

The early history of the cult  
of

T H E   M O T H E R   G O D D E S S

in Northern Indian Hinduism  
with special reference  
to

I C O N O G R A P H Y

:

by

:

MUKHLESUR RAHMAN

:

Thesis submitted for examination  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

at the

U N I V E R S I T Y   O F   L O N D O N

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1965

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A B S T R A C T  
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The present essay aims at a critical study of the cult of the Mother Goddess in North India from prehistoric times to the end of the 12th century A.D. It consists of a preface, five main chapters, a concluding chapter and two appendices.

Chapter I discusses the position of goddess worship in the Vedic period and analyses the attributes of some of the Vedic goddesses to determine the extent to which they have anticipated the Mother Goddess in Hinduism.

Chapter II is devoted to some of the non-Aryan village deities and the Mātrkās. It analyses their functions and attributes and points out their place in Hinduism vis-a-vis that of the Mother Goddess.

Chapter III traces the development of the concept of the Mother Goddess in Hinduism from the Vedic period and analyses the evidence of her worship from early Indian literature, Purānic mythology, folklore and epigraphy.

Chapter IV examines the archaeological evidence concerning the rise and development of the cult of the Mother Goddess in the prehistoric and historic times in North India.

Chapter V makes a critical study of the icons of the Mother Goddess and analyses the various forms in which she appears in the iconoplastic art of early and medieval India.

Chapter VI in conclusion gives a brief resumé of the salient features of her cult and reviews the place the Mother Goddess now occupies in Hinduism.

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P R E F A C E  
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This is the first full-length systematic study of the Hindu Mother Goddess based on literary and archaeological evidence. Unlike S.K. Dikshit's book, The Mother Goddess, it has no claim to be called a study of Hinduism, nor is it like Briffault's The Mothers a study of social anthropology inspired by a desire to enquire into the origins of sentiments and institutions.

The Mother Goddess has been the object of much veneration in India from remote antiquity. Her cult has undergone substantial changes since its adoption by Brahmanical Hinduism which has raised her to the dignity of a national deity under the names of Durgā, Devī or Mātā. A vast amount of literature has grown up centering round the Mother Goddess. Moreover, she is a prominent figure in popular mythology. She has also been the subject of much Indian plastic art which has been enriched to no small extent by depicting the themes associated with her various aspects.

The abundance of literature, religious or otherwise, is however of small help in tracing the origin of the Mother Goddess worship in India in a scientific or systematic manner. The earliest strata of Indian religious literature do not refer to her and her mention in

other works which are datable in the early years of the Christian era is so perfunctory that it is not possible to form any clear idea about the state or extent of her cult in those times. The same is almost true about the epics, though here for the first time we have indications of her organized cult and her worship not only by the non-Aryan aboriginals but also by the Kṣatriya princes of India. The Purāṇas offer a much better picture of the Mother Goddess and her cult. Some of these texts also give the iconography of her various forms. But, as with the epics, the dates of the Purāṇas have not yet been satisfactorily determined, and consequently these authorities, otherwise so helpful, cannot be much relied upon in reconstructing the early history of the Mother Goddess. The medieval Indian literary works of secular type refer to the Mother Goddess as the object of veneration by the Aryans and non-Aryans, but do not throw much light on her history or iconography.

The Purāṇas lack in historical perspective, but they are nevertheless of immense value as source materials to a scholar interested in a study like the present one. In the numerous legends recorded by them are embodied the beliefs and practices on which the foundation of Hinduism rests. The Purāṇas no doubt discuss the higher philosophy of religion, but they also reveal through the legends and anecdotes a vivid picture of the Mother Goddess in all

her aspects and the place she occupies in Hinduism.

Aware of the drawbacks of the literary sources, we have depended more on archaeological evidence - sculptural, epigraphic and numismatic. The history of the Mother Goddess has been written quite clearly in our opinion in the archaeological finds consisting of terracotta statuettes and steatite plaques, ring-stones and votive stone-discs, coins and seals, and inscriptions on stones and copper plates. Attention to the significance of these, especially the statuettes, ring-stones and votive discs has no doubt been drawn by archaeologists but they have not so far been utilized in a systematic study of the Mother Goddess as has been done in this work. Besides furnishing unmistakable proofs of her worship in prehistoric and ancient India, the archaeological evidence throws much light on the iconic motifs in the development of the Mother Goddess. The salient iconographical features of the goddess are noticeable not only in the prehistoric female figures from the Indus Valley, but also in similar objects unearthed at the archaeological sites all over North India. The statuettes as well as the female figures appearing on early Indian coins undeniably anticipate the Mother Goddess as she appears later in Indian plastic art - a heavy-breasted, slim-waisted, wide-hipped and profusely ornamented figure - conforming to the nyagrodha-parimandalā or ideal type of Indian

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feminine beauty. Many of the attributes, the different attitudes of her presentation as well as her lion mount can also be traced to the early Indian coins. Further the coins reveal a striking resemblance between the Indian Mother Goddess and her counterparts in Western Asia and Greece not only in regard to attributes but in her name as well. Apart from this, the coins also point to foreign influence on the iconography of the Mother Goddess.

While utilizing the archaeological and Purānic materials in this essay, we have not neglected the studies on social anthropology by some of the celebrated scholars in the field. Professor E.O. James' monograph<sup>1</sup>, which is otherwise a brilliant survey of the goddess cult from the Upper Palaeolithic Age down to the historical period, devotes but a few pages to India. The same is true about Sir J.G. Frazer's very informative volumes<sup>2</sup> and Briffault's work<sup>3</sup>. Unlike Professor James, these two authorities do not correlate their anthropological findings with archaeological evidence. Particularly useful for the purpose of this thesis have been the works

1. The Cult of the Mother Goddess, London, 1959.
2. The Golden Bough, 3rd. edition, London, 1933.
3. The Mothers, 3 vols., London, 1927.

on popular religion, folklore and ethnology by Dr. W. Crooke<sup>1</sup>, E.T. Dalton<sup>2</sup>, S.C. Roy<sup>3</sup> etc. Based on personal observation, these studies scientifically evaluate the popular beliefs and customs, legends and anecdotes, in which can be traced not a few elements of Hinduism. They also focus our attention on many details of Hindu religion including the numerous village deities whose cults are prevalent in India and who are the prototypes of the Mother Goddess. It is not the Vedas, the Brāhmaṇas or the Upaniṣads, but this welter of folk-beliefs, customs and superstitions which presents the Mother Goddess in the correct perspective. It is from this background that she was lifted by the Hindu priestly class who made her the great goddess (Mahādevī) by changing her complexion, but not so much of her flesh and blood, so that her pristine characteristics are still recognizable, and she is even now what she always has been - a Mother Goddess to all sections of the community, boundless alike in both her benevolence and her malevolence.

The need for a study of the goddess cult cannot be overemphasized. In the words of Professor James, 'Clearly it was an essential element very deeply laid in the long

1. Tribes and Castes of North Western Provinces and Oudh, 4 vols, Calcutta 1896; Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India, Oxford, 1896; Religion and Folklore of Northern India, Oxford, 1926.
2. Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal, Calcutta, 1872.
3. Oraon Religion and Customs, Ranchi, 1928.

and complex history of the body of beliefs and practices which centred in and around mysterious processes of fecundity, birth and generation, alike in nature, the human species and in the animal kingdom'<sup>1</sup>. Relics identified as associated with the cult of the Mother Goddess have been traced as far back as the Gravettian Culture in the Upper Palaeolithic and on the basis of these has been laid the hypothesis that she was the earliest manifestation of the concept of the Deity<sup>2</sup>. Be it so or not, the antiquity and importance of the Mother Goddess is confirmed not only by archaeological and documentary materials, but also by the actual practice of her cult prevalent among the followers of two important religions. In Roman Catholic Christianity the prehistoric Mother Goddess has been transformed into the Mater Ecclesiae or the Mother of the Church, and the Madonna who is the Virgin Mother of Jesus, the Incarnate son of God. In Hinduism, she is venerated in numerous forms and under equally numerous names, but is commonly known as Durgā, Pārvatī, Gaurī, Mā, Mahādevī, Mahāmāyī, Jagamātā, Deśamātā (motherland), Bhāratmātā (Mother India) etc. etc.<sup>3</sup>

1. CMG, p. 11.
2. Murray, M.A. : The Genesis of Religion, London, 1963, pp. 61-62.
3. For the names of the Mother Goddess see Sabdakalpadruma, which mentions their number as 1000 but gives 223 (pp. 742-46); Matsya P, xiii, gives 108 names of the goddess in connection with her pīthas; DM, pp. 254-57; Brhat-tantrasāra, i, pp. 47 ff; JRASBL, xiv(i), pp. 26-28; EM, pp. 224-26; Sorensen, S : An Index to the Names in the Mahābhārata, London, 1904, pp. 689-690.

Of her common names, we have selected Durgā to refer to the Mother Goddess, though for the sake of convenience we have also mentioned her as 'Devī' or 'the goddess' in this thesis. In our opinion, rather than any other name of hers, Durgā suits her best and it is also in perfect conformity with her character in the Mārkaṇḍeya-Candī. The gods are in great trouble (durgati) because of the tyranny of the titan Mahiṣa, and they implore her just as children do implore their mother for protection. Like the affectionate Mother that she is, the goddess immediately takes the frightened celestials under her wing and saves them by killing the wicked asura. Not only once, but she repeats this act again and again as well as providing sustenance to the creation in her role of Sākambharī when the world is in the grip of a terrible drought and famine. Thus, whether as a protectress, a war goddess, or an affectionate mother ever anxious to save and deliver her children - gods as well as mortals - the Mother Goddess is revealed as the durgatināśini (destroyer of troubles or miseries), and therefore deserves to be called Durgā. Moreover, it is also the most familiar among her many names and epithets. Her annual worship during the autumn is associated with this name and is called Durgā-pūjā, which the Hindus of Bengal regard as their national festival. Her autumnal service is marked by great excitement and looked forward

to with much expectation by rich and poor alike. Umā, Gaurī and Pārvatī as names are mostly associated with her maiden state and also with her role as the wife of Śiva. But it is as Durgā that she perfectly fits in with her function as the slayer of demons, protectress of her worshippers, remover of miseries and as the mother not only of Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya but of the entire creation.

.....

Various bodies and individuals have laid me under their debt while I have been engaged in preparation of this essay. I am thankful to the University of Rajshahi for the study leave that has enabled me to come over here to take up this work. To the British Council I am grateful for a travel grant with which they have favoured me under the Commonwealth Universities Interchange Scheme. I am most particularly obliged to another institution, which wishes to remain anonymous, for its kind interest in my work and favouring me with a substantial grant-in-aid for its completion. I must also thank the authorities of the Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi, for kindly permitting me to take photographs of some sculptures in their collection for use in this thesis.

To Professor A.L. Basham, my supervisor, are due my most sincere gratitude, affection and respect. It is impossible for me to express in words the invaluable help, wise guidance and constant encouragement that I have had the good fortune to receive from him during the preparation of this essay. I am considerably indebted to Miss Padmā Miśra of Benares Hindu University and Mrs Aparṇā Das Gupta of Calcutta for helping me over many a difficult Sanskrit passage. To Professor A.R. Mallick, my friend and colleague of more than twenty years, I am under obligations too numerous to enumerate. To Professor M.A. Bari I am indebted for many acts of kindness, encouragement and help. I am also in the debt of Mr. S. Siddhanta of the Varendra Research Society and Mr Dvijendra Kumar Chakravarty, (Rāmpada Babu), formerly Assistant Curator, Varendra Research Museum at Rajshahi, for much help and encouragement. To the latter I am particularly grateful for initiating me in the study of iconography.

I would also thankfully acknowledge here the ungrudging help and encouragement received from my students Mr and Mrs K. Mollah and Mr M. Rahman. To Dr A. Momin Chowdhury of Dacca my thanks are due for many valuable suggestions and help. I would also thank Mr. Abul Faraz Khan, engineer and architect, for generous assistance in regard to some of the plates. I would also express my thankfulness for all the courtesy and promptitude with which I

have been served by the staff of the libraries of the School of Oriental and African Studies, the British Museum, the India Office, the Royal Asiatic Society and the University of London.

I must also take this opportunity to put on record my most sincere thanks and gratitude to my parents and my sister Professor Muslimah Khatun for all their help, encouragement and good wishes. Finally, I would thank little Chānd, my wife, for great encouragement and much self-sacrifice, that have sustained me throughout the preparation of this thesis.

Alam ati vistarena

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L O N D O N

2nd July, 1965.

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A B B R E V I A T I O N S  
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A B B R E V I A T I O N S

- AAI Rowland, B : The Art and Architecture of India.
- AAR Tod, Col. James : Annals and Antiquities of Rajsthan.
- AB Aitareya Brāhmaṇa.
- ABORI Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona.
- AEAC Gupte and Mahajan : Ajanta, Ellora and Aurangabad Caves.
- AGS Āśvalāyana Gṛhya-Sūtra.
- AI Ancient India, New Delhi.
- AIA Zimmer, H : The Art of Indian Asia.
- AIRT Das Gupta, S.B : Aspects of Indian Religious Thought.
- AMTSI Burgess, J : The Ancient Monuments, Temples and Sculptures of India.
- AP Agni Purāna.
- App. Appendix.
- AR Adbhūta Rāmāyana.
- ASI Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report.
- ASM Vasu, N.N : Archaeological Survey of Mayūrabhañja.
- ASR Archaeological Survey(of India) Reports, Cunningham Series.
- ASWI Archaeological Survey of Western India.

- AV Atharva Veda.
- BHGGC Altekar, A.S : Catalogue of the Gupta Coins in the Bayana Hoard.
- BKS Bhattacharya, Gurudas : Bāṅglā Kāvye Śiva.
- BMC Gardner, Percy : British Museum Catalogue of the Coins of the Greek and Scythic Kings of Bactria and India.
- BMKI Bhattacharya, Asutosh : Bāṅglā Maṅgala Kāvyer Itihāsa.
- BSSS Das Gupta, S.B : Bhārater Śakti-sādhanā o Śakta Sāhitya.
- BVP Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa.
- CBIMA Agrawala, V.S : A Catalogue of the Brahmanical Images in Mathura Art.
- CCAI Allan, J : Catalogue of the Coins of Ancient India.
- CCGD Allan, J : Catalogue of the Coins of the Gupta Dynasties.
- CCIM Smith, V. A : Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.
- CCPM Whitehead, R.B : Catalogue of the Coins in the Panjab Museum.
- CDHM Dowson, John : A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology.
- CGE Altekar, A.S : The Coinage of the Gupta Empire.
- CHI Cambridge History of India.
- CII Fleet, J. F : Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum.

- CMG James, E.O : The Cult of the Mother Goddess.
- CR The Calcutta Review, Calcutta.
- CTI Fergusson, J and Burgess, J : The Cave Temples of India.
- CVRM Basak and Bhattacharya : A Catalogue of the Archaeological Relics in the Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi.
- DB Devī Bhāgavatam.
- DHI Banerjea, J.N : The Development of Hindu Iconography.
- DM Devī-Māhātmyam, edited with notes by V.S. Agrawala.
- DP Devī Purāna.
- EA Eastern Art, Philadelphia.
- EC Eastern Circle.
- Ed. Editor, edited by.
- EHI Rao, T.A.G : The Elements of Hindu Iconography.
- EI Epigraphia Indica.
- EISMS Banerji, R.D : Eastern Indian School of Medieval Sculpture.
- EM Hopkins, E.W : Epic Mythology.
- ERE The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. Hastings.
- GB Frazer, J.G : The Golden Bough
- GE Gupta Era.
- GGS Gobhila Grhya-Sūtra.
- GI Martin, E.O : The Gods of India.

- GM Neumann, E : The Great Mother.
- HB History of Bengal, vol. i, edited by R.C. Majumdar.
- HCIP The History and Culture of the Indian People, edited by R.C. Majumdar and A.D. Pusalkar.  
vol. i. The Vedic Age.  
vol.ii. The Age of Imperial Unity.  
vol.iii. The Classical Age.  
vol.iv. The Age of Imperial Kanauj.
- HD Kane, P.V : History of the Dharmasāstras
- HFAIC Smith, V. A : A History of Fine Arts in India and Ceylon.
- HGS Hiranyakeśin Grhya-Sūtra.
- HTIA Coomaraswamy, A.K : History of Indian and Indonesian Art.
- HM Wilkins, W.J : Hindu Mythology.
- HRY Underhill, M.M : The Hindu Religious Year.
- IA The Indian Antiquary.
- IBBS Bhattasali, N.K : Iconography of the Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum.
- IC Indian Culture, Calcutta.
- IHQ The Indian Historical Quarterly, Calcutta.
- JAOS Journal of the American Oriental Society, New Haven.
- JASB Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal New Series, Calcutta.
- JBBRAS Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Bombay.

<u>JBRS</u>	<u>Journal of the Bihar Research Society,</u> Patna.
<u>JISOA</u>	<u>Journal of the Indian Society of</u> <u>Oriental Art,</u> Calcutta.
<u>JNSI</u>	<u>Journal of the Numismatic Society of</u> <u>India,</u> Benares.
<u>JRAS</u>	<u>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society,</u> London.
<u>JRASBL</u>	<u>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of</u> <u>Bengal, Letters,</u> Calcutta.
<u>KP</u>	<u>Kālikā Purāna.</u>
<u>KU</u>	<u>Kena Upaniṣad.</u>
<u>LEM</u>	<u>Larousse Encyclopaedia of Mythology.</u>
<u>LK</u>	<u>Lalita-Kala,</u> New Delhi.
<u>LP</u>	<u>Liṅga Purāna.</u>
<u>MAR</u>	<u>Mythology of All Races,</u> edited by Gray, MacCulloch and others, Boston.
<u>MASI</u>	<u>Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey</u> <u>of India.</u>
<u>Mbh</u>	<u>The Mahābhārata.</u>
<u>MG</u>	Dikshit, S.K : <u>The Mother Goddess.</u>
<u>MI</u>	<u>Man in India,</u> Ranchi.
<u>MIC</u>	<u>Mohenjo-dāro and the Indus Civilization,</u> edited by Sir John Marshall.
<u>MP</u>	<u>Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna.</u>
<u>MS</u>	<u>Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā.</u>
<u>MSIAC</u>	Zimmer, H : <u>Myths and Symbols in Indian</u> <u>Art and Civilization.</u>

<u>MU</u>	<u>Mundaka Upaniṣad</u>
<u>NC</u>	<u>The Numismatic Chronicle, London.</u>
<u>NIS</u>	<u>New Imperial Seris.</u>
<u>NS</u>	<u>New Series.</u>
<u>OII</u>	<u>Oppert, G : The Original Inhabitants of India.</u>
<u>OST</u>	<u>Muir, J : Original Sanskrit Texts.</u>
<u>P</u>	<u>Purāna.</u>
<u>PAIOC</u>	<u>Proceedings of the All India Oriental Conference.</u>
<u>PD</u>	<u>S. M. Bhattacharya : Purohita Darpana.</u>
<u>PGS</u>	<u>Pāraskara Gṛhya-Sūtra.</u>
<u>PIHC</u>	<u>Proceedings of the Indian Historical Congress.</u>
<u>pl.</u>	<u>plate.</u>
<u>PP</u>	<u>Padma Purāna.</u>
<u>PRFNI</u>	<u>Crooke, W : Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India.</u>
<u>QJMS</u>	<u>Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society, Bangalore.</u>
<u>RFNI</u>	<u>Crooke, W : Religion and Folklore of Northern India.</u>
<u>RPV</u>	<u>Keith, A.B : The Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas.</u>
<u>RTLI</u>	<u>Monier-Williams, M : Religious Thought and Life in India.</u>
<u>RV</u>	<u>The Rg Veda.</u>

<u>SB</u>	<u>Satapatha Brāhmaṇa.</u>
<u>SBE</u>	<u>Sacred Books of the East,</u> edited by M. Muller.
<u>SDFML,</u>	<u>The Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend,</u> edited by Maria Leach.
<u>SED</u>	Monier-Williams, M : <u>Sanskrit-English Dictionary.</u>
<u>SIB</u>	Sivaramamurti, C : <u>South Indian Bronzes.</u>

A d d e n d a

SGS

Sāṅkhalāyana Gṛhya-Sūtra

<u>TB</u>	<u>Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa.</u>
<u>TS</u>	<u>Taittirīya Saṁhitā.</u>
<u>TU</u>	<u>Taittirīya Upaniṣad.</u>
<u>VGSI</u>	Whitehead, H : <u>The Village Gods of South India.</u>
<u>VM</u>	Macdonell, A.A : <u>Vedic Mythology.</u>
<u>VP</u>	<u>Vāmana Purāna.</u>
<u>VRS-AR</u>	<u>Varendra Research Society, Annual Report,</u> Rajshahi.
<u>VRSM</u>	<u>Varendra Research Society's Monograph,</u> Rajshahi.
<u>VS</u>	<u>Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā.</u>

VSMRS

Bhandarkar, R.G. : Vaisnavism,  
Saivism and Minor Religious Systems.

VV

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WSG

James, E.O. : The Worship of the  
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G L O S S A R Y

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G L O S S A R Y

- Abhaṅga a standing position in which there is definitely perceptible slight bend in both in the upper and lower halves of the figure.
- Abhaya,  
Abhayamudrā a gesture of protection or assurance made by the hand which is turned towards the visitor with palm open and fingers raised upwards (pl. xxxv.1).
- Abhiṣeka a ceremonial bath or sprinkling with water; usually associated with the coronation of an Indian king.
- Āgamas tāntrik texts.
- Agni fire, an attribute of Durgā (pl. xxxiii.1)
- Āi Mother (Assamese).
- Akṣamālā,  
Akṣasūtra rosary; a string of beads used as rosary (pl. xxxiii.2).
- Ālīḍha a particular mode of standing, usually sideways in which the right knee is thrown forward, the right leg retracted and the left leg is diagonally stretched behind. (pl. xxxviii.1).
- Āliṅgana,  
Āliṅganamudrā an embrace; a gesture of embracing.
- Āmalaka the crest of the pyramidal tower of a Hindu temple shaped like an āmalaka (Emblic Myrobalan) above which rises the finial.
- Añjalimudrā A hand pose in which the palms are joined and the hands thus are made to rest on the chest. This handpose is indicative of worship and prayerfulness. (pl. xxxv.3).
- Aṅkuśa an elephant goad. (pl. xxxiii.3-5).

<u>Annadā</u>	the giver of food; an epithet of Durgā.
<u>Annapūrnā</u>	full of food; giver of food; an epithet of Durgā.
<u>Ardhamandapa</u>	half pavilion.
<u>Āryā</u>	a noble lady.
<u>Āsana</u>	a sitting posture.
<u>Aṣṭabhuja</u>	eight-armed; an epithet of Durgā.
<u>Aṣṭadikpālas</u>	the guardians of the eight quarters : Indra, Yama, Varuṇa, Kuvera, Agni, Vāyu, Nirṛti and Īśāna ( <u>DHI</u> , pp. 519-20).
<u>Aṣṭaka</u>	a Vedic ritual connected with the worship of ancestors.
<u>Asura</u>	a demon.
<u>Āśvattha (tree)</u>	the <u>Ficus Religiosa</u> or banyan.
<u>Atibhaṅga</u>	the exaggerated form of <u>tribhaṅga</u> .
<u>Āyudha</u>	any weapon; <u>āyudhapurusa</u> : a male or female being who personifies a particular weapon, such as the Cakrapuruṣa and Gadādevī respectively personifying the discus and mace which are placed in the hands of Viṣṇu.
<u>Baddhapadmāsana</u>	a sitting posture similar to <u>padmāsana</u> .
<u>Bāna</u>	an arrow (pl. xxxiii.6).
<u>Bali</u>	a sacrifice; an offering.
<u>Bhaṅga</u>	bend; flexions; attitude of the body.
<u>Bhrṅgāra</u>	a narrow-necked water-pot with a spout.
<u>Bhūmi</u>	the earth; the earth goddess.
<u>Bhūmijā</u>	a female born of the earth; an epithet of Sītā.
<u>Budī</u>	an old woman (Bengali).
<u>Čakra</u>	a discus; an emblem of Viṣṇu; a ritual circle used in Tāntrik worship of Durgā. (pl. xxxiii.7-9).

<u>Caitya</u>	temple or monument originally of funerary character, usually Buddhist.
<u>Cāmara, chowrie</u>	a fly whisk.
<u>Cāpa</u>	a bow.
<u>Chatra</u>	an umbrella.
<u>Dakṣiṇā</u>	fee; remuneration paid to a Brahmin priest for his services.
<u>Damaru</u>	a hand-drum; a tom-tom; associated with Śiva (pl. xxxiii.10-11).
<u>Danḍa</u>	a rod; a staff.
<u>Darpaṇa</u>	a mirror (pl. xxxiii.12).
<u>Daśabhujā</u>	ten-armed; an epithet of Durgā.
<u>Dasahara, Dusserah</u>	the tenth day of the bright half of Āśvina; in Bengal it is associated with the autumnal worship of Durgā; also called <u>vijayā daśamī</u> or the victorious tenth in commemoration of Rāma's victory over Rāvaṇa. In the south and west of India, it is observed as a military festival. Originally, it had no connection with Durgā, being held on the tenth of Jyaiṣṭha in honour of Gangā's descent from heaven.
<u>Dhanuḥ</u>	a bow (pl. xxxiii.13-14).
<u>Dhānya</u>	corn; grain; unhusked paddy.
<u>Dhānyarūpa</u>	paddy incarnate; an epithet of Lakṣmī.
<u>Dharaṇī</u>	the earth.
<u>Dūrvā</u>	the bent grass.
<u>Dhvaja</u>	a banner.
<u>Dhyana</u>	meditation; mental representation of the personal attributes of a deity; the verses describing such a representation.

Dhyānamudrā

a particular pose of the hand in which the palm of the right hand is placed on that of the left and both are laid on the crossed leg of a seated figure.

Gācha

a tree (Bengali).

Gadā

a mace (pl. xxxiii.16-18).

Gāyatrī

the name of a Vedic metre; variously arranged, but generally as a triplet of eight syllables each. RV iii.62. 10 is a typical example; is called the Gāyatrī and also Sāvitri and is repeated by every Brahmin at his morning and evening devotions.

Ghaṭa

an earthen or metal pitcher to hold water for ritualistic purposes.

Ghaṅṭā

a bell (pl. xxxiii.19.).

Ghora

dark, terrible, malevolent.

Grahavipra

astrologer; a Brahmin capable of pacifying the pānnets.

Grāmadevatā

a village deity.

Guṇḍi

the trunk of a tree (Bengali).

Hāra

a torque, a necklace (pl. xxxvi.3).

Homakuṇḍa

a sacrificial fire-pit.

Jananī

one who gives birth; mother.

Janapada

āalōcality.

Jaṭā

matted locks of hair.

Jaṭājūṭa

long tresses of matted hair twisted or piled up on the head.

Jaṭāmukuta

matted locks of hair done up in the form of a tall crown on the head, and sometimes adorned with jewels, or a crescent or a skull; associated with Śiva. (pl. xxxvi.1)

Jñānamudrā

a pose of the hand in which the tips of the middle finger and of the thumb are joined together and held near the heart with palm turned inwards. (pl. xxxv.4).

Kamandalu

a water-pot made of gourd, wood, clay or metal with a spout; usually associated with Brahmā and ascetics. (pl. xxxiii.20).

Kambukanṭha

having three horizontal lines on the throat; indicative of good fortune and auspiciousness. (kambu= a conch).

Kāñcīdāma,

Kaṭisūtra,

Mekhalā

a jewelled girdle furnished with tassels and tinkling bells. (pl. xxxvi.9-11).

Kaṅkana

a bracelet; a bangle.

Karandamukūṭa

a crown shaped like a conical basket with the narrow end upwards (pl. xxxvi.2-3).

Karnikāra

the flower of Pterospermum Aceri-  
folium.

Kartari

a short chopper; a big knife.

Kaṭakamudrā or

Siṃhakarnaḥasta

a pose of the hand in which the tips of the fingers are loosely applied to the thumb so as to form a ring or resemble a lion's ear. (pl. xxxv.5-6).

Kaṭihasta

a hand pose in which the arm is let down so as to hang by the side of the body and made to rest on the loin indicating a posture of ease or pertness. (pl. xxxvi.7-8).

Kapāla

the upper part of a human skull used as a drinking cup. (pl. xxxiii. 21-22).

- Kāpālika a Śaiva ascetic of the left hand type who carries a human skull as a receptacle for his food and drink and worships Durgā in her terrible aspect with wine and human sacrifice.
- Kapālamudrā holding up with one hand a skull with its concave side upwards.
- Kathā a story or tale; in our context especially an anecdote glorifying the acts of a god or goddess.
- Kathākali A colourful folk-dance from Kerala, South India.
- Keli-Kadamba a tree, Nauclea Cadamba, under which Kṛṣṇa is said to have dallied with the milkmaids.
- Keyūra an armlet (pl. xxxvi.6-8).
- Khaḍga a heavy sword (pl. xxxiii.23).
- Khetaka a shield (pl. xxxiv.1).
- Kikar a tree of uncertain identity, possibly the pipal or ficus religiosa.
- Kinnara a mythical musician the upper part of whose body is human and the lower part bird-like; he is represented as playing on a vīṇā.
- Kirāta a degraded mountain tribe who subsist on hunting.
- Kirīṭa,  
Kirīṭamukuta a diadem; any jewelled ornament used as a crown. (pl. xxxvi.4-5).
- Kirtimukha a grinning lion-face carved at the top centre of the back-slab of an image, or over a gateway.
- Kṛpāna a sword.
- Kṣanika-mūrti a clay image made for ~~the~~ seasonal worship and immersion into water afterwards.
- Kṣetradevatā an earth deity.

Kṣetrapāla

lord of the fields, same as Kṣetradevatā.

Kuṣapattā

a breast band (pl. xxxvi.3).

Kukkuta

a cock; a peacock.

Kunda

a pit; a brazier.

Kundala

a pendant ear ornament.

Kūrmāsana

a sitting posture, in which the legs are crossed so as to make the heels come under the gluteals.

Loka

the world; the universe.

Lokamātā,

Lokajānānī

the mother of the universe; an epithet of Durgā and Lakṣmī.

Lalitakṣepa,

Lalitāsana

a sitting posture in which one leg usually the left is placed flat upon the seat, while the right one is pendant; also known as ardha-paryāṅkāsa.

Lolahasta

a hand that hangs loose by the side of the body like the tail of a cow (pl. xxxv.9-11).

Mā, Mātā,

Mātr, Mātrkā

mother; refers chiefly to Durgā but may indicate any female divinity; usually used as a suffix to the name of a goddess.

Maithuna

sexual intercourse, associated with Tāntrik worship of Durgā.

Makara

a mythical aquatic animal with elephantine head; usually associated with Gaṅgā as her vāhana.

Maṇḍala

a circle; especially of divinities in the Tāntrik form of worship.

Mandapa

a pavilion.

Manikundala

an ear ornament made of gems.

<u>Mantra</u>	a sacred formula addressed to a deity.
<u>Matsya</u>	a fish.
<u>Matsyamudrā</u>	a fish held up in one hand.
<u>Māyā</u>	illusion; magic.
<u>Mrga</u>	a deer with antlers; an attribute of Śiva.
<u>Mudgara</u>	a club.
<u>Mudrā</u>	a gesture of the hand.
<u>Mukuṭa</u>	a crown; a jewelled head-dress.
<u>Mūrti</u>	an image; a representation, plastic or otherwise, of some deity.
<u>Muṣala</u>	a pestle.
<u>Nāga</u>	a serpent; a mythical being, half snake and half human.
<u>Nāgapāśa</u>	a live snake used as a noose.
<u>Nāginī</u>	a female <u>nāga</u> .
<u>Natarāja</u>	lord of the dancers; an epithet of Śiva.
<u>Navagraha</u>	the nine planets.
<u>Navānna</u>	the ceremony new rice.
<u>Navaratha</u>	having nine facets (of an image of pedestal).
<u>Nāyikā</u>	the heroine of a drama; the principal female character in a literary work of romantic type.
<u>Nilotpala</u>	a blue lotus.
<u>Nim, Nimba tree</u>	<u>Azadirchta Indica</u>
<u>Nupūra</u>	anklets with tinkling bells.

<u>Nyagrodha-parimaṇḍala</u>	a female figure with high breasts wide hips and a slim waist; an ideal type of feminine beauty.
<u>Padma</u>	a lotus (pl. xxxiv.5-6).
<u>Padmāsana</u>	a lotus seat; a sitting posture in which the two legs are crossed so that the feet are brought to rest on the thighs.
<u>Palāśa tree</u>	<u>Butea Frondosa</u>
<u>Pañcaratha</u>	having five facets (of an image pedestal. (Plate xxxix.3).
<u>Pāṇigrahana</u>	taking the hand in marriage; marriage.
<u>Paraśu</u>	a battle axe; (pl. xxxiv.7-9).
<u>Parivāradevatā</u>	attendant deity.
<u>Pārthivī</u>	of the earth; a daughter of the earth; an epithet of Sītā.
<u>Paryāṅkāsana</u>	a sitting posture in which both the legs dangle from whatever type of seat the figure sits on.
<u>Pāśa</u>	a noose (pl. xxxiv.10-12).
<u>Patrakuṇḍala</u>	a circular ear ornament originally made of cones of cocconut, of palmyra-leaves or of thin gold plates. (Pl. xxxvi.12).
<u>Phala</u>	a fruit (pl. xxxiv.13).
<u>Pināka</u>	a bow.
<u>Piśitāsana</u>	a female (goddess Cāmuṇḍā) seated on a carrion-eater (a dog?).
<u>Pīṭha</u>	a place sacred to a god or goddess.
<u>Prabhāvalī</u>	an elaborate halo.
<u>Pranama</u>	obeisance.
<u>Pratyālīdha</u>	the opposite of <u>ālīdha</u> (pl. xxxviii.2).

<u>Preta</u>	a corpse; a ghost or goblin.
<u>Pūjābhāga</u>	the portion of the <u>liṅga</u> visible above its base.
<u>Pustaka</u>	a book; may also be a bundle of palm-leaf manuscripts. (pl. xxxiv. 14-15)
<u>Rājasika</u>	<u>majestic</u> .
<u>Rūpasī</u>	a beautiful woman.
<u>Rūpeśvarī</u>	the goddess of beauty.
<u>Śākta</u>	a worshipper of Śakti or Durgā.
<u>Śakti</u>	power; the female principle; the emanation in female shape of any god, with identical attributes; Durgā; a spear-like weapon associated with Karttikeya. (pl. xxxiv. 16).
<u>Śaktyāyudha</u>	a spear.
<u>Śāla tree</u>	<u>Vatica Robusta</u> .
<u>Śālabhañjikā</u>	an image or figure made of <u>Śāla</u> wood; a female figure standing in <u>tribhaṅga</u> pose against a <u>Śāla</u> tree and holding a branch of its leaves in one hand.
<u>Śalākā</u>	a stick.
<u>Samapādasthānaka</u>	a standing position in which the body faces front without any bend; also known as <u>samabhaṅga</u> . (pl. xxxviii. 3).
<u>Śaṅkha</u>	a conch (pl. xxxiv. 17-19).
<u>Saptapadīgamana</u>	the taking of seven steps; the circumambulation of the sacrificial fire seven times by the bride and bridegroom during an orthodox Hindu marriage.
<u>Saptaratha</u>	having seven facets (of an image pedestal).
<u>Sara</u>	an arrow.
<u>Saumya</u>	pleasing; placid; benevolent.
<u>Śilpaśāstra</u>	treatises on the arts, especially sculpture and architecture.

<u>Siṃhavāhinī</u>	riding or sitting on a lion; a form as well as an epithet of Durgā.
<u>Śitalā-paṇḍit</u>	priests of Śitalā, an inferior class of Brahmins; may as well belong to the Ḍom caste.
<u>Sivagana</u>	the impish followers of Śiva.
<u>Śloka</u>	couplet.
<u>Stūpa</u>	a monument, generally of a pyramidal or dome-like form, especially one erected over the sacred relics of the Buddha or on spots consecrated as the scenes of his acts.
<u>Sūcī</u>	a needle; a sharp pointed weapon.
<u>Sūcīmudrā</u>	a gesture of the right hand in which the projected forefinger points downwards and the hand itself hangs down. (pl. xxxv. 12-13).
<u>Sukhāsana</u>	a sitting position in which one leg, usually the left one, rests flat on the seat while the right knee is raised upwards from it and the right arm is stretched out on the upraised knee; also known as <u>mahārājalīla-</u> or <u>līlāsana</u> . (pl. xxxvii. 3).
<u>Śūla</u>	a trident.
<u>Sutā</u>	a daughter.
<u>Śnyāmala</u>	green.
<u>Taṅka</u>	a short axe-like weapon; a stone mason's chisel.
<u>Tantra</u>	a class of works teaching magical and mystical formulas, mostly in the form of dialogues between Śiva and Durgā.
<u>Tapasyā</u>	also called <u>tapas</u> , and <u>tapah</u> ; the practice of austerities; ascetic penance.

Tarjanīmudrā

a threatening gesture made with the forefinger (index) of the right hand pointed upwards. (pl. xxxv.14-15).

Thākuraṇī

feminine of Thākura, a god.

Tilaka

a sectarian mark on the forehead made with sandal-paste, vermilion, ashes of cow-dung or clay from the bed of the Ganges.

Tribhaṅga

a standing position with three bends in the body - the face slightly leaning to the right or left, the middle of the body to the left or right, and the portion below the waist again to the right or left. (pl. xxxviii.4).

Triśūla

a trident (pl. xxxiv.20-24).

Tūnīra

a quiver.

Tryambaka

having three mothers or eyes; an epithet of Śiva.

Ūrdhvaliṅga,Ūrdhvareta

ithyphallic.

Uttariya

a scarf of thin material thrown over the upper part of the body.

Vajra

a thunderbolt; an aegis. (pl. xxxiv.25-26).

Vāhana

a vehicle; a mount.

Vana

the forest.

Vara

a boon.

Varadamudra

a "boon-giving" gesture made by the hand with palm open and fingers pointing downwards. (pl. xxxv.16-17).

Vāsuki

the king of snakes.

Vibhūti

emanation.

Vidyā

a book; knowledge; science.

Vidyādhara

a demigod living in the Himālayas and possessed of magical powers.

Vīnā

the Indian lute.

Vismayamudrā

a hand pose that indicates astonishment and wonder. In this pose the forearm is held up with the fingers of the hand pointing upwards and the palm turned away from the observer. (pl. xxxv. 18-19).

Vṛkṣakā,

Vṛkṣadēvatā

a tree-spirit or goddess.

Yajña

a sacrifice.

Yajñopavīta

the sacred thread worn across the chest by a Brahmin. (pl. xxxvi. 13).

Yakṣa

a supernatural being; usually a class of semi-divine beings who are attendants of Kuvera.

Yakṣī,

Yakṣiṇī

feminine of Yakṣa; may also mean an ogress such as Hārītī.

Yoga

asceticism.

Yogī

an ascetic.

Yoginī

feminine of yogī; a female supernatural being; followers of Durgā in Tāntrik belief.

Yonī

the female generative organ; the species (of living being in which an individual is born).

Yonīpatṭa,

Gaurīpatṭa

the base of the Sivaliṅga.

Yantra

an amulet; mystical diagram supposed to possess occult powers and used in the Tāntrik worship of Durgā.

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L I S T O F P L A T E S  
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L I S T   O F   P L A T E S

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 6. Bāna from SII, pl. iii.4.  
 7-9. Cakra from SIB, figs. 26.2c, 3b, 3c.  
 10. Damaru from SII, pl. iv.24.  
 11. Damaru from JISOA, Golden Jubilee Number, p. 17).  
 12. Darpana from SII, pl. iii.8.  
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 15. Dhvaja from SII, pl. iv.22.  
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 19. Ghaṅṭā from SII, pl. iii.7.  
 20. Kamāṇḍalu from SII, pl. iv.4.  
 21-22. Kapāla from SII, pls. iii.21, iv.23a.  
 23. Khaḍga from SII, pl. iv.13.  
 24. Khaṭvāṅga from SII, pl. iii.11.  
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 2. Līṅga from HP, pl. 36.4.  
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 13. Phala from HP, pl. 37.3.  
 14. Pustaka from JISOA, Golden Jubilee Number, pl. Bhāratmātā.  
 15. Pustaka from SII, pl. iv.4.  
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## xxxv. Hand poses :

1. Abhayamudrā from SIB, fig. 5a.
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- 14-15. Tarjanīmudrā from SII, pl. iii.18,26.
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5. Kirītamukuta  
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Stanahāra from SIB, fig. 13b.
- 6-8. Keyura from SIB, figs. 20.1b,  
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Chapter One

.

THE PROTOTYPES

OF

THE MOTHER GODDESS : VEDIC

A D I T I

Aditi is the most distinguished among the female deities of the Vedic pantheon. She is called the mother of gods, and in view of her attributes, is regarded by scholars as the Mother Goddess of the Vedic period<sup>1</sup>. In reality Aditi is closely akin to Pṛthivī, with whom she is justifiably equated<sup>2</sup>. In the list of words prefixed to the Nirukta, the word Aditi stands as the synonym of words like pṛthivī, vāk and go in the singular, and of dyāvā-pṛthivī in the dual<sup>3</sup>. As well as in the Vedas, Aditi has been identified with the Earth<sup>4</sup>, and this is done quite frequently in the Taittirīya Saṁhitā and the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa<sup>5</sup>. She has however been addressed separately in many Rg Vedic hymns in which she occurs in

1. AIRT, p. 46.
2. CMG, p. 113.
3. OST, v, p. 35.
4. RV, i.72.9; AV, xiii.1.38.
5. VM, p. 121.

company with other gods, including Dyaus and Prthivī.<sup>1</sup> In these hymns, argues Muir, Aditi appears 'as if she were distinct from both the one and the other'.<sup>2</sup> Also in the Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā, Aditi appears to have been invoked along with the Earth, Diti, Heaven and others.<sup>3</sup> In the Atharva Veda too, Aditi seems to have been distinguished from Bhūmi or the Earth.<sup>4</sup> But in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa we find her equated with the Earth no less than four times.<sup>5</sup> Muir has characterized these identifications as 'very arbitrary and frequently fanciful',<sup>6</sup> but, all things considered, it is rather difficult to agree with him. There is nothing fanciful or arbitrary either in the Rg Veda or in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, which warrants such an observation. In such a passage of the Rg Veda as i.89.10, Aditi may have been represented as the personification of universal nature,<sup>7</sup> but can one deny after examining the hymns in which she has been celebrated, that in her can be traced many of those attributes which characterize Prthivī

1. RV, iii.54.19-20; v.46.3; vi.51.5; ix.97.58; x.36.2-3; x.92.11; x.63.9-10.
2. OST, v, p. 40.
3. VS, xviii.22.
4. AV, vi.120.2.
5. SB, ii.1.19: 'Aditi being this earth, and this earth being a firm resting place'; v.3.1.4: 'Aditi is this earth'; viii.2.1.10: 'Aditi doubtless is this earth'; xi.1.3.3: 'Now Aditi is this earth, and she is indeed is certain and firmly established'.
6. OST, v, p. 41.
7. VM, p. 121.

as a Mother Goddess? Like the latter, Aditi is a mother<sup>1</sup> of the gods who draw from her breasts honied milk. In fact, motherhood is Aditi's most prominent characteristic. 'She is the mother of a group of gods whose name ~~मैत्रियस्य~~<sup>2</sup> represents a metronymic formation from hers' (Ādityas).<sup>3</sup> The Atharva Veda credits Aditi with an eight-fold womb from which were born her sons, the Ādityas. Further, like Pṛthivī,<sup>4</sup> Aditi is supplicated for protection and blessings,<sup>5</sup> wealth<sup>6</sup> and gifts.<sup>7</sup> Her equation with the Waters and the Earth as mother of gods<sup>8</sup> represents her as the source of fecundity.<sup>9</sup> Again, as in regard to the Earth, the Vedic poets seem to have discerned in Aditi 'a sort of common womb, a substatum of all existences'.<sup>10</sup>

Aditi plays an inferior role in the Rg Veda, it has been remarked by one scholar, though she happens to be the mother of some of the leading gods.<sup>11</sup> She has been

1. RV, x.63.2-3. Yāska (Nirukta, iv.22) describes Aditi as the mighty mother of the gods.
2. VM, p. 122.
3. AV, viii.9.21.
4. AV, xii.1.
5. RV, viii.18.6-7.
6. RV, vii.40.2.
7. RV, ~~x.63.2~~ i.185.3.
8. RV, x.63.2.
9. Przyluski, J : 'The Great Goddess in India and Iran', IHQ, x, p. 420.
10. Barth, A : The Religions of India, 6th. edition, London, 1932, p. 19.
11. VM, p. 122.

celebrated in the Rg Veda no less than eighty times, yet 'the goddess Aditi is not the subject of any separate hymn'.<sup>1</sup> Such evidence apparently indicates a minor place for Aditi in the Vedic pantheon in which the gods are more prominent than the goddesses. But in the opinion of Jean Przyluski, and we are inclined to agree with him, Aditi is an exception to this rule; like the Great Goddess of Asia Minor, she is not only superior to the gods, but also exercises unlimited sovereign powers.<sup>2</sup> RV, i.89.10, he maintains, establishes clearly the omnipotence and immensity of Aditi, and makes her power superior to that of the gods.<sup>3</sup> But it is difficult to accept Przyluski's equation of Aditi with Ardivi, Nanai and Artemis,<sup>4</sup> for unlike these goddesses, Aditi never rose to the position of a national deity, either in the Vedic or any subsequent period. She was, however, essentially the mother of gods; her frequent invocation as mother of the Ādityās emphasizes her motherhood, which is her most outstanding characteristic.<sup>5</sup> In this regard Aditi closely resembles the Egyptian goddesses concerned with motherhood as their principal attribute, for does she or not, like them, give

1. VM, p. 120. Aditi, it has been counted, seems to have been mentioned in the RV no less than 140 times, either alone or in company of others. JASB, 1932, p. 15.

2. IHQ, x, p. 413.

3. Ibid, p. 417.

4. Ibid, p. 415. Dikshit seems to be in full agreement with Przyluski's views. He also agrees with V.S. Agrawala (cf. IC, iv, p. 401 ff) who connects Aditi first with Nanā, and then with the Sumerian mother goddess called Nana, Innana, Nina, and Annuit.

5. VM, pp. 120-21.

birth to gods<sup>1</sup> and kings?<sup>2</sup> The theriomorphic representation of Aditi in the Rg Veda<sup>3</sup> is an additional indication of her motherhood. Hathor, an important mother goddess<sup>4</sup> of Egypt, was worshipped in form of a cow, and Isis, as the goddess of procreation and birth, had the same animal for her emblem.<sup>5</sup> 'As in the case of other mother goddesses', points out Dikshit, 'identification with the cow is almost a constant feature of the Indian mother Aditi, Pr̥thivī, Idā or Vāk'.<sup>6</sup> In the Harivaṃśa, Aditi is found to have been equated with the celestial cow Surabhi.<sup>7</sup> She is a Mātr in the Bhāgavata Purāna.<sup>8</sup> In the Gr̥hyasūtras<sup>9</sup> also Aditi has been identified with Pr̥thivī. Sāyana seems to have consistently seen in Aditi nothing but a mother of the gods and Bhūmi or Earth.<sup>10</sup> Aditi's identification with the Earth is attested by the Purānas, which equate go-dāna (gift of cows) with Pr̥thivī-dāna (gift of land). Cows seem to have been associated with fertility and childbirth in ancient India, for the queen Vilāsavatī,

6. CMG, p. 63.

1. Supra, p. 54.

2. RV, ii.27.7; cf. RV, iii.4.11 and viii.56.11, and AV, iii.82 and xi.1.11 in which Aditi has also been called 'mother of excellent sons', 'mother of powerful sons', 'mother of divine ~~sons~~ heroes'.

3. RV, i.153.3; viii.101.15; x.11.1; ix.96.15.

4. CMG, p. 59.

5. ERE, i, p. 508.

6. MG, p. 188. cf. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, i.4.4, in which the female half of the Self or Supreme being assumes the form of a cow and He follows to unite with her in the form of a bull.

writes Bāṇabhaṭṭa, was blessed with Candrāpīḍa, her first born, through bathing under cows endued with auspicious marks.<sup>1</sup> The Earth, as we know from the Atharva Veda, is the mother of snakes;<sup>2</sup> so is Aditi, who in the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa is called sarparājñī (queen or mistress of the serpents), and is identical with Kadru, the mother of all snakes.<sup>3</sup> In the Taittirīya Saṃhitā also may be found Aditi's identification with Pṛthivī expressly asserted as well as in other texts, 'and by the time of Nighāṇṭukā this is so much the accepted version that the word is placed as a synonym for earth'.<sup>4</sup> In post-Vedic mythology, Aditi appears as the daughter of Dakṣa, mother of the gods in general, but particularly of Vivasvat, Sūrya, and Viṣṇu in his dwarf incarnation.<sup>5</sup> Previous to her incarnation as Umā, the goddess had been born as a daughter of Dakṣa and was known by the name of Satī.<sup>6</sup> Along with her

7. Harivaṃśa, i.3.59 ff, i.3.118.
8. Bhāgavata P, vi.6.24-26.
9. PGS, 1.3.26.
10. RV, i.89.3; i.113.19; v.46.6; vii.88.7; ix.71.5; ix.74.3-5; ix.132.6.
11. AP, ccxiii.7, ccxi and ccxcii; Matsya P, ccv.3 ff.

1. Kādambarī (translated by Ridding), p. 55.
2. AV, xii.1.46.
3. TB, ii.6.2.
4. Keith, A.B : RPV, p.216.
5. VM, p. 121. In RV, x.72.4-5, however, Dakṣa is born from Aditi and Aditi from Dakṣa. See Yāska's commentary on the passage in the Nirukta, xi.23. RV, x.90.5 furnishes another example of such reciprocal generation.
6. CDHM, p. 287; Śabdakalpadruma, p.2275 : Sati=Durgā. For the legend of Satī see VP, xxi; KP, vi, ix, xiv, xvi, xvii; SP(Kedārahanda), iii; Kūrma P, i.xi; LP, i. xcix; Matsya P, xlii; Brhaddharma P, xvi.

twenty-six sisters, including Aditi, Durgā as Satī was designated by their patronymic Dākṣayanī.<sup>1</sup> This legend, in which Durgā was one of the Dākṣayani's along with Aditi, has been seized upon by a few over-enthusiastic scholars in order to equate the Vedic Aditi with the Purāṇic Satī-Umā-Pārvatī-Durgā-Kālī.<sup>2</sup> Nothing could be, in our opinion, more far-fetched than this. The background in which the Puranic goddess has been conceived and developed is totally different from the one in which Aditi is born and celebrated in the Vedas. While it must be admitted that Durgā has borrowed through Pṛthivī quite a few of Aditi's attributes, particularly her maternal characteristics, Aditi can never be viewed, as Przyluski and others believe, as the exact prototype of Durgā as a mother goddess. As we have already stated, Aditi never rose to that prominence which is enjoyed by Durgā in the Hindu religion, nor did she, like the latter, ever become the object of so much popular worship in India.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the cult of Aditi as a mother goddess, if at all she had any, has not come down from the Vedic to the Epic and the Puranic religions.

1. Amarakoṣa, i.1.36.-38.

2. IHQ, x, p. 430 where Przyluski has connected Aditi with Kālī and claims that the two are one and the same goddess. But Kālī, we maintain and on good authority, was conceived under circumstances totally different from those in which Aditi was conceived. Kālī is in reality a manifestation of Durgā. Such identifications are, in our opinion, far-fetched. Dikshit is more to the point (MG, pp.46-47) though Durgā was not, as he suggests,

S A R A S V A T Ī

Originally a sacred river, Sarasvatī is one of the two Vedic goddesses<sup>1</sup> who are worshipped even today on a very wide scale. In importance and popularity she is next to Lakṣmī and Durgā, the Mother Goddess, to whom she has been affiliated as a parivāradevatā.<sup>2</sup>

Sarasvatī's prominence in the early Vedic Age need not surprise us. As her name signifies, she is sarasa, that is, 'with moisture', or 'watery' or a river,<sup>3</sup> and great significance seems to have been attached to the waters, called Āpaḥ in the Rg Veda, which celebrates them in no less than four hymns, 'as well as in a few scattered verses'<sup>4</sup> as mothers and bestowers of boons. As in other countries,<sup>5</sup> flowing waters, particularly springs and rivers, in ancient India were believed to be prophylactic,<sup>6</sup> bestowers of long life and fertility.

Sarasvatī according to Muir, is a Vedic goddess of some but not of great importance.<sup>7</sup> But in the very Rg Veda

Umā or Pārvatī in her incarnation as Satī Dākṣayaṇī. 'The derivation of Kālī from Kāla (time) is very uncertain; it is more likely a late connection'. The Śāktas, p. 62, note 2.

3. AIRT, p. 47.

1. The other is Śrī-Lakṣmī. See Infra, p. 97

2. HM, p. 300.

3. Nirukta, ix.26.

4. VM, p. 85; OST, v, p. 339.

5. CMG, pp. 48, 94.

6. RV, vi.50.7; x.30.12. In AV, i.5.3, the waters are besought for procreative vigour.

7. OST, v, p. 339.

she has been referred to as ambitame naditame devitame Sarasvati, 'the best of mothers, the best of rivers and the best of goddesses',<sup>1</sup> all of which indicates the high position she has been accorded in the Aryan pantheon dominated by the male divinities. Her importance was no doubt derived chiefly from her fertilizing waters as can be understood from RV, vi.52.6 and x.30.12, where she has been mentioned with the waters, and also from RV, vii.95.1<sup>2</sup> in which her fertilizing powers are clearly referred to. She is invoked to come swelling with streams and along with the waters which bestow wealth, progeny and immortality.<sup>3</sup> As the giver of vitality and offspring, she is not only associated with deities who assist procreation,<sup>4</sup> but she herself also grants progeny to her worshippers.<sup>5</sup> Like all other mother goddesses Sarasvatī also has a consort, Sarasvat, a river with fertilizing waters, who is invoked<sup>6</sup> for wives and children as also for plenty and protection. The Rg Veda especially lauds the purifying qualities of Sarasvatī's waters,<sup>7</sup> and in one passage describes her as pāvakā or purifier.<sup>8</sup>

1. RV, ii.41.16; cf. Das, S.K. : Divine Power, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1925, p. xxvii.
2. OST, v, p. 340.
3. VM, pp. 86-87.
4. RV, x.184.2.
5. RV, ii.41.17; vi.61.1.
6. OST, v, p. 340.
7. RV, x.17.10, 14.
8. RV, i.30.10.

As a sacred river, Sarasvatī was thus to the early Aryans what the Ganges became to their descendants.<sup>1</sup> Like Gaṅgā, who appears as 'a full-fledged mother-goddess' in the Purāṇic age,<sup>2</sup> Sarasvatī too is found to be closely associated with the Hindu Trinity - Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva - as consort of the first two<sup>3</sup> and the daughter of the last.<sup>4</sup>

Sarasvatī is praised in the Rg Veda both as a river and as a goddess.<sup>5</sup> In her first role she was considered sacred because she and Dṛṣadvatī formed the two boundaries of the Brahmāvarta,<sup>6</sup> the home of the Aryans who performed yajñas or 'sacrifices' on her bank.<sup>7</sup> 'When once the river had acquired a divine character', argues Muir, 'it was quite natural that she should be regarded as the patroness of the ceremonies which were celebrated on the margin of the holy waters and/<sup>that</sup> her direction and blessing should be invoked as essential to their proper performance and success'.<sup>8</sup> Scholars have found nothing wrong with Muir's above analysis of the causes behind Sarasvatī's deification. It was probably through her connection with the

1. OST, v, p. 338.
2. AIRT, p. 54.
3. VM, p. 87.
4. BKS, p. 48.
5. Brhaddevatā, ii.135-36.
6. Manusāṁhitā, ii.17 ff.
7. CDHM, p. 284.
8. OST, v, pp. 338-39.

sacred rites, it may also be argued, that Sarasvatī first inspired the composition of the Vedic hymns and then became identified with Vāk, the goddess of speech.<sup>1</sup>

Though addressed as 'the best of goddesses',<sup>2</sup> in none of the Rg Vedic passages celebrating Sarasvatī do the poets seem to have lost of her character as a river.<sup>3</sup> But in the Purāṇas, she appears as an important goddess. As Vāgdevī or Vāgīśvari,<sup>4</sup> Sarasvatī presides over learning and the arts. In fact, even as river deity, Sarasvatī appears to have been equated in the Āpri hymns of the Rg Veda with Vāk, Ilā, Mahī and Bhāratī,<sup>5</sup> all of whom are goddesses of speech.<sup>6</sup>

In spite of her Vedic origins, Sarasvatī's character betrays not a few traces which establish her connection with the Mother Goddess Durgā on more than one count. Like the latter, Sarasvatī is also pārvatī, because in her role of a river she comes out of the mountains.<sup>7</sup> Pāvakā,<sup>8</sup> which is one of her epithets, affiliates her with Agni

1. OST, v, p. 339; Das, S.K. : Op. cit, pp.xxiv-xxv.

2. Supra, p.60

3. OST, v, p. 341.

4. Bhattacharya, Viṣṇupada : Vaidik Devatā (Vedic Gods), Calcutta, 1950, p. 43.

5. VM, p. 87.

6. Griffith, R.T.H : The Hymns of the Rg Veda, i, p. 16, note 9; p. 198, note 9. For equation of Vāk with Sarasvatī see Bṛhaddevatā, ii,51 and iv.39.

7. RV, v.43.11.

8. RV, i.3.10.

who is known as pāvaka because he purifies, and Durgā has also been associated with the Vedic fire god in the Āraṇyakas<sup>1</sup> and the Upaniṣads.<sup>2</sup> Like the Mother Goddess, Sarasvatī is also found to be associated with agriculture and procreation. Her representation with serpents<sup>3</sup> indicates her connection with phallism<sup>4</sup> and agriculture. A tenth century stone relief<sup>5</sup> from Khiching (Orissa), which depicts a nāginī playing on a viṇā, has been pointed out as an image of Sarasvatī.

The invocation of Sarasvatī in the Āpri hymns relating to animal sacrifice<sup>6</sup> suggests her Indianization, while her equation with Ilā or Pr̥thivī points to her close association with agriculture.<sup>7</sup> Ploughing starts in north Bihar, it may be mentioned, on the Śrīpañcamī, the day on which Sarasvatī's annual worship is celebrated in Bengal and other places.<sup>8</sup> Further indication of her agricultural associations may also be inferred from the nature of the offerings made to her during the annual worship. They consist of new fruits and pañcaśasya, or five kinds of new grains.<sup>9</sup> In the Tantras, Sarasvatī is called kalā-badhū,<sup>10</sup> or 'banana bride' which is somewhat akin to the

1. TA, x.
2. MU, i.2.4.
3. BKS, p. 47.
4. ERE, xi, p. 399.
5. DHI, p. 378.
6. RPV, p. 173.
7. BKS, p. 47; Bṛhaddevatā, ii.74, ii.76.
8. BKS, p. 47.
9. Ibid; cf. PD, p. 96 : dhānyamāsastilā mudgāh sayavāh pañcaśasyakā.

navapatrikā in which Durgā is initially worshipped during the autumn.<sup>1</sup> In the Vedas, Sarasvatī is invoked<sup>2</sup> as the mother who grants reputation to the unrenowned, and a similar prayer is also made to Durgā by her worshippers, who regard her as a goddess presiding over learning and all kinds of prosperity.<sup>3</sup>

In many respects Sarasvatī resembles the earth goddess Pṛthivī.<sup>4</sup> She is wealthy in spoil, and her worshippers can draw upon her prolific breasts for prosperity, riches, food and pleasure of all kinds.<sup>5</sup> As sarasa or 'watery', Sarasvatī stands for all rivers, so indispensable for agriculture, particularly in a dry season like the spring when success of the harvest depends largely on water irrigated from rivers or streams. Incidentally, her annual worship coincides with this season and makes her therefore something of an Earth Goddess who represents the generative powers in nature, and is 'responsible for the periodic revival of life in the spring after the blight of the winter or the summer drought'.<sup>6</sup>

10. BKS, p. 47.

1. HD, v(i), p. 161 and note 415; Infra, p. 123.
2. RV, ii.41.16.
3. MP, xci.21.
4. RV, i.3.10.
5. RV, i.164.49.
6. OMG, p. 48.

Though a goddess of learning and the fine arts, Sarasvatī is, nevertheless, something of a termagant like Hera,<sup>1</sup> whose jealousy, intrigues, quarrels and vindictive acts form many a theme of Greek mythology. Already in the Rg Veda we come across an aspect of her character which puts Sarasvatī on a par with not only the Greek Athene,<sup>2</sup> or the Roman Minerva,<sup>3</sup> but also with the Mother Goddess Durgā. Sarasvatī is represented as the protectress of her worshippers and the conqueror of their enemies.<sup>4</sup> She destroys also the revilers of the gods,<sup>5</sup> but what is indeed of great significance is her role as a demon-slayer : she is ghorā-hiranyavartani vrtraghnī.<sup>6</sup> Shall we treat this passage as an example of the poet's licence, or assume on the strength of it that the Aryans, like many other ancient peoples of the world - the Greeks and Romans, the Cretans and Babylonians - did actually possess a war goddess, notwithstanding their pantheon being dominated by the male gods? Whatever may have been the purpose of the poet in representing Sarasvatī as the slayer of Vptra, he has, though unwittingly, made her anticipate the Mother Goddess Durgā, who like Viṣṇu,<sup>8</sup>

1. LEM, pp. 113-16; cf. GI, pp. 92-94.

2. LEM, pp. 117-19.

3. Ibid, pp. 219-20.

4. RV, ii.30.8; vi.49.7.

5. RV, vi.61.3.

6. RV, vi.61.7.

7. Athene in ancient Greece, Minerva in Rome, the Great Mother of Crete, Ishtar in Babylon, Ma and Cybele in Asia Minor were all war goddesses. LEM, pp. 118, 219, 57; CMG,

incarnates herself from time to time to protect the gods and mankind in the role of a demon-slayer.

Later Hindu mythology has made Sarasvatī a goddess of speech, music and learning.<sup>1</sup> She is also represented as the daughter of Brahmā,<sup>2</sup> 'and under various names his spouse like most Mother Goddesses, the One Being dividing himself into a duality of male and female, husband and wife'.<sup>3</sup> In the Sāntiparvan of the Mahābhārata, Sarasvatī is mentioned as the mother of the Vedas.<sup>4</sup> This is a further point for identifying Sarasvatī with Vāk, who, as Vedamātā, 'mother of the Vedas', in the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa,<sup>5</sup> is said to contain within herself all the worlds. As Brāhmī or Brahmāṇī, Sarasvatī is no doubt a śakti of Brahmā, but she is, at the same time, an emanation of the Mother Goddess Durgā.<sup>6</sup> Her affiliation with the great Goddess is also attested by iconographic evidence. In plastic art, Sarasvatī has been represented with a triśūla and a cakra in her hands and a lion for her vāhana.<sup>7</sup>

8. Bhāgavat Gītā, iv.7-8; cf. MP, xci.38-51.

1. GI, p. 90.

2. HM, p. 107.

3. CMG, p. 110; cf. AP, ccvi.2; Matsya P, iii.31.9 in which Sarasvatī is mentioned along with Sāvitrī, Gāyatrī and Brahmāṇī as daughter as well as wife of Brahmā. In the Manusāṁhitā (iv.5.92) Sarasvatī is mentioned as Brāhmī, i.e., the wife of Brahmā.

4. OST, v, p. 342.

5. Ibid.

6. MP, lxxxviii.14; xc.3-5; xci.11.

7. MG, p. 78.

Dikshit quotes from the Brhat-stotra-ratnākara a śloka in which Sarasvatī is identified with Ilā or Pṛthivī and Maheśvarī,<sup>1</sup> who is a śakti of Śiva as well as one of the manifestations of the Mother Goddess.<sup>2</sup> The śloka addresses Sarasvatī as Ilā and Maheśvarī, who has a lion for her vehicle, and holds<sup>d</sup> in her hands a triśūla and a cakra.<sup>3</sup> Sarasvatī is called Vāgīśvarī in the Tantras, according to which meditation on this goddess makes a devotee not only rich in knowledge and learning, but also in fortune and property.<sup>4</sup> In the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, the Mother Goddess is personified as intellect and addressed as Sarasvatī.<sup>5</sup> In the Devī Purāṇa, she is addressed as both Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī.<sup>6</sup> As well as in the praṇāma-mantra of Sarasvatī quoted by Raghunandana from the Brahma Purāṇa Sarasvatī is invoked as Bhadrakālī,<sup>7</sup> one of the names of Durgā.<sup>8</sup>

Many of the attributes of Sarasvatī, it will now appear from above, were borrowed for the development of the Mother

1. MG, p. 78.

2. MP, lxxxviii.15; xc.3-5.

3. Attention may be drawn to the headless statue of a goddess sitting sideways on a lion and holding on her knees a musical instrument shaped like a lute. Found in the north-west of India, the image has been identified by Grunwedel as that of Sarasvatī. He suggests that she was perhaps a local deity, and as the goddess of Vedic poesy she received the attribute of the lute. Buddhist Art in India, p. 105, fig. 56.

4. Brhat-tantrasāra, i, p. 114 : vande vāgviḥhavapradām  
trīnayanām saubhāgyasampatkarīm.

5. MP, xci. 22.

Mother Goddess Durgā.<sup>1</sup> Sarasvatī in her turn, it is equally obvious, came to acquire not a few non-Vedic or Indian characteristics which brought her very close to Durgā, so much so that in popular belief, as well as in sculptural art she could be easily affiliated to the latter.

### Ś R Ī - L A K Ś M Ī

Śrī-Lakṣmī, the goddess of beauty, prosperity and fortune,<sup>2</sup> does not appear among the divinities of the Vedic pantheon,<sup>3</sup> though the word Lakṣmī occurs in the Rg Veda in a kindred signification.<sup>4</sup> In the Atharva Veda also the word occurs in a similar sense, and in two hymns we have a number of Lakṣmīs, some of whom are good and

6. DP, xxxvii.

7. Ray, Yogesha Chandra : Pūjā-pārvan, Calcutta, 1951, p. 46.

8. MP, lxxxiii.8; lxxxiv.33; xci.26.

1. 'In the attribution of motherhood to Sarasvatī', says S.K. Das, 'we find one of the earliest attempts on the part of the Ṛsis to conceive the female divinities in a motherly character which we find so well developed in the post-vedic Śakti-cult in the Purāṇas, the Epics and the Tantras'. Divine Power, p. xxix.

2. GI, p. 103.

3. AIA, p. 159.

4. RV, x.71.2.

some bad.<sup>1</sup> In the Yajur Veda, Śrī and Lakṣmī are two distinct personalities, and both appear as the wives of Āditya.<sup>2</sup> In the Rg Veda, the word Śrī is used, according to one scholar, 'in a general way'.<sup>3</sup> Used both as a noun and an adjective, Śrī denotes primarily that which is beautiful, in the sense of pleasing to the eye; perhaps also in some cases with the implication of wealth and increase, all of which are "beautiful".<sup>4</sup> Standing respectively for lovely and pleasant qualities, Śrī and Lakṣmī often occur in the plural in later Vedic literature,<sup>5</sup> and also as the name of ~~the~~ one and the same goddess.

So far as her leading characteristics are concerned, Śrī-Lakṣmī appears to have been anticipated in the Rg Veda by a number of female divinities possessing more<sup>or</sup> less similar attributes. One is Purāṇḍhi, a goddess of plenty, whose name occurs about nine times in the Rg Veda.<sup>6</sup> Purāṇḍhi, it may be pointed out, is regarded as the Vedic form of the Avestan Pareṇḍi, a goddess of wealth and abundance.<sup>7</sup> Another goddess is Puṣṭi, whom Sāyaṇa has

1. AV, vii.115.1-4; xii.5.6.

2. VS, xxxi.22.

3. DHI, p. 370.

4. EA, i(3), p. 175. Sāyaṇa also explains the word Lakṣmī in the sense of 'pleasing to the eye'. Infra, p.70, note 1.

5. Ibid.

6. VM, p. 124.

7. SBE, xxxi, pp. 251, 346.

justifiably equated with Lakṣmī as the goddess of prosperity.<sup>1</sup> We find in Rākā another Vedic deity, who is celebrated in the Rg Veda as a rich and powerful goddess<sup>2</sup> and therefore closely resembles Lakṣmī. Again, there is Sinīvālī, who comes much closer to Lakṣmī than Purandhi and the others, for she too is, like Lakṣmī, fair, broad-hipped, a mistress of the family and implored to grant offspring.<sup>3</sup> Another reason why Sinīvālī may be identified with Lakṣmī is furnished by the Atharva Veda<sup>4</sup> in which the former is mentioned as the wife of Viṣṇu. But, as a goddess of fertility and wealth, it is Aditi, one of the most important among the Vedic divinities, who comes nearest to Śrī-Lakṣmī.<sup>5</sup> In fact, as the personified nature, great mother, goddess of abundance and the lady of Viṣṇu,<sup>6</sup> Aditi is found to anticipate, more than anyone else, the goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī of the post-Vedic period. 'One cannot but feel this', observes Coomaraswamy, 'when

1. Sudrśīva Puṣṭih śobhanadarśanā Lakṣmīriva bhavati, commentary on RV, iv.16.15.
2. RV, ii.32.4-5; v.42.12. Rākā, according to Sāyaṇa (on RV, ii.32.4) is full moon; she is closely connected with parturition, and is asked to assist the formation of the embryo.
3. RV, ii.32.6; x.184.2. Śrī-Lakṣmī, according to the iconographical texts, is to be represented with such physical characteristics as 'fully developed breasts, a narrow waist and heavy buttocks. These features are indicative of radiant and healthy motherhood'. DHI, p. 373; cf. Matsya P., cclxi.40-47.
4. AV, vii.46.3. cf. Śrī-sūkta, vv. 11, 20, 29.
5. EA, i (3), pp. 175-77.
6. VM, pp. 120-21.

we consider Śrī as "Mother Śrī" (Bharhut inscription), when we find her at Bharhut, and in some later representations pressing from her breasts a stream of milk, and when in the later Vaiṣṇava theology, Lakṣmī is said to be Prakṛti (Nature) in relation to Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu) as Puruṣa (Spirit)<sup>1</sup>.

A concrete concept of Śrī-Lakṣmī as a goddess personifying beauty and fortune, is furnished for the first time by the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.<sup>2</sup> The goddess Śrī is said to have issued from Prājāpati, who was tired of creation,<sup>3</sup> much in the same way as Pallas-Athene came out of the aching head of Zeus, the supreme god of the Greek pantheon.<sup>4</sup> Jealous of her radiance and beauty, the gods wished to kill her, but Prajāpati intervened. He then asked them to take away from her, instead of her life, all her attributes.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, Agni, Soma, Varuṇa, Mitra, Indra, Brhaspati, Savitr, Puṣan, Sarasvatī and Tvaṣṭr took from her kingship, universal sovereignty, noble rank, power, holy lustre, dominion, wealth, prosperity and beautiful form respectively. After this, Śrī, on Prajapati's advice, offered ten sacrificial dishes to the ten gods, who became pleased and restored to her all her

1. EA, i(3), p. 177.
2. VM, p. 124.
3. SB, xi.4.1.
4. LEM, p. 117.
5. SB, xi.4.1 ff.

attributes. Even in the Vedic Age, it thus appears, the goddess Śrī was believed to be the embodiment of all those things that are desired not only <sup>by</sup> ordinary human beings, but also coveted by important gods. In the Taittirīya Upaniṣad also the goddess Śrī appears with some of the attributes just mentioned.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the distinctive features which Śrī-Lakṣmī exhibits in her developed form are described in the Śrī-sūkta,<sup>2</sup> appended to the ancient corpus of the Rg Veda. The Śrī-sūkta is no doubt a later addition, but it is of considerable antiquity, as observed by Max Muller,<sup>3</sup> and, as Coomaraswamy suggests, surely pre-Buddhist.<sup>4</sup> In this hymn Śrī and Lakṣmī appear as one goddess, with particular emphasis on her association with the lotus,<sup>5</sup> which, according to the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa,<sup>6</sup> means waters, and therefore enables us to identify her as a deity of fertility. Not only in the texts, but in her iconoplastic representations as well, Lakṣmī is depicted as padmahastā, 'with a lotus in her hand', 'padmāsanā', 'having a lotus for her seat', 'padmavāsinī', 'with her residence among the lotus'.<sup>7</sup> Her other appellations, such as, kṣiravdhitānayā, 'daughter of the creamy ocean, and jaladhijā,<sup>8</sup>

1. TU, i.4.2.  
 2. DHI, p. 372.  
 3. Muller, Max : Rig-veda Saṁhitā with Sāyana's Commentary vol. iv, p. 590.  
 4. EA, i(3), p. 175.  
 5. Śrī-sūkta, vv. 4, 12, 13, 17, 18, 24.  
 6. SB, vii. 4.1.8; also in Amarakoṣa, i.9.3.

'born of water', as well as the numerous legends describing her birth from the ocean,<sup>1</sup> unmistakably associate her with water, hence with fertility.<sup>2</sup> 'In the Sūtra literature (SGS, iv.21.7 ff) offerings are made to Śrī at the head of the bedā, evidently as a goddess of fertility.<sup>3</sup> It is also in the same character that Śrī is referred to in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad.<sup>4</sup>

The concept of Śrī-Lakṣmī is much more concrete in the Epics, be it as the goddess of fortune and prosperity, or as the consort of Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa. In the Vedas, it may be mentioned here, there is nothing to show her connection with this god.<sup>5</sup> In the Epics, Lakṣmī is found to associate herself with the victorious kings and gods. The story of her deserting the asuras in favour of the divinities related in the Mahābhārata<sup>6</sup> is significant, as it points out her un-Aryan association at some stage of her career. She also appears in the great Epic as intimately connected, with Kuvera, the lord of the riches.<sup>7</sup> In one place, the king of the Yakṣas is mentioned as 'united with Lakṣmī', and 'in some later epic passages, she is expressly named as his consort, and the ideological union of the goddess of prosperity with the god of riches is easily understandable'.<sup>8</sup> As an auspicious divinity,

7. EA, i(3), p. 178.

1. Viṣṇu P, i.9.99-100; HM, pp.127-28; and 131; Myths of the Hindus and the Buddhists, pp. 315-16.  
2. On fertility gods and goddesses see Coomaraswamy, A.K: Yakṣas, ii, Washington, 1931, p. 13 ff.

Śrī was placed along with Kuvera on the entrance gates and facing the towns in the belief that 'on whatever place these two cast their eyes, they pour prosperity, health and victory'.<sup>1</sup> Under the name of Śrī the goddess is again found in the Mahābhārata, in which she is listed with such abstractions as Hrī, Kīrti, Dyuti, Puṣṭi, Umā, Sarasvatī and Lakṣmī;<sup>2</sup> but usually Śrī and Lakṣmī are one person.

In the Buddhist and Jaina literature, Śrī-Lakṣmī seems to have gained a position of some importance. Her position in the former religion is not however very happy, though in some of the Jātakas she is mentioned as Sirīmātā 'Mother Śrī', who bestows lordship on mankind, and symbolizes beauty, fortune and prudence.<sup>3</sup> Her usual association with the lotus is reiterated in some of the Buddhist works.<sup>4</sup> As well as in the Kalpa Sūtra and Jaina literature of religious type, mention is made of Śrī-Lakṣmī, her

3. EA, i(3), p. 175.  
 4. Supra, p. 73  
 5. LBBS, p. 186.  
 6. Mbh, iii.94.  
 7. Ibid, ii.10.19; iii.168.3.  
 8. DHI, p. 372.

1. ATA, p. 276.  
 2. EA, i(3), p. 177.  
 3. Ibid, pp. 177-78.  
 4. Ibid.

association with the lotus and her residence in a 'lotus lake amongst the heights of the Himālayas, anointed by the waters (poured upon her) by the strong, thick trunks of the elephants of the quarters'.<sup>1</sup> Medieval Hindu literature, notably such works as Raghuvamśa, Mālavikāgnimitra, Kādambarī, etc., continue the epic conception of Śrī-Lakṣmī, who is padmahastā, who consorts with the kings, and after whom are modelled beautiful and accomplished heroines.<sup>2</sup>

The conception of Lakṣmī, as it now appears, is not Rg Vedic, though it is Vedic. It is definitely pre-Buddhistic. The reluctance with which the goddess has been given a place in Buddhism, is possibly a proof of her alien background. But Śrī-Lakṣmī, as we shall presently see, absorbed in the course of her evolution much that is non-Aryan and indigenous which characterizes her as an Indian deity.<sup>3</sup> This is evident from her very names, such as, Padmā, Puṣkariṇī, Kamalā etc., all of which mean 'lotus'. 'Indeed', observes Zimmer, 'the lotus, the flower with which she is identified belongs to India, not to the northern regions of Middle Asia and the Near East whence

1. EA, i(3), pp. 177-78.

2. Ibid.

3. CMG, p. 106.

4.

the Aryans sprang.<sup>1</sup> The concept of such a deity by the primitive Aryans, who 'were semi-nomadic pastoralists who only occasionally stooped to cultivate the soil by rude and primitive methods',<sup>2</sup> may be dismissed as improbable, for Lakṣmi, like the Latin Ceres,<sup>3</sup> is primarily a goddess of agricultural prosperity, associated with harvest or corn, the rice fields and all kinds of earthly abundance.<sup>4</sup> The concept of such a goddess could, therefore, originate among the Aryans only after their migration to India, ~~the~~ their adoption of agriculture,<sup>5</sup> and their growing contact with the non-Aryans.

The goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī was developed by the Aryans, we may now argue, with much borrowing of attributes of Vedic deities of a kindred character but in a background that was essentially Indian, and to a great extent agricultural.<sup>6</sup> Thus 'like Sarasvatī who developed into the Goddess of Learning and was credited with multiple alliances and worshipped in all principal religions, Śrī as Lakṣmī was also credited with multiple origins and relations in later times'.<sup>7</sup> She absorbed a great many Indian

1. AIA, p. 159.

2. Childe, V.G : The Aryans, London, 1926, p. 83.

3. CMG, p. 106.

4. AIA, p. 329.

5. Müller, Max : Physical Religion, New Edition, London, 1898, p. 161; CHI, i, p. 99.

6. The existence of the Avestan Parendi (Supra, p.69) suggests however the acquaintance of the Aryans with a goddess of Lakṣmī's type, but, in all likelihood, their knowledge was derived chiefly from the agricultural Iranians among whom they lived in course of their

elements which not only changed the nebulous character in which she is met with in the Vedic literature, but also forged her into the concrete shape that is worshipped as the goddess of fortune and wealth, as well as of all that is desirable to mankind. <sup>1</sup> One of the most distinguishing features of Śrī-Lakṣmī is her great popularity among all sections of the people, irrespective of caste and creed. <sup>2</sup> As the goddess of prosperity, Lakṣmī is respected by the Indians in general. Not only among the Indians, the goddess was equally welcomed, if not actually venerated by the foreigners, as testified by her effigy stamped on the coins of a number of alien rulers who exercised sovereignty in the north-west of India. <sup>3</sup> The worship of Śrī-Lakṣmī transcended religious and sectarian barriers, obviously because she was the goddess of wealth. <sup>4</sup> 'She reigns in the hearts of all Hindus', observes E.O. Martin, 'as Fortune's queen, and although she has no temples she is assiduously courted and is more invoked for increase of prosperity than Kuvera, the god of wealth, himself'. <sup>5</sup>

wanderings and before their coming to India, for nearly a millennium. Cf. Chatterji, S.K : Indo-Aryan and Hindi, Calcutta, 1960, 17.

7. HCIP, ii, p. 470.

1. Lakṣmī is also known as Mahālakṣmī in which character she is called Aṣṭalakṣmī as combining eight kinds of prosperity : (a). Mahālakṣmī, the Great Lakṣmī from whom the others descend; (b). Dhanalakṣmī, the goddess of wealth; (c). Dhānyalakṣmī, the goddess of rice and corn in general; (d). Dhairyalakṣmī, the goddess of patience and venture; (e). Viralakṣmī, the goddess of bravery; (f). Vidyālakṣmī, the goddess of learning;

As testified by the coins, seals and sculptures,<sup>1</sup> the worship of Srī-Lakṣmī must have been current in India quite some time before the Christian era.<sup>2</sup> Her position as a deity presiding over wealth, fortune and crops, if not as a mother goddess of the most benevolent and pleasant type, in all probability became well-established during the Gupta period,<sup>3</sup> when the country was very prosperous on account of a flourishing state of trade and commerce.

Lakṣmī's subordination to Viṣṇu, we have noticed, is post-Vedic; originally, she must have been an independent goddess.<sup>4</sup> None of the hymns of the R̥g Veda is addressed to Lakṣmī; nor can we find her occupying any place in the circle of the Vedic divinities. Her appearance in the Srī-sūkta, with all the traits which characterize her in literature and art of the later period, is therefore very

- (g). Santānalakṣmī, the goddess of progeny; (h) Bhāgyalakṣmī, the goddess of fortune; OII, pp. 362-63.
2. Even the Muslims (undoubtedly the backward section of the community), whose religion is chiefly directed against idolatry, are said to have been among the votaries of Lakṣmī in Bengal. Cf. Lahiri, Bankimchandra, Hindu-o-Muslim Dharmer Samanvaya, (The synthesis of Hinduism and Islam), Calcutta, 1345 B.S., p. 30.
  3. DHI, pp. 110-12, 133-35.
  4. HCIP, ii, p. 470.
  5. GI, pp. 103-04.
1. DHI, pp. 193-96, 374-76; EA, i(3), pp. 178-87, pl. xxiv. figs. 1-4, 6-11; pl. xxv. figs. 15-20; pl. xxvi. figs. 21-22; pl. xxvii. figs. 24-25.
  2. HCIP, ii, p. 470. The beginning of Lakṣmī's worship in northern India definitely antedates the Buddhist religious architecture unearthed at Bharhut and Sanchi and assigned to c. 100-50 B.C.

significant. It may not be illogical in the above context to assume for Lakṣmī an un-Vedic and purely indigenous origin. 'Like the lotus plant itself, she is a product of the vegetation of India proper, and was therefore foreign to the Aryan invaders.<sup>1</sup> As one of the many forms of the earth goddess, and the presiding deity of all kinds of prosperity and fortune, Śrī-Lakṣmī was in every probability venerated by agriculturists and merchants, kings and ordinary men all over India long before the advent of the Aryans. 'Not improbably', observes Zimmer, 'she existed among the people long before the priests of the invaders deigned to grant her recognition'.<sup>2</sup> The fully developed concept of Śrī-Lakṣmī as a goddess in ~~the~~ the Śrī-sūkta confirms the truth in Zimmer's observation. Śrī-Lakṣmī, it may be pointed out, seems to have joined the Vedic pantheon on her own terms and conditions without much substantial change in her basic attributes.

The development of Lakṣmī as a mother goddess appears to have followed a bifurcated course.<sup>3</sup> Firstly, she has

3. AIRT, p. 59.  
 4. CMG, p. 107.

1. MSTAC, p. 90.  
 2. Ibid, p. 91.  
 3. AIRT, p. 59.

come down to us in her original character as a goddess of agricultural prosperity and good fortune, and secondly as the consort or śakti of Viṣṇu.<sup>1</sup> In both these roles, Lakṣmī may be equated with the Earth, and all things considered, she must have, like most of the mother goddesses of India, originated as an earth deity.<sup>2</sup> In the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa,<sup>3</sup> the Earth is Śrī, and as Dikshit suggests,<sup>4</sup> Lakṣmī-Śrī undoubtedly signifies Bhagā, the Earth Goddess. Viṣṇu is the husband of both Lakṣmī and Earth, especially when the latter is represented in the form of Bhū, who 'may be connected with the Aryan Dhāranī, Demeter or Ceres or perhaps with the Gauda-Dravidian goddess of the earth, who plays such an important part especially among the Gonds'.<sup>5</sup> Bhū is unquestionably a form of Śrī-Lakṣmī.<sup>6</sup> She is represented as standing on a lotus,<sup>7</sup> with swelling breasts and carrying ears of corn,<sup>8</sup> suggestive of her motherhood as well as her role as a corn goddess. Again, Lakṣmī is the source of all gems and wealth;<sup>9</sup> so is the

1. BVP (Prakṛti Khaṇḍa), i.
2. Crooke, W : Loc.cit, p. 296
3. AB, v.3.5, viii.5.
4. MG, p. 123.
5. OII, pp. 363-64.
6. Cf. Śrī-sūkta, verse 25 : 'Lakṣmī is ~~Ḍhūmī~~ Bhūmī'.
7. She may also stand on a tortoise, as seen on a fragmentary Viṣṇupatta now in the Dacca Museum. IBBS, pp. 92-93.
8. OII, p. 364.
9. BVP, (Prakṛti Khaṇḍa), vii.

Earth, who is ratnagarbhā, 'pregnant with gems' or 'containing gems in her womb'. In the Śrī-sūkta Lakṣmī is addressed as 'the mother of all created beings', while in the Rg Veda and the Atharva Veda the Earth is celebrated in a similar character. An appellation common to both is Kṣamā, which means 'the Earth', and both are prayed to for wealth, honour, crops, cattle, progeny, long life and protection against disease, dangers and death. Lakṣmī is thus, we may agree with Zimmer, 'a special aspect of the Mother Earth of old: the great mother goddess of the Chalcolithic period, who was worshipped over a wide area of the world'.

1. Amarakoṣa, ii.1.4; AV, xii.1.44.
2. Śrī-sūkta, verse 20 : prajānām bhavasi mātā.
3. Infra, p. 109
4. Infra, p. 109
5. Amarakoṣa, ii.1.4; Śrī-sūkta, verse 25.
6. Śrī-sūktā, vv. 19-20, 28, 29; cf. AV, xii.1.6, 8, 14, 22, 32, 40-44; BVP (Prakṛti Khaṇḍa), viii.53-64 in which the Earth is invoked as the source of all wealth. She is the auspicious depository of universal good, support of all things. She is worshipped for desired objects; she is holy, eternal, the abode of sanctity and the source of gems. She is also venerated as the gem among women, as the asylum of crops, and as full of crops. She represents the wealth of kings, is devoted to kings and is prayed to for land.
7. MSIAC, p. 92. In the Viṣṇu Purāṇa (viii.15.28), Lakṣmī or Śrī is described as the 'Supreme Mother Goddess' by such epithets as 'Jaganmata.' Lakṣmī's motherly nature is further brought out in this Purāṇa by such expressions as Vedagarbhā, Yajñagarbhā, Sūryagarbhā, Devagarbhā, Daityagarbhā, all of which go to prove her the Great Cosmic Mother in which aspect she is still worshipped in Bengal. The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa (lxxxiv.1ff) depicts Lakṣmī as Ambikā in a motherly sense. Das, S.K: Op.cit, pp. xxviii-xxix.

Further evidence of Śrī-Lakṣmī's as an agricultural and Indian goddess may also <sup>be</sup> enumerated here. We have already touched on her association with the lotus, which connects her with water, and characterizes her as a goddess of fertility. Her association with the owl, which is her vāhana, and elephants, in whose sound she takes delight (hastinādapramadinī), as well as her partiality for the bilva (wood apple), and her worship in the form of an earthen ghaṭa and paddy, all combine to suggest the non-Aryan and agrarian background in which she was originally conceived and developed.<sup>1</sup> The Śrī-sūkta describes her as taking delight in clay and moisture : Ānanadam kardamaḥ Śrīdaściklīta itā viśruta, and also as ārdrā, 'damp' and nityapuṣṭāṃ karīṣinīm, 'the well-nourished one possessing dung'.<sup>2</sup> Clay and moisture, as well as dampness of the earth, and dung which acts as fertilizer, are all essential ingredients of a rich soil that produces a bumper harvest. Being associated with these, Lakṣmī is rightly regarded 'as the tutelary deity of the rice-growing agriculture of native India'.<sup>3</sup> As well as her association with yajña as dakṣiṇā (fees), cloud, her residence in a lotus forest (sarasijanilayā), and representations,

1. BKS, p. 46 ; cf. AIA, p. 71: 'elephants represent 'the life bestowing force of the waters in the clouds and on the earth'. Also see Yakṣas, ii, p. 32.
2. Śrī-sūkta, vv. ~~127/137/14/~~ 9, 13-14, 27.
3. MSIAC, p. 91.

plastic or otherwise, in which she is depicted as being sprinkled with water from golden pitchers by a pair of elephants, indicate good rains and the prospect of a bumper harvest<sup>1</sup>.

Laksmi's Indian and agrarian background<sup>2</sup> are further suggested by the Mahābhārata in which she is mentioned as a cow<sup>3</sup> and Śiva is Vṛsadhvaḥ<sup>4</sup>. This is no doubt Bhatta-charya's basis for suggesting the relation of husband and wife between Śiva and Lakṣmī at some remote antiquity<sup>4</sup>. There may be some truth in this suggestion for Lakṣmī is also described as the beloved of the Rudras and Śaṅkara (Śiva), and she grants peace to and destroys the sin of her worshippers in the form of a cow<sup>5</sup>. It seems that Śrī-Lakṣmī was originally worshipped on the Śrīpañcamī<sup>6</sup>, the day of Kāma and Rati's service and that on which was celebrated the marriage of Skanda and Śaṣṭhī, the goddess of childbirth<sup>7</sup>. The associations undoubtedly make Lakṣmī as much a goddess of agriculture and fertility as are indicated by her husband Viṣṇu, who is the

1. BKS, p. 47. Cf. DHI, pp. 375-76; EA, pp. 181-87, pl. xxiv.6-7, 9-11; pl. xxv.13,15,19; pl. xxvi.21; MSIAC, p. 92, fig.15; Yaksas, ii, p. 61 ff.
2. BKS, p. 47.
3. EM, p. 220.
4. BKS, p. 47.
5. Vratakhanda, p. 584.
6. Ibid, pp. 540-41, 568, 575. On p. 574 it is recommended that Śrī and Pṛthivī should be worshipped on the 5th day of every lunar month.
7. BKS, p. 47.

lord of Go-loka, 'the cow-world',<sup>1</sup> her father Śiva, who has a bull for his vāhana,<sup>2</sup> her mother Umā, who is Annadā 'the giver of food',<sup>3</sup> and her own emblems, which consist of paddy, a wicker casket and an earthen ghaṭa.<sup>4</sup>

There is more than a fair resemblance between Lakṣmī and Durgā, the great Mother Goddess. 'We need not be surprised', observes Dikshit, 'if Pārvatī and Ramā-Śrī-Lakṣmī, are forms of the same Mother goddess'.<sup>5</sup> An analysis of the characters and attributes of the two goddesses will bring out the truth in Dikshit's remark. Lakṣmī, as we have stated, is an agricultural deity and a form of the Earth goddess.<sup>6</sup> In the Purāṇas one of the names of Lakṣmī is Dharā, 'earth'.<sup>7</sup> The Mother Goddess Durgā too appears in similar roles in the numerous legends recorded in the Purāṇas.<sup>8</sup> Lakṣmī, as we have noticed, is Kamalā and Padmā, both of which mean 'water' according to the Amarakoṣa; she is also Kṣamā, which is one of the names of the Earth.<sup>9</sup> Durgā is not only Apā and Pṛthivī,

1. BVP, (Prakṛti Khaṇḍa),
2. HM, p. 271.
3. Ibid, p. 319.
4. BKS, p. 47.
5. MG, p. 123.
6. Supra, pp. 82-84.
7. BSSS, p. 23.
8. Ibid, pp. 23-24.
9. MP, xci.3.

she is also both Lakṣmī<sup>1</sup> and Śrī.<sup>2</sup>

In the Rg Veda, the waters appear as female and maternal,<sup>3</sup> and the lotus (indu, puṣkara) as the womb from which no less ~~than~~ an important god than Agni is born.<sup>4</sup> As well as in the Epic period, the lotus seems to have been conceived as the womb. Brahmā was born, we are told, from the lotus which sprang from the navel of Viṣṇu, and was therefore called Abja-ja, Abja-yoni and Kañja-ja, 'lotus born'.<sup>5</sup> Padma-yoni, Kamala-yoni and Padmasambhava are also some of the well-known epithets which suggest Brahmā's birth from the lotus. The waters, being female and maternal, rightly argues Zimmer, are the 'procreative aspect of the Absolute, and the cosmic lotus is their generative organ'.<sup>6</sup> Lakṣmī is not only Kamalā and Padmā as personification of the cosmic lotus, she is, as we know, also ārdrā and Kṣamā. Not only is there enough justification to regard Lakṣmī as an agricultural deity, but<sup>also</sup> an earth goddess and a mother goddess.

On the other hand, Bhagavatī appears as one of the sixteen names of Durgā in the Brahma Vaivarta Purāna.<sup>7</sup>

1. MP, lxxxv.9, 26; xci.21.

2. ~~MP~~, lxxxix.60; lxxxiv.10. In this Purāna, the Mother Goddess Durgā is said to become a Lakṣmī in times of prosperity when she bestows abundance on men in their homes. Vide xcii.36 : bhavakāle nṛṇām saiva Lakṣmīr-vrddhipradā grhe.

3. VM, p. 85.

4. RV, vi.16.13; vii.33.11; cf. MSIAC, p. 90.

5. CDHM, p. 58.

6. MSIAC, p. 90.

7. BVP (Prakṛti-Khaṇḍa), lvii. 1-11.

Elsewhere in the same work the meaning of the word bhaga has been given as prosperity, wealth and fame; and being the source of all  $\forall$  these, the goddess is called Bhagavati. She is so named, says the Purāna, because she is invested with the bhaga, or the female generative organ. It is on this account that her male counterpart, the Supreme Being, is called Bhagavān.<sup>1</sup>

'Śrī-Lakṣmī combines an abstract Vedic terminology', it is observed by Coomaraswamy, 'with a concrete Indian mother-goddess of abundance'.<sup>2</sup> We have already hinted as much in the foregoing pages, but it may not be unrewarding if we pursued her history still further. She is, as we have seen, one of the forms of the Great Mother Goddess. In other words, Durgā and Lakṣmī are as much the same goddess as are Umā-Gaurī-Pārvatī and Durgā. In the development of the concept of Durgā in the Brahmanical Hinduism, a great deal of Lakṣmī's attributes have been freely borrowed and utilized. We have already pointed out that Lakṣmī was originally an independent deity before her inclusion in the circle of Vedic divinities.<sup>3</sup> She

1. BVP, (Prakṛti Khaṇḍa), ii. <sup>5-12</sup> For the different meanings
2. of the word bhaga, see SED, p. 743.
3. EA, i(3), p. 189.
3. Supra, p. 73.

was a corn goddess, who also presided over the welfare and general prosperity of the people. Her worship on Thursdays during the bright half of each lunar month,<sup>1</sup> observed in many Hindu homes, probably represents a tradition that goes back to a hoary antiquity. The same may be true for navāṇna,<sup>2</sup> celebrated by the agrarian community at the end of the autumnal harvest. As Lakṣmī's emblem is paddy, and she is also dhānyarūpā or dhānyalakṣmī,<sup>3</sup> it would be quite reasonable to regard this festival as not only held in her honour, but, in view of India's being one of the largest grain producing countries, as also of considerable antiquity. In the worship of Lakṣmī, we may as well mention here, women play a leading part.<sup>4</sup> A Brahmin priest is of course engaged to perform the actual pūjā (worship), but everything ~~else~~ else in connection with Lakṣmī's service is attended upon by the women of the household. It is also the women, and not the men, who assemble in large numbers to take active part in the ceremony, and listen to the kathā of the goddess.

1. Vīreśvara Kāvya-tīrtha : Vratamālāvidhāna, Calcutta, 1911, p. 424. But the goddess is worshipped in Bengal on all Thursdays. Being earmarked as the day of her service, Thursday in Bengal is called Lakṣmīvāra, 'the day of Lakṣmī'.
2. HRY, p. 58.
3. Supra, p. 77, note 1.
4. Vratamālāvidhāna, p. 424.

The Lakṣmī-pūjā is thus an affair virtually dominated by the women. By nature conservative, Indian women are known to have preserved many a practice, custom and tradition which are not only un-Vedic, but whose origins go back further than the Vedas.<sup>1</sup> A fair amount of support for this view may be obtained from the Śrī-sūkta in which the goddess has been solicited to reside in the house of the worshipper.<sup>2</sup> In the Purāṇas too, Lakṣmī appears as a household goddess of fortune and the mistress of the house.<sup>3</sup> In Śrī-Lakṣmī have thus been symbolized all that is auspicious and prosperous. She also personifies prosperity arising from the land, and from trade and commerce as well.<sup>4</sup> As the presiding deity of crops and agriculture Lakṣmī came to be conceived as the Earth, the very source of all created beings. She is thus addressed as prajānām mātā,<sup>5</sup> 'the mother of all created beings', and the Amarakoṣa calls her not only Mā, but also Lokamātā and Lokajanani,<sup>6</sup> which mean 'mother of the world'. She is prayed to for wealth and all kinds of desired objects,

1. BMKI, p. 15.

2. Śrī-sūkta, verse 20.

3. BVP, Prakṛti Khaṇḍa, xxxv. <sup>12-2A</sup> It is a common practice in Bengal to refer to the housewives as Grhalakṣmīs, 'Lakṣmī's of the house', in recognition of their beauty, modesty, piety and other accomplishments.

4. Ibid, (Prakṛti Khaṇḍa), i.22-30 Cf. the well-known Sanskrit proverb : vāṇijye vasati Lakṣmī, 'Lakṣmī presides over commerce'.

5. Śrī-sūkta, ~~11/19/20~~ verse 20.

6. Amarakoṣa, i.1.27-28.

such as riches, progeny, crops, elephants, horses, cattle and long life.<sup>1</sup> Popular but important, Lakṣmī must have flourished, though of course not under any of her present names or titles, in the different parts of India as one of the numerous grāmadevatās, who have been eventually Aryanized and whose worship have been adopted by the Aryan population of India to a large extent.<sup>2</sup> The 13th century grammarian Bopadeva has also described Lakṣmī as a grāmadevatā.<sup>3</sup> Kamalā and Lakṣmī appearing among the names of Aryanized Kṣetradevatās<sup>4</sup> confirm the existence of a pre-Aryan indigenous goddess possessing attributes similar to those of Lakṣmī. Kṣetradevatās are no other than village deities, connected with agriculture, whose 'worship is the most ancient form of Indian religion'.<sup>5</sup>

The Mother Goddess of the Indus Valley, it has been observed by Mackay, was looked upon as the village or house deity, very much like her present day counterparts, and her terracotta representations were kept in almost every house in the Indus cities.<sup>6</sup> Marshall also believes her to be the prototype of the Indian grāmadevatā of today.<sup>7</sup> The Mother Goddess of the Indus Valley, he also suggests, was possibly worshipped as an earth goddess,<sup>8</sup> who presided

1. Srī-sūkta, vv. 19-20.

2. OII, p. 398.

3. Ibid, p. 456.

4. Ibid, pp. 398-99, note 148.

5. VGSI, p. 11.

6. Early Indus Civilizations, 2nd edition, London, 1948, p. 54.

over agriculture, and we may as well assume on the basis of available evidence,<sup>1</sup> also over trade and commerce. She thus anticipated some of the essential attributes of the Śrī-Lakṣmī of Vedic and post-Vedic times. 'The ideas underlying Śrī, Devī or Pṛthivī, the bearer and producer of food and wealth', remarks Banerjea with not a little justification, 'may also be traced to the concept of all<sup>2</sup> nourishing Mother present among the Indus people'. Considerable weight is lent to this view by a very interesting seal, which was discovered at Mohenjo-dāro bearing the representation of a tree goddess or spirit.<sup>3</sup> Issuing from a circle on the ground at the right hand corner of the seal a tree<sup>is</sup> shown, consisting of two branches between which stands a nude female figure with long hair, triśūla head-dress and armllets. In front of the tree is a kneeling votary, also with long hair, armllets and similar head-dress. Behind him is a <sup>composite</sup> ~~complex~~ animal, a human-faced goat, while in the field below and standing in a line are seven figures, all dressed in knee-length skirts, each with a long plait of hair falling down the back and a plume on the head. Marshall and others have identified

7. MIC, i, p. 51.

8. Ibid, p. 52.

1. Wheeler, R. EMM : Indus Civilization, 2nd edition, Cambridge, 1953, pp. 58-62.

2. Banerjea, J.N : 'Early Indus Civilization', CR, cxv, 1950, p. 6.

3. MIC, i, p. 63, pl. xii.18.

the deity as a goddess and the tree as the pipal (ficus religiosa), still an object of veneration all over India.<sup>1</sup> Father Heras regards the tree deity as of male sex and the supreme god of the Indus people.<sup>2</sup> A similar belief is also professed by K.N. Sastri.<sup>3</sup> But Marshall's arguments, 'the absence of any evidence of male sex on her person, coupled with the fact that Indian tree deities are usually female, and that the ministrant figures on the seal also appear to be women, point to its being a goddess, rather than a god',<sup>4</sup> seem far more convincing and have been accepted by the majority of scholars.<sup>5</sup> On the seal under notice, as well as on several others of its kind,<sup>6</sup> the manner of representing the goddess as standing between the two branches of a tree is strikingly similar to 'one of the variants of the goddess Lakṣmī, in which she is made to stand on the pericarp of a lotus flower, with lotus flowers and leaves on long stalks spreading on her either side'.<sup>7</sup> Apart from this similarity in representation, the Indus goddess has in her female ministrants one more feature in common with Śrī-Lakṣmī. Unmistakably, it

1. MIC, i, pp. 63-65; Mackay, E : Further Excavations at Mohenjo-daro, i, pp. 337-38.
2. Heras, J : 'The Plastic Representation of God Amongst the Proto-Indians', Sardesai Commemoration Volume, Bombay, 1938, p. 229.
3. Sastri, K.N : New Light on the Indus Civilization, i, Delhi, 1957, pp. 30-31.
4. MIC, i, p. 63.
5. Gods are of course associated with trees like pipal, bilva, nimba, and kadamba, but as Marshall points out, it is more usually the goddesses who are connected with trees and all kinds of vegetation, viz., Manasā with siḥ, Durgā with Sheorā, śāla, and palāsa (as

distinguishes her also as a household goddess and the special object of devotion to the women. The composite animal appearing on the seal is obviously intended for sacrifice before the goddess. Though such a practice is unheard of in connection with the worship of Lakṣmī,<sup>1</sup> it was quite common in the cults of the ancient corn and earth goddesses.<sup>2</sup> Lakṣmī or her prototype, it may be argued here, must have been worshipped in her pre-Aryan background with animal and even human sacrifice which marks the cult of many a grāmadevatā in parts of India.<sup>3</sup>

An analysis of the traits which constitute the saumya and majestic aspects of Durgā, unerringly points towards Lakṣmī from whom those attributes must have been borrowed. It cannot have been otherwise, for Durgā appears to have gained admittance into the Brahmanical pantheon much later than Lakṣmī, because not only are the characteristics which distinguish Lakṣmī as a Mother Goddess traceable in the Vedas, but also a number of deities of a kindred character.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, there is nothing in the

Vana Durgā) and navapatikā, Lakṣmī with lotus, bilva, paddy etc. The early Buddhist sculptures at Bharhut and Sanchi, Amarāvati, Mathura, Taxila and other places represent mostly goddesses and not gods as associated with trees.

6. MIG, i, pl. xii.13, 14, 19; Further Excavations at Mohenjo-daro, ii, pls. xciv.430, xcix.A.

7. DHI, p. 168, note 2; ~~11/11/11~~

1. Gurudas Bhattacharya (BKS, p. 46) describes Lakṣmī as 'balikāminī', or desirous of animal sacrifice on the strength of Manusāhitā, iii.89, which states: 'Near

early Vedic literature to show if the psis (Vedicesages) had ever contemplated a goddess who might be called a prototype of Durgā. In Umā, the wife of Śiva, we have, no doubt, remarks Keith, ' a goddess ... foreign to the old Vedic religion, since her name appears only in the last strata of the period of the Brāhmaṇas'.<sup>1</sup> Though addressed as Ambikā, the Mother Goddess appears in the Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā<sup>2</sup> as a malignant deity, who destroys<sup>3</sup> the life of the people on behalf of her brother Rudra. But in the Kena Upaniṣad,<sup>4</sup> we come across another form of the same goddess - bahuśobhamānā or 'the highly adorned' Umā.<sup>5</sup> This was undoubtedly, as Muir points out, the earliest appearance of the goddess under this name.<sup>6</sup> Umā in the Kena Upaniṣad is not only bahuśobhamānā, she is

the head (of the bed) he shall make an offering to Śrī! The bali or offering mentioned here cannot be taken as animal sacrifice. Similar offerings to Śrī have been prescribed in the Gṛhyasūtras (Supra, p. 73), but no indications have been given as to the nature of the sacrifice.

