USE OF THESES

This copy is supplied for purposes of private study and research only. Passages from the thesis may not be copied or closely paraphrased without the written consent of the author.
STUDIES IN GODDESS CULTS IN NORTHERN INDIA,
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE FIRST SEVEN
CENTURIES A.D.

by

Jagdish Narain Tiwari

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in The Australian National University.

June 1971
This thesis was written by the undersigned as a research scholar of the Department of Asian Civilizations at The Australian National University.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preface</th>
<th>i</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Abbreviations</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Part One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>The Proliferation of the Goddess Cults</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>The Evolution of the Cult of the Supreme Goddess</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Part Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Mātrīs</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i)</td>
<td>Prevalence of the Cult of the Mātrīs</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii)</td>
<td>Nature of the Mātrīs, their Number and Names</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii)</td>
<td>Some Theories about the Origin and early history of the Mātrīs</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv)</td>
<td>Geographical Distribution of the Mātrī-cult</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(v)</td>
<td>Some Aspects of the cult of the Mātrīs</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vi)</td>
<td>Appendix: an alphabetical list of the Mātrīs as given in the Mahābhārata, Śalva-parvan, ch.45 and Matsya Purāṇa, ch.179</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>The Nude Squatting Goddess of India</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Keṭavī</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bibliography  
Sources of the figures in the Plates | 358  
Plates following p.358
The present study grew out of an enquiry into the popular religious practices in North India during the rule of the Imperial Guptas. As our investigation proceeded, some salient aspects of the problem soon became apparent. To start with, since the Gupta period only marked the culmination of cultural trends that had been growing in the two or three centuries preceding it, the attribution of a strict chronological reference for various aspects of the popular religious life during the period was not desirable. The uncertainty of the dating of the sources further emphasized this. It was also clear that the designation North India should remain rather vague, in view of the fact that the ramifications of several popular cults crossed this boundary and extended to the Deccan and the South.

We chose to investigate the goddess cults because these appeared to us to be probably the most representative features of popular religious life. But while the subject was attractive, the difficulties in its treatment were also obvious. Unlike the "higher" religions—with a developed theology, a rich liturgy and sometimes an organized sect—which found more frequent notice in literature, the goddess cults, by virtue of their being closer to the masses, had few of these benefits. Their history, therefore, could be reconstructed only in a vague outline, on the basis of meagre evidence, often of a very uncertain nature.

The thesis is clearly divided into two parts. The first part, consisting of Chapters I and II, concentrates on certain general aspects of the subject, such as the very wide prevalence of belief in goddesses and their cults, and the gradual evolution of the cult of the Great Goddess. It is necessary to emphasize that while there is sufficient evidence to speak in terms of a popular cult of the Great Goddess from the Gupta period onwards, the nature of the growth of this cult and its developed ideology affected the goddess cults in general, so that it often becomes difficult to ascertain whether a particular piece of evidence is with reference to a purely local goddess or to that of the Great Goddess. The very pervasive and all-absorbing nature of the latter marks it out from the lesser cults of the many individual goddesses. The second part of the thesis, comprising the last three Chapters, is devoted to the investigations of the nature and cults of specific goddesses, such as the Mātrās, a goddess who remains
unnamed for lack of adequate notice of her in literature but whose figures betray a widespread cult, and lastly Koṭavī who was most probably an ancient goddess of the Tamils. For obvious reasons, we have had to be very selective in our choice of the popular goddesses for special investigation. We decided in favour of some of the more obscure figures, about whom the literature gives inadequate or vague information but who are likely to have been closer to the popular religious life than several better known divinities.

Our investigation has frequently taken us to earlier periods, and sometimes to later ones, to ascertain the nature of the various trends and characters of the goddesses studied. Since each Chapter forms a complete study in itself, we have often had to refer to the same materials in different contexts. However, adequate cross references have been provided to show the interconnections. While every single aspect studied in the thesis is complete in itself, taken together they illuminate one aspect of the popular religious life in North India during the first six or seven centuries of the Christian era and justify our title.

A few words may be added about the sources and their dating. For our study, we have used both literary and archaeological sources. The latter have the advantage of relatively more accurate reference to a time-space framework. When vital to a specific point, a brief discussion on the dates of texts has been introduced into the thesis. But, generally speaking, we have adopted the commonly accepted datings of various texts. We favour the generally accepted view that Kalidasa flourished in the Gupta period and also that which assigns the dramas attributed to Bhāsa to a period not much earlier. The available text of the Arthaśāstra also, in our opinion, should not be dated before the Christian era. Again, while the dating of the early Purāṇas like the Markandeya, Vēyu, Viṣṇu and Brahmāṇḍa, as suggested by Hazra, appears to us to be quite sound, we are inclined to place the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, and to a certain extent the Viṣṇudharmottara, a little later than he has done. The dates of the medical texts are uncertain, but they also have been often ascribed to our period. The use of the Mahābhārata for the study of our period may be questioned. The critical edition has stabilized the text as it probably stood towards the end of the Gupta period, though it does contain materials belonging to earlier chronological strata. But until a reliable stratification is obtained, we feel that much of the evidence contained in
the epic may be more safely referred to the first three or four centuries of the Christian era than to the centuries before it. Our real justification for the use of various textual sources for the period comes from the fact that they frequently corroborate each other and the archaeological sources.

It remains for us to perform the very pleasant task of acknowledging the help and encouragement received from various scholars, well-wishers and friends. Miss Mary Hutchinson, Mr B.J. Terwiel and Mr Ian Proudfoot, all of the Department of Asian Civilizations of the A.N.U., Dr Georg Klim, formerly of the Department of German, A.N.U., and now in the Immigration Department of the Commonwealth Government of Australia, and Mrs Bridget Sack helped me with the translation of the materials in German and French, and I am indebted to all of them. I should like to thank particularly my friend Mr E.S. Visswanathan, of the Department of History, Research School of Pacific Studies, A.N.U., for help in using the materials in Tamil. I am similarly very thankful to Mr T. Rajapatirana, of the Department of South Asian and Buddhist Studies, A.N.U., with whom I discussed some Sanskrit passages. I am also indebted to Professor J.W. de Jong, of the Department of South Asian and Buddhist Studies, A.N.U., who let me borrow some books from his collection and supplied me with a few important references. I am similarly indebted to Professor Sir Harold Bailey, of Queen's College, Cambridge, who spared time to discuss a few important points while visiting the A.N.U.

My deepest debt of gratitude is to my supervisor, Professor A.L. Basham. I have immensely benefited from his unfailing guidance. He also permitted me to make full use of his collection of books and always gave me time when I needed it. In many other ways also, I received much help from him.

I owe my interest in the investigation which has let to the completion of the present thesis to Professor A.K. Narain, formerly of the Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology at the Banaras Hindu University and now at the University of Wisconsin, and should like to express my appreciation and indebtedness to him. I am also thankful to Dr S.A.A. Rizvi, Reader in the Department of Asian Civilizations, A.N.U., and my colleague Mr A.Q. Rafiqi for their good wishes and constant encouragement. I owe thanks also to my former colleagues, Dr A. Roy, now Lecturer at the University of Tasmania, and Mr A.K. Lahiri, now Lecturer in Salisbury Teachers Training College, South Australia, for their
discussions with me on matters connected with the thesis. I am similarly grateful to my friend Mr R.D. Dikshit, of the Department of Human Geography, Research School of Pacific Studies, A.N.U., who suggested a very useful reference to me. I am particularly thankful to Mrs Malati Jain who spared time to go through the typed thesis to eliminate mistakes, and I thankfully appreciate the very full co-operation of Mrs Jocelyn Bergin who typed it.

I take this opportunity to express my thanks to the authorities of the Banaras Hindu University who granted me leave to conduct my research, and to those of the Australian National University who awarded me a Ph.D. scholarship which enabled me to complete it. I should also like to thank the officials of the Menzies Library, A.N.U., particularly of its Reference Section, who spared nothing in obtaining much needed materials, often from overseas libraries.

It is difficult for me to find suitable words to thank my wife Shanti, but for whose silent support and encouragement, I could not have brought this work to completion.
# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS
(Alphabetically arranged)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABCRI</td>
<td>Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ag.P.</td>
<td>Agni Purana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AI.</td>
<td>Ancient India (Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AK.</td>
<td>Amara-koja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ar.O.</td>
<td>Archiv Orientalni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art.As.</td>
<td>Artibus Asiae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aś.GS.</td>
<td>Aśvalayana Grhya-sutra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASI-AR.</td>
<td>Archaeological Survey of India - Annual Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASR.</td>
<td>Archaeological Survey Reports by Cunningham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASS.</td>
<td>Anandāśrama Sanskrit Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AV.</td>
<td>Atharva-veda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av.Par.</td>
<td>Atharva-veda Pariśiṣṭa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBMPG</td>
<td>Bulletin of the Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDCRI</td>
<td>Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BÉFO</td>
<td>Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhā.P.</td>
<td>Bhāgavata Purāṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMC.AI</td>
<td>Catalogue of the Indian Coins in the British Museum: Ancient India, by Allan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMC.GD.</td>
<td>Catalogue of the Indian Coins in the British Museum: Gupta Dynasties and Saśāntaka, King of Gaūḍa, by Allan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPWM</td>
<td>Bulletin of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bra.P.</td>
<td>Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BŚŚ.</td>
<td>Baudhāyana Śrauta-sūtra (all our references to this text come from Dumont's translation of the First Prāṇāthaka of the third Kāṇḍa of the Taittīrīya Brāhmaṇa, in PAPS., vol.98, 1954, pp.204 ff.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CII.</td>
<td>Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dev.Bhā.P.</td>
<td>Devī-bhāgavata Purāṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHI</td>
<td>Development of Hindu Iconography by Banerjea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EA</td>
<td>Eastern Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EHI</td>
<td>Elements of Hindu Iconography by Rao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI</td>
<td>Epigraphia Indica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EJ</td>
<td>Eranos Jahrbuch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EM</td>
<td>Epic Mythology by Hopkins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERE.</td>
<td>Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EW.</td>
<td>East and West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GGS.</td>
<td>Gobhila Gṛhya-sūtra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HD.</td>
<td>History of Dharmaśāstra by Kane.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HGS.</td>
<td>Hiraṇyakesin Gṛhya-sūtra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIIA.</td>
<td>History of Indian and Indonesian Art by Coomaraswamy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR.</td>
<td>History of Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hv.</td>
<td>Harivамsa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA.</td>
<td>Indian Antiquary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC.</td>
<td>Indian Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IHQ.</td>
<td>Indian Historical Quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPEK.</td>
<td>Jahrbuch für Prahistorische und Ethnographische Kunst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAOS.</td>
<td>Journal of the American Oriental Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAS.L.</td>
<td>Journal of the Asiatic Society, Letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JBRS.</td>
<td>Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JBRAS.</td>
<td>Journal of the Bihar Research Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JGORS.</td>
<td>Journal of the Gujarat Research Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JIH.</td>
<td>Journal of Indian History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JIM.</td>
<td>Journal of Indian Museums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JISOA.</td>
<td>Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JNSI.</td>
<td>Journal of the Numismatic Society of India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOI.</td>
<td>Journal of the Oriental Institute, Baroda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOR.</td>
<td>Journal of Oriental Research, Madras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRAI.</td>
<td>Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Gt.Britain and Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRAS.</td>
<td>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Gt.Britain and Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRASB.L.</td>
<td>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUB.</td>
<td>Journal of the University of Bombay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUP.</td>
<td>Journal of the University of Poona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUPHS.</td>
<td>Journal of the United Provinces Historical Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kau.S.</td>
<td>Kauśīka Sūtra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mär.P.</td>
<td>Märkaṇḍeya Purāṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASI.</td>
<td>Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mat.P.</td>
<td>Matsya Purāṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mbh.</td>
<td>Mahābhārata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSP.</td>
<td>Nirṇaya Sāgara Press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cr.Art.</td>
<td>Oriental Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OST.</td>
<td>Original Sanskrit Texts, etc. by Muir.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAOS.</td>
<td>Proceedings of the American Oriental Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAPS.</td>
<td>Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pār.GS.</td>
<td>Pāraskara Gṛhya-sūtra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PED.</td>
<td>Pali-English Dictionary (PTS.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIHC.</td>
<td>Proceedings of the Indian History Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTS.</td>
<td>Pali Text Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RA.</td>
<td>Revue Archéologique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHR.</td>
<td>Revue de l'Histoire des Religions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPVU.</td>
<td>Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads by Keith.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RV.</td>
<td>Rg-veda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ŠB.</td>
<td>Satapatha Brāhmaṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBE.</td>
<td>Sacred Books of the East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SED.</td>
<td>Sanskrit-English Dictionary by Monier-Williams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sel.Ins.</td>
<td>Select Inscriptions, etc., vol.1, by Sircar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ŠGS.</td>
<td>Śāṅkhāyana Gṛhya-sūtra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ŠKDr.</td>
<td>Šabdakalpadruma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW.</td>
<td>Sanskrit Wörterbuch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA.</td>
<td>Taittirīya Āraṇyaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TB.</td>
<td>Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TC.</td>
<td>Tamil Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TS.</td>
<td>Taittirīya Śaṁhitā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vai,S.</td>
<td>Vaiśāna Śūtra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vām.P.</td>
<td>Vāmana Purāṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vē.P.</td>
<td>Vāyu Purāṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vi,Dh.P.</td>
<td>Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vi,P.</td>
<td>Viṣṇu Purāṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VM.</td>
<td>Vedic Mythology by Macdonell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VSP.</td>
<td>Veṅkateśvara Steam Press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZDMG.</td>
<td>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART ONE
Chapter I

THE PROLIFERATION OF THE GODDESS CULTS

The goddess cults in North India in the first seven centuries of the Christian era are characterised by two important features, the very widespread belief in and worship of goddesses of various types and the evolution of the cult of the Supreme Goddess. The roots of both features apparently go back to much earlier times, and it may be imagined that, in some forms, the two existed concurrently at various stages of their history. Logically, however, the widespread cults of many goddesses must be presumed to have formed the foundation on which the concept of the Supreme Goddess could have developed.

A full account of the widespread cults of popular goddesses should be expected to include the names and natures of these goddesses and evidence of their worship in a well defined framework of time and space. But while this may be possible to some extent in the case of a few, the nature of our sources generally precludes such a definitive enquiry. It may be accepted as a general rule that the more primitive is the form of a goddess and the closer she is to the illiterate tradition of the masses, the less likely is she to be recognized in literature or sophisticated arts. It is only the more popular goddesses, whose concepts have undergone a certain sophistication and whose cults, for one reason or the other, have outgrown their original narrow functions, that are likely to be noted pointedly in literature as having votaries, and whose more or less standardized iconographic forms are likely to be recognized in art. What we have in the form of evidence of widespread cults of goddesses in our period is only, generally speaking, of a very general and suggestive nature. While any number of names of goddesses of various types are available in literature and, including the terracotta female figures, many of which may represent goddesses, there are also innumerable images of these deities, such evidence is often worthless for the purposes of

---

1 Cf. the following remark about the mother goddess cults by Collingwood, R.G., Roman Britain, p.129, as cited by Johnston, E.H., JISOA., X, 1942, p.101: "Few religions were more widespread in the western Roman Empire; but there is no mention of it by any writer".
historical reconstruction of separate cults and can only be used in a very
general way. We present below some selected evidence which, though often
only of a suggestive nature and not in every case strictly referrable to
the time-space framework of our special investigation, nevertheless has,
in our opinion, the cumulative merit of indicating with fair certainty
that innumerable goddesses, mostly of local or special nature and often
anonymous though occasionally also having recognizable names and forms,
were worshipped all over North India in the first six or seven centuries
of the Christian era.

Perhaps one of the most obvious indications of a widespread belief
in or worship of goddesses is to be obtained from the fact that, apart
from numerous individual names separately introduced in independent
contexts, groups or clusters of names of real or imaginary goddesses of
various types are frequently met with in the literature of our period.
Such clusters are, of course, of the most varied types. While some include
but only a few goddesses, others contain scores of names and take the form
of long lists, especially in some later sources where they are even counted.
The reason for clustering the goddesses together can be easily guessed in
the case of smaller groups in which the names tend to suggest a similar
nature or, less frequently, when the goddesses so named have a common
mythological framework to bring them together. But a definite connecting
link is much less in evidence in the cases of larger groups where, even
presuming that the majority of the goddesses named have some semblance of
reality, the grouping is purely mechanical or theoretical. In such cases,
their sex provides the sole justification for their grouping. Some other
types of evidence which we would prefer to include along with the above
are not merely summarily introduced groups, but rather deliberate mythical
accounts of goddesses or female beings and their spheres of activity, or
actual prescriptions for their adoration, propitiation or exorcism. In
these cases, while the figures included are treated individually, their
grouping is impressive and significant. An additional gain from the
analysis of all this evidence together is the realization that, in the
context of the popular goddesses, the dividing line between the divine and
demoniacal is truly thin, for not only are demonesses often enumerated
along with goddesses, but also they often have their own special sites of
adoration or pacification.
A very frequently appearing group of half a dozen to a dozen or more feminine beings consists of apparent abstractions of mental or moral traits or various elements of auspiciousness and prosperity. Generally bearing names such as Hri, Sri, Kirti, Dharti, Smarti, Bhuti, Puerti, Kriya, Buddhi, Lajja, Mati, Aśa, Śraddhā, Aditi, Anumati, Siddhi, Śanti, etc., they appear in many different contexts, in myths and eulogies as embellishments, in benedictions and sometimes also in rites. Some of them apparently have a history going back to Vedic times, but many look like ad hoc creations of a later age. Though tenuous, the grouping of these figures has a certain unity, and their endurance in literature is remarkable. Equally remarkable is the fact that this otherwise very amorphous group includes a popular goddess like Śrī-Lakṣmī. It is mostly a selection from this group which appears in the well known creation legends in the epics and the Purāṇas as the wives of Dharma and sometimes of other sages. In fact these creation legends themselves are excellent illustrations for names of a large number of divine females. The key element of these legends is formed by the fifty or sixty so-called daughters of Dakṣa, who, in different groups, married to different personages, become the mothers of gods, demons, men and animals. The accounts are already confused in the epics, and the Purāṇas produce their

2 Rāmāyaṇa, III.49.16 enumerates several of these figures in the context of Rāvaṇa asking Sītā if she was a divine being. Mbh., II.7.4-5 names about half a dozen of them as present with Śaci in Indra’s assembly, and ibid., IX.45.37 portrays some of them as marching in front of Skanda’s army. They often appear in eulogies of gods and goddesses. Thus the names of many of these abstract figures are given to Śrī-Lakṣmī in Vi.P., I.9.119; to Mahādevī in her apocryphal stūta in Mbh., Kinjawadekar’s edn., IV.6.22; VI.23.15-6 (see also Mbh., Cr.edn., vol.5, p.301, App.I, no.4 D. 1,44, and ibid., vol.7, p.710, App.I, no.1, 11,29-32), and in her several stūta in the Devi-mahātmya; see Mar.P., 78,60; 81.5; 82.22 ff.; 88,21 (ibid., tr. Pargiter, pp.471, 482-3, 491 ff. and 515). Va.P., 55,43 suggests their origin from Śiva. Nāṭya-sāstra, III.86-7 names them in a benediction, and ibid., III.5, 24 and 52 prescribe their worship in the various rites of consecration of the playhouse. Perhaps it was usual to insert names of some of these goddesses in the rites of worship of the one or the other of the more prominent goddesses; see Mat.P., 69,25-6; 81,16; etc. For the place of these figures in the myths of creation, see below. It may be noted that Śrī and Lakṣmī are often named separately in this group, and Sarasvatī is also occasionally included.

3 This appears recurrently in the Manvantara sections of the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas; see Mbh., I.60.13-4; Dikshitār, The Purāṇa Index, II, p.159, s.v. Dharma (III). The number and names of these wives of Dharma are quite variable.
own variations within the general framework. It would be tedious to name them and we refer the reader to the brief sketch provided by Hopkins on the basis of the epic materials. But the important point is that a large number of female beings are meticulously named, and in their ranks are included such well known mythical figures of divine or demoniacal nature as Aditi, Diti, Dānu, Vināta, Kadrū, Śrī-Lakṣmī, Rati, Nirṛti, etc.

The enumeration of popular group divinities called Mātrīs provides another occasion for long lists of goddesses. Though they are generally counted as a group of seven or eight — and occasionally sixteen — in their popular brahmanized form, their group nature and essentially unbrahmanical, popular origin has encouraged the production of lists in each of which the names of the so-called "Mothers" number about two hundred. One such list is found in the myth of the birth of Skanda-Kārttikeya in the Mahābhārata and an equally large one is found both in the Matsya and the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa. In another chapter, we have subjected these lists to a detailed analysis in so far as they are relevant to the concept and cult of the Mātrīs, but it may be noted here that while the lists in the two Purāṇas are substantially the same and must eventually be traceable to one source, the one in the Mahābhārata, which is also probably the earlier, is quite different, and thus, even allowing for the few common names and some internal repetitions, the two lists together produce more than 350 names of goddesses. Of these names, while some are familiar divine and demoniacal figures, of Vedic and non-Vedic origin, a large number may be purely ad hoc creations. The important thing from our point of view, however, is the very existence of such lists.

---

4 See e.g. Vi.P., I.7.
5 Hopkins, EM., pp.189 ff. and 198 ff..
6 For the Mātrīs, see below, Ch.III.
7 Mbh., IX,45,1-28.
8 Mat.P., 179,9 ff..
9 Vi.Dh.P., I,226,7 ff..
10 See below, Ch.III, pp.171 ff. For the names of the "Mothers" in the lists in the epic and the Matsya Purāṇa, see the Appendix to the chapter on the Mātrīs, below, pp.256 ff.
The "Mothers" appear in the epic and Puranic myths in the role of demoniacal and bloodthirsty fighters, and sometimes as ogresses and afflicters of human beings in infancy and childhood. The names and characteristics of some other types of equally fearsome beings are also given in various texts of classical Sanskrit literature. The accounts of them are usually grouped, although they do not occur in large lists like that of the Matsya. Unlike the "Mothers", these beings are explicitly termed evil and classed as demonesses. But it appears that they too were sometimes propitiated; they may be said to have had some kind of a cult and, therefore, have a certain claim to be classed as popular goddesses.

We may first note that, in its legends of creation, the Markandeya Purana speaks of a demon called Duṣsaha, an offspring of Mṛtyu by Alakṣmī, who is thoroughly misshapen and ugly and ever ready to afflict and devour human beings. The text refers to his haunts, and to the kinds of men and women who are possessed by him, but also adds that he can be appeased, and specifically refers to plenteous bali offerings to him with the utterance of his name at the close of the Vaiśvadeva ceremony. Later, it speaks of the eight sons and eight daughters of Duṣsaha, all very terribie and evil, naming the daughters as Niyojikā, Virodhini, Svayam-hāra-kari, Bhṛamaṇī, Ṛtu-hārīkā, Smṛti-hāra, Viśā-hara and Vidveṣṇī, and it further mentions the equally evil progeny of these sixteen. The evil propensities and activities of each of these beings are described, often in detail, and since they are conceived of purely as demoniacal beings, a prophylactic rite is also suggested in several cases. An interesting instance is of Jāta-hārīṇī, said to be one of the three daughters of Ṛtu-hārīṇī. She is imagined as the agent who causes miscarriage in pregnant women and feeds on the newly born children, and naturally, therefore, a warning is sounded to guard against her in the lying-in chamber. But, as will be apparent from the conspicuous mention of her name in certain medical texts to be

11 See below, Ch.III, pp.177 ff.
13 Ibid., ch.48 (tr. Pargiter, pp.257 ff.).
14 Ibid., 48.103-4, 107-9 (tr. Pargiter, p.266). Jāta-hārīṇī is here also called Pisītāśana, i.e., one who feeds on flesh.
noticed below, it would be unfair to think of Jāta-hāriṇī as a mere demoness. In fact there are indications that she was regularly worshipped in the rites relating to birth, and was in the nature of a popular goddess.\textsuperscript{15}

Several feminine beings of predominantly malevolent nature who afflicted children in various ways are also listed as Bāla-grahas led by Skanda in the Suśruta Saṁhitā.\textsuperscript{16} They are named as Sakunī, Revatī, Pūtanā, Andha-pūtanā, Śīta-pūtanā and Mukha-māndikā. But in the rites aiming at the removal of their evil influences they are praised and adored like goddesses, and offerings are prescribed to propitiate them. The prayers are cast in traditional fashion and, though extremely brief, try to describe the form of the goddess concerned and occasionally establish interesting equations while giving the various names of the goddess. Thus, Revatī is also called Lambā, Karālā, Vinatā, Bāhāputrikā and Śuṣkanāma.\textsuperscript{17}

Though classed as a Bāla-graha, Revatī nevertheless must be imagined as a very popular goddess. The Kāśyapa Saṁhitā, another medical text, also refers to Revatī as a Bāla-graha,\textsuperscript{18} but attaches great importance to her and entitles a whole section dealing with uncanny afflictions as Revatī-kalpadhyāya.\textsuperscript{19} In this section, Revatī appears not as an afflicter of human beings but, on the contrary, as a goddess who, on the instructions of Skanda-Kārttikeya, protects them against afflictions by other evil beings.\textsuperscript{20} She is said to be of many forms, Bahu-rūpā, but her principal form is Jāta-hāriṇī,\textsuperscript{21} and, in fact, the two names, Revatī and Jāta-hāriṇī, are indiscriminately used throughout this section of the text to denote the same goddess. It is also said that Revatī - Jāta-hāriṇī is of three main

\textsuperscript{15} See below.
\textsuperscript{16} Suśruta Saṁhitā, Uttara Tantra, chs. 27-35.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 31, 10-1.
\textsuperscript{18} Kāśyapa Saṁhitā, pp. 90, 98 ff.,
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., pp. 187 ff.,
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p. 189.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
types, divine, human and pertaining to the animal world, and pervades the
three worlds in her various forms. She is sarva-loka-bhayāmkari and
revered even by the gods for the growth and long life of progeny. 22
Dozens of forms of Jāta-hārinī are enumerated in this context, and they
are classified according to various geographical regions and tribes covering
practically the whole of India, and also according to various professional
groups like blacksmiths, carvers, carpenters, potters, cobblers, garland-
makers, tailors, washermen, cowherds, etc. 23

Even in its section on the Bāla-grahas, Revatī is considered as
surpassing all the other Grahas in power and influence and prescriptions
are given for her worship and daily recitation of her name to cure children
of any afflictions and for freedom from fear. 24 Here again, she is said to
be of many names and forms, and twenty of her names are actually enumerated;
they include Vāruṇī, Brāhma, Kumārī, Bahuputrikā, Saśṭhī, etc. 25 She is
once specifically called Saśṭhī and, in that form, is conceived of as the
sister of Skanda-Kārttikeya; it is also prescribed that the six-faced
goddess, Saṃmukhī-saśṭhī, should be particularly worshipped on the sixth
day of the delivery of a child. 26

The female Grahas afflicting infancy and childhood are also prominently
referred to in the Mahābhārata, but they are there confused with the
Mātṛ-gaṇeṣṭhī, and it is said that these beings should be propitiated to ward
off their evil influences. 27 Not only the descriptions but often also the
names of several female beings given there agree with those of the medical

22 Ibid., p.194:
Trividhaṁ jātabhiṁ procyate lokabhedaṁ daivyā mānuṣī
tirāscinetti. Tasmāttrayo loka bhagavatāṁ revatāṁ bahurūpaya
vyāptāṁ. Ītyataśca sarvalokabhayaṁkari revatī paṭhyate.
Tam deṣa a(ma)nyanta, tata eṣāṁ prajāṁ prāvṛddhyanta, na eṣāṁ
prajā vicchedamagamant. ...

23 Ibid., p.195.
24 Ibid., pp.98 ff.
26 Ibid., p.100.
27 Mah., III.219.26 ff.; see also below, Ch.III, pp.166-7.
texts. Thus we have also in the epic a Šakuni-graha called Vinata,\(^{28}\) Pūtanā identified as Rākṣasi\(^{29}\) and Śīta-pūtanā called Piśācī,\(^{30}\) Revatī strangely identical with Aditi,\(^{31}\) and Mukha-mañjīka called Diti.\(^{32}\) In addition, there are Surabhi, Saramā, the "Mother of the Trees" (pādapānām ca vā mātā), the "Mother of the Gandharvas" and the "Mother of the Apsaras", the daughter of the divinity of the red sea (lohitasyadiadheś kanyā) said to have served as nurse to Skanda and worshipped as Lohitāyāni in Kadamba trees, and Āryā who is said to be the mother of all children and especially worshipped for their welfare.\(^{33}\) This latter is described as having the same status among females as Rudra has among the males, and there are some other indications that she may have been a very popular goddess in her own right.\(^{34}\)

In this description in the Mahābhārata, all the female beings, including Revatī, are conceived of as the mothers of Skanda.\(^{35}\) In popular epic and Purānic legends, Revatī is generally imagined as the wife of Balarāma,\(^{36}\) and not only the later iconographic texts describe the icons of Revatī by the side of her husband,\(^{37}\) but also some sculptures are identified as

---


\(^{29}\) Ibid.

\(^{30}\) Ibid., v.27.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., v.28.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., v.29.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., vv.32-40.

\(^{34}\) See below, p.31. Incidentally, it may be noted that the Jaina texts describe an Ajjā-maha (Āryā-maha) (see Jain, Life in Ancient India as depicted in Jain Canon, p.215, 224-5), and Āryā is also one of the several names of the Supreme Goddess; see Mbh., Cr.edn., vol.7, App.I, no.1, p.710, 1.7; Hv., Xinjawadekar's edn., II.3.7, 3.

\(^{35}\) A verse in the vulgate editions of the epic in which Skanda-Karttikeya is called Revatī-suta has been rejected by the Cr.edn. as later interpolation; see Mbh., Cr.edn., vol.4, p.1076, App.I, no.22, 1.13.

\(^{36}\) See Mbh., I.211.7; Vi.P., IV.1.65 ff.; V.25.19; etc.; also Hopkins, EM., p.212; Dikshitar, Purāna Index, III, p.98, s.v. Revatī (II), and p.72, s.v. Rāma (I).

representing the couple. In the Gañḍavaḥo of Vākpati, Revati appears as the attendant of the fierce Vindhyaṇaṃaṇi goddess. However, the tradition of Revati as the patron goddess of children seems to have been very strong in the popular mind. Revati is the name of a Nakṣatra both in Vedic and post-Vedic literature, and it is possible that this provided the starting point of the conception of an ogress and disease demoness of that name who eventually grew to sufficient prominence to be accepted as a popular goddess. This development is quite natural and probably provides another instance of the malevolent nature of astrological cults. Considering that many astral figures are already mixed up in the myths of Skanda-Kārttikeya in the Mahābhārata, the association of this god with Revati is also quite natural. In any case, as we have seen, there is a strong tradition of the association of Skanda with disease demons. Revati's relationship with Baliṅga, however, may be regarded as a relatively later development, perhaps effected on the basis of the very popular character of the latter as addicted to drinking and as a patron deity of agriculture.

The significance of the name Jāta-hārīṇī is less easy to understand, beyond the obvious one implied in its literal meaning. The Kāśyapa Saṁhitā makes this figure, identified with Revati, a very prominent one. But she

---

38 See ASR., XX, p.98, as cited in Jaiswal, The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism, p.60 and fn.5.
39 See Gañḍavaḥo, v.329.
41 For astrological cults and their malevolent nature, see below, Ch.III, pp.222 ff. Another instance of a malevolent Nakṣatra who may have been at the root or helped the formation of a popular goddess is Jyeṣṭhā. For the goddess Jyeṣṭhā, see Rao, EHI., I, pt.II, pp.390 ff.; Banerjea, J.N., "Some Folk Goddesses of Ancient and Mediaeval India", IHO., XIV, pp.104 ff. For Jyeṣṭhā as identical with or sharing the characteristics of Alakṣmī and Nīrīti, see Hartmann, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Göttin Lakṣmī, pp.13 ff., esp.15. The author's contention that an earlier goddess Alakṣmī-Jyeṣṭhā was later transformed into Lakṣmī appears to us to be very unconvincing for the simple reason that Lakṣmī preserves nothing of her supposed early malignant character in her later history.
42 See below, Ch.III, p.221.
too must have been originally an ogress who gradually rose to the status of a popular goddess and protector of children. Agrawala believed that she may be the same as or a form of the well known Hariti of the Buddhists, but the resemblance extends only to the general character of the two as originally having been "stealers" of children, which is also implied in their names. The identification is also difficult to accept because Jāta-hāriṇī, according to all available evidence, appears to have been only one, if a very prominent one, of a whole class of similar spirits. On the other hand, it is quite possible that she is the same as the Jāta-māṭr-devatā of Harsaracarita with her name euphemistically changed. It is said that, when Harṣa was born, the old nurses danced encircled in a great throng of boys like the incarnate Jāta-māṭr-devatā surrounded by a troop of dwarfs and deaf people with laughing upturned faces. The commentator Śaṅkara explains her as the cat-faced goddess, surrounded by a crowd of children, who is installed in the lying-in chamber, and a close connection between an evil cat and the ogress Jāta-hāriṇī is also clearly established elsewhere in the Markandeya Purāṇa, though the two are not identified. Relying upon Śaṅkara’s explanation of the Jāta-māṭr-devatā, it is also highly probable that she is the same as Bahu-putrikā or Bahu-putrī who is referred to as a Māṭr both in the Mahābhārata and

44 Agrawala, Prācīna Bhāratīya Lokadharma, p.54.
45 For Hariti, see Peri, Noel, "Hariti, la mère-de-démons", BEFEO., XVII, no.3, 1917, pp.1 ff.; also Coomaraswamy, Yakṣas, I, pp.9-10; and II, pp.5-6 and references cited there.
46 Harsaracarita, ed. Kane, 4th Ucchvāsa, p.7:
See also ibid., tr. Cowell and Thomas, p.111.
47 See ibid., ed. Führer, p.185, and Cowell and Thomas, cited in fn. above. The commentary by Śaṅkara runs:
Jātamatr-devatā mārjūramaṇā bahuputra-parivarā sūti kāreye sthāpyate.
It appears that this goddess was also identified with Carcikā; see Agrawala, Harsaracarita – Eka Śāṃskṛtika Adhyayana, p.65 and fn.2.
49 Mbh., IX,45,3.
the Matsya Purāṇa, and about whom it is mentioned in the Kadambārī that her form adorned the door of the lying-in chamber of the queen Vilāsavati.

It is also interesting to note that Šaṣṭhī, with whom Revati is identified in the Kāśyapa Sāṁhitā, is imagined as having a black cat as her vāhana in her popular cult in modern Bengal. She thus shares some of the characteristics of the ancient Jāta-ḥārini - Jāta-mātr-devatā - Bahu-putrikā, but whether she was originally identical with them, or with the Buddhist Ḫārītī as has sometimes been supposed, is difficult to say. The comment by Dimock that Šaṣṭhī herself, in contradistinction with Manasā who shares many of her characteristics, is never malevolent may be valid only for her later history in Bengal. Her identification with Revati - Jāta-ḥārini and her close association with Skanda make it practically certain that she too had originally a malevolent character. But whether her name originated because she was particularly propitiated on the sixth day of the birth of a child or because she was related to the six-faced Skanda-Kārttikeya is not easy to decide. In any case, her status as an independent goddess seems to be well attested for our period. Agrawala suggested that she may be the same as the six-headed female figure on the reverse of some Yaudheya coins which portray the six-headed Kārttikeya on the obverse, and also pointed out to an inscription from Supīa (near Rewa, modern M.P.) of the time of Skanda-gupta which refers to the installation and worship of the goddess Šaṣṭhī. Describing the decorations

50 Mat.P., 179. 19.
51 Kadambārī, ed. Parab, p.159: Asakta-bahuputrikālaṃkṛtena ... dvāreṇa .... See also Agrawala, Kadambārī - Ekā Sanskritika Adhyayana, p.77.
52 See Dimock, Jr., Edward C., "Manasā, Goddess of Snakes: The Šaṣṭhī Myth", in Kitagawa and Long (ed.), Myths and Symbols, etc., p.220.
53 Ibid., p.220.
54 Ibid.; cf. similar comments by Bhattacharya who compares the benevolent Šaṣṭhī with a malevolent modern goddess called "Jatapaharini" and the Buddhist Ḫārītī; see Bhattacharya, Asutosh, "The Cult of Šaṣṭhī in Bengal", Man in India, XXVIII, 1948, pp.152-3.
56 Agrawala, Prācīna Bhāratīya Lokadharma, p.61. The author does not refer to the source of this inscription and we have not been able to verify it.
on the door of the lying-in chamber of queen Vilāsavatī, the Kādambarī refers to the painting or installation of the figure of Śaṅkṣī on the one side and that of Kārttikeya on the other.57 A Śaṅkṣī-kalpa is described in the Mānavā-grhya-sūtra 58 and there are also indications that this goddess was sometimes associated with Śrī-lakṣmī. 59

The propitiatory rites to evil beings who afflicted human life in pregnancy and infancy, as suggested in the epic, Purāṇic and medical texts, are apparently connected with the rites to drive away evil demons from a newly born child as prescribed in the Grhya-sūtras. Thus, the Pāraskara Grhya-sūtra prescribes that mustard seeds with rice chaff should be thrown into the fire established near the door of the confinement room at morning and evening twilight until the mother gets up from the child-bed, with the recitation of the mantras: "May Śaṅkṣī, Marka, Upavīra, Śaṅkṣī, Ullākhala, Malimluca, Droṇāsa, Cyavana vanish hence. Svāhā! May Alikhat, Animaṇa, Kiṃvadanta, Upasruti, Haryakṣa, Kumbhin, Śatru, Pātrapāṇi, Nymani, Hantrīmukha, Sarṣapāruṇa, Cyavana vanish hence. Svāhā!"60

In the same continuation, the text prescribes the rite to drive away a special disease-bringing demon called Kumāra and conceived of in the form of a dog.61 The latter rite is also described with some elaboration in the Hiranyakeshin Grhya-sūtra. 62 In one place, the she-dog Saramā is said to be

57  Kādambarī, ed. Parab, p.160:
Haridra-drāva-vičhurāṇa-piṇjaritāmbara-dhāripiṁ bhagavatīm śaṅkṣīm devīṁ kurvata ....

58  See Gonda, Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism, pp.218-9.

59  Ibid.; also Jaiswal, The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism, pp.99-100. On Śaṅkṣī, see also Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa, II (Prakṛti-khaṇḍa), ch.43; Kane, HD., V, pt.1, pp.434-5; Agrawala, Prācīna Bhāratīya Lokadharma, pp.58 ff.

60  Pār. GS., I.16.23 (SBE., XXIX, p.296). In the same text, in the prescriptions for bali offerings which is made a part of Darsa-purṇanāṣa, the wife is supposed to offer the bali outside the house with various utterances including: "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."; ibid., I.12.4 (SBE., XXIX, pp.290-1).

61  Ibid., I.16.24 (SBE., XXIX, pp.296-7).

62  HGS., II.2.7 (SBE., XXX, pp.219-20).
the mother of Kumāra, apparently the same as her namesake in the Rg-vedic hymns; in another place, his mother is Dula, which appears in the later Vedic texts as the name of one of the Kṛttikās. Apparently the evil beings imagined in these rites are generally masculine and are comparable to similar beings in AV., VIII.6. But the most interesting information contained in the passage is the existence of the disease demon called Kumāra. It may also be added that Upāṣruti mentioned in Pār.GS., I,16.23 seems to have gradually developed into a goddess who uttered oracles. In the Mahābhārata, she helps Indrāṇī to discover the hidden Indra, and, in its description of the worship of various deities by Viśeṣavatī to obtain a son, the Kādambarī speaks of the queen’s attendants visiting Upāṣruti for prophecies. The Baudhāyana Gṛhya- pariśiṣṭa-sūtra even describes an Upāṣruti-kalpa, which may be a brahmanized version of some popular rite of the goddess.

It is not our intention to collect detailed evidence for the popular cults of the individual figures named above. Revati, Jāta-hārini, Śaṣṭhi, Upāṣruti, etc. appear to be only representatives of a whole class of beings who were originally demonesses, mainly connected with pregnancy, birth, infantile mortality and disease, but who gradually developed their own propitiatory rites and some of whom became important enough to be accepted in the brahmanical pantheon. As pointed out by Meyer, superstition of this kind is spread throughout the world. The important thing to note is that these primitive ideas seem to have provided a prolific source of popular religion in ancient India, and ancient witches and ogresses have

---

64 See Macdonell, VM., p.151.
65 HGS., II,2.7.2 (SBE., XXX, p.220).
66 See Ts., IV.4.5; TB., III.1.4.1.
68 Kādambarī, ed. Parab, p.146; also Agrawala, Kādambarī - Eka Samskrtika Ādhvayana, p.71.
70 Meyer, Sexual Life in Ancient India, p.392.
been gradually converted into goddesses. Also, the suspicion that there
must have been a large number of such evil beings in the beliefs of the
ancient Indians — whether or not they always bore names as reported of
them in the texts cited above — prevents any easy derivation of the one
from the other.

We may note some other instances where the names of feminine beings
or goddesses are deliberately collected or indirectly introduced. In the
modified and expanded version of the Pali Ājānātiya Suttanta,71 as it
appears in the Saddharma-pundarīka,72 three Bodhisattvas and Vaiśravana
give talismanic words for guard, defence and protection of the faithful,
each of which is a formula, ending in svāhā, in which from six to several
dozen words are used which, as Kern suggested, are apparently feminine
words in the vocative.73 The underlying principle of these formulae,
therefore, appears to be an invocation to various feminine beings for
protection. Kern imagined the several names to be "epithets of the Great
Mother, Nature or Earth, differently called Aditi, Prajñā, Māyā, Bhavānī,
Durgā", and tried to demonstrate that most of the names of the largest of
these mantras may be explained as synonymous with prajñā, nature and
earth.74 In another of these formulae, which begins with the words Jvāle
mahā-jvāle ukke — the latter probably the Prakrit form of the Sanskrit ulke —
Kern found the terms as obviously names of the "flame", mythologically the
wife of Agni, and noting that as Agni may be identified with Śiva, he
suggested that feminine words here too might be regarded as epithets of
Durgā.75 In still another mantra, he argued, the names like Gaurī,
Cāṇḍalīka and Mātangi are known from elsewhere as epithets of Durgā, and
others like Pukkasi and Vṛṣalī denote the same as Cāṇḍalī and Mātangi.76

73 Ibid., tr. Kern, SBE., XXI, p. 371, fn. 3.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid., p. 372 and fn. 1.
76 Ibid., p. 373 and fn. 2.
Except for a few obvious names like Gaurī and Gandhārī, perhaps also Candālī and Mātaṅgī, most of the names in these mantras appear to be meaningless words, especially as several of them are juxtaposed to rhyme with each other. But from the form in which the words are couched, there seems no reason to doubt that they are supposed to be addressed to various feminine beings for protection.

In the sequel of the narrative in the above Buddhist text, several feminine beings are actually introduced. They are named Lambā, Vilambā (or Pralambā), Kuṭadantī, Puṣpadantī, Makuṭadantī, Keśinī, Acalā, Mālādhārī, Kuntī, Sarva-sattvoja-hārī, and Hārītī, and are said to have come to Buddha with their own children and families. Although each is distinctly called a Rākṣasī, together they give to Buddha the magical charm whose utterance is supposed to protect the faithful against any calamity. In its structure, their mantra follows the standard form of the others', but even more than the others, it is a collection of meaningless words arranged in clusters of various rhymes. It is interesting to note that Kuntī, not Hārītī, is portrayed as the leader and spokesman of the group of giantesses.

The Dhāraṇī-mantra-padāni of the Saddharma-pundarīka may be regarded as very tenuous evidence of belief in or cult of popular goddesses, but Buddhist Sanskrit literature has also other and more reliable indications to that effect. The names of thirty-two goddesses, divided into four groups of eight each and portrayed as guardian deities of the four cardinal points, are given in the Lalita-vistara in the context of the utterance of blessings by Buddha to the two merchants, Trapusa and Bhallika. They are called

78 Similar mantras containing names of feminine beings in the vocative may also be collected from the Hindu Tantras, but they are generally later than the Buddhist evidence cited here. It may be noted, however, that the Arthasastra of Kautilya also gives similar formulae in its section entitled aupaniṣṭādika. Thus Arthasastra, ed. Kangla, 14.3.26 has:

Alite valite manave svāhā.

Ibid., 14.3.36 contains:

Svāhā. Amile kimile vayucāre prayoge phakte vayuhve vihāle dantakaṭake svāhā.

See also ibid., tr. Kangla, pp.585, 586 and note on 14.3.36.
Deva-kumarikās, and the wish is expressed that they grant health and happiness. Some of the names are apparently those of the Apsarases in the epic-Purānic tradition, while a large number of others are of the type of Hṛī, Śrī, Āśa, Śraddhā, etc. The names of Ila and Pṛthvī may also be regarded as familiar but several are not so easily intelligible. These are the names like Siddharthā, Su-utthitā, Su-prathama, Su-prabuddhā, Sukhāvalā, etc., and some others beginning with Nanda. Jayantī and Vijayantī may or may not have any relationship with Jayā and Vijayā which are seen elsewhere as the names of the Supreme Goddess as also of her two principal maids. The name Aparājita may only connote a Yakṣī, but it is also an epithet of Mahā-devī and it is under this name that the Yaśastilaka once describes her cult. It may be added that the 32 Deva-kumarikās noted above are in addition to the 28 Naksātras who also are all named and assigned in four groups of seven each to the four directions, with the expression of a similar wish that they keep watch abroad as well

80 Ibid., vv.117-8, 126-7, 135-6, and 144-5, in each case giving the benediction:
   Tā pi va adhipālentu ārogyena śivena ca.
81 Ibid., v.135. The following verse names such Deva-kumarikās as Ekādaśā, Navamikā, Śītā, Kṛṣṇā and Draupadī.
82 Ibid., v.145; cf. also v.126.
83 Ibid., v.144. Padmāvatī named in this verse may have nothing to do with Śrī-Lakṣmī, because a Śirī is named in v.145, and a Śrīyā-matī in v.126. Apropos of Surā-devī, see references to a goddess Madirā in Arthasastra, ed. Kangle, 2.4.17, and Vi.P., V.25.1-7.
85 Ibid., v.117.
86 See e.g. Mbh., Cr.edn., vol.7, App.I, no.1, p.710, l.11.
87 See Quackenbos, The Sanskrit Poems of Mayūra, pp.245-6.
88 See Agrawala, Pracīna Bhāratīya Lokadharma, pp.124 ff., for the Yakṣa connotations of the word Aparājita.
89 See Handiqui, Yaśastilaka and Indian Culture, pp.398 ff.. The manuscripts of some stotras claiming to belong to the Viṣṇu-dharmottara Purāṇa are entitled Aparājita-stotra; see Hazra, Studies in the Upapurāṇas, I, p.157, fn.122(x).
An almost exactly similar list of the "divine maidens" is also found in the *Mahāvastu* in the description of the same event, and it appears that this mode of classifying popular goddesses according to the directions was also popular in the Jaina tradition.

The recently published Jaina text *Āngavijjā*, dealing with prognostications and ascribed roughly to the fourth century A.D., names in at least three places separately a number of popular deities including many goddesses or types of goddesses. In the first place, introducing the names as belonging to the wives and daughters of the Asuras, Nāgas, Gandharvas, Rūkṣasas, Yakṣas and Kinnaras, or to the Vanaspatīs, Diśās or directions, and the astral figures, it refers to nearly forty goddesses which include several names of the type Hṛtī, Śrītī, Kīrtī, Dhṛtī, Śrātī, etc., easily recognizable names of Apsarases like Alambā, Miśrakesī, Menakā, Rambhā, Tilottama, Urvasī, etc., general names like Devī, Bhagavatī, and some well known names like Ilā and Sītā, besides class-names such as Deva-kanyā, Asura-kanyā, etc. But some of the names in their Prakrit forms are curious and hardly render intelligible Sanskrit equivalents. Such are Apalā, Anāditā, Airāṇī and Sālimāliṇī, which, being sandwiched in between the names of recognizable Apsarases, could be taken to represent deities belonging to the same class, but about whom it has been suspected that they might perhaps refer to foreign goddesses Pallas Athene, Anāhitā, Irene and Selene respectively.

---

90 Lalita-vistara, ed. Vaidya, ch.XXIV, pp.282 ff., vv.112-4, 121-3, 130-2, 139-41.
93 See *Āngavijjā*, Intro. by Moti Chandra, pp.36, 55; also Agrawala, V.S., "Coin-names in the Āngavijjā", in ibid., p.94.
94 Āngavijjā, p.69; also ibid., Intro. by Moti Chandra, p.42, and Intro. by Agrawala, V.S., pp.61-2.
95 See the Introductions by Moti Chandra and Agrawala, cited in the fn. above.
Long lists of popular deities appear in two other places in the same text, in the chapters entitled Devatā-vijayājñāo and Cintitajjhāo. The goddesses enumerated here are roughly classifiable into such figures as Hṛī, Śrī, Buddhī, Medhā, Kīrtī, etc.; into those whose names signify classes or types rather than individual deities, such as Yakṣiṇī, Nāgini, Kinnārī, Apṣara, Nakṣatra, Vidyādharī, Rākṣasī, Piśācī, as also Asura-kanyā, Gandharva-kanyā, Kiṃpuruṣa-kanyā, Bhūta-kanyā, Vāta-kanyā, etc.; and those which may be typically Jaina creations or at least bear typically Jaina names, such as Dvīpa-kumārī, Diśā-kumārī, Giri-kumārī and Samudra-kumārī. There is a Latā-devatā and also a Vanaśpati-kanyā. The so-called Devatā of Samudra, Nadī, Kūpa, Taḍāga, "Pallala" (?) and Diśā are also likely to be all female beings, as are probably several others like the Kula-devatā, Vastu-devatā (Prakrit Vatthu-devatā), Nagara-devatā, Varca-devatā and Śmaśāna-devatā. There is a Sarva-vidyā-devatā beside a Deva-vidyā. Some well known female beings are also included in the two places, such as Śrī, Ekaṇāṁśā, Pṛthivī, Rātri and Sarasvatī, and the same must be said of some others like Āryā and Śakunī, who appear elsewhere as afflicters of children, and perhaps also of "Mānyā" (Māṭpā ?) who may be a spirit of similar type. Some peculiar or obscure names are Alaṇā, Seṇāvati, Navamikā and Surā, the latter two of which also appear in the Lalitavistara. Of the few obscure names elsewhere in the text to which a reference has been made and in which suggestions of foreign goddesses have been suspected, only Āraṇī appears in these two lists.

In its chapters Devatā-vijayājñāo and Cintitajjhāo, the Angavijjā introduces the names of the deities, both gods and goddesses, in a rather haphazard manner, without an order of precedence or hint at relative popularity. But it does contain a statement suggesting their natural

96 Angavijjā, pp.204 ff., 223–4: also ibid., Intro, by Moti Chandra, pp.53, 54, and Intro. by Agrawala, pp.78, 83.
97 Cf. Intro. by Moti Chandra, cited in the fn. above.
98 See above, pp.6, 8.
99 See above, p.16, fns. 81 and 83.
100 See above, p.17.
classification into hierarchically arranged types such as uttama, madhyama and avara. It also adds significantly that while some of the deities are Aryan, the others are Mleccha. 101

In at least two places, the Viṣṇu-dharmottara Purāṇa also collects together the names of several goddesses, although the intention is not just to produce bare lists but rather to prescribe rites. A very modest attempt of this kind, more symbolical than real or factual in effect, is a very short chapter giving the names of the deities to be particularly worshipped by women. 102 It first refers to Śrī and then includes Aśokīnā, constellations like the Kṛttikās and Rohiṇī, and also Gaurī and Indrāṇī. Since the deities included are mostly female, and the only clearly male deities are Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, Kāmadeva and Kārttika, perhaps the Chhandodevata and Vāstu-devata are also to be understood as goddesses, the latter in the sense of Gṛha-devata or Gṛha-devī. In any case, the general impression created by the prescriptions is that the goddesses were particularly the deities of women. 103 In another place, in answer to the question as to who are the deities and at what times they are to be worshipped, the same text collects together more than one hundred names, nearly half of whom are names of goddesses. 104 Well known figures like Śrī, Pṛthivī, Umā, Menā, Bhadrakālī, Kātyāyanī, Śacī, Ekānamā, etc. find places in the list. We have also Nidrā, Svāhā, Svadhā, Ṛddhi, Anusūyā, Devasena; Gaurī as Varuṇānī, Yama-patni Dhūmorṇā and Sūrya-patni Suvarcalā; and groups such as Deva-patnīs, Deva-mātrkās and Apsarases. The river goddesses are also included, either in a general way as "one's favourite river-deity" or specifically as the seven Gangās and Sarasvatī. But here too, as often elsewhere, the bulk is made up of figures like Rati, Śraddhā, Kīrti, Medhā, Prajñā, Tuṣṭi, Kūnti, etc.. Some names like

101 Aṅgavijjā, p.206:
Uttamase uttamāṇī, majjhimehiṃ majjhimaṇī, paccavarthīṃ paccavarāṇī. Āriyopaiaddhiḥ āriyadevaṭaṇī, milakkhāpaladdhiḥmil akkhadevaṭaṇī.

102 Vi.Dh.P., II.35.

103 This is also the impression created by the long description of the devata-rādhana of Viṇāśavatī to obtain an offspring in the Kādambarī of Bāṇabhaṭṭa; see Kādambarī, ed. Parab, pp.143-6.

104 Vi.Dh.P., III.221.
Su-mahābhāgā and Mṛtyuchchāyā may be purely artificial constructions. But whether the names are familiar or otherwise, the important thing to note is that the Purāṇa-writer recommends the worship of these deities with all seriousness and presents a rough calendar of their specific rites over the year.

The various eulogies of the Goddess, Mahā-devī, e.g., the apocryphal stutis addressed to Durgā or Aryā in the Mahābhārata and Harivaṃśa, the praise of the Goddess in the Devī-mahātmya, the Candī-śākta of Bāṇabhaṭṭa, the stuti of Vindhyāvasinī-devī in Gāḍavaḥo, etc., are other important sources where a number of goddesses of various types are referred to, usually as names and forms of the Supreme Goddess. The historians of Indian religions have frequently understood such names and epithets as indicating a historical process of synthesis in which popular goddesses of independent origin merged together to form the concept of the Supreme Goddess. However, while such comments are legitimate in principle, it is not always possible to single out and enumerate names as referring to independent goddesses. By its very nature, a eulogy, generally speaking, turns out to be an elaborate, figurative description of the form and function of the deity, and many names and epithets may be no more than just what they are supposed to be, words or expressions especially coined to describe the deity and impress her greatness upon listeners. In other words, many names and epithets of the Supreme Goddess as seen in the eulogies composed in her honour may not have been obtained from independent goddess concepts, but may actually have been coined to serve the purpose of prayer. Perhaps relatively more reliable as sources of real names may be expressions of the type "Thou, O Goddess! art the same as, etc." in which the


106 See Bhandarkar, Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc., pp.143-4; Jacobi, H., "Brahmanism", ERE., 2, p.813; by the same author, "Durgā", ibid., 5, p.117; etc.

107 Such statements are fairly frequent in the eulogies. See, however, Mbh., Cr., edn., vol.5, App.1, no.4D, p.301, 11.44-5; ibid., vol.7, App.1, no.1, p.710, 11.21, 29 ff.; etc.
eulogists seem to identify her with real or imagined figures, although even such expressions occasionally lapse into purely figurative or descriptive epithets. Leaving due margin for these limitations, it must be accepted that several names and epithets of the Supreme Goddess do suggest independent and diverse elements in her makeup, especially when some of the so-called forms of Mahā-devi are well known to have been independent goddess concepts and also because we find special myths to explain the origin of one or the other forms.

Perhaps more truly compilations of names of goddesses are some other types of Purānic passages, which, though eulogies of the Great Goddess in effect, are actually introduced as mythical narratives of some sort. One such instance may be cited from the Vaiṣṇava Purāṇa. In this text, in the context of the origin of the gods, etc., we are told of the goddess who formed half of the body of Śaṅkara. She is said to have been born from the mouth of Svayambhu with the right half of her body white and the left black. Asked to divide or multiply herself, she is further said to have been converted into two forms, one white and the other black. These two, however, are to be understood as aspects rather than as personalities for the narrative continues to enumerate further manifestations, apparently as falling broadly into these two types. The names, of which about fifty are listed, are not easily classifiable. True to the mythical framework provided by the narrative, most of the names are the same as are frequently seen in the eulogies of the Goddess of the type noted above, but the text claims that they are not just names but different forms of the Goddess. Also, instead of introducing the names en bloc, it presents them in three separate steps. First we are told of Svāhā, Svadā, Mahā-vidyā, Medhā, Lākṣmī, Sarasvatī, Aparnā, Ekaparṇa, Pāṭalā, Umā, Haimavatī, Śaṭṭhi, Kalyāṇī, Khyāti, Prajñā and Mahā-bhāgā, who are said to be known in the world as Gaurī. Then, with the statement that now are introduced the names and forms of the Universal Goddess Āryā, the goddesses Prakṛti, Miśrī,

---


109 Vaiṣṇava Purāṇa, 9.82-98.
Raudrī, Durgā, Bhadrā, Pramathini, Kālarātri, Mahā-māyā, Revati and Bhūta-nāyikā are referred to. In the third section, we are told that the forms of the goddess that are obtained towards the close of the Dvāpara age are Gautami, Kausikī, Āryā, Candī, Kātyāyanī, Satī, Kumārī, Tādavī, Devī, Varadā, Kṛṣṇa-piṅgalā, Bahirdhvajā, Sūladhara, Parama-brahmacārīṇī, Māhendrī, Indra-bhaginī, Vṛṣa-kanyā, Eka-vāsini, Aparējitā, Bahu-bhujā, Pragalbhā, Śīmha-vāhinī, Ekaāmaśī, Daitya-hanī, Māyā, Mahiṣa-mārdinī, Amoghā, Vindhyā-nilayā, Vīraṇtā and Gaṅga-nāyikā, and the list is closed with the statement that these are the names of the goddess Bhadra-kālī. The narrative contains another closing statement that there are two principal forms of the Great Goddess, Prajñā and Śrī, which pervade the entire universe in thousands of forms.

Other important instances, though late in date, where a mythical framework is provided for lists of goddesses are the well known legends of the Pīṭhas or sacred places of the Supreme Goddess. In brief, these legends relate the Dakṣa-yajña-vidhvanśa episode as seen in the Mahabhārata with the addition that, unable to bear the insults heaped on her husband, Satī committed suicide and the enraged Śiva, after killing Dakṣa and destroying his sacrifice, roamed about like a madman with the body of his beloved on his shoulder; to cure him of his infatuation, the gods devised means by which Satī's dead body was cut into pieces and gradually scattered over the earth, so that every place where a part of Satī's body fell became the holy seat of the Supreme Goddess. We need not go into the origin and development of the above legend. Apparently the idea that every sacred place of the Goddess enshrines a part of her body is the latest addition to the Dakṣa-yajña story, probably sometime in the post-Gupta period. Since the full development of the Pīṭha legends coincides the organisation of the Śākta-Tantric traditions and since it is generally in the Tantric works or works affected by the Tantric tradition that the Pīṭha legends find a conspicuous place, it is possible that they were developed

110 Mbh., XII.274, esp. vv.18 ff.
111 See Sircar, D.C., "The Śākta Pīṭhas", JRASB., XIV, no.1, 1948, pp.5 ff., for the origin and development of the Pīṭha legends and their general lateness; cf. also the comments by Hazra on the lateness of the legend in the Matsya Purāṇa; Hazra, Studies in the Purāṇic Records, etc., p.45.
chiefly in Tantric circles.\(^{112}\) But we find it difficult to agree wholly with Sircar that the idea of Pithas must be regarded as essentially connected with phallic worship or the worship of linga and yoni.\(^{113}\) It is true that the Tirthayātrā sections of the Mahābhārata refer to such holy places as Yoni or Yoni-dvāra and Stana-kūṭa,\(^{114}\) but when the fully developed legends list the Pithas, they do not invariably associate them with the various limbs of the Goddess, and do not always refer to the infatuation of Śiva or the association of the Goddess in each Pitha with a Bhairava form of Śiva.\(^{115}\) Thus, even if the mythical framework of the developed Pitha legends may be purely a product of the Tantric traditions, the compilations of large lists of Pithas seem to be inspired principally by a desire to provide justification for and give a unity to the widely prevalent cults of the popular goddesses.

The above appears to us to be a very natural explanation but it may be demonstrated also by an analysis of the legend as seen in the Matsya Purāṇa.\(^{116}\) In outline, this version refers to the preparation of the sacrifice by Dakṣa, Sati's anger because her husband was not invited and her announcement that while she would give up her body, Śiva would destroy Dakṣa and his sacrifice. When Sati got ready to consume herself in the fire, Dakṣa realized his mistake and, paying homage to his daughter, addressing her as Devī and Jāganmātī, he requested her not to forsake him. The pacified Sati advised him to practise penances, enlightened him about his own future birth and eventually narrated to him the various places and forms in which she would be found and should be worshipped. There is no reference in the narrative to Śiva's infatuation, to his carrying the dead body of his beloved, to the dead body being cut up into pieces, etc..

\(^{112}\) Sircar, op.cit., JRASB.L., XIV, no.1, pp.6-7, 11 ff.,

\(^{113}\) Ibid., p.7.

\(^{114}\) Mbh., III.80,100; 82,83, 131.

\(^{115}\) Cf. the Matsya Purāṇa version of the legend (analysed below), which, though dated in the early mediaeval period, is also probably the earliest to give the list of 108 sacred places of the Goddess (see Sircar, op.cit., JRASB.L., XIV, no.1, p.25).

\(^{116}\) Mat.P., 13,10 ff..
The Matsya Purāṇa version of the Pīţha legend may be regarded as an incomplete one inasmuch as it leaves out even such elements of the story as the destruction of Dakṣa and his sacrifice by Śiva. But, from its own point of view, it tries to present a complete picture. The entire narrative is introduced in answer to the questions, why Sati, the daughter of Dakṣa, committed suicide, and what did Dakṣa say to her at the time of her consuming herself in the fire, and fully answers both of them. It even adds a lengthy Phala-āruti at the end. It is obvious, therefore, that in the mind of the compiler in the Matsya Purāṇa, the Pīţha legend was mainly illustrative of the universality of the cult of the Supreme Goddess, and any other elements in the story such as the infatuation of Śiva, the cutting up of the dead body of Sati, and every part of her body being enshrined in a holy place where the Goddess was also associated with a form of Śiva were considered non-essential.

The names and holy seats of the goddess as mentioned in the Matsya Purāṇa legend described above need not detain us. Since they have been specifically counted at the end as 108 in number, the list should be regarded as arbitrarily compiled. As a historical document, therefore, it is more imaginary than real. A few names in the list may refer to well known goddesses of independent history or at least to well known forms of the Great Goddess, but a large number are scarcely more than mere names, especially as a few repetitions are also noticed. But the important thing to note here again is that the compiler has produced more than a hundred names and tries to give every impression that they all refer to various forms of the Goddess actually worshipped in various parts of the country.

We have presented in the above pages evidence from various texts in which, under one pretext or another, a large number of names of goddesses

117 Ibid., v,54. The holy places of the Goddess here are not called Pīţhas, but Tīrthas or Sthānas; see also ibid., v,25.

118 Cf, Sircar, op.cit., JRASB,L., XIV, no,1, pp,24, 28-9, and 32; see also our comments in another context, below, Ch.V, p,324, fn,45.

119 The two clear repetitions are Lalita and Puṣṭi (see Mat.P., 13,26, 34 and 47), but the inclusion of Ṭaṅkā with Mahā-Ṭaṅkā, Narayāṇī with Vaiṣṇavī, etc. should also be regarded as repetitive.
are collected together. Hopkins had very early pointed out the existence of lists of deities in the epics, in particular of goddesses, especially abstractions like Memory, Affection, Endurance, Victory, Effort, etc., and, generally speaking, adopted the attitude that the mass of such deities are of no importance whatsoever.

In his words: "For all they do individually, they might as well be non-existent. Others live in a tale or two". More recently, Agrawala has also pointed to the existence of lists of deities in the epic, Purānic, Buddhist, Jaina and other texts, and readily accepted them as evidence of folk cults, "Loka-dharma".

Apparently neither the cautious scepticism of Hopkins nor the naive affirmation of Agrawala do full justice to the available evidence. Our own analysis of the various lists of goddesses shows that while they do include many names which are easily identifiable as names of known divine or demoniacal figures of independent history, they also contain a very large number of fictitious names. This, however, has not deterred the compilers from asserting that they are all names of real goddesses, and often prescribing for them rites of worship or pacification. It is noteworthy that the compilers do not simply refer to the large numbers of goddesses in round figures but actually produce their names. At the same time they frequently show that they are but presenting very incomplete lists. This is sometimes deliberately indicated by closing the lists with such expressions as "and others", or "and many others, thousands in number". But the very fact that the lists produce very arbitrary numbers of names and occasionally fall back upon names which refer to types rather than individual figures suggests that the names are to be

---

120 Hopkins, EM., pp.53-4.
121 Ibid., p.54.
122 Agrawala, Prācinā Bhāratīya Lokadharma, pp.3 ff., As far as relevant to our subject, we have already analysed in the above pages the lists cited by Hopkins and Agrawala.
123 See Mbh., IX.45.29; Mat.P., 179.32.
124 This can be seen in the three separate lists in the Āṅgavijñā itself; see above, pp.17 ff.
125 There are several such names in the lists in Āṅgavijñā; see above, pp.17-8.
understood more or less as samples. The only conclusion that can be drawn from the existence of such lists, therefore, is that goddesses of various types must have been very widely worshipped during the period of their compilation. These goddesses may or may not have borne the names given to them in the texts, but their cults must have existed. But from the existence of such cults, the lists become worthless and their compilation thoroughly anomalous.\textsuperscript{126}

We have seen that the eulogies of the Great Goddess or passages which can be interpreted similarly provide another source of the names of goddesses.\textsuperscript{127} In the light of our inference noted above, it would appear that certain general statements, also frequently seen in these eulogies, that the Goddess is present everywhere, in all kinds of places, may be accepted more or less in a literal sense. It is a little difficult to cite such statements from the \textit{Devi-mahātmya} in which the mythical account of the Goddess generally takes a strong philosophical colour. But the shorter and simpler eulogies in other texts are quite expressive in this respect. Thus the apocryphal stotra to Durgā sung by Arjuna in the \textit{Mahābhārata} contains the statement that the Goddess abides eternally in her various shrines and sacred places throughout Jambū-dvīpa.\textsuperscript{128} The similarly apocryphal \textit{Āryā-stava} in the \textit{Harivamśa} refers to the Goddess residing in mountains, rivers, caves, groves and forests.\textsuperscript{129} The Purānic myths of the birth of Kṛṣṇa and the destruction of Kaṁsa also contain similar suggestions. According to this myth,\textsuperscript{130} the Goddess, generally called Niḍrā or Yoga-māyā, took birth as the daughter of Yasodā, and, later secretly exchanged with Kṛṣṇa who was born at the same time to Devakī,

\textsuperscript{126} For our same inference based on the analysis of the epic-Purānic lists of the so-called Mātrṣ, see below, Ch.III, pp.176-7.
\textsuperscript{127} See above, pp.20 ff..
\textsuperscript{128} See \textit{Mbh.}, Cr.edn., vol.7, App.I, no.1, p.710, 1.20: 
Jambūkatakaśaityeṣu nityaṁ samnihitālaye.
\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Hv.}, Kinjawadekar's edn., II,3,6:
Pavatāgraṣu ghoreṣu nadīṣi ca guhāṣu ca,
Vāsaste ca mahādevi vaneṣūpavaneṣu ca.
\textsuperscript{130} For the various versions of this myth, see \textit{Hv.}, chs. 46 ff.; \textit{Vi.P.}, V.1 ff.; 
\textit{Bhā.P.}, X.1 ff..
sternly warned Kaṁsa of his imminent death when he tried to kill her by dashing her against a stone. The various versions of the myth record the assurance of Viṣṇu—Krṣṇa to the Goddess that, released from Kaṁsa’s grasp, she would fly up towards the sky, be accepted by Indra as sister, find her permanent abode on the Vindhyas, etc. It is in the context of this assurance that Harivamsa speaks of the earth being adorned by thousands of sacred places of the Goddess, and similar statements are contained also in the Viṣṇu and Bhāgavata Purāṇas.

The types of statements noted above only suggest a widespread cult of local goddesses who, at a certain stage of the development of the cult of the Great Goddess, were regarded as her various forms. Other statements, however, specifically indicate various ethnic origins of some of these deities. Several such statements from the later Purānic texts are collected by Hazra, but probably the best known is the one contained in the apocryphal Āryā-stava in the Harivamsa which refers to the Goddess being worshipped by Śabarās, Barbaras and Pulindas. It may also be added that the Bhagavatī Sahyavāsinī, apparently Durgā–Ambikā or some form of her, seems to be painted as the patron deity of the cāṇḍāla executioners of Cārudatta in the Mrčchakaṭikā, and the Harsacarīta refers to a shrine of Cāmūṇḍā in a dense grove of the Vindhyan forests peopled by various

---

132 Hv., 47.48: Tataḥ sthānasahasraistvaṁ pṛthivīṁ śobhayasyasi.
133 Vi.P., V.1.81: Sthānairanekaiḥ pṛthivīmaśeṣaṁ maṇḍayaiyasyasi.
134 Hazra, Studies in the Upapurāṇas, II, pp.17, fn.63, and 19, fns. 72, 73.
135 Hv., Kinjawadekar’s edn., II.3.7: Śabarairbarbaraśaśaiva pulindaiśca supūjitū.
aboriginal tribes, including the Sabaras. The eulogy of the goddess Vindhyaśārī in the Gaṇḍavaḥo refers pointedly to the Koli women, apparently belonging to some aboriginal tribe, crowding together to make their offerings to the Goddess, and to a man of the Sabara tribe, clad in turmeric leaves, leading the king to the Goddess' shrine. All this evidence finds excellent general corroboration from a statement about the Matr̥ṣ in the Mahābhārata, according to which the so-called Mothers are adorned in diverse kinds of ornaments, wear diverse attire and speak diverse languages. As noted below in another context, the statement has no special relevance for the well known Matr̥ deities, but it does seem to provide clear indication that many goddesses popularly worshipped in India in the early centuries of the Christian era belonged to different linguistic and ethnic groups.

Apart from the lists of goddesses and general statements in one context or another suggesting that popular goddesses of various types must have been very numerous and worshipped practically everywhere, several other more or less distinct types of female divinities are independently referred to quite frequently in the literature of our period. We will make only a passing reference to the Yakṣīṇīs and Nāginīs. The cult of the Yakṣīṇīs, more often in their individual forms than in groups, is adequately attested by literature and archaeology, and the same may perhaps be said for the Nāginīs, but these two should rather be seen in the wider

137 Harṣacarita, ed. Kane, 7th Ucchvāsa, p.68:
Gahānataru-śaṅḍa-nirmita-camunda-madvapairvanapradasaṁiḥ.
For the Vindhyan forest regions peopled by various aboriginal tribes, including Sabaras, see ibid., 8th Ucchvāsa, pp.70 ff.
138 Gaṇḍavaḥo, vv.319 and 338; see also ibid., Intro., pp.xxii-xxiii.
139 Mbh., IX.45.39:
Nānabharaṇadāriṁyo nānāmālyāmbarāstathā,
Nānāvicitreṣvarṣaṁ nānābhāṣaṁstathaiva ca.
140 See below, Ch.III, pp.176-7.
contexts of the cults of the Yakṣas and the Nāgas. The literature provides evidence also of the cult of the female Nakṣatras, individually as well as collectively, and it would appear that the Apsarases also commanded worship of some kind. As we have already seen, all these types are included in various lists of popular goddesses. The Deva-kanyās, Deva-kumarīs, Deva-yeṣṭās, etc., referred to in various texts are, as suggested by Hopkins, more or less akin to the Apsarases, and the evidence of the Buddhist Sanskrit literature suggests that the so-called "Deva-maidens" were also looked to for protection and good health.

141 For the cult of the Yakṣas in general, see Coomaraswamy, Yakṣas, pts. I & II; also Rhys Davids and Stede, PED. (PTS:), pp.545-6, s.v. Yaksha, Yakkhini and Yakκhī; Shah, U.P., "Yakṣa Worship in Early Jaina Literature", JOI, III, 1953-54, pp.54 ff.; Moti Chandra, "Some Aspects of Yakṣa Cult in Ancient India", BFWM., 3, 1952-53 (1954), pp.43 ff.; Agrawala, Pracīna Bharatīya Lokadharma, pp.118 ff.. In the Mahābhārata, the most representative statements about the cult of the Yakṣiṇīs occur in the Tīrthayātra sections of the Āraṇyaka-parvan; see below, pp.42-3. To the many evidences collected in the works cited above may be added the reference to princess Vasavadatta performing worship in a Yakṣiṇī shrine in front of the prison gates in the drama Pratijñā-yaugandharayana of Bhāsa; see Bhāsa-ṛṣṭaka-caκram, ed. Devadhar, p.97.

142 On the Nāga cult in general, see Vogel, Indian Serpent Lore, esp. the Introductory chapter; by the same author, "Nāga Worship in Ancient Mathura", ASI-AR., 1908-9, pp.159 ff.; also Hopkins, EM., pp.23 ff.; Bhattacharya, H.D., in Majumdar (ed.), The Age of Imperial Unity, pp.471 ff.; Banerjea, DHI., pp.344 ff.; Mahalingam, T.V., "The Nāgas in Indian History and Culture", JHI., XLIII, 1965, pp.1 ff., esp. 41 ff.. There are several figures of Nāgini goddesses of the Kuśaṇa and Gupta periods in the Mathura Museum; see Agrawala, A Catalogue of the Brahmanical Images in Mathura Art, pp.101-2, 104-5. For a colossal Nāgi image of the Gupta period from Sanchi, see Marshall, A Guide to Sanchi, p.108. For Maṇiyr Math, near Rājgir (Bihar), which was a great centre of Nāga worship during the Gupta period, see Marshall, "Rājagṛha and its Remains", ASI-AR., 1905-6, pp.103 ff.; Law, B.C., "Rājagṛha in Ancient Literature", MALI., no.58, pp.33 ff..

143 See Hopkins, EM., pp.52-3, 92-3, etc.; Kane, HD., V, pt.II, pp.792 ff.. A reference has been made above to certain Buddhist Sanskrit texts which contain benedictions in which the Nakṣatras are asked for protection (see above, p.16-7). For more evidence of Nakṣatra cult, see below, Ch.III, pp.219 ff..

144 See Hopkins, EM., pp.159 ff.; also below, Ch.III, pp.243-4.


146 See above, pp.15 ff.
There are, however, several other types who are also frequently mentioned in literature, often in contexts suggesting some sort of cult, but whose personality is of the most amorphous kind. Such are the deities, generally feminine, who appear as *genii loci* of trees, groves or forests, villages, cities or houses, rivers, streams, mountains, etc.

It has been seen above that the *Angavijja* refers to such goddesses as *Lata-devata* and *Vanaspati-kanya*. The mention is a little dubious in so far as it remains uncertain whether the divinity of the plant or tree *per se* is intended or the female spirit residing in it, particularly as there is adequate evidence of the existence of both conceptions in Indian thought. Tree and plant worship in India has its own history, starting from the Indus Valley culture and the hymns of the *Rg-veda* and continuing up to modern times. Overlooking the fact that a complex tree-symbolism has also entered into Indian philosophical thought and confining ourselves only to the popular manifestation of the worship of the tree and tree-goddess, a distinction may have to be made not only between the concept of the tree itself as divine and the spirit supposed to be residing in it, but also, with respect to the latter, amongst the spirits of trees in general, of particular trees perhaps close to habitation areas, of trees in a grove or forest, and of the spirits of groves and forests as a whole, because the literature seems to provide suggestions for all these distinctions.

As evidence of the worship of goddesses residing in trees, we need only cite what is perhaps the most representative statement on the subject, in the *Mahābhārata*. According to this statement, those desiring children

147 See above, p.18.
149 For one of the best and latest accounts of the Tree cult in ancient India, see Viennot, *Le Culte de l'arbre dans l'Inde ancienne*.
150 Ibid., Intro., and chs. I and III. For a short but very expressive statement about the cosmic symbolism of the Aśvattha tree, see *Bhagavad-gītā*, XV,1-2.
should worship the goddesses born in trees. These goddesses are described as eaters of human flesh and called Vṛddhikā. The Kumbhakonam edition of the epic gives the name as Vṛkṣakā or Vṛkṣikā which would appear to be an excellent descriptive designation of these beings. But if Vṛddhikā is the original word, as seems to be the case, it is possible, as pointed out by Agrawala, that the reference is to the same type of goddess who is mentioned a little earlier in the epic as a Bāla-graha called Āryā, and as Ārya-vṛddhā whose figure, according to the Kādambarī, was installed over scattered rice in the lying-in chamber of the queen Vilāsavatī. Agrawala also thinks that the same goddess may be portrayed on a stone plaque of the Kuśaṇa period from Mathura. He understands the expression Āryavatī pratīthāpitā Āryavatī Ārhaṭa pujaṇye in the inscription on the figure to mean: "the figure of (the goddess) Āryavatī is installed; the merit of the worship of (the goddess) Āryavatī may accrue towards the worship of the Ārhaṭa". In addition, he feels that the modern figures of Bihā and Bīmāta, whose worship is performed in connection with birth ceremonies, must be the same as the ancient goddess Vṛddhikā who was variously called Āryā, Ārya-vṛddhā, Vṛddhā, etc.

---

151 Mbh., III.220,16:
Strīyo mānuṣa-māṃsādā vṛddhikā nāma nāmataḥ,
Vṛkṣeṣu jātāstā devyo namakāryabh prajārthibhiḥ.
Cf. ibid., III.115.23 ff, where the story is related of Satyavatī and her mother obtaining sons by embracing trees like Aśvatthā and Udumbara; see also Coomaraswamy, Yakṣas, II, pp.11-2.

152 See Hopkins, EM., p.7; Mbh., III.220,16, note.

153 Mbh., III.219,40; see also above, p.8.

154 Kādambarī, ed. Parab, p.161:
Akhila-vrīhi-madhyaāsthaśāpitāryavrddhādhyāsita-sayanīya-sīrobhāgam ....

155 Agrawala, Kādambarī - Eka Sāṃskṛtiκa Adhyayanam, p.80, fn.2.

156 Ibid., For the figure and the inscription, Agrawala cites Smith, Jaina Stūpas, etc., pl.14. The inscription is apparently the same as the one included in Sircar, Sel.Ins., I, pp.120-1, no,25. Sircar reads the relevant line as "Āryavatī [p]rā[j]tīthāpitā [.] Priyā [.]. Āyavatī ārhaṭa-pu[j]jāye [.]", and is inclined to restore "Priyā" with missing letters as "Priyāṭāṃ Bhagavati", thus strengthening Agrawala's conjecture.

157 Agrawala, op.cit. (fn.155 above).
Coomaraswamy was generally inclined to believe that in view of the close connection of the Yakṣa deities with trees, the female figures associated with trees in early Indian art should be understood as representations of Yakṣinīs. This may be quite true in many doubtful cases. An incident related in the Daśakumāra-carita would also support it. According to this text, Pramati, wandering in the Vindhyas, prepared in the evening to make his bed at the foot of a tree and prayed to the deity resident in the tree for protection; later it is revealed that the deity concerned was Yakṣinī Tārāvalī. But Coomaraswamy himself was conscious that a tree-goddess need not invariably be a Yakṣinī. He pointed to certain verses in the Mahābhārata in which Draupadi, leaning against a Kadamba tree, is queried by Kṣiṇika as to who she was, whether a Devī, or Yakṣi, or Dānavi, or Apsarā, or the wife of a Daitya, or the daughter of a Nāga king, or a Rākṣasī, or the wife of Varuṇa, Yama, Soma or Kubera, suggesting that the motif of the woman under the tree could be identified in many ways. In the case of doubtful figures, such as those on the railing pillars of Bharhut and Mathura, a certain margin has to be left for the possibility that some of them represent Apsarases. The epics do represent the Apsarases also as residing in trees, and the reliable, though early, evidence comes from the Vedic literature that the Apsarases and Gandharvas residing in trees were entreated to be propitious to a passing wedding procession.