2. ERE, v, p. 129.
3. Infra, pp. 129-30
4. Supra, pp. 69-70.

1. MAR, vi, p. 119.
2. VS, iii.57.
3. TB, i.6.10.
4. KU, iii.12.
5. Ambikā and Umā are names of the one and the same goddess, Amarakoṣa, i.1.36-38.
6. OST, iv, p. 420.

also Haimavatī, that is, the daughter of Himālaya.<sup>1</sup> She was originally, as will be shown later, like the Cretan Great Mother,<sup>2</sup> and the Phrygian Cybele,<sup>3</sup> a mountain goddess with a long, well-established cult in the Himālayan and Vindhyan regions.<sup>4</sup> Her appearance in the Vājasaneyī Samhitā as the malignant Ambikā points to a non-Aryan background where such goddesses abound. But Umā is a totally different concept in which the goddess has come down to us, since the time of the Kena Upaniṣad, as a highly adorned woman, a lovely and comely maiden, who practises severe austerities in order to win Śiva for her husband.<sup>5</sup> She is also represented as a devoted wife and an affectionate mother.<sup>6</sup> Now Śrī-Lakṣmī, as we have seen, is not only the goddess of beauty and prosperity, she is also the embodiment of all womanly virtues. She is Mādhavapriyā, 'the beloved of Mādhava' or Viṣṇu,<sup>7</sup> because of her great devotion to him as his wife. We have also seen how as the source of all food and fertility,<sup>8</sup> she is a benevolent mother goddess. The Aryan genius

1. SBE, i, p. 151, note 1.

2. Glotz, Gustave : The Aegean Civilization, London, 1925, pp. 245-46.

3. LEM, p. 173.

4. Myths of the Hindus and the Buddhists, pp. 296-97.

4. Infra, p. 254 ff.

5. Myths of the Hindus and the Buddhists, pp. 296-97.

6. Infra, p. 554

7. Śrī-sūkta, verse 25.

8. Supra, pp. 86-87.

was not slow to make use of these attributes of Lakṣmī in or to build up the saumya aspect of Durgā, who is otherwise a terrible war goddess, whose battle cry shakes the three worlds,<sup>1</sup> and who as asuranāśinī displays the most unwomanlike qualities. Durgā is also known to take delight in blood, is fond of wine and flesh, and her worshippers are the Śabarās, Barbaras, and the Pulindas.<sup>2</sup>

In the Brahmanical pantheon therefore, Durgā is addressed as bālārkasadrśākāre pūrṇacandranivānane, pīnaśronīpayodhara, and bhāsi devī yathā Padmā Nārāyaṇa-parigraha, 'she whose body is like that of the newly risen sun, and whose face is as beautiful as the full moon; who is of fair round hips and high breasts; and who is the goddess who shines as does Padmā (Lakṣmī), the consort of Nārāyaṇa'.<sup>3</sup> She is also mentioned as kīrti, śrī, dhṛti, hrī and kānti meaning 'fame', 'prosperity', 'steadiness', 'modesty' and 'beauty' respectively.<sup>4</sup> In her majestic aspect, argues Rao on the evidence of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, the Great Goddess manifests herself as Lakṣmī.<sup>5</sup> In the Tantras too, Durgā is not only addressed

1. MP, lxxxii.31-33.

2. Harivaṃśa, ii.3.7.

3. Mbh, iv.6.7-8.

4. Ibid, iv.6.22-23; cf. MP, lxxxii.60

5. EHI, i(ii), pp. 334-35.

as Lakṣmī, but like the latter she (i.e., her complexion) rivals the lustre of molten gold, and she holds in two of her hands two lotus flowers, and with the other two hands makes the gesture of vara and abhaya, while four elephants pour water over her from jars held in their trunks. <sup>1</sup> They Kāmale-kāminī <sup>2</sup> 'the lady of the lotus forest', which is one of the forms assumed by Durgā as Maṅgalacaṇḍī in the Bengali Maṅgala <sup>3</sup> poems, is but another variant of Lakṣmī. Many of the attributes and much also of the iconography which emphasize the saumya and majestic aspects of Durgā under such grandiose forms and gradiloquent titles as Jagaddhātrī <sup>4</sup> and Jaganmātā, <sup>5</sup> Bhuvaneśvarī, <sup>6</sup> and Annapūrnā, <sup>7</sup> were doubtless borrowed directly from Lakṣmī. The most conclusive evidence of Lakṣmī's absorption into Durgā is furnished by the inclusion of the former as a parivāra-devatā of the latter. Lakṣmī appears in this role <sup>8</sup> apparently as one of the daughters, but she is in reality

1. Avalon, A and E : Hymns to the Goddess, Madras, 1952, pp. 33-34, 35-39. Cf. Vratakhanda, pp. 77-78 for the iconography of Śrī and Lakṣmī.
2. Dvija Mādhava: Maṅgala Caṇḍī Gīt, edited by Sudhibhūṣaṇ Bhattacharya, Calcutta, 1952, pp. 209, 241-42. In the Maṅgala-kāvyas, the goddess Caṇḍī also appears as a beautiful maiden of sixteen, gorgeously clad and profusely ornamented, resembling none else than Lakṣmī. Cf. Ibid, p. 49.
3. Ibid, Introduction, p. xii.
4. MP, lxxxv.53, lxxxiv.27, xciii.9.
5. Ibid, lxxxiii.33.
6. Avalon A and E : Op.cit, pp. 29-39
7. Ibid, pp. 64-67.
8. The other is Sarasvatī, see Supra, p. 59

a vibhūti or emanation of the Great Mother. It cannot but be so, for Lakṣmī, like Vārāhī, Nārasiṃhī and Vaiṣṇavī<sup>1</sup> is a śakti of Viṣṇu.<sup>2</sup> As well as in the Mahābhārata,<sup>3</sup> and the Purāṇas,<sup>4</sup> Durgā herself appears as Nārāyanī, Viṣṇu-māyā and Nārāyaṇavarapriyā, all of which names represent her not only as an emanation of Viṣṇu,<sup>5</sup> but also connect, if not equate her with Lakṣmī.

Her subordinate role as a parivāradevatā notwithstanding, Lakṣmī's eminence and popularity as a goddess have always remained unchequered. From the importance and grandeur that mark the celebration of her annual worship on the full moon night of Āśvina (known as Koṣṭhāgarī pūrṇimā)<sup>6</sup>, and the sincerity and enthusiasm that distinguish her weekly service on Thursdays,<sup>7</sup> Lakṣmī appears to command a popularity which no Hindu goddess has equalled, not even the Great Durgā herself.

Śrī-Lakṣmī, we may now claim, is a goddess of considerable antiquity. Because of the virtues which she

1. MP, lxxxvii.17-19.
2. Avalon, A and E. : Op. cit., p. 49, note 1.
3. Mbh, iv.6.2.
4. MP, lxxxv.6, 12; xci.7-23; xciii.2.
5. BVP, (Prakṛti Khanda), lvii.1-11; DM, pp. 255-56.
6. Raghunandana Bhattacharya : Tithitattvam, Calcutta, 1313 BS, pp. 688-97.
7. Supra, p. 87

embodies, she has enjoyed through the ages an important position and immense popularity, which no doubt account for her adoption by the non-Brahmanical Jainism and Buddhism. This is fully borne out by the numerous representations of the goddess in the plastic art which flourished under the patronage of the latter religion. No wonder that profusion of Gajalakṣmī images should lead Foucher and others to confuse Lakṣmī with Māyā, the mother of Śākyamuni.<sup>1</sup>

1. The association of elephant with Māyā's dream in which she is said to have conceived the Buddha, was obviously the starting point for Foucher for identifying the Gajalakṣmī reliefs as those of Māyādevī. ('On the iconography of the Buddha's Nativity', MAI, No. 46, pp. 2, 12-13). On page 2, Foucher states emphatically, 'Not only is there nothing to preclude, but everything to prove that the modern Hindu Lakṣmī started in the olden days by being the Buddhist Māyā'.

But as C. Sivaramamūrti has shown from the Rāmāyana, the association of the goddess Lakṣmī with elephants and lotuses is a very old Indian, and therefore, a pre-Buddhistic motif. 'Sanskrit Literature and Art: Mirrors of Indian Culture', MAI, No. 73, p. 6.

Zimmer, who does not agree with Foucher, says, 'On the other hand, in the numerous representations of Lakṣmī, in the reliefs of Sāñcī and Bhārhut, the symbolism of the ancient popular divinity is preserved unaltered. She is placed on a lotus, surrounded by lotus blossoms, and she holds a lotus in her hand. Such features are not warranted by the legends of the birth of the Buddha : in fact, they contradict the legendary description of the scene in the mango-grove. Queen Māyā should be standing, not among the lotuses, but beneath a tree, like a tree goddess, a dryad or vṛkṣadevatā. Foucher's ingenious interpretation, consequently could be accepted only with the understanding that in this particular case - for some unexplained reason - the craftsmen did not take the trouble to alter in any detail in the Hindu formula in order to relate it to the Buddhist legend. A contemporary looking upon it would certainly have been reminded not of the nativity of the Lion of the Śākyas but of the well-known goddess

But in spite of the great popularity and importance enjoyed by Lakṣmī since immemorial times, she does not appear to have ever attained that stature which characterizes Durgā as the Great Goddess. From the moment her Aryanisation began, Lakṣmī lost her independence. She is thus found to have been associated with a number of gods not as superior to, nor even equal with, any one of them, but in the abjectly subordinate role of a Hindu wife. As the consort of Viṣṇu she is cited as a model of constancy and wifely devotion, but, unlike Durgā, Lakṣmī has never dominated over her husband, to whom she has ever been accommodating.<sup>1</sup> Of this utter subordination the most convincing proof is furnished by the Śeṣaśayanamūrtis of Viṣṇu, in which the god gracefully reclines on the coil of the serpent Ādiśeṣa, and Lakṣmī is depicted as

Śrī-Lakṣmī - particularly since the whole stūpa is alive with the figures of the popular divinities, representing the vital forces of the earth : yakṣas, nāgas, and vṛkṣadevatās. There is certainly no necessity therefore (indeed there is hardly any possibility), to read ~~it~~ into the figures of the goddess Padmā - prominent though they are on the early stūpas - a new Buddhist reference to the nativity'. ATA, pp. 163-64; cf. EA, i(3), p. 187.

1. CMG, p. 109.

massaging his legs.<sup>1</sup> 'Lakṣmī has never fulfilled,' we will therefore agree with Professor James, 'the role of the active and virile Goddess to the same extent as the Shaivite Shakti of a thousand names, the mother of the universe, the reproducer, the destrutress; mild and benevolent, fierce and cruel, Uma and Parvati, Durga and Kali'.<sup>2</sup>

### S Ī T Ā

Intimately bound up with Pṛthivī<sup>3</sup> is Sītā, who is the furrow or husbandry personified, and worshipped as a deity associated with agriculture and fruits.<sup>4</sup> Etymologically, Sītā stands for 'furrowed earth' or 'furrows',<sup>5</sup> and Sāyaṇa, while commenting on the relevant passage in the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka,<sup>6</sup> considers Sītā in the same sense. Sītā must have been an early divinity connected with agriculture, for she appears not only in the Atharva Veda,<sup>7</sup> but in the Rg Veda as well.<sup>8</sup> As testified by the Grhyasūtras<sup>9</sup> and

1. DHI, p. 407, pl. xxii.2.

2. CMG, p. 109.

3. Infra, p. 115

4. CDHM, p. 294.

5. Amarakoṣa, ii.9.8-9.

6. TA, vi.6.2.

7. AV, iii.17.4,8.

8. RV, iv.57.6-7.

9. FGS, ii.13.1-2.



or Srī,<sup>1</sup> and as such may be identified with the Earth goddess.<sup>2</sup> Lakṣmī came down to earth to be born as Sītā, we are told in the last canto of Rāmāyana, in order to bring about the downfall and death of Rāvaṇa, king of Laṅkā, who was invulnerable by ordinary means, but doomed to die on account of a woman.<sup>3</sup> In the Adbhūta Rāmāyana, it is not Rāma, but Sītā, who kills Rāvaṇa, in form in the form of the goddess Kālī who in reality she was.<sup>4</sup> In a number of Rāmāyanas composed in the regional vernaculars will be found a similar story, in which Rāma's triumph over Rāvaṇa is ascribed to Sītā, who is none else than Durgā.<sup>5</sup> Strange though it sounds, the story cannot be summarily dismissed as mere flight of fancy, or as having originated from the sectarian Sāktas, for it is quite possible that as a goddess worshipped in an agricultural and matriarchal society, Sītā, like Isis and Ishtar, might have had attached to her a legend in which she had brought back her husband from the land of the dead.<sup>6</sup> In fact, such instances of impossible exploits are not rare in Indian mythology. One is that of Behulā, the

1. Viṣṇu P, ed. H.H. Wilson, p. 80.

2. AB, viii.5.

3. CDHM, p. 295; GI, pp. 120-21, note 1.

4. Adbhūta Rāmāyana, ascribed to Vālmīki, translated by Chandranath Vasu, Calcutta, 1902, pp. 148, 159. The Rāmāyana describes (p. 148) Sītā as Cāmundā, and as Kālī (on p. 159). It also gives 1000 names of Sītā (pp. 163-72). Cf. HM, pp. 310-12.

5. BSSS, pp. 161-64.

6. BKS, p. 42.

much celebrated heroine of the Bengali Manasā Maṅgala poems. Behulā's daring adventure into a world of uncertainty, carrying the dead body of her husband, recalls the saga of Isis and Osiris, Ishtar and Tammuz, and the severe tests which she had to pass in order to win her husband's life back, all <sup>1</sup> point towards a society organized on a matriarchal basis.

In many respects Sītā as the daughter of Pṛthivī resembles Kore or Persephone, a Greek vegetation deity, <sup>2</sup> whose mother was Demeter the Earth goddess. <sup>3</sup> Like Persephone Sītā is also abducted and kept in confinement in the house of Rāvaṇa, whose effigy is ceremonially <sup>4</sup> burnt by the peasants outside Bengal on the Dusserah. It commemorates as much the victory of Rāma over the Rākṣasa king as Sītā's rescue from his clutches, and may be interpreted as the renewal of vegetation on the earth following a long period of barrenness. <sup>5</sup> There may thus be some amount of truth behind the suggestion that the story of Rāma and Sītā or the theme of the Rāmāyana was possibly <sup>6</sup> first conceived in a society that was agricultural.

1. Das Gupta, T.C. : Prācīna Bāṅgālā Sāhityer Itihāsa, Calcutta, 1951, Introduction, p. 32.
2. LEM, pp. 175-76, 190.
3. Ibid, p. 174. For the myth of Persephone and its analysis, see GB, v(i), pp. 35-40.
4. The 10th day of the bright half of Āṣvina, the last day of Durgā pūjā in Bengal. Cf. Hutton, H.J.: Census of India, 1931, Report, Part i, p. 403; Glossary, p.
5. BKS, p. 42.
6. Ibid.

Rāma's complexion is śyāmala or 'green'; it is also described as navadūrvādalaśyāma, 'as green as the newly born grass',<sup>1</sup> and Sītā's is like that of warm gold,<sup>2</sup> which is also the colour of ripe corn. Equally suggestive are the names of her twin offspring : Kuśa and Lava were derived presumably from the upper and lower parts of the kuśa grass (Poa cynosuroides)<sup>3</sup> respectively. Kuśa grass, it may be mentioned here, plays an important part in Hindu rituals. All these unmistakably add up to represent Sītā as an agricultural goddess.

As an agricultural deity Sītā is found to be associated in the Rg Veda with a male god who is styled Kṣetrapati,<sup>4</sup> 'lord of the field', who may be equated with the non-Aryan grāmadevatā or Kṣetrapāla.<sup>5</sup> In one passage of the Rg Veda,<sup>6</sup> Śambhū or Śiva has been mentioned as Kṣetrapati, but in the Grhyasūtras,<sup>7</sup> this position is assigned to Indra, though such appellations as 'bull of the earth'<sup>8</sup> suggests that ~~he was~~ the latter was already a lord of the field in the Rg Vedic times. In Kautilya's Arthaśāstra, Prajāpati Kaśyapa appears with Sītā and is saluted, possibly as the god of agriculture or her 'male counterpart'<sup>9</sup> as Dikshit argues. But it is not at all clear from

1. Kṛttivāsī Rāmāyana, ed. D.C. Sen, Calcutta, 1916, p.65.

2. Ibid, p. 63.

3. MG, p. 154.

4. RV, iv.57.6; Sītā is also an Aryanized Kṣetradevatā, see OII, pp. 398-99, note 148.

5. Cf. HRY, p. 168.

6. RV, vii. 35.10; VS, xvi.18.

the mantra which is enjoined to be uttered at the sowing time if Sītā and Kāśyapa are jointly invoked in it, for it says :

Prajāpataye Kāśyapāya devāya na namaḥ sadā/ 1  
Sītā me rddhyatam devī bījeṣu ca dhanēṣu ca//

As the earth is equated with Aditi, Sita as the latter's daughter would be like Uṣas, a sister of Pūṣan, who is an Āditya and a lover/consort of his sister. Considered in this way, Sītā's career is found to match that of Ambikā or Durgā, who first makes her appearance in the Vedic literature as Rudra's sister, and only later becomes his wife. To such myths may we ascribe the origin of the story in some Buddhist works, where Sītā is mentioned as Rāma's sister as well as his wife.

Sītā is essentially an agricultural deity of the benevolent type. Conceived and developed in a background where other grāmadevatās of uncertain temperaments are also worshipped, she has been represented, no doubt under the impact of Śaktism, as a war goddess, similar to, if not identical, with Durgā. In fact, she is a manifestation of the Mother Goddess just as Pṛthvī-mātā is one and Lakṣmī another.

1. The Kautiliya Arthaśāstra, ii.24.27.
2. MG, p. 152; cf. ~~RV, vi.55.4-5~~ RV, vi.55.4-5.
3. VM, p. 37.
4. RV, vi.55.4.
5. VS, iii.57; TB, i.6,10.4; MS, i.10.20.
6. TA, x.18.

P R T H I V I

Prthivī or the Earth seems to have been deified and worshipped as a mother and goddess in India from a very remote period.<sup>1</sup> As the bringer forth of crops and fruits, the Earth has been conceived as a female and one of the mother goddesses,<sup>2</sup> whose cults<sup>3</sup> have all been derived from that of the Mother Earth'.<sup>3</sup> In the evolution of Mother worship in India, Prthivī occupies a very important place.<sup>4</sup> She is invoked early in the Vedic period as a Great Mother,<sup>5</sup> to whom the worshippers, who are her sons, turn for crops and riches, progeny and happiness, protection and longevity.<sup>6</sup>

The worship of Mother Earth marks man's adoption of a settled life and his earliest experiments in agriculture.<sup>7</sup> It will thus be indeed unfair to claim her conception as a deity as exclusively Indian. The Earth as a Mother Goddess has been worshipped in various parts of the world from an early prehistoric period.<sup>8</sup> An Earth Goddess and

7. MG, p. 149.

8. As a benevolent deity Sītā was held in great esteem by the agricultural community in ancient India. 'The orthodox Sītāyajña, "sacrifice in honour of Sītā" is recognized in the Harivaṃśa as especially offered by ploughmen'. EM, p. 12

1. BSSS, p. 15.

2. SDFML, i, pp 334

3. Crooke, W.: 'The Cults of the Mother Goddesses in India', Folklore, xxx, London, 1919, p. 296.

4. AIRT, p. 47.

5. RV, i, 168.33.

a Corn Mother appear to have played a conspicuous role in the evolution of the Mother Goddess worship in ancient Mexico.<sup>1</sup> Nerthus had first been conceived and venerated as an Earth Mother before her cult as a Mother Goddess became widespread in ancient Germany.<sup>2</sup> Rhea in prehistoric Greece<sup>3</sup> and Cybele in ancient Rome<sup>4</sup> were earth goddesses before their elevation as Great Mothers. The Great Goddess of the old Cretan religion was in all probability an Earth Mother in origin, because she is often identified not only with Rhea and Cybele, but also with Demeter and Gaia, all of whom are earth goddesses.<sup>5</sup> The Babylonian Ishtar, than whom 'no goddess could be more distinctly celestial and lunar', did possess nevertheless,<sup>6</sup> 'the characters and functions of an Earth-goddess'.<sup>6</sup> One of the many forms of Isis, the great mother goddess of Egypt, is that of a serpent, which indicates her origin as an Earth Mother.<sup>7</sup> In the Osirian myth, Isis, as the rich plains of Egypt, is annually fecundated by the inundations of the Nile, who is no other than her consort Osiris.<sup>8</sup>

6. Infra, pp. 110-111,

7. ERE, v, p. 4.

8. Mackenzie, D.A : Myths of Crete and Pre-Hellenic Europe London, 1917, p. 182.

9.

1. Briffault, R : The Mothers, iii, London, 1927, p. 61.

2. Tacitus : Germania, 40.

3. CMG, p. 141.

4. Ibid, 161; SDFML, i, p. 464.

5. ERE, v, p. 130.

6. The Mothers, iii, p. 90; Contenau, G : Everyday Life in Babylonia and Assyria, London, 1954, p. 25.

With few exceptions, we may therefore assume that the great goddesses of the East and West originated as Earth Mothers. They owed their prominence, suggests Briffault, chiefly to their association with agricultural rites in which they figured 'as the Earth-Mother who brings forth the golden corn'.<sup>1</sup> As an agricultural deity, the Earth was not only conceived as a female, but also believed to be the source or mother of all things in Nature - food, gods, men and animals.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the Earth's deification goes back to the primitive times when agriculture was in charge of women, who were believed to possess, similar to their power of child-bearing, magical powers inherent in their sex to bring forth a successful harvest.<sup>3</sup> The Earth's fecundity, and that of women, therefore, came to be viewed as one and the same thing; and both could be fructified, it was believed, by one and the same process.<sup>4</sup>

Scholars are unanimous with Macdonell about the subordinate position which the goddesses occupy in the Vedic pantheon.<sup>5</sup> The hymns in which Pṛthivī occurs in the

7. Myths of Crete and Pre-Hellenic Europe, p. 183; SDFML, i, p. 529.  
 8. LEM, p; 19.  
 1. The Mothers, iii, p. 56  
 2. ERE, v, p. 128  
 3. The Mothers, iii, p. 54.  
 4. Ibid, p. 56. Cf. Agni Purāna, xli.18 which recommends the worship of Pṛthivī on the day of garbhādhāna, 'impregnation'.  
 5. VM, pp. 124-25.

Vedas, alone or in the company of her partner Dyaus, no doubt demonstrate her maternal aspect, yet as Macdonell observes, 'the personification is but slight, the attributes of the goddess being chiefly those of the physical earth'.<sup>1</sup> The figure that Pṛthivī cuts in the Vedic mythology is much different from that of the Earth Mother whose worship has come down to this day.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, as Whitney remarks, though deified, addressed as mother and substance of all things and prayed to for blessings, 'the Earth herself makes no remarkable figure' in the circle of Vedic divinities.<sup>3</sup>

An analysis of the Vedic hymns celebrating Pṛthivī reveals her however as a great and powerful goddess. It is she, and not her consort Dyaus, who appears as the chief object of veneration.<sup>4</sup> She is invoked as mother of men,<sup>5</sup> and of gods,<sup>6</sup> and is said to have made and sustained all creatures.<sup>7</sup> 'In thee let everything be born, what is and what is yet to be' - so is she addressed in the Atharva Veda.<sup>8</sup> As the final resting place of her sons, she is approached in the Vedas to shelter the dead :

1. VM, p. 88.
2. RITLI, p. 182; OIL, p. 402.
3. Whitney, W.D. : Oriental and Linguistic Studies, First Series, New York, 1893, p. 32.
4. CMG, pp. 112-13.
5. RV, i.159.2, i.164.33, i.185.11; AV, vi.120.2, xii.1.10.
6. RV, i.106.3, i.159.1, i.185.4, x.2.7, x.11.9, vii.53.1.
7. RV, i.159.2, i.160.2, i.185.1, x.110.9.
8. AV, xiii.1.54.

'Heave thyself, Earth, nor press thee downwards heavily:  
afford him easy access, gently tending him.  
Cover him as a mother wraps her skirt about her child,  
O Earth'.<sup>1</sup>

And elsewhere, she is prayed to :

'Be pleasant to him, O Earth, thornless and lulling him  
to rest.

Vouchsafe him shelter broad and sure'.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike other Vedic goddesses, Pr̥thivī appears to have  
commanded throughout the Vedic Age a position that was  
far from insignificant. This is quite clear from the  
attitude of the ṛsis (Vedic seers), who seem to have  
combined in attributing to her 'all motherly feeling,  
tender affection, generosity of heart and forbearance'.<sup>3</sup>  
They take pride as her offspring, and dilate, in hymn  
after hymn, on her vastness and majesty, variety and  
fruitfulness. In the lengthy but beautiful Pr̥thivī-sūkta  
in the Atharva Veda<sup>4</sup> can best be read the further deve-  
lopment of Mother Earth's greatness : She is 'the Queen of  
all that is and is to be' (v.1); the source of all waters,  
food and cornlands (v.2); she is invoked to grant foremost  
rank, position and power (vv. 3,8), for cows ~~and~~ with

1. RV, x.18.11.

2. AV, xviii.2.19.

3. AIRT, p. 47.

4. AV, xii.1.

never-failing milk (v.4), for luck and splendour (vv.5, 7-9, 18, 21). She is our firm standing-place, gold-breasted, store-house of treasures and shelter of all that moves (vv.6, 26, 44, 45). She is our mother (vv.10, 12, 63), who is invoked for granting prosperity (v.13), and prayed to for vanquishing our foes (v.14). She produces as well as sustains all mortal creatures, - quadrupeds, bipeds and the five human races (v.15). She is the all-producer, mother of plants and herbs, and is asked to be gracious to her sons (vv. 17, 23). She is invoked for granting longevity (v.22); for protecting her children from the hatred of others (vv. 18, 23), against robbers and deadly weapons (vv. 32, 47), wild animals, evil spirits and demons (vv. 49, 50) and foemen (v.41). She is also approached with prayers for abundance and opulence (vv. 36, 40, 44). As the bearer of all things in her womb (v.43), she harbours inside her snakes, scorpions, worms and 'each thing that in the Rains revives and stirs' (v.46). In short, Prthivī possesses all the principal attributes with which the Mother Goddess is found invested in the post-Vedic literature, particularly the Epics and the Purāṇas.

Belief in the Earth Mother being common among the ancient peoples, scholars are naturally disinclined to trace the Vedic as well as the post-vedic ideas about the the deification of Prthivī to a similar conception in the

Indus Valley Culture or to her worship existing since<sup>1</sup> immemorial times among the non-Aryan aboriginals of India. But it is difficult not to agree with Briffault who rightly points out, 'Mother Earth has scarcely any place in the cosmological or religious conceptions and rites of peoples in the pre-agricultural stages'.<sup>2</sup> Even in a highly advanced culture whose authors are non-agrarian, Mother Earth plays no conspicuous role.<sup>3</sup> Since the Aryans<sup>4</sup> were nomadic pastoralists before their migration to India, it would be unfair to credit them with the conception of an Earth Mother at that stage. Soon after their settlement in the fertile plains of Northern India, the Aryans appear to have adopted agriculture which formed an important part of their economy, and there is also evidence in the Rg Veda of the increasing use of the plough.<sup>5</sup> That the Earth has already acquired a new and holy significance in their eyes can be seen reflected in their thought and culture; not only is she celebrated in the Vedic hymns, but agriculture as well.<sup>6</sup> 'Sweet be the plants for us, the heavens, the waters... May the Field's Lord for us be

1. AIRT, p. 49.

2. The Mothers, iii, p. 59.

3. Ibid, 7.

4. Supra, p. 76

5. CHI, i, pp. 88-89. Briffault's arguments (The Mothers, iii, p. 59) on the Aryan attitude towards agriculture are not wholly true.

6. BKS, p. 23.

full of sweetness... may the plough furrow happily... May Indra press the furrow down, may Puṣan guide its course aright... Happily let the shares turn up the ploughland, happily go the ploughers with oxen. With meath and milk Parjanya make us happy'.<sup>1</sup> And elsewhere, the Earth and Heaven are invoked to 'pour down the balmy rain',<sup>2</sup> evidently for the benefit of agriculture. From a race of pastoral warriors the Aryans must have become enthusiastic agriculturists, or it would indeed be difficult to find some of their great gods invited to become auxiliaries in their new occupation and to attribute the composition of these verses to any other circumstances. We have also seen earlier that important Vedic gods like Indra and Śiva appear as Kṣetrapatis.<sup>3</sup>

The existence of an Earth Mother in the religion of the Aryans in their nomadic state being improbable, it may not be bad logic if we assume the conception of one when they had taken up agriculture after their migration to India. Again, an agricultural mode of life, argues Mackenzie, engenders beliefs influenced by agricultural experiences.<sup>4</sup> After the initial conflict with the non-Aryans was over, the Aryans became slowly but steadily

1. RV, iv.57.3,4,7,8.

2. RV, vi.70.5.

3. Supra, p. 104; one of the epithets of Śiva is Kṣetrapati, SED, p. 332.

4. Myths of Crete and Pre-Hellenic Europe, p. xxvi.

infused with the former, from whom they borrowed a good many of those practices which permeate modern Hinduism but are not to be found in the Vedas at all, including the conception and worship of the Earth Mother. Though the orthodox among the Aryans strove hard to preserve the 'Aryan colour',<sup>1</sup> we have evidence from the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas of racial admixture and countless episodes of marriages between Brāhmaṇas or Kṣatriyas with Nāga, Sūdra or Dāsa women.<sup>2</sup> As a superior race, the Aryan did doubtless impress his own stamp upon the indigenous peoples of India, but the change from a nomadic to a sedentary, and from a pastoral to an agricultural mode of life, added to the comparative paucity of his number, proved his 'ultimate undoing as an Aryan and a foreigner, leading to his quick or slow but ultimately inevitable Indianisation'.<sup>3</sup> Mother Earth thus got her recognition in the Vedic Age, rightly observes Crooke, 'when agriculture was combined with pastoral life', though her conception was 'not fully developed until the Aryans amalgamated with the tribes whom they found in occupation of Northern India'.<sup>4</sup>

1. Cf. Griswold, H.D. : Loc.cit, pp.37-40, and note 1 on p.37.

2. Chatterji, S.K. : Indo-Aryan and Hindi, Calcutta, 1960, p. 7.

3. Ibid, p. 48.

4. RFWI, p. 47.

The Earth may be a minor deity in the Vedic pantheon, as suggested by Macdonell and others, but in Indian literature of the post-Vedic period she is a goddess of considerable importance. From an aniconic Vedic divinity, she becomes the anthropomorphised Earth Mother in the Rāmāyana.<sup>1</sup> Like Demeter of Greek mythology,<sup>2</sup> she appears to us as the mother of a daughter - Sītā,<sup>3</sup> 'the most exquisite and at the same time the most suggestive symbol for agriculture'.<sup>4</sup> In the Anuśāsanaparva of the Mahābhārata, the Earth is described as Prosperity's self and a mighty goddess, 'who makes him her lord who makes gifts of her in this life to other people'.<sup>5</sup> As in the Atharva Veda,<sup>6</sup> the Earth in the Mahābhārata has also been viewed as the original mother and nurse of all creatures as well as their final resting place.<sup>7</sup> But already in the Brahman Brāhmaṇa period, when<sup>8</sup> the Aryans have made further progress in agriculture,<sup>7</sup> the Earth appears to have been receiving a great deal of veneration. Not only in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa,<sup>9</sup> but in some of the later Upaniṣads as well,<sup>10</sup> the Earth is identified with Śrī, the goddess of

1. RFNI, p. 49.

2. James, E.O : Prehistoric Religion, London, 1957, p. 198.

3. Sita came out of the furrow of cultivated land at the mouth of a plough. Rāmāyana (ed. Bhattā, i.65.14.

4. AIRT, p. 49.

5. Mbh, xiii.62.6.

6. AV, xii.1.

7. Mbh, xiii.62, 38,49.

8. CHI, i, p. 121.

9. AB, viii.5; v.3.5.

10. AIRT, p. 50.

harvest and fortune. Such names as Bhūmi and Kṣamā, under which she is celebrated in the Śrī-sūkta,<sup>1</sup> represent Lakṣmī as but a manifestation of the Earth Goddess. Identified with Śrī, the Earth is eulogised as the sovereign goddess and homage is paid to her accordingly.<sup>2</sup> In the Sūtras, Earth shares along with other gods sacrifices made during the festivals of the new and full moon.<sup>3</sup> She is worshipped as a domestic goddess,<sup>4</sup> is the recipient of the first bali,<sup>5</sup> and is believed to contain in her womb Agni,<sup>6</sup> one of the most important Vedic gods. In the Grhyasūtras the Earth is also characterized as the final resting place.<sup>7</sup>

In the Purānas the Earth is an important manifestation of Nature, who is no other than the Great Mother Goddess (Prakṛti).<sup>8</sup> She is the support of the world, mother of crops, and mine of gems; she is ratnagarbhā, 'pregnant with gems', and she contains within her the oceans; all created beings constantly worship her, for she is the source of all livelihood and prosperity.<sup>9</sup> As Vasudharā,

1. Supra, p. 81
2. AIRT, p. 50
3. PGS, i.12.1.
4. HGS, ~~1.7.27.1(a)~~ ii.9.3.
5. GGSS, i.4.8.
6. HGS, i.7.25.1(d).
7. AGS, iv.5.7; cf. RV, x.18.10.
8. BSSS, p. 23.
9. BVP(Prakṛti Khanda), i.91-100.

the Earth is also a consort of Viṣṇu, who is said to unite with and beget on her a son named Maṅgala.<sup>1</sup> Under the name of Bhū,<sup>2</sup> as well as Pṛthivī, the Earth is joined with Śrī and Nilā as Viṣṇu's consort in the sculptural representations of the god from the Gupta period onwards.<sup>3</sup> Standing on either side of Viṣṇu as his śaktis, Śrī and Bhū personify possibly two important aspects of the Earth Mother,<sup>4</sup> - that of prosperity and productivity respectively. Since Lakṣmī stands for both these aspects as a mother goddess,<sup>5</sup> she is also addressed as Dharā, that is 'Earth', in the Purāṇas.<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere, in the same literature,<sup>7</sup> we find Pṛthivī being mentioned as Jagaddhātrī, one of the forms of the Great Mother.<sup>8</sup> She is also heard to declare: I am Pṛthivī, Jagaddhatri, in the form of clay or earth'.<sup>9</sup>

In many Purāṇas, Pṛthivī and Durgā appear as one and the same goddess.<sup>10</sup> In the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa alone there is considerable material which characterizes the Great Mother also as an earth goddess. The gods led by Agni

1. BVP, (Prakṛti Khanda), viii.21-26.
2. For the various names of the earth, see Amarakoṣa, ii.1.2-4.
3. Supra, p. 78
4. BSSS, p. 23.
5. Supra, p. 78
6. BSSS, p. 23.
7. KP, xxxvii.25-28.
8. VP Supra, //p/ Infra, p. 285
9. KP, xxxviii.63.
10. BSSS, p. 23.

praise her as Mahīsvarūpā,<sup>1</sup> 'who exists in the form of the earth', and she calls herself Bhrāmari<sup>2</sup> and Sākambhari,<sup>3</sup> both of which identify the Great Mother with Pṛthivī.<sup>4</sup> The former identifies Durgā with the Earth, who is found in the Vedas connected with honey in many ways, and is described as Madhumatī, Madhuvratā, Madhudughā and Madhumayī,<sup>5</sup> all of which make her its source. In the Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa,<sup>6</sup> the Earth has been called Saraghā which means a female bee.<sup>7</sup> The bee, it seems, was looked upon as a symbol of potency of nature or earth, ~~XXX~~ 'its motherliness, its never-resting, artfully formative business ...'<sup>8</sup> In the oldest times, honey was sacrificed to the earth goddess along with milk.<sup>9</sup> The title Sākambhari is equally suggestive of the Great Mother's role as an earth goddess. In the Devī Bhāgavatam,<sup>10</sup> she is represented as Satākṣī, 'the hundred-eyed one', who in answer to the prayers of the gods removed a great drought by causing rain, that issued from her numerous eyes continuously for nine nights. This four-armed goddess of dark-blue complexion, we are further informed, appeared before

1. MP, xci.3.

2. MP, xci.50.

3. MP, xci.45.

4. BSSS, p. 24.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. The word 'saragh' meaning a bee, male or female, also occurs in the RV, TS and SB. SED, p. 1183.

8. GM, p. 265.

9. Ibid.; also p. 266 for association of bee and honey with earth and woman.

10. DB, vii.xxvii. In the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, xci.44, the goddess herself refers to this form of hers: 'Then I

Brahmā and his retinue with such emblems as lotus, vegetables, fruits, flowers and roots with abundance of juice to quench hunger, thirst and fever. And since she fed the famished gods and mortals with these, she came to be known as Śākambharī. In the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, the goddess herself makes a prophecy of this famine as well as her Śākambharī form in which she would ~~appear~~ support the whole world with  $\forall$  life sustaining vegetables, having grown them on her own body.<sup>1</sup> The word śāka has been rightly taken to mean all kinds of crops, and the goddess promising to grow them on her own person in order to feed the world can be no other than the Mother Earth.<sup>2</sup> Kindred epithets of the Great Mother - like Annadā and Annapūrṇā, - also suggest such an interpretation. 'As goddess of earth and fertility, of sky and rain...', it is observed by Erich Neumann, 'the Great Goddess is everywhere the ruler over the food that springs from the earth, and all the usages connected with man's nourishment are subordinated to her'.<sup>3</sup>

Many of the mother goddesses of India, remarks Crooke with good reason, 'have been developed from the Grama-devatas, or village goddesses, many of whom owe their

shall behold the Munis with a hundred eyes, and so people shall glorify me as the 'hundred-eyed one'.

1. MP, xci.45.

2. BSSS, p. 24.

3. GM, p. 261. Cp. 'Being at once the goddess of fertility

4. worshipped in a great variety of local vegetation cults, the Durga was the author and giver of life to the

origin to the cult of the Mother Earth'.<sup>1</sup> It is not at all surprising that in India, which is primarily an agricultural country, the Mother Goddess should first have been conceived and worshipped as the Earth Mother. The goddesses of India, maintains Briffault, contain all the characteristics of agricultural goddesses, Mothers of corn, Earth Mothers.<sup>2</sup> A pile of stones or potsherds, representing the aniconic form under which the Earth is worshipped as a grāmadevatā, is a positive indication of the primitive nature of her cult.<sup>3</sup> In later cults, she is called however, not by her Vedic name Pṛthivī, but Bhūmi, which may mean 'that which is produced' or 'exists', and 'earth' as well. Add to this her other appellations like Dhārtī, Dharanī and Dharitṛī, 'she who bears or carries', and we have the Earth Mother or Dhārtī Māī, who is venerated by the simple agricultural folk all over India as 'the upholder of human, animal vegetable creation that rests upon her surface'.<sup>4</sup> Libation of rice-beer is ~~off~~ offered as a drink to Dhārtī Māī by the Oraon farmer

fruits of the earth as its primordial essence, the manifestation of cosmic vitality in perpetual process of regeneration'. CMG, p. 242.

1. Folklore, xxx, p. 297.
2. The Mothers, iii, p. 50.
3. Folklore, xxx, p. 286.
4. Ibid, p. 285.

before the transplanting of rice seedlings, with a prayer for plenty of rains and a bumper crop.<sup>1</sup> Prayers of almost similar nature are also addressed to Mother Earth by the forest-dwelling Kharwar farmer,<sup>2</sup> and his compatriot in the Panjāb.<sup>3</sup> Even the orthodox Hindu, at the time of sowing and ~~reaping~~ reaping, offers a prayer to the earth who grants all desires and who is blessed with all kinds of riches.<sup>4</sup>

Since the Earth has been so much intimately connected with Indian life and religion from the remotest antiquity, we must not wonder if the worship of the Great Mother Goddess Durgā should contain elements pointing to her origin as a primitive earth goddess. Her Sākambharī aspect, we have noticed, reveals her as an agricultural and corn deity. Much of the autumnal worship of Durgā consists in fact of rituals which suggest such a characterization.<sup>5</sup> 'The Śārādīya pūjā or the autumnal worship of Durgā! observes Chanda, 'is analogous to the service of the Greek goddess Demeter Chloe that took place on the sixth of Thargelion... The goddess is also worshipped in spring',<sup>6</sup> whence her name Vāsantī. Demeter, as we have

1. Roy, S.C.: The Oraons of Chota Nagpur, Ranchi, 1928, p. 142.
2. Folklore, xxx, p. 286.
3. PRFNI, i, p. 32.
4. IRE, v, p. 6.
5. MP, xcii.11 refers to the annual worship of Durgā thus: śaratkāle mahāpūjā kriyate yā ca vārṣikī.
6. Chanda, R.P. : Indo-Aryan Races, Rājshahi, 1916, p.131.

seen, was an earth goddess,<sup>1</sup> and also a vegetation and a corn goddess.<sup>3</sup> As early as the Brāhmaṇa period, the Great Goddess is found to be identified with autumn under the name of Ambikā : śarad vai Ambikā,<sup>4</sup> 'Ambikā is autumn', which incidentally is the beginning of the agricultural season in Bengal.<sup>5</sup> Her equation with autumn and her annual worship which is coincident with this season, naturally represent Durgā as a great agricultural goddess. Further, the agricultural season in Bengal continues, beginning with autumn, up to the end of spring, and during this period are observed the worship of Ambikā/Durgā, Lakṣmī, Jagaddhātrī, Kālī, Sarasvatī, Vāsantī and Annapūrṇā.<sup>6</sup> We have already seen how Lakṣmi is not only an agricultural and corn deity, but also a manifestation of the saumya and rājasika (majestic) aspects of the Great Mother.<sup>7</sup> We have also examined the evidences which establish Sarasvatī's association with agriculture and with Durgā.<sup>8</sup> Kālī, Jagaddhātrī, Vāsantī and Annapūrṇā, being the different names and forms of Durgā, must also be regarded as Terra Maters and agricultural goddesses.

1. LEM, p. 174.

2. GB, v (i), p. 41.

3. ERE, v, p. 129. Such epithets as 'Earth Mother' or 'Grain Mother' points to Demeter's connection with the Earth Goddess.

4. TB, i.6.10.4-5.

5. BSSS, p. 25.

6. Cp. the calender of Hindu religious festivals in HRY, pp. 136, 148, 150, 151, 156.

7. Supra, pp. 84, 92 ff.

8. Supra, pp. 63-64.

Annapūrṇā and Śākambharī are epithets, rightly suggests A.K. Sur, which connect the Indian Devī, i.e., the goddess Durgā, with the Earth Mother.<sup>1</sup> We have also noted how as with the Earth Kālī, the Great Goddess equates herself/in the Kālikā Purāna.<sup>2</sup>

The very first important ritualistic act in her autumnal worship, called bodhana or 'the awakening<sup>of</sup> the goddess', reveals Durgā as an agricultural and corn goddess, consisting as it does of her initial worship in a branch of the bilva tree.<sup>3</sup> Next is the worship of the navapatrikā, also called 'corn bride', which consists of nine plants bound together.<sup>4</sup> Since the navapatrikā is believed to be the symbol of Durgā, and its worship precedes that of the goddess in her image, the autumnal service has rightly been regarded as originating from the cult of a corn goddess.<sup>5</sup> In some families of Bankura, West Bengal, it is still the custom to worship during the autumnal service of Durgā the navapatrikā, but not her image.<sup>6</sup> Navapatrikā evidently stands here for Durgā or Navadurgā, because each of the nine plants is supposed to represent an aspect of the goddess.<sup>8</sup> Thus the Great

1. Sur, A.K. : 'Pre-Aryan Elements in Indian Culture', IHQ, x, 1934, p. 14.
2. Supra, p. 117.
3. Pūjā-pārvaṇ, Calcutta, p. 78.
4. BSSS, p. 24.
5. Pūjā-pārvaṇ, p. 78.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. But the names as well the iconography of the nine Durgās have little or nothing to do with agriculture.

Goddess: (i) as Brahmānī presides over Rambhā (plantain tree); (ii) as Kālikā over Kaccvī (Arum colocasia); (iii) as Durgā over Haridrā (turmeric); (iv) as Kārttikī or Kumārī over Jayantī (barley); (v) as Śivā over Bilva (Wood Apple tree); (vi) as Raktadantikā over Dādima (pomegranate tree); (vii) as Śokarahitā over Aśoka (Jonesia Asoka); (viii) as Cāmuṇḍā over Māna (a variety of Arum colocasia)<sup>1</sup> and (ix) as Lakṣmī over Dhānya (paddy plant). The connection of the goddess with the fruits of these nine plants has also been explained : She is Haridrā because her complexion is yellow; she is Jayantī as she is victory incarnate; as the bestower of honour she is connected with Māna; Bilva is equated with her as being the favourite fruit of her consort Śaṅkara; she is devoid of grief (śoka) hence she resides in the Aśoka; as the life-giving source of all the creatures, she is personified as paddy; and because she becomes Raktadantikā or 'one whose teeth are of the colour of blood', resembling pomegranate seeds at the time of destroying the demons, she is Dādima.<sup>2</sup> These are but deliberate attempts, we need hardly emphasize, to equate the Purāṇic Durgā with a primitive corn goddess who is but an aspect of the Earth Mother.<sup>3</sup> The navapatrī-kā ceremony also cannot but be viewed as 'a survival of

• For the iconography of the Navadurgās, see Infra, p.

1. Indo-Aryan Races, p. 131.

2. BSSS, p. 25.

3. Ibid.

the agrarian phase of Durgāaworship', because it clearly shows that the goddess was conceived as the personification of the vegetation spirit.<sup>1</sup>

But the cult of the Earth Mother is much more ancient than Puranic Hinduism or ~~the~~ the religion of the Vedas. The Earth Mother or Dhārtī Māī, as she is worshipped in India, substantially differs from the goddess whom the Rg and Atharva Vedas celebrate as a mother under the name of Pr̥thivī. 'Devotion of the Earth-mother', says Professor James, 'has continued to find ritual expression, especially among the Dravidians, all over India and all down the ages'.<sup>2</sup> Among the non-Aryans of India, it had also been pointed out by Gustave Oppert more than half a century before the Rev. James, Mother Earth as representative of the female energy (śakti) has been worshipped as the principal deity from a far remote period.<sup>3</sup> 'In India the worship of the active female principle (sakti) ... has a long history behind it, having arisen out of the impersonation of feminine energy in the form of the Earth-mother in the pre-Aryan cult of the village goddesses'.<sup>4</sup> The worship of the village gods, who are the

1. Indo-Aryan Races, pp. 131-32.

2. CMG, p. 243.

3. OII, p. 398.

4. CMG, p. 242.

present-day substitute of the Earth Mother, is the most ancient form of Indian religion, dating probably from the period when people began to settle down in agricultural communities.<sup>1</sup> Revered throughout the country not only by the rudest aborigines, but also by the highest castes, these grāmadevatās<sup>2</sup> are as numerous as there are villages and towns in India. With few exceptions, the village gods are all females, says Whitehead,<sup>3</sup> and as their name Mātā, Ammā or ~~Ambā~~ Ambā implies, are worshipped wherever they reside as protecting mothers.<sup>4</sup> Monier-Williams noticed 140 'distinct mothers' of this type in Gujarāt, 'besides numerous varieties of more popular forms', who were 'in reality grāmadevatās worshipped from time immemorial'.<sup>5</sup> Equally numerous would be the South Indian village deities whose names are legion.<sup>6</sup> The impressive, but not uniform, array of names under which the Mother Goddess is said in the Purāṇas to exist and receive worship in reality belongs to independent pre-Aryan deities having their cults in different parts of India.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the multitude of goddesses mentioned by the Bengali Maṅgala poems were doubtless village deities worshipped since immemorial times in different localities of the

1. VGSI, p. 11.

2. OII, p. 451.

3. VGSI, p. 17. Cf. Crooke W : 'The village goddesses ~~being~~ being originally earth deities were naturally spiritualized as females'. 'Dravidians', IRE, v, p. 4.

4. OII, p. 458.

5. RTLI, p. 225.

6. VGSI, p. 21.

7. BSSS, p. 5.

province.\*<sup>1</sup> In Mahārāṣṭra, 'The Mother goddesses are innumerable',<sup>2</sup> and those having the word āyā (mother) at the end of their names, have been known in the particular localities for over two thousand years.<sup>3</sup>

Worshipped chiefly in connection with agriculture, Mother Earth is in non-Aryan belief a powerful being, 'on which all that is or lives in or on it depends, and which in consequence exercises an unlimited influence for good or evil over all earthly creatures and objects'.<sup>4</sup> In this two-fold conception, Mother Earth appears as a goddess who is at once propitious and malevolent - traits which characterize not only the Indian village mothers, - but, as we shall see, also the Great Mother Goddess Durgā herself. She being the common womb of all existences, no single goddess could personify the Mother Earth, who has accordingly been venerated under many forms and names, and her cult has become universal in India.<sup>5</sup> No wonder that under the name of Pṛthivī, this primeval goddess should have been espoused by Dyaus Pitar, the most ancient among the Indo-Aryan gods.<sup>6</sup> Nor is it also at all surprising if in spite of her being eclipsed by a host of popular goddesses like Durgā, Lakṣmī or Sarasvatī, 'the sanctity of

1. BSSS, pp. 5-6.

2. Kosambi, D.D.: 'At the Crossroads', JRAS, 1960, p. 21.

3. Ibid.

4. OII, p. 452.

5. CMG, p. 113.

6. Ibid.

the Earth has remained a fundamental belief throughout India for all time, and around her the goddess cult has found its several modes of expression'.<sup>1</sup>

The two-fold aspect of the Earth Mother is illustrated as much by the nature of the offerings made to her as by the respect and fear which alternately mark the attitude of the people towards the goddesses in general.<sup>2</sup> 'Like the Earth-Mother', observes Crooke in this connection, 'the other Mothers appear in a double manifestation, at once benevolent and malevolent'.<sup>3</sup> This contraity of aspects is also evident from the names and epithets by which the goddesses in India are known and addressed. While names like Gaurī, Umā, Lakṣmī, Śivā, Sarvamaṅgalā, Jagaddhātrī and Jaganmātā indicate benevolent goddesses, epithets like Kali, Cāmuṅḍā, Caṅḍī, Bhīmā, Raktadantikā etc., are equally suggestive of their malignant nature and terrible appearance. In order to appease a malevolent goddess or to keep one of her kind in good humour, it should be remembered, however, <sup>that</sup> the worshippers are wont to address her as mātā (mother), mātājī (the honourable mother), and mahā māī (the great mother). But for ~~the~~ such euphemistic titles, the small-pox goddess would not have been called Sītalā,<sup>4</sup> and the demon-slayer Durgā or

1. CMG, p. 113.
2. ERE, v, p. 6.
3. Ibid.
4. CMG, p. 116.

the Kālī of terrible appearance addressed as Mahādevī and Jaganmātā.<sup>1</sup> It was possibly in obedience to such a time-honoured practice that Rudra's sister, though a killer, was named Ambikā, 'mother', in the Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā<sup>2</sup> before she was identified with the bahusobhamānā Umā Haimavatī.<sup>3</sup>

The Earth in her benign character is like an affectionate mother, who sustains all life by giving corn and 'imparting fertility, by virtue of her life-giving energies.<sup>4</sup> to human beings and animals. As such, she is worshipped 'with offerings of flowers, milk or fruits of the earth'.<sup>5</sup> Yet, the Earth is more dreaded than loved, for she 'was to be propitiated by valuable sacrifices', observes Oppert, 'in order to yield the necessaries of life, and nothing was deemed too precious that could gain her favour'.<sup>6</sup> This indicates her malignant aspect in which the Earth's appeasement is sought by blood sacrifices of birds and animals - goats, pigs, cocks and buffaloes - at her alter, or as in the case of the Khonds of Central India,<sup>7</sup> and the Todas of Nilgiri,<sup>8</sup> even with human victims. To the Khonds, the Earth also appears

1. MP, lxxxi.58, lxxxiii.33.

2. Supra, p. 93.

3. TA, x.10.

4. CMG, p. 113.

5. ERE, v, p. 6.

6. OII, p. 452.

7. ERE, v, p. 6. Cf. Campbell, J : The Masks of God, ii,

8. London, 1962, p. 160.

8. 'The buffaloes take now the place of human beings, but the tradition still now survives among the Todas that

as benign, but it is in her malevolent aspect that she is a supreme power; and in whatever form or occasion she is worshipped, immolation of a human being at her shrine seems to be a custom.<sup>1</sup>

in former times they sacrificed men to the Bhūmidevī, though they have managed to keep it secret'. OII, p. 453.

1. 'As the divinity who presides over the operations of nature, the character and functions of the Earth-goddess are defined with a considerable degree of directness. They reflect generally the leading wants and fears of an agricultural population. She rules the order of the seasons, and sends the periodical rains. Upon her depend the fecundity of the soil and the growth of all rural produce, the preservation of the patriarchal houses, the health and increase of the people, and in an especial manner the safety of flocks and herds and their attendants. She is worshipped by human sacrifices'. Lt. Macpherson : 'Report on the Khonds', CR, v, 1896, p. 54.

Equally interesting and informative may be found the following extract from Macpherson's second unpublished report : 'the tribes of the northern tracts (the only portion of the sacrificing population whose opinions I have had an opportunity to ascertain exactly) regard the earth goddess as supreme, - and at the same time attribute to her, in her character of regent of the operations of nature, pure malevolence towards man, and they believe, that while no observances or course of conduct can change her malignant aspect into benignity, her malevolence may still be placed in partial or in complete abeyance by the sacrifice of human life which she has expressly ordained'. CR, v, p. 54.

Chapter Two

:

THE PROTOTYPES

OF

THE MOTHER GODDESS : NON - VEDIC

T H E   G R Ā M A D E V A T Ā

The grāmadevatās or village goddesses being representatives of the Earth Mother, we may as well examine here the part played by them in the popular religions of India. As a manifestation of Sakti or Female Energy, the grāmadevatā has been receiving the veneration of the non-Aryan peoples in India as their principal deity from immemorial times.<sup>1</sup> Bishop Whitehead has also discovered in them 'the germs of national deities',<sup>2</sup> and Hinduism being 'a strange medley of the most diverse forms of religions, ranging from the most subtle and abstruse systems of philosophy to primitive forms of animism',<sup>3</sup> it is not at all surprising if the worship of the village gods and goddesses should form an important part of that complex polytheism. Bishop Whitehead is fully borne out by Crooke, in whose opinion Hinduism 'is so eclectic and tolerant that it recognizes the combination of the local with the orthodox cults, and some of the Animistic godlings have been promoted to the orthodox pantheons.'<sup>4</sup>

1. OII, pp. 449-50.

2. VGSII, p. 11.

3. Ibid., p. 13.

4. RFNI, p. 12. For the process by which a non-Aryan grāmadevatā is introduced into the Brahmanical pantheon, see Ibid., p. 14.

Not much different from those of the other primitive races, the pre-Aryan religion of India consists chiefly of superstitious belief in a multitude of spirits, good as well as bad, who are the cause of all unusual events, especially diseases and disasters.<sup>1</sup> Each village, therefore, must have its own grāmadevatā, who is its guardian,<sup>2</sup> and is revered as its founder or creator. The normal function of the grāmadevatā is to protect the villagers from all sorts of calamities caused by evil spirits, who 'lurk everywhere, on the top of the palmyra trees, in caves and rocks, in ravines and chasms', and like birds of prey may at any moment pounce upon their innocent and helpless victims.<sup>3</sup> For protection against such evil forces, much reliance is placed on the grāmadevatā,<sup>4</sup> because it is he or she, rather than the dignified Śiva or Viṣṇu, who is 'more intimately concerned with happiness and prosperity of the villagers'.<sup>5</sup>

To the less intelligent Indian villager, who according to Crooke, suffers from 'demonophobia',<sup>6</sup> the grāmadevatās

1. Crooke, W : 'Demons and Spirits', ERE, iv, p. 601.
2. OII, p. 398.
3. VGSI, p. 43.
4. ERE, iv, p. 606.
5. VGSI, p. 14. A correct analysis of the common people's attitude towards the Brahmanical deities vis-a-vis their own village gods is given by a Bengali novelist, who says, 'Truly speaking, they (the rustics of south-west Dinajpur, Bengal) have no illusion about these high class vegetarian gods (i.e., whose offerings consist of fruits and flowers). Only those deities, who are too real and too malignant in their manifestations, are of any concern to these people. Education being of little or no value to them, they could not care less

are obviously very important beings who 'symbolize only the facts of village life',<sup>1</sup> having as much powers to grant a rich harvest as to inflict him and his fellowmen with disease and calamity, such as, cholera or small-pox, drought or cattle disease. Since the grāmadevatās are believed to ward off evil influences in their protective capacity, the villagers do not regard them as evil spirits,<sup>2</sup> but neither are they looked upon as unmixed benefactors.<sup>2</sup> Of unpredictable temper and rather human in their liability to take offence, these village goddesses, or mothers, - as they are called everywhere, - are more feared than loved. Their cult 'is one of the most outstanding features of Hindu rural communities'.<sup>3</sup> At their shrines the villagers

for the goddess who presides over learning. Their gods appear before them as the unkind and all-devouring cholera, or the cruel epidemic of small-pox which is a sure killer. Their gods lurk by the roadside and river bank, in the forests and the undergrowth, with fangs poised for striking. Also their god is Kṣetrapāla, whose auspicious hand blesses every corn land with a golden harvest, and whose angry frown not only burns up all vegetation, but also brings down death and destruction from the heavens.

These malevolent deities can be appeased only by means which are violent, - with offerings of wine and flesh and orgiastic rites. The Vaiṣṇavite nature (placid, benign) of the goddess Brahmāṇī (Sarasvatī), as well as her offerings which consist of rice and vegetables, are as unintelligible, foreign and unfamiliar to them as the Brahmanical society which is beyond their access'. (our translation) Nārāyaṇa Gaṅgopādhyāya: Vaitālika (The Minstrel), Calcutta, 1947, pp. 198-99.

6. ERE, iv. p. 601.

1. VGSI, p. 17.

2. Ibid, p. 25.

3. CMG, p. 114.

turn out en masse, and take active part in the sacrifices and attendant rites held in their honour with a view to insure their favours and protection, particularly when they stand helpless in the face of some raging epidemic or a severe natural calamity. 'Being at once propitious and malevolent', observes Professor James, 'she can either protect or destroy, and so it behoves those who live within her "sphere of influence" not to neglect her worship or offend her in any way, lest instead of securing their well-being she brings upon them disease and death, drought and sterility, and all the ills to which flesh is heir'<sup>1</sup>.

Like the Earth Mother, the village goddesses as a class thus fall into two distinct categories : benign and malevolent. The functions of the village mothers are not clearly defined, though there is a special cholera goddess (Olā Bibi or Olāi Caṇḍī), as also a goddess of childbirth (Ṣaṣṭhī) and a goddess of small-pox (Śītalā); 'but as a rule', points out Bishop Whitehead, 'the infliction and removal of epidemics and disasters is (sic) a general function of all goddesses alike'<sup>2</sup>. Crooke supports him by rightly regarding these local mothers as 'primitive deities of all work'<sup>3</sup>. He also agrees with Whitehead that

1. CMG, p. 114.

2. VGSI, p. 26.

3. Folklore, xxx, p. 297.

localisation of functions which had led to the specialization of the village mothers, many of whom are now regarded as responsible for distinct spheres of activity, is a later development.<sup>1</sup> In Whitehead's opinion, only in places where the people have for many generations been under the civilizing influences of Brahmanism, are the functions of the grāmadevatās found differentiated, and often elaborate legends are current as to their origins, characters and greatness.<sup>2</sup>

The mention of the grāmadevatās in the Sanskrit Purāṇas is a strong proof of their important and honoured position among the non-Aryans.<sup>3</sup> Their influence must have been considerable, so that the Brahmins instead of ignoring them, 'found it even to their spiritual and worldly advantages to include in their pantheon not only the principle they represent, but also occasionally these, in their opinion, lower deities'.<sup>4</sup>

No one will question the superiority of the Aryans as a people, but in India, more often than not, they found themselves seriously challenged on the plane of religious belief. Brahmanical Hinduism, proud of its Vedic origin, characterized Jainism and Buddhism as downright heresies,

1. Folklore, xxx, p. 297.

2. VGSI, p. 26.

3. See OII, pp. 398-402, note 148 for the names of the Aryanised grāmadevatās, and p.456 (note) for another list of such deities.

4. OII, p.450.



growth of a prosperous trade and the patronage of popular cults by a rich and mercantile community. <sup>1</sup> 'First rejected, later tolerated and finally assimilated', remarks John Irwin, 'these gods and goddesses, together with innumerable pre-Aryan rituals and customs (such as snake-worship, river-worship and the phallic cults), survive as evidence of the insidious triumph of the popular pre-Aryan imagination over the <sup>2</sup> priestly mind'.

### Ś A Ś T H Ī

Purely benign village deities are not very common. Śaṣṭhī, in whose character the malignant aspect is totally absent, <sup>3</sup> belongs to this small but distinguished group. Her cult enjoys a wide popularity in Bengal as well as in the United provinces, where she is venerated as the deity who presides over the home and childbirth, 'protecting <sup>4</sup> infants and married women in their various avocations'. The goddess is called Śaṣṭhī obviously because she presides over the rites which are performed on the sixth (ṣaṣṭha) day following the birth of the child. <sup>5</sup> Her name is not, as Crooke explains <sup>6</sup> and Professor James accepts, <sup>7</sup> the word Śaṣṭhī for the 'sixth mother', because it is neither the correct meaning nor does it explain the actual nature

1. Indian Art, pp. 88-89.

2. Ibid, p. 89.

3. Bhattacharya, Asitosh : 'The Cult of Śaṣṭhī in Bengal' MI, xxviii, p. 153

4. CMG, p. 114.

5. MI, xxviii, p. 153.

of the goddess whose epithet is found 'extended to all the popular deities who are beneficent to children'.<sup>1</sup> As the goddess presiding over natal rites on the sixth day of a new born child, Śaṣṭhī is worshipped by the Hindus outside Bengal as far as Gujarat.<sup>2</sup>

Infant mortality, which is still a living threat in India, must have been viewed as a much greater calamity in ancient times. It would be quite natural in the circumstances if superstitious and anxious parents conceived of a deity as the protector of their offspring. We have, however, no idea how long such a deity had been worshipped in non-Aryan communities before getting a place in the Hindu pantheon, though it may be presumed that such a goddess did exist from very remote times under some other name or names. The nameless Mother Goddess of the Indus Valley, whom Mackay has described as a village or house deity,<sup>3</sup> may as well have been looked upon as the benefactress of children. Terracotta figurines of women with babies in their arms unearthed at the different sites of the Indus Valley Culture,<sup>4</sup> possibly permit such an inference. The existence of a deity associated with

6. RFNI, p. 208.

7. CMG, p. 114.

1. MI, xxviii, p. 154.

2. RTLI, p. 229.

3. Early Indus Civilizations, p. 54.

4. MIC, 1, p. 49, pl. xcv. 12.

mothers and children is also indicated by the Grhyasūtras. The Pāraskara Grhyasūtra, for example, prescribes a bali to such a god or goddess, to be given by the wife of the householder outside the house with the following prayer : 'They who allure my offspring, dwelling in the village or in the forest, to them be adoration. I offer a Bali to them. Be welfare to me! May they give me offspring'.<sup>1</sup> Whatever may have been the sex of the deity, one cannot fail to notice here, gradually creeping into the Aryan society, a prototype of the present-day Ṣaṣṭhī or Pañcānana (a name of Śiva), who are worshipped in the countless village shrines of Bengal by women desirous of offspring or mothers anxious for the welfare of their children.<sup>2</sup>

Two other goddesses, one of them Buddhist and the other Purāṇic, are also associated with children. They are, respectively, Hārītī and Jātāpahāriṇī, the latter being popularly known as Jaṭpāhāḍī.<sup>3</sup> Hārītī, presumably because of the position she holds in the Buddhist pantheon, is regarded as a mother goddess, and therefore closely akin to, if not the prototype of Ṣaṣṭhī. In Indian plastic art also, Hārītī is represented as a happy, smiling mother.

1. PGS, i.12.4.

2. Chowdhury, Nanimadhab : 'Some Cure Deities', IC, vii, p. 419. Bānabhaṭṭa in his Harṣacarita (trans. Cowell and Thomas, p. 12) and Kādambarī (trans. Ridding, p.28) mentions a goddess worshipped at childbirth and known as Jātamātrdevatā. She is also called Carcikā and has the face of a cat. The cat, it may be pointed out, is associated in popular mythology with Ṣaṣṭhī as her

surrounded by nearly half a dozen children <sup>1</sup> - a convincing proof of her prolific motherhood ( suggested also as much by her heavy-breasted and wide-hipped figure ), which is doubtless one of the reasons why she is associated with the welfare of infants. Hārītī is also regarded as belonging to the pantheon of those popular pre-Buddhistic divinities who remained favourite objects of worship for many lay followers of the gospel'. <sup>2</sup>

But it is chiefly because of her antecedents that Hārītī can on no account be connected with Śaṣṭhī, much less be her prototype, for Śaṣṭhī is essentially beneficent - a characteristic trait which distinguishes her not only from the Buddhist mother goddess and from the Hindu Jātāpahāriṇī, but also from the myriads of Indian village godlings. <sup>3</sup> The early history of Hārītī, as reconstructed from the Buddhist legends, represents her as a malignant demoness who along with her own five hundred sons used to feed on the children of Rājagṛha. <sup>4</sup> As every other means to appease the ogress proved of no avail, the harassed and frightened citizens of Rājagṛha were advised in a dream by their tutelary deity to solicit the aid of

vāhana. See Infrā, p. 518  
 3. MI, xxviii, p. 152.

1.  
 1. HFAIC, figs. 64, 65; AIA, pls. 154-55.  
 2. AIA, p. 135.  
 3. MI, pp. 152-53.  
 4. Yakṣas, ii, p. 5; AIA, pp. 135-36. The demoniacal nature of Hārītī has also been referred to by I-ching who calls her Ha-li-ti. Watters, T: On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India, London, 1904, p. 216.

the Buddha. And it was on his orders that the yaksini Hārītī who had been in her previous birth the wife of a herdsman of Rājagṛha, ceased to be a child-killer and joined the Buddhist order in atonement of her sins.<sup>1</sup> It seems that by adhering strictly to the chief commandment of the Buddhist religion - 'do not injure any living being' - Hārītī not only gave up her natural attitude of ~~merciless~~ merciless ferocity, but also acquired a place in the ~~circle~~ circle of Buddhist divinities as the 'tutelary deity of children, a madonnalike being, surrounded by babies, whom she fosters and protects'.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, notwithstanding her elevation as a mother-goddess and the wife of Kuvera, lord of the yakṣas, as well as the great popularity of her cult vouchsafed by numerous sculptures,<sup>3</sup> Hārītī cannot be put into that class deities to which Śaṣṭhī belongs. Her very name Hārītī means a 'snatcher' or 'a female thief', evoking memories that are far from pleasant, and rather than obliterating a much blemished past, has survived through the ages as a ~~constant~~ constant reminder of her original character.<sup>4</sup> In so far

1. Watters, T : Op. cit., p. 215 : I-ching evidently refers to Hārītī's conversion while speaking about Rājagṛha, particularly when he mentions 'a tope at the place where the Buddha converted the Kuei-tzu-mu or "Mother of Demons", and forbade her to kill human beings. The people of the country worshipped this Demon-mother and prayed to her for offspring'.
2. AIA, p. 136.
3. Banerjēa, J.N : 'Some Folk-goddesses of Ancient and Medieval India', IHQ, xiv, 1938, p. 104; Gordon, D.H: 'The Mother Goddess of Gandhara', Antiquity, xi, No.41, p. 152; Infra, pp 391-92

as her origin and character are concerned, the yakṣiṇī Hārītī can be equated with Jarā, who was originally a rākṣasi, but became quite a celebrity by joining together Jarāsaṃdha who was born in two vertical halves from the womb of two mothers.<sup>1</sup> Jarasaṃdha was the son of Bṛhad-rathā, who was, surprisingly enough, king of Rājagṛha, the very locale of Hārītī's cannibalistic activities and her subsequent conversion by the Buddha. Later Brahmanical literature does not repeat the story of Jarā, but in the Buddhist works we encounter, as well as Hārītī, a few other demonesses of her type. They are the yakṣiṇī Kālī and a Himālayan demoness named Kuṇḍalā who died after giving birth to one thousand children all of whom fed on the children of Vaiśālī.<sup>2</sup> Neither Jarā, nor Hārītī, nor the other two just mentioned, can be identified with, or have anything to do with the conception of Śaṣṭhī, who is ~~the~~ 'the guardian goddess of the home, presiding deity at childbirth, the giver of children, the friend and helper of married women'.<sup>3</sup> Unlike Jarā or Hārītī, Śaṣṭhī is not first an ogress who devours children and then their protectress through some accident. Nor is there anything to

4. In European mythology there are sorceresses like Circe and demonesses like Medusa, but none whatever (or at least not one that we know of) like Hārītī. The only divinity who is a child-eater is Cronos, the father of Zeus and Hera, but the children he fed upon were his own and not of others. The nearest European parallel to Hārītī is perhaps the Black Anni of Leicestershire, England. See Mackenzie, D.A. : Myths of Crete and Pre-Hellenic Europe, p. 61.

.....  
1. Mbh (Roy's translation), ii.17-18. In the standard

connect her with Jātāpahāriṇī whose name by itself is a sufficient index of her character. Asutosh Bhattacharya is inclined to identify Jātāpahāriṇī with Hārītī,<sup>1</sup> though in our opinion she is one of the many non-Aryan godlings who have been accommodated within Purāṇic Hinduism on account of their importance and popularity. The great Hārītī herself, we would also like to suggest, was possibly such a non-Aryan deity of malignant nature, and the in which fear and respect she was alternately held by the people in and around the region of Magadha must have had something to do with her transformation as a mother goddess under the auspices of Buddhism.<sup>2</sup>

Like the numerous village mothers of India, Śaṣṭhī is a popular goddess who appears to have found a place in the Hindu pantheon around the 9th-10th centuries A. of the Christian era.<sup>3</sup> Neither in the original texts of the

edition of the work published from Poona, see ii.16-17, in which the inclusion of the story of rākṣasī Jarā and her elevation as a deity at the capital city of the king Bṛhadhratha may be regarded as a proof of its authenticity. Jarā, it will be found, in spite of her having been a rākṣasī, calls herself a gṛhadevī or 'household goddess'. In her thus blend two opposing natures - malevolence and benevolence - the characteristic traits of the village mothers.

2. IHQ, xiv, p. 103.

3. GI, p. 251.

1. MI, xxviii, p. 152.

2. We are inclined to think so because Parṇa-Sabari, a Buddhist goddess, has also been imported from the non-Aryan pantheon. See Infra, p. 278

3. The Brahma Vaiivarta Purāṇa which refers to Śaṣṭhī as the goddess of children, appears to have been composed during this period. This Purāṇa occurs in the list of

epics and ancient Sanskrit works, nor in any of the older Purāṇas, is there any mention of this goddess. She appears<sup>1</sup> as a goddess in some of the recensions of the Mahābhārata, but not as the benefactress of children ~~of~~ and married women in which aspect she is an object of popular worship. She is represented in these recensions as Devasenā, having<sup>2</sup> for her sire no less a divinity than the Prajāpati (Brahmā). She is given in marriage to Skanda,<sup>3</sup> who is called Ṣaṣṭhī-priya (darling of Ṣaṣṭhī),<sup>4</sup> which indicates that Ṣaṣṭhī and Devasenā are one and the same goddess. As in the case of the Durgāstavas in the Virāta and Bhīṣma parvas, the sections containing references about Ṣaṣṭhī are also interpolations. In these later additions to the text of the Mahābhārata, Ṣaṣṭhī is also called Lakṣmī, Āśā, Sukhapradā Sinīvālī, Kuhu, Satvṛtti and Aparājitā, and 'is known<sup>5</sup> among men as Devasenā, the wife of Skanda'. Her equation with Lakṣmī, Sinīvālī and Kuhu no doubt represents her as a deity associated with fertility and procreation, but does not suggest that she was venerated as the patroness<sup>4</sup> of children and married women during the epic period.

similar texts in the Kitab-al-Hind of Albṛuni who flourished in the 11th century A.D. Alberuni's India, translated by E.C. Sachau, London, 1888, vol.i, pp. 130-131.

1. Sorensen, S : An Index to the Names in the Mahābhārata, London, 1904, p. 637.
2. Mbh, iii.224 (Roy's translation).
3. Sorensen, S : Op. cit, p. 238.
4. Ibid, p. 637.
5. Mbh, iii. 229 (Roy's translation, p. 694).
6. It appears that neither Ṣaṣṭhī nor Devasenā was ever connected in the epic period with procreation or

Ṣaṣṭhī occurs in two later Purāṇas, namely, the Devī Bhāgavata and the Brahma Vaiivarta. In the former, Ṣaṣṭhī as an epithet of Durgā is one of the sixteen divine mothers (mātr̥s),<sup>1</sup> In the latter text,<sup>2</sup> she is among the mothers the most adorable, because as the goddess of child-birth, she is the giver of sons and grandsons, and like a mother she preserves children <sup>3</sup> on land and water and in the sky. Her name is Ṣaṣṭhī because she is the sixth digit of Nature (Durgā).<sup>3</sup> Under the name of Devasenā, the goddess is also said to have been espoused by Skanda, the generalissimo of the gods and the son of Śiva and Durgā.<sup>4</sup> The representation of Ṣaṣṭhī in the Purāṇas - whether as one of the divine mothers or as a part of Prakṛti, or as Devasenā, the wife of Skanda (hence a daughter-in-law of the Mother Goddess), we need hardly point out, only demonstrates how a non-Aryan village deity was admitted into the Brahmanical pantheon.

The primitive nature of Ṣaṣṭhī's cult is also suggested by the aniconic form in which she is worshipped under a

protection of children. In Mbh, iii.231 (Roy's translation, p. 700) it is stated : 'persons who desire to have children born to them must always worship those female spirits who live on human flesh and are produced on trees'.

1. MI, xxviii, p. 152.
2. BVP, (Prakṛti Khaṇḍa), i.71-81.
3. Ibid, xliii. This chapter also gives the anecdotes relating to the origin and forms of, and to the benefits accruing from the worship of, Ṣaṣṭhī.
4. Besides Devasenā, Ṣaṣṭhī is also mentioned under other names in this Purāṇa, such as, Sukhapradā, Lakṣmī,

big tree, usually a ban<sup>1</sup>yan, in a public place in a village or town.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes she is also worshipped in the form of an earthen ghaṭa<sup>3</sup> inside the house. Rich devotees erect in her honour brick altars in grateful acknowledgement of favours received from her. Barren women and mothers of still-born children, in order to be blessed with healthy offspring with long life, suspend from the branches of her favourite tree pieces of rags with small stones tied at one end. Though incorporated<sup>4</sup> as a Purāṇic deity about the 9th or 10th century A.D., the goddess Śaṣṭhī does not appear to have ever been the subject of the sculptor's art. An image pointed out as belonging to this goddess,<sup>5</sup> has been subsequently proved to be the representation of Manasā, the goddess of snakes.<sup>6</sup> None of the early or medieval images of Hindu goddesses has yet been identified as that of Śaṣṭhī.<sup>7</sup> The total

Sinivālī, Kuhu, and Aparājitā. It should be noted that Lakṣmī, Sinivālī and Kuhu are Vedic names. Of these except Aparājitā, who is represented as a powerful goddess riding on a lion and armed with bow and other deadly weapons (cf. Vratākhaṇḍa, p. 82), the rest, as their names indicate, are benign goddesses, particularly Lakṣmī, Sinivālī and Kuhu, who are associated with childbirth or prayed to for children. Cf. IHQ, xiv, p. 107; OST, v, p. 346.

1. CMG, p. 114.
2. There is hardly a town or a prosperous village in Bengal which is without its Śaṣṭhītalā (shrine of Śaṣṭhī) under a big tree.
3. MI, xxviii, p. 153.
4. Supra, p. 144, note 3.
5. Vasu, N.N. : ASM, i, p. xxxviii, fig. 15; cf. Infra, p. 518-19.
6. IBBS, p. 227, note 2.
7. ~~VXX~~ MI, xxviii, p. 153.

absence of her sculptural representation is another proof of her non-Aryan origin, as is the confinement of her worship to the female half of the community to which there is a clear Purāṇic reference.<sup>1</sup> Her cult is also redolent of the soil, and her non-Aryan background is amply suggested by the character of the offerings, which consist of ripe plantains, banana leaves, mangoes, lemons, sweets and rice, made to her during her service.<sup>2</sup>

Śaṣṭhī is not, as we have seen above, a Vedic or even a Puranic goddess. She made her entry into the Hindu society from a non-Aryan background where she must have been receiving her worship from considerable antiquity. The importance of her cult as well as her wide popularity were no doubt largely responsible for her admittance into the circle of Hindu divinities. The Purāṇas are silent about her antecedents, and it would be too much to expect any help in this regard from the Jaina or Buddhist works. Yet, should we, on account of these factors, as also because she happens to be a <sup>mere</sup> village deity, stop here any further enquiry into the origins of Śaṣṭhī, who has been otherwise so intimately connected with the very first of the ~~most~~ three most important events in an Indian's life?

1. BVP, (Prakṛti Khaṇḍa), ~~1/71/88~~ i. 71-81.

2. MI, xxviii, pp. 155-57.

Touching on the mystery of birth, Professor James says, 'the deepest emotions and most heartfelt needs, hopes and fears have been aroused by propagation and nutrition as the vital concern of man in all ages.'<sup>1</sup> Food and offspring, maintains Frazer, have always been the primary needs <sup>2</sup> of man and will remain so for all time to come. It has always therefore been the fundamental urge with man to acquire both. 'But', as Professor James points out, 'in the precarious environment in which Early man had to ~~engage~~ engage in the struggle for survival the mysterious forces of propagation and nutrition acquired a sacred significance towards which a cautious and numinous attitude was adopted and a ritual technique developed in order to bring them under some measure of magico-religious control'.<sup>3</sup> The votive ~~of~~ character of the sculptured 'Venuses' of the Gravettian Culture in Europe, as also the Neolithic and Chalcolithic female figurines found in the Near and Middle East and Western India, bears out the truth in Professor James' observation.

Clay figurines of women, often with babies <sup>their</sup> in/arms, which are still placed as votive objects at many a village shrine, represent in fact an immemorial and deep-rooted Indian tradition of which the numerous similar images of

1. Prehistoric Religion, London, 1957, p. 145.
2. GB, v(1), p. 5.
3. Prehistoric Religion, p. 145.

clay or limestone found in the Indus Valley furnish the most ancient evidence.<sup>1</sup> We need hardly dilate on the purpose behind these votive figurines. They are offered to the ~~gods~~ village gods and goddesses mostly by the married women either in expectation of offspring or to signify their thanks for some favour or favours received. Hankering after children as well as anxiety for their well-being are universal among the Indian mothers, who 'arrayed in their best attire with all their ornaments'<sup>2</sup> throng in large numbers to the shrines or temples of deities particularly reputed as the bestowers and protectors of children. There is no dearth of such deities in Bengal, or, thanks to the high rate of infant mortality, also in other parts of India.

#### V A N A - D U R G Ā

The cults of the non-Purānic Vana Durgā, and a number of village deities of allied character worshipped in the various districts may, in our opinion, furnish some clue to the origins of Śaṣṭhī. Under different names and at different places, these deities have been receiving the veneration of the simple rustics since an undetermined antiquity, 'having in common two important features, namely, association with the Sheora tree (Trophis aspera)

1, ALA, p. 22.  
2, CMG, p. 114.

and the protection and welfare of children.<sup>1</sup> No district seems to be without a goddess of this type. She is known as Vana-Durgā (the sylvan Durgā) in the districts of Pabna, Sylhet, Comilla and Birbhum; Rūpasī and Rupeśvarī in Mymensingh; Guṇḍi Thākuraṇī in Manbhum and Birbhum; Caṇḍī and Kālī in Dacca, and Buḍī in Bogra.<sup>2</sup> Basanvarī and Bhiṭākumārī are also two of the names under which the goddess is worshipped in the districts of Birbhum and Manbhum.<sup>3</sup>

Not all the deities mentioned above can however be regarded as identical with Ṣaṣṭhī. Analysed, the cults of Vana-Durgā and of others reveal the following features: (a) all of them are tree goddesses and worshipped outside the village either in a wood or a solitary place; (b) the object of worship in all cases is protection and welfare of children; (c) both the form of worship and the nature of offerings are unorthodox in character; (d) the special devotees of these divinities are mostly married women; and (e) in one instance, i.e., in the district of Pabna, small pieces of cloth, dyed in turmeric, are tied by the mothers to the branches of the tree in which the goddess Vana-Durgā is believed to reside.<sup>4</sup>

1. Choudhury, Nanimadhadhab: 'The Cult of Vana-Durgā, a tree Deity', JRASBL, xi, p.

2. Ibid, pp. ~~75-76~~ 75-76.

3. Ibid, p. 77.

4. Ibid.

The non-Aryan origins of these deities are at once evident from the above, while the custom of worshipping them outside the village indicates their inauspicious, if not malevolent character. In the Grhyasūtras, we have already met deities of this kind, and balis prescribed for their propitiation are to be offered outside the house by the wife of the grhastā (householder) in order that no harm may come to her children.<sup>1</sup> The Vanaparva of the Mahābhārata gives the names of many malevolent godlings, all of whom are females and styled ~~no doubt~~ no doubt, euphemistically, as Mātrkās or 'mothers'.<sup>2</sup> In Gupta and post-Gupta India, the custom of worshipping such mothers seems to have been continued, for they were venerated outside the village or city limits and offerings were placed for them at the cross-roads.<sup>3</sup> Such places have enjoyed in India and elsewhere, for unknown ages, an ill repute as the dwelling place of evil genii.<sup>4</sup> No wonder that the deities believed to haunt the cross-roads should be euphemistically addressed as 'mothers', and fear should mingle with the reverence in which they are held by a superstitious people.

Vana-Durgā, it will also be apparent from the above

1. Supra, p. 140.
2. Chapters ccxxvii-ccxxix.
3. Kosambi, D.D. : 'At the Crossroads', JRAS, London, 1960, p. 17.
4. MacCulloch, J.A. : 'Cross-Roads', ERE, iv, pp. 330-31.

analysis, is a goddess whose propitiation is sought chiefly by women with the sole object of getting offspring or ensuring their protection and welfare. The tying of rags to the branches of the tree in which Vana-Durgā resides, is also a custom analogous to the cult of Ṣaṣṭhī.<sup>1</sup> Also significant is the fact that both the goddesses are worshipped in their aniconic forms, and any image that may occur in the worship of Guṇḍī Thākuraṇī alias Vana-Durgā is an accretion, having no connection whatsoever with the form in which she is meditated upon.<sup>2</sup> But the most outstanding feature which not only distinguishes Vana-Durgā and Ṣaṣṭhī, but also links them together, is the tree, which is inseparably associated with the cults of both - the Sheorā with the former and the aśvattha (banyan) with the latter. A stone stands for the emblem of Ṣaṣṭhī in her unpretentious shrine whose location is under a banyan tree,<sup>3</sup> while it is chiefly in the form of a Sheorā tree that the goddess Vana-Durgā receives her worship, though in some places, the tree may be a Kāminī as in Comilla,<sup>4</sup> a Śāl or a Palāśa in Birbhum, or an aśvattha in Manbhum. Such trees, in which the goddess is believed to reside are called Caṇḍī or Kālī gācha or 'the tree of Caṇḍī or Kālī'

1. Supra, p. 147

2. JRASBL, xi, p. 77. Guṇḍī Thākuraṇī means 'the goddess of the tree-trunk.'

3. CMG, p. 114.

4. JRASBL, xi, p. 77.

in the district of Dacca.<sup>1</sup> Or, the goddess may, as indicated by one of her aliases,<sup>2</sup> be worshipped in the trunk of some unspecified tree. In short, Vana-Durgā is a tree-deity, the local version of many similar ones, whose worship in India can be traced not only to the Buddhist and Vedic periods, but, in the light of the evidence unearthed in the Indus Valley, also to the Chalcolithic age, though in all probability, it goes even further back.

## T R E E - W O R S H I P    I N    A N C I E N T    I N D I A :

### i. Prehistoric period.

Tree-worship is a well-known feature of the Indus religion.<sup>3</sup> The tree-deity of the Indus Valley was a goddess and not a god, and seems to have been worshipped (a)<sup>4</sup> in its natural form as indicated by a number of seals, and (b) as the personified tree-spirit endowed with human shape and attributes.<sup>5</sup> We have already suggested that this tree deity was a manifestation of the Earth Mother, who imparts fertility to the soil as well as to all creatures.<sup>6</sup> Worshipped in her natural form and also in human shape under a tree, this particular Indus deity exhibits two features which are also peculiar to the cults of Vana-Durgā and Śaṣṭhī. Add to these the evidence furnished by

1. The tree seems to be the nim or nimba. At Rajnagar Kuṭhibādī, Vikrampur, Dacca, the trunk of this tree, which is sacred to the local goddess Kālīmātā, is painted with oil and vermilion by the Hindu women who worship it occasionally. Gupta, Yogendranath : Vikrampurur Vivarana, Dacca, 1919, p. 230.

one of the seals in which seven of the eight ministrants of the goddess are women,<sup>1</sup> and the identification <sup>seems</sup> is/ even closer. The composite sacrificial animal, appearing on the seal, furnishes another feature common to the cult of Vana-Durgā, who is also worshipped with blood sacrifices of cocks, pigeons, swine and goats.<sup>2</sup>

ii. Historic period.

Trees have been deified and worshipped in India from immemorial times. The practice is not exclusive to India,<sup>3</sup> and even the Aryans are known to have venerated the trees, plants and forests, though in doing so, they exhibit a trait that appears to be non-Aryan,<sup>4</sup> but may nevertheless be a survival of a similar belief of their remote ancestors. In both the Rg and the Atharva Vedas, tree-deities are found to receive some attention from the Vedic poets. Called Osadhi because of their medicinal properties, and in view of their efficacy,<sup>5</sup> they are deified and praised in the Vedas. A long hymn of the Rg Veda is addressed to the Osadhi; plants are referred to as mothers and goddesses; and in AV, vi.136.1, it is interesting to note, a medicinal herb is characterized as a 'goddess born on the goddess earth'.<sup>5</sup> More interesting information is, however,

2. JRASBL, xi, p. 76.

3. MIC, i, pp. 63-65; Early Indus Civilizations, pp.58-61.

4. MIC, i, pl. xii.16,20,21,25,26.

5. Ibid, pl. xii.13,14,18,19.

6. Supra, pp. 90-91.

1. MIC, i, pl. xii.18.

furnished by the Taittiriya Saṁhitā in which tree-deities are associated with childbirth, and it is advised to appease them with animal sacrifice lest they obstruct the course of delivery.<sup>1</sup> Designated as Vanaspati or 'lord of the forest', the large trees have been deified in the Vedas, as well as the forest as a whole, under the name of Aranyānī, the mother of beasts, who also abounds in food without tillage.<sup>2</sup> But, as Marshall observes, the forest deities are mere punies before the great gods like Indra, Varuṇa etc., and accordingly, the part played by them is negligible.<sup>3</sup> What matters however in this connection is that tree-worship was associated with childbirth in the Vedic age.

Veneration of trees and belief in their spirits, good or bad, have formed part of Indian religious belief through the ages.<sup>4</sup> Such Buddhist sites as Sanchi, Bharhut

2. JRASBL, xi, p. 76.

3. For tree-worship in other countries through the ages, see GM, p. 240 ff; GB, i(ii), p. 7 ff.

4. MIC, i, p. 65.

5. VM, p. 154.

1. VM, p. 154.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. 'In fact', says E.O. Martin, 'according to the Hindu theory, all trees and plants are conscious beings, having distinct personalities and souls of their own as gods, demons, men and animals (see Manusaṁhitā, i.49)... Another reason for the worship of trees is their wonderful utility in daily life. Their shade is grateful in a hot climate. Their wood is the source of fire, itself a god. Their fruits, juices, and bark are articles of food and have well-known medicinal and curative properties. The leaves supply many needs, amongst others roofing and thatch for houses. The palmyra palm, so abundant in

Amaravati and other places abound in monuments on which the sculptor's mallet and chisel have left indelible proof of the veneration in which the people held the tree or its presiding spirit.<sup>1</sup> In their anthropomorphic forms as dryads or vrkṣadevatās, the tree-goddesses represented life-force and the fertile aspect of the trees.<sup>2</sup> The fully rounded, heavy-breasted, broad-hipped and narrow-waisted yakṣīs and vrkṣakās, whose realistic representations provide the chief decorative element of the gate-pillars and railings of Buddhist religious architecture in Northern India from 100 B.C. onwards,<sup>3</sup> were all tree-deities and objects of popular worship. Like the caitya

South India, has over fifty distinct uses to the people. What would be the social life of the North Indian village be without the Pīpal-tree? Its shade and beauty are undeniable, and it naturally forms the Assembly Hall and Court House of the village community. And so highly revered is it that by an easy transition it becomes the abode of the village godling or guardian deity, and the centre for village worship'. GI, pp. 232-33; cf. GM, p. 245.

1. Fergusson, J : Tree and Serpent Worship, London, 1873, for tree-worship at Sanchi : pls. xxv.1-3; xxvi.1-2; xxvii.1-3; xxviii.3; at Amaravati : p. 206, pl. lxxii; pp. 207-08, pl. lxx; at Bharhut : HFAIC, fig.43; CHI, i, pl. xvi.45; xvii.47.
2. AIA, p. 71.
3. Ibid, pp. 71, 235-36; Yakṣas, ii, p. 55; HIA, pp.35-36. 'The art of Sāncī as a whole, is of course, Buddhist in theme; the story-telling reliefs successfully fulfil an edifying purpose. It is equally clear that their ~~content~~ content is not religious; ~~the intrinsic quality~~ in the sense that Indian art at a later period becomes religious; the intrinsic quality of the early art is realistic and sensuous, and this is only more evident in the case of the dryads, because there the theme is anything but Buddhist. Or if we recognize in this very sensuousness with which the art is saturated, a true religious

and stūpa worship, the veneration of trees in their natural form also became a distinctive feature of Buddhist religion. As Zimmer observes, just as the stūpa is a symbol of nirvāna, so is the Bo tree, the tree of enlightenment, the tree of that memorable spot where the Buddha defeated the Māra and achieved the highest goal.<sup>1</sup> But more significant for our purpose is the Buddha's birth, which legend and history have combined to represent as taking place under a tree.

Enciente for ten lunar months, queen Māyā, mother of the future Śākyamuni, 'desired to visit her family at Devadaha; whereupon her husband, the Buddha's father, King Suddhodana, had the road made smooth for her from Kapilavastu to her family's city. Moreover, he had it decorated with plantain trees, streamers and banners, and seating his queen in a palanquin borne by a thousand of his courtiers, he sent her off to her parents in stupendous pomp. On the way, however, there was a pleasure grove of

feeling, then it is religious on a plane very far removed from that of the aristocratic philosophy of the Upaniṣads and Buddhism. It is religious in the very real sense of the ancient cults of mother-goddesses and and fertility spirits, not in the sense of the Great enlightenment'. HIAA, p. 36.

1. AIA, p. 245, text pl. B. 10c.

Sāl trees, the Lumbinī Grove, belonging to the people of the two cities; and at the time of the journey the trees of this lovely place were filled both with fruits and with flowers. She saw them and with her party turned from the road to the foot of a magnificent Sāl tree, where she stepped from her palanquin and reached to grasp one of the branches. The beautiful great limb bent down of itself, like the tip of a supple reed, and came within her reach. She grasped it and immediately felt her throes of giving birth. Standing, with her hand to the branch, she was delivered!<sup>1</sup>

It was certainly no poor genius who so masterfully connected a traditional popular belief ~~to~~ with this nativity legend which is one of the significant chapters of Buddhist religion. The belief in trees as the givers of life and sustenance to all must have been very deep-rooted indeed, or Māyā, who was the daughter of one prince and the wife of another, could hardly be represented as giving birth in a grove and under a tree instead of in the midst of the luxurious comforts of a royal palace. Other interesting features of the legend are : (a) Māyā does not assume the usual position of the Indian women during ~~labour~~ labour, but delivers her child standing; and (b) the child comes out of her womb not by the usual way, but from her right side. It is also to be remarked that she stands in

1. AIA, p. 78, pl. 31d.

a grove of Sāl trees, beneath one of them, holding a branch of it with one of her hands while she is in the throes of giving birth. In plastic representation of this scene, queen Māyā is everywhere shown standing in this sālābhañjikā position, a classic attitude of tree-goddesses in Indian art.<sup>1</sup> The reasons why an ancient Hindu and popular motif should thus be integrated to the Buddhist idea of the nativity are quite obvious. Deified, trees 'are credited with the power of making the rain fall, the sun to shine, flocks and herds to multiply and women to bring forth easily'.<sup>2</sup> With the nativity of the Buddha for his subject, and the wide prevalence of tree-worship not only among the Hindus, but among the Buddhists as well, the artist could not but represent Māyā as a vrkṣadevatā.<sup>3</sup>

1. AIA, pp. 80-81; cf. Grunwedel, A : Buddhist Art in India, London, 1901, p. 110 ff., figs 64, 65, 66.
2. GB, i (ii), p. 45.
3. The observations of D.D. Kosambi (JRAS, 1960, pp. 138-39) in this connection will be found quite illuminating based as it is on an extensive exploratory tour of the area where the Buddha was born. 'The locality is still named Rumin-deī, the deī being short for devī, "goddess". The little shrine by the Aśokan pillar where Māyā was depicted at the time of the nativity was attributed by the villagers to Rūmindeī. So the Buddha's mother was worshipped even at the turn of the century as the goddess Lumbini or ~~Rumini~~ Rummini, with the red pigment and occasional blood sacrifices that disgusted pious Buddhists... The picture is quite clear, knowing what to do. Māyā sought the grove of the goddess, which was on the main route ... Māyā must have felt her time coming and gone to pay homage to Lumbini and receive her special protection. The protection proved inadequate, for Māyā died on the seventh day giving birth to her incomparable son; but she was herself identified with Lumbini and receives her worship'. Cf. Ibid, pp. 142-43.

In the eyes of the artist, who was probably a Hindu, queen Māyā, being the mother of so eminent a person like the Buddha, would naturally appear as a goddess, particularly a vṛkṣadevatā in the context of the scene, or her standing position (resembling the upright tree) in which she is shown delivering her child cannot be satisfactorily explained.<sup>1</sup> Nor can we, unless she were conceived as a divinity, account for the extraordinary way in which the child comes out of her womb.<sup>2</sup>

T H E T R E E A S S O U R C E  
O F  
F E R T I L I T Y

Buddha is not however the only prophet whose birth is associated with the tree or trees. According to the Qur'ān, Jesus was born not in a stable but by the trunk of a palm tree in a remote and desolate place.<sup>3</sup> The

1. AIA, p. 80.
2. The way gods, goddesses, quasi-divinities and human beings are found to be born in Indian mythology, is rather extraordinary. Compare for example, the births of Brahmā, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Durgā Mahiṣamardinī, Skanda, Gaṇeśa, Sītā, the Kauravas, Draupadī and Jārāsandha. Indra too, we are told, 'was born through his mother's side'. Cf. AIA, p. 80.
3. Qur'ān, translated by A. Yusuf Ali, 3rd. edition, Lahore, 1938, xix.22-23.

nativity of Jesus is the subject of a late 16th century Muslim painting<sup>1</sup>, in which the Virgin has been represented as leaning against a date-palm in an attitude of utter exhaustion, and the newly born infant looks as if it has just been dropped by the tree. The reasons for the artist's representing the scene in this manner are not far to seek. The date palm is of the greatest importance in Arabian society. 'The Prophet is reported to have said, "Honour your aunt, the palm which was made of the same clay as Adam"<sup>2</sup>. Trees were common objects of worship among the pre-Muslim Arabs<sup>3</sup>. Called Dhāt-Anwāt (that on which things are hung), trees received divine honours, and sacred palm trees were decked with apparel. Al-Uzzāh, a celebrated pre-Islamic Arab goddess, who is sarcastically mentioned as one of the three daughters of Allāh in the Qur'ān<sup>4</sup>, was worshipped in her sanctuary at Nakhlāh in the form of three trees<sup>5</sup>. Her

1. Arnold, Sir T.W.: *Painting in Islam*, Oxford, 1938, p. 100, pl. xxv.
2. Hitti, P.K. : History of the Arabs, 7th edition, London, 1961, p. 19.
3. Nöldeke, Th. : 'Arabs', ERE, i, p. 666.
4. Qur'ān, liii.19.
5. ERE, i, p. 660.

cult was a sanguinary one; animals as well as human beings were sacrificed to her in large numbers <sup>1</sup>, but, peculiarly enough, garments, rags and other things also were hung from her trees as a substitute for sacrifice <sup>2</sup>. The sacrifices were no doubt offered either in expectation of favours or in fulfilment of vows made to the goddess. And in view of the Arab's yearning for progeny, particularly sons, we may well assume that much of his prayer to al-Uzzāh was for offspring.

Trees have been associated with fertilization of women and easy delivery in various countries from a very remote age. Among the numerous instances furnished by Frazer <sup>3</sup>, mention may be made of the Maori custom according to which a sterile woman may be blessed with offspring by embracing a certain tree. The common practice of placing a green bush on May Day in front, or on the house of the beloved lady, is supposed to have originated

1. ERE, i, p. 665.

2. Ibid, p. 666 and note. 'Sacred trees,' writes Noldeke, 'to which rags are attached, exist in Arabia at the present day, and still more frequently in Syria'.

3. GB, i (ii), p. 56 ff.

in the belief of the tree-spirits' fertilizing powers. Obviously, due to such a belief, the South Slav women desiring children are known to have hung a new chemise (to be worn by them afterwards) upon a fruitful tree on the eve of the St. George's Day. Mention may also be made of the Kara Kirghiz barren women, who roll themselves on the ground under a solitary apple-tree in order to obtain offspring. That the ancient Greeks also had a similar belief in the efficacy of certain trees in this regard, particularly for facilitating delivery, is apparent from the legend in which Leto or Latona, a mistress of Zeus, is said to have clasped a palm tree and an olive tree, or two laurel trees when she gave birth to Apollo and Artemis. The association of a tree with the birth of Apollo is also referred to in a Homeric hymn which says, 'Leto clasped a palm-tree in her arms, pressed the soft ground with her knees and the earth beneath her smiled and the child leapt into the light'<sup>1</sup>.

1. LEM, p. 122.

Tree-worship in India has come down to the present-day in an unbroken continuity, and tree-spirits are even now believed to make the herd to multiply and women to conceive and bring forth. The Vedic Vanaspati still survives, though changed into the form of Banaspati Mā, 'mother of the woods', who is propitiated by the forest people not with animal sacrifice, but 'by flinging a stone or branch on her cairn, either as a mode of keeping the spirit under control, or as a tribute to, or recognition of, the dreaded deity who abides in the dark places of the jungle.<sup>1</sup> But the forest mothers are gradually acquiring the character of village deities of the agricultural type, because the village herdsmen who bring cattle into the jungle for grazing, usually offer such a goddess a cock, a goat or a pig, with an entreaty that she would protect the cattle from tigers.<sup>2</sup> To such a belief may we ascribe the origin of the cult of forest goddess called Rakṣā-Candī (Candī who protects) of the Sunderbans in lower Bengal.<sup>3</sup> She is worshipped in the form of <sup>the</sup> a trunk of a tree which is smeared with vermillion by the wood-cutters who are her principal devotees. Mention may also be made of Bānjāri Deo, a male deity of this type, who has an imperfectly organized cult in Madhya Pradesh.<sup>4</sup> Kād Bhagavatī

1. GB, vi, p. 15.

2. Folklore, xxx, p. 298.

3. O'Malley, L.S.S. : Bengal District Gazetteer: Khulna, Calcutta, 1908, p. 62.

4. Folklore, xxx, p. 298.

or Kali is the name of a sexless forest godling, who is worshipped by the Paniyans in South India.<sup>1</sup>

Belief in the fertility-giving powers of trees is as well-known in India as in the countries mentioned above. In Orissa, the growing rice-plant is equated with a pregnant woman, and the same ceremonies are held with regard to it as if it were a human female.<sup>2</sup> The people of Gilgit, according to Frazer, believe that their sacred Chili or Cedar possesses in addition to that of fertilizing the corn the virtue of fecundating their herds and their women.<sup>3</sup> Prayers are offered with libations at the foot of the Āmalakī tree (also called Āmlā, Emblīca officinalis) a sacred tree in North India, for fruitfulness in women, animals and land.<sup>4</sup> As a symbol of fertility, cocoanuts are kept in many shrines in North India and presented to women craving for offspring.<sup>5</sup> Belief in the fertility giving powers of trees is also illustrated by the promise given to different trees in the marriage ceremony among the Hindus and the Hinduized tribes in different parts of India.<sup>6</sup> Among some hill tribes, there

1. Thurston, Edgar : Tribes and Castes of Southern India, Vol. vi, Madras, 1909, p. 62.
2. Beams, John : 'Folklore of Orissa', IA, i, p. 170.
3. GB, i(ii), p. 50.
4. Ibid, p. 51.
5. Ibid. In a Kalyānasundara-mūrti from ~~Elura~~ Elura, Menakā, the mother of Pārvati, is seen holding a cocoanut in her hand no doubt as a fertility symbol. Sen Gupta, R : 'The Panels of Kalyānasundaramūrti at Ellora', LK, No.7, p. 14, pl. iv.2.
6. JRASBL, xi, p. 82.

is the custom of marrying the bride and the groom to two trees before they are pronounced man and wife in the eye of God and the society, - in order that the reproductive power of the trees may pass on to the couple.<sup>1</sup> The tree is regarded as an emblem of fertility in Micronesia, Fiji, Polynesia, Madagascar and among the Palaungs of Burma, and it is frequently a plantain tree which is used in India in the mock marriages sometimes performed for elder children to enable their juniors to be married.<sup>2</sup> The non-Aryans of Bogra venerate the plantain tree after the rice harvest and also worship it before solemnizing a marriage.<sup>3</sup> Tree-worship is also common among the Hinduized Koch people in the same district, and even the Muslims are known to have taken part in the ceremony known as Budir pūjā (worship of the old lady) in which offerings of sugar and milk are made to the Sheorā tree.<sup>4</sup> The banjayan is very well-known for its association with fertility not only in Assam and South India, but also in Africa, Italy and other countries.<sup>5</sup> Attention may as well be drawn in this connection to the celebrated Keli Kadamba tree near the temple

1. GB, i(ii), p. 57.
2. Hutton, H.J.: Census of India, 1931, Report, Part i, Delhi, 1933, p. 414.
3. Crooke, W : 'Bengal', ERE, ii, p.482.
4. Hunter, W.W : 'Statistical Accounts of Bengal, vol. ~~vii~~ viii, London, 1886, p. 163.
5. Hutton, J : Op. cit, p. 397. Even the Muslims in India appear to have faith in the fertility-giving powers of the tree. As Hutton states, 'A close parallel to the Baganda theory of conception from a plantain flower is to be found in India in the Muslim belief that a woman may conceive if the flowers of a rose tree or jasmine which is growing from the tomb of a dead saint should

of Barga Bhīmā in Midnapur, and other trees, particularly the aśvattha as special objects of worship by women eager for the removal of their barrenness.<sup>1</sup> Regarding the usage of marrying brides to trees before they are regularly married to their bridegrooms, Frazer's views are supported by Crooke who says, 'It appears to be done either with the intention of transferring to the tree any possible dangers that may result from the marriage; or it is a sympathetic, mimetic or homeopathic magic by which the fertilizing power of the spirit which animates the tree and revives it after its winter rest are communicated to the girl'.<sup>2</sup>

V A N A - D U R G Ā,

P R E C U R S O R O F Ś A Ś T H Ī

The forest mothers mentioned above should not be connected with the Earth, since their worshippers are either non-agricultural or belong to the pre-agricultural stage. But we have adduced enough evidence of trees being deified and worshipped in agricultural societies all over India. Belief in the tree-spirits, it may be noted, is a mixed one of fear and respect - fear of the demon or the spirit  
 3  
 fall upon her'. (Hutton, H.J : Op. cit, p. 414).

1. JRASBL, xi, p. 82.

2. ERE, ii, p. 482.

3. Ibid.

dwelling in the tree, and respect for its supposed or well-advertised benign character, since it is a bestower of fertility and desired objects such as the Pr̥thvī-mātā is. But benign or malignant, a tree-deity has to be kept perpetually in good humour, or it may either withdraw its countenance from, or inflict injury or harm, on its worshippers. Vana-Durgā is evidently such a deity -- a mixture of good and evil, almost in equal proportions. That is why she is meditated on as a goddess of fearful appearance, and women worshipping her as Durgā residing in the Sheorā tree, invoke her by reciting such prayers as, 'Save our sons, give us sons, o goddess; make the paddy in the field and the plough for tilling hundred-fold; obeisance to thee, o goddess of the tree-trunk'<sup>1</sup>. Like Vana-Durgā, Ṣaṣṭhī also originated in agricultural background, but unlike the former she stands for the purely benign tree-spirit. The development of the concept of a goddess like Ṣaṣṭhī, it may be argued, followed the same pattern adopted by the priestly class in shaping out of non-Aryan beliefs an absolutely benevolent deity like Lakṣmī. Ṣaṣṭhī, is, in our opinion, a civilized and harmless version of Vana-Durgā. Of the twelve types of Ṣaṣṭhī worshipped in Bengal during each month of the

1. JRASBL, xi, p. 77. Rao (EHI, i(ii), App.C, p.108) has given the iconography of a goddess called Vana-Durgā who is multi-armed, holding such weapons as vajra, śaṅkha, kroṇā, khetaka, ḍhanuḥ, bāna etc. She is also described as the auspicious Durgā with the complexion of newly born grass.

worshipped in Bengal during the twelve months of the year, the names of at least four suggest their having originated as vegetation spirits - Aranya-ṣaṣṭhī, Pātāi-ṣaṣṭhī, Aśoka-ṣaṣṭhī and Nīla-ṣaṣṭhī (sylvan, leaf, Aśoka and indigo Ṣaṣṭhī respectively). None of these twelve godlings is malevolent, though as with their prototype Vana-Durgā, the worshippers are particularly careful not to be remiss of anything in their service.