158 Coomaraswamy, Yakṣas, I, pp.32 ff.
159 Daśakumāra-carita, 5th Ucchvāsa, pp.190 ff.
160 Coomaraswamy, Yakṣas, I, p.33, fn.2, and II, p.11.
161 Mbh., III,265,1-3.
162 The popular architectural term Śāla-bhaṇjikā used for certain types of this motif has been shown to be derived from the name of the Śāla-bhaṇjikā festival which had an obvious fertility significance; see Coomaraswamy, Yakṣas, II, p.12, and references cited there.
163 Cf. ibid., I, p.33, fn.2.
164 See Hopkins, EM., p.72.
165 See AV., XIV,2,9; also Macdonell, VM., p.134; Keith, EPVU., p.184.
Among the types of deities connected with trees, a reference must be made to the Vana-devatās or the Devatās of upavanās, udānas, etc. These sometimes appear singly, but often as generic names for the sylvan goddesses, their mention frequently serving no other purpose than to indicate that gardens, groves and forests were full of such beings. They are invariably introduced as benignant; they are in constant sympathy with the humans, and, being of beautiful appearance, they provide suitable objects for comparison for good-looking women. But if only such a picture of the Vana-devatās were available, they would seem of little significance from the point of view of the popular cult. As it is, their names are mentioned in benedictions; sometimes prayers are addressed to them and occasionally they make gifts. Thus, in the Rāmāyana, Lakṣmaṇa, reluctant to leave Sītā alone in the forest, invokes the Vana-devatā to protect her, and later the abducted Sītā herself salutes the deities of the trees in the forest. In the same text, Viśvāmitra invokes the Vana-devatā and leaves his forest hermitage in her charge before going with Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to attend the sacrifice organised by Janaka. In the Uttara-rāma-carita, the Vana-devatā Vāsantī, the goddess of Janasthāna in the Daṇḍaka forest, appears as a very prominent character. She is pictured as a friend of Rāma and Sītā, and shares their pangs of separation. As the guardian deity of the forest, she welcomes the travellers and invites them to enjoy the woods. In the Mrčchakatika of Śūdraka, Viṭa is hesitant to do the bidding of Śakāra to kill Vasantasena because he is afraid that his evil deeds would then be witnessed by the Vana-devatā of the ten directions. In the Abhijñāna-sakuntala of Kālidāsa, the elder Gautamī is described as advising Sakuntalā to do obeisance to the sylvan goddesses who had been so kind to her and permitted her to depart from her father's

166 See Hopkins, EM., p.57; also below.
167 Rāmāyana, III.43.30.
168 Ibid., III.47.32.
home to join her husband.\textsuperscript{172} Earlier, in the same text, the Vana-devatās are described as making gifts of jewels to Śakuntalā.\textsuperscript{173} In the Kādambarī also, the Vana-devatā of Nandana-vana makes a gift of a Pārijāta-kusumamañjari to serve as a fragrant ear-ornament for Pundarikā. Banabhaṭṭa describes her as a beautiful young lady clad in a floral garment and intoxicated with drinking the nectar of flowers.\textsuperscript{174}

Since the tree-worship is of great antiquity in India, it is quite possible that each of the different concepts of the tree-goddess noted above has a long previous history, but it is not possible to demonstrate it. The Indus Valley culture had both the worship of the sacred trees and of goddesses associated with them, but the fundamental ideas underlying these cults are unknown.\textsuperscript{175} Although the deities of the plants, trees and forests do not play a very significant part in the Vedic religion,\textsuperscript{176} some aspects of their character do appear to connect them with the tree-goddesses of our period. Thus, the Planis (āṣadhī) were personified as goddesses and called mothers,\textsuperscript{177} and the Taittirīya Saṁhitā prescribes an animal sacrifice to them to remove their obstruction to the attainment of offspring.\textsuperscript{178} In this form, they anticipate the cult of individual trees or goddesses associated with them as noted above. The forest as a whole is personified as Aranvāmī in theṚg-vedic hymns,\textsuperscript{179} but the name is never used in the

---

\textsuperscript{172} Abhijñāna-Śākuntala, Act IV, NSP.edn., p.140. The Sanskritized form of Gautamī's statement in Prakrit reads as:
Jāṭe! Jñātijanasnigdhabhiranujnatagamanasi tapovana-devatābhīh.
Prāpama Bhagavatīḥ.

\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., Act IV, v.4, p.134.

\textsuperscript{174} Kādambarī, ed. Varar, pp.311-2.

\textsuperscript{175} See Marshall (ed.), MIC., I, pp.63 ff., esp. 65; also our comments on a Mohenjodaro seal representing the epiphany of the tree goddess, below, Ch.III, pp.201 ff.,

\textsuperscript{176} See Macdonell, VM., p.154; also Keith, RPVU., p.184 and fn.4.

\textsuperscript{177} See RV., X.97; also Macdonell, VM., p.154.

\textsuperscript{178} TS., II.1.5.

\textsuperscript{179} RV., X.146; also Macdonell, VM., p.154; Keith, RPVU., p.185; Diehl, C.G., "The Goddess of Forests in Tamil Literature", TC., XI, no.4, 1964, pp.308 ff..
plural and hardly provides a prototype of the Vana-devatās noted above. Moreover, Araṇyāni seems to have some sinister aspects, apparently connected with the fear naturally associated with a dense forest full of wild beasts. Her conception is nearer to the flesh-eating and fearsome Vṛddhikās, Vṛṣṇākas or Yākṣīṇīs of later times. Large trees, called Vanaspati, literally "the lord of the forests", also appear as personified deities in the Rg-vedic hymns, both singular and plural, but they are male.

Evidence of goddesses associated with hills and mountains is not as plentiful as of those connected with trees and plants. But the very strong tradition of the Vindhyavāsinī goddess should not be forgotten. Similarly, the names Haimavatī, Pārvatī, etc., though traditionally understood as referring to the myth of the goddess being the daughter of the Himavat mountain, strongly suggest that several goddess concepts must have been derived from the female spirits of hills and mountains.

In the list of the Tīrthas in the Aranyaka-parvan of the Mahābhārata, one is a mountain peak, somewhere in the Himalayas, which is said to be sacred to Mahā-devī Gaurī. Another name of the Goddess which connects her with mountains is Sahya-vāsini. The origin and significance of the name Durgā is uncertain. One traditional explanation that the name was given to the Goddess because she destroyed a demon called Durgāma is apparently later myth-making. The other explanation, seen in the apocryphal hymn to

---

180 See above, pp.30-1. On the fearsome aspects of Yākṣīṇīs, see esp. Rhys Davids and Stede, PBD. (PTS.), p.546, s.v. Yakkhinī; also Coomaraswamy, Yakṣas, pp.9, 25. Diehl has pointed to some early Tamilian forest goddesses who resemble the Vedic Araṇyāni; see Diehl, op.cit., TC., XI, no.4, pp.309 ff.

181 Macdonell, VM., p.154.

182 See above, pp.26-7.

183 See Jacobi, "Brahmanism", ERB., 2, p.813; also Hopkins, EM., p.224.

184 Mbh., III,82,131; see also below, p.44.

185 See above, p.27; also Monier-Williams, SED., p.1193, s.v. Sahya.

Durgā sung by Yudhiṣṭhīra in the Mahābhārata, that the Goddess was so called because she rescues people from durgā, usually translated as "difficulty",187 is closer to the original significance of the name. The expression that Durgā saves people from durgā or difficult situations occurs frequently in the eulogies of the Goddess in the Devī-mahātmya, and there is no doubt that the intended meaning of the word durgā in all these places is "difficult" or "difficult situation" of some sort.188 But it appears that this is only a derivative meaning. The word durgā literally means "hard to go upon", "difficult of access" and seems to have obvious topographical connotations.189 It could thus suggest heavily forested mountainous regions and the name may have been originally derived from the concept of a goddess of such regions. This inference is borne out by the contexts in which the word durgā is sometimes used in the eulogies. Thus, in the passage in Yudhiṣṭhīra’s stuti cited above, the durgā or "difficulty" from which the Goddess rescues are specified as arising from dense forests.190 In reply to Yudhiṣṭhīra’s hymn, the Goddess assures him that persons invoking her in atavi, durgā-kāntāra, sāgara, gahana-giri, etc., will have all their wishes fulfilled.191 Elsewhere the Goddess is addressed


188 Mar.P., 81.11; 82.10; 86.29 (tr. Pargiter, pp.484, 490, 508 respectively). Hopkins notes: "... her name Durgā is a lucus a non, because she saves from durgā, difficulty"; see EM., p.224.

189 For contrary opinion, see Weber, as cited in Muir, GST., IV, p.428. Weber’s explanation of the name Durgā comes quite close to the traditional explanation contained in Yudhiṣṭhīra’s stuti cited above. Only, in his opinion, like other names of the Goddess such as Kāli and Karāli, Durgā also points towards Agni, and could refer to the violent flame of the fire as Durgā, "a protecting fortress", which, like the fire itself, delivers, atones and frees from all durgā and durita. Mazumdar’s conjecture that since Durgā appears to have been originally a non-Aryan tribal goddess, her name also must be non-Sanskritic does not appear convincing to us; see Mazumdar, B.C., "Durgā: Her Origin and History", JRAS., 1906, p.358. For an early use of the word durgā with possible topographical connotation inasmuch as it seems to qualify Prthivī, see AV., XII.4.23.

190 See above, fn.187.

as Durge Kantāravāsini, or described as dwelling in Kantāra-bhaya-durgēṣu, etc..\textsuperscript{192} All this evidence is very suggestive, and the possible original association of Durgā with mountainous regions is clearly indicated.\textsuperscript{193} In any case, as we have seen, among the many different places where the Goddess is said to dwell in the apocryphal Aryā-stava in the Harivaṃśa, Parvatāgṛesu appears first.\textsuperscript{194}

If the association of goddesses with hills and mountains is often of a less direct and more suggestive kind, the streams and rivers are uniformly divine and called goddesses. It has been seen above that certain texts list among the popular goddesses also the Nāḍī-devatās.\textsuperscript{195} The epics and the Purāṇas produce long lists of the holy rivers.\textsuperscript{196} An excellent representative statement of the cult of the river goddesses may be seen in the Rāmāyaṇa, which describes at length Sītā’s invocation of Gāṅgā. Crossing the holy river at the start of their exile, Sītā prays to the goddess with folded hands to protect Rāma and ensure the safe return of her husband, her brother-in-law and herself. In return, she humbly vows to make an offering of a hundred thousand cows, abundant grain and beautiful apparel to brāhmaṇas in order to gratify the goddess.\textsuperscript{197} The Mahābhārata imagines all

\textsuperscript{192} Ibid., vol.7, App.1, no.1, p.710, 11.22, 27.
\textsuperscript{193} Cf. Hazra, Studies in the Upapurāṇas, II, pp.17; 18, fn.68; 24.
\textsuperscript{194} See above, p.26, fn.129.
\textsuperscript{195} See above, pp.18, 19.
\textsuperscript{196} See Hopkins, "The Sacred Rivers of India", in Lyon, D.G. and Moore, G.F. (eds.), Studies in the History of Religions presented to Crawford Howell Toy, p.216; by the same author, EM., p.4. As one instance in the epic, may be seen MBh., VI.10.13 ff.. The list of holy rivers in the Purāṇas generally appear in their geographical sections; see e.g., Vi.P., II.3; see also Kane, HD., V, pt. II, p.1528.
\textsuperscript{197} Rāmāyaṇa, II.46,67-73:

\begin{quote}
Mādhyam tu sāmanuprāpya bhāgīrathyāstvaninditā, 
Vaidehī prājjalirbhūtvā tām nādimāsābravīt. 67
Putro daśarathasyāṁ mahārajaśya dhīmatāḥ,
Nīdesāṁ yālayatvam ācage tvadabhikṣitāh. 68
Caturdaśa hi varśāni samagrāpyuṣya hānane,
Bhrāṭrā saha maya caiva purnāḥ pratyaśamīgyati. 69
Tattastvāṁ devi subhage kṣemena punarāgatā,
Iṣāye pramuditā gaṅge sarvakāmasamūdhye. 70
Tvam hi tripathāṁ devi brahmālokāṁ samākṣeṣe,
Māryāḥ ca dañcākṣaṁ pradṛṣṭeṣu, 71
\end{quote}
rivers as the "Mothers of the world" and calls them mahā-balāh, and similar statements may be found also in other texts. In its sections on Upa-nīpāṭa-pratikāra, the Arthaśāstra has the succinct recommendation to worship the rivers on parvan days. In the case of drought, it suggests particularly the worship of Indra, Gaṅgā, etc.

It is generally believed that one of the aspects of the religious life in the Indus Valley culture which connects it with the classical Hinduism of later times is the belief in the sanctity of water and in ritual bathing. It may be, therefore, that the epic-Purānic tradition of the river goddesses is also related in some way to similar beliefs in the chalcolithic culture of the Indus Valley. But this can only be conjectured. The available evidence, however, does suggest a definite and direct link with the religious beliefs of the Vedic people, even though the water deities there do not occupy a very prominent place. In the Rg-vedic hymns, the Waters, under the name Āpāh, appear as goddesses. Their conception scarcely rises beyond the elemental, but they are spoken of as

197 contd
Sā tvām devi namasyāmi praśamsāmi ca sūbhane,
Prāptarājye naravāghre śivena punarāgate, 72
Gavām śātasahāsarāṇi vastrāṅgamā ca pēsalam,
Brāhmaṇeḥbhyaḥ pradāsyāmi tava priyacakīrṣaya. 73

198
Mbh., VI.10.35.
Cf. Hv., 38.75; see also fn.211 below.

199
Arthaśāstra, ed. Kangle, 4.3.10:
Parvasu ca nadīpūjāḥ kārayet.

200
Ibid., 4.3.12. A statement in the Rāguvaṃśa (XVI,21) that in the absence of Rāma, the sandy banks of the river Sarayū had become bali-kṛiṣya-varjita suggests regular offerings to the river goddess.

201
Ibid., 4,3.12. A statement in the Rāguvaṃśa (XVI,21) that in the absence of Rāma, the sandy banks of the river Sarayū had become bali-kṛiṣya-varjita suggests regular offerings to the river goddess.

202
See Marshall (ed.), MIC., I, p.75; Mackay, Early Indus Civilizations, pp.66-7; Wheeler, The Indus Civilization, p.110; Bāsham, The Wonder that was India, p.18; etc.

203
It may be mentioned that while the belief in the purifying and healing properties of water is almost universal (see ERE., 10, pp.463-4; ibid., 12, p.706), and is fully attested in Indian culture from the Rg-vedic period onwards (see Hopkins, op.cit., Toy Volume, p.213; EM., p.3; also below), there is no evidence that the Indus Valley people worshipped river goddesses, though archaeological evidence suggests that they believed in the purifying effects of water; see Mackay, op.cit., p.66; cf. also the cautious comments by Wheeler, op.cit., p.110 and fn.3.
goddesses, young maidens and wives, and most frequently as life-giving, nourishing mothers, of Agni in particular. They are also said to cleanse and purify the worshipper. These Waters are sometimes imagined as celestial but, generally speaking, they belong to the atmospheric region and the earth should be understood as rain water or flowing streams and rivers. The rivers also appear independently as goddesses in the Rg-vedic hymns. They are most frequently counted as a group of seven — the Sapta-sindhavaḥ, etc. — but several are named; the most prominent being Sarasvati. As with the Ṛṣabha, the rivers, though deified, are scarcely personified, the only exception being Sarasvati, although the natural basis is rarely fully forgotten even in her case. In later Vedic and post-Vedic history, the character of Sarasvati grows very complex. She becomes the guardian deity of speech and learning, and it is in this form, generally speaking, that she finds her place in the Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jaina pantheons. She is, of course, also remembered in the lists of or in the

204 See Macdonell, VM., pp.85-6; Keith, RPVU., pp.141-2.  
205 Ibid.  
206 Ibid., For Waters as celestial or cosmic in the Rg-vedic hymns, see also Apte, V.M., in Majumdar (ed.), The Vedic Age, p.366.  
207 On the conception of the river-goddesses in Vedic religion in general, and that of Sarasvati in particular, see Macdonell, VM., pp.86 ff.; Keith, RPVU., pp.172 ff.  
208 On the evolution of the concept of Sarasvati in ancient Indian culture, see esp. Bhattacharya, Haridas, "Sarasvati — the Goddess of Learning", in Belvakiar (ed.), Commemorative Essays presented to Prof. Kashinath Bapuji Pathak, pp.32-52. As the goddess of learning, Sarasvati is frequently invoked in the beginnings of various treatises (cf. the opening verse in the Mahābhārata, Harivamsa and various Purāṇas), and the Purāṇas also contain eulogies of this goddess (see Mār.P., 21,29 ff. which refers to the Nāga king Aśvatara performing austerities at Plakṣavataraṇa in the Himalayas, where the river Sarasvati takes rise, and reciting a long stuti in honour of the goddess; see also ibid., tr. Pargiter, pp.127 ff.). For the iconography of Sarasvati, see Banerjea, DHI., pp.376 ff. Important evidence, not always utilized, of the prominent place occupied by the goddess in the Buddhist tradition is contained in Mahayana text Suvarṇa-prabhasottama-sūtra which devotes a whole chapter to the cult of the goddess Sarasvati; see ibid., ed. Nobel, ch.7, pp.102 ff.; also ibid., tr. Emmerick, pp.43 ff. Nobel has also studied in detail the contents of this chapter in "Das Zauberbad der Götting Sarasvati" in Festschrift Schubring, pp.123 ff.
Bg-veda, there is also the conception of Sapta-Gaṅgā. The most important myth connected with the goddess is of her descent from the heavens when she was borne by Śiva on his locks. In her human form, she appears as the younger sister of Uma, co-wife of Śiva and mother of Kumāra-Kārttikeya. She is also the wife of Śāntanu and mother of Bhīṣma. Her parentage is traced to Jahnū and Bhagīratha. In iconography, Gaṅgā, with Yamunā, is frequently depicted in human form riding her crocodile on the door-frames of the mediaeval Hindu shrines.

Closely connected with the sacred rivers is the institution of the Tīrthas. Tīrthas are holy places, generally, though not invariably, on the banks of sacred rivers. They generally derive their sanctity from that of the rivers or streams, etc., on whose banks they are located, but especially from association with places sacred to deities, saints, etc. A visit to such holy places, ablutions in the sacred waters there, worship of the deities, observance of fasts, making of gifts of all kinds, etc., are especially recommended in the epic and Purānic texts and great merits are promised in return. How the institution began and what was the underlying motive behind it is not our concern here. There are two things about the institution, however, which have a great bearing on the question of the widespread cults of goddesses in India in the early centuries of the Christian era. Firstly, even though the history of the idea of Tīrtha, literally "ford", may be taken back to the Vedic times.

---

218 Ibid., esp. p.226; cf. also Vi,Dh.P., III,221,63 which prescribes the worship of the Sapta-prakārā Gaṅgā.
219 See Hopkins, op.cit., Toy Volume, pp.223-4; EM., pp.5-6.
220 For the latest and best study of the iconography of the goddesses Gaṅgā and Yamunā, see Viennot, Les Divinités fluviales Gaṅgā et Yamunā, etc.
221 On the Tīrthas in general, see the brief comments by Barth, The Religions of India, pp.277-8; also Kane, MD., IV, sec.IV, esp. ch.XI, pp.552 ff.; Patil, Cultural History from the Vayu Purāṇa, App.B, pp.333 ff.; Bharati, Agehananda, "Pilgrimage in the Indian Tradition", HR., 3, Summer 1963, pp.135 ff.. We do not agree with Patil that brahmanas might have developed their institution of Tīrtha-yātra following Buddhist models; see below. The constant emphasis by Bharati on the predominantly Tantric background of this institution also appears to us somewhat misplaced and misleading.
222 See Barth, op.cit., p.62; Kane, op.cit., pp.554 ff..
it is not till the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas that the lists of the Tīrthas and laudatory statements about the great merits of visiting them actually appear. Secondly, as the following perusal at least of the lengthy Tīrtha-yātṛā section in the Aranyakaparvan of the Mahābhārata will show, a very large number of these sacred places seem to have been associated with various kinds of goddesses. This is specifically mentioned in several cases, but a similar inference can be made about a large number of others.

The Tīrtha-yātṛā sections in the Aranyakaparvan of the Mahābhārata list a large number of Tīrthas. We may first note those about which it is either specifically said that they are sacred to some goddess or the other or a similar inference may be easily made. Thus, somewhere in the north-western part of the country, there is the sacred place, called Yoni, of the goddess Bhīmā, and by bathing there, a man is supposed to become like the son of the goddess. Bhīmā mentioned here is apparently the same goddess as her namesake described in the Devi-māhātmya as a form of the Great Goddess, especially worshipped on the Himalayas. In the same general direction, not far from Kurukṣetra, is located the residence

223 See Kane, op.cit., p.561.
224 See Barth, The Religions of India, p.277, fn.4. The account of the Tīrthas in the Aranyakaparvan forms a continuous section but is actually composed of separate narratives. In the first and the longest one (chs. 80-3), Nārada relates to Yudhiṣṭhira what is said to have been narrated by Pulastya to Bhīma. It follows a very rough geographical order and it is not always possible to guess the precise locality of a particular Tīrtha. The second one (chs. 84-8) is related by Dhaumya to Yudhiṣṭhira. This part classifies the sacred places as belonging to east, south, west and north, but within each part the order appears to be only roughly geographical. After this, the actual pilgrimage of Yudhiṣṭhira, etc., in the company of Lomaśa, is described (ch. 89 onwards). On the whole, the account gives the impression of a more detailed and relatively accurate geography of North India than of South.
225 Mbh., III.80.100-1.
of a "world-famous" Yakṣī, near some sacred place of Mahādeva, and at Rājagṛha another Yakṣī shrine is mentioned where regular offerings were made. There is a Śrī-tīrtha, giver of prosperity, apparently sacred to Śrī-Lakṣmī, and the same goddess is said to be worshipped after bathing in Ahalya-hrada, which is located in the sacred forest of Brahmarṣi Gautama. A Śaṅkhinī-tīrtha is specifically said to be the Tīrtha of the goddess, and a bath in the Mātṛ-tīrtha, apparently sacred to the Mātṛ goddesses, is said to ensure many offspring and prosperity. Madhuvaṭī also is a Tīrtha of the goddess, and the confluence of Sarasvatī and Aruṇā is called Devī-tīrtha. Devī Hūdra-patnī is said to be seen at Amavaka-tīrtha, and there is a special Tīrtha of Mahā-puṇya Sarasvatī, known as Plakṣā-devī. Several verses are devoted to the "world-renowned" shrine of the goddess Sākambharī, the guardian deity of herbs, vegetables, etc., and reference is made to the ṛṣis being attracted there on account of the devotion to the goddess. Here again, the reference is clearly to the same goddess Sākambharī who is described as a form of the Mahā-devī in the Devī-māhātmya.

---

227 Mbh., III.81.19. Coomaraswamy seems to confuse this with the Yakṣī shrine at Rājagṛha, mentioned below (fn.228); see Coomaraswamy, Yakṣas, I, pp.9 and 25.
228 Mbh., III.82,90.
229 Ibid., III.81.37.
230 Ibid., III.82.93.
231 Ibid., III.81.41.
232 Ibid., v.47.
233 Ibid., v.79.
234 Ibid., vv.131-2.
235 Ibid., vv.146 ff., esp.148.
236 Ibid., III.82.5; see also above, p.39. The goddess Sarasvatī in human form is said to have been seen at a place visited by the Paṇḍavas; see ibid., III.132.2.
237 Mbh., III.82.11-5.
A Tīrtha called Dhūmāvatī, close to a sacred spot of Mahādeva, is also said to be sacred to the goddess. Since a visit to Brāhmaṇī-tīrtha promises residence in the Brahma-loka, the reference may be to a spot sacred to the consort of Brahmā. The "renowned" Tīrtha called Yoni-dvāra, a visit to which is said to give freedom from rebirth, must certainly be regarded as a place sacred to some goddess. At Jyeṣṭhila-tīrtha is to be seen the god Viśvesvara with the goddess. There is the significant mention of the "world-renowned" mountain-peak of the great goddess Gaurī and a Stana-kūṭa close to it. The Virājā-tīrtha close to Vaitaranya river, which would be localized by the sequence of the description somewhere in Orissa, may also have been famous on account of some goddess, because the same general area has yielded magnificent colossal statues of the Mātṛs of early mediaeval period. There is a reference to a "world renowned" shrine of the goddess Gāyatī. Perhaps the Jāti-mātṛ-hrada has some relationship with the Jāta-mātṛ-devata to whom a reference has been made earlier. When the Pāṇḍavas actually embark on their pilgrimage, amongst the several sacred places they visit one bears the name Nārī-tīrtha, and must be regarded as sacred to some goddess.

239 Mbh., III.82.20-1.
240 Ibid., v.52.
241 Ibid., v.83.
242 Ibid., vv.115-6.
243 Ibid., vv.131-2.
244 Ibid., III.83.6-7; cf. also ibid., III.114.4, where the river Vaitaranī is placed in the Kalinga country.
245 See below, Ch.III, p.154; see also Sircar, D.C., "Two Inscriptions from Jajpur", EI., XXVIII, pp.184-5.
246 Mbh., III.83.16-8.
247 Ibid., vv.26-7.
248 Ibid., vv.34, 36.
249 See above, p.10.
250 Mbh., III.118.4.
The name of a so-called "famous" tīrtha Devikā and the statement that Mahesvara is worshipped there might suggest that it was also associated with some feminine deity. There should be no doubt, however, of the association of goddesses with Tīrthas which are described as of the Kumārikās of Śakra, or which bear such names as Kanyā-tīrtha, Kanyāśrama, etc. Particular mention may be made of one such Tīrtha said to be to the south of the Kāverī and on the shores of the ocean, because it is probably this that the Periplus refers to as Comari where men and women came to consecrate themselves for life, bathe and dwell in celibacy, and where a goddess once dwelt and bathed. The Prthivī-tīrtha is likely to have been sacred to the Earth goddess; Kṛttikā and Maghā-tīrthas of the female Nakṣatras of those names, and Urvaśī-tīrtha of the homonymous Apsaras.

Apart from the above instances which are more or less certain as evidence of sacred spots of various goddesses, many other names and places enumerated in the epic list of the Tīrthas may be of a similar kind. Unlike the names of the rivers, the Tīrtha-names are not invariably feminine.

---

251 Ibid., III.80.110-12, 115. Verse 113 in this place refers to a Tīrtha of Rudra called Kāmākhya. It is described as served by Devarṣis and a giver of quick "siddhis". Since the name is almost certainly identical with Kāmākhya of the later tradition as a great centre of the Tantric worship of the Goddess, the association with Rudra and reference to "siddhis" would suggest association with some goddess also in the epic verse; see also Kakati, The Mother Goddess Kāmākhya, p.1.

252 Mbh., III.81.97.

253 Ibid., III.81.94, 165; 82.117-8; 83.34; etc.

254 Ibid., III.83.21.

255 The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea (tr. Schoff), p.46.

256 Mbh., III.81.11.

257 Ibid., III.82.46.

258 Ibid., v.136.

259 Cf. Hopkins, op.cit. (fn.196 above), Toy Volume, pp.214-5. In their mythological aspect, the rivers are distinctly feminine, whether they bear masculine names or feminine. Tīrthas, as such, are neuter and remain neuter in their personified state, but that does not affect our argument.
but they are generally so, at least in the list as given in the Aranyaka-parvan of the epic. This is probably because many names are simply the names of rivers. A large number of these are easily identifiable as the names of the well known rivers of India, like Ganga, Yamuna, Sarasvatī, Śoṇa, Lauhitya, Narmadā, G̣oḍavari, Kaverī, etc., but many others may be of similar kind. In the case of Tirthas bearing names of rivers, therefore, the sentiment of visit to the holy river goddess can always be suspected. But some feminine names may have been names of actual goddesses which are no more identifiable. It is interesting to see that two sacred places bear names like Gavām bhavane and Kapilā260 which might suggest some association with the holy cow.

Our analysis of the lists of Tirthas in the Aranyaka-parvan of the Mahābhārata clearly shows that these sacred watering places were frequently associated with female deities of various kinds.261 Since the epic lists try to follow a rough geographical scheme and embrace practically the whole of India,262 they easily provide a general indication of very widespread cults of popular goddesses in India in the early centuries of the Christian era. That pilgrimages to the sacred spots were not always locked on with favour by the orthodox brahmanical tradition263 is evidence of the popular nature of these holy spots. It is also suggested in the detailed statements in which the visit to the Tirthas is prescribed as a more economical but equally or even more efficacious substitute for the expensive sacrifices of the orthodox tradition.264

The tutelary deities of villages and cities were also generally goddesses. There is little literary evidence in our period for direct

260 Mbh., III.81.38, 40; cf. 82.27 ff.,
261 Cf. Hopkins, EM., p.11.
262 See above, p.42, fn.224.
263 See Barth, The Religions of India, p.277, and Kane, HD., IV, p.561, where it is pointed out that the Smṛtis of Manu and Yājñavalkya do not attach much importance to pilgrimages; see also Hopkins, op.cit. (fn.196 above), Toy Volume, pp.213-4, 225. The first large section on the merits of visiting the Tirthas and Tirtha-lists in the Aranyaka-parvan (see above, p.42, fn.224) is said to have been narrated to Bāisma because he had grave doubts about the efficacy of these practices; see Mbh., III.80.25-8.
264 See Mbh., III.80.29 ff., esp.34-8.
worship of the tutelary goddess of the village under the title Grāma-devatā - a term so frequently used for the modern phenomenon of village goddesses, especially in South India and sometimes in the North. But the existence of such goddesses and their worship may be safely presumed. Perhaps also it is with reference to such deities, if not especially referring to them, that the eulogies speak of the Great Goddess being present in every place and having her shrine everywhere. One such statement in the apocryphal hymn to the Goddess in the Bājāma-parvan has been cited above. Hazra quotes verses from the Bhaviṣya Purāṇa which refer to the Goddess being found in every āsthāna, pura and grāma. The late Devi-bhāgavata Purāṇa specifically speaks of the various forms of the Goddess as Grāma-devīs and refers to their worship in villages and cities. In any case, there is an interesting inscription of the early Kuṣāṇa period from Mathura which greatly strengthens our presumption. It is engraved on a stone sculpture and records the dedication of a shrine in the 10th year of the reign of Kaniṣka.


266

See above, p.26, fn.128.

267


268

Dev.Bhā., IX,1,137a:

Ya yāsca grāmadevyāḥ syustāḥ sarvāḥ prakṛteḥ kalāḥ.

Ibid., v,158a:

Pūjita grāmadevyāsa grāme ca nagare mune.

The Devi-bhāgavata is a sectarian Śākta work compiled sometime in the 11th - 12th century A.D.; on the nature and contents of this work and its date, see Hazra, op.cit. (fn.267 above), pp.329 ff., esp.346-7. Oppert quotes the following interesting verse from Āgama-smṛti-sūra according to which the Grāma-devatās are deities of the Sudras:

Brāhmaṇānām śivo devaḥ kṣatriyānām tu mādhavaḥ, Vaisāyaṁāṁ tu bhaved brahmaḥ sudrāṇām grāmadvataḥ.

See Oppert, op.cit., p.450, fn.231.

269

as Priyatām devī grāmasya, and although he was later inclined to revise the reading of the last word as grāmaṇa,270 other epigraphists have adopted his original reading.271 However, whether the meaning be "May the goddess of the village be pleased" or "May the goddess be pleased with the village",272 the cult of the tutelary goddess of the village is clearly indicated. It is doubtful whether the expression Uttarāyaṇa Navamikāyaṁ in the inscription gives the name of the goddess as Uttarā (or Uttarā) Navamikā or records the locality where the shrine was built.273 The stone sculpture, on which the inscription is engraved, shows a man and a woman seated on a bench. Since over the head of the man there appears something which, according to Bühler, may be a mutilated snake-hood and since the stone immediately above the woman's head is broken, allowing for the possibility that there may have been a similar hood there, he was inclined to believe that the scene represented a Nāga couple, and the benediction in the inscription must refer to a Nāgī goddess, particularly as Mathura is known to have been a centre of serpent worship during the period.274 There is nothing improbable in a snake-goddess being the tutelary deity of a rural locality, but Bühler's suggestion must remain problematic for want of clearer evidence. In any case, the inscription, a rare one of its kind and for its period, serves as a very clear pointer to the fact that villages had their own tutelary deities and that probably they were very frequently goddesses of one kind or another.

There is adequate literary evidence, on the other hand, indicating that the guardian deities of cities, the Nagara-devatā, were generally

270 See Lüders, Mathurā Inscriptions, p.209 and fn.3.
271 See Sircar, Sel.Ins., I, p.138. The grammatically correct Sanskritized form of the concluding line cited above will be Priyatām devī grāmasya.
272 Cf. the two alternative translations in Lüders, op.cit. (fn.269 above).
273 See Lüders, op.cit. (fn.269 above). A reference has been made above (p.16) to the mention of Navamikā as a Deva-kumārikā in a Buddhist Sanskrit text. Lüders also pointed to it.
274 For the description of the sculpture and its identification, see Lüders, op.cit. (fn.269 above). On the popularity of serpent worship in the Mathura region, see also above, p.29, fn.142.
feminine divinities. In the *Mrçchakatika*, the heroine Vasantasena, running away in fright from Sakara, is compared to a Nagara-devata. The *Daşakumära-carita* of Daśānīn similarly compares the daughter of a city merchant, wearing glittering ornaments and walking at night, and Rägamañjari, the younger sister of the courtesan Kämañjari, to a Nagara-devata, and on both occasions makes the interesting comment that the young ladies appeared like the guardian goddess of the city incensed at the theft committed in the city. The prescription of the *Arthaśāstra*, therefore, that the Nagara-devata should be placed towards the north should refer to the shrine of the tutelary goddess of the city.

In the *Raghuvamsa* of Kaśyapa, the tutelary goddess of the city of Ayodhyā appears as a beautiful young lady before Kuśa and carries on a long conversation with him. She is portrayed as lamenting the absence of Räma and requests the young prince to occupy the paternal throne. Kuśa is said to have gladly obliged her, whereupon the pleased goddess "forsook her embodied form and disappeared". It is possible, though not certain, that the text also alludes in the same context to the worship of this goddess, as well as other deities, through an animal sacrifice.

---

275 See above, p.18.
277 *Daşakumära-carita*, 2nd Ucchvasa, NSP. edn., p.99:
Athaśau nagaredevateva nagaramośarosita nihaśaṅbādahvelāyām nihaśaṅ ti sannikṣṭā kācidumisaṭhūṣaṇā yuvatirāvirāṣīt.

Ibid., p.109:
Athaśau nagaredevateva nagaramośarosita līlā-kaṭākṣa-mālā-śrīkhalābhīrni-lot-pala-pāla-sāyamalābhīrmābadhnāt.
278 *Arthaśāstra*, ed. Kangle, 2.4.15; also ibid., tr. Kangle, p.79. We believe that Kangle's rendering of the expression *nagara-rāja-devata-loha-manjī-kāravō* as "the tutelary deities of the city and the king, the workers in metals and jewels" is preferable to Shamasastry's "the royal tutelary deity of the city, etc." (see *Arthaśāstra*, tr. Shamasastry, p.54), or Stein's "workers in metals and precious stones for the town, the king and the deities" (see Stein, O., *"Arthaśāstra and Śilpaśāstra - II"*, Ar.O., VIII, no.1, May 1936, p.88).
279 *Raghuvansā*, XVI. 4–23. The v.9, in which the goddess identifies herself, runs as:
Tambaśravītsā gurupānassvadyā ya nītapsurā svapadomukhena,
Tasyaḥ purāḥ samprati vītanāthaṁ jānīhi rājannadhīdevatāṁ mām.

280 Ibid., v.39:
Tapaḥ saparyāṁ sapasūpahārāṁ puraḥ parārdhyapratimā-ghārīyāṁ,
Kadambari of Bājabhaṭṭa, the queen Vilāsavatī is represented as performing worship in the shrine of the Avanti-mātrās, the guardian deities of the city of Avanti, for the safe return of her son Candrapida.281 Perhaps the reference is to the same locally renowned shrine of the Mātrās where the queen is earlier said to have worshipped to obtain a son.282 Thus the Mātrās, who are known to have had a popular cult in the area,283 also appear to have occasionally obtained the status of tutelary deities of cities. But even if the so-called Avanti-mothers are different, the reference to their being Avanti-nāma-nagari-devatā and their worship by a queen are significant.

It may be added here that the goddess Lakṣmī is portrayed as the tutelary deity of the city of Madurai in an early Tamil poem The Garland of Madurai dated approximately in the 3rd - 4th century A.D.. The poem also refers to the massive city gate with posts carved with images of the goddess and grimy with oblations of ghee poured upon it to bring safety and prosperity to the city.284

The much discussed gold coin of the "City of Puṣkalavatī" showing on the obverse a standing crowned goddess and the Kharoṣṭhi legend Puṅhalavatī devadā on the right,285 may perhaps be cited as another early evidence of

280 contd

Upoṣitair vāstuvidhānavidhbirnirvartayāṁasa rāghupravīraḥ. Mallinātha’s commentary seems to understand puraḥ in the sense "in front of", and does not try to specify what deities may be meant by parardhyapratimā-grhayaḥ. Our inference that the deities understood here, before whose shrines the offerings of animal flesh were made, could also include the tutelary goddess of Ayodhya is based on the fact that the whole of the preceding part of this chapter is occupied with the dialogue between Kusa and this goddess, the arrival of the former at Ayodhya and his causing to repair and renew the neglected city. Cf. also ibid., XVII,36, which refers to king Atithi adoring Ayodhyā-devatāḥ.

281 Kādambarī, ed. Parab, p.649:
Candrapīdasya ivāgamanāyopayācitam kartumavantīnāma-nagari-devatā-nāma-vantimātrīṇāmayatanam nirgata vilāsavatī ....

282 Ibid., p.145; see also below, Ch.III, p.143.

283 See below, Ch.III, pp.245-6.

284 See Basham, The Wonder that was India, pp.203-4.

285 See Gardner, BMC.Gr.Sc., p.162 and pl.XXIX.15; Rapson, in Rapson (ed.), The Cambridge History of India, I, pp.557, 587, and pl.VI.10. A few other references are cited below at appropriate places.
the Indian tradition of the cult of tutelary goddesses of cities. As it is, since the coin is almost certainly the issue of a foreign ruler, probably Scythian, is executed in Greek style and shows the goddess on the obverse as wearing a mural crown, it should be regarded as a representative of the Greek tradition of city cults, like the copper coin type of Euacratis bearing on the reverse the Kharoshthi legend Kaviśīye nagara-devata and showing a similar but enthroned goddess, and many other coins of late Indo-Greek and Śaka kings on which the city goddess is recognized without the benefit of identifying legends. But inasmuch as the female figure on the obverse of the coin of the City of Puṣkalāvatī has been frequently understood as an Indian goddess, the influence of the Indian tradition of the cult of city goddesses is clearly

286 Gardner has classified it as "Indo-Scythic: Uncertain"; see Gardner, op.cit.


288 Tyche may be said to be the typical Greek deity swaying the fortunes of a city, her Roman counterpart being Fortuna. In actual practice, however, many goddesses, and sometimes gods, appear as tutelary deities of cities. It is also interesting to note that only Athena and Zeus obtain the epithets Polias and Polieus respectively. On Greco-Roman cults of city deities in general, see Hill, G.F., "City, City-gods", HRE, 3, pp.680-1; on the influence of the Polis on Greek religion, see Farnell, "Greek Religion", HRE, 6, pp.404-5; on Athena Polias and Zeus Polieus, see Farnell, op.cit., p.396, and by the same author, The Cults of the Greek States, I, pp.56 ff. and 299.

289 See Narain, The Coin-types of the Indo-Greek Kings, p.11; Lahiri, Corpus of Indo-Greek Coins, pp.33, 126-7, both citing Whitehead (see Whitehead, "Notes on the Indo-Greeks; II", Numismatic Chronicle, 1947, pp.29 ff.) who rejected the identification of the figure on the reverse as Zeus enthroned and, instead, suggested that it represents a goddess, probably Demeter or Tyche. On the basis of the general resemblance of this type with the coin-type of the City of Puṣkalāvatī, and the presumption that Nagara-devatās in Indian tradition are generally goddesses, we naturally support Whitehead's identification (for contra, see Banerjea, DHI., p.148 and fn.1). We also agree with Narain's suspicion that this coin-type was not struck by Euacratis I but by some later king.

290 See Narain, op.cit., pp.29, 32-3; Lahiri, op.cit., p.33; Jenkins and Narain, The Coin-types of the Śaka-Pahlava Kings of India, pp.1-2, 8-9, 10, 13-5 and 24; cf. also Tarn, The Greeks in Bactria and India, pp.254, 353 and fn.1.

suggested. It is uncertain, however, which Indian goddess is represented on the coin. Since the figure has often been supposed to hold a lotus in its right hand,\textsuperscript{292} she has been sometimes identified as Śrī-Lakṣmī.\textsuperscript{293} The legend vṛṣabha (\textsuperscript{= vṛṣabha}) and the bull on the reverse led Banerjea to suggest that the goddess on the obverse may be Durgā-Ekānaśī or Pārvatī, the consort of Śiva, whose characteristic emblem is the bull.\textsuperscript{294} More recently, Gupta has tried to read the complete legend on the obverse, including the undeciphered portion on the left, as Pukhalavadi devada āmbi, and feels that āmbi may stand for Ambī, Ambikā, or simply a mother-goddess. He has also pointed out that the goddess holds a long spear under her left arm, and the object held in her right hand may be a club.\textsuperscript{295} If Gupta's suggestions are accepted, Banerjea's identification of the figure as the consort of Śiva may be strengthened. But an accurate identification does not seem possible. Even if the legend to the left on the obverse be āmbi, it would give no certain indication, as Gupta is aware, that the figure is to be identified as Ambikā. Moreover, it is not improbable that the object in the right hand of the city-goddess of Puṣkalāvatī, the "city of lotuses", is a lotus flower.\textsuperscript{296} But whatever the identification of the figure, the general consensus that it represents an Indian deity in the Greek style greatly strengthens our inference that the guardian deities of cities in the Indian tradition were frequently feminine. It is on the strength of such traditions that certain female figures in the representations of the Mahābhārataramaṇa of Buddha in early Buddhist reliefs are frequently recognized as the guardian goddess of the city.\textsuperscript{297}

\begin{footnotes}
\item [292] Ibid., pp.557, 587.
\item [293] See Banerjea, DHI, p.111, citing Coomaraswamy.
\item [294] Ibid., p.111, 257.
\end{footnotes}
We do not know whether the Desa-devata or Desa-daivata referred to in the Arthasastra as tutelary deities of the region or kingdom were male or female. Equally uncertain is the sex of the Dig-devataḥ, provision for whom in the lay-out of the city is made in the same text. If they are identical with the well known Dikpālas, they are obviously all male deities. On the other hand, we have seen that the Āgāvijīṇa mentions Diva-kumārī goddesses, and both the Jaina and the Buddhist traditions assign goddesses to various directions. In the rite of the Pañca-mahāvajña, the Pāraskara Gṛhya-sūtra prescribes offerings also to the presiding deities of the quarters, but they are apparently male deities and have to be understood somewhat in the tradition of the later Dikpālas. However, even though there is no marked personification, the Atharva-veda imagines the "Five directions (or regions)" as goddesses and directs prayers to them, along with the seasons and the "fangs" of the year. It is probable, therefore, that the Desa-devataḥ and Dig-devataḥ of the later texts like the Arthasastra were also popular goddesses. An indirect indication to that effect may be obtained from the Kādambarī of Bāṇabhaṭṭa. Considering that most of the deities whom the queen Vilāsavatī is said in this text to have worshipped to obtain a son are female, it is highly probable that the Dig-devataḥ also, whom she is said to have propitiated on the cross-roads

---

298 Arthasastra, ed. Kangle, 13.2.15; 13.5.8.
299 Ibid., 2.4.20.
300 On the Dikpālas, see Banerjea, DHI., pp.519 ff.
301 See above, p.18.
302 See above, pp.15 ff.
303 Pār.Śr., II.9.5 (see SBE., XXIX, p.320).
304 Cf. Śr., II.14.6 ff. (see SBE., XXIX, pp.85 ff.).
306 On the devatārādhana of Vilāsavatī to obtain a son, see Kādambarī, ed. Parab, pp.143–6; see also above, p.19 and fn.103.
at night while seated in a mandala drawn by the priest-magicians, were of a similar character.

The Arthasastra provides also for the installation of the Vāstuvadēvataḥ in their proper places in the city, but, judged by the Vedic brahmanical tradition of Vāstoṣpati, he may be a male deity. The Grha-devatās on the other hand are often likely to have been feminine divinities. Perhaps the best indication of this is contained in the story of Rākṣasī Jara in the Mahabhārata, who from being originally an ogress is ultimately transformed into a giver of children. In identifying herself to the king, Jara makes the statement that she lived happily in his house and obtained worship, and that she had granted a son to him in return. This, along with the statement that the king later ordered a big celebration in her honour,
suggests that she was the tutelary deity of the royal palace, concerned with the welfare of its residents, especially children. It is probable, therefore, that the \textit{Gṛhya-devaṭāḥ}, frequently referred to in the classical Sanskrit texts are such patron deities. Thus, the \textit{grheṣu gṛha-devaṭāḥ} who, along with several other divinities, are cited in the \textit{Rāmāyana} as having been witnesses to Daśaratha’s pledge to Kaikeyi,\footnote{Rāmāyana, II.10.23.} are probably goddesses, as also the \textit{Gṛhya-devaṭāḥ} whose worship is recommended in the \textit{Mahābhārata}.\footnote{Mahābhārata, XIII.103.8.} Probably it is some such tutelary goddess of the house whom Garudatta is said to have worshipped, in the dramas of Bhāsa and Śūdraka, before he instructed his Vidūṣaka friend to make the offerings to the Mātras at the cross-roads,\footnote{Bhāsa-nāṭaka-sakram, ed. Devadhar, p.195; \textit{Mrucchakatika}, Act I, NSP. edn., pp.12, 16.} and before whom Kāntimati is described as bowing again and again in the \textit{Daśakumāra-carita}.\footnote{Daśakumāra-carita, 4th Ucchvasa, NSP. edn., p.183.}

The \textit{Gṛhya-sūtras} prescribe bali offerings to domestic deities under the name \textit{Gṛha-devaṭā};\footnote{In a description of the \textit{Vaiśva-deva} ceremony, the \textit{Aś. GS.}, I.2.4 contains the statement: \textit{Etabhyascaiva devatābhya'dbhya oṣadhi-vanaspatichibhyo gṛhāya gṛhadevatābhyaḥ vāstudevatābhyaḥ.} See also \textit{SBE.}, XXIX, p.161; cf. \textit{Pār. GS.}, II.9.3; also ibid., I.12.2 (\textit{SBE.}, XXIX, pp.319-20 and 290 respectively).\footnote{For Vāstūspati, see fn.309 above.}} and, since they sometimes mention them with Vāstudevaṭā, probably identical with the Vedic Vāstūspati,\footnote{See Macdonell, \textit{VM.}, p.95.} a distinction also seems to be imagined between the two. But it is uncertain whether the Vedic brahmanical tradition had the conception of a tutelary "goddess" of the house. The distinction of being \textit{Gṛha-pati} in the Rig-vedic hymns belongs particularly to the fire-god Agni.\footnote{See Macdonell, \textit{VM.}, p.95.} It is only in the \textit{Atharva-veda} that we once hear of a "pleasant sheltering goddess of the house, the mistress
of the dwelling”. Considering that this Veda is generally regarded as more truly representative of the popular traditions, the reference may be significant, although the ritual prescribed in the Kauśika Sūtra, while making use of the above hymn in the ceremony of house-building, only refers to the offerings to Vāstupati. In any case, the source of the typical Grha-devi or Grha-devatā of the epic-Purānic times is likely to be outside the Vedic brahmanical tradition, and the story of Jarā in the Mahābhārata seems to corroborate it.

In the context of the Grha-devatā or Grha-devī, a reference may be made also to the Kula-devatā. These also appear to have been sometimes feminine divinities. It has been mentioned above that the river-goddess Gaṅgā was imagined as the tutelary deity of the family of Bhagiratha and Raghu. In the Harsacarita of Bāṇabhaṭṭa, Mālatī is compared to the Kula-devatā of Candramā.

An indirect indication that several types of deities mentioned in the above pages were goddesses could also be obtained from their description as Devatā. The word devatā is explained by the Sanskrit grammarians as an abstract substantive, obtained by the addition of the suffix -tā, in the sense of "-ness", to deva and meaning "divinity" or "godhood". In this form, the word is parallel to others like gurutā, amṛtatva, etc. It must be in this form, therefore, that it is used for all kinds of deities,
whether male or female. A good example is the expression vividhā devatā-gaJt~l} in Mbh., IX.44,16. But whatever may be the derivation of the word, it appears to us that, on the presumption that the natural gender of the object determines the gender of its name, the word devatā, being feminine, when standing for an individual deity or more or less specific type of deity, should normally refer to a feminine divinity, if the context does not specify to the contrary. This would appear to be corroborated by some actual usages of the word. Thus, in the Mahābhārata, Draupadī is said to have appeared like a devatā to Kīcaka. Perhaps several similar examples may be collected. But the most persuasive evidence is of the labels of deities in the Bharhut reliefs. The goddesses in these reliefs bear only two types of labels if they are labelled at all. They are either called Yakṣiṇīs or Devatās, such as Ca[m]dē Yakhi[nī], Yakhi[n] Sudasa[ṇa], or Sirimā Devatā, Culakoka Devatā, Mahākoka Devatā. On the other hand, no male deity in these reliefs is labelled devatā. Hopkins' general impression on the basis of the epic materials that the term devatā is often used for minor deities is quite in agreement with our inference because

326 Cf. the title Brhad-devatā of the well known Vedic text.
327 Cf. Amara-kośa, p.3, l.18:
... daivatāni puṃsi vā devatāḥ striyām.
328 Mbh., IV.13.4:
Tam dṛṣṭvā devagarbhābhām carantām devatāṃ
Kīcakaḥ kāmayāmāsa kāma-bāga-prapīśitaḥ.
329 See Barua and Sinha, Barhut Inscriptions, pp.72-4; Lüders, Bharhut Inscriptions, CIII., II, pt.II, pp.74, 77-8, 80-1. We have omitted from consideration some other female beings distinctly labelled as Accharā (= Apsarā, the heavenly dancer) in the scene said to represent the music and dance of the gods; see Barua and Sinha, op.cit., pp.47 ff.; Lüders, op.cit., pp.100 ff.. Apparently on the strength of the inscribed labels, Barua imagined the Yakṣiṇīs and Devatās as two distinct types of goddesses (see Barua, Barhut, I, p.52), even though an accurate iconographic distinction between the figures labelled Yakṣiṇīs and those called Devatās is not possible. In his reconstruction of the comprehensive cult of the Yakṣas, Coomaraswamy considered both the terms as having the same connotation (see Coomaraswamy, Yakṣas, I, p.5; II, p.9). Since the evidence of the inscribed labels cannot be ignored, we feel that Coomaraswamy's suggestion can only be accepted in the sense that both Yakṣiṇīs and Devatās were popular goddesses of somewhat similar types.
330 See Hopkins, EM., p.57.
we believe that a very large number of such deities were feminine. It is no accident, therefore, that the goddesses residing in trees and forests, streams and rivers, or the tuteiary goddesses of villages, cities, houses, etc., were called devata. In fact, if the context permits, the word devata, even in its very general usages, is likely to refer to female deities. Thus, the deities in the expression Anu-grhpatvenaM prasanna devata, in the Mūdru-rākṣasa of Viśakhadatta, are very probably goddesses, of the type of Gṛha-devī or Kula-devī, since the statement is uttered by a mother for her son. 331

Thus there is impressive literary evidence of very widespread cults of goddesses in our period. Archaeology provides a certain corroboration for this, but, in spite of its obvious advantages in terms of actual practice and relatively easier reference to a time - space framework, it has also its own limitations, especially in respect of the reconstruction of the concepts and cults of deities. 332 Compared to literary texts, archaeology can provide only very limited information, and it may not be able to enlighten us about many popular deities and their cults otherwise attested by literature. It is possible that many popular goddesses were not worshipped in iconic form at all, or were worshipped only in the form of crude or temporary symbols which are no longer available or not identifiable. Moreover, many may have never achieved a following wide and influential enough to necessitate large, permanent shrines and icons. 333 It is also possible that some quite popular deities had chiefly domestic and private cults, giving little opportunity for large shrines or icons, and therefore there was little need for inscriptions recording their dedication. But our fuller use of the archaeological material is also handicapped because,

332 While this remark is generally true, the terracotta materials (see below, pp.72-3), have presented serious problems of dating.
333 Cf. the comments by Wheeler on the limitations of the archaeological materials for reconstructing the religious beliefs of the Indus Valley people; Wheeler, The Indus Civilization, p.108. These comments are made in relation to a chalcolithic culture, but the same caution is needed in handling archaeological material of any period without adequate literary corroboration.
334 Cf. our introductory comments, above, p.1.
except in the case of inscribed records and to a certain extent coins, these materials are not easily accessible and adequate comprehensive surveys of them are not available. There is yet another difficulty in respect of the sculptural material, including terracottas. While it is true that a properly identified figure, especially if it is known to have been an icon for worship, provides the best evidence of the cult of a deity, such accurate identifications are not always available. The early figures with which we are generally concerned belong to a stage of emergent iconography when the forms of deities were only gradually being standardized.\textsuperscript{335} The difficulties are almost insuperable in the case of terracotta figures where there is only the minimum of iconographic differentiation. It is only when the terracottas approximate to the stone sculptures and achieve a more or less conventional form that a specific identification becomes more certain.\textsuperscript{336}

With the above limitations in mind, we may make a rapid survey of the archaeological materials for evidence of goddess cults in our period. The inscribed records are dealt with first because they are not only more definitely placed in time and space but also provide fuller information and often names. An inscription of the early Kusāna period from Mathura suggesting the cult of a village goddess, and another, of the same period from the same place, possibly referring to the cult of a goddess called Aṣṭakā have already been mentioned.\textsuperscript{337} Omitting a few inscriptions which belong to the later phases of our period and may be related in one way or

\textsuperscript{335} This is fully borne by A Catalogue of the Brahmanical Images in Mathura Art by Agrawala; see, however, his comments on pp.v and vii; also Codrington, K. de B., "Iconography: Classical and Indian", \textit{Man}, XXXV, May 1935, pp.65-6; Agrawala, \textit{Indian Art}, p.316. For Coomaraswamy's general comments on the evolution of Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jaina iconographic types following the Maurya-Sunga Yakṣa models, see \textit{Yakṣas}, I, p.29.

\textsuperscript{336} The approximation of terracotta material to stone sculptures and the evolution of iconographic types in terracotta, though in evidence also in earlier periods, was not fully achieved before the Gupta period; see Codrington, K. de B., "Some Indian Terracotta Figurines", \textit{IA.}, August 1931, p.143; Sankalia and Dhavalikar, "The Terracotta Art of India", \textit{Marg}, XXIII, no.1, Dec. 1969, pp.43, 47; see also below, p.74.

\textsuperscript{337} See above, pp.31, 47-8.
the other with the cult of the Supreme Goddess, \(338\) there are several attesting the cults of independent goddesses, or goddesses of local or special nature. Thus an inscription on a fragmentary marble statue from Nagarjunakonda and dateable approximately to the third century A.D. brings

338

The following inscriptions, arranged in a rough chronological order, may be related directly or indirectly to the cult of the Supreme Goddess:

(i) Sircar, D.C., "Two Inscriptions of Gauri: 1. Chhoti Sadrī Inscription, year 547", EL., XXX, pp.120 ff.; discovered in sanctum of modern temple of Bhāvarmātā, from erstwhile Udaipur State, Rajasthan; dated in the [Vikrama-] year 547 = 491 A.D.; opens with an invocation to Devī, described as a fierce, fighting goddess, riding a chariot drawn by a lion, destroyer of demon (perhaps Mahiṣa), also as Loka-mātā, dehardha of Śiva, etc.; records the building of shrine for the Goddess by king Gauri.

(ii) Two inscriptions of the Maukhari king Anantavarman (6th cent.A.D.) in Nagarjuní hill caves (Bihar); Fleet, CII., III, p.223 ff. and 226 ff.; one refers to the installation of the images of Bhūtaptā and Devī; the other, opening with an invocation to the Goddess as Mahīṣamardini, records the installation of Katyāyanī in the vīndhya-bhūdāra-guha, and also the grant of a village for the Goddess, here called Bhavani.

(iii) Bhandarkar, D.R., "Vasantgadh Inscription of Varmalātā, etc.", EL., IX, pp.187 ff.; discovered outside the modern shrine of Khimel Mata, erstwhile Sirohi State, Rajasthan; dated in the [Vikrama-] year 682 = 625 A.D.; opens with an invocation to Durgā and Kṣemāryā; records the building of a shrine for the goddess (probably Kṣemāryā), described as Jagan-mātā, by a gaṣṭhi of persons including a woman specified as sri-mātā-ganika-buta-namni.

(iv) Chhabra, B.Ch., "Sakrai Stone Inscription, etc.", EL., XXVII, pp.27 ff.; discovered at Sakrai (erstwhile Jaipur State, Rajasthan), reputed for its modern temple of the goddess Śāṃbhāri; dated in the [Vikrama-] year 699 = 642-3 A.D.; opens with an invocation to Mahā-gaśapati, Caṣṭikā and Dhanada, and records the construction of a mandapa in front of (the shrine of) goddess Śaṅkarā by an association of bankers.

(v) Sircar, D.C., "Two Inscriptions from Jajpur: B. Chāmuḍā Image Inscription of Vatsadevi", EL., XXVIII, pp.184-5; from Jajpur, Orissa; undated but palaeographically assigned to the 1st half of the 7th cent. A.D.; records dedication of the image by queen Vatsadevi.

(vi) Kielhorn, F., "A Stone Inscription from Kudārkot (Gāvīdhumat)", EL., I, pp.179 ff.; from Kudārkot, Itawa Dist., Uttar Pradesh; undated, but palaeographically assigned to the later half of the 7th cent. A.D.; records the erection of a building for brahmaṇas, but opens with an invocation to Durgā, imagined as the consort of Śiva and said to be accompanied by her lion and Kārttikeya.

(vii) Sahni, Daya Ram, "Benares Inscription of Pantha", EL., IX, pp.59 ff.; from the vicinity of Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh; undated but palaeographically assigned to the opening of the 8th cent. A.D.; opens with praise of Varanasi; records the building of a shrine of Bhavani, who is described as fierce on account of her garland of human heads, etc.
to light a nude squatting goddess, whose cult, from the distribution of her figures in terracotta and stone, would seem to have been popular in North India and the Deccan during our period. The early fifth century A.D. inscription from Gangdhär (western Madhya Pradesh) refers to the shrine of the Mātṛṣ, to the association of these deities with the Dākinīs and to the rites of worship in this shrine; and, from slightly later dates, come two other inscriptions, one from the same general area and the other from Bihar, referring to these deities. The early Kadamba and Cālukya records testify that these "Mothers" were accepted as the tutelary deities of those dynasties. Three copper plate inscriptions of the 6th century A.D. from Khoh (Madhya Pradesh), issued by the Tārīvṛājaka Māhārājas, refer to land grants for worship and repairs in the shrine of a goddess Piṣṭapurī or Piṣṭapurikā, who is sometimes believed to be a form of Śrī-Lakṣmī but who may have been a local goddess and who probably bore some relationship to Piṣṭapura in South India, which is mentioned in the Allahabad Prāśasti of Samudragupta.

A copper plate grant of Droṇasimha of the opening of the 6th century A.D. records the gift of the village Trisāŋgamaṅka in Hastivapra for regular worship and repairs in the shrine of a goddess Pāṇḍurājyā or Pāṇḍurājā,

---

339 Narasimhaśāmy, H.K., "Nāgarjunikona Image Inscription", EI., XXIX, pp.137 ff.; also below, pp.77-8. For the cult of the nude squatting goddess, see below, Ch.IV.

340 Fleet, "Gangdhār Stone Inscription of Viśvavarman, etc.", CII., III, pp.72 ff.; see also below, Ch.III, pp.144-5.

341 Sahni, Daya Ram, "Deogarh Rock Inscription of Svēmibhaṭa", EI., XVIII, pp.123 ff.; Fleet, "Bihar Stone Pillar Inscription, etc.", CII., III, pp.47 ff.; also Sircar, Sel.Ins., I, pp.325 ff.; see also below, Ch.III, pp.146-7. For the cult of the Mātṛṣ, see below, Ch.III. The Bihar inscription also refers to a goddess Bhadrāryā.

342 See below, Ch.III, pp.147-8.

343 See Fleet, CII., III, pp.112 ff., 129 ff. and 135 ff.; also Sircar, Sel. Ins., I, pp.394 ff.

344 See Fleet, op.cit., pp.113, 130.

345 Ibid., p.113, fn.2; cf. also Jaiswal, The Origin and Development of Vaiśṇavism, pp.106-7.
apparently a local deity of some importance. Trisangamaka and Hastivapra of the grant are identified with Tārsamia and Hathab in modern Kathiawad, Gujarat. A grant of the Valabhi king Dhruvasena II of the 7th century A.D. associates the name of Droṇasimha with another goddess at the same place. According to this charter, Droṇasimha is said to have made a grant in favour of goddess Koṭţamahikā, and, as this had become inoperative for some time, Dhruvasena II confirmed it and issued an order for its use in regular worship and repairs in the shrine of the goddess. This goddess Koṭţamahikā seems to be identical with Korravai of the Tamil literature and Koṭavī - Koṭarī - Koṭarū of the epic and the Purāṇas.

The boundary demarcation in another Valabhi grant of the same period seems to refer to the shrine of a goddess Śaṅkarikā, who may be the well known Durga - Ambikā or, more probably, a local goddess regarded as one of her forms. Two inscriptions from Rajasthan, assigned to the 7th century A.D., refer to the shrine of the goddess Araṇyavāśinī and to the goddess Vasundharā. Another inscription of the same period from the erstwhile Jodhpur State refers to the shrine of a goddess Dadhimātī (sic.) and to contributions raised by certain Dadhya brāhmaṇas, probably in connection with the shrine or the cult of the goddess. Since the inscription was discovered in a temple dedicated to a goddess locally known as Dadhamatā-


347 See Jackson, op.cit., JBBRAS., XX, 1897-1900, pp.1-2.

348 Ibid., pp.6 ff.; see also below, Ch.V, pp.325-6.

349 For the cult of the goddess Koṭavī, see below, Ch.V.

350 Dīskalkar, D.B., "Two Un-published Valabhi Grants", EI., XXI, pp.179 ff. (see Bhavanagar Plates of Bharasena III, of Valabhi year 304). The reference to the goddess comes in the line 34 of the grant as: grāṃṭa-nirmmita-śaṅkarikāryyā[parataḥ].


352 Ram Karna, "Dadhimātī-mātā Inscription of the time of Dhruhilāṇa, etc.", EI., XI, pp.299 ff.
mātājī and since the community of Dāhimā brāhmaṇas living in the villages surrounding the temple regard this goddess as their Kula-devī, it has been reasonably suggested that the modern goddess is the same as the one referred to in the inscription and that the Dāhimā brāhmaṇas of today are the descendents of their ancient Dadhya ancestors. Thus the inscription is remarkable as evidence of a long continuity of the cult of a local or family goddess.353 The specific mention of a community of brāhmaṇa votaries would suggest that the cult of Dadhimātī was already affected by the learned tradition. In any case, as the inscription seems to reproduce a verse contained in the Devī-māhātmya,354 it is quite clear that the goddess Dadhimātī was imagined as having a status higher than a simple local or family deity, and she was regarded as identical with or a form of the Supreme Goddess.

It may be added that there is inscriptional evidence of royal devotees of a goddess called Stambheśvarī in Orissa in the 6th century A.D.,355 In the 10th century A.D., the same goddess was accepted as a family deity by the Śulkis ruling over the Dhenkanal area. It has been suggested that she may have been originally an aboriginal deity, and is probably related to the modern cult of wooden pillars at the corners of aboriginal villages in Orissa. Some temples of this goddess have also been noted and she seems to be worshipped in the modern times under the name Khambheśvarī.356 Finally, a goddess Kiraṇeśvarī seems to be mentioned in several short epigraphs of

---

353 Nitya Nanda has tried to trace the antiquity of Dadhimātī to the early Vedic period; see Dadhīci Number of Dadhimātī, Aug. 1952, pp.4-5, as cited in Agrawala, op.cit. (fn.351 above), JBRS, XLI, 1955, p.6 and fn.1. We have not been able to see the article by Nitya Nanda, but, to our knowledge, there is no mention of a goddess called Dadhimātī in the Vedic, epic or early Purāṇic texts.

354 See Ram Karna, op.cit., EI., XI, pp.300, 302; also comments by Sven Konow in ibid., p.303, fn.1. The verse contained in the 11.11-2 of the inscription, which is also seen in the Devī-māhātmya (Mar.P., 88.9), runs: Sarvā-mangala-māngalye śive sarvartha-sādhike, Saranye tryaṁbake gaurī nārāyaṇī namōstū te.


356 Ibid., p.276.
of approximately 7th - 8th century A.D. in the Pabhosa Caves near Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh.  

Gods and goddesses also appear frequently on coins and seals and this has often been utilized in the reconstruction of their cults. Since the choice of deities or their symbols as coin- or seal-devices would normally be deliberate and meaningful, this can be taken as evidence of the importance of the deities concerned and the popularity of their cults, but a certain margin may have to be left for the conservatism and continuity of numismatic traditions, the peculiar suitability of a particular deity as a device on coins and seals, etc. The pantheon represented on the Kuşâpa coins and seals has been independently studied by several authors. A fairly full survey of the representations of Indian deities on early Indian coins and seals is made by Banerjea, even though his approach is mainly iconographical. He has generally omitted particular discussion of the coin-series of the Imperial Guptas, mainly because he deals with the numismatic and glyptic materials in relation to the origin and evolution of iconography in India but perhaps also because the material on the Gupta coins has been independently studied. All this information provides some corroborative evidence for the popularity of certain goddesses in our period.

Without going into the merits of individual identifications, which are sometimes quite doubtful, the following observations may be made about the

---

358 As an instance, see Jaiswal, The Origin and Development of Vaiśnavism, pp.94-5, where the appearances of Śrī-Laḵṣmi on the early Indian coins have been used to reconstruct the history of the cult of the goddess.  
359 See below, p.65.  
360 We should like to mention particularly Stein, M. Aurel, "Zoroastrian Deities on Indo-Scythian Coins", IA., April 1888, pp.89 ff.; Rosenfield, The Dynastic Art of the Kushans, pp.69 ff.; Chattopadhyaya, The Age of the Kushānas - A Numismatic Study, pp.144 ff..  
361 See Banerjea, J.N., "Indian Elements in the Coin Devices of the Early Foreign Rulers of India", IRO., XIV, 1938, pp.293 ff.; and esp. DHI., ch.IV, pp.103 ff., and ch.V, esp. pp.177 ff..  
362 See below, pp.66-7.
appearance of certain goddesses on coins and seals. Since the goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī is one of those Indian deities who achieved a distinctive iconographic form very early, and apparently also because, being a goddess of good luck and prosperity, she was particularly suited as a coin-device, she makes a very early appearance on coins and her figures are often unmistakable. The most characteristic form of Śrī-Lakṣmī is the abhisēka motif in which, seated or standing, she is bathed by an elephant on either side, and the motif appears, with some variations, already on an un-inscribed coin from Kausāmbī assigned to the 3rd century B.C., on un-inscribed coins of Ujjainī dated between the 3rd and 2nd century B.C., on a coin of Sujyeṣṭha identified with a Śuṅga king, and on those of several Ayodhya kings, all dated in the 2nd – 1st century B.C. It was adopted also by the Śaka rulers Azilises, Rājivula and Śodasa. Further, it appears on several official and private terracotta sealings from Basārh and Bhīṭā, all dated in the Gupta period, and also on seals attached to the copper plate grants of certain feudatories of the Imperial Guptas and


365 Foucher's opinion that this motif, when appearing on early Buddhist monuments, represents Buddha's nativity should be abandoned; for criticism of Foucher's opinion, see Coomaraswamy's review of On the Iconography of the Buddha's Nativity by Foucher in IHQ., XI, no.2, June 1935, pp.357 ff.

366 Cunningham, Coins of Ancient India, p.74 and pl.V.9; Allan, BMC.AI., pp. xciv,149,pl.XX,15; Banerjea, DHI., p.110.

367 Allan, BMC.AI., pp. cxxiv-cxxv, 256, pls. XVII.24, XXXVI.4-5; Banerjea, DHI., p.110.


369 Cunningham, op.cit., p.92, pl.IX,6; Allan, BMC.AI., pp.lxxxviii-lxxxvix, 131, 133, pls. XVI, 14-5, XVII,8, XLIII,4-5; Banerjea, DHI., p.110.

370 Banerjea, DHI., p.10; Jenkins and Narain, The Coin-types of the Śaka-Pahlava Kings of India, pp.9, 30-1.

kings ruling in the later and post-Gupta periods. Although Śaśānka appears to have been a devotee of Śiva, the reverse of his gold coins show the abhiśeka motif, and some base gold coins of comparable date, bearing the legend Jaya, also contain a variant of the same.

Without the benefit of the anointing elephants and purely through her association with the lotus, the goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī is recognized also on several other local and tribal coins dateable from the 2nd century B.C. to 1st century A.D., on certain coins of Azes II and Hagāmaṣa, and on the obverse of those coins of Rājuvala and Šodāṣa which show the abhiśeka motif on the reverse. The so-called "dancing girl" on some coins of the Indo-Greek kings Pantaleon and Agathocles and the "city deity" of Puṣkalāvatī have also been identified as possible representations of Śrī-Lakṣmī. These identifications are naturally much less certain than those of the abhiśeka motif. Sometimes alternative identifications with Durgā, Ambikā, Ekapāda, etc. have also been suggested.

The goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī does not appear on the Kuśāna coins and seals, but, as is well known, she occupies a prominent place on the gold coin-series of the Imperial Guptas, and it is generally believed that her

---

372 See Fleet, CII., pp.191, 196 and pls. XXVI, XXVII for seals of the kings of Sarabhapura dynasty. For some other instances, see Pargiter, F.R., "Three Copper Plate Grants from East Bengal", IA., July 1910, pp.194, 199; Basak, Radhagovind, "Tipperah Copper Plate Grant of Lokanātha", EI., XV, p.302 and pl.

373 See Allan, BMC.GD., pp.cv, 147, pl.XXIII. 14-6.

374 Ibid., pp.civ, 150-1, pl.XXIV. 6,8.

375 Banerjea, DHI., p.111, fn.1.


377 Ibid., pp.30-1.

378 See Coomaraswamy, op.cit. (fn.363 above), p.182; also Banerjea, DHI., p.111.

379 See above, pp.50 ff.

380 See Banerjea, DHI., pp.111, 133 ff., 154-5.
iconography in the series has been strongly influenced by the Ardokhsho type of the Kuğına coins. 381

The identifications of Durga, Ambika, Gaurī, Ekānamā, etc. on early Indian coins as suggested by Banerjea are only of the doubtful kind, as noted above. 382 His suggestions, however, though not certain, carry relatively greater conviction when other symbols on the coins betray a definite Sivaite association. Thus the female figure standing on a lotus and holding a flower in her right hand, with possibly a lion beside it, as depicted on the obverse of a coin-type of Azes II, could represent Siva's consort, since the reverse also shows a humped bull which is a well known emblem of Siva. 383 It has sometimes been suggested that the lion-riding goddess on the Candragupta — Kumāradevi coins and the Lion-slayer type of Candragupta II represents Durga — Ambika. 384 But the force of the Gupta numismatic tradition has not permitted scholars to abandon identification with Śrī-Lakṣmī. 385 On the other hand, the unique stater of Huviṣka, now in the British Museum, shows on the reverse both Siva and his consort. The

---


382 Cf. esp. Banerjea, DHI., pp.154-5;


384 See Allan, BMC.GD., pp.lxxiii-lxxiv, lxxxiii; Altekar, op.cit. (fn.381 above), pp.27, 31-2, 106; Banerjea, DHI., p.135. It has been suggested that this Gupta device represents a specific iconographic form of Śrī-Lakṣmī, the Śimhāvahini Lakṣmī, which is described by Hemā dri and whose representations are seen in the temples of Khajuraho; see Dikshit, R.K., "Śimhāvahini Lakṣmī", JNSI., XXVI, pp.102 ff. This, in our opinion, does not solve the problem of the coin-device under reference, because there is no early evidence of the association of Śrī-Lakṣmī with the lion. The concept of the Lion-riding Lakṣmī, which is attested only by late evidence, should normally be explained as evolved under the influence of Durga — Ambika, especially as there was mutual give and take in concepts of these goddesses; see Hartmann, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Göt tin Lakṣmī, ch.7, esp. pp.38 ff.. But whether this influence is already in evidence in the Gupta coin devices remains a moot point; cf. Altekar, op.cit., p.31.

385 See Allan and Altekar, cited in fn.384 above.
name of the goddess in Greek characters was first read as **Ommo** by Rapson who inferred that it referred to the Indian goddess Umā, and the reading as well as the identification are now generally accepted, with few dissentient opinions.  

Banerjea has read the same legend **Ommo** on another stater piece of Huvisha, on which, however, the female figure holds a cornucopiae instead of flower.  

It may be added that Durgā riding a lion or killing a buffalo demon appears on Nalanda seals of the later Gupta and early mediaeval periods.

A few other Indian deities have also been identified on early Indian coins. A reference has been made above to the possible representation of Śaśṭhi on a coin-type of the Yaudheya. The female figure standing on a lotus on the reverse of Bhadrāghoṣa's coins (Paścala Mitra series), which conforms to the type of Śrī-Lakṣmī, was early identified by Allan as Bhadrā, on the basis of the name of the issuer. On the same basis, he also identified a similar figure on the coins of Paścala Phalguniṇītra as the asterism Phalgunī, although as Banerjea has pointed out, the Pūrva and Uttara Phalgunīs described in the late compilation by Hemādri are very different goddesses. The same author has identified Yakṣa-Yakṣīṇī couples on some Ujjainī coins, and it may be added that, often as alternatives to identifications with Śrī-Lakṣmī, Yakṣīs have been recognized tentatively on certain Indo-Greek and Śaka-Pahlava coins.

---

386 See Rapson, *JRAS.*, 1897, pp.222-4; Banerjea, *DHI.*, p.126; Rosenfield, *Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, pp.94-5, where the dissent of Robert Göbl is also cited; also Chattopadhyay, *The Age of the Kushāṇas*, etc., pp.166, 177.


388 Ibid., pp.185 ff.

389 See above, p.11.

390 Allan, *BMC.*AI., pp.cxvii-cxviii; also Banerjea, *DHI.*, p.133.

391 Allan, op.cit., p.cxviii.

392 Banerjea, *DHI.*, p.133.

393 Ibid., pp.150-1.

A few unidentified goddesses appear on terracotta sealings of the Gupta period from Rajghat, Uttar Pradesh, and the name of the goddess Sarasvati occurs in the legend on a Gupta sealing from Bhitā. 

In the context of appearances of Indian goddesses on coins and seals, it must also be noted that the coin-series of the foreign rulers in India introduce a large number of alien goddesses. Apart from several unidentified figures, some of which are simply labelled as city-deities, the figures of Artemis, Athena (Pallas), Demeter, Hekate, Nike, Tyche, etc. are recognized on the coins of the Indo-Greeks, Scythians and Parthians. The most important foreign goddesses to appear on the Kuśāṇa coins are Nana and Ardakheš. Since it has been frequently noted that the foreign rulers tended to identify their own deities with the local ones, the phenomenon should be regarded as of considerable significance for the history of the goddess cults in our period, particularly as the influence of some alien goddesses on the Indian goddess concepts is clearly indicated.

The limitations of sculptural materials as evidence of religious cults have been noted above. As corroborative evidence of the popularity of goddess cults, we will only utilize the products of the Mathura school of art, whose flourishing period generally coincides with the period of our investigation and which also appears to have been the centre where the

395 See Banerjea, DHI, p.198.
397 See above, p.51.
398 See Lahiri, Corpus of Indo-Greek Coins, p.27; also Gardner, BMC.Gr.Scy, pp.lvi ff..
399 See Stein, M. Aurel, "Zoroastrian Deities on Indo-Scythian Coins", IA, April 1888, pp.97-8; Rosenfield, Dynastic Arts of the Kushans, pp.72, 74-5, 83 ff.; also Chattopadhyay, The Age of the Kushāṇa, etc., pp.164 ff., and 167 ff..
401 See above pp.66-7 for reference to the Ardakhešo type of Kuśāṇa coins influencing the iconography of Śrī-Lakṣmī on the coin-series of the Guptas.
Indian iconography started taking shape. In his catalogue of the
dharmânica images in Mathura art, Agrawala lists the stone figures of the
Kuśāna and Gupta periods, of such goddesses as Śrī-Lakṣmi; Durgā–Pārvatī, usually identified, in the case of the early figures, with the help of the
lion-mount; Pārvatī performing tapaścaryā in the midst of fire; Durgā–mahīśamardini; the so-called Mātrikās, in a very evolutionary stage
of iconography in the Kuśāna period; the goddess Vasudhārā, associated with jars and fish; the well known Buddhist goddess Hārīti, characterized by the child in her arms; and the goddess Bhadrā, holding a fruit, in a
complex iconographic composition, now in the Lucknow Museum, which also
includes Śrī-Lakṣmi on lotus, Hārīti holding a child and Kubera. He
also lists figures of Nāginīs. Most of these are modest relief compositions, and, with the possible exception of some figures of Hārīti
and the Nāginīs, are scarcely more than a foot in height. They cannot,
therefore, be uniformly assumed to have been cult images, and many may have served a largely decorative purpose in a bigger edifice which was the shrine of another deity. But their representations and, in most cases, the frequency of their appearances are clearly a proof of their popularity.

The above are more or less definitely identified figures. Several Kuṣāṇāa figures of a goat-headed goddess with different attributes in her hands and often holding a child, sometimes raising the right hand in abhayamudrā and having a halo round the head, have been identified as the female counterpart of the god Naigameṣa, who may have been originally connected with the cult of Skanda-Kārttikeya but who is known to have occupied a prominent position in the Jaina tradition.413 There are, however, a large number of other female figures from Mathura, some of whom, on account of their prominent headdresses, their association with trees or children, and their general iconographic appearance, are very likely to represent goddesses, especially as in the case of some examples the right hand appears to have been raised in abhayamudrā, but it is not possible to supply their names.414 A special mention may be made here of the large number of charming, semi-nude females which decorated the Jaina and Buddhist stūpas at Mathura during the Kuṣāṇā period.415 Some of these figures may represent ordinary women, but a large majority are apparently deities, Yakṣīṇīs, Devatās, Vṛkṣakās, Apsarases or popular fertility goddesses of some kind,416 and must be related to their named and unnamed ancestresses on the railing pillars of the Bharhut stūpa417 and the

413 See Agrawala, Mathura Museum Catalogue, pt.III, pp.33-4; cf. also Mbh., III.2:17.11 (see below, Ch.III, p.163).
415 See Coomaraswamy, HIIA., pp.64-5; by the same author, Yakṣas, I, pp.32-3; Ray, Nihar Ranjan, in Majumdar (ed.), The Age of Imperial Unity, pp.523-4; Saraswati, A Survey of Indian Sculpture, pp.68-9.
416 See references cited in fn. above; also above, p.32.
417 See above, p.57.
unnamed goddesses of the crude terracottas.\textsuperscript{418} They almost seem to disappear from the monuments of the Gupta_period, apparently because they were gradually being absorbed in the growing cult of the Great Goddess as seen for instance in the Devi-mahātmya of the Markandeya Purāṇa.\textsuperscript{419} In an account of popular religion, the terracotta materials may be expected to produce valuable evidence, the more so as the Indo-Gangetic plain is particularly rich in them. But the value of this evidence is drastically limited for the reasons already noted.\textsuperscript{420} There is not only the lack of adequate comprehensive surveys and serious difficulties of identifications, but also the additional difficulty of accurate chronological arrangement. This has often been done on purely stylistic considerations which are not a sure guide. To take two instances, a certain type of terracotta female figurines from the North-western Frontier regions were assigned to as early as the 2nd millennium B.C. on the grounds of their archaic appearance, etc., but the Chārsada excavations have proved that they cannot be dated before 300 B.C.\textsuperscript{421} Similarly, although certain

\textsuperscript{418} See below, pp.74 ff..


\textsuperscript{420} See above, pp.58-9.

archaic-looking terracotta female figures from Mathura were generally assigned to such age brackets as "early" and "pre-Maurya", the Ahichchhatra excavations do not permit the dating of similar materials earlier than 300 B.C.. It may also be added that according to the chronological sequence generally agreed upon figures with bodies modelled by hand and head pressed from a mould in the Mauryan period were followed by completely moulded plaques in the Śunga period, and these in turn were followed by fully modelled figures again in the Kuśāṇa period. This sequence, though workable, is not fool-proof. It is possible to imagine that several different techniques were sometimes used in the same period. The Kuśāṇa period also shows some evidence of the use of moulds and both modelling by hand and pressing from moulds were employed by the Gupta artists.

In the face of the above difficulties, we will confine ourselves only to a few very general remarks pertinent to our discussion. Leaving the


423 See generally Coomaraswamy, op.cit., Marg, VI, no.2, pp.24 ff.; Agrawala, op.cit., JUPHS., IX, pt.II, 1936, pp.10-2, 28; Kramrisch, S., "Indian Terracottas", JISOA., VII, 1939, pp.89 ff., esp. 104-5; Gordon, D.H., "Early Indian Terracottas", JISOA., XI, 1943, pp.144-151, 190-1; Ray, Nihar Ranjan, in Majumdar (ed.), The Age of Imperial Unity, p.532; Saraswati, A Survey of Indian Sculpture, pp.98, 99, 102-3, 107, 109; Sankalia and Dhavalikar, op.cit., Marg, XXIII, no.1, pp.40, 43, 45, 47; etc. It may be added that since certain hand-modelled, crude figures appear at all times and from all sites, defying any classification by style or technique, the somewhat irritating name of "ageless" or "timeless" type has been invented for them; see Kramrisch, op.cit., pp.89 ff.; Ray, op.cit., pp.531-2; Saraswati, op.cit., pp.99 ff.

424 The limitations of the chronological sequence of the terracotta materials on the basis of technique of manufacture and exceptions are noted by nearly all the authorities cited in fn.423 above.

terracotta female figures from the pre-Harappan village cultures in the Baluchistan hills and the various sites of the Harappa Culture, as also those that have been brought to light from several post-Harappan chalcolithic cultures in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, it may be said that there is a more or less connected or continuous history of terracotta art in the Indo-Gangetic plain from approximately the Mauryan to the Sunga, Kusāṇa and Gupta periods. There also seems to be a general agreement that, as far as human figures are concerned, the so-called "mother goddess" figures predominate in the earlier periods, Mauryan and perhaps slightly earlier, after which, with advanced techniques of manufacture and greater freedom in the handling of the material, a wide variety of subjects, both religious and secular, is represented in the Sunga period, and, amongst the religious figures, specific deities start becoming identifiable. The better of the terracotta pieces also gradually approximate to the products in stone, and, by the Gupta period, large terracotta plaques showing complex compositions are used to adorn shrines.

Although a precise identification should remain doubtful, it may be conceded that the early terracotta female figurines, assignable to the Mauryan or a slightly earlier period, and roughly approximating in form

425 contd

1969, pp.33 ff.; also Das Gupta, C.C., "Bibliography of Ancient Indian Terracotta Figurines", JRASB, L., IV, 1938, pp.67 ff.; and by the same author, Origin and Evolution of Indian Clay Sculpture, esp. chs. III-VII. This last work, though purporting to be a comprehensive survey of the terracotta materials from Pre-historic to Mediaeval times, has not proved as helpful to us as expected because observations of religious significance in it are too general. In our opinion, while the work is of great bibliographical interest, the author does not fully justify his claim (see ibid., Preface, p.iii) to throw light on the history and evolution of the religious and iconographical arts of India.

426


427


428

We include in this category both the early female figures from sites in the Gandhara region, the so-called "Baroque ladies", as well as the figures from sites like Mathura which were assigned to "early" and "pre-Maurya" periods; see above, pp.72-3 and fns. 421, 422. The description of their characteristics presented here should be regarded as a very general one. In themselves, they differ in general style and many details, the one
to the standing figures on the gold leaf plaques from Lauria-nandangarh and Piprahwa\textsuperscript{429} suggest their divinity by their apparent nudity, excessive emphasis on such aspects of fecundity as breasts and hips, elaborate headdress and conspicuous girdle concealing the mount of Venus, and their overall conventional and hieratic appearance. They remain un-named, though, in various attempts to identify them, any number of names such as Prthivi, Mahī-mātā, Aditi, Vaśinī, etc. have been supplied.\textsuperscript{430} It has even been suggested that they belong to a tradition of an undifferentiated Mother Goddess.\textsuperscript{431} Assuming that all these early figures which generally conform to a conventional or hieratic pattern represent goddesses or even mother-goddesses, which is very likely, it still appears to us unwarranted to presume that they represent the same deity in every case. Since controlled excavations have bracketted figures which were once regarded as earlier and later,\textsuperscript{432} a broad regional and typological classification alone would suggest the possibility of different goddess concepts. Thus the so-called "Baroque ladies" of the sites in the North-west Frontier region will have to be distinguished from their approximately contemporary

\textsuperscript{428} contd

important element of difference being that while the Gandharan figures are nude, the mount of Venus is concealed by a heavy girdle in those from Mathura. There are some Śunga specimens, however, in which the sex is conspicuously depicted in spite of the suggestion of a covering lower garment, somewhat in the fashion of the females on the railing pillars of the Kuśāna period from Mathura; see Coomaraswamy, \textit{op.cit.}, Marg, VI, no.2, p.30 and fig.43.

429

For the repoussé figures on gold leaves from Lauria-nandangarh and Piprahwa, see Bloch, T., "Excavations at Lauria", ASI-AR., 1906-7, pp.122 ff. and 124, fn.3; Majumdar, N.G., "Explorations at Lauria-nandangarh".,ibid., 1935-36, pp.59-60 and pl.XXIII. a, b. Bloch's identification of the figure as Vedic deity Prthivi is purely speculative; see Coomaraswamy, \textit{op.cit.}, Marg, VI, no.2, p.28, where the dissent of Keith is also cited. Majumdar also doubted the early dating of the figure; see Majumdar, \textit{op.cit.}.

Citing the results of Majumdar's excavations at the site, Gordon suggested 300 B.C, as the earliest limit for the figure; see Gordon, \textit{op.cit.}, JISOA., XI, pp.150-1.

430


431

See Agrawala, \textit{op.cit.}, AI., 4, p.107.

432

See above, pp.72-3.
counterparts at Mathura. But even within the same regional style and group, there may have been differentiations of concepts which it is no longer possible to determine. A certain analogy for this suspicion is provided by the reliefs of the Bharhut stupā. These reliefs are in a different medium, show an advanced style of art and even an advanced consciousness of iconographic differentiation inasmuch as certain figures are named in the labels accompanying them. But in spite of this, it is still not possible to form accurate iconographic pictures of the deities depicted. In fact, but for the labels, the many female figures represented in these reliefs might have been forced into one class and regarded as representations of various forms of the same deity, or the same type of deity. Finally it may be added that while it is possible that these early terracotta figurines represent goddesses or mother goddesses, their precise purpose remains doubtful. It is uncertain whether they were cult icons or ex voto offerings, or were for use in purely magical rites, etc.

Crude terracotta female figures of the conventional or hieratic "Goddess" type, as noted above, appear also in the later periods, but, like the "goddesses" on the railing pillars of the Buddhist and Jaina stupās, they also seem to dwindle in number gradually down to Gupta

---

433 Gordon has used the figurines of the North-west Frontier region to reconstruct the cult of the "Mother-Goddess of Gandhara" whom he tentatively calls Anaitis and who may have been locally identified with Hariti; see Gordon, "The Mother Goddess of Gandhara", Antiquity, XI, 1937, pp.70 ff.; see also below, pp. 84 ff.

434 For the goddesses represented on the Bharhut railing pillars, without inscriptions giving their names, see Barua, Barhut, I, pp.62, 85-6; II, pp.70 ff.; also Banerjea, DHI., pp.368-9.

435 The attempts made by Barua and Banerjea to identify many of the unnamed deities are largely of speculative nature; see Barua and Banerjea cited in fn.433 above; cf. also Banerjea, DHI., p.100.

436 Cf. our comments above, p. 57, fn.329; also Cunningham, The Stupa of Bharhut, Intro. by V.S. Agrawala, p.xi.


438 See above, p.73, fn.423; also Agrawala, op.cit., AI., 4, pp.108-9.

439 See above, pp.71-2.
times.\footnote{Goetz makes this point in "Aphrodite Urania: An Asiatic Cult in Ancient Greece, and a Corinthian Bronze in the Bareda Museum", BBMPG., III, pt.II, 1946 (1948), p.13, but it can be substantiated also by the report on terracotta figurines from the Ahicchatra excavations; see Agrawala, op.cit., AL., pp.106 ff., "Group I. Mother Goddess".}

On the other hand, specific iconographic types of such goddesses as Śrī-Śrī-Lakṣmī, Vasudhāra, Pārvatī, Durgā-śrī-mahīśvarī, Cāmuṇḍā, Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Hārītī, Yakṣīnīs, Nāgīnīs, and occasionally the female counterparts of the goat-headed Naigameṣa, more doubtfully Koṭāvī, the multi-headed Śaśṭi and Carcikā in cat form, etc., have been identified in the terracottas of the Śuṅga, Kuśāṇa or Gupta periods, especially the latter.\footnote{See generally, Agrawala, op.cit., JUPHS., IX, pt.II, pp.28 ff.; and by the same author, op.cit., AL., 4, pp.126, 130, 133 ff., 151-2, 171 ff.; Indian Art, pp.316 ff.; Sankalia and Dhavalikar, op.cit., Marg., XXIII, no.1, pp.43 ff.}

The mithuna figures frequently appearing in the Śuṅga-Kuśāṇa period at Mathura, Kauśāmbī, Ahicchatra, etc. may also have some connection with goddess cults in so far as they can be interpreted as fertility symbols.\footnote{See Agrawala, op.cit., JUPHS., IX, pt.II, pp.31, 33; by the same author, op.cit., AL., 4, pp.109 ff., 160 ff.; Kala, Terracotta Figurines from Kauśāmbī, etc., pp.27 ff.}

Such a connection may be suspected to an even greater extent in the mother and child figures during these periods.\footnote{See Agrawala, op.cit., JUPHS., IX, pt.II, pp.32-3; by the same author, op.cit., AL., 4, pp.116, 146 ff.; Kala, op.cit., p.26.}

A certain type of terracotta figurines showing a nude squatting goddess and assignable to the Kuśāṇa period has been found from Mathura and Kauśāṃbi.\footnote{See Marshall, "Excavations at Bhīṣa", ASI-AR., 1911-12, p.75 and pl.XXIII. 40; Indian Museum Cat., II, p.286, no. Km.36, as cited in ibid., p.75; Codrington, "Iconography: Classical and Indian", Man, XXXV, May 1935, pp.65-6; Gupta (ed.), Patna Museum Catalogue of Antiquities, p.307, no.145, pl.I (7716).}

Similar pieces of comparable date also come from various sites in the Deccan, and the same motif is represented in stone figures of the Kuśāṇa-Gupta and later periods.\footnote{For a full account of all the available figures of this type, see below, Ch.IV, pp.270 ff.}

440

441

442

443

444

445
of these figures as representations of a goddess. It is possible that the cult of this goddess was introduced into India from the West sometime during the period of Roman contacts. It may be added here that foreign influences of various kinds and foreign ethnic types and fashions have been noted throughout the terracotta pieces of the Maurya, Śunga, Saka–Kuśāna and Gupta periods, these being most conspicuous during the Śunga–Kuśāna period.

Three other types of terracotta materials may be especially mentioned in view of their obvious importance. One is a type of winged female two of whose early specimens come from Basarh and are assigned approximately to the Maurya–Śunga period. Winged human figures are not common in Indian art, and winged female figures are particularly rare, only two other pieces being reported, one in bronze from Aţhun Īherī and the other in stone from Mathura, both dated roughly in the Kuśāna period. Since the Basarh figure stands on a lotus, Coomaraswamy was inclined to identify her as Śrī–Lakṣāmī, but he regarded the wings as curious and apparently approved of Spooner’s suggestion of a possible foreign influence, from West

---

446 See above, pp.60-1.

447 For the cult of the Nude Squatting Goddess, see below, Ch.IV.

448 See Coomaraswamy, HITA., p.12; Agrawala, op.cit., JUPHS., IX, pt.II, p.27; by the same author, op.cit., AI., 4, pp.124 ff., 155 ff.; Indian Art, pp.313-4; Ray, Nihar Ranjan, in Majumdar (ed.), The Age of Imperial Unity, p.533; Saraswati, A Survey of Indian Sculpture, pp.115-6; Kala, op.cit., pp.41 ff.; Sankalia and Dhavalikar, op.cit., Marg, XXIII, no.1, pp.40, 43-4, 47. It may be noted that some of these figures which are attributed to the Mauryan period may actually belong to a slightly later date. See also below for discussion on some of these types.

449 See Spooner, D.B., "Excavations at Basarh”, ASI–AR., 1913-14, p.116 and pl.XLV; cf. also fig.g in the same place; Coomaraswamy, "Early Indian Iconography; II. Śrī–Lakṣāmī", Eastern Art, I, no.3, January 1929, pp.181 and 174, fig.3. Spooner was inclined to date the figure in the Mauryan period and used it as another evidence of Persian influence in Mauryan times. Some other scholars have ascribed the figure to the Śunga period; see Saraswati, op.cit., p.115.


Agravala has identified the figure as Sapakṣa-śaṅkhī referred to in the Kasyapa Samhitā, and suggested that this, as well as the type of winged Kāmadeva, who seems to be represented on a terracotta piece from Kauśāmbī, may have developed under the influence of the Hellenic concepts of Aphrodite and Eros respectively.

Some other terracotta objects, approximately dateable to the 2nd–1st century B.C., also form a distinctive iconographic type. More or less complete or fragmentary specimens of it have been found over a very wide area, from Rupar (Panjab) in the west to Tamluk (Bengal) in the east, and including such sites in Uttar Pradesh as Kauśāmbī, Abicchatrā, Rajghat, Mathura, etc. The best preserved specimen is the one from Tamluk, now in the Museum of the Indian institute at Oxford. The figure is moulded,

452 Coomaraswamy, HIIA., p.12; cf. also Sankalia and Dhavalikar, op.cit., Marg., XXIII, no.1, p.40.

453 Agravala, Pracīna Bārātiya Lokadharma, p.61; also by the same author, review of Kala, Terracotta Figurines from Kauśāmbī, etc., in JUPHS., XXII, 1949, pp.237-8. It may be added that Saraswati refers to the figure of a hermaphrodite from Rajghat, and Sankalia and Dhavalikar regard it as a foreign type; see Saraswati, op.cit., p.116; Sankalia and Dhavalikar, op.cit., Marg., XXIII, no.1, pp.44-5.

454 For the Tamluk figure, see fn.455 below. For other specimens, mostly fragmentary, see Sharma, G.R., The Excavations of Kauśāmbī (1957–59), pp.93, 122, pl.46.14 and fig.18.3; Kala, op.cit., pp.21-2, 58, 61, pls. V.C (cf. also A), XIV.4.2; Agravala, op.cit., JUPHS., IX, pt.II, pp.19, 29, pl.V.14, VIII.26 (both slightly doubtful); by the same author, op.cit., Al., 4, pp.110-1, pl.XXIII.12 and fig.1.2 (the female figure appearing here as part of the mithuna motif); Gordon, op.cit., JISOA., XI, p.191 and inset fig. on p.195; Sharma, Y.B., "Past Patterns in Living as unfolded by Excavations at Rupar", Lalit Kala, 1-2, 1955-56, p.126, pl.XLVIII.21 (the middle piece); Das Gupta, Paresn Chandra, "Early Terracottas from Chandraketugarh", ibid., 6, 1959, pp.46-7, pls. XIII.3, XV.16 (cf. also XV.17); Gupta, Jagadīśa, "Āyudhāmāṅkta Śirobhūṣa-yuktā Bāli-devī kī Rāhasyamaya Mrṣūrtiyān", in Saksena, etc. (eds.), Kavirāja Abhinandana Grantha, pp.502, 507 and figs. 5-8, where similar figures from some other sites in Uttar Pradesh are noticed. Cf. also Coomaraswamy, "Archaic Indian Terracottas", Marg., VI, no.2, fig.29, said to come from Kauśāmbī, and Chhabra, B.Ch., "Antiquities from Jhusi and Other Sites", Lalit Kala, 9,1961, pl.V.8.

455 Johnston, E.W., "A Terracotta Figure at Oxford", JISOA., X, 1942, pp.94 ff. and pl.XX.1; also Gordon, op.cit., ibid., XI, 1943, pp.189 ff.; Saraswati, op.cit., pp.110 ff. and 117, fn.20.
but finished by hand with meticulous care. Standing against a background stamped with rosettes, the female figure is profusely ornamented and distinctively dressed from the shoulders to the ankles. All the ornaments - the ear-ornaments, the necklace, the series of bracelets on each wrist and the girdle - are unusually heavy. The most conspicuous is the elaborate headdress with a row of symbols attached to it which are identified generally as various types of weapons, such as śākusa, triśūla, an axe-like weapon and another which looks like a chopper but may also be a dhvaja. It is these symbols in the coiffure that generally help to ascribe the many fragmentary pieces to the same type. Some other symbols associated with the Oxford figure are a pair of fish, a bird, a sleeping doe and a makara on what is described as a sash passing over the right shoulder and round the left hip like a bandolier; and paunchy, squatting figures, sometimes identified as Kumbhāṇḍas, on the upper parts of the series of strings hanging from the tunic over the thighs.

While there has been considerable interest in this type, its identification has baffled scholars. Kramrisch tentatively suggested that it might represent the Apsara Paśacūḍā, although there is no information about the existence of a cult of such a deity. Several others have simply identified it as a Ṭakṣinī, which by itself is not very enlightening because any number of goddesses could be similarly designated. The figure has also been identified as Śrī-Lakṣmī. Since Śrī-lakṣmī is always described as a young lady dressed in beautiful clothes and adorned with all kinds of ornaments, the suggestion may have some basis. But no such figures of Śrī-lakṣmī are known and no textual description of the goddess fits the iconographic peculiarities of the terracotta figure. The identification with the Vedic goddess Śiṅvālī, suggested by some, also...

---

456 See the detailed description of the figure in Johnston, op.cit.,
458 See Sharma, J.D, and Das Gupta, cited above in fn.454; also Banerjea, DHI.,
p.368.
459 See Sankalia and Dhavalikar, op.cit., Marq, XXIII, no.1, p.43.
460 See below, Ch.IV, p.274.
461 See Sharma, G.R., op.cit. (fn.454 above); also Pradhan, Ashok, "Terracotta
suffers from the weakness that we have no evidence of a cult of this Vedic goddess in the period. One author has gone to the extent of suggesting that this terracotta type represents a composite deity combining together the śaktis of many deities indicated by their symbols. \(^{462}\) This explanation is hardly possible for such early figures. The presence of the male figure in the Ahichhatra plaque also does not help identification. \(^{463}\) Although suspecting the divinity of the female in the composition, Agrawala has naturally classified it as a mithuna plaque.

Johnston, who brought the Oxford figure to light, later analysed it minutely in a separate paper. \(^{464}\) He tried to find Indian parallels for many details and was generally inclined to regard it as a purely Indian product. But he also noticed certain curious features, especially of the dress, which are not explained through Indian sources and show some resemblance to figures of Hellenic origin. \(^{465}\) His final conclusion was that the cult of the goddess represented by this figure may have prevailed in the Gangetic region much earlier than the period of these figures and that there was some possible relationship with the West Asiatic cult of the Mother Goddess, but that a precise identification of the goddess was not possible. \(^{466}\) As proof that even in the centuries around the Christian era, the widely prevalent cult of the Mother Goddess shows contacts with similar cults in West Asia, Johnston pointed to Oxyrhynchus Papyrus no.1280, dated in the 3rd century A.D., which contains an invocation to Isis in which the goddess is equated with many mother goddesses known to the Greek world, including "Maia" in India. Later, in a fragmentary portion of the same invocation, a reference is also made to the goddess bringing floods in rivers, including the Ganges in India, and there is the suggestion that

461 contd
Figurines of Sinīvālī", The Leader, Weekly Magazine Section, 22 October, 1961, as cited in Gupta, op.cit. (fn.454 above), pp.504 ff.. Gupta examines this identification and does not find it quite satisfactory.

462 See Kala, op.cit., p.22.

463 See Agrawala, op.cit., Al., 4, pp.110-1.

464 See Johnston, op.cit. (fn.455 above), JIOSA., X, 1942, pp.94 ff..

465 Ibid., p.97.

466 Ibid., pp.99, 100-1.
the fertility of the land depends on these rivers. 467 He suggested further that Maia of this source may be the same as the goddess Maya, referred to as मैयेवा दिवि देवता in the Saundarananda of Aśvaghoṣa, and she may, therefore, be presumed to have had a popular cult as a fertility goddess in the Gangetic valley. 468 Without committing himself, he also suggested the possibility that the Oxford figure, which also seems to represent a fertility goddess as indicated by the symbols like the fish and makara, may be a representation of the goddess Maya. 470

The probability that the cult of a fertility goddess called Maya existed in the Gangetic plain, at least in the early centuries of the Christian era, and that it was familiar to the contemporary Hellenic world in the west is a very useful addition to our knowledge. 471 But, as Johnston

467
Ibid., pp.101-2.
468
See Saundarananda, ed. Johnston, II,47:
Tasya devi नेदवस्या मया नामा तदा’भवात,
Vitakrodhatamo मया मैयेवा दिवि देवता.
469
470
Ibid.
471
Apparently encouraged by the findings of Johnston, Agrawala tried to adduce more evidence of the wide popularity of the goddess called Maya. He identified "Sirimā-devatā" of Bharhut as a representation of this goddess, and believed that she was also regarded as identical with Śrī-Lakṣmī. Ancient Indian literature, however, does not clearly reveal the cult of a goddess called Maya. The evidence is only of the type such as in the Saundarananda. The references to Maya generally in the abstract in the sense of "magical potency", especially of the Asuras, are not infrequent in the Vedic, epic and Purānic literature (see Macdonell, VM., pp.24, 156; Hopkins, EM., esp. p.39). According to Agrawala, the so-called Maya of Asuras as referred to in the Vedic literature gradually developed into a goddess and her cult merged with that of Śrī-Lakṣmī. He also implied that the name Mā, by which Śrī-Lakṣmī was called in later history (see the interpolated line after line 54, p.6, in NSP, edn. of the Amarakośa with the commentary by Mahēśvara), and whose Prakrit variants may be Māyī or Māyi, may be a contraction of the name Maya. This inference is quite at variance with the opinions of several other scholars who understood the Bharhut label Sirimā as the Prakrit feminine form of Sirima and corresponding to Pali Sirimate and Sanskrit Śrīmate. In other words, in the name Sirima at least, Mā is a suffix and not the member of a compound. The name has survived to this day in Ceylon, where it is commonly given to girls, and there it is never taken as containing an element mā connected with either mātā or mayā, but is looked on as a feminine form of sīri (= sīrī). What exactly is the origin of the name Mā given to Lakṣmī is difficult to say,
himself felt, there is no real indication that the terracotta type discussed here represented this goddess. The presence of symbols with probable religious meanings, the profuse ornamentation, the elaborate headdress and the overall hieratic appearance clearly suggest the divine status of the type. Its very extensive distribution further suggests that the goddess had a widespread cult in North India in the one or two centuries preceding the Christian era. The exact identity of the goddess must remain uncertain until more information is available. We agree with Johnston that the type should be regarded as Indian. Not only are the various individual symbols identifiable as Indian, but the general style of the figure fits in with the terracotta materials generally assigned to the Śrīga period, and, as Gordon remarked, its elaborate piled-up headdress appears typically Śrīga. The possibility cannot be ruled out, however, that there is something alien in the form and character of this goddess. For the iconographic form of the type as a whole, there are no known parallels in Indian stone sculpture and no textual authority to our knowledge in contemporary, earlier or later works. Apart from the characteristic conglomeration of the weapon-symbols in the headdress, the ornaments, though apparently Indian, are exceptionally heavy. The most suspicious element appears to be the dress. While the more common practice in the case of the female figures in terracotta or stone during the Śrīga-Kuśaṇa periods is to leave the breasts bare, the

471 contd
but Agrawala's suggestion that it may be a contraction of Sanskrit Māyā or Prakrit Māyi or Māyā does not appear to us to be convincing; see Agrawala, Prācīna Bhāratīya Lokadharma, pp.105 ff.; Barua and Sinha, Barhut Inscriptions, pp.74 ff.; Lüders, Bhartih Inscriptions, III., II, pt.II, pp.77–8, where the authority of Hultzsch is also cited.


473 Cf. Ibid., pp.191, 194. Gordon, of course, made his comments before many other fragmentary pieces conforming to the same type were brought to light, but it must still be asserted that the type is very distinctive and without close iconographic parallels.

474 Cf. Moti Chandra, Prācīna Bhāratīya Vesabhūṣā, p.82, as cited in Gupta, "Ayudhālaśkṛta Śīrobhūṣa-yukta Bālī-devī ki Rahasyamaya Mrpūrtiyān", in Saksena, etc. (eds.), Kavirāja Abhinandana Grantha, p.503.

Oxford figure is dressed in a tunic covering most of the upper body but leaving the right shoulder and part of the right breast bare. As a lower garment, the figure seems to wear an under-skirt reaching to the ankles. Johnston imagined that, as an alternative, the figure may be supposed to be dressed in a single garment with flounces. Johnstone imagined that, as an alternative, the figure may be supposed to be dressed in a single garment with flounces. On the whole, the dress has an unfamiliar and, judged by the contemporary art materials, somewhat un-Indian appearance. Gordon pointed to a female figure of approximately 1st century A.D. from some site in the North-west Frontier region in which while the one breast is covered by the dress, the other is left bare. Another scholar has suspected Scythian influence on the dress. It appears to us, therefore, that there is some ground to suspect that the very popular goddess represented by the Oxford figure and several other fragments of the same type, if not entirely un-Indian, had some markedly alien features in her character. Since the age of the terracotta type may by approximately limited to the two centuries before the Christian era, with some possible overlappings in the 1st century A.D., the alien elements should have been received towards the beginning of this period. It is difficult to say, however, whether these elements were derived from the West Asiatic, Hellenic, Iranian or Scytho-Parthian goddess cults.

The third type of terracotta materials to be noticed are the so-called "votive tanks" which were found at Sirkap in the archaeological context of the Scytho-Parthian period and in association with the Buddhist stupas. In a well preserved specimen, this object consists of a walled enclosure, with lamps on the three corners, birds on the three walls and a miniature shrine inside against the fourth wall. There are steps leading up to the shrine, outside which stands a figure, apparently of a goddess. Inside the enclosure are also small pillar-like objects, and the fragment of a similar enclosure shows two snakes with a pillar. Gordon interpreted these
objects as model votive shrines of the Mother Goddess with various adjuncts of her cult, like the birds which must be doves, the snakes, the pillars and the lamps. He utilized these and the terracotta figures of goddesses of comparable date, the so-called "Baroque ladies", from various sites in the Gandhara region to reconstruct a popular cult of the Mother-Goddess of Gandhara who is manifested as the Persian Anaitis and the Buddhist Hārītī. According to Gordon, the terracotta materials on which his reconstruction was based are not dateable before approximately 300 B.C. Therefore the cult of the Mother-Goddess revealed by them cannot be directly related to the chalcolithic cult of the Mother Goddess in the Indus Valley culture or to the ancient West Asiatic goddess cults, but in all probability it was a much more recent introduction from the west. In his opinion, the Hellenized Parthians might have introduced it in some Iranian form sometime in the 3rd century B.C. Since, as noted above, the Chārsada excavations have vindicated Gordon's dating of the terracotta figurines referred to, his conjecture about the more recent introduction of some mother goddess cults in the region from the west may be accepted in principle.

Terracotta "votive tanks" or model shrines, very similar to those found at Sirkap, have also been found at Ahicchatra in layers dateable from A.D. 100 to 200. They are also walled enclosures with lamps at the corners. Although there is no clear indication of a shrine inside or the figure of a goddess, the resemblance is very striking. Inside the walled enclosures in the Ahicchatra specimens we have musicians, playing on cymbals and drums. Shallow bowls are frequently depicted inside the enclosure, and some fragmentary specimens also show a bird. Agrawala

See above, p.72 and fn.421.


Ibid.; see also by the same author, "The Age of Frontier Terracottas", Iraq, V, 1938, p.88.

See above, p.72.

See Agrawala, "Terracotta Figurines of Ahichchatra, etc.", Al., 4, pp.125 ff., pls. XXXVIII-XXXIX.
naturally related these objects to similar ones from Sirkap and, accepting Gordon's thesis, came to the conclusion that the goddess cult introduced by the Hellenized Parthians into the Gandhara region seems to have quickly spread to various centres in North India. In support of his inference, he also pointed to the drummer figures, several separate specimens of which were also found in layers of the same date as those yielding the votive tanks.

He suggested the possibility of these being foreign ethnic types and cited Van Ingen to the effect that the drummer type was specially popular at Seleucia during the period of the Parthians who may have actually introduced it.

We may close the discussion of the archaeological material with a reference to carved stone rings or discs found all over the North India from such sites as Taxila, Rupar, Mathura, Sankisa, Sāravastī, Kausāmbī, Rajghat, Patna and Vaiśālī. They are generally dated in the Maurya-Suṅga period, although it has been specifically noted about the one from Vaiśālī that it came from a stratum assigned to 150 B.C. - 100 A.D. They are modest little pieces, generally ranging from 1.5" to 3.5" in diameter, with or without a central perforation. All contain carvings on the surface, and, in the case of several perforated ones, also on the rim of the inner circle. In several cases, the carvings are simply in the form of an elaborate geometrical or floral pattern, often with a central stylized lotus and

485 Ibid., p.125.
486 Ibid., pp.124-5.
487 Ibid., pp.125-6.
sometimes resembling a prabha-mandala. In some cases the concentric bands or symmetrically arranged segments contain animal and bird figures. But in a fairly large number of specimens, there are conspicuous figures of standing females alternating with all kinds of vegetal, animal and other devices. Amongst the floral motifs, the palm tree appears most frequently, and a winged lion is sometimes included among the animals. The female figures, always standing facing in a stiff posture, are apparently nude but often with a modest headdress, and their likeness to the gold repoussé figures from Lauria-sandangarh and Piprahwa has been frequently noted.

The small size of these rings had earlier led some scholars to think of a utilitarian, possibly cosmetic, use for them, but the consensus now is to give them a religious and ritual meaning, and to regard the nude standing female as the representation of the Mother Goddess. Marshall tried to relate them to the ring stones of the Indus Valley culture - which, incidentally, do not contain any carvings and range from a half inch to four feet in diameter - and imagined that they were symbolic representations of the yoni, the female organ of generation, and served as necessary adjuncts, perhaps as votive offerings, in the cult of the Mother Goddess or Earth Goddess as Pṛthivī. His suggestion seems to have taken firm root, and several subsequent scholars have seen in these carved rings even the prototypes of the Tantric cakras and yantras.

Marshall's identification of the Indus Valley stone rings as symbols of yoni appears to us to be quite doubtful, but the appearance of nude female figures in stiff hieratic postures on the carved rings of early historic times suggests some affiliation with goddess cults and some rapprochement with the nude or semi-nude terracotta female figurines of

490 For the gold repoussé figures from Lauria-sandangarh and Piprahwa, see above, p.75, fn.429.
491 See Coomaraswamy, HIIA., p.20; Irwin, op.cit. (fn.488 above), JRAS., 1951, p.2.
494 Cf. Basham, The Wonder that was India, p.24.
approximately the same period. In this general form, therefore, they may be said to be connected with the evolution of the cult of the Supreme Goddess as seen in the Purāṇic literature, but whether they also specifically anticipate the Tantric symbols and rituals appears to us, in the present state of our knowledge, to be largely speculative.

Sufficient literary and archaeological evidence has been adduced above to suggest that the people in the North India in our period generally believed in a very large number of goddesses, and that many of these goddesses had their own popular cults, local or special. The very fact that these goddesses are of many different types and functions, and must have been of various independent origins, precludes a uniform historical explanation of their popularity. For the popularity of the individual figures or types which could be labelled as fertility deities, part of the explanation may lie in the predominantly agricultural nature of the society. For certain other figures, especially the probably non-Aryan ethnic types, there may be some explanation in the matriarchal traits of the complex society of the times, of which some scholars have collected evidence, even though we have no final proof of an essential connection between a matriarchal social organisation and the prominence of mother goddess cults. The wider cults of individual goddesses or types must be explained as the results of the historical processes of movement and contact, and there may have been several goddesses whose special nature and function made them more enduring. This may be particularly said of goddesses with a demoniacal, fierce and warlike nature. It is obvious, therefore, that a simple explanation of the phenomenon of widespread cults

---

495 See above, pp. 72 ff.
497 See above, pp. 27-8.
499 See James, The Cult of the Mother Goddess, pp. 228-9.
500 See Bhandarkar, Vaishnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems, p. 106, for similar explanation of the popularity of Rudra-Siva.
of goddesses cannot be given. What is certain, however, is that such a phenomenon existed. It is no wonder that Śaṅvāhaka, anxious to avoid paying his gambling debts, is portrayed in the Mrčchakatika of Śūdraka as hiding in the deserted temple of some goddess and trying to fool his pursuers by pretending to install himself as the image of the goddess, when a god's temple and a god's idol would have better suited the context. The dramatist must have been aware of the numerous modest shrines of goddesses in his age to think of this apparently anomalous ruse.

501 See Mrčchakatika, Act II, NSP. edn., pp.53 ff.
Chapter II

THE EVOLUTION OF THE CULT OF
THE SUPREME GODDESS

A very wide prevalence of the cults of goddesses of various types in the first six or seven centuries of the Christian era in North India has been demonstrated in the previous Chapter. This period is also characterised by the evolution of the concept and cult of Maha-devi, the Supreme Goddess.¹

The idea of a Supreme Goddess is a philosophical or at least a quasi-philosophical concept, and any satisfactory evidence of it can only be obtained from literary texts which dwell at length on the nature of the Goddess, narrate important myth or myths relating to her or present stutis in her honour. We may select for brief analyses the apocryphal hymns to the Goddess in the Mahābhārata and Harivaṃśa, the Devī-mahātmya section of the Markandeya Purāṇa, the Caṇḍi-śataka ascribed to Bāṇabhaṭṭa and the eulogy of Vindhyavāsinī Devī in the Gaṇḍavaho of Vākyati, directing our attention mainly to such elements as help understand the concept of the Goddess and the problem of its historical evolution.

The two apocryphal stutis to the Goddess in the Mahābhārata are contained in the Virāṭa- and Bhīṣma-parvans.² The one in the Virāṭa-parvan purports to be a hymn sung by Yudhiṣṭhira to Devī Durgā.³ In this hymn,

¹ See above, Ch.1, p.1. We use the expressions "Supreme Goddess" or "Great Goddess" mainly as convenient descriptive terms. The sources do use the word "Maha-devi" (see Mbh., vol.5, p.301, App.I-4D, 1.43; ibid., vol.7, p.710, App.I, no.1, 1.25; Hv., Kinjawadekar's edn., II, 3.6; etc.), but they frequently refer to the Goddess under the general name "Devī" or under one of her popular names such as Durgā, Pārватī, Gaurī, Ambikā, Caṇḍikā, etc.
² We have chosen for analysis the versions of the hymns as given in the Kinjawadekar's edition of the text; see Mbh., Kinjawadekar's edn., IV.6 and VI.23; also Mbh., Cr.edn., vol.5, pp.301-2, App.I-4D, and ibid., vol.7, pp.710-1, App.I, no.1. Since both the hymns are quite short and it is easy to locate authorities for various statements in our analysis of them, we have refrained from citing sources for the individual statements.
³ See Mbh., Kinjawadekar's edn., IV.6, and ibid., Cr.edn., vol.5, pp.301-2, App.I-4D; see also fn.2 above.
the Goddess is conceived of as the Supreme Deity, since she is called Tribhuvanesvarī and is prayed to by the gods for the protection of the three worlds. But this is indirectly expressed also in various other ways. Thus the Goddess is given many names or identified with many goddesses, such as Jayā, Vijayā, Kālī, Mahākāli, Hrī, Śrī, Kīrti, etc. She is said to be the ultimate refuge in all kinds of difficult situations. She grants victory in battle, progeny, wealth, happiness, and freedom from fear, sickness and other privations. It is said that wherever a person might be, at home or far away, in forests, on seas, in mountain wildernesses or in battle, if he prayed to the Goddess, all his desires would be fulfilled. The two myths to which the hymn makes specific reference are, firstly, the birth of the Goddess in the family of Nanda and as the daughter of Yaśodā, and, secondly, that of the Goddess destroying demons, especially the Buffalo-demon, Mahiṣāsura.4 While the latter is expressed cryptically in the phrases Āsuraūtām kṣayātākari and Mahiṣāsura-nāśini, the former is emphasized in several expressive epithets or statements, such as Yaśodā-garbha-saṁbhūtā, Nanda-gopa-kule-jātā, Kaṁsa-vidravaṇa-kari, śīlā-teṭa-viṇiktāptāmākāśam prati gāminīm and Vāsudevasya bhagini. Other epithets such as Narayana-vara-priya also indicate her Viṣṇuite affiliations.

Scattered over the hymn there are various statements describing the visual form of the Goddess, in which she is portrayed as a beautiful young lady, clothed in a heavenly dress and adorned with various ornaments. She is said to be armed with sword and shield and various other weapons such as pāṣa, dhanu and cakra, etc. She also holds vessel, lotus and bell. Perhaps more significant from the iconographic point of view are such epithets of the Goddess as caturbhujā and caturvaktra.5 The use of

---

4 For the myths of the Goddess as born in the family of Nanda and as killer of Mahiṣāsura, see below, p.99; also above, Ch.I, pp.26-7.

5 Coomaraswamy has noted that images with four or more arms do not appear before the 2nd century A.D.; see Coomaraswamy, Yaksas, I, p.29. The epithet Caturbhujā may therefore indicate a slightly developed iconographic concept. Also, since the four-faced form of the Goddess cannot be a popular one, could it be that Caturvaktra is a mistake for Candravaktra? (Cf. the expression Candravaktra caturbhujā for the Goddess in Hv., 48.30).
epithets such as Kumārī and brahmācārīni, reference to the brahmacarya of the Goddess and to her being the "pure woman", and the specific statement Keumārāṃ vratam-āsthāya tridivam pāvitaṃ tvayā suggest the conception of a virgin goddess. The Goddess is also said to be fond of sīdhu, māmsa and pāsu, and the Vindhyā mountain is mentioned as her permanent abode. Yudhiṣṭhīra is said to have invoked the Goddess when he and his brothers, deprived of their kingdom, were entering Virūṭa-nagara, and he asks specifically for protection and victory.

Arjuna's hymn in the Bhīṣma-parvan is also said to be directed to the Goddess Durgā for victory in the imminent Mahābhārata war. The greatness of the Goddess is expressed in this hymn not so much by specific epithets or direct statements as indirectly, by supplying her with an even larger number of names. Some of these names may be purely descriptive epithets, coined solely for the purposes of the prayer to suggest the greatness of the Goddess, but many may refer to independent goddess-concepts. Among these names appear Āryā, Kālī, Bhadrā-kālī, Mahā-kālī, Karālī, Caṇḍī, Caṇḍā, Kāpālī, Kausikī, Umā, Śākambhārī, Viṣṇūkṣī, Jāta-vedāśī, Brahma-vidyā, Mahā-nidrā, Śvāhā, Śvadā, Sarasvatī, Veda-mātā Sāvitrī, Māyā, Hī, Śrī, etc. Here also the Goddess appears as the destroyer of Daṇnavas in general, but the epithets Nanda-gopa-kulodbhava and Mahisāśvaka-priyā refer to specific myths as in the previous hymn. In addition, the Goddess is credited with killing Kaitabha, a feat generally reserved for Viṣṇu in the Purānic myths. Again, in this hymn also the Goddess bears the epithet Kumārī, but at the same time she is also called Janānī. The popularity and pervasive influence of the Goddess is expressed in the statement that she is found in her shrines in various places all over the Jambū-dvīpa. She is also addressed as Kāntāra-vāsinī.

6 Cf. also HV., 47.45.
7 Cf. below, p.105.
8 See MBh., Kinjawadekar's edn., VI,23; ibid., Cr.sdn., vol.7, pp.710-1, App.1, no.1; also above, fn.2.
9 Cf. also our comments above, Ch.I, p.20.
10 Cf. MR.P., 78.49 ff., esp.74; ibid., tr. Pargiter, pp.469 ff.
11 See above, Ch.I, p.26 and fn.128.
Several hymns to the Goddess were interpolated also in the Harivamsa, of which the most representative is the Arya-stava inserted in the description of the myth of Kṛṣṇa's birth. As in the two hymns noted above, several names are given to the Goddess in the Arya-stava. Quite appropriately to the context, she is specifically called Nārāyani, besides Baladevasya bhagini and Nanda-gopa-suta. But she is also described as Triśūlī and said to be as Pārvatī among all women. There is reference to her being known as Vindhyavāsinī, but the hymn also emphasizes that the Goddess is of many forms and is found in many places, such as on mountains, in forests, rivers, caves, etc. She is said to be worshipped by Śabaras, Barabaras and Pulindas. There is no lack of emphasis on the fierce aspect of the Goddess. She is described as Raudri, Prakirṇa-keśi, Mrtyu, Sūrā-māṁsa-bali-priyā, Kalaha-privā, destroyer of demons, etc., and is identified with the terrible Nevatī, Sakunī and Pūtanā who appear as Bāla-grahas in other texts. But on the whole the Arya-stava tends to be more figurative and philosophical, especially in its references to the Goddess being found in various places and in various forms. Also it contains, besides the epithet Tribhuvanesvarī, the specific statement that whatever is in this world, whether mobile or immobile, is pervaded by the Goddess. There is also considerable emphasis on the Goddess removing sickness, death, fear, and satisfying all kinds of desires, for wealth, progeny, etc. She is a protector-goddess par excellence, bhaktanām parirakṣinī.

The Devī-mahatmya is a long tract of several chapters contained in the Mārkandeya Purāṇa and it is not possible to summarise its contents in the manner of the shorter hymns such as those noted above. On the whole,

---

12 See Hv., Kinjawadekar's edn., II.3. It may be noted here that although this hymn is regarded as an interpolation, considerable parallel material about the concept of the Goddess in the preceding and the following chapters is retained in the Cr.edn.: see Hv., Cr.edn., 47.24 ff.; 48.26 ff.; see also below, p.99. For some older hymns to the Goddess in the vulgate editions of the text, see Hv., Kinjawadekar's edn., II.107.4 ff.; 120.1 ff. As in the case of the apocryphal hymns in the Mahābhārata, we have here also refrained from tracing individual statements in our analysis to specific verses in the hymn; see above, p.90, fn.2.
13 See above, Ch.I, pp.6 ff.
14 The Devī-mahatmya is formed of the chapters 78-90 of the Mārkandeya Purāṇa (chs.81-93 in Pargiter's translation, pp.465-523). The last two chapters, which are in the nature of phala-grutī and refer to the worship of the clay
however, it may be said to present in elaborate form what is contained in suggestive epithets and expressions in the shorter hymns noted above. Thus, the *Devi-mahatmya* dwells longer on the conception of the Goddess as the Supreme Power. It invents a myth of the origin of the Goddess mainly with a view to bringing out her greatness and her all-powerful aspect. Also it describes in considerable detail the Goddess' victory over the demons Mahiṣa, Sumbha and Niśumbha, etc., and sometimes digresses upon descriptions of various forms of the Goddess. In a philosophical aside on her nature at the very beginning of the text, Devī is described as the Mahā-māyā of Hari, and she is given the name Narāyaṇī in a hymn to her contained in the text. But, besides the very general Devī, the names most commonly given to the Goddess in the mythological narratives are Ambikā and Candra-kī, and rarely Bhadra-kālī, Durgā and Kātyāyani. Candra-kī-Ambikā is also the name given her in the description of her origin from the collective energy of the gods, in order to kill Mahiṣāsura and his demon-host. Though the Goddess herself is sometimes referred to as Bhadra-kālī, Kālī, identified with Candra-kī, is described as her emanation. The Mātris appear as personified energies of various gods, and actively help Ambikā-Candra-kī against the demons, but not unnaturally they

---

14 contd

images of the Goddess, are apparently later interpolations into the original poem; see Agrawala, V.S., "The Devi-mahatmya", JIH., XLII, 1964, p.832. Agrawala seems to suspect that chapter 88, which contains a long stuti to the Goddess as Narāyaṇī, may also not have formed part of the original poem (see ibid.), but this is unlikely. Since the Goddess is portrayed as the Mahā-māyā of Hari in the very beginning of the poem (see below), there seems nothing especially incongruous in her being called Narāyaṇī.

16 Ibid., 78.41; tr. Pargiter, p.469.
17 Ibid., 88.7 ff.; tr. Pargiter, pp.513 ff.
18 See Mar.P., 79.50, 53, 68; 80.1, 8, 11, 24, 28, 30; 81.34, 35; 82.69; 85.28; etc.
20 Ibid., 81.35; tr. Pargiter, p.488.
21 Ibid., 84.4 ff., 26; tr. Pargiter, pp.499-500.
are also regarded as forms of the Goddess. In one place, the principal form of the Goddess is called Parvatī, and Ambikā, Kauśikī and Kāli are described as her secondary forms. In another, while Ambikā-Caṇḍikā-Kātyāyanī is regarded as the principal form, others, such as Raktadantikā, Satākṣi, Sākambhari, Bhīmā and Bhrāmarī, and probably also Durgā, are portrayed only as her lesser forms. The Deīī-māhātmya also refers briefly to the myth of the birth of the Goddess as the daughter of Yasodā, and to the Vindhya mountain as one of her seats.

The concept of the Goddess as the Supreme Power is brought about in various ways in the Deīī-māhātmya. Some approaches to it are frankly of a philosophical and cosmogonic nature. Thus, without in any way assigning a precedence to Viṣṇu, and apparently to bring out the aspect of the Goddess as the eternally active principle at the back of the world-process, Devī is said to be the Mahā-maya of Hari. It may be supposed that the idea is taken from sectarian Viṣṇuite theology mixed with Sāṁkhya ideology, but, in the Deīī-māhātmya, it is thoroughly shorn of any Viṣṇuite element except in the bare reference to Hari and the identification of the Goddess with the periodic cosmic sleep of that god. The real sources of the philosophical basis of the Great Goddess should be traced to a theistic adaptation of Upaniṣadic Vedāntism mixed with Sāṁkhya conception of Prakṛti. As it is, the Goddess is imagined as the Supreme Principle in her own right, as eternally existing, as Supreme Knowledge, as the cause of the bondage and the final liberation of beings, etc.

---

22 Ibid., 85.11 ff.; 87.3-4; tr. Pargiter, pp.502-3, 509.
23 Ibid., 82.40 ff.; tr. Pargiter, pp.493-4.
25 Ibid., 88.38-9; tr. Pargiter, p.517.
26 Ibid., 78.40-1; tr. Pargiter, p.469.
27 For one instance of Viṣṇuite sectarian theology, especially cosmogony, and the general resemblance of Viṣṇu’s creative śakti with Sāṁkhya Prakṛti, see Schrader, Introduction to the Pañcarātra and the Ahirbudhnyā Śāṁhitā, pp.29 ff., 68 ff.
28 See also below, pp.135-6.
of philosophical import, suggesting a monotheistic or, more accurately, a monistic concept of the Goddess are frequently seen in the various short eulogies contained in the text. Sometimes they are in the explicit form of attributing to the Goddess the origin, sustenance and absorption of the world, but often they are poetic expressions suggesting her all-pervasive nature. The epithets Jagaunmata and Matr-rupera-sansthita, which have obvious religious overtones, could also be understood in a cosmic sense. There is also the Goddess’ assurance, apparently modelled on that of Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavadgītā, that whenever trouble may arise on account of the Daṇavas, she will become incarnate and accomplish the foes’ destruction. It is the mythological narratives, however, that truly bring out the concept of the Goddess as the Supreme Power. The most expressive, of course, is the account of the origin of Ambika-Capḍika from the combined energies of all the gods, but this is suggested throughout in the actions of the Goddess, as extending her protective mantle over the helpless gods, as a fierce fighter, riding her ferocious lion and annihilating the demons one by one. The recurrent hymns of praise sung by the gods after the achievement of various feats by the Goddess add their own touches and further enhance the effect. Individually, they are not very different from the apocryphal hymns in the epic and the Harivamsa, but in their cumulative effect, they are even more impressive, more elaborate and more figurative. These hymns contain not only many names given to the Goddess but also elaborate poetic descriptions, in which she is identified with every mental and moral faculty.

30 Cf. ibid., 78.56 (tr. Pargiter, p.470), which occurs in Brahma’s stuti to the Goddess:
   Tvayaitad-dhāryate viśvaṁ tvayaitatsṛjyate jagat,
   Tvayaitatsṛṣṭyate devi tvamatsyamte ca sarvadhā.
31 Ibid., 80.34; tr. Pargiter, p.481.
32 Ibid., 82.34; tr. Pargiter, pp.492-3.
33 Ibid., 88.51; tr. Pargiter, p.518.
34 See above, p.94 and fn.15.
Of the two other texts that we have especially chosen to analyse, the Candī-śataka ascribed to Bāṇabhaṭṭa is composed of a series of independent stanzas, mostly couched in the form of benedictions. Again, these benedictions generally seek the protection of the Goddess, although it is also wished that she may give prosperity, destroy sins and purify, ward off troubles, satisfy desires, etc. Since the poem is entitled Candī-śataka, Candī or Candikā could be imagined as the principal name of the Goddess, but in the stanzas themselves, the name Pārvatī appears most frequently. Other frequently appearing names are Umā, Devī and Ambikā. Several names of the Goddess are specifically derived from those of Śiva, such as Śivā, Bhaśā, Rudrāṇī and Śarvāṇī. The Goddess is sometimes also referred to as Kālī, Kālikā, Bhadrakālī, Durgā, Kātyāvanī, Āryā, Gaurī, etc., and some names refer to her as the daughter of Himavat mountain. In some cases, a boon is sought from the Goddess through the intercession of her son Kārttikeya. The most important thing to note is that all except four stanzas in the Candī-śataka refer to the victory of the Goddess over the Buffalo-demon. Of the remainder, three allude to Kaṃsa's attempt to dash the Goddess against a stone.

The hymn to Vindhyavāsinī Devī sung by the king Yaśovarman in the Gaṇḍavāha is in some ways markedly different from the texts referred to above. There is no doubt, of course, that this also refers to the Supreme

36 On the Candī-śataka, see Bühler, G., "On the Candikā-śataka of Bāṇabhaṭṭa", IA., April 1872, pp.111-5; Quackenbos, The Sanskrit Poems of Mayūra, pp.245 ff. (Introduction) and 267 ff. (Text and Translation).
37 Quackenbos, op.cit., p.245.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., p.258.
40 Ibid., pp.258-9.
41 Ibid., p.245.
42 Ibid., p.247; see also Bühler, op.cit., IA., 1872, p.111.
43 See Quackenbos, op.cit., p.247.
44 See Gaṇḍavāha, vv.285-338; also ibid., Intro., pp.xxii-xxiii.
Goddess or Mahā-devī. Vindhyavāsinī Devī is described as the killer of the Buffalo-demon and as the daughter of Himālaya.\textsuperscript{45} She is also addressed as Kālī, Cāṇḍī, Nidrā-rūpinī, Kalyāṇī, etc.\textsuperscript{46} Epithets such as Mādhavī and Mārāyaṇī suggest a Viṣṇuite affiliation, as does also the allusion to her as flying up to the sky when Kaṃsa tried to kill her.\textsuperscript{47} But there is even greater emphasis on the association with Śiva. The Goddess is not only regarded as the daughter of Himavat mountain and addressed as Bhairavī and Śaṅkarī, but she is also specifically said to form the half of the body of Śaśi-śekhara or Śiva.\textsuperscript{48} The malevolent aspect of the Goddess and her rites, however, emerges far more prominently in this hymn than in the texts analysed above. In this respect, the concept of Goddess as presented in the Gaūḍāvaho is closer to the description of Cāṇḍikā, her shrine and her chief priest in the Kādambarī of Bāṇabhaṭṭa and that of Cāmunḍā and her votaries in the Mālatī-mādhava of Bhavabhūti.\textsuperscript{49} There are pointed references in the hymn in the Gaūḍāvaho to human and animal offerings to the Goddess. Since her shrine is located in the Vindhyas, a Śabara is fittingly portrayed as the guide of the king,\textsuperscript{50} and the Goddess herself is once addressed as Śabarī.\textsuperscript{51} There is also a reference to Kālī women, apparently belonging to some non-Āryan aboriginal tribe, crowding to make their offerings to the Goddess.\textsuperscript{52}

The concept of the Supreme Goddess emerges also in various other cosmogenic and mythological contexts, as for example in the account of Devī and her various forms in the Deva-sṛṣṭi section of the Vāyu Purāṇa,\textsuperscript{53} in

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., vv.285-6, 290.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., vv.289-90, 296-7.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., vv.285, 291, 308.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., vv.287, 292.
\textsuperscript{49} See below, pp.114-5.
\textsuperscript{50} Gaūḍāvaho, v.338.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., v.305.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., v.319; also Intro., p.xxii.
\textsuperscript{53} Vā,P., 9, 82-98; see also above, Ch.1, pp.21-2.
the myth of Śiva's marriage with Pārvatī to produce a son who would destroy the demon Tāraka as narrated in the Matsya Purāṇa,54 in the later Pīṭha legends,55 etc. But an important and frequently appearing myth, to which reference has been made earlier,56 is of the birth of the Goddess as the daughter of Nanda and Yaśodā. In this form, she is said to have saved the life of Kṛṣṇa and warned Kamsa of his impending destruction. Naturally, the myth finds a prominent place in several Viṣṇuite texts, such as the Harivamśa, the Viṣṇu Purāṇa and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.57 All these texts refer to the Goddess as Yoga-nidrā or Mahā-mayā of Viṣṇu, to her flying up towards the sky when released from Kamsa's grasp and later being adored in many forms at many places.58 The Harivamśa and the Viṣṇu-Purāṇa also add that the Goddess would be received by Indra as his own sister, would destroy the demons, especially Śumbha and Niśumbha, and find her permanent abode on the Vindhyas.59 Further, the two texts also refer to the offerings of wine and animal flesh to the Goddess,60 and since she was born to Yaśodā on the ninth day of the dark half of the month of Nabhasa in the rainy season, that day is treated as a sacred one for her worship.61 The Harivamśa also identifies the Goddess as Ekanamsā and informs us that she was adored by the Vṛṣṇis and brought up like a son.62

From a philosophical point of view, the idea of the Supreme Goddess that emerges from the materials noticed above may be characterised as a type of monism. Its sources, as in fact those of the sectarian theistic

54 Mat.P., 154.56 ff., esp. 71-84.
55 See above, Ch.I, pp. 22 ff.
56 See above, Ch.I, pp. 26-7.
58 See above, Ch.I, p. 27.
59 Hv., 47.46 ff.; Vi.P., V.1.80 ff.
60 Hv., 47.51; Vi.P., V.1.85.
61 See Hv., 47.34, 51; Vi.P., V.1.77.
62 Hv., 96.11 ff.
philosophy in general, especially as it is seen in the Purāṇas, should be traced back to the monistic strands in Vedic philosophical thought, especially the Upaniṣadic concept of Brahman, and the Sāṁkhya concept of Prakṛti. It is, however, the mythological aspect that is of the greatest interest to us. From this point of view, the materials noticed above present the concept and cult of a goddess who was regarded as all powerful, as destroyer of demons, especially Mahiṣāsura, and as a protector par excellence in all and every situation. She was regarded as having many names and forms, and as being worshipped everywhere. As one caring for her devotees, as a saviouress and protectress, as one who granted all kinds of boons and cured various evils, as a pure woman, a model wife and loving mother, the Goddess is benign and merciful. But as destroyer of demons, as demanding offerings of wine and flesh, including human flesh, as having her shrines in mountain wilds and as worshipped by aboriginal tribes like Śabarās, etc., she is fierce and forbidding.

It may be noted that while the materials examined above clearly suggest a widespread cult of the Great Goddess, they do not provide definite evidence of an exclusive organised sect. They certainly do not provide any evidence suggesting that the cult of the Great Goddess was only an offshoot from either the cult of Śiva or that of Viśṇu, although a certain affiliation with both these deities is apparent. While the Viṣṇuīte element would seem to be quite prominent in some myths, the association of the Great Goddess with Śiva appears to have been far closer, since many of the principal names of the Goddess, such as Ambikā, Umā, Pārvatī, etc., are known to be the names of Śiva's consort. The instance of the Devī-mahātmya itself is very instructive in this connection. While this text is introduced as an account of the Goddess who is the Mahā-māyā of Hari-Viśṇu, it refers to her in the lengthy mythological narratives of her

---

63 See Dasgupta, A History of Indian Philosophy, III, p.497.
64 See also below, pp.135-6.
65 Cf. Hartmann, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Göttin Lākṣmī, p.40; also Agrawala, op.cit., JIH., XLII, 1964, pp.824, 826.
66 Cf. Monier Williams, Brāhmaṇism and Hindūism, p.184.
67 See below, pp.116 ff.
various feats not as Lakṣmī, Vaiṣṇavī or Nārāyanī, but generally as Ambikā or Caṇḍikā. But there are a large number of cosmogonic and other myths in which it is specifically the consort of Śiva who appears as the Supreme Goddess. Thus the Goddess who is described in the Deva-sṛṣṭi section of the Vāyu Purāṇa as pervading the entire world in thousands of forms, of which dozens are actually named, is initially introduced as forming half of the body of Śiva. Similarly, it is the one destined to be Śiva's consort who is presented as the Supreme Goddess in the Tāraka-vadha episode in the Matsya Purāṇa. The most definite evidence is, of course, of the Pīṭha legends in which the many goddesses and their holy shrines in the country are affiliated to Sati, the wife of Śiva. In fact, the very close association of the Supreme Goddess with Śiva has never been doubted, and many authors even begin their account of Devī worship by tracing the history of the consort of Śiva. Hopkins is certainly right in his assumption that the adoption of Devī or Durgā is a late feature of Viṣṇuism.

Confining ourselves for the present to the fully evolved concept as seen above and its apparently highly syncretistic nature, it may be noted that there is a general consensus that the many so-called names and forms of the Great Goddess actually refer to independent goddess concepts which were utilized, or actually merged, to form the concept of the Great Goddess. A very strong strand in the make-up of the composite Great Goddess is generally supposed to be formed by the consort of Rudra-Śiva,

---

68 See above, p. 94. The name Caṇḍikā, literally "the violent one", seems to have been derived from canda which appears as an epithet of Śiva and Skanda; see Hopkins, EM., p.225.
69 Vā.P., 9.82; see also above, Ch.I, pp.21-2.
70 Mat.P., 154.56 ff.; see also above, p.99.
71 See above, Ch.I, pp.22 ff.
72 See below, pp.116 ff.
73 Hopkins, EM., p.225.
74 See e.g., Jacobi, H., "Brahmanism", FREL, 2, p.813; Bhandarkar, Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc., pp.143-4.
variously named as Ambikā, Uma, Parvati, Gauri, Satī, Kālī, etc. ⁷⁵ In the epic-Purānic myths, Gauri appears also as the wife of Varuṇa. ⁷⁶ According to Weber, she may refer to the Vedic Nirṛti. ⁷⁷ It has also been suggested that she may have been originally worshipped by the yellow skinned Mongoloids of the Himalayan region. ⁷⁸ Since a typical brāhmaṇa is sometimes described as gaura, "fair-complexioned", ⁷⁹ the name Gauri may have been a contribution of the brahmanical tradition and may suggest the recognition of the goddess in the brahmanical circles. The popular Purānic mythology frequently understands the name Kālī as denoting the black colour of the Goddess. ⁸⁰ It is possible, therefore, that Kālī was originally a goddess of some dark-skinned aboriginal tribe. But her character and function as the cruel goddess of destruction also connect her with Time, or Kāla, in the sense of ill fate and death, which is also a name of Śiva in his aspect as a god of destruction. ⁸¹ In any case, as Weber suggested very early, she seems to be connected with Kālī which is given as a name to one of the seven flames or tongues of the Fire-god in the Mundaka Upaniṣad. ⁸² Whether a cruel goddess named Kālī was already in existence at that time is uncertain, but it is apparently this goddess who appears in some brahmanical domestic

⁷⁵ See below, pp.116 ff., 122 ff., 128 ff.
⁷⁶ See Hopkins, EM., pp.63, 120, 225.
⁷⁷ As cited in Muir, OST., IV, p.425.
⁸⁰ See e.g. Mār.P., 82.44; 84.4-5 (tr. Pargiter, pp.494 and 499 respectively); cf. also Va.P., 9.83.
⁸¹ See Hopkins, EM., p.76; Sircar, op.cit., JRASB.L., XIV, no.1, p.3, fn.2. Mazumdar has tried to connect the two meanings of kāla, "black" and "time". He has argued that kāla, meaning black, is derived from Dravidian kar = black (*kar → Tamil karappu = black), and kāla signifying time, comes from this source because darkness and fate are associated with kāla in its uses in early times; see Mazumdar, The History of Bengali Language, p.76.
⁸² As cited in Muir, OST., IV, pp.425, 429-30; see also below, p.117.
rites with her name euphemistically changed as Bhadra-kālī. It is quite probable that Kālī was originally an independent goddess. Even in the later period, a clear distinction is sometimes imagined between her and Śiva’s consort. Cāmunḍā, who is identified with Kālī in the Devī-māhātmya, is a very late entrant into the brahmanical pantheon. Her name is unknown in the epics. But the fact that she occupies such a prominent position in the Devī-māhātmya and the text finds it necessary to produce a special etymological explanation of her name indicates clearly that she was a quite popular goddess at the time of its composition.

The origin of Durgā is also obscure. Her name suggests a goddess of mountainous and forest regions. Perhaps it is she who was originally associated with Vindhyā mountain and was worshipped through bloody rites by several aboriginal non-Aryan tribes like the Śabarās, Barbaras and Pulindas. In the account of Śiva’s marriage with Pārvatī, the Matsya Purāṇa once distinguishes between Pārvatī and Durgā and seems to connect the latter with the forests, infested with tigers and lions, in the vicinity of the river Ganges. In any case, considering that the apocryphal hymns to the Goddess in the Mahābhārata are specifically said to have been sung in the praise of Durgā, and the Great Goddess is more than once referred to under this name in the mythological narratives of the Devī-māhātmya, Durgā must have had a very popular cult and have made a major contribution to the formation of the concept and cult of the Great Goddess.

83 SGS., II,14,14 (SBE., XXIX, p.86); Manu-smṛti, III,89; Vaikāhāna-smṛta-sūtra, III,7; tr. Caland, p,77.
84 In Kumārasaṁbhava, VII,39, the Kapālābharaṇa Kālī follows the Mātrs in the train of Śiva when the latter is proceeding to marry Pārvatī; see also Hartmann, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Götter Lakṣmī, p,36, citing Liṅga Purāṇa, II,6,53 where also a similar distinction is made.
85 On Cāmunḍā, see below, Ch.III, pp.185, fn.222, and 190, fn.250.
86 See above, Ch.I, pp.35 ff.
88 Mat.P., 154,561.
A very curious figure is Ekanamsa under which name the Harivamsa once refers to the Great Goddess in the myth of Krishna's birth. The Mahabharata once identifies her with Kuhu, and the Brhatasamhita describes her image in a manner which agrees with her being a sister of Saakarshana and Krishna. Whatever may be the significance of her name, she may be presumed to have been a fairly popular goddess in our period, because it is not only in Vaisnava myths that she makes her appearance but also in purely Sivaite ones where she is regarded as identical with Parvati. She appears in the list of popular goddesses also in the Angavijaya. Since the Harivamsa provides the additional information that the so-called divine daughter of Yasoda, when released from Kama's grasp, was adored by the Vaisnavas and brought up like a son, it has been suggested that she was originally a tutelary goddess of this tribe, and that this may perhaps provide additional evidence of matriarchal traits in the Vaisnavas.

The exact significance of the name Arya also should be regarded as uncertain. It might only suggest the high and noble status of the Great Goddess in brahmanical circles, or, alternatively, point to the popular goddess Arya who appears in the Mahabharata as a Bala-graha transformed into a deity interested in children's welfare. The latter suggestion is strengthened by the fact that of the several similar deities mentioned in the same context in the Mahabharata, the reference to Arya is perhaps

89 See above, p.99.
90 Mbh., III.208.8:
Yam tu drṣṭvā bhagavatim janaḥ kuhukuhāyate,
Ekanamsatī yamahūḥ kuhūmgirasaḥ sutām.
92 See Mat.P., 154.74.
93 See above, Ch.I, p.18.
94 Hv., 96.13 ff..
95 See Jaiswal, The Origin and Development of Vaisnavism, pp.66 ff..
96 See above, Ch.I, pp.8, 31.
the most complementary. It has been suggested that both Kauśikī and 
Kātyāyanī point to the tutelary goddesses of the brahmanical families 
of the Kuṣika and Kātyāyana gotras respectively. 97 But the name Kauśikī 
could also have come through Indra who bears the epithet Kuśika in the 
Ṛg-veda 98 and is closely connected with the Goddess in the myth of Kṛṣṇa's 
birth.99 The source of Kātyāyanī, as of several other names of the 
Goddess, including Kālī as noted above, has also been traced back to the 
Vedic Fire-god and his identification with Rudra. 100 Whether the names 
Śakambhari and Bhrāmarī point to the Vedic goddesses Pṛthivī, Ilā, etc., 
as has sometimes been suggested, 101 may not be quite certain. 102 But the 
two may have been independent goddesses. At least the former finds a 
prominent mention in the Tīrthayātra section in the Aranyaka-parvan 
of the 
Mahābhārata, 103 and the same text also refers to the sacred place of Bhīmā 
somewhere in the north-western regions of the country.104 The name 
Kumārī, as noted above, may denote a virgin goddess, 105 although in the 
context of the Great Goddess, it was probably used in a moral sense.106 In 
any case, it does seem to have some connection with various tīrthas bearing 
names such as Kumārī, Kanyā, etc. 107

97 See Bhandarkar, Vaiṣṇavism, Saivism, etc., pp.142, 144.
98 RV., I,10,11.
99 See above, p.99; also Hx., 47.46-7.
100 See Weber as cited in Muir, OST., IV, p.427; also below, p.117.
101 See Dikshit, The Mother Goddess, p.85; Das Gupta, Shashi Bhusan, "Evolution 
of Mother Worship in India", in Madhavanand and Majumdar (ed.), Great Women 
of India, pp.54-5.
102 On the nature of the real contribution of the Vedic brahmanical tradition 
to the concept of the Great Goddess, see below, pp.133 ff.
103 See above, Ch.I, p.43.
104 See above, Ch.I, p.42.
105 See above, p.92.
106 As applied to the Goddess the word must have a wider sense than that of 
virginity, Cf. Hartmann, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Göttin Lakṣmī, p.36.
107 See above, Ch.I, p.45.
Since the Great Goddess bears many names in the eulogies, the exercise of tracing the various names to possible independent goddess concepts can be carried on much further. But it is hardly necessary. Apart from the fact that several names given to the Goddess, such as Lakṣmi, Sarasvatī, etc., are those of known independent goddesses, there are many others which, as noted above, may be only poetic and descriptive epithets. Again, even if some names may be pointed out as having independent histories, it would still be pointless to pick them out if they do not lead to goddesses who may be supposed to have had a popular cult. Personifications of various mental and moral qualities, generally speaking, may be said to belong to this group.

A few words may be said also about the myth of the Goddess killing the Buffalo-demon, which is not only constantly alluded to in literature but would also appear from the sculptural evidences, to be noticed below, as the most characteristic element in the concept of the Goddess. The origin of this myth is very obscure. The Mahābhārata attributes the killing of Mahiśāsura to Skanda-Kārttikeya, and Quackenbos has imagined on this basis that the Goddess either usurped the fame originally belonging to her son, or Mahiśa, once killed by Skanda, was obligingly reborn to be slaughtered again at the hands of the Goddess. The latter, of course, is not an alternative but only a rationalization of the former hypothesis. Solitary instances may be found in the Purāṇic literature also where Skanda appears as the killer of the Buffalo-demon, but the feat is almost unanimously the prerogative of the Goddess and, what is even more important, no other deity except the Goddess is ever credited with it in iconography. Considering the force of this tradition, there is an even greater likelihood that Skanda-Kārttikeya obtained this feature from his supposed mother. It is not possible to say what is the origin and original significance of this

108 See above, p.92; also Ch.I, p.20.
109 Mbh., III.221.52 ff., esp. 65-6; IX.45.65.
111 Ibid., p.249, fn.1; see also Vām.P., 32.36 ff., esp. 109. It may be noted that the same Purāṇa describes in considerable detail the destruction of Mahiśa by the Goddess; see esp. Vām.P., ch.21.
myth. Kosambi has made a tentative suggestion that Śiva himself or some equivalent of him might have been originally the Buffalo-demon. The myth might thus be related to some historical conflict between the cult of this deity and that of the mother goddesses. In support of his hypothesis, he points to the horned headdress of the three-faced god seated in the yogic posture on the well known Mohenjodaro seal showing buffalo horns, and to a pastoral god called Mhasoba currently in worship at Poona and the surrounding area. The latter god must be regarded as Mahiṣasura, who is not only worshipped sometimes in close proximity of a Devī shrine but is also married to some local goddesses who are regarded as forms of Durgā-Pārvatī. Kosambi also connects his hypothesis with the form of Devī in which she tramples upon a lifeless Śiva.\(^{112}\) Since the horns in the Mohenjodaro seal noted above appear to be ridged at regular intervals or twisted,\(^{113}\) they could represent buffalo-horns, although this by itself need not prove the seated deity wearing the horned headdress to be a Buffalo-deity.\(^{114}\) Also, if the appearance of animals on the Indus Valley seals has some religious significance, as is often supposed, especially in cases where the animal is also associated with symbols or utensils which may have religious significance, it is possible that the buffalo too was regarded as a sacred animal by the Indus Valley people.\(^{115}\) But all this provides no definite evidence for Kosambi's thesis. A hypothetical cult of a Buffalo-god, analogous to Rudra-Śiva, in the Indus Valley culture, is too vague and too far separated to be easily connected with the motif of the Goddess killing the Buffalo-demon. Also, this characteristic myth of the Goddesses as narrated in the Purāṇas contains no suggestion whatever of the identity of Mahiṣa with Śiva. The late motif of the Goddess trampling a lifeless Śiva should be connected with the Tantric concepts of some fierce

---

\(^{112}\) Kosambi, Myth and Reality, pp.2-3, 28, 90-1, 122.

\(^{113}\) For the Mohenjodaro seal under reference, see Marshall (ed.), MIC., I, pl.XII,17.

\(^{114}\) The horned headdress as a sacred symbol or emblem of divinity was popular in contemporary Sumer and Babylonia. The specialized meaning that Kosambi gives this headdress on the Mohenjodaro seal is very unlikely; see Marshall (ed.), MIC., I, pp.54-5.

\(^{115}\) Ibid., p.70.
forms of the Goddess which were supposed to be seated on corpses, and perhaps ultimately to the Goddess symbolizing the life and energy in her consort Śiva without which he is as good as dead. We also consider it a little risky to use such thin modern anthropological data, as Kosambi has done, to explain a popular ancient myth. It is quite possible that this animal adversary of the Goddess simply symbolized darkness and death. This would agree with the literary and iconographic motif of Yama, the god of death, having a buffalo as his vāhana. On the other hand, the myth may simply be connected with the sacrifice of buffaloes to the Goddess. But whatever may be the origin of the myth, it is certain that in the classical Hinduism of the Purāṇas, the killing of the Buffalo-demon was the special prerogative of the Goddess and it was in this form that she was generally recognized in iconography.

An important question is when this highly sycretistic concept and cult of the Supreme Goddess evolved. This touches upon the dating of the epic, Purānic and similar materials about the Supreme Goddess as analysed above. There seems little dispute about the dating of Gaūḍavaho and Caṇḍī-śataka. Since Vākpati-rāja was a court poet of Yaśovarman of Kanauj, his Gaūḍavaho may be dated to the middle of the 8th century A.D. Also, since Vākpati presents in this Prakrit poem vivid pictures of rural life and locates the Goddess' shrine in Vindhya region, it seems natural that he produces a gruesome picture of it since the region was populated by aboriginal tribes who were much feared by the inhabitants of more settled areas. The ascription of Caṇḍī-śataka to Bāṇabhaṭṭa, the author of Haṭa-carita and Kādambarī and contemporary of king Haṭa of Śaṅgīśvara and Kanauj, is also generally accepted, even though this work is in poorer style than

117 Banerjea, DHL., p.525.
118 This may be implied in the frequent references to the offerings of animal flesh to the Goddess. By this time the sanctity of the cow was well established.
120 See Keith, op.cit., pp.150-1.
others by the same author. So the evolution of the concept and cult of the Great Goddess may be presumed to have been an accomplished fact by the beginning of the 7th century A.D. The dates of the epic-Parāśic materials are uncertain. The most important is the Devī-māhātmya which may be regarded as the principal text of the cult of the Supreme Goddess. It has been clearly demonstrated by Pargiter that the requirement of the continuity of narratives in the Markandeya Purāṇa suggests that the Devī-māhātmya, which is a complete poem by itself and quite unconnected with the Purāṇic text in which it is embedded, is a later interpolation. Also, since the earliest manuscript of this poem is datable to the 9th century A.D., it must have been completed before that time, and, according to Pargiter, it was probably composed in the 5th–6th century A.D. Winternitz, Hazra and others have fully endorsed this dating. Pargiter also added that, on the consideration of the close association of the Goddess with Śiva, whose worship was particularly popular during the period in the western part of the country, the Devī-māhātmya is likely to have been composed in this general region. On the basis of the choice of the two motifs, Seça-sāyi Viṣṇu and Maḥīṣa-mardini, together in the same shrine, the Maḥīṣa-mardini Mandaśa at Māmallapuram, Seshadri believes that cantos 81 and 82 of the Devī-māhātmya in the Markandeya Purāṇa must have been completed before the second half of the 7th century A.D. Again, on the basis of the parallelisms between the iconographic motifs described in the text and

121 See Dasgupta and De, op.cit., pp.170-1.
124 Mar.P., tr. Pargiter, Intro., pp.xi-xiii. While Pargiter's general inference in the form noted above is very acceptable to us, we feel that his specification of Maṇḍhata in the Narmada region as the place of origin of the poem is not adequately supported.
actual sculptural illustrations, and also on the basis of several other motifs, linguistic usages and the general religious background, Agrawala dated the text to the Gupta period. Iconographic parallelisms may not be wholly reliable guides for dating because textual descriptions could also be imagined as based on popular iconographic patterns. But, as noted above, an early 7th century A.D. inscription from Rajasthan quotes a verse from the Devī-māhātmya, and happily, this verse expresses succinctly the salient characteristics of the Great Goddess. The Devī-māhātmya, therefore, must have been completed sometime before the close of the 6th century A.D., and may have been in existence towards the later part of the Gupta period.

The dating of the Devī-māhātmya in the 5th - 6th century A.D. facilitates the use of similar epic and Purānic materials for our purpose. Thus, even though the evidence of manuscripts has proved that the hymns to Durgā by Yudhiṣṭhira and Arjuna were interpolated into the Mahābhārata at a later date, as were the Ārya-stava and a few similar hymns in the Harivamśa, we feel justified in making use of them because, as source materials, they clearly fall in the same class as the Devī-māhātmya and make no significant additions to the concept of the Supreme Goddess as presented in that text.

127 See Bhandarkar, D.R., "Epigraphic Notes and Questions: VI - The Date of the Markandeya Purāṇa", JBBRAS., XXIII, 1909-14, pp.73-4; Ram Karna, "Dadhimātī-mātā Inscription of the time of Druhāla; [Gupta-] Saṣvat 289", EL., XI, pp.300, 302, 303 fn.1 by Sten Konow, and 11,11-2 of the inscription; see also above, Ch.1, pp.62-3 and fn.354.
128 Cf. the following statement by Winternitz in his review of Utgikar's edition of the Virāṭa-parvan of the Mahābhārata in ABORI., V, pt.1, 1923-24, p.24: "Now Utgikar has proved, that by the unmistakable evidence of the MSS, the Durgāstotra is a late interpolation in the Virāṭa-parvan, and has to be excluded from the text altogether, Utgikar (p.xxii) is perfectly right in saying that no absolutely certain historical argument could have proved the Durgā-stotra to be an interpolation, while the evidence of the MSS, is an absolute proof."
The evidence of inscribed records and incidental references in secular literature also confirm that the concept and cult of the Great Goddess must have evolved by the Gupta period and become quite popular in the immediately following one. The earliest inscription clearly suggesting such a cult comes from Choti Sādrī in the erstwhile Udaipur State in Rajasthan and is dated in the [Vikrama-] year 547 = 491 A.D. It opens with an invocation to the Goddess called Devī, who is described as one who bears a sharp spear that tears asunder the demon, Asura (probably Mahiśāsura), or demons, whose rapidity is impetuous owing to her being seated in a chariot to which is yoked a fierce lion (or lions), whose anger is concentrated in her frowning glance, who, out of her devotedness, assumes half of the body of moon-crested Hara, and who, out of kindness to the devotees, sustains the worlds like a mother full of tenderness arising from her affection for her own children. The purpose of the inscription is to record that a certain Mahārāja Gauri, desirous of the grace of the Goddess, built a palatial shrine for her. Several other inscriptions which may be related to the cult of the Great Goddess belong to a later period. They are generally dated in the 7th century A.D., and come mostly from Rajasthan but also from various other places in North India, including modern Uttar Pradesh and Orissa. In all cases, the goddesses referred to have to be identified as the Great Goddess for the simple reason that they bear either the general name Devī or such popular names as Durgā, Kātyāyani, Cāmunda, Śākambharī or Bhavānī.


130 Ibid., 11.1-3 of the inscription. The corrected invocatory verses as read by the editor are:

 Devī jayatasya-asura-dāraṇa-tīkṣaṇa-sūlā
 prodgīṛṇa-ratna-makūṭa-anāśu-cala-pravāhā,
 Simh-ogra-yukta-ratham-aṣṭhita-carpḍa-vigrah
 birūbaṅga-çṛtī-vinippata-nivigṛha-roṣa। 1
 Bhūyo-pi sa jayati ya saśiśekharasaya
 dehārdhama udvahati bhaktatavā ārahasya,
 Ya bhakta-vatsalataya prabhuhartī lokān
 māt-eva svākya-suta-prama-viryuddha-sneha। 2

131 For the inscriptions in our period which may be related to the cult of the Supreme Goddess, see above, Ch.I, p.60, fn.338.
It is similar in the case of various incidental statements in literature. Such statements have been taken to refer to the Great Goddess because they use her principal names, although in some cases at least the deity referred to may be no more than a local or tribal goddess who has assumed a literary colour and donned a superior garb. The references to Kātyāyani in the dramas of Bhāsa must be related to the cult of Majādevi because they are either in clear allusion to some well known myth connected with the Great Goddess, such as her role in the myth of Kṛṣṇa's birth and in the destruction of the demons Śumbha, Niśumbha and Mahiṣa, or relate the goddess to Śiva. The same should be imagined of Kātyāyani whose shrine in Kusumapura (Pārīlputra) is referred to in the Vēsavadattā of Subandhu, because the goddess is described as the killer of the demons Śumbha, Niśumbha and Mahiṣa. In the Mṛcchakatika, Durgā appears only in the

132 We have omitted any mention of the goddess Madirā, provision for whose shrine, along with those of several other deities, in the centre of the fortified town, is made in the Arthaśāstra of Kautilya. It has been sometimes suggested that she may be the same as the goddess Durgā-Kālī, but we regard it as doubtful; see Arthaśāstra, ed. Kangle, 2.4.17, and note on it in ibid., tr. Kangle, p.80, where the opinion of Meyer is also cited. It is also uncertain whether the goddess bears any relationship with Surā, Vāruṇī, etc. mentioned in other texts; see above, Ch.I, p.16, fn.83.

133 Bhasa-nātaka-çakram, ed. Dovadhar, pp.532 ff. (Bāla-carita, Act II). Kāma describes the goddess as:

Tīkṣṇagrama śulamālambya raudra-veṣeṇa īrmbhate,
Vināśakāle samprapte kālātririvothita.

The goddess Kātyāyani identifies herself as:

Śumbham niśumbham mahiṣam ca hatvā kṛtvā surāmśtan rata-satru-pākṣan,
Ahaṁ prasūta vasudeva-vānse kātyāyani (sic) kaṁśa-kula-kṣayāya.

See also ibid., p.83 (Pratijñā-vaugandharavana, Act III) where a reference is made to a Śiva temple in Ujjayini which had in it the icons of Śiva, his consort Lohita-Kātyāyani and son Brahmacāri (Skanda-kumāra). Incidentally, the fact that the demons of Bhāsa also chose the theme of Kṛṣṇa's birth and refer to the role of Devī in the destruction of Kaṁṣa, suggests a late date for them, closer to Śudraka and Kālidāsa than to Pāṇini as has sometimes been suggested. On the date of Bhāsa, see Keith, A History of Sanskrit Literature, Preface, pp.xii ff.; Mehendale, M.A., in Majumdar (ed.), The Age of Imperial Unity, p.261.

134 Vēsavadattā, tr. Gray, p.77. The text translated by Gray characterises the goddess as Vetālā, but the Telugu and Srirangam editions replace the epithet by Candā, see ibid., pp.77, fn.4 and p.161. It may be added that this text also alludes to the myth of the Goddess killing the Buffalo-demon in figurative descriptions of the sunset and the evening twilight; see ibid., pp.94, 97, 152, 198.
modest role of the family deity of the caṇḍāla executioners of Carudatta, but her name as well as the epithet Sahyavāsinī necessitate her identification as the Great Goddess. However, the goddess Vindhyavāsinī Durgā occupies a very prominent place in the Daśakumāra-carita. In one place, the text refers to the goddess granting a son and a daughter to a king, and this daughter later worshipping the goddess by means of Kanduka-nṛtya every month on the Kṛttikā day from the age of seven to the day of her marriage, in order to obtain a suitable husband. In another place, where also there is a conspicuous mention of the shrine of the same goddess as well as her image, the popular belief in the greatness of the goddess and her supposed instructions to a certain person in dream are utilized as important props in the continuity of the story.

Bhagavatī Gaurī, her shrine and her worship occupy a prominent place in the Sanskrit drama Nāgānanda. Both Malayavatī and Jimutavāhana address prayers to the Goddess and ask for her grace, and the goddess is credited with reviving Jimutavāhana. Bāṇabhaṭṭa describes in his Harsacarita how he crossed the Caṇḍikā-kānana to reach the village Mallakūṭa on his journey to the court of Harsa. Here, in this forest, the figures of the goddess Kātyāyanī were carved on the trees and travellers used to pray obeisance to them. Agrawala has suggested that this forest must be located somewhere between the rivers Son and Ganges in Shahabad District in Bihar.

135 Mṛcchakatika, Act X, NSP. edn., p.282; see also above, Ch.I, p.27.
136 Daśakumāra-carita, 6th Ucchvāsa, pp.207 ff.
137 Ibid., 8th Ucchvāsa, pp.273 ff. It may be added that in its prescriptions relating to the rites of Truth, the Yajñavalkya-smṛti refers to the worship of Ugra (lit. "powerful", "fierce") deities, and the Mitaksara commentary explains it as referring to Durgā, etc.; see Yajñavalkya-smṛti, II, 112-3 and Vijñāneśvaras commentary thereon.
138 Nāgānanda, ed. Toraskar and Deshpande, pp. 18 ff., 36, 50 ff., 158 ff.
139 Harsacarita, ed. Kane, 2nd Ucchvāsa, p.26:
Prathameḥani ... pathika-jana-namaskriyamāṇa-praveśa-
pādadopkirṣa-kātyāyanī-pratityātanām ... śanaś-caṇḍikā-kānanaṁ- 
atikramya mallakūṭa-nāmanāṁ grāmamagāt.
140 Agrawala, Harsacarita - Eka SāṃskṛtiKA Adhyayana, p.36.
The reference to the Cāṇḍikā temple and its chief Draviḍa priest in a lengthy digression in the Kādambarī of Bāna must be related to the cult of the Great Goddess. Although the description is full of uncanny elements and the goddess Cāṇḍikā has all the appearance of a fierce local and tribal goddess, her conspicuous mention and the meticulous, ornate description of her form, her shrine and her chief priest are clearly inspired by the popular Mahā-devī cult. The same text refers also to the queen Vilāśavatī, aspiring for a son, performing worship in the shrine of Cāṇḍikā by burning guggula, fasting and sleeping on an uncomfortable, prickly bed.