Contrary to the opinion of Bhattacharya,<sup>2</sup> the twelve Ṣaṣṭhīs are but the various folk forms of the one and the same goddess, all having been originally vegetation and tree-spirits, and subsequently brought by the Hindu priestly class under one group with the suffix of the Purānic Ṣaṣṭhī added to their names.<sup>3</sup> The cult of Aranya-ṣaṣṭhī is actually a vrata observed by the Bengali women on the sixth day of the bright half of Jyaiṣṭha. The goddess is worshipped in a wood near the village, the object being the welfare, longevity and prosperity of the children. Aranya-ṣaṣṭhī thus seems to be a stage in the evolution of Ṣaṣṭhī from Vana-Durgā.<sup>4</sup>

1. The 12 Ṣaṣṭhīs and the seasons of their worship are: Dhūlo-ṣaṣṭhī in April-May; Aranya-ṣaṣṭhī in May-June; Koḍā-ṣaṣṭhī in June-July; Loṭan-ṣaṣṭhī in July-August; Manthana-ṣaṣṭhī in August-September; Durgā-ṣaṣṭhī in September-October; Goṭ-ṣaṣṭhī in October-November; Mūlā-ṣaṣṭhī in November-December; Pātāi-ṣaṣṭhī in December-January; Śītala-ṣaṣṭhī in January-February; Aśoka-ṣaṣṭhī in February-March, and Nīla-ṣaṣṭhī in March-April. (MI, xxviii, p. 154). It will be seen from the list that Manthana and Mūlā Ṣaṣṭhīs are also agricultural deities: manthana signifies the churning of the milk for producing butter and cream, while mūlā means the well-known vegetable ~~radish~~/ radish.

GOODLINGS OF DISEASE  
AND  
CURE

Village goddesses were originally believed to concern themselves with the general welfare of the people living under their respective 'spheres of influence'.<sup>1</sup> But in course of time, and chiefly under the auspices of the educated Hindu priestly class, their functions became more or less specialized.<sup>2</sup> This accounts for goddesses like Śaṣṭhī, whose sole concern is the protection of mothers and children all over Northern India, or such a tutelary deity as Devī-māī, whom the Oraons worship and whose functions consist of looking after the health and prosperity of the village.<sup>3</sup> To this class of specialized deities<sup>4</sup> belong a number of others, but of an entirely different type, whom Crooke has described as the 'godlings of disease'.<sup>5</sup> These are also female, though some of the most celebrated are not only male, but in many places may even be represented by a member of the Hindu Trinity - no less than the great Śiva himself. The reputation that

2. MI, xxviii, p. 154.

3. JRASBL, xi, p. 79.

4. For legends connected with Śaṣṭhī, see MI, xxviii, p. 157 ff. Two other types of Śaṣṭhīs are also worshipped in Bengal - the Janma-śaṣṭhī and the Jāmāi-śaṣṭhī. See Ibid, pp. 155-57.

1. VGSI, p.

2. RFNI, p. 12.

3. Roy, Sarat Chandra : Oraon Religion and Customs, Ranchi, 1928, pp. 52-53.

4. Cf. RFNI, p. 12/14 14.

5. Ibid, p. 122.

Siva enjoys at Tārakeśvara and Gondalpādā in Bengal and at Vaidyanatha in Bihar reveals him as a deity of cure.<sup>1</sup> As Rudra, Siva is praised in the Vedic literature for his healing powers.<sup>2</sup> He is called 'the healer of healers',<sup>3</sup> an attribute which seems to have survived till today in his titles like Vaidyanātha which means 'lord of the physicians'.

Though addressed as 'mothers', the majority of the village goddesses are not only malevolent but also appear to be far from maternal in their conduct and character. There are of course deities of a truly beneficent nature, but the religion of the Indian rustic is based largely on a feeling of fear which he has never wholly shaken off.<sup>4</sup> Though as tutelary deities, the functions of the village mothers is to shield the villagers from harm and calamity, yet they are regarded as more inclined to turn mischievous and cause misery if anything is remiss in their worship.<sup>5</sup> Everywhere in India, the fear of the village mothers is chronic, because they are said to be the causes as well as the averters of disease and death. They are also known to be extremely fond of blood. In order that they may not

1. Choudhury, Nanimadhab : 'Some Cure Deities', IC, vii, p. 419.
2. VM, p. 76.
3. RV, ii.33.4; AV, vi.44.3, vi.57.1 and xix.10.6 represent Rudra not only for his cooling and healing remedies, but also invoke him for curing diseases. One of the names under which Siva is worshipped as a cure deity in Bengal is Pañcānana. (Cf. GI, pp. 177-78). No less interesting of the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, which mentions Sarasvatī as a physician. Divine Power, p. xxvi.

indulge in mischief and bring disease and misery upon the village, they are propitiated with blood sacrifice of animals - goats, swine, cocks and pigeons.<sup>1</sup> To the anger of the grāmadevatā are attributed all kinds of maladies - from cholera and small-pox to whooping cough,<sup>2</sup> as well as drought and famine, cattle and infant mortality. There is, therefore, nothing of a festal character in the worship of these deities who are more feared than loved, ~~the~~ their cults being marked by many gloomy and weird rites aimed at propitiating their anger or driving away evil spirits.<sup>3</sup>

India may be a land of many wonders, but being situated within the tropical belt, she is also an excellent breeding ground of diseases which are propagated through air and water. The most fearful of the diseases belonging to this category are small-pox and cholera. Ignorance of the laws of hygiene and absence of adequate preventive measures are chiefly responsible for the frequent outbreaks of these two diseases in the form of epidemics which have not

4. RFNI, p. 13.  
5. RTLI, p. 225.

1. RTLI, p. 228; CMG, pp. 115-16.  
2. CMG, p. 116.  
3. VGSI, p. 44.

only laid desolate many a once prosperous and well-populated village, but also take even now a heavy toll of human lives.<sup>1</sup> There are of course other dangerous diseases, but none is even half as notorious as small-pox or cholera - whose sudden attacks almost always result in a rapid but very painful death. Overwhelmed by the recurring inroads of such swift, cruel and fatal diseases, on whom could the superstitious and helpless Indian rustic lean upon but his grāmadevatā? This can be easily inferred from the worship of such deities under similar circumstances still current among the uneducated and backward sections of the people all over the land.<sup>2</sup> In a country like India, where the percentage of mortality is so high, it would have been rather unnatural if the religious belief had not included since primitive times some god or goddess~~s~~ invested with the powers of causing as well as curing diseases. The general functions of the Indian village deities, as we have already seen, include the infliction and removal of epidemics and disasters.<sup>3</sup> The absence of evidence does not however enable us to determine how far back the worship of the various gods and goddesses of disease may go, though we can well imagine

1. Some idea of the ravages caused by these two diseases (small-pox and cholera) may be formed from the vital statistics furnished for the period between 1882-1890 by Sir W.W. Hunter in his book The Indian Empire, London, 1892, pp. 770-71. As late as 1921, there were in India 304,062 cases of small-pox, of which 216,538 resulted in death; and in 1949, out of 17,740 cases

the circumstances under which they were conceived and venerated. We have also at the moment no proof whatsoever of the cult of any such deity in the religion of the Indus Valley in the Chalcolithic period. Yet, as the Mother Goddess of that place has been pointed out both as a village and household deity,<sup>1</sup> it may be suggested that, like the present-day grāmadevatā, her functions also included causing, preventing and curing diseases.

Sickness and disease were attributed in ancient India to supernatural agencies.<sup>2</sup> It might be from the gods in punishment for sins, as in the case of dropsy caused by Varuṇa,<sup>3</sup> or, it might be due to a mere caprice of a malevolent deity.<sup>4</sup> A cure, it was believed, could be effected only by propitiating and appeasing the god or spirit responsible.<sup>5</sup> This is also apparent from the Vedic literature in which Rudra appears as a malevolent deity who assails men with fever, cough and poison, and with his hosts attacks men and beasts with disease and death.<sup>6</sup> But

• in India, there were 17,740 deaths, and of 4,806 cases 1,471 deaths in Pakistan. Encyclopaedia Britannica, xx, 1957 edition, p. 818.

2. RFNI, p. 12.

3. Supra, p. 133

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1. Supra, pp. 91-92

2. GI, p. 253.

3. VM, p. 26 and note 16 on p. 29.

4. Jayne, W. A : The Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations. New Haven, 1925, p. 145.

5. Ibid.

6. VM, p. 76.

at the same time he is supplicated to restrain his malevolence, and is besought <sup>1</sup> not only to preserve from calamity but also to bestow blessings on and produce welfare for men and beasts.

### Ś Ī T Ā L Ā

Epidemics in India are attributed to sins committed by people in their present birth, <sup>2</sup> and the gods or goddesses responsible for them are objects of special veneration among the common people. Fear of small-pox is indicated by the euphemistic title given to Śītalā (cool), its presiding deity, <sup>3</sup> who ~~is~~ is chiefly worshipped for the cure of the disease from Assam to Balūchistān, and from the Himālayas to the Vindhya<sup>4</sup>s. She is also called Mātā (mother), Mātājī (respected mother), and even Mahā Māī <sup>5</sup> or the Great Mother. In South India she is known as <sup>6</sup> Māri Amma.

The goddess Śītalā, whose cult is widely distributed all over Northern India, <sup>7</sup> occurs as the deity responsible for causing and curing small-pox in those sections of

1. VM, p. 76.

2. GI, p. 253.

3. Ibid; CMG, p. 116.

4. IC, vii, p. 424.

5. CMG, p. 116.

6. GI, p. 253. The name is also spelt as Mariamma and Mariyamma.

7. CMG, p. 116.

Hindu treatises of medicine that deal<sup>1</sup> with the antedotes to poison. The importance and popularity of her cult before the 15th century A.D., may be vouchsafed by the sudden abandonment of her worship in Mathura,<sup>2</sup> presumably under the orders of the iconoclastic sultan Sikandar Lodi (1489-1517), who destroyed all the Hindu temples of that place.<sup>3</sup> A very ancient temple of Śītala on the Daśāśvamedha Ghāṭ at Benares,<sup>4</sup> and another near Sasaram in Bihar indicate the antiquity of her worship.<sup>5</sup> She is worshipped under the name of Śītalā-Bhavānī by the scavengers of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.<sup>6</sup> In Madhya Pradesh, Śītalā is worshipped in the form of indented stones placed beneath a medicinal nim tree.<sup>7</sup> In the Panjāb, the goddess is believed to reside in a kikar tree, whose roots are watered by women to cool those who are suffering from small-pox.<sup>8</sup> In Mahārāṣṭra, an image of Śītalā is bathed in water mixed with nim leaves and sprinkled on the ~~patient~~ patient.<sup>9</sup> In the same province, the goddess is also

1. Bhattacharya, Asutosh : 'The Cult of the Goddess of Small-pox in West Bengal', QJMS, xliii, p. 55.
2. Elliot, H.M. and Dowson, J : History of India, vol. iv, London, 1872, p. 448, note 2.
3. Ibid, p. 447.
4. ~~Byy~~ Mustafi, Byomkesh : 'Śītalā Maṅgala', Sāhitya Pariṣat Patrikā, Calcutta, 1898, vol v(i), p. 27.
5. QJMS, xliii, p. 55. A profusely decorated stone chamber is known as the temple of Śītalā at Kangra. ASI, 1905-06, p. 14.
6. QJMS, xliii, p. 55.
7. CMG, p. 116.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.

worshipped with a different purpose. Mothers solicit her favours on the occasion of their daughters' marriage and sometimes for the purpose of getting offspring.<sup>1</sup> Several images of Śītalā have been brought to light through excavations in Mayūrabhañja, but in Orissa the goddess<sup>2</sup> passes under the name of Thākurānī and not that of Śītalā. The presiding deity of small-pox in the Brahmaputra Valley in Assam, especially in the western part, is known as Āi,<sup>3</sup> which may have been derived from Sanskrit Arṣikā or Āryā.<sup>3</sup> The Āi and her six sisters figure prominently in many Assamese folk songs which are sung whenever any one is attacked with small-pox.<sup>4</sup> The goddess is known as Mari Amma, 'the destroying mother' in the Tamil country and as Poleramma in the Telegu region of South India.<sup>5</sup>

The rites associated with the worship of the small-pox goddess differs from place to place. In the Hinduized localities, the goddess has been given an anthropomorphic form, but among the lower class people she is usually represented by a crude piece of stone daubed with vermilion.<sup>6</sup> In Birbhum, the image of Manasā, the snake-goddess is worshipped as Śītalā.<sup>7</sup> Usually, the goddess

1. QJMS, xliii, p. 55. In Mayūrabhañja, Śītalā is also

2. known as Kālikā. ASM, i, p. xcvi.

2. QJMS, xliii, p. 55.

3. Ibid.

4. ~~CMG, p. 116.~~ Ibid.

5. ~~QJMS, xliii, p. 55.~~ ~~cf. VGS, pp. 27, 22.~~ CMG, p. 116.

6. QJMS, xliii, p. 55; cf. VGS, pp. 27, 22.

7. QJMS, xliii, p. 55.

has no permanent shrine and mostly her worship takes place, as in Bengal, on a piece of ground marked out and smeared with cow-dung.<sup>1</sup> Hindu women of Bengal observe on the seventh day of the bright half of Śrāvaṇa a vrata which is called Śītalāsaptamī-vrata, the object being to avoid widowhood,<sup>2</sup> and gain sons, wealth and paddy. A brand new ghaṭa is placed on an altar decorated with the drawing (ālīpanā) of an eight-petalled lotus, and the worship of the goddess takes place in her golden image (in default of a ghaṭa) after the service in honour of Gaṇeśa and other deities.<sup>3</sup> The dhyāna is the same as quoted from the Picchilātāntra.<sup>4</sup>

We find in the Vedic literature not a few references to diseases and their treatment,<sup>5</sup> and also the names of a number of healing deities,<sup>6</sup> but it would be absolutely futile to look for Śītalā in the Vedic age, for she is in reality an Indian folk goddess.<sup>7</sup> The rituals connected with her worship, as also the conception of her image, differ substantially from the conception of the Vedic divinities.<sup>8</sup>

1. GI, p. 254.

2. PD, p. 267.

3. Ibid. A similar vrata is observed on the sixth lunar half of Māgha. Known as Śītalā-ṣaṣṭhī, the goddess is worshipped in private houses by women having children. Works of H.H. Wilson, ii, London, 1882, p. 192.

4. Infra, pp. 181-82.

5. Jayne, W. A : Op.cit, p. 150.

6. Ibid, p. 160.

7. BMKI, p. 693.

8. Ibid.

It is no doubt true that small-pox is widespread in tropical countries, but we cannot agree with Asutosh Bhattacharya that, since the Aryans came from a cold climate, they had no knowledge of this malady and consequently there is no mention of it in the Vedic literature. As a dangerous disease, small-pox seems to have been quite well-known in Europe from ancient times, though the first mention of its occurrence in France and Italy was made by Bishop Marius in 570 A.D. Small-pox was pandemic in Europe in 1614 A.D. and epidemic in England during 1666-75, and not even royalty was immune from its fatal attack. From Zimmer's list of the principal diseases known in ancient India, it is not difficult to infer if the Aryans knew of small-pox or not, for we find included in its ailments like sores, abscesses and skin-diseases, any one of which can be equated with small-pox. The disease does not find any mention in the Atharva Veda, but occurs in such ancient medical books as the Suśruta Saṁhitā, Aṣṭāṅgasaṁgraha, Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayasaṁhitā and Sārṅgadhara. According to the Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayasaṁhitā, masurikā or small-pox is a dangerous disease whose attack nobody survives.

1. BMKI, pp. 693-94.

2. Encyclopaedia Britannica, xx, 1957, p. 817.

3. Ibid.

4. Cambridge Modern History, vol. vi, ed. Sir A.W. Ward and others, Cambridge, 1925, p. 148; Leroy, Alfred : Louis XV, London, 1939, p. 350.

5. Zimmer, H : Hindu Medicine, Baltimore, 1948, pp.31-32.

6. Jolly, J : Indian Medicine, Poona, 1951, p. 137.

7. Ibid.

The name Śitalā is non-Vedic, but became current as a popular designation (lokāśraya saṁjñā)<sup>1</sup> of the small-pox goddess in the 12th century A.D. It originated doubtless in connection with the cold treatment for small-pox because of the high fever that accompanies it.<sup>2</sup> Since the mild type of small-pox is cured of itself and the virulent type is a sure killer, many physicians prescribe no medicine and the only treatment suggested is application<sup>3</sup> of cold water and putting the patient in a cool place. Different types of small-pox also account for the seven forms of the goddess and the prevalence of the/seven small-pox sisters in North India.<sup>4</sup>

The Bhāvaprakāśa, a treatise on medicine, contains a series of meditative verses or the dhyāna of the goddess Śitalā, which are said to have been derived from the Kāśikhanda of the Skanda Purāna.<sup>5</sup> This is evidently a later ascription made with a view to invest the folk goddess Śitalā with a Purānic pedigree.<sup>6</sup> The worshippers of the goddess believe that the rituals connected with her worship have been compiled from the Picchilātāntra and her

1. Jolly, J : Op.cit, p. 137.
2. CMG, p. 116.
3. Jolly, J : Op. cit, p. 139.
4. Ibid. Cf. Bhāvaprakāśa by Bhavamisra, ii, ed. and trans. by Kailasa Chandra Sen Gupta, Calcutta, 1901, pp. 934.
5. Bhāvaprakāśa, ii, pp. 930-31.
6. BMKI, p. 693.

dhyāna lifted from the Skanda Purāna.<sup>1</sup> In the dhyāna<sup>2</sup> the goddess is described as of white complexion, seated on an ass, holding in her hands a sweeping broom and a pitcher full of water. She sprinkles with the broom the nectar-like water from the pitcher to alleviate the heat (caused by the ravages of the disease). She is naked, has a winnowing fan on her head, is three-eyed and her person is decorated with gold and jewels. She restrains the terrible suffering caused by the painful eruptions. There is also a hymn in the Skanda Purāna,<sup>3</sup> in which Śītalā is addressed by Śiva. All the salient characteristics of the goddess as described in her dhyāna appear to have been repeated here. According to this hymn, people who worship her, are sure to be rid of diseases, particularly the fear of eruptions in their own houses.

'The conception of Śītalā', says Nanimadhab Chaudhury, 'her cult as it is practised now-a-days and the absence of any mention of her in the older Purānas - all point to her rise from a folk goddess of demoniacal type'.<sup>4</sup> Yet, as the goddess in the hymn addressed to her by Śiva ~~in the~~<sup>5</sup> is said to be worshipped in water, some scholars have

1. QJMS, xliii, p. 56.
2. Quoted in ASM, i, p. xcvi, also compare fig. 51 in Ibid.
3. On the north wall of the temple of Sachiya Mātā in Marwar, Rājasthan, there is an image of Śītalā, which answers to the dhyāna. ASI, 1908-09, p. 109.
4. BMKI, p. 693.
5. IC, vii, p. 426.
5. Yastvāmudakamadhye tu kṛtā sampujayennarah.

sought to equate her with Āpaḥ,<sup>1</sup> who are praised in the Vedas because they are remedial and grant remedies for healing, long life and immortality.<sup>2</sup> But as we have already stated, Śītalā has nothing to do with the Vedic pantheon. Nor has she, contrary to what has been suggested by H.P. Sastri,<sup>3</sup> any relation with the Buddhist Hārītī. There is absolutely no evidence, either legendary or iconographical, which may connect Hārītī with Śītalā as the prototype of the latter.<sup>4</sup> It is indeed difficult, as Bhattacharya rightly observes,<sup>5</sup> to equate Śītalā,

1. BMKI, p. 694.

2. RV, i.23.19-21, vi.50.7; AV, vi.91.3, iii.7.5.

3. Sastri, H.P : Discovery of Living Buddhism in Bengal, Calcutta, 1897, p. 20. J.N. Banerjea also regards Śītalā as having 'a great many affinities with the Buddhist Hārītī, especially from the point of view of her iconographic and other traits'. (DHI, p. 383). But it is not Hārītī but Parnaśabarī, another Buddhist goddess, who is three-headed and wears an apron of leaves, who is, according to her iconography a deity of disease and epidemics : aśeṣarogamārīpadākrāntāḥ ... sarvvamārīpraśamanī = 'tramples under foot many diseases and epidemics ... and queller of all epidemics'. An image of the goddess, found at Vajrayogini, Dacca, represents her as trampling under her feet figures with small, round pox marks on their bodies, and other figures symbolizing epidemics, are shown in flight. ASR, 1922-23, p. 115; IBBS, pp. 59, 61, pl. xxiii.b.

4. For the legends regarding Hārītī, see Supra, pp. 141-42. It will appear that Hārītī did not possess like Śītalā the power to cause and avert small-pox or epidemics.

5. BMKI, pp. 695-96.

whose dhyāna represents her as seated on an ass, naked, with a winnowing fan over her head and holding a broom in her hand, with Hārītī who is the very image of happy and radiant motherhood - well-dressed, profusely ornamented, of smiling countenance and surrounded by babies.<sup>1</sup> The origin of Śītalā as well as her name has been described in the following legend by Nityananda Chakravarty, the author of a Bengali Śītalā Maṅgala poem.<sup>2</sup> The king Nahuṣa performed a sacrifice for getting offspring. When the sacrificial fire was about to be put out at the end of the ceremony, a girl of dazzling appearance came out of it with a winnowing fan over her head. Brahmā gave her the name of Śītalā (one who is cool or who cools) because she came out of the sacrificial pit when it was cooling down. Evidently, the story furnishes another example of how a non-Aryan goddess is admitted into Hinduism. 'The attributes of the goddess; we fully agree with Nanimadhab Chaudhury, 'and the existence side by side, of her worship in the Hindu and non-Aryan forms, indicate her true origin, namely, that she is a folk goddess who has been Brahmanised'.<sup>3</sup>

1. ~~Supra~~ Supra, p. 140-41.

2. BMKI, p. 696.

3. IC, vii, p. 425.

Śītalā is obviously a Purāṇic name invented to address or designate euphemistically the small-pox goddess so that she might restrain the burning heat from which the patient suffers during an attack of the disease. In her dhyāna too, she is mentioned as visphoṭakādugrapratāpaprāśamānā-karī, or 'one who alleviates the high heat caused by the eruptions'. One of the South Indian village goddesses bears the name of Śītalamma, who is however a water deity,<sup>1</sup> but ~~in~~ in many parts of South India goddesses of her kind are associated with small-pox.<sup>2</sup> Gaṅgamma of Masulipattam district is a deity of this type.<sup>3</sup> In the hymn to Śītalā, it has been stated that she is worshipped in water. The submerging of the Sitala temple at Benares in the Ganges every year during the rainy season has given rise to the popular belief in which the image of the goddess is thrice submerged by the holy Gaṅgā in order to maintain its purity and effectiveness.<sup>4</sup> Śītalamma, though a water spirit, is thus a small-pox goddess.

Bhattacharya thinks that Śītalamma of South India and Śītalā of Bengal are one and the same goddess.<sup>5</sup> According to him, Śītalā was originally a South Indian village goddess imported into Bengal.<sup>6</sup> The reasons given for his

1. VGSI, p. 22.
2. BMKI, p. 697.
3. VGSI, p. 21.
4. BMKI, p. 697.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.

conjecture are however far <sup>o</sup>fr̄m convincing. Bengal must have been as much subject to the ravages of small-pox as South India or any other part of the sub-continent. It therefore stands to reason if the  $\frac{1}{2}$  people of Bengal in ancient times should have conceived a goddess presiding over this disease and given her the euphemistic title of Śītalā under Purāṇic influence. More logical and effective sound the views of Banerjea in whose opinion Śītalā, as she is worshipped now in Eastern and Western India, is a form of the goddess Jyeṣṭhā, about whom there is an entire chapter in the Baudhāyana Gr̄hyasūtra and who was once worshipped in South India for happiness and prosperity.<sup>1</sup> The worship of Jyeṣṭhā, it appears, declined in South India due to Vaisnavite opposition, but she gained a permanent footing, so thinks Banerjea, in Eastern India, particularly Bengal and Orissa, and also in Gujarat under the name of Śītalā, who is characterized by many of the features of Jyeṣṭhā.<sup>2</sup> In the old Tamil Nighāntus, Jyeṣṭhā appears under many names such as Mugadi, Tauvai (elder sister), Kaladi, Mudevi, the crow-bannered, the ass-rider, Kiṭṭai, the bad woman and Ekavenī, and her weapon is said to be a sweeping broom.<sup>3</sup> But mere tracing of Jyeṣṭhā to

1. IHQ, xiv, pp. 104-05.

2. Ibid, p. 105.

3. EHI, i(ii), p. 395; also pp. 390-98.

the time of the Baudhāyana Grhyasūtra cannot invest her with the character and importance of a Vedic goddess. She was, like many other non-Aryan gods and goddesses, obviously incorporated into the Vedic religion which had already accommodated a fair amount of belief in grotesque and malevolent spirits. We are inclined to regard Jyeṣṭhā, in the light of her iconography,<sup>1</sup> as of non-Aryan origin, notwithstanding her worship being traceable among the Vedic Aryans of the time of Baudhāyana.<sup>2</sup> Apart from the facts that Jyeṣṭhā has a broom in her hand and that she rides an ass, there is hardly any other feature which might equate her with Śītalā as described<sup>5</sup> in her dhyāna or in the hymn addressed to her by Śiva. We shall not deny that the Senas brought with them from their original homeland many items of religion to Bengal, but we find it difficult to agree with Banerjea if they had really brought with them the conception as well as the cult of a goddess, whose worship, as testified by Banerjea himself, had declined in the South owing to strong Vaiṣṇavite opposition.

As the goddess of small-pox Śītalā is widely worshipped in Bengal. She is also known as Bāsantī Burhī or Bāsantī Caṇḍī and worshipped even by the high caste Brahmins in times of acute emergency.<sup>3</sup> In Jessore and Noakhali

1. EHI, i(ii), p. 393; App. C, p. 156, pls. cxxi, cxxii, cxxiii.
2. C. B. C. 500-300.
3. ERE, ii, p. 485.

districts the goddess takes the form of a white woman in a state of perfect nudity,<sup>1</sup> and the Pods of Khulna regard her not merely as the goddess of small-pox, but as their main deity.<sup>2</sup>

Besides Sitalamma, there are a few goddesses who are also connected with small-pox in South India. One is Sukhajamma, who is worshipped in Mysore district.<sup>3</sup> Mariamma, the most ~~a~~ reputed among the gramadevatas in the South, is actually a godling of disease,<sup>4</sup> and the special malady with which she is associated is small-pox, and she has, in this capacity, Sitalādevī as one of her epithets.<sup>5</sup> None of the South Indian small-pox deities has any image; all are worshipped in the form of stones.<sup>6</sup> This is a proof both of the antiquity of their worship as well as of their non-Aryan origin. In Bengal also, Sitalā had originally no image.<sup>7</sup> Usually, a stone with pock marks represents the goddess, who may also be indicated by a piece of wood or stone with a human face carved on it, besmeared with oil and vermillion, and studded with nails of gold, silver or brass in imitation of the pustules of the disease.<sup>8</sup> Her priests are known as Sitalā Pandits,<sup>9</sup>

1. Webster, J.E. : Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteer : Noakhali, Allahabad, 1911, pp. 34-35.

2. Bengal District Gazetteer : Khulna, p. 61.

3. VGSI, p. 23.

4. OII, p. 471 ff, and notes 263 and 264.

5. Ibid; cf. VGSI, p. 27.

6. BMKI, p. 698.

7. Ibid.

8. Sāhitya Pariṣat Patrikā, v(i), 1898, p. 30. cf. Matsya P cclix.20 : regarding images having no hands or feet as responsible for epidemics.

drawn chiefly from the lower class, and their goddess is an image having neither hands nor feet but only a face smeared with red lead and with pustules made of mother of pearl or of some metal.<sup>1</sup> The iconography of Śītalā as well as her image discovered in Mayūrabhañja,<sup>2</sup> should therefore be ascribed to the Buddhist or Hindu Tāntrik influence of a subsequent period.<sup>3</sup> Another proof of Śītalā's non-Aryan origin is furnished by her priests - the Śītalā-Paṇḍits, - who are also known as grahavipras.<sup>4</sup>

O L Ā I C A Ṇ Ḍ Ī O R O L Ā B I B I

Equally fatal and dangerous is cholera whose presiding deity is known as Olāi Caṇḍī and Olā Bibi in Bengal,<sup>5</sup> and Ankamma in South India.<sup>6</sup> The third major epidemic disease of India, cholera 'has endemic foci in the country, in Bengal, and in the Cauvery delta of the province of Madras'.<sup>7</sup> The disease was known to the Aryans under the

9. ERE, ii, p. 485.

1. Sāhitya Pariṣat Patrikā, v(i), 1898, pp. 30-31.

2. ASM, i, p. xcvi.

3. BMKI, p. 698.

4. Ibid; cf. Sāhitya Pariṣat Patrikā, v(i), 1898, p. 30.

5. ERE, ii, p. 485.

6. VGSI, p. 22.

7. Sigerist, H. E : A History of Medicine, ii, New York, 1961, p. 130. According to this scholar, from 1877 to 1941, the average number of annual deaths from cholera calculated for five year periods, varied from 141,000 to 440,000.

names of visūcikā and visūcī, and according to the Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā, people were attacked by it as a result of drinking too much soma.<sup>1</sup> Symptoms and treatment of the disease have been discussed in both the Suśruta Saṁhitā<sup>2</sup> and the Bhāvaprakāśa.<sup>3</sup> In the Rājatarāṅginī, cholera is cited as dangerous as well as fatal, while the Caraka Saṁhitā<sup>4</sup> mentions it as an epidemic disease.

The goddess presiding over this notorious disease is sometimes represented as wearing a gown and riding a horse, but usually she is worshipped in the form of an earthen pot placed under a nim tree.<sup>5</sup> As in the case of Śītalā, the priests of the cholera goddess also belong to the lower castes. The Mother Goddess Durgā, whose manifestations the various godlings are,<sup>6</sup> is believed to develop during the excitement caused by epidemics into her terrible form, the blood-thirsty Kālī.<sup>7</sup> She is therefore worshipped, particularly in Bengal, as Rakṣā Kālī, 'the preserver Kālī', in times of an epidemic of a severe type.

1. Jolly, J : Op. cit., p. 111.
2. Suśruta Saṁhitā, iii (ed. and trans. by Kaviraj Kunjalal Bhisagaratna), Calcutta, 1916, pp. 352-56.
3. Bhāvaprakāśa, ii, pp. 307-09.
4. Jolly, J : Op. cit., p. 111.
5. ERE, ii, p. 485.
6. It should however be noted that the Mother Goddess or her emanations are not mentioned in the pre-epic, epic and Purāṇic accounts as deities of disease, and there is also no reference to their healing powers. In popular belief only she is worshipped under her various Purāṇic names for the cure of various ailments. IC, vii, p. 421.
7. RFNI, p. 122.

The worship of Rakṣā Kālī takes place during midnight at lonely crossroads outside the village or in a cremation ground.<sup>1</sup> In former times Rakṣā Kālī used to be worshipped with human sacrifice.<sup>2</sup> The cholera goddess is worshipped in ~~the~~ Uttar Pradesh under the name of Kālī Devī, who is also called Hulkā Devī and Mārī Māī in some places.<sup>3</sup>

Many local and folk deities, having association with diseases, have been affiliated to Śiva or his consort (chiefly under her name Caṇḍī) under the impact of Brahmanical Hinduism. This will be evident from such names as Olāī Caṇḍī, Basana Caṇḍī, Ghoḍā Caṇḍī, Dharā Caṇḍī, Kalāī Caṇḍī, Abāk Caṇḍī, Kakāī Caṇḍī etc.<sup>4</sup> The words mātā and Kālī are also found added to the names of such goddesses, e.g., Ujāli Mātā, Rakṣā Kālī, and so on.<sup>5</sup> The uncouth names of many of these village goddesses unmistakably point to their non-Aryan origin, and words like Caṇḍī or Kālī suffixed to their titles indicate their adoption into orthodox Hinduism by giving their cults the semblance of having had a Purāṇic origin.<sup>6</sup> More often than not, local and folk deities, whose identities are

1. RFNI, p. 126.

2. GI, p. 256. On p. 255, Rev. Martin says, 'In times of small-pox epidemics of unusual severity, human sacrifices have been known to be offered to stay the ravages of the disease!'

3. Ibid, pp. 255-56. For the legends of Śitalā and the propagation of her worship, see BMKI, p. 698 ff.

4. IC, vii, p. 422.

5. Ibid.

6. Mitra, S.C. : 'On the Cult of the Godlings of Disease in Eastern Bengal', MI, iii, Ranchi, 1923, pp. 55-56



T H E M Ā T R K Ā S

Like the Deae Matres whose worship seems to have been quite popular in Gaul, Britain, Lower Germany, and to a limited extent even at Rome between the 1st and the middle of the 3rd century A.D.,<sup>1</sup> the Mātrkās may be described as mother goddesses in a restricted sense of the term. From what is known about them from the Mahābhārata, the Purānas and other literary sources, they appear as minor war goddesses to serve as auxiliaries to great gods and goddesses in the latter's struggle against the asuras.<sup>2</sup> Seven Mātrkās are said to attend the investiture of Skanda as the generalissimo of the gods.<sup>3</sup> At the end of the ceremony, a large band of mothers, of whom 194 names are given by Vyāsa, come to join Skanda on the eve of his fight against Tārakāsura.<sup>4</sup> Besides these 194 mothers, we

1. Robinson, F.N : 'Deae Matres', ERE, iv, p. 406 ff; LEM, p. 248.
2. Mbh, ix.45; MP, lxxxviii; Varāha P, xxvii; Matsya P, clxxix; Kūrma P, xxvii; SP(Kāśīkhaṇḍe Uttarakhaṇḍa), lxxxii. For an exhaustive list of literature on the Mātrkās, see Aufrecht, Th. : Catalogus Catalogorum, Part i, Wiesbaden, 1962, pp. 447-48.
3. Mbh, ix.43.29.
4. Ibid, ix.45.1 ff; VP, lviii.28.

are told, many others numbered by thousands and of diverse forms, appear to swell the ranks of the celestial army.<sup>1</sup> The Mahābhārata describes them in detail.<sup>2</sup> These Mātṛkās appear to be terrible as warriors and are said to have their abodes on trees, in open spots and at the cross-roads. They also live in caves, crematoriums, mountains and springs. Adorned with various ornaments, the Mātṛkās are represented as attired in various kinds of dress and speaking different languages.

According to the Varāha Purāna,<sup>3</sup> Śiva is assisted during his fight with Andhakāsura by seven gods through their respective śaktis who are named Brahmāṇī (of Brahmā), Māheśvarī (of Maheśvara), Kaumārī (of Kumāra), Vaiṣṇavī (of Viṣṇu), Indrāṇī (of Indra), and Cāmuṇḍā or Yāmī (of Yama). Collectively, these śaktis of the seven gods are called Sapta-mātṛkās or the seven mothers.<sup>4</sup> As stated in the Kūrma Purāna,<sup>5</sup> the Mātṛkās after the destruction of the demon Andhaka, go to live in the pātāla or the underworld, but, having no means of subsistence, start feeding

1. Mbh, ix.45.29.

2. Ibid, ix.45.30 ff.

3. Varaha P, xxvii.31-32. In addition to the seven mothers, Yogeśvarī, who is reckoned as a Mātṛkā, is born out of Śiva's mouth (Ibid, xxvii.30).

4. DHI, p. 505.

5. Kūrma P, xxvii.226-32; SP (Āvantiyakhaṇḍe Revākhaṇḍa), xv; Matsya P, clxxix.44-86.

themselves upon anything and everything that come in their way. Viṣṇu as Nṛsiṃha (the man-lion incarnation) stops their carnage by abstracting ~~from them~~ from them their destructive and cannibalistic nature. According to another legend recorded in the Suprabhedāgama, the Sapta-mātrkās are created by Brahmā in order to kill a demon named Nirṛta.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in the Devī-Māhātmya section of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna,<sup>2</sup> we find coming out of the bodies of the gods - Brahmā, Śiva, Kārttikeya, Viṣṇu, Varāha, Indra and Nṛsimha - these Sapta-Mātrkās in the forms of their respective śaktis to assist the Mother Goddess Durgā (Caṇḍī) during a very tense moment of her struggle with the demons Sumbha and Niśumbha. The Adbhūta Rāmāyaṇa, a work ascribed to Vālmīki, mentions the creation of thousands of Mātrkās, all of them of terrible appearance and warlike character, from her own body by Sītā, who assumes the form of Kālī in order to destroy the rākṣasa king Rāvaṇa.<sup>3</sup>

The cult of the Mātrkās can claim, like that of the Mother Goddess, a great antiquity among the lower orders at least, and it must have come into vogue among the upper strata of Hindu society following the rise and spread of

1. EHI, i(ii), pp. 382-83.

2. MP, lxxxviii.11 ff.

3. Adbhūta Rāmāyaṇa, p. 150 ff.

Śaktism in India. The Vāyu Purāna, which existed more or less in its complete form during the early Gupta period, if not before,<sup>1</sup> contains notices of Mātrkās and describes them as the wives of ṛṣis, who nurse the motherless Skanda immediately after his birth.<sup>2</sup> It was through Skanda, that 'the Sapta Matrikas got themselves admitted into Saivism ... and later were transformed from their original character of the Saptaṛṣis of astronomy to the new śaktis or bibhūtis or energies of the seven great gods - as they are found represented in the later sculptures from Elephanta and Ellora'.<sup>3</sup> The Mātrkās do not figure prominently in the Grhyasūtras, but as Kane observes, their worship was prevalent certainly in the early centuries of the Christian era throughout India.<sup>4</sup> The custom of Mātrkā worship in ancient India may be noticed in the writings of the dramatists Bhāsa and Śūdraka, and during their times it was both widespread and generally understood.<sup>5</sup> Bhāsa and Śūdraka lived before Kālidāsa. Scholars are not unanimous on the date of Bhāsa,<sup>6</sup> but as the

1. Smith, V.A.: Early History of India, (4th edition), Oxford, 1957 (reprint), p. 11 ff; HD, v, p. 856.
2. Patil, D.R.: 'Sapta Matrikas or the Seven Mothers from Besnagar', PIHC, xiith session, Allahabad, 1950, p.111. According to the Mahābhārata(ix.43), Skanda was nursed by the Kṛttikās or the Pleiads. Cf. EM, p.227.
3. PIHC, xiith session, p. 112.
4. HD, ii(i), p. 217. But Kane is wrong because the Mātrṣ are mentioned in the Mānava Grhyasūtra. See Infra, p. 200.
5. JRAS, 1960, p. 18.
6. Sukthankar, V.S. : 'Studies in Bhāsa', JBBRAS, lxxv, p.233; Dasgupta, S.N.: A History of Sanskrit Literature, i, University of Calcutta, 1957, p. 106.

peculiarity of the Prākṛt in his drama Cārudatta is also shared by the works of Aśvaghōṣa,<sup>1</sup> a contemporary of Kaṇiṣka,<sup>2</sup> it would be reasonable to suggest<sup>3</sup> Bhāsa to have been living not only long before Kālidāsa,<sup>3</sup> but possibly before the birth of the Christ as well. Bhāsa also appears to have lived before Sūdraka, who has been assigned to a period between the 1st century B.C. and the 1st century A.D.,<sup>4</sup> because Cārudatta written by the former is the fragmentary original of the latter's Mṛcchakaṭika.<sup>5</sup> Bhāsa in his Cārudatta and Sūdraka in his Mṛcchakaṭika refer to the worship of the Mātṛs at the crossroads.<sup>6</sup>

The Mātṛkās also occur in the leading Purāṇas<sup>7</sup> and are mentioned as well as in the Gobhila-smṛti, the Bṛhat-saṃhitā of Varāhamihira and the Devī Purāṇa.<sup>8</sup> Their worship seems to have come down from the Kuṣāṇa to the Gupta period. This is indicated by the Kumārasambhava of Kālidāsa. The Mātṛs, whose number is limited to seven by the commentator Mallinātha,<sup>9</sup> appear in connection with

1. Sukthankar, V.S.: 'Studies in Bhāsa', JAOS, No. 40, 1920, p. 290.
2. Keith, A.B. : A History of Sanskrit Literature, Oxford, 1920, p. 54.
3. Smith, V.A.: Early History of India, p. 212, note 2 : 'Kalidasa belongs to the Gupta period and 5th century A.D.'
4. Dasgupta, S.N.: Op.cit, p. 758.
5. Ibid, p. 108; JAOS, No. 40, p. 249.
6. JRAS, 1960, pp. 17-18.
7. Supra, p. 193, note 2. The Amarakoṣa also mentions the Mātṛkās (i.1.41), but gives only the name of Cāmuṇḍā and no description of the others.

the marriage of Śiva with Pārvatī.<sup>1</sup> Held in regard by Śiva,<sup>2</sup> the Mātṛkās appear as brilliant as lightning, and with their ear-rings swinging due to the movement of their vāhanas, they follow the god as part of his entourage in a procession from Kailāsa to the house of Himālaya.<sup>3</sup> That these goddesses enjoyed the reverence of all strata of society including even the royalty during the 7th century A.D., is testified by Bāṇabhaṭṭa in two of his famous works, Kādambarī<sup>4</sup> and Harṣacarita.<sup>5</sup> In the former, the Mātṛkās appear as associated with the removal of barrenness in women and with childbirth, for the queen Vilāsavati is found to solicit their favours ~~for~~ in order to be blessed with offspring.<sup>6</sup> Abu Raihan Albārūni, a contemporary of Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznah (997-1030), and his son Sultan Masud (1030-1041), not only mentions the Sapta-mātṛkās, but their names and iconography as well, including that of Virabhadra and Gaṇeśa.<sup>7</sup> Kalhaṇa, the

8. HD, ii(i), p. 217.

9. Kumārasambhavam, ed. and translated by Srishchandara Chakravarty, Dacca, 1904, p. 616.

1. Kumārasambhavam, vii.30.

2. Ibid, vii.31.

3. Ibid, vii.38.

4. Kādambarī, (trans. Ridding), p. xvi.

5. Harṣa Carita by Bāṇabhaṭṭa, (trans. Cowell and Thomas), pp. 85, 221.

6. Kādambarī, (trans. Ridding), p. 56.

7. Sachau, E.C. : Albārūni's India, 2 vols., London, 1888, vol. 1, pp. 119-20.

12th century historian of Kashmir,<sup>1</sup> frequently refers to the Mātrkās and the erection of temples in their honour by the kings of his country.<sup>2</sup>

It may not be possible for us in the absence of ~~evidence~~ evidence, to assign a definite date for the origin of the cult of the Mātrkās, but the large number of terracotta female figurines/<sup>unearthed</sup> in the prehistoric sites of the Indus Valley suggest, in our opinion, the evidence of their worship from the remotest antiquity. It was from such a background, rightly argues Kane, that the cult of the Mātrkās was taken up by the followers of Vedism and later<sup>3</sup> on affiliated to the worship of the Mother Goddess Durgā.<sup>4</sup> The Vedas too mention the Sapta Mātaraḥ,<sup>5</sup> who stand for seven rivers, and are said to regulate the soma when it is under preparation.<sup>6</sup> The daughters of Tvaṣṭṛ collectively enjoy the epithet - 'mothers of Indra', whom they cure of ophthalmic sleeplessness.<sup>7</sup> Rudra's title Tryambaka has been interpreted as that god's having three mothers.<sup>8</sup> Should this interpretation be correct, Rudra

1. Keith, A.B.: A History of Sanskrit Literature, p. 158.
2. Rājatarāṅgīnī, (trans. M.A. Stein), Westminster, 1900, i.222, 333, 335, 348; iii.99; v.55; viii.2776.
3. HD, ii(i), p. 218.
4. RV, ix.102.4.
5. Griffiths, R.T.H.: The Hymns of the Rig Veda, vol.ii, Benares, 1897, p. 370, note 4.
6. HD, ii(i), p. 218.
7. RPV, p. 205.
8. JRAS, 1960, p. 19.

would be connected according to some scholars, with the cult of the mothers right from the Vedic period.<sup>1</sup> The mothers are also mentioned in the Mānava Grhyasūtra in connection with a ritual of the Astaka festivals.<sup>2</sup> On the evening of the last Astaka a cow is killed by the sacrificer at the crossroads and its flesh is distributed to the passers-by, but while soma is offered to the Pitrs and their wives, the 'Mothers' receive only surā (wine) and the scum of boiled rice.<sup>3</sup> The 'Mothers' in whose honour the cow is killed, appear here not as Aryan ancestresses, says Kosambi, but in their own right as independent goddesses whom it was necessary to appease, and that this practice was borrowed from the non-Aryan element in India is indicated by the rite being performed at the crossroads.

The earliest concrete evidence of Mātrkā worship in India is suggested by a headless, standing female figure found at Shabkadar on the Momand frontier, representing a goddess with four arms of which the upper two are broken.<sup>5</sup>

1. RPV, p. 149; but Keith does not agree with the interpretation as there is no mention of Rudra's three mothers in the literature of the later period. Cf. EM, p. 220, note 1.
2. RPV, p. 428.
3. Ibid, p. 429.
4. JRAS, 1960, pp. 19-20. Evidence of the worship of the Mātrkās at night and presumably at the crossroads outside the village or city and also the custom of throwing the offerings meant for them into the space, is also furnished by Bāṇa. Harṣa Carita (trans. Cowell and Thomas), p. 221.
5. ASI, (Frontier Circle), 1908-09, p. 4.

Headless and short of two arms, the image can yet be identified as that of Vaiṣṇavī or the śakti of Viṣṇu and one of the Mātrkās.<sup>1</sup> D. C. Ganguli assigns the sculpture to the early part of the 2nd century A.D.,<sup>2</sup> but Smith<sup>3</sup> thinks it to be later than 226 A.D.<sup>4</sup> Both Spooner<sup>5</sup> and Smith<sup>6</sup> are however wrong in describing the weapon held by the goddess in her lower left hand as a spear, because it is actually a mace or gadā,<sup>6</sup> which along with the cakra or discus seen in the lower right hand of the image,<sup>7</sup> constitute the weapons placed in the hands of Viṣṇu,<sup>7</sup> and should therefore be in the hands of Vaiṣṇavī, who is his śakti. For, according to the Brhatsamhitā, we have :<sup>8</sup>  
mātrgaṇaḥ karttavyaḥ svanāmadevānurūpakṛtaciḥṇaḥ,<sup>8</sup> that is, 'the mothers should be made with the form and cognizance of the gods whom they are named after'. Again in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, it is in connection with their appearing to augment the strength<sup>9</sup> of the Mother Goddess :  
Yasya devasya yadrūpāṃ yathābhuṣanaṃ tattaddeva hi  
tacchakti ...<sup>9</sup> or, 'the śakti of each god is characterized by his (that god's) form and ornaments'. According

1. Ganguli, D.C. : 'Identification of Some Brahmanical Sculptures', IHQ, ix, p. 162.
2. Ibid.
3. HFAIC, p. 125, fig. 78.
4. ASI, (Frontier Circle), 1908-09, p. 4.
5. HFAIC, p. 124.
6. IHQ, ix, p. 163. Ganguli regards the indistinct object on the palm of the upper right hand of the image as lotus and conjectures that the corresponding left hand held a conch.
7. EHI, i(ii), App.C, p. 39.
8. Brhatsamhitā, lvii.56.

to this formula, the image from Shabkadar answers to the description of Vaiṣṇavī. It is also the earliest known Mātṛkā image.<sup>1</sup> Assuming it as datable in the 3rd century A.D., and taking into consideration the evidence furnished by the works of Bhāsa and Śūdraka, the Mahābhārata, and the Mānava Grhyasūtra as well, the cult of the Mātṛkās may with reason be postulated to have been in practice at the beginning of the Christian era, if not earlier.<sup>2</sup>

V.S. Agrawala draws our attention to a number of stone slabs containing seated as well as standing female figures and preserved in the Mathura Museum.<sup>2</sup> He assigns all the compositions to the Kuṣāṇa period and identifies the images as those of Mātṛkās, notwithstanding the absence of attributes. In regard to No. F.38, containing a row of seven standing female figures, with their right hands raised in abhayamudrā and each holding a water-pot in her left, he observes, 'they represent the earliest forms of the seven Divine Mothers, Sapta-Mātrikās, shown as ordinary female figures without any distinguishing symbol or vehicle'.<sup>3</sup> The group is flanked by two male figures, each

9. MP, lxxxviii.13. The Mahābhārata also describes the Mātṛkās as having the forms of important Vedic and Puranic gods, such as, Yama, Soma, Kuvera, Varuṇa, Indra, Agni, Brahmā, Vāyu, Kumāra, Viṣṇu and Varāha. Mbh, ix.45.36-37.

1. IHQ, ix, p. 163.

2. CBIMA, p. 59 ff, Nos. F.38, F.39, G.57, 126, 1024, 1362, 2491.

3. Ibid, p. 60.

with his right hand in abhayamudrā and his left holding a spear. Agrawala identifies them as āyudhapuruṣas. In his opinion, 'the convention of carving the Divine Mothers between Vīrabhadra and Gaṇeśa was preceded in the Kuṣāṇa period by the figures of two āyudha-puruṣas or male attendants carrying spears.<sup>1</sup> Yet elsewhere he identifies a group of five seated female figures as Mātṛkā images even though the āyudhapuruṣas are absent from the slab.<sup>2</sup> The female figures on slab No. 126 are according to him Mātṛkā images, being the earliest of their kind.

To us, Agrawala's identification of these images as those of Mātṛkās appears to be based more on guesswork than on iconographical texts relating to these goddesses. He seems to have identified these female figures, regardless of the absence of any distinguishing symbol or ~~the~~ vehicle, as Mātṛkā images. The identity of the male figures as āyudhapuruṣas is difficult to accept, for Agrawala does not specify what or whose āyudha they personify in the composition. Moreover, their identification as āyudhapuruṣas seems to be chronologically premature, because such figures do not appear in Indian sculpture till the Gupta period, and when they do, are found to have been exclusively employed in the representations of Viṣṇu, as testified by numerous representations

1. CBIMA, p. 60.

2. Ibid, p. 60 (No. G.57).

of that god in the medieval and late medieval art of Northern India.<sup>1</sup> Āyudhapuruṣas are not known to have accompanied any other god, much less any goddess, in Indian plastic art. Thus V.S. Agrawala's contention cannot be entertained. As to the dating of the images, we have only Professor Agrawala's claim that they belong to the Kuṣāṇa period. This is quite likely, for the bulk of the antiquities from the region of Mathura belong to those times, but we cannot regard the female figures as Mātṛkā images because there is no attribute to warrant such an identification.

We cannot also agree with Agrawala's identification of some of the animal-headed female figures as Mātṛkā images.<sup>2</sup> 'The figurines are distinguished', he says about one of the groups,<sup>3</sup> 'not by their vehicles but by the different animal faces borrowed from their respective vāhanas'.<sup>3</sup> Two of the goddesses in this category, i.e., Vārāhī and Nārāsiṃhī have of course to be represented as boar-headed lion-faced respectively, but all the rest of the Mātṛkās have human faces.<sup>4</sup> Agrawala's claim that the four-armed ox-headed goddess is Māheśvarī<sup>5</sup> must be rejected as fantastic, because it is not supported by iconographical

1. DHI, p. 537, p. xxvii.2; for āyudhapuruṣas, see Ibid, pp. 403-04.
2. CBIMA, pp. 60-62, (Nos. 880, 929, 2331, D.8)
3. Ibid, p. 61, (No. 2331).
4. Infra, p. 238.
5. CBIMA, p. 62, (No. D.8).

texts. Seated female figures with a child on their laps in the Mathura Museum collection, and assigned by Agrawala to the Kuṣāṇa period,<sup>1</sup> may as well have been votive images associated with the worship of the Mother Goddess, and hence may be put in the same class as those found at various archaeological sites and assigned to the pre-<sup>2</sup> Mauryan, Mauryan, Śuṅga, Kuṣāṇa and Gupta periods. But as they are depicted in groups on the same slab,<sup>3</sup> which is the usual manner of representing these divinities, as well as on account of the child on their lap, these figures may be regarded as Mātṛkā images, though such an identification, in the absence of the usual attributes, must be held as tentative. In regard to the fragmentary relief,<sup>4</sup> the identity of the images depicted on it does not leave us in doubt. They are, as Agrawala suggests, Mātṛkās, the boar-faced goddess being Vārāhī and the lion-faced one Nārasiṃhī. It is with regard to the dating of the relief that we must differ from Professor Agrawala. It cannot be assigned to the Kuṣāṇa period for none of the incarnatory forms of Viṣṇu in plastic art goes back to a period earlier than the Gupta Age.<sup>4</sup> As two of the Mātṛkās on this slab happen to śaktis of Viṣṇu in his Varāha and Nṛsiṃha incarnations, the relief cannot be assigned to the Kuṣāṇa period.

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 1. CBIMA, p. 59, (Nos. F.31, F.32).  
 2. Infra, pp. 389-91  
 3. CBIMA, p. 60, (No. 1002).  
 4. DHI, p. 412.

A sculpture depicting a dancing female<sup>1</sup> whose head and foreparts of four arms are broken, and which is shown as wearing an ankle-length transparent skirt with a kukkuṭa by her side, has been identified as Kaumārī or the śakti of Kumāra (Skanda).<sup>2</sup> Cunningham identified this image as that of dancing Kālī.<sup>3</sup> R.D. Banerji not only accepted the identification but also assigned the sculpture to the Kuṣāṇa period.<sup>4</sup> In regard to its identification both Cunningham and Banerji appear to have been wrong. In spite of the mutilations suffered by it, the image is still recognizable as that of Kaumārī, because of the presence of the backslab of the kukkuṭa, which is the mount of Kumāra.<sup>5</sup> There is no reason whatsoever to mistake the image as that of dancing Kālī. Not only Kaumārī, but the other Mātṛkās as well are known to have been represented in dancing attitudes in Indian plastic art. Mention may be made in this connection of the square panel of the 12th century Siddappa temple at Haveri in Dharwad district (Karnatika).<sup>6</sup> The panel is divided into nine square compartments of which the central one is occupied by a multi-armed dancing Siva and the rest by eight

1. Banerji, R.D : 'The Haihayas of Tripuri and Their Monuments', MA SI, No. 23, Calcutta, 1931, pl. xxix.a.
2. IHQ, ix, p. 165.
3. ASR, ix, p. 70. The image is no. 78 in Cunningham's list on page 69.
4. MA SI, No. 23, p. 69.
5. ~~MA SI, No. 23, p. 69.~~ According to
6. the Viṣṇudharmottara, kukkuṭa or the cock is an emblem

Mātrkās, including Kaumārī in the compartment at top left. All the Mātrkās are four-armed, accompanied by their respective vāhanas, and represented as dancing, as if they have joined Śiva Natarāja in the central compartment. Banerji's dating of the sculpture under notice cannot also be accepted in view of the transparent garment, kucapaṭṭa and the exaggerated hips of the image, which suggest the Gupta art idiom of the 5th-6th century A.D.<sup>1</sup>

Seven sculptures of goddesses found near the famous Heliodorus Pillar at Besnagar,<sup>2</sup> have been identified as Sapta-mātrkā images. They belong to the post-Gupta period and, as Patil points out, iconographically they do not conform to the texts.<sup>3</sup> A slab representing Śiva and the Sapta-mātrkās, unearthed at Nalanda,<sup>4</sup> may on stylistic grounds, be assigned to the late Gupta period. It also confirms the Purāṇic evidence regarding the affiliation of the Mātrkās to Śaivism. The mothers represented here are: Brāhmaṇī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Indrāṇī, Vārāhī and Cāmuṇḍā. A stone slab containing the representations in relief of 'Ashta śaktis or eight female energies, seated on their respective vāhanas or vehicles', was noticed by Cunningham at Besarh (Basarh) or ancient Vaiśālī.<sup>5</sup> As

of Kumāra (Skanda). DHI, p. 364. Kukkūṭa may be defined as a cock or wild cock. Cf. SED, p. 287.

6. AMTSI, ii, p. 44, p. 316; our. pl. i.

1. IHQ, ix, p. 166.

2. Lake, H.H. : 'Besnagar', JBBRAS, xxiii, 1909, p. 140

3. Op. cit., p. 110.

4. ASI, 1903-04, p. 218.

these remains antedate 640 A.D.,<sup>1</sup> the Aṣṭa Śaktis who are no other than Aṣṭa Mātṛkās, belong either to the early part of the 7th or the latter part of the 6th century of the Christian era. This piece of sculpture also corroborates archaeologically, Bāṇa's testimony regarding the worship of the Mātṛkās in his time. Further testimony of the worship of these divinities during this period (may be even earlier)<sup>2</sup> is provided by the topmost of the eleven panels on the long flight of steps that leads from the brow of the Deogarh fort on its south side to the Belwa river.<sup>3</sup> It contains a row of nine seated figures which are : Vīrabhadra, holding a vīṇā with both hands; Brahmāṇī with three faces, Māheśvarī(?) seated on a lion and Gaṇeśa in her left hand; Kaumārī on her peacock; Vaiṣṇavī on the Garuḍa; Vārāhī; Indrāṇī; Cāmuṇḍā with four arms and seated on a corpse;<sup>4</sup> and Gaṇeśa with two arms. D.R. Sahnī is obviously wrong in identifying the Mātṛkā with a lion for her mount as Māheśvarī, for not only has she a bull for vāhana,<sup>5</sup> but also the instance of representing this goddess with Gaṇeśa in her hand is totally unknown. The Mātṛkā in question is, in our opinion, either Caṇḍī or

5. ASR, i, p. 58.

1. ASR, i, p. 58.

2. Sahnī, D.R.: 'Deogarh Rock Inscription of Svāmībhāṭa', EI, xviii, 1925-26, p. 125.

3. ASR, x, p. 100.

4. EI, xviii, p. 125.

5. Cf. Vratākhaṇḍā, p. 83.

Ambikā whose vāhana consists of a lion and whose images are usually flanked by Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya.<sup>1</sup> It must however be conceded that no stone image of the Mother Goddess under either of these names with Gaṇeśa on her lap or held in her hand as in this Deogarh panel, has yet come to light. The goddess in question may also be Siṃhavāhinī, another form of the Mother Goddess that we will presently notice among the nine Mātṛkās on a panel preserved in the Verandra Research Museum, Rajshahi.<sup>2</sup> The placing of Gaṇeśa in the hand of the goddess will then be justified, not iconographically of course, but at least according to popular belief which regards him as the son of the Mother Goddess.<sup>3</sup> A relievo cut in the rock about half a mile to the east of Mandor in Marwar and measuring about eight and a half feet in length and one and a half feet in height, contains nine figures which represent Gaṇeśa with eight divine mothers.<sup>4</sup> Five of them, - Vaiṣṇavī, Māheśvarī, Brāhmī, Aindrī and Cāmuṇḍā are easily recognizable by their attributes and vāhanas; and the remaining three, lacking in their emblems, have been tentatively identified as Kaumārī, Vārāhī and Nārasimhī.<sup>5</sup> A

1. Vratakhaṇḍa, p. 89 and Infra, pp. 477

2. Infra, p. 201, also CVRM, p. 15.

3. Infra, p. 241.

4. ASI, 1909-10, p. 93; Agrawala, R.C. : 'Goddess Worship in Ancient Rājasthāna', JBRs, xli(i), p. 8.

5. ASI, 1909-10, p. 93.

large panel on the western wall of the Śiva chapel in the main cave at Elephanta has carved on it ten seated figures two of which are easily identifiable as those of Gaṇeśa and Vīrabhadra, and the rest, though sadly mutilated, can still be recognized as the Aṣṭa-mātrkās.<sup>1</sup> The sculptures<sup>2</sup> are datable in the first half of the 7th century A.D.,<sup>3</sup> and may even belong to the Gupta period.. Aṣṭa-mātrkās in relief also occur in the Brahmanical caves at Dokeśvara 20 miles ~~from~~<sup>4</sup> west of Ahmednagar. They have Gaṇeśa for their companion, and he is preceded by a naked figure who is possibly Kāla (time or death). An example of poor workmanship, the panel<sup>5</sup> depicts the Mātrkās as nimbate, with proper cognizance and seated under the foliage of five trees. There is a figure of Śiva (Vīrabhadra?) at the end of the panel. The sculpture may be assigned to the medieval period though according to Fergusson and Burgess,<sup>5</sup> it may be of almost any age. Mātrkā images also occur in a number of Elura caves,<sup>6</sup> whose rich Hindu sculptures have been assigned to the 8th-9th centuries A.D.<sup>7</sup> In Cave No. XIV, a large panel depicts the Sapta-mātrkās in the

1. Sastri, Hirananda : A Guide to Elephanta, Delhi, 1934, p. 50.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. CTI, pp. 429-30.
5. Ibid., p. 425.
6. AEAC, pp. 128-29; CTI, p. 434; ASWI, v, p. 39.
7. AAI, p. 184. Cf. AIA, p. 290; HLIA, p. 99; ASWI, v, p. 26.

in the company of Siva (Vīrabhadra?), Gaṇeśa, Kāla and Kālī.<sup>1</sup> In the 'Hall of Sacrifice' in Cave XVI, the images of eight divine mothers appear in full relief accompanied by Virabhadra, Gaṇeśa, Kāla and Kālī.<sup>2</sup> As well as in Caves XXI and XXII may be noticed Sapta-mātrkā groups similarly attended by Vīrabhadra and others.<sup>3</sup>

The Archaeological Museum at Mathura has in its collection an interesting stone sculpture which depicts a female standing on a cushion supported by a Garuḍa.<sup>4</sup> The image has ten arms, each of which holds a cakra. An elaborate halo, shaped like a full-blown lotus, can be seen behind its missing head. There is a profusion of ornaments on the person of the image which has a female attendant on either side. There is a seated male figure in dhyānī attitude in the top centre of the slab, and on both sides of the halo are carved foliate patterns and flying vidyā-dharas with garlands in their hands. From the emblem held in its hands as well as its mount, the image is identifiable as that of Vaiṣṇavī, though it must be conceded

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1. AEAC, p. 129, pl. lxxv (bottom); EHI, i(ii), pl. cxviii. 2; for a description of the panel see CTI, p. 434, pl. lxxii.
  2. AEAC, p. 129.
  3. ASWI, v, p. 39, pl. xxxiv.1-3. Referring to the panel in Cave XXII, Gupte and Mahajan state the number of Matrkas as eight (AEAC, p. 129) which is obviously wrong as seen from ASWI, v, p. xxxiv.3.
  4. Vogel, J.Ph. : Catalogue of the Archaeological Museum at Mathura, Allahabad, 1910, p. 95, pl. xvii.

that a ten-armed specimen of the goddess is against the canons of iconography. According to the Matsya Purāna,<sup>1</sup> Viṣṇu images may be made with two, four or eight arms. There are also examples of Viṣṇus in plastic art with six,<sup>2</sup> twelve and even twenty arms, but none has yet been discovered with ten. The presence of the dhyānī figure at the top centre of the slab need not be taken for a Buddha or a Jina; it may very well be a yogī<sup>3</sup> form of Śiva, indicating the affiliation of the Mātṛkā to that god, or it may be yogāsana Viṣṇu,<sup>4</sup> whose śakti this particular goddess is. Also somewhat irregular appear the inscribed images of three goddesses - Indrānī, Māheśvarī and Nārasimhī - all of them depicted as ten-armed and now preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.<sup>5</sup> Māheśvarī may be

1. Agrawala, V.S. : Matsya Purāna, a Study, Varanasi, 1963, p. 354; DHI, pp. 400-01.
2. Banerjea, J.N. : 'Hindu Iconography', JISOA, xiii, pp. 83-84.
3. EHI, i(ii), App.C, p. 20.
4. Cf. Bhattacharya, B.C. : Jaina Iconography, Lahore, 1939, pp. 121-22, pl. xii. The goddess Cakreśvarī worshipped by the Jainas of the Śetāmbara sect (and also the Digambaras), is represented with four, eight or twelve arms, images of the first variety holding two discs. Cakreśvarī has also a Garuḍa for her vāhana. By her name, emblems of discs and her mount, she is closely akin to Vaiṣṇavī. The image under discussion on account of her having a dhyānī figure resembling a Jina may as well be taken for a work of Jaina art. Without denying such a possibility, we may point out that though she happens to be the Smaśānadevī of the first Tīrthaṅkara, and an abundance of her images testify to the importance and popularity of her cult, no ten-armed representation of Cakreśvarī has yet come to light.
5. ASI, 1925-26, p. 152, pl. lix.a, c, d; DHI, p. 508, pl. xliv.2.

made with four or six arms according to the texts,<sup>1</sup> and  
 Indrāṇī with four,<sup>2</sup> but neither of them is said to be  
 eight-handed. As Nārasiṃhī appears to be a śakti of Viṣṇu,  
 she may be represented, according to the Brhatsaṃhitā  
 formula,<sup>3</sup> with eight arms, but the present example must  
 be regarded as only one of its kind. Instances of Mātṛkā  
 worship in the 10th-12th centuries A.D. are furnished by  
 Sapta- and Aṣṭa-mātṛkā panels as well as individual  
 images of these goddesses found in different parts of  
 North India.<sup>4</sup> But the most elaborate example of Mātṛkā  
 worship in India during this period is furnished by the  
 Chauṣaṭ Yoginī temple at Bheraghat near Jubbalpur, Madhya  
 Pradesh.<sup>5</sup> Though called the temple of sixty-four Yoginīs,  
 the actual number of images found in it ~~is~~ is eighty-two,<sup>6</sup>  
 and the iconography of many of these divinities styled  
 as Yoginīs, seems to be quite applicable to some of the  
 well-known Mātṛkās. Cunningham identified eight of ~~these~~  
 these sculptures as the representations of Aṣṭa-śaktis,<sup>7</sup>

1. EHI, i(ii), App.C, pp. 146-47.

2. Ibid, App.C, pp. 153-54.

3. Supra, p.20. It should however be noted that in icono-  
 4. graphical texts, Viṣṇu as Nṛsiṃha does not appear as  
 eight-armed.

4. HB, i, pp. 454-55; AMTSI, ii, p. 44, pls. 316,317;  
CVRM, pp. 16-17.

5. ASR, ix, p. 63, ff; ASI-EC, 1907-08, p. 14 ff; Banerji,  
 R.D. : 'The Haihayas of Tripuri and their Monuments',  
MASI, No. 23, pp. 68-70; ~~R.D.~~ and 78-91. R.D. Banerji  
 assigns the temple to the 10th century (MASI, No.23,  
 p. 69). According to Bloch, the sculptures do not ante-  
 date 12th century (ASI-EC, 1907-08, p. 15), and Cunning-  
 ham places the temple between 900 and 1200 A.D. (ASR,  
 ix, p. 71).

6. ASI-EC, 1907-08, p. 14.

and the rest, whom he also identified, confirm to some extent in our opinion, the huge number of the Mātṛkās mentioned in the Salya Parva of the Mahābhārata and chapter clxxix of the Matsya Purāna.<sup>1</sup>

Epigraphic evidence is also not lacking in regard to the worship of the Mātṛkās in ancient and Medieval India. Mention may be made in this context of the Gangdhar Stone Inscription of Viśvavarman, dated 480 A.D.<sup>2</sup> It records the erection of a Viṣṇu temple and also one for the Mātṛkās by Mayūrākṣa, minister of Viśvavarman, son of Bandhuv<sup>3</sup>varman, a feudatory of the Gupta Emperor Kumaragupta I. The erection of a temple for the Mātṛkās, who are objects of Śākta worship, by Mayūrākṣa, who appears to have been a Vaiṣṇava, is a definite indication of the popularity as well as the importance of their cult during the Gupta<sup>4</sup> period. Evidence of Mātṛkā worship during this age can also be had from the fragmentary Bihar Pillar Inscription

7. ASR, ix, p. 63. The Mātṛkās are addressed by Śiva as Yoginīs in the Skanda Purāna (Avantyakhaṇḍe-Revākhaṇḍa), lxvi. According to this Purāna, the Mother Goddess Durgā creates out of her own body millions of śaktis to destroy the army of Durgāsura (vide Kāśīkhāṇḍe-Uttarakhaṇḍa, lxxii.1-4).

1. Cf. ASR,<sup>ix</sup> pp. 65-69. Nos. 12 and 18 in Cunningham's list appear as Indrānī; nos. 16 and 40 as Māheśvarī; nos. 38 and 54 as Vaināyakī; no. 32 as Nārasinhī, and no. 55 as Vārāhī. No. 78 has already been identified as Kaumārī, vide Supra, p. 206.
2. CII, iii, p. 72, pl. x.
3. Ibid, pp. 73-74.
4. Ibid, p. 74; cf. Pāñcopāsana,// Banerjea, J.N. : Pāñcopāsana, Calcutta, 1960, pp. 252-53.

of the time of Skandagupta.<sup>1</sup> The epigraph commemorates the erection of several temples in honour of certain gods and goddesses, including one for the Mātrkās.<sup>2</sup> An inscription of the Kadamba kings, datable on palaeographic grounds in the 5th century A.D.,<sup>3</sup> refers to the ruler Kakusthavarman, who meditates on the 'assemblage of the mothers' (mātrgagananudhyātānām).<sup>4</sup> That the Cālukyas of Badami were also great devotees of the Mātrkās is attested by a grant of the great king Satyāśraya or Pulakeśin II, dated in the Śaka year 535,<sup>5</sup> corresponding to 660 A.D.<sup>6</sup> According to this grant, the Cālukyas appear to have been descended from Hārītī, and nursed by the seven mothers who are also the mothers of mankind (Hārītīputrānām saptalokamātrbhiḥ saptamātrbhirbhivardhitānām).<sup>7</sup> The Kadambas were not the only protégés of the Mātrkās. Nārasiṃhī seems to have been the patron-goddess of the Yādavas of Devagiri, and Cāmuṇḍā is still the tutelary deity of the royal house of Mysore.<sup>8</sup>

1. CII, iii, p. 47, pl. viB.

2. Ibid, lines 5 and 9.

3. Fleet, J.F. : 'Sanskrit and Old Canarese Inscriptions', IA, vi, p. 22.

4. Ibid, p. 25, (inscription No. xxii) lines 2-3; cf. Dikshit, K.N. : 'Sangoli Plates of Harivarman : the 8th Year', EI, xiv, p. 166, line 2.

5. IA, vi (inscription No. xxvii), p. 72; cf. IA, vii, p. 163 (inscription No. xli, lines 2-3); IA, xiii, p. 138 (inscription No. cxliv, line 2).

6. Hultzsch, E. : 'Talamanchi Plates of Vikramaditya I, A.D. 600', EI, ix, p. 99 (also see Postscript by F. Kielhorn on p. 102).

7. IA, vi, p. 73, (inscription no. xxvii, lines 2 1-2); cf. Ibid, p. 76 (inscription No. xxviii); EI, xviii, p. 125.

8. AEAC, p. 128.

Both the Gangdhar inscription and the Brhatsamhitā of Varāhamihira are silent about the number of the Mātṛkās as well as their names and description.<sup>1</sup> So are the dramas of Bhāsa and Śudraka, and the works of Kālidāsa, Bāṇabhaṭṭa and Kalhaṇa. Moreover, the inscriptions of the Kadamba kings and the Bihar Pillar Epigraph do not throw any light on these points. The Deogarh Rock Inscription of Svamibhata noticed above,<sup>2</sup> and datable on palaeographic grounds in the 6th century A.D.,<sup>3</sup> describes the Mātṛkās as lokamātṛṇāṃ or 'mothers of the world',<sup>4</sup> but does not give their names or their number. In the preamble to the inscriptions of the Cālukyas, the number of the

1. Albīruni's statement that he gives from the Brhatsamhitā of Varāhamihira the names and iconography of the Mātṛkās is indeed puzzling, (Albīruni's India, i, pp. 117, 119-20) because in none of the extant editions of the text do we come across any reference to the making of Mātṛkā images except what is stated in the first line of the verse 56 of chapter lvii. It is also obvious that in writing about these goddesses Albīruni is not following Utpala's commentary, which he is said to have fully utilized. (Ibid, p. xxxvii). As ~~Albīruni's~~ Albīruni's integrity is beyond question, the passages relating to the Mātṛkās translated by him, must be from a manuscript of Brhatsamhitā, which had suffered from interpolation, or the discrepancy cannot be explained.
2. Supra, p. 208
3. EI, xviii, p. 125.
4. Ibid, (verse 1,) p. 126.

Mātrkās has been given as seven, but neither their names nor their descriptions are mentioned. Only Utpala, the commentator of Brhatsaṃhitā, while commenting on the relevant verse, <sup>1</sup> gives the names of eleven Mātrkās: Brāhmī, Vaiṣṇavī, Rudrā, Kāumārī, Aindrī, Yāmī, Vāruṇī, Kauverī, Nārasimhī, Vārāhī and Vaināyakī. <sup>2</sup> In the Varāha Purāna, Siva is assisted by the śaktis of seven gods, but according to this Purāna itself, the number of Mātrkās is eight, <sup>3</sup> because it includes in addition to the afore-said śaktis, Yogeśvarī, who came out of the mouth of Siva <sup>4</sup> while <sup>he</sup> was engaged in single combat with the demon Andhaka. Rao's remark that the Mātrkās are seven in number according to the Purāṇas and Āgamas, <sup>5</sup> cannot thus be substantiated. Their number as well as their names vary in <sup>6</sup> different contexts. Usually, they are referred to as Sapta-mātrkās or seven mothers, but they are also cited in groups of eight, nine, sixteen, and even a hundred. As we have noticed, the Mahābhārata gives the names of 194 of these mothers and describes them as numerous. <sup>7</sup> The Matsya

1. Brhatsaṃhitā, lvii.56.
2. A four-armed elephant-faced female figure in the collection of the Indian Museum (No. 3919), represents in all likelihood Vaināyakī, the śakti of Vināyaka or Gaṇeśa. Bloch, Th. : Supplementary Catalogue of the Archaeological Museum Section of the Indian Museum, Calcutta, 1911, p. 90.
3. Varāha Purāna, xxvii.31-32.
4. Ibid, xxvii.30.
5. EHI, i(ii), p. 381.
6. DHI, p. 503.
7. MBh, ix.45.29; cf. Adbhūta Rāmāyaṇa, pp. 150-52.

Purāna records the names of more than one hundred of these <sup>1</sup> Mātrkās, the Kūrma Purāna one hundred, <sup>2</sup> and the Skanda Purāna mentions sixty-eight in one place and ten in another. <sup>3</sup> Moreover, in the Gobhila-smṛti, we come across the names of fourteen Mātr̥s: Gaurī, Padmā, Śacī, Medhā, Sāvitrī, Vijayā, Jayā, Devasenā, Svadhā, Svāhā, Dhṛti, Puṣṭi, Tuṣṭi, and one's own deity (abhīṣṭa-devatā). <sup>4</sup> The Mātrkā panel at Elephanta represents eight goddesses. <sup>5</sup> At Elura, in caves XIV, XXI and XXII, the Mātrkās are seven in number, but in Cave XVI they are eight. <sup>6</sup> According to Kṣīrasvāmī, such goddesses as, Kāla Saṅkarṣiṇī, Vāmanī, Vaināyakī, Caṇḍikā and Mahālakṣmī should be added to the list of the Mātrkās. <sup>7</sup> In the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, the number of Mātrkās, is seven : Brāhmī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Varahi, Nārasimhī and Aindrī. <sup>8</sup> Camuṇḍā, usually

1. Matsya P, clxxix.9-32. According to this Purāna, Siva creates the Mātrkās to drink up the blood of Andhaka. Again, it states in another place (clxxix.35 ff), that to assist Siva Viṣṇu first creates four Mātrkās, the foremost among them being Suṣkarevatī (vv.35-37), who is no other than Kālī (verse 65). Then he creates 32 other Mātrkās, in four groups of eight each. The names all the Mātr̥s created by Viṣṇu are given in vv.66-74.
2. Kūrma P, xxvii.226-32. As in the Matsya P, Viṣṇu also creates according to this text, 100 Mātrkās to assist Siva (vide vv. 139-40).
3. SP(Nāgarakhaṇḍa), clxxxiii.68; Kāśīkhaṇḍe-Uttarakhaṇḍa, lxxxii.33 of this Purāna gives the names of nine Mātr̥s: Brahmāṇī, Vaiṣṇavī, Raudrī, Vārāhī, Nārasimhī, Kaumārī, Aindrī, Cāmuṇḍā and Caṇḍī, and verse 26 of this chapter gives the name of another Mātrkā- Vikāṭa.
4. HD, ii(i), p. 217. The Bhaviṣya Purāna list of the Mātrkās seems to have been copied from the Gobhila-smṛti. Cf. Vratākhaṇḍa, p. 84.
5. Supra, p. 210.
6. Supra, p. 211.
7. AEAC, p. 128.
8. MP, lxxxvii.4 ff.

reckoned as one of the Mātṛkās, is, according to this Purāna, no other than Kālī,<sup>1</sup> the latter having sprung earlier from the wrathful countenance of the Mother Goddess.<sup>2</sup> In the Devī-kavaca attached to the Devī-Māhātmya section of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, the Mātṛkās are mentioned as eleven in number, and include, besides the aforesaid seven, - Cāmuṇḍā, Sivadūtī, Lakṣmī and Iśvarī.<sup>3</sup> In the Vāmana Purāna, the Mother Goddess creates out of the different parts of her own body six Mātṛkās: Brahmāṇī,<sup>4</sup> Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī and Nārasiṃhī. But as in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, Kālī is created earlier from the frown of the Mother Goddess,<sup>5</sup> and also from her lock of hair another being named Caṇḍamārī resembling very much the physical aspects of Cāmuṇḍā.<sup>6</sup> As both Kālī and Caṇḍamārī are emanations of the Mother Goddess just as Brahmāṇī and others, they may also be logically regarded as Mātṛkās, and the number of these divinities, so far as the Vāmana Purāna is concerned, may be reckoned as eight.

1. MP, lxxxvii.25. Kali becomes Cāmuṇḍā by killing the demons Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa. See Appendix A.
2. Ibid, lxxxvii.4 ff.
3. Durgākavacam, Chowkhamba Stotra Granthamālā, Benares, 1946, vv. 8-11.
4. VP, lvi.3-9.
5. Ibid, lv.53.
6. Ibid, lv.63-65.

In medieval Orissan sculpture, the Mātṛkās appear in groups of seven, a fact which led Chanda to assume that the artists of Orissa must have derived their knowledge about these divinities from the Devī-Māhātmya section of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa.<sup>1</sup> As we have seen, Albīruni gives the iconography of seven Mātṛkās, but elsewhere in his book he mentions the number of these divinities as eight.<sup>2</sup> In Bhavabhūti's Mālatī-Mādhava, Siva as Śaktinātha (lord of the śaktis) is represented as attended by eight śaktis who, according to the commentator Jagaddhara, are no other than the well-known Mātṛkās : Brāhmī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Mahendrī (Indrāṇī), Cāmuṇḍā and Caṇḍikā.<sup>3</sup> In giving the names and iconography of seven mothers in his book, the Cālukya king Someśvara ( C. 1126 - 1138 A.D.)<sup>4</sup> seems to have followed the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa. The Prapañsāra Tantra mentions eight goddesses known as Mātṛkās (mātarah proktāh).<sup>5</sup> The list follows the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa

1. Chanda, R.P. : 'Exploration in Orissa', MAST, No. 44, Calcutta, 1930, p. 19. Chanda seems to have contradicted himself by bringing to our notice the images of eight goddesses whom he identifies as Mātṛkās: Vārāhī, Cāmuṇḍā, Indrāṇī, Brāhmāṇī, Māheśvarī, Vaiṣṇavī, Kaumārī, and Nārasiṅhī. (Ibid, pp. 2-3). Cāmuṇḍā ~~does~~ does not appear to have been included among the Mātṛkās in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, but Chanda obviously treats her as one.
2. Op. cit., p. 121.
3. Mālatī-Mādhava, with the commentary of Jagaddhara, edited by R.G. Bhandarkar, Bombay, 1905, Act v.
4. Someśvara: Mānasollāsa, Part ii, edited by G.K. Shringonkar, Baroda, 1939, vv. 796-99.
5. Avalon, A.(ed): Tantric Texts, iii, Prapañcasāra Tantra, vii.11.

except that Nārasiṃhī is replaced by Camuṇḍā and Mahalakṣmī takes the place of the eighth Mātṛkā. In eastern India, examples of Sapta-mātṛkā groups seem to be common. In the Indian Museum, Calcutta, there are as many as three slabs - Nos. 4189-4191 - each containing the images of the seven mothers and a male god, who has been identified as Siva.<sup>1</sup> All the examples are from Bihar and assignable to the Pāla period. Composite reliefs, depicting the Mātṛkās flanked by Gaṇeśa and Vīrabhadra, have been discovered in many parts of India,<sup>2</sup> but not in Bengal. A stone slab with the Sapta-mātṛkās in relief, but without Siva, Gaṇeśa and Vīrabhadra, is preserved in the Varendra Research Museum at Rajshahi.<sup>3</sup> The Museum has also in its collection a sandstone slab on which are represented nine Mātṛkās, whose names from right to left read as follows : Brahmāṇī, Raudrī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Mahiṣamardinī, Vārāhī, Indrāṇī, Cāmuṇḍā and Siṃhavāhinī.<sup>4</sup> The example must be regarded as unique, for in no other Mātṛkā panel discovered so far, do we come across a group which includes Mahiṣamardinī and Siṃhavāhinī, both of which are well-known forms of Durgā, the Mother Goddess. The evidence of

1. Bloch, Th.: Op.cit, pp. 91-92. The mothers are : Brāhmī, Rudrāṇī (Māheśvarī), Vaiṣṇavī, Kārttikeyā (Kaumārī), Indrāṇī, Vārāhī and Cāmuṇḍā.

2. HB, i, p. 454.

3. CVRM, p. 16 (No. 251).

4. Ibid, (No. 7 )

Mātrkā worship in Bengal is furnished, apart from the two panels and single images of some of these deities in the Varendra Research Museum, as well as in the public collections at Calcutta, by numerous other images obtained from different parts of the region.<sup>1</sup> Mention may also be made here of the image of a lion-faced goddess, evidently that of Nārasimhī, which has been noticed among several rock-cut sculptures at Unakoti, an ancient holy place of the Śaivas,<sup>2</sup> in the Koilashahar sub-division of Tipperah State, India.

Like the divine mothers of Europe, who were conceived as triads,<sup>3</sup> the Mātrkās also appear in groups, but as we have noticed above, their number is not rigidly fixed.<sup>4</sup> The relevant texts and plastic representations are not of any help in determining the number of the Mātrkās with any exactitude. The goddesses, as also their male guardians, such as Vīrabhadra and Gaṇeśa, may either be represented on the same slab in a group, or separately, as suggested by the colossal images of Vārāhī, Gaṇuḍā and Indrāṇī from Orissa;<sup>5</sup> several Vārāhī images, one of Indrāṇī, and

1. DHI, pp. 506-508.

2. ASI, 1921-22, p. 86. The sculptures are datable in the 8th-9th centuries according to K.N. Dikshit. Ibid., p. 87.

3. ERE, iv, pp. 408-09. For illustration of the divine mothers, see LEM, p. 245.

4. 'Stone and bronze sculptures are not only unknown', says Banerjea, 'in which the number of the 'Mothers' are only three, and they are usually Brahmāṇī, Kaumārī and Vaiṣṇavī ... one such fine bronze composition ... (now in the King Edward VII Gallery of the British Museum) shows the three goddesses seated between Virabhadra and Gaṇeśa'. DHI, p. 505. H. Goetz mentions a panel con-

a large variety of Cāmuṇḍās from North Bengal; <sup>1</sup> a four-armed Brāhmāṇī and a Cāmuṇḍā in the Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣat Museum (Calcutta); an eight-armed Nārasiṁhī image in the Indian Museum; <sup>2</sup> and images of Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Brāhmāṇī, Vārāhī, Nārasiṁhī and Cāmuṇḍā from various parts of Orissa. <sup>3</sup> Mātrkā images executed on separate stelae, may yet be placed ~~by~~ side by side on platforms or in niches, so as to form groups, as in Cave <sup>4</sup> XVI at Elura, or in the Chauṣaṭ Yoginī temple at Bhera-ghat. The single Mātrkā images mentioned above, suggest no doubt their having been set up and worshipped in isolation, though, except in the case of Cāmuṇḍā, no proof, literary or archaeological, can be adduced in corroboration of such a surmise. As we have noticed in the Epic and the Purāṇas, these goddesses are always mentioned collectively (mātarah), and more often than not, they are

from

consisting of only five Mātrkā/Gujarat. 'Late Gupta Sculptures from Pātan-Anhīlwāḍa', Bulletin of the Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery, vii(i-ii), May, 1949-March, 1950, Baroda, pp. 31-32.

5. MASI, No. 44, p.2; DHI, p. 505.

1. CVRM, p. 16; our pl. ii.

2. HB, i, p. 455; DHI, p. 508, pl. xliv.2.

3. DHI, pp. 505-07; MASI, No. 44, pp. 3, 14; ASM/7/4

4. AEAC, p. 129; DHI, p. 505.

represented in groups of seven,<sup>1</sup> or eight in plastic art as well. Single Mātṛkā images, other than those of Cāmuṇḍā, are therefore an exception rather than the rule.

As regards the undetermined number of the Mātṛkās, who may be represented in groups of seven, eight, nine or sixteen,<sup>2</sup> Banerjea observes, 'It appears that side by side with the common concept about the stereotyped number of the Mothers of Śaktis of seven or eight gods there existed a belief about the Śaktis of other gods or their aspects. In subsequent ritual literature of the Hindus, the number of sixteen Mātṛkās beginning with Gaurī are mentioned (Gauryādi-ṣoḍaśa mātṛkā)'<sup>3</sup>. The popularity of these goddesses, particularly of the Sapta-mātṛkās, all over India is established beyond doubt not only by their plastic representations, but also by the literary and epigraphic evidence cited above. The commonly accepted seven mothers are : Brāhmī, Kaumārī, Māheśvarī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Aindrī and Cāmuṇḍā.<sup>4</sup> In the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, however, the last-named Mātṛkā appears to have been replaced by Nārasimhī.<sup>5</sup>

1. Cf. our pl. iii showing from left to right : Śiva or Vīrabhadra, Kaumārī, Maheśvarī, Vaiṣṇavī, Brāhmī, Vārāhī, Indrāṇī, Cāmuṇḍā and Gaṇeśa having for their vāhanas, respectively, bull, peacock, bull, Garuḍa, swan, buffalo, elephant, ~~and~~ dog (sārameya) and rat.

2. OII, p. 447.

3. DHI, p. 504.

4. AEAC, p. 128.

5. Ibid, p. 128.

I S C Ā M U Ṇ Ḍ Ā A M Ā T R K Ā ?

The position which Cāmuṇḍā occupies in the cult of the Mātrkās may appear as somewhat ill-defined, due mainly to her not being mentioned specifically in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna as one of the group. We have already given the context in which this goddess is born according to this Purāna.<sup>1</sup> But, the omission of her name <sup>from</sup> the list of the Mātrkās in this text notwithstanding, Cāmuṇḍā is mentioned in all other works of this kind as one of these goddesses. Amarakoṣa mentions her by name and also as Carcikā,<sup>2</sup> which is one of her forms.<sup>3</sup> She occurs as one of the Mātrkās in the Varāha, Bhaviṣya, Matsya and Skanda Purānas.<sup>4</sup> In the Devī-kavaca, she is mentioned as one of the Mātrkās,<sup>5</sup> and is also described as such by Albīruni.<sup>6</sup> In the Matsya Purāna however, Cāmuṇḍā seems to have been equated with Yogeśvarī,<sup>7</sup> who as we know from the Varāha Purāna, springs from the mouth of Śiva to assist him against Andhakāśura.<sup>8</sup> Both Yogeśvarī and Cāmuṇḍā appear to have been born under similar circumstances and to perform similar functions. Iconographically also, the two

1. See Appendix B.

2. Amarakoṣa, i.1.41.

3. CVRM, p. 16, (No. 280).

4. Supra, 219, note 1; Matsya P, cclxi.37; Vratakhanda, pp. 83-84.

5. Supra, p. 219.

6. Albīruni's India, i, p. 120.

7. Matsya P, cclxi.37.

8. Supra, p. 194, note 3.

are almost identical.<sup>1</sup> Again, both the goddesses possess characteristics which may also be remarked in Śuṣkarevatī, an ogress, whom Viṣṇu creates to drink up the blood of Andhakāśura.<sup>2</sup> Śuṣkarevatī thus appears to be no other than Yogeśvarī whom we meet in the Varāha Purāṇa. But as Śuṣkarevatī is also Kālī,<sup>3</sup> she may as well be equated with Cāmuṇḍā, for according to the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, the latter (Cāmuṇḍā) is but a subsequent form of the former (i.e., Kālī).<sup>4</sup> Out of the confusing mass of Purāṇic legends, we may thus conclude that Yogeśvarī, Śuṣkarevatī and Cāmuṇḍā are one and the same goddess, and that all of them, including the last-named, are Mātrkāś.

The 194 names given by the Mahābhārata do not include those of the well-known Mātrkāś. But we come across among them Kālikā and Manojavā,<sup>5</sup> which appear to signify two of the seven tongues of Agni in the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad.<sup>6</sup> As Kālikā or Kālī happens to be one of the names of the Mother Goddess in the Purāṇas, scholars have sought on the strength of this Upaniṣadic passage, to invest her with

1. For the iconography of Yogeśvarī/Cāmuṇḍā, see Matsya P., cclxi.33-37; for Cāmuṇḍā's see EHI, i(ii), App.C, pp. 151-52; AP, 1.21-23.
2. Matsya P., clxxix.35-37.
3. Ibid, clxxix.65.
4. See Appendix A.
5. Mbh, ix.45.14, 16.
6. MU, i.2.4.

an Aryan pedigree through Agni, who is an important Vedic god.<sup>1</sup> It may as well be noted here that the tongues of Agni and the commonly known Mātrkās are seven in number.

Manojavā, another tongue of Agni, has been equated with the feminine form of Manojavas, which is an epithet of Yama, the god of death, in the Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā of the White Yajur Veda.<sup>2</sup> Yāmī or the wife of Yama appears as one of the Mātrkās in some of the Purāṇas.<sup>3</sup> In the Varāha Purāṇa,<sup>4</sup> she and Cāmuṇḍā appear as one and the same goddess, and she is occasionally found to replace the latter, whose name appears last among the Sapta-mātrkās.<sup>5</sup> In referring to the forms of the Mātrkās, the Mahābhārata mentions<sup>6</sup> some who partake of the nature of Yama. Yāmī also appears among the Mātrkās mentioned by Utpala when he is commenting on the verse 56 of chapter lvii of Brhat-Saṁhitā (dandī Yamo mahiṣago iti Yāmya). But, though both are Mātrkās, and may even replace one another, Cāmuṇḍā and Yami are, nevertheless, two different goddesses. Iconographically, Cāmuṇḍā is as different from Yāmī as she is from Vaiṣṇavī, Brahmāṇī, Indrāṇī or Kaumārī.<sup>7</sup> The

1. Pañcopāsanā, p. 229.

2. VS, v. 41.

3. Pañcopāsanā, p. 230.

4. Varāha P, xxvii. 31-32.

5. Pañcopāsanā, p. 230.

6. Mbh, ix. 45. 36.

7. For the iconography of Yāmī, see Vratakhanda, p. 91; for Cāmuṇḍā see Ibid, pp. 83-84; for Brāhmī and others, see EHI, i(ii), App.C, pp. 145-46, 149-50, 153-54, 147-48.

mention of Cāmuṇḍā as Yāmī in the Varāha Purāṇa cannot therefore be accepted as final, and accordingly, Banerjea's treating them as one and the same goddess cannot also be entertained.<sup>1</sup> While Yāmī appears according to Utpala as the śakti of Yama, Cāmuṇḍā is an emanation, ~~and~~ <sup>if not</sup> a form of the Mother Goddess herself, and she is also a śakti of Śiva as Yogeśvarī, and of Viṣṇu as Suṣkarevatī.<sup>2</sup> In order, therefore, to equate Yāmī with Cāmuṇḍā, Yama has first to be equated with Śiva and Viṣṇu. Since that is out of the question, the Varāha Purāṇa passage and Banerjea's identification of Cāmuṇḍā as Yāmī cannot be taken seriously.

Of all the Mātṛkās, Cāmuṇḍā appears to be the most popular and widely worshipped.<sup>3</sup> Not only does she appear as one of the seven or eight Mātṛkās in Indian plastic art, examples of which we have cited above, but can also claim the largest number of individual representations to her credit.<sup>4</sup> This should appear as rather strange, for a Cāmuṇḍā image is far from beautiful to look at, but it is by no means illogical or inappropriate. Undoubtedly, there is much that is grotesque, ugly and fearful in the representation of Cāmuṇḍā as enjoined by the iconographical

1. Pañcopāsanā, p. 230.

2. Supra, p. 218, note 1.

3. HB, 1, pp. 454-55.

4. Ibid; CVRM, pp. 15-16; our pl. iv.a,b.

texts, but her conception is a tribute to the Indian genius, for she is but a form of the Mother Goddess personifying death and destruction, famine and epidemic.<sup>1</sup> This is quite clear from the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, in which she is an emanation of the Mother Goddess,<sup>2</sup> and also from the Devī Purāna, according to which the Great Mother assumes the form of Cāmuṇḍā to destroy as the champion of the gods a demon named Ruru.<sup>3</sup>

Cāmuṇḍā's popularity is largely due to her being an object of Śākta worship as indicated by the discovery of her images from various parts of Bengal, which is a stronghold of Śaktism,<sup>4</sup> and also from the Śāktapīṭhas in Orissa<sup>5</sup> and Assam.<sup>6</sup> This accounts as much for the large variety of her images as for the weird and uncanny features which render them 'a concrete representation of the esoteric symbolism underlying one aspect of the Tāntric faith'.<sup>7</sup> The association of Cāmuṇḍā with Tāntricism since remote antiquity is also suggested by Bhavabhūti

1. According to the Matsya P, cclix.17, an image made with a sunken abdomen and fleshless body brings about famine and loss of wealth : kr̥sodarī tu durbhikṣaṃ nirmāṃsā dhananāśinī.
2. Supra, p. 219
3. DP, xxxvii.17.
4. Payne, E.A. : The Śāktas, Calcutta, 1933, p. 69.
5. DHI, p. 507; ASM, 1, pp. lxix-lxxii, figs. 30-32.
6. Chowdhury, P.C. : The History and Civilization of the People of Assam, Gauhati, 1959, p. 495; Gait, E.A. : History of Assam, Calcutta, 1963, pp. 287-89; ~~XXX~~
7. DHI, p. 507.

who flourished in the first quarter of the 8th century A.D.<sup>1</sup> In his play Mālatī-Mādhava, Cāmuṇḍā appears as a Tāntrik goddess who is worshipped with human sacrifice.<sup>2</sup> But the worship of Cāmuṇḍā, some goddess or goddesses of her type, seems to go further back than the time of Bhavabhūti or the beginning of Śaktism in India. This is indicated, in our opinion, by the terracotta female figurines unearthed at the prehistoric sites in the Zhob Valley in Baluchīstan.<sup>3</sup> No more than a few inches in height, these figurines with their hooded heads, circular eye-holes, beak-like noses, and grim, slit mouths<sup>4</sup> produce the same terrifying effect as do the Camunda images of the medieval period. Considered as a grim embodiment of the Mother Goddess,<sup>5</sup> the little Zhob figurines have on their lipless mouths the same cruel expression that lurks in the evil smile on the broad, bare face of Danturā,<sup>6</sup> a ghastly variety of Cāmuṇḍā.

1. Mālatī-Mādhava, p. xvii; Wilson, H.H. : Hindu Theatre, ii, 2nd edition, London, 1835, p. 4.
2. Mālatī-Mādhava, p. 199; Hindu Theatre, ii, p. 54.
3. MIC, i, p. 50.
4. Pigott, S : Prehistoric India (Pelican Books), 1952, p. 126.
5. Ibid, p. 127.
6. DHI, p. 507; cf. Our pl. v.

S O M E C H A R A C T E R I S T I C S  
O F  
T H E M Ā T R K Ā S

The Mātrkās have been described in the Mahābhārata as beings of divergent appearance and speech.<sup>1</sup> Some of them are said to have well-formed, youthful, sweet-featured bodies covered with ornaments,<sup>2</sup> while some are described as beautiful as the celestial nymphs and sweet-voiced like the Indian nightingale.<sup>3</sup> The Kṛttikās or Pleiades, who nursed Skanda immediately after his birth, were all 'goddesses of beautiful forms' (devyo divya-vapurdhārāḥ),<sup>4</sup> and the 'mothers' who joined him against Tarakāsura, are all described as slayers of foes as well as 'illustrious mothers' (yaśasvininām mātrṇām), and 'auspicious ones' (kalyāṇībhīṣca).<sup>5</sup> But there are as many of these Mātrkās, who appear as so many fiends,<sup>6</sup> whose fearful shapes strike terror into the hearts of those who come to face them on the battlefield.<sup>7</sup> Whether handsome or hideous, and in spite of some of the commendable virtues attributed to them in the Mahābhārata,<sup>8</sup> the Mātrkās undeniably

1. Mbh, ix.43.29, ix.45.42.

2. Mbh, ix.45.30 : saralā madhurāścaiva yauvanasthā svālaṅkṛtāḥ.

3. Mbh, ix.45.37 : rūpenāpsarasaṁ tulyā ... parapuṣṭopamā vākye tathā.

4. Mbh, ix.43.13.

5. Mbh, ix.45.1-2.

6. EM, p. 228.

7. Mbh, ix.45.39.

8. Mbh, ix.45.32, 35.

appear to be endowed with a fair amount of malevolence. This is quite apparent in the Purāṇic stories about their origin. According to the Varāha Purāna, they not only assist Śiva against Andhaka but also drink up the demon's blood after he is slain<sup>1</sup>. Apart from this gruesome instance, the Purāna also furnishes additional indications of their malevolent character by identifying the Aṣṭa-mātrkās with eight bad mental qualities<sup>2</sup>: Kāma (desire), Krodha (anger), lobha (greed), mada (pride), (moha (illusion), mātsarya (fault-finding), paiśunya (calumny), and asūyā (envy) represented respectively by Yogeśvarī, Māheśvarī, Vaiṣṇavī, Brahmaṇī, Kaumārī, Indrāṇī, Yāmī or Cāmuṇḍā and Vārāhī<sup>3</sup>. By their conduct and appearance, the Mātrkās thus seem to betray characteristics that are peculiar to the Yoginīs and Dakinīs associated with the goddess Durgā or Kālī when she is engaged in some destructive work<sup>4</sup>. The importance of the cult of the Yoginīs is indicated by the circular temple erected in their honour at Bheraghat near Jabbalpur in Madhya Pradesh, as also by the rectangular cloister with sixty-four cells at Khajuraho<sup>5</sup>. The Rudra Upaniṣad legend about the origin of the Yoginīs recalls those in the Varāha and Matsya<sup>6</sup>.

1. Varāha P, xxvii.39-40.

2. Ibid, xxvii.34-37.

3. R.P.Chanda treats the relevant passage in this Purāna as interpolation. In his opinion, the Mātrkās who helped Śiva (auspiciousness) against Andhaka (darkness), cannot be malevolent (MASI, No. 44, p. 18). The weight of evidence, however, invalidates this theory.

4. ASR, ix, p. 70.

Purānas regarding the Mātṛkās. Strangely enough, the Yoginīs, whom Śiva summons according to this Upaniṣad to devour the corpse of the demon Jālandhara, are named Brāhmī, Māheśvari, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī and Mahendri. All of them<sup>are</sup> cruel and evil-looking creatures, who dance with joy while drinking up the gore with which the battle-field is drenched. The Mātṛkās as well as the Yoginīs are, therefore, in both appearance and action, totally unlike the Deae Matres, who from their artistic representations and the epithets applied to them, are benignant deities.<sup>1</sup>

Two reasons may be advanced to explain the saumya and ghora aspects of the Mātṛkās. The first is their non-Aryan origin, suggested unquestionably by the crude appearance of many of them<sup>2</sup>, their gruesome habits and malevolence<sup>3</sup>, their warlike character<sup>4</sup>, the magical powers they possess<sup>5</sup>, and the strange places they inhabit or frequent. The Mother Goddess Durgā, whose non-Aryan background is no less pronounced, is also said to have for

5. ASR, ix, p. 70.

6. Ibid, p. 71.

1. ERE, iv, pp. 408-09.

2. Mbh, ix.45.34-35.

3. MAŚI, No. 44, p. 15; EM, p. 229.

4. Mbh, ix.45.32, 40 mention them as capable of assuming any form (kāmarūpadharā) and sojourning at will.

5. Mbh, ix.45.41.

her abode open spots, caves, crematoriums and mountain tops<sup>1</sup>. The Mātrkās mentioned in the Mahābhārata and the Purānas are, in our opinion, no other than the numerous village goddesses who have been pressed by the Hindu priestly class into the service of Siva, Skanda and Durgā, under the guise of the śaktis of the different<sup>e</sup> gods. This shows on the one hand the process by which the non-Aryan grāmadevatās are Brahmanized, and on the other the affiliation of the Mother Goddess herself through these deities to the various important Vedic and Purānic gods. This is quite clear from the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, which describes the Mātrkās as her emanations or manifestations.<sup>2</sup> In ~~other~~ other words, the Mother Goddess herself stands simultaneously as the śakti of each god. Her relation with the various gods is made quite clear through her origin which this Purāna ascribes to the combined energies of all the great gods.<sup>3</sup> 'The Devī was also manifest as the motivating energy behind many Hindu god-concepts like Brahmā, Maheśvara (Śiva), Viṣṇu etc., and was known<sup>4</sup> collectively as 'the Divine Mothers', the Saptamātrkās'. In all likelihood, the Mother Goddess was conceived in this way, though in later ~~belief~~ belief the position is

1. Infra, p. 272.

2. MP, xc.3-5.

3. See Appendix A.

4. HCIP, iii, p. 447.

seems to have been quite reversed since she is represented, as in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, as capable of absorbing all those forms and manifestations and resuming her unitary character as the Supreme Goddess.<sup>1</sup>

Saktism is no less responsible for the peculiar and strange characteristics of the Mātṛkās as well as for the peculiarity of their worship all over India from a very early period. Their association with Tāntricism is borne out by both literary and epigraphic evidence. We have already referred to Bhavabhūti's play in which the goddess Cāmuṇḍā is the object of Tāntrik worship.<sup>2</sup> Her priest is Aghoraghanṭā, who is a kāpālika, a sect of the Śaivas.<sup>4</sup> He tries with the help of his disciple Kapālakuṇḍalā (one who has human skulls for her ear ornaments), a female Tāntrik, to kidnap and sacrifice the heroine Mālatī before the goddess Cāmuṇḍā.<sup>5</sup> Bāṇa's Harṣacarita<sup>6</sup> also suggests the Tāntrik association of the Mātṛkās. The Gangdhar Inscription of the Gupta period also points towards the Mātṛkās as objects of a Tāntrik form of worship. The temple erected in their honour is referred to in this epigraph as 'the terrible abode ... (and) filled full of female ghouls, of the divine Mothers, who utter loud and tremendous shouts of joy (and) who stir up the (very) oceans with the mighty wind rising from the magic

1. HCIP, iii, pp. 446-47.
2. Supra, p. 230
3. Mālatī-Mādhava, Act. v.
4. Pāncopasana, pp. 159-63

rites of their religion'.<sup>1</sup> Dākinīs frequently occur in Tāntrik literature as attendants of the goddesses belonging to this branch of Śākta religion.<sup>2</sup> They are also known as the followers of Kālī (Kālīganaviśeṣaḥ).<sup>3</sup> Additional evidence of the Tāntrik association of the Mātṛkās is furnished by the Brhatsamhitā, according to which their images are to be installed only by 'those who are conversant with the circle of the divine Mothers'.<sup>4</sup> In commenting on this passage, Utpala says : mātrṇām brāhmyādīnām maṇḍalakramavido ye maṇḍalakramāni pūjākramāni vidanti jānanti / tān sthāpamāna vidu. But the phrase pūjākrama does not properly explain the sense contained in the expression maṇḍalakrama, which is connected with Tāntrik rituals.<sup>5</sup> In the inscriptions of the Kadambā kings, there is a reference to the 'assemblage of the mothers' (mātrgaṇaḥ).<sup>6</sup> In Kashmir, it appears from the Rājatarāṅgiṇī, the Mātṛs were objects of Tāntrik worship, as is evident from such expressions about them as mātrcakra or 'the circle of Mothers'.<sup>7</sup> Both maṇḍala and cakra play an important part in Tāntrik form of worship.<sup>8</sup>

5. Mālatī-Mādhava, Act v.

6. Harṣa Carita, (trans. Cowell and Thomas), p. 85.

1. CII, iii, p. 78.

2. Pañcopāsana, pp. 264-65.

3. Ibid, p. 265; cf. SED, p. 430.

4. Brhatsamhitā, lix. 79.

5. Pañcopāsana, p. 253.

6. IA, vi, p. 25 (line 2 of the text).

7. Supra, p. 199, note 2

8. ASM, i, p. lix.

Literary and archaeological evidence points towards the association of the Mātrkās with Śiva and his family. As we have seen, the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas suggest as much by representing them as the followers or auxiliaries of Śiva, Skanda and Durgā. In iconographical texts, they are directed to be placed between Vīrabhadra and Gaṇeśa<sup>1</sup>, who belong to the family of Śiva<sup>2</sup>. In plastic art we have seen the Mātrkās represented in the company of these two divinities as well as in that of Śiva. In the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa we have also noticed these goddesses described as part and parcel of the Mother Goddess, who figures in Indian mythology as the wife of Śiva. 'The Sapta-Mātrkās are often carved in relief on a rectangular stone slab ... with the image of Vīrabhadra and Gaṇeśa on either side'<sup>3</sup> but as we have seen at Elura, these two gods occur with the Aṣṭa-mātrkās as well<sup>4</sup>. In the Elura panels, the Sapta- and Aṣṭa-mātrkās are also accompanied by the skeletal figures of Kāla and Kālī<sup>5</sup>, a further proof of their Tāntrik association. According to the Rūpa-maṇḍanaṃ Vīrabhadra should be placed in front of the Mātrkās who should be placed in the middle with Gaṇeśa at the end.<sup>6</sup> But this direction does not appear to have been strictly adhered to, as testified by the Mātrkā panels on which both Vīrabhadra and Gaṇeśa are absent<sup>7</sup>, or

1. SP, (Māheśvarakhaṇḍa-Kedāarakhaṇḍa), iii.33-37.

2. HM, pp. 270, 323 ff.

3. DHI, p. 505.

4. Supra, pp. 210-11.

5. Supra, p. 211.

only one of them is present. Sometimes in place of Vīrabhadra and Gaṇeśa the god Śiva is represented with the Mātṛkās.<sup>1</sup>

The presence of Śiva, Vīrabhadra and Gaṇeśa on the Mātṛkā panels is a further indication of the non-Aryan origin of these goddesses, for each of these gods comes from indigenous background.<sup>2</sup> The Tāntrik association of the Mātṛkās indicated by the literary, epigraphic and plastic evidence also suggests as much, for Tāntricism is non-Vedic,<sup>3</sup> and may even be pre-Aryan.