The modest Cāmunḍā-mañḍapa in a forest settlement of aboriginal people that Harṣa is said to have seen in the Vindhya region, according to the Harṣacarita, could simply be the shrine of a local, tribal deity, but the goddess Cāmunḍā of the drama Mālatī-mādhava by Bhavabhūti is a very impressive figure and should be regarded as an aspect of the Great Goddess. Perhaps a goddess of independent origin, Cāmunḍā is invariably included in the

---

141 Kādambarī, ed. Parab, pp.452-63. Candrapīḍa is said to have seen this temple and performed his worship there on his way to Ujjeyini. Agrawala felt that it is probably the same forest and shrine which is referred to as Candikā-kānana in the Harṣacarita (see above); see Agrawala, Kādambarī - Eka Sāṃskṛtika Ādhyāya, p.223, fn.2. The route taken by Candrapīḍa is not very clear, but it seems very unlikely that this Cāṇḍikā shrine of Kādambarī is located in modern Bihar.

142 Cf. Payne, The Sāktas, p.68.

143 With the Draviḍa priest of the Cāṇḍikā temple in the Kādambarī, cf. the statement in the Harṣacarita that among various rites being performed to cure Harṣa's father, there was an Andhra man holding up his arms like a rampart to conciliate Cāṇḍikā; see Harṣacarita, ed. Kan, 5th Ucchvāsa, p.21:

\[ \text{Kvacidāndhroḍhiryamāṇa-bahu-vaprayācyamanā-cāndikam} \]

See also ibid., tr. Cowell and Thomas, p.135.

144 Kādambarī, ed. Parab, p.144:

\[ \text{Anavarata-dahyamāṇa-guggulu-bahula-dhūmānda-kāriteṣu} \]
\[ \text{cāṇḍikā-gṛheṣu dhavalāṃbāreṇa śuci-mūrtirupoṣitā} \]
\[ \text{harita-kusopaccadēṣu musala-śayenēṣu suṣvēpa} \]

145 Harṣacarita, ed. Kane, 7th Ucchvāsa, p.68; see also above, Ch.1, pp.27-8, fn.137.

popular group of the Sapta- or Aṣṭa-mātrikās, and, identified with Kālī, she is regarded as an emanation of the Great Goddess in the Devī-mahātmya. Similarly, while the goddess Ambā worshipped by Vilāsavatī, as mentioned in the Kādambarī, may be a local deity, the goddess Ambikā of the Gaṇapati-kālpa-prakāraṇa in the Yājñavalkya-smṛti is obviously the same as her namesake in the Devī-mahātmya.

It is clear from the evidence presented above that the cult of the Supreme Goddess becomes recognizable from the Gupta period onwards. How far back its history can be traced depends upon the identification of the central element in the concept of the Supreme Goddess. In other words, the crucial question to answer is what is the nucleus around which the concept developed, or, to be more precise, who is the goddess who achieved prominence and popularity enough to absorb other smaller goddesses and inspire poems and eulogies painting her as the Supreme Deity, the Supreme Power, the final refuge, the origin and end of the world, etc. The concept of the Supreme Goddess was not a mechanical product or a purely literary motif. The evidence of secular literature and inscribed records proves that it had a real cult as its basis.

Several authors have examined the question of the origin of the Great Goddess of classical Hinduism. It is impossible to be exhaustive in our references to them. But we may present the representative lines of enquiry in a very rough historiographical manner, adding our own comments about their validity and limitations.

147 See below, Ch.III, pp.156, 185 and 190, fn.250.
149 Yājñavalkya-smṛti, I. 286-91. Ambikā is here called Vināyakasya janani. According to the prescription laid down, the offerings to the goddess, including raw and cooked meat and fish, are to be made in a winnowing basket at the crossroads, with the prayer to give beauty, fame, prosperity, progeny, wealth and satisfaction of all desires.
150 On the origin and development of the concept and cult of the Great Goddess, we refer particularly to the following: Wilson, The Religious Sects of the Hindus, pp.135 ff.; Muir, OST., IV, pp.420 ff., 497 ff., where the opinion of Weber is also extensively reproduced; Oppert, The Original Inhabitants of
At an early stage, the main source of the Great Goddess, like that of many other elements of classical Hinduism of the epics and the Purānas, was traced back to the hymns of the Rig-veda. Emphasizing the philosophical content as against the Goddess of the cult, Wilson imagined that the worship of the female principle "originated in the literal interpretation of the metaphysical language of the Vedas in which the will and purpose to create the universe is represented as originating from the Creator, and co-existent with him as his consort". This tendency is still very much alive, especially among those who emphasize the esoteric and symbolic elements in the Śākta-Tantric teachings and point to their possible Vedic sources. As it will be seen below, a Vedic brahmanical element is apparent in the concept of the Goddess, but it seems to provide only a superstructure, a philosophical framework for what is non-Vedic and unbrahmanical at its core.

A large majority of other scholars have pointed specifically to the consort of Rudra-Siva as the real source of the Great Goddess. Perhaps the most representative and quite an early opinion of this type is that of Weber, who traced the source of the Goddess to various feminine deities associated with Rudra in the Vedic literature and, at the same time, to various other concepts that this Vedic god obtained through his identification

150 contd


152 The writings of M.P. Pandit on Tantric religion are good illustrations of this approach, but its best earlier representative is Sir John Woodroffe, who also wrote under the pseudonym Arthur Avalon.

153 See below, pp.133 ff.
with Agni. 154 He pointed out not only that Kālī and Karālī, which appear later as names of the Great Goddess, are names of tongues or flames of the Fire-god in the Mundaka Upanisad, but that the names Durgā, Kātyāyanī and Kumārī may also point to the same source. 155 The latter suggestions are quite doubtful, but Weber's general explanation has never been really doubted. It may be added that Weber did not greatly interest himself in this context in the determination of Vedic or non-Vedic elements in the concept.

From an equally early stage again, and even before any archaeological evidence had entered into the picture, it was suspected that various non-Aryan and non-Vedic cults helped the formation of the concept and cult of the Great Goddess. Opinions, however, differ on the nature and extent of this contribution. We cite two representative instances. Bhandarkar traced the history of the cult of Devī or Śakti through the history of the consort of Rudra-Śiva and accepted that, just as in the case of Rudra himself in earlier times, so also in the case of his consort later, an aboriginal element made its contribution in the form of goddesses of forests and mountains worshipped by wild tribes and demanding animal and human offerings. 156 Oppert, on the other hand, asserted that the worship of Devī or Śakti, "the principal of Female Energy", was wholly a contribution of the original non-Aryan inhabitants of the land, whom he identified as Gauḍa-Dravidians. 157 His main arguments were that goddesses occupied an insignificant position in Vedic myths and rituals whereas they are still very popular with the Dravidians of South India, that eulogies to the Great Goddess in the epics and the Purāṇas distinctly point to non-Aryan elements in her character, and, lastly, that Umā and Ambā or Ambikā, two of the principal names of the Goddess, are most likely derived

---

154 See Weber, as cited in Muir, OST., IV, pp.421 ff.
155 Ibid., pp.425 ff.
156 Bhandarkar, Vaisnavism, Śaivism, etc., pp.142 ff., esp. 144. Jacobi expressed similar opinions; see Jacobi, op.cit. (fn.150 above).
from the Dravidian word Āma, meaning "mother". Oppert's vigorous exposition appears to have strongly influenced later writings on the subject and his derivation of the names Uma and Ambika have been frequently endorsed.

The archaeological discoveries of the Indus Valley culture have greatly strengthened the hypothesis outlined above. It is now generally accepted, perhaps a little too readily, that a cult of the Mother Goddess or Earth Goddess formed the popular household religion in the chalcolithic culture of the Indus Valley. The main argument for this hypothesis is the discovery of numerous terracotta figurines of an almost nude female, from practically all over the excavated areas of Harappa and Mohenjodaro and in many other Indus Valley sites also; these "have no clear counterparts in the seals or major sculptures". It has been argued that the remarkable frequency of the occurrence of these figures, their general resemblance to one another, their elaborate headdress and rich jewellery, all indicate that they portray a goddess. More specifically, it has been pointed out that the cup-shaped appendages on either side of the fan-like headdress in several specimens are smoke-stained, suggesting that oil or little pellets of incense

158 Ibid., p.421.
159 See Hopkins, EM., p.226; Keith, RPVU., pp.199-200; etc.; also Caldwell, A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages, pp.613-4.
160 See Wheeler, The Indus Civilization, p.91; also below, p.122. A recent and excellent warning against hasty interpretations of prehistoric figurines has been sounded by Ucko, who demonstrates through an analysis of the Cretan figurines that even though a Mother Goddess may have been worshipped in neolithic Crete, the anthropomorphic figurines from Knossos did not appear to present any corroborative evidence of such a cult; see Ucko, Peter J., "The Interpretation of Prehistoric Anthropomorphic Figurines", JRAI., XCII, pts. I and II, 1962, pp.38 ff.
were burned in them to propitiate the goddess. Marshall pointed also to an oblong sealing from Harappa depicting on the one side an upside-down and apparently nude female with a plant-like object issuing from her womb, and on the other the figures of a man and a woman, the former standing with a sickle-shaped weapon in his hand and the latter seated with the hands raised in an attitude of supplication. He believed that this sealing provided evidence of the cult of the Earth or Mother Goddess and possibly of human sacrifice connected with it. Some modern scholars have been particularly impressed by this evidence and regard it as clear testimony to Marshall's overall hypothesis about the terracotta females. To some others, the more decisive indications are the depictions of pregnant females.

Marshall produced some indirect arguments also in support of his hypothesis. Firstly, he pointed out that female statuettes akin to those found on the Indus Valley sites were also reported in large numbers from various contemporary cultures in West Asia and were generally regarded as representations of the Great Mother or Nature Goddess. Secondly, he argued like Oppert that whereas there was no evidence that goddesses occupied a prominent position in the religious life of the Vedic Aryans, they were conspicuous in later Hinduism, where they appeared as local manifestations of the Great Mother Goddess. This, according to him, strengthened the possibility that a cult of the Great Mother Goddess was very popular in the Indus Valley culture, from where it gradually permeated the religious life of the Vedic Aryans.

In his reconstruction of the cult of the Mother Goddess in the Indus Valley culture and also the near contemporary village cultures in the

163 Marshall (ed.), MIC., I, p.52 and pl.XII,12. See also below, Ch.IV, p.270 and fn.5 where this seal has been noticed in another context.
164 See Sullivan, op.cit., HR., 4, p.117.
167 Ibid., pp.51-2.
neighbouring hills of Baluchistan, Marshall gave the impression that all
the terracotta female figurines may not represent one and the same divinity,
but by and large, he found it convenient to think in terms of a cult of the
Great Mother Goddess, and it is mainly in this form that his hypothesis
has gained currency. As he reconstructed it, therefore, the supposed cult
already anticipates in great measure the cult of the Supreme Goddess of
Furūnic Hinduism. Marshall took his hypothesis a step further by imagining
that the essential idea of Śakti-ism of later times might also be anticipated
at that early age. He defined Śakti-ism as essentially a sexual dualism
in which the Great Mother is conceived of as the personification of the
female energy (Sakti) and as the eternally producing principle (Pra-krți)
which, united with the eternal male principle (Puruṣa), becomes the creator
and mother of the universe, and he pointed out that this Great Goddess is
mythologically conceived of as the consort of Śiva. He argued that a male
god analogous to Śiva Pasupati of later Hinduism seemed to be depicted in
some seals and sculptures, and this suggested that here we might have a
parallelism with the religious ideas of the ancient Near East, in which the
Mother Goddess was generally associated with a young, subordinate male god.
Moreover the Indus Valley and other contemporary sites in the Baluchistan
hills have also yielded phallic objects and symbols of female sexual
organs, which suggested that already at that early age India was familiar
with the religious symbolism of the organs of generation and thus with the
sexual dualism which is the underlying principle of the classic Śakti-ism.
In this case also, Marshall's supposition derived support from the strong
probability that the Vedic Aryans disapproved of phallic worship. With

168 Ibid., p.50, fn.5.
169 Ibid., pp.57 ff.
170 Ibid., pp.52 ff.
171 Ibid., pp.58 ff.
172 See Bhandarkar, Vaisnavism, Śaivism, etc., p.115; Keith, in Rapson (ed.),
The Cambridge History of India, I, p.85; Bas cham, The Wonder that was India,
p.32; Banerjea, DHL., pp.62 ff.; etc. The interpretation of the expression Śisna-devaḥ in RV., VII.21.5 and X.99.3 cannot, of course, be regarded as
finally settled; cf. Pišer, Indian Erotics of the Earliest Period, pp.85-6. Also, it must be accepted that the Vedic myths and rituals are otherwise
full of erotic and sexual allusions; see ibid., pp.43 ff., 108 ff.
the exception of a few dissentient opinions,173 these additional suggestions
of Marshall have many supporters. His hypothesis of the prototype of Śiva
Pasūpati in the seal representations and statuary of the Indus Valley sites
has proved particularly attractive.174 It is also generally conceded that
the conical symbols to which Marshall pointed out, some of which are quite
unrealistic, are formalized representations of the phallus,175 although his
suggestions about the stone rings being symbolical representations of the
female sex are dubious.176 The fact is that, considered individually, almost
every hypothesis of Marshall has found more or less general acceptance, but
the arguments for the existence of a proto-Śakti-ism and proto-Śivaism in
the Indus Valley culture have been best marshalled by Marshall himself, and
since his great report few further arguments in favour of this hypothesis
have been put forward.

The discoveries of the Indus Valley culture and Marshall's reconstruction
of its religious life have strongly moulded the types of opinions represented
by Oppert, Bhandarkar and others, and form the basis of the theories on the
origin and development of the Great Goddess most widely accepted today. In
other words, while the goddess allied to Rudra-Śiva is believed to be the
central element in the concept of the Great Goddess, the history of both,
the goddess and her consort, is now frequently traced from the Indus Valley
culture.177 An additional explanation is also often added that the Great
Goddess was late in receiving recognition because of her alien, non-Vedic
nature.178

173
Cf. Sastri, K.A. Nilakanta, in Bhattacharya (ed.), The Cultural Heritage of
India, IV, pp.65 ff.

174
Wheeler, who otherwise sounds the need for caution in handling material
objects for the reconstruction of religion, seems to accept fully Marshall's
hypothesis of the existence of "Śiva" as yogī, pasūpati and nātarāja in the
Indus Valley culture; see Wheeler, The Indus Civilization, pp.89-90, 109.
See also below, Ch.III, p.206, fn.340.

175
See e.g. Wheeler, op.cit., p.109; Basham, The Wonder that was India, p.24;
Banerjea, DHI., p.63; etc.

176
See above, Ch.I, p.87.

177
See e.g. Banerjea, DHI., pp.447, 489; Yaduvanshi, Śaiva Mata, chs.1 and 2.

178
Cf. Norman Brown, W., op.cit., in Kramer (ed.), Mythologies of the Ancient
World, p.310.
The above explanation has much to commend it, and may in fact be largely true. But it is based on several pre-suppositions and does not explain some significant aspects of the problem.

Thus, even if it is accepted that the terracotta female figurines from the Indus Valley sites, which conform to a certain conventional and hieratic type or otherwise suggest pregnancy or fertility, represent goddesses, which is very likely, it is doubtful whether they represent the same goddess in every case.\textsuperscript{179} Again, although it is very probable that the people in the Indus Valley culture were familiar with a male god analogous to the later Rudra-Siva, we still know nothing of his supposed relation with the goddess cults at that time. If Rudra-Siva was already allied to the Goddess at that early period, why do we notice an ambivalence in his relationship with Ambika in the brahmanical literature, and, what is even more important, why it is that while the recognition of Rudra-Siva appears early in the Vedic brahmanical literature and the god steadily grows in prestige, his supposed consort takes so long to appear and obtain commensurate recognition?\textsuperscript{180} The truth is that the material objects of the Indus Valley culture can at best provide only the most general information,\textsuperscript{181} and presuming that the short inscriptions on the seals of this culture also contain matters of religious interest, no certain assertions can be made about concepts until their script is satisfactorily deciphered.\textsuperscript{182}

With literary records of the Vedic brahmanical tradition, we are naturally on more firm ground. We have shown below in another context that

\textsuperscript{179} See our same remark above, Ch.I, p.75, about the terracotta female figurines of the early historic period; cf. also similar comments by Nilsson on the supposed cult of the Great Mother Goddess in Minoan-Mycenaean religion; Nilsson, \textit{The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion}, etc., pp.337-8.

\textsuperscript{180} See below, p.126.

\textsuperscript{181} Cf. Wheeler, \textit{op.cit.}, p.108; Gordon, \textit{The Prehistoric Background of Indian Culture}, p.68; Allchin, Bridget and Raymond, \textit{The Birth of Indian Civilization}, p.308; also Gonda, \textit{Change and Continuity in Indian Religion}, pp.19 ff.

\textsuperscript{182} The recent claims by Finnish scholars, Parpola and others, to have deciphered the Indus Valley script has not yet received general approval; see reviews of their first two pamphlets, embodying preliminary reports on the decipherment, by Zide, Arlene E.K. and Zvelebil, Kamil, in \textit{Indo-Iranian Journal}, XII, no.2, 1970, pp.126 ff.
there are grounds to suspect that Rudra-Śiva has many and marked non-Vedic elements in his make-up. It is significant, therefore, that the Great Goddess of Purānic times often bears the names of Śiva's consort. The earliest and the most important mention of a female deity associated with Rudra is ofAmbikā, who appears in the Vājasaneyi and the Taittirīya Saṁhitās as his sister, and receives her share of offerings with him in the rite called Tryambaka-home. It is also significant that Ambikā is pictured in the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa and the commentaries on the Yajurvedic texts cited above as a cruel goddess and a killer. It is only in a later period that she appears as the wife of Rudra. Ṣumā, another favourite name of Śiva's consort in epic-Purānic times, appears for the first time as Śumā Haimavatī in the Kena or Talavākara Upaniṣad, without, however, any connection with Rudra-Śiva but important enough to be imagined as the being who revealed the identity of the resplendent Brahmān to the Vedic gods Indra, Agni and Vāyu. The epithet Haimavatī may point to the mountainous origin of Śumā, but, if she was already allied to Śiva, the epithet might have come to her also through the association of that god with mountains. The commentary on the Upaniṣadic passage naturally identifies the goddess as Brahma-vidyā and also understands Haimavatī as alternatively indicating one resplendent with golden ornaments or the

183 See below, Ch.III, p.206, fn.340.
184 VS., III.57a; TS., I.8.6.
185 The rite of Tryambaka-home and the place of Ambikā in it is discussed below in another context, where the relevant passages from the Vedic texts are also reproduced; see below, Ch.III, pp.212 ff..
186 See below, Ch.III, pp.214.
187 See Muir, OST., IV, pp.420, 422; also TA., X.22 (see below, p.125); Hopkins, EM., p.226. On the lateness of the Xth chapter of the Taittirīya Aranyaka, see below, p.125.
188 Kena Upaniṣad, III.1 - IV.1.
189 See Weber, as cited in Muir, OST., IV, pp.423-4; also Keith, RPJVU., pp.199-200. Bhandarkar believed that Śumā was already regarded as the wife of Rudra-Śiva; see Bhandarkar, Vaishnavism, Śāivism, etc., p.111. It is not however till the Taittirīya Aranyaka, X.22 (see below, p.125) and the epics (see Hopkins, EM., p.224) that Śiva is called the husband of Śumā.
daughter of Himālaya. 190 Already in the later Vedic period, various forms of Rudra had been imagined. 191 In the Grhya-sūtras, in the description of the Śūla-gavya sacrifice which is especially meant for him, he is associated with several female beings who bear names such as Rudrāṇi, Bhavānī, Śarvānī, Īḍānī, etc., and receive their share of offerings. 192 By the time of the epics, Rudra has become a very prominent god and his consort is frequently mentioned with him. She appears under various names, Uma being probably the favourite one. Several of her names are derived from the myth of her being the daughter of Himavat, such as Pārvatī, which appears only in late passages but is very common in the Narivāmaṇa and the Purāṇas, and others like Giri-putri, Saila-rāja-putri, etc. Besides the stories of her birth and marriage, she also appears conspicuously in the myth of the destruction of Dakṣa's sacrifice by Śiva. 193 It is this last myth which later grew into the elaborate Pītha legends explaining the many forms and various sacred seats of the Great Goddess. 194

In the evolution of the concept of the Great Goddess, a reference is invariably made also to a version of the Vedic gāyatrī found in the Xth chapter of the Taithārīya Aranyakā, This gāyatrī reads: Kātyāyana-ya vidmāte kanyakumāri (sic) dhīmaḥ, tanno durgī pracodayāt, literally "we think on Kātyāyana and meditate on Kanyakumāri; may Durgī advance us". 195 Since other deities for whom also appropriate gāyatris are given in the same context are all male, 196 it seems natural that in this gāyatrī also we obtain masculine

190 See the commentary on the relevant lines of the Kena Upaniṣad, reproduced by Weber, as cited in Muir, OSt., IV, p.421, fn.200.
191 See Bhandarkar, op.cit., pp.103-5.
192 See HGS., II.8.7 (SBE., XXX, pp.221-2); Pār. GS., III.8.10 (SBE., XXIX, p.352); see also Bhandarkar, op.cit., p.106.
194 See above, Ch.1, pp.22 ff.
195 See Muir, OSt., IV, p.426; TA., X.1.
196 These are Rudra, Vakratunda Danti (Gaṇeśa), Nandi, Mahāśeṣa Śaṃskṛtika (Skanda-Kārttikeya), Garuḍa, Brahma (Brahma), Nārāyaṇa-Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu, Aditya (Sun) and Agni.
forms Kātyāyana, Kanyakumāri and Durgī. But the formula is a curious one and, as Weber pointed out, there is no alternative except to accept the traditional explanation of the commentators and understand the names as irregular forms referring to the Great Goddess as Kātyāyanī, Kanyakumāri and Durgā. The forms are more or less regularized in the Narāyanīya Upaniṣad (which is only another name of the Xth chapter of the Taittiriya Aranyakā) in the Atharva-vedic tradition and the Liṅga Purāṇa. This part of the Taittiriya Aranyakā contains interesting references to the Goddess in two other places also. One is a verse invoking Durgā who is called there Agni-varṇā and Vairocanī. This verse occurs also in the later additions to the Rātri-sūkta in the Khila of the Rg-veda. In the other, Rudra-Śiva is invoked as Ambikā-pati and Umā-pati. This last part of the Taittiriya Aranyakā is generally accepted as a very late addition. In fact, it is extremely doubtful if it can be dated before the Christian era. The same may be said of the Rātri-sūkta in the Khila of the Rg-veda which eulogizes Durgā in some verses apparently added to it in much later times.

The above survey demonstrates one thing very clearly. While Rudra himself had many non-Vedic elements in his make-up, he also seems to have gathered around himself several popular goddesses of non-Vedic origin who bore names which were later given to the Great Goddess and some of whom, such as Ambikā, had clear malevolent streaks in their character. It is

---

197 See Weber, as cited in Muir, OST., IV, pp.426-7.
198 Ibid., p.426, fn.211; also Oppert, The Original Inhabitants of Bhāratavarṣa, p.368, fn.105.
199 Muir, OST., IV, p.427; TA., X.2.
201 TA., X.22.
202 See Max Müller, A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature, etc., p.334; Winternitz, A History of Indian Literature, I, pt.1, pp.205, 207; Ghosh, B.K., in Majumdar (ed.), The Vedic Age, p.421.
203 RV. Khila, IV,2, esp. vv.5 ff. (see Scheftelowitz, op.cit., pp.110-2; RV., ed. Sontakke and Kashikar, vol.IV, pp.956-9; also ibid., p.907).
possible to imagine, therefore, that the goddess originally and most closely allied to Rudra-Śiva gradually rose to importance and absorbed other popular goddesses of similar nature and origin. But this hypothesis still does not quite explain the fact that while Rudra is an important god already in later Vedic texts and, presuming that the Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad was composed before the Christian era and probably not much earlier than the Bhagavadgītā, he had become important enough to be identified with Brahman, his consort takes longer to make an appearance and obtain full recognition. If the apocryphal stutis are excluded from consideration, as they should be, even in the Mahābhārata, Umā-Pārvatī derives her prominence mainly from being the consort of Śiva and does not appear to be a popular goddess worshipped in her own right. It appears to us, therefore, that the Great Goddess of Purānic times must have a history slightly different from that of Rudra-Śiva, and perhaps she was the product of certain special historical situations. The simple explanation that the nucleus of the Great Goddess was provided by the consort of Rudra-Śiva may not be sufficient.

We have seen above that there is a great probability of the prevalence of goddess cults in the Indus Valley culture. It may also be that these cults survived in later Indian history and provided the background of the growth of the cult of the Great Goddess. The terracotta female figurines and the carved stone rings or discs of the early historic period also provide a certain continuity, however vague. Literature also, as seen in the preceding chapter, supplies evidence of widespread cults of popular goddesses of various types and thus helps fill in the background.

Reliable sculptural evidence, which anticipates to a considerable extent the cult of the Great Goddess as seen for example in the Devī-māhātmya, starts with the beginning of the Christian era. It has been noted above that the killing of the Buffalo-demon is probably the most important myth connected with the Great Goddess. This is also probably the favourite

204 See Keith, RPVU., pp.143, 144; Bhandarkar, Vaiṣṇavism, Saivism, etc., p.103 ff.
205 See above, pp.118 ff.
206 See above, Ch.1, pp. 72 ff., 86 ff.
207 See above, pp.100, 106 ff.
iconographic motif of the Goddess and is widely distributed in time and space. The Mahiṣaṃardini motif has its own history of evolution in art, from simple early compositions depicting the bare essentials of the myth in the form of the Goddess overpowering a buffalo to more complex and artistically more satisfying later ones of various types, in which the Goddess and her demon adversary take different iconographic forms. Some developed forms of the motif provide close parallels with the Purānic myth in which the demon is portrayed as emerging in human form when his buffalo-head had been decapitated. The earliest specimens of the Mahiṣaṃardini motif come from Mathura and are dated in the Kuśāṇa period. It is significant that they do not show the lion mount of the Goddess. Two terracotta plaques, from Nagar, in the Jaipur unit of Rajasthan, depicting the same theme have also been assigned to a period from the mid-1st century B.C. to the early 1st century A.D., but the presence of the lion in the better preserved of the two has been regarded as incongruous for such an early figure. They probably belong to late Kuśāṇa or early Gupta period. The motif must have become quite popular by the Gupta

period because specimens of it in stone and terracotta are reported from Bhīṭā, Ahīcchatrā, Rajghat (all in Uttar Pradesh), Udaygiri Caves, the Śiva temple at Bhumra, and Karavan (all in Madhya Pradesh). \[215\]

None of the early Mahiśamardini figures dated to the Kuṣāṇa period bears an identifying label or dedicatory inscription. In the circumstances, while there is no question of their identification as Mahiśamardini, which happens to be an excellent descriptive term, there is no means of knowing that the goddess represented by them was already imagined as the Great Goddess. It has been remarked by one scholar that the Kuṣāṇa statuettes depict an earlier version of the myth which has an unmistakably rural atmosphere. \[216\] However, these early figures prove the very popular cult of a goddess who, inasmuch as she was regarded as the killer of the Buffalo-demon, strongly anticipates the Great Goddess of the Devi-māhātmya. It may be that this goddess, whatever her real name and earlier history, served as the nucleus of the growth of the Great Goddess. Since Mathura was a prolific centre of art during the period, it is not unnatural that the majority of the early figures, if not all of them, belong to that place. But it would be safer to infer that this goddess had a popular cult in the southern and south-western Uttar Pradesh and the contiguous regions of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. We are therefore strongly inclined to believe that she is the same goddess who appears in the persistent tradition of Vindhyavāsinī Devī in literature. Perhaps it was she who was originally given the name Durgā, and was mostly worshipped by non-Aryan tribes like the Śabarās, Barbaras and Pulindas. \[217\]

The strong Śivaite element in the concept of the Great Goddess \[218\] indicates that this very popular divinity of the Vindhya region, who was regarded as the killer of the Buffalo-demon, was absorbed in the Śivaite circles before the philosophic and literary forms of the concept appeared as in the Devi-māhātmya. It is also highly probable that she was already

\[215\] See Seshadri, op.cit. (fn.209 above), pp,6-8; Iyer, op.cit. (fn,213 above), Art.As., XXXI, pp,179 ff..
\[217\] See also above, p,103.
\[218\] See above, pp,100-1, 116 ff.
allied to Śiva when her earliest figures appear in Mathura art, and that her concept and cult obtained a classical form in association with the cult of Śiva. The history of Śivaism during the period seems to confirm this influence. There are several indications that the Śiva cult was particularly popular in western India, including Mathura and Ujjayini, in the early centuries of the Christian era. The Śaka and Kuśāṇa kings of Mathura, who ruled from the 1st century B.C. to 3rd century A.D., favoured either Śiva or Buddha. The Nāga-Bhāraśivas and Yauḍheyaśas, probably the two most important native dynasties which asserted themselves after the disruption of the Kuśāṇa empire, were ardent devotees of Śiva or of the Śivaite deity Skanda-Kārttikeya. The Mathura Pillar Inscription, dated in the Gupta year 61 (= 380-1 A.D.) proves that a branch of Paśupata Śivaism flourished at Mathura during the Kuśāṇa and early Gupta periods. The best evidence of the popularity of Śiva cult in the Avanti region is the strong tradition of the renowned shrine of Mahākāla-Śiva at Ujjayini. It may also be added that some Parivṛṣṭaka Mahārājas, who were feudatories of the Imperial Guptas in Madhya Pradesh, Yaśodharman, Mihirakula, and most of the kings of the Vākaṭaka and Vālabhi dynasties were worshippers of Śiva.


220 Sircar, D.C., in Majumdar (ed.), The Age of Imperial Unity, pp.166-7, 169.


222 See Meghadūta, I,34; Raghuvanaśa, VI,34; also above, p.112, fn.133. The very coarse query in the Mrčchakātika, when Vidyuṣaka, referring to the obesity of Vasantāsenā’s mother, asks whether the entrance of the house was constructed after she was set up there like an idol of Śiva, is understood by van Buitenen to have an indirect reference to the famous Mahākāla temple at Ujjayini; see Mrčchakātika, Act IV, NSP, edn., p.124; ibid., tr. van Buitenen, Intro., p.32 and p.275, note 39. See also Mṛ. P., tr. Pargiter, pp.xi, 521 and note.

223 See Fleet, CII., III, pp.95, 102, 107, 111; also ibid., p.146 and by the same author, "Mandasar Pillar Inscription of Yaśodharman", IA., July 1889, pp.219-20; Majumdar, in Majumdar (ed.), The Classical Age, p.37; Mirashi, Vākaṭaka Rājaveṇaśa ka Itihāsa tathā Abhilekha, p.72; Jaiswal, The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism, p.203.
The above discussion indicates that the popular "Buffalo-killing" goddess of the early statuettes from Mathura, who may have been the original Vindhyavāsīni Devī worshipped by non-Aryan tribes, served as the nucleus of the development of the Great Goddess of the Devī-māhātmya and similar texts. Also, this concept gradually evolved during the Kuśāṇa and early Gupta periods somewhere in the general region of western India, in alliance with the cult of Śiva, which had a stronghold in that region. It is in this specialized form that we may speak of the consort of Rudra-Siva as forming the nucleus of the concept of the Great Goddess.

Perhaps the special historical and cultural background of the age also aided the process of this evolution. It has been seen in the previous Chapter that, during the rule of the foreign dynasties, alien goddesses were introduced in the country. It was also noted that Prakrit forms of the names of some foreign deities have been suspected in the Āṅgavijjā, and the Indian terracotta materials of the early historic period also show some influence of alien goddess cults and concepts. It is not possible to assess accurately the nature and extent of the contribution made by this phenomenon to the eventual growth of the cult of the Great Goddess. Nevertheless, this necessitates that, as against vague suggestions often made about parallelism or contacts between the Indian cult of the Great Goddess and West Asiatic Mother Goddess cults in very early times, enquiry should be directed specifically towards relatively more recent, historical times, such as during the Achaemenid, Alexandrian, Scythian,

224 See also Pargiter, as cited above, p.109.
225 See above, Ch.I, p.69.
226 See above, Ch.I, p.17.
227 See above, Ch.1, pp.78 ff.
228 There are several attempts of this type, but it is most marked in Dikshit, The Mother Goddess, where speculative theories are frequently built up on the basis of vague linguistic and other parallelisms. See also Przyluski, Jean, "Les Aśvin et la Grande Déesse", Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, I, 1936, pp.129 ff., and "The Great Goddess in India and Iran", T.I.H., X, no.3, 1934, pp.405 ff., and criticism of the two by Keith, A.B., in "The Aśvins and the Great Goddess", I.C., III, 1937, pp.721 ff.; also Raychaudhuri, H.C., "Prototypes (?) of Śiva in Western Asia", in Law (ed.), D.R. Bhandarkar Volume, pp.301 ff.; Hazra, Studies in the Upapurāṇas, II, p.23; etc.
Parthian and Kuṣāṇa periods, when India is known to have been in closer contacts with countries beyond its western border and is very likely to have received external influences and made its influence felt on the neighbouring cultures.

The periods of most immediate relevance to our enquiry are those of the rule of the Kuṣāṇas and the immediately succeeding one when the native dynasties asserted their independence, culminating in the rise of the Imperial Guptas, who brought most of North India under one rule. It is well known that the Kuṣāṇa coin-series reveals an elaborate and complex pantheon of deities drawn from the Greco-Roman world, Hellenised West Asia, Iran and India. This pantheon also includes several goddesses, of whom the most important are Nana and Ardokhshe who in terms of the number of coins and variety of types take precedence over several gods. Whatever may be the true explanation of the adoption of such a mixed pantheon by the Kuṣāṇa kings, the fact that they assigned prominent positions to certain alien goddesses must have made its impact on the local goddess cults and indirectly on the evolution of the cult of the Great Goddess. Since the early history and true character of both Nana and Ardokhshe are obscure, it has been possible to speak so far in terms of iconographic

229 See Rosenfield, The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans, p.69; also above, Ch.I, p.64 and fn.360.
230 Rosenfield, op.cit., pp.72, 74-5, 83 ff.; also above, Ch.I, p.69 and fn.399.
231 See Rosenfield, op.cit., pp.69 ff.
232 Nana has been related to Inanna-Ishtar of the ancient Near East, and Ardokhshe to the equivalent of Old Persian Aši-šavā, the Avestic A(r)ši-Oakhsho (of Aši Yāst, Yāst XVII). But the two goddesses have also been related to Anāhita (of Avestan Ašan Yāst), who may contain religious elements of great antiquity but who makes a late appearance and is known to have had a popular cult in Iran in the Parthian period. The latter suggestion gains some strength also on the consideration that but for it, it is difficult to account for the absence of Anāhita on the Kuṣāṇa coins; see Rosenfield, op.cit., pp.74-5 and 83 ff.; also Ghirshman, Iran, pp.269-70. For brief sketches of the concepts and cults of Inanna-Ishtar and Anāhita, see Paton, Lewis Bayles, "Ishtar", ERE, 7, pp.428 ff.; Cumont, Fr., "Anāhita", ibid., 1, pp.414-5. It has been pointed out by Agrawala that the name Nana occurs in the list of the Nighanṭu and it is used in RV., IX, 112.3 in the sense of mother. He also thought that this word may be connected with the ancient Sumerian goddess variously called Nana, Inanna, etc., and with Nana of the Kuṣāṇa coins. But as he himself has pointed out,
influences only. The influence of the Ardokhsho type on the Śrī-Łakṣmī of the gold coin-series of the Imperial Guptas has been noted above. Whether the lion-mount of Umā-Pārvatī was introduced under the influence of Nana is uncertain. But such a possibility cannot be ruled out, especially in view of the probable identification of the two deities. The characteristic lion mount of the Indian goddess could have come through her consort Rudra-Śiva, who is depicted in the Mahabharata as driving in a chariot drawn by lions. But there is no authority to our knowledge which may be certainly dated before the Kuśāṇa period and which associates Umā-Pārvatī-Ambikā-Durgā with a lion. It is also significant that this mount makes a late appearance in the Mahiṣamardini reliefs and many figures of Durgā-Pārvatī, from Mathura and belonging to the Kuśāṇa period, are so identified mainly on the basis of the presence of a lion in the composition. The real impact of Nana and Ardokhsho, whose characters sometimes appear mixed with each other, probably lies in another direction. It is quite probable that their high status and popularity with the ruling dynasty gave a certain prestige to the local goddess cults. The most important individual gainer was the consort of Śiva. Since Śiva

232 contd

the name is a rarity in Vedic literature. Whatever may be the origin of this word in Vedic literature, it is extremely doubtful that it has any connection with goddess Nana of the Kuśāṇa coins; see Agrawala, Vasudeva S., "Aditi and the Great Goddess", IC., IV, no.4, 1938, p.409.

233 See above, Ch.I, pp.66-7.

234 See below.

235 See Mbh., III, 221,1-2.

236 The Mohenjodaro seal which is supposed to represent proto-Śiva also shows a tiger among the animals surrounding the seated human figure, but this hardly provides evidence of the association of the mother goddesses in that culture with a sacred tiger; see Marshall (ed.), MIC., I, p.52. For the possibility of the lion-mount of Durgā-Ambikā being Dravidian in origin, see Gonda, Change and Continuity in Indian Religion, p.88.

237 See above, p.127.

238 See above, Ch.I, p.70.

239 See Rosenfield, op.cit., p.88.
appears on the Kuṣāṇa coins both with Nana and with Umā, the Kuṣāṇas must have identified the two goddesses and assigned them the same high status. Considering the strong probability that the Mahiṣamardini goddess, affiliated to Śiva and identified with Umā-Pārvatī-Ambikā etc., enjoyed great popularity at Mathura and the contiguous southern and south-western regions during the Kuṣāṇa period, it is quite likely that she acquired even greater importance when the local dynasties asserted their independence after the disruption of the Kuṣāṇa empire. The catholic spirit of the Guptas, their feudo-federal administrative set-up and the overall cultural florescence during the period of their rule must have provided the opportunity for a further development and wider acceptance of her cult, its full recognition in élite brahmanical circles and the consequent evolution of the literary and philosophical form of the Great Goddess. The association with the cult of Viṣṇu should be regarded as roughly coinciding with these final phases of the development. If Jaiswal's suggestion is accepted that Ekānaśā was originally a tutelary goddess of the Viṣṇu tribe, this association may have been first initiated with the identification of Ekānaśā with Vindhyavāsinī, but it achieved a more definite form with the evolution of the Viṣṇuite sectarian theology and the recognition of the Great Goddess as the Mahā-māyā or Yoga-nidrā of Viṣṇu.

The characteristic brahmanical elements in the concept of the Great Goddess belong, as suggested above, to the latest stage in its development. The Vedic elements entered the cult apparently through the recognition of the Goddess and the development of the literary form and philosophical basis of her cult in the brahmanical tradition. The contribution of individual Vedic deities, such as Aditi, Pṛthivī, Sarasvatī, etc., appears to us to be very limited. While Sarasvatī had her own independent cult and at best only added to the richness of the literary picture of the Goddess by lending her name, Aditi and Pṛthivī could scarcely be said to

240 See ibid., pp.88, 94.
241 See Majumdar (ed.), The Classical Age, pp.xlvi ff.; 348 ff.; 373.
242 See above, p.104.
243 On the goddess Sarasvatī, see above, Ch.I, p.39, fn.208.
have had popular cults in the real sense of the term. The more definite Vedic brahmanical contribution is the ideological one. As Wilson very early pointed out, the monistic strands in the Vedic hymns do anticipate the concept of the Goddess in the Devi-mahatmya. It is in this sense that the concept of Aditi as the mother of gods and of all beings, or that of Prthivi as the Great Mother, etc., could have made their contributions. More definite anticipations of the Primeval Female Principle as the source of all creation are available in the Devi and Ratri-suktas of the Rig-veda. In the former, the goddess Vāc appears in the role of the Ultimate Creative Principle; in the latter, Rātri. Both appear to have no basis in popular cult. They are rather pure products of priestly imagination. But both ideological traditions apparently survived in later thought. It is likely that the concept of the Great Goddess as Supreme Knowledge, Mahā-vidyā, is related not so much with the concept of Sarasvati of the

244 See below, for suggestions about the possible nature of their contribution. It may be noted that the Mahāyāna Buddhist text Suvarṇa-prabhūṣottama-sūtra devotes a whole chapter to the goddess Drjha Prthivi, but her conception there is quite abstract and not that of a popular goddess in active worship; see Suvarṇa-prabhūṣottama-sūtra, ed. Nobel, ch.10, pp.121 ff.; ibid., tr. Emmerick, pp.51 ff.; cf. also Tucci, Giuseppe, "Earth in India and Tibet", EJ., XXII, 1953 (1959), p.325.

245 See above, p.116.

246 On the concepts of Aditi and Prthivi in the Vedic religion, see Macdonell, VM., pp.88, 120 ff.; Keith, RPVI., pp.174, 215 ff.; also Agrawala, Vasudeva S., "Aditi and the Great Goddess", TC., IV, no.4, 1938, pp.401 ff.. The Vedic brahmanical goddess Prthivi seems to have had a closer relationship with Śrī-Lakṣmi; see Gonda, Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism, pp.230-1; also Tucci, op.cit., EJ., XXII, p.347.

247 RV., X,125. See also Norman Brown, W., "The Creative Role of the Goddess Vāc in the Rig Veda", in Heesterman (ed.), Pratidānam, pp.393 ff.. He suggests that Ekaṁ sat of RV., I,164.46 also refers to Vāc.

248 RV., X,127.

249 Cf. Norman Brown, op.cit., p.393. In the Bhadradevata, Vāc is considered threefold, terrestrial, middle and celestial, and the other goddesses are imagined as her forms; see Bhadradevata, II, 72 ff.. The additional first line in the v.77, which refers to Durgā, is considered an interpolation; see ibid., tr. Macdonell, note on II.77.

250 See above, p.95.
popular cult, but rather with this ancient concept of Vāc, most probably through the mediacy of Brahman-knowledge, Brahma-vidyā. Similarly, it is impossible not to detect a certain relationship between Vedic Rātri and the concept of the Great Goddess as Rātri, Nidrā, etc.\(^{251}\) In any case, as has been pointed out, both the above-mentioned sūktas of the Ṛg-veda came to occupy a prominent position in the Śākta ritual of later times.\(^{252}\)

The suggestive ideas in these and other Ṛg-vedic sūktas, such as the Purusa-sūkta\(^{253}\) and the Nāṣadiya-sūkta,\(^{254}\) were loosely organised in the Upaniṣads in the concept of an impersonal Brahman as the source and end of all creation.\(^{255}\) As in other sectarian theistic systems, especially as they are seen in the popular Purānic literature, the concept of the Great Goddess in the Devī-mahātmya and similar texts also utilizes this idea for its own purposes.\(^{256}\) Again, as Wilson pointed out, another important source of the philosophic basis of the Goddess should be the concept of Prakṛti in Śaṅkhyā philosophy.\(^{257}\) A marked dualism is not a conspicuous feature of the concept of the Great Goddess as seen in the Devī-mahātmya or similar materials examined above, but, is apparently borrowing Śaṅkhyā terminology in calling the Goddess Prakṛti or Mūla-prakṛti.\(^{258}\) In any case,

\(^{251}\) Cf. Mar.P., 78, 59 (tr. Pargiter, p.471), which occurs in Brahmā's eulogy to the Goddess:

Kālaratri-mahāratri-moharatriṣṭa dārupā.

Also, Mat.P., 154, 56 ff.; see also above, pp.91, 94.

\(^{252}\) See Banerjea, DHI., pp.490-1.

\(^{253}\) RV., X.90.

\(^{254}\) RV., X.129.

\(^{255}\) For a brief sketch of the Upaniṣadic concept of Brahman and its relation with the monistic thought in the Ṛg-vedic hymns, see Hiriyanna, Outlines of Indian Philosophy, pp.41 ff., 53 ff.

\(^{256}\) Cf. Dasgupta, A History of Indian Philosophy, III, p.497; see also above, p.99.

\(^{257}\) Wilson, The Religious Sects of the Hindus, pp.136-7; see also above, p.115, n.151; also Renou, in Renou and Filliozat, L'Inde Classique, I, pp.519-20.

\(^{258}\) See Mar.P., 78, 59; 81, 7; 82, 7; etc. (tr. Pargiter, pp.471, 483, 489, etc.).
as affiliated to Śivaism, or in the form of the consort of Śiva, which is particularly noticeable in the Tantras, a monistic adaptation of Sāṁkhya principles is obvious in the concept of the Goddess.\textsuperscript{259}

We may summarise the above discussions in the form that while a long continuity of analogous cults and concepts, with their histories going back to the Indus Valley and the Vedic culture, formed the background or the substratum, the immediate elements that led to the formation of the concept and cult of the Great Goddess were of independent later growth, or at least become recognizable in literature and art at a much later period. Also, in all probability, these elements were of non-Vedic and non-Aryan origin and became particularly prominent in the western and south-western part of India during the rule of the Kuśāṇas and in the immediately following period when native dynasties became locally autonomous. Allied to the cult of Śiva, these elements became prominent enough to give rise to the concept and cult of the Supreme Goddess by the Gupta period. It was probably only after the cult had achieved a certain prominence and a loose organisation that it was affiliated also to the cult of Viṣṇu. As a direct result of the evolution of the Supreme Goddess, the idea became popular that each god has his Śakti; the gods in themselves are powerless and their energies are centred in their female counterparts. It is not surprising that the same Devī-mahātmya, which presents the allegory of Caṇḍikā-Ambikā formed of the collective energies of the gods and ready to annihilate the demons, also contains the allegorical description of the Mātrīs as personified energies of various gods.

\textsuperscript{259} Cf. Woodroffe, \textit{Introduction to Tantra Śāstra}, pp.4 ff.
The Matrs, especially in the form of the Saptamats, are familiar figures to students of Indian iconography. They are equally familiar figures in classical Sanskrit literature, even though they are normally referred to by their generic name alone rather than as a specific group of seven or eight, as in the iconographic texts. It is certain, therefore, that the Matrs had an important popular cult in ancient India, maintaining its distinct individuality despite the growing cult of Devi which absorbed many other goddesses and often altered them beyond recognition. Still, the history of these divinities is very obscure, and we are immediately on uncertain ground when faced with questions like what and how many goddesses constituted this group, how were they named, what was their original and essential nature and in what manner were they propitiated.

Prevalence of the Cult of the Matrs

A review of some opinions about the origin and early history of the Matrs will be presented below - opinions which trace the cult back to the Indus Valley or the Vedic Culture, or sometimes to the two together, besides those pointing to the essentially non-Aryan character of these goddesses. But whatever the origin and early history of the Matrs, the prevalence of their cult from about the beginning of the Christian era can be safely inferred from the available literary and archaeological evidence.

To concentrate on the literary evidence first, the confused mythology of the birth of Skanda and his anointment as generalissimo of the gods' army, etc., as available in the Aranyakas and the Salys-parvans of the Mahabharata, contains several important allusions to the Matrs. Cited generally as Matarah or Matrganah, they appear there in groups, sometimes specified and named but also anonymous, and sometimes in the company of

---

1 Chs. 213-21.
2 Chs. 43-5.
Śiva but frequently as the mothers of Skanda. We propose to analyse these passages later, with a view to ascertaining the origin and nature of the Mātrīs, but it may be mentioned here that the texts not only utilize these goddesses to build up the myth of Skanda's birth but also contain clear evidence of their cult. Thus, in the Aranyaka-parvan, one group of such goddesses, called the daughters of Hūtāsana and apparently distinguished from another group of Mothers, are said to have requested Skanda to bless them to become the good and respected "Mothers of the World", to which the young god replied: "Be it so". A little later, without specifying what Mothers or what group of Mothers are meant, we are told that all the Mothers requested Skanda to install them in place of another anonymous group of Mātāraḥ of a bygone age so that they might now be worshipped. Skanda granted the request, conferred upon the Mothers great power and assured them: "Ye shall live happily worshipped by all". The Mātrīgaṇī, in this context, appear as afflicters of children and are supposed to be pacified with ablutions, incense, unguents, bali-karma and other offerings, and especially with the worship of Skanda; when honoured and worshipped thus, they are said to bestow upon men what is good for them, as well as valour and long life. It may be added here that the Mahābhārata also

---

3 Mbh., III, 217.7:
   Bhavema sarvalokasya vayaṁ mātara uttamaḥ,
   Prasādattava pūjyāṣca priyametatkuruṣva naḥ.
   See also below, pp. 163-4.

4 Mbh., III, 219, 16-7, 23:
   Yastu mātaraḥ pūrvam lokasyaṣya prakalpitāḥ,
   Aṣmākam tadbhavetsthanām tāsam caiva na tadbhavet. 16
   Bhavema pūjyā lokasya na tāḥ pūjyā surarṣāvha,
   ....
And by Skanda:
   Ahaṁ ca vah pradāṣyāmi raudramātmanamāvayam,
   Praramañ tena sahitā sukham vatsyatha pūjitāḥ. 23
   See also below, pp. 165-6.

5 Mbh., III, 219, 42-4:
   Ye ca mātrīgaṇīḥ prakṛtāḥ puruṣāṛṣcaiva ca ye grahāḥ,
   Sarvo skandagṛhāḥ nāma jñeyā nityaṁ sārīrīḥ. 42
   Teṣāṁ prasāmanāṁ kāryaṁ śañām dhūpasmatāḥjanan,
   Belikarmopāharaścā skandasyeyāviśeṣataḥ. 43
   Evaṃe rciṭaṁ sarve prayacchanti suḥkam nṛpaṁ,
   Ayuvīryāṁ ca rājendra samyakpujānamsakṛtaḥ. 44
   See also below, pp. 166-7.
mentions a Matr-tirtha and once calls Siva by the name Matr-bhakta, i.e., one devoted to the Matrs.

There are many references to the Matrs in the early Puranic literature, and the Brhatashtra as well as later śilpaśastras contain prescriptions for making Matr-icons. Particularly suggestive of the popularity of the Mat-cult is the succinct verse of the Brhatashtra which, in trying to lay down what persons are especially qualified to perform the worship of what deities, names only the devotees of Viṣṇu, Sūrya, Siva, the Matrs, Brahmā, Buddha and Jīna. The Natya-sāstra of Bharata also recommends the worship of the Matrs in the ritual connected with the preparation and consecration of the playhouse and the stage. The text clearly identifies these goddesses as "Brāhma, etc.", but prefers to label them Natya-matr.

---

6. MBh., III.81.47. Bathing in this Tirtha was supposed to give much progeny and great prosperity.
7. MBh., XIV.8.19. The reference is in the form Matr-bhaktaya for Siva, in the context of salutation to that god.
8. For the references to the Matrs in the Brahmāṇḍa, Vāyu, Matsya, Mārkaṇḍeya and Bhāgavata Purāṇas, see Dikshitar, Purana Index, II, s.v., Mataras, Matrās, Mātrikās and Mātragnās. Many of these are utilized below at appropriate places.
10. Brhatstra, 59.19:
Viṣṇubhāgavatān maṇi-maṇiśa savituh śambhoḥ sabbhusmadviṣijān,
Matrēṃ api maṇḍalakramavido vīprāṇa vīdurbranmāṇaḥ,
Śākyaṁ sarvahitasya sāntamanaso magnān jīnānāṁ viduh,
Ye yam devamupāśritaṁ svavidhina taistasya kārāya kriyā.
11. Natya-sāstra, III.66:
Namastu nāṭyaśāstraḥ brāhmīyādibhyo nāma nāmaḥ.
The offerings and salutation to the Mothers here are preceded by those to Kubera and the other Yakṣas and followed by offerings to the weapons of Rudra and Viṣṇu, etc. The same Matrs seem to be referred to in ibid., III.29 and 44, in both of which places they are named along with the Yakṣas. The Nāṭya-kumārīs in ibid., III.8 may also be the same. Ghosh is obviously not right in imagining that the Nāṭya-kumārīs are some different and special group of goddesses ignored by the Purāṇas, or that Sarasvatī, Dhiśti, Medhā, Hrī, Śrī, Laksāṇī, Mati and Śrīntī, who are referred to in ibid., III.86-7 and called mātaraḥ, are the Nāṭya-Matr mentioned in the verses cited above; see
But perhaps even more reliable evidences of the prevalence of the Mātr-cult are the incidental references in the "belles-lettres" of the classical Sanskrit literature. In the drama (Daridra-) Cūrūdatta, ascribed to Bhāsa, the hero Cūrūdatta instructs his Vidūṣaka friend: "Go, offer (this) bali to the Mātrṣ at the crossroads", and the instruction, in almost the same words, is repeated in the Mṛcchakātika of Śūdraka. Obviously it must have been possible to make such offerings by proxy. What is significant here is that, in the latter drama, when the Vidūṣaka shows reluctance to oblige—because, in his opinion, there was no use in such offerings when the deities did not favour poor Cūrūdatta—the hero's stern reply is that such rites should not be questioned; they are the obligatory duties of a householder. Clearly, the particular offering to the Mātrṣ is assumed here to be a commonplace one, and, at least in this case, the main worshipper happens to be a poor brahmaṇ in the merchants' profession who is noted for his character and learning.

11 contd

comments by Ghosh on ibid., III, 8, 44, 86-7. The word mātarah for the eight goddesses, Sarasvatī, etc., in III, 86-7 is to be understood as used in a general sense, or at the most on the pattern of the popular group of the Saptā- or Aṣṭa-mātṛkās,

12 Bhāsa-mātaka-cakram, ed. Devadhar, p. 204:

Maitreya! Gaccha, catuspate balimupahara mātṛbhyah.

13 Mṛcchakātika, NSP. edn., Act I, p. 16:

Tadvayasya ... gaccha, tvamapi catuspate mātṛbhya balimupahara.
In the same drama, the Vidūṣaka curses himself in the words: But I, a poor brahmaṇ will come to grief at every step just as an offering made at the crossroads is gobbled up by dogs (see ibid., Act I, p. 46), but this need not have any reference to the Mātr-bali. In Kādambarī, it is said that the queen Vilāsavatī, in the course of performing various rites for a son, also worshipped digdevatās while seated in a mandala at the crossroads, and again at the crossroads made offerings to Śiva; see Kādambarī, ed. Parab, pp. 144, 146.

14 Mṛcchakātika, NSP. edn., Act I, p. 16:

Vayasya! mā maivam, gṛhaṣṭasya nityo'yaḥ vidhiḥ.

15 This is indicated by the casual mention of the rite without elaboration or comment; cf. Wilson, Theatre of the Hindus, I, p. 23, fn. on Mātrṣ. Wilson, however, does not seem to be right in thinking that the rite was comparable to that of the Pitr as enjoined in the Manusmṛti, 3, 91; see below, pp. 224 ff.

16 This is suggested throughout the drama. Albeit in a merchants' profession, Cūrūdatta is proud of his brahmaṇa lineage, follows the brahmanical way of
Besides the fact that the rite mentioned in the two dramas consisted of offerings of *bali*, i.e., balls of cooked rice, to the *Mātrīs* at the crossroads, two other matters of detail are suggested in the context. Firstly, the offering was supposed to take place at the onset of the night, presumably in the dark half of the month, which is suggested not only by the reference to the Vidūṣaka's fear of going out at that unsafe hour and his eventually agreeing when he got a companion with a lamp in her hand, but also by the mention of the moon rising shortly afterwards. Secondly, the night in question was probably of the sixth day of the dark half of the month. As introduced in the *Mrčchakatīka*, the Vidūṣaka Maitreya was to present Čarudatta with a new cloak after the latter had finished certain religious rites. The hero's worship of the house-deities and subsequently his instruction to make offerings to the Mothers are acts which are supposed to have followed this particular rite. The text reports the rite as *siddhikidadevakajjasā*, which, rendered into Sanskrit as *siddhikrtadevakārasya*, would mean *after (Čarudatta) having finished the worship of the gods*. But the commentary of Prthvīdhara records a variant *gaoli-vrata-kṛta*, i.e., *after having finished the gaoli-vrata*.

16 contd

life, is a connossieur of good poetry and music, etc.. All the characters in the drama, including the guards, the judges of the court and the executioners, show due deference to him.

17

The time is indicated as *Padosavelā* (pradosavelā), when the *rujamṛga* would be unsafe because of the courtesans, their parasites, royal servants, etc., moving about; see *Mrčchakatīka*, NSF. edn., Act I, pp.16–7. In fact, throughout this opening act, there are allusions to the onset of the night, as in Vasantasena, pursued by Sakāra, disappearing in the night's darkness (see *ibid.*, pp.27–8), Vidūṣaka enjoying the gentle night-breeze (ibid., p.33), Čarudatta's son suffering from the chilliness of the evening (ibid., p.41), etc.. See *ibid.*, p.30, where Čarudatta agrees to let Radanikā accompany the Vidūṣaka and the latter asks the maid to carry a lamp along with the *bali*.

18

... kṛtām pratiṇipīkābhīhi, Paśyantī hi Saṭāṇkāh, etc., spoken by Čarudatta; see *ibid.*, p.47. It is curious, however, that when Čarudatta returns, past midnight, from the musical concert, we are told of the setting of the moon, and soon after the housebreaking by Sarvilaka takes place.

19


20

which seems to have greater claim to originality, not only because it then makes better sense but also because this reading is supported to some extent, by the Cārudatta of Bhāsa, which has satthikida-devakavyassā. It would appear that the cloak was to be presented to Cārudatta after he had finished certain rites in connection with the vrata observed on the sixth day of the month. Probably on that date Cārudatta had observed a fast which was supposed to be ceremonially broken in the evening, just as, later in the drama, the hero's wife speaks of having observed the Ratnasāṣṭhī fast that day.

Other important evidences of the prevalence of the Mātr-cult come from the works of Bàṣabhāṭṭa. In the Harsacarita, when king Puṣpabhūti wished to see the Bhairavācārya, he was informed that the ascetic was staying in a bilvavaṭīkā to the north of an old mātr-grha. On hearing about his father's illness, Harṣa returned to find all kinds of rites being performed to restore the king to health. One such rite is described as kvaciddīpikā-dahyamāna-kulaputrika-prasādyamāna-mātrpandalam, which is translated by Cowell and Thomas as "There young nobles were burning themselves with lamps to propitiate the Mothers". A rite analogous

---

22 See Mrcchakāṭika, ed. Kane, Notes, p.16.
23 Mrcchakāṭika, NSP, edn., Act III, p.94.
24 Harsacarita, ed. Kane, 3rd Ucchvāsa, p.46; Asya jirīnmatrārhatayuttareṇa bilvavāṭīkā madhyāste.
25 Ibid., 5th Ucchvāsa, p.21. In ibid., fn.1, dahanadahyamāna is noted as a variant for dahyamāna accepted in the text.
26 Harsacarita, tr. Cowell and Thomas, p.135. There seems to be some difference of opinion about the nature of this special propitiation. Thus, according to Kane, the young nobles did not burn their limbs; they rather kept lamps on their heads to propitiate the Mothers and now and then got burnt accidentally; see Harsacarita, ed. Kane, Notes, p.71. He points out that even now worshippers of Ambikā are in the habit of placing lamps on their heads and reverently going round the idol, and suggests comparison with jvalita lohitamūrḍhadvārtanasāṃsibhiḥ kṛṣṇasarpairapi śirodhūtra manidīpakaik-ivārādyamānaṃ of Kadambarī. Agrawala seems to understand the expression simply as propitiating the Mātr̥s by burning lamps; see Harsacarita - Eka Sāṃskṛtika Adhyāyana, p.89. However, an even more painful mode of propitiating these deities is recorded in the Yaśastilaka of Somadeva; see below, p.180, fn.197.
to the one in the Carudatta and the Mrchakatika seems to be referred to in a simile of the Harsacarita, where Hamsavega, overwhelmed at Harṣa's acceptance of the proposal of friendship of Kumāra (Bhāskaravarman) of Prāgijyotisa, goes on to recount the fate of a man in servitude, a royal servant, a man in distress (a fate which can never be likeable to a respectable person), and, in that context, says of such a man: nīśāsaviga māṭrvalipindasya dīku vikṣipyamāṇasya, i.e., "who is thrown in various directions (sent out on various errands) like the māṭrvalipinda even at night". In the Kadambarī, where the queen Vilāsavatī is portrayed as performing all manner of rites and propitiating various gods to obtain a son, we are told that she used to resort to the neighbouring shrines of the Māṭrkās, in whom faith was displayed by the people (darśita-pratyaśyāni sannihita-māṭrka-bhavānāni jagāma), The expression darśita-pratyaśyāni is very significant here and eloquently speaks of the popularity and influence of these goddesses. Further, the long and gruesome description of the old Tamil priest of the Candaikā temple in the forest includes: "His cheeks had been badly scratched in encounters with bears hiding in abandoned Māṭr-shrines".

27 Harṣacarita, ed. Kane, 7th Ucchvāsa, p.65. 28 Kadambarī, ed. Parab, p.145. Parab here accepts the reading sannidhāna, and gives sannihita, as also sannidha, as variants. Since there is no difference in meaning, sannihita may be accepted as the better expression which is adopted in some editions of the text. Later, Vilāsavatī is again depicted as propitiating the Avanti-mātr̥s for the safe return of her son Candrapāda: "... caḍrnapādasavyavāpanāvopacitām kartumavatānamāgarādeyavata-nam avantimātr̥nāmayatanām nirgata Vilāsavatī ..."; see ibid., p.649. Perhaps the same shrine of the Mothers as above is intended here, Bhānucandra's commentary definitely identifies the Avanti-mothers as the Saptamāṭrkās, Brāhmī, etc. Cf. Agrawala, Kadambarī - Eka Sanskritika Adhyayana, p.305 and fn.1. 29 See the relevant commentary by Bhānucandra. Also, cf. Mbh., IX.45.2: Yāsvininām mātr̥nam śṛṇu nāmāni bhirata, Yābhīrīvyāptāstrayo lokāḥ kalyāṇīḥbhīṣaṭcarūḥ. 30 Kadambarī, ed. Parab, p.462: Asakṛdutsannadevamāṭr̥yaghaṇyakṣānaksakajarijaritakapalena. Bhānucandra's commentary does not explain devamāṭr̥yaga, but there is no doubt that a shrine of the Mothers is meant; see Agrawala, Kadambarī - Eka Sanskritika Adhyayana, p.231. A modern Sanskrit commentary by Kṛṣnaḥomahānā Sāstrī specifies the Mātr̥s as Brāhmīpābhrī; see Kadambarī, ed. Kṛṣṇomahānā Sāstrī, p.647.
None of the instances quoted above look like literary clichés used as embellishment. Since all are casual and incidental and occur in the respective narratives without any comment, they create the impression that, in the early centuries of the Christian era, the Mātrās were well-known objects of widespread popular worship, and the authors of our texts were familiar with them, with their sacred places, and with various rites performed in their honour.31

Archaeology provides excellent corroboration of the above literary allusions. The well-known Gangdhārī stone-tablet inscription, of the (Mālava) year 480 (= A.D. 422-3),32 which opens with an invocation to Viṣṇu and records that Mayūrākṣa, a minister of king Viśvavarman, caused to be built a temple of Viṣṇu and a large drinking well, also goes on to record in lines 35-7 that, for the sake of religious merit, the counsellor of the king caused to be built "this very terrible abode ... of the Divine Mothers (Mātrānāīca)". Since Mayūrākṣa was professedly a devotee of Viṣṇu,33

Commenting on darsita-pratyayāni, etc., of Kādambarī (above, p.143, fn.28), Agrawala says that for the worship of the Mātrā goddesses, every village had in its vicinity a Mātrā-bhavana where images of several Mātrās were installed. In the excavations at Ahicchatra one such shrine, he notes, was discovered in which about fifty images of the Mātrā goddesses were found together; Kādambarī - Eka Saṃskṛtiya Adhyayana, p.70, fn.4. Agrawala does not cite the source about the Ahicchatra excavations, but apparently he refers to his own "Terracotta Figurines of Ahicchatra, etc.", AI., no.4, 1947-8, Type 29, pp.171 ff., where he notices the discovery of about forty clay-idols, all except two females, found lying in fragments on a platform built against the city wall in the south-east corner of plot ACV. After noting in detail the common features of these idols, he tentatively suggests identification with Saṣṭhī - the "brahmanical counterpart of the Buddhist Hāritī", although here too he notes that the platform on which these figures were found, in association with half a dozen figures of Mahiṣāsurasamādini, was probably used "as a shrine of the Mother-Goddesses, or mātrā-bhavana, as it is called by Bāṇabhaṭṭa, where different female tutelary deities worshipped by the village people were installed together ...". The idols seem to be dated by Agrawala to a period between A.D. 550-750. They are crude in appearance; many are three-headed and some specimens hold a child. If their identification with the well-known Mātrās could be accepted, it would indicate the popularity of the Mātrā cult in the region of Western U.P. in late Gupta period, the essentially popular nature of the cult, and the uncertain number of goddesses included in the Mātrā-group.32

Fleet, CII., III: Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings, etc., no.17, pp.72-8.33

The minister is qualified in 1s,25-6 of the inscription as one who is displaying by means of lawfully acquired riches, the most extreme devotion
his building a shrine for the Matrs indicates not only that he looked at these goddesses with favour but also that they were already popular divinities of the locality, most likely among the masses. The village Gangdhār, it may be noted, is in the erstwhile Jhalawād State in the Western Malwa Division of the Madhya Pradesh, and Fleet also thought that the name of the village must be connected with the river Gargara, mentioned in the inscription, on whose banks stood the city said to have been adorned with temples, etc., by Mayūrākṣa and where presumably the shrines of Viṣṇu and the Matrs were built.

33 contd

towards the god Viṣṇu who holds the cakra and the gada.

34

It is not infrequently found that a builder of a religious edifice, or a donor, who caused his pious act to be recorded in an inscription, also expressed his personal faith, or that of his family, in a particular deity through explicit statements or pithy epithets. But there are also instances of such persons building shrines for deities, or making donations for faiths, other than their own. To quote a few such instances at random which roughly belong to the period with which we are concerned: (i) Mahārāja Vainyagupta, who was a devotee of Śiva, made gifts for the worship of Buddha; see Sel. Ins., I, pp.340 ff.; (ii) the Uchhakalpa Mahārāja Śarvanātha, who seems to have been a devotee of Viṣṇu, made a grant for the temple of Sun; see CII., III, no.28, pp.125 ff.; (iii) the Maitraka king Drogaśimha, who is called Paramamahēśvara (e.g., in Maliya Cop. Pl. grant of Mahārāja Dharasena II, Jeeck, CII., III, no.38, pp.164 ff.), made a grant to a local goddess Pāṇḍurājya; see Sel. Ins., I, p.426; (iv) another Maitraka ruler Śīlāditya I, called Paramamahēśvara, made grants for the worship of the Sun-god; see EII., XXI, no.18, pp.116 ff. (It is interesting that this king is also shown as a patron of Buddhism; see Majumdar (ed.), The Classical Age, p.53); (v) Śarvavarama Maukharī, who calls himself Paramamahēśvara in his own Asirgadh seal, seems to have confirmed a grant to a Sun-temple; see CII., III, no.46, pp.213 ff.; (vi) Mahāēśivagupta, who called himself Paramamahēśvara and built shrines for Śiva (see EII., XXVII, no.50, pp.319 ff; ibid., XXXI, no.5, pp.31 ff.), also made donations to Buddhist monasteries; see EII., XXIII, pp.113 ff., etc.. Instances where a prince or a noble built shrines or made donations for a deity to whom he owed allegiance would be good evidence of the personal faith of the individual concerned and, to that extent, of the popularity of that deity. But when such persons are seen bestowing the same favour upon other gods or faiths, especially in different and separated areas, it should be best understood in terms of the religious need of that area and, therefore, indicative of the real popularity of the deities or cults concerned. The Matrs, therefore, must have been quite popular deities of the region for them to have attracted the attention of the minister Mayūrākṣa.
From the same general area comes another important record testifying to the popularity of the Mātrī-cult.35 This slightly damaged inscription, dateable towards the end of the 6th century A.D., is engraved on a rock-cut flight of steps leading down the south side of the Deogarh Fort (Jhansi Dist., U.P.) to the banks of the river Betwa. It begins with an invocation to the Divine Mothers as: "May the group of the Mothers, the Mothers of the Universe, having their dwelling in ... and having prowess fit for the preservation of the world, be for your welfare",36 and records that a person called Svāmibhāṭa caused to be constructed on that hill "a very costly and indestructible abode for the Mothers".37 It is highly probable that the builder in this case too belonged to a princely family, since the genealogical portion of the record calls Svāmibhāṭa the grandson of Gonilaka who was an ornament of the Solar race, the son of Kesava who was comparable to Viṣṇu and whose fame was widespread, and himself a man of great prowess and fame. The inscription is engraved immediately above a niche which contains a panel of the Divine Mothers Brāhmaṇī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vīrāhī, Indrāṇī and Cāmuṇḍā, flanked by Viрабhadra and Gaṇapati, and the editor thought that the abode of the Mothers whose erection the epigraph records is probably identical with this niche.38

The Mātrīs are also referred to in another inscription, of a slightly later date than the Gangdhār inscription, from the Bihar sub-division of the Patna District in Bihar.39 Unfortunately it is too fragmentary to reveal reliable information in any detail. It is engraved on a stone pillar and is obviously in two parts. The first part, which mentions in

36 ... sthānām jagadrakṣākṣāmāujasyaṃ
dātāṃ laukadātāṃ maṇḍalāṃ bhūtayestu vaḥ.
37 The verse 6 of the inscription runs as:
Teṇa kārītamaṇtraśvarthineśvarcitārthinā,
Priyāyaṃ priyaprasādānāṃ mātṛṇāṃ kṣayamākṣayamīti.
38 If this is true, the inscription cannot be very much earlier than 600 A.D., because the description of the carved images as given by the editor suggests a developed iconography.
39 Fleet, CII., III, no.12, pp.47 ff.; also Sircar, Sel.Ins., I, no.30, pp.325 ff.
the beginning at least two generations of a family which may have been
connected by marriage with Kumārāgupta I of the Imperial Gupta dynasty,
seems to record the erection of a column in or in front of a shrine which
was in some way connected with the Mātrās. The legible relevant portions
in lines 7 and 8 of the inscription are translated by Fleet as "... by
(the presence of) Bhadrāryā, the house shines ...", and "... headed by
Skanda and by the Divine Mothers, on the earth ( ... skandapradhānairbhuvimātrabhisca ...)"). Bhadrāryā is again referred to in line 10, and this as
well as line 11 seems to refer to some permanent endowment, apparently for
the shrine concerned. The second part of the inscription, of which line
32 mentions Bhadrāryakā, probably identical with Bhadrāryā of the first
part, again seems to record a perpetual endowment at the command of the
reigning Gupta king, who may have been Skandagupta or Purugupta. Apart
from the probability that there may be a reference here to a Mātr temple
and some building activity connected with it carried on by a person of
ministerial rank, as also a perpetual endowment to the temple, the only
certain information revealed by the inscription is the complimentary
manner in which the Mātrās are referred to, and their association with
Skanda and Bhadrāryā. The identification of the latter is uncertain,
Agrawala suggested that she might be the same as Bhadra, who was regarded
as the wife of Kubera, and, emphasizing ēryā, Sircar identified her with
Pārvatī. 40

It may be noted for the sake of completeness of the contemporary
picture, that the Mātrās must have become sufficiently important divinities
for the early Kadambas and Cālukyas of Badami to have adopted them, along
with Svāmī Mahāsena or Kārttikeya, as their tutelary deities. 41 Both the

40 See Sircar, Sel., Ins., I, p.328, fn.1, where is also cited Agrawala, JNSI.,
III, p.82. Sircar also notes that Bhadra is a name of Śiva.
41 Cf. Fleet, CII., III, p.48, fn.1. Svāmī-mahāsena-mātrgenānudhyatānām and
Saptalokamātrūbhis-saptamātrūbhīrabhirbhivarhītānām kārttikeya-parirakṣaṇa-
prapta-kalyāne-paramparānām are almost stock phrases in the early Kadamba
and Cālukya records respectively. For the Kadambas, see, e.g., "Tālaṅgāda
Pillar Inscription of Kākusthavarman", EI., VIII, no.5, pp.24 ff.; "Halsi
Plates of Revivarman", IA., VI, pp.26-7; "Nilambur Plates of Revivarman",
EI., VIII, no.13, pp.146 ff.; Kudgere Plates of Vijaya-Śiva-Mādhavīrvarman
and Bannahalli Plates of Kṛṣṇavarman II in "Two Kadamba Grants", EI., VI,
no.2, pp.12 ff., etc. For the Cālukyas, see "Hyderabad Plates of
Satyāśraya (Pulakesin II)", IA., VI, pp.73-5; "Gadval Plates of Vikramaditya
I", EI., X, no.22, pp.100 ff.; "Yakkalerī Plates of Kīrtivarman II", EI.,
dynasties seem to have been of indigenous, local, origin. The Kadambas were probably brāhmaṇa; they certainly betray a marked brahmanical outlook. The Cālukyas of Badami, as would appear from their varāha-lāṁcha and occasional paramabhāgavata title, probably professed Viṣṇuism as their personal faith, but they were very liberal in outlook and some of the later kings seem to have embraced other creeds. What is noteworthy is that the two important royal families of the Deccan favoured the Matṛṣ even while showing personal preferences to other deities and other creeds. The association of Mahāsena-Kārttikeya with the Matṛṣ in their epigraphs is also significant, and, as far as we know, in epigraphy the Matṛṣ are specifically counted as seven for the first time in the early Cālukya records.

The difficulties of making definite identifications of sculptural remains with divine figures of cult and mythology, especially in the evolutionary stage of iconography, have been noted above. The available Matṛkā images are so labelled today because they appear to illustrate well-known iconographic descriptions in brahmanical texts. The BrhatSamhitā is the earliest text to give suggestions of a standardisation of the iconographic forms of the Matṛṣ. Without specifying their names or number, it simply lays down: "Matṛṣ are to be made with cognizances of the gods corresponding to their names". But standard lists of Matṛṣ,

41 contd
V, no,22, pp,200-5; Timmapuram Plates of Vişņuvardhan I, EI., IX, no,50, pp,317 ff.; a grant of Jayasimha I in IA., XIII, pp,137-8; "Nausārī Plates of Satyāśraya Śīlāditya", EI., VIII, no,22, pp,229 ff. It is sometimes suspected that the phrases expressing adoration to Kārttikeya and the Mothers, along with Manavyagotra and the metronymic Hāritiputra were borrowed by the Cālukyas from their Kadamba precursors in the area; see Majumdar (ed,), The Classical Age, p,228.

42 See Majumdar (ed,), The Classical Age, pp,227 ff., 270 ff.
44 See Majumdar (ed,), The Classical Age, p,228.
45 Individual members, however, are not specified.
46 See above, Ch,1, p,59.
47 BrhatSamhitā, 57,56:

Matṛgaṇāḥ kartavyaḥ svarāmadevānurūpakoṣṭacihnaḥ.
specifying their names and number, were soon compiled, which are now utilized in identifying the icons. There are many variations in these lists, but the usually accepted one, which seems to agree with the available sculptural material is, as noted in the beginning of the chapter, of the Sapta-mātrikās, consisting of Brūham, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaishnavī, Māhendrī, Vārahī and Cāmunī.\textsuperscript{48}

The Mātr-icons are recognizable from about the beginning of the Christian era. In his catalogue of Brahmanical images in the Mathura Museum, Agrawala lists several Mātrkā panels of the Kuṣāṇa period.\textsuperscript{49} According to him, one of the most complete ones, assignable to the early Kuṣāṇa period and earliest from the point of view of evolution,\textsuperscript{50} shows a row of seven identical standing female figures, the right hand of each raised in abhaya-mudrā and the suspended left holding a water-pot, with a male figure at the right standing in the same mudrā and holding a staff-like object in the left hand. The number seven of the female figures is noteworthy, as also the presence of the male guardian deity at the right. A similar guardian may be presumed also at the left end, which is broken. As far as the number of deities is concerned, the panel fulfils two important requirements of the standardised Sapta-mātrikās of a later age, according to which the seven Mothers should be flanked on the two sides respectively by Viśrābhadrā (or Viśeśvara) and Gaṇeśa.\textsuperscript{51}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[48] See Banerjea, DHI., p.505.
\item[49] Agrawala, A Catalogue of the Brahmanical Images in Mathura Art, pp.59 ff. The author has listed twenty-two Mātr panels, complete and fragmentary, of which seventeen are assigned to the Kuṣāṇa period, the rest being mediaeval; see also his Mathura Museum Catalogue, pt.IV: Architectural Pieces, etc., pp.125-6, for some other Mātrkā reliefs of the Kuṣāṇa period.
\item[50] A Catalogue of the Brahmanical Images in Mathura Art, p.59, F.38. Agrawala does not illustrate the figures listed by him in the Catalogue, but the description shows that he has reproduced a line-drawing of the same in his Indian Art, p.19\textsuperscript{3}, LIII, fig.184, fac. p.260.
\item[51] An extract from Rūpamandana, reproduced by Rao, EHL., I, pt.II, App.C, p.194, runs as:

\begin{verbatim}
Viśeśvaraśca bhagavānvrśarudho dhanurdharah,
Viśñastatriśūla ca mātrīnāgrato bhavet,
Madhye ca mātaraḥ kārya ante teṣāṁ vinayakah,
\end{verbatim}
\end{footnotes}
identification of the panel thus appears beyond doubt, especially in view of the staff- or spear-holding guardian at the right. But no distinction whatever is made in the female figures. They are all alike, "ordinary females without any distinguishing symbols or vehicles". All of them wear ear-pendants, bracelets and anklets, and are clad in long skirts instead of dhotis. The only sign of divinity is the upraised right hand granting fearlessness - a very common feature in the early stages of the development of Indian iconography.

Agrawala lists an almost exactly similar piece in the Mathura Museum, but, as far as the available specimens of the Kuśāṇa period are concerned, the panels with seven females are more an exception than a rule. Even allowing for the probability of similar panels in fragmentary reliefs showing four or five goddesses, there are several depicting only three, one complete in itself and undamaged, clearly indicating that the number seven of the Mothers was still not standardised.

Other interesting aspects of the Kuśāṇa Mātrīs of Mathura are their frequent depiction with animal faces, and the occasional depiction of seated Mātrīs with children in their laps. Sometimes worshippers in

52 This staff- or spear-holding guardian, with right hand raised in abhaya-mudrā, seems very common in the Mātrī images of the Kuśāṇa period from Mathura. One may be tempted to identify him with Śaktidhāra Kārttikeya, especially in view of this god's association with the Mātrīs in the Mahābhārata (see below, pp.161ff; also cf. an image of Kārttikeya, of 2nd cent. A.D., from Mathura, reproduced, fac. p.237, in Agrawala's Matyas Purāṇa - A Study), but the iconographic texts would not support it. Could he be Siva as Gulin? According to Agrawala, they are just śayudha-puruśas which were precursors of Virabhadra and Gaṇeśa in the development of Mātrī iconography; see his comments on G.57 in A Catalogue of the Brahmanical Images in Mathura Art, p.60.

53 Cf. Coomarasvamy, Yaksas, I, p.29.

54 Agrawala, A Catalogue of the Brahmanical Images in Mathura Art, p.60, no.126.

55 Some fragmentary reliefs show only two goddesses.

56 Agrawala, op.cit., pp.60-1, no.1046.

57 Ibid., pp.60-2, nos. 880, 929, 1002, 2331 and 2491.

58 Ibid., pp.60-1, nos. F.31, F.34, 929, 1179 and 2331.
añjali-mudrā are included, and, in one relief, between the four devotees on the one side and the two Mothers on the other, is a vase from which emerges the bust of the guardian figure with a staff in his left hand.

It is clear that the early images of the Mātrās from Mathura betray only an emergent iconography, not yet standardized, but Agrawala appears to be off the mark when, explaining the animal-faced females, he suggests that the figures were distinguished not by their respective vāmanas but by the animal faces borrowed from them. He seems to imply that the animal faces of the Mothers are to be understood as normal steps towards standardisation of the Sapta-mātrās, distinguished by their respective mounts. This is far from certain. Firstly, not in all cases are the animal faces clearly recognizable. When they are, we can see a lion-faced female beside a bear-faced one; in other cases, a human-faced female is depicted by the side of animal-faced ones - once with a bull-faced figure. Now, to readily identify this last as Māheśvarī, and the other two as Nārasiṃhī and Vārāhī would suggest that Nārasiṃhī was already well on the way to becoming a Mātrā - one of the seven - whereas the truth is that this goddess is very infrequently counted as a Mātrā even in iconographic prescriptions and her actual sculptural representations are quite rare. Perhaps the best explanation of the animal faces of the Mothers here would be that, consistent with their origin and nature as reflected in the epic stories, they were, in the early period, popularly conceived of as having

59 Ibid., pp.60-1, nos. 6,57 and 1179.
60 Ibid., p.61, no.1179. On the basis of the vase here as in Vasudhārā images, and the children as in the lap of Hārītī, Agrawala imagines an intimate connection of the Mātrās with these deities, and suggests that the Mātrās were invoked as goddesses of fertility and child-birth.
61 Ibid., p.61; see comments on no.2331.
62 See, e.g., ibid., pp.60-2, nos. 880 and 2491. Even while making his comments on no.2331, Agrawala is not able to identify the animal faces.
63 See below, pp.190-1.
64 For the description of a mediaeval Nārasiṃhī figure from Satna (Madhya Pradesh), now in the collection of the Indian Museum, Calcutta, see DHI., p.508.
a variety of animal faces and fierce forms. In the *Mahābhārata*, stress is laid on the capacity of the Matṛṣ to assume any form at will, and once they express the desire to eat up human progeny in this way. The Matṛṣ appear as companions of Skanda in the epic, and the description of the fierce form of the Mothers in the *Śalya-parvan* has great resemblance to the fierce, animal-faced Pāriṣadas of Skanda in the same place. It is possible that, like the other companions of Skanda, the Matṛṣ were imagined as also having animal faces.

No Matṛkā images of the Gupta period are listed by Agrawala in his catalogue of the Mathura Museum, but such images are reported from other places. Most probably of this period, there is a badly damaged relief of the Seven Mothers in the Udayagiri caves near Vidiṣā, and from the same place, near the ancient site of the famous Heliodorus Pillar, were discovered seven almost identical figures of goddesses which were identified by Patil as Sāpta-Matṛkās and assigned to the early Gupta period. These figures, now preserved in the Gwalior Museum, are also damaged, but enough remains to suggest the identification. They are identical in size and style, thus suggesting a group. Two-armed, they are all shown seated.

---

65 For the discussion on the nature of the Matṛṣ, see below, pp.177 ff.
66 The Matṛṣ are described as *mānārūpāḥ* in *Mbh.*, IX,45,29; as *kāmarūpādharāḥ* in ibid., v,21; see also ibid., III,219,19.
67 See below, pp.161 ff.
68 See below, p.179.
69 See *Mbh.*, IX,44,73 ff, for the animal-faced Pāriṣadas of Skanda.
70 Agrawala, however, notes some Mother-and-Child figures and one possible Kaumārī of the Gupta period in the Mathura Museum; see *Mathura Museum Catalogue*, pt.III: Jaina Tīrthāṅkaras, etc., p.59, no.104.
71 Patil, *Monuments of the Udayagiri Hill*, p.26, as cited in *PIHC.*, XII, 1949(150), p.110 and fn.3. Cunningham refers to two such reliefs and labels them as *Aṣṭāsakti*; see *ASR.*, X, pp.48, 50.
72 Patil, "Sapta-matṛkās or the Seven Mothers from Besnagar", *PIHC.*, XII, 1949(150), pp.109-12, and the plate accompanying it.
on stools, and three have each a child portrayed with them. In spite of much damage, the general similarity of the figures seems to confirm the impression that even by the time of the Gupta rule in northern India, the distinctions in Mātrikā icons had not crystallized. To the Gupta period are also assigned some other individual Mātrikā figures in the Gwalior Museum, and several individual Mātrikās from Gujarat and Saurāstra, although many of the latter might not be earlier than 600 A.D.

With the increasing temple-building activity in the early mediaeval period — by carving live rocks or erecting structural edifices — Mātrikā panels or slabs, with some variations both in the number and identity of the goddesses become common after the 7th century A.D. Thus early mediaeval individual icons of Brāhmaṇī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Aindrī, Vārāhī and Cāmūṇḍā — the last two quite common — and occasionally Nārasiṁhī, are reported from the Gujarat-Saurāstra region and south-western Rajasthan,

75 Thakore, op. cit., pp.9, 10. The Brahmāṇī listed on p.10 is dated as later Gupta.
76 Goetz, H., "Gupta Sculptures from Northern Gujarat", JGRS., XIV, no.1, Jan. 1952, pp.1-5, in which individual Mātrikā figures from the erstwhile Idar State in the Gujarat-Saurāstra region are published. The author dates them approximately to the first half of the 6th century A.D. and calls them of Baroque Gupta Style. Of those illustrated, the identification of Cāmūṇḍā (fig.3) is certain, but figs.1 and 2 are labelled Mātrikās because they appear as haloed goddesses with a child. U.P. Shah, in "Gupta Sculptures from Old Idar State (Northern Gujarat)", JIM., IX, 1953, pp.90-103, and "A Few Brahmanical Sculptures in the Baroda Museum", BBMPG., X-XI, 1953-5, pp.19 ff., refers to some individual Mātrikās of the Gupta period, but many of these might be later; cf. general comments on the author's liberal early dating of the Sāmīlājī sculptures in Lalit Kalā, no.8, Oct. 1960, pp.83-4.
77 This will be apparent from the references below, but an instance may be cited of an interesting Mātrikā panel from the Gujarat region dateable to the middle of the 8th century A.D., which, though complete in itself as far as the composition is concerned, shows only five goddesses; see Goetz, "'Late Gupta' Sculptures from Fātan-Aphilvāda: Archaeological Evidence on Venārāja and Cāpotkaṭa Dynasty", BBMPG., VII, 1949-50, pp.31-2.
78 For Gujarat-Saurāstra region, besides Goetz and Shah above (fns.76, 77), see Majumdar, M.R., "A Post-Gupta Mātrikā Group from Western India", JGRS., April 1950, pp.88-91; Mankad, B.L., "Mātrikā and Related Images in the Baroda Museum and their Background", with an appendix by H. Goetz, BBMPG., VII, 1949-50, pp.39-47, etc. See also Soundara Rajan, K.V., and Parikh, R.T., "A Magnificent Sapta-Mātrikā Group and Fārvatī from Vadavāl, North
and even more impressive pieces come from Orissa. Some of the best specimens of the panels of seven or eight Matṛkās together, flanked by Virabhadra and Gaṇeṣa, are found in rock-cut shrines and structural temples in the Deccan, as at Ellora, Elephanta, Aihole, etc. These shrines are all dateable after 600 A.D. and generally Śivaite in nature. In fact the Matṛkās are found in early mediaeval Śivaite temples all over India.

There can be no question, therefore, of the great popularity of the Matṛkā figures from the 7th century A.D. onwards. It is, however, necessary to remember that, as far as can be conjectured from the size of the individual icons or detached slabs and reports of the circumstances of their finds, coupled with the absence of dedicatory inscriptive labels, few Matṛ-icons can be regarded with any certainty as cult-icons, specially installed in a shrine for worship. It is, of course, not entirely unlikely

78 cont'd
79 Chanda, Ramaprasad, "Explorations in Orissa", MASI., no.44, pp.3-4, 14 ff., where magnificent specimens of Matṛ images, some nearly 9ft. high, from Jajpur and the banks of the Mārkandēsvara tank at Puri are noticed. Chanda assigns them to the "early mediaeval period" and, more specifically, to the 8th century A.D.; see ibid., pp.4, 14; cf. also Panigrahi, Archaeological Remains at Bhubaneswar, pp.136-7, 249-50.
81 Sastri, A Guide to Elephanta, p.50.
83 See Mankad, op.cit., BBMPG., VII, 1949-50, p.42, fn.22, where several sources are cited giving information about the Matṛkā images in the early mediaeval period; see also Soundara Rajan, K.V., "Some Iconographic Elements in the Pre-mediaeval Rajasthan Temples", Lalit Kalā, no.8, Oct. 1960, pp.15 ff., esp. p.22. For the Sapta-matṛkās in the mediaeval temples of Bhubanesvara and some other sites in Orissa, see Panigrahi, Archaeological Remains at Bhubaneswar, pp.71, 72, 79, 80, 87, 91, 92, 135-7 and 249. Mediaeval Matṛkā panels in the Mathura Museum are already noticed; one such panel in the Lucknow Museum is reproduced by Hiranand Shastri, The Origin and Cult of Tara, MASI., 20, pp.3-4 and pl.IIb.
that at least some of them were actual cult-images; and any concentration of such icons in a specific area should lead to the same conclusion, especially in view of literary references to Mātr-shrīnas in that area and independent inscriptional evidence to corroborate them. But there is no doubt that the majority of these icons decorated the temple walls. Nevertheless, the fact of their frequent appearance on the temples is itself a measure of their popularity, and, if corroborated by other evidence, may be taken to point to the fact that they were very alive in the public mind and appropriated their share of popular worship.

Nature of the Mātrās, their Number and Names

It was found necessary to introduce the concept of the so-called Sāpta-mātākās to assess the sculptural evidence of the Mātrā cult, but, as hinted at in the beginning of the Chapter, so far as literary notices go, the Sāpta-mātākās are only a specialized form of the Mātrās. We may, therefore, ask the question: who were the Mātrās, and what was their original and essential nature?

The brahmanical Puraṇic literature has a more or less standard form of myth to account for the Mātrās, in which, while the basic structure of the story remains almost unchanged, the details and names of some principal characters vary. The Mātrās, in these stories, are imagined as personified energies of seven or eight of the principal brahmanic gods, and appear to aid Śiva or his consort Devī in destroying a particular demon and his hosts.

In the Devī-mahātmya section of the Mārkaṇḍeya Puraṇa, the gods, thoroughly vanquished by the two demons Śumbha and Niśumbha, pray to Ambikā to save them, and the Goddess, offering them protection, engages herself in a gruesome battle with the demon host. At the start of the battle, the demon Dhūmralocana and the contingent following him are destroyed by Ambikā. Then Cāṇḍa and Muṇḍa, with their well-arrayed army, meet with a

---

84 The colossal Mātrās of Orissa would assert their nature as cult images by their very impressive size.
similar fate at the hands of Kālī, "of the terrible countenance", who is said to have emanated from Ambikā's forehead grown "dark as ink" in anger. We are told here that because she destroyed the demons Cāndrā and Munḍa, Kālī would be known in the world as Cāmunḍā. The feat of killing Śumbha and Niśumbha is reserved for the goddess Ambikā-Cāndikā herself. As the story continues, when the two demons, enraged at the losses they had suffered, attacked the Goddess, "there issued forth, endowed with excessive vigour and strength, the Energies (saktaya) from the bodies of Brahmā, Śiva, Guha (i.e., Kumāra Kārttikeya), Viṣṇu and Indra, and went in the forms of these gods to Cāndikā. Whatever was the form of each god, and whatever his ornaments and vehicle, in that very appearance his Energy advanced to fight the Asuras". At this place is introduced an almost iconographic description of the Saktis of Brahmā, Mahēśvara, Kumāra, Viṣṇu, Hari (presumed to be the Varāha form of Viṣṇu), Nṛsiṁha and Indra, making a group of seven. Naturally, there is no mention of

87 Māra P., 84.4-7 (tr. Pargiter, 87,4-7, p.499):
Tataḥ kopaḥ cakāroccairAMBikā tāmāriniṃprati,
Kopaṇa cāśayā vadaṇāṃ maśīvargamaḥbhūṭadā.
4 Bhūkūṭiṇīkūṭiṇītāśaya lalāṭaphalakādāṛūtan,
Kālī karālavadaṇāṃ viṇīśkrāntāsipāsinī.
5 Vicitrakhaṭvājaṁgadāraṇā maṇālāśvibhūṣanā,
Dvīpicarmanapāḍhāṇā suṣkamāmasāṭibhārāvā,
6 Avitvaśravadaṇā jihvālaianabhūṣanā,
Nimāna raktanayaṇā nādāpuritādīṇukhā.
7

88 Ibid., 84.26 (tr. Pargiter, 87,26, p.500):
Yasamācāndanācā muṇḍanācā grhītvā tvamupāgatā,
Cāmunḍeti tato loke khyātā devī bhaviṣyati.

89 Ibid., 85.11-3 (tr. Pargiter, 88,11-3, p.502):
Etasminmatre bhūpa vināśasya suradviṣaṃ,
Bhāvāyamaraśahāṃmatiṇīvaḥ-balāṅvitāḥ.
11 Brahmesaguhaviṣṇūṇām tathendraya ca saktayaḥ,
Śarīrebhyo vinīśkramya tadrūpalācaṇḍikāṃ yayoḥ,
12 Yasya devasya yadrūpaṃ yathā bhūṣaṇavāhānaṁ,
Tadvadeva hi tacekhattirasūryaḥdhumāyayau,
13

90 Ibid., 85.14-21 (tr. Pargiter, 88.14-21, pp.802-3):
Hamsayuktaividyaḥ sākṣaśūtrakamandulāḥ,
Āyāta brahmaṇayā saktibrhamāṇī sābhīdhiyate.
14 Mahēśvarī vṣāruḍhā triśūlavaradhiṛṇī,
Mahābhivalyaḥprāpta candralakhamvibhūṣanā,
15 Kaumārī saktihastā ca mayūravaravāhanā,
Yoddhumabhyāyayau daityānambikā guharūpīṇī.
Cāmuṇḍā, since, as Kālī, she is already present in Devī's ranks. Instead, we are informed of an Energy of the goddess Candikā herself, called Śivadūti. In the description of the battle that ensued, the individual performances of these Saktis, including Kālī and Śivadūti, are noted, and, collectively, they are called Mātrā-gana or Mātrā. Raktavīja, from every drop of whose blood falling upon the earth sprang up a similar demon, is said to have been destroyed by Kālī-Cāmuṇḍā, and Śumbha and Niśumbha were finally killed by Candikā.

A similar account of the Mātrs, in which, however, the Mothers emanate from the body of the goddess Candikā herself, is given in the Yamana Purāṇa, and, according to Agrawala, the entire episode of the Goddess killing the demons Śumbha, Niśumbha, etc., in this text seems to be indebted to the Devī-māhātmya version. Also similar in essentials is the account of the Varāha Purāṇa with the difference that there the Mātrs appear to aid

---

90 contd
Tathaiva vaiṣṇavī saktirguḍopari saṃsthitaḥ,
Śaṅkhacakragadāśārṇgakahastāḥbhūpāyayau. 17
Yajñavārāhanamataḥaṁ rūpaṁ yaḥ bhurati hareḥ,
Saktiḥ sāpyāyayau tatra vārāhīṁ bhurati tānun. 18
Nārasimhī niḥśimhasya bhurati saṭrāṁ vāpyūḥ,
Prāptā tatra saṭākṣepa koṣṭhanakgratrasamathṭih. 19
Vajrahastā tathaiwainārī gajājoparisthitā,
Sahasranayanāpraṃptā yathāsakrastathaiva sā. 20
Tataḥ perivṛtastabhūriśāno devaśaktibhiḥ,
Hanyatamāsurāḥ śīghram mama prītyaḥ caṇḍikum. 21

91 Ibid., 85.22-7 (tr. Pargiter, 88.22-7, p.503). The verses 22 and 27 read as:
...Tato devīśarītrattā viniskrāntatibhiṣṇu,
Caṇḍikāśaktiratyaugṛ śivāṣtaninādini. 22

92 Ibid., 85.29 ff. (tr. Pargiter, 88.29 ff., pp.503-4).

93 See, e.g., ibid., 85.38 (tr. Pargiter, 88.38, p.504):
Iti mātrgāṇam kruddhāṁ marddayatāṁ mahāsurāṁ,
Drṣṭvābhūpyupayairvidhāirnācaḥdevāśīnānikāḥ. 38
Cf. also ibid., 85.44, 49 (tr. Pargiter, 88.44, 49, pp.504-5).


Śiva against Andhakāsura. As in the case of Raktavīja in the Devī-mahatmya, from every drop of blood fallen from Andhakāsura's body an identical demon emerged, and, to stop the blood from falling on the earth, Śiva created Yogesvarī out of the flame issuing from his mouth, and Indra and other gods also sent their Saktis. The latter are enumerated as Brahmi, Maheśvari, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavi, Vārahi, Indra and Cāmunda, armed with weapons, wearing ornaments, riding vāhana and carrying banners like their respective male counterparts. By adding Yogesvarī to this group, the Purāṇa makes the number of the Mātṛkās eight. The Mothers caught the blood of the demon before it touched the ground and ultimately helped to break his power. According to the Suprabhedāgama, the Mātṛkās were created by Brahmā to kill Nirṛta.

The traditional origin of the Mātṛṣ as reflected in the Purānic myths, outlined above, is clearly an attempt to incorporate these deities into the brahmanical pantheon. The more or less stereotyped grouping, labelled Brāhma etc., is itself the first sign of the artificial nature of the so-called Sapta- or Aṣṭa-mātṛkās. It is difficult to account for the popularity of the Mātṛ cult on the basis of the shadowy figures of "Energies" of certain brahmanical gods, especially if we keep in mind that not all the gods in the group can be imagined as having had a popular cult of their own. Most illuminating is the case of Brāhma or Brahmā. While almost invariably she heads the list of the Sapta- or Aṣṭa-mātṛkās, her male counterpart had scarcely a popular cult comparable to that of Śiva or Viṣṇu. Perhaps an important god in northern India in the early Buddhist period, Brahmā, though always remembered as the father-god, is nevertheless an insignificant figure in the Purānic literature and there is no clear evidence of his popular independent cult. Similarly, even if a Vārahi is justified on the basis of a popular cult of the Varāha form of Viṣṇu,

96 This account is summarised by Rao, EHI., I, pt.II, pp.379 ff.. In this Purāṇa, the Mātṛkās are also said to have been born out of Devī's laughter; see Yaduvanshi, Saiva Mata, p.119, quoting ch.96 of the Purāṇa.
98 See Banerjea, EHI., pp.510 ff.; Hiriyanna, Outlines of Indian Philosophy, pp.95-6; Majumdar (ed.), The Age of Imperial Unity, pp.464 ff.; The Classical Age, pp.440 ff.
at least in the Gupta period, the same cannot be said of Nārasiṃhī. Further, in literature and art, Śiva's consort is generally recognizable, not as Māheśvarī, but as Umā, Pārvatī or Gaurī, and similarly the consort of Viṣṇu, generally speaking, is not Vaiṣṇavī but Śrī-Lakṣmī. Again, except in stories which narrate Kumāra Kārttikeya's marriage with Devasena, this god is invariably remembered, not as one accompanied by his consort, but as a warrior god leading the gods' armies, as the son of Śiva and Umā-Pārvatī, or, as often in south Indian art and literature, as an instructor god. The inclusion of the Saktis of one or more forms of Viṣṇu, besides that of Viṣṇu himself, also looks rather incongruous, and, perhaps for this reason, the Devī-māhātmya, when first introducing the god's "Energies", speaks only of the Saktis of Brahmā, Śiva, Guha, Viṣṇu and Indra, without mentioning those of the other forms of Viṣṇu.

An analysis of the Purānic myths of the origin of the Sapta- or Aṣṭa-mātrikās, therefore, shows that the Mothers were essentially ferocious deities, always conceived of as a group, and any attempt to name them or fix their number was a result of brahmanising and incorporation in the Purānic pantheon.

The above inference is confirmed by evidence which should be regarded, on logical as well as chronological considerations, prior to the above Purānic myths. In the Matsya Purāṇa, we are told that when an identical demon sprang up from every drop of Andhaka's blood, Śiva created the Mātrīs


100 Skanda's name Kumāra implies that he was essentially a bachelor god. In the Vikramorvāsi, Kalidāsa records the tradition that the sacred precincts of the god Kumāra Kārttikeya were strictly out-of-limits for women. It is said that when Urvasī, forgetting the rules laid down by the deity, entered the grove sacred to him, she was immediately transformed into a creeper; see Vikramorvāsi (ed. Kale), Act IV, p.182.

In respect of Kaumārī as one of the Sapta-mātrikās, it may also be noted that in the epic stories, the Mātrīs are generally mothers of Skanda-Kumāra; see below, pp.161 ff.

101 See above, p.156, fn.89.
to drink all the blood and prevent the swelling of the demon army. 102 The Mothers were exceedingly gratified to perform this task even though it could be successfully accomplished only after Viṣṇu created Śuṣṭaka-revatī. The Purāṇa names the Mothers in this story and makes up a list of about one hundred and ninety, with the remark that there were many others besides. 103 It does include Maheśvarī, Brāhmī and Kauśārī in the very beginning, and later finds places for Śakrī, Cāmuṇḍā, Vārahī, Nāraśimhī and Vaiṣṇavī. Still, the list is too large to correspond to the standardised group of seven or eight Mothers. As far as the individual names are concerned, even this list may be suspected to be a fictitious one, and its bulk only impresses us as indicating that the Mothers were essentially conceived of as a group of goddesses of indefinite number. It is possible that the Purāṇa-writer, taking advantage of their collectivity and anonymity, has arbitrarily sought to include a large number of real and imaginary goddesses in the group. This is confirmed by another interesting observation in the story. Their task over, the Mothers continued to devour men, gods and demons in spite of Śiva’s admonition, and Nṛsiṁha-Viṣṇu had to create a different group of thirty-two Mothers to subdue them. These Mothers are also named, 104 with some names overlapping with the first list, and are contrasted with the latter by being characterized as “prosperous and fortunate”. 105 They are supposed always to stay by Viṣṇu and receive oblations along with him, whereas the subdued Mothers are instructed to grant all desires of the devotees when propitiated separately. 106

102 Mat., ch.179. The battle between Śiva and Andhaka is said to have taken place in the Mahākāla forest in the Avanti-viṣaya; see ibid., 179.5.

103 Ibid., 179.9-32. For the list of Mātris, see the Appendix below, pp.256 ff.

104 Ibid., 179.66-73.

105 Sarvāstīstū mahābhāgā; see ibid., 179.67. The Mothers created by Nṛsiṁha-Viṣṇu are given these epithets even though they are described as fierce enough to subdue the Śivaite mātrikas and are called trialokya-srī śī-śambhār-śamarthā; ibid., 179.74.

106 Ibid., 179.83-4. For further discussion on the long list of Mothers in this text, see below, pp.171ff. It may be noted that the Viṣṇucharmottara Purāṇa, I, ch.226, also gives the story of Śiva’s killing the demon Andhakāsura with the aid of the Mātris in almost exactly the same words as the Matsya Purāṇa, ch.179. As these Purānic stories specifically speak of a helpless Śiva seeking the aid of Viṣṇu, we may suspect the hand of a
Perhaps a still earlier stage of the position of Mātris in the brahmanical pantheon is reflected in the Mahābhārata. As noted earlier, in the Aranyaka-parvan of the text, the Mātris are conspicuously referred to and are specifically named at several places in the account of Skanda's birth.107 Like the myth of Skanda's birth itself, the references to the Mātris in the context are singularly confused. Several independent groups seem to be referred to and differently named. Nevertheless, the citations do help us to imagine the original, essential nature of these deities.

The myth of the birth of Skanda in the Mahābhārata first introduces Indra rescuing Devasena from the demon Kesin and Devasena expressing the wish to be married to one who is able to conquer all the gods, demons, etc. Indra notices a favourable conjunction of planets and imagines that if a son were to be born then of Soma or Agni, he could become the appropriate husband for the damsel. He confers with Brahmā, who agrees with him, and the two gods then repair to the place of the seven celestial ṛṣis where the ground is prepared for the appearance of Agni's son. Agni, while returning from delivering the sacrificial oblations to the Devas, notices the wives of the brahmin ṛṣis and is smitten with their charms. Afraid to approach them with his illicit proposal of love, he decides to remain content with being near them in the form of the household fire. Svāhā, the daughter of Dakṣa, who is already enamoured of the Fire-god, finds in the latter's infatuation an excellent opportunity to entice her beloved. Successively assuming the forms of the six wives of the brahmiṇḍa seers, she unites with Agni, but every time deposits his seed on the peak of the White Mountain guarded by poisonous snakes, and abounding in Rākṣasas, Piśācas and other terrible spirits and animals.108 From the seed thus thrown is born Skanda, with six faces, resplendent like the sun and of incalculable power.

106 contd

Viṣṇuite editor in this part of the myth. The Kūrma Purāṇa also has traces of the same tendency, where even Śiva is portrayed as joining the wayward Mothers in destroying everything, having been left without any means of subsistence; see Rao, EHI., I, pt.II, pp.381-2.

107


108

Mbh., III, 214,11-2.
Skanda rapidly grows into a mighty being, terrorising the three worlds. Such is the fury and terror caused by his appearance that the gods first approach their leader Indra with the request to destroy him, and, finding him as afraid as they are, they finally decide: "Let the Mothers of the Universe repair today to Skanda. They can muster at will any degree of energy. Let them kill this child". Saying "It shall be so", the Mothers agree, but even they become dispirited at the sight of Skanda. They therefore seek the child's protection, praying to him to become their son, and, in return, Skanda is said to have paid due respect to them and acceded to their request. We are told that Agni came to his son and stayed on that mountain with the Mothers to tend him. That lady among the Mothers, who was born of anger (krodhasamudbhava), with a śūla in her hand, kept a constant watch over the child, and the other, the red-coloured daughter of the sea, "the cruel one, living on blood" (krūrā lohitabhojana) nursed him. At this place, there is no mention of the creation of the Mothers, or of their specific alliance to any brahmanical deities, and no attempt is made at naming them or fixing their number.

These Mātaraḥ continue to recur in the story of Skanda, but now other Mothers are also introduced, making any precise identification of the group difficult. While Agni and numerous other "fire-mouthed" and blazing dwellers of heaven of cruel mien waited upon Skanda-Mahasena with the Mātṛ-gaṇas, Indra decided to fight it out with him but ultimately sought his protection, and the magnanimous babe granted him fearlessness. Here, in a confused account, we are told that when once struck by Indra's vajra,

109 Ibid., III,215,16:
    Sarvāvātvdābhigacchantu skandam ātasa mātaraḥ,
    Kānavīryā ghnantu ca tathetyuktva ca tā yavaḥ.
111 Ibid., III,215,20:
    saha mātṛgaṇena ha.
113 Ibid., III,216,1-2:
    Grahaḥ sopagrahāścavaḥ rṣayo mātaram tathā,
    Hutāśanaukhaścāpi dīptāḥ pariśadām gaṇāḥ.
    Ete cāṁye ca bahavo ghorāstridivavāsinaḥ,
    Parivārya Mahāsenam sthitā mātṛgaṇaḥ saha.
another being came out of Skanda's body, called Viṣākha, as also a number of kumāras and kumāris, of terrific appearance and stealers of children, who adopted Viṣākha as their father, and the latter, also called Bhadraśākha, guarded them carefully in the presence of the Mothers. Then, "the daughters begotten by Hutāsana, named Tapa", went over to Skanda and expressed the wish to become "the good and respected Mothers of the World". Skanda, as we have seen earlier, granted this request, saying repeatedly, "Ye shall be divided into Śiva and Asīva". Having established Skanda's sonship, the Mothers departed and, by the blessings of the same being, an offspring (sīsu) was born to them. These "Mothers of the sīsu" are specifically named as Kākī, Halimā, Rudrā, Bhālī, Āryā, Palālā and Mitrā, and counted as a group of seven. Who is this sīsu is uncertain. The following verses identify him as the eighth hero born of Skanda's Mothers, but it is said that "he is also known as the ninth when that being with the face of a goat is included". Further, we are told, "know that the sixth face of Skanda was like that of a goat. That face ... is situated in the middle of the six and is regarded constantly by the Mārī-gañas". We have clearly to do here with beings analogous to Skanda himself who probably merged together to form the conception of Skanda-Kārttikeya with different names; but interesting from our point of view is the curious group of the Mothers specifically named and counted as seven. How these

114 Ibid., III,216,13; 217,1-4.
115 Ibid., III,217,6-9;
   Yastāstvajananāyaṁ kanyāśtapo nāme hutāsanaḥ,  
   Kiṁ karomiti tāṁ skandaṁ samprāptāṁ samabhāṣata, 6  
   Mātara ucuḥ;  
   Bhavema sarvalokasya vayaṁ mātara uttamāḥ;  
   Prasādātāvā pūjyaṁca priyametaṁ kurūṣvya naḥ. 7  
   Mārkaṇḍya uvāca:  
   So'bra vai dhāvamityevaṁ bhaviṣyadhvaṁ prthagvidhāḥ,  
   Asīvaṁca śivāṁcaiva punaḥ punarudārādhīḥ. 8  
   Tathaṁ saṁkalpaṁ putrāṁ skandaṁ mārīganop'gametaṁ;  
   Kākī ca halimā caiva rudrātāḥ bhālī tathā,  
   Āryā palālā vai mitrā saptaitāṁ sīsamātaraḥ. 9

116 Ibid., III,217,11.
117 Ibid., III,217,12;
   ... nityam mārīganārcitam.
Mothers, "the daughters of Hutasana", are to be related to the Mothers tending the child Skanda, as narrated earlier in the story, is not made clear.

The story goes on that with Skanda's concurrence, Indra continued to remain the sovereign of the three worlds, and in his turn anointed Skanda as the leader of the gods' army against the demons. Introduced now for the first time, Rudra is said to have come there with Pārvatī, and we are suddenly told of Skanda being in reality Rudra's son. It is explained that the White Mountain was actually formed of Rudra's semen, Agni was united with the Kṛitiṣṇas on this mountain, and Rudra had entered into the constitution of the Fire-god when Skanda was produced. Skanda is now married to Devasena, "she who is called Ṣaṭṭhī, Lākṣmi, Āṣā, Sukhapradā, Sinīvāli, Kuhū, Sadvytti and Aparājīti".

The six ladies, from amongst the wives of the seven Ṛṣis, now appear as another group of Mothers. Disowned by their respective husbands, who suspected them to have actually borne the child to Agni, they also come to the shelter of Skanda, who accepts them with the words "Be my Mothers". The wives of the seers, like the seers themselves, may have astral connections, but it is not specifically mentioned in this context, and,

---

118 Ibid., III,218,25-30.
119 Ibid., III,218,47.
120 Ibid., III,219,1-6.

Mārkaṇḍeya uvāca:

Sṛiyā juṭān mahāsenaṁ devasesanāpatim kṛtam,
Saptarṣipatnyah śad devyastaksasamathāgamam.

Ṛṣibhiḥ samparītyakta dharmayukta mahārvataḥ,
Drutamāgya cōcūsti devasesanāpatim prabhūṁ.

Vayaṁ putra parītyakta bhartybhirdvasaṁmitaṁ,
Akarāpadruṣaṁ tāta punyasthānātparicītyuṣaṁ.

Asmabhīy kila jātaṣvamiti kenāpyudāḥṛṣaṁ,
Asatyamētatsamsrūtyā tasmānnastrētumārhasī.

Akhyaṇśca bhavetvarṣaṅvatprasālāddhī naḥ prabhō,
Tvam putram cāpyabhīpsaṁ kṛtvaitadānṛṇo bhava.

Skanda uvāca:

Mātaro hi bhavatyo me suto vo'hamaninditāḥ,
Yaccābhīpsathā tatsvarvām sambhavīyati vastatha.

121 For seers as stars, see Hopkins, EM., pp.176 ff., Seers or Ṛṣis are sometimes conceived of as one with the Fathers in the epic; ibid., pp.34 f., 176, 178; and the Fathers also are called stars; ibid., p.34. These ideas seem to be anticipated in the Vedic thought where a certain relationship
earlier, only two of the rāis' wives are named, one Śiva, the wife of Áṅgiras, whose form was first assumed by Svāhā, and the other, Arundhatī, the wife of Vaśiṣṭha, whose form she could not assume on account of the latter's great ascetic merit and devotion to husband. However, some astral figures, including the Kṛttikās, are introduced in the story at this stage. It is said that Dhaniṣṭha, etc., including Rohini, were created by Brahmā for specific astral positions, but Abhijit, jealous of the seniority of her sister, deserted her position to perform austerities. Indra, therefore, made a request to Skanda to fill up the vacancy, which seems to have been ultimately assigned to the Kṛttikās, presided over by Agni. Vinata's wish to become Skanda’s mother is also inserted here. However, when the story continues, we are told that all the Mothers (sarvāḥ mātragāh) spoke to Skanda: “We have been praised by the learned as the Mothers of the World (sarvasya lokasya mātaraḥ), but we desire to be thy Mothers”, and, on Skanda's agreeing to this, they go on to request that they be installed as Mothers in place of others of bygone age, that they, and not the old ones, be worshipped by the world, and that the progeny of which they had been deprived be restored to them. They

121 contd
between the dead ancestors and stars is imagined; see below, p. 219. The Saptarāis in astronomy are understood as stars of the constellation of Ursa Major; see Monier-Williams, SED., p.1150a, s.v. Septa. 122
Mbh., III.219.7-11. While Skanda makes these arrangements, none of the astral figures, singly or collectively, are specifically called Mātaraḥ or Mothers of Skanda, although their motherhood may be taken to be implied. 123
Ibid., III.219.12. 124
Mbh., III.219.14-7:
Mārkaṇḍaya uvāca:
Athā mātrgañāḥ sarvāḥ skandaṁ vacanaḥ abhavat,
Vayaṁ sarvasya lokasya mātaraḥ kavibhiḥ sutah,
Icchāmo mātarastubhyaṁ bhavitum pujayasva naḥ. 14
Skanda uvāca:
Mātarastu bhavatyo me bhavatīnāmāham sutah,
Ucyatām yanmayaṁ kāryam bhavatīnāmathepsitam. 15
Mātara uvāca:
Yastu tā mātaraḥ pūrvāḥ lokasyāsyā prakalpitah,
Aṣmākāṁ tadhavetsvānāṁ tāsāṁ caiva na tadbhavat. 16
Bhavema pūjāṁ lokasya na tāṁ pūjyaṁ surarṣabha,
Prajāśmākāṁ hṛtāstabhīstvāt kṛte tāṁ prayaccha naḥ. 17
further add to this grim request others more formidable: "We desire that living with thee and assuming different shapes, we be able to eat up the progeny of those Mothers and their guardians ...". 125 Skanda, instead, assures them fresh progeny and, even though he exhorts them to extend their protective care to children instead of feeding on them, he still acquiesces to their afflicting them until the sixteenth year of their age. 126 The story finds this a convenient occasion to speak of beings, both male and female, called grahas or Skanda-grahas, who afflict children before and after birth in various ways. Some of the female beings included here are Vinata, Rākṣasī/Pūtanā, both Aditi and Diti – the former also called Revati –, Surabhi, Saramā, Kadrū, the mother of the Gandharvas and Apsarasas, and Āryā. They are specifically called evil spirits fond of meat and wine, and prescriptions are given as to how they may be pacified (teṣām praśanamān kāryaṁ ...). 127 The whole context shows that the ogresses mentioned here are to be included in the group of the Mothers, and this is specified in the words:

124 contd

As noted earlier (above, p. 138), it is not certain as to who precisely are referred to by Sarvām mātrganaṁ in v.14. The commentator Nīlakanṭha’s identification of them as Vinata etc. may or may not be correct. He is, however, certainly wrong in identifying the "Mothers of bygone age" with Brāhma, etc.; see Nīlakanṭha’s commentary on Mbh., III,230,14 and 16 in the Kinjawadekar’s edn. of the epic. The concept of the Mātrās personified energies of gods is a later phenomenon; see below, pp.187 ff.

125

Mbh., III,219,19:

Icchāma tāsāṁ mātrān prajā bhoṣṭuṁ prayarcccha naṁ,
Tvaya saha prthagbhūtaṁ ye ca tāsāmatheśvarāṁ.

126

Ibid., III,219,20-3:

Skanda uvāca:
Prajā vo dadmi kāṣṭaṁ tu bhavaṁbhirudāḥṛtam,
Parirakṣata bhadraṁ vah praṣaṁ sādhu namaskṛtaṁ. 20
Mātara ucuḥ:
Parirakṣama bhadraṁ te praṣaṁ skanda yathecchasi,
Tvaya no rocate skanda saha vaśasāciraṁ prabhō. 21
Skanda uvāca:
Yavātṛodasa varṣaṁ bhavanti taruṁ praṣaṁ,
Prabādhaṁ manuṣyaṁ tāvadṛupaiṁ prthagvīdhaiḥ. 22
Ahaṁ ca vah pradaśyāmi raudramātmānamavayaṁ,
Paramaṁ tena sahitā sukham vatsyatha pūjitaṁ. 23

127

Ibid., III,219,24 ff.; see also above, p.138, fn.5, where vv.42-4 are reproduced.
Ye ca mātrgaṇāḥ proktāḥ puraśāścaiva ca ye grahāḥ,
Sarve skandagrahaḥ nāma jñeyāḥ nityām ċarīribhibhīḥ. 128

The rest of the story of Skanda-Kārttikeya is taken up by the account of his destroying the army of the demons, especially one of its leaders, the Dānava Mahiśa, but there is no talk of any assistance given by the Mothers to the gods in this fight, even though they may be presumed to have been present in Skandā's train.

The Mataraḥ appear equally prominently in another detailed story of Skanda, in the Śalya-parvan of the epic, 129 where his parentage is specifically traced to Śiva and Umā, and, in that context, also to the Kṛttikās. Called the story of the investiture of Kumāra, it speaks of the vital seed of Maheśvara falling into the blazing fire; of the Fire-god Agni, unable to hold it, throwing it into the Ganges; the sacred river, unable to retain it, throwing it on the peaks of the Himalayas, where "Agni's son" began to grow and, nurtured by the six Kṛttikās, developed six mouths and was called Kārttikeya. 130 When the child first saw his real father Śiva, the latter is described as seated among a crowd of Bhūtas who were bodiless, strange looking, crooked and ugly, with faces of wild beasts and birds. 131 The Saptamātr-gaṇāḥ were also present there, 132 as were the Śadhyas, Viśvedevas, Maruts, Vasus, Rudras, Ādityas, Siddhas, Dānavas, and Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Indra. 133 The mention of the Mothers in the company of Śiva is noteworthy, as also the motley crowd of

---

128 Ibid., III.219.42.
129 MBh., IX, chs. 43-5.
130 Ibid., IX.43.6-16. The Rāmāyaṇa, I. ch.36, also gives the story of the birth of Skanda-Kumāra from Agni and Gaṅgā, of the child being nursed by the Kṛttikās, and thus developing six mouths and obtaining the name Kārttikeya, but the goddesses called Mātrṣ do not play any part in the story.
131 MBh., IX.43.23-8.
132 Ibid., IX.43.29:
Saptamātrgaṇāścaiva samājagmurviśām pate.
133 Ibid., IX.43.29-30.
strange beings with them. All the gods collected there request Brahmā to grant some kind of sovereignty to the child Skanda, and the latter's investiture as the general of the gods' army is performed on the banks of the sacred Sarasvatī.

The story provides a much fuller list of the brahmanical gods who were present on the auspicious occasion of the investiture of Kumāra, and all of them are said to have given suitable gifts to the young celebrity. Skanda in this way acquired not only various weapons of war but also numerous fighter-followers (pārīṣadaṇṇ), of fierce forms and strange animal faces, a long list of whose names is given. Here, in continuation, is introduced the band of Mothers (mātr-ganaṇaṇ), "the slayers of foes", who become companions of Kumāra although they are not mentioned as anybody's gift to him.

A large number of these Mothers are actually named, in all about one hundred and ninety, but to make certain that the names are but a sampling of the group, we are told: "These and many other Mothers, numbering thousands and of diverse forms, became followers of Kārtikeya". A graphic description of the gruesome appearance of these deities, their cruel fierce nature, their favourite haunts, etc., follows the list.

In the above list of the Mātrṣ in the Śalya-parvan of the Mahābhārata, just as in that from the Matsya Purāṇa cited above, all kinds of goddesses are included. Here again we notice repetitions, and at

134
Ibid., IX.44.73 ff.,

135
Ibid., IX, ch.45. The two opening verses of this chapter read:

Sr̄ṇu mātr-gaṇāṇārjumārkumārānucārānimān,
Kīrtymānānmayā vīra sāpatnagārāṇādānān, 1
Yaśasvinīnām māttām śr̄ṇu nāmanī bharatā,
Yābhīrvyūptāṣtrayocokāh Kālyāṇībhiścarārāh. 2

136
Ibid., IX.45.3-29. For the list of the Mātrṣ, see the Appendix below, pp.256ff. The verse 29 reads as:

Etascaṁyāṣa baḥavo mātaro bharatārṣabha,
Kārttikeyāṁyāyino nānarupāḥ sahasraśaḥ.

137
Ibid., IX.45.30 ff.,

138
See above, pp.159 ff.,
least some names appear to be hypothetically constructed.\textsuperscript{139} Clearly, any attempt at identification of goddesses in such lists has to be given up, but some names are noteworthy, either because they refer to goddesses of known history, like Bhadrakālī or Kālī,\textsuperscript{140} or at least independently known elsewhere, or because they bring out some interesting aspect of the goddess cults, including the cult of the Mātrās. Thus, in the epic list, a well-known demoness like Pūtānā is included.\textsuperscript{141} Two goddesses of almost identical names, Catuṣpāthaniṇī,\textsuperscript{142} and Catuṣpāṭharaṇā,\textsuperscript{143} with another called Catvaravāsini,\textsuperscript{144} remind us of the Mātrā-rite at the crossroads in the Sanskrit dramas Čāruḍatta and Mṛcchakatika.\textsuperscript{145} There is also a goddess called Mahiṣāṣūnā.\textsuperscript{146}

In the further story, Skanda, accompanied by his companions and the Mothers, proceeds against the demons and destroys them, including their prominent leaders, Tāraka and Mahiṣa.

From these references to the Mothers in the epic stories, what inferences can we draw about the origin and essential nature of these deities? Since the incidental references in the non-didactic classical Sanskrit literature are to the Mātrās as group divinities, and since this is corroborated by the evidence of inscriptions, this aspect of their nature must be accounted for. The Mātrās undoubtedly loom large in the epic myths of Skanda-Kārttikeya, and that they were always conceived of as a

\textsuperscript{139} For an analysis of the two lists, see below, pp.171 ff.
\textsuperscript{140} \textit{Mbh.}, IX,45,11 and 13.
\textsuperscript{141} \textsuperscript{141} Ibíd., IX,45,16. In the Āraṇyaka-parvan of the epic, the demoness Pūtānā is named as one of the female bala-grahas, all of whom are included in the group called Mātrā-ganāḥ; see above, p.166. In the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, the Mātrās are named with Pūtānā, etc., as evil beings, see below, pp.180-1.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibíd., IX,45,25.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibíd., IX,45,27.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibíd., IX,45,12.
\textsuperscript{145} See above, p.140.
\textsuperscript{146} \textit{Mbh.}, IX,45,25.
group is also clear. But it seems equally clear that the \textit{Mahābhārata} stories do not warrant any precise identification, nomenclature and fixed number of this group, in spite of actual attempts in the myths to the contrary.

We notice first that the Mothers are often introduced as a group without any names or fixed number. Such are the Mothers who are employed to kill the child Skanda and who eventually rear him.\footnote{See above, p.162.} Similar are the two \textit{Mātṛ-ganāḥ}, in the confused account of the epic, one of which requests to be installed in the place of the other.\footnote{See above, p.165.} Despite a few who are named, such also appear to be the \textit{Mātṛ-ganāḥ} who are presented as afflicters of children.\footnote{See above, pp.166-7.} The virtual anonymity of the group is also indicated by passages where individual members are specified or named. It is interesting to note that whenever the epic attempts this, it lists a different group each time. On different occasions, in the \textit{Āranyakā-parvan} story,\footnote{See above, pp.161 ff.} besides an anonymous group of Mothers, the daughters of Hūtasana - counted seven and named -, the wives of the brāhmaṇ seers, the Kṛttikās, and, curiously, it would appear, even the female beings produced out of Skanda's own body,\footnote{This conclusion is irresistible because the \textit{Āranyakā-parvan}, in ch.217, vv.1-2, introduces terrific Kumārakas born from Skanda's body who are stealers of children, and Kanyās as bāla-grahas, and in ch.219, v.30, portrays these Kumāras and Kūmarīs as bāla-grahas and counts them along with the Mātrs.} are called Māṭṛs or Mātarās. The very long lists of the Mothers, as in the \textit{Salya-parvan} or the \textit{Matsya Purāṇa}, are no exceptions to this, even though, on account of their bulk, they seem to form a class by themselves.\footnote{See above, pp.159-60, 168-9; also below, pp.171 ff., and Appendix pp.256 ff.} Had the Māṭrs been well known brahmanal deities, with specific names and of more or less fixed number, we should never have found this variety and confusion in their epic lists. The only manner in which the Mothers in the myths of Skanda in the
Mahābhārata can be made intelligible is by supposing that they were a group of popular divinities, influential but as yet outside the pale of brahmanical society, and, in the process of brahmanisation, their essentially alien nature and, partly for that reason, their relative anonymity was utilized to introduce all kinds and groups of goddesses under their name. At least as far as the epic myths are concerned, we are not dealing with a gradual evolution but with haphazard and arbitrary attempts at absorption and brahmanisation. The epic sources do not seem to warrant the priority of a specific group, such as the Kṛttikās or any other, from which other specific or general Mātr-ganas may be supposed to be derived. The original and essential aspect of the Mātrīs seems to be a group of goddesses, allied and alike in nature, who were given different names and numbers at different times, No other explanation would do justice to the Mahābhārata evidence.\(^{153}\)

The longer lists of the Mātrīs in the Śalya-parvan and the Matsya Purāṇa\(^ {154}\) are, as suggested above, in a sense a class by themselves, and a closer look at these may be attempted here.\(^ {155}\) Neither the names in the

\(^{153}\) See below, pp.199ff, for an examination of various suggestions about the origin of the Mātrīs.

\(^{154}\) Mbh., IX.45.1 ff.; Mat.P., ch.179. See also Appendix, pp.256 ff.

\(^{155}\) We are omitting from consideration the list in the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa, I, ch.226 (see above, p.160, fn.106), because the exactly parallel list in the Matsya Purāṇa, ch.179, is a more complete one. According to Hazra, the Matsya Purāṇa has borrowed a large number of passages from the Viṣṇudharmottara; see Hazra, Studies in the Upapurāṇas, vol.I, pp.202 ff.. If this is true, it is possible that the list of Mātrīs given in the former text is also based on that in the latter. But the available text of the Viṣṇudharmottara omits a few names and produces a somewhat shorter list of the Mothers. Thus, even though Viṣṇudharmottara, I.226,28a is an extra line not found in the Matsya Purāṇa, Matsya Purāṇa, 179.31 and 32a are missing in the Viṣṇudharmottara. Again, although Viṣṇudharmottara, I.226, 63b-64a, proceeds to list, like Matsya Purāṇa, 179,66, the 32 Mothers created by Nṛsiṃha, it produces a list of 24 only, omitting a complete verse after I.226,66a, which is available in Matsya Purāṇa, 179,69b-70a (cf. also Hazra, Studies in the Upapurāṇas, vol.I, pp.155-6, fn.122 ff.). This consideration alone justifies the choice of the Matsya Purāṇa list for a fuller discussion, but some of the proper names in it may also be more original compared to those preserved in the Viṣṇudharmottara. Unfortunately, this cannot be asserted with confidence in the absence of critical editions of the two texts and in view of the fact that many names in the list may be
lists nor anything in the context where they are introduced have any suggestion of originality. But what is interesting is that, unlike attempts to produce shorter and more compact lists of the Matṛṣ, these long ones, incongruous though it may seem, do not even have pretensions to specifying and identifying these deities. This becomes obvious when the compiler ends his list with the phrase "and many others besides" (etaścāṇyāśca bahavo. 156 etaaścāṇyāśca 157) - the Śalypārvan has additional "thousands of them" (sahasraśaḥ) 158 - but the very length of the lists and the analysis of the names contained in them confirm their artificial character.

In each of the two lists, in the Mahābhārata and the Matsya Purāṇa, 159 the goddesses number about one hundred and ninety, but, curiously, there are hardly more than a dozen common names. Bālā, Lambā, Nandini, Subhagā and Viṣekā, are the only names which appear in the same form in the two lists. It may also be accepted that Bahuputrikā, Bhaganandā, Gokarpī, Kālikā, Krodhanā, Kukkuṭikā and Śaṅkhanikā of the epic refer to the same goddesses respectively as Bahupтри, Bhagānandā, Gokarpikā, Krodhanī, Kukkuṭī and Śaṅkhini in the Matsya Purāṇa. But this almost exhausts the common names. Again, we come across repetitions of names in each of the two lists as also names which have the appearance of being artificially constructed for real or imaginary goddesses. Surprisingly, these features are relatively more in evidence in the Mahābhārata list, which has otherwise every claim to being chronologically earlier. Thus, in the epic, Gokarpī Lohamekhāla, Lohitākṣī, Mahābalā, Pingākṣī and Sudāma are each listed twice, and clusters of names like Dahadaha and Dhamadhamā, 160 Eṇī, Bhēṣī...
and Samedī, 161 Gaṇā and Sugaṇā, 162 Sudāmā and Vasudāmā, 163 Pratiṣṭhā and Supratiṣṭhā, 164 Megharavā and Meghamālā, 165 and several goddesses with names ending in dā and karnī, 166 by their very grouping, look fictitious. Instances of arbitrary names can be detected also in the Matsya Purāṇa list in such pairs as Satānandā and Bhagānandā, 167 Matrānandā and Sunandā, 168 Subhagā and Durbhagā, 169 Kampī and Parikampī, 170 Lambasaṭā and Visāṭā, 171 etc. Individual groups of such names might well have been conceived as names of real goddesses, mutually distinguished, 172 but the manner in which they appear in the lists along with similar groups, and the general nature of the lists themselves, make their authenticity highly suspect.

The suspicion that the lists of the Matrīs in the Mahābhārata and the Matsya Purāṇa are artificial is strengthened by two more factors. Firstly, they include with what appear to be imaginary names, names of goddesses of known history. Such are the goddesses Bhadrakālī, Kālī, Kālikā or

161 Ibid., IX.45.13.
162 Ibid., IX.45.26.
163 Ibid., IX.45.5. In ibid., v.10, Sudāmā is named with Bahudāmā.
164 Ibid., IX.45.28.
165 Ibid. There is a Meghasvanā in ibid., v.8, and Meghavīsinī in v.17.
166 Dhanadā and Bhavadā in ibid., IX.45.13; Bhaṅgadā in v.26; Paśudā, Vittadā, Sukhadā, Payedā, Go-mahiṣadā, all in v.27; Krṣṇakarnī, Kṣurakarnī and Catuṣkarnī in v.24; Gokarnī, Eharakarnī and Mahākarnī in v.25; Gokarnī again with Sukarnī in v.28.
167 Mat.P., 179.11.
168 Ibid., 179.12.
170 Ibid., 179.24; ibid., v.25 names Kampanā.
171 Ibid., 179.28.
172 Cf. Culākoka- and Mahākoka-devatā of the Bharhut railing inscriptions; see Barua & Sinha, Bharhut Inscriptions, p.73.
Mahākāli, who in one form or the other appear in both the lists. 173

Bahuputrika, Koṭarā, Revatī and Śyeṣṭhā also appear to have had popular cults of their own. 174 Secondly, in these lists goddesses whose divine nature was never suspect in the brahmanical tradition are crowded together with demonesses. This is difficult to be detected in the epic list in which, while the well known demoness Pūtana is included and several other names suggest goddesses of horrible form and character, there are scarcely any clearly recognizable Vedic brahmanical deities. But the Matsya Purāṇa includes Aditi, Uṣā, Svabhā, Svadhā, Vaṣākārā, etc., with Piśacī, Rākṣasī, Vinatā, Surasā, Danu, etc. This might possibly hint at the priority of the Mahābhārata list, but such priority is clearly indicated by the fact that, whereas there are very few goddesses in it whose names may be imagined as feminine forms of names of male gods, 175 the list in the Matsya Purāṇa is full of such instances. There, not only all the traditional Sapta-mātīkās are recognizable, but also such goddesses as Rudrēśī, Sākṛī, Śāṅkarī, Saurī, Śivā, Vaināyakī, Vārunī and Vāyavyā. 176


174 Bahuputrika occurs in Mbh., IX,45,3 and Mat.P., 179,19. The Kādambarī refers to painting the figure of this goddess on the door of the confinement room of queen Vilāsavatī; see Kādambarī, ed. Parab, p,159. A Jātamātrīdevatā is mentioned in the Harsacarīta (ed. Kane, 4th Ucchvāsa, p,7), in connection with the celebration on the occasion of Harsā’s birth, and it would appear from Śāṃkara’s commentary on it (see ibid., ed, Führer, p,185) that she might be identical with Bahuputrika. See also Agrawala, Harsacarīta – Eka Śāṃskṛtika Adhyāyana, p,65, and Kādambarī – Eka Śāṃskṛtika Adhyāyana, p,77 and fn,2, where the identification of these goddesses with Carcika is suggested. See also above, Ch. I, pp,9 ff.

Koṭarā occurs in the Mahābhārata, IX,45,17. For a popular cult of Koṭārī-Koṭārī-Koṭarā, see below, Ch.V.

The Matsya Purāṇa includes Revatī and Śyeṣṭhā also in the list of the Mātṛīs; see Mat.P., 179,13, 20. A popular cult of Revatī is clearly suggested in the Revatī-kalpadvīpa of the Kāśyapa Saṁhitā; see Kāśyapa Saṁhitā, pp,187 ff.; also Agrawala, Prācina Bhāratīya Lokadharma, pp,58 ff.; see also above, Ch. I, pp,6 ff. For a popular cult of Śyeṣṭhā, see Rao, EHI., I, pt,II, pp,390 ff.; Hartmann, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Göttin Laksānī, pp,12 ff., esp,15-6; Banerjea, J,N., "Some Folk Goddesses of Ancient and Mediaeval India", IHO., XIV, pp,104 ff.

175 In fact, there are no such recognizable names except the very doubtful ones like Dhanadā, Piṅgakṣī, Piṣaṇā, and probably a few others.

176 See Appendix, below, pp,256ff. About the lateness of the conception of the Mothers as personified energies of the male gods, see below, pp,187 ff.
The long lists of the Mātṛs, therefore, generally speaking, are purely arbitrary compilations and no precise identification of all the goddesses named can be made.

It might perhaps be suspected for a moment, in view of these long lists, that we are dealing not with one group of the Mātṛs but with several separate groups of them, or that the very grouping of the Mātṛs is a later phenomenon when popular local goddesses of independent origin and history were arbitrarily huddled together.177 The second alternative, which at first sight would appear to explain the long lists satisfactorily, has to be rejected outright because independent historical evidence invariably speaks of the existence and worship of the Mātṛs as group-divinities, which, therefore, has to be accepted as their original, essential characteristic.178 The first alternative may appear relatively less objectionable, especially since the epic, when referring to the Mātṛs, occasionally uses the expression mātr-ganaḥ.179 But even this explanation would appear hypothetical, firstly because the more common expression in the epic passages is mātaraḥ, and occasionally also mātr-ganaḥ, where not more than one group is implied; and, secondly, because the classical Sanskrit literature of secular inspiration as well as inscriptions, when referring to the shrines or the worship of the Mātṛs, always seem to mention them as one group. So the longer lists also should be regarded as products of the same tendency which worked in the compilation of shorter and more specific lists, with the difference that the compilers here show greater enthusiasm and, commensurate with it, greater arbitrariness in including all kinds of real and imaginary goddesses in the group. At least in the early stages of such developments, as reflected in the epic verses and also in the Matsya Purāṇa, the compilation of longer lists may also be assumed.

---

177 This would seem to be implied in Kosambi's approach; see below, pp.251 ff.
178 The smaller groups of the Mothers, widely differing from each other, as seen in the myths of Skanda's birth in the Mahābhārata, would be intelligible only on the assumption of a pre-existing group of popular goddesses who were collectively designated Mātṛs.
179 E.g. in Mbh., III.219.42; ve ca mātrganāḥ proktāḥ ...; mātrganāḥ in ibid., IX.45.1. Also in Ete. canvā ca bahavo ganāḥ śatrubhayamkarāḥ (ibid., IX.45.40), the word ganāḥ, coming immediately after the long list of the Mothers and the description of their forms and nature, should stand for Mātr-ganaḥ.
to have been influenced by the exigencies of the myth, to highlight Skanda's position by increasing the number of Mātrās accompanying him, or, when the destruction of demons was at stake, to swell the gods' army by including as many ferocious Mothers in it as possible, counting them in hundreds and thousands. It is only when a smaller group, like that of the Sapta-Mātrakās, has been more or less standardised and popularised in the brahmanical tradition that, in the Purānic myths, we notice only these assisting Śiva or Devī in vanquishing the demon host. The word Mātr-gaṇaḥ, therefore, has to be understood as a loose expression synonymous with Mātraraḥ, and perhaps occasionally necessitated because several arbitrary groups of Mothers had already been introduced into the story.

The arbitrary nature of the long lists of the Mātrās in the epic and Purānic literature has been demonstrated above. The manner in which such lists were made up and the factors facilitating their compilation may also be suggested here. The possible exigencies of the story where a large army of ferocious beings was to be brought together, and the ease with which this could be done in the case of the Mātrās in view of their group nature and relative anonymity, coupled with the enthusiasm of the compilers, must have worked in the production of such lists, but we suspect that these factors alone may not fully explain their bulky nature, for we notice in them, not simply a vague and general counting of deities in round figures like hundreds and thousands, but attempts at actually naming such a large number. In the face of these lists, therefore, it appears to us necessary to assume that, even if the names included are generally concocted ones, a wide-spread cult of feminine deities must have been a familiar phenomenon of the age. Real goddesses must have been locally worshipped all over India before such lists could be manufactured and made intelligible. This, incidentally, is supported by certain passages in the same context in the Mahābhārata. Towards the close of a fairly detailed description of the nature and appearance of the Mātrās, immediately following the list of them,

180 This inference would be quite in conformity with the Sanskrit grammatical tradition, in which, in the case of a dvīgu compound, the qualified noun could be in the plural if the adjectival part indicated more than one number, i.e., Sarvah mātr-gaṇaḥ and Sarvah mātr-gaṇaḥ, would both be permissible and mean the same, viz., "the group of the Mothers". A good illustration is provided by Saptamātr-gaṇaḥ-saiva in Mah., IX, 43, 29, which almost certainly stands for the group of the seven Mothers.
we are informed: "Adorned with diverse kinds of ornaments, they wear
diverse kinds of attire, and speak diverse languages". It is transparent
enough that the compiler of the epic list (and presumably that of the Matsya
Purāṇa, following it) had raw material in the form of the very large number
of local goddesses to draw upon in reconstructing a group of Mothers in
hundreds, and in actually being encouraged to coin names for them. However, while the intention of the compiler and the method adopted by him
is clear, his attempt has no other relevance to the concept of the Mātṝs
except demonstrating the group nature of these deities and their alien
origin. As far as the mechanism of coining names is concerned, it may be
noted that almost all the names appear to be pure Sanskrit words in
feminine forms. A fairly large number of them are expressive of the forms
and appearance of the Mātṝs, generally fierce and cruel, e.g., Bhayaṁkarī,
Uttejani, Ṣatrubhujāya, Krodhanā, Mahāvega, Vibhiṣaṇā, Alāṭahśī, Lohitākṣī,
Dīrgahajīva, Vidvujajīva, Lampaṇayodha, Saśoḷiṇamukhī, Śiśūmāramukhī,
Jarjarānana, Lohamekhalā, Khaṇḍakhaṇḍī, Mahākāyī, etc. Other names try
to express the sentiment that, when appeased, the Mātṝs grant all kinds of
boons; such as Paśuḍā, Vittadā, Sukhadā, Payodā, Go-mahiśa-dā, etc. Some
names appear to be euphemistically formed with aṇānda and bhaga endings,
imputing a general auspicious nature to these deities.

Before we proceed to examine attempts to specify the names and number
of the Mātṝs in shorter, compact groups of seven, eight, etc., we may take
note of the epic and Purāṇic statements about the nature of these deities.
Far from what their group name, "Mothers", seems to suggest, the
Mātṝs generally appear as a formidable group of fighting, ferocious and
bloodthirsty beings. This is indicated by several aspects of their
character and myths. In the common epic and Purāṇic stories of Śiva, Skanda

181
Mbh., IX.45.39:
Naṁbhaṁkaraṇaṁkaraṇo naṁmaṁghoṁbhariṇoṁbhariṇo
Naṁvīcitraṁvīcaṁbhāsaṁbhāsaṁca.

182
Cf. also above, Ch. I, pp. 24 ff.

183
For several such names, see Mbh., IX.45.5, 11; Mat.P., 179.11, 12, 14, 25.
Cf. also Maṅgalā and Suṁaṅgalā in Mat.P., 179.21 and Mbh., IX.45.12
respectively; Kalyaṇī in Mbh., IX.45.7 and Svastiṁatī in ibid., IX.45.12;
Subhā in Mat.P., 179.29.
or Devī killing the demons, they appear on the side of the gods as suitable matches for their enemies. Their appearance strikes terror in their enemies' hearts and they spread destruction all around the demon host. In the Purānic myths of Śiva killing Andhakāśura, as we have seen, the Mātṛs were especially created to suck the blood of the wounded demon and were exceedingly gratified at performing this task. In fact, so pronounced is their ingrained ferocity and bloodthirstiness that even after the demons are annihilated, they continue to devour gods and men in the three realms in spite of Śiva's admonition to the contrary.

Although designated "Mothers", the Mātṛs also appear as ogresses. It must be borne in mind that the so-called "Mothers" of the child Skanda were initially employed to kill him. Skanda's female grahas, again called Mātṛs, are said to destroy foetuses, cause miscarriage and afflict children under sixteen years of age in various harmful ways. In fact, they have to be especially pacified to prevent them from doing so. It may be added here that both the Harivamśa and the Matsya Purāṇa record a

184 Note their performance in Mar.P., 85.28-38 (tr. Pargiter, 88.28-38, pp.503-4); see also Mātṛs as satruḥhavamankarāḥ in Mbh., IX,45.40. In Bhā.P., VIII.10,33, the Mātṛs fight the demons for gods for possession of amṛta that came out of the churning of the ocean, and, in ibid., X,63, 6 ff., they are in the train of Śiva when he fights on the side of Bāṇāśura against Kṛṣṇa's army.

185 See above, p. 160. Mat.P., 179.33 reads as:
Andhakāśurā mahāghorāḥ papustadrudhirām tada,
Tato'ndhakāśurāḥ sarvāḥ param śṛṇvataḥ.
In the Mar.P., against Raktavīja, this feat is performed by Kāli-Cāmunḍā, generally counted as the last of the Sapta-mātrās; see above, p.157. See also Lohitabhojana as the name of a "Mother" attending on the child Skanda (above, p.162), and some Bāla-grahas, also called Mātrī-gaṇāḥ, as fond of flesh and wine; (above, p.166).

186 Mat.P., 179.41-4, 61-2.

187 See above, p.162 and fn.109.

188 Mbh., III,219,24-41; see also above, pp.166-7.

189 See above, p.138, and fn.5.
tradition that all the children of the king Bharata had been destroyed in a bygone age on account of the anger of the Matṛs.  

The malevolent character of the Matṛs is clearly indicated in a graphic description of their forms and appearance in the Śalya-parvan of the Mahābhārata. Though also said to be generally of straight forms and sweet features, fair complexioned, endowed with youth and decked with ornaments, they are described at length as ugly, ferocious-looking beings, with long nails, long teeth and protruding lips. They are skeletal (nirmāṇasāgāryaḥ) and some of them have long ears, long breasts and stomachs. While some are said to be white in colour, others are tawny, coppery, green or dark like clouds and smoke. Their favourite haunts are trees, open spots, crossroads, caves and cremation grounds, mountains and springs, all of which, named together, have to be regarded as equally inauspicious places, and were often conceived as playgrounds of all kinds of demoniacal beings like Rākṣasas, Piśācas, Bhūtas, etc. Cārudatta's worship of the Matṛs as referred to in the Cārudatta and the Mṛchakatika may have been a brahmanised rite, but it is interesting to note that the offerings were to be made in the evening at the crossroads, and the used or abandoned Matṛ shrines of the Mṛṣa-carita and Kādambari, often located in uninhabited or wild places, are clearly not an invention of Bāṇabhaṭṭa. The statement

190 Hvy., 23.50:
Bharatasya vinaṣṭeṣu tanayeṣu mahīpate,
Matṛṇaṁ tātā kopena yathā te kathitaṁ tādā.

191 Met.P., 49.15:
Bharatasya vinaṣṭeṣu tanayeṣu purā kilā,
Putrānām māṭhikātkopāt sumahānsaṁkṣayaḥ kṛtaḥ.

192 Hvy., IX.45.30-40.

193 See e.g., Hopkins, EM., p.37 for Bhūtas as dangerous demons of mountains; ibid., pp.39, 40, 44 for Rākṣasas living in caves, trees, mountain wilds, rough places. The demoness Jāra is said to collect raw flesh at crossroads at night; see ibid., p.41. According to Varāhamihira, a house situated near the crossroads brings evil repute; see Bṛhat-samhitā, 52.87; also below, p.254.

194 See above, pp.140 ff.

195 See above, pp.142-3.
in the Harṣacarita that young nobles burnt themselves with lamps to propitiate the Mothers must also be accepted as having some basis in fact, for even more gory rituals are recorded in the Yaśastilaka of Somadeva according to which certain fanatical devotees of the Mātrīs used to tear out their intestines to appease these deities.

The demoniacal strain in the Mātrīs' character is also suggested by the arbitrarily compiled long lists of the epic and the Purāṇas which, as we have seen, juxtapose goddesses with known demonesses. But clearer evidence still comes from several instances where the Mātrīs as a group are counted along with beings of undoubtedly demoniacal character. We have already seen how, in the Śalya-parvan, when the father Rudra was seen by the babe Kumāra Kārttikeya, the former was in the midst of numerous ferocious and ugly looking Bhūtas and the Divine Mothers, etc. The list includes towards the end several Vedic brahmanical deities, but it starts with counting the Bhūtas and immediately after them notices the Mothers. Several such interesting instances are found in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. For example, in an account of the creation of all beings by Viṣṇu, we are told of the origin of the Prajāpatis, Manus, Devas, Ṛṣis, Pitṛ-gaṇas, Siddhas, Cāraṇas, Gandharvas, Vidyādharas, Asuras, Guhyakas, Kimaras, Apsarases, Nāgas, Sarpas, Uragas, "Mātrīs", Rākṣasas, Piśācas, Pretas, Bhūtas, Vināyakas, Kuśmāṇḍas, Unmād-devatās, Yatudhānas, Grahas, etc., where the specific position of the Mothers in the narrative cannot be overlooked.
In the description of Kṛṣṇa's victory over Bana to secure the release of Aniruddha, Rudra is portrayed as fighting on the side of the demon king and his army is said to have been constituted of Bhūtas, Praamathas, Guhyakas, Ḍākinis, Yatudhānas, Vetālas, Vināyakas, Pretas, "Mātrs", Piśācas, Kūśmāṇḍas and Brahma-rākṣasas. At another place in the same Purāṇa, the Mātrs are explicitly conceived of as evil beings. We are told that when the babe Kṛṣṇa had killed the bālagāhātinī Pūtanā, the overjoyed, but at the same time scared, Gopīs carried out all kinds of apotropaic ritual for the child and finally performed a bīja-nyāsa on his body with various protective utterances, including: "... May the Ḍākinīs, the Jaṭādhārīs, the Kūśmāṇḍas, the infanticides, the goblins, the Mātrs, the Piśācas, the Yākṣas, the Rākṣasas, the Vināyakas, Koṭarā, Revati, Jyeṣṭhā, Pūtanā, etc., ..., other evil omens and calamities dreamt of, the slayers of the old and the young, all these and other evil spirits be destroyed, being terrified at the recital of the name of Viṣṇu".

There is, therefore, no doubt about the essentially evil nature of the Mātrs, and it would appear that even after they had been incorporated into the brahmanical pantheon and their cult popularised in the form of the Saptā- or Aṣṭa-mātrkās, their original nature was never forgotten. The need of pacification (prasamana) of the Mātrs, as referred to in the Mahābhārata, appears to have been constantly felt. In the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa, immediately after the account of Śiva's destruction of the demon Andhakāsura with the aid of the Mothers, a short chapter is devoted entirely to certain rites, involving the use of many kinds of medicinal herbs, food materials, etc., by which the evil influences of the Mātrs (mātr-dosā) may be warded off. It is interesting to note that in the rite of the

201 Ibid., X.63.6 ff., esp. vs.10-1.
202 Ibid., X. ch.6. The verses 27–9 read:

Ḍākītyo yatudhānāyaśa kūṣmāṇḍa ye'ṛbhakagrahāḥ,
Bhūtāpretapiśācaḥ yākṣaraṇkośāvayakāḥ. 27
Koṭarārevatijyeṣṭhā pūtanā mātrkādayaḥ,
Unmādā ye ṣyapasaṃrā deha-prāṇendriyadruḥaḥ. 28
Svapnasthitā mahotpātā vṛddhālālagrahaścena ye,
Sarve naṣyaṃtu te viṣṇornāmagrahaṇabhirvāḥ. 29

203 See above, p.138, fn.5.
204 Vi.Dh.P., I. ch.227.
Vyuddhi Śrūddha, as described in the mediaeval digests and the Purāṇas, the rationale given for the worship of the Mātrās before that of the Pitrō or other deities is that otherwise they would perpetrate violence, and Viṣṇu occasionally appears in the role of the chastiser of these divinities. In the Varāha Purāṇa, the Mātrakās are portrayed as symbolizing bad mental qualities like desire, anger, covetousness, pride, etc.

The character of the Mātrās is reflected also in the epigraphs. In its invocatory verse, the Deogarh Rock inscription of Śvāmibhaṭṭa lays stress on the prowess of these deities, and in the Gaṅghāḍar inscription, while the Mātrās are described as "uttering loud and tremendous shouts of joy and stirring up the very oceans with the mighty winds arising from the Tantric rites of their religion", their abode is said to be "full of female ghouls" (dākini-samparākṣiram) and "a very terrible one" (atyugram). As we shall presently see below, there are other indications that certain forms of worshipping the Mātrās were probably of the Tantric variety, and there is explicit, though late, evidence of these deities being actually included in proper Tantric rites. It is not unlikely, therefore, that the Mātrās, like many other similar groups such as Dākinīs, Sākinīs, Yoginīs, etc., who are all of predominantly malevolent character, were included in the Tantric rites, and possibly were the very first to be included, for that very reason.

The essentially demoniacal character of the Mātrās appears certain, and their group name should, therefore, be regarded as euphemistic. The whole

205 See Kapadia, Hindu Kinship, p.39, fn.84;
206 Mat.P., ch.179; see also below, p.193.
208 See above, p.146 and fn.36.
209 See Fleet, CII., III, p.76, lines 35-7 of the record:
Mātṛṇāma [pramudita-ghan-ātyarthana-nihṛādīnām, Tantr-ōdbhūta-prabala-pavan-ōdvartīt-āmbhonidīnām, [...],gataṁ-īdān dākini-samprakṣīrnam,
See also Sircar, Sel.Ins., I, p.405.
210 See below, pp.249 ff..
history of the Mothers appears analogous to that of the demoness Harītī who became the Buddhist Madonna, or the demoness Jarā of the Mahābhārata. Of course, the dual character of a divine figure, at once evil and good, is a familiar religious phenomenon. Some of the best instances of it are provided in the religious history of India itself, in which, generally speaking, it becomes difficult to conceive of a demon as wholly evil, or, for that matter, of a god as always kind and merciful.

It is possible to imagine that the Matrs too had always had such an ambivalent nature; essentially cruel, they could also be pacified so as to grant protection and boons or, at least, not to inflict injuries. But as far as the evidence of the brahmanical literature stands, the Matṛs seem to have acquired much of their kindly nature, their so-called "Motherhood", in the process of their entry into the brahmanical pantheon. To our mind, the epic passages where, while accepting the seven daughters of Hutasana as "Mothers", Skanda repeatedly remarks: "Ye shall always be named Śiva and Asiva", and where, dissuading the Mataraḥ from eating human children, he exhorts them to extend to the children their protective care, and also a similar act on the part of Śiva in the Matsya Purāṇa, retain pages of the real history of these divinities, when their malevolent character was gradually being softened in the process of brahmanisation.

211 See Peri, Noel, "Harītī, la Mère-de-démons", BEFEO., XVII, no.3, 1917, pp.1 ff.; also Coomaraswamy, Yakṣas, I, pp.9-10, and II, pp.5-6 and references cited there.

212 See Mbh., II,16.38 ff.; 17,1 ff.; also Hopkins, EM., p.41; Banerjea, "Some Folk Goddesses of Ancient and Mediaeval India", IHQ., XIV, pp.101-4.

213 Cf. Hopkins, EM., p.38, while writing about the demons in the epic.

214 Mbh., III,217.8; 219,20, quoted above on p.163, fn.115 and p.166, fn.126 respectively.

215 Mat.P., 179,42:

Bhavatībhīḥ praṇāḥ sarvāḥ rakṣaniyāḥ na saṃsārayāḥ.

216 Yaduvanshi makes a distinction between two separate types of Matrkās, the ones who were benign and conceived of as "mothers", and the others who were fierce and malevolent in nature. According to him, it is the popular cult of the benign Matrkās that is reflected in inscriptions, in such literary texts as the Mṛcchakaṭika and in the conception of the Matrkās as constantly accompanied by Gaṇeśa in iconography. The other type of the Matrkās, in his opinion, are the ferocious companions of Śiva and Pārvatī as described in
The analysis of the epic and Purānic myths, therefore, enables us to suggest that the Mātris were originally a group of analogous goddesses of cruel, demoniacal aspect, outside the brahmanical tradition. They may have had their own names—although there is little indication of their having been of a fixed number—but when confronting the brahmanical society, it was by their group character rather than by specific names that they were recognizable. However, giving specific names to the Mātris and fixing their number seems to have started from the very beginning of their incorporation into the brahmanical fold. The attribution of these two specific features could well have been a simultaneous process, but available evidence indicates that the Mothers were first sought to be limited by number before they were specified by proper names. We have already suggested that the varying lists of the Mahābhārata do not warrant the originality or priority of any one group of Mothers over the others. This being so, the attribution first of a number to the Mātris has to be presupposed to explain why the six wives of the seers together with Svāhā, the Kṛttikās, and the seven daughters of Hutasana are all separately called Mātarāj. Considering the popularity that the concept of the Saptamaivṛkṣas enjoyed in literature and art in the subsequent period, it would not be surprising if, in the process of their entrance into the brahmanical pantheon, the number of the Mātrikās was originally fixed at seven. Suggestions of this are contained in the Mahābhārata itself. When the daughters of Hutasana are welcomed as "Mothers", they are specifically

216 contd
the Purāṇas; see Yaduvanshi, Śaiva Mata, p.141; cf. also ibid., pp.163-4. Such a distinction, we believe, is thoroughly arbitrary and even misleading.

217 See also below, pp.199 ff., for an examination of various suggestions about the origin of the Mātris.

218 See above, pp.170-1.

219 See above, pp.161 ff. While only six wives of the ṛṣis appear as Skanda's "Mothers", the place of the seventh is not quite vacant, in view of the figure of 'chaste' Arundhati lurking in the background and especially of that of Svāhā, who was not only instrumental in the "fall" of the six and their eventual installation as Skanda's mothers, but who was herself fittingly accepted as one. Similarly, even though there is a tradition that the Kṛttikās are of a large, indefinite number, they were generally counted as six and sometimes as seven; see below, pp.216 ff.
counted as seven, \(^{220}\) and Śiva in the Śalya-parvan is described as surrounded, amongst the others, also by the *Sapta-mātr-ghanāḥ*. \(^{221}\)

If the number of the Mātrs was originally sought to be fixed at seven, it is difficult to be certain of the names by which they were first recognized. The different groups of the Mothers in the *Āraṇyaka-parvan* only suggest a stage when they were still more or less anonymous. It seems, however, that the position was changed by the time of the *Bṛḥatsaṁhitā* and the *Amarakoṣa*, and an entirely new element was added to the concept of the seven Mothers. They were identified as personified energies of certain gods and obtained names, appearances and other characteristics from their male counterparts. \(^{222}\) There are thus two clearly-marked stages in the development of the concept of the Seven Mothers in the brahmanical tradition: first, when the Mothers were conceived of as a group of seven without any agreement over the names of the individual members, and second, when they were conceived of as energies of certain male gods and were identified as Brāhma, etc. The latter development brings us to the stage of the traditional Sapta-mātrkās of brahmanical tradition.

The traditional Sapta-mātrkās, as noted earlier, are generally counted as Brāhma (or Brahmā), Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiśṇavī, Vārāhī, Aindri (or Indra or Mahendri), and Cāmuṇḍā. \(^{223}\) The epic anticipates the idea contained in the above list, though not the specific seven of the group, when, in the long description of the nature of the Mātrs in the Śalya-parvan, it says that some Mātrs partook of the nature of Yama, some of Rudra, some of Soma, some of Kubera, some of Varuṇa, some of Indra, some of Agni, some

\(^{220}\) See above, p. 163, and fn. 115.

\(^{221}\) See above, p. 167, and fn. 132; cf. also above, p. 175 and fn. 179.

\(^{222}\) This is clearly mentioned in the *Bṛḥatsaṁhitā*, 57.56: *Mātrganāḥ kartavyah svanāmadevānuḥpajatracihnaḥ*, and implied in *Amarakoṣa*’s *Brahmītyādvyāśtu Mātaraḥ*; see AK., NSP, edn., p. 8, line 70. See also *Naṭya-sāstre*, III.66, cited above, p. 139 and fn. 11.

\(^{223}\) See above, p. 149. One of the frequently quoted verses giving the list is contained in the Bombay (NSP,) edn. of the *Amarakoṣa*, with the Māheśvarī commentary, p. 8:

*Bṛhma māheśvarī caiva kaumārī vaiśṇavī tathā,
Vārāhī ca tathāndraṇī cāmuṇḍā sapta-mātaraḥ.*
of Vāyu, some of Kumāra and some of Brahmā.224 But the earliest definitely dateable sources where the Sapta-mātrās are referred to are the inscriptions of the early Calukyas of Badāmi.225 Whether the reference there is to the seven Mothers traditionally counted as Brāhma, etc., is not absolutely certain, though highly probable. The Amarakoṣa definitely identifies the Mothers as "Brāhma, etc." (Brāhmaṇītyādyāstū mātāraḥ), but does not specify the number, although here again the traditional Sapta-mātrās may be implied.226 The same may be said of the prescription in the Bhāṣaṃhitā which conceives of the Mothers as female forms of their corresponding male counterparts but neither names them nor even identifies them in the manner of Amara by naming the first of the group.227

In Indian literature and art in the mediaeval period and, therefore, presumably in the religious beliefs and practices of the brahmanical society represented by such sources, the Sapta-mātrās remain very enduring figures. The Purāṇas and Āgamas generally count the Mātrās as seven, beginning with Brāhma,228 and, as noted above, their icons are frequently recognized on the walls of mediaeval Hindu shrines.229 It appears, however, that once the Mothers had been conceived of as personified energies of the gods, this, and not the number seven, became the central concept behind them. This is suggested in the abbreviated reference to them in the Amarakoṣa and the simple, straightforward prescription of the

224
Mbh., IX.45.35-6:
Yāmyo raudryastathā saumyāḥ kauberyo'ṭha mahābalaḥ,
Vārudyo'ṭha ca māhendrayastathāgneyeyāḥ paramātapa.

225
A line immediately following it, viz. Vaiṣṇavaṣa ca taṇu sauryo vārāhyoṣa mahābalaḥ, that appears in the vulgate text (Kinjawadekar's edn, IX.46.38a), is rejected in the Poona Critical edn. as interpolation; see notes on Mbh., IX.45.36 in the Cr. edn. 226
See above, p.147 and fn.41.

227
See above, p.185 and fns. 222 and 223.

228
See above, p.185 and fn.222.

229

229
See above, pp.153-4.
What is implied in the individual names of the Sapta-mātrkās is allegorised in the Purānic myths, as in the Markandeya Purāṇa, where they are described as emerging from the bodies of their male namesakes.

The conception that the Mātrṣ are personified energies of gods is clearly related to the Devī or Śakti cult in general, and its origin and history are intelligible only in relation to and as consequent upon the idea that the gods are all associated with their Śaktis, without whom they are powerless. This, incidentally, provides a logical clue towards a rough determination of the antiquity of the concept of traditional Sapta-mātrkās. The idea that a supernatural being is possessed of power is a perfectly natural and innocent one and may be presumed to be an important constituent element in the conception of a deity in the earliest stages of religion. But in India, in the context of the growing popularity of the cult of the Supreme Goddess, it assumed great significance when the power of the god was abstracted and allegorised as a feminine being. Distinguishable from the prior and more general philosophical idea of Supreme Female Energy as the creator of the universe and the main power behind it, and largely dependent upon it, the concept that each god has his own Śakti is a relatively later development. No doubt, the Rg-veda has Indra's wife Śaci, who is essentially the personification of that god's power, and the Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad anticipates it in its classic

230 See above, fn.222.
231 See above, p.156.
232 See above, Ch.II, for the evolution of the cult of Mahā-devī.
233 This is a very common observation by scholars writing on the nature and origin of religion. See, e.g., van der Leeuw, Religion in Essence and Manifestation, pp.23 ff., Power is also the primary attribute of the Vedic gods; see Macdonell, VM., p.19.
234 See above, Ch.II, pp.133 ff., esp.136.
235 Cf. Basham, The Wonder that was India, p.311.
236 See Gonda, Some Observations on the Relations between "Gods" and "Powers" in the Veda, etc., p.70. We are, of course, not dealing with the gods' "wives" like Varuṇārī, Agnayī, etc., which has no relevance here, even though, much later, they also might have come under the influence of the
statement: Māyām tu prakṛtīṁ viddhi māyināṁ tu maheśvaram, but the concept became popular only at a much later date. Its general currency has to be associated with the popularity of the Śakti cult and the organisation of the Tantric traditions, which, on the available evidence, cannot be dated before the beginning of the Christian era, and in fact become fully recognizable only from the 6th - 7th century A.D. The origin of the traditional Sāpta-mātṛkās, counted as Brāhmaṇī, etc., therefore, cannot be placed much earlier than this period. This inference is quite in agreement with the literary and archaeological evidence. The earliest text which suggests the concept of the Mātṛṣ as personified energies of the gods and which can be dated with any certainty is the Brhatsamhitā of Varāhamihira, generally assigned to the 6th century A.D. The Amarakoṣa also, which refers to the Mātṛṣ as Brāhmaṇī, etc., cannot be dated before the Gupta period and the same may be said of the Devī-mahātmya of Markandeya Purāṇa which gives a detailed description of

236 contd

same idea and have been conceived of as their husbands' "Energies"; cf. Gonda, Die Religionen Indiens, II, p.41, fn.61; also Kane, HD., V, pt.II, p.1044.