In spite of their being represented as warlike goddesses, and of their Tāntrik association, the Mātṛkās, with the notable exception of Cāmuṇḍā, appear in plastic art with well-formed bodies. In fact, this particular feature does to a large extent counteract the otherwise terrifying effect produced by the weapons placed in their hands, as also by the boar's face of Vārāhī, the lion's face of Nārasiṃhī, and the four and six faces of Brahmāṇī and Kaumārī respectively. The goggle-eyed lion-face of the

6. EHI, i(ii), App.C, p. 154; cf. Matsya P, cclxi.38-39.

7. Supra, p. 221

1. BKS Supra, p. 221.

2. BKS, pp. 14-18, 46

3. ASM, i, p. lii; The Śāktas, p. 61 ff.

goddess and the face of the lion mount opened wide as it were for a mighty roar endow the composition with a grotesque character', writes Banerjea in describing a Nārasiṃhī image from Madhya Pradesh, but the grotesqueness, he observes, has been 'partially relieved by the modelling of the main image'<sup>1</sup>. Introduced as they were into Brahmanical Hinduism from a non-Aryan background in the role of war goddesses, the Mātrkās had of necessity to be represented in the beginning as of terrific nature, armed with fearful weapons, and capable of prodigies of valour in the battlefield - attributes that are far from being compliments to their sex. As in the case of the malignant village goddesses, these too have been sought to be propitiated with the euphemistic title of the Mātṛs or Mothers. A further attempt to cover up their malevolence seems to be indicated, even in the Mahābhārata, by references to their asceticism and handsomeness, and later in the iconographical texts as well as in plastic art, by depicting them with youthful bodies, handsome faces (except Vārāhī, Nārasiṃhī and Cāmuṇḍā), profusion of jewellery on their persons, and tall impressive crowns on their heads. All of them are usually represented as seated in the ardha-<sup>2</sup>paryāṅka pose with one of the hands (the lower right)

1. DHI, p. 508, pl. xlv.2.

2. A sitting position of ease with one leg drawn up and the other dangling rests on a lotus. Also known as lalitāsanā or lalitakṣepa. DHI, p. 272.

raised in the gesture of protection (abhayamudrā). The custom of making their images agreeable in appearance seems to be an old one, for in describing the iconography of the Mātrkās, Utpala says : kintu tāsāṃ stanaśobhā madhyakṣāmatā nitambavaipulyaṃ kārya yena prakāreṇa strīrūpasya śobhā jāyata iti, that is, 'but their ( of the Mātrkās') breasts, slender waists and massive hips should be so made so as to give maximum play to their feminine charms' <sup>1</sup>. Their carefully modelled bodies, breasts of remarkable size <sup>2</sup>, and wide, rounded hips are as much suggestive of sensuousness as of ripe motherhood. It is chiefly on account of the latter characteristics with which the Mātrkās, contrary to iconographical directions <sup>3</sup>, appear to have been invested in a later period, that we find so many of their representations in which each of them, except Cāmundā, is depicted with a child on her lap <sup>4</sup>, or by her side <sup>5</sup>. The Mātrkās represented by Indian artists appear, in the opinion of R.P. Chanda, as real mothers <sup>6</sup>. The idea of representing these erstwhile

1. Brhatsaṃhitā, lvii.56.

2. ASR, ix, p. 63.

3. EHI, i(ii), App.C, pp. 143-54.

4. DHI, pp. 505-06; MASI, No. 44, pp. 17-18. Sometimes Brāhmī is shown without a child (cf. ASWI, v, p. 39, pl. xxxiv.1, 3). But in the Mātrkā group consisting of seven Mothers and preserved in the Mathura Museum, each goddess is depicted with a child in her left arm. CBIMA, p. 62 (No. 552).

5. JBBRAS, xxiii, p. 140.

6. MASI, No. 44, p. 140/1 17.

companions-in-war as mothers fondling a child<sup>1</sup>, can possibly be ascribed to popular belief in which the Mother Goddess is not only Skanda-mātā<sup>2</sup> and Gaṇeśa-jananī<sup>3</sup>, but the mother of all gods and human beings. Such manner of representation also accounts for, if not justifies, the title of Mātr̥s given to these goddesses, who are otherwise introduced in the Epic and the Purāṇas apparently as śaktis of different gods and also as so many fiends, who take part in sanguinary battles against demons whose blood they drink up with joy<sup>4</sup>. Nor does this practice of representing a goddess with a child on her lap seem to have been confined to the Mātr̥kās or the Mother Goddess alone. It appears to have been extended to a quite a number of female deities, including such malignant types as Manasā<sup>5</sup>, and Śītalā<sup>6</sup>, and also others whose plastic representations are termed as 'Mother-and-Child Images'<sup>7</sup>, because their proper identification has not been possible with the help of the iconographical texts.

1. About the Mātr̥kā images Chanda observes, 'The Indian artists do not represent them as actually engaged in war, but as real mothers each seated at ease on her proper vehicle with a child on her lap supported by the left lower hand, to whom she offers protection with the right lower hand, while holding weapons of war in her two upper hands'. MAI, No. 44, p. 17.
2. Mbh, (Roy's translation), vi.23.11.
3. HM, p. 320.
4. Matsya P, clxxix.9,33.
5. Maity, P.K. : The Early History of the Cult of the Goddess Manasā, (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1963), pp. 334,336-337, pls. 4,5,7,9.
6. GI, p. 254.
7. Infra, p. 391 ff.

Chapter Three

:

THE MOTHER GODDESS  
IN

NORTH INDIAN HINDUISM

V E D I C   P E R I O D

In the light of the archaeological evidences unearthed at the different sites in India,<sup>1</sup> we are now in a position to claim a great antiquity for the cult of the Mother Goddess. The absence of any written documents does not however enable us to say under what name or names and in what forms she was venerated in the remote past. The Vedas do not throw any light on this point, and it is fruitless to look into them for the common names and the iconography of the Mother Goddess as she is worshipped today. But as we have already observed,<sup>2</sup> Durgā has absorbed the functions and attributes of a number of Vedic goddesses in course of her development in Brahmanical Hinduism.

In the Vedic pantheon, which is predominantly male, goddesses may not play any part as rulers of the world, but they are by no means 'vague or shadowy' as Payne thinks.<sup>3</sup> An examination of the functions and attributes

1. Infra, p. 350 ff.

2. Supra, p. 52 ff.

3. Payne, E.A : The Śāktas, Calcutta, 1933, p. 33.

of attributes of Aditi,<sup>1</sup> Sarasvatī,<sup>2</sup> and Pṛthivī<sup>3</sup> will testify that even in the early Vedic age these goddesses have a distinctive place in the estimation of the Aryans.

The Mother Goddess, as she is worshipped now, was unknown to the ancient Aryans,<sup>4</sup> but the idea of Mother-worship seems to have found a place even in the<sup>ir</sup> patriarchally constituted society.<sup>5</sup> In the Aryan family, the father was no doubt respected, but the mother was adored by the children.<sup>6</sup> From the way Dyaus and Pṛthivī are celebrated in the Vedas as heavenly parents of all creatures, including the gods,<sup>7</sup> the earliest religious creed of the Aryans seems to have been 'constructed on what may be called paternal and maternal lines'.<sup>8</sup> The idea of the universe proceeding from a female principle brought into union with a male is fully developed in the Vedic texts.<sup>9</sup>

The duality of the self-existent Supreme Being is much more elaborately enunciated in the later strata of the Vedic literature,<sup>10</sup> and the union of the two principles - male and female - Self or Puruṣa and Māyā or Prakṛti of

1. Supra, pp. 55-57
2. Supra, p. 59 ff.
3. Supra, pp. 109-11.
4. Supra, pp. 112-14.
5. RTLI, p. 223.
6. Ibid.
7. Supra, p. 109.
8. RTLI, p. 223.
9. Ibid.
10. SB, xiv.4.2.1; Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad, i.4.1-3; Manusāṃhitā, i.5 ff.

the Vedānta and Sāṅkhya philosophical systems - came to be regarded as indispensable before any creation could result. In the popular creed however, the Puruṣa became identified with a male god, Śiva, and Prakṛti with the goddess Pārvatī /Durgā.<sup>1</sup>

The concept of Śakti or the female aspect of god as being more active and more powerful than his male side also makes its appearance in the Vedic age. In celebrating Vāk in RV x.125, the composer who is the daughter of ṛṣi Ambhr̥ṇa, visualizes none but herself as capable of infinite powers, including those controlling the universe. According to the Śāktas, who characterize it as the Devī-sūkta, this hymn draws up a vivid picture of Śakti or the female principle.<sup>2</sup> Containing as it does ideas that are parallel to those in the Śākta philosophy, it has been readily adopted into the latter as the oldest mantra of Devī worship.<sup>3</sup> But, truly speaking, there is no clear mention of the Mother Goddess in the so-called Devī-sūkta.<sup>4</sup> Nor can we find in the old Vedic literature the epithets which have been used in this hymn in celebrating Vāk.<sup>5</sup> There is also no proof whatsoever that the Śākta cult centred around any of the Vedic goddesses,<sup>6</sup> though from

1. RTLI, p. 143.

2. Banerjea, J.N : Pañcopāsanā, Calcutta, 1960, p. 225.

3. BSSS, p. 29.

4. Ibid.

5. Pañcopāsanā, pp. 225-26.

6. Ibid., p. 226.

the way several female divinities like Aditi, Puraṇḍhi, Indrāṇī and Sarasvatī are described as mother goddesses, it would not be wrong to say that this conception of motherhood which figures so prominently behind the notion of such goddesses as Umā, Pārvatī, Lakṣmī etc., is undoubtedly of Vedic origin.<sup>1</sup>

The Śāktas may try to invest the Mother Goddess with a Vedic and therefore an Aryan pedigree, but she is essentially as much non-Aryan in origin as the Tantras,<sup>2</sup> which celebrate her as the Supreme Creatrix, preserver and destroyer. Her non-Aryan origin is also indicated by her being introduced in the Vedic literature for the first time as Ambikā,<sup>3</sup> sister of Rudra-Śiva who appears to have absorbed a fair amount of non-Vedic characteristics in course of his development as the supreme god (Mahādeva,<sup>4</sup> Maheśvara). Initially, Ambikā appears as the antithesis of the benign Vedic mothers, for she is characterized as a killer,<sup>5</sup> and thus closely resembles a grāmadevatā of the malignant type. In the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, Rudra is described as Ambikāpati, 'husband of Ambikā',<sup>6</sup> and the goddess henceforth came to be known as the wife of that god. The commentator Sāyaṇa describes Ambikā not only as

1. Divine Power, p. xxvii.

2. For the non-Vedic origins of the Tantras, see BKS, p. 82; Chattopadhyaya, Debiprasad : Lokāyata, New Delhi, 1959, p. 321 ff.

3. Supra, p. 93.

4. VSMRS, pp. 106 ff; EM, p. 219 ff.

5. TB, 1.6.10.4-5.

6. TA, x.10.

Rudra's wife, but also as the mother of the world (jagan-  
mātā) and Pārvatī.<sup>1</sup>

Durgā, which is one of the most important as well as popular names of the Mother Goddess, occurs in a gāyatrī  
mantra in the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka.<sup>2</sup> The mantra also contains two other well-known names of the goddess - Kātyāyanī and Kanyākumārī. The goddess is however mentioned in the mantra as Durgī, but according to Sāyaṇa,<sup>3</sup> it is a variant of Durgā and means the same goddess. None of these names are found in the Vedas, but their occurrence in the later strata of the Vedic literature is nevertheless highly significant, for each of them is used in the Purāṇic worship of Durgā.<sup>4</sup>

The appellation Kanyākumārī, which signifies a virgin daughter according to Sāyaṇa (kumārī kanyā) is associated with the name of a place in the far south of India. Styled as Kumārikā, this spot on the southernmost tip of the Indian peninsula, has been revered since remote antiquity as sacred to the goddess in her aspect of Kumārī or Kanyākumārī.<sup>5</sup> The unknown author of the Periplus Maris Erythraeae mentions this place as Comar, where 'those who wish to consecrate the closing part of their lives come...

1. TA, x.18.

2. T.A, x.1.

3. Ibid.

4. Pañcopāsanā, p. 227.

5. Ibid. Under the designation of Kanyā, the goddess is also associated with several places of Śākta pilgrimage, such as, Kanyāśrama, Kanyākūpa and Kanyāhrada. EM, p.225.

and bathe and engage themselves to celibacy. This is also done by the women; since it is related that the goddess (Kumārī) once on a time resided at the place and bathed'.<sup>1</sup> The Mahābhārata also mentions her as Mandaravāsini Kumārī or the virgin living on the rocks.<sup>2</sup> It seems quite likely that the Mother Goddess must have been worshipped as a virgin all over India since immemorial times.<sup>3</sup> The goddess Kumārī mentioned by the unknown Greek author is doubtless no other than the Kanyākumārī, who is mentioned in the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka as an Aryan divinity.<sup>4</sup>

R.G. Bhandarkar regards Kātyāyanī, (another common name of Durgā),<sup>5</sup> as the tutelary deity of the Brāhmaṇa Kātya dynasty. Incidentally, he also suggests that the Devī's name Kauśikī may also be explained in the same way.<sup>6</sup> Durgā is also mentioned as Kātyāyanī in the Mahābhārata.<sup>7</sup> According to the Vāmāna and Varāha Purāṇas,<sup>8</sup> Kātyāyanī is no other than Durgā, and was born at the hermitage of the ṛṣi Kātyāyana, who joined the gods in contributing his own energy for the creation of this goddess.<sup>10</sup> She is

1. Majumdar, R.C : The Classical Accounts of India, Calcutta, 1960, pp. 306-07

2. EM, p. 225.

3. It seems that Durga has been conceived as a young virgin and of age between an year and sixteen. Thus she is called Sandhyā if conceived as an year-old baby; Sarasvatī if two years old; Candikā if she is seven; Sāmbhavī if eight; Durgā or Bālā if nine; Gaurī if ten; etc., etc. EHI, i(ii), pp. 332-33.

Virgins appear to play an important part in the cult of the Mother Goddess. According to the Devī Purāṇa (xxxiii.54, 60, 67, 71, 75, 79, 83, 87, 91, 95, 100, 104), at each monthly service of Durgā beginning from Śrāvāṇa (cf. HRY, p.176 ff.) the worshipper must feed the Brāhmaṇas and

described as an eight-armed maiden in the Varāha Purāna,<sup>1</sup> according to which she materialised in response to Brahmā's meditation in order to destroy a demon named Vetrāsura.<sup>2</sup> In the iconographical texts as well as in some ~~other~~ other Purāṇas, Katyāyanī is described as ten-, sixteen-<sup>3</sup> and twenty-armed Durgā in her aspect of Mahiṣāsoramardinī.

The Taittirīya Āraṇyaka also furnishes proof about the Aryanizing of the goddess Durgā by connecting her with Agni and Sūrya, two prominent Vedic gods. She is invoked<sup>4</sup> as Vairocanī, or the daughter of Sūrya or Agni,<sup>5</sup> and is

kumārīs and pay them dakṣiṇā (fees). Feeding of the virgins or kumārīs, ~~is~~, says this Purāna (xxxv.17-18), is an indispensable rite in Devī worship because Durgā herself is a kanyā (daughter) in her forms as Umā, Gaurī and Pārvatī, and so long as girls do not attain puberty, they are as good as the Devī herself. Cf. Varāha P, xcii.1, xcv.24, 38.

4. Pañcopāsanā, p. 228.
5. VSMRS, p. 144.
6. Ibid.
7. EM, p. 224.
8. VP, xvii.42.
9. Varāha P, xxviii.39.
10. VP, xviii.7 ff.

1. Varāha P, xxviii.23-25.
2. EHI, i(ii), App. C, pp. 109-112; Vratakhaṇḍa, pp.88-89; Mānasollāsa, ii, vv.764-72.
3. Infra, p. 472.
4. TA, x.1.
5. Jacobi, H : 'Durga', ERE, v, p. 117.

characterized as having the colour of flame, radiant from meditation, an object of prayer by people (because she rewards them with success), and a beautiful deliveress to whom people turn in distress.<sup>1</sup> The Durgāstavas<sup>2</sup> (eulogies of Durgā) emphasizing the Devī's aspect as a deliveress and bestower of success in the Mahābhārata and the Purānas, may be traced to this passage, which point out her connection with asceticism, and with the Vedic gods Agni and Sūrya,<sup>3</sup> as well as with divine energy.

### U M A

The name Umā, which suggests the placid aspect of the Devī, occurs for the first time in the Kena Upaniṣad.<sup>4</sup> It is to be noted that Umā appears in this text not as the wife of Rudra-Śiva, but as a 'very radiant' (bahuśobhamānā) heavenly woman, who is conversant with the Brahman or the Supreme Being. There is also nothing in the Kena Upaniṣad to suggest that Umā is the same as Ambikā of the Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā, though in the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka<sup>5</sup> she is mentioned as the wife of Rudra who is designated Umāpati the husband (the husband of Umā) as well as/of Ambikā. Umā and Ambikā thus came to be regarded as one and the same goddess.

1. Tām agnivarṇām tapasā jvalantīm Vairocanīm karmaphaleṣu-  
jṣṭām/  
Dūrgām devīm śaraṇamaham prapadye sutarasi tarase  
namah// TA, x.1.
2. Infra, p. 272, note 2.
3. Pañcopāsanā, p. 228.
4. KU, iii.25.
5. TA, x.18.

In the Kena Upaniṣad,<sup>1</sup> the goddess as Umā appears conversant with the knowledge of the Supreme Being, whom important gods like Agni, Vāyu and Indra could not even recognize.<sup>2</sup> This is rather surprising, for it is the goddess, and not the seemingly dominant masculine divinities of the Vedic pantheon, who appears to possess the knowledge about the mysterious power behind the universe.<sup>3</sup> Sāyaṇa also focuses our attention on this fact by characterizing Umā as Brahma-vidyā or the knowledge of ~~Supreme~~ Brahman personified, while commenting on the passage in which Rudra is mentioned as the husband of both Umā and Ambikā.<sup>4</sup> But Umā is not only Brahma-vidyā in the Kena Upaniṣad, she is also Haimavatī, an epithet that has been interpreted as the daughter of Himālaya.<sup>5</sup> The association of the goddess with mountains ~~is~~ thus appears to date back to great antiquity. In qualifying Umā as Haimavatī the Upaniṣad may possibly be referring to an ancient and well-known tradition in which the goddess was known as the daughter of Himavat.<sup>6</sup> Not only is her husband Rudra described as Giriśa and Giritra in the Śatarudriya,<sup>7</sup> but the goddess herself is invoked as Gaurī and Girisutā (daughter of the mountain) in a gāyatrī of the Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā.<sup>8</sup> We may thus equate Girisutā and Gaurī with Umā

1. KU, iv.1.

2. Ibid, iii.1 ff.

3. Campbell, J : The Masks of God, ii, London, 1962, p. 204; AIA, pp. 108-10.

4. TA, x.18.

5. SBE, i, p. 151, note 1. In explaining the soma, Sāyaṇa describes Gaurī, who is also Umā and Brahma-vidyā

Haimavatī though it must be remembered that the portion of the Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā containing this gāyatrī belongs, like the 10th part of the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, to the later Vedic period.<sup>1</sup>

Our subject being chiefly iconographical, we do not intend to enter on a lengthy examination of the etymology of the various names of the goddess. Among her well-known names, Umā appears to be most controversial in so far as its etymology is concerned. Hopkins<sup>2</sup> follows Oppert<sup>3</sup> in deriving the word from ammā or amma which in Dravidian means 'mother'. It is quite likely that the word Umā is not of Sanskrit origin and the explanations offered about its etymology are mostly arbitrary.<sup>4</sup> The Bengali poet Bhāratchandra explains the word Umā as the Śrī (grace) of Śiva.<sup>5</sup> Another Bengali poet seems obviously fantastic when he traces the name to the crying sound made by the goddess on her birth (u-mā, u-mā).<sup>6</sup>

personified, as the daughter of Himavat or Himālaya :  
Himavat putryāḥ Gauryāḥ brahma-vidyābhimānirūpatvad  
Gaurī-vācakah Umā-śabdo brahma-vidyāṁ upalakṣayanti =

'Since Gaurī, the daughter of Himavat, is the impersonation of divine knowledge, the word Umā which denotes Gaurī indicates divine knowledge' (OST, iv, p. 420). Thus we have in Gaurī another name of Umā and in both aspects the goddess is the daughter of Himālaya.

6. BSSS, p. 36.
7. TS, iv.5.1; VS, xvi.
8. MS, ii.9.4.

1. Pañcopāsanā, p. 228.
2. EM, p. 226.
3. OII, p. 421.
4. BSSS, p. 26.

The origin of the name and its meaning appear to have been undetermined even in ancient India, for, Kālidāsa derives Umā from u mā (oh, dont) addressed to Pārvatī by her mother when the latter sought ~~o~~ to persuade her not engage herself in rigorous ascetic penance.<sup>1</sup> The origin of the name as suggested by Kālidāsa also occurs in some of the Purāṇas.<sup>2</sup> It may be pointed out that the Babylonian word for 'mother' is ummu or umma, in Akkadian it is ummi, and in Dravidian Umma or Amma.<sup>3</sup> It is not unlikely that these words as well as Umā have come from the same source and are therefore synonymous. Umā, we have noticed,<sup>4</sup> appears on the coins of Huvīṣka as OMMO which is possibly derived from the Babylonian and Akkadian words for 'mother'. It may also be suggested that the word Ammā or Mā, which is the name of the Mother Goddess in Phrygia,<sup>5</sup> may have had something to do with the formation of the word OMMO, for OMMO in our opinion seems to be a Scythic adaptation of the ancient Anāhitā, who is known to have been identified with the Phrygian Ma.<sup>6</sup> In any case, notwithstanding

5. Bhāratchandrer Granthāvalī (published by Vasumatī Sāhitya Mandir), 14th edition, Calcutta, p. 15.

6. BSSS, p. 27.

1. Kumārasambhavam, i.26 : Umeti mātrā tapaso niṣiddhā pascādumākhyāṃ sumukhī jagāma.

2. VP, li.24; Varāha P, xxii.5; Matsya P, cliv.73; KP, xlii; Harivaṃśa, i.18.13-22. For further explanations of the name see BSSS, pp. 27-28.

3. MG, p. 59.

4. Infra, p. 408.

5. MG, pp. 59-60.

6. MAR, vii, p. 25; CMG, p. 95.

its occurrence in the Kena Upaniṣad, the word Umā is both non-Sanskritic and non-Vedic, and appears to have been derived from some ~~non-Aryan~~ non-Indian stock through the Dravidian.<sup>1</sup> This also indicates that the elements of the Mother Goddess cult may have been borrowed like the word Umā from the Near and Middle East in the distant past and preserved in their pristine character among the non-Aryans of India from whom the cult of the Mother Goddess was introduced into the later Vedic religion and Brahmanical Hinduism.<sup>2</sup>

### P Ā R V A T Ī

In the Epics as well as in the Purāṇas and other literature the goddess Umā is known as Pārvatī. Her birth as "daughter of Himavat", whence this name, is recognized everywhere.<sup>3</sup> In the Rāmāyaṇa the goddess Umā<sup>4</sup> is described as the second daughter of Himālaya. She is mentioned as Sailasutā Pārvatī in the epics and under such synonyms as Giriputrī, Girirājaputrī, Sailarājaputrī, Nagarājaputrī, Girijā, Girivarātmaajā, Nagakanyā, Parvatarājakanyā and Sailaputrī.<sup>5</sup> The goddess also appears as the daughter of Himālaya in the Harivaṃśa.<sup>6</sup> As testified by

1. MG, p. 60; cf. OII, pp. 421-22.
2. Cf. Kretschmer, Paul : 'Indra und der Hethitische Gott Inaras', Band i, Heft 2, Weimar, 1929, p. 316; HCIP, i, pp. 165-66.
3. EM, p. 224.
4. The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmiki, ed. K.P. Parab, Bombay, 1888, i. xxxv. 13-15.
5. EM, p. 224.
6. Harivaṃśa, i. 18. 13 ff.

<sup>1</sup> Śudraka and <sup>2</sup> Kālidāsa, the association of the goddess with mountains seems to have been well-known in ancient India, for both mention her as Pārvatī. The story of the Devī's birth as the daughter of Himālaya is narrated by most of the Purāṇas.<sup>3</sup> That in the epic and Puranic mythologies Durgā continued to figure as Pārvatī is attested by Bāṇa's Caṇḍiśataka in which no less than six epithets<sup>4</sup> connect her not only with mountains but also with Himālaya. The association of the goddess with mountains does not extend to the Himalayas alone, for she is also Vindhya-vāsini,<sup>5</sup> or the dweller in the Vindhya mountains, and also is said to live on mountain peaks.<sup>6</sup> We have already noticed that she is mentioned as Mandaravāsini-Kumārī in the Mahābhārata.<sup>7</sup> In the Devī Purāṇa, the goddess is addressed as always residing on the peak of the Himālayas, Kailāsa, Meru, Mandāra, Vindhya, Malaya, and Gandhamādana<sup>8</sup> mountains.

Kālidāsa defines the word Pārvatī as the patronymic of the goddess, who is later on called Umā.<sup>9</sup> The latter name

1. Infra, p. ~~note~~ 448, note 1.
2. Kumarasambhavam, i.26. In verse 21 of the same canto Kālidāsa mentions the birth of the goddess from the womb of Menakā, the wife of Himālaya.
3. KP, xli.40-41; SP, xx; Varāha P, xxii; Siva P, vii; Padma P (Sr̥ṣṭi Khanda), xliii; Matsya P, clii.73; VP, xxi.2; Kūrma P, i.xi; DB, vii.xxxi.
4. SPM, p. 258.
5. Hariyaṃśa, ii.3.8; ii.103.9; ii.120.19; EM, p. 224; VP, xviii.7-12; MP, xci.39. Rao reproduces from an undisclosed source the iconography of a four-armed goddess called Vindhya-vāsini Durgā (EHI, i(ii), p. 344). The Kathāsaritsāgara (trans. C.H. Tawney, i.2.2, i.3.38, i.5.20 ff, i.6.2, i.10.41) frequently refers to the

is no doubt an Aryan invention to include into the circle of Vedic divinities a non-Aryan goddess who must have been venerated from immemorial times as Earth-Mother, Mountain-Mother and Forest-Mother.<sup>1</sup> The appellations of the goddess suggestive of her mountainous origin should not be taken to mean that she is the daughter of Himālaya. They rather indicate the existence of her cult in the mountainous regions of India from long before the advent of the Aryans. The situation of many of the Sāktapīṭhas on mountains (Vindhyācala, Kāmarūpa, (also called Kamagiri), Caṭṭala,<sup>2</sup> Hinglāj, Śrīparvata, Jvālāmukhī, Kāśmīra, Rāmagiri etc), should support such a contention. This also links the goddess Umā/Pārvatī/Durgā with the mother goddesses of

goddess as Vindhyavāsini.

6. Harivaṃśa, ii.3.6.
7. Supra, p. 248.
8. DP, cxxvii.73-74.
9. Kumārasambhavam, i.26.

1. BKS, p. 25. Oppert (OII, p. 421) appears to accept like Muir (OST, iv.p.425) Professor Albrecht Weber's suggestion that the word Umā may be derived from the Sanskrit root u, av, which mean 'to protect'. Muir gives his support in the following ~~words~~ words: 'As Ambikā, mother appears to be merely an euphemistic and flattering epithet, employed to propitiate the cruel goddess, in the same way it appears that we must derive Umā from root u, av, to protect. It is true that a final vowel before ma commonly takes guna or is lengthened, but the words sīma and hīma show that this is not necessary, and the name Rumā is perhaps ... a perfectly analogous formation'. OST, iv, p. 425.
2. Sircar, D.C : 'The Śākta Pīṭhas', JRASBL, xiv, p.

of the ancient Near and Middle East. The Cretan Mother Goddess was venerated as Mater Dolorosa.<sup>1</sup> Long before her worship was introduced into Rome in 204 B.C.,<sup>2</sup> the cult of Cybele was widely practised in the mountainous regions of Asia Minor,<sup>3</sup> particularly on Mount Ida, whence her epithet the Great Idean Mother.<sup>4</sup> The identification of Rhea and Anāhitā<sup>5</sup> with the Phrygian Cybele possibly suggests that the former were mountain goddesses in the more primitive state of their respective cults. Ishtar too appears to have been a mountain deity, because among her numerous appellations she is also mentioned as 'the mistress of the mountains'.<sup>7</sup> In fact, all mother goddesses in their aspect as Earth-mothers appear to have been worshipped on mountain tops,<sup>8</sup> and Umā/Pārvatī/Durgā is no exception to this rule.

It is quite true that in many Purāṇas Durgā is described as the daughter of Himālaya, but in a few others the epithet Pārvatī appears to have been derived from her residence in the mountains. Thus in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, she is called Pārvatī not because she is the daughter of the mountain king, but because she resides in the

1. CMG, p. 134 ff.
2. Barrow, R.H : The Romans (A Pelican Book), Harmondsworth, 1949, p. 146.
3. LEM, 173.
4. Showerman, G : 'Cybele', ERE, iv, p. 377; LEM, p. 173.
5. Pearson, A.C : 'Mother of the Gods', ERE, viii, p. 848.
6. Supra, p. 253.
7. Jastrow, M : The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria, Boston, 1898, p. 85.
8. CMG, p. 134.

Himālayas.<sup>1</sup> Like any other god, Himālaya also came forward to contribute his own energy to the creation of the goddess as well as to give her a lion to serve as her vāhana.<sup>2</sup>

The connection of Durgā/Pārvatī with the mother goddesses of the Near and Middle East is as much suggested by her lion-mount as by her mountainous origin. In her Greek representations Cybele is shown as seated on a throne flanked by two lions or placed on a chariot drawn by the same animals.<sup>3</sup> In the 5th century B.C., Cybele was celebrated as the mistress of the swift-slaughtering lions.<sup>4</sup> Lions are also known to have regularly guarded the Great Mother in Asia Minor.<sup>5</sup> Ashtart, the Phoenician Mother Goddess,<sup>6</sup> appears to have had a lion for her vehicle<sup>7</sup> just like her counterpart in Mycenae and Minoan Crete.<sup>8</sup> The Babylonian Ishtar is said to ride on a chariot drawn by seven lions,<sup>9</sup> who also attend her on other occasions.<sup>10</sup> Inanna or Nanaia or Nana, whose identities merged with that of Ishtar,<sup>11</sup> must also have been

1. MP, lxxxv.6, 37, 40.

2. MP, lxxxii.29,

3. LEM, p. 174.

4. ERE, viii, p. 848.

5. Levy, G.R. : The Gates of Horn, London, 1948, p. 177/178/179. p. 224; fig. 101; cf. MAR, I, p. 275.

6. LEM, pp. 77 ff.

7. ERE, vii, p. 116.

8. CMG, pp. 137-38; Levy, G.R. : Op. cit, p. 223, fig. 100;

LEM, LEM, p. 88.

9. LEM, p. 57.

10. Conteneau, G : Op. cit, p. 257; Delaporte, L : Mesopotamia, the Babylonian and Assyrian Civilizations, London, 1925, p. 140; Levy, G.R. : Op. cit, p. 223.

associated with animals in the primitive stage of their cults. It is therefore not surprising to find either Nana or her variant OMMO to be attended by the lion on the coins of the Indo-Greek, Bactrian and Indo-Scythic kings of India.<sup>1</sup> Since the early Gupta emperors freely copied the Kuṣāṇa coin devices for their own issues,<sup>2</sup> it would be quite reasonable to postulate the association of Ambikā/Durgā with the lion to have been inspired by foreign influences percolating through the Indo-Greeks, Bactrians and the Kuṣāṇas. It is also quite possible, as Professor James suggests, that the cult of the Mother Goddess after its inception in its original homeland, the Near East, in the remote palaeolithic times, subsequently extended to different parts of the ancient world.<sup>3</sup> While it absorbed many new elements in the course of its diffusion, it also retained a few of its pristine features which provide a link among the mother goddesses of the ancient world. This accounts for the similarity between Cybele and Durgā/Pārvatī, who like the former, is attended by a lion which may be taken as representing the animal world of which she is the patron.<sup>4</sup> The epithet Pārvatī as well as the lion mount also suggest that like Cybele and the Mater

11. Jastrow, M : Op. cit, p. 232.

1. Infra, pp. 418-20

2. Infra, p. 422. . Bhadrakali, a form of Durgā, is to be represented according to the texts, on a chariot drawn by four lions. As there is unmistakable evidence of non-Aryan influence on the iconography of

Dolorosa of Crete, she must have been worshipped in the wild mountainous regions in pre-Aryan India as a Mother Goddess<sup>1</sup> before she was introduced into the circle of the Vedic divinities as the bahuśobhamānā Umā of the Kena Upaniṣad. Since then her elevation as the Supreme Goddess -Mahādevī or Maheśvarī (meaning the Great Goddess and not the wife of Maheśvara or Mahādeva, i.e., Śiva) has been quite easy and rapid. Under the auspices of Brahmanical Hinduism, particularly the sectarian Śāktas, Durgā has risen to be the supreme goddess having absorbed the attributes of the benign Vedic deities, such as, Aditi, Sarasvatī and others on the one hand, and those of the numerous village mothers on the other. That is why Durgā has so many names and so many forms - placid as well as malignant.

### D U R G Ā

Historically, the name Durgā comes to designate the Mother Goddess later than Umā and Pārvatī, though as we have seen, it occurs as early as the period of the

Bhadrakālī, it is very likely that the idea of representing Durgā with a lion for her yāhana or riding on a chariot drawn by the same animals. (see Infra, pp. may have come from outside long before her legends were incorporated in the Purāṇas.

3. CMG, p. 20 ff.

4. Harivaṃśa, ii.3.8

1. BSSS, p. 39.

Taittirīya Āraṇyaka.<sup>1</sup> In the Rātri-sūkta which occurs in the Rg Vedapariśiṣṭa,<sup>2</sup> and is placed between the 126th and 128th hymns of the 10th maṇḍala, is a Durgāstava or a hymn in praise of Durgā, characterized as an auspicious and beautiful goddess, who is approached for deliverance from various kinds of dangers, difficulties and fears. The Rātri-sūkta is a late insertion in the sacred text as are all the hymns in the Rg Vedapariśiṣṭa, but like a few others,<sup>3</sup> it may have been composed in a fairly early period. In the gāyatrī found in the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka Durgā is also approached as a goddess who delivers her worshippers from dangers and difficulties.<sup>4</sup> Ordinarily, the name Durgā signifies her role as the destroyer or dispeller of difficulties and miseries (durgatināśinī). The sense has been much elaborated in the Śabdakalpadruma<sup>5</sup> according to which the goddess is called Durgā because she is the destroyer of the demon Durga, great obstacles, fetters of action, heinous acts, grief, sorrow, hell and fear of death,<sup>6</sup> rebirths, great fear and mortal disease. Such explanations are not exactly arbitrary; they rather indicate the nature of the circumstances in which Durgā is remembered in popular practice as a deliveress.<sup>7</sup>

1. Supra, p. 247.

2. Rig-Veda Saṁhitā, ed. Max Muller, iv, p. 535 ff.

3. Ibid, p. 520.

4. Supra, p. 250, note 1

5. Śabdakalpadruma, pp. 743 ff.

6. Cf. BVP (Brahma Khanda), lvii.1-11.

7. BSSS, p. 47. Cf. SP (Kāśikhanda Uttarakhanda), lxxii. 81 ff. describing how people may overcome all kinds of dangers by worshipping the goddess for nine nights.

The concept of the goddess as a deliveress also occurs in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna in which she is described as Durgā because she is durgabhavasāgaranaurasaṅgā (the boat to cross the difficult ocean of existence).<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere, in the same Purāna, the Devī is called Durgā as she is to be the killer of the powerful demon Durgama.<sup>2</sup> We are inclined, however, to agree with scholars in whose opinion the name of Durgā has originated from the role of the goddess as the protectress of a durga or a fortress.<sup>3</sup> This explanation appears satisfactory not only from the etymological point of view, but also because of the occurrence of this epithet in a similar sense in the Purānas.<sup>4</sup> In celebrating her greatness, the Devī Purāna describes the goddess as Durgā who resides in fortresses as their mistress (Devī durgēṣu durgēśvarī).<sup>5</sup> In the Devī Bhāgavatam, Durgā appears as a powerful city goddess ever intent on protecting the citizens against all kinds of enemies and dangers.<sup>6</sup> She is ~~is~~ invoked by Aniruddha, the grandson of Kṛṣṇa,<sup>7</sup> as Mahādevī Durgā durgaparākramā, i.e. 'Durgā, the great goddess, who is the powerful (protectress) of the fortress, or whose great power protects the fortress!'<sup>8</sup> As Moor suggests,<sup>9</sup> the derivation of this name

1. MP, lxxxiv.10; cf. Ibid, lxxxv.10.

2. Ibid, xci.46; cf. DB, vii.22; SP, (Kāśīkhaṇḍe Uttara-khaṇḍa), lxxi-lxxii.

3. BSSS, p. 47.

4. Ibid, pp. 47-48.

5. DP, lxxxiii.62-63. According to this Purāna (xxxvii.9), the goddess is called Durgā because whenever implored by the gods, she rescues them from unsurmountable dangers.

of the goddess from 'durga', a fortress which is 'durgama', difficult of access, because it is situated in the ~~mountains~~ mountains (parvata, whence the appellation Pārvatī), may also have been influenced by three passages in the Manu-saṁhitā.<sup>1</sup> This name of the goddess also appears<sup>2</sup> to mean a fortress or a secure place of refuge in Bana's Kādambarī.<sup>2</sup>

As we have hinted elsewhere,<sup>3</sup> the Mother Goddess may have been worshipped ~~in~~ in the urban communities in ~~ancient~~ ancient India much in the same way as Lakṣmī, the goddess of wealth and fortune (nagaralakṣmī). As cities (purā)<sup>4</sup> were usually fortified in these days, particularly those in the west and north-west of India, it would be reasonable to suggest that, like Pallas Athene, the Mother Goddess also came to be invested with heroic attributes, as well as venerated like the former as a war goddess who<sup>5</sup> slew demons and giants with her own hands. Whether as the remover of distress, or the slayer of the demon Durga, or as the guardian of a city or a fortress, Durgā is essentially a war goddess armed with ~~various~~ various weapons, and she is ever ready to crush enemies. She is thus

6. DB, iii.24.5-6.
7. EM, p. 214.
8. Harivaṁśa, ii.120.35.
9. HP, p. 153.

1. Manusaṁhitā, vii.71-73.
2. Kādambarī Kathāmukha by Bānabhatta (ed. P.L. Vaidya, Poona, 1939, ), p. 31 : svacchandapracāramapi Durgaika-śaraṇam, 'though wandering at pleasure, he had his sole refuge in the goddess Durgā (or a fortress).

utterly unlike Umā/Pārvatī who has nothing warlike about her and who is celebrated in literature and art as a daughter (of Himālaya), a wife (of Śiva), and a mother (of Gaṇeśa and Skanda). In her placid aspect as Umā/Pārvatī, the wifely and motherly virtues of the goddess appear as the most prominent characteristics, whereas Durgā, Caṇḍī, Kālī recall her terrible forms associated with violence, bloodshed and destruction. The latter aspect of the Devī is best indicated by her name Caṇḍī or Caṇḍikā connected with her role as the slayer of the titans like Mahiṣāsura, Sumbha and Niśumbha, Durgama and others.<sup>1</sup> It is quite likely that representing as they do two diametrically opposite aspects of the goddess, Pārvatī-Umā and Durgā-Caṇḍī were two different goddesses before they were compounded into one divinity in post-Vedic Hinduism.<sup>2</sup>

### C A N D Ī   O R   C A N D I K Ā

As the Supreme Goddess, Durgā is celebrated under this epithet in thirteen chapters of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna,<sup>3</sup>

3. Infra, pp. 403-04.

4. Wheeler, R.E.M : Indus Civilization, pp. 90-91.

5. Jones, Sir W : 'On the Gods of Greece, Italy and India', Asiatick Researches, i, Calcutta, 1788, p. 252. In the frieze of the great altar of Zeus at Pergamon, now in the Berlin Museum, Athene is shown striking down the giant Enceladus during a battle. LEM, p. 94.

1. Infra, p. 506 ff.

2. BSSS, p. 50.

3. MP, lxxxix-xciii.

Collectively known as the Devī-Māhātmya or Mārkaṇḍeya Caṇḍī, or simply Caṇḍī, it is to the Śāktas what the Bible is to the Christians. The goddess occurs in the Devī-Māhātmya under most of her well-known names, such as, Ambikā, Durgā, Gaurī, Pārvatī and Kātyāyanī, but not even once as Umā. She is of course mentioned thrice as Pārvatī, but as the resident in the mountains and not as the daughter of Himālaya.<sup>3</sup> This may be taken as a further proof of Umā-Pārvatī and Durgā-Caṇḍī being different goddesses representing two different traditions in the history of ~~the~~ Mother Goddess worship in India. As Das Gupta suggests, Umā and Pārvatī as names of the goddess appear to be much older than Durgā or Caṇḍī.<sup>4</sup> It is also quite possible that upon her introduction into the Aryan pantheon, the pristine characteristics of the goddess were sought to be covered under the civilised attributes of Umā Haimavatī, who was conceived after the Vedic mothers like Aditi, Pṛthivī, Sarasvatī, Purāṇḍhi and Śrī-Lakṣmī. The transformation of Ambikā, who was originally a ruthless killer, into the placid Umā suggests as much. But the suppression of the warlike characteristics of the Mother Goddess, coming from the non-Aryan background in which she had been worshipped as the source of all power, was

1. Cf. Barth, A : Op. cit., p. 197, note 2.
2. Infra, p. 296, note 2
3. Supra, pp. 257-58.
4. BSSS, p. 50.

but temporary. As usually happens to all conquering races, the Aryans succumbed to the non-Aryans whom they had subjugated, and were compelled to accommodate among other things elements from the latter's religion in their own. Numerous images in terracotta found all over Northern India,<sup>1</sup> testify to the continuation of the worship of the Mother Goddess, among the lower orders of ~~the~~ society at least, after the fall of the twin capitals of the Indus Civilization, Harappā and Mohenjo-dāro.<sup>2</sup> The fighting characteristic of the goddess, which are so un-womanish, appear to have reasserted themselves from the pre-Kuṣāṇa times, as testified by the writings of Sūdraka<sup>3</sup> and the devices on the coins of the Indo-Greek and Indo-Parthian rulers in the north-west of India.<sup>4</sup> What with the resurgence of non-Aryanism under Aryan garb, foreign invasions, and the rise of warlike kings like Candragupta Maurya and the imperial Guptas, it was but natural that the Mother Goddess should be reconceived and represented as a war goddess destroying for her worshippers their enemies, personified by demons, such as Mahiṣa, Durgama and others.<sup>5</sup> The Matsya<sup>6</sup> and the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇas, as

1. Infra, p. 384 ff.

2. Cf. Basham, A.L. : ~~Op/~~ Loc cit, p. 311.

3. Infra, p. 448, note 1.

4. Infra, pp. 414-16.

5. HD, v, pp. 856, 900. The 4th Book of the Brahmānda P., which may be of an earlier date than either the Matsya or the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, celebrates the goddess under the name of Lalitā as being more powerful than Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva and also as the slayer of Bhaṇḍāsura (Dikshitar, V.R.A: The Purāṇa Index, i, University of Madras, 1951, p. xxii). Lalitā is one of the names of

well as the Mahābhārata,<sup>1</sup> which were all compiled during the Gupta period, or even a century or two earlier, furnish the best indication of the form in which the goddess was conceived and venerated. It is not as Umā-Pārvatī but as Durgā-Caṇḍī that the goddess gained one of the foremost positions in the Hindu pantheon. Notwithstanding her celebration as an ascetic maiden and an amorous wife by Kālidāsa and numerous other poets and writers of the medieval period,<sup>2</sup> the goddess continued to flourish in her warlike aspect and under her name Durgā/Caṇḍī from the Gupta period onwards.<sup>3</sup> In his Caṇḍīśataka, Bāṇa mentions the goddess as Caṇḍī in 96 stanzas, whereas she is mentioned only twelve times as Umā and twenty times as Pārvatī.<sup>4</sup> In this as well as in other works of Bāṇa, the goddess is no doubt referred to in her benign aspects,<sup>5</sup> but these pale into insignificance before the sanguinary and violent character in which he usually represents her to his readers.<sup>6</sup>

Durgā(EHI, i(ii), p. 333). She is worshipped under this name at Prayāga (near Allahabad) which is known as one of her pīṭhas. JRASBL, xiv, p. 36.

6. Infra, p. 448, note 1.

1. Winternitz, M : A History of Indian Literature, University of Calcutta, 1927, i, p. 463 ff; Hopkins, E.W : The Great Epic of India, New York, 1901, p. 387 ff.

2. BSSS, p. 95 ff.

3. The Śāktas, pp. 38-39.

4. SPM, pp. 247, 258-59.

5. Ibid pp. 258-59.

6. Ibid, p. 258; Harṣa Carita (trans. Cowell and Thomas), pp. 84, 102, 225, 259; Kādambarī Kathāmukham, pp. 30-31. Kathāsaritsāgara (trans. Tawney), 1.3.38; 1.6.156; 1.10.141; 1.10.189; 1.11.13; 1.11.36.

The Vedic and later Vedic literature, such as, the Brāhmaṇas, Upaniṣads and the Gṛhya Sūtras, does not contain any direct evidence of Devī or Śakti worship on an organized basis. Yet, nevertheless, they reveal how the elements of the goddess cult were gradually being incorporated in the religious system of the Aryans.<sup>1</sup> This is evident from the importance accorded, though grudgingly, first to the Vedic goddesses like Aditi, Sarasvatī and Pṛthivī, and later from the introduction into the Vedic pantheon of Śrī, Ambikā, Umā Haimavatī, Kātyāyanī, Gaurī, Kanyā-Kumārī and Durgā.<sup>2</sup>

1. Pañcopāsanā, p. 231.

2. The recognition of the Female Principle in the Vedic period is indirectly indicated in the so-called Creation hymn of the Rg Veda (x.129). In the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad (i.4.1 ff), the recognition is fully given, though the Female Principle is characterized as part and parcel of the Creator, who is male, and who brings her into existence at his will because being lonely, he wished for a second (self or partner) which he produced out of himself. 'He then made his Self to fall into two (pat), and then arose husband (pati) and wife (patni) ... Therefore the void which was there is filled by the wife. He embraced her, and men were born'. Ibid, i.4.3 (Trans. F. Max Muller, SBE, xv, pp. 85-86.

T H E M O T H E R G O D D E S S  
I N T H E E P I C S

The first unmistakable signs of an organized cult centred in a goddess appear in the Mahābhārata<sup>1</sup>. These references throw insufficient light on the history of the worship of Durgā in the Sub-continent, but furnish enough indication of a syncretism in which the Vedic and non-Vedic elements combine in the development of the Mother Goddess.<sup>2</sup> The original Rāmāyana is virtually useless as evidence of goddess worship in ancient India. The story that is current in Eastern India, particularly Bengal, about the worship of Durgā by Rāma out of season (akāla bodhana), and which has been widely accepted as the basis for celebrating her annual worship during the autumn, occurs only in the Bengali version of the epic composed by Kṛttivāsa.<sup>3</sup> Kṛttivāsa's source of this legend is yet undisclosed, though there are evidences of such a tradition of worship of the goddess by Rāma out of season in the comparatively late Bṛhaddharma Purāna.<sup>4</sup> The merit of

1. The Śāktas, p. 37.
2. Jacobi, H. : 'Durga', ERE, v, p. 117.
3. Pañcopāsanā, p. 232; cf. Kṛttivāsi Rāmāyana, ed. D.C. Sen, 9th edition, Calcutta, 1916, p. 459 ff.
4. Pūrva Khaṇḍa, xxii.14 :

Rāvaṇasya vadhārthāya Rāmasyānuḡrahāya ca /  
Akāle tu Śive bodhastava devyāḥ kṛto mayā //

her autumnal worship is referred to by other Purāṇas as well<sup>1</sup>. The original Rāmāyana describes however how Rāma was advised by the ṛṣi Agastya to recite a hymn in honour of Āditya (Sūrya), and upon his doing so, was able to kill the rākṣasa king Rāvaṇa<sup>2</sup>. The goddess is mentioned in the two epics under different names, but these references are mostly vague and throw little light on the extent of her worship<sup>3</sup>. There is enough indication of Saktism in the Mahābhārata<sup>4</sup>, but in reality it does not recognize any Śākta cult<sup>5</sup>. 'Even Durgā seems to be a late addition to the epic as she appears hymned'<sup>6</sup>. Being treated as interpolations, the two hymns celebrating Durgā in the Mahābhārata, have been left out of the standard recensions of the text<sup>7</sup>. Though not two thousand years old, as claimed by Yogesh Chandra Ray<sup>8</sup>, these two sections may have been added to the text in the early medieval

1. AP, cclxviii; DP, lix.16; SP(Kāśikhaṇḍe-Uttarakhaṇḍa), lxxii.85; ~~DP~~ BVP(Brahma Khaṇḍa), iii.55 ff; DB, iii. xxvi.7-8; KP, lx.26.
2. Rāmāyana, (Parab edition), vi.106.
3. Pāncopāsanā, p. 232.
4. Mbh, ix.45 describes the Mātṛkās as the śaktis of different gods after whom the former are shaped.
5. Hopkins, E.W. : Op.cit, p. 115.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid, Op. cit, p. 381 ff; Winternitz, M. : Op.cit, p. 467; Virātaparva of the Mahābhārata, ed. N.B. Utkigarh, Poona, 1923, App. notes on pp. 22-23.
8. Pūjā-pārvaṇ, p. 81.

medieval period by the sectarian Śāktas<sup>1</sup>. Read with a  
 similar hymn styled as Āryāstava in the Harivaṃśa<sup>2</sup>, as  
 well as two others of a kindred nature in the same work<sup>3</sup>,  
 the two Durgāstotras in the Mahābhārata<sup>4</sup> clearly indicate  
 that the complete development of Durgā as a great goddess  
 of the Hindu pantheon took place sometime prior to the  
 completion of the final version of the epic and its  
 supplement, the Harivaṃśa<sup>5</sup>, that is, in the 4th-6th century  
 A.D.<sup>6</sup> The celebration of Durgā as a mighty goddess in  
 the Harivaṃśa may be viewed as a proof<sup>of</sup> her organized cult  
 in early India. Just as in the Rātri-sūkta the sages  
 invoke Durgā for assistance<sup>7</sup>, in a similar manner she is  
 appealed to in the Āryāstava in the Harivaṃśa. The  
 prayer is preceded by an account of Viṣṇu's descent to  
 the infernal region, which he visits in order to persuade  
 the goddess to frustrate, in the form of Nidrā Kālarūpiṇī  
 (sleep personified)<sup>8</sup>, the nefarious designs of Kaṃsa the  
 tyrant.<sup>9</sup> Notwithstanding his being a petitioner before

1. Utkigarh, N.B : Op.cit, App. p. 23.

2. Harivaṃśa, ii.3.

3. Ibid, ii.103; ii.120.

4. Mbh, iv.6; vi.23.

5. Pañcopāsanā, p. 232.

6. Winternitz, M : Op.cit, p. 463. The Harivaṃśa, has been  
 has been assigned to the 3rd century A.D. by Sir R.G.  
 Bhandarkar (VSMRS) p.36), and to the 4th century A.D.  
 by Winternitz (Op.cit, p. 464, note 2). This work as  
 well as the Mahābhārata may have been compiled much  
 earlier as Winternitz suggests (Ibid).

7. OII, p. 430.

8. Harivaṃśa, ii.2.24 ff.

9. For the legend of Kaṃsa, see GI, p. 133 ff.

the goddess, Viṣṇu presumes, as Oppert rightly observes, a certain superiority over her<sup>1</sup>, and promises her upon her successfully carrying out his requests, the status of Indra's sister, the title of Kauśikī signifying her lineage from the Kuśika clan, a residence on the Vindhya mountain, the honour of being worshipped by ghosts with animal sacrifices, and the destruction of the demons Sumbha and Niśumbha. She is also described as the sole refuge of persons wandering in the deserts, or plunged in the ocean, or attacked by thieves and highway-men. The Āryāstava distinctly states the superiority of the goddess already foreshadowed in the preceding chapter of the Harivaṃśa. She is saluted as Nārāyaṇī, and as the supreme goddess of three worlds, as well as addressed by all the names given to her by Arjuna in the Mahābhārata<sup>2</sup>.

1. OII, p. 430.

2. Ibid, p. 431. In the hymn to Durgā in the Virāṭaparva (Mbh, iv.6), Yudhiṣṭhira addresses her as the darling of Nārāyaṇa, born in the family of the cowherd Nanda, as one increasing the prestige of the family, the cause of Kāṃsa's destruction and the slayer of asuras. She is described as a virgin who has taken the vow of celibacy and is said to reside on the Vindhya mountain. She is Kālī and Mahākālī, and is fond of blood, flesh and animal sacrifices. She delivers her worshippers from all kinds of difficulties. In the hymn addressed to her by Arjuna (Mbh, vi.23), she is given many names including Āryā (noble), Mandaravāsini, Kālī, Kapālī, Bhadrakālī, Mahākālī, Caṇḍī, Kātyāyanī, Karālī, Sikhīpicchadhāriṇī, (one who wears peacock feathers), Mahiṣasr̥p̥riyā, Kauśikī, Kokamukhā (wolf-faced), Sākambharī, Brahma-vidyā, Vedaśruti, Sāvitrī, Vedamātā, Skandamātā etc. She is also mentioned as the younger sister of Kṛṣṇa and as born of the family of Nanda, the cowherd.

With reference to the epithet kokamukhā in the epic, Yogesh Chandra Ray informs us about a wolf-mouthed image of Durgā, which is still worshipped at Raipur in

Analysed, the hymns celebrating Durgā as a great goddess in both the Mahābhārata and its supplement, at once reveal her varied characteristics. The attempt to Aryanise a non-Aryan goddess is very apparent in these hymns. Great stress seems to have been laid on her virgin state and celibate character, as well as on her residence on the peaks of the mountains of Malaya, Vindhya and Kailāsa, that is, northern, central and southern India. There are pointed references to her fondness for wine, flesh and animal sacrifice (sīdhumāṅsapaśupriyā)<sup>1</sup>. She also appears as the particular deity of the Śabarās, Pulindas and Barbaras, 'the chief aboriginal races of India, thus supplying a strong foundation for the supposition that the cult of the Devī or of the Female Energy arose among the non-Aryan races, and was not imported into this country by the victorious Aryans'<sup>2</sup>. The worship of the Earth Goddess is still practised by the non-Hindu aboriginal tribes belonging to the Śabara and Gond groups<sup>3</sup>. The epithets of the goddess, suggestive of her non-Aryan

the Bankura district, West Bengal. Before its installation in a temple, the image used to be worshipped under a tree. Pūjā-pārvaṇ, pp. 81-82.

1. Mbh, iv.6.17.
2. Oll, p. 436.
3. Ibid.

origin, occurring in these hymns may be regarded as supplying important evidence concerning the worship of the Female Energy in India from great antiquity.<sup>1</sup>

T H E M O T H E R G O D D E S S  
I N T H E P U R Ā N A S

i. The Legends and their analysis:

The work of Aryanizing the Mother Goddess appears to have been continued, if not intensified, in the Purāṇas. Most of these works refer to her two births - first, as the daughter of Dakṣa Prajāpati<sup>2</sup>, an important Vedic god, and next, as that of Himālaya<sup>3</sup>. The legends of her two births seem to have been well-known in India from very ancient times and are referred to by Kālidāsa<sup>4</sup>.

In one of the legends, the goddess is mentioned as Satī, a daughter of Dakṣa who is a Prajāpati and whose vanity is offended at the insubordination of Śiva. He is, however, persuaded by Brahmā to give his daughter in marriage to Śiva, who is of disreputable habits, but for whom his daughter has nevertheless conceived a great love and devotion. Sometime later, Dakṣa arranges a great sacrifice to which he invites all gods, but deliberately leaves

1. OII, p. 436.

2. Supra, p. 57 and note 6.

3. KP, xli.40-41; SP (Kedārahāṇḍa), xx; Varāha P, xxii; Śiva P, i.vii; PP (Sṛṣṭi Khāṇḍa), xliiii; Matsya P, cliv.73; VP, xxi.2; Kūrma P, i.xi; DB, vii.xxxi; Rāmāyana (Parab edition), i.xxxv.13.15.

4. Kumārasambhavam, i.21.

out Śiva. Satī goes there uninvited, and when her father reviles her husband in a cruel manner, she is unable to bear it and gives up her life in protest. When Śiva hears of this, he comes to Dakṣa's house with Vīrabhadra at the head of his gaṇas, and, having destroyed the sacrifice, goes away bearing the corpse of his wife on his shoulder. Drunk with infinite grief he strides about the universe. All nature seems to share his bereavement, for the soil is dried up, plants wither and harvests fail. To save mankind, therefore, Viṣṇu hurls his discus time after time and cuts the corpse of Satī to pieces till Śiva realizes the weight is gone and retires to meditate on Mount Kailāsa. Hewn by the cakra of Viṣṇu, Sati's body falls into 52 pieces (or 51 or 108 pieces), and wherever a fragment touches the earth, a shrine (pīṭha) of mother-worship is established with Śiva himself as guardian of the spot (Bhairava)<sup>1</sup>. The theme of the other legend is the re-birth of Satī as the daughter of Himālaya and Menakā, and her remarriage with Śiva under such names as Pārvatī, Umā and Gaurī.

1. For the story of Satī's suicide and the destruction of Dakṣa's sacrifice, see Sister Nivedita and A.K. Coomaraswamy : Op.cit, pp. 287-94; Rāmāyaṇa (Parab edition), i.66.9 ff; Śiva P, v.xvi-xx; i.vii; LP, i.c; Varāha P, xxii; VP, xxxi; SP, (Kedārahanda), iii; PP, (Srṣṭi Khanda), v; The number of the pīṭhasthānas does not appear to have been fixed. Cf. JRASBL, xiv, p. 11 ff.

The first legend is evidently a Purānic fabrication aimed at giving the goddess a Vedic and therefore an Aryan pedigree. In the account of the destruction of Dakṣa's sacrifice given by the Mahābhārata<sup>2</sup>, the goddess appears as Umā/Gaurī, and not as Satī Dākṣayaṇī. Vīrabhadra, who destroyed the sacrifice on the orders of Śiva, is said to have been created by the latter at the desire of Umā, who was unable to tolerate her husband's exclusion from the ceremony<sup>3</sup>. As Mahākālī, one of her terrible manifestations, the goddess assists Śiva to wreck Dakṣa's sacrifice<sup>4</sup>. According to the Devī Purāna, it is the goddess, and not Śiva or Vīrabhadra, who destroys the ceremony<sup>5</sup>. As Bhattacharya remarks, the story of Satī Dākṣāyaṇī is an altered form of the older legend in which the goddess figures as the daughter of Himālaya<sup>6</sup>. Another thing to note in this connection is that initially the goddess as Pārvatī is outside the Vedic pantheon; in the next phase she is given a place in it as Satī Dākṣāyaṇī, and finally, she is reborn as the daughter of Himālaya. In this way, the non-Aryan Mother Goddess is given recognition by the Aryans in their pantheon, but at the same time care is

1. BKS, pp. 21-22.
2. Mbh, xiii.161.10 ff.
3. Kurma P, i.xv.4, 36; Mbh, xii.285.23-28.
4. Mbh, xii.285.31 ff.
5. DP, xvii.23; cf. Śiva P, v.xvi-xx.
6. BKS, p. 22.

taken to keep her at its periphery just as even after realizing his own share in the Vedic sacrifices, Rudra-Siva has not been granted a permanent domicile in the Amarāvati<sup>1</sup>, but lives in his own Kailāsa. As with the non-Aryan Siva, the Aryans could not ignore for long the claims for recognition by the non-Aryan Mother Goddess, who was first introduced into the circle of their own divinities as the daughter of Himālaya, and subsequently Aryanized as that of Dakṣa<sup>2</sup>. Her suicide and the distribution of the different members of her body all over the sub-continent implies the recognition, under the cover of myth, of the numerous village mothers whose cults have been active in all parts of India from immemorial times<sup>3</sup>.

1. BKS, p. 22.

2. The non-Aryan antecedents of the goddess are also suggested by the Mahābhārata (xiii.140.23, Roy's trans), and also in iii.39 where she is represented as a Kirātī accompanying Śiva, who as a Kirāta, tests the devotion of Arjuna. That this legend, as well as the situation of her cult spots on hills and mountains suggest her non-Aryan and mountainous origin, are also confirmed by the existence of Hiḍimbā or Hiḍmā Devī temple at Dhungrī in the Kulu Valley, side by side with the shrines of the goddess under the names of Sandyā, Tripurā Sundarī and Ambikā. According to the legend current in the region, Hiḍimbā was a man-eating demonesse before her deification, but she is now regarded as the patroness of Kulu. Hiḍimbā may be taken as an example of the non-Aryan Mother Goddess worshipped in the wild mountainous areas, and the survival of her name as well as her worship is a proof of the importance which her cult must have enjoyed since primitive times. ASI, 1905-06, p. 26 ff.

3. The whole story has an excellent parallel in the quest of Persephone by Demeter. In the fifty-two pieces of Satī's body, observes Sister Nivedita and Coomaraswamy, 'we are irresistibly reminded of the seventy-two fragments of another dead body, that of Osiris, which was sought by Isis and found in the cypress tree at Byblos.

ii. The non-Aryan background of  
the Mother Goddess : Śābarotsava

There are many indications in the Purāṇas of the non-Aryan origin of the Mother Goddess and the deliberate attempts at her Aryanization. Aparṇā, which is one of the epithets of the goddess in the Matsya and Brahma Purāṇas<sup>1</sup>, is but the civilized version of the non-Aryan goddess Parṇaśabarī<sup>2</sup>. Taking out the image of the Devī on a chariot in a procession, the worship of her ksanika image in a pandal and its immersion in a pond, lake or

The oldest year is said to have been one of the two seasons, or seventy-two weeks. Thus the body of Osiris would perhaps signify the whole year, divided into its most calculable units. In the more modern story we find ourselves dealing again with a number characteristic of the weeks of the year. The fragments of the body of Satī are fifty-two. Does she, then, represent some ancient personification which may have been the historic root of our present reckoning ?' Op. cit., p. 295.

1. CDHM, pp. 18-19; Harivaṃśa, i.18.13 ff.
2. BKS, p. 26; Cf. Matsya P., xiii.7-9. For the iconography of Parṇaśabarī, see IBBS, pp. 58-61, pls. xxiii.a,b; Indian Buddhist Iconography (by B. Bhattacharyya) Calcutta, 1924), pp. 83-84.

1  
 river outside the village, as well as the śābarotsava associated with her annual worship, - ~~1/2~~ all betray traces of non-Aryan practices in her cult.

The word śābarotsava indicates a festival of the Sabaras or one that has been borrowed from these non-Aryan

1. BKS, p. 26; cf. DP, xxi. Sten Konow regards Durgā as a goddess of Indo-European origin like Nerthus of ancient Germany, because, like the latter, Durgā's primitive form was that of an earth mother and the worship of Nerthus was also marked by 'a kind of rathayātrā connected with feasting and merry-making and concluded by a ceremonial bath ...'. 'A European Parallel to Durgā-pūjā', JASB(NS), xxi, 1925, pp. 317-18.

In discussing the non-Aryan origin of Durgā, B.C. Majumdar regards the custom of Kumārī worship in Bengal during the autumnal worship of the goddess, as well as the immersion of her kṣanika image, as having been derived from the non-Aryan festival of Kumārī-Osā (worship of the virgin) held in the lunar month of Āsvina. 'Durgā, Her Origin and History', JRAS, London, 1906, p. 358 ff.

A ceremonial procession and bathing of Gaurī, who appears to be the national goddess of Rajasthan, takes place every year amidst much pomp which is highlighted by the dancing and singing of women. Gaurī is venerated as the bounteous and universal mother, the goddess of abundance, love and chivalry. Her festival of peculiar brilliance at Udaipur, is held annually during the vernal equinox. 'The meaning of Gaurī is "yellow", emblematic of the ripened harvest, when the votaries of the goddess adore her effigies, which are those of a matron painted the colour of ripe corn and she is represented with two hands'. (AAR, ii, pp. 665-68). The non-Aryan character of the goddess is suggested by the slaying of a boar in her honour during the spring hunt. Ibid, p. 660.

people. As testified by the Kālikā Purāna<sup>1</sup>, this ceremony appears to have become a part of the autumnal worship of Durgā around the 10th or 11th century A.D. The Purāna directs that the immersion of the image of the goddess on the 10th day of her worship should be marked by the śābarotsava. The image is to be taken out in a procession which is to be joined by virgins, prostitutes and dancers, all dressed up for the occasion. Conches, pipes and drums are to be played and crackers to be fired. Banners of many colours are to be displayed, fried rice and flowers to be strewn on the processional route. At the time of immersion, the participants are to indulge in a sport which is to be marked by frolics and the utterance of indecent words referring to the sexual organs. Persons refraining from using indecent words will incur the displeasure of the goddess who will curse them. The ceremony of śābarotsava is also prescribed as a part of the autumnal worship of the goddess by Raghunandana,<sup>2</sup> and his contemporary Sūlapāni<sup>3</sup>. Sebastian Manrique, who visited India during 1629-43, gives a full account of this śābarotsava which he witnessed and in which the image of the goddess 'is carried along in a highly ornamented triumphal car with a large band of dancing girls, who

1. KP, lxi.17 ff.
2. Tithitattva, p. 425.
3. Pāncopāsanā, 281.

besides dancing, gain a livelihood by prostitution ... After several streets have been traversed in this fashion, these ceremonies in honour of the idol give place suddenly to others full of infamy and dishonour. The idol being taken with all this pomp or circumstance to the river, or if there is no river to some reservoir, is hurled into it amidst the excretions of the people who pelt it with stones and earth, upbraiding it with being a whore and heaping the most ignominious epithets upon it, accompanied with shouts, yells, jeers and scoffs. When they have thus ended the festival, they return home contented'.<sup>1</sup> B.C. Majumdar also draws our attention to the immersion of the Kumārī image at the Kumārī-Osā ceremony when the non-Aryan maidens, its chief participants, sing indecent songs in honour of the goddess.<sup>2</sup> It cannot be stated with any certainty if the śābarotsava is still observed in connection with the autumnal worship of Durgā,<sup>3</sup> but as Majumdar points out, it was the custom in lower Bengal to sing obscene songs on the ninth day of Durgā pūjā some 75 years ago, and the Bengali phrase 'navamīr kheud' (the obscene songs of the ninth day), which is well-known throughout the province, possibly refers to the śābarotsava<sup>4</sup> given up in the not too distant past.

1. Travels of Sebastian Manrique, 1629-1643, translated with an introduction by and notes by Lt. Col. C.E. Luard, vol. i, Oxford, 1927, pp. 71-72.
2. JRAS, 1906, p. 360.
3. Pañcopāsanā, p. 284.
4. JRAS, 1906, p. 360.

The prescription of śāvarotsava, whose non-Aryan character is so obviously plain, by an orthodox Brahmin and social reformer like Raghunandana Bhattacharya is highly significant. Apart from indicating its inclusion among the rituals of the goddess long before the composition of the Kālikā-Purāna, the very name of the ceremony is by itself a proof of her cult having been borrowed from the non-Aryan Śavaras, among whom it was originally practised and to which the Harivaṁśa pointedly refers. <sup>1</sup> Worship of the goddess by the non-Aryans of the Vindhya regions is also mentioned by Bāṇabhaṭṭa <sup>2</sup> and Somadeva <sup>3</sup>. Vākpati, the author of the Gauḍavāho, and who flourished <sup>4</sup> during the second quarter of the 8th century A.D., not only mentions the goddess as Vindhya<sup>vāsini</sup>, but also as the non-Aryan Kālī as well as Pārvatī, whose worshippers are the Koli women and the savage Śavaras, who cover up their nudity with turmeric leaves and whose offerings to <sup>5</sup> the goddess consist of wine and blood.

iii. Aryanization of  
the Mother Goddess:

Further evidence of the non-Aryan origin of the Mother Goddess provided by the Purānas consists of references to her black complexion, a characteristic of the original inhabitants of India whom the Vedas mention as dark-<sup>6</sup>skinned. In several Purānas, the Mother Goddess appears

1. Supra, p. 273.  
2. Supra, p. 255.  
3. Supra, p. 255, note 5.

initially as black-complexioned<sup>1</sup>, but subsequently becomes fair through ascetic penances<sup>2</sup>. Out of her discarded skin arises the goddess Kātyāyanī, whom Indra makes his own sister under the name of Kauśikī, and instals her with a lion for her vāhana on the Vindhya mountain<sup>3</sup>. Clearly the history of Aryanization of the non-Aryan goddess is described in these metaphorical changing of complexion. The terrible and uncouth non-Aryan Kālī gives up her black skin for the fair golden one of the Aryan goddess and becomes the majestic Gaurī or the bahusobhamānā Haimavatī. Even then, so powerful must have been her cult that her pristine form has been retained under the cover of myth<sup>4</sup> and has become known as Kālī, Kātyāyanī, Kauśikī, etc.

In the Liṅga Purāṇa, Kālī is said to have emanated from Pārvatī<sup>5</sup>. She is also described as Ambikālalātanīskrāntā Devī in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa<sup>6</sup>. According to the Kālikā

4. Mālatī-Mādhava, Preface, p. xvii, also pp. xiii-xvii.  
 5. Vākpati : Gaudavāho, ed. S.P. Pandit, Bombay, 1887, vv. 270-338.  
 6. RV, i.130.8; x.41.1. The black skin is characterized in RV, ii.12.4 as Dāsa varṇa. Cf. Griswold H.D. : The Religion of the R̥gveda, OUP, 1923, pp. 37-38.

1. Matsya P, cliv.73; KP, xli.44-48; VP, li.4; Bṛhadharma P, xvi.37.  
 2. Matsya P, clvii.13-14; KP, xlv.159-65; VP, liv.6-23.  
 3. VP, liv.24-28.  
 4. BKS, p. 26.  
 5. LP, cvi.  
 6. Sabdakalpadruma, p. 343; cf. MP, lxxxvii.4-5.

Purāna, Himālaya calls his daughter Kālī, whom his friends address as Pārvatī and Girinandinī<sup>1</sup>. The same text also describes how the auspicious goddess Kālikā of dark complexion, four-armed, handsome looking, having very high round breasts and a lion for her vāhana, appears before Dakṣa and promises to become his daughter (Satī) and the wife of Śiva at each creation.<sup>2</sup> The Matsya Purāna ascribes the dark complexion of Pārvatī to Brahmā at whose will the goddess Rātri enters the womb of Menakā and turns her foetus black.<sup>3</sup> And by thus becoming a part and parcel of Umā/Pārvatī, Rātri would become known as Ekānaṁśā<sup>4</sup>. The latter appears out of Pārvatī's cast-off skin which the Purāna describes as dark as a bhramara ( a black beetle) and a full-blown blue lotus.<sup>5</sup> These, as well as the above-mentioned stories, have but one objective behind them. They not only indicate the Aryanization of the non-Aryan goddess, but also make covert hints about her being originally an Aryan goddess.

The deliberate Aryanization of the goddess may also be noticed in the Brahma Vaiivarta, Devī Bhāgavataṁ, Mārkaṇḍeya and Devī Purānas. In the last named text, the goddess is said to have originated out of the dhyāna of Śiva,<sup>6</sup>

1. KP, xli.44-48.

2. Ibid, viii.7-10.

3. Matsya.P, cliv.68.

4. Ibid, cliv.74-75.

5. Ibid, clvii.13-14. Read with VP, liv.24-28 and MP, lxxxv.38-41, it will become apparent that being emanations of the Mother Goddess, Kauśikī, Kātyāyanī and

who has been an important Hindu god since the later Vedic period. In the Brahma Vaiivarta Purāna, she springs from the intellect of the Lord Kṛṣṇa<sup>1</sup>, who is none else than Viṣṇu, another Vedic god. As in the majority of the Purānas, the Devī Bhāgavataṁ also refers to the two births of Pārvatī<sup>2</sup>, but also states that in reality she is unborn, and all the gods, including Śiva, who is her husband in the epic and Purāṇic mythologies, are her children<sup>3</sup>. Thus two of these Purānas ascribe her origin to two important divinities of the Hindu pantheon, and another represents her as the supreme creatrix of the universe; and ~~(4)~~ the gods, Vedic as well as Purāṇic. In the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, all the gods combine to contribute their energy towards her creation, yet she is mentioned as Parameśvarī<sup>4</sup>, Paramā Prakṛti, Jagaddhātrī and Jagannmātā. It is she, rather than the masculine Vedic and Purāṇic divinities, who goes to fight and win the battle for the latter. In

Ekānaṁśā are one and the same goddess, because all of them rise from the discarded dark skin of Durgā.

6. DP, ~~cx~~ cxxvii.46-52.

1. BVP, (Brahma Khaṇḍa), iii.65 ff.

2. DB, vii.xxx-xxxi.

3. Ibid, i.v.56-61; iii.v.1-19.

4. MP, lxxxiii.18, lxxxiv.6, lxxxv.53, lxxxviii.33.

the Devī Bhāgavatam<sup>1</sup>, Devī<sup>2</sup> and Mārkaṇḍeya<sup>3</sup> Purāṇas, long hymns are addressed to her by the gods who dilate on her greatness and bounty much in the same manner we noticed her being hymned in the Mahābhārata and the Harivaṁśa. Indeed, there could be no better means to cover up the non-Aryan origin of the Mother Goddess than the hymns which have been put in the mouth of the Vedic and Purāṇic gods and the importance accorded to her as their mother, protectress and deliveress.

In spite of the best endeavours to endow the Mother Goddess with numerous attributes suggesting her Vedic and Aryan origin in the epics and the Purāṇas, many of her pristine characteristics remain attached to her cult and legends. Traces of non-Aryanism are evident in the blood sacrifice of animals, including the custom of human sacrifice which the British stopped with much difficulty<sup>4</sup>. In describing the comparative merits of sacrificing various animals, including human beings, the Purāṇas have given recognition to a practice that has been current

1. DB, iii.iv; iii.v; iv.xix.

2. DP, cxxvii.

3. MP, lxxxv.54-67; lxxxiv.1-26; lxxxv.7-36; xci.1 ff.

4. On human sacrifice as a part of the goddess cult, see The Śāktas, p. 9 ff; GI, p. 186 ff; Barth, A : Op.cit., pp. 203-04.

among the non-Aryan inhabitants of India for ages<sup>1</sup>. The non-Aryan origin of the goddess is also suggested by the character of the offerings made to her during her autumnal service. Cooked rice and fish curry in one case, and stale rice soaked in water and mixed with burnt fish, lemon juice and salt in another, are known to have been the customary offerings to the goddess at her autumnal worship in some places of Bankura district<sup>2</sup>. The fondness of the goddess for wine and flesh is another non-Aryan characteristic. The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna refers to her drinking spirituous liquor and to her boisterous intoxicated laughter just before engaging the demon Mahiṣa in single combat<sup>3</sup>. Not only wine, but meat, fish and other things (maithuna and mudrā) which the Tāntriks regard as indispensable requirements in her worship<sup>4</sup>, have nothing Vedic about their character. Even in the Bṛhaddharma

1. A survival of human sacrifice, according to Yogesh Chandra Ray, is still being continued in East Bengal and also at Calcutta. The effigy of a human child, made of rice paste, hardened milk or flour, is decapitated before the goddess and is known as śatruvali or sacrificing the enemy. In the house of a rich Vaiṣṇavite Kāyastha in Bankura such an effigy is decapitated in lieu of an animal. The sacrificial human flesh is called mahāmāṃsa, which is favourite to the goddess. People are not aware that the gourd is a substitute for the human victim. The widows of East Bengal do not eat this vegetable for this reason. Pūjā-pārvaṇ, p. 79.
2. Pūjā-pārvaṇ, pp. 29-30.
3. MP, lxxxiii.37, 39.
4. The Śāktas, pp. 15-16.

Purāna, which is a very late work of its kind, we find Viṣṇu addressing a hymn to the Mother Goddess who is described as wearing a large piece of tiger-skin bound by a very long serpent<sup>1</sup>.

I S T H E M O T H E R G O D D E S S  
A V I R G I N ?

It is interesting to note that the Mother Goddess appears in the late Vedic period not so much with an independent status of her own as the wife of Rudra-Siva. As Ambikā she no doubt appears first as the sister of Rudra<sup>2</sup> and a virgin, but she is represented soon afterwards under this name as well as Umā, as the wife of that god<sup>3</sup>. She is however mentioned in the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka<sup>4</sup> as Kātyāyanī and Kanyākumārī, the latter epithet signifying her virgin state. In the Kena Upaniṣad, she is Umā Haimavatī and not the wife of any god. In the epics she is represented as the wife of Śiva<sup>5</sup> and mother of Skanda<sup>6</sup>, but there are pointed references in such epithets as Kanyā (maiden daughter) and Kumārī<sup>7</sup> which are

1. Bṛhadharma P, xvi.38.

2. Supra, p. 246.

3. Supra, p. 250.

4. Supra, p. 247.

5. EM, pp. 225-26.

6. Mbh (Roy's trans), vi.23.11.

7. EM, p. 225; Mbh, iv.6.7, vi.23.4.

suggestive of her having been conceived and regarded as a virgin goddess. The Āryāstava refers in no uncertain manner to her celibacy by describing her as Brahmacāriṇī <sup>1</sup>.

Many of the Purāṇas describe the marriage of the goddess with Śiva as well as her penance to win the latter as her husband <sup>2</sup>. The story of her marriage is not only recounted in ancient Indian literature <sup>3</sup>, but is also perpetuated in various examples of Hindu plastic art, known as the Kalyāṇasundara-mūrti and Umāliṅgana-mūrti <sup>4</sup>.

The Devī Bhāgavatam refers no doubt to her two births as well as the marriage of the goddess with Śiva <sup>5</sup>, but insists nevertheless on her role as the supreme creatrix, and all the gods, including her so-called spouse, being her creation <sup>6</sup>. In fact, Śiva addresses her as his mother in a hymn in this Purāṇa <sup>7</sup> just as he implores her to look upon himself as her own son in the Devī Purāṇa <sup>8</sup>. Elsewhere in the latter work, he says to her in a hymn, 'O

1. Harivaṁśa, ii.3.3. In the Durgāstava by Yudhiṣṭhira in the Mahābhārata (iv.6.14) the goddess is praised for maintaining the three worlds by adopting the vow of celibacy : Kaumāraṁ vratamāsthāya tridivam pālitaṁ tvayā. The virginity of the goddess seems to have been repeatedly pointed out in the Harivaṁśa, i.103.8, i.120.21.
2. VP, xxi.1,20; KP, vi.8, ix, xlv; PP (Sṛṣṭi Khaṇḍa), xliii; IP, i.xcix, ci-cii; Śiva P, xi-xix; SP, (Kedārakhaṇḍa), iii, xxv.
3. Kumārasambhavam, cantos v-vii.
4. Infra, p. 519 ff., 532 ff.
5. Supra, p. 285.
6. Supra, p. 285.
7. DB, iii.v.
8. Infra, p. 396.

goddess, I am in your heart, and you too perpetually reside in mine. I am your father and you are my mother. All describe me as your brother, husband, friend and protector, and you are described by them as my sister, goddess and wife<sup>1</sup>. This hymn hinting at reciprocal generation betrays a similarity with the relationship between Dakṣa and Aditi (father -daughter, mother-son)<sup>2</sup>. It also reminds us of the incestuous relation between Brahmā (father) and Sarasvatī (daughter)<sup>3</sup>, Puṣan (brother) and Uṣas (sister)<sup>4</sup>.

According to the Brahma Vaivarta Purāna the goddess is born at the desire of Kṛṣṇa who bids Maheśa to espouse her<sup>5</sup>. She is celebrated in this Purāna as the Primordial Principle of Nature (Prakṛti), who is constantly worshipped by the gods, but is described nevertheless as the wife of Śiva and the mother of Gaṇeśa<sup>6</sup>.

It may be pointed out in this connection that some of the Vedic goddesses, notably Aditi and Sarasvatī, whose attributes have been borrowed for the development of the Mother Goddess in the Aryan religion, are not represented

1. DP, cxxvii.174-75.
2. Supra, p. 57, note 5.
3. Supra, p. 66.
4. Supra, p. 105.
5. BVP (Prakṛti Khaṇḍa), i.4-15.
6. Ibid.

initially as wedded to any god, notwithstanding the emphasis on their maternal aspects. In RV, x.125, Vāk (Sarasvatī) is conceived, as Das points out, as the active power of Brahman proceeding from him, and as "Supreme Female Energy", sustaining and stimulating the activities of gods in carrying out their respective functions<sup>1</sup>. Here she is described as the 'sovereign queen'<sup>2</sup>, and also as cognizant of Brahman, the Supreme Being, abiding in manifold conditions and entering into new forms<sup>3</sup>. We agree with Das's inference from verse 7 of this hymn, which ascribes her origin to the waters (yonīrapsvantaḥ samūdre) that she may even be regarded as the first emanation from the Puruṣa, the Supreme Male Principle<sup>4</sup>. But even this hymn from the latest maṇḍala of the Rg Veda does not explicitly state if Vāk is the śakti of Brahman in the sense that Durgā is of Śiva. It is not until the period of the Brāhmaṇas, as Das himself observes, that Vāk takes her place by the side of Prajāpati (Brahmā), the father of creation, as his śakti or partner<sup>5</sup>, and unites with him

1. The Divine Power, pp. xvii-xviii.
2. RV, x.125.3 : She declares, 'Ahaṁ rāṣṭrī', which may be translated as 'I am the sovereign power or queen' after Sāyaṇa's commentary on these words which he explains as sarvasya jagata īsvarī or '(the supreme) mistress of all the worlds'.
3. Ibid; cf. The Divine Power, p. xviii.
4. The Divine Power, p. xviii. Das has accepted Weber's interpretation of 'the waters' as the chaotic ~~principle~~ primordial principle.
5. Ibid. It is only when she is equated with Pṛthivī in the Rg Veda (Supra p. 52) that Aditi has Dyaus for her male partner or husband, otherwise she does not appear to have been wedded to any god though she is

as his wife <sup>1</sup>. Some other female divinities, such as, Āpaḥ, Purāṇḍhi, Sinīvālī, Rākā and Kuhu, possessing attributes which are characteristics of Mother Goddesses, also appear as unwed. So also are Rātri and Uṣas. The <sup>2</sup> latter is frequently described as displaying her bosom, meeting any god who desires her <sup>3</sup>, but in her relations with Sūrya who is her brother, she appears rather as his <sup>4</sup> incestuous mistress than as his wife <sup>5</sup>. Her relationship with her brother-lover-husband is rendered very complicated indeed when she is mentioned as the generator of <sup>6</sup> Sūrya and arrives with a shining child (i.e., the sun) <sup>6</sup>.

As we have noticed, initially under such names as Ambikā, Umā Haimavatī, Kātyāyanī and Kanyākumārī, the Mother Goddess does not appear to have been wedded to any god. The fact of her having been worshipped as a virgin goddess from remote antiquity has also been attested by <sup>7</sup> the anonymous author of the Periplus Maris Erythraeae.

1 mentioned as the mother of the Ādityas and has an eight-fold womb. In the Viṣṇu Purāna, she is one of the daughters of Dakṣa who gives her in marriage to Kaśyapa (CDHM, p. 3).

1. The Divine Power, p. xx.

2. RV, i.92.4; vi.64.2.

3. RV, i.123.10.

4. RV, i.92.11.

5. RV, ~~ii~~ vii.75.5.

6. VM, p. 48. On the analogy of the relationships of the Western Asiatic Mother Goddesses with their male partners, the relationship of Uṣas with Sūrya or Puṣaṇ, Aditi and Dakṣa, Brahmā and Sarasvatī and finally between Durgā(Ambikā) and Śiva may not appear incongruous

Bhadrakālī, another name of the goddess, occurs in the Sāṅkhyāna Gṛhyasūtra<sup>1</sup>, a work belonging to the late Vedic period, but as in the case of Ambikā and Umā Haimavatī, the Mother Goddess even under this name and in so late a period, does not appear to be the wife of any god<sup>2</sup>, though in all other works of this kind she occurs as Rudrāṇī, Bhavāṇī and Śarvāṇī<sup>3</sup>, i.e., the wife of Rudra, Bhava and Śarva<sup>4</sup>, all of which are epithets of Śiva<sup>5</sup>. Unlike Agnāyī, Varuṇāṇī or Indrāṇī in the Vedas, the Mother Goddess as Rudrāṇī, Bhavāṇī and Śarvāṇī does not however shine in the reflected glory of her husband, but plays a decidedly more important role than the Vedic goddesses whose names are formed from those of the gods with the feminine suffix āni<sup>6</sup>. Notwithstanding this slight prominence accorded to her as the wife of Rudra, the Mother Goddess is made henceforth subordinate to her male partner, whereas, before being paired off with him, she had an independent status in which she was unwed and the object of veneration from immemorial times. Her being

Isis was the sister-wife of Osiris, Attis stood vis-a-vis the Phrygian goddess first as her son and then as a lover, and Ishtar first created Tammuz and later took him for her husband. In first appearing as Śiva's sister, then his wife and later in the Purāṇas as his mother, daughter and wife, Durgā thus betrays characteristics which are common to the Mother Goddesses of the ancient world.

? Supra, pp. 247-48.

1. SGS, ii.14.14.

2. From the iconographic texts it appears that Bhadrakālī was lifted from a non-Aryan background where presumably she was worshipped as a virgin goddess. Infra, p.

paired off with Rudra-Siva may be ascribed to two reasons: firstly, like this god she is also a combination of several deities<sup>1</sup>, and her cult is decidedly a blend of the Aryan and non-Aryan elements. And secondly, the predominantly male character of the Vedic pantheon in which the goddesses had little independent status of their own. Her being wedded to Rudra-Siva, who is an important Vedic god, fits in with the Aryan social convention in which brides were procured from the indigenous stocks<sup>2</sup>, or it may have been inspired by the example of Dyvas and Pr̥thivī, who are celebrated in the Vedas as the divine pair and as universal parents.<sup>3</sup>

The maidenhood of the Mother Goddess is not only suggested by some of her Vedic prototypes which we have discussed above, but also by the evidence that has been adduced from references to her virginity as well as her celibacy in the Mahābhārata, Harivaṃśa and some of the Purāṇas. The Devī-Māhātmya section of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, which celebrates her greatness in numerous ways,

- 3. RPV, p. 212.
- 4. Ibid, p. 364.
- 5. Ibid, p. 218.
- 6. VM, p. 125.

- 1. ERE, v, p. 117; cf. Barth, A: Op.cit, p. 165.
- 2. Chatterji, S.K. : Indo-Aryan and Hindi, p. 7.
- 3. VM, p. 21.

does not represent the Mother Goddess as the wife of any god, let alone of Śiva<sup>1</sup>. Nor is she mentioned anywhere in this Śākta Bible as the mother of Skanda or Gaṇeśa. She is addressed twice as Ambā, and more than a dozen times as Ambikā, as well as by such names as Jagata ādhārabhūtā (support of the world), Jagatapratiṣṭhā (foundation of the world), Jagadātmaśakti (the power of the soul of the universe), Jagaddhātrī (nurse of the world), and Jaganmātā (mother of the universe), and she is also described as Mātr-rūpā (mother incarnate) - all suggestive of her maternal and creative aspects<sup>2</sup>. Her relation with Śiva<sup>3</sup> is no different from that<sup>4</sup> of the other gods to whom she stands as their protectress from dangers and difficulties caused by the irruptions of asuras. We find in this Purāṇa among the various aspects of the goddess : an amazon crushing the armies of the demons who are far more powerful than the gods; the mother of the universe; the primordial Female Principle or Paramā Prakṛti; and the sustainer of the world in times of famine, drought and scarcity in the form of Śākambharī or a Corn Mother. But nowhere do we find her aspect as the wife of Śiva or of

1. Infra, p. 340 ff.

2. DM, pp. 254-56

3. Ibid, pp. 210-11.

4. For the legend of the Mother Goddess in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, see Appendix A.

any other god<sup>1</sup>. Whether mentioned as Ambā or Ambikā, or as Jagannātā or Jagaddhātṛī, the goddess appears every-<sup>2</sup>where in the Devī-Māhātmya as a kumārī or virgin.

From the references to her virgin state, the goddess Durgā appears to be on a par with her ancient counterparts in Western Asia and Europe. Female statuettes in stone, datable in the Palaeolithic Age and found in a territory extending from Siberia to the Pyrenees<sup>3</sup>, have been identified as the effigies of the Mother Goddess. Of unquestionable cult significance, the extant Stone Age sculptures consist of fifty-five female figures and only five male statuettes<sup>4</sup> - a fact that sufficiently demonstrates the predominance of the Female Principle and the secondary role that the male played in the primitive religion of ~~the~~ mankind. Even after agriculture and herding became established modes of food-supply in the Neolithic Age, the position of the woman as the mother of the race did not suffer at all because of the essential role she played in the production of offspring<sup>5</sup>. Thus, though with the

1. In spite of the great emphasis on the maternal aspect of her character, the goddess does not appear in the two Durgāstotras of the Mahābhārata and the three hymns in the Harivamśa as the wife of Śiva. She is however mentioned in other parts of the epic as the wife of ~~the~~ that god.
2. The goddess is also mentioned in the Devī-Māhātmyā under such names as Gaurī, Sarvaṇī, Pārvatī, Śivā and Rudrā which are usually used to designate her as the wife of Śiva. But as V.S. Agrawala points out, these names are happiest in their connotation and stand out as the expressive symbols of the resurgent Sanskrit style developing in the days of Aśvaghosa, Kālidāsa and Bāṇa ... Some of these like Bhadrā, Vṛddhī, Siddhī

transition of society from the stage of food-gathering to that of food production gave the male an upper hand over the female, and also as one of the poles of creative energy his part was fully recognized, it was the maternal principle that in due course became personified as the Mother Goddess and continued to play its former leading <sup>1</sup> role in religion. This is not at all surprising, as Briffault points out, 'in primitive societies, generation begins with females, not with males; women procreate by immaculate conception, men do not; a mother is indispensable, a father not'.<sup>2</sup> Since not much significance was attached to paternity, and 'as the precise function of the male partner in relation to conception and birth was less obvious, and probably less clearly understood, it is hardly surprising that he should be regarded as supplementary rather than as the vital agent in the process'.<sup>3</sup> Quite naturally, therefore, with the advent of the Neolithic Age, the goddess presiding over the mysterious

Durgā also became personified as goddesses but generally the meanings remained more or less elastic and the epithets applied to many different gods and goddesses to express their divine personality'. DM, p. 204.

3. GM, p. 94; CMG, p. 13 ff.

4. GM, p. 95.

5. CMG, p. 22.

1. CMG, p. 22.

2. The Mothers, iii, p. 48.

3. CMG, p. 47.

processes of birth and generation emerged as a virgin, or, more precisely, as unmarried<sup>1</sup>. Thus as Langdon points out, long before the ancient Mesopotamians had evolved their complex theology and a vast pantheon in which the male deities were more important, 'the productive powers of the earth had supplied in prehistoric times a divinity<sup>2</sup> in which the female element predominated'.

The marriage of the Mother Goddess  
and its analysis:

In view of the changed circumstances in which man's role in procreation became more apparent and recognised as a vital element in the physiological context, 'the life-producing Mother, be it as Mother-earth or in any other capacity, was assigned a spouse to play his essential role as the begetter, even though as in Mesopotamia, he remained the servant or son of the goddess, the producer of all life'<sup>3</sup>. Another remarkable phenomenon in the goddess cult in the Neolithic Age is its close relation with the seasonal cycle and vegetation rituals in agricultural communities in the ancient Near and Middle East. As Earth Mother, the Mother Goddess was conceived as the

1. CMG, p. 47.

2. Langdon, S.H. : Tammuz and Ishtar, Oxford, 1914, p. 5.

3. CMG, p. 47.

generative power in nature as a whole and hence responsible for the periodic revival of life on the earth in the spring following a severe winter or a dreary summer marked by the absence of crops.<sup>1</sup> She thus came to be regarded as of many forms - mother as well as bride - with many names and epithets.<sup>2</sup>

The male partners of the Mother Goddesses in ancient Western Asia and Egypt appear to have played a minor role. Adonis, the companion of Aphrodite,<sup>3</sup> Attis who was associated with the Phrygian mother,<sup>4</sup> and Osiris, who though much more important than Adonis or Attis, was known as the husband of Isis,<sup>5</sup> - all 'apparently embodied the powers of fertility in general and of vegetation in particular'.<sup>6</sup> But obviously they had no independent cults of their own because the mythical personification of nature of which all three were in at least one aspect the products, required that each of them should be coupled with a goddess, and in each case it appears that originally the goddess was a more powerful and important personage than the god'.<sup>7</sup> The superiority of the goddess over her male partner has been perpetuated in ancient legends centering round the figures of Ishtar-Tammuz, Aphrodite-Adonis, Cybele-Attis, Isis-Osiris and Pr̥thivī-Dyaus.

1. CMG, p. 48; cf. BKS, pp. 40-43.

2. CMG, p. 48.

3. SDFML, i, pp. 12-13.

4. Ibid, p. 90.

5. Ibid, p. 529.

6. GB, iv(ii), p. 201.

7. Ibid.

Precreation in an agricultural society presupposes not only union of the male with the female but also their marriage. Marrying one corn with another was an important feature in the primitive agricultural ritual before they were conceived as gods and goddesses<sup>1</sup>. Marriage between the corn gods and goddesses also became as compulsory an act as the ploughing and hoeing the fields. The sacred marriage of these divinities was enacted in many places by men and women who engaged in sexual intercourse that was viewed not as satisfaction of carnal desires but as a magical aid in fructifying the agricultural lands and increasing their productivity<sup>2</sup>.

In such ritual acts possibly lie the root of the myth in which the Mother Goddess in her primitive form as Earth Mother appears as the acknowledged spouse of the Sky-God or Heaven. In regions where agriculture is always dependent on the rains, it is to the gods in heaven that prayers are sent up for them to inundate the fields<sup>3</sup>. It is in this context that the Sky-God has been regarded as responsible for fructifying the soil, personified as the

1. Marriage of crops and trees is still a living tradition in Bengal and Bihar, Cf. Roy, S.C : Oraon Religion and Customs, pp. 90-94.
2. BKS, p. 32; cf. CMG, pp. 50-52.
3. WSG, p. 20.

Earth Mother, with his fertilizing waters<sup>1</sup>. Thus Demeter<sup>2</sup>  
 the Earth Mother is married to the Sky-God Zeus<sup>3</sup> and  
 Prthivī to Dyaus<sup>3</sup>.

The culture of the prehistoric Indus Valley, which has furnished us with concrete proof of the Mother Goddess cult in the Chalcolithic Age, does not give ~~us~~ any indication if the goddess had a male partner. 'In the Harappa culture male gods, frequently horned recur, but they do not appear to have been prevalent and seldom brought into conjunction with goddesses in the iconography, as is also the case in respect of the village goddesses in modern India'<sup>4</sup>. But as the Indus Civilization was agrarian<sup>5</sup>, we may presume on the analogy of similar

1. WSG, p. 20.

2. GB, v(i), p. 65 ff

3. Infra, p. 304.

4. OMG, p. 34; Early Indus Civilizations, pp. 54-55. On the analogy of the grāmadevatās being independent of consorts, Mackay not only regards the Indus Valley Mother Goddess as without one, but also as a virgin. 'It is uncertain', he states, 'whether the female deity represented by the pottery figurines was a virgin goddess or the consort of the god on the seal amulets ... so many ancient religions insist that a female deity must have a spouse and a son to carry on the succession that it is not impossible that the two most important deities of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa were thus related. On the other hand as F.J. Richards has pointed out, the Mother Goddesses of Southern India are quite independent of any consort, while Dr. Hutton states that the village goddesses of that region are only at the present time being provided with husbands from the orthodox Hindu pantheon. A slight indication that the Mother Goddess of the ancient Indus Valley was a virgin is ~~indicated~~ the small size of the breasts compared with those of the more matronly female figures which are thought to have been used for votive purposes'.  
Ibid, pp. 57-58.

5. MIC, i, p. 93.

civilizations of Western Asia in the Chalcolithic period, that here too, the Mother Goddess had a male partner though it cannot be stated definitely if it is his effigy that occurs on the seals<sup>1</sup>. The preponderance of female figurines from the different sites of the Indus Culture<sup>2</sup> precludes the possibility of the male god's having the lion's share in the religion of the area. In our opinion, his position, vis-a-vis the Mother Goddess, appears to have been one of subservience similar to that of Osiris, Attis, Tammuz and Adonis.

The superiority of the goddess over her male partner seems to have continued from the prehistoric to the historic period, as available evidence from the Gandhāra region indicates<sup>3</sup>. To Hiuen Tsang, Bhīmādevī, whose shrine is on a mountain top in the north-west of India, appears to be more important than her spouse Maheśvara whose inferiority is suggested by the situation of his temple at the foot of the same mountain<sup>4</sup>. What the Chinese savant observed in the 7th century A.D. was no doubt a characteristic feature of the goddess cult in which her superiority over the male god has been recognized since immemorial antiquity. It is still evident

1. MIC, i, p. 52 ff, pl. xii.17; Further Excavations at Mohenjo-dāro, p. 335, pls. lxxxvii.222, 235; xciv.420.
2. Early Indus Civilizations, p. 53; Vats, M.S. : Op.cit, i, p. 292; cf. Wheeler, R.E.M. : 'Harappa, 1946', AI, iii, 1947, p. 126.
3. Infra, pp. 373-
4. Watters, T : On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India, i, p. 221.

all over India at the numerous pīṭhasthānas, where the goddess is the chief object of worship and her husband is relegated under the designation of Bhairava not only to a secondary position but also to that of a caretaker or a servant of ~~the~~ her shrine<sup>1</sup>. This superiority of the **Mother Goddess** may be said to have been confirmed not only by the preponderance of the terracotta female figurines found at different archaeological sites and identified as her effigies, or as votive offerings in her worship, but also by stone sculptures containing her individual representations in various aspects. In examples of the latter class, particularly those icons which are strictly of a Śākta character, there is little that indicates her subservience to any male divinity, and much less to Śiva. Only those varieties which depict her as bride, wife and mother<sup>2</sup>, owe their inspiration ~~of~~ to Śaivism and to the Epic and Purāṇic mythologies which associate her with Śiva as her husband, and with Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya as her sons. Otherwise, the myth of her being a virgin goddess appears to have continued in her cult, as testified by the custom of Kumārīpūjā during her autumnal service<sup>3</sup>, as well as in Indian plastic art as mentioned above.

1. Cf. 'At the Pīṭhasthānas ... temples are erected to the different forms of the Devī or Satī, not to the phallic emblem of Mahādeva, which, if present, is there as an accessory, not as a principal; and the chief object of worship is a figure of the goddess - a circumstance in which there is an essential difference between the temples of Durgā and the shrines of Osiris'. H.H. Wilson, quoted in CDHM, p. 235.

It is not possible to state if the myth about the marriage of the Mother Goddess as Pārvatī, Umā or Gaurī with Śiva owes its origin more to the example of Dyaus and Pṛthivī or to some agrarian ritual. Celebrated as the parents of the gods<sup>1</sup>, the Indo-European Dyaus<sup>2</sup> and his consort Pṛthivī are conceived in the background of nature<sup>3</sup>. They are also described as universal parents, creator<sup>4</sup> (Prajāpati) and universal mother (Aditi)<sup>5</sup>. Elsewhere, they are conceived as will (icchā) and nature (Prakṛti)<sup>6</sup> and are prayed to for food<sup>7</sup>. The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa pictures their conjugal life as also their separation which seriously disrupts the creative forces of the world. It further recounts how they are reunited through the intervention of the gods who hold a special festival to mark the occasion<sup>8</sup>. 'But', as Professor James points out, 'they are vaguely conceived as father and mother and their anthropomorphism was never clearly defined'. Nevertheless, the influence of the Vedic Dyaus and Pṛthivī as

2. Infra, p. 512 ff.

3. Supra, p. 248, notes 2 and 3.

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1. Muller, F. Max: India, what it can teach us, London, 1892, p. 162.

2. RPV, p. 95.

3. BKS, p. 24.

4. RV, i. 89.10; x. 121.8-10; vii. 53; i. 160.

5. BKS, p. 24.

6. AB, iv. 27; cf. India, what it can teach us, pp. 155-56.

7. 'The union of man and wife is the human analogy followed in the primeval conception of the marriage of Heaven and Earth. So compelling was this analogy that in harmony therewith the great Vedic gods had to be

universal progenitors on the development of the mythology of Hara-Pārvatī cannot be denied<sup>1</sup>. It is of course true that they had no paramount status in the Vedic circle of divinities, nor had the Aryan mind conceived Dyaus Pitar and Pṛthvī Mātā as the prime cause behind the mysterious processes of creation. They were, on the other hand, regarded as the personifications of the material heavens and the earth<sup>2</sup>. But the conception of such a divine pair or parents in the Rg Veda has undoubtedly exercised profound influence on the subsequent philosophical doctrines in which Śiva and Pārvatī, Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī and similar divine pairs have been equated with the Puruṣa and Prakṛti<sup>3</sup>.

The concept of a Sky-father and an Earth-mother in the ancient Near and Middle East<sup>4</sup> may have influenced a similar conception by the Aryans in the course of their migration towards India. At any rate, 'in the Rg Veda the picture which the hymns conjure up before us is that of Father Dyaus bending down in love over Mother Earth

joined in wedlock, e.g., Indra with Indrāṇī, Agni with Agnāyī, Varuṇa with Varuṇāṇī'. Griswold, H.D.: Loc. cit., p. 104.

8. CMG, p. 108.

1. BKS, p. 24.

2. CMG, p. 101.

3. BKS, p. 24.

4. WSG, p. 22 ff.

and bestowing his seed in the form of rain, by which the earth is fertilized and made fruitful' <sup>1</sup>. Long before the advent of the Aryans, however, such a conception of a divine pair 'which was far more profound, more mystic, more all-embracing and more deeply philosophical as well as more poetic than the simple Aryan idea of a material Sky Father and an equally material Earth Mother' may have been brought to India by the Dravidians. Resemblances in cranial structures and in many features of religion suggest that at a remote period they were connected with the people of the islands of the Aegean Sea and the tracts of mainland along the Aegean Sea - Greece and Asia Minor <sup>2</sup>. The Siva-Umā cult of Hindu India may thus have its roots in the far older cults of Ma or Cybele and Attis, or Hepit <sup>3</sup> and Teshup, or the <sup>great Cretan</sup> Mother Goddess and her young partner, or Ishtar and Tammuz - the former in all cases having as her symbol or vehicle the lion, and the latter the bull <sup>3</sup>.

Saktism, as Marshall points out, grew out of the far more primitive cult of the Mother Goddess, and later on <sup>4</sup> became associated with Saivism. In agricultural India,

1. Griswold, H.D.: The Religion of the Rigveda, Oxford, 1923, p. 99.
2. HCIP, i, p. 158.
3. Ibid.
4. MIC, i, p. 57.

it is but natural that the Mother Goddess should have a male partner. Thus the numerous village goddesses have been associated in most cases with a male deity who is known as Pramatha, Bhairava, Aiyandar or Siva. The last-named god became associated with the village mothers rather late, as Mackay informs us on the authority of F.J. Richards and Dr. Hutton.<sup>1</sup> In the Aryanization of the hundreds and thousands of village cults, Siva appears to have been used by the Hindu priestly class as their most effective weapon. For, by virtue of the important position that Siva held in the Hindu pantheon, it was but natural that the non-Aryan village goddesses should be made to step into Brahmanical Hinduism as one or other form of his consort Durgā/Pārvatī.<sup>2</sup>

1. Supra, p. 301, note 4.

2. 'In the course of amalgamation', observes M. Weber, 'the ancient feminine fertility spirits were first elevated to the status of wives of the Brahmanical gods. A particular godly-form illustrating this process is the ancient Vedic fertility god, Shiva (the Vedic Rudra) Ranged beside him was Visnu as sun fertility god. The feminine fertility demons came to be ordered beside one of the three orthodox gods, or better, subordinate to them. So, for example, Lakshmi was located beside Visnu, Parvati to Shiva, Sarasvati (as patroness of lovely music and writing) to Brahma. Other goddesses followed ... Many gods and, above all, goddesses not even represented in ancient literature now appear as "orthodox". This process appears throughout India and the Purānas are its literary expression ...' Weber, Max : The Religion of India, Glencoe (Illinois), 1960, pp. 296-97.

But, as we have stated above, the concept of a divine pair as also their sacred marriage goes back to a remote period. This is suggested by the worship of a number of divine pairs extant among the lower orders in Northern India. Such a pair, called Burhā and Burhī are regarded by ~~the~~ the lower class in Bengal as ancestors of mankind and invoked in times of sickness<sup>1</sup>. The Majhwars of Mirzapur worship during the sowing season two divine pairs - Dih and Deoharin, who are protectors of the village, and Ningo Baghiyā (the phallic tiger) and Hariyārī Mātā (the mother of greenery)<sup>2</sup>. Other divine pairs are Barā Kumbā and Rāñī Kājhal, tutelary deities of the ~~Pavās/~~ Pavrās, a forest tribe of Khandesh<sup>3</sup>; Chāndol and Chāndā<sup>4</sup> worshipped by the Kharwars of the central hills; Duhār and Dākiñ of Palamau<sup>5</sup>; Devī and Gansām of Mirzapur<sup>6</sup>; Jak Jaknī of Bihar<sup>7</sup>, and Śitalā and Ghaṇṭākaraṇa of Bengal<sup>8</sup>.

1. ERE, v, p. 5.
2. Crooke, W. : Tribes and Castes of the North-western Provinces and Oudh, iii, Calcutta, 1896, pp. 435, 447.
3. ERE, v, p. 5.
4. Dalton, E.T. : Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal, Calcutta 1872 (Reprinted 1960), p. 125. In the religion of the Muṇḍās, Hos, and Bhūmij, such deities are known as Sin Boṅgā and Chāndo Omol (Ibid., p. 184). The Kols or Santāls also have such a divine pair - Sin Boṅgā and Nindā Chāndo, whom they regard as great father and mother deities of their pantheon. HCIP, i, p. 158.
5. ERE, v, p. 5.
6. Ibid.
7. Tribes and Castes of the North-western Provinces and Oudh, iii, p. 447.
8. ERE, ii, p. 485.

In Rajasthan, a similar ancient belief in the divine pair also centres round Ekalinga or Īśvara, and Gaurī who is identified with Annapūrṇā<sup>1</sup>.

The idea of the sacred marriage in which the Mother Goddess is united with the male god also owes its origin to similar beliefs and customs which prevail in many parts of India. Like the conception of the divine pair, this belief may also have been imported, together with techniques of cultivation, by the Dravidians from their original home land around the Mediterranean in remote antiquity<sup>2</sup>. The rite consists of a symbolic marriage which is performed periodically with a view to increasing the fertility of the soil (Pṛthvīmātā)<sup>3</sup>. Thus, Muchuk-Rāṇī, who is an Earth or Mother Goddess of the Kharwars of Chota Nagpur, is wedded in the form of a small piece of oblong stone, dressed up as a bride to a similar stone every third year with much pomp and ceremony<sup>4</sup>. The Mushahars of Uttar Pradesh also hold a similar ceremony in which Banaspati Mā or the forest mother is united with Gansam or Bansgopāl represented by a mud pillar shaped like a phallus<sup>5</sup>. Dhārtī-mātā or Mother Earth is married every

1. AAR, i, p. 603.

2. EKS, p. 29.

3. ERE, v, p. 5.

4. RPNI, pp. 248-49.

5. Tribes and Castes of North-western India Provinces and Oudh, iv, p. 34 ff; cf. RPNI, p. 81.

year to Dhamma or Dharmesh, the chief deity of the Oraon pantheon, during the spring when the śal, which is the sacred tree of the tribe, flowers<sup>1</sup>. Daryā Sāhib or the god of the river Indus is married every year to the goddess called Devī, who is represented by an image made of clay or cowdung and is loaded with ornaments, but is thrown into a well soon after the service<sup>2</sup>. To such primitive practices must we ascribe the origin of similar rites performed at Udaipur in Rajasthan and in the Bijapur district. At the former place the images of Śiva and Gaurī who is described as having the colour of ripe wheat, are placed together, 'and a "Garden of Adonis" is grown. The goddess here takes the precedence of her consort, and she is ceremoniously bathed in the lake in order to purify her from the pollution incurred during the preceeding year and to fit her for her future fertilizing task'<sup>3</sup>. Śiva is married under the title of Saṅgameśvara or 'lord of the sacred river junction' every year amidst great pomp to Pārvatī in the Bijapur district, and their marriage is enacted by a Brahmin and the village head-man who officiate as bridegroom and bride respectively<sup>4</sup>.

1. Crooke, W and Hahn, F : 'Oraons', ERE, ix, pp. 502-03.
2. ERE, v, p. 5.
3. RENI, p. 248; cf. Supra, p. 279, note 1.
4. Ibid.

Eversince the earth has been equated with a woman<sup>1</sup>, her productivity has been viewed as subject to her being united with a male partner. In popular belief, she appears to behave exactly like a/female<sup>2</sup>. Thus the absence of crops during the summer is attributed to her barrenness caused by the exhaustion of fecundity<sup>2</sup>, which however returns or is renewed with the advent of the rainy season. But before she is fecundated again, she is believed to go through a period of uncleanness, as every female creature does once a month. This period is known as Ambuvācī which occurs from the 10th to the 13th day in the dark half of Jyaiṣṭha or Āṣāḍha (June-July) in Bengal, and during these four days because Mother Earth is considered unclean, 'No ploughing, sowing or cooking is to be done, nor a journey to be undertaken. On the fourth day stones, representing her, are set up, bathed and garlanded, and the earth is clean again'<sup>3</sup>.

Since like that of all mother goddesses, the worship of Durgā has also grown out of the far more primitive cult of the Earth Mother, it is but natural that with the advent

1. Supra, p. <sup>108</sup>. Cf. such address to the bride by the bridegroom in a Vedic marriage: 'the heaven I, the earth thou. Come let us marry. Let us unite our sperm. Let us beget offspring. Let us acquire many sons ...' PGS, i.6.3 (trans. H. Oldenburg, SBE, xxix, p. 282).
2. Folklore, xxx, p. 287.
3. HRV, p. 287.

of the Neolithic Age and the rise of agrarian societies she should have been associated in popular mythology and religion with a male partner, through marriage. Such unions are however to be viewed as purely symbolic, and at best, temporary, because as we have already pointed out, there is no dearth of references to her virginity in the Vedic and post-Vedic literature. Our contention is sustained by the absence of her being referred to as the wife of any god not only in the Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā, Kena Upaniṣad and Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, but also in the hymns addressed to her in the Mahābhārata and its supplement, the Harivaṁśa.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, as we have stated elsewhere in this essay, she is not even the mother of Kārttikeya and Gaṇeśa, both of whom figure as her sons in popular mythology.

G L I M P S E S   O F  
T H E   M O T H E R   G O D D E S S  
F R O M   E A R L Y   I N D I A N  
L I T E R A T U R E

Though archaeological evidence suggests an unbroken continuity<sup>2</sup> of the Mother Goddess worship in India, the amount of literary evidence that is available in regard

1. Infra, p. 528, note 1.

2. Infra, p. 368 ff.

to the history of her cult in the pre-Gupta period is comparatively meagre. Such names of the goddess as Gaurī<sup>1</sup> and Pārvatī of course occur in the writings of Sūdraka<sup>2</sup>, who may have belonged to the opening century of the Christian era. These, together with the mention about the Mātrkās by Sūdraka<sup>2</sup> and his forbear Bhāsa<sup>3</sup>, point towards the custom of worshipping the mothers in their own times, but are in reality of small help in forming a comprehensive picture of the Mother Goddess and her cult in ancient India.

As we have pointed out, it was not till the Gupta period that the worship of Durgā as a great goddess was properly organized<sup>4</sup>, and Śaktism as a cult rapidly spread<sup>5</sup>. This was the time when 'the legends connected with the goddess received much attention in popular literature'<sup>6</sup>. The story of Umā's marriage with Śiva might well have been handed down for many centuries through folk lore and legends, but it was transformed into a refined and polished epic by Kālidāsa in his Kumārasambhava.

The Mother Goddess Durgā appears to have been mentioned under four epithets and listed among post-Vedic female deities by Pāṇini<sup>7</sup>, who flourished about the 5th century

1. Infra, pp. 448, note 1; 538, note 3.

2. Supra, p. 196.

3. Supra, p. 196.

4. Supra, p. 269.

5. The Śāktas, p. 39.

6. Ibid, p. 40.

7. Agrawala, V.S. : India as Known to Pāṇini, Lucknow, 1953, p. 357.

B.C.<sup>1</sup> These are : Bhavānī, Śarvānī, Rudrānī and Mr̥ḍānī under which she also appears to have been venerated at the time of the Gṛhyasūtras<sup>2</sup> . As Bhava, Śarva, Rudra and Mr̥ḍa all signify the name of one god, Śiva, and also as he was the object of popular worship in the Prācyā region under the name Śarva, and in the Vāhlika region as Bhava<sup>3</sup>, 'it may therefore be inferred that the names Śarvānī and Bhavānī are local designations of the one and the same Mother Goddess'<sup>4</sup> . As indicated by the fairly impressive list of her names in the Amarakoṣa<sup>5</sup>, the goddess seems to have been the object of much worship in the Gupta period<sup>6</sup> .

The Brhatsaṃhitā of Varāhamihira, who lived in the 6th century A.D., mentions the Mātṛkās without giving their names and iconography<sup>7</sup>, but it furnishes a comprehensive direction as to how the image of Ekānaṃśā, a form of the Mother Goddess is to be made and installed<sup>8</sup>. Varahamihira's devoting as many as three couplets to the iconography<sup>9</sup>

1. Winternitz, M : Op.cit, p. 42.
2. India as Known to Pāṇini, p, 357; supra, p. 293.
3. Amarakoṣa, 1.1.36-38. SB, i.7.3.8.
4. India as Known to Pāṇini, p. 357.
5. Amarakoṣa, i.1.36-38.
6. For the date of Amarakoṣa, cf. HD, v, p. 840.
7. Supra, p. 269, note 1.
8. Infra, pp. 420, 510.
9. Infra, p. 510, note 4.

of Ekānaṁśa<sup>1</sup>, is a proof of the importance which the Mother Goddess commanded under this name during his time. But neither the hymns sung in her honour in the Mahābhārata, nor the iconographical notice of Ekānaṁśā in the Brhatsaṁhitā, should be regarded as the true index of the importance of the cult of the goddess in early medieval India. This is shown most clearly in the Devī-Māhātmya section of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, which was finalized about the Gupta period. It no doubt formed the basis for Bāṇa's Caṇḍīśataka,<sup>2</sup> an ode to the Mother Goddess in one hundred couplets. As well as in his other works, the goddess appears as the object of worship both by the aborigines and the Aryans.<sup>3</sup>

It is not usually under the name of Durgā but as Caṇḍī or other epithets that the Mother Goddess seems to have been worshipped in the early medieval period. Bāṇa's writings indicate this, as also does the Gauḍavāho of Vākpati, who treats Kālī or Vindhyavāsini Devī and Caṇḍī, Pārvatī, Sabarī, Nārāyaṇī, Saṅkarī and Mahiṣāsoramathanī<sup>4</sup> as one and the same goddess. It is also not as Durgā but under the name of Cāmuṇḍā, which indicates one of her ghora aspects, that the Mother Goddess is found to be

1. Brhatsaṁhitā, lvii.37-39.
2. The Śāktas, p. 41.
3. Ibid., p. 42.
4. Gauḍavāho, Introduction, pp. cii-ciii.

worshipped with human sacrifice in Bhavabhūti's Mālatī-Mādhava<sup>1</sup>. The custom of human sacrifice to the goddess is also referred to by Hiuen Tsang, who narrowly escaped from becoming a victim himself when he was surprised and taken captive by robbers during a journey by boat from Ayodhyā<sup>2</sup> to Ayamukha. It also appears to have been a custom in ancient Kashmir to propitiate Durgā, who is also the Earth Mother, with human sacrifices before it was abolished by the king Meghavarna<sup>3</sup>. The placid or beneficent aspect of the goddess seems to have been equally favoured as an object of worship in medieval India, particularly as a house deity. From the Karpūra-Mañjarī of Rājaśekhara, the metal image of the goddess appears to have been worshipped ~~z~~ under the name of Pārvatī in the house of a king<sup>4</sup>.

T H E M O T H E R G O D D E S S  
I N  
I N D I A N E P I G R A P H Y

More definite evidence about the worship of the Mother Goddess is epigraphic. Strictly speaking, such evidence should be classed as archaeological, but as it consists of

1. Supra, p. 230.
2. Watters, T : Op. cit, p. 360.
3. Rājatarāṅgī, iii.83-91.
4. Karpūramañjarī, edited by N.G. Suru, Bombay, 1960, p. 99.

written records, it may as well be treated as literary. We have referred to a number of epigraphs in connection with the cult of the Mātrkās who are closely associated ~~with~~ with the Mother Goddess as her emanations<sup>1</sup>. They are no doubt important in determining the existence and the extent of Śaktism in ancient and medieval India, but in so far as the worship of Durgā is concerned can best be admitted as indirect evidence. One of these, - the fragmentary Bihar stone pillar inscription of the time of Skandagupta, recording the erection of some temples, mentions as Bhadrāryā, one of the divinities, to whom a structure is dedicated<sup>2</sup>. We are inclined to agree with Banerjea, in whose opinion the name Bhadrāryā is a compound of Bhadrā of Bhadrakālī or Subhadrā, and Āryā of Āryāstava in the Harivaṃśa<sup>3</sup>. As the other temples were dedicated to the Mātrkās and Skanda, all of whom are associated with the Mother Goddess in one way or the other and also as she appears to have been the object of much worship in the early medieval period as Ekānaṃśā, which equates her with Subhadrā sister of Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva, the goddess Bhadrāryā of this epigraph may be regarded as a form of Durgā.

1. Supra, pp. 214-15.
2. CII, iii, p. 49, line 8.
3. Pañcopāsanā, p. 253.

Another epigraph of the Gupta period, issued by Yaśogupta, son of Rājyavardhana and grandson of Dhanyasoma a king of the Gauḍa-Kṣatriya family, and found built into a niche of the temple of Bhamrāmātā in Udaipur State, Rajasthan<sup>1</sup>, records the construction of a temple for the Devī or Durgā on the 10th day of the bright half of Māgha in 547 V.S. (=490-91 A.D.). Incidentally, Bhamarā is the vernacular form of Bhramarī or Bhrāmarī, which is one of the epithets of the Mother Goddess in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna<sup>2</sup>.

Evidence of goddess worship in the 5th century A.D.<sup>3</sup> is furnished by two epigraphs whose authorship belongs to the Maukhari chief Anantavarman<sup>4</sup>. Both have been discovered in the caves of the Nagarjuni Hill. One of these records the installation by Anantavarman of an image of Śiva in the form of Bhūtapati and of his wife under the name of Devī<sup>5</sup>. The second inscription, located in the Gopi Cave of the same hill range, records the installation by the same Maukhari chief of an image of the goddess Pārvatī under the name of Kātyāyanī<sup>6</sup>. Further, it mentions a grant to the same goddess, but under the name of Bhavānī, of a village the name of which has been destroyed<sup>7</sup>. Line 1 of the second epigraph refers to the

1. ASI, 1929-30, p. 187; cf. Agrawala, R.C. : 'Goddess Worship in Ancient Rājasthāna', JBRs, xli(i), p. 5.

2. Supra, p. 118.

3. HCIP, iii, p. 421.

4. CII, iii, pl. xxxi A, p. 223 ff; pl. xxxi B, p. 226 ff.

5. CII, iii, p. 225, line 3.

6. Ibid, p. 227, line 7.

7. Ibid, p. 227.

Devi's foot, 'which surpassing in radiance all the beauty of a water-lily was disdainfully placed, with its tinkling anklet, on the head of the demon Mahiṣāsura'<sup>1</sup>. This epigraph as well as the Mahisamardini relief in Candragupta II Cave at Udayagiri<sup>2</sup>, may be taken as evidence of the popularity of this form of the goddess in the early medieval period. It also indicates the acquaintance with the Devī-Māhātmya section of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, which states how the goddess placed her foot on the demon<sup>3</sup> when transfixing him with her trident.

The Dadhimatī-mātā inscription of the time of Druhlana, dated 608 A.D., found in an ancient temple in the Jodhpur district of Rajasthan<sup>4</sup>, indicates how in medieval India tutelary deities of different caste-groups were gradually merging their identity with that of the more important Mother Goddess. Called Dadhimatī because she is the kuladevī or family goddess of the Dadhimā Brahmins<sup>5</sup>, the goddess in this epigraph is evidently meant to be no other than Durgā, as indicated in line 11 which contains the verse : Sarvamāṅgalamāṅgalye Śive sarvārthasādhike /  
Śaranye tryambake Gaurī Nārāyaṇī namo'stu te //<sup>6</sup>

1. CII, iii, p. 227, line 9.

2. Infra, p. 452

3. Infra, p. 452, note 6.

4. Pandit Ram Karṇa : 'Dadhimatī-mātā Inscription of the time of Druhlana', EI, xi, p. 299.

5. Ibid.

6. MP, xci.9; cf. EI, xi, p. 300.

which is a salutation to the Great Goddess. As noticed in line 3 of the epigraph, the temple of the goddess Dadhimatī is of considerable antiquity<sup>1</sup>. We may hence assume that the cult of Dadhimatī is much anterior to the date of the epigraph, but that she was identified with the Mother Goddess at the time of its composition in view of the latter's growing importance in North Indian Hinduism. Like the second inscription of the Maukhari Anantavarman, this epigraph also confirms the existence of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna including its portion known in the early medieval period as the Candī<sup>2</sup>. A record of similar nature belonging to the first half of the 7th century is the Vasantgarh inscription of Varmalāṭa, dated 682 V.S.(= 625 A.D.)<sup>3</sup>. The first verse of this epigraph invokes the blessings of the goddess, who is mentioned as Durgā, and who is the Vedas and the Brahmagītā personified, and the harbinger of welfare to the world<sup>4</sup>. The second verse is addressed to Kṣemāryā Kṣemakarī<sup>5</sup> (Kṣemaṅkarī), which is but an epithet of Durgā<sup>6</sup>, who is popularly known and worshipped as Khimel-mātā in Rajasthan<sup>7</sup>. The identification of Kṣemāryā with Durgā is also suggested by the fact

1. EI, xi, p. 301.

2. Cf. Infra, p.448, note 1.

3. Bhandarkar, D.R. : 'Vasantgarh Inscription of Varmalāṭa' EI, ix, p. 187 ff.

4. Ibid, p. 191.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid, p. 189.

7. JBRs, xli(i), p. 6.

that Kṣemaṅkarī is one of the forms of the latter<sup>1</sup>, and the discovery of the present epigraph outside the temple of the goddess Khimel-mātā<sup>2</sup>. That Kṣemaṅkarī or Khimel-mātā is no other than Durgā in her Mahiṣamardīnī form is also suggested by a late inscription of Samvat 1234 (= C. 1178 A.D.), found at the north-east corner of the temple of Sachīyā-mātā<sup>3</sup> at Osian in Marwar.

As indicated by verse 14 of the Sakrai stone inscription of 699 V.S. (= 644 A.D.)<sup>4</sup>, the Mother Goddess appears to have been worshipped in Rājasthan as Saṅkarā (feminine of Saṅkara, i.e., Śiva) during the first half of the 7th century. In recording the erection of 'an excellent loggia for the gods' by a committee of eleven bankers, the epigraph mentions the goddess as Caṇḍikā, whose multi-armed aspect is indicated in verse 2 : 'May those hands of Caṇḍikā, dancing with (proper) gesticulation, having thoroughly agitated the earth by the weight of her feet, (and) having dispelled darkness by the flashes of her nails glittering in the night bereft of moonlight, that have annihilated the foes (and) that with the palms, sportively tossed up, makes the quarters appear to be

1. EHI, i(ii), p. 342.
2. JBS, xli(i), p. 6.
3. ASI, 1908-09, p. 109.
4. Chhabra, B. Ch : 'Sakrai Stone Inscription, V.S. 699', EI, xxvii, p. 22.

extending offerings of lotus flowers, shower prosperity on you'<sup>1</sup>. Further evidence of goddess worship in North India is provided by an epigraph discovered at Samoli in Mewar. Dated 703 V.S. (= 646 A.D.), it records the erection of a temple in honour of the goddess Araṇyavāsini<sup>2</sup> who may be a form of Durgā, for the latter is said to reside in the forest in the Harivaṃśa<sup>3</sup>. We may also infer from the name Araṇyavāsini which means 'resident in the forest', that the goddess of this epigraph was possibly of considerable importance and the object of worship by the powerful/<sup>wild</sup>tribes of non-Aryan origin before she was Brahmanized and a temple was built to house her. The worship of the Earth Mother who is a manifestation, if not the prototype of the Mother Goddess, is confirmed not only by her temple at Dungarpur in Rajasthan, but also by the fragmentary inscription found there. Assigned to the 7th century A.D. on palaeographic grounds<sup>4</sup>, the epigraph appears to be an eulogy of the goddess who is here named Vasundhara (the earth)<sup>5</sup>.

1. EI, xxvii, p. 32.
2. JBRS, xli(i), p. 7.
3. Harivaṃśa, ii.3.6.
4. JBRS, xli(i), pp. 7-8.
5. Ibid, p. 8.

The Daulatpur Copper Plate inscription of Bhojadeva I, the Gurjara Pratihara ruler of Kanauj<sup>1</sup>, is an important document regarding the worship of the Mother Goddess in Northern India during the 9th century A.D. The date of this inscription has been the subject of great controversy but on the evidence of other epigraphs, of Bhojadeva I appears to have ruled from C. 836 to C. 885 A.D.<sup>2</sup>, and the date of the present document has been fixed at Vikrama Era 900 which is equivalent to 843 A.D.<sup>3</sup> The epigraph contains a list of eight Gurjara-Pratihara kings of whom three appear to have been Śāktas, as indicated by the expression paramabhagavatibhakta or most devout worshippers of Bhagavatī, prefixed to their names<sup>4</sup>. Though R.C Agrawala thinks otherwise<sup>5</sup>, as Bhagavatī occurs as a name of the Mother Goddess in the Purāṇas<sup>6</sup>, there should not be any doubt about the identity of the iṣṭadevī of the three rulers described as her worshippers in this inscription. Such titles as Prabhāsa, and Ādivarāha under which Bhojadeva I is mentioned in this and other epigraphs, apparently point towards his Saura and Vaiṣṇava inclinations, but, 'we are otherwise told that his predilections were towards the worship of the goddess Bhagavatī'<sup>7</sup>. Any doubt as to the

1. Kielhorn, F : 'Daulatpura Plate of Bhojadeva I of Mahodaya', EI, v, p. 208 ff; Fleet, J.F. : 'Inscription of Mahārāja Vinayakapala', IA, xv, 138 ff.
2. Tripathi, R.S. : History of Kanauj, Benares, 1937, p.237
3. Ibid, p. 360.
4. Lines 3 and 6 of the epigraph, IA, xv, p. 141. Cf. Pañcopāsanā, p. 256.

identity of Bhagavatī has been set at rest by D.R. Bhandarkar who examined the image of the goddess engraved on the copper-plate bearing the epigraph<sup>1</sup>. 'She is standing and facing full front with a tiger on each side near her foot and with four hands, upper right holding a liṅga, lower left holding a pitcher and upper left holding the figure of Gaṇeśa. So this must be an image of Pārvatī ordinarily met with in ancient Śaiva temples and is Bhagavatī whose devotees Nāgabhaṭa, Bhoja I and Mahendrapāla were'<sup>2</sup>. In the same 9th century, the Mother Goddess under the name of Ambikā appears to have been the ~~the~~ object of worship by the Jainas in Rajasthan, as testified by the stone inscription found built into the well-known Sala of Mātāji<sup>3</sup> at Ghāṭiyālā in Marwar, and dated 918 V.S. (= 861 A.D.)<sup>3</sup>. The goddess Ambikā, whom Jaina iconography describes as four-armed, riding a lion and holding a bunch of mangoes, a noose, a child and a goad, 'is by name and appearance a borrowed form of Durgā'<sup>4</sup>. Such

5. JBRs, xli(i), p. 9.

6. Supra, p. 86.

7. Tripathi, R.S. : Op.cit, p. 238.

1. JBRs, xli(i), p. 9.

2. Quoted in Ibid, p. 9. Bhagavatī appears to have been commonly used as a name of the Mother Goddess in the 9th-11th centuries A.D. It is under this name of Bhagavatī that Albīruni mentions her while giving the names and the iconography of the Mātṛkās. Albīruni's India, i, pp. 119-20.

3. JBRs, xli(i), p. 9.

4. Bhattacharya, B.C. : Jaina Iconography, pp. 142-43.

borrowings are quite evident in the conception of Jaina goddesses like Cakreśvarī<sup>1</sup>, Gaurī<sup>2</sup> and Siddāyikā<sup>3</sup>, whose iconography betray similarities with the Brahmanical Vaiṣṇavī, Gaurī and Sarasvatī respectively.

In the pillar inscription of Arna (about 12 miles from Jodhpur), datable in the 9th-10th century A.D., the Mother Goddess appears as Nandā<sup>4</sup>. According to the Varāha Purāna<sup>5</sup> the goddess Nandā is a form of Durgā. She was installed under this name on the Himālayas by the gods because she had brought gladness (ānanda) to them by killing the demon Vetra. Nandā, in our opinion, is a purely Purāṇic name of the Mother Goddess who assumes various forms and names to destroy demons and to perform other functions. Nandā does not seem to have any connection with the Buddhist Hārītī or Nana of the Kuṣāṇa coins, as R.C. Agrawala<sup>6</sup> suggests on the authority of U.P. Shah. In the Partabgarh inscription of the time of Mahendrapāla II of Mahodaya, dated V.S. 1003 (= 946 A.D.), the Mother Goddess occurs as Vaṭa-yakṣiṇī and the grantee of a village for the maintenance of her worship<sup>7</sup>. Her very name points to

1. Jaina Iconography, pp. 121-22.

2. Ibid, pp. 131-32.

3. Ibid, pp. 145-46.

4. JBRŚ, xli(i), pp. 9-10.

5. Varāha P., xxviii.27-44.

6. JBRŚ, xli(i), p. 10.

7. Ojha, G.H. : 'Partabgarh Inscription of the time of King Mahendrapāla II of Mahodaya', EI, xiv, p. 177.

her non-Aryan background in which, like Araṇyavāsini of the Samoli inscription noticed above, she must have been worshipped as a deity of demoniac nature<sup>1</sup> with her shrine under a vata tree (ficus bengalensis).<sup>2</sup> Vata-yakṣiṇī has been identified as form of Durgā<sup>2</sup>, who is invoked in this inscription also as Mahiṣamardini and Kātyāyanī<sup>3</sup>. The Mother Goddess is also referred to under the epithets of Kātyāyanī and Kālī in another epigraph dated V.S. 1056 (= 999 A.D.) and found in the temple of Kevāyamātā at Kinsariyā, Marwar<sup>4</sup>. Like Khimel-mātā, Kevāya-mātā also appears to be a popular name of the Mother Goddess in Rajasthan<sup>5</sup>, as indicated by this epigraph which records that the temple is meant for Bhavānī<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, in line 3 of the epigraph, the goddess is mentioned as Bhagavatī Kātyāyanī, thus equating her with Durgā, the Mother Goddess<sup>7</sup>.

In a praśasti discovered at Baijnath, situated east of Kangra, and datable in the 9th century<sup>8</sup>, the Mother

1. For the meaning of yakṣiṇī and her nature see SED, p. 838
2. EI, xiv, p. 177.
3. Ibid, p. 183, lines 3-4 of the epigraph.
4. Pandit Ramkanta : 'Kinsariyā Inscription of Dadhichika (Dahiya) Chachcha', EI, xii, p. 56 ff.
5. JBR, xli(i), p. 11.
6. EI, xii, p. 61, line 20 of the epigraph.
7. EI, xii, p. 59.
8. Bühler, G : 'The Two Praśastis of Baijnath', EI, i, p. 97 ff. For the date of the praśastis, see Ibid, p. 103.

Goddess appears to have been celebrated in a manner that recalls the stotras recited in her honour in the Mahābhārata and the Harivaṃśa. The Mother Goddess is represented in this eulogy<sup>1</sup> as the most important among the Brahmanical divinities. She is worshipped not only by the mortals but also by the gods. She is the great power (mahāśakti) and leader of men in the three worlds. She rides on a fierce lion, but is more beautiful than Śrī. She is the remover of troubles and the supreme deity of women. She is mentioned as three-eyed, the mother of gods, daughter of the mountain, and bride of Ugra, and as Gaurī, Mr̥ḍāṇī and Śarvāṇī. All these testimonies undoubtedly confirm her importance in North Indian Hinduism during the medieval period<sup>2</sup>.

As in other part of India, the worship of the Mother Goddess in the eastern provinces from an early period is indicated by the ancient terracottas from Bihar and Bengal<sup>3</sup>. The Hara-Gaurī relief of Kuṣāṇa times found in Mayūrabhañja also suggests the extension of Śākta influence in Orissa<sup>4</sup>. The Nagarjuni Hill inscriptions of

1. EI, i, pp. 104-06, lines 3-19 of the epigraph.
2. Elsewhere in this essay (Infra, p. 454) we have given the iconography of the Devī images found in the Chamba State and datable in the 8th century on palaeographic grounds. In two epigraphs inscribed on the orders of the ruler Meruvarman, the goddess is mentioned as Lakṣmī and Śaktidevī (ASI, (NIS), xxxvi, pp. 141-42, 145). In a third epigraph, i.e., the Svaim inscription of Rājanaka Bhogaṭa (ASI(NIS), xxxvi, pp. 150-52), the goddess, who is depicted in the act of slaying asuras, is named Bhagavatī (but she is commonly known as Aṣṭa-

Anantavarman, located in the Gaya district of Bihar<sup>1</sup>, may also be taken as proof of the worship of Durgā under some of her well-known names and forms in eastern India.

There is not much evidence, literary or archaeological, in determining the existence of the goddess worship in eastern India, particularly Bengal, in the ancient and early medieval periods. Examples of plastic art, datable in the Kuṣāṇa times, have been found in various parts of Varendra<sup>2</sup>, but these do not include the image of any śakti goddess. Among the ruins of the 8th century Somapura Vihāra<sup>3</sup> numerous images in terracotta and stone of gods and goddesses abound, but they are either Vaiṣṇavite or Buddhist<sup>4</sup>. There are even images of Śiva 'in those manifestations that are still popular in Bengal villages', and of Brahmā and Gaṇeśa<sup>5</sup>, but not a single specimen that may be taken as the evidence of worship of Durgā. One of the terracotta plaques contains the standing figure of a ten-armed deity whom Dikshit identifies as Śiva<sup>6</sup>, but we agree with Saraswati that the image is that of a goddess<sup>7</sup>. This

bhūjā). In the Sarahan Praśasti discovered not far from Chamba (ASI(NIS), xxxvi, p. 152 ff), the Mother Goddess is referred to as the better-half of Śiva (Gaurīdehārdha - verse 1) as well as Giriśaputri (verse 4) and Sāilajā (verse 21). The epigraph of Rājanaka Bhogaṭa is datable in the 9th-10th centuries A.D. on palaeographic grounds (Ibid, p. 151) and the Sarahan Praśasti in the 10th century A.D. (Ibid, p. 155).

3. Infra, p. 386 ff

4. Infra, p. 539.

1. CII, iii, p. 224.

2. Saraswati, S.K. : Early Sculpture of Bengal, Calcutta, 1962, p. 10 ff;

is indicated by the unusual prominence given to the left breast which should settle the question about the figure's sex. She is clad in a dhoti, wears ornaments on hands and feet and patrakuṇḍalas in her ears. She holds in one of the upper left hands a sword much in the same way as the Durgā daśabhujā in our plate xx. In her normal left hand is a short dagger pointing downwards and the corresponding right hand, which is placed on the breast, may be indicating the tarjanī-mudrā<sup>1</sup>. The figure is shown in the pratyālīḍha pose. The other attributes, if any, in the remaining hands cannot be made out. This, as well as the absence of her vāhana, does not enable us to determine the true identity of the goddess represented on this plaque from Paharpur. She may be taken for a representation of Durgā on the grounds of having ten arms and a few similarities noticed above, but she may as well be one of the Buddhist goddesses, among whom there is no dearth of multi armed types. It would be rather risky in our opinion to

3. Dikshit, K.N.: 'Exacavations at Paharpur', MAI, N8.55, Delhi, 1938, p. 4.  
 4. HB, i, p. 527.  
 5. Ibid.  
 6. MAI, No. 55, pl. xliv.a.  
 7. Early Sculpture of Bengal, p. 121, pl. xxii.58.

1. Cf. our pl. xix.

even tentatively identify the representation as that of Durgā since no other evidence of her worship has come to light from Paharpur.

Instances of Purāṇic Hinduism in Bengal, centering round the worship of Viṣṇu, Sūrya and other gods, have been furnished not only by pre- and post-Gupta sculptures, but also by a number of epigraphs<sup>1</sup>. Literary evidence of the goddess worship in Bengal in the early medieval period is practically non-existent. Sandhyākara Nandī, the 12th century author of the Rāmacaritam, makes a maddeningly brief reference to the Mother Goddess as Umā, during whose<sup>2</sup> 'excellent worship', Varendrī becomes 'full of festivities'. Authors who wrote about the rituals of the Mother Goddess worship flourished much later<sup>3</sup>. One of them, Śūlapāṇi, who is the author of Durgotsavaviveka, Vāsantiviveka and Durgotsava-prayoga, has quoted largely from the works of two other scholars, Jīkana and Vālaka, who lived before him and also hailed from Bengal<sup>4</sup>. Their dates are not available, but they appear to have flourished before the time of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva, the chief minister of the King

1. 'Suśunia Rock Inscription of Chandravarman', EI, xiii, p. 133 ff; 'Baigram Copper-plate of the time of Kumāragupta I, GE 128/447-48 A.D.', EI, xxi, p. 78 ff; Damodarpur Copper Plate (No.4) of the time of Budhagupta, EI, xv, p. 138; 'Three Copper Plate Grants of Śaśāṅkarāja, Gupta Samvat 300/619-20 A.D.', EI, vi, pp. 143 ff.
2. Rāma Caritam, iii.35.
3. Pañcopāsanā, p. 281.
4. Ibid,

<sup>1</sup>  
 Harivarmadeva, who ruled in eastern Bengal during the  
<sup>2</sup>  
 12th century. Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva, a commentator on Smṛti,<sup>3</sup>  
 has discussed in his own writings the works of Jikana and  
 Vālaka and also another writer named Śrīkara - all of whom  
 lived before him. But these writings ~~do~~ deal chiefly  
 with rituals and other than indicating the practice of  
 worshipping the goddess in the form of a clay image  
<sup>4</sup>  
 (kṣāṇika mūr̥ti) from the 10th-11th century, do not throw  
 any light either on the origin or the history of Mother  
 Goddess worship in Bengal in the period.

It is rather interesting to find that ~~the~~ in the  
 earliest epigraph testifying to the worship of the Mother  
 Goddess in Bengal, she should appear under the name of  
<sup>5</sup>  
 Śarvāṇī, which is both Vedic and Purāṇic. Still more  
 interesting is the fact that her eight-armed standing  
 image, bearing this epigraph on the pedestal, is dedicated  
<sup>6</sup>  
 by a person who is the wife of a devout Buddhist ruler.  
 Instances of the goddess having been the object of worship  
 by the Buddhists may also be noticed in another epigraph  
 which mentions her as Durgottārā to whom is dedicated a

1. Majumdar, N.G.: Inscriptions of Bengal, iii, Rajshahi, 1929, pp. 27-28.
2. Ibid.
3. About the scholastic attainments of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva see Inscriptions of Bengal, iii, pp. 27, 30-31.
4. Pañcopāsanā, p. 281.
5. Bhattasali, N.K. : 'Śarvvāṇī Image Inscription of of Prabhāvatī, Queen of Deva-Khaḍga', EI, xvii, pp. 358-59.
6. Infra, p. 494.

monastery built in the beautiful city of Paṭṭikera in eastern Bengal<sup>1</sup>.

The epigraphs testifying to goddess worship in eastern India are mostly votive and inscribed on the pedestals of images which have been identified as one form or the other of the Mother Goddess<sup>2</sup>. As the epigraphs are mostly dated they are of considerable importance. Thus the Śarvāṇī image inscription containing the dedication of the goddess

1. 'The Mainamati Copper-plate of Ranavankamalla Harikala-deva:1141 Śaka', VRSM, No. 5, 1934, pp. 14-15. Durgottārā is possibly the same as Durgottāriṇī Tārā, whom Benoytosh Bhattacharyya has listed among 'extraordinary Tārās'—(Indian Buddhist Iconography, Calcutta, 1924, pp. 136-37). Her dhyāna (Sādhanamālā, 111) leaves us in little doubt about her identity as a Buddhist goddess. She is so-called because she removes all kinds of distress of her worshippers (sarvvaduhkhanmocani bhagavati Durgottāriṇī, Sādhanamālā, 111). She is thus like Durgā, who is also invoked in times of danger and difficulty, and is characterized as sutarasī in the Taittirīya Aranyaka. Tārā is no doubt a Buddhist deity but the concept of her aspect as Durgottāriṇī seems to have been borrowed in our opinion from Hinduism, in which the Mother Goddess is called Durgā because she destroys durgati (misery) and also Tārā and Tāriṇī in her role of a deliveress (Cf. SED, p. 443). The Mother Goddess is also associated with fortresses as their protectress. The goddess Durgottārā of this epigraph thus appears to have been lifted from Hinduism. Durgottāriṇī may also be a Hindu goddess, as indicated by the name of a science developed in Hindu Tantricism and called Durgottāriṇī-vidyā (Rājatarāṅgiṇī, vol ii, pp. 9-10, note).
2. EISMS, pp. 21-23, pls. i.c; iii.a,b; vi.a,c,d.

by the queen of a Buddhist prince suggests the importance of her cult in Bengal in the latter half of the 7th century A.D.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the image of Gajalakṣmī<sup>2</sup> on the seal affixed to the Tipperah Copper Plate Grant of Lokanātha indicates the worship of this goddess in eastern Bengal during the 7th century.<sup>3</sup> The epigraphs not only furnish the dates and the well-known names under which she was worshipped in the medieval period, but also many less-known and vernacular epithets by which she was known in a particular region. This is indicated by such names as Puṇḍeśvarī, Puṇyeśvarī and Muṇḍeśvarī under which she is represented as a real mother in the plastic art of Bihar during the medieval period.<sup>4</sup> Also less known and strictly local are the names Kṣemaṅkarī, Khimel-mātā, Vaṭayakṣiṇī, Araṇyavāsini and Dadhimatī by which she is mentioned, as we have seen, in the epigraphs datable from the early medieval period. She is also mentioned, it has been noticed above, as Durgā and Mahiṣamardinī - suggestive of her ghora aspect - in some of the inscriptions. But preference for her saumya aspect is indicated by an image which represents her as Pārvatī and was dedicated in V.S. 1232 (= C. 1177 A.D.), the 14th regnal year of Govindapala<sup>5</sup>

1. For the date of the Khadgas, see Dani, A.H. : Indian Palaeography, Oxford, 1963, p.134 ; HB, i, pp. 86-87.
2. Basak, R.G. : 'Tipperah Copper Plate Grant of Lokanātha' EI, xv, p. 302.
3. Ibid, p. 303.
4. Infra, pp. 513-15.
5. EISMS, p. 23, pl. vi.c.

It is also clear from such an inscribed image, made and installed during the reign of Lakṣmaṇsena, that though named as Caṇḍī the Mother Goddess could yet be shown in her saumya aspect, for the icon is a curious mixture of Gajalakṣmī and Caṇḍī<sup>1</sup>.

It would not be a bad argument if we suggested that preference for the placid forms of the Mother Goddess was inspired by the concept of Hindu Lakṣmī on the one ~~hand~~ hand, and the Buddhist Tārā on the other, though the iconography of Tārā in our opinion is to a large extent indebted to the representation of Lakṣmī in early Indian plastic art. But in view of the comparative paucity of Lakṣmī images in medieval and late medieval Indian sculpture, as against the numerous icons of Tārā, we should admit the influence of latter's iconography on the seated and standing images of the Mother Goddess in her placid aspects as Umā, Gaurī and Pārvatī. As the two religions flourished side by side, quite naturally one was influenced by the other. This accounts for the impressive number of Hindu images in terracotta and stone found at important citadels of Buddhism like Nalanda, Gaya and Paharpur in Bengal. But evidence of Buddhist influence on Hindu iconography should not be treated as servile

1. Bhattasali, N.K. : 'Dacca Caṇḍī Image Inscription of the 3rd Regnal Year of Lakṣmaṇsena', EI, xvii, p. 360.

imitation of the art of the former religion. If the Hindu sculptors borrowed the placid forms of Tārā, seated in lalitāsana or standing in graceful tribhaṅga pose, two- as well as multi-armed, with one hand raised in abhaya-<sup>1</sup>mudrā and another making the gesture of giving a boon, they also retained much that is pristine in their own art, such as the āyudhas and the vāhana of the Mother Goddess. But for these distinctive features, the representations of Durgā with a child on her lap, or those of the Mātṛkās accompanied by a child, would have been mere copies of Hārītī images noticed in Buddhist art from the beginning of the Christian era. The absence of any plastic representation of Ṣaṣṭhī, who is associated like Hārītī with the welfare of children, is a strong proof that Hindu artists did not copy freely from contemporary Buddhist art

Unlike the Buddhists, the dislike of the Hindus for Buddhism did not descend on the domain of art. In their attempt to prove the superiority of their own creed the Vajrayāna Buddhists not only demonstrated<sup>r</sup> their attitude by showing important Hindu gods and goddesses as being trampled under the feet of their own divinities, but provided

1. Cf. the Tārā images reproduced in Indian Buddhist Iconography, pl. xxxii.c, d, e, f; EISMS, pls. iv.b; v.c; ix.c; x.c; xvi.c; xvii.d; HB, i, pl. xxvi.62-64.

each of such compositions with a dhyāna <sup>1</sup> as well. Thus in the Buddhist sculptures from Nalanda Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva are shown as being trampled under her feet by Mārīci. Tārā is depicted is trampling upon Rudra and Brahmā, Aparājītā on Gaṇeśa, Trailokyavijaya with one foot on the head of Śiva and the other on the breast of Pārvatī, and Hariharivāhanodbhava with Viṣṇu for his vāhana <sup>2</sup>.

## T H E M O T H E R G O D D E S S

### A S

### V I Ṣ Ṇ U Ś A K T I

The Mother Goddess appears in popular mythology as well as in most of the Purānic texts, as the wife or śakti of Śiva. The word śakti is also used as one of the synonyms <sup>3</sup> which designates her as the wife of that god. Not only in mythology, but in Indian classical literature also, the goddess is portrayed as the spouse of Śiva. Kālidāsa's Kumarāsambhavam describes how Śiva and Pārvatī became man and wife. The Gupta poet also equates their relation with that of the word with its meaning in the Raghuvaṃśa <sup>4</sup>. In Indian philosophy, the Mother Goddess has been identified with the Prakṛti and her consort Śiva with the Puruṣa of the Sāṅkhya. As Prakṛti, the goddess

1. Sastri, Hirananda : 'Nālandā and its Epigraphic Material', MAI, No. 66, Delhi, 1942, p. 114.
2. Ibid ; Indian Buddhist Iconography, pp. 98, 82, 139, 139, 153 (pl. xli.c,d); 143 (pl. xxxix.b); 146-47 (pl. xxxix.c); 44-45 (pl. xxiii.a-b).

also became later identified with Māyā or Called Māyin<sup>1</sup> of Brahman who was equated with Maheśvara, called Māyin.

But as we have hinted earlier, originally the goddess had an independent cult of her own, whose importance was the chief reason for her worship being taken over by the Brahmanical religion. Eventually, her identification with Māyā also equated her with Prajñā (wisdom) and Svapna (illusion, dream), whence she came to be called Sarasvatī and Moharātri. Thus personifying Śakti<sup>2</sup>, Prajñā and Māyā, to which were added her attributes as the creatrix, the Mother Goddess became a composite deity, 'who as Mahā-lakṣmī created even the gods, as Durgā killed the Asuras, as Devī revealed the Śākta literature, and as Yoganidrā<sup>3</sup> sent all creation to sleep!

The exact reasons why the Mother Goddess was allied to Śiva as his śakti are as difficult to determine as the process by which she rose<sup>to</sup> prominence in Hindu religion. There is of course no dearth of evidence, archaeological as well as literary, pointing to her association with Śiva but there is also equally strong evidence which suggests her rise to prominence under the auspices of Vaiṣṇavism.

3. SED, p. 1044.  
4. Infra, p. 547; note 6.

1. HCIP, iii, pp. 444-45. Nityā-śakti means 'power', while Māyā is usually loosely translated "illusion". It is the power of creating the phenomenal world, which in a sense is illusory.  
2. For the meaning of śakti, see SED, p. 1044.  
3. HCIP, iii, p. 445.

In the Mahābhārata, the goddess appears no doubt as the wife of Śiva<sup>1</sup>, but she is also described as the wife of Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu)<sup>2</sup>. In the Durgāstotras put into the mouth of Yudhiṣṭhira and Arjuna<sup>3</sup>, while the association of the goddess with Viṣṇu is much emphasized, there is little except such phrases as Kapāli<sup>4</sup> or Skandamātā<sup>5</sup>, which vaguely suggest her connection with Śiva. She is described in the Epic as born of Yaśodā's womb, darling of Nārāyaṇa (Nārāyaṇavarapriyā)<sup>6</sup> and sister of Vāsudeva. The Harivaṁśa refers to her birth as Aparṇā, one of the daughters of Himālaya, and her marriage with Śiva<sup>7</sup>. It also mentions her as Girīśā (feminine of Girīśa, i.e., Śiva)<sup>8</sup> and Śivapriyā, both of which indicate her as the wife of Śiva, but there are as many epithets which also suggest her connection with Viṣṇu to whom she is subservient. The Harivaṁśa makes it quite clear that the goddess owes her elevation in Hinduism to the grace of Viṣṇu<sup>9</sup>. By carrying out his orders as Nidrā-Kālarūpiṇī, the goddess not only becomes a sister of Kṛṣṇa, Baladeva and Indra, but also the object of veneration in the Vindhya region. Also through the grace of Viṣṇu she

1. EM, pp. 224-26.

2. HCIP, iii, p. 445.

3. Supra, p. 272, note 2.

4. Mbh, vi.23.4. Kapāli is a name of Śiva. See SED, p.250

5. Mbh, vi.23.11.

6. Mbh, iv.6.2,4.

7. Harivaṁśa, i.18.18-22.

8. Ibid, ii.103.6-7.

9. Supra, pp. 271-74.

she becomes celebrated as asuranāśinī. She thus appears<sup>1</sup> to be, as Hopkins remarks, an adoption into Viṣṇuism .

The development of the goddess under Vaiṣṇavism is further attested by the Brhatsaṃhitā in which, from the number of verses devoted to his iconography<sup>2</sup>, Viṣṇu appears as of far more importance than Śiva. The latter is mentioned in only one verse in his form of Arddhanārī, in which the left side of his body is to represent the half part of Pārvatī.<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the Mother Goddess does not find any further mention in this text under this or any other name except that of Ekānaṃśā to whose iconography Varāhamihira devotes three ślokās. Ekānaṃśā is also one of the epithets of the goddess in the Hariyaṃśā.<sup>4</sup> As has been pointed out elsewhere in this essay<sup>5</sup>, Ekānaṃśā is one of the forms in which the Mother Goddess, as the sister of Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva, was the object of much worship in North India in the Gupta and late Gupta periods. Her importance is also confirmed by the erection of a temple in her honour, where she was installed under the name of Bhadrāryā during the Gupta period.<sup>6</sup> The derivation of her name Durgā may also have had something to do with Viṣṇu, for this god has Durga as one of her synonyms.<sup>7</sup>

1. EM, p. 225.
2. Brhatsaṃhitā, lvii.31-35.
3. Ibid, lvii.43.
4. ii.120.15.
5. Supra, p.314-15; Infra, p.510.

Strange though it may sound, it is in the Devī-Māhātmy the locus classicus of the Śāktas, that the association of the goddess with Viṣṇu appears to be of the most pronounced character. She is nowhere mentioned in this text as the wife or śakti of Śiva. Her connection with the latter, so far as this text is concerned, is extremely vague. In fact, Śiva plays a very minor role in the Mārkaṇḍeya-Candī vis-a-vis Viṣṇu, who appears in it as the Supreme Being (Jagatpati) and the goddess is at first introduced as his Yoganidrā<sup>1</sup>, which has been interpreted as the inactive eternal energy that is co-existent with him. Viṣṇu cannot act unless and until this inactive energy (śakti) is awakened. When threatened by the demon Madhu and Kaiṭava, ~~Brahmā~~ Brahmā rouses this inactive śakti by singing a hymn in her honour and as soon as she awakens, Viṣṇu gets up from his slumber or inactive state and saves Brahmā by killing the wicked asuras. As śakti of Viṣṇu, the goddess appears in one sense superior to that god, for without her he is unable to act.<sup>2</sup> It is as Viṣṇuśakti that the goddess is eulogised by Brahmā, who associates her with sacrifices under such epithets as

6. Supra, p. 317.

7. Sørensen, S : Op.cit, p. 274.

1. See Appendix A.

2. BSSS, p. 52.

Svāhā, Svadhā and Vaṣaṭkāra<sup>1</sup>, and also regards her as the personified Viṣṇuśakti when she assumes her terrible form - armed with sword, spear, club, discus, conch, bow, arrows, noose and mace<sup>2</sup> - which is associated with her role as the slayer of demons. This conception of the goddess appears to owe nothing to Saivism.

Moreover, Śiva does not play any special part when the goddess is described as coming into being from the combined energies of the gods<sup>3</sup>. He is no more than one of the celestials suffering from the depredations of the asuras<sup>4</sup>. The face of the Devī is made from his energy and he gives her a trident identical with his own<sup>5</sup>, but it is Viṣṇu and not Śiva who is approached by Brahmā and the gods for redress against the oppression of Mahiṣāsura, and it is also Viṣṇu who initiates the process by which the goddess is brought into being for the destruction of the demons<sup>6</sup>.

The goddess whom the gods approach in the Himālayas when they are again in trouble caused by Śumbha and Niśumbha, is called Pārvatī. But she is neither the daughter of Himālaya nor the wife of Śiva. Her identity

1. MP, lxxxii.54.
2. MP, lxxxii.61.
3. See Appendix A.
4. BSSS, p. 54.
5. MP, lxxxii.13, 19.
6. See Appendix A.

as Viṣṇumāyā or Viṣṇuśakti is made abundantly clear in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna :

Iti kṛtvā matiṃ devā himavantam nageśvaram/ <sup>1</sup>  
Jagmustatra tato devīm Viṣṇumāyām pratustuvuh //

'Making this resolve the gods went to Himavat, lord among mountains, and there raised their hymn to the goddess who is Viṣṇu's illusive power' (trans. F.E. Pargitar).

On the eve of her fight with the asura king Śumbha, the gods send their respective śaktis to assist the Mother Goddess <sup>2</sup>. Siva leads them before her and says, 'Be pleased to kill for me the asuras quickly' <sup>3</sup>. He also acts as the messenger of the goddess who sends him to Śumbha and Niśumbha with proposals of peace <sup>4</sup>. As Das Gupta remarks, the Siva whom we meet here is not the god who is well-known as Mahādeva; his minor role is further emphasized <sup>5</sup> when he carries the message for the goddess. The

1. MP, lxxxv.6.

2. MP, lxxxviii.11-20.

3. MP, lxxxviii.21 : Siva says to the goddess : hanyantama-surāḥ śīghraṃ mama prītyāha, which Pargitar translates as 'Let the Asuras be slain forthwith through my goodwill'. V.S. Agrawala (DM, p. 105) translates it as 'Let the Asuras be killed forthwith for my gratification'. But we are inclined to accept Das Gupta's translation : 'Be pleased to kill forthwith the asuras because it appears most appropriate in the light of the hymns sung in her honour by the gods. As she is infinitely superior to the gods, the Mother Goddess cannot be expected to wait on anybody's pleasure.'

4. MP, lxxxviii.23-26.

5. BSSS, p. 55.

goddess is no doubt mentioned as Śivā more than once<sup>1</sup>, but the context in which the epithet is used, is obviously meant to indicate her auspicious aspect and not her role as the wife or śakti of Śiva<sup>2</sup>. Similarly, the epithet Gaurī<sup>3</sup> used in the Devī-Māhātmya, refers to the fair complexion  $\forall$  of the goddess and has nothing to do with the Gaurī who is Śiva's spouse<sup>4</sup>. Gaurī occurs in such an expression as Gaurī tvameva śaśimaulikṛtapratisthā (thou art Gaurī, established on the moon-crested god)<sup>5</sup>, but the first line of the śloka describes the goddess as Śriḥ Kaiṭāverihṛdayakṛtādhivāsā (thou art Śrī, dweller in the heart of the foe of Kaiṭava). The śloka further characterizes her as Medhā (mental vigour), viditākhilāśāstra-śārā (knowing the essence of all the scriptures) and durgabhavasāgara-nau (the boat (to cross) the difficult ocean of existence). The expression śaśimaulikṛtapratisthā thus refers to only one of her aspects, and it is by no means the only one or the chief form in which she is represented in this text<sup>6</sup>.

The Mother Goddess is referred to in the Devī-Māhātmya on numerous occasions as Ambikā<sup>7</sup>. As we have seen, she is

1. DM, p. 256.
2. BSSS, p. 55.
3. DM, p. 254.
4. BSSS, p. 55.
5. MP, lxxxiv.10.
6. BSSS, p. 55.
7. DM, p. 254.

mentioned under this name first as Rudra's sister and then as his wife in the later Vedic literature. But compared to such names as Umā, Pārvatī, Gaurī and Durgā, which associate the goddess with Śiva as his wife, her relation with that god indicated by the epithet Ambikā cannot but be viewed as nebulous<sup>1</sup>, for it means 'mother' and can equally be applied to any goddess. It is also as an epithet to convey the sense of 'mother'<sup>2</sup> that the word Ambikā seems to have been used in the Mārkaṇḍeya-Candī.

The Devī-Māhātmya puts special emphasis on two aspects of the goddess. One is her independent character as the Supreme Mistress of the Universe, and the other is her role as Viṣṇuśakti<sup>3</sup>. The Upaniṣadic idea of the one and indivisible Brahman has also its parallel in Śākta philosophy which regards the Mother Goddess as the Supreme Being. She is not only the mistress of the world, but also the mistress of mortals and immortals alike, and the Supreme Goddess who is advaya or non-dual. In higher philosophy, Śakti is treated as indivisible and is inseparably bound up with God. Notwithstanding her association with Śiva or Viṣṇu in the Purāṇas and the Tantras, Śakti is nevertheless eternally non-dual in nature and is celebrated accordingly as the Supreme Goddess. This self-contained and independent aspect of the Mother Goddess has been emphasized in many places of the Devī-Māhātmya.

§

1. Cf. BSSS, p. 56.

Such expressions as, saiva sarveśvareśvarī (she is the supreme mistress of all the gods)<sup>1</sup>, parāparānām paramā tvameva parameśvarī (you are indeed beyond the highest and the lowest, you are the supreme goddess)<sup>2</sup>, as well as her epithets, paramā māyā, paramā śakti, paramā Prakṛti, Mahāmāyā etc.<sup>3</sup>, - all unmistakably suggest her independent nature. Her unitary aspect is also indicated by her spirited reply to Śumbha before she absorbs within herself the Mātṛkās, who are the śaktis of different gods.<sup>4</sup> This feat of the goddess reveals her as the source to which Brahmā, Viṣṇu and others owe their energy (śakti), and, therefore, as far above all the gods. As the source of all power and the mistress of the world, the Mother Goddess is characterized in the Devī-Māhātmya as 'the lady worthy to be praised by the Lord of the universe' (viśveśavandya)<sup>5</sup>. Her independent aspect also becomes quite clear in the hymns which the gods sing in her honour in the Caṇḍī.<sup>6</sup>

2. Ambikā may be defined as 'little mother' just as Caṇḍī means. ~~Caṇḍī~~ 'little Caṇḍī'. Cf. D.D. Kosambi, JRAS, 1960 p. 19.
3. The Kālikā Purāna, composed as late as the 9th-10th century (and possibly in Bengal where Śākya Tantricism was vigorously practised), mentions the Mother Goddess as Viṣṇumāyā or Viṣṇuśakti. KP, v.4.

1. MP, lxxxi.44.
2. MP, lxxxi.62.
3. DM, pp. 255-56.
4. MP, xc.3 : Ekaiivāhaṃ jagatyatra dvitīyā kā mamāparā
5. MP, xci.33 ~~xxxi~~
6. MP, lxxxi.54-67; lxxxiv.1-26; lxxxv.7-36; xci.2-35.

Yet the epithets which emphasize her independent aspect, are also used in eulogising the Mother Goddess as Viṣṇuśakti. Thus though she is the germ of the universe and illusion sublime (viśvasya bījaṃ paramāsi māyā), she is also Vaiṣṇavī śaktiranantavīryā (Viṣṇuśakti (and) boundless in valour)<sup>1</sup>. Elsewhere, she is described as the Māyā of Viṣṇu. In the first of the many ślokas in which she is saluted by the gods, the Mother Goddess is mentioned as Viṣṇumāyā: Yā devī sarvabhūteṣu Viṣṇumāyeti śabdītā or 'the goddess who among all created things is called Viṣṇu's illusive power'.<sup>2</sup> Again, when the gods bow before her in reverence after the destruction of Sumbha and his hosts, she is saluted as Nārāyaṇī or the wife of Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu). In the second series of salutation ślokas,<sup>3</sup> the goddess is referred to as Gaurī, Brahmaṇī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Nārasiṃhī, Aindrī, Śivadūtī and Cāmuṇḍā, but it is always as Nārāyaṇī that she receives the homage of the celestials (Nārāyaṇi namo'stu te : O Nārāyaṇi, reverence be to thee)

In view of the common belief that the development of Śaktism centred chiefly round Śiva, the above discussion will naturally appear anomalous. But, as Das Gupta so

1. MP, xci.4.
2. MP, lxxxv.12-34.
3. MP, xci.7-23.

justly points out, this belief is historically unsound<sup>1</sup>. It is not Saivism but Vaiṣṇavism to which Śaktism owes more for its development, especially in its initial stage. The philosophy of Śakti has been traced to the Upaniṣads and its elaboration may be noticed in the Purāṇas and the Tantras<sup>2</sup>. But it is in the Saṃhitās of the Pāñcarātra school of Vaiṣṇavism that we find for the first time systematic discussion on Śaktism which is centred round Viṣṇu<sup>3</sup>. Composed in or about the early Gupta period<sup>4</sup>, these Saṃhitās are older than the Saiva philosophical works, whose composition is assigned to the 8th-10th centuries A.D.<sup>5</sup> The older Purāṇas refer to the Śakti as either Viṣṇumāyā or Viṣṇuśakti<sup>6</sup>, which has however been eventually identified with Prakṛti-Puruṣa of the Sāṅkhya, Māyā-Brahman of the Vedānta and Śiva-Śakti of the Tantras<sup>7</sup>. The idea of Śakti as revealed in the Mārkaṇḍey Candī may not be older than that discussed in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa or the Saṃhitās of the Pāñcarātra school. All

1. BSSS, p. 59.
2. AIRT, pp. 76-83.
3. Cf. Das Gupta, B.B. : Śrīrādhār Kramavikāśa (The Evolution of Śrīrādhā), Calcutta, 1957-58, p. 23 ff.
4. Pañcopāsanā, p. 38; Cf. HCIP, iii, pp. 423-24.
5. BSSS, p. 60.
6. As testified by the Kālikā Purāṇa, such a belief seems to have persisted till as late as the 9th-10th centuries A.D. (Vide Supra, p.344, note 3.)
7. BSSS, p. 60.

these texts being more or less contemporary, treat Śaktism as part and parcel of Vaiṣṇavite philosophy. As Śaktism appears to centre round Viṣṇu in the Gupta Age, the Devī-Māhātmya,<sup>1</sup> which was in all probability composed during this period, naturally makes most of the Mother Goddess as Viṣṇumāyā or Viṣṇuśakti. According to the Pāñcarātra school, Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa is Brahman, and being inseparably bound up with him, Śakti is called both Vaiṣṇavī and Nārāyaṇī.<sup>2</sup> The reasons for erecting a temple by the Vaiṣṇavite Mayūrākṣa for the Mātrkāś who are śakti goddesses, are thus abundantly clear,<sup>3</sup> as also the temple meant for the goddess Bhadrāryā during the time of Skandagupta.<sup>4</sup>

1. Infra, p. 448, note 1.

2. Cf. Brahmabhavāṃ vrajatyevaṃ sā śaktirvaiṣṇavī parā/ Nārāyaṇaṃ paraṃ Brahma śaktirnārāyaṇī ca sā // Ahirbudhnyā Saṃhitā, iv. 77.

3. Supra, p. 214.

4. Supra, p. 317.

Chapter Four

:

THE MOTHER GODDESS

IN

INDIAN ARCHAEOLOGY

P R E H I S T O R I C  
P E R I O D

The worship of the Mother Goddess in India dates back to remote antiquity, but in the absence of any direct evidence, it is not possible to assign a definite date for its beginning. The material remains of the Palaeolithic and Neolithic Cultures unearthed in the sub-continent, no doubt throw some light on the life and condition of their authors, but so far as religion is concerned, they furnish little or no information at all. Yet, the dearth in these sites of steatopygous and large-breasted female figurines of the Gravettian type, or rock painting

1. About the rock paintings of Madhya Pradesh, scholars are divided in their opinions. While Ajit Mookerjee and others claim for these considerable antiquity, D.H. Gordon and some European scholars would not assign the a date anterior to C. 500 B.C. (Cf. Mookerjee : Art of India, Calcutta, 1952, p. 12; Ghosh, M : 'Rock Paintings and Other Antiquities of Prehistoric and Later Times', MAI, No. 24, Calcutta, 1932, p. 14; Mitra, P Prehistoric India, Calcutta, 1927, pp. 167-68). For reasons why the Indian examples cannot claim an equal antiquity with the prehistoric cave paintings of Europe see Adam, L : Primitive Art, Pelican Books, 1952, p. 35. In the opinion of Helmut de Terra, who shares the views of Stuart Piggot and D.H. Gordon, the cave paintings discovered at Adamgarh may antedate the Central Indian examples which are assigned to the historic period. Cf. 'Stone Age Man in Ice Age India and Burma' Asia, Concord, New Haven, March, 1939, p. 163.

akin to the Magdalenian Culture depicting some magical rite or a fertility dance should in no way militate against the considerable antiquity of the cult of the Mother Goddess in India. The Indus Valley Culture, which has furnished the first concrete proof of the cult in India during the Chalcolithic Age, 'must have had a long antecedent history on the soil of India, taking us back to an age that at present can only be dimly visible'.<sup>1</sup> This observation of Marshall on the high antiquity of the Indus Civilization has received the support of many scholars. Helmut de Terra assigns to it a beginning as early as 3500 B.C.,<sup>2</sup> and V. Gordon Childe thinks that 'the delicate and ... enduring adaptation to the Indian environment represented in the Indus Civilization, can only have been created and spread over a vast area after a long period of incubation on the spot'.<sup>3</sup> Marshall's dating of the Indus relics in 3250 B.C.,<sup>4</sup> and 2550 B.C. for the upper and 3000 to 2800 B.C. for the lower levels of the sites suggested by Mackay,<sup>5</sup> are no longer acceptable in the context of the typological evidence unearthed

1. MIC, i, p. 106.

2. de Terra, Helmut : 'Stone Age Man in Ice Age India and Burma', Asia, March, 1939, p. 163.

3. Childe, V.G. : New Light on the Most Ancient East, London, 1952, p. 185; Mitra, P. : Op. cit. pp. 271-72; HCIP, i, p. 192.

4. MIC, i, p. 106. Early

5. Mackay, E.J.H. : The Indus Civilizations, London, 1948, 2nd edition, p. 11.

at the ancient sites in Mesopotamia. In view of the scant testimony regarding the contact between the Indus Valley and Western Asia in the pre-Sargonid times, both Wheeler<sup>1</sup> and Piggott<sup>2</sup> are not inclined to date the relics from the former regions much prior to C.2350 B.C. The former suggests a provisional dating of 2500-1500 B.C., for the Indus Civilization, because it 'responds consistently with the current tests',<sup>3</sup> and further observes, 'There is little reason, ... in the light of the collateral evidence, to modify the maximum opening-date (2500 B.C.) already suggested by the evidence of the seals : always with the proviso that the lowest and earliest strata of Mohenjo-daro and Chanhu-daro are not yet known

In the light of the evidence unearthed so far we may thus place the Indus Valley Civilization in the third millennium B.C., and consequently, postulate an equal antiquity for the cult of the Mother Goddess, though in all probability, both may go even further back. In the opinion of de Terra, a period from five hundred to one thousand years must have been necessary for the high civilization of the Indus to develop.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, it

1. Wheeler, R.E.M.: Indus Civilization, pp. 84 ff.
2. Prehistoric India, Pelican Book, 1952, pp. 207ff.
3. Indus Civilization, p. 93.
4. Ibid, pp. 87-88.
5. Op.cit, p. 163; cf. Rowland, B.: AAI, p. 12.

would be reasonable to argue, considerable time must have elapsed between the origin of the Mother Goddess worship in the Indus regions and her anthropomorphic representations in terracotta which have been found in large numbers at Mohenjo-dāro in Sind, Harappā in the Panjāb, and the Zhob and Kulli culture sites in Balūchistān.<sup>1</sup>

Ever since the discovery of the Indus Valley Civilization, there has been a great deal of controversy over its authorship. We shall concern ourselves, though briefly, with this question, because not only does the religion of the Indus Valley people appear to be pre-Aryan and non-Vedic in character, but also the cult of the Mother Goddess seems to have formed as an important aspect of it, as we find it in the Hinduism of today. Marshall's view that the Indus religion 'is so characteristically Indian as hardly to be distinguishable from the still living Hinduism' in which the cult of the <sup>Mother Goddess</sup> constitutes one of the two most potent forces in popular worship', can count among its supporters scholars like Wheeler and V.G. Childe. In the former's opinion, 'the Indus civilization anticipated certain of the non-Aryan elements in the

1. MIC, i, p. 49; Piggott, S.: Op.cit, pp. 105, 107-08, 126-28.  
 2. MIC, i, Introduction, p. vii.

Hinduism of a long subsequent age',<sup>1</sup> while to the latter the religious concepts suggested by the available evidence are familiar to the modern and post-Vedic Hinduism, and therefore, 'the Indus Civilization may be regarded as non-Aryan and pre-Aryan'.<sup>2</sup>

Marshall's arguments<sup>3</sup> in favour of a pre-Aryan and non-Vedic origin of the Indus Valley Civilization have raised protest among Indian scholars whose views on this question may best be studied in the writings of A.D. Pusalkar<sup>4</sup> and L. Sarup.<sup>5</sup> There are, however, more grounds than one to regard the Indus Valley Culture as both pre-Vedic and non-Aryan. The views of Pusalkar and Sarup, who are so anxious to prove it as otherwise, are weak and far from convincing. The date of the Indus Culture,<sup>6</sup> as mentioned above, must be anterior to the Aryan migration in India as well as the composition of the Rg Veda, both of which by common consent cannot be placed earlier than the middle of the second millennium B.C.<sup>7</sup> 'What is known as the Indus Civilization appears to

1. Wheeler, R.E.M.: Five Thousand Years of Pakistan, London, 1950, p.29.
2. Op. cit, p. 185.
3. Op. cit, pp. 110-12.
4. 'The Religion of the Indus People', Modern Review, December, Calcutta, 1936, pp.697ff; 'Authors of the Indus Culture', ABORI, xviii, pp.385ff; Presidential Address PIHC, xiiiith session, Nagpur, 1950, pp.19ff; HCIP, i, pp. 169ff.
5. 'The Rgveda and Mohenjo-daro', IC, iv, 1937-38, pp.149ff
6. Supra, p. 352
7. Chatterji, S.K.: Indo-Aryan and Hindi, Calcutta, 1960, pp. 18-19; Five Thousand Years of Pakistan, p.32; Piggott, S. : Op. cit, p. 251.

owe nothing to the Veda, for indeed, in its origins at least, it is definitely of earlier date'.<sup>1</sup> The Indus religion consists chiefly of those elements that are familiar to modern and post-Vedic Hinduism,<sup>2</sup> and 'which are not to be found in the earliest stratum of Indian religious literature'.<sup>3</sup> It would be utterly futile were we to look for the basis of 'classical' Hinduism which emanates from Vedism in the material culture of the Indus Valley, 'and we must bear in mind that Vedism itself contains elements of primitive religion, and therefore of Hinduism (or, we might say, of pre-Hinduism) the existence of which at a period earlier than the Veda could be verified by the evidence of the Mohenjo-Daro excavations

Concrete evidence of the Mother Goddess cult in pre-historic India has been furnished chiefly by the terracotta female figurines found in considerable number at the sites of the Kulli and Zhob cultures and at Mohenjo-daro and Harappā.<sup>5</sup> The examples found at the two latter sites may be classified as :

1. Renou, Louis : Religions of Ancient India, London, 1953, p. 3.
2. Childe, V.G. : Op.cit, p. 185.
3. Basham, A.L. : The Wonder that was India, London, 1954, p. 22.
4. Renou, Louis : Op.cit, p. 47.
5. MIC, i, p. 49.

- i. Toys: figurines of women shown as engaged in household occupations, such as, kneading flour or holding<sup>a</sup> dish of cakes.<sup>1</sup>
- ii. Mother and child figurines: representing women with a child or children in their arms.<sup>2</sup> According to Wheeler<sup>3</sup> these may be related to the idea of fecundity.<sup>3</sup> Mackay calls them 'nursing mothers' and suggests that most probably these were votive figurines placed in shrines either to obtain offspring or as thank-offer-<sup>4</sup>ings for having been blessed with children.
- iii. Ex-voto offerings: represented by figurines of women with hollow, squat and swollen bodies suggesting pregnancy.<sup>5</sup> Marshall regards these as having magica<sup>6</sup> significance, possibly for getting offspring, but these may be, as he himself suggests, apotropaic in character in view of the taboo regarding pregnant women in India.<sup>7</sup>
- iv. To this group also belongs the majority of figurines that 'portray a very distinctive and generally uniform type, viz., a standing, almost nude female, wearing a band or girdle about her loins with elaborate head-dress and collar, and occasionally with ornamental cheek cones and a long necklace'.<sup>8</sup> They

1. MIC, i, p.49, pls. xcv.12; Five Thousand Years of Pakistan, p.73.

2. MIC, p. 49, pl. xcv.

3. Five Thousand Years of Pakistan, p. 73.

4. Further Excavations at Mohenjodaro, Delhi, 1938, vol. p. 269, vol. ii, pl. lxxvi.13.

wear a peculiar but distinctive head-dress from which are suspended fantastic ear ornaments - two cup-like objects one on either side of the head.<sup>1</sup>

Pottery figurines of the Mother Goddess from Balū-chistān are of two types, both of which differ from those found at Mohenjo-dāro and Harappā in that they are not full-length images, but consist only of head and torso, the latter terminating abruptly in a flat base or 'little pedestals'.<sup>2</sup> 'Of very great interest', these figurines which are found widespread among the sites of the Kulli Culture, represent the goddess with her arms akimbo and hands placed on hips, but instead of a regular face, all have a fantastic aquiline profile pinched out of clay - 'an absurd caricature resembling nothing so much as a sacred hen, with the eyes made from centrally pierced applied pellets and no indication of the mouth'.<sup>3</sup> Similar figurines found at such sites as Sur Jangal, Periano Ghundai, Mughal Ghundai, Kaudani and Dabar Kot in the Zhob Valley, end below the waist like those of Kulli Culture,

5. Further Excavations at Mohenjo-dāro, ii, pl. lxxv.7, 12; MIC, i, p. 49, pl. xcv.24, 29, 30.  
6. MIC, i, p. 49.  
7. Ibid.  
8. Ibid.

1. MIC, i, p.49, pl.xii.1; Mackay: Early Indus Civilization p. 53.  
2. Piggott, S. : Op.cit, p. 126, figs. 9, 16; MIC, i, p.49 pl.xii, 3-5, 6-10.  
3. Piggott, S. : Op.cit, p. 107.

and in several examples are adorned with a series of necklaces.<sup>1</sup> But their faces are horribly grotesque,<sup>2</sup> because they are 'hooded with a coif or shawl, they have high, smooth foreheads above their staring circular eye-holes, their owl-beak nose and grim slit mouth ... and in two from Dabar Kot all pretence is thrown aside and the face is a grinning skull'.<sup>3</sup>

While writing on the Indus Valley Civilization Marshall and others have lamented over the paucity of materials for reconstructing the religious life of the pre-historic Indus people. Both Wheeler and Mackay<sup>4</sup> agree with Marshall<sup>5</sup> on the absence of temples or religious buildings and documents or legends at Mohenjo-dāro and Harappā. 'One of the most surprising facts in the culture of the Indus Valley', comments K.N. Dikshit, 'is the paucity of what may be definitely taken as religious symbols or buildings, definitely to be classed as pertaining to religion'.<sup>7</sup> Pusalkar also regards the absence of any positive religious material from the Indus relics as strange, 'for

1. Piggott, S.: Op.cit, p.126.  
 2. MIC, i, p. 50  
 3. Piggott, S.: Op.cit, pp.126-27.  
 4. Five Thousand Years of Pakistan, p. 28.  
 5. Early Indus Civilizations, pp. 15, 52.  
 6. MIC, i, p. 48.  
 7. Prehistoric Civilization of the Indus Valley, University of Madras, 1939, p.33.

religion has always played a dominant part in ancient cultures, and especially in India, where it was the prime factor moulding the lives of people for ages'.<sup>1</sup> The picture of religious beliefs and practices of the Indus Valley people has therefore to be drawn from what Mackay describes as 'the somewhat unsatisfactory medium of objects which have been unearthed in these cities (Mohen-dāro and Harappā). These consist of 'engraved seals found in abundance among the ruins, an inconsiderable number of clay sealings and copper tablets, a variety of small figurines of terracotta, <sup>a</sup> fi<sup>a</sup>ience and metal, and a few stone images in the round'.<sup>3</sup> Wheeler treats these as lesser relics with which he advises us to console ourselves, but in Marshall's opinion, they are invaluable to any student of Indian religion, because they constitute 'the only authentic and contemporary evidence regarding the religious belief of the pre-Aryans'.<sup>5</sup>

In the religion of the Indus Valley of the pre-historic times, the cult of the Mother Goddess was the first in point of importance.<sup>6</sup> There has been no serious challenge.

1. HCIP, i, p. 185.

2. Early Indus Civilizations, p. 52.

3. MIC, i, p. 48.

4. Five Thousand Years of Pakistan, p. 28. H.E. Sigerist says about the Indus Valley seals : 'If we had nothing but the seals we would have ample evidence of the fact that the early inhabitants of the Indus Valley, like their Western cousins of Elam, Sumer and Crete, had a rich pantheon, a colourful mythology, a highly developed religious life.' A History of Medicine, ii, New York, 1961, p. 128.

to Marshall's identification of the terracotta female figurines from Balūchistān and the Indus Valley both as sacred objects and representations of the Mother Goddess on the analogy of kindred examples associated with her cult, which was widespread in ancient Mesopotamia and Western Asia.<sup>1</sup> Many scholars have agreed with Marshall, who would, even without such an analogy, identify the figurines from Mohenjo-dāro, Harappā and Balūchistān as 'effigies of the Great Mother Goddess or of one or other of her local manifestations. For in no country in the world has the worship of the Divine Mother been from time immemorial so deep-rooted and ubiquitous as in India'.<sup>2</sup> From their general resemblance to one another as also the frequency with which they were found at the sites, Mackay has little doubt that 'these female figurines with their elaborate head-dresses and jewellery' are sacred images. He also thinks, 'There is a strong reason to believe that they represent the Great Mother Goddess, who was worshipped so widely in the Near and Middle East in ancient time and whose cult is almost universal amongst the lower class people of India'.<sup>4</sup> Heinrich Zimmer not only considers the Indus figurines as strongly suggesting the Mother Goddess

5. MIC, i, p. 52. Elsewhere (Indus Civilization, p.82), Wheeler has pointed out the inadequacy of such evidence as dangerous for reconstructing the picture of an ancient religion.

6. HCIP, i, p. 186.

1. MIC, i, p. 50

familiar in Mesopotamia and the lands of the ancient Mediterranean, but also as 'the most ancient representations we possess of the Indian deity who was later worshipped, variously, as the Mother of the Universe, the goddess Earth, the goddess Padmā-Lakṣmī (patroness of fertility, riches and prosperity), or simply Devī, "The Goddess"<sup>1</sup>. Rev. E.O. James, who has to his credit a wide range of study on comparative religion, is in full agreement with Marshall and Mackay about their identification of the prehistoric terracotta figurines as effigies of the Mother Goddess as well as votive objects connected with fertility.<sup>2</sup>

That the female figurines and some of the steatite sealings point to the existence of the Mother Goddess cult in Indus Valley during the Chalcolithic Age, has also been admitted by many of those scholars who argue a Vedic origin for the Indus Valley Civilization. The Mother Goddess of Mohenjo-dāro and Harappā as represented in these materials is, according to them, no other than Pṛthivī

2. MIC, i, p. 51.

3. Ibid, p. 339.

4. Early Indus Civilizations p. 54.

1. AIA, p. 22.

2. Prehistoric Religion, London, 1957, p. 157, CMG, p. 34

and Aditi of the Rg Veda. The Indus figurines, which are not only similar to those found in Western Asia, but to those one comes across round wayside trees and village shrines in India, are according to Pusalkar, 'rightly taken to represent the Mother or Nature Goddess'<sup>1</sup>. Swami Samkarananda, another firm believer in the Vedic origins of the Indus Culture, identifies the female appearing on a clay sealing<sup>2</sup> and from whose womb a plant appears to be coming out, as a mother goddess whom he equates not only with the Vedic Pṛthivī and Aditi, but with Kālī and Śaṣṭhī of modern period as well.<sup>3</sup> The terracotta female statuettes are, according to him, no more than toys.<sup>4</sup> In the opinion of B.N. Puri, the Mother Goddess of Mohenjodāro can be identified with Nanā whose effigy occurs on Kuṣāṇa coins,<sup>5</sup> and 'the goddess Nanā is none else than the goddess Ambā who is mentioned as the Mother Goddess in the Rgveda'<sup>6</sup>. Puri, however, does not believe in the Vedic origin of the Indus Valley Civilization. The cult of the Mother Goddess, he argues, is not only older than the Harappān Culture, but the goddess Ambā too is pre-Aryan and Dravidian since her name is derived from Amma which

1. HCIP, i, p. 186.
2. Vats, M.S.: Excavations at Harappā, 2 vols, Delhi, 1944, vol.i, p. 42, pl. xciii.304.
3. The Rigvedic Culture of the Pre-Historic Indus, i, Calcutta, 1946, p. 136.
4. Ibid.
5. Puri, B.N.: 'Can We Identify the Mother Goddess Cult Mohenjodāro?', QJMS, xxxiv, 1944, p. 160.
6. 'Nana, the Mother Goddess in India and Western Asia', IC, vii, 1940-41, p. 126.

stands for 'mother' in old Tamil. From this, as well as from the study of some Kuṣāṇa sculptures, Puri is convinced that the worship of the Mother Goddess Ambā continued through the Indus Civilization to the Kuṣāṇa period.<sup>1</sup>

The suggestions of the abovenamed scholars cannot be entertained on more than one ground. The cult of the Mother Goddess in India is non-Aryan in origin and so is the Indus Valley Culture.<sup>2</sup> The Vedic civilization, as has been explained by Marshall, is neither the progenitor nor the lineal descendant of the Indus Civilization.<sup>3</sup> The Indus figurines in terracotta or clay sealings cannot therefore represent either the Vedic Pṛthivī or Aditi. To call the Mohenjo-dāro Mother Goddess Nanā or Ambā after B.N. Puri is not only a wild guess, but bad logic as well because the Rg Veda does not mention any female deity under these names with the attributes of a Mother Goddess. The word Nanā occurs in the Rg Veda in the sense and meaning of 'mother', but does not signify a goddess.<sup>4</sup> To consider the legend NANA on Huvīṣka's coins<sup>5</sup> as identical in meaning and purport with the Vedic word Nanā would perhaps be stretching a point too far.<sup>6</sup> The word Ambā too occurs

1. QJMS, xxxiv, p. 164.

2. Supra, pp. 353-55

3. MIC, i, pp. 110-12.

4. RV, ix.112.3 : Kārurahaṃ tato bhiṣagupala prakṣṇī nanā - 'my mother is a grinder (of corn) on stone'.

5. CCIM, p.77 (No.12), p.78 (No.14).

6. The goddess Nanā appearing on the Kuṣāṇa coins may well be the Phrygian virgin goddess of the same name who

in the Rg Veda thrice<sup>1</sup>, but on each occasion it is used the vocative case though in RV ii.41.16 it also qualifies as ambitamā, 'best mother', the deified river Sarasvatī. The word Ambā thus no doubt characterizes an important Vedic goddess as a mother, but there is nothing in the Rg Veda to show if Sarasvatī ever plays a role similar to that of the Mother Goddesses in ancient Western Asia or the post-Vedic India. 'Indeed', we must agree with A.K. Sur, 'the very conception of the supreme deity as a Mother Goddess which is an outstanding feature of modern Hinduism was quite unknown to the Rg Vedic Aryans'<sup>3</sup>.

As to the existence of the Mother Goddess worship in the Indus Valley, J.N. Banerjea is inclined to rely most on the evidence furnished by the clay sealings and the phallic and ring stones rather than the female figurines. 'Many of the numerous terracotta figurines unearthed there in course of excavations ...' he observes, 'are very difficult of correct interpretation in the present state of our knowledge'<sup>5</sup>. Prior to their being acknowledged a

gave birth to Attis (CMG, p.162). Or, she may be Nanai the Elamite Mother Goddess whose cult was very active for many centuries down to the Parthian period (C.250 B.C.-229 A.D.). CMG, p.94. Cf. Gordon, D.H.: 'The Mother Goddess of Gandhara', Antiquity, xi(41), p.76.

1. RV, x.86.7, x.97.2, ii.41.16.

2. Ambitame naditame devitame Sarasvati/

Aprasasta iva smasi prasastimamba naskrdhi//

effigies of the Mother Goddess in the light of Western Asian examples, Mackay was doubtful if the Indus figurine<sup>1</sup> did actually represent any particular deity. Wheeler, who has characterized their identification as Mother Goddess images as 'an exaggerated tendency' regards the figurines as no more ~~votive~~ than votive objects connected with the idea of fecundity, for in their crude execution by the prehistoric Indus artist, 'there is no emphasis of the generative organs such as is normal to the Mother Goddess cults'.<sup>2</sup> In so far as their iconography is concerned, the Indus figurines, including those with babes in their arms, there is little that is distinctive. To Yogesh Chandra Ray they do not appear therefore as at all different from the terracotta toys of similar type turned out in hundreds and thousands by the present-day village potter and sold in the bazaars and fair grounds in Bengal. The Indus Mother Goddess has none of the exaggerated breasts and accent on sexual organs, all of which characterize not only her Palaeolithic<sup>4</sup> and Neolithic<sup>5</sup> prototypes and Chalcolithic contemporaries,<sup>6</sup> but also her

3. Sur, A.K.: 'Pre-Aryan Elements in Indian Culture' IHQ, HQ, x, 1934, p. 14.

4. MIC, i, pp. 59-63.

5. DHI, p. 42.

1. MIC, i, p. 339.

2. The Indus Civilization, p. 68.

3. Pūjā-Pārvaṇ, p. 111.

4. CMG, p. 13.

5. Ibid, pp. 23, 28.

6. GM, p. 96.

successor the Purāṇic Lakṣmī, or Durgā or Kālī, each of whom is represented as an eternally young woman, with well formed features, radiant complexion and great beauty (except Kālī who is black complexioned and has a terrible appearance) and with high round breasts,<sup>1</sup> the last characteristic emphasizing the maternal aspect of the goddess. Nudity, held to be another characteristic of the Mother Goddess,<sup>2</sup> is also absent in the Indus figurines all of which have around the loins a girdle covering their generative organ. 'The semi-nudity of these figures is in contrast', says Mackay, 'with similar figures from other countries, which even upto a late period were usually entirely nude'.<sup>3</sup> Worship of the Mother Goddess conceived as a nude female has also been a prominent feature in the non-Aryan religion in India from very ancient times. Surprisingly enough, such a conception survives even to this day in the iconography of Chinna-mastā, and Śitalā who are but manifestations of the same Mother Goddess Durgā.<sup>4</sup> Nudity, it may however be mentioned, is an important, but by no means an indispensable characteristic of the Mother Goddess. In Minoan Crete,

1. Matsya P., cclx.55-56; KP, lix.11-20; Brhat-tantrasāra i, p. 270.
2. CMG, pp. 14, 21, 29; Prehistoric Religion, p. 153.
3. MIC, i, p. 338.
4. Sur, A.K.: Op. cit, p. 14.

where her cult found its fullest expression,<sup>1</sup> the Mother Goddess appears with her breasts bare, but clad in a flounced gown which is suspended from her slim waist and held by a girdle.<sup>2</sup> Isis, the most popular and important among the divine maters of Egypt,<sup>3</sup> is always depicted as 'wearing a tunic with fringe reaching to her feet'.<sup>4</sup> It is only when she is suckling Horus that she is represented with her bosom bare.<sup>5</sup> Except when she is apprehended and disrobed in the Hades,<sup>6</sup> **Ishtar**, the Babylonian Mother Goddess, appears in all her roles fully clothed. So are the Magna Mater of Phrygia,<sup>7</sup> Atargatis of Syria,<sup>8</sup> and the Avestan Anahitā, who in the form of Ishtar was 'depicted in statues erected at Susa, Ecbatana, Damascus, Babylon, Bactria and elsewhere by Artaxerxes II, with prominent breasts, a crown of gold, a golden embroidered cloak, earrings, a necklace and a girdle'.<sup>9</sup> While examples of her representation in a completely nude state are not rare, in early Indian terracottas and clay sealings, the Mothe

1. CMG, p. 40.

2. Mackenzie, D.A. : Myths of Crete and Pre-Hellenic Europe, London, p. 59; CMG, p. 135; Prehistoric Religion, p. 163.

3. CMG, p. 61.

4. Ibid, p. 62; Mackenzie, D.A. : Egyptian Myth and Legend, London, 1915, plate facing p. 190.

5. GM, pls. 38, 44.

6. Mackenzie, D.A. : Myths of Babylonia and Assyria, London, 1931, p. 96.

7. ERE, iv, p. 378.

8. CMG, pp. 183-84; GM, pl. 59.

9. CMG, p. 94.

Goddess appears like her Indus prototypes, with a girdle around her waist<sup>1</sup>. As well as in the late Indian plastic art, the Mother Goddess appears with swelling breasts and massive, round hips, but invariably dressed in a sari reaching upto her ankles and held at her waist by a plain or jewelled belt or band (kaṭisūtra)<sup>2</sup>.

### H I S T O R I C P E R I O D

#### The Earth Mother :

Female figurines in terracotta and in relief on small steatite plaques found in the Indus Valley have been identified as representation of the Mother Goddess. A female figure appearing on one of the plaques has been pointed out as the image of Pṛthivī or the Earth Goddess<sup>3</sup>. The semi-nudity of the terracotta female figurines has also led a scholar to identify them as effigies of the Earth or Mother Goddess<sup>4</sup>. A steatite seal, depicting the ceremonial worship of a vegetation or Earth Goddess represented by a female standing between two branches of a tree, has also been unearthed in the Indus Valley<sup>5</sup>. But the most interesting find in this connection is the seal which has on its obverse a nude female figure upside down with legs apart, and a plant issuing from her womb<sup>6</sup>. On

1. Infra, p. 462

2. Infra, p. 475

3. MIC, i, p. 52, pl. xii.12.

4. Further Excavations at Mohenjo-dāro, p. 265.

the reverse of the seal is a scene which 'is intended to portray a human sacrifice connected with the Earth Goddess depicted on the other side'.<sup>1</sup> There may be some justification, as Dikshit observes, in identifying the female figure depicted in such an unusual position as the image of Pr̥thivī, one of whose epithets describes her as uttāna padā or 'with her legs up',<sup>2</sup> presumably because she gives birth to trees and plants in an upward direction. Birth scenes of more or less similar type seem to have been the theme of religious art in prehistoric India and Iran. A silver round pinhead from Luristan, dated first millennium B.C., shows a woman with her legs stretched and drawn up so that her pudenda is completely exposed, and the head of the child can be seen coming out of it.<sup>3</sup> The image of the woman in the act of child-birth, has been recognized as a votive offering to the ancient Mother Goddess, who was the symbol of fecundity and procreation.<sup>4</sup> A mutilated inscribed image in high relief on a white marble slab, the portion from  $\frac{1}{2}$  above the waist missing, has been found at Nagarjunikoṇḍa, India. Datable in the 3rd century A.D.

5. MIC, i, p. 63, pl. xii.18.

6. Vats, M.S. : Op.cit, i, p.42; ii, pl. xciii.304.

1. MIC, i, p. 52.

2. MG, p. 81.

3. Ghirshman, R. : Persia from the Origins to Alexander the Great, London, 1964, p. 48, fig. 57.

4. Ibid.

the image is of considerable iconographical interest in that, like the Luristan example, it represents a seated nude female with her legs doubled up and wide apart with the generative organ completely exposed.<sup>1</sup> The sculpture is evidently a representation of the Mother Goddess, and, as indicated by the epigraph, it was in all likelihood a votive offering made in response to the fulfilment of certain wishes or desires.<sup>2</sup> Earlier in point of chronology is a small terracotta figure from Mathura in the form of a toad, datable in the 2nd century A.D.<sup>3</sup> The underside of the object displays a squatting, naked female whose hands are touching the pudenda. Apparently, the image is that of a fertility goddess the popularity of whose cult is suggested by the figurine itself, being 'very specialized, highly worked, cast from a mould and therefore in demand in great quantity'.<sup>4</sup>

As close parallels to the Indus Valley Earth Goddess image mention may be made of the terracotta reliefs of the Maurya (3rd-2nd century B.C.), Kuṣāṇa and Gupta (1st-4th century A.D)<sup>5</sup> periods found at Bhita<sup>6</sup> and Kośām. The

1. EI, xxix, pp. 137-38.
2. Ibid, p. 139.
3. Man, xxxv, 1935, p. 65.
4. Ibid.
5. ASI, 1911-12, pp. 73, 75.
6. ASI, 1927-28, p. 67.

subject of these plaques is a nude woman shown with her legs wide apart as in the Indus Valley example, while a palm tree in one <sup>1</sup>, and a lotus in others, <sup>2</sup> may be seen coming out, not from her womb, but from her neck. Gold repoussé figures, two each from the pre-Mauryan site at Lauriya Nandangarh <sup>3</sup> and the Piprāwā Stūpa, <sup>4</sup> have been identified, from the fact that they have been discovered in the context of burials, as images of Pṛthivī, <sup>5</sup> on the analogy of similar figurines discovered in the ancient tombs of Mycenae. <sup>6</sup> While the Piprāwā images have been assigned to ~~the~~ the 3rd or 4th century B.C., <sup>7</sup> those from Lauriya have been regarded as pre-Mauryan. <sup>8</sup> But, as N.G. Majumdar argues, though the findspots of the Lauriya figures may have connection with Vedic customs, the images themselves cannot be regarded as of Vedic Age. Benjamin Rowland agrees with Bloch, the discoverer of these images, that they represent Pṛthivī, 'who is another incarnation <sup>10</sup> of the Mother Goddess of all Oriental Civilizations'. In

1. ASI, 1911-12, p. 73, pl.xxii.9. According to Marshall, the plaque represents a woman under a ~~tree~~ palm tree, but the woman shown here is headless and the tree ~~spring~~ springs not from the ground behind her, but from her neck. The position of her legs does indicate that she is standing under a tree; she is either in the act of running or walking.
2. Ibid, p. 75, pl.xxiii.40.
3. ASI, 1906-07, p.122ff, fig. 4.
4. ~~JRAS~~ JRAS, 1898, p. 586, figs. 11, 15.
5. ASI, 1906-07, p. 124.
6. Ibid.
7. ASI, 1935-36, pp. 59-60.
8. ASI, 1906-07, p. 123.
9. ASI, 1935-36, pp.59-60.
10. AAI, p. 23.

his opinion, the Lauriya images display the same technique which had been applied to the making of the terracotta figurines in the Indus Valley and because of the complete frankness of their presentation and archaic concept of iconography, the former serve as a link between the Indus examples and the Yakṣī statues of the Maurya and Śuṅga periods.<sup>1</sup> Nude female figurines in terracotta, which have turned up in appreciable quantities at Taxila and other places in the frontier regions, as well as in Lauriya Nandangarh<sup>2</sup>, Vaiśālī,<sup>3</sup> Ahichchatra,<sup>4</sup> Bhitā,<sup>5</sup> Kauśāmbī,<sup>6</sup> Chandraketugarh<sup>7</sup> and various other sites in India strongly suggest the worship of the Mother Goddess from ancient times. We may well presume, ~~on~~ on the basis of the preponderance of these female figurines and their distribution over an extensive area, that the cult of the Mother Goddess was not only widespread but had continued in an unbroken tradition since the prehistoric Indus Culture. If, however, there may be some lingering

1. AAI, p. 23.
2. ASI, 1936-37, p. 50.
3. Deva, Krishna and Mishra, V.: Vaiśālī Excavations, Vaiśālī, 1961, p. 50ff.
4. AI, iv, pp. 106ff.
5. ASI, 1911-12, pp. 71ff; pl. xxii.10, 18; xxvii.97,98, 102; xxviii.103, 104.
6. Sharma, G.R.: The Excavations at Kauśāmbī, 1957-59, Allahabad, 1960. Moulded terracotta female figurines unearthed during the excavations dating between 200 B.C. and 50 A.D. represent the artistic traditions of Bharhut and Sanchi (p.20), but the handmade and archaic type of figurines with bird-like faces (p.74, pl.44. 3-6) represent a female deity, probably the Mother Goddess, whose images have turned out in appreciable

doubt about these figurines actually representing a deity conceived in the female form, 'they are at least symptomatic of some fertility ritual based on a recognition of the generative powers of women'.<sup>1</sup>

Terracotta images of a nude female with pronounced steatopygy and accent on the sexual attributes, unearthed in large quantities at Sari Dehri near Charsadda,<sup>2</sup> have been identified as those of the Mother Goddess worshipped in the regions of ancient Gandhāra at least one thousand years before Alexander's invasion of India.<sup>3</sup> Their find-place at Sari Dehri has also been pointed out as *śarshrīr* of the Mother Goddess with an attendant god, the former receiveing the lion's share of the worship'.<sup>4</sup> Indications of the Mother Goddess worship at Taxila are provided by the terracotta female figurines of archaic type found at Bhir mound, Sirkap and Dharmarājika stūpa.<sup>5</sup> Attention may be drawn to a primitive looking idol of the 'Nude Mother' or 'Earth Goddess' type from the Bhir mound and datable from any time up to the first century A.D.<sup>6</sup> Similar

number in the Gangetic Valley. The archaic figurines are datable between C.535 B.C. and 185 B.C. (vide the chronological chart on p. 22)

7. LK, No. 6, 1959, pp. 45ff, pls. xiii.4, xiv.8, xv.15.

1. Childe, V.G.: Social Evolution, London, 1951, p.65.

2. Man, lxx, 1934, pp.55ff, figs. 3,5.

3. Antiquity, xi, No. 41, p. 71.

4. Ibid, p. 72.

5. Ibid, p. 74.

6. Marshall, J.H. : Taxila, i, p. 104.

primitive looking idols representing a nude goddess have also been unearthed at this mound.<sup>1</sup> Three of these, which Marshall dates in the 4th or 3rd century B.C., have been treated by him as relics of a remote past, the type being still worshipped over a millennium after the fall of Mohenjo-dāro.<sup>2</sup> Two others, datable in the 1st century A.D. and also of the same type as the three examples just mentioned, exhibit according to Marshall, characteristics which may be taken as the continuation of a technique that has been handed down from immemorial antiquity.<sup>3</sup> Some of the terracotta figurines from Sirkap belong to the Nude Goddess type as above, and may, therefore, be assigned to the 1st century A.D.,<sup>4</sup> while others from the same find-spot could be taken as survivals from the Maurya period.<sup>5</sup> Marshall argues a prehistoric date for one of the figurines, which along with four others were recovered from the ritual tanks in the Bhir mound and in the Greek strata of Sirkap.<sup>6</sup> His dating of these terracottas have not been accepted by D.H. Gordon in whose opinion, the date of the archaic type of figurines being uncertain, the examples from the Bhir and Sirkap mounds should not be assigned to

1. Taxila, ii, p.440; iii, pl.132, No.1-5, pl.136.w,x.
2. Ibid, iii, pl. 132.1-3.
3. Ibid, iii, pl. 136.w,x.
4. Ibid, ii, p. 440, pl. 132.6-8.(in vol.iii)
5. Ibid, iii, pl.132.15,25,36.
6. Ibid, ii, p. 442.

a period earlier than 200 B.C.<sup>1</sup> But he agrees with Marshall that the archaic type of figurines continued to be made down to the 1st century A.D. or even later.<sup>2</sup> According to him, the same dating also holds good for the terracotta images which have come to light at the various sites in the north-west of India.<sup>3</sup> We need not join the debate over the dating of these terracottas, which appear to be so difficult to assign with any exactitude. As Kramrisch points out, 'Images of the "Great Mother" under one name or another are in the majority among the timeless clay symbols found in all sites and still made by the women and potters in the villages'.<sup>4</sup> Two things may be

1. Antiquity, xi, No. 41, p. 77.

2. Ibid.

3. Man, cxxix, 1935, pp. 117-18. Gordon's dating of the terracottas on the basis of their find levels has been seriously challenged by Simone Corbiau who regards the archaic type of the figurines found at Sari Dehri as of far more ancient date than has been admitted by the former. She draws our attention to a terracotta figurine of a nude female and gives reasons why it should be held as old as the Mohenjo-dāro examples. The image she agrees with Coomaraswamy, is that of a goddess of fertility. Iraq, iv, part i, London, 1937, pp. 1-3, pl.iii.1-2.

4. JISOA, vii, 1939, p. 90. According to Kramrisch, the Indian terracotta images fall into two categories :  
 1. primitive, that is, ageless or timeless types which continue essentially changeless, and  
 2. timed variations, resulting from impresses which the passing moment leaves on them. The two types often turning up side by side on the various levels of different excavations render their proper dating difficult. Ibid, pp. 89-90.

remarked in regard to these terracottas of the historic period : firstly, the figurines, whether primitive or late, represent a tradition in technique and craftsmanship which goes back to remote antiquity; and secondly, their unmistakable votive character constitutes a strong proof of goddess worship in India since immemorial times.

### R I T U A L T A N K S

The existence of a fertility cult centering round the Mother or Earth Goddess has also been suggested by the votive or ritual tanks, no less than fifteen in number,<sup>1</sup> that have turned up from the different sites at Taxila.<sup>2</sup> In the opinion of Marshall,<sup>2</sup> they were intimately connected with the cult of the nude goddess whose shrine and miniature idol stand on one side of many of these tanks. D.H. Gordon regards these as model shrines of the Mother Goddess, suggested by such paraphernalia visible on them as aquatic animals (snakes or crocodiles), birds, pillars and lamps, all of which constitute adjuncts to her worship.<sup>3</sup> Their discovery in situ at the Buddhist or Jaina stūpa at Sirkap, unless regarded as symptomatic of the conatamination that had been affecting both Buddhism and Jainism,<sup>4</sup> cannot be explained. They are in all probability the relics of the Mother Goddess cult which was the

1. Taxila, ii, pp.463ff, pl.136. Nos. 153-63.

2. Ibid, p.465.

3. Antiquity, xi, No.41, p.74; cf. ASI, 1924-25, p.50, pl.xi.

4. Taxila, ii, pp.465-66.

real religion of the uneducated people for whom the more philosophical side of Buddhism or Jainism had little or no attraction.<sup>1</sup> Whatever may be the reason behind their occurrence at Sirkap, their antiquity is unquestionable, as also their wide popularity in India. In a ritual practised by the women of Bengal, and known as the Yama Pukur Vrata,<sup>2</sup> similar miniature tanks with clay human and animal figurines play a prominent part. The clay human figurines represent Yama and his wife, his paternal and maternal aunts, and his mother called Yama-budī, and are worshipped to obtain offspring or as a magical rite to relieve dead ancestors from sufferings in the other world.<sup>3</sup> That similar votive tanks have played from immemorial times a part in the religion of other countries, has been attested by their discovery from Lemnos and Egypt, in the latter country mostly from burials of the time of the Third Dynasty (C.2660-2600 B.C.).<sup>4</sup> It would of course be bad logic to postulate an immediate connection, because of their similarities, between the tank shrines of Sirkap and Egypt, Bengal and Lemnos. But we may probably agree with Marshall, in whose opinion the rituals connected with them 'may go back to a common

1. Antiquity, xi, No.41, p. 76.

2. MI, xxxii(2), p. 105ff.

3. Ibid, p. 110; Taxila, ii, p. 466.

4. ASI, 1924-25, p. 50.

prototype which in the Chalcolithic Age may well have had a diffusion in the Near and Middle East as wide as the cult of the Great Mother-Goddess herself'.<sup>1</sup>

R I N G - S T O N E S  
A N D  
S T O N E D I S C S

Of singular interest and importance as proofs of Mother Goddess worship in prehistoric India are the stone objects shaped like phalli, baetyls and rings discovered at Mohenjo-dāro and Harappā.<sup>2</sup> As Marshall suggests, these should not be taken for direct evidence of Śaktism in the prehistoric Indus Valley, but the realistic shapes of some of these stone phalli or liṅga, and valvae or yonī, prove beyond doubt the existence of the worship of phalli symbols in India long before the advent of the Aryans.<sup>3</sup> They also suggest the male and female organs of generation having long been worshipped as the embodiment of the creative principles of life.<sup>4</sup> In opposing the view of certain scholars that the larger of these ringstones from the Indus Valley served as architectural members, and the smaller ones were stone money, Marshall has the support of J.N. Banerjea, in whose view they may reasonably be

1. Taxila, ii, p.467. Several votive tanks, similar to the Taxila examples, have also been found at Ahichchattri.
2. AI, iv, p. 125.
3. Ibid, pl.xiv.2,4; pl. xiii.1,7.
4. Ibid, p. 59.

identified 'as representations of the yonī, the female organ of generation, symbolizing motherhood and fertility<sup>1</sup>

A number of stone discs discovered from various ancient sites extending from Taxila in the north-west to Patna in the east, deserve our attention because most of them contain on their surface beautiful carvings whose theme is relevant to our subject. Cunningham mentions two of these stone discs, one from Saṅkisā and the other from Shah Dehri or Taxila.<sup>2</sup> Of Mauryan date,<sup>3</sup> the former is two and three-fourth inches in diameter and its surface consists of decoration in concentric circles, the innermost zone having alternating representations of fan-palms a nude female figure identified as the image of the Earth Goddess and a taurine symbol.<sup>4</sup> The fragmentary Shah Dehri specimen is similarly carved.<sup>5</sup> Marshall also discovered several of such stone discs at Taxila, three at the Bhir mound,<sup>6</sup> and one at Sirkap near the foot of Hathial.<sup>7</sup> All the specimens belong to Mauryan times. Those from the Bhir are of Chunar sandstone, and all are elaborately decorated in concentric circles, one zone consisting of a

1. DHI, p. 169.
2. ASR, xi, p. 28.
3. Ibid, pl. ix.3.
4. HIIA, p. 20.
5. ASR, xi, p. 28.
6. Taxila, ii, pp. 503-04, Nos. 129-31, pl. 147.b, c, d; cf. ASI 1920-21, p. 21, pl. xvii.29, 30.
7. Taxila, ii, pp. 503-04, No. 132, pl. 147.g; cf. ASI, 1927-28, p. 66, pl. xx.7.

spirited series of elephants, another with a kind of palmette ornament alternating with what appear to be mountains, while the zone around the central hole depicts three standing figures of Pṛthivī alternating with an Indian honey-suckle motif.<sup>1</sup> The Sirkap specimen has its upper surface adorned 'with concentric bands of cross and cable patterns and with four nude female figures alternating with honey-suckle design engraved in relief around the central hole.'<sup>2</sup> Carved stone discs with similar decorations, one intact, and the other fragmentary, have also been unearthed at Mathura.<sup>3</sup> Another disc with identical decoration and bearing a name in Aśokan Brāhmī, has been recovered from the Mauryan level at Kadamkuan, a section of Patna city.<sup>4</sup> Comparable to the Taxila stone discs in date and decoration are three steatite specimens, now in the collection of the Bharat Kalā Bhavan Museum at Benares. Nude female figures, presumably representing the Earth Goddess, also appear on these specimens, which ~~present~~ present a few special features of interest. On all the discs, the goddess is seen accompanied by a large variety of animals : a horse, a short-tailed and long-eared animal, a crane, a mythical winged animal, a crab and a bird. Around the central hole of one of these discs, which was

1. ASI, 1920-21, p. 21; cf. HIIA, p. 20.

2. ASI, 1927-28, p. 66.

3. ASI, 1930-34, p. 260, pl. cxxx.1-2.

4. ASI, 1935-36, p. 60; JISOA, iii, December, 1935, p.125, pl. xxx.3.

5. DHI, pp. 170-71.

found at Rajghat,<sup>1</sup> are engraved two nude female figures with a honey-suckle design between them, while between the cable motifs on the flat surface of the disc can be seen two ape-like creatures with a lizard or alligator between them. The disc has also on its rim an illegible inscription in early Brāhmī script. Nude goddesses between three-pronged trees and a row of alligators occur in relief on another disc which the Museum obtained from Kośām.<sup>2</sup> As many as twenty-one stone discs, five of which contain decorations more or less similar to those mentioned above, were discovered accidentally from a deep drain in May, 1951, at Murtazigunj, a suburb of Patna city.<sup>3</sup> Figures of a nude goddess occur on the five discs along with representations of various animals and birds: lion (in some cases winged), horse, elephant, antelope, stag, ram, goose, peacock, crane and parrot.<sup>4</sup> Besides, the discs are extremely rich in plant and vegetation designs, consisting of lotus flower, palmyra, date-palm etc. On all the discs, the goddess appears nude save for some ornaments on her bosom and a head-dress. She is depicted in samapādasthānaka, and in strict frontal pose like similar figures on similar discs from Mathura,<sup>5</sup> and

1. DHI, p. 171.

2. Ibid.

3. Shere, S.A.: 'Stone Discs found at Murtazigunj', JBRs, xxxvii, parts 3-4, p. 178ff.

4. Ibid., pp. 179-82, pl. v.1-5.

5. ASI, 1930-34, p. 260.

therefore resembles the gold image of Pṛthivī from Lauriya,<sup>1</sup> but unlike the latter, she wears no girdle. Like the Lauriya image, the Murtazigunj female figure is heavy breasted, narrow-waisted and wide-hipped with accent on the organ of generation. All the discs are of soapstone, with carvings of a very high order and may be dated approximately in the Sunga period.<sup>2</sup> They were not used as decorative pieces on the walls of houses as suggested by Sher but were cult objects falling in line with similar stone discs and rings recovered from the early Mauryan sites as well as from the prehistoric Indus Culture.<sup>4</sup>

Scholars are unanimous in identifying the nude female figure on the stone discs or ringstones as the image of a fertility goddess or Pṛthivi, who is but a manifestation of the Mother Goddess,<sup>5</sup> and there can be no two opinions as to the character of these objects. They seem to have as much sanctity attached to them as the cakras and yantras of the Śāktas, the Viṣṇupaṭṭas of the Vaiṣṇavas and the ayāgapaṭas of the Jainas.<sup>6</sup> They may thus be regarded as the lineal descendants of the ringstones which symbolized in all likelihood the yonī of the

1. ASI, 1930-34, p.260, pl.cxxx.8.

2. DHI, p. 172.

3. JBRs, xxxvii, parts 3-4, p. 189.

4. DHI, p. 173.

5. Supra, p.117 ff.

6. DHI, p. 171. Ayāgapaṭas are votive slabs. They usually bear in the centre the representation of a seated Jina with shaven head. HIIA, p. 37, pl. 71 xix.71, 72.

female principle in the prehistoric Indus Valley. There is no justification whatever for considering the ringstones as ear ornaments as has been done by Coomaraswamy. Their votive character is quite apparent from the nude goddess of fertility 'engraved with consummate skill and care inside the central hole, thus indicating in a manner that can hardly be mistaken, the connection between them and the female principle'.<sup>2</sup> The very shape of these stones— circular and wheelshaped - seems to have led Marshall to identify the nude female figure depicted on them as Prthivī, who is described in the Rg Veda as wheel shaped and in the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa as circular.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the animals, particularly the alligator or iguana (godhikā), associated with the nude female image on the discs are very analogous to similar motifs on the medieval stone sculptures portraying the Mother Goddess in Bengal and elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> The animals on the five Murtazigunj discs do not of course include the godhā, but as Banerjea points out, the presence of the lion and other animals and birds with the goddess figures is highly significant. Equally suggestive are the profuse plant and vegetation

1. HIAA, p. 20.

2. MIC, i, pp. 62-63; for sanctity attached to ringstones in India see RFNI, p. 322.

3. Taxila, ii, p. 503.

4. DHI, p. 172.

5. Ibid, p. 173.

designs clustering round the nude female figures, for these doubtless emphasize the vegetation aspect of the deity so prominent in the Purānic conception of the Mother Goddess.<sup>1</sup> Marshall and others are therefore quite justified in regarding the female figures as images of Pṛthivī or the Mother Goddess engraved on the stone discs and rings which must have been used as votive objects associated with her worship.