237 Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad, IV.10 (Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upaniṣads, p.734).

238 The precise origins of the Śākta and Tantric cults are obscure, but it is generally believed that they appear as recognizable religious movements in the post-Gupta period; see Farquhar, An Outline of the Religious Literature of India, pp.167 ff.; 199 ff.; Winternitz, A History of Indian Literature, I, pt.II, pp.514 ff., esp. 530 ff.; Bhattacharya, H.D., in Majumdar (ed.), The Age of Imperial Kanauj, pp.315 ff.; cf. Renou, Religions of Ancient India, pp.101-2; also Gonda, Die Religionen Indiens, II, p.31.

239 See above, fn.222.

240 See Keith, A History of Sanskrit Literature, p.517; Majumdar (ed.), The Classical Age, p.321. For a very recent discussion on the date of Varāhamihira, see Shastri, India as seen in the Brhatsamhitā of Varāhamihira, pp.4 ff.

241 See above, fn.222.


243 On the date of the Devī-mahātmya, see above, Ch.II, pp.109-10.
the Mothers as the personified energies of the gods. Similarly, as noted above, the traditional Sapta-mātrkās are not clearly recognizable in any sculpture dated before the Gupta period, and the grants of the Calukyas of Badami are the earliest epigraphical records which refer to the Sapta-mātrkās, probably in the sense of the Mātrkās counted as Brāhma, etc. The Mahābhārata passages, therefore, which paint the Mātrīs as partaking of the natures of various gods must be regarded as belonging to the later stages of the development of the epic; and, whatever may be the date of the Nāṭya-sāstra of Bharata, at least those sections of the text which refer to the Mothers as Brāhma, etc., under the name Nāṭya-mātrī, are not likely to have been added before the Gupta period. One important aspect of the development discussed above must be emphasized to avoid possible misunderstanding of the concept of the Seven Mothers. While it is undeniable that the traditional Mātrkās, Brāhma, etc., came into being in the background of the general Śākta-Tantric ideas, the individual goddesses of the group so formed are not quite parallel to the concept of a god associated with his Śakti. The independent group

244 See above, p.156.
245 See above, pp.151 ff.
246 See above, p.147.
247 See above, pp.185-6.
248 See above, p.139 and fn.11.
249 There has been considerable discussion about the date of the Nāṭya-sāstra, which, according to various opinions ranges between the 4th cent. B.C. and the 8th cent. A.D. The text is generally acknowledged to be a compilation from several different sources. The consensus appears to be to date the core of the work to 2nd-3rd cent. A.D., to which additions were made in the following centuries. Particularly suspect are the first five and the last two chapters of the text. See Keith, A History of Sanskrit Literature, pp.372, 407; The Sanskrit Drama, p.13; Winternitz, A History of Indian Literature, vol.III, fasc.1 (tr. from original German by Kohn), p.10; Majumdar (ed.), The Age of Imperial Unity, pp.269-70; Nāṭya-sāstra, ed. Ghosh, vol.I, Intro., pp.xli ff., esp. lxxix ff.; Kane, History of Sanskrit Poetics, pp.40 ff.; Dasgupta and De, A History of Sanskrit Literature: Classical Period, vol.I, pp.xxiv, 522; see also a recent and balanced appraisal of various opinions in Shekhar, Sanskrit Drama: Its Origin and Decline, pp.42 ff.
character of the Mothers is ever the dominant feature and there is scarcely any individualisation of the constituent members of the group.\textsuperscript{250} Thus, in myth or iconography, the individual members have nothing to do with their respective male counterparts from whom they borrow their names and many other characteristics. When forming associations, they always form them as a group. If Brāhmī, Māhēsvārī, Kaumārī, Vaiśṇavī, etc., are to be individually associated at all with other divinities, it is not with their respective male counterparts, but with the Supreme Goddess as her different aspects or forms.\textsuperscript{251}

Perhaps for the reason that the central idea behind the concept of the Sapta-mātrkās was their being personified energies of gods, in literature, new goddesses with names formed in similar manner replace old ones or sometimes are added to the list. A good instance is the account of the

\textsuperscript{250} One possible exception may be Vārāhī, but her independent status is intelligible not so much in the context of the Mātrās as of the popularity of such goddesses in general in the Tantric period, and, possibly, also of that of the Vārāhā incarnation of Viṣṇu; see above, p.158 and fn.99; see also Banerjea, J.N., "The Vārāhī Temple at Caurāśī", Dr Mirashi Felicitation Volume, pp.349 ff.; Agrawala, R.C., "A Rare Image of Vārāhī in the British Museum", Or.Art., n.s., IX, no.3, 1963, p.167.

The case of Cāmunḍā, who is generally counted as the seventh in the group of the Sapta-mātrkās (see above, p.185 and fn.223), seems different. Since her name is not formed like that of the other Mātrkās, Brāhmī, etc., she must be regarded as a goddess of independent origin. It is significant that the Devī-mahatmya section of the Markandeya Purāṇa does not refer to Cāmunḍā while describing the origin of the Mātrās as the personified "energies" of various gods, and finds it necessary to explain the origin of her name separately; see above, p.156. Cāmunḍā does not appear in the epics (cf. Hopkins, EM., p.226; Mar.P., tr. Pargiter, Intro., p.xi), but her independent popular cult is clearly suggested by the Sanskrit drama Malatīmadhava, which introduces this goddess and her temple in the city of Padmāvatī and refers to the attempt by her votaries to offer a human sacrifice there; see Malatīmadhava, Act V. Bānapaṭṭa also refers to a shrine of Cāmunḍā in a dense grove in the Vindhyan forest regions (Gahanataruṣandanīrimitacāmunḍāmadapairvanspradesaih ...; Harṣacarita, ed. Kane, 7th Ucchvasa, p.68). As an independent goddess, Cāmunḍā is akin to Kālī and conceived of as the fierce form of Devī; see Mar.P., ch.84, esp. 84.4–7, 26 (tr. Pargiter, 87,4–7, 25, pp.499, 500), cited above, p.156. fn. 87, 88).

Similar appears to be the case with Carcikā. Although often counted as the eighth in the group of the Aṣṭa-mātrkās (see below, p.191), she seems to have had an independent history; see above, p.174, fn.174.

\textsuperscript{251} See below, p.199.
Markandeya Purāṇa which has Nārasiṁhī in place of the usual Cāmūṇḍā. 252
Similar instances may be cited for Nādrī, Kauverī, etc. 253

Apart, however, from the fact that the group of the Seven Mothers remained somewhat unstable in view of replacements and additions in the shape of goddesses of similarly-formed names, 254 the number seven, as far as literary evidence goes, cannot be regarded as the only standard one. We hear fairly frequently of the eight Mothers (Aṣṭa-mātrkās), and sometimes of nine, thirteen, fourteen and sixteen. In the lists of eight, most of the names are the same as those of the common Sapta-mātrkā list. In one such frequently appearing list, only Carcīkā is added; 255 in another, while Aindrī and Āśvāryā are dropped, Raudrī, Cāmūṇḍā and Kālasamkārṣī are added to make eight. 256

The Varāha Purāṇa has a very different list of eight Mothers, viz. Yogāvāri, Maheśvāri, Vaiṣṇavī, Brahmī-svayambhu, Kāumārī, Indrajā, Yamadāṇabharī, Anasuyā and Varākā. 257 Some late citations by Kṣare from Kṣirasvēmin, the Suprabhedagāme, the Nirnayasindhu, the Śrītatvanidhi and some other works fill in the eighth place by Kālasamkārṣī, Vāmanī, Vaināyakī, Mahālakṣmi and Caṇḍikā. 258

252
See above, p.156.
253
Such instances may be gathered from the lists collected in the Sabdakalpadruma, III, pp.691 ff., s.v. Mātā and Mātrkā. Cf. ibid., p.692a, where the following verse is reproduced from the Bharata’s commentary on Amara:

Brāhmī ca vaiṣṇavī cāindrī raudrī vārahikī tathā,
Kauverī caiva kauverī kāmārī mātarāḥ sapta-kīrtitāḥ.

254
Sabdakalpadruma, III, p.692b, s.v. Mātā, incidentally, has an entirely different list of seven whose names have no relation at all with the traditional Brāhmī, etc.:

Ādau-mātā gurēḥ patnī brāhmaṇī rājapatnikā,
Gāvī dhārī tathā pṛthyś saptaśī mātaraḥ śrīṛteḥ.
This is apparently an instance of a list made purely on the basis of the number seven of the traditional Sapta-mātrkās, and indicates the popularity of the latter.

255
See Sabdakalpadruma, III, p.692a, s.v. Mātā:
Brāhmī maheśvāri cāindrī vārahī vaiṣṇavī tathā,
Kauverī caiva cāmūṇḍā caicīkṣeṣṭā mātaraḥ.

256
See Böhtlingk and Roth, SW., V, p.700, s.v. Mātā: "acht Mütter".
257
258
Ibid.
Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa also names Mahālakṣmi as the eighth Mother. Similarly constructed are the lists of nine Mothers. In one, Nārasiṁhikā and Candikā are added and Raudrī appears for Māheśvarī; in another, very different, only three of the standard seven, Vārvī, Cāmunḍā and Indrāṇī, are retained, and Nārasiṁhī, Vārvī, Lakṣmī, Kālī, Kapālī, and Kurukūliyā are added. Groups of Mothers consisting of more than nine members are very different lists indeed, the only reason for treating them as Mothers being because they are labelled Mātarah and form a group. Thus Kaśyapa's thirteen wives are Lekānā mātarah; the Skanda Purāṇa has a list of fourteen in which Carcikā, and perhaps Yogeśvarī and Candikā may be said to be the only familiar Mothers; and the Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa has two different lists of sixteen, both of which include different types of female relatives, or elderly females, to whom respect is normally due, suggesting the development of the concept of the divinity of human mothers on the basis of the divine ones. A frequently quoted list of sixteen is actually a medley of several types of deities like Gaurī, Padmā, Śaci,

---

259 Ibid. According to Karmarkar, "the number of the Divine Mothers was originally eight representing the counterparts of the eight forms of Śiva"; see ibid. In our opinion, this is purely speculative. As suggested above, pp.169-70, the Mātrās appear to have been originally an indefinite number, and, in the process of their absorption in the brahmanical pantheon, they were probably first counted as seven.

260 Ibid., and Böhtlingk and Roth, SW., V, p.700, s.v. Mātar: "neun Mütter". Explaining the "Nine Ambikās" in the Naiśadhacarita, VII.97 (= VII.98 in NSP, edn, of the text), which the commentary explains as the seven Mothers, Brāhmī, etc., with Gaurī and Sarasvatī added to them, Handiqui has collected a few other lists of the eight and nine Mothers; see Naiśadhacarita, tr. Handiqui, pp.555 ff., Vocabulary, s.v. Ambikā.

261 See Böhtlingk and Roth, SW., V, p.700, s.v. Mātar, q. from Bhā.P., VI.6.


263 As quoted in the Sabdakalpadruma, III, pp.691c and 694b, s.v. Mātā and Mātrikā respectively. A slightly larger list of the Mothers from the same Purāṇa is also reproduced in the Sabdakalpadruma, III, pp.694a-b, s.v. Mātrikā.
Savitri, with Vijaya, Jayā, Devasena, Medhā, Svāhā, Svadēha, Śānti, Puṣṭi, Dhṛti, Puṣṭi, Ātmadevāti and Kuladevāti.264

Many of the above lists, especially the larger ones, are clearly late productions and must be viewed in the light of the general popular cult of the Mātris as well as the popular standardized lists of seven or eight. At least one thing is certain that iconographic texts and archaeology together generally support a list of Seven Mothers, and sometimes of eight, with members who were, with the exception of Cāmunḍā, normally conceived of as the personified energies of their male counterparts.265 It is these Mātrkās, with the attributes, ornaments and vehicles, etc., of their male namesakes, that are recognized in the carvings of mediaeval shrines.

In the context of the origin, nature, names and number of the Mātris, we may also take note of their special associations. The brahmanical literature sometimes associates the Mātris with the cult of Viṣṇu. We have already noticed the Viṣṇuite Mātrkās in the Matsya Purāṇa, who are always said to accompany Nṛsimha and receive offerings along with him, although the whole episode appears like the concoction of a Viṣṇuite editor asserting the supremacy of Viṣṇu over Śiva.266 In fact the more important element in the story appears to be the role of the Nṛsimha form of Viṣṇu as the chastiser of the Mātris. In the Narada-Pañcaratra, if Viṣṇu is called Mahāmātrganaveśa, he is also Mātrcakrapramathana.267 However, it is not unlikely that in the process of coming to terms with Śakti worship, the Viṣṇuites occasionally looked kindly also upon the Mātris.268 The

264 They are called Gauryādīsodaṃśamātrkā in the SabdaKalpaPurana, III, p.692a, s.v. Mātā. Importance of the number 16 (see Gonda, Change and Continuity in Indian Religion, ch.IV, pp.115 ff.) must be responsible for the conception of the 16 Mothers; cf. Śoḍaṃśpacāra.

265 See above, pp.185 ff.

266 See above, p.160 and fn.106.

267 As quoted in Böntlingk and Roth, SW., V, p.700 s.v. Mātar.

268 In the hierarchical presentation of the goddesses in the Devī-Mahātmya section of the Markandeya Purāṇa, the chief form of the Supreme Goddess is said to be the Yoganidra or Mahamāyā of Viṣṇu, of which all other goddesses are manifestations. But it would be futile to search for genuine Viṣṇuite elements here; cf. Rao, EHL., I, pt.II, pp.334-7; see also above, Ch.II, p.95. Lakṣmī is naturally conceived of as the Supreme Goddess also in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa; see Majumdar (ed.), The Classical Age, p.445.
Gangadhār inscription is sometimes cited as evidence of the association of the two cults, because the same builder, himself a devotee of Viṣṇu, is said to have built shrines both for Viṣṇu and the Mothers. But the association here may be more superficial than real, and may indicate no more than the mutual toleration and peaceful co-existence of the two cults. In fact, all indications are that Viṣṇuism hardly made any contribution to the formation and growth of the Mātṛ cult.

The closest connection of the Mātṛs appears to be with Śiva and his mythic circle. In the myths of Skanda's birth in the Mahābhārata, it is with Skanda-Kārītikeya that the Mātṛs are most intimately linked. Such also is the case in the early Kadamba and Cañukya records and in the Bihar fragmentary pillar inscription of the time of Skandagupta-Purugupta. A Periṣṭā of the Atharva-veda, dealing with the worship of Skanda, also called Dhūṛta, prescribes the invocation of the Mātṛs along with Skanda-Kārttikeya, and a similar prescription is available in the description of apparently the same rite in the Baudhāyana Gṛhyaparīṣṭāsūtra. As cited by Rao, the Kumāra Tantra prescribes the installation of the Sapta-mātrkās among the Parivā-devatās in the temple of Subrahmaṇya — another name of Skanda-Kārttikeya. A very close relationship between the two cults, at some stages of their history, seems

269 Fleet, CII., III, pp.72 ff., cited above pp.144-5.
271 See above, pp.161 ff..
272 See above, pp.147-8.
273 See above, pp.146-7.
274 Atharva-veda Periṣṭā, XX (Skandayēgaḥ or Dhūrtakalpaḥ). 2.6:

Yas ca mātr-gaṇāir nityam sada parivrto yuva,
Tam ahāṁ mātrbhiḥ sārdham dhūrtam avāhayasy aham.

275 Harting, Selections from the Baudhāyana-Gṛhyaparīṣṭāsūtra, pp.25, 56. The relevant verse reads as:

Kyātu devottamah kārttikeyo brahmaṇyaḥ putraḥ sana mātrbhiḥ,
Dhūtra viśākhena ca viśvarūpo juṣṭaṁ baliṁ sānucaro jusasva.

In his translation (see ibid., p.56), Harting equates the "Mothers" with the Kṛttikās.
undeniable. Still, it is not possible to assert that the association of the Mātrīs with Skanda is original, because in the Mahābhārata, both Skanda and the Mātrīs remain very obscure figures. In fact the myths are so confused that the very concept of a "mother" or "mothers" of Skanda is suspect; and, if the Mātrīs are linked to him as his mothers, they appear equally prominently as independent deities unrelated to him. The close relation of the two, therefore, has to be regarded as a relatively late development in the history of the Mātrī cult, and, it would appear, one that was also popular in some select circles. In the traditional origin of the Mātrīs in the Purānic myths, Skanda is completely ignored, and moreover, what is more significant, in iconography the Mātrīs are invariably accompanied by Gāmeśa—the other son of Śiva—and Vīraḥadhra—a form of Śiva himself—but never by Skanda-Kārttikeya. Of all the members of the Śiva family, perhaps the most enduring relationship of the Mātrīs was with Śiva himself. Suggestions of this are already contained in the Skanda-myth of the Mahābhārata, where Skanda is portrayed as looking upon his father Śiva surrounded by various beings including the Saptā-mātrī-ganān. Purānic myths, as we have seen, depict Śiva as creating the Mātrīs, and, as in the epic, the Mātrīs are present in Śiva's retinue also in the Purāṇas. An instance from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa has been cited earlier. In the Devī-mahātmya of the Markandeya

277 Cf. Banerjea, DHI., p. 362. Apart from the question of the origin of the group of goddesses called Mātrīs, it has been suggested that the conception of the "mothers" of Skanda might have developed on account of the association of Skanda with Agni. In other words, since Agni is called in the Ṛg-vedic hymns Mātiśvan, lit. "growing inside his mother", the epithet might have been transferred in course of time from the father to the son; see Makhopadhyay, Manmatha, "Some Notes on Skanda-Kārttikeya", IHQ., VII, 1931, p. 316.

278 It is interesting to note that when the Mātrīs are introduced for the first time in Skanda's story in the Aranyaka-parvan of Mahābhārata, it is to kill the child Skanda; see above, p. 162.

279 Cf. Getty, Gāmeśa, p. 12.

280 See above, p. 167 and fn. 132.

281 See above, p. 159.

282 See above, p. 181.
Purāṇa, it is said that when the Śaktis of the different gods came into being, they surrounded Śiva and the latter said to Caṇḍikā: "Let the Asuras be slain forthwith through my good-will". 283

The Mātrṣ were not simply the companions of Śiva as a ferocious fighting group, amongst several others of similar nature. An even closer relationship between the two must be imagined to appreciate expressions like Mātrabhaktaya and Mātrāpayā namaḥ used for Śiva in prayers addressed to that god in the Mahābhārata and the Brahmanḍa Purāṇa respectively. 284 In the Kumārasambhava of Kālidāsa, where Śiva is described as being decked for marriage, the Mātrṣ are said to have been the first to place the ornaments in front of him, and later, in the marriage procession, the resplendent Mothers lead the train immediately behind the groom. 285

In a description of the same event in the Mātasya Purāṇa, Viraka, goading everybody to hasten with the marriage procession, notes with a touch of impatience that thronged by the Mātrṣ, Śiva, together with the horses of his chariot, is not able to move. 286 The same text also contains an āvāhana-mantra of Rudra-Śiva which suggests that the Mothers, along with several other deities, were supposed to be yoked to Śiva's chariot. 287 A very close connection between the Mothers and Śiva seems to be hinted at

---

283 Mār.P., 85,21 (tr. Pargiter, 88,21, p.503);
Tataḥ parivṛttastābhiriśano devaśaktibhiḥ,
Hanyatamasurāḥ śighram mama pṛityaha caṇḍikām.
284 See above, p.139 and fn.7; also Br.P., Purva-bhūṣa (Anuṣaṅga-pāda), 25.70.
Cf. Bhūta-mātr-ganādhyakṣaṃ virūpākṣaṃ, apparently used for Śiva, in the Kinjavadekar's edn. of the Mahābhārata; see above, p.180, fn.200. For the identity of Virūpākṣa with Śiva, see Hopkins, EM., p.226.
285 Kumārasambhava, VII,30, 18;
Tavadbhavasyāyāṁ kuberāśaile tatpurvapāṇigrāhapanurūpam,
Prasādhanām mātrabhīrāḍvībhīrṇyāṣṭam purastātpuraśāsanaṣaya. 30

... Tam mātaro devamanuvrajaṇyāḥ svavāhanakṣobhaścalavastāmaḥ,
Mukhāñca prabhamanḍalareṇugacūrāḥ padmākaraṇa cakrurivāntarikṣaṃ. 38

286 Māt.P., 154,457;
Padam na yadrathaturagaiḥ pradviṣṇ pramucyaḥ bahutara mātrāṇkulaḥ.
287 Ibid., 266.45 ff., esp. v.45.
also in the Amarakośa's list of deities where the Mātaraḥ appear immediately after Śiva and even before the names of Umā-Pārvati.\textsuperscript{288}

The Mātṛs seem to have been associated with Śiva not only in myth but also in ritual. It may be inferred from the iconographic prescriptions in which Śiva in the form of Vīrabhadra or Vīṇādhara, is a constant companion of the Mātṛs and whose sculptural illustrations are noticed frequently in mediaeval shrines of Śivaite character.\textsuperscript{289} But there are explicit textual recommendations for the joint worship of Śiva and the Mātṛ-gana. One such recommendation is available in the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa.\textsuperscript{290} The Brhatasmhīta also prescribes the worship of Rudra with the Mothers in the rite of Puṣyaṇana.\textsuperscript{291} In the Andhakavadha chapter of the Matsya Purāṇa, it is expressly said that when Nṛśīma-Viṣṇu disappeared with his own group of the Mātṛs, Śiva stayed behind with the Mothers created by him and disappeared only after installing the Saptamātaraḥ in his Raudrasthana.\textsuperscript{292} The Rājatarangini of Kalhaṇa records joint shrines and worship of Śiva and the Mātṛs, and the worship of the Mothers by the devotees of Śiva.\textsuperscript{293}

The Mātṛs' association with the cult of Śiva, therefore, appears to have been a very intimate one, but how old this association was and whether other members of the Śivaite family were necessarily allied to the Mātṛs on that account is difficult to say. It is particularly difficult in the case of Skanda, since the Mahābhārata evidence, which seems to be our

\textsuperscript{288} Amarakośa (NSP, edn.), pp.7-8.
\textsuperscript{289} See above, p.154.
\textsuperscript{290} Vi,Dh.P., III. 222.99.
\textsuperscript{291} Brhatasmhīta, 47.36:
\begin{quote}
Grahamsca sarvanakṣatrai rudrāṃśca saha māṭrbbhiḥ.
\end{quote}
\textsuperscript{292} Mat.E., 179.87-9:
\begin{quote}
... Tatrāpi pūryaō devo jagadārttihara haraḥ. 87
Raudrasya māṭryārgasya datvā rudrastu pārthiva,
Raudrāḥ divyām sanum tatra māṭrymadhyam vyavasthitah. 88
Sapta tā māṭaro devyāḥ sārdheānārānārāḥ śivah,
Nivesya raudrāḥ tatsthaṃ tatraivāntaraḥvidhyata. 89
\end{quote}
\textsuperscript{293} Rājatarangini, I.122; 335; III.99; V.55. Somewhat similar evidence is available also in the Kathāsaritsāgara of Somādeva; see Kathāsaritsāgara, tr. Tawney, IV, pp.69-70, 223; IX, pp.17-8.
earliest definite source of the cult of the Mātrās and which aligns these deities both with Skanda and Śiva, does not appear to admit the priority of one over the other. But the probability, in view of Śiva's known history, is in favour of his association with the Mātrās being earlier, whether or not Skanda was allied to them through this source. It seems certain, however, that Śiva's close association with the Mothers was responsible for the similar relation of his son Gaṇeśa with those deities. Like Śiva as Viṛabhadra on the one side, Gaṇeśa always flanks the Mātrās on the other in iconographic prescriptions and sculptural illustrations; and, along with the Mothers, he seems to have been included in certain Tāntrika rites. In the Śākta-Śivaguru-deva-paddhati, he is invoked, under the name Vighnānāyaśaka, to protect little children from the demon-goddesses by removing all obstacles to a successful propitiation of the Sapta-Mātrikās. Gaṇeśa is a very late entrant into the brahmanical pantheon and opinions are divided about the origin of this elephant-headed god. But as there is no indication of the association of Gaṇeśa with the Mothers before the former was incorporated into the Śivaite family, and as Śiva himself was conceived of as the lord of the ganas at an early date, it is likely that Gaṇeśa obtained the guardianship of the Mātrās from his father.

294 See the discussion on the association of the Mātrās with Skanda-Kārttikeya, above, pp.194-5.
295 See below, pp.244-5, for the discussion on the possibility of a very early association of the Mātrās with Śiva.
296 See above, p.149 and fn.51; also Getty, Gaṇeśa, pp.10 ff.
297 See, e.g., Mahānirvāṇa Tantra, X. 118 ff., esp. 124, 127.
298 As cited in Getty, Gaṇeśa, p.12.
299 See Bhandarker, Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc., pp.147 ff.; Coomaraswamy, Yāksas, I, p.7; II, p.4; Getty, Gaṇeśa, pp.1 ff, and ibid., Intro. by Foucher, pp.xv ff.; Aravamuthan, T.G., "Gaṇeśa: Clue to a Cult and a Culture", JUR., XVIII, pt.IV, pp.221 ff.; Banerjea, DHI., pp.354 ff., etc.
300 In the hymns of the Rig-veda, the Maruts are always imagined as forming a troop (gana) and, at the same time, frequently spoken of as the sons of Rudra, or as Rudras or Rudriyas; see Macdonell, VM., pp.74, 77-8. Rudra-Śiva is mentioned as Gaṇapati in the Satarudrīya; see TS., IV.5.4; see also Bhandarker, Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc., pp.103-4, 147.
The Mātrās' association with the cult of the Supreme Goddess – Mahādevī, Sakti – might perhaps also be a legacy of the Śiva cult, since it is generally believed that the Devī cult developed and attained a classical form in association with that of Śiva, but it should not be unduly emphasized. In the apocryphal Devī-stotras in the Mahābhārata and the Harivaṃśa, and similar eulogies in the Purāṇas, the Devī emerges as the Supreme Goddess in her own right. Only nominally attached to Śiva, she is otherwise the apotheosis of the idea of the female energy as the creator of the universe and the force behind it.

It is easy to imagine that the Mātrās were conceived of as forms of this Goddess, in the same way as were all goddesses according to the Purānic accounts. It is explicitly said in the Markāndeya Purāṇa that, taunted by the demon Śumbha for having sought the assistance of the Mātrās, etc., the Goddess replied that they were but her own forms, and demonstrated this by absorbing them into her breasts. The Purānic passages, however, are rather an extension of a philosophical concept than evidence of the actual association of the cults. But it is highly likely that such an association also existed.

Some Theories about the Origin and Early History of the Mātrās

Definite literary evidence of the cult of the Mātrās does not go further back than the Mahābhārata and the dramas of Bhāsa, and some reliefs of

301 See above, Ch.II, esp. pp.128 ff.
302 See above, Ch.II, for the concept and cult of the Great Goddess.

Ṛṣirvācā:
Niśumbhaṁ nihataṁ dṛṣṭvā bhrātaram prāṇasāṁmitam,
Hanyamānāṁ bālāṁ caiva śumbhaḥ kruddho'brahīdvacaḥ. 1
Balāvalopudduṣṭe tvaṁ mā durge garvavahah,
Anyasāṁ balamāśritya yudhyase yātīmāṁinī. 2
Śrī-devyuvācā:
Ekāvāhāṁ jagatyaatra dvitiyā kā maṁāparā,
Paśyaita duṣṭa mayyeva viśaṁtyo madvibhutayah. 3
Ṛṣirvācā:
Iṣitaḥ samastāṁ devyā brahmāṇīpramukhā layam,
Tasyā devyāstānuḥ jagmukhāvīśeṣāṁbikā. 4

In some Purānic accounts, the Mātrās are said to have been born from the person of Devī herself; see above, pp.157-8 and fns. 95, 96.

304 See above, pp.137 ff., 140 ff. and 161 ff.
the early Kuśāṇa period in the Mathura Museum, as noted above, are possibly the earliest archaeological evidence of this cult, but various suggestions have been made about the origin and early history of these divinities and sometimes their antiquity has been stretched back to the Indus Valley and the early Vedic culture.

The very general suppositions that the Mātrīs are old divinities of India or that they are of non-brahmanical, tribal or Dravidic origin are likely to be true even if not definitely proved. Our own examination of the concept of the Mātrīs in classical Sanskrit literature and in archaeology clearly suggests the un-brahmanical nature of these deities. A great antiquity of the Mātrīs is also suggested by the very primitive form in which they appear in the Mahābhārata. Again, a considerable previous history of these goddesses has to be presumed to account for their widespread and popular cult in India from about the beginning of the Christian era.

The more specific theories, however, which derive the Mātrīs from the one or the other aspect of the Indus Valley or early Vedic culture or from concepts mentioned in the Vedic literature need to be critically examined to test their validity. It appears to us, as the following discussion will show, that several such theories are built up on the basis of aspects which are either not essential to the concept of the Mātrīs or are apparently late developments in their character. Even while there may be sufficient grounds for the presumption that the Mātrīs are amongst the oldest divinities of India, any suggestion of their origin from a specific ancient source is not likely to prove satisfactory if it does not take into account the

305 See above, pp.149 ff.
306 See e.g. Hopkins, The Religions of India, pp.415-6; Elliot, Hinduism and Buddhism, II, pp.276, 286. This is also implied in the treatments of Arghavan, Kosambi, etc., examined below; see below, pp.212 ff., 251 ff.
307 See our conclusion, below, pp.244-5.
308 See above, pp.182 ff.
309 See above, pp.161 ff., 167 ff.
310 See above, pp.137 ff., 140 ff., 149 ff.
essential character of these deities as reflected in the epic and Purānic
texts and in the "belles-lettres" of the classical Sanskrit literature.

We may now examine some attempts to find the prototypes of the Mātris
in the Indus Valley and the early Vedic culture.

A terracotta seal from Mohenjodaro represents a human figure standing
between the two branches of what looks like a pīpal tree, and to its
proper right is a kneeling human figure doing obeisance, behind whom is
depicted a human-faced goat. In the lower ground of the seal, there is a
row of seven standing human figures, all facing in the same direction and
away from the central figure in the tree.311 Perhaps all the human figures
in the composition are females, although this has also been doubted.312
The seal undoubtedly represents a religious scene, but there is no unanimity
about its exact nature. Marshall understood it as a representation of the
worship of the tree-goddess and took the seven standing females below to
be officiants or ministrants of the goddess performing some kind of ritual
dance, and the human-faced animal behind the kneeling worshipper as some
minor deity.313 Mackay also was certain in his mind that no animal-sacrifice
is depicted here, and the human-faced goat may be a form of the goddess
herself. According to him, the similar headgear suggests that all the human
figures in the composition are to be understood as deities, the so-called
kneeling worshipper and the seven standing females being divinities of
lesser rank. He noted the mystical number seven of the standing figures
and tentatively suggested that they recall the goddess Śītalā and her six
sisters.314

Mackay did not specifically identify the seven figures standing in a
row on the Mohenjodaro seal with the Sapta-mātṛkās of classical Hinduism
but there is no doubt that such an idea was on his mind.315 Subsequent

\[\text{References}\]

312 See below.
314 Mackay, Further Excavations at Mohenjodaro, I, pp.337-8; Early Indus
Civilization, p.58.
315 See Mackay, Further Excavations at Mohenjodaro, I, p.338, fn.3.
interpreters of the seal have been less circumspect than Marshall and Mackay and have even read into it aspects of Rg-vedic ritual and belief. Some have unhesitatingly seen in the seven figures prototypes of the Sapta-mātṛkās. 316

The predilection of the Vedic religion towards the number seven is well known, 317 and the Rg-veda does speak of "Seven Mothers" and "Seven Sisters" (Sapta-mātāraḥ, Sapta-svasāraḥ). 318 Emphasizing the vegetative and fertility aspect of the scene on the Mohenjodaro seal, Wijesekera has suggested that the seven figures below represent the seven river-goddesses of the Rg-veda, the kneeling figure the Sarasvatī as chief of them, and the figure in the tree, the male procreant deity. 319 He is not so much concerned with finding in the seal prototypes of any deities of later Hinduism, as in demonstrating that there is strong evidence of the existence of fertility ideas in the Rg-veda, that the Rg-vedic river-goddesses are fertility goddesses, and that the Mohenjodaro seal represents precisely the same idea. But, in a recent paper dealing with the question of the origin of the Sapta-mātṛkās, Dhavalikar finds in the seal an exact representation of the Rg-vedic passage where the Sapta-mātāraḥ are said to regulate the preparation of Soma. 320 According to him, the deity in the

316 See below. Only those views are considered here which have a bearing on the question of the Mātṛs or the Sapta-mātṛkās.
317 See Keith, RPVU., pp.41, 79, etc.; also by the same author, "Numbers (Aryan)", ERG., 9, pp.407 ff.
318 For the "Seven Mothers", see e.g. RV., I,34.8; 141.2; VIII,96.1; X,86,36; 102.4, etc. For the "Seven Sisters", see ibid., I,164.3; 191.14; VI,61.10; VIII,41.2; 59.4; IX.66.8; 86.36; X,5.5. There are numerous references in the Rg-veda to Sapta-sindhavāḥ or the "Seven Rivers", as in I,32,12, and there are also passages in which it is very clear that the Seven Sisters or the Seven Mothers are the Seven Rivers, e.g. RV., I.34.8; VI,61.10; VIII.96.1; perhaps VIII,41.2, as also IX,66.8 read with st.6, etc.
319 Wijesekera, O.H. de A., "Rg-vedic River-goddesses and an Indus Valley Seal", Dr C. Kunhan Raja Presentation Volume, pp.428 ff.
320 Dhavalikar, M.K., "The Origin of Sapta-mātṛkās", BDCRI., XXI, 1960-1, pp.19 ff., esp. 22-4. The Rg-vedic passage under reference occurs at IX,102.4, and reads as:

Jajñānam sapta mātaro vedhāmāsāsata śriye,
Ayām dhruvo rayānām ciketa yat.
tree represents the god Soma standing between the branches of the stylized Soma plant; the kneeling figure being Agni by the side of his vāhana, the ram, and the seven figures below the Saptā-mātār acab mentioned in the hymn. Apparently basing his entire argument on the identical number seven, Dhavalikar believes that the Mohenjodaro seal, and the Ṛg-vedic passage referred to, together provide definite evidence that the Saptā-mātākās of the Purānic tradition or their prototypes were worshipped during the Harappan and early Vedic times. Conscious that the "Seven Mothers" mentioned in the Ṛg-vedic hymn as regulating the preparation of Soma juice may be the "Seven Rivers", Saptā-sindhavaḥ, and that the Waters are conceived of as goddesses in the Ṛg-veda, he makes another suggestion that "the Saptā-mātākās were essentially water-deities to the Indo-Aryans".321

The identification of the seven standing figures on the Mohenjodaro seal with the Seven Mothers regulating the preparation of the Soma juice and the Saptā-mātākās of the Purānic tradition, as also the suggestion that the latter were essentially Indo-Aryan water deities, are apparently the main points Dhavalikar wants to make, but in his enthusiasm for finding the prototype of the Purānic Saptā-mātākās, he not only notes various other passages in the Ṛg-vedic hymns where the number seven is prominently used,322 such as the seven tones (saptā-vanīḥ),323 the seven rays (saptā-rasmayaḥ) used both for the Sun-god and Agni,324 and Agni of the seven mothers (saptā-mātārāh)325 or seven tongues (saptā-jihvāḥ) - the last suggested in

321 See Dhavalikar, op.cit., BDCRI., XXI, pp.24-5.
322 Ibid., pp.21-2. Some of the references to the Ṛg-vedic passages cited by Dhavalikar are inaccurate; see fn.323 below.
323 Dhavalikar cites RV., II,2,9, but it makes no mention of Saptā-vanīḥ. The "seven tones", however, are mentioned at a few other places, e.g., RV., III. 1,6; 7,1; VIII.59,3, but never clearly as an epithet of the goddess Vac, as claimed by Dhavalikar. In the first two of the three places cited above, Sāyaṇa understands the "Seven tones" as the seven rivers, and does not comment on the third which occurs in one of the Vālakhiliya hymns.
324 For the seven rays of the Sun-god, see RV., VIII,72,16, and for the seven rays of Agni, see ibid., I,146,1; II,5,2; cf. also IV,50,4.
325 RV., I,141,2. The seven mothers of Agni are here called śivā or auspicious.
the Rg-veda and individually named later in the Mundaka Upaniṣad — but also quotes Dikshit with approval: "... there can be no denying the fact that these seven tongues correspond to the 'seven sisters' or the Sapta-mātrikās with whom we are now familiar".

It must be pointed out first that the severe limitations of using the seals and similar objects of the Indus Valley culture for the reconstruction of religious beliefs and practices of those times, and the risk of reading too much into such materials, have been frequently noted. The representation on the Mohenjodaro seal under reference, on which various interpretations have been put, itself provides a good illustration. While the general opinion appears to be to treat the central figure standing between the two branches of the tree as female, which is also supported to a certain extent by the very common belief in the later periods that the guardian spirits of trees were frequently female beings, both Wijesekera and Dhavalikar regard the figure as male. Some have even

326

The tongues of Agni are frequently mentioned in the Rg-veda, e.g., at VIII.72.18, and sometimes they are counted as three, as at III.20.2, but RV., III.6.2 also refers to the seven tongues of the god (cf. also Sāyāṇa's commentary on sapta-stavāṁ in RV., X.5.5). The seven tongues of Agni are also mentioned in the Vajasaneyi Saṃhitā, XVII.79, and the names of each are provided by the Mundaka Upaniṣad, I.2.4:

Kālī karāḷī ca manojava ca sulohitā yā ca suhūmravargā, 
Sphulinginī viśvarūpī ca leśayamāti iti saptaṣjīvāḥ.

327


328


329

This is presumed by Marshall and Mackay whose views have been referred to above, p.201; see also Banerjea, DHI., p.168; Viennot, Le Cûte de l'arbre dans l'Inde ancienne, p.13; Sullivan, op.cit., HR., 4, pp.117-8; Majumdar (ed.), The Vedic Age, p.186; Basham, The Wonder that was India, pp.23-4. Almost all the authorities cited above also treat the kneeling worshipper on the left as well as the seven standing figures below as females.

330

See Coomaraswamy, HIIA., p.64 and fn.2; Yakṣas, I, pp.32 ff.; II, p.11; cf. also Marshall (ed.), MIC., I, p.64.

331

Gordon also regards the figure framed by the branches of the pīpal tree as male and the seven figures in a row in the lower ground as females, probably priestesses; see Gordon, The Pre-historic Background of Indian Culture, p.68.
doubted whether a female figure is represented on the seal at all. In our opinion, the seal appears good evidence of worship of a tree-deity which is clearly suggested by the position of the principal figure and, even more, by the supplicant attitude of the kneeling figure facing it. But to read more than this seems unwarranted. Presuming, as is generally done, that the figure in the tree and the seven standing in a row in the lower ground are all females, and agreeing with Mackay that the similar headgear etc. suggest the divinity of all the human figures in the composition, we are still nowhere near a definite possibility that the seven standing figures are the 

332 See, e.g., the interpretation of Heras and Ramchandran referred to in Dhavalikar, op. cit., BDCRI., XXI, p. 29. Wheeler seems to be uncertain whether the deity in the tree and the seven "votaries" or "ministrants" below are male or female; see The Indus Civilization, p. 105.

333 See above, p. 204 and fn. 329.

334 See above, p. 201.

335 Sullivan, op. cit., HR., 4, pp. 117-8, fn. 12.

336 Dhavalikar, op. cit., BDCRI., XXI, p. 22.

337 See Marshall (ed.), MIC., III, pl. CXVIII. 7; for the description of the seal impression, see ibid., II, p. 393.

332

333

334

335

336

337
analysis and is now generally accepted. In fact, the present consensus
often favours the opinion that the Vedic Indo-Aryans were partly or largely
responsible for the destruction of the Indus Valley cities. The only way
in which an element of one of these cultures may be read into the other is
on the assumption that either such an element is extraneous to both and
borrowed from a common source, or that it was a feature of the one which
was chronologically prior and was borrowed by the other which came after
it. Since neither the representation on the Mohenjodaro seal under

by some scholars that the Vedic Aryans may have been the authors of the
Indus Valley culture or at least may have formed an important part of the
population in those days and contributed their share to the evolution of
this culture is exceptional and not generally accepted; see Majumdar (ed.),
The Vedic Age, pp.193-5; Basham, The Wonder that was India, p.24.
339 See, e.g., Wheeler, The Indus Civilization, pp.126 ff., esp. 131-3;
Piggott, Prehistoric India, pp.262-9; Gordon, The Pre-historic Background
of Indian Culture, pp.77 ff., esp. 80, 93 ff.; Basham, The Wonder that was
India, pp.28, 29-30; Allchin, Bridget and Raymond, The Birth of Indian
Civilization, pp.143-4, 152 ff.. The counter theory that the Harappa
culture disintegrated owing to constant flooding (see Wheeler, op.cit.,
pp.7 ff., 127 ff., and references cited there), is equally unfavourable to
the theory that the culture was in any way connected with the Aryans.
340 A good illustration is provided by the case of Rudra-Siva. While Rudra
is a well known Vedic deity and a certain continuity of his complex history
is easily traceable up to the later Rudra-Siva of epic-Pura~ic myths and
the exclusive Sivaite sects, Marshall's conjecture that an analogous god
was worshipped by the people of Indus Valley culture has come to be almost
universally endorsed, even by scholars who otherwise exercise extreme
cautions in using material objects like seals, terracottas, etc., in
reconstructing the religious beliefs and practices of the Indus Valley
people. Although the common practice, generally following Marshall, is to
cite various aspects of the conception of Rudra-Siva in the epics and the
Pur~nas, e.g. Siva as Maha-yogi, as Pasupati, as Urdhvarastes, as having
three eyes, or many faces or trisula as his emblem, etc., which appear to
be anticipated in some seals and similar objects of the Indus Valley culture,
the real reason for the overwhelming approval of Marshall's hypothesis is
apparently the peculiar growth of Rudra-Siva in the Vedic religion itself.
It seems very easy to demonstrate that the concept of Rudra in the Vedic
thought and the position occupied by him in the Vedic pantheon, myths and
rites are such that mark him completely out from the rest of the gods, Thus
it is often noted that, of all the Vedic gods, Rudra alone is predominantly
malevolent. He is marked out from the other gods in the ritual by being
assigned a different direction of the compass. It is said that he was left
behind when others attained heaven through rites; he forcibly snatches his
own share and those of others at the sacrifice; not only human beings but
also gods are afraid of him, and he is the one chosen to punish Praj~pati
reference on the one hand, nor the grouping into seven of the rivers, mothers, or the rays or flames of the Sun and Fire-god, etc., in the Ēg-vedic hymns on the other, are suggested as intruding elements in the respective cultures to which they belong, the interpretations of the type offered by Wijesekera and Dhavalikar apparently assume an identity of the Indus Valley and the early Vedic culture which is otherwise quite impossible to uphold. In the circumstances, while it appears legitimate to look for the prototypes of the later Sapta-mārkās individually in the remains of Mohenjodaro and Harappa and the hymns of the Ēg-veda, it is not possible to imagine that an identical concept of the Seven Divine Mothers or an

340 contd

for his incestuous misdemeanour - a theme which grows into the elaborate Dakṣa-vaṁśa-vidhvamsa episode of the epics and the Purāṇas. He is excluded from the normal Soma offerings and receives only informal balis. The specific rites of Rudra-Śiva are generally of popular and inauspicious character and very different from the usual Vedic rites. The utterance of his name was to be avoided in rites, and "to be forsaken like the offerings made to Śiva" (śiva-nirmalya ki taraṇa tyājya) is still a current phrase in Hindi literature. To all this may be added the generally accepted opinion that phallic worship, which is so characteristic of Śivaism of the epic-Purāṇic times, is condemned in the Ēg-veda. In fact, even before the civilization of the Indus Valley had been brought to light, Arbman had used such materials to arrive at the opinion that Rudra-Śiva may have been originally a popular cannibalistic death-demon who was later transformed by the Vedic priests into a celestial deity. But even if we do not take recourse to this extreme view and discount attempts to trace the words Śiva and Rudra to non-Vedic or Dravidic origins, it still appears undeniable, and, in fact, is the generally accepted opinion, that much of the content of the Vedic Rudra is made up of non-Vedic elements. In special cases of concepts like that of Rudra-Śiva, therefore, it should be regarded as legitimate to try to trace elements of the Vedic religion in the remains of the Indus Valley culture. For the origin and development of the concept of Rudra-Śiva and his place in the Vedic pantheon, see Macdonell, VM., pp.18, 74 ff.; Arbman, Rudra etc.; Keith, RPVU., pp.142 ff.; Bhanārkar, Vaishnavism, Saivism, etc., pp.102 ff.; Majumdar (ed.), The Vedic Age, pp.162-3, 203, 372, 443-4; Renou, Religions of Ancient India, p.47; Gonda, Vaishnavism and Śivaism, pp.2 ff., etc. For brief descriptions of two special rites of Rudra, Sūla-gava and Tryambaka-homa, see Kane, HD., II, pt.II, pp.831-2, 1103-5; see also below, pp.212 ff. For Marshall's hypothesis and its general approval, see Marshall (ed.), MIC., I, pp.52 ff.; Piggott, Prehistoric India, p.204; Gordon, The Pre-historic Background of Indian Culture, p.68; Wheeler, The Indus Civilization, pp.89-90, 105, 109; Banerjea, DHI., pp.159-60; Basham, The Wonder that was India, pp.22-3; etc. Gonda, who is generally quite sceptical about such attempts (see above, p.204, fn.328), nevertheless seems to feel the force of these arguments; see Gonda, Die Religionen Indiens, I, pp.7-8. Perhaps a relatively more definite dissent is of Sastri, in Bhattacharya (ed.), The Cultural Heritage of India, IV, pp.65-7.
identical ritual involving them was familiar both to the people of the Indus Valley and the early Vedic culture and that the same provides the starting point of development of the Sapta-mātrkās of Purānic tradition.

It has been seen above that the Mohenjodaro seal cited by Dhavalikar does not provide any proof that the Sapta-mātrkās of Purānic tradition were already worshipped by the people of Indus Valley culture. Before we comment on his attempts to find the prototypes of these deities in the hymns of the Rg-veda, a reference should be made also to the suggestions of Dikshit, whose statement is cited in support by Dhavalikar.

Dikshit does not deal specifically with the question of the origin of the Mātrṣ. He expresses his opinion on the subject in the course of a discussion on the role of the stars and planets in the development of the Mother Goddess cults in western Asia and India. In this context, he identifies the Sapta-mātrkās of classical Hinduism with the seven Kṛttikās, and, arguing that since a close connection existed between the Kṛttikās and the Vedic deity Agni, he further imagines that the Sapta-mātrkās must also be the same as the so-called seven mothers of Agni, "the Seven Sisters", as well as his seven tongues or rays as mentioned in the Rg-vedic hymns. At least this appears to us to be his main inference, although Dikshit does not express himself as unambiguously as we have tried to summarise his argument. He speaks of the motif of the Goddess multiplying herself into seven, which, according to him, was popular in western Asia and India from very ancient times, and seems to imply, without any historical basis, that the Vedic concept of the seven Kṛttikās, the seven mothers, flames, tongues, etc., of Agni are all manifestations of the same motif.

---

341 See, however, below, pp.244-5.
342 See above, p.204.
343 Dikshit, The Mother Goddess, pp.112 ff.
344 As illustration of the motif of the Goddess multiplying herself into seven, Dikshit points to the seven Hāt-hors of Egypt and cites the opinion of W. Max Müller in support that these seven were originally the Pleiades which were among certain nations constellations of human fate, especially ill-omened fate, and foretellers of harvest, and that this concept, especially of the zodiacal sign bull which is associated with the seven Hāt-hors, may have been borrowed by the Egyptians from the Asiatics in the days of the New Empire, i.e., later than 1580 B.C.; see Dikshit, op.cit., pp.112, 114; Gray (ed.), The Mythology of All Races, XII, p.40. Inasmuch
The possibility that the Matrs may be derived from the concept of the Kṛttikās is separately discussed below.345 But it may be stated here that Dikshit, in his frequently imaginative style, accepts equations amongst the Vedic and other Indian concepts of later age which have little evidence to support them. Also, generally speaking, he leaves no margin for the possibility that a religious concept in later Hinduism, which is presented in a Vedic brahmanical garb, may be essentially of extra-Vedic origin. In the present context, beyond the common number seven, no definite equation can be established, in our opinion, between the so-called seven mothers of Agni and his seven tongues or rays, despite the complex correspondences frequently present in the Ṛg-vedic thought. In view of the facts that the Ṛg-vedic hymns often depict Agni as present in or born of the Waters and the latter as goddesses and mothers,347 and also that the seven mothers are at times specifically identified as the seven rivers,348 it is logical to suggest that the reference to the "Seven Mothers" of Agni is to these Waters or rivers. Again, even if it is accepted for the sake of argument that a clear correspondence exists between the seven rays of the Sun and the seven rays, flames or tongues of Agni on the one hand and the seven Kṛttikās on the other,349 still it appears to us too far-fetched to imagine that Agni, who is called Kumara in the Vedic hymns, is the real prototype of Kumāra-Kārttikeya of the epic Purānic pantheon, and that the relationship between Skanda and the Matrs is only another form of the ancient Vedic

344 contd

as Dikshit's supposition may be imagined to be supported by the view that the ancient Indians derived their astronomical conceptions, of the Nakṣatras in general and the seven Kṛttikās in particular, from the Babylonians, it may be noted that this view is based on very insufficient grounds and is far from certain; see, for arguments in brief for and against this view, Macdonell and Keith, Vedic Index, I, pp.409 ff., s.v. Nakṣatra, and Kane, HD., V, pt.1, pp.508 ff.; also Keith, in Rapson (ed.), The Cambridge History of India, I, p.140; Basham, The Wonder that was India, p.490; Renou, Vedic India, p.57;

345 See below, pp.216 ff.

346 See Macdonell, VM., pp.91-2; Keith, RPVU., pp.155-6.


349 See Dikshit, The Mother Goddess, pp.112-3, 121-2.
relationship between the Fire-god and the stars of the Pleiades constellation.\textsuperscript{350} The origin of the god Skanda-\text{kārttikeya} is obscure, but the available evidence seems to suggest that he is of non-Aryan origin, and probably several allied god-concepts of un-brahmanical folk origins combined to develop the complex character of Skanda-\text{kārttikeya} of the epic-Purānic tradition.\textsuperscript{351}

Inasmuch as the hymns of the \text{Rg-veda} speak of the \text{Sapta-mātāraḥ}, whether in the form of the river-goddesses or as mothers of Agni, or as the seven mothers regulating the preparation of the Soma juice,\textsuperscript{352} there may always be a temptation to find in these expressions some suggestion of the \text{Sapta-mātākās} of Purānic tradition. As it is suggested above, so far as the concept of the \text{Sapta-mātākās} is concerned, the \text{Mātṛs} do appear to have been later moulded according to Vedic concepts in the process of their incorporation into the brahmanical pantheon.\textsuperscript{353} But any attempt to find the clear prototypes of the \text{Mātṛs} in the \text{Sapta-mātāraḥ} of the \text{Rg-veda} is wholly inadmissible, for the simple reason that these so-called mothers of Agni or Soma, etc., have nothing of the character of the \text{Mātṛs} as reflected in classical Sanskrit literature. The \text{Mātṛs} of classical Sanskrit literature, as we have seen,\textsuperscript{354} appear essentially as a group of un-brahmanical, anonymous deities of indefinite number and mainly demoniacal nature, and even when names were given to them or their number was sought to be fixed, there was no unanimity about it. The so-called \text{Sapta-mātākās} of the Purāṇas, iconographic texts and archaeology were no doubt popular.

\textsuperscript{350} Ibid., pp.112-3, 117; cf. also Mukhopadhyay, Manmatha, "Some Notes on Skanda-\text{kārttikeya}, \text{IHO.}, VII, 1931, p.316; see also above, p.195, fn.277.

\textsuperscript{351} For the origin and development of the concept of Skanda-\text{kārttikeya}, see Jacobi, "Brahmanism", \text{ERE.}, 2, p.807; Bhandarkar, \text{Vaiṣṇavism}, \text{Sāivism}, etc., pp.150-1; Hopkins, \text{EM.}, pp.227 ff.; Mukhopadhyaya, \text{op.cit.}, \text{IHO.}, VII, 1931, pp.309 ff.; Banerjea, \text{DHI.}, pp.361 ff.; Basham, \text{The Wonder that was India}, p.314; Venkataraman, K.R., "Skanda Cult in South India", in Bhattacharya (ed.), \text{The Cultural Heritage of India}, IV, pp.309 ff.; see also below, Ch.V, p.335.


\textsuperscript{353} See above, p.184.

\textsuperscript{354} See above, pp.169 ff., 177 ff., 184 ff.
divinities in the brahmanical tradition, but in that form, i.e., as personified energies of seven different gods, Brahmā, etc., they are certainly not anticipated in the Rg-veda or even in the later Vedic literature. Any attempt at finding the Mātr̥s in the Vedic religion is bound to be defeated if these deities are indiscriminately regarded as wholly identical with the traditional Sapta-mātr̥kās, counted as Brahmī, etc., and if their essential nature as ferocious and cruel beings is overlooked.

Similar objections would seem to apply to a casual suggestion by Barth that the cult of the Tisro-devīḥ in the Veda is very similar to that of the Mātr̥s or Mahā-mātr̥s. The group nature of this Rg-vedic trio, Iḍā, Sarasvatī and Bhāratī, or Iḷā, Sarasvatī and Mahī, is no doubt clear, as also is their prominent position as deities regularly invoked in the Āpri-sūktas. However, apart from the difficulty created by the number three, there seems nothing in the nature of these deities to bring them close to the Mātr̥s of the epic and Purānic tradition. At least two of the three deities, Iḍā and Mahī, appear to be products of ritualistic elaboration by priests. Iḍā, literally "nourishment", is the personification of the offering of milk and butter, thus representing plenty derived from the cow, with which she is frequently connected in the Brahmānas and is synonymous in the Naighaṁtukā. Mahī also may be regarded as a goddess of similar nature. Bhāratī, according to Keith, must refer to the lady

---

355 See above, pp.185 ff., esp. 185-6, 193.
356 Cf. our remarks above, pp.137, 155.
357 Barth, The Religions of India, p.202, fn.1. Barth gives the impression that the suggestion was favoured by Weber, which appears to us to be inaccurate; see below, pp.212ff., for the examination of Weber's suggestions. For another suggestion contained in a statement of Barth elsewhere, see below, p. 224, fn.428.
358 For the Āpri-sūktas and the deities invoked in them, see Max Müller, A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature, etc., pp.463-7. With some differences, the three goddesses are generally invoked in the eighth verse of each Āpri-sūkta. See also Potdar, K.R., "Āpri Hymns in the Rg-veda", JUB., XIV, pp.26 ff.; XV, pp.29 ff..
359 See Macdonell, VM., p.124; Keith, RPVU., pp.173, 200.
360 See Keith, RPVU., p.173.
of the Bharatas who dwelt on the banks of the Sarasvatī and Drāadvatī and is probably the personification of the offerings made by them.\textsuperscript{361} It is only the well known river-goddess Sarasvatī who betrays some warlike character, but this is never prominent and cannot be said to form the central aspect of the goddess' personality.\textsuperscript{362} There is also nothing in the ritual implied in the \textit{Aprī-sūktas} to suggest a sinister aspect of the Tīsro-devī.\textsuperscript{363}

Arbman's view, that an explanation of the "Mothers" (i.e., the Mātrīs of the epic-Purānic tradition) may be obtained in the \textit{Tryambaka} title of Rudra and the \textit{Tryambaka} ritual, may be regarded as relatively less open to objection.\textsuperscript{364} Rudra seems to be referred to as \textit{Tryambaka} already in the \textit{Ṛg-veda}\textsuperscript{365} and the epithet is repeated in the later Vedic texts which also describe the special rite in honour of Rudra called \textit{Tryambaka-homa}.\textsuperscript{366} In this rite, the offerings are made both for Rudra and his "sister" Ambikā\textsuperscript{367} and the god is requested to retire to Mūjavant mountain.\textsuperscript{368} As described

-----

\textsuperscript{361} Ibid., pp.173, 200.

\textsuperscript{362} For the conception of the goddess Sarasvatī in the Vedic religion, see Macdonell, VM., pp.86 ff.; Keith, RPV., pp.172 ff.. The mighty, war-like character of this goddess is probably best expressed in \textit{RV.}, VI.61. See also Potdar, op.cit., JUB., XV., pp.30-3 for a discussion of the character of Tīsro-devī as \textit{Aprī} deities.

\textsuperscript{363} See Potdar, op.cit., JUB., XV, pp.49 ff., where the ritual implied in the \textit{Aprī} Hymns has been discussed.

\textsuperscript{364} Arbman, Rudra, etc., pp.295 ff..

\textsuperscript{365} \textit{RV.}, VII.59.12. Grassmann regards this verse, as also \textit{RV.}, VII.59.7 and 8, as later additions; see \textit{RV.}, tr. Grassmann, vol.I, p.555.

\textsuperscript{366} \textit{TS.}, I.8.6; \textit{VS.}, III.57-63; \textit{ṬP.}, I.6.10; \textit{ŚB.}, II.6.2. For other references to this rite in the ritual texts, see Arbman, Rudra, etc., p.295, fn.3, and \textit{TS.}, tr. Keith, pt.I, p.118, fn.1. Arbman deals with the rite in ch.3 of his book and it is briefly described in Kane, HD., II, pt.II, pp.1103-5.

\textsuperscript{367} \textit{TS.}, I.8.6:
\[\textit{eśa te rudra bhūgaḥ saha svasra'nihilā yām juśasva ...}\]
Similarly in \textit{VS.}, III.57a.

\textsuperscript{368} \textit{TS.}, I.8.6:
\[\textit{te nāvasena paro mūjavato'nīhi ...}\]
\textit{VS.}, III.61:
\[\text{Etatte rudrāvasam tena paro mūjavato'nīhi.}\]
in the Brāhmaṇas and other later ritual texts, the essential elements of
the rite of Tryambaka-homa are as follows: The adhvaryu first prepares
on the gārha-patya fire as many cakes as the vajamana has descendants, with
an additional cake for the unborn ones. Then, taking a fire-brand from
the daksīna fire, he, accompanied by other priests, the vajamana and his
relatives, carries the cakes in a dish to a place towards the north-east.
The fire-brand is deposited in a spot where four roads meet and over which
the usual purifying rites have been performed. Here then, at the cross-roads,
a portion cut off from each cake, except the additional one, is offered to
Rudra and his sister Ambikā, the presumption being that thereby the
vajamana and his descendants are delivered from Rudra's power. The
additional cake is buried on a mole-hill or a heap of earth dug up by rats,
which is supposed to free the unborn descendants from Rudra's power.
Returning from the heap, the vajamana, his wife, children and other ladies
in the family go around the fire thrice from right to left, i.e., in an
anti-clockwise direction, as in the pitr-vajha, striking their thighs in
a specified way. There is an interesting prescription that unmarried
daughters of the vajamana, who are desirous of husbands, should go around
the fire three times each in the anti-clockwise and clockwise direction.

---

369 For the description of the rite, see Kane, HD., II, pt.II, pp.1103-5;
also Devasthali, Religion and Mythology of the Brāhmaṇas, pp.102-3.
370 A detail at this stage, omitted here, is that one cake is laid down on the
earth dug out by moles or rats with the words: "The mole (or rat) is thy
beast, O Rudra; rejoice in it" (Akhuste rudra paśustām jūṣasva; TS., I.8.6;
cf. VS., III.57), or if one has an enemy, one may think of him and offer
that cake with the words "that is thy beast"; see Kane, HD., II, pt.II,
p.1104.
371 This offering is accompanied by the utterance of the mantra quoted above
in fn.367; see Kane, HD., II, pt.II, p.1104.
372 The clue to this is in the use of the epithet pativedanam for Rudra in
VS., III.60b:
Tryambakaṃ vajāmahe sugandhim pativedanam.
Explaining the word, the commentary says:
Yajamanasambandhinyah kumāryop'ī pūrvoktapuruṣavaduttareṇa
tryambakamantreṇāgniḥ triḥ pariyaṇti. Tryambakaṃ vajāmahe
kīḍāsāṃ pativedanāṁ pataṁ vedayatīti tam bharturlambhayitāram
vidyā lābhe ....
See also Kane, HD., II, pt.II, p.1104.
The *vajamāna* then throws up high in the air the portions of the cake that remain and either catches them in his hands one after the other or touches them when they have fallen on the ground. This act is supposed to cut Rudra’s darts from his body. The cakes are then put in two baskets and hung from the two ends of a bamboo pole which is afterwards fastened to a tree-trunk or an ant-hill towards the north in such a way that a cow or bull cannot reach it. Rudra is then requested to retire to Mūjavant mountain. \[373\] Finally, the priests and the *vajamāna* return without looking back and touch water for purification. While the various acts of the rite are performed, suitable Vedic *mantras* are also recited.

Full of magical elements, the rite of *Tryambaka-homa* is undoubtedly of a popular, inauspicious kind, very different from the normal Vedic sacrifices. \[374\] The malevolent nature of Rudra is transparent enough in the description of the rite which is especially meant for him. But certain Brāhmaṇa passages and the commentators of the *Yajur-veda* leave no doubt also about the similar character of his so-called "sister" Ambikā. While explaining this rite, the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* makes the statement:

".... His sister Ambikā is the autumn; with her he smites (or kills)", \[375\]

and both the commentators, of the *Vājasaneyi* and the *Taittirīya Samhitā*, elaborate that Ambikā kills by taking the form of autumn and producing diseases, etc. \[376\] It is also significant that the joint offering to Rudra and Ambikā was supposed to be made away from the house, at the crossroads.

\[373\]
See above, fn.368.

\[374\]

\[375\]
*TB.*., I.6.10:

... Saradāvā asyāmbikā svasa. Tayā vā eṣa hinaṣṭi ....

\[376\]
The commentary explains the mention of "sister Ambikā in the joint offering to her and Rudra in *VS.*, III.57 as:

Ambikā ha vai nāmasya svasaḥ tayāsyaśa saha bhāga iti.
Yo'yām rudrākhyāḥ krūra devastasya virodhinaḥ hantumīchā bhavati tadānayā bhaginīyā krūre devatayā sādhanabhūtaye tam hinaṣṭi.
Sa cāmbikā saradrūpam praṇyā jarūdikamupāyam tam virodhinām hanti. ...

Similarly, the commentary on *TS.*, I.8.6 says about Ambikā:

Śaratkālo hi pīnasajvārydūtpādanen a himsakastadvadvadiyamambikā himsikā. Tataḥ saradityucayate. Eṣa rudrastayaiva sahāyabhūtaye praṇīnaṁ hinaṣṭi, ....
Arbman emphasized the popular nature of the rite and the malevolent nature of the goddess associated with Rudra.\(^{377}\) He understood Tryambaka in the sense of one accompanied by three mothers (ambāḥ, ambikāḥ), i.e. goddesses.\(^{378}\) Obviously presuming the so-called "sister" Ambikā as identical, at least in name and nature, with the ambāḥ or ambikāḥ implied in the title Tryambaka, Arbman supposed that these must be the same as the cruel, demoniacal Mātrīs of the epic, etc.\(^{379}\)

The supposition of Arbman carries considerable force, especially in view of the close association of the Mātrīs with Śiva in epic and Purānic Hinduism,\(^ {380}\) and the suggestion in the epic passages of a great, if obscure, antiquity of these divinities.\(^ {381}\) It must be emphasized, however, that Arbman's view, in the present state of our knowledge, is no more than a good supposition, perhaps more satisfactory than some others of its kind but still far from being certain. The mention of a goddess Ambikā in relation to Rudra in the Vedic texts may be very significant for the history of the Devī or Śakti cult in India,\(^ {382}\) but the association of Rudra with a group of Ambikās as prototypes of the later Mātrīs should be regarded as no more than a possibility, for Arbman's statement that the name Tryambaka implied one associated with three mothers or three goddesses, although highly plausible, is not universally accepted.\(^ {383}\) Elsewhere in the

\(^{377}\) Arbman, Rudra, etc., pp.295 ff.

\(^{378}\) Ibid., p.295.

\(^{379}\) Ibid., p.296. For a somewhat similar inference drawn by Kosambi, see below, pp.251 ff.

\(^{380}\) See above, pp.195 ff.

\(^{381}\) See above, p.200.

\(^{382}\) See above, Ch.II, p.123.

\(^{383}\) The meaning of Tryambaka as "one having (or being associated with) three mothers" would seem to be generally supported by most scholars; cf. Macdonell, VM., p.74; Hopkins, EM., p.220 and fn.1; Keith, HPVU., p.149. Grassmann also understands the word Tryambaka in the sense of one having three mothers, and suggests comparison with trimātā in RV., III.56.5; see RV., tr. Grassmann, vol.I, p.555; Wörterbuch zum Rig-veda, p.561. However, the agreement seems to extend only to the bare translation of the term, and there is difference of opinion as to the origin of the title and its significance. For the traditional view, see, besides Hopkins cited above, Barth, The Religions of India, p.161 and fn.1.
Yajur-veda when, in the ritual of the Asvamedha sacrifice, the chief queen is required to lie down with the slain horse and utter "O Ambā, O Ambikā, O Ambālikā! No one leadeth me, etc.", there is no indication that three divinities are meant or that they have any connection with the goddess Ambikā or with Rudra's Tryambaka title.

The suggestion sometimes put forward that the Maṭrīs may be derived from the concept of the Kṛttikās must be regarded as inspired by the popular epic and Purānic myth of the Kṛttikās nursing the child god Kārttikeya. Since the Maṭrīs are also closely connected with Skanda-Kārttikeya, there may always be a suspicion that they were originally the same as the Kṛttikās.

The Kṛttikās appear as a prominent constellation closely associated with Agni in the texts of the later Vedic period. Their association

384 Tā., VII.4.19; see also ŚB., XIII.2.8.3.
386 Dikshit's opinion has already been cited, above, p.208, but he arrives at the equation Kṛttikās = Maṭrīs in a somewhat different and roundabout way. Perhaps the most representative opinion of this type, though very briefly expressed, is of Patil; see Patil, "Sapta-mātrikās or the Seven Mothers from Besnagar", PIHC., XII, 1949 (1950), pp.109 ff., esp. 111-2. While discussing Roman influence on the classical Indian art, Goetz points to a new wave of "light cults" and, referring to the growing worship of Kārttikeya, quotes Patil in support of the close association of this god with the Maṭrīs who may be the stars of the Pleiades constellation; see Goetz, "Imperial Rome and the Genesis of Classic Indian Art", EW., n.s., X, no.4, 1959, pp.262 and 268, fn.69. See also Yaduvanshi, Saiva Mata, pp.95-6, 141, and cf. Mukhopadhyay, "Some Notes on Skanda-Kārttikeya", IHQ., VII, 1931, pp.316-7.
387 See above, p.p.194-5.
388 See Macdonell and Keith, Vedic Index, etc., I, pp.413, 415, s.v. Nakṣatra; Kane, HD., V, pt.1, pp.499, 501, 507; Dikshit, The Mother Goddess, pp.113, 117-8. An instance of the close connection of the Kṛttikās with Agni may be seen in ŚB., II.1.2.1:

Kṛttikās vagnādadhīta. Eta vā'gninakṣatraṁ yaktṛttikāstadvai saloma yo'gninakṣatregni ādadhātai tasmākṛttikāsvādadhīta.
with the Fire-god continues throughout the history of Indian culture and, in fact, it is quite probable that the myth of Skanda-Karttikeya as son of Agni and the Krttikās in the Mahābhārata is already influenced by Vedic concepts. The Krttikās were uniformly regarded as six in the classical Sanskrit literature and in this form are taken to explain the name and the six faces of Kārttikeya, but there are earlier traditions that they were counted as seven and it appears that they were sometimes also imagined as of a very large and indefinite number.

389 See Hopkins, EM., pp.105-6; Mudhopadhyay, op.cit., IHQ., VII, 1931, p.317; Shastri, India as seen in the Bratasamhitā of Varahamihira, p.142; also Sabdakalpadruma, II, p.176, s.v. Kṛttika; Monier-Williams, SED., p.304, s.v. Kṛttikā. The Kṛttikās are called Vahni-daiva in the Mahābhārata; see Mbh., I,213.78; III.219.11; cf. also ibid., IX,43.10.

390 Cf. Hopkins, EM., p.229; Mukhopadhyay, op.cit., IHQ., VII, 1931, p.316; see also above, p.195, fn.277

391 See Monier-Williams, SED., p.304, s.v. Kṛttikā; ERE., 2, p.807.

392 See above, pp.164,167. It has been suggested that the name Kārttikeya of the god was probably derived not directly from that of his so-called mothers, the Kṛttikās, but from Kārttikeya, the first month of autumn when, on the cessation of the monsoon, the roads become practicable and kings were wont to set out on war expeditions; see Jacobi in ERE., 2, p.807. Hopkins, however, preferred to accept the traditional derivation from Kṛttikā since these stars were imagined as regents of war (see below, p.218) and governed the month when wars usually began in ancient India; see Hopkins, EM., p.230.

393 Several later Vedic texts count the Kṛttikās as seven and give their names as Ambā, Dula, Nitāti, Aḥhrayantī, Meghayantī, Vārṣayantī and Cuptīkā; see TS., IV.4.5; TB., III.1.4.1; for other references and some variations in names, see Macdonell and Keith, Vedic Index, etc., I, p.415, fn.68; TS., tr. Keith, pt.2, p.346, fn.2. Several of the above names suggest association with clouds and rain. The description of the Kṛttikās as Sapta-Ṣirsāhā naksatras in Mbh., Kinjawadekar's edn., III.230.11, has been rejected in the Cr. edn., and the accepted reading describes this constellation as Sakaṁkārā; see Mbh., III.219.11.

394 Cf. SB., II.1.2.2: Ekaṁ dve triṇi ca ṛṭvāriti va anyāni naksatrāyaḥ jaya eva bhūvijāta yatr kṛttikāstadbhūmannāmevaitadupaiti. Tasmā kṛttikāsva[dhāta]. .... A large and indefinite number of this constellation is also suggested by the name Bahulā by which it is referred in Pāṇini, IV.3.34 and AK., NSP. edn., p.231, 1, 2733. Cf. also the expression Tatāsca prānte jyeṣṭhamūlye māśi bahulāsū, etc., in the Harsacarīta and the commentator's equation of bahulāsu with kṛttikāsu; Harsacarīta, ed. Kane, 4th Ucchvāsa, p.6; ibid., ed. Führer, p.183. The masculine form of this name, i.e. Bahula, is given to Agni (see
An association with birth and new-born children is also brought out in their relationship with the child Skanda as his mothers.\(^{395}\) The Mahābhārata also suggests a war-like character both of the Kṛttikās and their presiding deity Agni.\(^{396}\)

It is not improbable, therefore, that the Mātṛs may be ultimately derived from the concept of the Kṛttikās. Unfortunately, however, there is no definite evidence to prove it. Firstly, even though the Kṛttikās occupy a prominent place in the basic Śrauta rite of the consecration of sacred fire (Agniadhāna) and invariably head the list of the Nakṣatras in the Vedic literature,\(^{397}\) it does not seem to be possible to reconstruct a popular cult of this constellation in the Vedic and pre-epic times. Secondly, as we have seen, the Skanda-myths in the Mahābhārata, which are probably our earliest sources where the Mātṛs of later Hinduism are clearly recognizable and which describe these deities in such a detailed, if also confused manner, do not warrant the derivation of the "Mothers" from a specific group like the Kṛttikās.\(^{398}\) In these myths, the Kṛttikās appear incidentally as "Mothers" and assume significance only in relation to Skanda, especially in relation to his six faces.\(^{399}\)

Perhaps the suggestion of a possible early relationship of the Mātṛs with the Kṛttikās may be regarded as more acceptable in another form.

394 contd
commentary on AK., NSP. edn., p.231, line 2733), and Skanda-Kārttikeya is sometimes called Bāhuleya; see AK., NSP. edn., p.8, 1. 79.
395
See above, pp.164,167. A certain relationship of the Kṛttikās with birth and new-born children can also be inferred from the fact that in the later Vedic and especially the post-Vedic period, the Nakṣatra of a child's birth was supposed to be of great significance and in certain rites in the ceremonies relating to birth, offerings were prescribed, among others, also to the Nakṣatra of that day and the god of that Nakṣatra; see Kane, HD., II, pt.1, pp.246 ff.; V, pt.1, pp.521 ff., esp. 525, 528 ff.; also Keith, RPVU., p.368.
396
See Hopkins, EM., pp.105-6, 230.
397
See Kane, HD., V, pt.I, pp.501, 506-7. For the place of the Kṛttikās in the rite of Agnyadhāna, see SB., II.1.2.1-5. A description of the rite is given in Kane, HD., II, pt.II, pp.986 ff.
398
See above, p.171.
399
See above, pp.164, 167.
Although the Mātṛs do not seem to have been originally astral figures as shown by their names, whether in the longer lists in the epic and the Purāṇas or in the shorter lists in these sources, including the popular traditional Sapta- or Aṣṭa-mātrkās, it is possible to imagine that astral cults influenced their growth and development.

The origin and development of the astral cults in India is obscure. The old theory of Hillebrandt that a lunar cult formed the basis of the Ṛg-vedic rites and myths is all but abandoned, but moon and stars did play an important role in the life and thought of the Vedic people, and there is also evidence that the knowledge of the Vedic Aryans about astronomy was fairly advanced, if not fully organised. The stars seem to have played some part also in the eschatological ideas of the Vedic people. The word Naksatra, generally in the sense of star, appears

Cf. Hopkins, The Religions of India, p.415, fn.2, on Skanda's Grahas, both male and female.


See Hopkins, "Festivals and Fasts (Hindu): The Vedic Calendar", ERE., 5, p.871; Keith, RPVU., p.316; Kane, HD., V, pt. I, pp.506-7, 523 ff.; Renou, Vedic India, p.49; Basham, The Wonder that was India, pp.489-90; etc.

See Kane, HD., V, pt. I, chs. XIV, XV, esp. pp.477 ff., 488 ff.. The arguments by Kane may not be uniformly objective, but he has collected enough materials at one place to convince us that the astronomical knowledge of Vedic Indians must have been fairly advanced. See also Macdonell and Keith, Vedic Index, etc., I, pp.409 ff., s.v. Naksatra; Rapson (ed.), The Cambridge History of India, I, pp.139-40; Basham, The Wonder that was India, pp.489-90; Apte, Social and Religious Life in the Grhyā-sūtras, pp.155 ff.

The stars are sometimes imagined in the Vedic thought as the souls of the virtuous dead; see Barth, The Religions of India, p.23; Hopkins, The Religions of India, p.204; Macdonell, VM., p.167. Commenting on TS., V. 4.1.3-4:

-Sukṛtāṁ vā etāni jyotīṁśi yannakṣatrāṇi tānyevā'ḥpnotyatho anūkāśeṇevaṁtāni jyotīṁśi kuśe suvargasya lokasyānukhyataya,

Śāyaṇa says:

Ye sūbhānam śāstravīhitam karma kurvanti te sukṛtinaḥ. Teṣaṁetāni divi dṛṣyamāṇāni nakṣatrārūpāṇi jyotiṁśi. Te hi puyukṛtaḥ svargaṁ gatvā bhāsānavighrahastānyāpnuvanti.
already in the hymns of the Bhagavata, and, in the later Vedic period, it seems to be technically used in the sense of the stations of the moon. Mythologically, in this period, the Nakṣatras are conceived of as females and wives of Soma, identified with moon. However, in spite of the fact that some later Vedic texts describe a Nakṣatraśṭi, there is no clear evidence that the worship of the Nakṣatras personified as female deities played any significant part in the Vedic ritual. But a star-cult, including the cult of the female Nakṣatras, must have been more popular than the Vedic literature seems to reveal, for, as pointed out by Hopkins, the epic mythology appears to have been conspicuously affected by such a cult.

---

404 contd

Ata eva tadupadhānena tadīyāni jyotīṃśi prāpnuvanti. Api caitāni nakṣatra-jyotīṃṣyanu tenopadhānena kīṃcitprakāsāṃ karoti. Sa ca prakāsāḥ svaragolokāvibhāya sampadyate.

(See Śāyaṇa's commentary on TS., IV.4.11; ASS., no.42, p.2092). See also SB., VI.5.4.8:

... tāṇi ha tāṇi nakṣatranāyeva nakṣatranāi vai janayo ye hi janāḥ punyakṛtaḥ svargam lokam yanti teṣāmeṇāṃ jyotīṃśi nakṣatrairevaṁāmetatpacati.

Cf. Griffith's note on the reference to the Fathers decorating the heaven with stars in RV., X.68,11; see RV., tr. Griffith, vol.II, p.481. In any case, the identification of the Saptarṣis as the stars of the constellation of Ursa Major was an established concept in the Vedic thought; see Macdonell, VM., p.167; Keith, RPVU., pp.201 and fn.9, 416; see also above, p.164,fn.121. 405

See Macdonell and Keith, Vedic Index, etc., pp.409 ff., s.v. Nakṣatra; Kane, HD., V, pt.I, pp.495 ff.. 406

See Macdonell, VM., p.112; Macdonell and Keith, Vedic Index, etc., I, p.410, 407

TB., III.1; BSS., 28,3 and 4; for the text and English translation of the former, see Dumont, Paul-Emile, “The Īṣṭis to the Nakṣatras ... in the Taิตtirīya Brāhmaṇa”, PAPS., 98, no.3, 1954, pp.204 ff.. Atharva-veda Parisiṣṭa, I is a Nakṣatra-kalpa. See also Keith, RPVU., p.201, and Kane, HD., V, pt.I, pp.505-7; pt.II, pp.792 ff.. 408

Cf. Keith, RPVU., p.201; Renou, Vedic India., p.74. 409

Hopkins, EM., pp.52-3. For the inclusion of the Nakṣatra deities in brahmanical rites in the post-Vedic times, or for special rites of Nakṣatras in general or particular Nakṣatras, see Keith, RPVU., p.201, fn.2; Apte, Social and Religious Life in the Gṛhya-sūtras, pp.234-5; Kane, HD., V, pt.II, pp.792 ff., where the rites of Nakṣatra-snāna and Puṣya-snāna are described; see also Shastri, India as seen in the Brāhmaṇhita of Varāhamihira, pp.167-8.
In the present context, it is worth remarking that even though diverse and very obscure groups of goddesses are associated with Skanda in the myths of his birth in the Mahābhārata, and many of them are also labelled as Mātrs or Mātarah in different contexts, at least some, besides the Kṛttikās, are clearly identifiable as astral figures. Such are the stars Dhanisṭhā, Rohiṇī, etc., as well as Abhijit, whose position is said to have been assigned by Skanda to the Kṛttikās. Although, in the particular context where they are introduced, none of the above Nakṣatras are called Mātarah or mothers of Skanda, their motherhood is nevertheless implied in the myth. Similarly, even though the Skanda myth in the Mahābhārata does not clearly allude to the astral nature of the wives of the seers, this can be safely inferred because there are some indications that already in the Vedic thought dead ancestors were sometimes conceived of as transformed into stars and constellations, and, in post-Vedic thought, the Saptarṣis in astronomy are regularly understood as stars of the constellation of Ursa Major. In any case, some versions of the myth of Skanda’s birth render the six Kṛttikās as six of the seven wives of the Saptarṣis, who, when Svāhā assumed their forms to woo her own infatuated husband Agni, were supposed to have fallen from their status and consequently to have been assigned the position of a constellation. This is clearly a skilful adaptation of the ancient Vedic belief that the Kṛttikās were the wives of the Seven Ṛṣis but that they were for some reason prevented from cohabiting with their husbands and thus it was that while the seven Bears, i.e. the Saptarṣis, rose in the north, the Kṛttikās did so in the east.

410 See above, p.165.
411 See above, p.219, fn.404, where it is also pointed out that the Saptarṣis were identified with the stars of the constellation of Ursa Major already in the Vedic thought.
412 See ERE., 2, p.807.
413 SB., II.1.2.4:

Athā yasmānna kṛttikāsvādadhīta’rkṣānām vā’eta agre patṇya āsuḥ sapta’ṛgīnu ha śma vai pura’ṛkṣā ityācakṣate tā mithunena vyārddhayantāṁ hyuttarāhī sapta’ṛṣaya udyanti pura etā aśaniṣa vai tadyo mithunena vyṛṭāhāḥ sa nenmithunena vyṛṛdhya’iti tasminna kṛttikāsvādadhīte.

See also SB., tr. Eggeling, SBE., XII, pp.282-3. The context is the establishment of the fire in the rite of Agnyādhana, and amongst several arguments as to why it must be established under the Kṛttikās, the above statement is introduced to indicate why it may not be so done.
A close association with astral figures, named or implied, in the myths of the birth of Skanda in the Mahābhārata, therefore, strongly suggests the possibility that the concept and cult of the Maṭṣyas were influenced by astral ideas. Such a possibility finds support also from another consideration. Although in the evolved astrological ideas in the later Vedic and post-Vedic periods, the Nakṣatras, in different positions and varying conjunctions with the planets, tended to be divided for the purposes of ceremonial acts into auspicious and inauspicious, it appears that a markedly malevolent nature was attributed to them from the very beginning of their conception. This does not, of course, seem to be clearly suggested in the Iṣṭī to the Nakṣatras described in the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa and the Baudhāyana Śrāuta-sūtra, except perhaps in the division of the 28 asterisms into the Deva-Nakṣatras and Yama-nakṣatras.