FURTHER EVIDENCE:  
TERRACOTTA FEMALE FIGURINES

A considerable number of moulded terracotta female figurines, datable between the 4th or 3rd century B.C. and the 3rd century A.D., have been unearthed at Hastināpur.<sup>2</sup> These are shown as standing, with elaborate head-dress, luxurious ear and neck ornaments, and holding various objects like flower, bowl or fruits in their hands.<sup>3</sup> Much as they resemble the Deae Matres of Europe in pleasing appearance and other attributes, it cannot be stated with any certainty whether all of these are dolls or votive objects. That such figurines were in great demand is indicated by their being cast from moulds. They

1. DHI, p. 173. Steatite votive discs have also been discovered at Rugar and Vaiśālī. LK, Nos. 1-2, pl. xlvi. 13. Vaiśālī Excavations, 1950, p. 63ff, pl. xxiii. A.
2. AI, xi-xii, 1954-55, p. 83, pls. xxxvi. 1-2, xxxvii. 6, xl. 15; also p. 23 for chronology.
3. Supra, p. 233.

may either have been used as dolls in the houses of the well-to-do, as was the fashion in the Gupta and post-Gupta periods,<sup>1</sup> or as the objects in their hands suggest, they may also have been worshipped as the representation of some popular goddess (Lakṣmī?) associated with fertility and agricultural prosperity.

Terracotta female figurines, mostly in fragments, found<sup>2</sup> at Basarh and assignable to the Maurya or Śuṅga periods,<sup>3</sup> may have had something to do with fertility cults. This is quite evident from their wide hips, well-formed breast elaborate jewellery, nude state and the much ornamented girdle worn more or less in the prehistoric Indus fashion.<sup>4</sup> In two examples, there is an unmistakable emphasis on the sex organ which is completely exposed, while in others, prominence has been given to this zone with the help of the girdle and the transparency of the skirt.<sup>5</sup> Their votive character is apparent from one of the figurines,<sup>6</sup> the lower half of whose body is missing, and which is shown with her palms joined and held together between her globular breasts in an attitude of deep veneration (añjali mudrā). The quantity of jewellery worn by this fragmentar

1. Agrawala, V.S.: Gupta Art, Lucknow, 1947, p. 11.
2. ASI, 1913-14, p. 115ff, pls. xliii, xliv.
3. Ibid, pls. xliii.a,c; xliv.a,c.
4. Ibid, pls. ~~xliii.b,c~~/~~xliv.d~~ xliii.b; xliv.e.
5. Ibid, pls. xliii.d,e; xliv.i.
6. Ibid, pl. xliv.c.

specimen and the exquisite coiffure suggest it to be the representation of a lady of high status, perhaps of the royal family.

Worship of the Mother Goddess in the regions of ancient Basarh or Vaiśālī has been suggested by a number of terracotta female figurines of the archaic type, entirely modelled by hand and assignable to a period between C.150 B.C. and 100 A.D. <sup>1</sup> Moulded figurines, possibly representing the Mother Goddess, found in large numbers at this site, <sup>2</sup> are of the same type as those unearthed previously during Spooner's excavations. <sup>3</sup> The archaic handmade types have bird-like faces, prominent breasts, broad hips, tapering arms and legs, applied and punched ornaments, such as collar and necklace, and a prominent girdle. <sup>4</sup> Apart from their general similarity with the Mother Goddess figurines from Gandhāra, <sup>5</sup> their sacred and votive character is also suggested by their having been washed with red paint. <sup>6</sup> A two-armed standing female figure, with heavy features and wearing a transparent sari, depicted in relief on a rectangular plaque of red jasper found at

1. Vaiśālī Excavations, pp. 50-51, pl.xii.

2. Ibid, pp. 51-53; pls. xiii, xiv.

3. ASI, 1913-14, p. 115 ff.

4. Vaiśālī Excavations, p.50.

5. Ibid; supra, p.

6. Vaiśālī Excavations, pp. 50-51, Nos. 2-8; pp.52-53, Nos. 1-5 and 7; cf. CMG, p. 34; Further Excavations at Mohenjo-dāro, p. 259.

this site, has also been claimed as the image of the Mother Goddess.<sup>1</sup> In her frontal pose she recalls the Lauriya image of Pṛthivī, but, being clothed, bejewelled and holding a lotus in her hand, she may be identified as an early form of Śrī-Lakṣmī, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. Stylistically, the image is akin to the Śuṅga sculptures at Bharhut and the early moulded terracottas from Vaiśālī, datable between C.300 and 150 B.C.<sup>2</sup> Archaic terracotta images of the Mother Goddess, as many as nine in number, and some of them having bird-like facial features like those of Vaiśālī and Mathura, have been brought to light at Ahichchatra.<sup>3</sup> As they come from Stratum VIII,<sup>4</sup> they are datable between 300 and 200 B.C., and are characterized, in addition to bird or animal-like face, by prominent breasts, broad hips, elaborate head-dress,<sup>5</sup> collar or torque, necklace and a prominent girdle.

Terracotta female figurines of exquisite workmanship and in type similar to the moulded specimens from Vaiśālī have also been found at various other places in Northern India, including Mathura<sup>6</sup> and Bengal.<sup>7</sup> The widely separated findspots - from Tamralipti to Taxila - is an indication of their popularity, while their discovery from the

1. Vaiśālī Excavations, p. 64, pl. xxiii.c.

2. Ibid.

3. AI, iv, pp. 106-07.

4. Ibid., p. 106 (vide chronology.).

5. Ibid., p. 107, pl. xxxi.A, 1-10.

lowest or nearly the lowest levels is equally suggestive of their antiquity.<sup>1</sup> Datable mostly in the Maurya and Śuṅga periods, the figurines on moulded plaques or in the round, complete as well as fragmentary, represent in most cases a standing female divinity with elaborate coiffure, dressed in a tunic, or nude to the waist, or wearing a dhoti or skirt of diaphonous muslin. Despite the garment especial care is taken to reveal the generative organ in apparent nudity - a tendency that characterizes as well the stone sculptures of the Śuṅga, Kuṣāṇa and Andhra periods. These types have doubtless behind them a long

6. Consolidated Report on the Archaeological Museum, Mathura (1 April, 1955 - 31 March, 1959), Lucknow, 1961 p. 17ff: Nos. 4002-4004, 4022, 4041-4042, 4117, 4214, 4386, 4394, 4396, 4413, 4436, 4550, 4557, 4639, 4668, 4669, 4695, 4743, 4785, 4792. Figurines suggestive of being votive objects are: Nos. 3985, 3986, 3988, 3989, 4023, 4024, 4033, 4035, 4064, 4067, 4078-4081, 4108.
7. Saraswati, S.K. : Early Sculpture of Bengal, Calcutta, 1962, p. 96ff, figs. 37, 38, 39, 43; JISOA, x, 1942, p. 95; on pp. 100-01, Johnston regards it as the image of the Mother Goddess. Cf. Vaiśālī Excavations, p. 51. A considerable number of terracottas belonging to the Maurya, Śuṅga and Gupta periods, have been found during excavations at Chandraketugarh, about 23 miles north-east of Calcutta. Many of these, belonging mostly to Śuṅga and Kuṣāṇa periods, are represented in a state of nudity save for a girdle with the organ of generation completely exposed. The diaphonous skirt of some of the figurines lends a special emphasis to the voluptuous charm delineated with a realistic intensity. It may be argued on the analogy of similar specimens from other sites that the Bengal figurines may also have been cult objects with Mother Goddess worship and fertility. LK, No. 6, p. 45ff, pls. xiii.4, xiv.8, xv.15.

1. HIIA, p. 20.

tradition and may have served either for votive objects or auspicious representations of the Mother Goddess as the bestower of fertility, wealth and prosperity.<sup>1</sup>

M O T H E R - A N D - C H I L D  
F I G U R E S ( I N T E R R A C O T T A )

Evidence of Mother Goddess worship in ancient India is also furnished by terracotta female figurines depicted with a child or children in their arms. Though it cannot be stated definitely if these were worshipped as the image of the Mother Goddess, their votive character is nevertheless very plain. Figurines of this type have been noticed in various ancient sites, including the prehistoric Mohenjo-dāro and Harappā.<sup>2</sup> Marshall has identified as deities several specimens from Taxila, datable in the Maurya period, and represented as standing with a child on the left hip.<sup>3</sup> Similar figurines, assigned to the Gupta times, and with a child held at the left breast, have been brought to light at Mahet which has been identified with ancient Śrāvastī.<sup>4</sup> From Bhita, near Allahabad, Marshall discovered three such mother-and-child pieces in terracotta, all belonging to the Gupta period.<sup>5</sup> In one

1. Ibid, figs. 16, 23, 57, 60. For provenance of the terracottas, see Ibid, p. 21, note 1.
2. Supra, p. 356.
3. Taxila, ii, p. 448, pl. 132, Nos. 23-25.
4. ASI, 1907-08, p. 86; for identification of Mahet with ancient Śrāvastī, see MA SI, No. 50, p. 1.
5. ASI, 1911-12, p. 79.

specimen, the child is held across the breast of the mother who supports it with both arms,<sup>1</sup> and in two others<sup>2</sup> the child is held in the left arm. Several crude figurines, showing a woman with one or two babies hanging near her breast,<sup>3</sup> have turned up at Lauriya Nandangarh. N.G. Majumdar appears to be more than certain in his identification of these female figures as representations of the Mother Goddess, and suggests that they were probably offered at the shrine of the goddess by women desirous of children.<sup>4</sup> These, as well as the preponderance of female figurines among the terracotta objects at Lauriya Nandangarh,<sup>5</sup> doubtless indicate the existence of the Mother Goddess cult in and around the region. A terracotta bust of a headless female and the torso of a female holding a child in their arms, and datable on stylistic grounds in the Śuṅga or Kuṣāṇa period, have been noticed among the antiquities of Jhusi, near Allahabad.<sup>6</sup> Mother-and-child images in terracotta, assignable between 550 and 650 A.D. constitute an interesting group among the finds of the same material at Ahichchatra.<sup>7</sup> Cast from moulds, some of

1. ASI, 1911-12, pl. xxvii.102.
2. Ibid, pl. xxviii.103,104.
3. ASI, 1936-37, p. 50, p. xxiv.14,15.
4. Ibid, p. 50.
5. Ibid.
6. LK, No. 9, p. 14, pl. v.7.
7. AI, iv, p. 196.

these show the mother with the child at her breast, and others with the child held in her two arms or in the left arm.<sup>1</sup>

M O T H E R - A N D - C H I L D I M A G E S  
(I N S T O N E):

The mother-and-child images in terracotta undeniably anticipate similar themes in the plastic art of the subsequent period. This is amply attested by stone sculptures depicting a woman with a child or children. The sacred character of these sculptures is quite apparent, as is their popularity from the frequency with which these specimens are met with. That these had something to do with the cult of the Mother Goddess, is clear from the images of Hārītī, a Buddhist Mother Goddess, who is always represented with children.<sup>2</sup> Vogel draws our attention to some small Kuṣāṇa sculptures from Mathura having for their subject a male and a female figure squatting side by side. The female has some features of interest in that she is shown with a flower in her right hand and a child on her knee. From the large number of these sculptures as well

1. AI, iv, p. 146.

2. ASI, 1909-10, p. 77; HFAIC, pp. 114-16, figs. 64, 65.

3. ASI, 1909-10, p. 76, fig. 7.

as their small size, they have rightly been accepted as objects of popular worship. Their votive and sacred character is also obvious from the figures of devotees carved on the pedestals of one of these sculptures, now in the Mathura Museum.<sup>1</sup> Numerous images of a goddess attended by children have been reported from Gandhāra.<sup>2</sup> Two such sculptures, believed to contain the representation of Hārītī, are in the Lahore Museum, and a similar piece in the British Museum, London.<sup>3</sup> Similar to the British Museum specimen is the piece in the Mathura Museum showing the headless figure of a female seated with one infant on her lap and four others between her feet.<sup>4</sup> Another group of children is also seen carved on the pedestal. Previous to its removal to the Mathura Museum, the sculpture was in worship under the name of Gandhārī, mother of the Kauravas.<sup>5</sup>

That female figures, accompanied by a child or children may have been worshipped as Mother Goddess images has been clearly suggested by a big composition in terracotta from Kasia. The mother has been identified as Pārvatī, who is shown here seated with Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya<sup>6</sup> 'engaged in a lively scramble for sweet balls'. As many

1. ASI, 1909-10, p. 77.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. For description of one of the figures in the Lahore Museum, see Grunwedel, A.: Buddhist Art in India London, 1901, p. 103, fig. 55.

4. ASI, 1909-10, p. 77, pl. xxviii.d.

as fifteen stone sculptures, all datable in the 6th century A.D., and representing a standing female accompanied by a child, have been found in worship in the Taneśvara-<sup>1</sup> Mahādeva temple, 30 miles from Udaipur, Rajasthan. Each figure is nimbate and two of them appear to be suckling the baby, holding it across the bosom with both hands.<sup>2</sup> In one example, the child is carried on the left hip,<sup>3</sup> while in another, it is standing near the left leg,<sup>4</sup> and in yet another it stands to the proper right of the mother,<sup>5</sup> In one composition, the child is missing, but it is by no means difficult to guess that it must have stood under the extended right arm of the mother.<sup>6</sup> All the females in these sculptures have been identified as Mātrkā images,<sup>7</sup> but except that they are nimbate,<sup>8</sup> there is nothing to indicate their divine character. The female figures are not shown in samapādasthānaka, but in the charming position of slight tribhaṅga, with their head inclined either to the left<sup>9</sup> or to the right,<sup>10</sup> but in all cases looking,

5. ASI, 1909-10, p.77.

6. Agrawala, V.S.: Gupta Art, p. 12.

1. LK, No. 10, p. 32ff; cf. Ibid, No. 6, p. 67.

2. Ibid, NO. 10, pl. xxi.10,11.

3. Ibid, pl. xxi.12.

4. Ibid, pl. xxii.13.

5. Ibid, pl. xxii.14.

6. Ibid, pl. xxii.13-15

7. Ibid, p. 32.

pl. xxi.10-12

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid, pls. xxi.10-12, xxii.13.

10. Ibid, pl. xii.14.

as it were, fondly at the child. All are wide-hipped, heavy-breasted, substantial women whom Rubens would have loved to paint. Their voluptuousness conveys a sense of abundance and fruitfulness, but certainly not anything sensuous. All seem to be enveloped by an aura of sweet innocence and of happy motherhood. Each figure has as one item of her wearing apparel a scarf, which hangs gracefully from either shoulder reaching as far as the ground. This is a feature not seen in any Mātrkā image nor that of the Mother Goddess.<sup>1</sup>

With this type of representations of mother-and-child of doubtful divinity, we would like to include the fairly numerous specimens depicting the same theme from the art of the Pāla-Sena period. Found chiefly in Bihar<sup>2</sup> and Varendra,<sup>3</sup> a part of ancient Bengal, these sculptures may be viewed in the public collections at Calcutta<sup>4</sup>, Dacca<sup>5</sup>.

1. None of the images has any attribute that might suggest their being Mātrkāś. The child accompanying them is not of much help, for none of the iconographical texts describes the Mātrkāś with children on their laps. In the absence of attributes, it would be far from wise to accept Agrawala's identification of these images as Mātrkāś. Moreover, Mātrkā images belonging to the same period from Rajasthan have appeared with requisite attributes, including their vāhanas and in conformity with iconographical directives. LK, No. 6, pp. 65-66, pls. xviii.4; xxiii.19; xviii.5,6; xix.8; Ibid, No.10, p. 31.
2. EISMS, p. 107, pls.xlix.b, l.a-d.
3. IBBS, p. 134.
4. Anderson, J.: Catalogue and Handbook etc, ii, p.258.
5. Enamul Haque: Treasures in the Dacca Museum, Dacca, p. 47, fig. on p. 45.

and Rajshahi.<sup>1</sup> The subject matter of these compositions<sup>2</sup> is a lady represented as lying on her left side and facing front on what appears like a luxurious couch. She has a lotus in her right hand and is supporting her head on the palm of her left hand which rests on the pillow. Her legs cross each other, the right one over the left which is being massaged by a maid servant. Near the left breast of the lady on the couch is a child, also lying down, with its feet resting on a lotus. Outside the couch and near its head and foot are more maid servants with fans and fly-whisks in attendance on the lady. On the wall above the couch are the gods Kārttikeya and Gaṇeśa and a liṅga. In many of the slabs are also added the figures of the navagraha or the nine planets.<sup>3</sup>

In discussing the above salient features of the mother and-child images in the collections of Rajshahi, Dacca and the Indian Museum, Calcutta, Bhattasali has identified the lady as Pārvatī (i.e., the Mother Goddess) and the child as the sadyojāta (newly born) form of Śiva.<sup>4</sup> The arguments advanced by him in support of his contention are not, in our opinion, acceptable for more than one reason. According to Bhattasali, the lady is none else

1. CVRM, p.29.

2. IBBS, pp. 135-36; CVRM, p. 29; our pl. vi; Anderson, J: Op.cit, pp. 258-59.

3. For a description and the worship of the navagrahas see DHI, pp. 443-45.

4. IBBS, p. 137.

than Pārvatī, but the child is neither Gaṇeśa nor Kārttikeya, because both of them appear in their adult forms in all compositions of this kind. Just as this fact precludes the possibility of either of them being the child, would it also not be bad logic to identify it as Śiva who happens to be their father? Further, is not Śiva already represented by his symbol, - the liṅga, - in these compositions?<sup>1</sup>

The Liṅga Purāna legend, reproduced by Bhattasali,<sup>2</sup> offers in reality no help in identifying the child as Śiva sadyojāta, for according to this particular account, Śiva sprang from the meditation of Brahmā, and appears to have no connection with Pārvatī while in that form.

In the Devī Bhāgavatam,<sup>3</sup> Śiva invokes the Mother Goddess, addressing her as his mother, and in the Devī Purāna,<sup>4</sup> he implores her to look upon himself as her son (putravat paśya mām). But these passages do not mean much, for he is one of the many gods, including Brahmā and Viṣṇu who according to Śākta mythology, stand in the relation<sup>5</sup> of sons to the Mother Goddess who is the Supreme Creatrix.

1. In the earliest specimen of these images from the Viṣṇu pāda temple at Gaya, there is besides the liṅga on the backslab Śiva's vāhana, Nandī the bull. EISMS, p. 107, pl. lc.
2. IBBS, p. 137.
3. Devī Bhāgavatam, iii.v.1.
4. DP, xvii.24.
5. Devī Bhāgavatam, i,v.58-61.

Moreover, there is nothing in these Purānas connecting Śiva in his sadyojāta form with Pārvatī as seen in these sculptures. Similar to the Brahma Purāna legend quoted by Bhattasali,<sup>1</sup> is the one contained in the Linga Purāna which describes how Śiva assumed the form of an infant to test Pārvatī immediately before he was wedded to her. In the legend given by both the Purānas, Pārvatī is mentioned as a bride in the marriage pandal in the midst of a large assembly of celestials and also of her parents and maids of honour,<sup>3</sup> whereas the scene depicted in these sculptures is that of a bed-room having no resemblance to a marriage pandal or any connection whatever with a marriage ceremony, and the lady appears as anything but a bride. According to another legend in the Linga Purāna,<sup>4</sup> Śiva assumed the form of an infant and was suckled at her breast by the Mother Goddess. But the form assumed by the latter on this particular occasion was that of Kālī, having therefore no similarity whatsoever with the pleasing appearance of the lady in the mother-and-child reliefs.

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1. IBBS, p. 137.
  2. LP, i.cii.
  3. LK, No. 7, p. 14, pls.iv.2, v.4, vi.5; CVRM, p.9, pl. iii.
  4. LP, i.cvi.

Moreover, we cannot identify the lady as Pārvatī and the child as Śiva just because of the presence of the navagrahas in some of the compositions as suggested by Bhattasali.<sup>1</sup> The planets are no doubt present on the slabs depicting the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī,<sup>2</sup> but, as we have already mentioned, the latter is represented in these compositions as a bride easily recognizable by her tender youth and by a mirror held in her hand.<sup>3</sup> The absence of the various gods who attended the wedding ceremony as well as of Pārvatī's parents and of the signs and symbols indicative of her bridal state are points that strongly militate against the lady being identified as Pārvatī. Consequently therefore, the child cannot be regarded as Śiva sadyojāta. The divine character of the lady and the child has also been suggested because the former holds a lotus in her right hand,<sup>4</sup> and the feet of the latter rest on a lotus.<sup>5</sup> In one example preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, the child appears with a jaṭāmukuta on its head.<sup>6</sup> But a lotus in her hand is not enough to transform a lady into a goddess, much less into

1. IBBS, p. 137.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., pp. 121-22; CVRM, p. 9; cf. DHI, pp. 485-86.

4. IBBS, p. 142.

5. Ibid., p. 137.

6. ASI, 1930-34, p. 262, pl. cxxxii.b.

a Pārvatī. The human nāyikās of Kālidāsa are often described with lotuses in their hands<sup>1</sup>, and so are many of the ladies whose romances are narrated in the Kathā-saritsāgara<sup>2</sup>. Similarly, the child's feet resting on a lotus or a jatāmukuta on his head, does not necessarily indicate his divinity. It may at best suggest that he is the scion of a royal family.

The presence of the liṅga and the figures of Kārttikeya and Gaṇeśa on the slabs precludes the possibility of the reliefs representing the nativity of Kṛṣṇa as suggested by a number of scholars<sup>3</sup>. The relief is, in our opinion, as far from representing the sadyojāta form of Śiva by the side of Pārvatī, as it is from depicting the nativity of Kṛṣṇa or Buddha. Nor is there anything to suggest that the lady and the child are Yaśodā and Kṛṣṇa. The relief is undoubtedly a Śaiva one, but it does not represent a nativity at all<sup>4</sup>. There is nothing whatsoever to prevent us from suggesting that these reliefs are of secular character, representing a human mother and her child - the former in all likelihood being the consort of a king. This is indicated by the luxurious couch, the profusion of ornaments on her person, the diaphonous sari, the well-done coiffure, the coronet encircling her head, and the

1. Meghadūtam, ed. by S.K. De, New Delhi, 1957, verse 65.
2. Kathāsaritsāgara, ed. by Durgaprasad and Parab, xii.8. 68-74.
3. EISMS, p.107; Anderson, J: Op.cit, p. 259; HB, i, p. 462.
4. We cannot accept R.D. Banerji's suggestion (EISMS, p.108) that the slabs represent the nativity of Buddha, because it seems to be far-fetched.

number of maids ministering to her comforts. This hypothesis would also account for the lotus footrest and the crown of the child. The presence of the liṅga indicates the Śaivite affiliation of the person who commissioned the sculpture as well as a fertility symbol, for is not Śiva also prayed<sup>1</sup> to for offspring? Gaṇeśa<sup>2</sup> occurs on the slab as the lord and remover of obstacles, and Kārttikeya<sup>3</sup> as a leader of the Śiva-gaṇas. The presence of the navagrahas on these reliefs indicate the veneration in which they were held in Eastern India during the medieval period.<sup>4</sup> They were objects of worship for those who desired peace and prosperity, ample rains, long life and nourishment,<sup>5</sup> and for the discomfiture of enemies.

The mother-and-child images examined above, may at best have had a votive significance, and accordingly, have been set up in the bed chambers of queens or wives of the well-to-do in medieval India. But in our opinion, they were no more votive than the early Kuṣāṇa fragmentary sculpture in the Mathura Museum, depicting a woman under an Aśoka tree with a child at her breast,<sup>6</sup> or the 11th century

1. BKS, p.56; VSMRS, p.113.
2. Pañcopāsanā, p.16.
3. VSMRS, p. 150.
4. DHI, p. 443.
5. Ibid.
6. HIA, p. 233, pl. xxi.81.

mother-and-child group from Khajuraho, now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.<sup>1</sup> The simplicity of the composition - a mother with her child on the lap or at her breast - has captured the imagination of artists in all ages.<sup>2</sup> It is of course true that the numerous representations of the Virgin and the infant Jesus, which have so much enriched Christian art since 2nd century,<sup>3</sup> owe their origin to such a theme, but there is no reason why such compositions should always be exclusively ecclesiastical in character. A human mother with her child on a canvas or in stone may appear as sublime and dignified as a 'Madonna with Child' by Raphael. The mother-and-child images in medieval Indian art need not therefore be mistaken for sacred sculptures. We believe that they are secular, owing their origin chiefly to ~~the~~ the desire of the rich who sought to perpetuate in stone the likenesses of their wife and child much in the same way the nobility in post-Renaissance Italy commissioned painters for an identical purpose.

1. AIA, p. 415, pl. 344; our pl. vii.

2. ERE, ii, p. 342.

3. Ibid, p. 341.

T H E M O T H E R G O D D E S S  
O N E A R L Y I N D I A N  
C O I N S A N D S E A L S

Pre-Gupta Coins:

Coins and seals found in different archaeological sites furnish important evidence regarding the worship of the Mother Goddess in ancient India. One of the most popular devices noticed on the early Indian coins issued by the kings and tribal chiefs is the effigy of Gaja-Lakṣmī,<sup>1</sup> i.e. goddess Lakṣmī standing and being bathed by a pair of elephants. The motif appears on an uninscribed coin ~~of~~<sup>2</sup> from Kauśāmbī, datable in the 3rd century B.C., on similar coins from Ujjayinī assigned to 3rd-2nd century B.C.,<sup>3</sup> and on the coins of the kings of Ayodhyā, placed in the 1st century before Christ.<sup>4</sup> Not only the indigenous and Hindu rulers, but many alien kings of Northern India, such as Azilises,<sup>5</sup> Rajuvala<sup>6</sup> and Sodāsa<sup>7</sup> also appear to have adopted this popular device for their respective coinage.

1. DHI, p. 110; cf. CCAI, pp. lxxxviii, xcv, cxv, cxliv.
2. CCAI, p. 149, pl. xx.15.
3. Ibid, p. 256, pls. xviii.24, xxxvi.4-5.
4. Ibid, pp. 131-34, pl. xvi.14-15.
5. CCPM, pp. 135, 141, pl. xiii.332.
6. CCAI, p. 187, pl. xxvi.12.
7. Ibid, pp. 190-91, pls. xxvi.14-17, xliii.17.

Rather than typifying the Indian idea of prosperity in sculptural art alone, the effigy of Lakṣmī appears quite frequently as a numismatic device from the ancient down to the medieval period in India. Whether seated or standing on a lotus, as well as holding a lotus flower in her hand and unattended by elephants, the figure of Lakṣmī seems to have been the most favourite as a device on the Hindu coins of Ujjayinī.<sup>1</sup> More often than not, ~~in~~ her hand appears as a symbol on the coins of this kingdom, and also on those issued by the Kṣatrapas of Mathura, on the coins of Rājanya Janapada, and on those of Bhadrageṣa of Pañcāla.<sup>2</sup> The female figure on the obverse of the Indo-Scythic gold coin and described as a 'Greek city-goddess clad in chiton and peplos, wearing mural crown, and holding a poppy head';<sup>3</sup> has been identified as an Indian city goddess by Rapson,<sup>4</sup> as Lakṣmī by Coomaraswamy,<sup>5</sup> and as Durgā Ekānaṁśā by Banerjē.<sup>6</sup> Rapson's identification of the figure as the city goddess of Puṣkalāvati<sup>7</sup> on the basis of the legend Pukhalavadi devada inscribed on the obverse of the coin (read partly and doubtfully by Gardner

1. CCAI, p.252, pl. xxxviii.23-25; for the same motif appearing on the coins of other places see Ibid, pp. lxxxi, ci, cviii, cix, cxii, cxxxiii, cxliii, cxlix, 159-67, 170-71, 173-84, 210-12, 279.
2. DHI, p. 111.
3. BMC, p. 162, pl. xxix.15.
4. CHI, i, p.587.
5. EI, i(3), p. 182
6. DHI, p. 111.
7. CHI, i, p. 587.
8. JNSI, xx(i), p. 69.

seems to have been accepted by the numismatists.<sup>1</sup> We are inclined to agree with Banerjea's identification because Lakṣmī's role as a guardian deity of cities is yet unknown, and, as pointed out by Banerjea himself, the identity of the goddess as a form of Durgā is suggested as much by the legend Tauro-uṣabhe or vṛṣabha (bull) on the reverse of the coin as by the figure of the humped bull which is<sup>2</sup> but the theriomorphic representation of her consort Śiva.<sup>3</sup> We do not of course agree with Banerjea that the Mother Goddess has been represented here as Ekānaṁśā,<sup>4</sup> because according to the very Bṛhatsaṁhitā on which his identification of the figure is chiefly based, the goddess is to be placed<sup>5</sup> between Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva, but the figures of these two gods are absent on this coin. Contrary to the iconography of Ekānaṁśā,<sup>6</sup> the goddess on this coin does not hold a lotus flower in her right hand,<sup>6</sup> nor is her left hand placed on the hip. Also she does not hold the spear in her left hand as stated by P.L. Gupta,<sup>7</sup> and the short, spear-like weapon is clearly seen to have been held in an upright position against the side of her body by the pressure of her left arm. Again, as Gupta ably demonstrates,<sup>8</sup> the restored legend on the obverse can be read

1. DHI, p.257.

2. The term Nagara-Lakṣmī does not signify Lakṣmī's status as a city goddess. It means 'the goddess who presides over the fortunes of the city'.

3. DHI, p. 113.

4. Ibid, p.257.

5. Infra, p.510 note 4.

as Pukhalavadi devada Ambi, that is, 'Ambi who is the goddess of Puṣkalāvati'. As Ambi is but a variant of Ambā<sup>1</sup> and Ambikā, the goddess bearing this name can be no other than the Mother Goddess Durgā. This is also suggested by the name of the city, for Puṣkalāvati may as well be read as Puṣkarāvati, la (ल) and ra (र) being interchangeable in local usage. Puṣkarāvati is also an epithet of Durgā<sup>2</sup> Dākṣāyaṇī according to the Matsya Purāṇa. As protectress and deliveress of her worshippers from dangers and enemies and possessing martial qualities like Athena, Minerva, Ishātār or Anahitā,<sup>3</sup> it is Durgā, rather than Lakṣmī, who<sup>4</sup> admirably fits in the character of a city goddess. The goddess on this coin therefore is an early form of the Mother Goddess, but not of her Ekānamśā aspect as shown above and must not be treated as Lakṣmī at all.

Being an object of wide and universal worship, it was but natural that Lakṣmī's image should have been adopted as a device on the coins of ancient India. Though not as popular as Lakṣmī, cult deities of the Śaivas, Śāktas and<sup>5</sup> Vaiṣṇavas were also used as devices on many early Indian

6. JNSI, xx(i), pl. i. The object in the right hand of the goddess is obviously not a flower, it may either be a short mace or rattle (muṣala)?

7. Ibid, p. 70.

8. Ibid, pp. 69-70.

1. JNSI, <sup>xx(i)</sup> p. 70.

2. SED, p. 639.

3. Supra, pp.

4. Durgā, one of the principal epithets of the Mother

coins. Mention may be made of Śiva represented in his anthropomorphic<sup>1</sup> and theriomorphic<sup>2</sup> forms, as well as by his symbols the liṅga and the triśūla,<sup>3</sup> which may be noticed on Indian coins datable in the 3rd-2nd centuries B.C.<sup>4</sup> The effigies of Gaṇeśa<sup>5</sup> and Kārttikeya<sup>6</sup> too are known to have been used on the coins of some rulers of ancient India. We shall concern ourselves here chiefly with the representations of the Mother Goddess in the early coinage, for, apart from their iconographic interest they constitute one of the concrete proofs of the existence ~~of~~ of her cult in ancient India.

Thus many of the female figurines appearing on the die-struck and cast coins may stand for the image of the Mother Goddess. The female deity which appears with a lotus for her pedestal on the coins of Bhadrakoṣa and which has been identified by Allan as Bhadrā<sup>7</sup> in allusion to the name of the king, may in reality be Lakṣmī. Banerjea considers this as a possibility, though he is more

Goddess may have been derived from durga which may mean a fortress or a fortified city. See Supra, pp. 262-63.

5. DHI, pp. 112, 128-32.

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1. BMC, pp. 104, 125, 135, 155, 159; CCIM, pp. 68, pl. xi. 5: 70, 74, 78, 80; Bhandarkar, D.R.: Lectures on Ancient Indian Numismatics, Calcutta, 1921, pp. 15-20.

2. CCAI, pp. lxxi, lxxxii, cv, cix, 120-21, 172.

3. DHI, pp. 115-16; cf. CCAI, pp. cxviii-cxix; DHI, pp. 113-14, pl. 1.10; ASI, 1911-12, p. 49; HIIA, p. 45.

4. DHI, p. 114.

5. CCIM, p. 81.

6. CCAI, pp. lxxxvi, xciii, cxliii, cxliv, 270-79; cf. DHI pp. 140-46.

7. CCAI, pp. cxvii, cxviii, 197, pl. xxviii. 1-3.

inclined to agree with Allan, but notwithstanding the lotus in her right hand and her left hand placed on the hip, the female figure does not represent, as he thinks, the Mother Goddess in her aspect of Subhadrā or Ekānaśā.<sup>1</sup> We have already referred to the Brhatsaṁhitā in support of our objection.<sup>2</sup> Yet it is quite true, as Banerjea observes, that 'the lotus in the hand alone would not always justify us in identifying' a female deity 'as Lakṣmī unless some other distinctive marks are present; the lotus on which a few of these goddesses are made to stand is not also the characteristic of Lakṣmī alone, for the lotus pedestal is one of the commonest pedestals on which the images of cult divinities are placed in Gupta and post-Gupta art!'.<sup>3</sup> But if these features cannot serve as the basis for identifying the goddess on Bhadrachōṣa's coin as Lakṣmī, they are equally unsuitable as the criterion for an Ekānaśā image since the deity here has been represented alone and not between Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva. There is, on the other hand, nothing against identifying her as Lakṣmī.<sup>4</sup> Allan in fact regards her as such, and in view of her wide and universal popularity we are justified in this identification.

- 1. DHI, p. 133.
- 2. Supra, p. 404.
- 3. DHI, p. 133.
- 4. CCAI, p. cxviii.

The figure of a goddess on some gold and copper coins of the Kuṣāṇa king Huiṣka has been identified with much good reason as Umā (OMMO), one of the earliest forms of the Mother Goddess. The clue to her real identity seems to have been provided by a quarter stater of the same ruler<sup>1</sup> in the Panjāb Museum. On this particular piece the goddess NANA appears facing a male figure described as OHPO (OESO), i.e., Bhaveśa, an epithet of Śiva.<sup>2</sup> That NANA in the Kuṣāṇa period was no other than Umā, the wife of Śiva, is clearly indicated by no less than three other coins,<sup>3</sup> on which the female deity appears under the name of OMMO (Umā), facing a male god mentioned as OHPO (OESO= Bhaveśa or Śiva). In the opinion of Rapson, any doubt as to the identity of the goddess arising from the symbol in her hand has been set at rest by the inscription OMMO which justifies the inclusion of Umā in the list of India deities represented on Kuṣāṇa coins.<sup>4</sup> Banerjea not only agrees with Rapson, but also provides additional evidence to support the latter<sup>5</sup> from another coin of the same period in the Panjāb Museum collection bearing the effigy

1. CCPM, i, p. 197, pl. xviii. 135.

2. Ibid, cf. DHI, pp. 135-36.

3. Rapson, E.J.: 'Two Notes on Indian Numismatics', JRAS 1897, p. 324; cf. Cunningham, A.: 'Coins of the Kushans or Great Yue-ti', NC, iii series, vol. xii, 1892, pl. xiii. 1; DHI, p. 126.

4. JRAS, 1897, p. 324.

5. DHI, p. 126.

of a goddess with a cornucopiae in her hand.<sup>1</sup> Instead of being 'quite blundered and illegible',<sup>2</sup> the name of the goddess inscribed to the left of her figure can easily be read, as Banerjea demonstrates, as OMMO, i.e., Umā.<sup>3</sup>

That the worship of the Mother Goddess had been firmly planted before the Christian era as an important element in the religion of ancient India, is amply attested by the figure of a female divinity used as a device on the coins of the Kuṣāṇa emperors. The goddess is represented as standing, draped, and usually nimbate, holding a sceptre in her right hand with the legend NANA and also NANAIA on the gold and copper coins of Kaṇiṣka.<sup>4</sup> On the gold coins of the same ruler the goddess also appears wearing a sword and<sup>with</sup> the legend NANAPAO.<sup>5</sup> The effigy of the same goddess is again found on the gold coins of Huviṣka.<sup>6</sup> Substantially differing in the manner of representation as well as in respect of accompanying legends

1. CCPM, p. 197, pl. xviii.136.

2. Ibid.

3. DHI, p. 127, pl. xi.7.

4. CCIM, pp. 70, 71-72, 73, pl.xii.1,3; CCPM, pp.186-87, pl. xvii; BMC, pp. 129, 131, 134-35, pls.xxvi.3,xxvii.

5. BMC, p. 131, pl. xxvi.11; CCIM, p. 70; CCPM, p. 188, pl. xvii.

6. CCIM, p. 77; CCPM, p. 197, pl. xvii, pp.200, 207; NC, iii series, vol. xii, pp. 145, 147-18, pls. xii.13, xxii.20-22; BMC, pp. 144-46, pl.xxviii.8-11. On the coins of Vāsudeva the goddess Nana appears fully draped nimbate and with crescent on her head, a peculiar sceptre in her right hand and a flat dish in her left. NC, iii series, vol. xii, p. 123, pl. xxiv.2; BMC, p. 159, pl. xxix.8.

are the goddesses whose figures have been adopted as their coin types by the emperors Huvishka and Vāsudeva. On the gold coins of the former, is one of these goddesses, - standing, robed and holding cornucopiae in her hand, and the legend ΑΡΑΟΧΠΟ, i.e., Ardochsho.<sup>1</sup> This goddess also appears as seated on a throne holding a fillet in her right hand and a cornucopiae in her left on the gold coin of the emperor Vāsudeva Kuṣāṇa.<sup>2</sup> On the gold coins of a ruler named Vasu, presumably the same Vāsudeva Kuṣāṇa, the identical throned goddess is seen with a cornucopiae in her hand but with the corrupt Greek legend ΟΑΟΑ for ΑΡΑΟΧΠΟ or Ardochsho.<sup>3</sup> The effigy of Ardochsho seated on a throne and traces of her name in corrupt Greek may also be distinguished on the base gold issues of a number of sundry chiefs ruling in Panjāb and the neighbouring areas and also in the north-western part of India during the period from the 3rd to the 6th century A.D.<sup>4</sup> On Huvishka's gold coins we also find the figure of a helmeted goddess, standing, holding out a wreath or fillet in her right hand and a trophy in her left.<sup>5</sup> The legend ~~ΟΑΟΑ~~ ΟΑΝΑΟ on the coin is not of much help in determining the identity of the goddess whom Smith thinks to be Nike, the goddess

1. CCIM, p. 76, pl.xii.7; NC,iii series,vol.xii, p.113,pl xii.3-7; BMC, p. 137, pl.xxvii.10. The goddess also appears on a stater piece of Kanishka.CCPM, p. 194.
2. CCIM, p. 86.
3. Ibid, p. 87, pl. xiii.11.
4. Ibid, pp.88-91, pl. xiv.4,11.
5. Ibid, p.78,pl.xii.13;cf.BMC, p.138,pl.xxvii.13.Huvishka COIN bearing a similar figure with the legend ΟΧΠΟ.

of victory, obviously because of the objects in her hand and her attitude, suggesting that she is about to crown someone for having achieved victory.<sup>1</sup> Also on some coins of Huvishka there is a female divinity with a modius head-dress, a cornucopiae in her left hand and her right hand extended towards a child.<sup>2</sup> These coins bear the Greek legend  $\rho\omicron\omicron\rho\alpha\omicron$  = Shao Gao, which means 'the queen of earth'.<sup>3</sup> Another coin with the Chaldaeo-Pahlavi legend Armandukhta or Queen Arman or Queen Earth seems to have been issued by this king.<sup>4</sup> Arman evidently stands for the Avestan Armaiti which is equivalent to the Vedic Aramatī, the earth goddess.<sup>5</sup> That Armandukhta on Huvishka's coin is an effigy of earth goddess, is also suggested by the Demeter on the coins of a number of Indo-Greek rulers.<sup>6</sup> The goddess (Demeter) appears on their coins as standing to the left, holding a cornucopiae in her left hand, and her right hand is raised as on the issues of Philoxenos<sup>7</sup> and Azes I,<sup>8</sup> or like Ardochsho noticed on the coins of Huvishka and Vāsudeva, is represented as seated on a throne with a cornucopiae in her left hand. Artemis, celebrated in Greek

1. CCIM, p. 78; cf. LEM, p. 189.

2. NC, iii series, vol. xii, p. 111, pl. xxi.16.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p. 112, pl. xxi.17. But the word dukhta actually means 'daughter' and is an equivalent to the Sanskrit duhitā.

5. Ibid.

6. CCPM, p. 72, pl. vii.

7. Ibid., 121-22, pl. xii.

8. Ibid., p. 120; CCIM, pp. 46-47, pl. viii.15.

mythology as the goddess of hunting,<sup>1</sup> appears on the coin<sup>2</sup> of a number of Indo-Greek kings, such as, Demetrios,<sup>3</sup> Artemidoros,<sup>3</sup> Peukolaos,<sup>4</sup> and Manes.<sup>5</sup> On some coins of Huviṣka can be noticed the effigy of a goddess, nimbate and decorated with a crescent, who like Artemis on the Indo-Greek issues is shown holding a bow in her left hand<sup>6</sup> and drawing an arrow from the quiver with her right.<sup>6</sup> According to the legend on the coins, the name of the goddess appears to be NANO, who like NANA is known to have figured on the coins of this particular Kuṣāṇa ruler with a sceptre in her right hand.<sup>7</sup> The Greek Artemis thus appears to have undergone transformation into the Indo-Parthian and Indo-Scythic NANO or NANA. As NANA is no other than OMMO or Umā,<sup>8</sup> it may reasonably be postulated that she as NANO(=Artemis) anticipated the Mother Goddess Durgā ~~in~~<sup>9</sup> in her aspect of Kirātī. Such an identification is as much suggested by her association with mountains,<sup>10</sup> of which there is an abundance of literary evidence as by her being the consort of Śiva who as a Kirāta or

1. MAR, i, p. 184.
2. CCIM, p. 9, pl. i.11; BMC, pp. lvii, 7, pl. iii.1.
3. CCPM, pp. 66-69; BMC, p. 170, pl. xxxii.3-5.
4. CCPM, p. 80.
5. CCIM, p. 39, pl. viii.3.
6. NC, iii series, vol. xii, p. 116, pl. xxii.16-19; BMC, p. 144, pl. xxviii.7.
7. NC, iii series, vol. xii, p. 115, pl. xii.14-15.
8. Supra, p. 408
9. Kirātī is one of the epithets of Durgā. SED, p. 283.
10. Supra, p. 254 ff.

hunter in the mountains is said to have opposed Arjuna.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the Greek Demeter and Ardochsho as well as the ancient Iranian Armandukhta on the early coins of India may be painted out as the fore-runners of Bhū-devī and Lakṣmī of the subsequent period. Both Demeter and Armandukhta are well-known as Earth goddesses, and, as Allan suggests,<sup>2</sup> Ardochsho had in all probability the Roman Abundantia<sup>3</sup> for her prototype. That like Demeter and Abundantia, Ardochsho ~~was~~ too was a goddess of agricultural prosperity is clearly suggested by the emblem placed in her hand - the cornucopiae which is the horn of<sup>4</sup> plenty, overflowing with flowers, fruits and corn. Thus Demeter and Ardochsho on the Indo-Greek and Kuṣāṇa coins anticipated not only Lakṣmī but also the Mother Goddess in her aspect of the Earth Mother.<sup>5</sup>

1. SED, p. 283. As Śiva is Śabara, Durgā is Śabarī (SED, p. 1052). Artemis, represented as clad in skins and armed with bow and quiver-full of arrows on the reverse of the coins of the Indo-Greek king Artemidoros (CCPM, p. 68, Nos. 551-52), undoubtedly anticipates the Kirātī and Śabarī aspects of the Mother Goddess. Again, Artemis appears on the early Indian coins in association with the bull (CCPM, p. 69, Nos. 555-56, pl. vii; CCIM, p. 39, pl. viii. 3), which as we have already observed, is regarded as the theriomorphic representation of Śiva the consort of the Mother Goddess. It is also to be noted that Durgā was a special object of worship with the Śabarās, Barbarās and Pulindas, i.e., people living in the forests. Supra, p. 273.
2. CCGD, p. lxxii.
3. Abundantia is a 'Roman goddess, the personification of prosperity and good fortune. On the coins of the later Roman Emperors she is frequently represented holding a horn of plenty and distributing grains and money'. Encyclopaedia Britannica, i, p. 71. The goddess

One of the most important aspects of Durgā represents her as a goddess of war. As is well-known, she frequently assumed this form in the Purāṇas in order to destroy any demon who causes chaos and confusion in the universe by overpowering the gods. It would be neither far-fetched nor a poor conjecture were we to point out that the iconography of Durgā, in so far as her aspect of a war goddess is concerned, has been influenced, if not anticipated by the goddess whose figure is frequently seen on the coins of not only the Indo-Greek and Indo-Parthian kings who ruled in the Panjāb and the north-western parts of India, but also on the coins of the Kuṣāṇa emperors. Identified as Pallas Athene, the goddess appears on these types as helmeted and wearing armour, with a spear in her right hand and her left hand resting on a shield.<sup>1</sup> She is also most commonly represented standing, holding the aegis in her left hand and hurling a thunderbolt with her right.<sup>2</sup>

Abundantia was, like Pṛthivī, and Lakṣmī, a goddess of agricultural prosperity. To this class of divinities also belong Dame Habonde or Abundia of medieval folk-belief, possibly a reminiscence of Fulla, an associate of Frigg, who was an earth goddess in Eddic mythology. MAR, ii, pp. 184-85.

4. Oxford English Dictionary, Vol.ii, Oxford, 1953, p.100
5. The association of Demeter with the humped bull depicted on the reverse of the coins of Philoxenos (CCPM, p.72 No.584-98), and with the lion on the obverse of the coins of Azes I (CCPM, p.121, Nos.221-30, pl. xii), may be put forward in support of such a hypothesis. The bull, as we have seen, represents Siva in his animal form, while the lion is well-known as the mount of the Mother Goddess not only in India, but also in the Near and Middle East.

1. CCIM, pp. 9,44; CCPM, pp. 78, 141-42.

On the copper coins of Vonones, Pallas appears as helmete and standing with a wreath in her raised right hand, a shield on her left arm, a spear on her shoulder, and a sword at her waist.<sup>1</sup> On three coins of Azes I, Pallas stands facing, and crowning herself with her right hand, while a shield and a spear are held in her left hand.<sup>2</sup> On some issues of this king <sup>in</sup> the Panjāb Museum collection, the goddess is seen with spear and shield on her left side and her right arm outstretched as if in a Roman military salute.<sup>3</sup> The identical goddess is again noticed on the coins of Azes I in almost the same attitude except that her right arm hangs by her side, or with the shield and spear at her back, she is shown crowning herself, as noticed above, with her right hand.<sup>5</sup> Armed figures of Pallas also appears<sup>6</sup> on the coins of Azilises and

2. CCIM, pp. 18, 21-22, 22-26, 28, 44; CCPM, pp. 41-42, pl. iv; pp. 49-51, pl. v; p. 53; pp. 54-61, pl. vi; p. 64; pp. 65-68; p. 81, pl. viii; pp. 112-14; BMC, pp. 37, 40-41, 44-47, 51-54, 61, 67, 78, 168, 169, pls. x. 1, 3, 4, 10-13, xi. 1, 2, 7-12, xii. 9, 11-13; xiii. 1, 2, xiv. 9, xv. 11, 12, xviii. 2, 3, xxxi. 1, 6, 13.

1. CCIM, p. 41.

2. Ibid, p. 44, pl. viii. 13.

3. CCPM, pp. 114-15.

4. Ibid, p. 116, pl. xi.

5. Ibid, pp. 116-17, pl. xi; BMC, pp. 79-80, pl. xviii. 4-5

6. Ibid, p. 135, pl. xiii.

Gondopharnes.<sup>1</sup> On three base silver coins of the latter, Pallas, armed with a thunderbolt and a shield, appears as fighting.<sup>2</sup> A seated figure of the same goddess, holding lance and shield, and with helmet for her headgear, has also been identified on the coins of Demetrius<sup>3</sup> and Hippostratus.<sup>4</sup> On a coin of Huviṣka,<sup>5</sup> now in the British Museum, inscribed with the legend PIOM, the goddess Roma or Pallas is seen standing, wearing helmet and long chiton with the spear and shield in her hands.<sup>6</sup>

It will thus be seen that Pallas has been represented with some of the well-known āyudhas<sup>7</sup> that are placed in the hands of the Mother Goddess Durgā, such as, shield (kheṭaka), sword (khadga), spear (śūla), and thunderbolt (vajra). Like the Mother Goddess who dons armour before her encounter with the demons,<sup>8</sup> Pallas also appears similarly clad. Moreover, as testified by the coins of Gondopharnes,<sup>9</sup> Pallas is depicted as fighting; so is the Mother Goddess in all the Purāṇas and Hindu plastic art.

1. CCPM, pp. 150-51.
2. BMC, p. 103, pl. xxii.6.
3. Ibid, p. 163, pl. xxx.2.
4. Ibid, pp. 60, 163.
5. Ibid, p. 1.
6. Ibid, p. 149, pl. xxviii.20; our pl. viii.
7. Infra, pp. 473-74.
8. MP, lxxxii.27.
9. BMC, p. 103, pl. xxii.7.

If Pallas anticipates Durgā as a war goddess, Demeter,<sup>2</sup> Tyche,<sup>3</sup> Ardochsho,<sup>3</sup> and a divinity described as City,<sup>4</sup> may as well be regarded to have constituted some of the earliest forms of the Mother Goddess in her saumya aspect with attributes more or less similar to those of the Roman Abundantia. Though described under four separate names, they are, in our opinion, variants of ~~the~~ the one and the same goddess, who is represented with a cornucopiae in her left hand<sup>5</sup> and a sceptre in her right.<sup>6</sup> Her right hand is also sometimes seen extended like that of Pallas.<sup>7</sup> She has either a modius<sup>8</sup> or a turreted crown<sup>9</sup> for her head-dress, and on some coins holds in her left hand, instead of the cornucopiae,<sup>10</sup> a palm which is sometimes shown bound with a fillet.<sup>11</sup> A brazier-like object is also seen in her right hand<sup>12</sup> when it is not extended. The goddess is usually represented in a standing position but also appears as seated on a throne on some of the issues.<sup>13</sup>

1. BMC, p. 85.
2. Ibid, p. 68, pl.xvi.3; p. 70, pl.xvi.9.
3. Supra, p. 410.
4. BMC, p. 57; CCIM, p. 30, pl. vi.6.
5. CCPM, p. 74.
6. Ibid, p. 99, pl. x.
7. BMC, p. 90, pl. xx.1.
8. Ibid, p. 59, pl. xiv.1; CCIM, p. 30, pl. vi.6.
9. CCPM, p. 99, pl. x; BMC, p. 1, pl. i.2.
10. BMC, p. 60.
11. Ibid, p. 82; CCPM, p. 132, pl. xiii.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid, p. 84; CCPM, p. 120.

The female divinity designated as City on the coins mentioned above is however different from the city goddess of Puṣkalāvati in that the former, unlike the latter, seems to have been associated rather with the welfare and fortunes of cities than with their defence. In her, as well as Demeter, Tyche and Ardochsho, we no doubt have the local version of the Roman Abundantia, and perhaps, the forerunner of Lakṣmī on the Indo-Parthian, Kuṣāṇa and Gupta coins. That like any of these goddesses, the Mother Goddess was also conceived as presiding over fortune and affluence, is clearly indicated by the Panjāb Museum coin of Huviṣka,<sup>1</sup> on which OMMO or Umā 'holds a cornucopiae<sup>2</sup> like Demeter, Tyche and Ardochsho'.

Demeter and Abundantia not only appear to have anticipated Ardochsho and Lakṣmī on the Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythic coins, but also indirectly the Ambikā or Durgā figures on the coins of the Imperial Guptas. A standing figure of Demeter with her right hand raised and a cornucopiae in her left, appears on the coins of Philoxenos and Azes.<sup>3</sup> The reverse of these coins is stamped with the effigy of a humped bull, but on some coins of Azes  $\nabla$  in

1. Supra, p. 408

2. DHI, p. 127.

3. CCPM, pp. 72, 121-22; BMC, p. 85, pl. xix.3.

the collections of the Panjāb and British Museums, the goddess appears on the reverse while the obverse shows a lion walking towards the right.<sup>1</sup> On the Azes coins Demeter is also represented as seated, with her right arm extended and a cornucopiae in her left hand.<sup>2</sup> On the obverse of the square bronze and copper coins of Pantaleon and Agathokles,<sup>3</sup> is depicted a female figure wearing pendant ear ornaments, oriental dress and trousers and holding a flower in her right hand.<sup>4</sup> The reverse of these coins shows a maneless lion standing to right. Demeter's association with the lion on the above coins undoubtedly represents her as a Mother Goddess like Cybele.<sup>5</sup> The female figure in oriental dress on the Indo-Greek coins appears in our opinion to be none else than a variant of the Mother Goddess of the ancient Middle East - the Iranian Anahita or the Babylonian Ishtar to whom is attributed a lion as her mount and favourite animal.<sup>6</sup> That this particular deity as well as the one described above as Demeter were in fact intended to represent the Mother Goddess is not only suggested by their association

1. CCPM, p. 121; BMC, p. 85, pl. xix.4.
2. CCPM, p. 120; BMC, p. 84; CCIM, p. 46, pl. viii.15.
3. BMC, p. 9, pl. iii.9; CCIM, p. 10, pl. ii.1.
4. CCIM, p. 10, pl. ii.2.
5. MAR, i, p. 275, pl. lxi; LEM, p. 174; CMG, p. 160.
6. Delaporte, L: Op. cit, p. 140; LEM, p. 57. Percy Gardner's description of the figure as that of a dancing girl of 'strictly Hindu type' (BMC, p. lix) and Coomaraswamy's identification of it as a variant of Lakṣmī (EA, i(3), p. 182; cf. DHI, p. 111) cannot be

with the bull and the lion, but also by a bronze coin of Azes<sup>1</sup> having on its obverse the figure of a female deity clad in a himation, standing on a lotus and holding a flower in her right hand. A crouching animal is seen on the proper left of the female figure, and on the reverse we have the effigy of a humped bull. Gardner seems inclined to identify the deity as Lakṣmī, obviously because of her lotus pedestal and the flower in her hand. He also seems doubtful whether the crouching animal is actually a lion. Careful examination definitely reveals it to be so. Thus with her lion by her side and the humped bull on the reverse, the deity on this coin can be no other than the Mother Goddess Durgā. In her tribhaṅga pose, the goddess not only appears to be truly Indian, but, with a flower in her right hand, having a lotus for her pedestal, and her left hand placed on the hip, the deity amazingly anticipates the two-armed Ekānaṁśā aspect of the Mother Goddess.<sup>2</sup> Like the goddess on Bhadrakhoṣa's coins,<sup>3</sup> this wide-hipped and heavy-breasted female on this coin of Azes may well be some divinity personifying abundance and fertility. From their attributes as well as the manner of their representation, such female figures

accepted. There is nothing about the female figure (not even the trousers, which are oriental, but certainly not Indian) to justify the hypothesis of the two scholars. Equally unacceptable is Banerjea's suggestion that the figure represents the Yakṣiṇī Aśvamukhī. DHI, p. 111.

1. BMC, p. 85, pl. xix.5; our pl. ix.

on early Indian coins may justly be regarded as the fore-runners of those voluptuous females who figure prominently in Indian plastic art beginning from the Maurya period, and who are described as Yakṣīs, Vṛkṣakas, Earth and Mother Goddesses and divinities of fertility.<sup>1</sup>

### G U P T A   G O L D   C O I N S

The main element in the reverse devices of Gupta gold coins consists of the figure of a female with emblems that are undoubtedly intended to represent her (except perhaps in the case of the Aśvamedha medals of Samudragupta) as a divine personage.<sup>2</sup> Female figures representing a divinity also occurs on the silver and copper coins of the Gupta emperors. In an appendix (B) we record the main forms of this divinity.

As Smith suggests, the goddess seated on a throne on the coins of Samudragupta and Candraguta II, the goddess seated on a wicker stool on the coins of both these kings and of Kumāragupta, on a lotus flower on the coins of Candragupta II and his successors, as well as the goddess shown as standing on the coins of Kaca and Candragupta II 'are all intended to express substantially the same conception'.<sup>3</sup> This is quite evident from the emblems - lotus

2. Brhatsaṃhitā, lvii.37.

3. Supra, p. 403.

1. HIA, p.46, pl.xi.37.

2. JRAS, 1889, p. 16ff.

3. Ibid, p. 27.

flower and cornucopiae or fillet or lotus flower - placed in the hands of the goddess. Smith's view that the goddess sitting on a four-legged stool on the gold issues of Samudragupta and Candragupta II 'is unmistakably an adaptation of the goddess who is named ΑΡΑΟΧΨΟ, Ardochsho on the Indo-Scythic coins,<sup>1</sup> seems reasonable. Allan not only subscribes to this view, but also draws our attention to a coin of Azes on which Demeter is seated like Ardochsho on the late Kuṣāṇa coins.<sup>2</sup> Both are supported by Altekar in whose opinion the goddess on the reverse of the early Gupta coins is 'an exact copy of Ardoxsho with cornucopia in her hand seated on a high backed throne'.<sup>3</sup>

We have already stated that the goddess on the above-mentioned Gupta coins is Lakṣmī,<sup>4</sup> having for her original the Indo-Scythic Ardochsho, who had been a familiar figure for centuries in north-western India.<sup>5</sup> This no doubt accounts for the survival of the cornucopiae seen in the hand of the goddess before the Hindu engravers changed it into a lotus, one of her characteristic attributes.<sup>6</sup>

Further indication of the transformation of Ardochsho into

1. JRAS, 1889, p. 26. Here as in Gardner's British Museum Catalogue and other early numismatic studies, the name is given as "Ardochro". This is clue to the fact that, at the time, the letters P (r) and ρ (sh) of the Greco-Kuṣāṇa script had not been distinguished.
2. CCGD, p. lxx.
3. CGE, p. 15, pl. i. 14-15.
4. Supra, p. 413.
5. CCGD, pp. lxxi-lxxii.
6. Ibid. Smith rightly objects to Theobold's assertion that the cornucopiae is intended to represent a multi-headed nāga or snake. It is, as he observes, 'primarily

the Indian Lakṣmī may be noticed in the replacement of the throne by a lotus seat,<sup>1</sup> and the provision of another lotus flower on which her feet rest, as in the Battle-Axe Type of Samudragupta's coins.<sup>2</sup>

It would rather be too rash as well as unwise if the goddess on the coins of Candragupta II and his successors holding a cornucopiae or flower in her left hand, and a fillet or noose in her right,<sup>3</sup> were straightaway identified as Lakṣmī. In maintaining that the noose or pāśa is an emblem of Lakṣmī, Smith<sup>4</sup> seems to have blindly followed Birdwood,<sup>5</sup> who also includes a rosary in one of her hands, but does not give the source from which he derives the iconography of the goddess. We are inclined to agree with Smith that the object held in the hand of the goddess on Gupta coins looks more like a noose(pāśa) than a fillet.<sup>6</sup> But it appears somewhat incongruous that a pāśa should be placed in the hand of Lakṣmī, who stands for the ideal feminine beauty, wealth and prosperity. In none of the iconographical texts describing the two-armed and four-armed varieties of Lakṣmī images, do we find either the pāśa or the akṣamālā ever placed in the hands of the goddess.<sup>7</sup> According to the Candīkalpa, a supplementary

1. a horn of plenty, copied from the Indo-Scythic coins' (JRAS, 1889, p. 25). That it was regarded as an emblem suitable for a benevolent deity like Lakṣmī is sufficiently indicated by its appearance as an emblem of the goddess in Class I of the Archer Type of Candragupta II's coins. (Ibid)

.....

1. CGE, p. 16, pl.v, 1-15.

text of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, the goddess as Mahālakṣmī may of course hold a rosary and a noose in two of her eighteen hands,<sup>1</sup> but Lakṣmī in this form 'really illustrates one of the primary aspects of the principal cult-icon of the Śāktas (Durgā), which stands for the supreme fountain-head of all divine power'.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, both these objects constitute the emblems placed in the hands of Durgā, who obtained the pāśa from Varuṇa whose āyudha it is, and the akṣamālā from Brahmā.<sup>3</sup> The latter is usually placed in the hand of the goddess when she is represented in her two or four-armed variety as Umā, or Gaurī and Pārvatī.<sup>4</sup> Thus the goddess who appears on a lotus, holding a noose in her right hand, should rather be identified as Durgā and not as Lakṣmī.

2. CCGD, p. lxxiii; JRAS, 1899, pp. 72-73, pl.i.11; CGE, pp. 58-59, pls. ii.16, iii.1-5.
3. JRAS, 1889, p. 83.
4. Ibid, p. 26.
5. Birdwood, Sir G.C.M.: The Industrial Arts of India, London, 1880, p. 58.
6. JRAS, 1889, p. 28.
7. According to iconographical texts collected by Rao, the following are placed in the hands of Lakṣmī when she is made with four-arms: a lotus flower, a wood apple, a conch, a pot of nectar, a citron, a shield and a club (EHI, i(ii), App.C, pp.132-36) Pāśa and aṅkuṣa do not appear among the objects placed in the hands of Lakṣmī according to the Mānasollāsa (Partii, vv.779-803). In the Tāntrika texts also neither Lakṣmī nor Mahālakṣmī appears to possess either of these objects as emblems (cf. Brhat-tantrasāra, i, pp.125-29).

1. EHI, i(ii), App.C, p. 136.
2. DHI, p.
3. MP, lxxxii.22-23.
4. EHI, i(ii), App. C, pp. 119-20.

Another factor militating against the goddess being Lakṣmī is the āsana or the sitting posture in which she is seen on the Gupta coins. The goddess sits on a lotus (sometimes full-blown) in baddhapadmāsana in most of the examples,<sup>1</sup> and in some others in kūrmāsana,<sup>2</sup> the earliest example of which is to be found in the seated prototypes of Śiva-Paśupati on some Mohenjo-dāro and Harappā seals'.<sup>3</sup> Kūrmāsana, padmāsana and variations of the latter<sup>4</sup> are evidently yogic āsanas adopted as aid to the concentration<sup>5</sup> of the mind. On some Archer Type coins of Candragupta II the goddess is seen seated ~~not~~ cross-legged or in padmāsana but with her right leg tucked up and the left bent and drawn up on the seat so as to form a support for her out-stretched left arm(sukhāsana).<sup>6</sup> She is also shown as seated on a lotus in lalitāsana on two Archer Type coins of the same ruler.<sup>7</sup> The goddess may be Lakṣmī in both examples, particularly in the one in which she is seated in lalitāsana, which seems to have been one of the principal<sup>8</sup> modes of representing her in early Indian art. Besides lalitāsana, Lakṣmī is also known to have been

1. CCGD, pls.vi.11,13, vii.15,18,xvi.2,8,12; BHGGC, pls.i.6-10, 12-15; x.2-5,7-13, xi.2-5,8,12-15, xii.1-6, 9-10, xiii.1-5; CGE, pls.v.1,2,5, x.1-10; xi.14-15, xiv.7-11, xv.6-10.
2. CCGD, pl.vi.10; CCIM, pls. xv.13, xvi.9-11; CGE, pl.v.10,12, xiv.11,15, xv.2-5,6-10,12-15; BHGGC, pls.ix.11-15, x.6-15, xi.6-7,9-15, xxi.6-15.
3. DHI, p. 270.
4. Ibid, p. 272.
5. Ibid, p. 269.
6. CGE, pl. v.3,11; BHGGC, pl.xii.11-15; CCIM, pl.xv.14.

represented in paryāṅkāśana as in her abhiṣeka group at Mahābalipuram,<sup>1</sup> but she has rarely been shown in sculpture or in painting<sup>2</sup> either in padmāsana or kūrmāsana like the goddess on the Gupta coins noticed above. Since both these āsanas are associated with Śiva and his worship, and also as the pāśa happens to be one of the āyudhas of the Mother Goddess, the divinity on the Gupta coins represented in these two sitting postures cannot but be regarded as Durgā. In sculptural art also a few four-armed varieties of Durgā images appear in padmāsana or kūrmāsana.<sup>3</sup>

The fillet or cornucopiae, or the fillet and lotus, and sometimes only the fillet or the lotus, held in the hands of the goddess seated either on a throne or cross-legged on a lotus, seem to have been the criteria for identifying her as Lakṣmī.<sup>4</sup> But these emblems are also seen in the hands of the goddess seated on the back of a couchant lion on the reverse of gold coins of the King and Queen Type of Candragupta I,<sup>5</sup> the Lion-Trampler, Combatant Lion and Retreating Lion Types of Candragupta II,<sup>6</sup>

7. BHGGC, pl. xii.7-8.

8. EA, i(3), pl. xxiv.7, 10-11.

1. EA, i(3), p. 185, pl. xxvii.24.

2. Seated figure of Lakṣmī in padmāsana flanked by two elephants as in her abhiṣeka scene may be seen carved on an ivory comb from Bombay. (Birdwood, G.C.M:Op.cit, p.218, pl.62) but such a sitting position has not been prescribed in any iconographical text. A similar scene is also depicted on a circular terracotta seal from

and the Lion-Trampler Type of Kumāragupta.<sup>1</sup> The goddess so represented on these coins is no other than Durgā/Ambikā. It was obviously because of these emblems that Allan seems to have been in two minds about her identity, since he says, her lion-mount notwithstanding, that 'she is probably to be again identified as Lakṣmī or she may be Mahādevī (Durgā, Ambikā) whose vehicle is the lion'.<sup>2</sup> Smith has no doubt whatsoever in regard to her identity, and explains the cornucopiae as intended to emphasize the beneficent aspect of the goddess.<sup>3</sup> 'When she holds the cornucopiae,' he observes, 'and is seated on a lion, as in the case of the coins of Chandra Gupta I, it is obvious that the symbolism is intended to suggest both the terrible and beneficent aspects of the goddess, and it is immaterial whether we call her Parvati or Durga, or Lakshmi, for she partakes of the special characteristics of each'.<sup>4</sup>

On the King and Queen Type coins of Candragupta I, the goddess is seated on the lion in paryāṅkāśana<sup>5</sup> like

• Nalanda(MASI, No. 66, p. 52 (no. S.I. 812).

3. Infra, p. 516

4. Cf. our pl. x.

5. JRAS, 1889, p. 63, pl.i.1.

6. Ibid, p.87, pl. ii.5; pp.89-90, pl.ii.6.

• 1. JRAS, 1889, p. 106.

2. CCGD, p. lxxiii, pl. iii.1,2,8,9.

3. JRAS, 1889, p. 25.

4. Ibid, pp. 25-26.

5. CGE, p. 27, pl.i.8-10,12,13, vi.11; BHGGC, pl.i.1-10.

like Ardodochsho on a throne in Kuṣāṇa coins,<sup>1</sup> and also like the goddess who appears sitting on a throne or wicker stool<sup>2</sup> on the Standard, Battle-Axe and Archer Types of Samudragupta's<sup>3</sup> as well as on the Archer Type of Candragupta II's gold coins.<sup>4</sup> The Gupta die-cutters no doubt discarded the throne in favour of the lion, as Altekar rightly suggests, in order to represent the divinity as Durgā, who has this particular animal for her mount. The legends Licchavayah occurring with the lion-mounted goddess on the reverse and Kumāra Devī Śrī on the obverse of the King and Queen Type of Candragupta I's gold coins,<sup>6</sup> probably indicate that Durgā was the tutelary deity of the Licchavis of Vaiśālī.

Even a cursory examination of the Gupta coins having for their reverse device the goddess seated on a lion, with the latter either walking or couchant, cannot but reveal that the former sits on her mount in both padmāsana<sup>8</sup> and lalitāsana<sup>9</sup> as she does on the full-blown lotus. She

1. CGE, p. 28, pl. i.3.
2. Ibid, p. 48.
3. BHGGC, pls. i.11-15; ii.1-15; iii.1-15; v.6-14; vi.1-2.
4. Ibid, pls. vii.13, viii.1-15, ix.1-5.
5. CGE, p. 28. Altekar's identification of the goddess seating on a lion and holding a lotus in her hand on the coins of Candragupta II as Lakṣmī is not acceptable (CGE, p. 106), because as an emblem the lotus is not exclusive to Lakṣmī. (DHI, p. 133)
6. JRAS, 1889, p. 63.
7. CGE, p. 28.
8. Ibid, pl. vi.9-10; vii.2-3.
9. CGE, pp. 111-13, pls. vi.1-3, 5-7; vii.5, 10; xix.1; BHGGC, pls. vi.7-15, xvii.1-10, 12-14, xviii.1-4, xxix.1-15. our pl. xi.

also appears seated astride the lion on varieties B and G of the Lion Trampling Type, Class II, of Candragupta II's coins.<sup>1</sup> The sculptural representation of Durgā in padmāsana ~~of her~~ on her lion-mount as on these Gupta coin is extremely rare if not entirely unknown. In ~~her~~ bas reliefs depicting Durgā in lalitāsana, it is a throne rather than the lion on which she is seated, the animal being usually carved on the pedestal.<sup>2</sup> A four-armed image of the goddess, described as Siṃhavāhinī, now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, represents her facing, and in lalitāsana on the back of a couchant lion.<sup>3</sup> She differs from the goddess on the Gupta coins in that she is armed with a sword in her upper right hand and a shield in her upper left. Her lower right hand is making the boon-giving gesture, while with her left arm she encircles a child sitting on her drawn up left leg. The goddess sitting astride the lion on the Lion-slayer Type of Candragupta II's coins may be rightly regarded as the forerunner of the Siṃhavāhinī images of the Mother Goddess that we find in the art of medieval India, particularly in Bihar and Bengal.<sup>4</sup>

1. CGE, pp. 114 and 116, pl. vi.8 and 13; BHGGC, p. 204, pl. xvii.11.
2. Infra, pp. 502-03, 504.
3. DHI, p. 501, pl. xlii.4.
4. Ibid, pl. xliii.4.

The female figure seen standing on the reverse of the Combatant Lion (or Tiger-slayer) Type of gold coins of Kumāragupta and feeding a peacock,<sup>1</sup> and also performing the same act sitting on a wicker stool on his Horseman Type of coins,<sup>2</sup> has been identified as Kumārī Devī.<sup>3</sup> On the reverse of the Peacock Type of coins of the same rule the goddess appears riding the bird, while the obverse shows the king offering a fruit to a peacock.<sup>4</sup> The identification of the goddess as Kumārī is based apparently on her association with the peacock, the mount of Kumāra Kārttikeya, as well as on the fact that the king was named after that god. While we are inclined to regard the goddess riding on a peacock as Kumārī, the śakti of Kumāra and one of the Sapta-Matrīkās,<sup>5</sup> it is rather difficult to say if the standing and seated female feeding the bird may also be identified as such. It may be pointed out that the lotus held in her left hand does not necessarily indicate her divinity,<sup>6</sup> nor does the nimbus, because this also encircles the head of the queen on the obverse of the King and Queen Type coins of Candragupta I.<sup>7</sup>

1. CCGD, pp. xcii, 81-83, pls. xiv.14-17, xv.1-4.

2. Ibid, pp. xc, 71-76, pls. xiii.6-19.

3. JRAS, 1889, pp. 19-20.

4. Ibid, p. 105, pl. iii.1-2; CCIM, pp. 113-14, pl.xvi.3.

5. Supra, pp. 206-07

6. Supra, p. 407.

7. CCGD, pp. 8-11, pl. iii.1-15; cf. CGE, p.32ff., pl. ii. 8-13; BHGGC, p. 1ff., pl. i.1-10.

Peacock is no doubt the vāhana of Kārttikeya and therefor of his śakti Kumārī, but it is also one of the many birds domesticated as pets (bhavanaśikhī)<sup>1</sup> in ancient India.

With its gorgeous plumes of a thousand hues and its delightful dance,<sup>2</sup> this elegant bird seems to have been for ancient Indian nāyikās and wealthy ladies what pekes and poodles are for their Western counterparts of today. Thus in our opinion, the female, particularly the standing one feeding a peacock, may not represent the goddess Kumārī.

She is in all likelihood a consort of King Kumāragupta whose effigy occurs on the obverse. The figure seated on a wicker stool and feeding the peacock may also represent a queen but she may equally well be regarded as a variant<sup>3</sup> of Śrī-Lakṣmī and not Kumārī Devī as suggested by Smith.

For in sculptural art Lakṣmī is known to have been presented in association with animals (elephants) and birds,<sup>4</sup> the latter including peacocks.

In regard to the goddess riding a peacock on the Gupta coins it must be admitted that such a representation of Kumārī is unknown in Indian plastic art in which she appears with her vāhana either carved by her side or on the pedestal.<sup>5</sup> On some coins, the female feeding the peacock is seen standing on what looks

1. Hāla: Gāthā-Saptaśatī, p. xiv.

2. Meghadūtam, ~~7/32/~~ verse 32.

3. JRAS, 1889, p. 24.

4. EA, i(3), p. 181, pl. xxvi.21-22.

5. Supra, p. 206; cf. ocur pl. i.

like a crocodile or makara according to A.S. Altekar.<sup>1</sup> But such an animal is not the vāhana of either Kumārī or Lakṣmī, but of Gaṅgā. Allan thinks that the goddess on these coins (Tiger-slayer Type of Kumāragupta) stands on a lotus plant.<sup>2</sup> We agree rather with Allan than with Altekar because Kumārī has no connection with an aquatic animal; nor is Gaṅgā in any way associated with a peacock. Nor again do we know a goddess having association with both these creatures.<sup>3</sup> The object under the feet of the goddess does not seem to have any resemblance to a makara head, though, honestly speaking, it is also not distinct enough to be regarded as a lotus, as suggested by Allan.

It is not easy to determine with any exactitude the identity of all the female figures used as devices on Indian coins. As we have seen, the emblems placed in the hands of these deities are not of much help. That some of the figures are intended to represent Lakṣmī is undoubtedly suggested by the goddess sitting on a wicker stool, holding a cornucopiae in her <sup>left</sup> hand and scattering coins with her right.<sup>4</sup> The objects being scattered may also be grains, which would be quite characteristic of

- Lakṣmī
1. CGE, pp. 192-94, pl. xii.11-13; BHGGC, p.277ff., pl. xxvii.1-5.
  2. CCGD, p. 81.
  3. Unless, of course, we are prepared to regard her as Durgā, who like Artemis (MAR, i, p. 184) is also the 'Lady of the Beasts'.
  4. BHGGC, p. 173, pl. xiv.8; CGE, p. 94, pl. iv.8.

Lakṣmī since she is associated with agriculture.<sup>1</sup>

Our contention that many of the female figures identified as Lakṣmī (even when associated with a lion) do in reality represent the Mother Goddess is clearly substantiated by the standing female figure, facing, on the Chatra Type (Class II) coins of Candragupta II,<sup>2</sup> and the Elephant-Rider Type of Kumāragupta.<sup>3</sup> Altekar regards the goddess on the latter's coins as Lakṣmī, but is not sure about the identity of the one on the former's. Excepting that the goddess on the coins of Kumāragupta wears much jewellery and holds a cornucopiae in her left hand, she is identical, in so far as the manner of representation is concerned, with the female figure on the coins of Candragupta II. Except for the position of her hands in which she holds lotus and cornucopiae or noose, the goddess on the coins of both the rulers recalls in her strictly frontal presentation, heavy breasts, slim waist and wide hips, similar figures in terracotta from Sari Dehri<sup>4</sup> and Mathura,<sup>5</sup> and on the gold leaves from Lauriya.<sup>6</sup> Rather than hiding her physical charms and nudity, the transparent skirt worn by the goddess lends a special emphasis

1. Supra, p. 76.
2. BHGGC, p. 181ff., pl. xv.7-11.
3. Ibid, pp. 300-02, pl. xxx.1-3.
4. Supra, p. 378.
5. AAI, pl. vi.B.
6. Supra, p. 371.

to her *mons veneris*, particularly on the coins of Candragupta II. These should be enough to indicate that, like the Maurya, Śuṅga and Kuṣāṇa sculptors, the Gupta die-cutters were guided by the iconography of some Mother or fertility goddesses while executing these female figures on the coins.<sup>1</sup>

In support of our contention we may also draw attention to the goddess shown on the Gupta coins as seated in paryāṅkāsaṇa,<sup>2</sup> facing, on a throne or a lion, with both feet down. It is difficult to overlook the prominence deliberately given to the abdomen of the goddess by the artists, who have shaped it after the pūrṇaghāṭa or pitcher of plenty. The sitting posture of the goddess not only reveals this feature in stark reality, but shows its close resemblance to the lower half of the mutilated marble figure of a nude female,<sup>3</sup> whose 'distended belly with the ornamental belt around it very much resembles the decorated pūrṇaghāṭa.<sup>4</sup> Divine or human, the female

1. Cf. our pl. xii.
2. BHGGC, pls. i.1-10, 12-15, ii.1-15, v.6-14, vi.1-2, vii.1-viii.1-15. Notice in particular pls. vii.13 and viii.1-3, 11, 12, 14. Our pls. xiii.a-d.
3. Supra, p. 369-70.
4. El, xxix, p. 138. The pūrṇaghāṭa does not occur as a decorative element exclusively in Buddhist art. The 'pitcher of plenty' or "full vessel" as Coomaraswamy calls it, 'with its lotus sprays, represents the water and is a symbol of prosperity and abundance... The aspect of the form and its mode of occurrence in the early art seems to suggest that the "full vessel" may even have been intended, by itself, as an aniconic representation of the goddess' (EA, i(3), p. 183, fig. F). Coomaraswamy is fully borne out by the present-day

figures on the various types of Gupta coins as well as the coins of the rulers of Northern India down to the time of Śaśāṅka, the king of Karnaśuvarṇa in Bengal,<sup>1</sup> stand not only for the type of ideal feminine figure known as nyagrodha-parimaṇḍala,<sup>2</sup> but also appear to have concealed beneath their apparent sensuousness the sublime idea of motherhood, of fertility and abundance. Usually two-armed the goddesses nonetheless anticipate in their standing and sitting postures the bhaṅgas and āsanas<sup>3</sup> of the female divinities in subsequent Indian plastic art. Just as Artemis and Demeter, Ardochsho and Armandukhta anticipate some of the well-known aspects of the Mother Goddess on the Indo-Greek, Indo-Parthian and Kuṣāṇa coins, so did the lion-mounted divinity on the Gupta coins anticipate her Siṃhavāhinī form in subsequent Indian art.

custom of worshipping goddesses like Manasā, Lakṣmī and even Durgā, the Mother Goddess in their aniconic form when their images are replaced by an earthen ghaṭa filled with water and its mouth decorated with green mango twigs and leaves. The pūrṇaghaṭa thus indicates the nature of the goddess whom it symbolizes - the goddess of personifying abundance, fertility and prosperity.

1. CCGD, p. 147ff., pl. xxiii:4-16, xxiv:1-2.

2. DHI, pp. 373-74.

3. Two gold coins from Eastern Bengal have on their reverse the effigy of an eight-armed goddess. Her identity is as uncertain as the authorship of the coins. CGE, p. 336, pl. xix.B.1-2, also pp. 333-35.

S E A L S

Like those discovered in the Indus Valley sites, clay seals of a religious character unearthed at Bhita<sup>1</sup> and Nalanda<sup>2</sup> furnish important evidence of Mother Goddess worship in ancient India. The seals found in the former place are chiefly Śaiva, and not only are emblems like the liṅga, the trident-axe, the nandī-pāda and the bull visible on them, but also Śiva in his anthropomorphic form.<sup>3</sup> The female figure appearing on three of these seals in association with such Śaivite emblems as the bull and the crescent under its neck,<sup>4</sup> has therefore been justifiably identified as Durgā, the consort of Śiva.<sup>5</sup> Facing front with her right hand stretched downwards a little away from her body, and her left hand resting on the hip, the female figure on the Bhita seals, datable between the 2nd and 3rd century A.D.,<sup>6</sup> bears a striking resemblance to the goddess figures on early Indian coins.<sup>7</sup> These seals - as well as others showing the abhiṣeka of Lakṣmī,<sup>8</sup> and the terracotta plaque depicting in high relie

1. ASI, 1911-12, pp.

2. MASI, No. 66, pp. 26ff.

3. DHI, p. 182.

4. ASI, 1911-12, p. 51, pl. xviii.26,27.

5. DHI, p. 184.

6. ASI, 1911-12, p. 51.

7. Supra, p. 420.

8. ASI, 1911-12, pp. 52-54, pls. xviii.32, xix.35,42.

a female from whose headless trunk a lotus is seen coming out - all indicate the worship of the Mother Goddess at Bhita and the regions around it since great antiquity.

That the worship of Brahmanical deities, including that of the Mother Goddess was in existence in the regions around Nalanda during the late Gupta and early medieval periods, is conclusively proved by the discovery of a number of clay seals which are of considerable importance from the artistic and iconographic point of view. They are also of unusual interest, because their find place is Nalanda, which is principally associated with Buddhism. The occurrence of so many seals with Brahmanical deities, and their emblems stamped on them must naturally appear somewhat strange. Such devices being found mostly on th

1. Supra, p. 371.

2. DHI, p. 185.

3. The prevalence of Hinduism in and around the famous centres of Buddhism should not however be surprising. Notwithstanding its spectacular success and the active and warm patronage of powerful kings, Buddhism could never dislodge the older religion from its firm position in the society. This chiefly accounts for the survival of the ancient Hindu faith not only at Nalanda but also at Gaya and Benares. 'Buddhism', says Smith, 'was still a strong force at the time of Hiuen Tsang's visit in A.D. 637, and no doubt enjoyed a large share of favour under the Pala kings of Bengal, whose dominions included at times, at all events ... But even while Buddhism enjoyed the patronage of kings, the religion of the Brahman was always predominant, and Benares would seem to have been throughout the ages a Hindu Brahmanical city rather than a Buddhist one. In Hiuen Tsang's days, the followers of Siva, the great local deity, far outnumbered the adherents of Buddha, and Siva in many forms and under many names is still the deity whose worship characterizes Benares'. ERE, ii, p. 468.

seals of royalty, officials and village organisations, it may be presumed that the ruling chiefs as well as their subjects, living near and around the famous monastery, were Hindus. The seals of the monastery no doubt bear mostly the Buddhist creed and emblems on them. Yet, several of these have turned up with Brahmanical deities stamped on one side.<sup>1</sup> Thus a monastic seal of burnt reddish clay (S9.75) has on its left side a circular Buddhist device, while on the other side, within an oval space, is depicted 'a four-armed goddess, Durgā, seated on an animal which looks more like a buffalo than a lion'.<sup>2</sup> The goddess has a mace in her right hand, a sword in her lower right, and an indistinct object in her upper left and a lotus stalk in her lower left hand. The accompanying legend on the seal ends in grāmasya<sup>3</sup> which suggests her as being the tutelary deity of some village. But for her face, which is not

Not only Śiva, but Viṣṇu and the Mother Goddess are worshipped at Benares. For the worship of the Mother Goddess there since very ancient times see Skanda Purāna (Kāśīkhaṇḍe Uttarakhaṇḍa), lxi, lxx, lxxi-lxxii.

At Gaya, the locale of Buddha's sambodhi, numerous deities of the Brahmanical pantheon have been the object of worship from immemorial times. (See Montgomerie Martin : Eastern India, i, London, 1838, p.58ff.) The Mother Goddess seems to have been worshipped at Gaya from remote antiquity under the name of Gayeśvarī

1. DHI, p. 185.

2. MAI, No. 66, p. 39, pl. iii.b.

3. Ibid.

shaped like that of a boar, this goddess as well as the one (SI.547) having an identical vāhana and the accompanying legend Dvitrā-grāmasya (of the village Dvitrā)<sup>1</sup> could have been identified as Vārāhī. That many of the goddesses appearing on the Nalanda seals - manastic as well as Janapada - were village mothers is suggested by the legends on many of them ending in grāmasya or 'of the village'. A few of them, including the two buffalo-mounted ones, may even have been intended as Mātrkās, who were originally village goddesses.<sup>2</sup> Mention may be made in this connection of a six-armed deity seated on a bull (SI. 915),<sup>3</sup> and 'a seated four-armed goddess (S.9. R.92) whose right upper hand holds a trident, right lower hand has a noose, left upper lotus bud, left lower a vessel, tree on her left side'.<sup>4</sup> Because of the bull mount, the former may be identified as Māheśvarī, though as Banerjea observes, a six-armed image of this goddess must be regarded as unusual.<sup>5</sup> Banerjea seems inclined to regard the latter goddess as the Mātrkā Brahmāṇī because of her attributes,<sup>6</sup> e.g., four arms and kamandalu, but these may also constitute the attributes of the Mother Goddess.<sup>7</sup> It

1. MAI, No. 66, p. 42, pl. iii.1.
2. Supra, p. 234
3. MAI, No. 66, p. 43.
4. Ibid., p. 45.
5. DHI, p. 186.
6. Ibid.
7. Infra, p. 484.

would be much better in our opinion, particularly in the absence of a vāhana, to identify the goddess as a variant of Durgā. That would be all the more justified because we have on the Nalanda seals two four- and eight-armed images of the Mother Goddess with or without her lion mount. Thus the four-armed goddess (S.I. 305), seated on a lotus on the back of lion with the inscription Śrīmad-Deveśvarī (the auspicious mistress of the gods) <sup>1</sup> represents undoubtedly the Siṃhavāhinī aspect of Durgā <sup>2</sup> that we have noticed above on many Gupta coins. <sup>3</sup> The same aspect of the goddess has been unmistakably repeated on a number of Nalanda seals on which she appears as two- (S.9.R.92, S.I.800), <sup>4</sup> four- (S.9.R.1A, S.9.R.18), <sup>5</sup> and eight-armed (S.9.R.19, S.9.R.1A) <sup>6</sup>. A two-armed divinity seated with a child having a tree to her right (S.I. 836 807), <sup>7</sup> with the legend Amkoṭhasatta-grāmasya no doubt represents the Mother Goddess in her saumya aspect, the tree possibly indicating her association with agriculture, the chief occupation of the Indian villager. Perhaps the same two-armed deity appears on two other seals - sitting and flanked by a tree, with her right hand making the gesture

1. MAI, No. 66, p. 37.

2. DHI, p. 185. As Sarveśvareśvarī is an epithet of Durgā according to the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna (lxxxii.44), the legend Śrīmad-Deveśvarī may equally be regarded as one of her titles.

3. Supra, pp. 428-29.

4. MAI, No. 66, pp.47, pl.v.c, 53, pl. vi.d.

5. Ibid, pp. 48, 54.

6. Ibid, pp. 46, 48, pl. iv.j.

7. Ibid, p. 42, pl. iii.i.

of protection, and a trident held in her left hand (S.I. 668)<sup>1</sup>, and seated goddess flanked by a tree on another (S.I. 799, 829)<sup>2</sup> with a two-lined legend Gayā-viṣṣyādhikaranasya<sup>3</sup> written under a serpent. The seated figure of the goddess with a child on her left knee and attended by a serpent also appears on two of the seven different impressions on an oval piece of baked clay (S.I. 673)<sup>4</sup>. The divinity here is in all probability a variant of the Mother Goddess as she is worshipped in an agricultural community, or she may also be Manasā, the goddess of snakes, whose motherly aspect is sought to be emphasized by placing a child on her knee<sup>5</sup>. That the Mother Goddess was worshipped in the region of Nalanda in all her aspects, saumya as well as ghora, will be apparent from an examination of the seals, one of which depicts a four-armed skeleton figure of a female facing right, with a skull (kaṭāla) in her lower right hand, a goad in her upper right, a trident in her lower left and a dagger in her upper left hand. (S.9. R 1A)<sup>6</sup>. Śāstrī identifies her as Mahākālī,<sup>7</sup> but her description and attributes answer to the four-armed variety of Cāmuṇḍā,<sup>8</sup> who is one of the Mātrkās, and also an important manifestation of the Mother Goddess.<sup>9</sup>

1. MA SI, No. 66, p. 42, pl. iv.a.

2. Ibid, p. 50, pl. v.h.

3. For the association of the Mother Goddess with the serpent and its significance see MG, pp. 36-41.

4. MA SI, No. 66, p. 55, pl. vi.i.

Coins and seals furnish much valuable evidence about the worship of the Mother Goddess in ancient India. They also record her iconographic development - the attributes, āsanas, and the various modes of depicting her in standing attitudes. Not only the Mother Goddess, but other female divinities regarded as her emanations or whose attributes she has largely absorbed, also appear on the coins and seals. As we have already noticed, the early Indian coins with the effigies of various female divinities stamped on them enable us to determine the extent of foreign influence on the iconographic development of Lakṣmī and the Mother Goddess.<sup>1</sup> It would be sheer obstinacy not to admit that Lakṣmī had her prototype in Ardochsho, or that Demeter and Pallas Athene had something to do with the iconography of Umā and Durgā.

It must however be admitted that seals, as compared with coins, supply more iconographic details of the Mother Goddess. This in no way minimises the importance of the evidence furnished by the coins on which may be noticed some of the well-known standing and seated postures of the Mother Goddess.<sup>2</sup> As on the coins, she also appears

5. Supra, p. 241.

6. MAI, No. 66, p. 48, pl. v.d.

7. Ibid.

8. DHI, p. 187.

9. Supra, p. 229.

1. Supra, p. 413.

2. Supra, pp. 425-29; 433-34; also Appendix B.

on the seals with a lion for her vāhana, and in two examples from Nalanda (S.9,R.55 and S.9,R.144)<sup>1</sup>, she is seen seated on an animal resembling a crocodile or iguana (godhā)<sup>2</sup>, which is usually associated with her two- and four-armed variants.<sup>3</sup> The goddess appears on the coins mostly as two-armed, standing as well seated, but on the seals she is mostly seated and shown as two-, four- and eight-armed. In the last named variant, she sits on a lion with some of her well-known attributes - sword, lotu bell, snake, and noose in her hands,<sup>4</sup> two of them being shown in the abhaya and varada poses. As we have seen, the motherly aspect of the deity on the seals from Naland has been duly emphasized by a child placed on her knee, while her character as a grāmadevatā intimately associate with agriculture, has been suggested as much by the accompanying legends ending in grāmasya as by the tree or trees at her side.

1. MAI, No. 66, p. 47, pl. v.a.
2. DHI, p. 186.
3. Infra, pp. 479-80.
4. DHI, p. 186.

Chapter Five

:

THE MOTHER GODDESS

IN

HINDU ICONOGRAPHY

The Mother Goddess Durgā has numerous names and as many forms <sup>1</sup>. But the best known among her forms are those which represent her as Mahiṣamardinī or Mahiṣāsura-mardinī and Caṇḍī. Under her other names Umā, Gaurī and Pārvatī, the Devī is shown as performing tapas, as a bride being wedded to Śiva, or in an amorous mood seated by the side of her husband. Caṇḍī, one of her most popular names, obviously suggests her ghora aspect, but in reality the goddess under this epithet appears in plastic art as no more terrific than Uma-Gaurī-Pārvatī associated with her saumya character. Multi-armed as in the aspects mentioned above, seated images of the goddess with her lion-mount usually carved on the pedestal, also represent her in her saumya character which is indicated

1. It is not possible to examine here all the forms of Durgā. We shall therefore confine ourselves to her well-known forms only. The numerous forms of the goddess may best be studied in EHI, i(ii), pp. 338-72; Vratakhanda, pp. 79-102; SII, pp. 199 ff.

by the sukhāsana or lalitāsana in which she is portrayed in many examples of medieval sculptures found chiefly in Bengal.

DURGA AS THE SLAYER OF THE TITAN BUFFALO

By far the largest number of representations of Durgā relate to her ghora aspect in which she is shown as the slayer of the buffalo-demon (Mahiṣāsura). It is also the earliest<sup>1</sup> as well as the most popular, as testified by the large number of terracottas and stone images that have been found at the different archaeological sites. With certain modifications, this particular form of the Devī has come down as the accepted model for the clay images (kṣanika mūrtayah) in which she is worshipped nowadays in Bengal during the autumn.<sup>2</sup>

Banerjea's view that none of the Mahiṣamardinī images is anterior to the Gupta period<sup>3</sup>, has been rightly challenged by R.C. Agrawala who draws our attention to a terracotta plaque from Nagar, Rajasthan, depicting Durgā in the act of killing the buffalo-demon, and datable according to him, in the 1st century B.C. or 1st century

1. DHI, p.497.
2. Ibid; our plate xiv.
3. HCIP, iii, p.447.

A.D.<sup>1</sup> Agrawala's objection is sustained by as many as six Mahiṣamardinī statuettes in the Mathura Museum, one of them being four-<sup>2</sup>, and the rest six-armed, and all assignable to the Kuṣāṇa period. But by no means should these examples be taken as confirming the high antiquity that R.C. Agrawala claims for the Nagara plaque.<sup>3</sup> For it shows the Devī accompanied by the lion, a feature that is conspicuous by its absence not only in the Mathura Museum specimens, but also in the Mahiṣamardinī reliefs belonging to the Gupta and early medieval periods.<sup>4</sup> Should Agrawala's dating of the Nagara plaque be accepted, the date also of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, which is commonly believed to have inspired the Mahiṣamardinī concept of Durgā,<sup>5</sup> has of necessity to be shifted back by at least

1. LK, No. 1-2, p.73, pl. xviii.1.

2. CBIMA, p.57.

3. Elsewhere (JBR, xli(i), pp.2-3), R.C. Agrawala has claimed 1st century A.D. as the date of another plaque from Nagar, depicting a two-armed Durgā slaying the buffalo-demon. The right hand of the goddess is placed on the back of the animal whose tail is standing erect and whose forelegs are also raised. The Devī's right foot is placed on the head of her recumbent lion-mount. Besides jewellery, she wears a turban-like head-dress, a characteristic of Kuṣāṇa art. The goddess has a pleasing countenance. Like the other plaque from Nagara, the dating of this one also should be regarded as tentative.

4. Infra, p. 452 ff.

5. DHI, p.498.

three or four centuries.<sup>1</sup> Till that has been done, Agrawala's dating should be treated as purely tentative.

Many of the early Mahiṣamardinī reliefs are poorly executed and the goddess is represented in a summary fashion.<sup>2</sup> Yet as Banerjea observes, their study 'will

1. The Devī-Māhātmya section of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, which is the source of the Mahiṣamardinī form of Durgā cannot be later than the first quarter of the 7th century A.D. in the light of the Dadhimatī-mātā Inscription of the time of Druhlana, datable in the GE 289, equivalent to 608 A.D. and V.S. 665 (EI, xi, p.302). This epigraph as well as the terracotta and stone images of Durgā as Mahiṣamardinī, assignable to the Kuṣāṇa and Gupta periods, and her great popularity during the period from 550 to 750 A.D. as testified by the writings of Bāṇa (AI, iv, p.133), all combine to suggest that the MP together with its DM section, was written much earlier. This is also indicated by the utterance of Candanaka, a character in Śūdraka's Mṛcchakatika (tr. A.W. Ryder, p.104): May Śiva, Viṣṇu Brahmā, Three in one/Protect thee, and the Moon and the blessed Sun// Slay all thy foes as mighty Pārvatī/Slew Śumbha and Niśumbha fearfully//. The destruction of Śumbha and Niśumbha is one of the well-known exploits of Durgā described in the DM, and Śūdraka's reference to it may be taken as evidence of the existence of this section during his period, i.e., 1st century B.C - 1st century A.D. (Supra, p. ). We may therefore agree with those who argue an earlier date for the MP (HCIP, iii, p.298), though as we have seen, the evidence of Śūdraka's play and Mahiṣamardinī images datable in the Kuṣāṇa period would point to the high antiquity of the Purāna, viz., 1st to the 3rd century A.D. (Cf. Bhandarkar, D.R.: 'Epigraphic Notes and Questions', JBBRAS, xxiii, 1909, pp. 61ff; HD, v(ii), p.821; Pargiter, F.E.: The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, translated with notes, Calcutta 1904, pp.xiii-xx.)
2. LK, Nos. 1-2, p.73.

enable us to throw some light on the developmental aspect of the iconmic motif'.<sup>1</sup> In the Nagara plaque,<sup>2</sup> the Devi is four-armed, and her left foot is placed on the recumbent lion. Her lower right hand is placed on the buffalo and in her upper right hand she holds a triśūla. Armed with such āyudhas as triśūla and spear, the goddess also appears as the slayer of the buffalo-demon in the Mathura Museum sculptures.<sup>3</sup> In as many as twenty terracotta plaques from Ahichchatra, the goddess, usually four-armed is seen 'engaged in subduing a buffalo standing on its hind legs with head uplifted in front of the goddess and body stretched across her legs. In the upper hands she holds attributes, her lower right hand is placed on the back of the animal and the left swung around its neck',<sup>4</sup> obviously half overpowering it before plunging into its body the śūla held in her upper right hand. Identical rough representations of the goddess may also be noticed on two reliefs of local sandstone unearthed at Bhita by Marshall.<sup>5</sup> On the superior specimen (No. 14) the goddess is four-armed (not two-armed as suggested by Banerjea),<sup>6</sup>

1. DHI, pp.497-98.

2. LK, Nos. 1-2, p.73.

3. CBIMA, p.57. The Bikaner Museum has in its collection a Mahiṣamardini image in terracotta that may be assigned to the Gupta period. (LK, No. 8, p.55, pl.xxvi.23)

4. AI, iv, p.133, pl.xlvi.B.

5. ASI, 1911-12, p.86, pl.xxxi.13,14.

6. DHI, p. 498.

holding an indistinct object in her upper right hand, and a shield in her corresponding left, while her lower left hand is pressing down the haunches of the buffalo as she pierces its neck with the śūla in her lower right.

Influence of the Kuṣāṇa art idiom still lingers on the round face and the low round cap of the goddess on these plaques which may be placed in the early Gupta period.<sup>1</sup>

The practice of representing the ~~buffalo~~ goddess as the slayer of a buffalo, ostensibly personifying the demon of that name (Mahiṣāsura), appears to have continued as late as the 8th century A.D. It was not before the 6th century A.D. that we find the asura emerging in his human form out of the body of the animal, or fighting the goddess assuming a form that is half human and half animal (buffalo-headed). The Devī-Māhātmya no doubt refers to both the animal and human forms of the demon,<sup>2</sup> but his destruction in his former aspect in all probability represents the survival of a custom relating to the

1. A roughly carved female figure on the lower part of a stone from the monastery site at Sarnath with one hand on the back of an animal(buffalo?), and with the other hand apparently spearing it, may after all represent Durgā as Mahiṣamardini(ASI, 1907-08, p.48), for we have from the same place another relief whose Brahmanical character is impossible to mistake. She is no other than Manasā, four-armed and seated cross-legged above a ghaṭa from which are issuing two snakes, ~~one/on/each side/of/the/goddess~~ There are two rows of four snakes one on each side of the goddess, the row on the right being topped by the figure of Gaṇeśa(Ibid, p.61, pl. xix.C). The two plaques may be assigned to the early medieval period.