But a popular myth about the Nakṣatras in the texts of the later Vedic period clearly paints a malignant picture of them. According to this myth, as referred to in the Taittirīya Śaṁhitā, Prajāpati gave his 33 daughters—all presumably astral figures— to king Soma, but as the latter associated only with Rohiṇī, the rest deserted him in anger and he was consequently afflicted with a serious illness. But even if such evidence were not available, the very fact that, from as early as the Vedic times, the Nakṣatras were regarded as having a potent influence on human lives, and some of them were imagined as inauspicious in contrast to others which were auspicious, would be enough to suggest the malignant nature of these figures. In the later periods, when we hear of specific rites to a certain Nakṣatra or

414 See Kane, HD., V, pt.I, pp.524-5, 528 ff.
415 See Dumont, op.cit., PAPS., 98, no.3, 1954, p.205; Kane, HD., V, pt.I, p.505. The Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, however, sometimes uses the word punya nakṣatras (TB., I.5.2.1; III.1.2.8), implying belief in evil Nakṣatras, and suggests the evil nature of Nakṣatras like Jyeṣṭhā and Mūlā (see ibid., III.1.2.2-3; cf. Kane, HD., V, pt.I, pp.524-5). The birth of a child on the Nakṣatras like Jyeṣṭhā, Mūlā, etc., is regarded as very inauspicious in AV., VI.110.2-3 and the whole of this hymn is prescribed by the Kaushika Sūtra, 46,25 to be recited in a rite of pacification for one born on an evil Nakṣatra; see Kane, HD., V, pt.I, p.524 and fn.753.
416 TS., II.3.5; see also Keith, RPVU., p.170.
417 See above, p.219 and also below.
Nakṣatras in general, they are generally of the nature of pacificatory or śanti rites. As already noted above, the description of the rite of Puṣyavāna by Varāhamihira also includes the worship of the Mātrṣ along with Rudra, the Grahas, Nakṣatras and a host of other deities. The close association of the rites to the Nakṣatras with those to the Grahas also suggests the malevolent nature of the former, since the planetary cults, in general, were of inauspicious and pacificatory nature. As implied by their name, the Grahas or the planets were conceived of as beings which afflict human lives in various ways. The Mahābhārata often treats them as fiends and classes them with demons and ogres. One of the earliest and the best descriptions of the rite of pacification of the Grahas is found in the Yājñavalkya Smṛti. Much of the Bhṛṣṭaṃhitā is occupied with

418 Cf. Kane, HD., V, pt.II, pp.792 ff. According to the Baudhāyaṇa Śrauta-sūtra (28,4), the Iṣṭi to the Nakṣatras is performed to drive the evil away, produce luminousness and conquer repeated dying; see Dumont, op.cit., PAPS., 98, no.3, 1954, p.207.

419 See above, p.197 and fn.291. The worship of the Nakṣatras and Grahas in the rite called Rohini-yoga in the Bhṛṣṭaṃhitā seems to be aimed at avoiding droughts and securing timely and adequate rain for the crops; see Bhṛṣṭaṃhitā, ch.24.

420 See above, fn.419. In the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa, Khaṇḍa I, the rite of pacification of the Mātrṣ (ch.227) is followed immediately by the rite of worship of the Kṛṣṭikās (ch.228), etc., and then by the rites to the Grahas (chs. 231-2). For the frequent mention of the Nakṣatras and the Grahas together in a Sanskrit Buddhist text, see below, fn.421.

421 See ERE., 12, p.84. The Mahāyāna Buddhist text Suvarṇa-bhāṣottama-sūtra frequently refers to the afflictions caused by the Grahas and the Nakṣatras, etc. (Gṛha-nakṣatra-pīḍā, Sarva-graha-nakṣatra-jamam-marana-pīḍā, Sarva-graha-kāli-kalaha-nakṣatra-jamam-pīḍā); see Suvarṇa-bhāṣottama-sūtra, ed. Nobel, pp.104, 107, 157, 163. See also ibid., pp.55, 93, 106, where the Grahas and the Nakṣatras are separately mentioned as evil beings causing afflictions.

422 See Mbh., VI,73,10; 96,35-6 for references to cruel planets. The fact that the epic speaks of evil beings called Skanda-grahas (see above, p.166), Deva-grahas, Gāndharva-grahas (see Hopkins, EM., p.34), and Pitr-grahas (Mbh., III,219,47) easily suggests that the Grahas in their primary sense as planets were regarded as evil beings. The demoniacal beings exercising evil influences on human life, especially that of children, are called Graha also in the Suṣruta-śaṃhitā and divided into nine classes apparently according to the number of planets; see Suṣruta-śaṃhitā, Uttara-tantra, 27.1-5; also Monier-Williams, SED., p.372, s.v. Graha.

423 Yājñavalkya-smṛti, I, 295-308.
the potent and often evil influence of these beings, and the text frequently refers to the Graha-śūnti, Graha-vajña, etc. \(^{424}\) Several Purūnas, \(^{425}\) astrological texts and mediaeval digests describe the Navagraha-śūnti, and it is interesting to note that a detailed description of such a rite in the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa almost immediately follows a similar one to the Mātṛs. \(^{426}\)

It seems therefore safe to assume that the cult of the Mātṛs, if not itself of astral origin or derived from a cult of the Kṛttikās, was strongly influenced by astral cults at a fairly early stage of its history and, in any case, before the Mahābhārata assumed its present form.

Another suggestion of the origin of the Mātṛs may also be considered, that they were at first essentially dead ancestresses, and were conceived of as a group and commanded reverence in the same way as the Pītṛs. We shall examine presently some very interesting uses of the word Mātṛ in texts of the Atharva-vedic tradition, \(^{427}\) but it may be mentioned that Weber, commenting on the relevant passages of these texts and conscious that the "Mothers" presumably referred to in them might be connected with the Mātṛs of the epic and Purānic tradition, expressed the opinion that their worship may have been modelled on the lines of the various supplicatory sacrifices to the Pītṛs. \(^{428}\) In support of his opinion, he pointed mainly to the

---

426 Vi,Dh,P. I, 231-2; see also above, p.223, fn.420.
427 See below, pp.232 ff.
428 Weber, *Zwei vedische Texte „Über Omina und Portenta*, pp.349 ff., esp. pp.352-3. This is, of course, only part of the explanation offered by Weber. For a fuller examination of his views, see below, pp.232 ff., esp.238ff. Apparently inspired by the suggestions of Weber, Bloomfield also expressed a similar opinion while explaining the use of the word Mātṛ-kalpika in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*: see *Kau.S.*, ed. Bloomfield, Intro., p.lxviii; also below, p.235. Cf. also the suggestion implied in the following statement of Barth in *The Religions of India*, preface, p.xv:

"Suppose that certain hymns of the tenth book of the Rg-veda ... had not come down to us, what would we learn from the rest of the collection respecting the worship of the manes of the departed? We might know that India paid homage to certain powers called Pītṛs ..., but we could not infer from that, any more than from later worship of the Mātṛs ..., this worship of ancestors, or
offerings made to the Mātrīs in the Ābhūdayīka Śrāddhā, mentioned probably for the first time in the Śāṅkha-yāna Grhya-sūtra but more frequently in the later ritual texts. He also referred to a passage in the Kauśītaki Upaniṣad which mentions the Apsarases, called Ambā, Ambāyu, welcoming the newly arrived dead in heaven, suggesting that they might have been regarded as the souls of the deceased human mothers occupied with the fate of their descendents on earth.

The suggestion that the Mātrīs were in origin the souls of dead female ancestors and their concept and cult was modelled on the pattern of those of the dead male ancestors, the Pitṛs, may appear attractive from several points of view. Apart from the obvious correspondence between the two names, like the Mātrī, the Pitṛs also, at least in the Vedic brahmanical tradition, were conceived of as an indefinite but numerically large group of anonymous beings; they also were sometimes referred to as forming groups, which in epic times were often counted as seven in number.

Far less marked than in the case of the Mātrīs, the Pitṛs’ anger nevertheless

428 contd

spirits of the dead, which, as the comparative study of the beliefs, customs, and institutions of Greece and Rome shows us, was nevertheless from the remotest antiquity one of the principal sources of public and private right, one of the bases of the family and the civic community ...."

429
Weber, op.cit., p.352. The Śāṅkha-yāna Grhya-sūtra, IV.4 runs as:

430

431
See Madonell, VM., p.170; Kapadia, Hindu Kinship, p.8 and fn.4.

432
See groups of Pitṛs specified by family names in RV., X.14.6; VS., XIX.50; AV., XVIII.3.15-6, 20; cf. also Kapadia, Hindu Kinship, p.12.

433
Hopkins, EM., pp.31 ff., esp. 33.
had to be reckoned with, and, as the gods, they also always commanded worship and could likewise grant boons.

The reliable evidence for the theory that the Mātrās were originally souls of dead ancestresses, however, can only be of the type suggested by Weber. Probably he was right in thinking that the inclusion of the Mātrās in the Abhyudayika Śrāddha is recorded for the first time in the Śāykhāyana Gṛhya-sūtra. Some other Gṛhya-sūtras also contain suggestions of or prescriptions for this rite but they do not refer to the Mothers. But the same rite, under the name Vṛddhi Śrāddha or Nāndimukha Śrāddha, is frequently described in the Purānic and other later Brahmanical texts, and, generally speaking, includes the worship of the Mothers, preceding that of the Fathers. Since the worship of the Mātrās in the Abhyudayika or Vṛddhi Śrāddha is accompanied by and in fact precedes that of the Pitṛs, as also since the rite is clearly called a Śrāddha, the natural inference would appear to be that the Mātrās here are to be conceived of as dead female ancestors.

434 The Pitṛs are implored in RV., X,15.6 not to injure their descendents for any sins committed against them through neglect. It is interesting to see that they are also invoked as warriors in battle; RV., VI.75.9; see also AV., XVIII.4,82-3. The Mbh., III,219,47 even speaks of the evil Pitṛ-grahas; see also Hopkins, EM., p.34. As evil beings, afflicting human lives, especially that of children, the Pitṛ-grahas are also mentioned in the Caraka and Suśruta-sāmhitā; see Caraka-sāmhitā, II (Nidāna-sthāna), 7,14; VI (Cikitsa-sthāna), 9,16, 20(3), 21(3), 88; Suśruta-sāmhitā, Uttara-tantra, 27,5; 60,12, etc.. Cf., however, Keith, RPVU., pp.426-7.

435 See Macdonell, VM., pp.170-1; Keith, RPVU., pp.425 ff.

436 See above, pp.224-5.

437 See, e.g., Aś.68., II,5,13-5; IV,7,1 (SBE., XXIX, pp.209, 250); GGS., IV,3,35-7 (SBE., XXX, pp.110-1).

438 See Kane, HD., IV, pp.525-9; Kapadia, Hindu Kinship, pp.31, 35 ff.; also Shastri, Origin and Development of the Rituals of Ancestor Worship in India, pp.236 ff.. The Śrāddha-sūtra of Kātyāyana makes no reference to the worship of the Mātrās in the Abhyudayika Śrāddha, but Deva’s commentary on it does, and, under the name Mātrā-śrāddham, lists it regularly as a preliminary rite before the beginning of any new sacrificial undertaking; see Weber, Zwei vedische Texte über Omina und Portenta, p.352. For the same rite being called Abhyudayika, Vṛddhi or Nāndimukha Śrāddha, see Kane, HD., IV, pp.527-8. The subtle distinction made by Kane between the Abhyudayika and the Vṛddhi Śrāddha does not affect our argument.
The evidence collected above, however, is not as conclusive as it appears at first sight. Bearing in mind that the rites in question are typical of the brahmanical tradition, the primary objection to Weber's suggestion would be that the *patria potestas* of the Vedic brahmanism does not warrant the supposition of a cult of the dead mothers by the side of that of the dead fathers. The word *Pitaraḥ* by itself never really comprehends female ancestors in the Vedic literature or later brahmanical texts, and, in the literature of the early or later Vedic period, no *Matarah* appear as recipients of proper funeral offerings. It is only in the *Āṣṭaka-homa*, or, more properly, in the *Anvāṣṭakya* rite following it, that the *Gṛhya-sūtras* sometimes refer to the *pīndā* offerings to the wives of the three immediate male ancestors. But this is very unusual and is not likely to have provided the pattern for the so-called *Abhyudayika* or *Vṛddhi Śraddha*. In the description of the same rite of *Āṣṭaka Śraddha* in the *Purāṇas*, the dead females are generally absent.


440 It may be mentioned that the word *Pitarau* (masculine gender, dual number) is used in the *Ṛg-veda* in the sense of parents or father and mother; see Monier-Williams, *SED.*, p.626, s.v. *Pitr*. Also *Dyaus*, the well known *Dyaus-pitar*, sometimes appears as feminine (see Macdonell, *VM.*, p.22; Keith, *NVU.*, p.95), and the word *Matar* is used to indicate both the parents (see Höftling and Roth, *SW.*, 5, p.699, s.v. *Matar*). But such usages provide no evidence that the word *Pitaraḥ* (masculine gender, plural number), denoting ancestors in general who were invited to receive offerings, also included dead female ancestors.

441 Cf. Kane, *HD.*, IV, p.472. The *A mā gantāṁ pitarā mātarā cā*, etc., in *VS.*, IX.19, does not appear to us to provide an exception.


443 See below, pp.231-2, for suggestion on the reason for inclusion of Mothers in this rite.

The suspicion that a cult of dead ancestresses could not have naturally developed in the Vedic brahmanical tradition is confirmed by a close scrutiny of the rites of Ābhyudayika or Yṛddhi Śrāddha, described in the Gṛhya-sūtras and other later texts. As Kapadia has demonstrated, these so-called funeral offerings, which were recommended to be performed on all kinds of auspicious occasions, including the various Saṃskāras, differ strikingly from the normal Pārvana Śrāddha offerings of the brahmanical tradition. The Pitṛs of the Ābhyudayika or Yṛddhi Śrāddha form a very loosely-defined group called Nāndīmukha-pitṛs, and the definition of the female ancestors is very imprecise and varying..

There are marked variations also in the small details of the rite. As against the normal funeral offerings, the Yṛddhi Śrāddha is performed from left to right instead of from right to left; barley is substituted for sesamum; dūrva replaces kuṣa; the sacred thread is worn on the left hand side and not on the right; the brāhmaṇas invited are of an even number instead of odd; the offerings are made with the word svāhā, and not svadhā; and the paternal ancestors are invoked in an inverse order, beginning with the great-grandfather. It is clear, therefore, that the Ābhyudayika or Yṛddhi Śrāddha is not strictly speaking an obsequial rite. As implied in the names of the rite as also in the designation Nāndīmukha-pitṛs, literally "the Manes of joyful countenances" or, as Kapadia suggests, "the Fathers who are faces of joyful occasions", it is a special ceremonial rite for auspicious occasions.

Since the Ābhyudayika or the Yṛddhi Śrāddha does not appear to be a typical obsequial rite, it is highly unlikely that the offering to the Mothers prescribed for these rites is a natural extension of the obsequial offerings to the Fathers, as supposed by Weber. How the Mothers came

---

445 Ibid., pp.35-6; see also the prescriptions for the rite in Saṁkhāyana Gṛhya-sūtra as cited above, p.225, fn.429. For a fuller description of the Ābhyudayika or Yṛddhi Śrāddha, see Kane, HD., IV, pp.525-9; Kapadia, Hindu Kinship, pp.35-41; cf. also Keith, RPVI., p.427.

446 See below, pp.229 ff.


448 See above, pp.224-5.
to be included in the rite is not easy to answer. It may be that their inclusion is to be explained by the growing importance of motherhood in the brahmanical tradition, perhaps under the impact of the increasing recognition of the popular mother goddess cults, even though the extant Dharma-sāstra literature provides no adequate proof of it. It is even possible that, at a very early stage of its history, the popular cult of the Mātrīs influenced the brahmanical tradition and was responsible for the addition of the "Mothers" by the side of the Fathers in the Abhyudayika Śrāddha.

The possibility that the "Mothers" were included with and given precedence over the Fathers in the rite of the Abhyudayika or Yṛddhi Śrāddha under the influence of the popular cult of the Mātrīs seems to be strengthened by a closer look at the attempts to define and specify the so-called "Mothers" of these rites in the brahmanical texts. The short prescription in the Sāṅkhāyana Gṛhya-sūtra does not make it clear as to who the "Mothers" are whose worship is to be performed in the beginning of the Abhyudayika rite, but the later sources discuss this point and are more informative, if less definitive. It may be noted first that, according to these later prescriptions, the worship of the Mothers is generally supposed to be accompanied by that of Ganesa, a constant companion of the Sapta- or Aṣṭa-mātrīkās in iconography. Moreover, these deities are

449 The attitude of the brahmanical tradition towards women in general is truly ambivalent; for the censure and eulogy of women in the Dharmasastric and other works, see Kane, HD., II, pt.I, pp.574 ff. and 580 ff.; also Basham, The Wonder that was India, pp.177 ff., esp. 182. A good instance is the attitude of Manu-smṛti which, while advocating the dependence of women at every stage of their life on the male members of the family (Manu-smṛti, IX,2-3), also makes a statement that the ācārya is ten times more venerable than the upādhyāya, the father a hundred times more than the ācārya, and the mother a thousand times more than the father (ibid., II. 145).

450 See above, p.225, fn.429.

451 See Kane, HD., IV, p.529 and fns, 1184, 1185, quoting Kalpataru and Aparārka respectively. The Kūrma Purāṇa also prescribed the worship of the Mātrīs with Ganesa in the Nandimukha Śrāddha; see Hazra, Studies in the Purānic Records, etc., p.258, fn.53.

452 See above, pp.149, 195.
sometimes referred to as Mātr-geṇa, and, in attempts to define and specify them, they are also sometimes counted as seven or eight and identified as Brāhma, etc. Further, an explanation is occasionally added that the Mothers are worshipped before the Pitṛs because otherwise they perpetrate violence. There is no doubt, therefore, that the Mothers of the Ābhyudayika or Vṛddhi Śrāddha as described in the later brahmanical sources are the well known ferocious Mātrs of the epic-Purānic tradition who appear in the company of Skanda, Śiva and Devī in literature and whose representations as Sapta- or Aṣṭa-mātrākās are seen so frequently on the walls of the medieval Hindu shrines. It is true that dead human females are also included in the rite as described in these sources, but they usually occupy a secondary place. It is also interesting to note that in such of these later sources which may be regarded as valid for a relatively earlier date, only three paternal females are included, but their number is later raised to eight, when a distinction is also made between the Divine Mothers who must be worshipped before the Pitṛs and the human mothers who must be worshipped afterwards. It seems clear, therefore, that the Purānic and other later brahmanical texts do not generally identify the "Mothers" of the Ābhyudayika or Vṛddhi Śrāddha as the souls of dead ancestresses. On the contrary, they give the impression

453 See Kapadia, Hindu Kinship, p.39, fn.84, citing Prayoga-parijāta which quotes Brahma Purāna as authority.

454 Aparārka cites verses to show that the Mothers worshipped in the rite of Vṛddhi Śrāddha before the Pitṛs are seven in number and to be identified as Brāhma, etc.; see Kane, HD., IV, p.529 and fn.1185. See Kapadia, Hindu Kinship, p.39 for a different list of eight Mothers. Sometimes these deities are counted as sixteen and identified as Gaurī, etc.; see Shastri, Origin and Development of the Rituals of Ancestor Worship in India, p.241; see also above, p.193 and fn.264, for Gauryayādi-sodasa-mātrākāḥ.

455 See Kapadia, Hindu Kinship, p.39 and fn.84, citing Kūrṣa Purāṇa and Prayoga-parijāta.

456 See above, pp.193 ff.

457 See above, pp.153-4.

458 See Kane, HD., IV, pp.528-9; also Kapadia, op.cit., p.39.

459 See Kapadia, op.cit., p.39.
that the dead paternal females were included in the rite following the inclusion of the well known Matras of the epic and Puranic tradition, and their number was gradually raised to eight to correspond to the Asta-Matrikas.\(^{460}\) Since the "Mothers" are included in the rite of the Abhyudayika Sraddha as early as the time of the Sankhayana Grhya-sutra, the influence of the popular cult of the Matras on the brahmanical tradition may be suspected from that early date.

Perhaps the occasional mention of the offerings to the wives of the three immediate ancestors, besides those to the ancestors themselves, as prescribed in the Anvastakya rites,\(^{461}\) is also to be explained in the same manner. We do not agree with Kane that the inclusion of the wives was a natural growth in course of time.\(^{462}\) For reasons already mentioned,\(^{463}\) the offerings to dead ancestresses in this rite cannot be regarded as a natural growth inside the brahmanical tradition any more than it can be in the rite of the Abhyudayika or Vrddhi Sraddha. But there are other considerations to support this suspicion. Apart from the fact that the brahmanical ritual texts give widely divergent opinions about several vital aspects of the Astaka Sraddha - e.g. the number of times and the dates in the year on which it was to be celebrated, the deities to be worshipped, the offerings to be made, the procedure to be adopted, etc.,\(^{464}\) - which gives a distinct impression that it should not be regarded as an original or typical brahmanical Sraddha but only a variation of it,\(^{465}\) it is interesting to note that even when the offerings to the wives of the dead ancestors is recommended, a sharp distinction is made between the wives and their husbands, creating the suspicion that these so-called wives do not belong in the rite naturally. Thus, according to the Asvalayana Grhya-sutra, the pindas to the males are put in the east while those to the females are put

\(^{460}\) Cf. ibid.,

\(^{461}\) See above, p.227.

\(^{462}\) See Kane, HD., IV, p.475.

\(^{463}\) See above, p.227.

\(^{464}\) See Kane, HD., IV, pp.353 ff.

\(^{465}\) Cf. ibid., pp.361-2, 426.
in the west, with the addition of surā and the scum of boiled rice.\textsuperscript{466} Perhaps in a suggestion of the same rite in the Sāṅkhāyana Grhyā-sūtra, the offerings to the females are required to be put behind those to the males, putting something between the two, which is taken to refer to darbha grass.\textsuperscript{467}

It may be added here that the instruction mātrdevo bhava, pitṛdevo bhava in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad, given to the student at the conclusion of his education,\textsuperscript{468} does not appear to us to be of any relevance in the present context. Appearing as it does beside acāryadevo bhava, atithidevo bhava, probably it means no more than an expression of due respect to the mother and the father.

The idea that the goddesses could be originally spirits of dead ancestresses, especially in a matriarchal society, is not prima facie inadmissible. It may perhaps be argued in the same way as the view associated with the names of scholars like Herbert Spencer that gods, especially in a patriarchal society, were originally spirits of dead male ancestors.\textsuperscript{469} But such an investigation is part of the much larger question of the origin of the concept of gods and of religion with which we are not concerned. Our main concern here is with the suggestion that the Mātrīs of the epic and Purāṇic tradition are to be derived from an earlier cult of the spirits of dead ancestresses, and our analysis shows that the earliest extant literature in India, being representative of the Vedic patriarchal tradition, naturally does not support such a hypothesis.

A passing reference has been made above to the use of the word Mātrī in texts of the Atharva-vedic tradition.\textsuperscript{470} The word is actually used as part of a compound, in the forms Mātrī-nāmāni or Mātrī-gana, literally "the names of the Mothers" or "the group of the Mothers", which invariably denotes certain texts or hymns. Thus, in its chapters on omens and portents,

\textsuperscript{466} Aśvatthāmārya Sūtra, II.5.5, 7-8 (SBE., XXIX, pp.208-9).
\textsuperscript{467} Sūtra, IV.1.11; SBE., XXIX, p.108).
\textsuperscript{468} Taittirīya Upaniṣad, I,11,2.
\textsuperscript{469} See Hopkins, The Religions of India, pp.8 ff.
\textsuperscript{470} See above, p.224.
the Kauśika-sūtra frequently speaks of offerings with the recitation of Mātr-nāmāṇī which thereby act as a charm against evil portents. At another place, it recommends the use of the same recitation in a rite which, according to the scholiasts, is meant to exorcise the Gandharvas, Rākṣasas, Apsarases, Bhūtas, etc. The recitation of the Mātr-nāmāṇī is recommended by the Vaiśāṇa-sūtra in the rite of Agnīdhya and by a Pariśiṣṭa of the Atharva-veda in the rite called Brahma-yāga.

The references in the Kauśika-sūtra make it very clear that the hymn entitled Mātr-nāmāṇī is to be identified primarily as Av., II.2, which begins as Divyo Gardharvah, etc., but when it actually defines Mātr-nāmāṇī at one place, the pratikas cited indicate that, besides the above-mentioned hymn, AV., VI.111 and VII.6 are also to be included in

471
Kau.S., 94.15:
Divyo gardharva iti mātrnāmabhirjihuyat.
See also Weber, Zwei vedische Texte über Omina und Portenta, pp.349 ff.
Exactly the same text occurs at Kau.S., 95.4; 96.3; 101.3; and 114.3.
Ibid., 136,9 reads as:
Sa khalvetuṣu karmasu sarvatra śāntyudākāṁ kṛtvā sarvatra cātanaṁyanuyojayenmātrnāmāṇī ca.

472
Kau.S., 26.29 ff.:
See also Karambelkar, The Atharva-vedic Civilization, pp.187-8. In his commentary on Av., II.2 and VI.111 (two of the three Atharva-vedic hymns identified in the Kauśika Sūtra as Mātr-nāmāṇī, see below, pp.236-7), Śāyāṇa reproduces Kau.S., 26.29 ff., cited above, and adds:
Aṣya sūktasya gandharvarākṣasāpsaraḥ śaṅgaraḥādhiśāntaye ghrātakasarvasauṣadhihoma catuṣpāthe grahaghyīṭāsirah sthitamayakaḥpālāgniḥomādau ca viniyojaḥ.

473
Vai.S., 5,10:
... cūtanaṁmātrnāmabhirvāṣṭoṣpatyairnuyojitaḥ.

474
AV.Par., XIXb.4.2:
Hutvā ca cūtanaṁ tatra mātrnāma-gaṇeṇa ca,
Śnapayet paścagavyena tathā śāntyudakena ca.

475
See above, fn.471.
The Atharva-veda Pariṣṭa entitled Gana-mālā follows the tradition of the Kauśika-sūtra but adds one more hymn, viz. AV., IV, 20, and gives an alternative name of the group as Mātr-ganah. It may be added here that, commenting on the sūtra IV, 260 of Pāṇini, the Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali explains the word kalpa by using Pārāśara-kalpikaḥ and Pārāśara-kalpikaḥ as illustrations, and a variant reading adds to them Mātr-kalpikaḥ. Weber, who noticed this word very early, did not attempt to define it. Writing on the Āṣuri-kalpa, a Pariṣṭa of the Atharva-veda, Magoun conjectured that as Kalpa-sūtra meant one familiar with the Kalpa-sūtras and Pārāśara-kalpika was probably used of a person familiar with the Pārāśara-kalpa, the word Mātr-kalpika should be taken to mean one who was familiar with the Mātr-kalpa. He also thought that the presence of these words in the Mahābhāṣya without further explanation indicated that they were well understood by the people of Patañjali's time and therefore referred to the rites and practices familiar to the Hindus. Pointing out that the Mahābhāṣya is very familiar with the Atharvan literature, Bloomfield also suggested that on the supposition that the word Mātr-kalpika also is Atharvan, it might be translated as "one who practices the Mātr-kalpa". He felt that the Mātr-kalpa may be the title of some minor ritualistic treatise, involving especially the use of the hymns called Mātr-nāmāni or Mātr-gana, and that even though it was impossible to imagine

476 See Kau.S., 8.24: Divyo gandharva imaṁ me agne yau te māteti mātrānāmāni.
477 AV.Par., XXXII.4: Mātrānāmā divyo gandharva ā ūnyaṣayi'maṁ me agne yau te māte'ṭi mātrānāmāni. (4) Iti mātr-ganah.
478 Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣya, ed. Kielhorn, vol. II, p. 284, 1, 3; for the variant Mātr-kalpikaḥ, see ibid., p. 477.
479 Indische Studien, XIII, 1873, p. 455. The word Mātr-kalpika is listed in Böhtlingk, Sanskrit Wörterbuch, V, p. 64, as an adjective, and in Monier-Williams, SED., p. 807, s.v. Mātr., as traceable in Patañjali, but it is not explained in either.
481 Ibid.
the precise nature of these rituals, they might have dealt with "a śrāddha for the Mātraras".\footnote{482}

Bloomfield's conjecture that a ritualistic text entitled Mātr-kalpa existed which dealt with some rites of śrāddha for the Mātraras is not likely to be proved, for, as we have seen, the brahmanical ritual texts do not seem to contain clear evidence of a supplicatory obsequial rite to the dead Mothers corresponding to one for the Fathers.\footnote{483} On the other hand, it seems certain that during mediaeval times the rites of worship of the Mātris of the epic and Purānic tradition in general or of the Sāpta-mātrkās in particular were supposed to be in accordance with their own special kalpas. Explaining the statement of Varāhamihira that the images of Viṣṇu should be duly consecrated and installed by the Gāgavatas, of Sūrya by the Magas, of Śiva by the ash-besmeared brāhmaṇas, of the Mātris by those versed in the maṇḍala-krama, etc., according to the rites peculiar to the worship of the individual deities,\footnote{484} the commentator Utpala, who is generally assigned to the 9th century A.D.,\footnote{485} names the philosophies and the texts of the various sects and in that context speaks of the consecration and installation of the images of the Mātris according to the rites prescribed in their own Kalpa.\footnote{486} It is not unlikely that if a ritualistic treatise called Mātr-kalpa existed in Patañjali's time, it contained prescriptions for some brahmanised form of the popular rite of worship of the Mātris of epic and Purānic tradition. It is even possible that, while no actual text of such name existed, the popular worship of the Mātris was given the name Mātr-kalpa when it was incorporated in the brahmanical tradition.

It is not so much the doubtful occurrence of the word Mātr-kalpikah in the Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali or the possibility of the existence of a

\footnote{482}{See Kau.S., ed. Bloomfield, Intro., pp.lxii-lxii.}
\footnote{483}{See above, p.227.}
\footnote{484}{Brhatsamhitā, 59.19, reproduced above, p.139, fn.10.}
\footnote{485}{See Shastri, India as seen in the Brhatsamhitā of Varāhamihira, pp.154-5.}
\footnote{486}{See Utpala's commentary on the Brhatsamhitā, 59.19. The relevant portions of the commentary are as follows:
Mātrām brahmyādīnām .... Ye naraḥ yām devamupalāritoḥ ...
tairnarājasasya devasya svavidhīnā atmiyadarāṃsanoktenavidhānena ....
Mātrām svakalpavihitavidhānena .... kriyā kārya.}
text called *Matr-kalpa* during his time that are important to us but rather it is the use of the word *Matr-nāmāni* for certain hymns of the *Atharva-veda*. The instances already quoted from the *Kausiṣka-sūtra* etc. are very likely to be of great significance to the question of the origin and early history of the Mātrs of the epic and Purāṇic tradition. It is particularly striking that they appear in texts directly emerging from the *Atharva-vedic* tradition which by consensus is regarded as more truly representative of popular religious traditions of India. Unfortunately, however, it is almost impossible to guess the real significance of the word *Matr-nāmāni* or the reason why certain selected hymns of the *Atharva-veda* were called by that name.

The *AV*, II.2, which is most frequently cited as *Matr-nāman* and is always cited as the first of the group denoted by that name, is a short hymn of five verses directed towards the Gandharva and his wives, the Apsaras. It is not a hymn of adoration in the true sense of the word, but rather of supplication or propitiation of deities whom the poet held in considerable awe. This is best expressed in the last three stanzas directed to the Apsaras, especially stanza 5, in which, while the poet pays homage to these goddesses, he also calls them noisy, dusky, dice-loving and mind-confusing. There is no clue in the hymn itself as to why it should have been called *Matr-nāman*. The opinion of Weber that the Apsaras referred to in the hymn could scarcely have appeared as Mātāras to the poet and that if this hymn was used later to honour the deities called the "Mothers", it is only another instance of an inappropriate use of an old hymn by later ritualists, does not appear to us to be very sound. On the contrary, if a relationship were to be imagined between the ancient Apsaras and the Mātrs of the epic and Purāṇic tradition, it would appear

---

487 See above, p.233-.4.
488 See Bloomfield, The Religion of the Veda, pp.40-2, 76-7; Keith, BPVU., p.18. Winternitz, A History of Indian Literature, I, pt.1, pp.112-3; etc...
489 See above, pp.233-.and fns. 471, 476, 477.
490 *AV*, II.2.5:
Yāṁ klandāstamīścavekṣakāmā manomuḥaḥ,
Tābhyaḥ gandharvapatrībhyopsarābhhyokarāḥ namah.
to be significant that the former are portrayed in an unflattering manner. As we have already seen, the attribution of the name Mataraḥ to the group of deities who were of the nature of fierce ogresses is essentially euphemistic. The fact remains, however, that there is nothing definite in the hymn itself to suggest that the Apsaras referred to are conceived of as Mothers and could serve as the starting point of a conception that developed into the Matṛs of the epic and Purānic tradition.

The AV., VI.111 is also a short hymn of four stanzas in which Agni is prayed to cure a man of insanity. The last stanza of the hymn expresses the wish that the Apsaras, Indra, Bhaga and the Viṣvedevaś may cure the man and restore him to normality. Since the Apsaras are conceived of as agents of mental derangement (manomuhahaḥ) in AV., II.2.5, it is appropriate that they are mentioned here. But there is no suggestion in this hymn also as to why it was labelled Matr-nāman.

The AV., VIII.6 is a long hymn of 26 stanzas and apparently meant to guard a pregnant woman against demons. Apart from the fact that it is included in the group Matr-nāmani, the Kaushika Sūtra recommends the use of it in the Simanta rite while binding an amulet on a woman in the eighth month of her pregnancy. Some charmed amulet or bandage seems to be suggested also in verse 20 of the hymn. Here again, presuming for the moment that the name Matr-nāman has some relationship with the Matṛs of the epic and Purānic tradition, it seems significant that the hymn refers to demoniacal beings who attack a pregnant woman and destroy the embryo. But otherwise there is no indication as to why the hymn was called Matr-nāman. Although a large number of evil beings are named in the hymn, they are generally conceived of as male rather than as female, and are more like the

492 See above, p.182.
493 AV., VI.111.4:
Punastva durapsarasah punarindraḥ punarbhagaḥ,
Punastva durvisvedevā yathānummadito'sasi.
494 See above, p.236, fn.490.
Puruṣa-grahas, the companions of the Mātṛ-grahas, in the rétinue of Skanda-Kārttikeya in the Mahābhārata.

The hymn, AV., IV.20, which is added by an Atharva-veda Parīśiṣṭa to the group Mātṛ-nāmanī, is addressed to a plant (ōṣadhi) conceived of as a goddess and is supposed to impart the power to expose demons, magicians and their hostile practices. The plant-goddess is addressed as Devī but not called a mother.

It must be accepted, therefore, that there is nothing in the four hymns of the Atharva-veda noticed above which provides any definite clue to their grouping as Mātṛ-nāmanī in the later tradition. According to a traditional explanation, they might have been so named on account of their authorship by Mātṛnāmasī, and Whitney seems to accept this in his introductory comments on AV., II.2. Apparently discounting the traditional explanation, Bloomfield suggested that these hymns might have been so designated because they contain the words apsaras (AV., II.2.3, 5; VI.111.4), mātar (ibid., VIII.6.1) and devī (ibid., IV.20.1, 2).

Weber also looked to the Apsarases mentioned in AV., II.2 for a possible clue towards the identification of the "Mothers" in the name Mātṛ-nāman, but, as noted above, he discounted the possibility that these beings could have appeared as "Mothers" to the composer of the hymn. After examining, besides Apsarases, various other feminine members of the Vedic pantheon, such as Āpā, Gāh, Devapatnyāh, Aditi, Anumati, Sarasvāti, evil Nīrṭi, Uṣā, Dvāro-devī, Tīsro-devī, etc., he tentatively offered the suggestion that two possible sources could have combined to give rise to the concept and cult of the "Mothers".

As Weber argued, even though the ritual

---

496 See above, p.166.
497 See above, p.234.
498 See AV., tr. Bloomfield, SBE., XLII, p.399.
501 See Weber, Zwei vedische Texte über Omina und Portenta, pp.349-50; also above, p.236.
ignores most of the individual goddesses of the Vedic pantheon, this gap is filled by the rite called Patnī-samvāja in which offerings were made collectively to the "wives of the gods" (Deväpatnyaḥ). The possibility that the "Mothers" of the expression Mātr-nāman could be connected to these "wives" is suggested, according to him, by the fact that in the only place where the "wives" of the Patnī-samvāja rite seem to be named, viz. Pāraskara Gṛhya-sūtra, III.8.10, they are specified as Indrāṇī, Rudrāṇī, Śarvāṇī and Bhavāṇī, and remind us of the eight-fold Mothers of later times and of prescriptions such as that in the Brhatsamhitā that the images of the Mātrās should be fashioned according to the names and forms of their respective male counterparts. 503 Another, more popular source for the origin of the worship of the "Mothers", according to Weber, could have been a cult of the dead ancestresses modelled on the pattern of the suppilatory rites to the Pitṛs, to which a reference has already been made above. 504 Since the Kauśika-sūtra mentions the "Mothers" in special relation with the Apsarases, it appeared significant to Weber that the latter appear under the names Ambā, Ambayu, in the Kauśitaki Upanisad and are portrayed as welcoming the newly arrived dead. 505 Notwithstanding the above explanations, Weber confessed that since the contents of the Atharva-vedic hymns under reference do not give much help, it was impossible to determine the reason why these hymns were called Mātr-nāman or to imagine the significance of the "names" of the Mothers. 506

The second part of Weber's hypothesis, that a cult of the dead Mothers, modelled on the pattern of the śrāddhas for the dead Fathers, could have been at the root of or helped to form the concept of the Mātrās, has already been examined. 507 As we have seen, whether or not the Mātrās of the

503 Ibid., p.351. The statement quoted by Weber from the Brhatsamhitā is reproduced above, p.185, fn.222.
504 See above, p.224
505 See Weber, op.cit., p.352; also above, p.225. In suggesting that the Kauśika-sūtra brings the Mātrās in special relation to the Apsarases, Weber apparently means that this text uses the hymns called Mātr-nāman in rites to exorcise beings like the Apsarases; see above, p.233
507 See above, pp.224 ff.
epic-Purāṇic tradition were originally souls of dead ancestresses, at least the extant brahmanical literature provides no clear proof of it, and it is highly unlikely that such a concept could have naturally developed in the Vedic brahmanical tradition.

The other hypothesis of Weber that the Devapatnyah of the rite of Patnī-saṃvāyas could be regarded as prototypes of the later Mātrṣ is also quite unacceptable. It has been demonstrated above that the concept of the Sapta- or Āṣṭa-mātrikās counted as Brahmī, etc., i.e. the concept of the Mātrṣ as the personified "Energies" of the gods, is in all probability a late growth in the cult of these goddesses and its development cannot be placed before the beginning of the Christian era. It has also been suggested that the so-called "wives" of the gods in the Vedic religion, whether taken individually or collectively, provide no real parallelism with the later Mātrṣ who, as "Energies" and at least in the form of the groups called the Sapta- or Āṣṭa-mātrikās, are not really the wives of their respective male counterparts. It may be added that while the group-nature of the Devapatnyah in the Patnī-saṃvāja rite is clear, there is nothing known of the character of this group or of the rite in which they play such a prominent part that may be supposed to bring them close to the ferocious Mātrṣ of the epic-Purāṇic tradition.

The Patnī-saṃvājas are typical brahmanical rites forming the closing parts of the Dārśa-Pūranās, which serve as the model (prakṛti) for all sacrifices of the type known as Isti. They actually consist of four offerings, respectively to Soma, Tvāṣṭr, Devapatnyah and Agni Grhapati, and the name Patnī-saṃvāja has to be understood rather in the sense of "offerings made (to some deities) along with the wives (of the gods)".

The Devapatnyah here are obviously the same "wives of the gods" who are

508 See above, pp.187 ff.
509 See above, p.187, fn.236.
510 For the Patnī-saṃvājas, see Kane, HD., II, pt.II, pp.1076 ff.; also Hillebrandt, Das altindische Neu- und Vollmondopferr, pp.151 ff.; Keith, RPVU., p.320; see also SB., I.9.2; ibid., tr. Eggeling, SBE., XII, p.256 ff.
511 See SBE., XII, p.256, fn.1; Kane, HD., II, pt.II, p.1076, fn.2406.
seen in the company of Tvaṣṭrī also in several hymns of the Rig-veda. Perhaps they include goddesses like Indra, Varuṇā, Agnāyi, etc., as seems to be suggested by RV., I.22.9-12. But, to our knowledge, they are never really specified and named individually except in the place referred to by Weber. This fact, in itself, appears significant to us, because when the Paraskara Gṛhya-sūtra specifies the Devapatnyaḥ as Indra, Rudra, Sarvā and Bhavā, it does so in the rite of Patnī-saṁyāja as part of the Śūla-gava sacrifice. Although this special rite to Rudra is described also in several other Gṛhya-sūtras, perhaps nowhere else do the Patnī-saṁyājas form a part of it. It is also interesting to note that, with the exception of Indra, all the names of the so-called "wives of the gods" as given in the Paraskara Gṛhya-sūtra are only names of the wives of various forms of Rudra. Keeping this in mind, as well as the fact that Rudra, as the wife of Rudra, appears for the first time only in the Śūtra literature, it seems to us that the individual names of the Devapanthyaḥ in the Patnī-saṁyāja rite and the rite itself are only ad hoc introductions into the Śūla-gava sacrifice of the Paraskara Gṛhya-sūtra, the opportunity being taken to introduce in this way the female counterparts

512 RV., I.22.9; II.31.4; 36.3; VI.50.13; VII.35.6; X.64.10; 66.3; see also Muir, OST., V, p.229; Macdonell, VM., p.117, Keith, RVVU., pp.205, 219.

513 Some other goddesses mentioned in this context are Hotra, Bharatī, Varūtri and Dhiṣāṇa. Since, in his commentary, Śaṅkara explains a few of them as the wives of one or the other god, perhaps they also were included in the group Devānām patniḥ or Gnaḥ referred to in RV., I.22.9 and 10 respectively.

514 See above, p.239.

515 Par. GS., III.8 (SBE., XXIX, pp.351-3).

516 See Aś. GS., IV.8 (SBE., XXIX, pp.255 ff.); HGS., II.8 (SBE., XXX, pp.220 ff.). For other references and a short description of the rite, see Kane, HD., II, pt.II, pp.831-2.

517 Bhava and Sarva, which appear as independent deities in the Atharva-veda (see AV., IV.28.1; VI.93.2; X.1.23, etc.), are already names of Rudra in the Yajur-veda and the Brāhmaṇas; see TS., IV.5.5; VS., XVI.28; ŚB., I.7.3. 8; VI.1.3.11, 15; also Macdonell, VM., p.75; Bhandarkar, Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc., pp.103-5.

518 See Macdonell, VM., p.125; Keith, RVVU., p.218.
of Rudra or goddesses allied to him. This is clearly demonstrated by the description of the Śūla-gava rite in the Hiranyakesin Grhya-sūtra which, without producing individual names, prescribes offerings to the consorts of Bhava, Rudra, Śarva, Īśana, Paśupati, Ugra, Bhīma and Mahādeva, but does not call it Patnī-samāyaja offering. Thus, even if a relationship were to be imagined between the "wives of the gods" named in the Pāraskara Grhya-sūtra and the Matrīs of the epic-Purānic tradition, it would not prove a necessary relationship of the latter with the Devapatnyas of the normal Patnī-samāyajas or as companions of Tvaṣṭry.

In the light of the above analysis, it appears almost impossible to determine the real significance of the name Matrī-nāman, especially as the contents of the Atharva-vedic hymns so designated offer little help. In our opinion, the choice of the name Matrī-nāman is neither as accidental as the native explanation implies nor as arbitrary as suggested by Bloomfield. We are strongly inclined, like Weber, to treat the name as very meaningful and to suspect some relationship with the Matrīs of the epic and Purānic tradition. It is difficult to say, however, what is the precise nature of this relationship or who are the "Mothers" in the name Matrī-nāman. The fact that the hymns in question deal with uncanny and evil spirits and magical practices involving them may not be of any special relevance to the problem, for the majority of hymns in the Atharva-veda are of a similar nature. As far as the hymns under discussion themselves permit us to conjecture, the only likely candidates for the designation Matrī may be the Apsarases referred to in AV., II.2.3, 5 and VI.111.4, and, as we have already seen, the difficulty pointed out by Weber is not necessarily a very serious one.

519 See HGS., II.8.7 (SBE., XXX, pp.221-2).
520 See above, p.238.
522 See above, pp.236-7.
The Apsarases are amongst the minor deities of the Vedic pantheon. It is generally agreed that they were originally water-nymphs, but even in the Brāhmaṇa they their conception has developed far from their natural source. They have become rather heavenly or celestial nymphs, and, in the later Śāhītās, their domain fully extends over the earth, trees, clouds, heavens, etc. Again, already in the Brāhmaṇa, more than one Apsaras is spoken of, and by the later Vedic period, the close association of the Apsarases with the Gandharvas, as their beloveds and wives, assumes the character of an oft-repeated formula. In the Vedic pantheon, the Apsarases are essentially beautiful beings fond of love, song, dance and play, and it is this aspect, generally speaking, that is noticed in a developed form in the epic and Purānic myths. The only aspects of their character, besides their group-nature, which may be imagined to bring them nearer to the Mātrīs of the epic and the Purānas, are the sinister ones suggested in the Atharva-veda. These, as we have already seen, are clearly reflected in one of the hymns later labelled as Mātrī-ghanā, in which the Apsarases are called mano-muhā, "mind-confusing". Explaining this expression as unmadakārīnāḥ, Sāyaṇa cites a statement from the Taittirīya Śāhītā which says: "... it is the Gandharva and the Apsarases who madden him who is mad ...". A certain connection of the Apsarases with mental derangement can also be inferred from AV., VI.111.4. In still another hymn of the Atharva-veda, the Apsarases are prayed to depart from the vicinity of men to the river and the banks of the waters.

523
For this and the following statements about the nature of the Apsarases in the Vedic religion, see Macdonell, VM., pp.134-5; Keith, RPVU., pp.179 ff.
524
AV., II.2.5; see above, p.236.
525
TS., III.4.8.4:
Gandharvāpsaraśa va etam unmādayanti ya unmādyati.
See Sāyaṇa's commentary on AV., II.2.5.
526
See above, p.237. Sāyaṇa makes similar comments on this verse as on AV., II.2.5; see fn.525 above.
527
AV., IV.37.3:
Nādiṁ yāntypsaraśaḥ tāmāvaśvasam,
Gulgulēḥ pīḷē nalaṃyukṣaṇāndīḥ pramandani,
Tat pūrātāpsaraśaḥ pratibuddhaḥ abhūtana.
Cf. also ibid., vv. 2, 4 and 5.
It is quite likely, therefore, that the Apsarases had a malevolent streak in their character. But this by itself provides too feeble a ground to suggest that they may have served as prototypes of the Mātr̥s of epic and Purāṇic traditions, particularly as there is no certainty that a marked malevolence was an essential characteristic of the Apsarases. At least, the epic and Purāṇic myths retain no clear memory of it. In his survey of the epic mythology, the worst that Hopkins notes in the character of the Apsarases is that ordinarily they are not shy and the best of them is described as lewd and pitiless. As a general rule, the epic Apsarases are very free in their love and are conceived of as deities of love-lorn women, none of which aspects bespeak essential malevolence or provide parallels with the Mātr̥s.

The prehistory of the Mātr̥s, i.e. their history before appearance in the epic and such classical Sanskrit works as the dramas of Bhāsa and Śūdraka, therefore, remains obscure, and nothing more can be stated with confidence beyond the simple assertion that they are likely to be very old divinities of India and to have originated, in all probability, outside the brahmanical tradition. We have seen that there is a strong probability that a popular cult of the Goddess or several goddesses existed in the Indus Valley culture. Moreover Rudra—with whom the Mothers were so intimately connected in later history—if not wholly non-Vedic in origin, had many non-Vedic elements in his make-up and is similar to a god worshipped by the people of the Indus Valley culture. Thus it is possible that the Mātr̥s

---

528 See Keith, RPVU., p.182 and fn.3, suggesting a comparison with Mannhardt, Wald- und Feldkulte, II, pp.36 ff. Keith believes that the Gandharva may have obtained his power of causing mental derangement or mental excitement from the Apsarases. He cites an instance recorded in the JaiminIva Brāhmaṇa in which a Gandharva, in conjunction with an Apsaras, brings about the madness and death of a brāhmaṇa; see RPVU., p.182 and fn.9.

529 Hopkins, EM., p.161. Generally speaking, in classical Hinduism, the Apsarases are dangerous only to the ascetics whom they seduce; see Gonda, Die Religionen Indiens, vol.I, p.110.

530 Hopkins, EM., p.161.

531 See above, Ch.II, pp.118 ff.

532 See above, pp.195 ff.

533 See above, p.206, fn.340; also Ch.I, pp.120-1.
were already known in the times of the Indus Valley and the Vedic cultures, but there is no definite evidence in support of this, and, for all practical purposes, these goddesses are recognizable in literature only from the time of the Mahābhārata, (Daridra-) Čārudatta, Mrčchakatika, etc. Also, inasmuch as their concept in the epic and Purāṇic myths shows some correspondence with astral figures, it may be imagined that, already in the epic, the Mātṛs do not appear in their original form but have assumed a somewhat complex character by absorbing alien features.534

Geographical Distribution of the Mātṛ-cult

From what we have seen above of the origin and history of the Mātṛ-cult, it may be safely concluded that, though of obscure origin and probably of great antiquity, this cult becomes noticeable around the beginning of the Christian era, and from about the beginning of the early mediaeval period it becomes very popular in the brāhmaṇical tradition. From notices in literature, no safe generalizations can be made about the specific geographical distribution of this cult, except that it was probably popular all over North India and Deccan. It has been suggested on the basis of archaeological finds that, at least in the early mediaeval period, the Mātṛ-cult was widely prevalent in the Malwa region;535 and, similarly, that as the Saptamātṛs were so popular with the early Cālukyas, it is probably from their region that the cult of a definite number of the Mothers with a specific iconography, migrated towards Orissa in the north-east and the Paṇḍya-Pallava territories in the south and east.536 There may be some truth in both the suggestions, but, based as they are, generally speaking, on the provenance of Mātṛ icons, they should not be overemphasized. From about the beginning of the Christian era, Western India, including the Malwa region, seems to have been a stronghold of Śivaism,537 and it is but to be

---

534 See above, pp.219 ff.
537 See above, Ch,II, p.129.
expected that Mātr icons would have a relatively greater concentration in this region. The testimony of Südraka and Bāṇa would appear to support this to a certain extent, as also that of the very important Gangdhār and Deogarh inscriptions. But it should be borne in mind that discoveries or absence of icons of a certain deity or deities in a particular area will always involve an element of accident, particularly as monuments in North India were the worst sufferers from Muslim iconoclastic zeal. Nevertheless we cannot ignore the testimony of the Bihār fragmentary pillar inscription, which would speak of a popular Mātr cult in that region, and the earliest of the Mātrs' icons, fairly large in number, from Mathura. The only safe conclusion appears to be that during the early centuries of the Christian era, the Mātr cult was equally popular all over North India and probably continued to be so in later periods, even though few art specimens have survived to corroborate this.

The above inference is in accord with the general literary testimony. The evidence of the epic and the Purāṇas, of course, cannot be localised with any certainty, and probably the same is true of Bhāsa, Kālidāsa, Südraka, Varāhamihira, Bāṇa, etc., for the simple reason that, while drawing upon popular beliefs and practices, they were nevertheless producing idealized works in a traditional style. The pantheon reflected in the poetical works of Kālidāsa and the astrological prescriptions of Varāhamihira may reflect the respective authors' biases, but they cannot be regarded as parochial in character; and the same should also be true in the cases of Amara, Bhāsa, Südraka and Bāṇa. Unless pointedly localised by the author and corroborated by independent evidence, the casual mention of the shrine of a deity or its cult should be understood as valid for the entire geographical horizon with which the author was familiar. Thus, Ārjuna's bali to the Māṭras as referred to by Bhāsa and Südraka need not be

538 See above, pp.140 ff.
539 See above, pp.144 ff.
540 See above, pp.146-7.
541 See above, pp.149 ff.
542 See above, pp.140 ff.
regarded as specific evidence of the Matṛ cult in the Ujjain area. At best it would be good evidence of the popularity of that cult even amongst respectable people like Cārudatta in the age of the two authors. Similarly, the account of the Matṛs being propitiated to cure Harṣa's father, as referred to in the Harṣacarita, and, for that matter, the Matṛ-gṛha near which Bhaīravācārya was staying,543 have no special relevance for the Sthānviśvara region. Bāna's reference to the throwing of bāli to the Matṛs at night in the Harṣacarita or to Vīlāsavatī propitiating these divinities for a son in the Kādambarī also suggest that such were common practices in the author's age.544

Indubitable epigraphic evidence, combined with sculptural testimony, would make it certain that in the age of the Kadambas, and later in that of the early Cālukyas of Badami,545 the Matṛ cult was popular also in southwestern Deccan, and the close political contacts of this region with that of Pāṇḍyas and Pallavas on the one hand and southern Orissa on the other546 are no doubt some grounds for the other suggestion noted above,547 especially in view of the lack of independent evidence of the Matṛ cult in these regions in the earlier period and its popularity in the later one. We are not aware of any literary or archaeological evidence which may conclusively prove the existence of the Matṛ cult in Orissa before the 7th century A.D.,548 although it was obviously quite popular afterwards.549 Similarly, in the Tamil region, the cult appears only in the 8th century A.D.550 Srinivasan's suggestion, however, has the weakness of being based largely on negative evidence. We have to remember that there is too strong a local tradition

543 See above, p.142.
544 See above, p.143.
545 See above, pp.147-8.
546 See Majumdar (ed.), The Classical Age, pp.xliv, 238, 240.
547 See Srinivasan, as cited above, p.245 and fn.536.
548 See, however, below.
549 See above, p.154.
in South India of the seven mothers or seven sisters\textsuperscript{551} to be explained as an import to that region in medieval times. Again, if a popular \textit{Mātr} cult is presumed in Bihar in the 5th-6th century A.D.,\textsuperscript{552} the possibility cannot be ruled out that the existence of this cult in Orissa in the medieval period was essentially a part of a widely prevalent \textit{Mātr} cult in North India during that period. It should also be remembered that during the medieval period, Orissa was an important centre of Tantric-\textit{Sākta} cult,\textsuperscript{553} and the cult of the \textit{Mātrs} there might be affiliated to it.\textsuperscript{554} In this form at least, the Orissan phenomenon has no direct links with the \textit{Cañcupyan} region.

\textbf{Some Aspects of the Cult of the \textit{Mātr}s}

The types of evidence utilized above for the reconstruction of the \textit{Mātr}-cult in the early centuries of the Christian era are not very enlightening in respect of details, but a few points may be noted. Considering the clear references to \textit{Mātr-grha}, and \textit{Mātr-bhavana}, etc., in literature and inscriptions,\textsuperscript{555} it is certain that independent shrines were built for these divinities. Such shrines might imply regular worship even if it was not identical with the brahmanical or āgamic mode of worship. Perhaps there were regular or periodical animal sacrifices in such shrines in view of the malevolent nature of these deities and specific references to their being fond of blood and wine.\textsuperscript{556}


\textsuperscript{552} See above, p.246.


\textsuperscript{554} For the Tantric affiliation of the \textit{Mātr}-cult, see below, pp.249 ff.

\textsuperscript{555} See above, pp.142-3, also 144 ff.

\textsuperscript{556} Cf. \textit{Mbh.}, III,219,35.
The testimony of the Gangadhār inscription is quite in accord with the nature of the Mātṛ deities when it describes them as stirring up the very oceans with the mighty winds arising from the rites of their religion. Since the inscription uses the word tāntrodbhūta to qualify these rites — the first epigraphic mention of this word — it is cited as evidence of antiquity of Tantrism in India.\(^557\) We cannot enter here into the complex question of the origin and nature of Tantrism, but it may be mentioned that Tantrism, as known to us from the texts going under the name of Tantras, is a sophisticated religion and far from being a popular cult, such as the Mātṛ-cult essentially must have been.\(^559\) It would, therefore, be presumptuous to regard the so-called "Tantric" rites of the Mātṛs in the Gangadhār inscription as identical with the rites of the Tantric texts. The inscription, however, greatly strengthens the probability that, although several extraneous elements went into the making of Tantrism, perhaps its nucleus was formed of essentially popular, unsophisticated and crude, unbrahmanical cults, largely of female deities like the Mātṛs.

The contribution of the cult of the Mothers towards the formation of classical Tantrism seems to be corroborated also by Varāhamihira, who lays down that the persons especially qualified to install the icons of the Mātṛs and perform their worship are those versed in the ṁandala-krama.\(^560\) The word ṁandala is highly suggestive, and seems to imply a mode of worship analogous to the later Tantric rites. In Kāṇha's Dohakoṣa, the word ṁandala-karma, distinguished from japa and homa, seems to be synonymous with Tantric rites, and, as suggested by Banerjea, might be regarded as a variant

---

\(^557\) See above, p.182, fn.209, where the relevant lines of the inscription are cited.

\(^558\) See e.g. Banerjea, J.N., "Some Early Literary and Archaeological Data about Tantricism", PIHC., XVI, 1953, pp.24 ff.

\(^559\) Cf. the following statement by Winternitz, A History of Indian Literature, I, pt.II, p.531:

"... On the whole the Tantras and the curious excrescences and degenerations of religion described in them, are not drawn from popular belief or from popular traditions either of the aboriginal inhabitants or of the Aryan immigrants, but they are pseudo-scientific productions of theologians, in which the practice and theory of Yoga and the doctrines of the monist (advaita) philosophy are seen mingled with the most extravagant symbolism and occultism."

\(^560\) See above, p.139, fn.10.
of the Brhadarhaṇī word. mandala, like other Tantric technical terms, is of complex meaning, implying a circular configuration of spiritual powers both inside and outside the human body, but in its ordinary ritualistic usage it may be understood as a circular arrangement of deities for invocation and worship. Considering the general nature of the Brhadarhaṇī of Varāhamihira, devoted as it is to sophisticated rituals and astrological materials, perhaps the reference to maṇḍala-krama in it actually anticipates the later Tantrism of the texts, but it is difficult to say if the Mātrṣ were always popularly worshipped in such a manner. Early sculptures do not seem to warrant this and no such system is clearly implied in the Gaṇḍhār inscriptions.

If we understand the word maṇḍala in a somewhat loose, literal sense of a circular configuration of icons or symbols of deities, and not in the technical sense of the Tantric maṇḍalas, it is not improbable that the Mātrṣ were propitiated in a maṇḍala form - at least in some magical rites involving them - from the very beginning. The use of maṇḍalas or mystical circular diagrams is of greater antiquity than the Tantric texts. Its history in the Vedic brahmanical tradition has sometimes been traced back to the later Saṁhitās and Brāhmaṇas. But considering the magical ideas associated with it, its prevalence need not have been confined to the learned tradition of the Vedic sacrificial ritual, and the drawing of charmed circles may have been an essential feature of popular magical rites. However, when the Mātrṣ are actually said to have been propitiated as a maṇḍala, perhaps their cult was already being incorporated into the Tantric movement. Thus the propitiation of the Mātr-ṇaṇḍala, as referred to in the Hamsacakirita, in which young nobles burnt themselves with

561 Banerjea, op.cit., PIHC., XVI, p.27.
562 See general remarks by Conze in the context of maṇḍala in Tantric Buddhism; Buddhism: Its Essence and Development, p.187 f.; see also Woodroffe, Sakti and Sakta, pp.547-8; Kane, HD., V, pt.II, pp.1131 ff.
563 Cf. Banerjea, op.cit., PIHC., XVI, p.27.
564 See Kane, HD., V, pt.II, pp.1131 ff.
lamps,\textsuperscript{566} appears to fall in line with the possibly Tantric rite suggested in the \textit{mandala-krama} of the \textit{Bhattacharita}, rather than to be a cult of popular kind, and the same may be said of the references in the \textit{Rajatarangini} to the establishment of the \textit{Matri-cakras} in or near the shrines of \textit{Siva}.\textsuperscript{567} Considering the period to which they belong, the circular shrines for the \textit{Mats}, or shrines in which they were installed in a circular fashion, during mediaeval times may have been essentially Tantric establishments. The dancing \textit{Matrikās} of \textit{Bheraghat} seem to have come from such a shrine.\textsuperscript{568} Apart, however, from the suggestiveness of relatively early evidence like the \textit{Gaṅgādhāra} inscription, or the \textit{Bhattacharita} and \textit{Harsacarita}, the \textit{Mats} appear prominently in later times in purely Tantric rites.\textsuperscript{569}

The offering of \textit{bali} to the \textit{Mats} at the crossroads, as referred to in the dramas of \textit{Bhāsa} and \textit{Śudraka}, and the analogous rite of throwing \textit{bali-pīṇḍas} to the \textit{Mats} in different directions at night, as in the \textit{Harsacarita}, may refer to some brahmanised form of a rite in honour of these deities.\textsuperscript{570} But, curiously, no details of such a rite are available in brahmanical ritual texts. Kosambi traces it to a peculiar rite described in the \textsl{Māṇava Gṛhya-sūtra} for the evening before the last \textit{Aṣṭakā}, in which the sacrificer kills a cow at the crossroads, dismembers it and divides the flesh among the passers-by, although it is not mentioned for whom this

\textsuperscript{566} See above, p.142 and fn.26.

\textsuperscript{567} \textit{Rajatarangini}, V.55; see also ibid., I.122, 335; III.99.

\textsuperscript{568} See Mitra, Debala, "Dancing \textit{Matrikās} of \textit{Bheraghat}", \textit{JASL}, XXII, no.2, 1956, pp.237 ff., where relevant evidence, and reference to Cunningham's \textit{Archaeological Survey Reports} and Banerji's \textit{The Haihayas of Tripuri and their Monuments} is also given.

\textsuperscript{569} See, e.g., \textit{Mahānirvāṇa Tantra}, X.124, 127. Cf. also \textit{Śilpa Prakāsa}, II.66 (Boner and Sarma, \textit{Śilpa Prakāsa}, etc., text p.48 and tr. p.66):

\textit{Evam prāśādabheda sṛyub vaiṭālikā mahat tathā, Māṭṛheda eṣa prāśada tāntrikaḥ saudha ucyate.}

\textsuperscript{570} This presumption is based on the fact that here Čarudatta of the two Sanskrit dramas is a brāhmaṇa albeit in merchants' profession, and is proud of his brāhmaṇa lineage and culture; see above, p.140 and fn.16. For the rite of throwing \textit{bali-pīṇḍas} to the \textit{Mats} as referred to in the \textit{Harsacarita}, see above, p.143.
particular offering is meant. The Astakas, as we have seen, were domestic offerings to the dead and were performed generally three to four times in a year. There were no uniform rules about the deities of these offerings, but the Pitras were naturally the main recipients. It has also been noted above that the Astaka rite was generally followed by Anvaštakya in which offerings were made also to the Mothers along with the Fathers, although a distinction was made between the two, inasmuch as they were sometimes assigned two different directions of the compass or their seats were separated by some mechanical means. Kosambi notes this distinction between the Mothers and the Fathers, and also emphasizes the fact that the curious Manava rite of the distribution of cow's flesh at the crossroads should fall on the sixth day of the dark half day of the lunar month. The fact that the rite was to be performed at the crossroads, as well as the date when it was to be performed, would no doubt bring it close to the Matr-bali of Bhasa and Sudraka, but the Manava Gṛhya-sūtra itself does not specify that the rite was for the Mothers. Kosambi, however, feels that, since in the later Vedic literature offerings were conjointly made to Rudra and his "sister" Ambikā at the crossroads, and Rudra was remembered as Tryambaka - one having three Mothers, Ambikā herself being one of the three - the presumption is strong that the Manava rite was for the Mothers not as mere female ancestresses but as deities in their own right whom it was necessary to appease, although Vedic practice did not


572 For the Astakas and the rite of Anvaštakya accompanying it, see above, Rp.227, 231-2.

573 See above, pp.231-2.

574 Kosambi, Myth and Reality, p.84.

575 The Matr-bali, referred to in the Carudatta and Mrccchakatika, is also likely to have fallen on the 5th day of the dark half of the month; see above, pp.141-2.

576 Kosambi, op.cit., p.84, citing SB., II.6.2.9; see also above, pp.212 ff.

enjoin it. The non-Vedic nature of these deities, according to him, also explains why they are not named specifically. The argument is ingenious and carries considerable conviction, but remains doubtful in the absence of the Matr̄s or Ambikās being specifically named as recipients of the crossroads offering of the cow's flesh.

In his fairly detailed paper, Kosambi takes pains to explain the choice of crossroads for offerings to the Matr̄s. By a field investigation of mother-goddess cult-sites in Maharashtra, he notes a mother-goddess in every village in the region, their cult-sites located generally outside habitation areas by the side of a water-tank or grove, the general injunctions against any roofing over the red-daubed shapeless stones that were the goddesses, the goddesses being generally without consorts, the more fashionable cult-spots visited by a number of people out of all proportion to residents in the vicinity, and, what is more important to his thesis, the invariable discovery of a far greater concentration of microliths at the cult-sites than at any other location nearby. Kosambi thus comes to the conclusion that these goddesses are all of primitive, pre-agricultural origin, and argues: "The fixed cult-spots for pre-agricultural people would necessarily be those where their regular paths crossed, places where they met for their pre-barter exchange with the ceremonial and communal ritual that always accompanied it, or where several groups celebrated their periodic fertility cults in common". He has tried to strengthen his thesis by demonstrating that some of these prehistoric tracks eventually developed into trade-routes and that ancient literature like the Jātakas speaks of traders and travellers, when setting out, making animal sacrifices at the crossroads, by a tree outside the village, or in a grove or jungle on the way. According to him, therefore, Cārudatta's offering to the Matr̄s must be in this tradition of sacrificing

578 See Kosambi, op.cit., p.84.
579 Ibid.
580 Ibid., p.85 ff..
581 Ibid., p.95.
582 Ibid., pp.95 ff.
to deities en route, and presumably the ritual propitiation was carried out by pious caravan merchants even when they remained at home. Earlier, in the beginning of his enquiry, Kosambi also notes that in the Mṛcchakatika reference the ordinary crossing of two city streets would not serve the purpose; the catuspatha had to be on a highway (raja-marga) outside the town.

It was necessary to cite Kosambi at length to do justice to his painstaking enquiry. His arguments here too are ingenious but over-imaginative. Several presumptions seem to underline them which, especially as far as they are supposed to explain the mātṛ-bali at crossroads, appear either unnecessary or unwarranted. As Kosambi himself seems to have been aware, crossroads along with roads, open spaces, trees and forests, river banks, hills, caves and crematoria, etc., were often regarded as inauspicious places, being haunts of evil, demoniacal beings. No special explanation for this need normally be found necessary except the natural one that such places may incite fear and insecurity. Since the Mātṛs also were conceived of as ferocious evil beings, their association with such places is to be expected. It may also be noted that the inauspicious nature of crossroads is not singularly an Indian but almost a universal phenomenon, for which, if one explanation has to be supplied at all, it would have to be like the simple one suggested above. Kosambi's argument that the crossways were natural cult-spots in the pre-agricultural stage of society in India appears presumptuous to us. Still, even if this were accepted as true, it would not prove that they should necessarily be sites for mother-goddess cults, unless one makes another unwarranted presumption that such cults were the sole religion of the pre-agricultural population.

584 Ibid., p.82.
585 Ibid., p.83; see MacCulloch, "Crossroads", ERE., 4, pp.330 ff., which draws upon much material from India; also above, p.179 and fn.193.
586 From the instance of the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, V,26, VI,33, it would appear that the crossroads also served as burial sites.
587 See above, pp.177 ff.
Our concern, however, is with the explanation of the rite referred to in the two Sanskrit dramas, and we feel that, despite his labour, Kosambi does not enlighten us very much. Apart from his unwarranted presumption that the *catuśpatha* referred to in the *Mṛcchakaṭika* has to be outside the town, he completely overlooks the fact that here we are dealing not with a rite to mother-goddesses in general, but one to a special group of them, the *Mātṛs*. His emphasis on the non-Aryan nature of the mother-goddesses in India, their anonymity in the brahmanical tradition for that reason, the constant swelling of their number, etc., is clearly irrelevant to the case of the *Mātṛs*, for he would appear to imply that the *Mātṛs* were non-Aryan goddesses thrown arbitrarily into a group in the brahmanical tradition in view of their alien nature and alien cults. As we have already seen, even when the *Mātṛs* appear to have been originally outside the brahmanical tradition, they were always conceived of as a group, which seems to have been their essential, inalienable, characteristic.\(^{589}\)

\(^{589}\) See above, p. 169.
APPENDIX

An Alphabetical list of the Matras as given in the Mahābhārata, Śalya-parvan, ch.45 and the Matsya-Purāṇa, ch.179. The number of the verse or verses in which each name occurs is indicated against it in brackets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matras from Mbh., IX.45</th>
<th>Matras from Mat.P., 179</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alatākṣī (8)</td>
<td>Abāla (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amoca (20)</td>
<td>Adarśanā (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amitāśanā (7)</td>
<td>Aditi (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apsujātā (4)</td>
<td>Aghavīnāśini (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ajamukhikā (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alambākṣī (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aparājita (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asanī (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Atibalā (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avikārī (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ayōmukhī (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahudāma (10)</td>
<td>Bahuputri (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahuputrikā (3)</td>
<td>Bāhusālinī (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahuyojanā (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balā (14)</td>
<td>Balā (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Balamohini (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balotkātā (22)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhadrakālī (11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bhagamālīnī (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhagānandā (11)</td>
<td>Bhagānandā (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhāminī (11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If this word gives the names of two goddesses, they might be understood as Bherisvana and Mahasvana.

2 This may be understood as giving the names of two different goddesses, Bhuti and Tirthanyagocara.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mbh., IX.45</td>
<td>Mat.P., 179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citrasena (4)</td>
<td>Citrarūpinī (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curvyuti (16)</td>
<td>Cittā (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahadaha (19)</td>
<td>Cittajalā (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devanitrā (13)</td>
<td>Daṅstrālā (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhamadhama (19)</td>
<td>Danu (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhanadā (13)</td>
<td>Dhrīti (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhruvaratnā (4)</td>
<td>Dhūmaśikhā (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dīrghajihvā (22)</td>
<td>Dhūmrā (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Edī (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekacakrā (28)</td>
<td>Dīrghakesi (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dītwi (10, 14)</td>
<td>Diti (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubhargā (14)</td>
<td>Dubhargā (14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 This may be a mistake for Durbhagā; cf. above, p.173, fn.169.

4 Dūti occurs in the two verses in the following manner:
(i) Saurī saumyā śiva dūti cāmūndā cātha varuṇī (Mat.P., 179.10b), and
(ii) Kāli caiva mahākāli dūti caiva tathaiva ca (ibid., 179.14a).

Since Śiva-dūti is called the "Energy" of the goddess Caṇḍikā in the Mārkandeya Purāṇa (see above, p.157 and fn.91), and the iconographic texts describe her form and sculptures have been found to illustrate them (see Banerjea, DHI., pp.33-5), it is possible that Śiva dūti and Dūti in the verses of the Matsya Purāṇa reproduced above actually refer to this goddess.
I
Mbh., IX.45

E contd
Ekacūḍā (5)
Ekākṣarā (24)

Ekāksī (25)
Ekavīrā (17)

G
Gaṇā (26)

Garddabhī (18)
Ghaṇṭāravū (23)
Ghaṭodarī (15)

Gītāpriyā (7)
Gokarṇī (25, 28)
Go-mahīṣadā (27)
Gonasī (3)
Gopāī (4)

Grūmyā (15)

H
Haripīṇḍī (23)

Hāsinī (30)
Huṅkārī (31)

J
Jalāśvarī (13)
Jarāyu (19)
Jareṇā (15)
Jarjarānana (19)
Jarjarikā (14)
Jaṭālikā (22)

Jayā (13)
Jayantī (13)

Jayāpriyā (12)
Jayatṣenā (6)
Jayēvatī (4)

Jvālāmukhī (32)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Mbh., IX.45</em></td>
<td><em>Mat.P., 179</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>J contd</em></td>
<td><em>Jyeṣṭhā (20)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>K</em></td>
<td><em>Jyotsnāmukhī (26)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kadrumā (7)</td>
<td>Kākajāṅghikā (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kāleḍikā (23)</td>
<td>Kālāparṇī (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kālikā (13)</td>
<td>Kālī (14, 27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalyāṇī (7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kāmacari (22)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kāmadā (26)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamalā (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamalākṣī (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamārūpā (21)</td>
<td>Kampanā (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamākṣetī (8)</td>
<td>Kampini (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kandarā (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaṇḍarā (15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaṇḍūti (13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaṅkaṇā (15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaṇṭakinī (16)</td>
<td>Kapālī (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kapardanī (20)</td>
<td>Kapālī (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karūni (17)</td>
<td>Karūndī (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karṇamoṭī (15)</td>
<td>Karṇamoṭī (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karṇaprāvaraṇā (24)</td>
<td>Kaṭumukhī (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ketaki (14)</td>
<td>Kaumārī (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaṇḍakhaṇḍā (20)</td>
<td>Kekarī (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kesinī (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contd</td>
<td>Mat.P., 179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kharajaṅgha (21)</td>
<td>Kheṭā (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kharakarṇī (25)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaṛī (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaśayā (16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khṛśṭā (19)</td>
<td>Koṇā (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kokalikā (15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koṭārā (17)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krodhanā (6)</td>
<td>Krodhanī (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krosanā (16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krṣṭā (21)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krṣṭakarṇī (24)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kṣurakarṇī (24)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kukkuṭikā (14)</td>
<td>Kṣvelā (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumārī (22)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuṭārī (15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambā (17)</td>
<td>Kuṭabhī (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambamekhalā (27)</td>
<td>Kuṭumbikā (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambapayodharā (20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambasatī (14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lāṅgalāvatī (27)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambastani (28)</td>
<td>Lāṅgalī (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lelihānā (18)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mbh.</em>, IX.45</td>
<td>*Mat.*P., 179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L contd</td>
<td>Lohitākṣi (22, 23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lohitāmulki (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mādhavī (7)</td>
<td>Madoddhata (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhukumādhā (18)</td>
<td>Mahācitā (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhurikā (18)</td>
<td>Mahādevī (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahābalā (9, 26)</td>
<td>Mahāgrīvā (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahācūḍā (5)</td>
<td>Mahāja (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahājāvā (21)</td>
<td>Mahākālī (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahākāyā (23)</td>
<td>Mahāmukhi (21, 24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahāvegā (15)</td>
<td>Mahanādā (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahāyasā (27)</td>
<td>Mahanāśa (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahiṣūnanā (25)</td>
<td>Mahāraktā (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malatikā (4)</td>
<td>Mahāsurī (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manḍodarī (17)</td>
<td>Mahēśvarī (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maṇikundalā (20)</td>
<td>Mahodarī (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manojāvā (16)</td>
<td>Mālia (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manthanikā (19)</td>
<td>Maṅgalā (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manoramā (26)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I

Mbh., IX. 45

M contd

Meghamālā (28)
Megharava (28)
Meghasvanā (8)
Meghavāsinī (17)

Mukutā (23)

N

Nandini (5)

Niṣkutiṅkā (12)
Nyṯyapriyā (10)

P

Padmavatī (9)
Pakṣālikā (19)
Palitā (3)
Paśudā (27)
Payodā (27)

Piṅgākṣī (18, 21)

II

Mat. P., 179

Mārī (15)
Mātāṅgī (27)
Māṭrṇandā (12)
Māyā (21)

Menakā (20)
Mohanā (25)
Mṛtyu (15)
Mukhamanḍīkā (12)
Mukhevilā (21)
Muktikā (30)

Nairṛtā (10)
Nandini (14, 25)
Nārasiṅhi (11)
Nikumbhā (26)
Nirbhayā (25)

Parikampīnī (24)

Pichilā (11)
Pilapicchikā (13)
Piṇḍajīlīvā (32)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mbh., IX,45</td>
<td>Mat.,P., 179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prabhāvatī (3)</td>
<td>Piṅgalā (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praghasā (16)</td>
<td>Piśācī (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pratiṣṭhā (28)</td>
<td>Pramodā (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prthuvakrā (18)</td>
<td>Pretayānā (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pūṣaṇā (20)</td>
<td>Rocamānā (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pūtanā (16)</td>
<td>Rocanā (22, 23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rudrasuṣaṭṭā (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rudresī (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabhasā (26)</td>
<td>Sadāhā (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raktā (12)</td>
<td>Saillamukhī (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paktakampanā (26)</td>
<td>Śākrī (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rākṣasī (16)</td>
<td>Śakumī (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rambhā (20)</td>
<td>Salilā (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revati (13)</td>
<td>Sāmanyā (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Samāsavī (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocamānā (28)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S contd</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mbh., IX, 45</td>
<td>Mat. P., 179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sañkhakumbhasvanā (26)</td>
<td>Saṅganā (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saṅkhanikā (14)</td>
<td>Saṅkara (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sasira (28)</td>
<td>Saṅkhinī (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saśolūkamūkhī (21)</td>
<td>Saṅkukarṇī (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sataghaṇṭā (11)</td>
<td>Saṅtikā (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satānanda (11)</td>
<td>Sarpaṅkarṇī (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satodarī (15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saṭolūkhalamekala (10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saṭruṇijaya (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śiṣumāramukhi (22)</td>
<td>Saṃśyā (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śobhanā (6)</td>
<td>Sauparṇī (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śrīmatī (3)</td>
<td>Saurī (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sthērikā (28)</td>
<td>Siddhi (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subhagā (17)</td>
<td>Sīkhā (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subhavaktrā (7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subhru (8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudāmā (5, 10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 See above, p. 258, fn. 4.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MBH., IX.45</td>
<td>MAT.P., 179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S contd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugaśa (26)</td>
<td>Sulocana (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukarṇī (28)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukhaśā (27)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukusumā (24)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sumaṅgalā (12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunakṣatrā (9)</td>
<td>Sunandā (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suprabha (10)</td>
<td>Sundarī (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suprasāda (13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supratiṣṭhā (28)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surocanā (28)</td>
<td>Surabhī (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suviṣṇā (27)</td>
<td>Surasā (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Svastimatī (12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Svetā (22)</td>
<td>Śyāmā (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taditprabhā (16)</td>
<td>Trijaṭī (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tīrthanemi (7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tūṇḍā (17)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>Unmattodumbarī (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulkāmukhi (24)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulōki (15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmattā and Udumbarī.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6 This word may refer to two goddesses called Unmattā and Udumbarī.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mbh., IX.45</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mat. P., 179</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>U contd</strong></td>
<td><strong>Uṣā (20)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udhdvavādharā (18)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utkrāṭhinī (15)</td>
<td>Vaināyakī (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttējanī (6)</td>
<td>Vaiśāvatī (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vaitāli (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vajraheṣṭā (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vāmā (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vāmanikā (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vānīcāna (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vāpuṣmatī (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vārūhi (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vāruṣi (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vāsacūrṇī (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vaṣṭṭhēra (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vaśucūḍā (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vāyavyā (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vāsudūmā (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vicitaraṇī (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Viḍambinī (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vētalajājanī (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vidyujjihvā (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Viṣayā (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Veṇuvīṇāḍharā (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vikatthanī (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vinatā (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vibhīṣaṇā (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Virocana (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Viṣāladamśtriṇī (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I
Mbh., IX, 45

II
Mat. P., 179

Y contd
Viśokā (5)
Vittadā (27)
Vṛddhikāmā (12)

Y
Yaśasvinī (10)
Chapter IV

THE NUDE SQUATTING GODDESS OF INDIA

Among the popular goddesses in the early centuries of the Christian era in India must be included a squatting nude goddess with a strikingly individual iconography. Although in the present state of our knowledge she remains unnamed, there is no doubt about the wide prevalence of her cult. As evidenced by her representations, she is, with some variations, portrayed nude, in a squatting posture, the legs widely separated and the pudenda fully displayed. This seems to be the essential element of the iconography of the goddess, but equally characteristic of her, to a certain extent, are the upraised arms and the head and face which are concealed or obliterated by one device or another. There is no unanimity about the identification of the goddess. She has been casually called the 'Earth Mother' or labelled as a fertility goddess. In more serious attempts at identification, it has been suggested on the one hand that she is a Greco-Roman goddess whose cult was imported into India in the early centuries of the Christian era, and, on the other, that she is "Aditi Uttānapād" of the Rg-veda, in other words, a characteristically Indian phenomenon.¹

Semi-nude female figures are common in Indian art,² but what invests the present goddess with great significance is the highly individualistic

¹ See below, pp.273 ff.
² Excluding females in erotic compositions on mediaeval Hindu temples, which, however, belong to an independent genre and need a different explanation, completely nude female figures are not at all common in Indian art. The same is the case with male figures, except in Jaina art.