2. MP, lxxxiii.20-28, 32-39.

propitiation of the grāmadevatā with buffalo sacrifice in some remote antiquity.<sup>1</sup> The animal is also one of the many whose blood is favoured by the goddess,<sup>2</sup> some of whose appellations describe her as Mahiṣāsuranāśinī (destroyer of the buffalo-demon) and Mahiṣasrkpriyā (fond of Mahiṣa's blood)<sup>3</sup> as well as Mahiṣaghñī (the killer of of the buffalo)<sup>4</sup>. We are therefore inclined to think that the worship of Durgā was combined with some seasonal sacrifice, and the story of her fight with the demon in buffalo form was invented later on to fit in with the existing custom.<sup>5</sup>

1. HRY, p.57.
2. BVP, (PrakṛtikḶh), liv.89ff; KP, lxvii.3,11.
3. Mbh, iv.6.15, vi.23.8.
4. Sabdakalpadruma, iii, p.1449. Other epithets of the goddess in recognition of her destruction of the buffalo-demon are : Mahiṣamathanī, Mahiṣāsuraḡhātini, Mahiṣasuramardinī, and Mahiṣāsurasudānī (SPM, p.255).
5. HRY, p.58. In support of her observation, Underhill mentions an incident that took place at Nasik, Mahārāṣṭra, in 1909 about dropping the usual buffalo sacrifice to Durgā during her autumnal worship but which was made following the outbreak of cholera attributed to its omission. 'A special sacrifice was made at the Holi festival and representations of the buffaloes' heads together with obscene words were painted on walls all over the town. This points to the sacrifice being unconnected with either Durgā or Rāma, but with the propitiation of older village gods! (Ibid). In their original non-Aryan set-up, both Śiva and Skanda appear to have been worshipped with buffalo sacrifice. This is indicated by such title of Śiva as Mahiṣaghna or slayer of of the buffalo (Mbh, xiii.14.16). Skanda is also credited with the destruction of various demons, including Mahiṣāsura. (Mbh, vii.166.16, viii.5.57, ix.45-46.)

Representations of Durgā as the slayer of the titan in his buffalo form occurs in an early relief on the facade of the Candragupta II Cave at Udayagiri, Madhya Pradesh.<sup>1</sup> The relief is remarkable not because the goddess is twelve-armed and holding sword and shield, bow and arrows, club discus and thunderbolt,<sup>2</sup> but because with two of her upper hands she is stretching over her own head an iguana or godhikā<sup>3</sup> 'which plays a prominent part in the mythology of the goddess Caṇḍī and Kālaketu in the medieval Maṅgala kāvyas of Bengal'.<sup>4</sup> Though much damaged, the sculpture is a lively composition in the fine tradition of Gupta art, and shows the goddess pressing down the head of the demon with her right foot and lifting its hind part by the heels.<sup>5</sup> That the mode of killing the demon by the Devī as described in verse 37 of Chapter lxxxiii of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna<sup>6</sup> was known to the artists all over India, is not only clear from the present example and those noticed

1. DHI, p.498, pl.xli.4.
2. ASR, x, p.50.
3. DHI, p.498.
4. Ibid; cf. Dvija Madhava: Op.cit, pp. 41ff.
5. ASR, x, p.50.
6. Evamuktvā samutpatya sārūḍhā taṃ mahāsuram/ Pādenākramya kanṭhe ca sūlenainamatādayat//

above, but also from another Mahiṣamardini relief, datable in the 6th century A.D., from the Śiva temple at Bhumara, Madhya Pradesh.<sup>1</sup> Here the goddess is four-armed with her left foot on the head of the buffalo, and she has plunged into its body a trident held in her upper right hand. In her corresponding left hand is a shield, and with her ~~lower~~ lower left hand she grasps the tail of the animal, half raising it from the ground. To the same period also belongs a relief in Cave I at Badami,<sup>2</sup> giving 'a pretty picture of Maheśāsuri or Pārvatī as the destroyer of the buffalo-demon Maheśa, 4 feet 7 inches high, four-armed, holding up the buffalo like a pig by the tail while the spearhead - half the size of the buffalo's - is through the neck. She holds the discus or chakra in one of her right hands, and the shankh or conch in the corresponding left. In the air above each shoulder is a pair of floating figures - male and female - the males holding some offering'.<sup>3</sup> In a 7th century (650 A.D.) relief in the Rāmeśvara Cave (No. XXI),<sup>4</sup> Elura, the goddess as Mahiṣamardini may be seen subduing the buffalo by holding its

1. Banerji, R.D.: 'The Temple of Śiva at Bhumara', MAST, No. 16, p.13, pl.xiv.b.
2. Banerji, R.D.: 'The Bas Reliefs of Badami', MAST, No. 25, pp.2,4.
3. ASWI, i, p.16, pl.xix.1; our pl.xv.
4. Kramrisch, St. : Indian Sculpture, Calcutta, 1933, p.180, pl.xxix.75; AIA, pp.92-93, pl.234.

snout with her lower left hand and placing her right foot on its back. As in the previous example, she is four-armed, the upper right hand which presumably held the trident being broken. There is a sword in her other right hand and a shield in her upper left. The two male warriors flanking the main figures are asuras, and the scene probably depicts the stage preparatory to the decapitation of the buffalo by the Devī and the emergence of the Mahiṣāsura in human form out of its carcass. There is an almost identical representation of the Devī in an inscribed image in the round from Chamba State.<sup>1</sup> Datable in the 8th century on palaeographic grounds,<sup>2</sup> this image of the goddess who is worshipped under the name of Lakṣaṇā, appears to have been made by the workman Guggu on the orders of Meruvarman, one of the early rulers of Chamba.<sup>3</sup> Exhibiting a high technique but not much artistic merit,<sup>4</sup> the image represents the goddess as a handsome woman, four-armed, and trampling under her right foot the head of a prostrate buffalo whose hind parts she has raised up by the tail<sup>5</sup> held in one of her left hands.

1. ASR, xiv, p.111; DHI, p.498.

2. ASI, 1902-03, p.242.

3. ASI(NIS), xxxvi, pp.138-42, pl.vii.b; cf. ASI, 1902-03, p.243.

4. ASI, 1902-03, p.240.

5. ASR, xiv, p.111.

In one of her right hands there is a trident which is stuck into the buffalo's neck. In the remaining left hands, the goddess holds a sword and a bell respectively. Mentioned as Bhadrakālī in the vaṁśāvalī (genealogy) of the Chamba kings, and widely known as Bhagavatī, the goddess Lakṣaṇā is thus no other than Durgā-Pārvatī portrayed here as Mahiṣamardinī.<sup>1</sup>

The destruction of Mahiṣāsura in his animal form by the goddess Caṇḍikā or Durgā has been a theme of literary compositions in the early medieval periods<sup>2</sup> as well as of plastic art. But, unlike the examples cited above, the goddess appears in many medieval reliefs destroying the buffalo-shaped demon accompanied by her vāhana, the lion. The Mahiṣamardinī panel in the Brāhmaṇical cave at Aihole,<sup>3</sup> datable in the 6th or 7th century A.D., shows Durgā as nimbate and eight-armed, piercing with the śūla in one of her right hands the twisted neck of the buffalo.<sup>4</sup> In her other right hands she has a cakra, a vajra (or sūcī?), and the remnants of a sword. In two of her upper hands she has a bell and a conch, and the rest are missing. The twisted neck of the buffalo indicates the great force with

1. ASI, 1902-03, p.241.

2. SPM, pp.252-55, 293-326.

3. DHI, p.499; AIA, p.84.

4. ASWI, v, pl.xliii.4; AIA, pl.107.

which the goddess is pressing its head against her left thigh with one of her missing left hands. Her left foot is still visible on the back of the animal, one of whose forelegs is raised from the ground. The goddess wears a much carved mukuta on her head and a considerable amount of jewellery on her person, including a garland that hangs from her shoulders and reaches as far as her navel. On the right of the Devī appears the lion, a huge grin lighting up its face. He is far from a disinterested onlooker as Banerjea suggests,<sup>1</sup> but looks as if he is eagerly waiting for his mistress to finish off the buffalo for his dinner.

As seen above, the mode of representing the demon in the shape of a buffalo belongs to an early tradition that continued upto the 8th century A.D. Numerous examples in terracotta and stone amply attest the popularity of the theme which conforms to the Purānic account of the demon's struggle with the Devī,<sup>2</sup> but is not supported by any iconographical text. But already in the early medieval sculptural art in India, the mode of depicting the Devī's fight with the asura seems to have undergone a few

1. DHI, p.499.

2. Supra, pp.446-50.

important changes. Thus an Elura panel (Kailāsa Rock temple, Cave No. XVII), datable in the 8th century A.D., and illustrative of the changed mode, 'shows the eight-armed Devī riding on her lion mount vigorously attacking Mahiṣāsura, a full-scale man of her stature with buffalo horns; other demons, some fallen and others still fighting, are shown below, and in the two uppermost rows in the panel are the divine onlookers of the fight'.<sup>1</sup> On the outside of the north wall of the great mandapa of the Kailāsa temple is another relief that dramatically represents the climax of the Devi's struggle with the asura<sup>2</sup> whose human head is topped by a pair of buffalo horns. His sword still clasped in his right hands, the asura sits completely exhausted on the ground, and the victorious goddess, who has dismounted from her lion, has her left foot planted on the shoulder of her adversary and her right on another asura whom her vāhana has seized by the head. The Devī's main right hand holds the śūla which is poised to strike at the demon's breast, and her corresponding left holds him by one of the horns. Attributes held in the other arms of the goddess are similar to those noticed in the preceding example. In both the reliefs,

1. DHI, p.499, pl.xli.2; ASWI, v, pp.28-29, pl.iv.7. The goddess does not sit astride on the lion in this relief but sideways with her left leg drawn up and the right dangling.
2. ASWI, v, p.28, pl.iv.6; AEAC, p.189, pl.cvi(left).

the asura seems to have been more modestly clothed than the goddess, whose nudity has been hidden behind a narrow strip of cloth with one end hanging between her thighs. Much more impressive must we pronounce the panel in the Mahiṣāsura Maṇḍapa at Mahābalipuram (Māmallapuram) containing the scene of the Devī's fight with the Mahiṣāsura. Characterized as the most animated piece of Hindu sculpture,<sup>2</sup> this early 7th century relief<sup>3</sup> represents the goddess as a young amazon, bestriding her mount, the lion and rushing at the clumsy demon who is greater in stature strength than all the gods<sup>4</sup>. The eight-armed goddess is shown<sup>5</sup> in the act of shooting arrows at the Mahiṣāsura with her two main hands. In her remaining six hands are a cakra, a ghaṇṭa, and a khadga to the right, and a śaṅkha a pāśa and an indistinct object to the left. A quiver is visible over her left shoulder. A host of dwarfs, possibly the ganas of Śiva, are acting as her auxiliaries. One behind her, holds a parasol over her head; another at her side, waves a fly-whisk (cāmara). The remainder carry various weapons - usually a round buckler and a carved sword - but one of them in the foreground is armed with bow and arrow. Distinct from the dwarfs is a female figure

1. ASI, 1910-11, p.55, pl.xxix.a; our pl.xvi; CTI, pp.145-47.
2. Dr. Babington, quoted in CTI, p.146.
3. AIA, p.413.
4. Ibid, p.91, pls. 284-285.
5. ASI, 1910-11, p.55; AEAC, p.189.

fallen on her knees in front of the lion and lifting up a sword in her right hand. Opposite the goddess stands the buffalo-headed demon, a colossal figure, wearing a conical crown above which is a parasol that indicates his royal rank. He holds a heavy mace in his two hands and is girt with a sword. His discomfiture at the hands of the war-like Devī is writ large in his attitude, which is apparently one of beating a retreat. Of the seven demons representing his army, two are prostrate on the ground, one slain and the other wounded and holding up his right hand in a gesture of imploring mercy. One of the ~~remaining~~ remaining asuras is in flight and the rest seem to offer but a feeble resistance to the onslaught of Durgā and her attendants. Particularly noticeable in this sculptured tableau is the representation of the asuras with the exception of the Mahiṣāsurā in purely human form.

In sharp contrast to the abovementioned relief depicting a breath-taking episode of Indian mythology, we have from the mallet and chisel of the artists of Mahābalipuram a few representations of Durgā in which she appears as more full bodied than in her amazonian aspect, but wears on her divine face a sweet and serene expression in her hour of triumph which she celebrates by gracefully standing on the severed buffalo-head of the demon.<sup>1</sup> She also

1. AIA, p. 100.

appears four-armed and samapādasthānaka on a double lotus in the back wall of the cella of the Mahābalipuram temple known as Draupadī's Rath, and also in the lower cave temple at Trichinopoly.<sup>1</sup> In both the reliefs the goddess has a cakra in her upper right hand and a śaṅkha in her corresponding left.<sup>2</sup> The lower right hand of the goddess in the Mahābalipuram relief is raised in varada mudrā while the corresponding left is placed on the hip. The goddess in the Trichinopoly cave temple holds a fruit in her lower right hand and her ~~upper~~ left is placed on the hip as in the Mahābalipuram example. Pot-bellied dwarfs attend on the goddess in the example from Draupadī's Rath, and of the kneeling figures in the foreground of this composition, one is shown in the act of cutting off his hair, presumably as an offering to the goddess.<sup>3</sup> The act of hair-cutting has also been repeated in the Trichinopoly relief, and in a similar representation of the goddess in the Varāha Maṇḍapa at Mahābalipuram.<sup>4</sup>

1. ASI, 1910-11, p.53, pl.xxviii.c,d.
2. The upper left hand of the goddess in Draupadī's Rath is broken.
3. ASI, 1910-11, p.53. The custom of offering one's own hair or that of one's offspring to a god or goddess in fulfilment of some vow is very old and survives even now in Bengal and Rajasthan. Mention may be made of the temple of Sacīyā Mātā at Osia or Osian, Jodhpur, Rajasthan, where people bring their children for the tonsure ceremony. The goddess in this temple answers to the description of Camuṇḍā. (ASI, 1908-09, pp.103,109). Durgā under the name of Kālī is the recipient of hair-offering at North Vikrampur, Dacca. It is significant to note that the village where her shrine is situated is named Cāncuratalā (cāncura=hair). Gupta, Yogendra

The above mode of representing Durgā, four-armed and standing on a lotus with her lower left hand placed on the hip (kaṭihastā), seems to be as exclusive to South India as her almost similar images in which the severed buffalo-head of the demon replaces the lotus pedestal.<sup>1</sup> The relief in the niche in the back wall of Draupadī's Rath shows the goddess in samapādasthānaka on a buffalo-head.<sup>2</sup> In a similar composition carved in a niche in the north wall of the ardhamandapa of the Subrahmaniya temple at Tanjore,<sup>3</sup> the goddess 'holds a flaming wheel in the upper right and a flaming conch in the upper left hand. The other right hand is raised in the attitude of imparting protection (abhayamudrā). The second left hand is placed on the hip.'<sup>4</sup> In another relief from Mahābalipuram now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston,<sup>5</sup> the goddess stands on the buffalo-head not in the stiff samapādasthānaka, but in the graceful tribhaṅga attitude with her right leg slightly bent at the knee and her lower left hand placed on the hip. She is eight-armed, but her lower right hand, which must have originally indicated varada mudrā, is broken. In her other right hands she has a cakra

1. Natha: Vikrampurur Itihāsa, Calcutta, 1909, p.380.  
4. ASI, 1910-11, p.53.

1. ASI, 1910-11, p.56, note 1.  
2. Ibid, p.53, pl.xxviii.b.  
3. Ibid, p.53, note 3.  
4. Ibid.  
5. AIA, p.413, pl.288; our pl.xvii.

an indistinct object (a rosary?) and a khadga. A śaṅkha and a kheṭaka can be easily recognized in two of her left hands, the broken object in the third hand being a bow, as is indicated by what looks like a quiver (tūṅira) behind her right shoulder. There is a trident carved on the back of the slab.<sup>1</sup>

In all the South Indian variants illustrated above, the goddess wears much jewellery on her person including a karanda-mukuta on her head. Her huge globular breasts, pressing against each other, are held in place by means of a breast band. In the standing varieties she appears to be clad in a transparent skirt, but her nudity is actually hidden behind row upon row of stringed jewellery (mekhalā, kāñcidāma) suspended from her waist and going round her wide hips. In some of the reliefs she wears what may be characterized as a loin cloth, an end of which hangs between her thighs.<sup>2</sup> The scant clothing no more serves its purpose than the jewelled or plain girdles around the massive hips of the voluptuous female donors in the 2nd century sculptured panels on the Caitya facade at Karli.<sup>3</sup>

1. There is another relief containing a similar representation of Durgā attended by kneeling devotees and others in the rock-cut Varāha temple at Mahābalipuram. (EHI, i(ii), pl.ci). The west wall of the Siva temple at Kandiyyar contains a panel that shows Durgā as eight-armed but her head and shoulders missing, standing on the head of a buffalo and leaning against her vāhana, the lion. (LK, No.5, p.64, pl.xxviii.5).
2. Notice particularly the Devī's clothing in ASWI, v, pl. iv.6,7; AIA, pl.288; EHI, i(ii), pl.ci.
3. AIA, pp.72, 250, pls. 80-83.

The number of her arms and the emblems held in them - śaṅkha, cakra, śūla, dhanuḥ, bāṇa, khadga, kheṭaka, pāśa, vara and abhaya - as well as her physical characteristics, such as her well-formed body, ample bosom, stout thighs and wide hips, all conform to the requirements of iconography.<sup>1</sup> The Śaivite association of the Devī (not necessarily suggestive of her being the wife of Śiva) is indicated by the trident carved on the back of the slabs. Her lion mount too appears in these compositions, not at her feet, but at the top corner of the reliefs.<sup>2</sup>

The representation of Mahiṣāsura in a human figure with the head of a buffalo in the Mahābalipuram relief is unusual, for it substantially <sup>(differs)</sup> from the convention in which he is shown emerging in human form out of the decapitated carcass of the buffalo.<sup>3</sup> Yet the unconventional mode appears to have persisted in South India for quite some time as testified by 'a very fine sculpture from Mukhed, district Vanden, Hyderabad State ... in which the eight-armed goddess is shown plunging her trident in the breast of the buffalo-headed demon whom she holds down with one

1. EHI, i, (ii), pp. 341-42.

2. Ibid, pls. c, ci.

3. ASI, 1910-11, p. 56. In none of the iconographical texts is it recommended that the demon should be shown as buffalo-headed human figure. Nor do the Purāṇas describe the asura in this manner.

of her left hands'.<sup>1</sup> Not only in the South, but in Eastern India as well, this mode of representing the asura seems to have appealed to the imagination of the artists. In a relief in the Vaital Deul at Puri, dated C. 1000 A.D.,<sup>2</sup> the Orissan sculptor has depicted with extreme dynamism and dramatization the scene of Devī's triumph in a manner that is identical to the Mukhed example. Set in a rectangular stone frame that is rich in foliate carvings, the asura in a human body but with a buffalo-head is shown breaking and sinking down before the powerful eight-armed goddess who has her right foot planted upon his shoulder, and is firmly pressing back his muzzle with one of her left hands, while with a long staff-like trident in her right hand she is stabbing his breast with all her might.<sup>3</sup> Of the various emblems in her other hands, mention may be made of a short weapon pointed at both ends (sūcī?) held in one of her right hands, and in one of her left a serpent (nāgapāśa) with its fangs buried into the snout of the buffalo-headed demon. The lion-mount of the goddess is near her left foot, and is shown mauling with his teeth and fore paws the right arm of the Mahiṣāsura. The present panel, it may be noted,

1. ASI, 1910-11, p.56, note 1; Kramrisch, St.: Op.cit, p.19 pl.xlviii.110; our pl. xviii.
2. AIA, p.93.
3. Ibid, pl. 326.

is the only one of its kind in Eastern and Northern India

The nearest approach to the conventional representation of the asura fighting against Durgā, perpetuated in the latter's kṣanika images, may also be seen at Elūra on the entrance into the court of the Kailāsa temple.<sup>1</sup> This pedimented panel depicts the struggle of the eight-armed goddess with the asura, who has been shown here in human form between the body and the head of the buffalo.<sup>2</sup> In the conventional Mahiṣamardinī images, the asura is however shown as emerging in human form out of the trunk of the buffalo. Being in complete accord with the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna description<sup>3</sup> as well as with the iconographical texts,<sup>4</sup> Mahiṣamardinī images of this type are fairly numerous, as testified by the available examples, dating from the medieval period.<sup>5</sup> In the absence of a dated specimen, it is not possible to state precisely the period when the asura came to be represented in this manner.

In so far as the number of arms are concerned, the Mahiṣamardinī images fall mainly into three classes.<sup>6</sup> Not

1. ASWI, v, p.29.

2. Ibid.

3. lxxxiii.38-39.

4. EHI, i(ii), App.C, pp.109-12; Vratakhaṇḍa, pp. 88-89.

5. In South India, the Purāṇic account of the Devī's triumph over the demon has found expression in a beautiful example of plastic art. See AIA, pl.334; EHI, i(ii), pls. cii.1, ciii. The theme was popular not only in India proper, but also in Java. See ASI, 1910-11, p.55; AIA, p.104, pl.502; Anderson, J: Op.cit, pp.356-57, 359, 360-61; HB, i, p.453.

6. EISMS, p. 116.

only the eight-armed type, but contrary to what R.D. Banerji thinks,<sup>1</sup> the ten-armed variety also seems to have been very common in the medieval period. 'In the early specimens discovered in Bengal, we already meet with the developed eight- or ten-armed Devī fighting vigorously with the demon issuing out of the decapitated trunk of the buffalo'.<sup>2</sup> Ten-armed representations of the goddess destroying the demon Jālandhara (or Śumbha or Niśumbha?) as well as Mahiṣa may be seen among the sculptures at the Mātā Devī or Vajreśvarī Temple at Bhavan in the Kangra Valley.<sup>3</sup> Also ten-armed is another image from Hansi, representing Durgā according to the Sāstras, 'as a beautiful female with her right leg resting on the buffalo demon who is being attacked by her lion from behind'.<sup>4</sup> Ten-armed Mahiṣamardinī images are also as common in Bengal and other parts of Northern India as are those of the eight-armed type.<sup>5</sup> Among other sculptures found at Dalmi on the Suvarṇarekhā, in the west of the Manbhum district, is a ten-armed Mahiṣamardinī image, now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.<sup>6</sup> In pratyālīḍha pose the goddess

1. EISMS, p.116.

2. HB, i, p.453.

3. ASI, 1922-23, p.91, pl.v.c;cf. ASI, 1905-06, p.16.

4. ASI, 1922-23, p.93.

5. DHI, p.497.

6. HB, i, p.453; AMTSI, ii, p.40, pl.ccxcii.

stands with her right and left legs resting on the lion and the buffalo body of the demon respectively. In her ten hands she carries triśūla (piercing the neck of the demon), kheṭaka, taṅka, śara, khadga, dhanuḥ, paraśu, aṅkuśa, nāgapāśa and sūcīmudrā. As many as four images of the ten-armed type have been found in North Bengal, and quite an appreciable number in other parts of the province. Ten-armed Mahiṣamardini images have also been reported from Khiching and Mayūrabhañja in Orissa, and also from Mathura in Uttar Pradesh.

Mahiṣamardini images of the eight-armed type are more common than the twelve-armed class. This is indicated by the single metal image of the latter type discovered so far in Eastern India. Also rare are Mahiṣamardini images of sixteen-, eighteen- and twenty-armed types. The

1. HB, i, p.453.
2. Ibid.
3. CVRM, pp.14-15.
4. IBBS, pp.195-98, pl.lxvi.
5. ASI, 1929-30, p.223, p.xliv.e.
6. ASM, i, p.lxxiv, fig.35. The ten-armed images are worshipped in Mayūrabhāñja under the name of Mahālakṣmī.
7. CBIMA, p.57(No.541). Stone and metal images of Durgā, shown as ten-armed, are still in worship in the districts of Midanapur (West Bengal), (Vasu, Yogeshchandra: Medinipurer Itihāsa, Calcutta, 1921, pp.327,335), and Dacca. (Gupta, Yogendra Natha: Vikrampurur Vivarana, Dacca, 1919, p.261).
8. For eight-armed specimens see CVRM, p.14; IBBS, pp.196-97, pl.lxv.b; ASI, 1923-24, p.75; ASI, 1925-26, p.111; ASI, 1906-07, p.196, pl.lxxiv.c; ASI(NIS), xxxvi, p.150; ASI, 1909-10, p.22, pl.vii.c; ASM, i, pp.lxxii-lxxiii; fig.34; Kramrisch, St:Op.cit, p.194, pl.xlii.99.
9. EISMS, p.116, pl.liii.c.

relief of Nava-durgā from Porsha, Rajshahi, datable in the 11th century, is an extremely rare type<sup>1</sup>. It consists of nine figures of Mahiṣamardinī, one represented in the centre with eight other miniature Mahiṣamardinīs arranged around it - five in the top part of the stela, two on either side, and one on the middle face of the saptaratha pedestal.<sup>2</sup> One of the right hands bearing originally the trident as well as the head of the principal eighteen-armed image are missing; and she holds anticlockwise in her remaining right hands sword, arrow, discus, mace, stick, chisel, thunderbolt and elephant's goad. In her normal left hand she holds the tuft of hair of the demon issuing from the trunk of the buffalo, and in others has shield, bow, tarjanī mudrā, flag, damaru, mirror, bell and noose. She stands in the pratyālīḍha attitude with her right foot on the lion and the left on the decapitated body of the buffalo whose severed head is lying on the pedestal. The eight miniature Mahiṣamardinīs are all sixteen-armed, having all the emblems of the principal image except the stick and the damaru.<sup>4</sup> The whole composition fairly corresponds to the description of the goddess Nava-durgā.

1. VRS-AR, 1936-38, p.24, fig.2.

2. HB, i, p.453, pl.xiii.35.

3. Cf. AP, 1.7-9.

4. VRS-AR, 1936-38, p.24; cf. AP, 1.9-12.

found in the Bhaviṣya Purāna,<sup>1</sup> according to which the central figure is named Ugracaṇḍā, and the rest Rudracaṇḍā, Pracacaṇḍā, Caṇḍogrā, Caṇḍanāyikā, Caṇḍā, Caṇḍavatī, Caṇḍarūpā and Aticaṇḍikā. Notwithstanding the violent attitude in which the nine figures have been depicted as well as the multiplicity of their hands, the entire composition has a dignified balance.<sup>2</sup> Twenty-armed Mahiṣamardinīs have not been found in any part of India, but we have from Betna, Dinajpur, East Pakistan, 'the unique stone image of a thirty-two handed goddess fighting with demons'.<sup>3</sup> In spite of its face and some of the hands being sadly mutilated, the image 'is yet of great iconographic importance as no such image or its corresponding text is known to us'.<sup>4</sup> The demon Mahiṣa being absent from the composition, the image cannot be described as a new type of Mahiṣamardinī though, as Banerjea points out, its general pose is somewhat similar.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the

1. HB, i, pp.453-54; VRS-AR, 1936-38, pp.24-26; cf. EHI, i(ii), pp.356-57 and App.C, pp.114-15 and note 3. on p.115; Vratakhaṇḍa, pp.84-85; KP, lix.21-22.
2. HB, i, p.454. In the Chidambaram temple, there is an eighteen-armed Mahiṣamardinī image that may be taken as the solitary example from South India. (Balasubrahmanya S.R.: 'Labelled Sculptures of the Western Tower of Chidambaram Temple', IK, No.9, p.29, pl.ix.3). An eighteen-armed miniature Mahiṣamardinī image is still in worship at Panighat in the Khulna district. It is much water worn and reported to have been retrieved from the nearby river in the 18th century. The demon appears in this relief in human form. (Mitra, Satish Chandra: Loc.cit, pp. 163-68 and plate). According to the iconographical texts, when Durgā is represented as Bhadrakālī, she should have as many as eighteen arms and be shown as a handsome woman though in ālīdhāsana on a chariot drawn by four lions. (EHI, i(ii), pp.357-58; Vratakhaṇḍa, p.39)

composition has certain features in common with the much animated Mahiṣamardinī reliefs from Elura and Mahābalipuram that we have described above. These are : a chatra held by a female attendant over the head of the goddess; four pot-bellied āsurās, and on the top part of the stela miniature figures of divinities like Gaṇeśa, Sūrya, Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahmā.<sup>1</sup> This multi-armed figure undoubtedly represents Durgā as the destroyer of demons though not in her Mahiṣamardinī aspect. In the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, she is found to destroy besides the Mahiṣāsura a number of

Such an image has not however been found anywhere in India. As Bhadrakālī, the goddess may also be shown on the back of a lion and trampling under her foot the head of the buffalo-demon. (SII, p.197). She may also be made with a frightful face, fat breasts, protruding teeth, a long tongue, and wearing a garland of skulls. (Ibid). The very suggestion that Bhadrakālī is to be made with ten arms and decorated with a jaṭāmukuta and all kinds of ornaments when she is worshipped by the Brāhmaṇas (Ibid), points to her non-Aryan origin.

3. HB, i, p.454, pl.i.5.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

1. In the Elura relief, the divinities watching the Devī's reduction of the demon and his hosts from the top of the panel are 'Indra on his elephant, Agni on the ram, Yama on the buffalo with mace and noose, Viṣṇu on Garuḍa; the fourth and the last in the upper row are probably Śani or Saturn and Varuṇa, and below the latter is Śiva on Nandī'. (ASWI, v, p.29). In the Mahabalipuram relief, the goddess as well as the demon have parasols held over their heads. (Supra, p.453-54).

other demons equally formidable, such as Śumbha and Niśumbha, Raktaviṣṭa and others.<sup>1</sup> Like the sculptured panels in the Mātā Devī temple at Kangra,<sup>2</sup> Mahādeva temple at Bajaura, Kulu,<sup>3</sup> and the temple of Aṣṭabhuṅgā Devī in the Chamba State,<sup>4</sup> the Betna relief depicts the destruction of the asuras by the great goddess Durgā as recounted in the Purānic literature. The number of her hands in the Betna image is another point that should enable us to identify the goddess as Durgā who, as the destroyer of all calamities, may have as many as one hundred or more hands in which she holds trident, spear, bow, sword, arrows, conch, discus, club, lotus, water pot, thunderbolt, rosary, hook, lance, noose, staff and other weapons.<sup>5</sup> As against the magnificent sculptured scenes at Elura and Mahābalipuram, the four reliefs mentioned above may not appear very impressive, but they are by no means poorly conceived. In combining two exploits of the

1. MP, lxxxii.39-68; lxxxiii.1-19; lxxxvi.9-20; lxxxviii xc.
2. ASI, 1922-23, p.91.
3. ASI, 1909-10, p.22.
4. ASI(NIS), xxxvi, p.150, pl.xiii.
5. BVP(Brahma Kh), iii. According to the Devī Purāna, the Mother Goddess is not only multi-armed (xxxii.19-37), but she is also śatavaktrā (hundred-faced), caturdamstrā (four-tusked), and mahājivā (big-tongued). cxxvii.73-74. Stanza 39 of Bāna's Candīśataka compare the numerous hands of the goddess with an impenetrable forest and the extremities of her arms are said to have reached as far as the sky. (SPM, pp.303-04).

Devī in their compositions in the Mahadeva temple at Bajaura, and the temple of Aṣṭabhuja Devī (the eight-armed goddess), the North Indian artists appear to have scored a point over their South Indian counterparts. The translation of the theme through the medium of stone on such an elaborate scale is as much a proof of the authors' breadth of vision as of the popularity of the worship of the goddess in North and South of India.

As in the twelve- and eighteen-armed types, the eight- and ten-armed Mahiṣamardini images also represent Durgā in the act of slaying the demon who is issuing from the decapitated trunk of the buffalo.<sup>1</sup> The emblems found in the hands of the goddess in each type of her Mahiṣamardini form are not however fixed, but contrary to the iconographical canons, differ from image to image. Thus, ~~according~~ according to the texts, the goddess in her eight-armed aspect should have in her hands śaṅkha, cakra, śūla, dhanuḥ, bāna, khadga, khetaka and pāśa.<sup>2</sup> But it will be quite clear from our plate xix that while in six of her hands she holds as many of these attributes (in two of the missing right hands the goddess must have held a śūla and a bāna), one of her left hands is holding the asura

1. The goddess is also known as Kātyāyanī when she is represented as a ten-armed and the slayer of Mahiṣāsura. EHI, i(ii), p.347; cf. Matsya P, cclx.55-56; KP, lix.5-20.
2. EHI, i(ii), pp.341-42.

by the hair and another is raised in the tarjanī mudrā.<sup>1</sup>  
 In the ten-armed images, Durgā as Mahiṣamardini should have triśūla, khadga, śāktyāudha, cakra, dhanuḥ, pāśa,<sup>2</sup> aṅkuśa, khetaka, paraśu and ghaṇṭa in her hands. But as in the case of the eight-armed types, the daśabhujā images of Durgā do not conform strictly to the iconographic texts.<sup>3</sup> It will be gathered from our plate xx that ~~although~~ although the image is fairly in consonance with the texts, the goddess is pressing back the head of the Mahiṣāsura with her left hand, a characteristic feature we have noticed in the examples in which the demon has been shown in the shape of a buffalo. In a well-preserved and very animated composition from Sāktā, near Dacca, the ~~goddess~~ attributes of the goddess corresponds to the textual enumeration except that in her main right hand she has a śūla and not a triśūla, while with the corresponding<sup>4</sup> left she has seized the demon by the hair. In her twenty-

1. In giving the iconography of the eight-armed Durgā from the Suprabhedāgama, Rao refers to pl.no. ci of his book but it will be at once seen that the goddess has only four out of the eight attributes prescribed by the text. Again, in the Madras Museum specimen (EHI, i(ii), pl.cii) the goddess may be seen holding six out of the eight prescribed emblems : śūla, khadga, cakra, khetaka, dhanuḥ, and śaṅkha. There is a ghaṇṭā in one of her right hands and with her lower left the goddess is pressing back the head of the demon who is coming out of the carcass of the buffalo.
2. EHI, i(ii), p.345.
3. AP, 1.3-6 describes the ten-armed Mahiṣamardini as Durgā-like Caṇḍī.
4. IBBS, pp.197-98, pl.lxvi.

armed Mahiṣamardinī aspect, Durgā should have according to the Viṣṇudharmottara, śūla, khadga, śaṅkha, cakra, bāṇa, vajra, abhaya mudra and damaru in her right hands, and nāgapāśa, khetaka, paraśu, aṅkuśa, dhanuḥ, ghanta, dhvaja, gadā, darpaṇa and mudgara in her left. No direction for making a Durgā image with more than twenty arms, either as Mahiṣamardinī or in any other aspect, will be found in the iconographical texts though she may have any number of hands according to the Purāṇas.

In two-, four- and six-armed varieties of Mahiṣamardinī images, the demon is usually shown in the shape of a buffalo. But there is in the Ajmer Museum, Rajasthan, an elegant Mahiṣamardinī relief in which the goddess is four-armed, and the demon is shown emerging from the carcass of the animal. Like the twelve-armed example, the present image is also unique of its kind. So is the six-handed miniature metal image of dancing Mahiṣamardinī from Benares, now in the Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi.

Durgā as Mahiṣamardinī is usually shown in the ālīdha or the prtāylīdha pose, with one foot on her vāhana and

1. EHI, i(ii), p.346; according to the AP(1.1-9), the Devi under the name of Caṇḍī may be represented as ten-, eighteen- and twenty-armed.
2. LK, Nos. 1-2, p.131, pl. liii.3.
3. R.C. Agrawala reports about similar reliefs in the Jhala war Museum, Rajasthan, but does not give any details. (LK, Nos. 1-2, p.131).
4. CVRM, p.15.

the other on the shoulder of the demon. She may also stand on the severed buffalo-head of the asura in samapā-dasthānaka,<sup>2</sup> or may be shown fighting with the titan and his cohorts sitting on the back of a lion,<sup>3</sup> though the latter representation of the goddess at Elura and Mahābalipuram must be regarded as exceptional and not as a type. Though engaged in a cruel and sanguinary act in her Mahisamardini aspect, the goddess is invariably represented as a handsome woman with a youthful body, slim-waisted, heavy-breasted and wide-hipped, conforming both to iconographic requirements and the Indian ideal of feminine beauty. Her expression is usually one of ~~complete~~ complete calm, as befits a great divinity who is quite confident of the outcome of the battle, and whose mind is all the while at peace. In the early medieval examples from the South, the goddess wears a transparent skirt and sometimes something like a loin-cloth, but in the North Indian plastic art her clothing consists of a sari which serves its purpose well in spite of its thinness. The breast-band of the goddess is another feature that may be noticed mostly in her Mahisamardini images, both from

1. cf. our plate xvii. The goddess may also be shown with one of her feet on the ground as in our plate xv.
2. Supra, p. 461. In one instance we have seen the goddess standing in tribhāṅga on a severed buffalo-head. (Supra p. 461, our pl. xvii.)
3. Supra, pp. 458-59.

South and North India. Though according to the iconographic texts, this item of the wearing apparel of Durgā should be a live snake (nāgendrena stanam baddhā),<sup>1</sup> usually a harmless piece of cloth keeps her breasts partially covered. The chatra held over the head of the goddess indicates her sovereign status, if not her role as the Supreme Mistress of the universe.

### THE SO-CALLED CAṆḌĪ IMAGES

We shall now turn from the ghora aspect of the Mother Goddess to the examination of some of her images which represent her saumya forms. These images have long since been recognized as the placid forms of Durgā, but as Bhattasali remarks, 'they have hitherto hardly been properly identified'.<sup>2</sup> In the Varendra Research Museum's catalogue, these have been labelled as Caṇḍī,<sup>3</sup> but the compilers 'have omitted to quote the authority on which this identification is based'.<sup>4</sup> The goddess in these so-called Caṇḍī images is invariably shown in samapādashthānaka and four-armed, with such attributes as the abhaya mudrā or pomegranate in her lower right hand, an akṣamālā which is sometimes topped by a miniature liṅga in the upper right hand, a trident or a mirror and the

1. EHI, i(ii), App.C, p.105.

2. IBBS, p.198.

3. CVRM, p.13.

4. EISMS, p.115.

varada mudrā or kamaṇḍalu in the corresponding left.<sup>1</sup> She is attended by a bull and her vāhana, the lion, and in the images from Eastern India, a godhikā is sometimes found to have been carved on the pedestal.<sup>2</sup> She is also flanked sometimes by Kārttikeya and Gaṇeśa, but in the majority of the sculptures of this class, plantain trees<sup>3</sup> also appear on either side of the composition. The image appear to be more common in Bihar and Bengal than in any other part of India, but from the absence of a proper dhyāna in the tantras current in the latter province, it may perhaps be assumed that in carving these images 'the sculptors of Bengal used some particular Śilpaśāstra<sup>4</sup> which we have not yet been able to recover'. Indicative of the placid aspect of the Devī, these images have been discovered in and around the regions of Mathura,<sup>5</sup> at

- 1. IBBS, p.198.
- 2. Ibid; EISMS, pp.115-16.
- 3. EISMS, p.116. Two statuettes, now in the Indian Museum Calcutta, (Nos. 6270 and 3953) represent Durgā as four-armed, having in her right hands rosary and varada mudrā, and in her left hands a kamaṇḍalu and the branch of a tree. There are miniature figures of Gaṇeśa and a liṅga in the upper part of the slab. The goddess is flanked by plantain trees. There is a lion to the left of Durgā, and another animal - a leopard or antelope - to her right; on No. 6270, it is clearly a bull. Both the statuettes are from Bihar. (Bloch, Th.: Supplementary Catalogue, p.87)
- 4. IBBS, p.199.
- 5. CBIMA, pp.51-56.

Nalanda in Bihar,<sup>1</sup> and in many places of North Bengal,<sup>2</sup> (such as Mandoil, Dharsa, Chapaila, Ramgaon, Bagmara and Nunihar in the Rajshahi district; Shanail in the Bogra district, and Nishchinta in the Dinajpur district), and also at Raigunj in Dinajpur (West Bengal),<sup>3</sup> and Maheśvara-pāśā in the Khulna district.<sup>4</sup> The number of such images found in the eastern part of Bengal, notably in the Dacca district,<sup>5</sup> is not few. An image of this class has been acquired by the Indian Museum, Calcutta, from Dakṣiṇ Muhammadpur near Comilla in the Tipperah district,<sup>6</sup> and another has been reported from a place off the Golaghat-Dimapur Road in Assam.<sup>7</sup>

Notwithstanding the absence of dhyānas, an examination of their attributes in the light of certain passages quoted by Rao from the Rupamaṇḍanam,<sup>8</sup> reveals that the images stand for those placid forms of Durgā in which she is known as Umā, Gaurī and Pārvatī. To designate any of these images as Caṇḍī will therefore be a misnomer, for the word signifies one who is fierce or violent in action or temper.<sup>9</sup> Also from the iconographical and Purānic<sup>10</sup>

1. DHI, p.501, pl.xlii.2; EISMS, p.115, pl.lvii.b; cf. ASI, 1927-28, p.161 for two identical four-armed images from Nalanda. Both may be identified as those of Durgā.
2. CVRM, p.13.
3. EISMS, p.115, pl.lvii.d.
4. ASI, 1922-23, pp.111-12; EISMS, p.115, pl.lvii.c. The actual provenance of the image is Mangalbari, Rajshahi district where another image of this class has been found. ASI, 1922-23, p.112; EISMS, pl.lvi.a.

1  
texts, it will appear that under this name Durgā is represented in her aspect of Mahiṣamardinī as well as the killer of many other demons.

D U R G Ā   A S   G A U R Ī

2  
According to the Rūpamaṇḍanam, the images of the goddess indicating her saumya aspect, may be described as Gaurī, Umā and Pārvatī on the basis of the attributes placed in the four hands and other distinguishing marks. Thus an image of the goddess with a godhikā for her vāhana may be identified as Gaurī, who should have akṣamālā, padma, vara and abhaya in her four hands. 4  
But the real criterion of a Gaurī image seems to be the godhikā carved or placed on the pedestal and not the attributes, because they vary from image to image. None

5. IBBS, pp.200-03.
6. ASI, 1935-36, pp.120-21, pl.xxxv.3.
7. ASI, 1923-24, p.82.
8. EHI, i(ii), App.C, pp.113, 120.
9. SED, p.383.
10. Vratākhaṇḍa, pp.79-80.

1. MP, lxxxii.49; lxxxiii.27,33,34; lxxxiv.3,24; lxxxvii.22,24; lxxxviii.7,12,21,22,56; lxxxix.6,8,13,26,28,30-32; xc.13,18,19,21; xci.28; xcii.29; xciii.9. In all but four of the stanzas of Bāṇa's Caṇḍīśataka picturing some detail of the Devī's fight with Mahiṣasura, she is mentioned as Caṇḍī. SPM, p.247.
2. EHI, i(ii), App.C, pp.113, 120.
3. According to the Kāśyapa Silpa and the Mānasāra, the goddess under the names of Gaurī, Umā and Pārvatī should be two-armed when accompanying Śiva, and four-armed when represented independently. SII, p.190.
4. EHI, i(ii), App.C, p.120. According to the Rūpamaṇḍanam it is auspicious to always worship in the house a Gaurī image of this type. Ibid; cf. AP, cccxxvi.1.

of the Gaurī images having a godhikā on the pedestal appears to have conformed to the iconographic directions in so far as the attributes in the hands are concerned. Notice for example, the images from the Dacca district.<sup>1</sup> One of them has a fruit in its lower right hand which should have been in the varada mudra.<sup>2</sup> Another has a linga over her upper right hand holding an akṣamālā;<sup>3</sup> two of them have their lower right hands shown in the varada mudrā,<sup>4</sup> and all of them hold in their upper and lower right hands a triśūla and a kamaṇḍalu respectively. It is to be noted that none has two of the attributes of Gaurī prescribed by the Rūpamaṇḍanam - padma and abhaya mudra, which have been replaced in these images by the triśūla and the kamaṇḍalu. Another peculiarity noticed ~~noticed~~ in these compositions is the presence of other figures. The Devī is flanked by two female attendants in two of them<sup>5</sup> from the Dacca district as well as in the one from Maheśvara-pāśā, Khulna.<sup>6</sup> Again, in some of these sculptures not only the godhikā is present, but also are other animals, such as the bull in the Maheśvarapāśā example,<sup>7</sup> and lion and antelope in the Devī image from Raigunj.<sup>8</sup>

1. IBBS, pp.200-01.
2. Ibid, pl.lxxvii.
3. Ibid, pl.lxxviii.b.
4. Ibid, pl.lxxviii.a,b.
5. Ibid, pl.lxxviii.a,b.
6. EISMS, p.116.
7. ASI, 1922-23, p.112.
8. EISMS, pl.lvii.d.

D U R G Ā    A S    P Ā R V A T Ī

Iconographically, the images representing the goddess as Pārvatī should have rosary, liṅga, image of Gaṇeśa and kamaṇḍalu in her hands, and she should be placed between two braziers of fire.<sup>1</sup> But an image of this type is indeed scarce in Eastern India and the extant examples from the north and south of the country are quite few in number.<sup>2</sup> Five examples in the Mathura Museum, ātable in the early medieval and medieval periods, represent the goddess performing austerities amidst fires to win Śiva for her husband - the theme having been obviously borrowed from Kālidāsa's Kumārasambhavam.<sup>3</sup> In one of these sculptures (No. 1044) the goddess has been shown standing on one leg between four fire altars.<sup>4</sup> In this, as well as in another example (No. 1104), the goddess touches a liṅga with her upper right hand and an image of Gaṇeśa with her corresponding left.<sup>5</sup> In two others (Nos. 834, 1100) not only are the liṅga and the image of Gaṇeśa present, but the bull and the lion as well.<sup>6</sup> In having

1. Akṣasūtraṁ Śivaṁ devagaṇādhyakṣaṁ kamaṇḍaluṁ/  
Agnikuṇḍadvayaṁ pārśve Pārvatī parvatodbhavā//

- EHI, i(ii), App.C, p.120; Vratākhaṇḍa, p.86.
2. CBIMA, pp.51, 53-54. Nos. 879, 834 and 1104 show the Devī standing between two fire altars while in No. 1044 she is shown in the midst of ~~the~~ four.
3. Vv. 8-29 of Canto V of Kumārasambhava describe in detail the rigors of the tāpas practised by Pārvatī. Verse 20 of the same Canto refers to her penance by placing herself in the midst of four fire altars. Such penance is known as pañcāgnitapasyā, the fifth fire

the image of Śiva or liṅga and the image of Gaṇeśa in her two hands as well as the fire altars, the goddess in these reliefs answer to the description of Pārvatī, though V.S. Agrawala does not throw any light on the attributes held in her other two hands. Since these compositions were inspired by Kālidāsa's Kumārasambhavam,<sup>1</sup> Agrawala's dating of one of the images (No.879) in the Kuṣāna period<sup>2</sup> will have to be rejected. Mention should also be made of the lion and the bull figures carved on three of these sculptures,<sup>3</sup> though this is a feature not mentioned by the texts relating to Pārvatī images.

In the Cave temples of Western India, the representation of the Mother Goddess as Pārvatī performing ~~austerities~~ austerities in conformity with the iconographical texts, may be seen in a sculpture in the Lankeśvara temple at

being the sun at which the ascetic has to look with an unflinching gaze. See Kumārasambhava of Kālidāsa, ed. and trans. by R.D. Karmarkar, Poona, 1951, pp.254-55.

4. CBIMA, p.53.
5. Ibid, p.54.
6. Ibid, pp.53-54.

1. The legend of Pārvatī's tapasya is quite likely to have existed in India from long before the time of Kālidāsa who was possibly the first to popularize it through his writings.
2. CBIMA, p.51.
3. Ibid, Nos. 834, 1100, 837, pp.53-54.

Elura.<sup>1</sup> It shows her as 'four-armed, and performing tapas or ascetic penance between two fires, while holding up a liṅga - the symbol of Śiva - in one right hand, and an image of Gaṇeśa, his reputed son and chief of his followers, in one of the left hands'.<sup>2</sup> From the position of her other two hands it may be easily guessed that the right was in varada mudrā and the left held a kamaṇḍalu. Also in the Elura caves has been found another relief that shows Pārvatī as two-armed and performing the pañcāgni-tapasyā with an akṣamālā in her right hand and a kamaṇḍalu in her left.<sup>3</sup> In the Laṅkeśvara relief, traces of a godhikā may still be noticed near the feet of the goddess. In two other reliefs from Caves XXII and XXIV at Elura, a two-armed goddess is shown standing on a gigantic godhikā with her right arm raised in varada mudrā and an indistinct object in her left.<sup>5</sup> While these two images may be straightaway identified as Gaurī,<sup>6</sup> the Laṅkeśvara relief

1. CTI, p.459.

2. ASWI, v, p.32, pl.xxx.2; our pl.xxii.

3. Sen Gupta, R.: 'The Panels of Kalyāṇasundaramūrti at Ellora', LK, No.7, p.14, pl.v.3. In a relief from Pattisvaram, South India, Parvati has been shown standing on her right leg, the other being drawn up diagonally and pointing towards her right hip. The right hand is stretched upwards with palm resting on her jaṭāmukuta, and her left is in dhyānamudrā. SII, p.190, fig.121.

4. ASWI, v, p.32.

5. Ibid, pl.xxv.4,5; our pl.xxii.

6. EHI, i(ii), App.C, p.113.

as well as the sculptures in the Mathura Museum noticed above, betray features that are common to Gaurī and Pārvatī images according to the Śilpaśāstras.

D U R G Ā    A S    U M Ā

The characteristics of the images of Umā, in which she is worshipped even by the celestials, consist of akṣamālā<sup>1</sup>, padma, darpaṇa, and kamaṇḍalu in her four hands. The Devī image in the Indian Museum,<sup>2</sup> shown with a mirror in her upper left hand is perhaps intended to represent the goddess as Umā, though she appears in this composition having a lotus, a ball or fruit, and an indistinct object in her other hands and is placed between Gaṇeśa ~~standing~~ standing on her right and a female figure on the left. On the pedestal is an animal which R.D. Banerji regards as a boar,<sup>3</sup> but in all probability is an antelope or lion. A mutilated specimen in the Varendra Research Museum shows the goddess holding a mirror in her upper left hand and flanked by Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya with their respective vāhanas, the rat and the peacock, carved on the pedestal. In no example except these two and the Nava-durgā<sup>5</sup> and

1. EHI, i(ii), App.C, p.120.
2. EISMS, p.115, pl.lvii.b.
3. Ibid; J.N. Banerjea regards the animal as a godhikā.  
HB, i, p.450.
4. CVRM, p.13 (No.273).
5. Supra, p. 468.

some of the Kalyānasundara groups,<sup>1</sup> do we find Durgā with a mirror as one of her attributes.<sup>2</sup> Like that of Gaurī or Pārvatī, a four-armed image of Umā, strictly conforming to the iconographical texts has yet to be brought to light.

### U M Ā - G A U R Ī - P Ā R V A T Ī I M A G E S

The Devi image from Mandoil, Rajshahi,<sup>3</sup> is distinct from the examples of this kind in having the navagrahas carved in the middle of the pedestal. Her attributes are more or less similar to those of the Gaurī images from the Dacca district - an akṣamālā topped by a liṅga and varada mudrā - in the upper right and lower right hands respectively, and a trident and a kamaṇḍalu in the corresponding left (the lower left hand is missing). She is flanked by Kārttikeya and Gaṇeśa and plantain trees. The two parivāradevatās, Kārttikeya and Gaṇeśa have two lions and two antelopes at their feet respectively, but there is no sign of the godhikā in this composition. The godhikā is also absent in the example from Mangalbari, in the two images in the Indian Museum collection,<sup>4</sup> in two images in the Varendra Research Museum,<sup>5</sup> and in the

1. Infra, p. 523.

2. The mirror is also one of the attributes of Durgā Mahisamardini when she is represented as twenty-armed. Supra, pp. 473-74.

3. CVRM, p. 13; our pl. xxiii.

4. EISMS, pls. lvi.a,c; lvii.b.

5. CVRM, p. 13, (Nos. 151, 273).

wonderfully preserved specimen from Dakṣiṇ Muhammadpur,<sup>1</sup> as well as in the Mathura Museum examples.<sup>2</sup> The image from Dakṣiṇ Muhammadpur<sup>3</sup> is quite distinct from the standing Devī icons of this class. She has two arms instead of four, and has neither the godhikā nor the bull and the antelope carved on the pedestal. In place of Kārttikeya and Gaṇeśa, she has a female chowrie-bearer on either side, standing on lotus pedestals in graceful tribhaṅga poses - the one on the right holding a kamandalu in her left hand and the other on the left a lotus also in her left hand. The goddess herself is shown in samabhaṅga attitude on a lotus, with an elaborate prabhāvalī behind her head. Her figure is framed by two lotuses springing from the one serving as her pedestal. Truly a majestic figure, the goddess in this composition is richly adorned - a tall jaṭāmukuta on her head, patra-kunḍalas in her ears, three necklaces, one of which hangs elegantly on her full bosom, armlets (keyūras), bracelets and anklets. A transparent sari reaching up to the ankles is held at her waist by a jewelled girdle (kaṭisūtra) having many horizontal and vertical tassels. The third eye is prominent

1. Supra, p. 478.

2. Supra, pp. 481-82.

3. ASI, 1935-36, p. 121; our pl. xxiv.

on the forehead of the goddess whose right hand bearing a lotus-mark (padmāṅkita) is in varada mudrā and whose left hanging down like her right, holds a lotus by the stalk. This handsome female figure, so sumptuously ornamented and dressed, having a lotus for her pedestal, holding a lotus in one hand and with lotus mark on the palm of another, and flanked by the same flowers could have been identified as an image of Lakṣmī but for the lion whose miniature figure is carved on the pedestal. In the Devī image from Maheśvarapāśā, we have the figures of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva carved in niches at the top of the back slab, but the present example has at the same place of the stela<sup>1</sup> the figures of not only these three deities in a row, but also those of Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya - all with their respective emblems and vāhanas. Datable in the 11th-12th century,<sup>2</sup> this rare and excellent specimen of Bengal sculpture, partially conforms to the representation of Gaurī according to the Suprabhedāgama.<sup>3</sup>

The goddess in her saumya aspect is almost invariably shown in samapādasthānaka, but in one of the examples in

1. ASI, 1922-23, p.112.
2. ASI, 1935-36, p.121.
3. EHI, i(ii), App.C, p.104. Except that its Buddhist character is too plainly written on it, the image of Tārā, datable in the 9th year of the Pratihara ruler Mahendrapāla, from Hazaribagh, Bihar (EISMS, p.22, pl. iv. b), bears a close resemblance to the Devī icon from Dakṣiṇ Muhammadpur. The point of resemblance are: disposition of the two arms, the double lotus pedestal on which the goddess stands in samabhaṅga, attitude,

the Indian Museum,<sup>1</sup> as well as in the inscribed specimen described as Caṇḍī and now in worship in a temple at Dacca<sup>2</sup>, she is presented in the tribhaṅga pose. In the former example, her standing posture may even be characterized as atibhaṅga.<sup>3</sup> In both the examples she is four-armed and her vahana is prominently sculptured on the pedestal. In the Indian Museum piece, all her hands but the upper left are broken and in this surviving hand she seems to hold what looks like the lower end of a trident, though it might well have been a mace or a goad. From the

profuse jewellery on their persons, the leogryph motif on the back slab and the two female attendants.

1. EISMS, pl. lvi. b.
2. IBBS, p. 202, pl. lxi. According to the inscription, its making was begun in the 3rd year of the reign of Lakṣmaṇsena, the last great Hindu king of Bengal, and was installed in the next year which is C. 1174 A.D. The epigraph mentions the goddess as Caṇḍikā. Ibid, p. 203; cf. EISMS, p. 23.
3. Burgess draws attention to a four-armed image identified as that of Pārvatī or Caṇḍī, who is shown in the charming tribhaṅga pose, having rosary, trident, varada mudrā and kamaṇḍalu for her attributes. (AMTSI, ii, p. 40, pl. 4 cxciii). This medieval sculpture from Dalmi, Manbhūm, consists of a plain rectangular slab on which the goddess stands on a lotus that is placed on the back of a crouching lion. There are flying vidyādhara figures carved at the two upper corners of the slab. The goddess is decorated with jewellery and wears a transparent skirt. In respect of attributes, the image is similar to those identified as Gaurī and Pārvatī, but unlike them has an easy grace that characterizes the Tārā images in the medieval sculptures of Eastern India. (EISMS, pls. v. 3, xvii. d; IBBS, pls. xx, xxi, xxii. a, b).

position of her lower right and left hands it may be guessed that they held the varada mudrā and a kamaṇḍalu respectively. As in the Dakṣiṇ Muhammadpur example, the goddess in the Indian Museum sculpture wears much jewellery, including a tall mukuṭa whose tapering end is fashioned like an āmalaka. There is a kīrtimukha at the top centre of the rectangular back slab with a dwarfish Yakṣa in the attitude of adoration on either side. Two medallions, one at each corner at the top, contain the flying figures of semi-divine couples (vidyādharas).

The inscribed image from Dacca<sup>1</sup> represents the goddess as four-armed and three-eyed, standing in tribhaṅga pose on a double lotus on a navaratha pedestal on the middle face of which is the crouching figure of her vāhana facing left. Clockwise her hands hold abhaya mudrā, aṅkuṣa, padma and kamaṇḍalu.<sup>2</sup> As richly adorned and attired as the Devī in the sculpture from Dakṣiṇ Muhammadpur, the goddess in the Dacca example wears a garland of which the lower end comes down to her knees and the upper end disappears beneath her armpits. She is flanked by chowrie-bearers standing in tribhaṅga poses with their left arms

1. See our pl.xxv.

2. IBBS, p. 203. R.D. Banerji describes the aṅkuṣa as a parasu. EISMS, p. 121, pl.vi.d.

resting on their hips. The main figure is framed by a trefoil arch springing from slim four-sided piers. The edge of the stela is carved with a foliate design and near its tapering upper end, and on either side of the middle carve of the trefoil arch is an elephant pouring water on the goddess from a pitcher held in its trunk. Bhattasali, who is inclined to identify this image as that of Bhuvaneśvarī,<sup>1</sup> has evidently ignored this feature which is not a characteristic of this goddess.<sup>2</sup> Nor has the Mother Goddess as Bhuvaneśvarī a lion for her vāhana. In the absence of the exact dhyāna the goddess in this image may be described as a variant of Durgā who has compounded many of the characteristics of Lakṣmī with her own.<sup>3</sup>

A number of four-armed standing images in the collection of the Mathura Museum and assignable to the medieval period represent the Mother Goddess in her saumya character. In one specimen,<sup>4</sup> the goddess is shown on the back of a lion with her lower right hand in varada mudrā and her lower left akimbo, while ~~with~~ holding a triśula and a spear (goad?) in her other two hands. In two examples

1. IBBS, p. 203.

2. Cf. Brhat-tantrasāra, i, pp. 96, 98-99.

3. Supra, p. 86.

4. CBIMA, p. 51 (No. 59).

she appears with similar attributes, but without her vāhana.<sup>1</sup> The lion is also absent in another composition in which the goddess has a triśula, a pāśa, and a kaman-  
dalū for her attributes.<sup>2</sup> The goddess has been shown in two sculptures standing on two couchant lions seated back to back,<sup>3</sup> and in two other examples she is found accompanied by a lion and a bull - one of these (No. 1177)<sup>4</sup> having in the upper corners of the backslab a liṅga and the figure of Gaṇeśa. In a number of similar sculptures, the goddess stands between a liṅga and a figure of Gaṇeśa and holds up a conch in two hands in front of her breast. There are other attributes in her two upper hands - a ram's head in one example (No. D51), and a sword and a nāgapāśa in another (No. 1105). In one example of this kind, the goddess is shown with a bull touching a liṅga on her left (No. 2103). V.S. Agrawala is inclined to identify these images as those of Vaiṣṇavī, the śakti of Viṣṇu,<sup>6</sup> obviously because of the conch held up by the goddess in two hands. But in view of the bull, Śivaliṅga and Gaṇeśa present in these sculptures, such an identification is far from justified. Moreover, the sword and

1. CBIMA, p.51 (Nos. 724, 2028).

2. Ibid, p.55 (No. 1108).

3. Ibid, p.53 (No. 1033).

4. Ibid, p.53 (No. 837), p.55 (No. 1177).

5. Ibid, p.52 (Nos. D51, KT26), p.54 (No. 1105), p.55 (No. 1172), p.56 (No. 2103). An image of Pārvatī engraved on the Daulatpur Copper Plate of Bhoja, dated 900 V.S./ 843 A.D. (EI, v, pp.208ff) shows her four-armed,

nāgapāśa, held by the goddess in one example of this type (No. 1105), do not constitute the emblems of Vaiṣṇavī, who as we know, has in addition to the conch, a mace, a lotus and a discus for her attributes.<sup>1</sup> As we have already noticed, the bull, liṅga, and miniature figure of Gaṇeśa are some of the distinguishing features in the Devī image in Eastern India.<sup>2</sup> So are the sword and the nāgapāśa which are two of her many attributes.<sup>3</sup> We have also seen that the conch is one of the attributes of the Mother Goddess, and that she received this object not from Viṣṇu but from Varuṇa on the eve of her struggle against the Mahiṣāsura. A conch placed in the hand of Durgā when she is represented in her ghora aspect<sup>5</sup> is evidently intended to serve the purpose of a bugle or clarion in the battle field.<sup>6</sup> Placed in the hand of the goddess shown in her placid

standing, flanked by two lions, and holding a liṅga and an image of Gaṇeśa in the two upper hands. She has a pitcher in her lower left hand. JBRs, xli(i), p.9.

6. CBIMA, p.56.

1. Supra, p. 201.
2. Supra, pp. 481-82.
3. EHI, i(ii), p.345.
4. MP, lxxxii, 20:

Cakraṁ ca dattavān Kṛṣṇa samutpādya svacaktah/  
Śaṅkhaṁ ca Varuṇa Saktiṁ dadau taṅgai Hutāśanaḥ//

5. Supra, p. 471.
6. As for example, the conch Pāñcajanya which is blown by Kṛṣṇa-Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu in the battle. EM, p.206.

character, the conch stands for auspiciousness. It is with this intention that this object seems to have been placed in the hands of the Devī in the Mathura Museum sculptures.<sup>1</sup>

### S A R V Ā N Ī I M A G E

In her placid standing forms, the goddess has four arms according to the texts though in some variants of Gaurī images she may be made with two arms as well.<sup>2</sup> But the inscribed gold-plated octo-alloy image from Deulbādī, Tipperah,<sup>3</sup> datable in the 7th century,<sup>4</sup> presents her as eight-armed. Notwithstanding the presence of her vāhana and such attributes as the arrow, sword, discus, conch, trident, bell, shield and bow, the placid aspect of the goddess has not been marred in the least in this composition. She is flanked by two female attendants, both nimbate and standing in tribhaṅga pose while the goddess herself affects the stiff samapādasthānaka. The inscription on the pedestal describes the image as that of Sarvānī (wife of Śarva or Śiva), one of the many epithets of the Mother Goddess.<sup>5</sup> As Bhattasali points out, seven

1. Blowing the conch during the worship of gods and goddesses is part of the ritual. The conch is also blown to announce the advent of the evening and the birth of a male child in the family. In short, it is associated with things and events of an auspicious nature.
2. EHI, i(ii), App.C, pp.104-05, 119.
3. IBBS, pp.203-205, pl.lxx.
4. Ibid; R.D. Banerji is inclined to assign it to a later period. EISMS, pp. 137-38.
5. MP, lxxxv.9; cf. DM, p.204.

of the eight attributes placed in the hands of this image are similar to those given to the eight-armed Mahiṣamardini figures of Durgā.<sup>1</sup> With the exception of the ghaṅṭā, the attributes also agree with those of Mahiṣamardini as directed by the Suprabhedāgama,<sup>2</sup> which replaces this attribute by a pāśa. The image is of considerable interest not only because it furnishes concrete proof of the worship of Durgā under one of her Puranic names<sup>3</sup> in Bengal in the 7th century A.D., but also because its donor Prabhāvatī happens to be the wife of Deva-Khaḍga,<sup>4</sup> a devout Buddhist ruler in Eastern India.

#### T H E   S O - C A L L E D   M A H Ā M Ā Y Ā   I M A G E

Before winding up the examination of standing Devī images, we should draw attention to an extremely rare type<sup>5</sup> found at Kagajipara, in the Dacca district. About four feet in height, the composition in its lower part depicts a well-carved liṅga in bold relief. Only half of the upper part of the liṅga is shown, from which emerges the waist of the goddess in profound meditation. The goddess has four arms. The upper right hand holds a Rosary, and

1. IBBS, p. 204.

2. EHI, i(ii), pp.341-42.

3. The name Sarvānī also occurs in the Grhya Sūtras to designate the goddess as the wife of Sarva.

4. IBBS, p.204.

5. HB, i, p.452.

a book is in her upper right hand. The two normal hands are placed one above the other in a graceful Dhyāna-mudrā beneath the ample breasts'.<sup>1</sup> Bhattasali appears to have identified the image as that of Mahāmāyā or Yoganidrā, both of which are forms of the Mother Goddess, though he remarks in the end, 'A more satisfactory identification of this unique image supported by authoritative texts is greatly to be desired'.<sup>2</sup>

Both Bhattasali and R.D. Banerji<sup>3</sup> had the opportunity of making an on-the-spot study of this icon, but unhappily neither appears to have described it properly. It is not clear what Bhattasali means by 'only half of the upper part of the liṅga is shown', for this would mean three-fourths of the phallic symbol lying concealed in the yonīpaṭṭa. In reality the entire pūjā-bhāga of the liṅga has been shown here above the elaborately chiselled base which serves the purpose of the yonīpaṭṭa.<sup>4</sup> The base rises from a double lotus resting on a pañcaratha pedestal. The goddess is actually standing between the liṅga and the backslab, and is not emerging out of the liṅga as Bhattasali suggests and J.N. Banerjea confirms.<sup>5</sup> The lotus

1. IBBS, pp.192-93, pl.lxiv; our pl.xxvi.

2. IBBS, p.194

3. ASI, 1924-25, p.155, pl.xl.c

4. For the pūjā-bhāga of the liṅga and its base yonīpaṭṭa see DHIA, p. 169.

5. HB, i, p. 452.

crowning the liṅga is enough to sustain our contention, and to refute R.D. Banerji's fantastic suggestion of the goddess being in coitus with the phallic symbol.<sup>1</sup> The back of the upper half of the stele is carved with foliate designs. Two kinnaras, one above the upper right hand of the goddess and the other above her corresponding left, are seen playing on cymbals and flute respectively. There is a kīrtimukha at the top centre flanked by dwarf Yakṣa figures carved in low relief. Between these and the kinnaras on either side are flying vidyādharas holding garlands in half medallions. The three-eyed goddess is richly adorned with jewellery among which mention may be made of the elaborate ear ornaments, including huge patra-kundalas coming down to her shoulders; a three-stringed garland of pearls lying in a graceful pattern on the huge globular breasts that touch one another; and the tall, exquisitely carved mukuta (kirīṭa or ratnamukuta) somewhat similar to the head dress worn by the modern Kathākali dancers in India.<sup>2</sup> A scarf of gossamer muslin is thrown over her body and its two ends may be seen hanging on both sides of her hips. Her skirt or sari of the same material is tied at the waist by a jewelled kaṭisūtra.

1. ASI, 1924-25, p.155.

2. Cf. Jamila Brij Bhusan : The Costumes and Textiles of India, Bombay, 1958, pl. lxi.1-2.

The image under notice undoubtedly represents the Mother Goddess, but the form given to her by the 12th century <sup>1</sup> Bengali sculptor cannot be explained with reference to the extant texts of iconography. As Banerjee <sup>2</sup> observes, it is a composite icon, <sup>2</sup> resulting from the compound of the attributes of several goddesses. Thus in holding an akṣamālā and a book in her upper hands, the goddess absorbs two of the attributes of Sarasvatī. <sup>3</sup> From the position of her other two hands in dhyāna-mudrā as well as her half closed eyes suggesting deep meditation with the symbol of Śiva in front, the goddess may also be regarded as Gaurī or Pārvatī, for according to the Viṣṇu-dharmottara, 'Gaurī is to be shown as a virgin meditating on Maheśvara'. <sup>4</sup> The rosary, it may be pointed out, is also one of the attributes of Gaurī, <sup>5</sup> Umā, <sup>6</sup> and Pārvatī. <sup>7</sup> According to the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, both Sarasvatī and Gaurī <sup>8</sup> are epithets of the Mother Goddess, who has the akṣamālā for one of her attributes even when she is shown multi-armed in her ghora aspects. <sup>9</sup>

1. ASI, 1924-25, p.155.

2. HB, i, p. 452.

3. EHI, pp. 377-78; Vratakhanda, p. 77.

4. EHI, i(ii), App.C, p. 119; Gaurī kumārikārūpā dhyāya-mānā Maheśvarai.

5. Vratakhanda, p.82.

6. Ibid, p. 86.

7. Ibid.

8. MP, xci.22, lxxxiv.10, lxxxv.8, xci.9.

9. Supra, p. 471.

In identifying the goddess in this sculpture as Mahāmāyā, Bhattasali has quoted a legend from the Kālikā Purāna according to which she rends open the liṅga to appear out of it before her worshippers.<sup>1</sup> Her breasts round and high, the goddess who is beautiful in all respects, holds varada, abhaya, akṣamālā and khadga in her four hands and sits on a preta(corpse).<sup>2</sup> Having none of these peculiarities save the akṣamālā, the Kagajipara image cannot be identified as that of Mahāmāyā. It is also iconographically incorrect to identify her as Yoga-<sup>3</sup>nidrā or Tripurā-Bhairavī as Bhattasali has done<sup>3</sup> just because these goddesses are not only identical with the Universal Mother Mahāmāyā, but also happen to be her manifestations.<sup>4</sup> The image of Yoganidrā should be made, according to the Visnudharmottara,<sup>5</sup> with a beautiful figure and it should be shown as lying on a bed with eyes closed. It should have two arms in one of which should be placed a drinking vessel (kapāla?).<sup>6</sup> The Sāradātilaka describes the goddess Tripura-Bhairavī as having a chaplet

1. IBBS, p. 193.

2. KP, lxxvi.88ff.

3. IBBS, p. 194.

4. Esā ca Tripurādevī yāścānyāṅ pūrvabhāṣitāḥ/

Sarvātu Māyā Bhairavīyā Yoganidrā jagataprabhuh//

KP, lxxiv.198; cf. DM, pp. 161, 168.

5. EHI, i(ii), p. 362; Vratakhanda, p. 82.

6. EHI, i(ii), App. C, p. 126.

of skulls and her breasts daubed with blood(raktalipta-payodharam). In two of her hands should be placed akṣamālā and vidyā,<sup>1</sup> but the latter may mean a book as well as the jñāna-mudrā. Her two other hands should be shown in varada and abhaya mudrās.<sup>2</sup> As far as the attributes are concerned, the iconography of the goddess Tripurā-Bhairavi given by the Sāradātilaka agrees with that found in the Kālikā Purāṇa.<sup>3</sup> According to the latter work, this three-eyed goddess with elephantine gait has high round breasts she sits on a white preta; has her head, bosom and waist encircled thrice with garlands of human ~~skulls~~ heads; her three eyes roll due to drinking wine, and her lips are red with blood. In another place, the Purāṇa states that the goddess Tripurā-Bhairavi should be meditated on as seated on the best of golden seats.<sup>4</sup>

Except that the goddess from Kagajipara has an akṣamālā and a pustaka in her upper hands, she disagrees in all other essentials from the goddess Tripurā-Bhairavi, whose appearance must be regarded as grotesque and horrible as against the handsome and saumya features of the former. Moreover, she has hardly anything in common with Mahāmāyā and Yoganidrā whose iconography we have described above.

1. EHI, i(ii), p. 366.
2. Ibid.
3. KP, lxxiv.94-98.
4. Ibid, lxxiv.105-07.

We have every reason to think that the goddess does not come out of the liṅga after having rent it open, or the liṅga would have been shown in three fragments as it appears from the Kālikā Purāna story.<sup>1</sup> She stands, as we have already stated, facing front, and between the liṅga and the backslab, the lower part of her body from the middle of the thighs being covered by the pūjābhāga and the base of the phallic symbol. Her iconography is a perfect blend of the attributes of Sarasvatī with those of Umā-Pārvatī-Gaurī, whose tapasyā for winning Śiva for her husband has been immortalized by Kālidāsa in his Kumārasambhavam.<sup>2</sup>

### S E A T E D V A R I E T I E S O F D U R G Ā I M A G E S .

Seated varieties of Devī images with two, four or more hands are not only comparatively rare in Bengal<sup>3</sup> but also in other parts of India. Two-armed bronze images of Pārvatī, standing in tribhaṅga pose with her right hand

1. KP, lxxvi.88ff.

2. According to a legend narrated in the Skanda Purāna (Arunācala Māhātmya, 1st part, iv.29-33), Gaurī once performed penance on the bank of the river Kampā in order to atone for an offence. She meditated on Śiva in the form of a liṅga with offerings of flowers, sand-paste etc. When the river swelled and was about to wash the liṅga away, she held it in a fast embrace. The Kagajipara image may have been inspired by this legend for no other work describes if Pārvatī in her virgin state ever meditated on Śiva in the form of a liṅga.

3. HB, i, p. 451.

in Kaṭaka mudrā and her left gracefully hanging down her side (lolahasta), have been found in South India.<sup>1</sup> Datable from the 10th century onwards, these two-handed varieties also show the goddess seated in lalitāsana on a double lotus, her right hand in kaṭaka pose as in the standing images and her left resting, palm downwards, on the lotus seat.<sup>2</sup> In a two-armed Devī image of the early Gupta period now in the Mathura Museum, the goddess is shown sitting in lalitāsana on the back of a lion with a śakti in her right hand and an indistinct object in her left.<sup>3</sup> Also in the same Museum is another sculpture in which the goddess is eight-armed, and seated in lalitāsana on a lotus that is placed on the back of two lions facing in opposite directions. Datable in the early medieval period, the goddess in ~~these~~ this example has cakra, khadga, padma and abhaya mudrā in her right hands, and pāśa, dhanuḥ, kheṭaka and kamaṇḍalu in her left ones.<sup>5</sup>

Among the seated varieties of Mother Goddess images mention may be made of the four-armed example from Bogra,

1. AIA, pls. 415-418, 421. The kaṭaka mudrā is one of the distinguishing attributes of Pārvatī. EHI, i(ii), ~~p. 338~~ p. 338.
2. AIA, pl. 419.
3. CBIMA, p. 52 (No. 1283).
4. Ibid, p. 54 (No. 1047).
5. Ibid.

now in the Indian Museum,<sup>1</sup> representing her in lalitāsana on a lotus, with her right leg dangling and resting on the back of grimacing and couchant lion carved on the pedestal. She has a fruit (pomegranate) in the open palm of her lower right hand, a sword in the upper right, and a kamaṇḍalu and a shield in her corresponding left hands. She wears a jaṭāmukuta on her head and various other ornaments on her person, including a three-stringed hāra that hangs from her neck reaching below her waist. In a sculpture from Naogaon, Rajshahi, now in the Varendra Research Museum (No. 1549),<sup>2</sup> the goddess is shown flanked by miniature figures of Kārttikeya and Gaṇeśa, and is four-armed, and seated in an identical manner as in the Bogra specimen. She holds in her hands vara, padma, triśūla and bhr̥ṅgāra (kamaṇḍalu?).<sup>3</sup> Banerjea identifies her as Sarvamaṅgalā,<sup>4</sup> a form of Durgā, because besides having the lion for her vāhana, the goddess has three of the four attributes of the former.<sup>5</sup> A sandstone image of Durgā in the Museum's collection (No. 1582), datable in the 9th century, and found at Niyamatpur, Rajshahi,<sup>6</sup> represents her as three-eyed, and seated in lalitāsana.

1. HB, i, p. 452, pl.x.26.

2. HB, p. 452.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. EHI, i(ii), p.359; Vratakhanda, p. 81.

6. VRS-AR, 1936-38, p. 26, fig. 3.

as the two images noticed above, with her right foot on the neck of her lion-mount. She wears jaṭāmukuta and jewellery, and has vara, triśūla and kheṭaka for attributes. Her upper left arm, which must have held a sword, is missing, including a portion of the back-slab on the left side. According to N.B. Sanyal,<sup>1</sup> the image has a close resemblance, in respect of attributes, to the Aparājitā  $\phi/\phi/$  form of Durgā as given in the Devī Purāna.<sup>2</sup> Banerjea accepts this identification, but he as well as Sanyal are obviously in error in this regard. The Devī Purāna<sup>3</sup> describes the goddess as three-eyed, seated on a lion, holding a bow (pinākesu-karā), sword and shield. She should have a crescent moon among her matted locks, and snakes for her bangles (kṛtavāsukikaṅkaṇā). Sanyal translates the word pināka of the dhyāna as 'arrow', and regards the varada mudrā in the lower right hand of the image as  $\chi/\chi$  its substitute.<sup>4</sup> But pināka means a bow<sup>5</sup> and not an arrow. Having neither the one nor the other for her attribute, the goddess in this sculpture cannot be identified as Aparājitā. Nor has she like the goddess of the dhyāna, snakes for her bracelets. In fact, Aparājitā seems to

1. VRS-AR, 1936-38, p.26.
2.  $\chi/\chi$  HB, i, p.452.
3. EHI, i(ii), App.C, p. 129, also p.369.
4. VRS-AR, 1936-38, p.26.
5. SED, p.627.

stand for one of the ghora forms of Durgā, while the goddess in this sculpture looks as saumya in appearance as the examples from Bogra and Naogaon noticed above. Like the latter she represents Durgā in one of her placid forms of which the dhyāna is yet to be found.

T H E   S O - C A L L E D  
B H U V A N E Ś V A R Ī   I M A G E

In worship even today under the name of Bhuvaneśvarī<sup>1</sup> at Shaykh-hati in the Jessore district, East Pakistan, is a six-armed Devī image seated in lalitāsana and having in her right hands varada mudrā, akṣamālā and padma, and abhaya mudrā, kamaṇḍalu and triśūla in her corresponding left.<sup>2</sup> This large and extremely fine image, datable in the 11th-12th century<sup>3</sup>, shows the goddess seated on a double lotus with her right foot pendant and resting on the back of a recumbent lion carved on the middle of the saptaratha pedestal. There are two more lions on either side of the Devī's vāhana. The goddess wears a high mukuta, bangles, armlets and anklets. Wavy lines on her thighs and legs indicate the transparency of the sari that is held at her waist by a jewelled kaṭisūtra. There are

1. Mitra, S.C.: Yashohara-Khulnār Itihāsa, 1, Calcutta, 1914, pp. 227ff; EISMS, p. 123, pl. lviii.a; our pl. xxvii.

2. HB, i, p. 452. S.C. Mitra (Op.cit, p. 229) describes as śaṅkha what Banerjea correctly identifies as bhrṅgāra or kamaṇḍalu.

3. EISMS, p. 123. The image is assigned by R.D. Banerji to the last period of artistic activity in Eastern India corresponding to the 11th-12th century.

huge patra-kundālas in her ears, and her torso, wide at the bust and slim at the waist, would have been naked but for the wide necklace and the string of pearls which lie in a graceful curve on her ample bosom. The back of the stele show in low relief a trefoil arch above which are foliate designs. Below the pointed end of the backslab is a kirtīmukha, and on either side above the trefoil arch are flying and dancing male figures, all executed in very low relief.

R. D. Banerji<sup>1</sup> seems to have accepted the identification of the image by S.C. Mitra<sup>2</sup> as that of Bhuvaneśvarī. So also has J.N. Banerjea,<sup>3</sup> but according to the Mahā-lakṣmīratnakōśa,<sup>4</sup> the goddess has four arms, two of which should hold pāśa and aṅkuśa and the remaining two varada and abhaya mudrās. In giving vara and abhaya with two of her hands, the goddess from Shaykh-hati no doubt anticipates these two attributes of Bhuvaneśvarī, but these also happen to be the characteristics of Gaurī.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, not only is she without a pāśa and an aṅkuśa, but she is also six-armed with a lion for her vāhana.<sup>6</sup> She cannot therefore be identified as Bhuvaneśvarī. In regard to her

1. EISMS, p. 123.

2. Op.cit, p.227. Mitra also identifies the goddess as Tripureśvarī (Op.cit, p.229) but the dhyāna which he quotes from the Tantrasāra does not agree with the iconography of the image.

3. HB, i, p. 452.

4. EHI, i(ii), App.C, p.132.

5. Ibid, App.C, p. 119.

attributes, her resemblance to Gaurī seems to be much closer, for the latter may as well have abhaya, akṣamālā, padma and kamandalu,<sup>1</sup> or akṣamālā, padma, abhaya and vara<sup>2</sup> for her emblems when she is made with four arms. Akṣamālā and padma, and akṣamālā and kamandalu also constitute<sup>3</sup> the attributes of Umā and Pārvatī respectively. The Devī also has some of the characteristics of Durgā represented in her placid aspect : well-formed thighs and bust, karāṇa<sup>4</sup> karanda-mukuta and jewellery (sarvābharanabhūṣitā). Finally, in having as many as five lions carved on the pedestal, the image cannot but be regarded as that of Durgā, though as in the case of the Kagajipara image examined above,<sup>5</sup> the dhyāna of this six-handed seated form of the goddess is yet to be discovered.

### D U R G Ā    A S    M A H Ā L A K Ṣ M Ī

It is equally difficult, ~~if~~ in the absence of a proper dhyāna, to satisfactorily identify the twenty-armed Devī

6. According to her dhyānas, the goddess as Bhuvaneśvarī should be made with two or four arms. Brhat-tantrasāra i, pp.96-99.

1. EHI, i(ii), App.C, p.119.  
 2. Ibid, p. 120.  
 3. Ibid.  
 4. Ibid, p. 105.  
 5. Supra, pp.494-500. Except that she is six-armed, the Devī from Shaykh-hati fairly resembles Ambikā whose dhyāna is given in the KP(liii) which describes her as four-armed, seated on a lotus seat, having a youthful body, kambukanṭha, and is adorned with jewels, three-eyed, and has a lion for her vāhana. These features, as well as ~~her/attributes~~ three of her attributes -akṣamālā,

image seated in lalitāsana on a double lotus placed on the back of a grimacing lion and found at Simla in the Rajshah district.<sup>1</sup> The identification of the image as that of Mahālakṣmī by S.K. Saraswati<sup>2</sup> has been tentatively accepted by Banerjea,<sup>3</sup> though the goddess under this name should have eighteen<sup>4</sup> instead of twenty hands as in this example. In having vara and abhaya<sup>5</sup> as well as a miniature liṅga on her matted crown<sup>6</sup>, and twelve of the eighteen attributes<sup>7</sup>, the image no doubt appears to be a near approach to that of Mahālakṣmī. We cannot however agree with Saraswati if the calm and benign aspect of the Devī in this sculpture has anything to do with her mood on the eve of her struggle with the Mahiṣāsura.<sup>8</sup> This unique relief, which is now lost, may be placed in the 9th century A.D.<sup>9</sup>

1. vara and abhaya are common with those of the Shaykh-hat image. In the Tantras the goddess Bhvaneśvarī is also addressed as Ambikā, Parvatarājaputrī, Bhavānī and Gaurī, but she is four-armed, having jñānamudrā, akṣamālā, ghata and pustaka for her attributes. Brhat-tantrasāra, ii, p.36ff.

1. VRSM, No.6, p. 23, fig.4.

2. Ibid, p. 23.

3. HB, i, p. 452.

4. VRSM, No.6, p. 24 and notes 4-6.

5. Ibid, p. 23.

6. Ibid, p. 25.

7. Ibid, p. 24. For the Mahālakṣmī aspect of the Mother Goddess, see Ibid, p. 22 and note 3; and also EHI, i(ii) pp. 334-37 where Rao quotes a lengthy legend but not mention the recension of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna in which he found it. The Devī-Māhātmya section of the MP does not include Mahālakṣmī among the epithets of Durgā. The iconography of the goddess in this sculpture does not

D U R G Ā   A S   S I M H A V Ā H I N Ī

In the early iconic types, the Mother Goddess appears accompanied by her lion-mount or actually riding on it.<sup>1</sup> In medieval sculptures, ~~and~~, representing her ghora as well as her saumya aspects, we have also noticed the goddess with the lion for her yāhana.<sup>2</sup> In some medieval reliefs, now in the Indian Museum, the goddess is shown with her lion in a characteristic manner.<sup>3</sup> One of these<sup>4</sup> represents Durgā as Siṃhavāhinī in that she is seated astride the lion like the goddess in the Mahābalipuram panel.<sup>5</sup> She is four-armed, having a long sword in her upper right hand lifted up as if to strike, giving a vara with her lower right hand, and a shield and a trident in the corresponding left hands.<sup>6</sup> She is three-eyed, wears two necklaces, a three-stringed yajñopavīta and patra-kundalas - features which are also shared by the earlier<sup>7</sup> specimens of the Eastern School, particularly from Nalanda

also appear to have any similarity with the dhyānas of Mahālakṣmī found in the Tantras. Cf. Brhat-tantrasāra, i, pp. 127-29.

8. Cf. MP, lxxxii.31-33. In giving directions for making an eighteen-armed Devī image, the Devī Purāṇa (xxxii. 19-37) states that the goddess should be seated on a lion and roaring after decapitating the Mahiṣāsura whose body she should be holding in her nāgapāśa.
9. HB, i, p. 452.

1. Supra, p. 447.

3. DHI, p. 501.

4. ASI, 1935-36, p. 122, pl. xxxvi.10; our pl. xxviii.

5. Supra, p. 458.

6. ASI, 1935-36, p. 122.

2. Supra, pp. 455-56, 463.

Datable in the 9th-10th century<sup>1</sup>, the image, notwithstanding the varada mudrā in the lower right hand, successfully represents Durgā, mounted on her roaring lion and armed with the āyudhas mentioned above as a warlike goddess who is about to rush into the battle-field. As in the Gupta coins<sup>2</sup>, the goddess appears in another sculpture from Bihar, which shows her seated in lalitākṣepa on the back of a couchant lion<sup>3</sup>. The attributes in her two right hands as well<sup>as</sup> in her upper left are identical with those of the goddess in the other sculpture. But, unlike the

7. ASI, 1935-36, p. 122.

1. ASI, 1935-36, p. 122. No less warlike and ghora in aspect would appear the ten-armed standing image of Durgā from Conjeevaram (EHI, i(ii), pl.cii) with her left foot on the back of a roaring lion and her right on the ground. The goddess stands in tribhaṅga pose, her crowned head thrown back and her torso thrown forward. Her main right hand, bent at the elbow, holds a flower, and another right hand is placed on the hip. The objects in the other right hands are indistinct though the uppermost is possibly touching a triśūla that is carved on the backslab. In her left hands the goddess holds paraśu, khetaka, nāgapāśa, a long bow and an indistinct object (it may as well have been indicating abhaya). Of particular interest is a parasol over the head of the goddess carved on the backslab. Armed with deadly weapons, the warlike but handsome goddess appears to be waiting for the battle to begin when she will mount her lion and meet the asuras in combat.
2. Supra, pp. 428-29.
3. DHI, p. 501; Block, Th.: Supplementary Catalogue etc, p. 91 (No.3946).

latter, the present image clasps with her lower left hand a child, sitting on her left knee and looking up at her face. The sculpture is a nice blend of the ghora and the saumya sides of her character, the latter predominating because the child on her knee obviously emphasizes the motherly aspect of Durgā,<sup>1</sup> though here too she is siṃhavāhinī.

D U R G Ā    A S    E K Ā N Ā M Ś Ā

The examples discussed above relating to her standing and seated images, portray the Mother Goddess in her independent aspect, though in many pieces we notice that a clear emphasis has been laid on her association with Siva.<sup>2</sup> But mythologically, Durgā has been connected with Kṛṣṇa-Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu from a very early period.<sup>3</sup> In Brhatsaṃhitā, the earliest iconographical text, the form in which the goddess has been associated with Kṛṣṇa is that of Ekānaṃśā who may be made with two, four or eight arms.<sup>4</sup> In the two-armed type, the goddess Ekānaṃśā has to be placed between Baladeva and Kṛṣṇa, but the text is

1. DHI, p. 501.

2. Supra, pp. 481-82.

3. DHI, p. 502.

4. Brhatsaṃhitā, lvii.37-39: 'The goddess Ekānaṃśā should be made between Baladeva and Kṛṣṇa; her left hand should rest on her hip, while the other (i.e., the right hand) should hold a lotus. If she is made four-armed, then a book and a lotus are to be placed in her left hands while on the right she is to confer a boon on the supplicants with one hand, her other hand holding a rosary. An eight-armed Ekānaṃśā should hold in her left hands a water-vessel, a bow, a lotus, and a book,

silent if she is also to be flanked by these two gods<sup>1</sup> when represented with four or eight hands. The worship of Ekānaṁśā seems to have been confined to Eastern India - a fact which is attested by some medieval bronze and stone sculptures found in that region only.<sup>1</sup> An image of this goddess flanked by the figures of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, is the principal object of worship in the main sanctum of the Ananta-Vāsudeva temple at Bhuvanēśvara<sup>2</sup>(Orissa). The fact that her image is cast in metal may indicate the importance which her cult must have enjoyed during the medieval period. A fine bronze image of Ekānaṁśā bearing an inscription of the time of the Pāla ruler Mahipāla I (C. 995-1043), and found at Imadpur in Bihar, is now in the British Museum.<sup>4</sup> It shows the two armed goddess samapādasthānaka on a lotus, with her right hand stretched down in the varada mudrā and a mirror in her left, and she is placed between the four-armed standing figures of

her right hands showing a varadamudrā, an arrow, a mirror and a rosary' (Trans. DHI, p. 587). Identical description of two-armed Ekānaṁśā image is also to be found in the Viṣṇudharmottara (DHI, p. 503)

1. DHI, p. 503. A stone relief showing Ekānaṁśā between Baladeva and Viṣṇu is in the collection of the Provincial Museum, Lucknow (Ghosh, J.C.: 'Ekānaṁśā and Subhadrā', JRASBL, ii, 1936, p. 43, pl. vii.). The goddess and the accompanying gods were wrongly identified as Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa and Rāma by P. Dayal (Ibid). J.C. Ghosh has attempted with the help of ancient texts like the Hari-vaṁśa and the Purāṇas etc. to establish the identity of the goddess who appears to have been the tribal deity of the Vṛṣṇis. Ghosh also thinks that the triad not only in the Ananta-Vāsudeva temple at Bhuvanēśvara

Balarāma on her right and Kṛṣṇa on her left. Though cast with great skill, the bronze figure does not represent the goddess in consonance with her iconography as given by the texts, according to which the right hand of the two-armed type of Ekānaṁśā should hold a lotus and her left is to be placed on her hip.<sup>1</sup> But contrary to what Banerjea thinks about the disposition of the two hands,<sup>2</sup> the goddess in the Imadpur image has two of the eight attributes of the eight-armed variety.<sup>3</sup> She is moreover placed between Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa - a fact that should suffice to identify her as Ekānaṁśā.

### D U R G Ā   A S   A   R E A L   M O T H E R

Though styled Skandamātā and Gaṇeśajananī in the Purāṇas and the Mahābhārata, the goddess Durgā appears to have conceived neither of these two divinities in her womb. As ~~will~~ has been explained earlier in this essay, the suffix mātā applied to her name is largely euphemistic. None of the iconographical texts, nor the Purāṇas ever describes Durgā with a child on her lap or by her

but also in the Jagannātha temple at Purī represents the local adaptation of Baladeva, Ekānaṁśā and Kṛṣṇa (Ibid, pp. 41-46)

2. DHI, p. 503.
3. Majumdar, R.C. and Banerjea, J.N. 'Two Inscribed Images from Imadpur', JRASBL, xvi, 1950, pp. 247-51, pl. xii.
4. DHI, p. 503.

1. Supra, p. 510, note 4.
2. DHI, p. 503.
3. Supra, p. 510, note 4. In another place Banerjea sounds

side.<sup>1</sup> The number of images which depict the goddess with a child is fairly large; but in the absence of a dhyāna as well as recognizable attributes in many cases, their identification has not been satisfactorily settled. It should be borne in mind that these images owe their origin more to the desire of the donors or the fancy of the artist than to any text. The purpose in sculpturing such images is obviously to emphasize the motherly aspect of the goddess, who is otherwise malevolent.<sup>2</sup>

Mention may be made in this connection of the inscribed image from Jaynagar in Bihar, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.<sup>3</sup> Carved in high relief, this 12th century sculpture shows a four-armed goddess seated with a child on her left knee.<sup>4</sup> The inscription on the pedestal describes the goddess as Pūrṇeśvarī or Pūṇyeśvarī,<sup>5</sup> installed in the 35th regnal year of Palapāla. Another inscribed image of the same goddess, but not exactly with

more positive regarding the identification of the image as Ekānaṁśā, and observes, 'the mirror is one of the characteristics of Durgā-Pārvatī who is no other than Ekānaṁśā in one of her aspects'. JRASBL, xvi, p. 250.

4. Supra, p. 241.

1. In giving the details of the Somāskanda mūrtis of Śiva Sāstrī (SII, p. 110) refers to the Kāraṇāgama according to which Pārvatī and Śiva are to be shown with a child between them. But the absence of an image of this type in Northern India indicates that the use of this text was confined to the South.

2. Supra, p. 246.

3. JBR, xli(2), p. 146.

4. Ibid.

the same attributes, has been found at Jaynagar and may be assigned to about the 12th century A.D.<sup>1</sup> A number of such images found in Bihar no doubt indicate the great popularity of the Mother Goddess in Eastern India during the medieval period. From the inscription on a mutilated Devī image with a child, datable in the 8th or 9th century on palaeographic grounds, and found at the village of Valgudar in Bihar, we learn that she was worshipped under the name of Gansava.<sup>2</sup> A similar image, with its name Pundeśvari<sup>3</sup> as well as the date of installation during the reign of Nayapāla (c. 1043-58) inscribed on it, has been found in the neighbouring village of Rājāunā.<sup>3</sup> Also from Bihar we have another inscribed but much mutilated Devī image of an identical type that is now in the Asutosh Museum, Calcutta.<sup>4</sup> From Ghosrawan in the Patna district, the Indian Museum collected an inscribed four-armed image

5. JBRs, xli(2), p. 146 151; AMTSI, pp. 134-42, pls. liii, liv. ~~Palapāla~~ Possibly, Palapāla did not belong to the imperial Pāla line of kings. He may be placed approximately in the middle of the 13th century A.D.

1. JBRs, xli(2), p. 146.

2. EI, xxviii, p. 138.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. EISMS, p. 31, pl. xii.c; our pl. xxix.

representing the Mother Goddess seated on a cushion in lalitāsana with her right foot resting on a lotus. She holds an aṅkuṣa in her upper right hand, a curious wand with a makara head ( a khaṭvāṅga?) in her corresponding left, a fruit in her lower right hand and with her other left hand supporting a child sitting on her left knee. In hollow niches in the pedestal are two lions, one on each side, facing in opposite directions. The epigraph on this image describes it as Muṇḍeśvarī or Puṇḍeśvarī. From Bihar, which seems prolific in such images, we have still another metal sculpture showing Pārvatī with Kārttikeya(?) and dedicated in the 54th year of the reign of Nārāyaṇa-pāla (c. 866-920) at Uddanḍapura, i.e., modern Bihar Sharif.<sup>1</sup> This image is now in the collection of the Vāṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣat,<sup>2</sup> Calcutta. The goddess is four-armed with a child reclining on her left knee. She has a sword and a shield in her upper arms and a club-like object (khaṭvāṅga?) in the lower right. There is no sign of her vāhana in this composition.

• The Devī-and-child images of the above class represent in our opinion the goddess Durgā in her motherly aspect.<sup>3</sup> The presence of her lion-mountain and such attributes as the

1. EISMS, p. 22, pl. iii.a,b.

2. Ibid.

3. That these images are intended to represent Durgā as mother will be evident from another sculpture found in Bihar. Supra, pp. 509-10.

sword and shield in many examples evidently suggest such an identification. An image of the goddess with a child and having a canopy of snakes and a lion-mount has been found in the compound of a temple at Luckeesarai (Lakhi-sarai) in Bihar.<sup>1</sup> 'The deity seems to have been the primitive Mother Goddess worshipped under different local names in various parts of East India, though she may have been associated with the Buddhist deity Hārītī as well as the Brahmanical goddess Pārvatī with Skanda on her lap'.<sup>2</sup>

The image of a four-armed goddess holding in her upper arms a fish and a bowl and supporting a child with the two lower hands has been identified as that of Hārītī by Bhattasali.<sup>3</sup> Banerjea refers to the identification of the image by Bhattasali as tentative,<sup>4</sup> and the latter appears to have argued his case more on assumption than on any tangible grounds. The image has nothing whatsoever in common with the Hārītī images known to us.<sup>5</sup> The goddess in this sculpture holds the child in a manner different from any representation of her Buddhist counterpart. The sitting posture of the goddess in this example is baddhapadmāsana in which no extant Hārītī image has ever been shown. Moreover, the two extra hands, holding a fish and a bowl respectively, cannot be fitted into

1. EI, xxviii, p. 139.
2. Ibid.
3. IBBS, p. 63, pl. xxv.
4. HB, i, p. 461.
5. Supra, pp. 141-42.

the iconography of Hārītī, who, as Bhattasali himself admits, is two-armed.<sup>1</sup> Bhattasali's <sup>(attempt)</sup> to characterize this feature of the image as 'a Mahāyana redaction of the two-armed goddess'<sup>2</sup> must be dismissed as poor logic since he does not quote any dhyāna in support of his hypothesis. Except that she sits in baddhapadmāsana like the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas, there is nothing Buddhist in character in this image.<sup>3</sup> The goddess is profusely decorated with ornaments and her garments include a transparent uttariya. She sits on a double lotus on a pañcara-tha pedestal on the middle face of which is a kneeling worshipper facing towards her left. The backslab is plain except for a raised border and a kīrtimukha flanked by flying vidyādharas.

In the conception of this four-armed and three-eyed goddess, indigenous, but not Mahāyana tāntrik influences, seem to have played an important part. This is indicated in our opinion by the two emblems in her upper hands - the fish<sup>4</sup> and the bowl (rice bowl). The child too may be

1. IBBS, p. 63.

2. Ibid, p. 67.

3. The common characteristics of a Buddhist image are: a dhyāni Buddha figure on the crown, caitya symbols and seated Bodhisattva motifs on the backslab.

4. The fish, it may be suggested, is looked upon in India with reverence as the emblem of fertility and hence used in marriage rites in Bengal. The fish is sacred to the Mother Goddess because she is the goddess of love and fertility. It is accordingly placed in the hand of the Bengali bride at the time of marriage but it is a tabbo to a Bengali widow. MG, pp. 32-33. For the significance of the fish in the cults of the Mother

ascribed to local influence and intended to emphasize the role of the goddess as mother and creatrix. The fish and the bowl have no other significance but that of indicating an important aspect of the Mother Goddess who is conceived as the giver of sustenance.<sup>1</sup> As Bengal abounds in rice and fish, such an explanation of the attributes appear to be most appropriate and far from fantastic or inadequate.

A sadly mutilated image showing the goddess Durgā seated in lalitāsana on a lotus with a child on her left lap and preserved in the Varendra Research Museum,<sup>2</sup> has been identified as that of Ṣaṣṭhī,<sup>3</sup> the miniature figure<sup>4</sup> of the lion on the pedestal having been evidently mistaken for the cat which is the vāhana of the latter goddess.<sup>5</sup> The goddess appears to hold in her partially preserved right hand what seems to be<sup>a</sup> dhvaja, but may as well be a leafy branch. As neither of these objects have any connection with Ṣaṣṭhī, and as both may be regarded as<sup>6</sup> the attributes of the Mother Goddess, and as there is

Goddesses, see Ibid, pp. 30-32.

1. Supra, pp. 118-19.
2. VRS-AR, 1934-35, pp. 17-18, pl. iii.6.
3. HB, i, p. 461.
4. VRS-AR, 1934-35, p. 17.
5. HM, p. 477.
6. Dhvaja is an attribute of Durgā in her Mahiṣamardinī aspect. (Supra, p. 474). As the controller of all vegetation, i.e., in her Śākambharī aspect the goddess may have a leafy branch (which looks like a sheaf of grain in this sculpture) in her hand.

moreover a lion in this composition, 'the deity may without any doubt be considered as a variety of Durgā, though in the absence of other emblems, the exact type cannot be determined'.<sup>1</sup>

D U R G Ā   A S   A   B R I D E

In her placid aspects under such names as Umā, Gaurī and Pārvatī, the Mother Goddess has also been represented in Indian plastic art in the role of a young bride being wedded to Śiva. Apart from symbolizing the union of the two cults - Śaivism and Śaktism - the sculptures depicting the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī also signify the union of the male and the female principles which is necessary for the creation of the universe and the propagation of the species. As testified by the Purāṇas,<sup>2</sup> the Epics,<sup>3</sup> and Kālidāsa's Kumārasambhava,<sup>4</sup> the story of the marriage of these two divinities seems to have been well-known in India from very ancient times.

In perfect conformity with the Indian custom, Śiva as bridegroom appears to have appropriated to himself the lion's share of importance in these sculptures, which are designated as his Kalyānasundara- or Vaivāhika-mūrtis.<sup>5</sup>

1. VRS-AR, 1934-35, p. 18.

2. Supra, p. 289

3. Supra, p. 338

4. Canto vii.

5. DHI, p. 485; SII, p. 103.

The Purāṇas and other works give however only the story of the marriage, but not the dhyāna as to how the divine couple should appear during the ceremony.<sup>1</sup> Bhattasali seems to regard this as the reason for the comparative paucity of Kalyānasundara images in North India.<sup>2</sup> The iconographical details quoted by Rao, as well as the examples cited by him,<sup>3</sup> also led Bhattasali to assume that the making of these images were chiefly confined to South India.<sup>4</sup> But, as Banerjea rightly points out, in recent years our knowledge of Bengal iconography has been enriched by the discovery of a few specimens of this type in Bogra and Dacca districts.<sup>5</sup>

Altogether six sculptures representing the marriage of the goddess with Śiva have so far been discovered in Northern India. Four of these were found in Bengal - two each in Bogra and Dacca districts.<sup>6</sup> Of the remaining two

1. IBBS, p. 121.

2. Ibid.

3. EHI, ii(i), pp. 337-352, ii(ii), App. B, pp. 171-78.

4. IBBS, p. 121.

5. HB, i, pp. 445-46.

6. Of the two images from Bogra district one is now in the Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi, and the other at the Dacca Sāhitya Pariṣat. (IBBS, pp. 120-21). One of the images from Dacca district is in the Dacca Museum (Ibid, p. 120), and the other in the Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣat, Calcutta. (Ibid, p. 120).

examples one was found at Ratanpur in Bilaspur district, Madhya Pradesh,<sup>1</sup> and the other in the courtyard of the Viṣṇupada temple at Gaya.<sup>2</sup> Among the South Indian specimens - not more than six in all - (contrary to Bhattasali's contention that the South is more prolific than the North in these images)<sup>3</sup>, two are from Madura,<sup>4</sup> one is from Tiruvorriyur,<sup>5</sup> one is from Elephanta,<sup>6</sup> two are from Elura,<sup>7</sup> and one from the Chidambaram temple.<sup>8</sup> Strictly speaking, the number of South Indian Kalyāṇasundara images should be regarded as three only, for Elephanta and Elura are situated rather in the west of the peninsula than in the proper south.

The Kalyāṇasundara-mūrtis from Northern India compare unfavourably with those of the South<sup>9</sup> in that the latter are not only better known but also produced on a vast scale. The iconographical details of the chief dramatis personae in these groups are available in as many as four

1. EHI, ii(i), pp. 345-46, pl. cii.
2. EISMS, p. 112, pl. xcv.C. This image is in the private collection of Dr. S.K. Chatterji of Calcutta. (Ibid).
3. Supra, p. 520.
4. EHI, ii(i), p. 351, pls. cvi-cvii.
5. Ibid, p. 344, pl. ci.
6. HFAIC, p. 215, fig. 154.
7. ASWI, v, p. 41, pl. xxxvi.1; EHI, ii(i), pp. 347-51, pls. civ-cv; AEAC, pp. 197, 212.
8. SII, p. 107, ~~pl.~~ fig. 66.
9. HB, p. 446.

texts<sup>1</sup> which seem to have been current in South India only, for the theme appears to have been represented in Northern India in a manner that is materially different.<sup>2</sup> Thus according to these texts,<sup>3</sup> Pārvatī should stand on the left of Śiva,<sup>4</sup> but except in the Dacca Sāhitya Pariṣat example, she stands in front of the god in all other sculptures of this type from Bengal. In the example from Gaya, she stands on the right of Śiva, and in the specimen from Madhya Pradesh she is of course placed on the left of the god, but instead of facing front as in the sculptures from Elephanta, Elura and other parts of South India, the goddess as well as her bridegroom have been shown facing each other with three-quarters of their bodies presented to view. While the South Indian images depict the marriage scene in the Vedic or orthodox style, those from Bengal are much more interesting 'inasmuch as they portray some of the local marriage customs such as pacing of the seven steps, the carrying of kartari in the hand of the bridegroom etc'.<sup>5</sup> In these particular sculptures from Bengal

1. Āṅgśumadbhedāgama, Uttarakāmigama, Silparatna and Pūrva-kāranāgama reproduced in EHI, ii(ii), App.B, pp.171-78. H.K. Sāstrī mentions three more works of this kind : Kāśyapa-Silpa, Silpasamgraha and Mayamata. SII, p.107.
2. HB, i, p.446.
3. EHI, ii(i), p. 340.
4. As Rao himself observes, Parvati may also stand on the right of Śiva. This will be evident from the examples from Elephanta, Elura and Madura. EHI, ii(i), p.340, note
5. HB, i, p. 446.

the goddess holds a mirror in her left hand,<sup>1</sup> while a flower replaces this object in the South Indian examples.<sup>2</sup> These differences clearly demonstrate that 'whatever particular texts might have supplied the northern artists with the theme, they certainly did not follow such manuals as Āṅśumadbhedāgama or the Pūrva-kāraṇāgama adopted by the southern ones'.<sup>3</sup>

The Kalyānasundara image<sup>4</sup> is usually crowded with gods and demigods; of which the central figures are those of Śiva and Pārvatī, both dressed up and adorned with ornaments appropriate to the occasion. Śiva is to be shown as a young man, four-armed, holding ṭaṅka or paraśu and the mrga in his two upper hands, while his lower left will be extended in varadamudrā and his right shall hold the corresponding hand of Pārvatī. The latter in these sculptures should be represented as a fully developed maiden with two hands, of which the right should be placed in the corresponding hand of Śiva, and the other should hold a lotus. Her head should hang down a little in shyness and she should be made as high as the eye, ~~or~~ chin, shoulder or breast of Śiva. The composition shall also

1. IBBS, pp. 122-23; CVRM, p. 9; EISMS, p. 113.

2. SII, p. 103.

3. HB, i, p. 446; cf. EISMS, p. 114.

4. EHI, ii(i), pp. 340-43; SII, pp. 103-07.

include the four-faced and four-armed Brahmā seated on a padmāsana in front of a lighted sacrificial fire-pit in the role of a priest. To the right of the main figures should be the standing ones of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī who replace Himavat and Menakā, the parents of Pārvatī. This should be indicated by the golden pot held in the two lower hands of Viṣṇu for pouring water into the hands of Śiva as a token of giving away the bride.<sup>1</sup> In such compositions in which Viṣṇu does not give away the bride, he becomes a spectator with other gods, all of whom are attended by their respective vāhanas.

An examination of the extant Kalyāṇasundara groups will however reveal peculiarities which do not conform to the above directions. The 11th-12th century Kalyāṇasundara-mūrti from Tiruvorriyur<sup>2</sup> consists only of Śiva with Pārvatī on his right. In the remarkably well-executed panel depicting the sacred marriage at Elephanta, datable in the 8th century A.D.,<sup>3</sup> the goddess no doubt appears according to the formula though she is shown on the

1. Kālidāsa refers to the presence of Lakṣmī at the wedding and her blessing the couple after the ceremony by sprinkling them with water from the stalk of the lotus held in her hand.
2. Supra, p. 521.
3. HFAIC, p. 215; AIA, pls. ~~257~~ 257 and 259.; EHI, ii(i), p. 346.

bridegroom's right. The place of her parents seems to have been taken over by Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī. Brahmā is seen officiating as the priest, and the figure of a two-armed well-built man standing behind Pārvatī with his left hand resting on her shoulder may be that of her father, Himavat. The top part of the panel is crowded with male and female figures, but their sadly mutilated state renders any identification difficult. In the late medieval example from the Chidambaram temple,<sup>1</sup> the goddess is on the left of Śiva, her right hand in the corresponding one of the god in pānigrahaṇa gesture, while the left hangs gracefully by her side. Both are profusely adorned with ornaments and sumptuously clad. As in the Elephanta and other specimens, the goddess is in the full bloom of her youth suggested as much by her remarkably large globular breasts pressing against one another as by her slim waist and wide hips.<sup>2</sup> In the two Madura sculptures of this class, Viṣṇu as the giver-away of the bride stands on the right of the couple and the three divinities form the principal figures in the compositions. In both the examples, Viṣṇu, Pārvatī and Śiva are so lavishly decorated with jewels that not

1. Supra, p.521.

2. Supra, p.521.

much space has been left uncovered on their respective persons. The group stands on a three-tiered pedestal in the upper part of which may be seen the figure of Brahmā performing the homa.

Rich in wealth of detail as well as demonstrating the vigour of conception of their authors are the Kalyāna-sundara panels at Elura in Cave Nos. XXI (Rāmeśvara) and XXIX (Dumar Lena or Sītā-kī-Nānī). There is also a third panel in the Eastern Gallery of the Lankeśvara temple in Cave No. XVI.<sup>1</sup> It represents Śiva with one of his left hands on the shoulder and his lower right hand holding the corresponding hand of Pārvatī. 'The artist of Ellora has, with perfect ease, carved out of mere stone a loving and blushing bride'<sup>2</sup>. Brahmā is present in this composition, acting as the priest.<sup>3</sup> The panel from the Dumar Lena Cave 'represents on a good scale the marriage scene on the east wall of the south portico. The two chief figures are Śiva and Pārvatī or Umā, each with a flower in the left hand; below to the right, kneeling by the sacrificial fire is Brahmā, with three heads, acting as priest; to the left are Menā and Himālaya, the mother and father of the bride, with a flower and a cocoa-nut. Above are the

1. AEAC, p. 197, pl. lxxxviii(right).

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

gods and goddesses; on the left are - Viṣṇu mounted on Garuḍa, Yama on a buffalo, Vāyu or Soma on a stag, Agni on a goat and perhaps Varuṇa; on the right are Indra on Airavati, Nirṛti on a makara<sup>1</sup>. Datable in the 6th-7th century A.D.,<sup>2</sup> the Dumar Lena example also contains flying vidyādhara couples and Sādhyas etc.,<sup>3</sup> and in spite of the crowding it is full of that feeling and grace which makes it a noble example of early medieval Indian art.<sup>4</sup> In Cave No. XXI, the Kalyāṇasundara group<sup>5</sup> is flanked by two panels - the one on the right showing Pārvatī performing tapas,<sup>6</sup> and the one on the left Brahmā as a match-

1. ASWI, v, p.41; AIA, p.296, pl.237; DHI, p.485, pl. xxxviii.1; AEAC, p.217, pl.cxxxiii (bottom). Banerjea (DHI, p.485) identifies the couple on the right of Pārvatī as Lakṣmī and Viṣṇu. He is evidently wrong, for not being four-armed, the male figure cannot be Viṣṇu who seems to have been shown at the top of the panel on the shoulders of Garuḍa. Burgess (ASWI, v, p. 41) has also mistaken Varuṇa or Kāmadeva on a makara in the second line at the top right corner of the panel for Nirṛti. Banerjea (DHI, p.485) identifies the bull-mounted figure in the second line at the top left corner as Isāna who is no other than Śiva (SED, p. 171). It is not clear how Śiva could simultaneously be represented as the bridegroom and a spectator in the same ceremony. Gupte and Mahajan (AEAC, p. 217) also mention the figure as that of Isāna and the one riding on the shoulders of a man as that of Nirṛti. They are not sure however if Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī have replaced the parents of the bride in this composition.
2. AIA, p.294. Banerjea would place this relief in C. 8th century A.D., but earlier than the Elephanta example. (DHI, p. 485)
3. DHI, p. 485.
4. Ibid, pp. 485-86; AEAC, p. 217.
5. AEAC, p. 212, pl. cxxii (top).
6. Supra, p. 483.

maker before Himavat. The middle panel depicts the marriage scene in which Pārvatī stands on the right of Śiva and facing him, her two hands held by the right hand of the god. A very curious feature of this composition is the presence of Gaṇeśa who is seen between the couple. There is a bearded sage and another male figure holding a casket behind Pārvatī. There are two female figures in this composition as well as a male figure wearing a tall crown. He may be the bride's father. There is a dwarf standing behind Śiva. Brahmā is present near the sacrificial fire-pit (homa-kunḍa), and on the right side of the panel is the figure of Viṣṇu, easily recognizable by his four hands. Below the pedestal is a row of Śiva-gaṇas shown in a humorous fashion, some having animal faces, others with animal-mouthed bellies, attending the ceremony in evidently cheerful mood.

1. Rao not only identifies Gaṇeśa but also Kārttikeya standing between Śiva and the dwarfish Gaṇa (EHI, ii(i), p.349). The presence of these two gods at the wedding must apparently be regarded as the height of anachronism because both are known as the sons of the couple. But Rao also correctly observes, 'the presence of these two children is, in all probability, meant to indicate that they were not born by the union of the couple, but had existed from eternity like all gods, but at a later period assumed the position of the sons of Śiva and Pārvatī.' (Ibid, pp.349-50). Cf. Kosāmbī, D.D.: Myth and Reality, Bombay, 1962, p. 3: 'It might be noted that the son of Pārvatī's body was not of Śiva's, and he cut off the child's head later replaced by that of an elephant in the myth. On the other hand Skanda was born of Śiva's seed but not of Pārvatī's womb'.
2. EHI, ii(i), pp. 350-51. Kālidāsa refers to these gaṇas who joined the marriage procession of Śiva (Kumāra-sambhavam, vii.40), and whose comic faces made even the

Except in the Dacca Sāhitya Pariṣat example, the three other Kalyānasundara sculptures from Bengal depict the goddess standing in front of Śiva.<sup>1</sup> In the Dacca Pariṣat image the goddess stands immediately to the left of the god and the actual scene of 'taking the hand' (pānigrahaṇa) is depicted, -the god taking the right hand of Pārvatī in his normal right hand.<sup>2</sup> The Dacca and the Vaṅgiya Sāhitya Pariṣat Museum (Calcutta) specimens are crowded with a host of gods, goddesses and semi-divine beings, and in both Pārvatī is shown as a developed maiden of about the height of Śiva's breast.<sup>3</sup> In the Varendra Research Museum specimen also 'the slab contains a crowd of figures representing on the right side the bridegroom's friends- Brahmāṇ, Sūrya, Indra, and on the left those of the bride party'.<sup>4</sup> In all the reliefs from Bengal, the figures of the navagraha may be seen at the upper part of the slab, and in the Dacca and the Vaṅgiya Sāhitya Pariṣat examples, those of the aṣṭadikpālas as well.<sup>6</sup> We do not find these features in the Kalyānasundara-mūrtis from South India. Also absent from them are the bull and the lion, the

young bride Pārvatī laugh while she was sitting by the side of Śiva and surrounded by her maids of honour. (Ibid, vii.95).

1. IBBS, p. 121; CVRM, p. 9.
2. IBBS, p. 121; cf. Kumārasambhavam, vii.76.
3. IBBS, p. 121.
4. CVRM, p. 9.
5. Ibid; IBBS, pp. 122-23.
6. IBBS, p. 122.

vāhanas respectively of Śiva and Pārvatī - which can however be noticed in all the examples from Bengal,<sup>1</sup> except the one in the Dacca Sāhitya Pariṣat whose lower portion<sup>2</sup> is broken. Śiva is four-armed in the last-named relief, and holds a skull-cup and a half-blown lotus in his upper and lower left hands respectively. In the other sculpture from Bengal, Śiva is two-armed as at Elephanta and Elura.<sup>3</sup> In the Dacca and Vaṅgiya Sāhitya Pariṣat examples,<sup>4</sup> the god has a trident in his upper right hand and his upper left rests on the shoulder of Pārvatī who has a caskey in her right and a mirror in her left hands.<sup>5</sup> Both these objects are still carried by Hindu brides at the time of marriage.<sup>5</sup> In the Varendra Research Museum specimen however, Śiva and Pārvatī have been shown not in the pāni-grahana but in the saptapadīgamana attitude.<sup>6</sup> The former's right hand holds a kartari and the latter's an indistinct object near her bosom. As in the other examples from Bengal, Śiva holds a trident, but in his left hand, and in the same hand Pārvatī holds a mirror of polished metal by the handle. Both stand with more than three-quarters of

1. IBBS, pp.122-23; CVRM, p.9; cf. EISMS, p.112.

2. IBBS, p. 123, pl. xlviii.b.

3. Śiva is two-armed in the panel in Cave No.XXI only. AEAC, p. 212.

4. IBBS, pp.122-23.

5. Ibid, p.122. Kālidāsa refers to the mirror held by Pārvatī in her hand when she is being dressed and prepared by her maids for the marriage ceremony. (Kumāra sambhavam, vii.22)

6. CVRM, p. 9; our pl. xxx. The saptapadī-gamana is not however a local custom in Bengal as Banerjēa points

their bodies in view on a double lotus placed on a bull and a lion. A feature of particular interest is that Siva is ūrdhvaliṅga in this composition. Miniature figures of Kārttikeya and Gaṇeśa on either side above the main figures in the Dacca Sāhitya Pariṣat sculpture<sup>1</sup>, may indicate the inclusion of these two gods into Siva's family, though not as his sons.

The image in the private collection at Calcutta<sup>2</sup> resembles the Kalyānasundara sculptures of South India much more closely than any other of its kind found in Bengal.<sup>3</sup> But unlike such compositions from the South, Pārvatī has in this one an object in her left hand that may be a mirror rather than a lotus.<sup>4</sup> Also, unlike the South Indian examples, the group includes the figures of navagrahas as well as the vāhanas of Pārvatī and Śiva. Banerji assigns the sculpture to the end of the 9th century, because 'there is a total want of craven stylization or of any idealistic affectations which is to be found in the sculpture of the Eastern provinces of Northern India from the end of the 11th century.'<sup>5</sup>

out (Supra, p. 522, ~~note 2~~) but may be traced back to the Vedic times. See HGS, i.6.20.5-10, i.6.21.1-2.

1. IBBS, p. 123.
2. Supra, p. 521, note 2.
3. EISMS, p. 113.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 114.

The Kalyānasundara group from Bilaspur district, Madhya Pradesh, <sup>1</sup> has a few peculiarities of its own. The goddess not only stands on the left of Śiva, but the latter also seems to encircle her with his lower left hand while stretching out his lower right to receive hers intāt. The group is crowded with gods and goddesses including Brahmā who is acting as the priest. A row of nine figures at the top of the slab may represent the navagrahas. Near the sacrificial fire-pit stands the bull, the yāhana of Śiva. The image is datable on grounds of technique in the 9th century A.D., if not earlier.

#### D U R G A   A S   T H E   W I F E   O F   Ś I V A

In another class of sculptures the Mother Goddess has been represented by the side of Śiva, either standing or seated, under such names as Umā, Gaurī and Pārvatī, and the compositions are generally designated as Umā-Maheśvara Hara-Gaurī or Hara-Pārvatī images. The beginning of such representations of the goddess may be traced to the Kuṣāṇa period when under the name of OMMO her effigy was used as a coin device along with that of OESO or Bhaveśa(i.e., Śiva).<sup>2</sup>

1. Supra, p. 521. The list of Kalyānasundara-mūrtis from North India should not be regarded as closed. R.C. Agrawala (JBRS, xli(i), p.5) reports an example from Kaman, Bharatpur State, datable in the Gupta period and now preserved in the Museum at Ajmer. Gupte and Mahajan (AEAC, p.185) reports one such example from Cave No. XV at Elura.
2. Supra, p. 408.

The Śiva images styled Vṛṣavāhana, Candraśekhara, and Gaṅgādhara, Pārvatī appears standing by the side of her consort.<sup>1</sup> In the first variety, Pārvatī and Śiva may also be shown seated side by side in an intimate manner 'exactly as in the Umāsaḥita-āliṅgana-mūrti ... on a seat placed upon the back of a full-sized bull'.<sup>2</sup> The Candraśekhara-mūrtis are of three types : one (Kevala-Candraśekhara) depicts the god alone, and the others, Umāsaḥita and Āliṅgana-Candraśekhara-mūrtis show him standing with Umā at his side or embracing her in a loving manner.<sup>3</sup> These varieties are mostly found in South India, and the Umāsaḥita- and Āliṅgana-Candraśekhara-mūrtis have also been noticed in many parts of Northern India. The latter class known as Umā-Maheśvara or Umā-āliṅgana-mūrtis,<sup>4</sup> have been found in large number in different parts of eastern India,<sup>5</sup> particularly Bengal. In two other varieties of this class of sculptures, Parvati appears as the wife of Śiva and the mother of Skanda. These are known as

1. DHI, p. 464; SII, pp. 113, 120, 129, 132, figs. 70-71, 72-73, 84-85.
2. EHI, ii(i), p. 356, pl. cxii.1-2. Some of the Āliṅgana-Candraśekhara-mūrtis also represent the goddess and her consort seated. SII, fig. 74.
3. DHI, pp. 466-67.
4. IBBS, p. 123; SII, p. 113.
5. EISMS, p. 111.

Somāskanda- (=Sa+Umā+Skanda = with Umā and Skanda)<sup>1</sup> and Sukhāsana-mūrtis of Śiva.<sup>2</sup> In images of these types, Umā is shown seated on a lotus with her left leg pendant and the right drawn up, and with Skanda either on her lap or dancing on a lotus between her and Śiva.<sup>3</sup>

The Umāsaḥita (also known as Hara-Pārvatī, Hara-Gaurī, Śiva-Pārvatī and Umā-Maheśvara) images found in North India, showing the goddess and her partner standing, are quite few in number. Strikingly simple and unconventional but far earlier in date<sup>4</sup> than any of the South Indian examples of this class, is the inscribed Gupta Hara-Pārvatī relief from Kosam.<sup>5</sup> It shows the goddess standing on the left of Śiva with a darpana in her left hand.<sup>6</sup> Still earlier in date is a sandstone relief, now in the Mathura Museum, showing the goddess standing by the side of her ithyphallic consort, holding a nīlotpala bud in one of her hands and leaning against the bull.<sup>7</sup> Two sculptures - one datable in the Kuṣāṇa,<sup>8</sup> and the other in the Gupta<sup>9</sup>

1. SII, pp. 107, 109, figs. 67-68.

2. Ibid, pp. 110, 113, fig. 69.

3. DHI, p. 470. Umā also appears by the side of Śiva in such forms of the latter known as Tripurāntaka-mūrti, Kirātārjuna-mūrti and Caṇḍeśānugraha-mūrti. SII, pp. 140-41, 143, 147, figs 90-91, 93.

4. DHI, p. 467.

5. ASI, 1913-14, p.264, pl.lxx.

6. DHI, p. 467.

7. Ibid, p.468.

8. CBIMA, p.27(No. 2106)

9. Ibid, p. 30, (No. 2084).

period, represent the goddess standing by the side of Śiva. In the former example both appear before the bull, which has a prominent hump. The goddess as well as Śiva are two-armed in the Gupta specimen, the latter ~~is~~ having been shown as ithyphallic with his missing right arm holding a lotus bud thrown around the neck of Pārvatī whose person is richly adorned with jewels. A lotus held in her left hand rests against her left thigh while her right hand, which extends behind the back of Śiva to lie on his right hip, may be interpreted as returning his amorous advances. The Devī's vāhana is absent from this composition, but that of her consort is prominently carved on the pedestal.

The goddess has also been the subject of sculptures in which she is shown seated with Śiva on the latter's mount, the bull.<sup>1</sup> In a sculpture from Basarh, datable in the early medieval period, the goddess, seated on the lion, has however been shown as being caressed by Śiva from the back of his own mount.<sup>2</sup> In a number of reliefs, the details of which are lacking, the goddess appears by the side of Śiva.<sup>3</sup> At Elura, she is also included in such elaborate and masterly compositions known as the Rāvanānu-graha-mūrti,<sup>4</sup> in which she appears seated by the side of

1. CBIMA, p.31 (No. D14), p.34(No.1080), p.35 (No. 1970).
2. ASR, i, p. 58.
3. CBIMA, p.32(No.150), p.33(Nos. 868, 1009), p.34(Nos. 1067, 1082), p.35(No.1574, 1577).
4. AEAC, pp. 192, 195-96, pls.xciii(left), cxxxii.

Siva, with her right hand entwining the latter's left and also heavily leaning against him as if in great fear due to the shaking of the mountain by the Rākṣasa king. ~~Another~~ Another interesting sculpture from Elura shows the goddess in a sportive mood playing dice with her husband on mount Kailāsa.<sup>1</sup> With a female attendant watching the game from her back, the goddess is shown in this composition seated in sukhāsana and her right arm raised in vismayamudrā. Her left hand rests with palm downwards on the cushion of her seat. Of particular interest besides her full-bodied figure, is her coiffure, done up with many strings of pearls. The only example of the standing variety of Hara-Gaurī sculpture showing the couple in āliṅganamudrā is in the Mathura Museum.<sup>2</sup> Datable in the Gupta period, the sculpture is much water-worn and represents Śiva as ithyphallic.<sup>3</sup>

By far the largest number of Umā-Maheśvara images found in Northern India, particularly in the Eastern provinces, are of the āliṅgana type,<sup>4</sup> which show the goddess seated on the lap of Śiva. As the goddess Tripurāsundarī (a name of Umā or Pārvatī in the Tantras) is required to be

1. AEAC, p. 196, pl. cxxiv.

2. CBIMA, p. 29 (No. 474)

3. Ibid, p. 29.

4. EISMS, p. 111. The goddess actually sits on the left thigh of Śiva. IBBS, p. 123.

meditated upon by her worshippers as sitting on the lap of Śiva, Banerjea is perhaps justified in attributing the greater frequency of such images in Eastern India to Tantricism.<sup>1</sup> According to the Matsya Purāna,<sup>2</sup> the goddess in this type of image shall be placed on the left of Śiva, one of whose left hands should be on her shoulder and the other on her breast or thigh. Her hair should be well done, and there shall be a tilaka on her forehead. Her ears shall be decked with manikundala, or sometimes with karnikāra flowers, and her person shall be decorated with a profusion of necklaces and keyūras. She should be so made as to be watching the face of Hara and touching his left side in playfulness, and her right arm should pass behind his back to reappear on his right side. Or she may be so made as touching her spouse with her nails. There should be a beautiful lotus or mirror in her left hand. On two sides of Śiva and Pārvati there shall be the figures of Jayā, Vijayā, Kārttikeya and Vināyaka. An examination of the Umā-Maheśvara sculptures found in Bengal will however reveal that they differ in many

1. DHI, p. 469.

2. Matsya P, cclx.11-20.

details from the description of the Matsya Purāna, particularly in regard to the attributes placed in the hands of the two divinities.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, in some of the specimens from Bengal Śiva has been shown as holding up the chin of the goddess with his right hand - a feature for which no dhyāna has so far been found except the one quoted by Paṇḍit Bipin Chandra Kāvya<sup>2</sup>ratna from some undisclosed source.

That the goddess as well as her spouse have been the object of worship in the āliṅgana form from very ancient times is quite clear from the prologue of Sūdraka's drama Mṛchchakaṭika.<sup>3</sup> In the verses in praise of Śiva and Śakti found in the prelude of the drama Mṛchchakaṭika, composed before the first century of the Christian era, we observe a tendency to attribute to these deities, the passion of

1. Compare the two two charts (i) of dhyānas from different texts, and (ii) their actual realization on some of the extant images. IBBS, pp. 126-27.
2. Ibid, p. 125. According to the dhyāna quoted by the Paṇḍit and reproduced by Bhattasālī, the god should sportively touch with his right hand the chin of the goddess : Apareṇa karāgreṇa priyāyāścibukaṃ mudā/  
sprśantaṃ līlayā . . . . .
3. Ryder's translation, p. 1:

'May Śiva's neck ~~may~~ shield you from every harm,  
That seems a threatening thundercloud, whereon,  
Bright as the lightning flash, lies Gauri's arm!

It is quite likely that Kālidāsa's Kumārasambhavam which devotes an entire canto (viii) to the amorous honeymoon of Śiva and Pārvatī may have inspired the Umāliṅgana-mūrtis in Indian sculptural art.

love which we find so greatly developed in all Tāntrika form of worship'.<sup>1</sup> An ancient sculpture from Koisārigaḍa, Mayūrabhañja, depicts the goddess seated on the left thigh of Śiva, her right hand passing around his neck and the left holding up a flower. Her right breast is pressing against the chest of Śiva whose left arm is around her back and touching the left breast of the goddess. The figure of a centaur on the backslab possibly indicates Scythian influence and the image may be tentatively assigned to the Kuṣāṇa period<sup>2</sup> (2nd-3rd century A.D.).

In the Umāliṅgana-mūrtis, the goddess sits in lalitā-sana on the left leg or lap of Śiva on a double lotus,<sup>3</sup> with her left leg drawn up on the lotus seat and her right pendant either on a lotus or on the back of her lion carved in a couchant fashion and facing Śiva's bull, who is represented in a similar manner having on its back the right leg of the god.<sup>4</sup> Two inscriptions of Lakṣmaṇsena, containing a clear reference to this form of representing Umā doubtless indicate its popularity in eastern India.<sup>5</sup> She holds either a mirror or a lotus in her left hand,

1. ASM, i, p.11. It is of course true that Śiva and Pārvaṭī figure prominently in the Tantras which favour the āliṅgana-mūrtis. But many an in Indian sculpture of far more erotic character (cf. AIA, pls.314-315,318; AEAC, pls. cix-cxviii) than Umāliṅgana-mūrtis may not have had anything to do with the Tantras. The male lifting up the chin of the female with his right hand while closely embracing her with his left, seems to have been a favourite motif in representing mithuna couples. cf. Basham, A.L.: Op.cit, pl.lv, AIA, pl.121.

while her right may embrace the neck of Śiva or just touch his left thigh or side.<sup>1</sup> She is profusely decorated with ornaments and clad in a transparent sari whose folds are marked in graceful wavy lines on her hips, thighs and legs. Particular care seems to have been devoted to her wonderful coiffure which varies from image to image. Her features conform to the physical standard of the Indian nāyikas and signs of intense passionate love appropriate to the sport in which she is engaged with her partner are writ large on her countenance.<sup>2</sup> In most of the examples from Bengal, the upper right hand of Śiva touches in amorous style the chin of the goddess whose left breast is also caressed by his corresponding left.<sup>3</sup> Or he may touch her left breast with his lower left hand and his

2. ASM, i, pp.xxvii and li, fig. 9.

3. EISMS, pl. lv.b; AIA, pl. 387; IBBS, pl. li.a. Representation of Pārvatī seated on the left thigh and in the embrace of the ithyphallic Śiva in a medieval sculpture from Khiching appears to be a faithful portrayal of the hieratic motif (DHI, pp.469-70, pl.xxxix.2.)

4. EISMS, pl. lv.a. The lotus foot-rest may also be placed on the backs the respective vāhanas of Pārvatī and Śiva as in AIA, pl.387; IBBS, pls. xlix.a, li.a.

5. Majumdar, N.G : Inscriptions of Bengal, iii, Rajshahi, 1929, p.109; EI, xxvi, p.5.

1. IBBS, pp. 126-27, pl.xlix.a.

2. Cf. AIA, pl.387; our pl. xxxi.

3. IBBS, p. 127; EISMS, pls. lv.a,b,d; CVRM, pp. 9-10 (Nos. 227, 100, 159).

other hand (upper right) instead of lifting up the chin<sup>1</sup> of the goddess, may either hold a flower<sup>2</sup> or an akṣamālā. In some examples, the figures of Kārttikeya and Gaṇeśa<sup>3</sup> are included, and in some others, also those of dancing pretas,<sup>4</sup> Nandī and Bhṛṅgī, but not the representations of Jayā and Vijayā as directed by the Matsya Purāna.<sup>5</sup> Evidence of Tāntrika influence on these images may be traced in the skull-cup (kapāla) in the hand of Śiva and the dancing skeletal figure on the pedestal of the example from Dinajpur.<sup>6</sup>

D U R G Ā   A S   T H E  
B E T T E R - H A L F   O F   Ś I V A

The Arddhanārī or androgynous form of Śiva owes its origin to Śākta ideas according to which God is incapable

1. IBBS, p. 127; AIA, pl. 387.
2. IBBS, p. 127, pl. xlix.a.
3. CVRM, p. 11 (Nos. 109, 119); IBBS, p. 128, pl. xlix.a.
4. IBBS, p. 128, pl. xlix.a.
5. Matsya P., cclx.20. For further images of this type, their provenance and description see CVRM, pp. 10-11; IBBS, pp. 128-30; CBIMA, p. 27 (No. 2495), pp. 32-35 (Nos. 469, 472, 496, 537, 726, 1066, 1957, 2489); EISMS, pp. 111-112; AEAC, pp. 195, 196, 197, 198.
6. EISMS, p. 111, pl. lv.b.

of discharging his divine functions unless joined with His female partner or Sakti.<sup>1</sup> In Śiva's merging his own body into that of Pārvatī, the main purpose is not only to demonstrate the syncretism of Śaivism and Śaktism, but also to emphasize the inseparability of the masculine and feminine elements in the Creator.<sup>2</sup> The Arddhanārī images therefore represent the artistic translation into stone and metal of what was originally a purely philosophical idea.<sup>3</sup> In fact, they register the triumph of Śaktism over Śaivism rather than the merger of the former into the latter, for in general belief the god is inactive and transcendent<sup>4</sup> while his female element is active and immanent,<sup>4</sup> and 'the male side of the god is believed to relegate all his more onerous and troublesome executive functions to his feamle counterpart'.<sup>5</sup>

As the name indicates, an image of this class should be in form half male on the right side and half female on the left.<sup>6</sup> The jewellery on the image<sup>7</sup> is accordingly

1. RTLI, pp. 180-81.
2. DHI, p. 552.
3. SII, p. 120.
4. Basham, A.L. : Op. cit., p. 311.
5. RTLI, p. 181. For legends about the origin of this form see EHI, ii(i), pp. 321-23.
6. EHI, ii(i), p. 323.
7. SII, p. 120; fig. 75; EHI, ii(i), pp. 323-26, pls. xcv-xcvii; Ibid, ii(ii), App. B, pp. 164-68.

distinguished in every detail : those on the left side being purely feminine ornaments, and those on the right appropriate for a male. The drapery on the right side consists of a tiger's skin reaching upto the knee, but on the other side it is a dukūla suitable for a lady and falling down as far as her ankle. Of the four arms of this image, those on the right show a hatchet and the gesture of protection, but the corresponding left ones, are richly decorated with bracelets and armllets, the upper sporting a flower and the lower stretching down to the waist. According to the Kāśyapa-Silpa,<sup>1</sup> the lower right hand may be placed on the head of the bull. Some images show only three hands, two on the right, and one on the left, - holding an axe in the upper right and the lower resting on the head of the bull.<sup>2</sup> The Arddhanārī figure stands gracefully against the back of the bull in tribhaṅga pose.<sup>3</sup> Such images are also made with two hands - with a staff in the right and the left placed on the hip.<sup>4</sup> As indicated by the example from Dhārāsūram, South India,<sup>5</sup> such images may also be made with eight arms, three faces

1. SII, p. 120.

2. Ibid, figs. 75-80.

3. Ibid, p. 120. The image from Madura (fig. 75) shows the deity in samapādasthānaka.

4. Ibid, fig. 78.

5. Ibid, p. 125, fig. 79; DHI, p. 554.

and a nimbus behind the head. Another variation is the image from Tanjore,<sup>1</sup> in which the right side and not the left that represents the female half of Śiva. In an example from Co<sup>n</sup>jeevaram,<sup>2</sup> the Ardhanārī figure is three-armed and seated on a bull with a vīṇā in the single hand on the side which represents Pārvatī.

The iconography of Ardhanārīśvara consists of the following features according to the Matsya Purāṇa:<sup>3</sup> Half of Śiva's body shall be that of a beautiful female. The male half shall have matted hair (jaṭājuṭa) with crescent moon, but the other half representing Umā shall have a vermillion mark at the parting of hair as well as a tilaka on the forehead. The right and left ears of the image shall be adorned with Vāsuki and kundala respectively. There shall be necklace on the neck, a skull-cup or triśūla in the right hand and a lotus or mirror in the left. The left arm shall be adorned with keyūra and bangles, and the sacred thread made of gems and pearls, shall be in the proper place. On the left side shall be a full, round and heavy breast, and a bright developed chest on the other side. Half of the liṅga under the tiger-skin shall be shown erect, while the left side shall be decorated with jewelled strings hanging from the waist.

1. SII, p.125. Śāstrī regards this image as unusual (Ibid) and Rao remarks (EHI, ii(i), p.332), 'In no Sanskrit work that has been examined do we meet with a description of Ardhanārīśvara which agrees with this image....'

The right arm shall be encircled with snakes and the right foot placed on a lotus. Slightly above it shall be the left foot, coloured with lac dye and adorned with anklets and jewelled rings for the toes.

It will be at once seen that the South Indian images<sup>1</sup> do not conform to the iconography given by the Matsya Purāna. In none of the examples from the South, including the one from Elephanta,<sup>2</sup> is the male side ithyphallic, though this is a feature which is quite common in the Arddhanārī images from North India.<sup>3</sup> As both the Matsya Purāna and Viṣṇudharmottara<sup>4</sup> mention this peculiarity of the Arddhanārī image, it may be argued that the North Indian sculptors followed these two texts, particularly the former which describes it as two-armed.

The iconic motif of Arddhanārīśvara is quite likely to have been evolved at a fairly early period, as testified by the glyptic and sculptural evidence of this form<sup>5</sup> in Northern India during the Kuṣāna and Gupta periods.

2. SII, fig. 80. In a 9th century Arddhanārī relief from the Śiva temple at Kandiyar, South India, the deity has been shown seated in bhadrāsana. LK, No.5, 1959, p. 63, pl. xxvii.4.
3. Matsya Purāna, cclx.1-10. The dhyana is also quoted in the Viṣṇudharmottara. EHI, ii(ii), App.B, pp.167-68.

1. Supra, pp. 542-44.
2. ATA, p.298, pls.256, 258. At Elura, the first panel of the southern gallery in the Kailāsa temple contains an Arddhanārī image. AEAC, pp.199-200, pl.xciv.4.
3. DHI, p. 554.

In drawing our attention to a seal unearthed at Basarh<sup>1</sup>, Banerjea observes, 'the left breast of the figure is abnormally large in proportion to the right one... "the curious head-dress like a single horn" is nothing but the longish coil of jaṭā shown on the heads of Śiva figures, and it should be noted, it is deliberately placed on the right side of the head; lastly, there seems to be traces<sup>2</sup> of ūrdhvaliṅga feature on the front part of the waist'. As Banerjea thinks, the seal no doubt contains the Arddha-nārī aspect of Śiva, and like all other finds from Basarh, may be placed in the Gupta period.<sup>3</sup> The left half of the figure shows the Umā aspect of this composite deity, as indicated by the prominence given to the breast on that side.<sup>4</sup> A miniature relief from Mathura, datable in the Kuṣāṇa period, depicts the same theme.<sup>5</sup> In the

4. EHI, ii(ii), App.B, pp.167-68 : ūrdhvaliṅgaṃ Maheśvara rddha sarpamekhalāmaṇḍitaṃ.

5. DHI, p. 553.

1. ASI, 1913-14, p. 152, pl. 1 (No.764).

2. DHI, p. 181.

3. ASI, 1913-14, p. 98.

4. DHI, p. 181.

5. Agrawala, V.S. : 'Brahmanical Images in Mathura', JISOA, v, 1937, p. 124, pl. xiv.2.

Mathura Museum collection, there are no less than four examples of Arddhanārī icons.<sup>1</sup> As in the South Indian specimens,<sup>2</sup> one of these shows the deity standing against the bull, but, unlike any of the former, it is carved in the round, and the male half is ūrdhwareta as recommended by the Matsya Purāna.<sup>3</sup> Another sculpture in the Museum's collection represents the Arddhanārī in tribhaṅga pose, but like the one just noticed, the right half is ūrdhva-<sup>4</sup> liṅga.<sup>5</sup> Both the examples belong to the Kuṣāṇa period. This composite form of Śiva and Pārvatī has not only been glorified by Kālidāsa,<sup>6</sup> but also perpetuated in stone sculptures belonging to the Gupta period.<sup>7</sup>

As against so many Arddhanārī images from other parts of India noticed above, there is but one solitary example which has been found in Bengal.<sup>8</sup> This is rather surprising.

1. CBIMA, p.27(Nos.800,874), p.28(No.362), p.29(No.722).
2. Ibid., p. 27 (No. 800)
3. Supra, p.544-45.
4. CBIMA, p.27(No.874).
5. Ibid.
6. Raghuvamśa, I.1:

Vāgarthāviva saṃprktau vāgarthāpratipattaye/  
Jagataḥ pitarau vande Pārvatīparameśvarau//

Cf. Kumārasambhavam, vi.79: Ṛṣi ~~Agg~~/ Āṅgīrasa advises Himālaya to unite his daughter (in marriage) with Śiva as word is joined with its meaning:- tamarthamiva bhārtiyā sutayā yuktumarhasi.

7. CBIMA, p.28(No.362), p.29(No.722).
8. IBBS, pp.130-31, pl. lii.

since Saivism as a creed is fairly ancient in Bengal,<sup>1</sup> and two of the powerful ruling dynasties, that of Śaśāṅka<sup>2</sup> and the Senas<sup>3</sup> were renowned Saivas. The Naihati Copper Plate inscription of the Sena king Vallāla Sena (C. 1160-1178)<sup>4</sup> invokes Śiva as Arddhanārīśvara. The story of Śiva and Gaurī merging themselves into one body may therefore have been as well-known in Bengal as in other parts of India.<sup>5</sup>

The Arddhanārī image reproduced here in our plate No. xxxii is now in the collection of the Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi.<sup>6</sup> Found at Purapara in the district of Dacca,<sup>7</sup> it is unlike the majority of other images found in Bengal as well as the Arddhanārī images from South ~~India~~ India in that it is not in relief, but carved in the round.<sup>8</sup> It is sadly mutilated. One arm is broken away

1. HB, i, pp. 404-05.
2. Ibid, p. 67.
3. IBBS, p. 130.
4. EI, xiv, p. 159, verse 1.
5. The origin of the Arddhanārī form is also narrated by the Kālikā (ch. xlv) and other Purāṇas (IBBS, p. 130). As testified by the king Vallāla Sena himself (Dāna-Sāgara of Ballāla Sena, ed. B. Bhattacharya, Calcutta, 1953, pp. 2-3), most of the leading Purāṇas including the Kālikā, which is but an Upapurāṇa, appear to have been in circulation in Bengal during his times. The Arddhanārī form representing Śiva and Pārvatī or Puruṣa and Prakṛti together thus seems to have been well-known in ~~India~~ Eastern India, particularly in Bengal.
6. CVRM, p. 9 (No. 95). The Museum has also a fragmentary image of Arddhanārī procured from Gaya. (Ibid, p. 9, No. 288). It shows only the female half of the deity upto the bust.
7. IBBS, pp. 130-31.
8. Ibid, p. 131.

at the shoulder and the other at the elbow, and its lower part from the knee downwards is completely missing. The hand of time or the vandal has also left its marks on the face including the nose. The right half of the icon shows the features of Śiva, who is ithyphallic, and the left those of Umā. 'The crown, the third eye, the face, the bosom, and the other parts of the body, as well as the ornaments and the dress on the right in the male half are shown as quite separate and of a different kind from those on the left or the female half.'<sup>1</sup> In spite of its sad state it is not at all difficult to visualize its pristine excellence as a remarkable example of Bengal art, when entire.<sup>2</sup> Datable in the 11th-12th centuries on stylistic grounds, the image appears to be a fairly faithful answer to the description of the Arddhanārī given by the Matsya Purāna<sup>3</sup> and the Viṣṇudharmottara.<sup>4</sup>

1. CVRM, p.9
2. IBBS, p. 131
3. Supra, pp. 544-45.
4. 3rd. Khaṇḍa, 55 adhyāya.

Chapter Six

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C O N C L U S I O N

In the foregoing pages we have traced the early history of the Mother Goddess as far as it has been possible with the help of literary and archaeological sources. Our essay is not without shortcomings but we believe we have drawn a clear picture of the Mother Goddess as she appears in religion, literature, folklore, mythology and art.

Our survey must have made it clear that, as in other countries, the cult of the Mother Goddess originated in India out of the far more primitive cult of the Earth Mother, whom Homer characterized as 'the mother of all gods and of all men'<sup>1</sup>. The same idea seems to be echoed in the voice of the Vedic rsi<sup>2</sup> in whose contemplation the earth is a mother, and who sings, 'may earth give milk to me her son' and 'the earth is my mother, I am her son'<sup>3</sup>. The veneration in which the Mother Goddess is held today owes its origin to her originally having been conceived as the Earth Mother. It is still apparent in the attitude

1. Bruce, Charles : 'On the Vedic Conception of the Earth', JRAS (First series), xix, 1862, p. 333.
2. Cf. Supra, pp. 109-11.
3. JRAS, 1862, p. 332.

of the Hinduized tribes towards their deities, and in the celebration by Hindus of Durgā as Annapūrṇā, Annadā and Śakambhari; in her manifestation as Laksmi, the goddess of agricultural prosperity; and finally, in the rituals connected with her autumnal worship whose resemblance to an agricultural festival is so strikingly close<sup>1</sup>.

As suggested by Professor James<sup>2</sup>, it is on account of her having been first conceived as Earth Mother that the Mother Goddess came to be invested with so many names and so many forms. She is Jananī because she gives birth to or causes gods, men and everything to be born. She is Dhātrī because she nurses them, and as Śākambharī she causes all vegetation to grow. As the meter out of sustenance the Mother Goddess is known as Annadā or Annapūrṇā. She is Tārā and Tāriṇī because she delivers her worshippers from all earthly miseries. As the source of all grace, beauty and accomplishments, she is Śrī; and as all material prosperity springs from her she is called Laksmī. All knowledge and learning flow from her, hence she is Sarasvatī and Vedamātā as well as Vedagarbhā. As the supreme creatrix she is Jagajjananī, as the preserver of the creation she is Jaganmātā, and as its protectress she is asuranāśinī. She is benevolent because she

1. Supra, pp. 123-25. Indications of the origin of Durgā as Earth Goddess are furnished not only by the navapatrikā ceremony and her awakening on a branch of the bilva

personifies all the good qualities of head and heart. She is malevolent because she has also been conceived in the background of fear and of death caused by famine, epidemic war and strife. That is why she is Ambikā at one moment and Umā Haimavatī in the next. Śrī-Lakṣmī and Cāmuṇḍā, Sarasvatī and Śitalā, Annapūrnā and Kālī are but different aspects of the same Mother Goddess conceived under different circumstances. Thus in a wild mountainous environment the Mother Goddess appears as Pārvatī or Kirātī; amidst sylvan surroundings she is worshipped as Vana-Durgā, Aranyavāsini, Parnaśabari and Vaṭa-yakṣini. In the fertile plains where life is more settled and agriculture is practised she is the Earth Mother, Vasundharā or Lakṣmī.

In the light of archaeological evidence the goddess appears to have been venerated since remote antiquity not only as a Mother but also as the source of fertility. Current practices known as vratas observed by the women, and the worship of Ṣaṣṭhī, Lakṣmī and tree-deities confirm this. Her role as the protectress and bestower of boons (abhayā and varadā) is emphasized everywhere. In the Durgāstuti, which is recited in her honour during her autumnal service, she is prayed to for various objects

tree, but also by her worship in the form of five kinds of grains and several kinds of earth and also by the worship of Kṣetrapāla during her autumnal service.  
PD, p. 762 ff.

2. Supra, p. 127

- material as well as spiritual <sup>1</sup>.

The relationship between the Indian and his deity often transcends the spiritual plane to develop into a personal one. That is why Viṣṇu in his incarnation as Śrī-Kṛṣṇa is sometimes worshipped as Bālagopāla ( a small boy) for whom the devotee entertains an attitude which is paternal. Similarly, Śiva is fondly represented as a penniless householder, a beggar and an addict to intoxicating drugs. The Mother Goddess has not been an exception to this rule. She has been conceived as a daughter, a young maiden, a bride, a housewife and an affectionate mother. Not only have these aspects been celebrated in Indian literature, but they have also been the themes of many a remarkable piece of Indian sculpture, in which the Mother Goddess is represented in her saumya aspects as a young maiden, as a bride being wedded to her beloved, as an amorous wife of an equally amorous husband and also as a real mother.<sup>2</sup>

Like Durgā, Pārvatī and Umā, Kālī is also one of the common names of the Mother Goddess. The name has been

1. PD, p. 815.

2. Supra, p. 512 ff.

traced to the Mundaka Upaniṣad<sup>1</sup>, and it occurs as a synonym of the Mother Goddess in the Amarakoṣa<sup>2</sup>, the Mahābhārata<sup>3</sup> and the Harivaṁśa<sup>4</sup>. The majority of the Purāṇas also use this epithet to designate the Mother Goddess<sup>5</sup>. As indicated by its meaning, the goddess under this name is represented in her ghora aspect that is usually associated with death and destruction. As Kālī, the goddess is shown with a dark complexion, a terrible appearance, armed with deadly weapons and nude save for ornaments that are usually made of human skulls and bones. Evidently, her conception was borrowed from the non-Aryans whose object of worship in medieval India appears to have been a goddess of this type, as it appears from the writings of Bāṇabhaṭṭa and others<sup>6</sup>. The attempt to Aryanize Kālī by equating her with Pārvatī/Umā/Satī is quite apparent in some of the Purāṇas and Upapurāṇas<sup>7</sup>.

There is nothing grand or festal about the goddess Kālī, who is regarded as one of the principal forms of Durgā the Mother Goddess. This ghora form seems however to have been especially favoured as an object of worship

1. MU, i.2.4.
2. Amarakoṣa, i.1.36-38.
3. Mbh, iv.6.17, vi.23.4. (Roy's translation).
4. Harivaṁśa, ii.120.10.
5. Supra, p. 283 ff.
6. The Śāktas, p. 68.
7. BSSS, p. 80 ff; Supra, pp. 283-84.

in North India, particularly in the eastern provinces. Two reasons may be assigned for this. The first is the influence of Tantricism - Hindu as well as Buddhist - which was very active in eastern India, where anarchical conditions often prevailed from 550 A.D. onwards, following the decay of Gupta Imperial authority. Secondly, the resurgence of Hinduism under the Senas was short-lived and the brief spell of peace and security achieved by their rule was followed by wars rebellions and assassinations which characterized the first two centuries of Muslim rule in Bengal (13th-14th centuries A.D.). In such circumstances, it was quite natural for the ordinary people, whose life must have been a hopeless and helpless one, to seek refuge in a conception of the divine as destruction, in a deity unreliable, irresponsible almost, dancing a mad dance of death, and propitiated only by cruel and degrading practices'.<sup>1</sup> That the worship of the goddess in her ghora aspect continued to gain the upper hand and also that she was accorded a status which was equal to, if not higher than, that of the orthodox gods of Hinduism in Bengal, will be evident from the Maṅgala poems as well as some of the Tāntrik texts composed in Bengal from the 14th century onwards.<sup>2</sup> But though she was

1. The Śāktas, p. 87

2. Ibid, p. 86 ff. In the Maṅgala poems, the goddess is however named as Maṅgala-Caṇḍī who is a compound of her ghora and saumya aspects. Cf. Dvija Mādhava : Op.cit, p. vii ff (Introduction)

conceived as Kālī, the tender aspect of the goddess were not forgotten, as it appears from the devotional songs of Ram Prasad Sen and the Annadā Maṅgala of Bhārat Candra Rāi Guṇākara.<sup>1</sup>

The worship of the Mother Goddess appears to have received a new orientation from the first decade of our century. Under the impact of Indian nationalism she became identified with the mother land (Bhāratmātā) in 1905 by the Hindus of Bengal who were opposed to the partition of the Province by Lord Curzon. The germ of the this concept is traced by common consent to the hymn which was composed in or about 1860 by the Bengali novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterji, who was also a deputy magistrate in the Bengal civil service. The hymn entitled Vande mātaram and composed in a different context for his novel Ānanda Math (The Abbey of Bliss), became a sort of Marseillaise of the nationalist movement throughout India in 1905.<sup>2</sup> As Payne observes, it is not at all certain if the hymn was intended by its composer 'to be addressed to the goddess Bengal or the goddess Kālī. They were not identified in the eighteenth century and hardly by 1860 when the novelist was writing'<sup>3</sup>. Chatterji equates his

1. The Śāktas, p. 94 ff.

2. Sources of Indian Tradition, ed. Wm. Theodore de Barry, New York, 1958, p. 708.

3. The Śāktas, pp. 102-03.

own motherland of Bengal with the Mother Goddess. The hymn draws a picture in which 'Durgā the Mother is "baṅgabhūmi", "janmabhūmi". All Bengalis are her children ... It is to her that they turn for protection and all good gifts. They believed that as she triumphed over the buffalo and trampled it under her feet, so they with her help will overcome their foes'<sup>1</sup>. The Motherland as Durgā is eulogised by Chatterji in much the same way we find her hymned by the gods in the Mārkaṇḍeya-Candī. She is addressed<sup>2</sup> as ten armed, holding different weapons, and as Kamalā (Lakṣmī) and Vānī (Sarasvatī). Most of all, the poem emphasizes her fertile aspect manifested in the well-watered croplands rich with harvest, and trees with flowering blossoms. It conjures up a glorious though very wishful vision in which the Mother Goddess as the Motherland appears in her most benevolent and majestic aspects - as the giver of sustenance, and the source of all power, wealth and knowledge.

1. Clark, T.W. : 'The Role of Baṅkimcandra in the Development of Nationalism', Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon, ed. by C.H. Philips, London, 1961, p. 434.
2. Sources of Indian Tradition, pp. 711-12.

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A P P E N D I C E S  
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Appendix A.

Legend of the Mother Goddess  
in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna :

The myths relating to Caṇḍī or Durgā in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna are spread over 13 chapters of the text and are collectively known as the Devī-Māhātmya, Caṇḍī-saptaśatī, Mārkaṇḍeya-Caṇḍī or simply Caṇḍī<sup>1</sup>. The 700 ślokas of the Devī-Māhātmya are however ascribed not to Mārkaṇḍeya, the author of the Purāna but to the ṛṣi Medhas, who is the original speaker, the former merely repeating his words.

In the 1st canto of the Devī-Māhātmya (MP, lxxxix) we meet the king Suratha, a Kṣatriya, and a Vaiśya named Samādhi, both of whom are victims of misfortune and treachery of their own relatives, and who have taken refuge in the forest where they meet a muni (hermit) named Medhas. In reply to their query about the cause of

1. For the date of the Purāna including the Devī-Māhātmya, see Supra, p.448, note 1. About its place of origin, see Fargītar, F.E. : Op. cit, pp. viii-xiii. While we agree with him that the text was composed in North India somewhere near the Vindhya, we cannot accept his conclusions that it was inspired by Saiva influence. Cf. DM, pp. iv-ix.

the selfish feelings which are troubling both, Medhas discourses about the greatness of Mahāmāya, the Mother Goddess, from whom such feelings originate. He also relates how previously Brahmā had invoked the goddess in the form of Yoganidrā to avoid being slain by the demons Madhu and Kaiṭava, and how Viṣṇu got up from his sleep and slew the latter.

The 2nd canto (MP, lxxxii) relates how the gods are defeated in a hundred years' war by the asuras, led by their king Mahiṣa, who drives the celestials from Amarāvati and then assumes paramountcy of the world. Oppressed by his tyranny, the gods with Brahmā at their head approach Viṣṇu and Śiva, and solicit them to devise ways and means for the destruction of the asura king. On hearing the story Viṣṇu and Śiva are so angry that the faces of both become dark with frowns, and there issues forth great energy from the mouth of the former as well as from those of Brahmā and Śiva (tatōtikopapūrnasya cakriṇo vadanāttatah / Niścakrāma mahattejo Brahmanah Śaṅkarasya ca // MP, lxxxii.9). Great energy (tejas) also goes forth from the bodies of Indra and other gods to amalgamate with those of Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Śiva. The mass of intense energy which appears like a burning mountain and illumines the three worlds, gathers into one corpus to assume the form of a female (Atulaṁ tatra tattejah sarvadevaśarirajam / Ekasthaṁ tadbhunnari vyāpta-

lokatrayaṃ tviṣā // MP, lxxxii.12 ) . Through the energy of each god present there, the different parts of her body are developed, and thus comes into being the auspicious goddess celebrated under such names as Ambikā, Durgā, Kātyāyanī and Caṇḍī. The gods also equip her with weapons identical with their own. Thus she is given a trident by Śiva, a discus by Viṣṇu, a conch and a noose by Varuṇa, a śakti by Agni, a bow and two quivers full of arrows by Vāyu, a thunderbolt and a bell by Indra, a rod (danda) by Yama, and a sword and a shield by Kāla. She is also given an impregnable coat-of-mail and a very brilliant battle-axe by Viśvakarmā. For her personal adornment Varuṇa bestows upon her jewels and ornaments, līlākamala and also imperishable lotus garlands. Śeṣa, the lord of serpents gives her a nāgahāra set with brilliants. Kuvera gives her drinking vessel full of wine, and Himālaya brings her a lion-mount.

Thus equipped and attended by her ganas (followers), the goddess utters a loud laugh that shakes the world and goes forth to challenge the mighty Mahiṣāsura.

The destruction of the asuras with their leader Mahiṣa is the subject-matter of the 3rd canto of the Devī-Māhātmya (MP, lxxxiii). Greatly enraged at the total annihilation of his hosts, the titan Mahiṣa rushes upon the goddess, whom he assails with many weapons, but notwithstanding all his efforts and magical powers, he is at

last overwhelmed by the Great Goddess who first bears him down with her foot and then cuts off his head.

For thus destroying the mighty asura king after a valiant struggle, the Mother Goddess is praised in the 4th canto (MP, lxxxiv) by Indra and the other gods - with their necks and shoulders bent in humility before her - (pranatinamraśirōdharāṅsā). In a long hymn they sing her praise, touching chiefly on her attributes as a mother and protectress, and pray that she may deliver them from similar calamities whenever implored. The goddess promises to do so and disappears.

Not long afterwards, as it appears from the 5th to the 10th cantos (MP, lxxxv - xc), the gods are again in trouble owing to the wickedness of the demons Sumbha and Niśumbha, who rob them of their power and expel them from their paradise. The gods remember the great Mother Ambikā and go to the Himālayas to solicit her aid. After they sing in her honour a hymn equating her with all the virtues, mundane as well as spiritual, she appears before them in the form of Pārvatī (a resident of the mountain). Soon from her body comes the goddess Kauśikī of an exceedingly lovely appearance. Kauśikī is no other than the Mother Goddess who assumes this form in order to destroy Sumbha and Niśumbha.

1. BSSS, p. 66, also note 2.

Śumbha hears of her beauty from his servants Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa and sends a messenger to the goddess to/marry either him or his brother Niśumbha. But the beautiful amazon declares that she will marry none but her superior in combat. Śumbha in offended dignity sends army after army to capture her, but these are destroyed by the goddess. At the sight of Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa coming against her, the countenance of the goddess becomes so dark with anger that out of her forehead furrowed with frowns springs Kālī of terrible appearance, armed with a sword, a noose, and a khaṭvāṅga and wearing a tiger skin and a garland of skulls. She is of emaciated form, exceedingly wide of mouth, and with a lolling tongue and eyes that are sunk deep in their sockets. She kills Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa for the goddess, who invests her with the title of Cāmuṇḍā. Śumbha then lets loose his entire force against the goddess, whereupon the gods also send their respective śaktis to assist her. Thus there appears on the scene Brhmāṇī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Nārasiṃhī and Indrāṇī (the Saptā-mātrkās), each having the form, the ornaments, the weapons and the vehicle of the gods whose śakti they personified. With their assistance the Mother Goddess slays Raktabīja, Niśumbha and others. Taunted by Śumbha for fighting with so many goddesses as her auxiliaries, the Great Goddess absorbs into herself not only the seven Mātr̥s, but also Kālī or Cāmuṇḍā (MP, xc.2-4). The goddess then slays Śumbha in single combat.

The 11th canto contains the hymn in which the gods, overjoyed at the fall of the demons, eulogise the Devī. Pleased with their veneration, the goddess assures them ~~XX~~ that she will incarnate herself time after time and deliver the world whenever it is oppressed by the demons.

The merits of the Devī-Māhātmya are extolled by the goddess herself in the 12th canto (MP, xcii) which also describes the beneficent results of reading and listening to the poem. The gods ~~again~~ regain their Amarāvātī and the demons depart for the nether regions (pātāla). The canto concludes with recounting the attributes and benevolence of the goddess.

The 13th and the concluding canto (MP, xciii) relates how, after listening to the recital of the great exploits of the Mother Goddess, the king Suratha and the Vaiśya Samādhi practise austerities and worship in the form of her earthen image on the bank of a river, with flowers, incense, libations of water and drops of blood from their own bodies. After they have worshipped her in this manner for three years, the Mother Goddess appears before them in visible shape. On being asked to name the boon each desires from her, the king wishes for a kingdom in this world as well as in the world hereafter, but the Vaiśya prays for knowledge unto full perfection. The goddess grants both of them their desired objects and disappears.

Appendix BThe different forms of the Mother Goddess on Gupta gold coins :A. Standing Goddess:

<u>Devic</u>	<u>Ruler</u>	<u>Type</u>
1. Goddess holding lotus flower in right hand and cornucopiae in left.	Kaca <sup>1</sup> or Kāca	Standard 38
2. Goddess holding fillet in right hand and lotus in left, or fillet in right hand only.	Candragupta II.	Umbrella
3. Goddess holding fillet in right hand and lotus flower in left and standing on a crocodile or <u>makara</u> <sup>2</sup>	Samudragupta ... Kumāragupta ...	Tiger-slayer Rhinoceros-slayer

1. For the identity of Kaca, see CGE, pp. 78-89.

2. What Smith describes as an elephant-headed monster on which the goddess stands (JRAS, 1889, p. 64) is in reality a makara, which is well-known as the vāhana of Gaṅgā, the river goddess. The goddess seen on these coins is undoubtedly Gaṅgā, who along with the other river deity Yamunā, frequently occur in Gupta art. CGE, pp. 70, 198-200, pls.iii.13-14, xiii.3-6; DHI, pp. 353-54, pls. xvii.3, xv.4.

<u>Device</u>	<u>Ruler</u>	<u>Type</u>
4. Goddess(?) with <sup>1</sup> fly-whisk	Samudragupta .... Kumāragupta ....	Aśvamedha Asvamedha
5. Goddess feeding peacock	Kumāragupta ....	Combatant Lion
6. Goddess facing, noose in right hand, or cornucopiae in right hand	Candragupta II ...	Chatra Class II.
7. -Do?-	Kumāragupta .....	Elephant- Rider.
B. <u>Seated Goddess</u>		
1. Goddess seated on four-legged throne	.. Samudragupta ....	Javelin
-do-	.. -do- ....	Archer
-do-	.. Candragupta II ..	Couch
-do-	.. -do- ..	Archer Class I.
2. Goddess seated cross-legged on open lotus flower	.. -do- ..	Archer Class II
-do-	.. Kumaragupta ..	Swordsman
-do-	-do- ..	Archer
-do-	-do- ..	Two Queens

1. The female figures appearing on the reverse of the Aśvamedha medals and holding a chowrie or a fly-whisk in her right hand has with good reason been identified by Altekar not as a goddess but as the consort of the king who caused them to be struck. CGE, pp. 66, 201.

<u>Device</u>	<u>Ruler</u>	<u>Type</u>
2. Goddess seated cross-legged on open lotus flower	.. Skandagupta	... Archer
-do-	-do-	King & Queen
-do-	.. Nara Bālāditya	.. Archer
-do-	.. Prakāśāditya	.. Lion and Horseman
-do-	.. Kramaditya	.. Bull
3. Goddess seated on wicker stool to left		
a. holding fillet and cornucopiae	.. Samudragupta	... Lyrist
b. holding fillet and lotus	.. Candragupta II	.. Horseman to right
-do-	.. -do-	Horseman to left
-do-	.. Kumāragupta	.. Horseman to right
c. feeding peacock and holding lotus	.. -do-	.. -do-
-do-	-do-	.. Horseman to left
4. Goddess riding peacock	.. -do-	.. Peacock
5. Goddess seated on the back of a couchant lion		
a. holding fillet and cornucopiae	.. Candragupta I	.. King & Queen
b. holding fillet and lotus or fillet only or lotus only	.. Candragupta II	.. Lion-Tramp-ler.

<u>Device</u>	<u>Ruler</u>	<u>Type</u>
b. Holding fillet and lotus or fillet only or lotus only	.. Candragupta II	.. Combatant lion.
-do-	-do-	Retreating lion
-do-	Kumārāgupta	Lion Trampler

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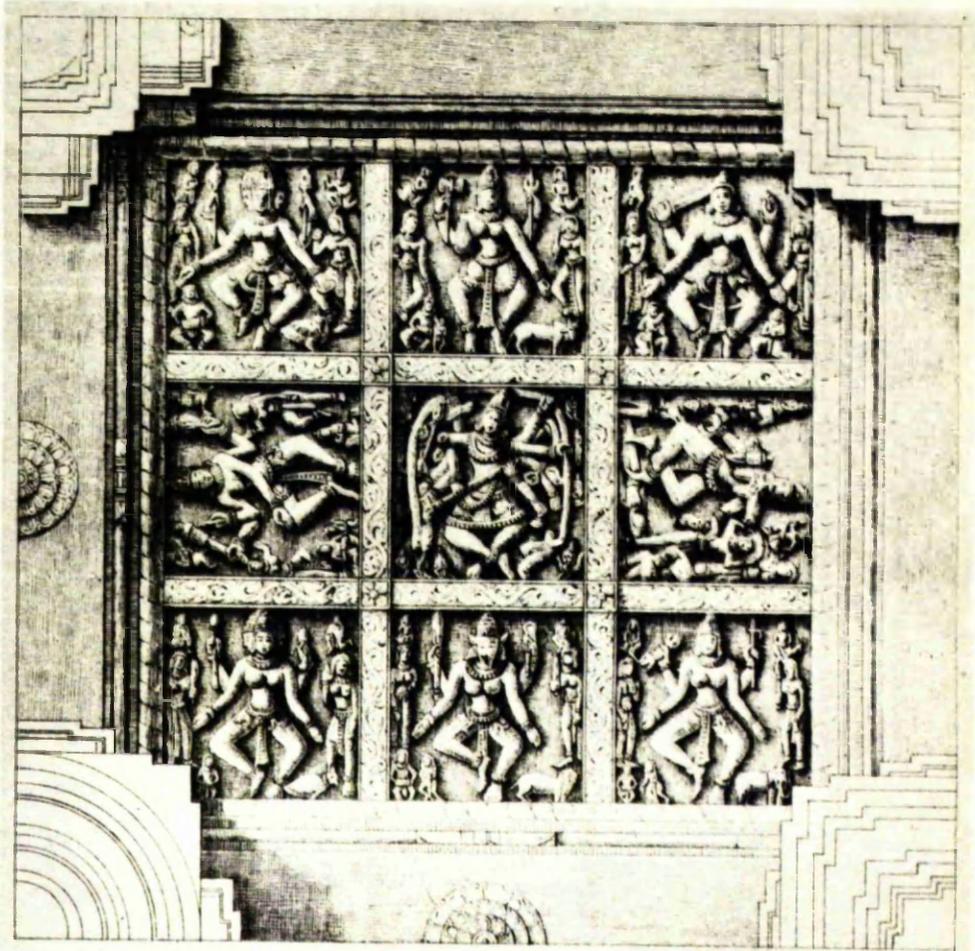
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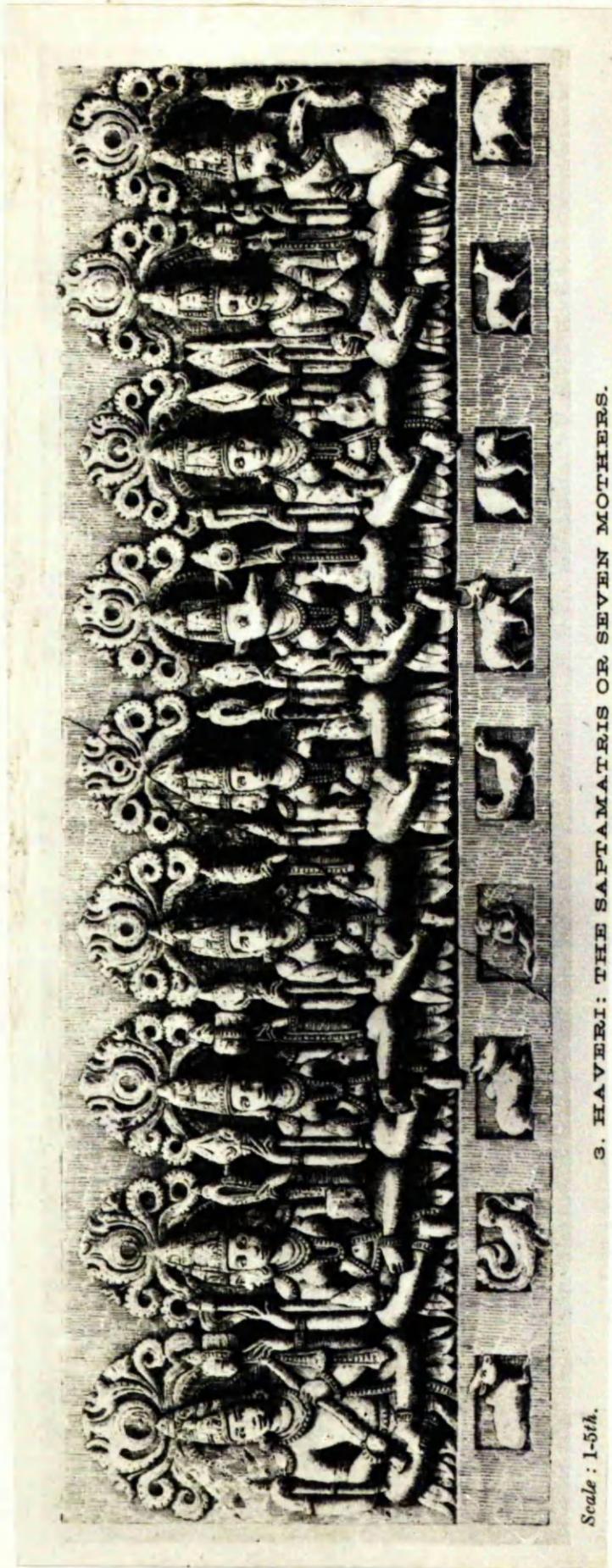
Scale : 1-20th.

HAVERI: 1. SIDDAPPA TEMPLE, ROOF PANEL.

Dancing Mātṛkās from Siddappa Temple at Haveri



Indrāṇī from Pāogāchā, Bogra



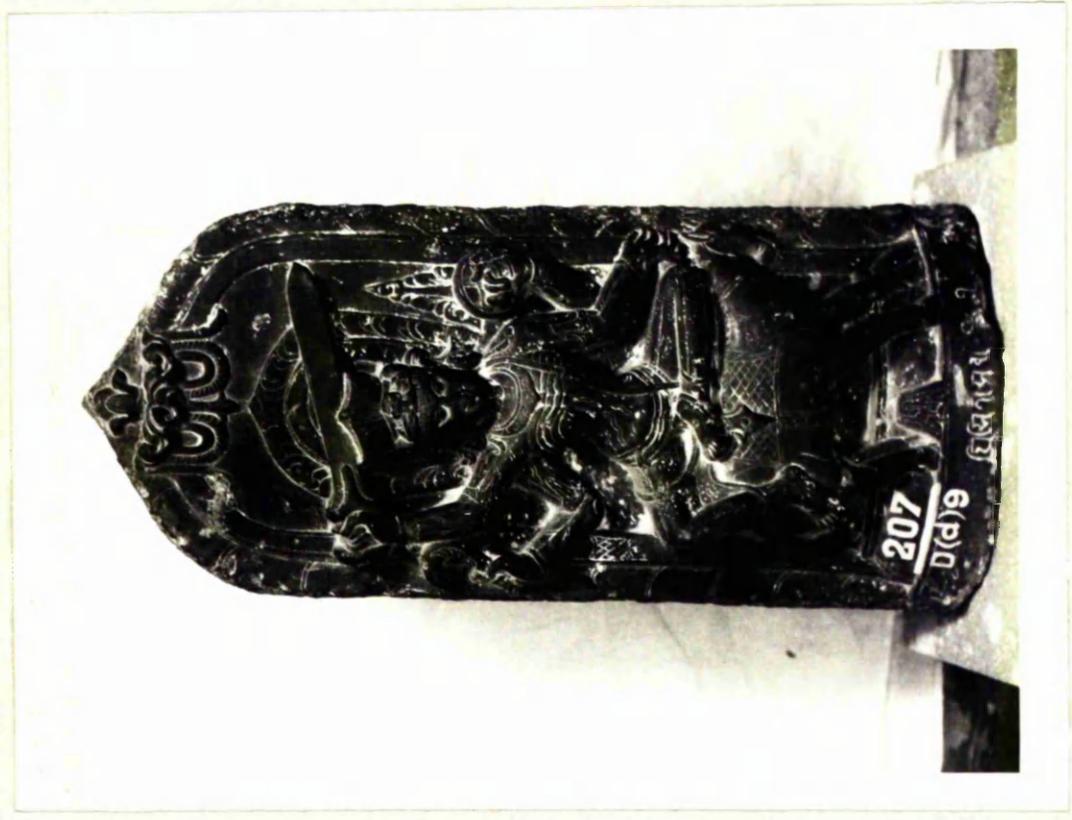
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3. HAVERI: THE SAPTAMATRIS OR SEVEN MOTHERS.

Sapta-Mātrkā Panel from Haveri



a. Cāmuṇḍā Rudra-carcikā from Dinajpur



b. Camunda Pisitasana from Duboil,  
Rajshahi



Danturā from Dinajpur



Mother - and - Child Image from Mallickpur, Rajshahi



Mother-and-Child Image from Khajuraho



Roma or Pallas Athene on a coin of Huvishka

b



a



a. Obverse : Durgā Ekānaṁśā  
b. Reverse : The humped bull, vāhana of Siva,  
on a coin of Azes.



Durgā sitting in padmāsana  
on coins of Candragupta II



Durgā sitting in lalitāsana on the back of a couchant lion on the coins of Candragupta II



Durgā as the goddess of fertility  
on coins of Candragupta II



Durgā as the goddess of fertility on a coin  
of Candragupta II



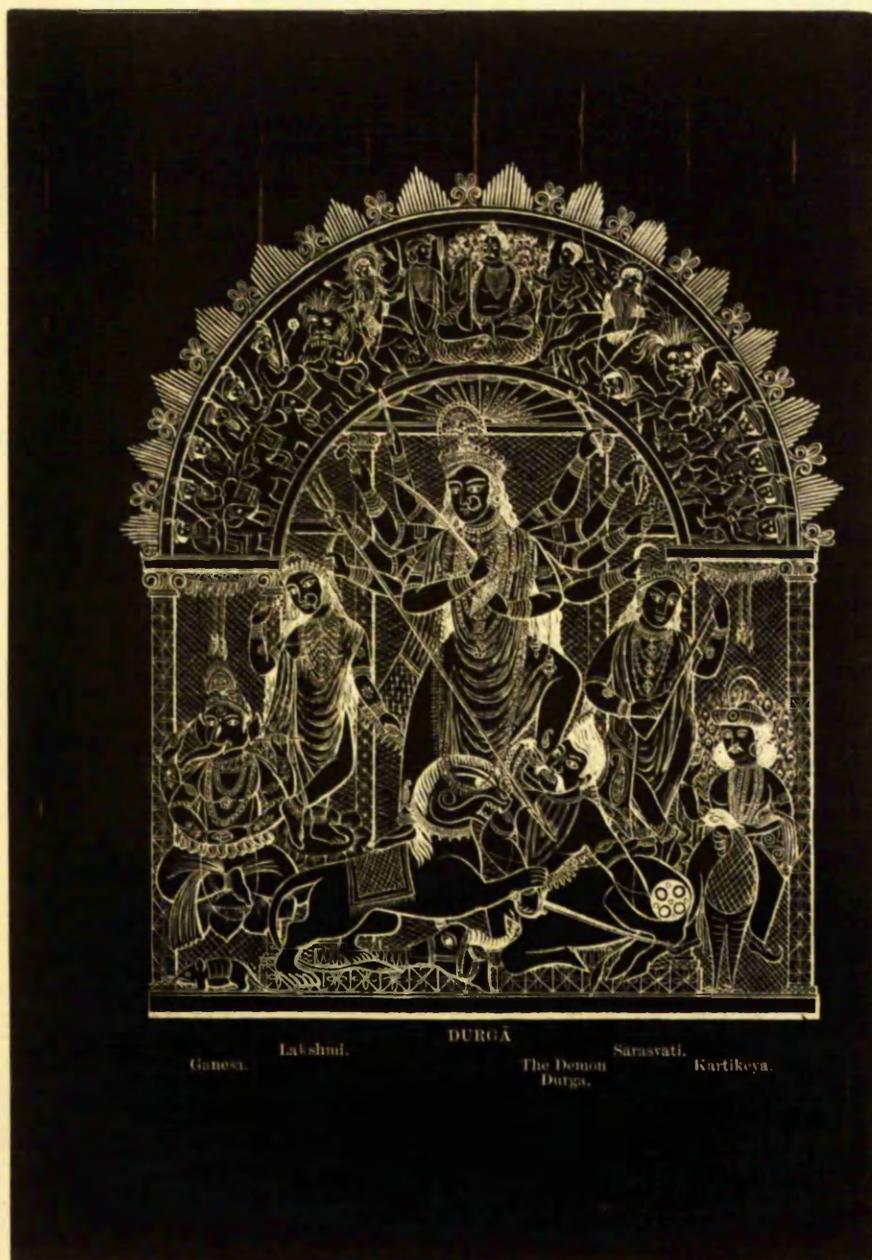
Durgā as the goddess of fertility on a coin  
of Samudragupta



Durgā as the goddess of fertility  
on coins of Samudragupta



Durgā as the goddess of fertility  
on coins of Candragupta II



A Kṣaṇika Image of Durgā



Durgā Mahiṣamardini from Badami, Cave No. I



The Great Goddess and the Demon Mahisha  
From a sculpture in Mahishmaṇḍapa at Mahabalipuram, Circa 650 A. D.

Mahīsmardinī Panel, Mahābalipuram



Durgā standing on buffalo-head, Elura-



Durgā Mahiṣāsuramardini from Mukhed



Aṣṭabhujā Durgā Mahiṣamardini from Haraḥkrishnapur,  
Rajshahi



Daśabhujā Mahiṣamardini from Bagmara,  
Rajshahi



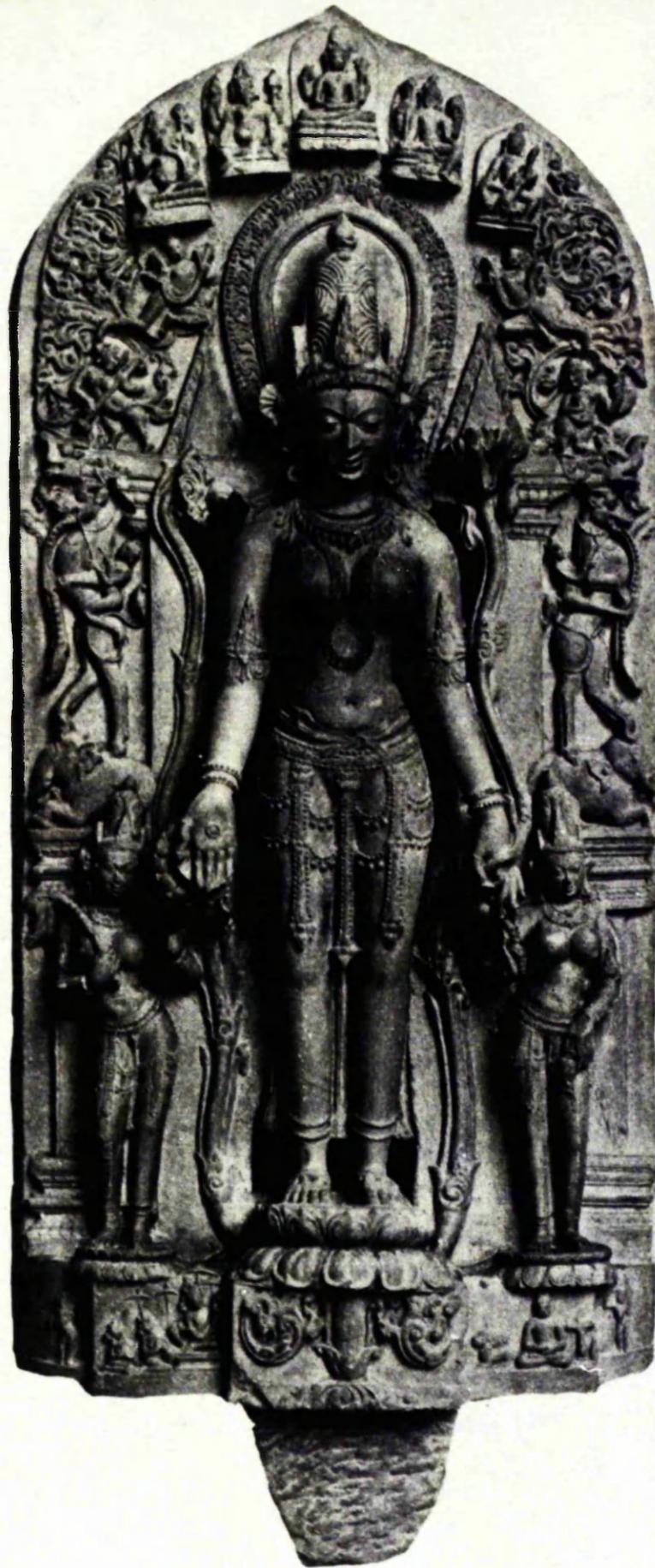
Umā's Tapasyā from the Lankeśvara Temple, Elura



Gaurī standing on a godhikā  
from Cave Nos. XXII and XXIV, Elura



Pārvatī from Mandoil, Rajshahi



Gaurī from Dakṣiṇ Muhammadpur, Comilla



Parvati from Patharghata, Dacca



Gauri from Kagajipara, Dacca



Durgā/Pārvatī from Shaykh-hati, Jessore



Durgā Siṃhavāhini from Bihar



Mundesvari from Bihar



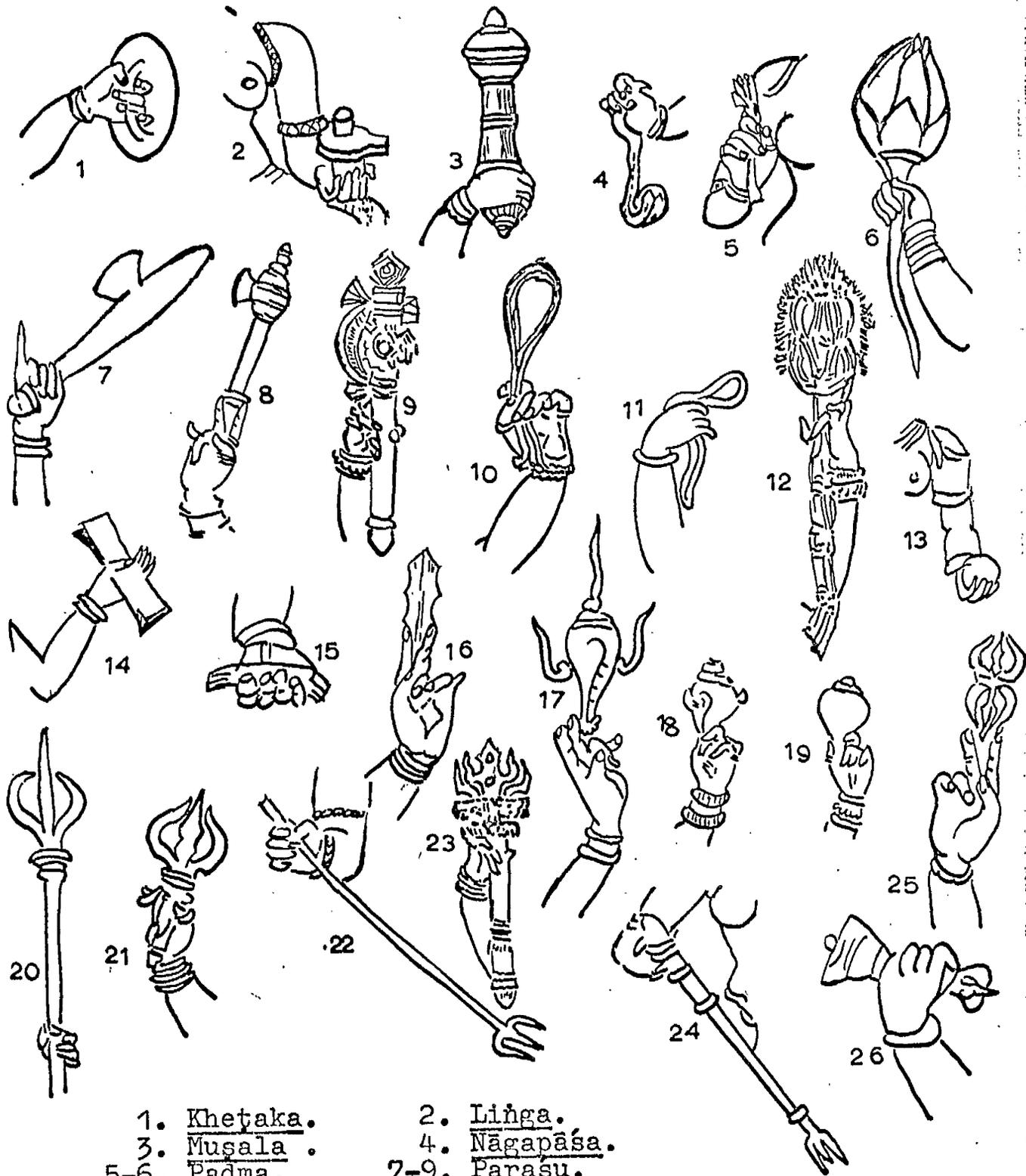
Pārvatī as a bride or Kalyānasundara-mūrti  
from Chatingram, Bogra



Umā-Maheśvara or Umāliṅgana-mūrti  
from Bhatranda, Rajshahi



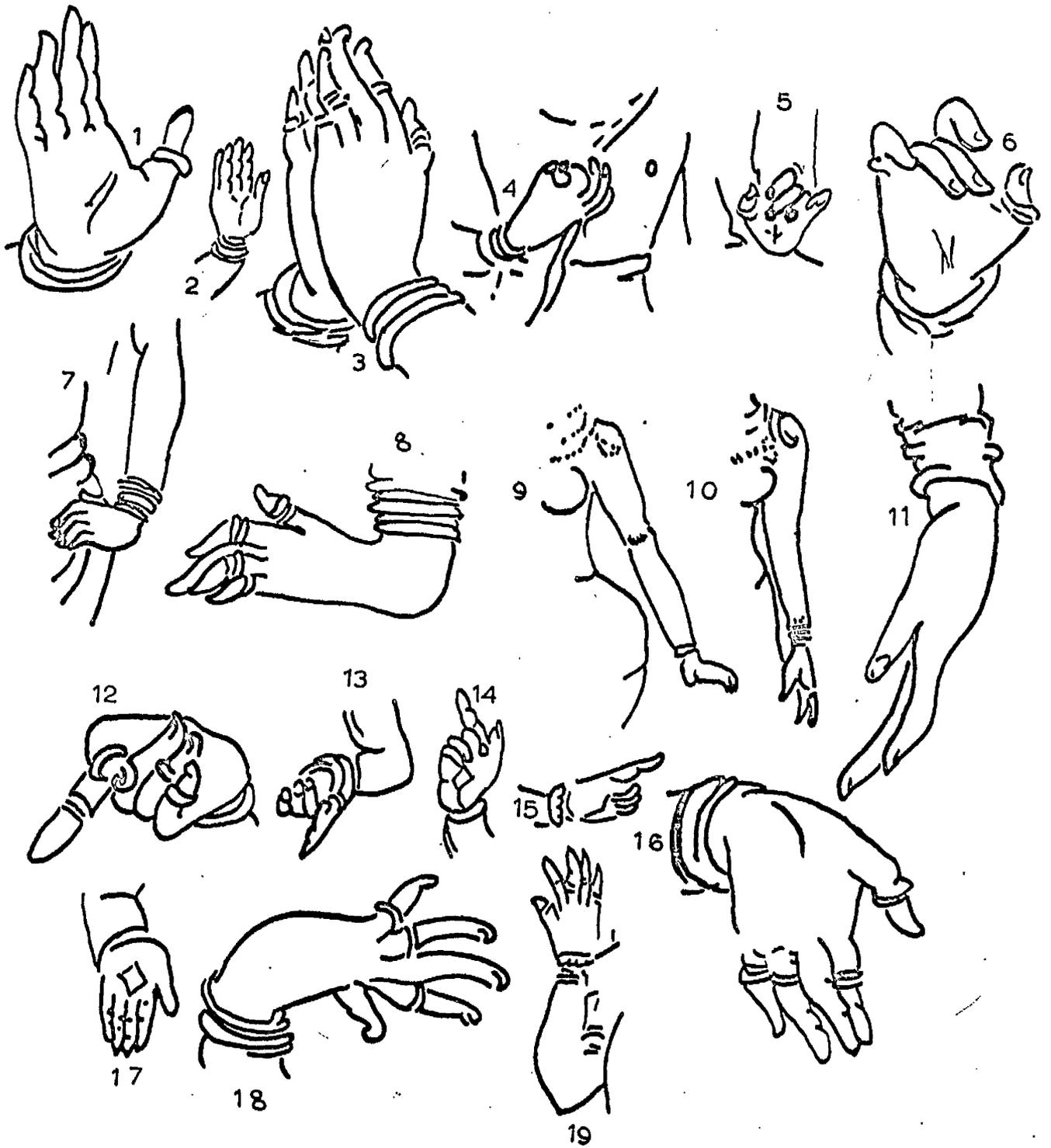
Arddhanārī from Purapara, Dacca



- 1. Khetaka.
- 2. Linga.
- 3. Muṣala .
- 5-6. Padma.
- 10-12. Pāśa
- 14-15. Pustaka.
- 20-24. Trisūla.
- 25-26. Vajra.

- 4. Nāgapāśa.
- 7-9. Paraśu.
- 13. Phala.
- 16. Sakti.

- 17-19. Śaṅkha.



1-2. Abhayamudrā.

4. Jñānamudrā.

7-8. Kaṭihasta.

12-13. Sūcī mudrā.

16-17. Varadamudrā.

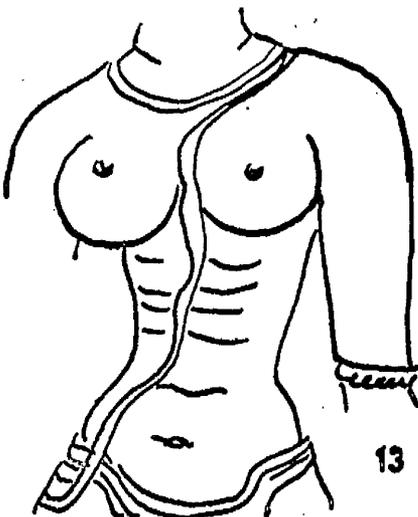
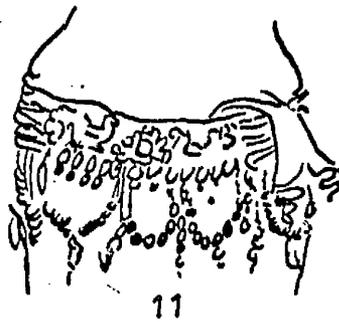
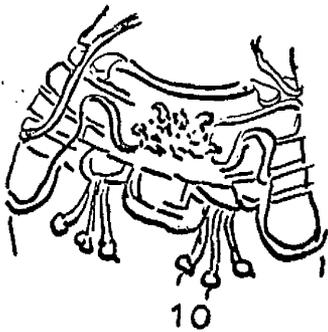
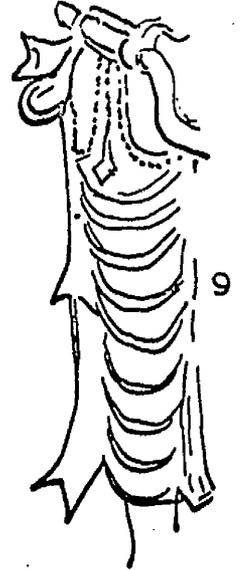
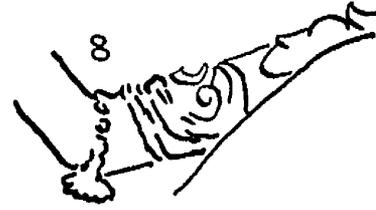
3. Añjalimudrā.

5-6. Kaṭakamudrā.

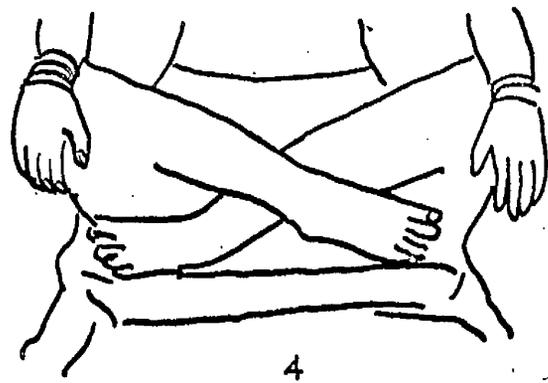
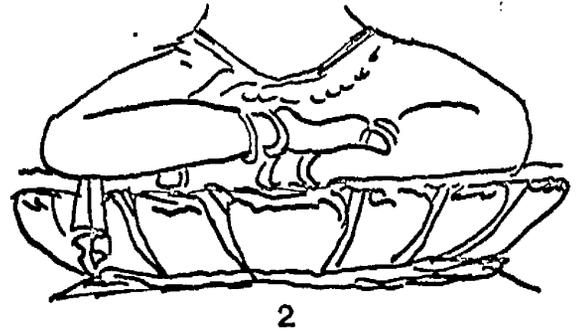
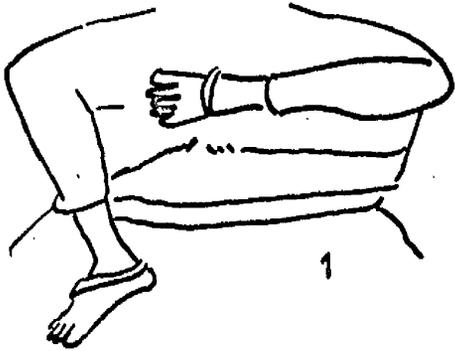
9-11. Lolahasta.

14-15. Tarjanī mudrā.

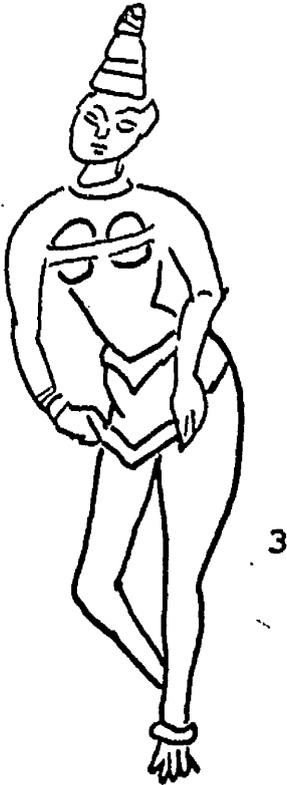
18-19. Vismayamudrā.



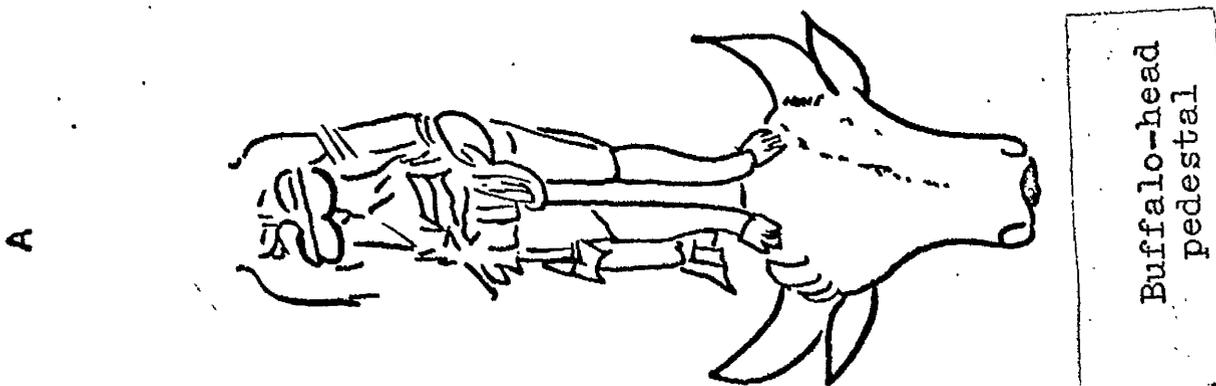
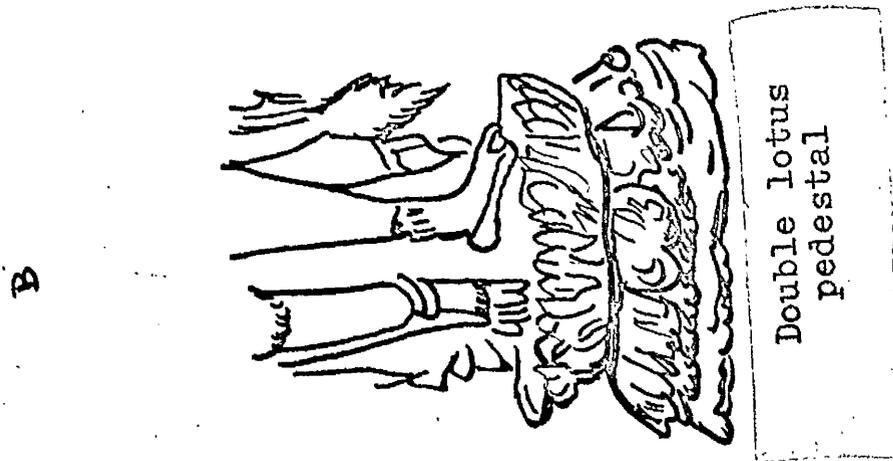
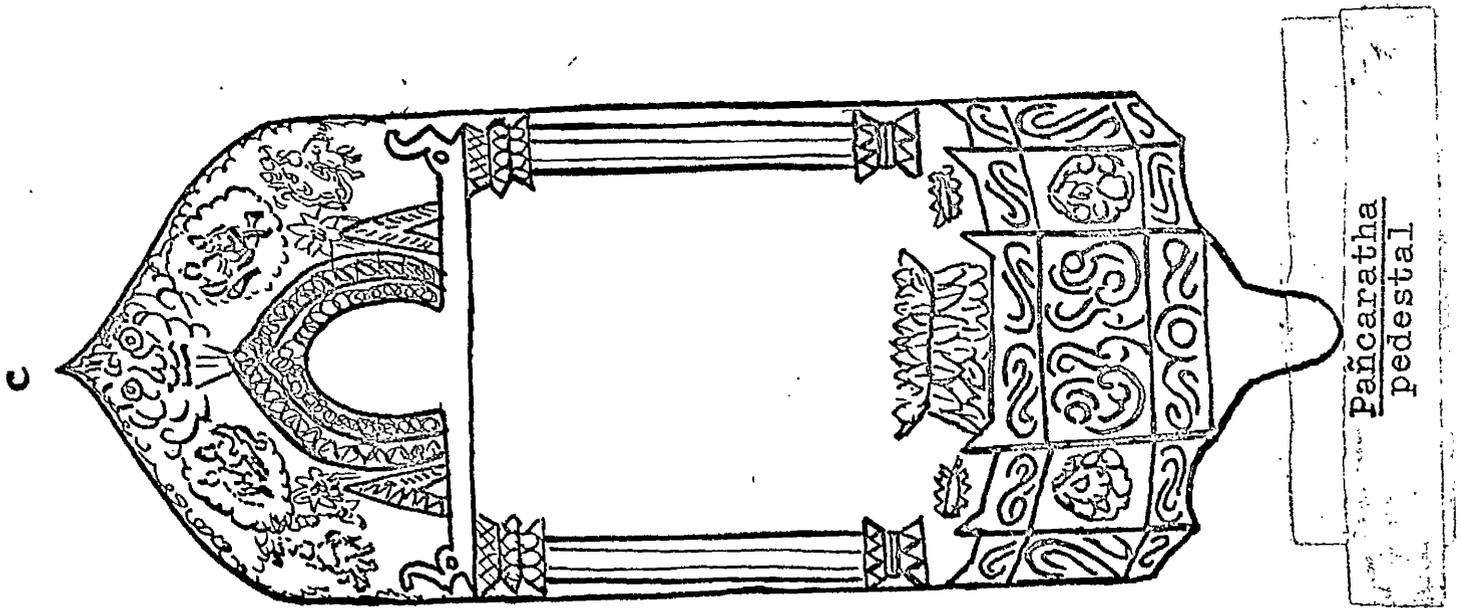
- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. <u>Jaṭāmukuta.</u>                               | 2. <u>Karaṇḍamukuta.</u> |
| 3. <u>Karaṇḍamukuta,</u><br><u>Hāra, Kucapaṭṭa.</u> |                          |
| 4-5. <u>Kirīṭāmukuta.</u>                           | 6-8. <u>Keyūra.</u>      |
| 9-11. <u>Kaṭisūtra.</u>                             | 12. <u>Patrakundala.</u> |
| 13. <u>Yajñopavīta.</u>                             |                          |



1. Lalitāsana.
2. Padmāsana.
3. Sukhāsana.
4. Yogāsana



1. Ālīḍha
2. Pratyālīḍha.
3. Tribhaṅga.
4. Samapādasthānaka.



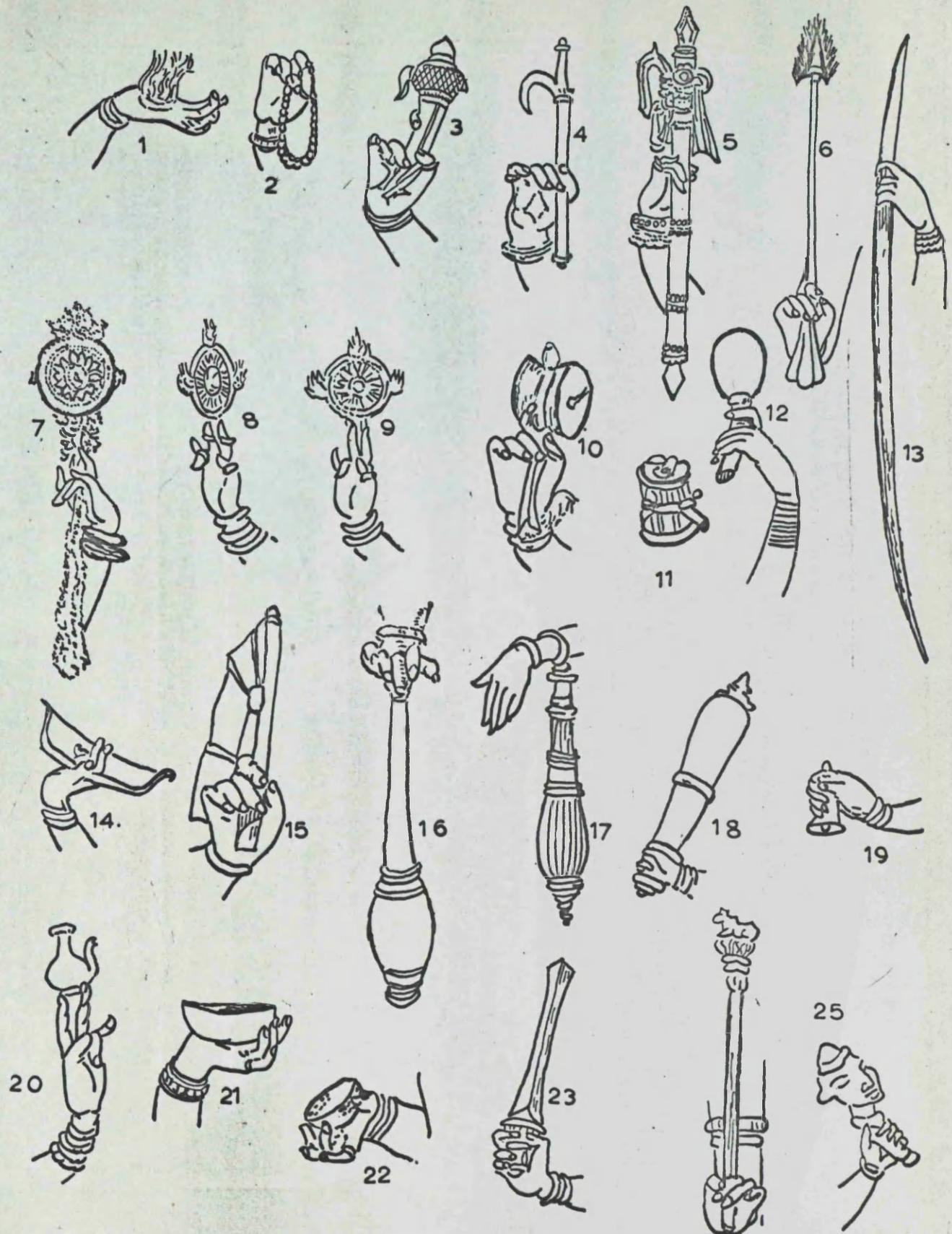
CORRIGENDA

Page

- 28 .... on Addenda, read 'Sāṅkhāyana' for 'Sāṅkhalāyana'.
- 82 .... line 1, read 'role' after 'Śrī-Lakṣmī's'.
- 83 .... line 5, read 'Lakṣmī's' for 'Laksmi's'.
- 87 .... line 12, read 'considerable' for 'cosiderable'.
- 105 ... line 6, read 'Sītā' for 'Sita'.
- 115 ... line 9, read 'Mahā-' for 'Maha-'.
- 117 ... line 4, read 'Viṣṇu' for 'Visnu'.
- 123 ... foot note 8 (on p. 124) '468' after 'p.'.
- 128 ... line 15, read 'Kālī' for 'Kali'.
- 138 ... line 14, read 'Uttar Pradesh' for 'the United Provinces'.
- 145 ... last line, read '6' for '4' (foot note No.).
- 171 ... foot note 1, read 'CMG, p. 114' for 'VGSI, p.'.
- 185 ... line 13, read 'Sītālā' for 'Sitala'.
- 186 ... line 14, read 'Vaiṣṇavite' for 'Vaisnavite'.
- 188 ... line 8, read 'grāmadevatās' for 'gramadevatas'.
- 195 ... line 10, read 'Nṛsimha' for 'Nṛsimha'.
- 196 ... line 8, read '~~wives~~/~~of~~' 'wives of' ~~the~~' and 'Saptarṣis'.
- 205 ... line 22, read 'be' between 'to' and 'śaktis'.
- 208 ... line 13, read 'with' between 'and' and 'Gaṇeśa'.
- 212 ... last line, delete one set of 'may be'.
- 214 ... line 11, read 'Kumāragupta' for 'Kumaragupta'.
- 221 ... line 1, read 'Mahā-' for 'Maha-'.
- 228 ... line 20, read 'inappropriate' for 'anappropriate'.
- 231 ... line 9, read 'Tārakāsura' for 'Tarakāsura'.
- 234 ... line 5, read 'Śiva' for 'Siva'.
- 244 ... line 1, delete 'attributes of'.
- 253 ... line 4, read 'to' after 'not'.
- 259 ... foot note 2, read 'Bhadrakālī' for 'Bhadrakali'.
- 262 ... line 3, read 'durgabhavasāgarānau' for 'durgabhava-sāgarānaurasāṅgā'.
- 268 ... line 2, read 'do' for 'does'.
- 270 ... last line, delete 'medieval'.

Page

- 282 ... line 16, read 'Śabararas' for 'Śavararas'.
- 293 ... line 2, read 'Śāṅkhāyana' for 'Sāṅkhāyana'.
- 319 ... line 4, read 'Mahiṣamardinī' for 'Mahismardini'.
- 326 ... line 5, read 'a' between 'as' and 'form'.
- 339 ... last line, read 'his' for 'her'.
- 357 ... line 15, read 'scared' for 'sacred'.
- 376 ... line 21, read 'contamination' for 'conatamination'.
- 378 ... line 19, read 'scholars' for 'scolars'.
- 386 ... ~~xxx~~ foot note 5, read '373 ff' after 'Supra, p'.
- 391 ... line 11, read 'popularity' for 'poppularity'.
- 410 ... line 11, read 'OAOA' for 'O O'.
- ~~414/111/foot note 4/(continued from previous page)/~~
- 424 ... foot note 2, read '373' after 'p'.
- 427 ... last line, delete 'like'.
- 428 ... line 1, read 'Ardochsho' for 'Ardodochsho'.
- 435 ... line 5, read 'nyagrodha-parimaṇḍalā' for 'nyagro-  
dha-parimaṇḍala'.
- 439 ... line 5, read 'monastic' for 'manastic'.
- 440 ... line 7, read 'a' between 'of' and 'lion'.
- 461 ... line 14, read 'Elura' for 'Mahābalipuram'.
- 467 ... line 11, read 'Mahiṣmardinī' for 'Mahisamardini'.
- 475 ... line 8, read 'Mahiṣamardinī' for 'Mahisamardini'.
- 482 ... line 7, read 'Kuṣāṇa' for 'Kusana'.
- 486 ... line 18, read 'boṣom' for 'boson'.
- 517 ... line 16, read 'Mahāyāna' for 'Mahāyana'.
- 521 ... line 3, read 'Viṣṇupāda' for 'Viṣṇupada'.
- 542 ... line 15, read 'female' for 'feamle'.
- 543 ... line 2, read 'right' for 'roght'.
- 552 ... line 3, read 'Lakṣmī' for 'Laksmi'.
- 562 ... line 16, read 'a' between 'her' and 'drinking'.
- 565 ... line 16, read 'her' between 'worship' and 'in'.



- |                       |                       |                          |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. <u>Agni.</u>       | 2. <u>Akṣamālā.</u>   | 24                       |
| 3-5. <u>Aṅkuśa.</u>   | 6. <u>Bāṇa</u>        | 7-9. <u>Cakra.</u>       |
| 10-11. <u>Damaru.</u> | 12. <u>Darpaṇa.</u>   | 13-14. <u>Dhanuḥ.</u>    |
| 16-18. <u>Gadā.</u>   | 19. <u>Ghaṅṭā</u>     | 15. <u>Dhvaja.</u>       |
| 21-22. <u>Kapāla.</u> | 20. <u>Kamaṇḍalu.</u> | 24-25. <u>Khatvaṅga.</u> |
|                       | 23. <u>Khadga.</u>    |                          |