Standing nude females in early Indian terracotta are noticed, particularly in the centuries before the Christian era (see e.g., Coomaraswamy, "Archaic Indian Terracottas", Marg, VI, no.2, pp.24-9; also Agrawala, in AI., no.4, pp.151-2), although in many cases, in view of the crude style and cursory modelling, it may not be possible to be sure whether a covering dress is intended or not. In stone sculpture, as in the case of railing figures from Bhūtesar (Mathura) or the bracket Vṛksakās in the gateways of the Stūpa 1 at Sanchi, only partial nudity is to be understood, since, if the sex organs are clearly marked, there is also the clear suggestion of the covering lower garment. The marking of the sex organs in such cases, therefore, appears not so much an iconographic necessity as artistic license,
rudity of her iconography. Such figures were noticed for the first time, without their full significance being realized, by Marshall, who published a circular terracotta plaque from Bhīṭā (near Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh) showing a female figure in high relief with upraised arms and outstretched legs, and pointed to a similar figure from Kosam (also near Allahabad), both now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.\(^3\) The Bhīṭā figure (Pl. I.1) is entirely nude except for a girdle of circlets around the waist and bangles on the hands and feet. Also, in place of a head, it has a lotus flower with petals falling over the shoulders. The archaeological context shows that the figure must be assigned to the Kuśāṇa period,\(^4\) and Marshall tentatively suggested identification with Pṛthvī, the Earth-goddess. Later, when the same author found on an oblong terracotta sealing from Harappa (Pl.I,2), on the one side, a nude female figure depicted upside-down with legs apart and a plant issuing from her womb, he suggested comparison with the Bhīṭā specimen and felt confirmed in his mind of a "cult of the Earth or Mother-goddess" in the Indus Civilization.\(^5\)

\(^2\) contd

no doubt in conformity with the nature of such goddesses in general and the overall attitude of the ancient Indians in such matters.

\(^3\) Marshall, "Excavations at Bhīṭā", *ASI-AR.*, 1911-2, p. 75, and pl. XXIII, fig. 40. For the Kosam figure, see *Indian Museum Cat.*, II, p. 286, no. Km. 36, as cited by Marshall, op. cit., p. 75. He, however, neither illustrates the Kosam figure nor provides a detailed description of it.

\(^4\) Marshall himself was uncertain of it as he assigned the figure to the "Kuśāṇa or the Gupta period", but see Sankalia, *Art As.*, XXIII, 1960, p. 114.

\(^5\) Marshall (ed.), *MIC.*, I, p. 52 and pl. XII, 12. The figure occurs at the extreme right end of this seal, and to its left, separated by a pictograph in the centre, are two rearing and confronting animals, probably tigers, "the animal genii" of Marshall. Wheeler's suggestion that what looks like a plant issuing from the figure's womb "may equally be a scorpion or even a crocodile" (see Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, p. 106) is highly improbable; cf. Sullivan, "A Re-examination of the Religion of the Indus Civilization", *HR.*, 4, 1964, p. 117, fn. 8. On the other side of the seal, the same pictograph (perhaps minus one character) occupies the right half, and to the left are represented a man and a woman, the woman seated with hands raised as if in supplication but both the legs apparently to one side, and the man on the left, standing with a sickle-like weapon in his hand, appearing to threaten the woman. Marshall interpreted this scene as a representation of human sacrifice, and both Wheeler and Sullivan (op. cit.) seem to agree; esp. of Sullivan, op. cit., p. 117, fn. 10. Picard, unaware of later historical evidence which subsequently came to light in India, made greater and more specialized use of the Harappa evidence to reconstruct
The real interest in such figures from India seems to have started with the publication of an article, "Female Fertility Figures", by Margaret Murray. The author's aim was to provide a systematic framework to classify and study the large number of female figures found throughout the ancient world which are all generally labelled as "Mother Goddess". She imagined these figures as falling in at least three distinct categories: 1) Universal Mother or Isis type; 2) Divine Woman or Ishtar type; and 3) Personified Yoni or Baubo type, and described the third, with which we are concerned here, as the type of nude figure, generally squatting, in which the beauty of form or features is disregarded, the secondary sexual characters, such as the breasts, are minimized, and the whole emphasis is laid on the pudenda.

Referring to Murray's Baubo-type, Codrington noticed a small terracotta figure in the form of a toad in the India Museum, London, cast from a double mould, the underside of which displays a similar squatting goddess (Pl.II). If the identification with Baubo was certain, he felt, this little figurine would be "possibly the only directly borrowed classical icon known to Indian archaeology". On the basis of associated acquisitions in the Museum, Codrington was certain that the figure came from Mathura and is to be dated in the early 2nd century A.D., and, since the theme of his short paper was to emphasize the emergence of Indian iconography in this period, especially at Mathura which had close contact with centres in the North-west where the hybrid art-forms of the Gandhara School were

---

5 contd
the cult of a Mother Goddess baring her sexual parts in the ancient world; see below, pp.298 ff..

6 JRAI., LXIV, 1934, pp.93-100, with illustrations.

7 Murray has classified the Sheila-na-gigs of mediaeval churches in the British Isles under her Baubo type; see JRAI., LXIV., pp.97 ff.. It may be mentioned that even though Murray borrows an Indian word to identify her third type, she does not use any Indian specimens to illustrate this or the first two types.

8 Codrington, "Iconography: Classical and Indian", Man, XXXV, May 1935, pp.55-6, with accompanying plate.
appearing, he no doubt implied that the classical Baubo may have been imported into India in this period.\footnote{9}

An image of a nude squatting goddess, preserved in the Museum of Alampur in Southern Deccan, has been published by Stella Kramrisch (Pl.III).\footnote{10} Carved in a dark stone with excellent finish and worked to a high degree of polish, this figure is a remarkable piece of art and deserves all the encomium lavished on it by Kramrisch. It represents a female form lying facing upwards on a nearly square plane. The figure is entirely nude except for the armlets on the upper arms, widely-spaced bracelets at the wrists and thin anklets, all shaped as serpent-coils, and a small bead-necklace on the chest. The broadly spread out legs are drawn up laterally and bent at the knees, framing the gently swelling abdomen and "bud-like" opening of the sex below. The arms are bent upwards, elbows resting on the knees, and the hands, each holding a lotus-bud, are laid on the shoulders. As its neck and head, a fully-blossomed lotus crowns the image, and the nipples on the gently flattened breasts also take lotus-shapes. On stylistic considerations, Kramrisch dated the image approximately to the 8th century A.D., and thought that it might have belonged originally to one of the local sanctuaries.\footnote{11} That the image was actually meant for worship seems to be suggested by the provision of spouts on either side of the figure to allow the water poured during worship to be drained off.\footnote{12} Its cultic significance is also

\footnote{9} With reference to Murray's Baubo-type, Dasgupta also (see Man, XXXVI, Oct, 1936, pp.183-4), pointed to a terracotta figure of the "Iron age" from Nilgiri in Foote's Catalogue of Pre-historic Antiquities in the Government Museum, Madras (1901), p.48, pl.iii, 542, but from the published photograph it does not look like the true Baubo-type. Cf. also by the same author, Origin and Evolution of Indian Clay Sculpture, p.17. Impressed by Murray's classification, Dasgupta frequently speaks in this work of a "Baubo-type" for figurines of the Indus valley, pre-Maurya, Maurya and Sunga periods, but does not cite a single true specimen of the type; see ibid., pp.80, 134, 173-4, 254.
\footnote{11} Ajit Mookerjee illustrates this image in his Tantra Art, etc., pl.58. He arbitrarily dates it to 11th century A.D. and labels it as Ädiya-Sakti.
\footnote{12} A spout is clear on the proper left of the image, but there may also have been a similar spout on the right rim, which is damaged.
indicated by the size of the figure, which along with its support measures 36" x 40".

Without referring to Murray's Baubo-type figures or the suggestion of Codrington that the Classical Baubo may have been introduced into India, Kramrisch has tried to explain the figure as a purely Indian phenomenon. She has laid stress on the two obvious elements of the figure: the depiction of a majestic female form in the throes of giving birth and the close association of the lotus with it. Noting that the iconography of the image has no known parallel, Kramrisch nevertheless picks out its two conspicuous elements to find archaeological and literary correspondences and ascertain the meaning of the sculpture. For parallel art specimens, she points in the main to the fragment of an approximately contemporary image of a goddess from Mahākūṭa (south-western Deccan) who is lotus-headed and holds a lotus flower in each hand, to the two terracotta plaques from Bhīṭā and Kosam already noticed by Marshall, to a relief composition in Stūpa no.2 at Sanchi showing lotus plants with buds and flowers, where the stalk of the crowning lotus by its breadth and curvaceous contour gives to her the impression of lithe female limbs, and to two painted pot-sherds from Mohenjodaro with a circle of lotus petals around the necks. Since the lotus-flower, born from water and mud, yet impressive in the purity of its bloom and subtlety of its fragrance, has remained a perennial symbol of creativity in Indian art and culture, Kramrisch finds it in remarkable agreement with the conception of the birth-giving Mother of the Alampur figure. She also notes that in India, the lotus was conceived as foremost of all plants, and plants in the Vedic culture were conceived as goddesses, nourishing, life-giving mothers.

In Indian art, the anthropomorphic equivalent of the lotus-flower is the goddess Padmaśrī-Lakṣmī, who is so frequently depicted on the railings and gateways of the Bharhut and Sanchi stūpas and who, already in the Śrī-sūkta, in the Khila of the Rg-veda, is intimately connected with the

13 Kramrisch makes this comment even though she herself refers to earlier specimens from Bhīṭā and Kosam, and a later one from Mahākūṭa which, however, is fragmentary.

lotus. In classical Sanskrit and iconographic texts, the goddess dwells in a lotus-pond, stands or sits on a lotus, and always carries a lotus flower in her hand.\(^{15}\) There is no textual warrant, however, that a lotus flower should replace the head and face of the goddess. The statement in some iconographic texts that a beautiful lotus should be made on the head of the goddess is apparently to be understood as the description of the head decoration.\(^ {16}\) Again even though Śrī-Łakṣmī may have been originally a fertility goddess worshipped for the growth of crops and cattle, etc., there is no evidence, literary or archaeological, that she was ever conceived of as having the nudity and the posture of the Alampur figure. In fact, she is noted in the classical Sanskrit literature and iconographic texts not only for her sweet face and beautiful form but also for her charming dress and rich ornaments, and frequently serves as the model of beauty for mortal princesses and heroines.\(^ {17}\) Kramrisch herself seems to have been aware of these limitations. Although she found close parallels between the lotus-headed image from Alampur and the rich, life-giving Padmaśrī-Łakṣmī, yet, conscious that the female figure in the throes of

\(^{15}\) For the Śrī-śūkta, see RV., Khila, II,6, esp. vv,4, 5 and 11; also 13-4. For Śrī-Łakṣmī's association with lotus in general, see Scheftelowitz, "Śrīśūkta", ZDMG., 75, 1921, p,38; Coomaraswamy, "Early Indian Iconography - II: Śrī-Łakṣmī", EA., I, 1928-9, pp,177-8; Hartmann, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Göttin Łakṣmī, pp,1, 6-8, 31, etc., On the symbolism of the lotus, see Gonda, Aspects of Early Viśnuism, pp,103-4 and references cited there; also Coomaraswamy, Yakṣas, II, pp,23, 26, 56 ff.; Zimmer, Myths and Symbols, etc., pp,90 ff.; Kramrisch, op,cit., Art,As., XIX, pp,264 ff.,

\(^{16}\) Vi,Dh.P., III,81,8: Devvāśca mastake padmanā tathā kāryam manoharam; also cited by Hemādri, see Rao, ETH., II, pt,2, App,C, p,134; cf, also, Śiraso mantanam śākhasakrasimantapankajam, as in Amśumadbhādāgama and Pūrvakāraṇāgama, cited by Rao, op,cit., pp,133, 135.

\(^{17}\) See Scheftelowitz, Hartmann, Gonda and Zimmer, op,cit. (fn,15 above).

\(^{18}\) The goddess Śrī-Łakṣmī is described as kaścukācchādistanī, śobhanāmbaramvaśeṣītā and sarvantābhaṃ-bhūṣītā in Amśumadbhādāgama, svetavastra-vibhūṣītā, kaścukābhadhrā-gātī, etc. in the texts cited in Šilparatna, divaryurāmbaramadhā, sarvantābhaṃbhūṣītā, etc. in the Viśudharmottara Purāṇa, and kaścukācchādistanī and śobhanāmbaramvāsamanā in Pūrvakāraṇāgama; see Rao, op,cit., pp,133 ff.
giving birth conveys "a deeper message and a more primal vision", she finally suggested identification with the "Aditi Uttānapad" of the Rg-veda.

Aditi in the Rg-veda appears as the primal female energy, the source from which everything is born, as identical with whatever has been and whatever shall be. Emphasis is always laid on the motherhood of Aditi. Specifically the mother of the Adityas, she is the mother of the gods in general, and of all beings. Perhaps earlier distinguished from Prthivi, she is constantly identified with her in the later Vedic literature.

Kramrisch was obviously persuaded to her suggested identification by the reference to Uttānapad in a late hymn of the Rg-veda. She translates the two relevant stanzas, where the word occurs, as: "In the stage of the gods, the existent was born from the non-existent. After this the regions were born. This [existent] was born of her with the legs spread open. From Aditi Dakṣa was born and from Dakṣa Aditi". In her opinion, Aditi is here identical with Uttānapad and the two stanzas apparently describe the mysterious process of creation from Aditi. Kramrisch also notes that when Norman Brown saw the photograph of the Alampur image, he immediately pointed to this Rg-vedic hymn.

While there is no ambiguity about the literal meaning of the word Uttānapad, i.e., "one with the legs spread open", different opinions have

---

20 Kramrisch herself cites several significant passages in early and later Vedic literature to prove her point. For the conception of Aditi in the Vedic religion in general, see Macdonell, VM., pp.120-3; Keith, RVU., vol.1, pp.215-8; Muir, OST., V, pp.35-53; also Agrawala, V.S., "Aditi and the Great Goddess", IC., IV, no.4, 1938, pp.401 ff.,
21 See esp. Agrawala, cited in fn.20 above.
22 Ibid., and Muir, cited in fn.20 above.
24 RV., X.72.3-4:

\[
\begin{align*}
Dvānām yuge prathame\'sataḥ sada\jyata, \\
Tadāśā anvajāyanta taduttānapadaspari. \\
Bhūrjajāka uttānapado bhuvā āśa ajāyanta, \\
Aditerdakṣa ajāyata dakṣādvaditiḥ pari.
\end{align*}
\]

25 See Art.As., XIX, p.268, fn.27.
been expressed about its precise meaning in the context. According to Norman Brown himself, whose verbal approval is cited by Kramrisch but who later expressed himself in a different context on the stanzas under reference, two parallel creations seem to be described in the hymn, viz., of the material universe from Asat which was made by Brahma~aspati, and of the sentient beings from the primal potentialities, Dakṣa and Aditi. He understands Uttānapad as referring to Asat and used as feminine in the sense of one whose legs are stretched apart in parturition. It is, therefore, not quite certain that Uttānapad in RV., X.72.3-4 necessarily refers to Aditi. As a matter of fact, the whole hymn, addressed to the gods in general and purporting to describe the process of creation, is quite obscure. But, whether or not Uttānapad in RV., X.72.3-4 refers to Aditi, it is not improbable for the creatrix Mother Aditi to be described in such a manner. Elsewhere in the Rg-veda, she is described as widely-spread (uru-vyacaḥ) and there are references to her lap, womb or sex (garbha, upastha) in the context of her role as birth-giving Mother. Prthivī, with whom Aditi is so often identified in later Vedic literature, is herself conceived of as the wide one, capacious, widely spread, bounteous, etc. There is no doubt, therefore,
that if a Vedic parallel for the remarkable Alampur figure is to be found at all, the conception of Aditi-Pṛthivi would be more appropriate than that of Padmaśri-Lakṣmi, especially as the universal motherhood of Śrī-Lakṣmi appears to have been a late development in her character.  

On closer analysis, however, as we shall see, the identification suggested by Kramrisch appears untenable.

Recently, H.D. Sankalia has published about half a dozen other specimens of the nude goddess in India, and has tried to strengthen Codrington's suggestion of a foreign inspiration. Apart from the figures already noticed, he has listed the following others of "Baubo-type", all from the Deccan:

1) A terracotta figure from Ter (Osmanabad Dist., Maharashtra; Pl.IV.1), cast in a single mould with a fine finish and red polish all over. The female figure is portrayed seated in the Baubo-pose. It is entirely nude except for the beaded necklace around the neck, a thick girdle around the waist and heavy anklets. It is intentionally made headless and the two arms are supposed to be at the sides. The figure was a surface find, but on the basis of associated pot-sherds of ascertainable dates, Sankalia confidently assigns it to the 1st-2nd century A.D.  

Śrī-Lakṣmi obtains her universal motherhood mainly in the Viṣṇu theology as reflected in the Viṣṇu Purāṇas and the Samhitās, and the development is fully intelligible only in the background of the theoretical systematization of the concept and cult of the Supreme Goddess. Her association with Viṣṇu also seems to have been a late development in her history. At whatever period this association may have taken place, it does not seem to have been popular much before the younger portions of the Mahābhārata; see Gonda, Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism, p.223; Coomaraswamy, op.cit., EA., I, pp.175, 178; also Hartmann, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Göttin Lakṣmi, p.25. It is interesting to see that the line giving the names Lokamata and Ma to Śrī-Lakṣmi in the NSP, edn. of the Amarakosa with the commentary of Mahesvara is not found in the Trivandrum edn. of the text with Sarvānanda's commentary and the earlier Bombay edn. with the commentary of Bhūnuji Dīkṣita; see Hartmann, op.cit., p.1.

See below, pp.283 ff.,  

Sankalia, H.D., "The Nude Goddess or 'Shameless Woman' in Western Asia, India and South-eastern Asia", Art.As., XXIII, 1960, pp.111-23, with illustrations.
2) A similar terracotta figure (Pl. IV.2) from the same site but from controlled excavations and thus dateable to the 1st-3rd century A.D. This figure, too, is headless, but it is difficult to ascertain the position of the arms. There appears to be a large number of beaded girdles around the waist, and the torso, much shortened, seems to be rounded above in a stump. Four rosettes are placed at the corners, the two on the top roughly occupying the position where the hands would be if they were depicted raised upwards as in the Bhīṣa figure.

3) A headless terracotta figure in relief from Nagarjunikonda (Guntur Dist., Andhra Pradesh; Pl. V.1), where the rounded torso is depicted as a solid mass, which suggested to Sankalia the shape of a stūpa.  

4) A stone relief figure from Nevasa excavations (Ahmadnagar Dist., Maharashtra; Pl. V.2), dateable to c.100-300 A.D. The carved female nude appears as a highly abbreviated Baubo-type, with the rounded stump-like torso drastically shortened and the entire figure with its spreadeagled thighs and only vaguely suggested lower legs forming an inverted triangle in outline.

5) A tiny stone sculpture from Vadgaon (near Satara, Maharashtra; Pl. V.3). The headless female depicted is exactly similar in composition and outline to the stone relief from Nevasa excavations, described above, with the very significant addition of a bull to its right, suggesting that this goddess might have been conceived of as a form of Durgā or Pārvatī. Although Sankalia does not date the figure, there is no doubt that it belongs to the same age as the figure from Nevasa.

6) Relief sculpture of a nude goddess in a cave at Siddan Kotte, north of Kelur, in northern Karnataka (Sankalia's fig. 6). It is also headless and the torso, which seems to be sharply truncated above the shoulders instead of being rounded, clearly depicts the breasts. The hands are raised upwards as in the Bhīṣa figure. This figure too is not dated by Sankalia, but his order of treatment seems to imply that it is not later than the figure, listed below, in the Rāmeśvara Cave at Ellora, i.e., not later than the 8th century A.D.

35 Sankalia emphasizes in this context that the piece came from a Buddhist site. In fact, on that basis, he felt that the goddess was also accepted in the Buddhist pantheon; see Art. As., XXIII, p. 114.
An interesting piece of information supplied by the late Shri Chapgar (from whose copy in his diary, Sankalia seems to reproduce the illustration) is that the figure is called Lājja Gaurī, and local women, desirous of children, pray to the goddess and worship her by applying butter and red lead on the vulva and the breasts.

7) Relief carving of a goddess with a female attendant on either side in the Cave no. 21 (Rāmeshvara Cave) at Ellora (Pl. VI). Sankalia is uncertain whether it represents the Baubo-type, since, even though the figure is seated in a manner which would emphasize the pudenda, it is not at all clear whether it was intended to be nude, especially as the region of the sexual triangle seems to have been repaired. The two hands of the figure could have been raised upwards but the relief in the illustration appears too damaged to permit verification of this. Incidentally, the attendant females and the possible suggestion of a halo behind the head of the central figure seem to leave no room for doubt that the latter represented a goddess.

Sankalia's arguments for the foreign inspiration of the above figures are discussed below in detail. But we may first notice a few other figures of the nude goddess which were either overlooked by Sankalia or published after his paper.

Two figures of the goddess are listed in the recently published Patna Museum Catalogue of Antiquities. One is a weathered red-sandstone relief plaque of "Kuśāna-Gupta" period from Kausāmbī. It shows a seated female figure with legs wide open, knees drawn up laterally, elbows resting on knees and left arm raised to shoulder height. As the figure is not illustrated, it is impossible to be certain of many details. The right hand may have been similarly raised but the Catalogue does not specify it. Also, while the beaded chain between the breasts and a heavy shape round the neck are noticed, it is not made clear whether the figure is otherwise nude and whether it is with or without a head. However, since a comparison is invited with the terracotta figures from Bhīṭā and Kosam noticed by Marshall, there is no doubt that an identical figure is meant here. Like

36 Gupta (ed.), Patna Museum Catalogue of Antiquities, p. 27, no. 29 (Antiquity no. 7606). Red sandstone with white or pale yellow spots was a popular medium in the Mathura art. Could it be that, though discovered at Kausāmbī, the figure originally came from Mathura?
Marshall, again, the Catalogue identifies the figure with the Earth-goddess, P'thivi.

The other specimen is a coarse, rectangular, terracotta plaque of Kuśāṇa date, showing a crudely modelled female squatting with widespread knees and upraised hands (Pl.VII.1). Despite defacement and slight damage, the figure appears entirely nude except for the heavy necklace, and bracelets and anklets. It may have had also a girdle around the waist. The breasts are crudely suggested in the horizontal alignment of the upper arms, and there is no doubt about the head even if the facial features cannot be made out. The illustration labels the figure as "Fertility Goddess".

The above two pieces were published after Sankalia had listed the figures of "Baubo-type" known to him. A highly significant omission by him, however, is a stone figure of the same goddess, with a dedicatory inscription, from Nagarjunikonda (Pl.VIII). The image is carved in high relief on a white marble slab. The upper part is broken but the lower part, which remains almost intact, leaves no doubt about the identification.

It shows a nude seated female with the knees laterally spread and the pudenda clearly marked. There are a series of anklets on each leg and several elaborately carved girdles around the waist. It is difficult to be certain about the position of the arms, the form of the bust and the presence or absence of the head. But the nature of the ornamentation above the girdle, as also the marked similarity to the nude headless goddess from Nevasa and Vadgaon (Pl.V.2, 3), and to a certain extent also

---

37 Ibid., p.307, no.145 (Antiquity no.7716).
38 According to the Catalogue, the figure seems to have come from Kauśāmbī. It may be mentioned that S.C. Kala describes another terracotta piece from Kauśāmbī showing a seated nude stretching her legs on both sides, similar to Marshall's Bhīṭā specimen; see Kala, Terracotta Figurines from Kauśāmbī, etc., p.30 and pl.XVII.C. But we agree with Sankalia that the illustration provided does not make it clear; see Art, As., XXIII, p.114, fn.14.
to the terracotta figures from the Ter excavations (Pl.IV,2) and
Nagarjunikonda (Pl.V,1), suggest that this figure also was headless.
Towards the top of the surviving part of the trunk where the image is
broken, outlines of what looks like a large lotus flower may be
discernible. But even so, its position is not such as to be equated with
the lotus-heads in the Bhīṣa and Alampur figures; at the most, it would
be part of an ornamental floral decoration.

The short one-line inscription at the base, written in Prakrit in
Brāhmi characters of approximately the 3rd century A.D., informs that the
image was caused to be made by Mahādevī Khāmuvalā, who was avidhavā and
jīvaputā and wife of Mahārāja Siri Ehavala Caṃtamula. The king is
probably identical with his namesake who was the son of Siri Vīrepurisadatta
of the Ikṣvāku dynasty and is generally placed in the 3rd century A.D.

The inscription thus proves beyond any doubt that the nude, squatting
female whose figures have been found all over the Deccan and the various
sites in North India was not only a popular goddess but also counted among
her votaries members of royal families. It should be mentioned that the
marble sculpture was discovered buried in debris at the extremity of the
remains of a large, many-pillared hall which, the editor of the inscription
thought, may have actually enshrined the image.

Cf., esp. the rows of wide girdles of the Ter figure with the equally
elaborate one in this image. The editor of the inscription finds the
ornamental belt around the belly resembling a decorated pūrna-ghaṭa.

See EI., XXIX, p.139. The text of the inscription has been read as:
Sida[m*]. Mahādūviya a-vidhavāya j[a]vaputāya
Mahār[a]ja-siri-[Ehavala Caṃtamula]-pati[ya]
Khaṃmuvalaya kāritāti[.]

See EI., XXIX, pp.138-9; also Majumdar (ed.), The Age of Imperial Unity,
pp.225-6. Ladies of Ikṣvāku family frequently appear as benefactresses of
the Buddhist mahācaitya at Nagarjunikonda; see ibid., p.225.

EI., XXIX, p.137. The "exhibitionistic" female figures occasionally
appearing on the mediaeval temples, such as those illustrated by Maury
(Folk Origins of Indian Art, figs,132-4) do not seem to belong to this
class, even though they look like the Sheila-na-gigs of the mediaeval
churches in England and Ireland which are included by Murray in her
"Personified Yoni or Baubo type"; see above, p.271, fn.7. In fact, it is
doubtful if they belong to a strict iconographic pattern at all. Even
if they are conceived of as religious figures of some kind, they need to
be studied in the general background of the erotic symbolism of mediaeval
Several significant facts emerge from a survey of the images of the nude squatting goddess in India. To begin with, all the images fall into a distinct class and it is certain that they represent a goddess who was in active worship. The available specimens show a distribution over most of North India and the Deccan generally, the greater concentration being in the Deccan, and range in date approximately from the first to the eighth centuries A.D. The fairly large proportion of terracotta specimens would indicate that the nude goddess was essentially a deity of the common people. Nevertheless, she must have been popular enough to have attracted the attention of the higher sections of society, to have retained an almost standard iconography for several centuries and to have excellent stone images carved to represent her and possibly to be installed in independent shrines.

The striking iconographic form of the goddess would have been sufficient reason to suspect that she was connected with fertility, but this seems to be suggested also by the Nagarjunikonoda image inscription where a queen is represented as dedicatrix of the goddess' image and is characterized as avidhavā ("not a widow", i.e., one whose husband is living) and jīvaputā (one whose son or sons are living). It appears that this goddess was essentially a goddess of women who prayed to her for a

43 contd

Hindu temple sculptures, and not as representations of a specific goddess. We believe that the figures discussed in this chapter conform to a more or less strict iconography and, in spite of their nudity and peculiar posture of the legs, cannot be labelled as exhibitionistic; cf. below, pp.308-9.

44 With respect to the figure from Mathura, Codrington noted that its being pressed from a mould indicated demand in quantity; see Man, XXXV, p.65. Sankalia specifically noted about one specimen from Ter that it was made from a mould.

45 It must be noted that the expressions jīvaputā, jīvasuta or jīvaputraputra have been used in inscriptions elsewhere to characterize ladies whose children were living, and also in literature, these, as well as avidhavā, are used of married ladies either in simple descriptions of them or at auspicious modes of addressing them; see EL, XXIX, p.139 and fn.s.3 and 4. But, in the present instance, the epithets seem to take an added meaning. In any case, even in the most casual and innocent use of these epithets for married ladies, the sentiment of fullness and fertility can always be suspected as the basic element.
happy and fruitful marital life. This is also the modern tradition recorded by Chapgar about the Siddan Kotte figure.46

It is not easy to form a definite opinion about the precise identification of the nude squatting goddess in India. Unfortunately the short dedicatory inscription on the Nagarjunikonda figure does not give the name of the goddess. As we propose to show below, the contemporary Sanskrit literature is not entirely unaware of her, but the iconographic texts or similar material in the Purāṇas or other works, to our knowledge, do not mention such a goddess, either with or without the name Aditi.47 In fact, even while Aditi lives in brahmanical Purānic mythology,48 we do not find any descriptions of her iconographic form as an independent goddess49 and there is no indication that she was ever actively worshipped in post-Vedic times.50

Aditi, as we have already seen, is among the prominent goddesses of the Rg-veda. Her conception, probably more than that of any other early Vedic goddess, comes closest to the idea of the primeval Great Mother.

---

46 See above, p.279.
47 Iconographic texts, to our knowledge, are also unaware of a goddess called Lajjā-Gaurī. However, for possible survivals of the form of the nude squatting goddess, see below, pp.311 ff.
48 Aditi sometimes appears in the Purāṇas as the mother of Indra and Viṣṇu in the context of the origin of the Vāmana incarnation of the latter; see Rao, EHI., II, pt.I, pp.161-3. In the post-Vedic mythology, generally speaking, she is the daughter of Dakṣa, and the mother of Vivasvanta and Viṣṇu, and of the gods generally; cf. Keith, RPVU., p.215. The deva-mātrī, "mother of the gods", frequently appearing in Purānic myths must refer to Aditi; cf. Dasgupta, Shashi Bhusan, "Evolution of Mother-worship in India", in Madhavanand and Majumdar (ed.), Great Women of India, pp.51-2. Strangely, Aditi also appears as the name of a Rākṣasa in Mānasāra; see Banerjea, DHII., p.207.
49 We know of only one reference to the figures of Aditi in the iconographic passages of the Purāṇic literature. It occurs in the Viṣṇudharmottarā Purāṇa and lays down that the figures of the divine mothers Aditi, Diti, Danu, Kaśṭhikā, Daṇḍu, Sīmhiṇī, Muni, Kadā, Krodha, Tura, Pradā, Vinati, Surabhi and Kaśā should be made as "engaged in making images"; see Shah, Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa, Third Khanda, vol.II, p.226. The reference, to say the least, is a curious one, and, naturally, no images of this type are known. In any case, it provides no evidence of a cult of Aditi.
50 Cf. Dasgupta, op.cit. (above, fn.48).
In fact, so great is the attraction towards her name and form in the Vedic pantheon that modern scholars, when attempting to trace the history of the Śakti-cult of historic India, often fall back upon her name, and she is sometimes even utilized to reconstruct the history of the Great Mother in proto-historic times in Western Asia and Iran. Thus Przyluski has tried to establish doubtful etymological relations between Aditi and Anaitis, Artemis and Anāhitā, and Coomaraswamy, looking for a name for the standing nude goddess represented in early Indian terracottas, also suggested Aditi. The fact remains, however, that the history of Aditi as a living goddess is confined to the Vedic period, and any identification of a later historical figure with her, and even more, any attribution of a specific iconographic form to her, is purely conjectural.

The Vedic word Uttānapad would no doubt appear as an accurate graphic description of the nude squatting goddess, but this does not warrant that she was called Uttānapad or was identified with Vedic Aditi. It should also be borne in mind that the iconography of the squatting goddess, despite its characteristic singularity, is of the simplest kind, and, therefore, whatever her early history, if any, on Indian soil, if she was really conceived as Aditi Uttānapad during the period of her popularity in India, it is difficult to understand why the brahmanical iconographic texts are silent about her name and form.

---

51 Ibid.; cf. also Banerjea, DHI., p.490.
54 While the study of Indian iconography is of the utmost importance for the history of the cults of various gods and goddesses, it has also a very significant limitation. It would appear that in the mediaeval period many complex iconographic forms emerged purely as a result of the enthusiasm of priests and patrons or the fertile imagination of the artist. It is difficult to imagine, for instance, that the "24-forms" (caturvīṃśatimūrtayah) of Viṣṇu, which are distinguished from each other only by a permutation and combination of the four attributes in the four hands of the deity (see Bidyabinod, Varieties of the Viṣṇu Image, MASI., 2; Rao, DHI., I, pt.1, pp.227 ff.; Banerjea, DHI., pp.410-2), had any real meaning for the worshipper. The mediaeval authors of sectarian and iconographic texts seem to have conceived of forms of deities which were never really
It appears, therefore, that the identification of the nude goddess with the so-called "Aditi Uttānapad" of the Rg-veda has to be given up. A Vedic origin of this goddess is quite unacceptable even if it could be proved that she is of longer history in India than when her representations first appear after the Christian era or is to be related to the figure on the Harappa seal noted by Marshall.

It has been suggested above that the contemporary classical Sanskrit literature is not entirely unaware of the goddess baring herself. The solitary reference comes from the Matsya Purāṇa which has so far been ignored or misunderstood by scholars working on the text. The context is of the gods beseeching Brahmā for the destruction of the demon Tāraka and Brahmā advising them to bring about the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī, whose son would accomplish their purpose. Brahmā is supposed to have said to the gods: ".... At present Śāṅkara is without a wife. I have earlier spoken to you of the goddess with raised hands. The hands of the goddess are always raised to grant boons. Soon that goddess will be (born as) the daughter of Himācala, and the son born of her from Śiva, like fire from the firewood, will destroy Tāraka. ...". Later, when the gods have departed, Brahmā prays to the Goddess Rātrī (who is said to have earlier emanated from the grandsire himself) to enter into the womb of Menā, the wife of Himācala, and take birth as Pārvatī. Rātrī obliges the father-god represented for worship. On the other hand, many complex images may have been created first before they were standardized in an iconographic text, and this may be the reason why icons are occasionally found for which no textual sanction is available. The question, however, is very different in the case of a figure of very simple iconography and relatively early date. If such a figure is attributed to a learned tradition, it is natural to expect reference to it in the appropriate texts emerging from that tradition.

54 contd

---

55 Mat.P., ch.154.
56 Ibid., 154,51-3:
Yaccāyamuktavāṇyaśyaḥ hyuttānakaratāḥ sādā,
Uttāno varadaḥ pāniṃśa devyāḥ sadaiva tu, 51
Himācalasya duhitāḥ sa tu devī bhavigyati,
Tasyāḥ sakāśadāḥ śarvastvaraṇyām pāvako yathā. 52
Janayīgyati tām prāpya tārako bhībhavigyati,
Mamāpyupāyaḥ sa kṛto yathaivaṃ hi bhavigyati. 53
There is in fact no earlier reference to the goddess in the Matsya Purāṇa.
and Pārvatī is born at an auspicious moment. She is described here as beginning to grow with all the virtues of Devas, Gandharvas, Nāgendras, etc., and gradually captivating and adorning the three worlds with her beauty, fortune and intelligence. 57 Incongruous though it may seem, however, when Nārada, to whom the gods assign the task of bringing about the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī, approaches Himācala and Mena and is asked to read the marks on their daughter's body and predict her future, he replies: "... Her husband is not yet born. She will be devoid of (auspicious) marks, and will always be with her hands raised upwards and her feet going astray by her own shadow. What more can I say?" 58 The words of the sage shock the parents, who are deeply distressed to think of their daughter as full of inauspicious marks and therefore entirely undeserving of a husband. Nārada, however, consoles them by saying that their fears were groundless. 59 Pārvatī's husband is "not-born" because he is the eternal, immutable, Supreme God. She is herself devoid of any auspicious marks because no marks can express her everlasting good fortune. Her hands will always be raised to grant boons to gods, demons and sages, and the reason for her straying feet, as the sage explains, is that the toenails of her lotus-like feet will shine with the radiance of the gems in the crowned heads of the prostrating gods and demons. 60

57 Ibid., vv.96 ff., esp.109-10.
58 Ibid., v.146:

Na jātō'syāḥ patirbhadre Lākṣaṇaśīca vivarj jītā,
Uttānaḥastaḥ satataṁ caraṁpairvyabhicāri bhiṁ,
Svaccāhyāḥ bhaṃvigeyyaṁ kīman yadhāh bhaṃyāte. 146
Part of this prediction, as we have seen, is anticipated in Brahma's statement earlier (fn.56 above), and all its elements are repeated again in Himācala's lament (ibid., vv.147 ff., esp. vv.160, 169-73) and Nārada's explanation (see below, fn.60).
59 Ibid., vv.176 ff..
60 Ibid., vv.178-93:

Na jātō'syāḥ patirdevyā yammayoktaṁ himācala,
Na sa jāto mahādeo bhūtabhayabhayabhodihāvaṁ,
Śarāryāḥ śaśvataṁ śaśa śāṅkaraṁ paramesvarāh. 178

Yaduktaṁ ca mahā devī lākṣaṇaṁ arj varjītaṁ tava,
Śrīpu tasyaṁ vākyasya samyaktvena viśāraṇam, 185
Lākṣaṇaṁ daivyiko kyaṅkaḥ śārīraṁ vaśvaśrayaṁ,
Sarvāyurddhandasaubhāgyaparimāṇaprakāśakaṁ. 186
The agency of Narada in affecting the union of Siva and Parvati must have been a fairly popular motif for it is to be noted also in the Kumārasambhava of Kālidāsa, \(6^1\) but the enigmatic prediction by him, to our knowledge, is found only in the above passages of the Matsya Purāṇa. The important thing to note, however, is that this prediction, only partly anticipated by Brahmā earlier, reads like a graphic description of the nude squatting goddess. Unaware of the existence of the figures of this goddess, Agrawala has misunderstood the verse as referring to Parvati holding in her hands a beggar's bowl and always roaming about. \(6^2\) No effort is needed to see that this interpretation is wholly unwarranted.

The relevant verse \(6^3\) containing the prediction can be easily paraphrased as: Bhadre! Asyāḥ patih na jātah. Iyaṁ laksanaṁḥ vivarjita ca, satatam uttānahastā (ca), svacchāyahā vyabhicāribhibh caranaiḥ (vukā ca) bhaviṣyāḥ. The use of instrumental in vyabhicāribhibh caranaiḥ, to be

---

60 contd

Anantasūryaṃ prameyasya saubhāgyasyāśya bhūdhara,
Naivāṅko lakṣṣāṅkārāḥ śārire samvidhiyate. 187
Atōśyā lakṣāṇām gātre śaila nāsti mahāmate,
Yathāhamuktāvānasya hyuttānakarataḥ sādā. 188
Uttāno varadaḥ pāṇīreṣa devyaḥ sadaiva tu,
Suraśurāṃitrāṇāvataradeyam bhaviṣyati. 189
Yathā proktām tadā pādau svacchāyāvyabhicāriṇau,
Asyāḥ śṛṇu mamātyāpi vāgyuktāṃ śailasattama. 190
Caranau padmasaṅkaśāvasyāḥ svacchanakhojvalau,
Suraśurāṇām nāmatām kriṣṭamaṇḍikāntibhiḥ. 191
Vicitravārpābhāsāntau svacchāyāpratibimbitau,
Bhāryāya jagadugurhoreṣeṣa vrṣāṅkasya mahāhara, 192
Janaṇi dharmalokasya sambhūtā bhūtabhāvāni,
Śiveyam pāvanāyālva tvatkoṣṭre pāvakaudyutāḥ. 193

V.189a is already anticipated in Brahmā's statement in v.51b, cited above in fn.56. The vv.191-192a, which together form the explanation of the straying feet, are difficult to be rendered accurately, partly because of the awkward construction but especially because of the fantastic nature of the explanation.

61
Kumārasambhava, I.50-1:
Tāṁ nāradaḥ kāṇacararāḥ kadācit kanyāṁ kila prekṣya pituḥ saṁīpe,
Samādidesāiakavadhūm bhavitrīṃ premāṁ śāriṅrādhahāram harasya. 50
Guruḥ pragalboṣi vayasatYOṣyastathau nivṛttānyavarāvahilaṣaḥ,
Ṛṭe krśānorna hi mantrapūtamarhanti tejanisyaparāṇa havyam. 51

62

63
Mat.P., 154,146, cited above in fn.58.
understood as "endowed with" or "characterized by", should be regarded as amongst the normal usages according to Sanskrit grammar. Also, the literal meaning of \textit{vyabhicārin} as qualifying the feet would be straying away from each other, going in opposite directions, falling apart. From the comparison with Ṣāmīcalā's lament and Narada's detailed explanations later, it is also clear that the body devoid of distinguishing marks, the upraised hands and the straying or falling apart feet are three separate elements of the prophecy. There is, therefore, no real ambiguity in the verse, and the \textit{Purāṇa} appears to provide a straightforward description in pleasing and very aptly chosen words. The only figurative element in the prediction is the word \textit{svacchāyāya}. That it has to be understood as invariably qualifying the straying feet is clear from the father's lament and the sage's consolation. Although the instrumental is awkward, the word seems to have been used to further emphasize the falling apart of the legs.

There is no doubt, therefore, that the \textit{Purāṇa}-writer had the nude, squatting goddess in mind when he composed the verses containing Narada's strange prophecy about Pārvatī. In fact, we believe that even the expression \textit{lakṣaṇaiśca vivarjijitaḥ}, "devoid of (auspicious) marks", may have been chosen to describe the utter simplicity of the iconography of the goddess who has no distinguishing marks, no attributes, save her peculiar posture, and it is even possible that Pārvatī's covering her face with the ends of her garment on the suggestion of her mother to salute the sage to ensure a worthy husband, which could be understood as the natural

\[\text{svacchāyāyaśyaścaraṇau tvayoktau vyabhicāriṇau.}\]

\[\text{Ityukta tu tato mātrā vastrāntapihitānā, Kīcītkaṃpi mūrdhā tu vākyaḥ novāca kiṃcana,}\]
shyness of a bride-to-be, has a veiled reference to the figures of the nude goddess where her head and face are concealed or obliterated. At the same time, however, a touch of irony and disapproval also seems to be implied in lakṣānaṅga vīvarjītā, and possibly also in the choice of the words vyabhicārī and svacchāyāya to describe the goddess' offensive posture. That the prophecy as a whole was meant to be evil is obvious from the fact that the parents were shocked to hear it.\(^70\)

Nārāda's prediction in the Matsya Purāṇa is the only literary allusion to the nude goddess in contemporary texts that we have been able to find.\(^71\) This fact is significant in itself and suggests the alien character of the goddess. But the nature of the Purānic allusion to her also confirms it. The entire episode is a very awkward and jarring element in the story of Śiva's marriage with Pārvatī. Nārāda's explanations of the real meaning of his predictions, even though they are said to have pleased Himācala, are not only lame but virtually meaningless. Uttānahastā, which literally means "one with raised hands", can never be understood as granting boons.\(^72\) The boon-giving gesture (varada-mudrā), which must have been standardized in Indian iconography by the time of the Matsya Purāṇa,

\(^{70}\) Cf. ibid., 154,160, uttered by Himācala:
Tvam caṅkavān sūtaṁ me sāriṁ dūṣaṁ smṛghraṁ,
Aho muhyāmi śuṣyāmi glāmi śidāmi nārāda.

\(^{71}\) There is an interesting reference to a naked Yakṣinī in the Manorathapūrāṇ of Buddhaghoṣa. Commenting on the Anuputāra Nikāya, V. XXII.10 (PTS, ed., vol.III, p.256), where Buddha speaks of the five disadvantages of Madhura (the modern Mathura), including its fierce Yakṣas, Buddhaghoṣa relates the story that when Buddha was once visiting Mathura and had entered the outer precincts of the town, a naked Yakṣinī stationed herself before him with her two hands outstretched and her tongue sticking out (... Aṭṭhako niccādāṭṭhiṅka yakkhini acelā hūtva dvā hatthe pāsāretvā jīhvaṁ ninnametvā dasābalassa purato etṭhāsi ...). Buddha, apparently disgusted, turned back from the town and took his residence in a monastery outside (Manorathapūrāṇ, ed. Kopp, PTS. ed., vol.III, p.329). The nakedness and the outspread arms of the Yakṣinī appear to suggest some parallelism with the nude squatting goddess but this may be coincidental. In its element of confrontation between a nude ogress and the Buddha and the latter turning away, the story perhaps betrays even greater similarities with that of Koṭāvī in the Purāṇas (see below, Ch.V, pp.317 ff.). The protruding tongue is characteristic of the fearful images of Kāli or her forms.

\(^{72}\) See below, p.309, for a discussion on the real meaning of the upraised arms in the figures of the goddess.
is a very different position in which the right arm is held diagonally in such a way that the fully-opened palm, with fingers pressed together, faces the onlooker—a natural gesture of giving. The explanation of Pārvatī's falling-apart legs is too fanciful and confused to need any comment. It is obvious from the Matsya Purāṇa episode, therefore, that the nude goddess to which it seems to allude was essentially a figure alien to the brahmanical tradition. At the same time, she must be assumed to have had an important popular cult of her own, whence attempts were made to absorb her in the brahmanical Śivaite pantheon by regarding her as identical with Pārvatī and as the consort of Śiva. This is suggested also by the Vadgaon figure where the Nandi—Śiva's characteristic emblem—is represented beside the goddess. The Śivaite affiliation of the goddess may be hinted at also if the doubtful figure in the Rāmeśvara cave at Ellora is understood to represent her, because this cave enshrines a Śiva-liṅga and its walls are full of scenes in relief representing Śivaite themes. Chapgar, therefore, appears to have referred to the survival of a truly old tradition when he recorded that the Siddan Kotte figure was worshipped locally as Lajjā-Gaurī.

It is clear, however, that even by the time of the Matsya Purāṇa, this absorption was far from complete and the nude goddess who had already a few centuries of history behind her, was as yet only on the fringes of Purānic Śivaism. When we consider that this Purāṇa is the only text which alludes to the goddess, and that also in such an abrupt, awkward manner, the conclusion is forced on us that this goddess, through most of her popular history in India, remained a figure alien to the brahmanical tradition. An unfortunate result of this aspect of her history is that even the name of the goddess is unknown to us.

Since Nārada's prediction in the Matsya Purāṇa further militates against the identification of the nude squatting goddess with a Vedic deity, her origin must be sought for outside the Vedic brahmanical tradition.

In a recent short paper, Vishnu Sisodia has published a late mediaeval (18-19th century A.D.) brass image of a Jain goddess from Rajasthan which he regards as derived from the "Baubo-type" figures published by Codrington

73 See Gupte and Mahajan, Ajanta, Ellora and Auragabad Caves, pp.211 ff.
and Sankalia. In this context, he also puts forward the tentative suggestion that the nude squatting goddess may have been known to the tribal Indian religions long before the 1st century A.D., and Hindu and Jain iconography may have occasionally borrowed from this source. His two arguments are that similar nude female figures are sometimes seen in the modern tribal art of north India, and that the Arya-stava in the Harivamśa refers to nude goddesses Aparṣa and Nagna-Savari as worshipped by Savaras, Barbaras and Pulindas, all probably primitive tribes.

Sisodia’s suggestion may appear attractive on the face but it does not stand close scrutiny. The apocryphal Arya-stava in the Harivamśa does refer to the Sabaras, Barbaras and Pulindas as worshippers of the Great Goddess,76 suggesting that elements of the religious beliefs of such tribes must have been incorporated with her cult. It does not mention Aparṣa or Nagna-Savari, but elsewhere in the Harivamśa and several other Purāṇas, Uma-Pārvatī is called Aparṣa.77 The name Aparṣa may have denoted a goddess who was "not even clad in leaf garments", but, according to the traditional interpretation, it was given to Uma-Pārvatī because she sustained herself in her asceticism without even accepting a leaf as food. A conspicuous Sabha element in the formation of the Great Goddess is adequately corroborated by the Mediaeval tradition of Sabarotsava as a variety of the autumnal worship of Durgā.78 It would not be surprising, therefore, if the Great Goddess was also called by names like Parnā-Sabarī

---

75 The well known Arya-stava in the vulgate editions of the Harivamśa (see e.g. Hv., Kinjawadekar's edn., II,3) does not contain a statement of the type imagined by Sisodia; see below. The author derives his information from Banerjea (DHI., p.491 f.) and seems to have misunderstood him. Incidentally, Banerjea refers to the Arya-stava as Hv., III,3 which is clearly a misprint for Hv. (vul,ed.), II,3.
77 Hv., 13,15-9; also Vi.P., 72,7-12; Bra.P., III,10,8-13; see also Kumārasambhava, V,28, and Vi.P., 9,86.
78 For Sabarotsava, see Kane, HD., V, pt.I, pp.176-7.
or Nagna-Savarī. But all these evidences do not appear to us to be very pertinent to the problem, since we are not dealing with nude goddesses in general but with a very specialized nude goddess with a strongly individualistic iconography. Even if the statements in the Harivamśa and Purānic texts are accepted as some proof that autochthonous Indian tribes worshipped nude goddesses, we cannot be certain that they worshipped the nude squatting goddess or that such a goddess was familiar to them from before the beginning of the Christian era.

As regards the survivals in modern Indian tribal art, an apparently nude female of the Baubo-type, carved in wood in low relief, is seen in two illustrations provided by Elwin from the arts of the Santals and the Marias, and since the figures occur on a Santal marriage-litter and a Maria funerary pillar, they may also be imagined to have religious connotations. But there is no record that the Santals or the Marias actually worship a goddess of that form. Presuming, however, for the sake of argument that such a goddess is known to these tribes, it still provides no evidence that she is original to them or that similar goddesses were worshipped in India by various non-brahmanical tribes before the beginning of the Christian era. The tentative suggestion of Sisodia, therefore, though not illegitimate, is scarcely more than a conjecture. Any worthwhile evidence of the origin of the nude squatting goddess in India must be obtained through an investigation of reliable historical antecedents.

The known historical antecedents suggest two alternative possibilities of the origin and early history of the nude squatting goddess in India, viz. that she is a descendent of her remote ancestress on the oblong terracotta sealing from Harappa, or that she is a Greco-Roman goddess who may have been imported into India in the early centuries of the Christian era. Overlooking the tentative relationship with the terracotta figure from Bhīrā already established by Marshall, only the second of the two alternatives has really been offered so far, but the first may be equally

79 Cf. Banerjea, DHI., p.492.
80 Elwin, The Tribal Art of Middle India, etc., figs,83 and 102; see also Fraser (ed.), The Many Faces of Primitive Art, p.46, fn.4. Sisodia's reference to the fig. nos, as 82 and 120 (see EM., n.s., 19, no.3-4, p.412, fn.9) is apparently inaccurate.
worthy of investigation. The solution, however, is somewhat complicated by the possibility that the two alternatives may not be as well defined and disparate as they appear, and connections between the two in remote times have also been suggested.  

Both Codrington, who first hinted at the possibility of Baubo's importation into India, and Sankalia, who accepted a foreign inspiration without specifically referring to Baubo, chose to ignore the evidence of the Harappa sealing. The arguments for a possible foreign inspiration of the Indian goddess are best marshalled by the latter scholar, who not only published several specimens of the figures of the goddess falling into a definite time-pattern, but also reconstructed their historical background, in which a foreign inspiration appears highly probable.

If we do not question, like Codrington and Sankalia, Murray's nomenclature, it must be accepted that the images of the Indian goddess, in the essential elements of their iconography, do conform to her "Baubo-type". Further, the majority of these images come from the early centuries of the Christian era. All the north Indian specimens - from Mathura, Bhājā and Kausāmbī - are assignable to the Kuṣāṇa period and most of the specimens from the Deccan also range from the 1st to 3rd century A.D. This was the period when India had the closest trade contacts with the Roman world in the west. This fact was already known from the Greek sources like the *Periphus of the Erythrean Sea*, but recent archaeology has confirmed it, and it is even possible to speak of Roman trading posts in India in this period. As pointed out by Sankalia, it is clear that the contact was not only confined to the Kuṣāṇa empire in the North but was even more brisk through seaports on the coastal regions of India. Excavations at Arikamedu, Chandravalli, Kolhapur, Nevasa, Junnar and Ujjain have brought to light Roman coins as well as sherds of Roman amphorae. There is also an associated fine red-polished ware, as at Nasik and probably also at Nevasa and several other Andhra sites, which, if not actually of Roman

81 See below, p.298.
82 See e.g. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, pp.228 ff..
83 Wheeler, *AI*, 2, 1946, pp.17 ff..
84 *Art.,As.*, XXIII, p.113.
origin, may have been made in imitation of the Roman ware. One of the terracotta figures from Ter (Pl.IV,1) was discovered in association with such sherds. With this accumulated information, Sankalia reinforces Codrington's suggestion, and, since Murray had looked essentially to Egypt for the origin and development of the Baubo-cult, he feels that the inspiration was received in India most probably from Egypt through the Romans in about 1st-2nd century A.D.

The circumstantial evidence for the foreign inspiration of the Indian goddess would appear overwhelming, but it is interesting that Baubo herself is a very obscure figure in Greek mythology and it is uncertain how many of the so-called "Bubo-type" figures from the Roman-Egyptian world actually represent that goddess. Murray's paper itself hints at this obscurity, although it provides much useful information and suggestions about the origin and nature of Baubo.

Bubo has attracted the attention of several scholars who interested themselves in the Orphic religion and Eleusinian Mysteries. Perhaps the most important source of Baubo's myth is the Orphic version of the rape of Persephone and the wandering of the sorrowing Demeter in search

85 Ibid.,
86 JRAI., LXIV, pp.94-5.
87 Art.As., XXIII, p.121. Sankalia also rejects Kramrisch's identification, but agrees that this foreign goddess, once absorbed, may have been identified with Aditi Uttanpad; ibid., pp.114, 121. In view of our arguments above, pp.283ff, we feel that even this is unlikely.
88 In spite of her obscurity, there is considerable literature on Baubo. A fairly comprehensive list of ancient sources, literary as well as archaeological, is collected by Guthrie, Orpheus and Greek Religion, etc., pp.136-7. For modern literature and opinions on Baubo, see Cook, Zeus; A Study in Ancient Religion, vol.2, p.131, fn.5; Nilsson, Geschichte der griechischen Religion, I, p.657, fn.2. Particularly referred is Kern, "Bubo", in Pauly-Wissowa (ed.), Realencyclopadie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft (1897), III, pp.150-1. See also Guthrie, op.cit., pp.135-6; Kerényi, The Gods of the Greeks, pp.241 ff.; Mylonas, Eleusis and Eleusinian Mysteries, pp.291 ff.. Some other important references are cited below at appropriate places.
of her daughter. In this version, which is dateable to the 1st century B.C., the scene of the rape was Eleusis. Demeter, looking for her daughter, was received here by poor Dysaules and his wife Baubo in their humble cottage where their sons informed the goddess about the rape. The grief-stricken Demeter is said to have refused the barley-drink offered by her hostess, whereupon Baubo lifted up her gown and revealed her uncomely womb through which the child Iacchus was laughing. The goddess laughed too and accepted the drink.

In the above myth, Baubo appears in the role of a servant of Demeter, but there is no doubt about her having been a goddess in her own right. The only certain evidence of her cult, however, comes not from Eleusis but from the island of Paros where an inscription of the 1st century B.C. is dedicated to her along with Demeter, Kore, and Zeus Eubuleus by Erasippe, the daughter of Prason.

Classical scholars have often suspected Baubo to be an alien figure on the Greek soil. She has been variously found alien to the Orphic religion, to the Eleusinian Mysteries and even to the island of Paros where the inscription referring to her cult was found. There is, however, no unanimity about her place of origin. On the basis of an inscription from Galatea (north Phrygia, Asia Minor) which mentions Baubo, another inscription from Magnesia on Maeander which speaks of a Maenad of that name, and the fact that Asklepiades of Tragilos (4th century B.C.) represents Baubo and Dysaules as parents of Mise, who is known to be a figure of Anatolian cult as well as of Orphic tradition, Guthrie,

89 Kern, Orphicorum Fragmenta, 52, as cited in Guthrie, op.cit., pp.134-5; Kerényi, op.cit., pp.242 ff., etc.; see also Clement of Alexandria, tr. Butterworth, pp.40 ff.,
90 Guthrie, op.cit., p.134.
following a suggestion of Gruppe, has looked to Anatolia, or more particularly Purygia, as the original home of Baubo.95

At a very early stage of the study of Baubo, Egypt was considered the real source of the goddess. Thus Foucart, pointing out that Baubo is essentially alien to the Eleusinian Mysteries, looked to that country for her origin, especially as a large number of her figures were supposed to appear in Egypt in the Roman period.96 Since Dieterich had very early demonstrated that the word Baubo originally meant "that which she showed to Demeter", i.e., the female sex,97 Mylonas has recently argued that the name seems to have been coined after the fact, and, therefore, it could only have been created in a locality "where the raising of clothes by women and the exhibition of their secret parts, accompanied by banter, obscene language and gestures, were related to the worship of some God or Goddess".98 The only report of such a custom is by Herodotus, who relates it to the Egyptian delta. According to him, women pilgrims on boats on route to the shrine of the cat-headed goddess Pasht at Bubastis, on approaching a town on the river-bank, used to indulge in singing and dancing, and shouting mockery of the women of the town, and some would stand up and raise their garments to expose their secret parts.99 Diodorus also preserves a tradition that when after the death of the sacred Apis-bull of Memphis, a new one was discovered, only women might look at the God for forty days, but they did this "while lifting their clothes up and showing their private parts to the God".100

95 Guthrie, op.cit., pp.135-6.
97 Guthrie, op.cit., p.135.
98 Mylonas, op.cit., p.293; cf. similar arguments by Lenormant and others as cited by Hornblower, op.cit., p.47.
100 As cited by Mylonas, op.cit., p.294.
Murray also suggested an Egyptian origin of Baubo.\footnote{101} She noted that in the ancient world, the most realistic of Baubo-type figurines belong to Egypt, though of the Roman period (Pl.VII.2), and the Classical scholars themselves seem to accept an Egyptian origin of the goddess when they equate Baubo-Phryne (Frog-Baubo) with Heqt, the Egyptian Frog-goddess of birth. Even though, she argues, the equation Baubo-Hecate with Baubo-Heqt is philologically impossible, it might still be correct if understood to be based on some of the Baubo-figures. According to her, since, in the Greek sources, the goddess is referred to both as Baubo and Babo, her name is probably derived from the goddess Bebt, the female counterpart of Beb. She points out that the cult of this pair is best known in the First Intermediate Period, particularly in the VIIth Dynasty, when personal names compounded with Beb are very frequent, and it seemed significant that Baubo figures should appear in great numbers in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt, when deities of the common people became important.\footnote{102}

In a well-documented study, Isidore Lévy has also looked for the source of the myth of the goddess baring herself to ancient Egypt, from where, according to him, it spread in the Alexandrian times to the Greek archipelago, Asia Minor and as far east as Japan.\footnote{103} He believed that the Baubo-episodes of Orphic tradition were late Hellenistic imitations of old and obscene Egyptian myths, as in the legend of goddess Hathor who pulled up her clothes in front of her father. In this legend, which is preserved in a papyrus dateable to the reign of Ramses V (c. 12th century B.C.) and is entitled "The Contendings of Horus and Seth", Re’-Harakhti, the Master of the Universe, who is aggrieved and pensive after being taunted in the tribunal, regains his composure and resumes his seat after his daughter Hathor is said to have come to him and uncovered her nakedness before his face, which made him laugh.\footnote{104}

\footnote{101} JRAI., LXIV, pp.94-5.
\footnote{102} For objections by H.J. Rose to some of the suppositions of Murray, see Man, XXXIV, 1934, pp.167-8.
\footnote{103} Lévy, "Autour d’un roman mythologique égyptien", in Mélanges Franz Cumont, vol.2, pp.817-45.
\footnote{104} See Gardiner, The Library of A. Chester Beatty: Description of a Hieratic Papyrus with a Mythological Story, etc., pp.1 and 13 ff., esp.16.
Charles Picard has strongly criticized Foutart's thesis of an Egyptian origin of the motif, and Lévy's, of its proliferation from Alexandrian Egypt. In several important contributions, he has argued in favour of a very ancient motif of the Mother Goddess baring her secret parts popular all over the Mediterranean world and up to the Indus Valley. In the Eleusinian episode of Baubo, he notices a continuity of ideas stretching back to the Cretan Mother Goddess, and still further, to the representation on the Harappa seal, and felt that the later Mycanean, Egyptian and Hellenistic representations express the same ancient conception. According to him, what was later interpreted as an obscene gesture by the Christian Fathers and became the basis of lurid jokes in Greek writings was an essential element of the ancient Mother Goddess cult, and the exhibition of secret parts was a ritual act related to the fertility of animals and the earth. He commends Lagrange for emphasizing that, though it is attributed to a servant, the Baubo myth was essentially a prerogative of the Great Goddess, and points out that it is not without significance that St Gregory Nazianzen, in a sermon against heathens, attributes Baubo's act to the goddess Demeter herself.

The earliest evidence of Picard from the Mediterranean world comes from a crudely-sketched figure on a pot-sherd from Mallia in Crete. It is not very clear in the illustration provided. The main figure probably does show a female with the sexual triangle clearly marked, and it might represent the Mother Goddess in her fertility aspect, but Picard imagines her as portrayed with legs widespread and finds her cognate with the earlier Harappa representation of the nude upside-down female with a plant.

106 See esp. EJ., 1938, pp.100 ff.
107 Ibid., pl.4 of Picard, fac.p,102; see also the line-drawings in figs. 7 and 8 in RA., July-Dec,1938, pp.12-3.
issuing from her womb (Pl.I.2), already noticed by Marshall. He also notes several examples, in literature and art, from the Mycenaean, Etruscan, Greek and Roman culture, as later expressions of the same motif of ritual exhibitionism in various forms.

Baubo herself, according to Picard, is only one of the several manifestations of this ancient motif, and apparently a very minor one. In fact, he believed that Baubo and her male counterpart Baubon, together, are "gastro-cephalic" spirits who were essentially personifications of female and male sex-organs and modelled on the pattern of the earlier pair, Iambe and Iambos. The only certain representations of Baubo, according to him, are the "bizarre and scandalous" figures from Prienne, without torso, showing on the belly, over the clearly indicated sex, a human face full of details, apparently Iacchus. These figures are generally dated to the 4th century A.D.

Picard might be accused of occasionally stretching his point in bringing diverse elements of myth and art within the compass of a single abstract idea of great antiquity. He also appears to underrate Baubo, whose strange service to Demeter seems to have been a popular myth of the Greco-Roman world, and whose cult is indubitably established in the 1st century B.C. on the island of Paros. Again, his ideas about the origin of Baubo carry no greater conviction than the alternative suggestions that derive the goddess from elements of myths and practices in the Near

108 Picard in RA., July-Dec., 1938, pp.5 ff., and EJ., 1938, p.101. For the Harappa seal, see p. 270, fn.5 above. The tiger or tiger-headed monsters on one side of the Harappa seal, according to Picard, could be demons with protective armour or priest-dancers clothed like animals. The scene on the reverse showing a woman with upraised hands threatened by a man holding a sickle reminds him of the Greek myth of Perseus killing Gorgon. From the blood of the latter came out Pegasus and Chrysaor, and not just a twig with leaves; see EJ., 1938, p.101.

109 EJ., 1938, pp.102 ff.


113 EJ., 1938, p.101, fn.3.
East or Egypt. The real merit of Picard's investigations seems to lie in suggesting the possibility of a great antiquity of the motif of the goddess baring herself and, what is even more important for our purpose, the possibility of a continued history of it in various forms in the Mediterranean world up to the Greco-Roman times. Fraser refers to early Neolithic examples, probably of the 7th millennium B.C., excavated at Chatal Huyuk in Anatolia and showing the lower half of "goddesses in birth giving position". Certain bronze pins from Luristan, on the western border of Iran and the fringes of ancient Near East, also show the motif. In one example, the nude female with the outstretched legs and holding her breasts with her two hands is actually portrayed as giving birth to a child. In another, she is surrounded by rosettes all around, which remind us of the Indian figures associated with the lotus. These pins are generally dated between 1000 and 600 B.C.

It must be accepted that the form of the nude goddess and the essential message conveyed by it lack any sophistication, and have all the appearance of a primitive idea expressed crudely. Guthrie expressed this sentiment when he noted about Baubo that "she has all the characteristics

---

114 Fraser (ed.), The Many Faces of Primitive Art, p.37, citing Mellaart, James, "Earliest of Neolithic Cities: The Third Season of Excavations at Anatolian Chatal Huyuk, etc.", Illustrated London News, Feb.1, 1964, pp.158-60; see also Mellaart, Catal Huyuk: A Neolithic Town in Anatolia, pp.180 ff., esp.183. For the dating of the site, see ibid., pp.52-3. The only clay statuette supposed to represent the goddess, seated on a throne, in the birth-giving position (see ibid., pls.67, 68, IX and fig.52) is dateable to the 6th millennium B.C. Cf. the claims made about the representations of mother-goddess figures in the attitude of giving birth in the terracotta pieces of a slightly later period (approximately 4000 B.C.) from Tall Arbachiya in ancient Mesopotamia, and of a still later period (approximately the middle of the 2nd millennium B.C.) from Tell Beit Mirsim in Palestine; see, for the evidence from Tall Arbachiya, Mallowan, M.E.L., and Rose, J. Cruikshank, "Excavations at Tall Arbachiya, 1933", Iraq, II, 1935, pp.79 ff.; (cf. also Roux, Ancient Iraq, p.65); and for Tell Beit Mirsim, see Mallowan and Rose, op.cit., p.79, fn.4, and James, Prehistoric Religion, p.154, both citing Albright, The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible. The claims about the latter evidence appear to us to be quite doubtful if the figures under reference are the same as those illustrated in Albright, The Archaeology of Palestine, p.107.

115 See Ghirshman, Iran, p.102 and pl.8a; Goddard, The Art of Iran, p.69 and figs.61-2; see also Fraser, op.cit., pp.37-8 and fig.1.
of a creature of primitive popular imagination, a kind of bogey, and in later times became quite naturally an associate of the dread Hekate. Kramrisch seems to have been conscious of this when she read "a deeper message and a more primal vision" in the Alampur figure, and, perhaps for the same reason, Przyluski commends Picard against Lévy. It is this which gives added significance to the representation of the Harappa seal.

In spite of the obscurity that still surrounds the origins of the Indus Valley culture, its contact with the contemporary Western world is generally accepted. This contact seems to have embraced various aspects of the social and material life, not the least of which is the probability of an identical or similar cult of the Great Mother spread from the shores of the Mediterranean to the basin of the Indus river. At the same time, the discovery of the Indus Culture has been hailed as revolutionary for the history of Indian religions, and various aspects of later Hinduism, particularly the prominent cults of the Mother Goddess, which are not directly traceable to the Vedic religion, are often conveniently traced back to the Indus Culture. Now, whether or not Picard was right in associating the representation on the Harappa tablet with the drawing on the pot-sherd from Mallia, it is interesting to observe that while a continuity of the motif of the Goddess baring herself is demonstrable,

116 Guthrie, op.cit., p.135.
117 See above, pp.274-5.
118 Przyluski, La Grande Déesse, p.156.
119 See, e.g., Marshall (ed.), MIC., I, pp.50, 57-8; Coomaraswamy, HIIA., p.3; Przyluski, "The Great Goddess in India and Iran", IHQ., X, pp.405-38, etc.. C.L. Fabri has specifically tried to relate the Mother-goddess cults in Crete and the Indus Valley (see his "Cretan Bull-grappling Sports and the Bull-sacrifice in the Indus Valley", Asi-AR., 1934, pp.93-101), although some of his assumptions and the conclusion have been objected to by K.N. Sastri in "An Important Cultural Link between Indus Civilization and the Minoan Crete", JAS-L., XXII, 1956, pp.39 ff.
120 Marshall (ed.), MIC., I, pp.48-9, 77-8; cf. also Piggott, Prehistoric India, p.205; Majumdar, R.C., "Evolution of Religio-philosophical Culture in India", in Bhattacharya (ed.), The Cultural Heritage of India, IV, pp.31-3; Pande, Studies in the Origins of Buddhism, pp.251 ff., etc.; see also above, Ch. II, pp.118 ff.
however loosely, in the ancient Mediterranean world from the early
Neolithic to the Hellenistic-Roman times, there is no such thing on Indian
soil. Except for the so-called "Aditi Uttānapad" in the Rg-veda, who, as
we have seen, seems to have little claim to identification with the nude
squatting goddess in terracotta and stone, the enigmatic prediction of
Nārada in the Matsya Purāṇa is the only allusion to her in Indian literature.
In archaeology, in the large number of terracottas assignable to the
Maurya-Śunga period, if not earlier, not a single true representation of
this goddess has been noticed, even though a high percentage of such
figures are of females and are frequently labelled as representations of
the Mother-Goddess. The balance of probability, therefore, seems to
favour a foreign inspiration of the Indian goddess.

There is no doubt that the hypothesis of a foreign inspiration for
the Indian figures has its own limitations. Apart from the fact that the
evidence of the Harappa seal, howsoever ambiguous in itself, leaves a
margin for the possibility of a continuity of ideas even if no connecting
links are available, it may be pointed out that sexual symbols have an
almost universal distribution in ancient culture, and similar symbols
may have been conceived and developed independently in widely separated
areas. What is more important, the specific symbol of the nude seated
goddess with outstretched legs is itself very widely distributed in time
and space. The Sheila-na-gigs on the mediaeval churches in England and

121 Cf. e.g., Coomaraswamy, "Archaic Indian Terracottas", Varg, VI, no.2,
pp.22 ff.; see also above, Ch.1, pp.74 ff. Most of these so-called figures
of the goddess represent standing females, and many are nude; see e.g.,
the Śunga terracotta illustrated as fig.43 by Coomaraswamy, op.cit.; cf.
also the earlier gold-leaf plaque from Lauria-nandangarh; ibid., fig.36.
We do not believe, however, that the standing nude females in these
terracottas, even when the sex is clearly marked, have any close
relationship with the figures of the nude squatting goddess. As already
suggested (above, p.269, fn.2), the nudity of the squatting goddess is of
too specialized a kind to be imagined as directly derived from the former.
For the same reason, we believe that even though the Classical Baubo may
have a very ancient origin, Murray is not quite justified in directly
relating to it all those earlier standing female figures in Egypt where
the sexual triangle is very prominently marked; see JRAI, LXIV, p.96.

122 Cf. Hartland, "Phallism", ERE., 9, pp.830-1; see also Chakravarti, The
Tantras: Studies on their Religion and Literature, pp.8-9.
Ireland, certain mythical motifs in mediaeval Japanese literature and a very large number of modern art examples from South-east Asia and the Pacific world in general have been taken to belong to the same class. On the other hand, it may be also suggested that there is such a strong current of erotic and sexual symbolism running through the history of Indian art, religion and culture that any hypothesis of a foreign inspiration in their context is hazardous.

The two limitations outlined above are valid and well worth keeping in mind. But they are also of a very general nature. It needs to be emphasized that in the case of the nude squatting goddess in India, we are

123 See JRAI., LXIV, pp.97 ff.; Man, XXIII, 1923, pp.140-1; ibid., XXIX, 1929, pp.133-5; ibid., XXX, 1930, pp.10-1; ibid., XXXI, 1931, pp.3-6, etc.; also BER., 9, pp.817-8; Ross, Pagan Celtic Britain, pp.229, 232; Fraser (ed.), The Many Faces of Primitive Art, pp.44-5, where reference is also made to Guest, "Irish Sheela-na-gigs in 1935", Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries, Ireland, LXVI, 1936, pp.107-29, and Mercier, The Irish Comic Tradition, p.54. The obvious fertility aspect and possible apotropaic significance of these figures are often noted, but their precise meaning remains obscure; see, however, Murray's opinion cited below, pp.307-8. The meaning of the word Sheila-na-gig is also doubtful; see Man, XXXIV, 1934, p.184; ibid., XXXV, 1935, pp.62-3.


125 Several such examples are collected by Sankalia (see Art.As., XXIII, pp.121-2), but a much fuller and up-to-date account is given by Fraser; see Fraser (ed.), The Many Faces of Primitive Art, pp.47 ff. Fraser, however, concentrates on a special type of these figures which he calls "the Heraldic Woman"; see below.

126 It is very common to cite India for the wide prevalence of sexual and erotic symbols; cf. e.g., the introductory remark in Fišer, Indian Erotics of the Earliest Period, p.5; also ERE., 9, pp.442, 818, 819; Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences, 6, p.192; International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences, 14, p.206. A good example of this aspect of Indian culture may be said to be the popular worship of the Siva-linga which, in its standard iconography, combines both the male and the female sex principles. But more appropriate examples, equally well known though not fully investigated, are the Tantric traditions in Indian religions, the erotic sculptures on the mediaeval temples and the scientific erotic literature of India. For the attitude of ancient Indians towards the sexual life in general, see Basham, The Wonder that was India, pp.170-2; and for the frequent erotic suggestions in the early Indian art, see Coomaraswamy, HIIA., pp.64-5.
not dealing with a general sexual symbol but with a very specific iconographic form. In fact, it is the highly standardized iconography of the goddess that not only provides definite evidence of a well distributed cult but also necessitates enquiry about origins from a specific source. Apparently, under some such compulsion, Murray related the Sheila-na-gigs to her Baubo-type127 and Lévy imagined the proliferation of an old Egyptian mythical motif in the Greek legend of Baubo and the Japanese one of the goddess Ame-no-uzume,128 even when adequate historical links were not available. In a very well-documented study of a special form of this motif, especially of its manifestations in the modern primitive cultures, Fraser faces the same situation and boldly postulates a common origin of the motif probably in the early neolithic times in the ancient Near East and its wide diffusion from that source.129

The original sources of the Sheila-na-gigs in the British Isles, the Japanese myth of the goddess Ame-no-uzume and the modern representations of the nude squatting goddess in the South-east Asia and the Pacific world in general are not our main concern here. We should, however, like to comment that, while in their own ways, Picard and Fraser have ably put their case suggesting the great antiquity of the motif of the goddess baring herself and its possible origins in the ancient Mediterranean world or the Near East,130 their arguments are of no help in understanding the historical process of its diffusion in later times in widely separated areas. Fraser’s investigations, otherwise quite thorough and well argued, suffer in our opinion also from the two limitations he has imposed upon himself. Firstly, it is a very special type of the motif of the nude goddess that is principally investigated by Fraser. He calls it the “Heraldic Woman” and defines it as the image of a female figure holding the knees apart and exposing the genital area and symmetrically flanked on the

127 See above, p.271, fn.7.
129 Fraser, "The Heraldic Woman: A Study in Diffusion", in Fraser (ed.), The Many Faces of Primitive Art, etc., pp.36–99.
130 See above, pp.298 ff..
two sides by two other figures who may be human beings, animals, monsters or birds. He therefore does not regard the Indian specimens published by Codrington and Sankalia as true heraldic women, although they could be regarded as somehow connected with the same original motif. Secondly, what is even more important, he shows no awareness of the existence of possible literary motifs parallel to the artistic forms, and only discusses the problem of diffusion and various manifestations of the so-called "Heraldic Woman" in primitive art. Naturally, therefore, he makes no reference to the investigations of Picard and Lévy.

The non-awareness of the possibility of the literary forms of the motif, in our opinion, considerably detracts from the value of Fraser's conclusions, and betrays a refusal to face the complexity of historical problems that might be involved with the individual manifestations of the motif. To take the Indian phenomenon as an illustration, apart from the considerations that certain peculiarities of iconography of the Indian figures, e.g., the headless form of several specimens, put them in a new light and necessitate independent explanations, and that a figure of as high artistic and technical merit as the one from Alampur presupposes the influence of learned traditions, the facts that at least one Indian figure bears a dedicatory inscription by a queen and the nude goddess appears to be referred to in the Matsya Purāṇa indicate that, howsoever primitive the idea underlying the nude squatting goddess may be, her figures in the historical period in India cannot be explained simply as manifestations of primitive art. All the Indian evidence considered together indicates a complex historical phenomenon of a cult of the nude goddess which had come into prominence in the early centuries of the Christian era, spread over a fairly extensive geographical area and become popular to an extent that it affected the higher religious traditions and was gradually being absorbed by them. Naturally such a phenomenon cannot be adequately explained on the basis of a general assumption, of the type made by Fraser,

131 Fraser (ed.), op.cit., The Many Faces of Primitive Art, pp.36-7.
132 Ibid., p.46.
133 For possible explanations of the headless forms of the Indian figures, see below, pp.310-1.
that the motif probably originated in the Near East in neolithic times and gradually diffused in the other regions of the world. Whether or not Lévy was right in ascribing an Egyptian origin to the motif of the goddess baring herself and imagining the Hellenistic Baubo as an imitation of the same, his idea of its proliferation to distant regions in relatively recent times would appear to suit at least the Indian phenomenon, even though he himself was unaware of it.

The solution to the problem of the historical origin and inspiration of the Indian figures of the nude squatting goddess is facilitated to a certain extent by the fact that the ancient specimens of the motif come, besides India, only from the Ancient Near East and the Mediterranean world. Now, the only available source of the motif in the Indian sub-continent is the solitary representation on the Harappa seal (Pl.I,2). It appears to us that the similarities between the upside down female on this seal and the figures of the nude squatting goddess of historical times do not extend far enough to suggest total identification. But even if the possibility of continuity of cognate ideas from the Indus Valley Culture is imagined, the sudden appearance of the figures of the nude goddess in the early centuries of the Christian era, and contemporary inscriptive and literary evidence suggesting her popular cult, remain inexplicable. The phenomenon strongly suggests a fresh inspiration, and therefore the need to look outside India for its adequate explanation. The historical background of the Indian figures also favours a fresh inspiration from the Roman west. As Sankalia has ably demonstrated, the specimens of the nude squatting goddess in appreciable number appear for the first time in a period when India had the closest contacts with the Roman world, and some of these were actually discovered in association with a ware which, if not itself of Roman origin, was made in imitation of it.

134 See above, p.297.
135 On the grounds that the image was apparently unknown prior to c. 1st or 2nd century A.D., Fraser also thinks that the idea does not appear to be indigenous to India; see Fraser (ed.), op.cit., The Many Faces of Primitive Art, p.46. It is interesting to note that he makes no reference to the representation on the Harappa sealing.
136 See above, pp.293-4.
As the most conspicuous representative of the goddess baring her secret parts, the Classical Baubo could well be the inspiration behind the Indian figures, but, from what we have seen of the obscurity surrounding her name, it would be impossible to assert it with confidence. In any case, whatever may be the origin and early history of the Goddess baring herself in the Near Eastern or the Mediterranean world, and whatever different forms it may have taken in later times, it seems to us safe to assume that it was a popular religious motif during the Roman period when a large number of figures of "Baubo-type" are said to appear in Egypt, and it could have been introduced into India by the Romans in the early centuries of the Christian era.

Murray has noted a few details about the "Baubo-type" figures of Roman Egypt which seem to be significant also in the context of their Indian counterparts. She informs us that these figures, where adequate records exist, were discovered in houses, usually in the inner, i.e., the women's apartments, indicating that these were for the use of women. Again, while citing the Sheila-na-gigs of the British Isles as the later examples of the ancient "Baubo-type", the same author informs us that Romsey Abbey, which contains one such figure, was a nunnery and one of the most important religious houses of the Norman period in the south of England, and since, in the Middle Ages, young girls of good position were brought up in these institutions and at puberty left them to be married, the Sheila-na-gigs on the wall might suggest that the bride may have been prepared for marriage in the convent. She also quotes a modern incident to the effect that when one such figure was removed from the tower of St Michael's Church at Oxford, a local newspaper published the information that brides on their way to the Church for their weddings were made to look at the figure. She thus concludes that Baubo seems to have been a goddess for women only, like Bona Dea, from whose rites men were excluded.
Although the Indian evidence is even more slight in this respect, it is significant that in the case of the only figure with a dedicatory inscription, viz. the marble image from Nagarjunikonda, a queen appears as the worshipper of the goddess.\footnote{142} Chapgar's report about the Siddan Kotte figure also indicates that the nude goddess was essentially a goddess of women.\footnote{143} This parallelism incidentally suggests another argument in favour of a possible foreign inspiration of the Indian goddess. According to the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, pretty girls were sent as articles of merchandise from Alexandria to India.\footnote{144} Weber had used this argument to suggest possible Hellenistic influence in the concept of the Indian god of love, Kâma, whose makara-dhvaja brings him so close to the dolphin-banneered Eros.\footnote{145} We feel that the evidence of the Periplus is even more apt in the context of the introduction of the nude squatting goddess in India. It is easy to imagine that the girls imported into India from Alexandria brought with them their favourite deities.

There is absolutely no question about the local origin of the figures of the goddess found in India. This is clearly reflected in the technique, art-style and ornaments. Even when her inspiration appears to have been introduced from the Roman west, the nude goddess seems to have very soon acquired a characteristic Indian form. It must first be noted that all the figures of the Indian goddess belong to Murray's "Baubo-Phryne" type.\footnote{146} There is no specimen from India in which the legs are horizontal, the knees bent and the feet turned inward, a posture which according to Murray is the most usual in the Roman figures.\footnote{147} Similarly, the hands in India, where they can be clearly seen, are always raised upwards. They are never held forward as in invitation, and there is absolutely no

\footnote{142} See above, pp.280-1.
\footnote{143} See above, p.279.
\footnote{144} The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, tr. Schoff, para 49, p.42.
\footnote{145} Weber, "On the History of Religion in India - A Brief Review" (translated into English from the author's original German), JAI., July 1901, p.283.
\footnote{146} JRAI., LXIV, p.95.
\footnote{147} Ibid.
indication, explicit or in the form of arms-akimbo, that they are laid on the inner thighs to stretch the legs apart and emphasize the pudenda.  

It is difficult to say what was the real meaning of the upraised hands in the eyes of the worshippers of the goddess, especially when they hold no attributes. They certainly cannot be understood as in an attitude of supplication or prayer, for that would be incongruous in the context of a cult-goddess, although, outside such a context, the upraised hands would normally indicate supplication. Murray's use of the expression for Baubo-type figures thus could only be regarded as valid for a description of the visual form of the figures. If the figures from Egypt etc. of the Roman period were unmistakably identified as Baubo, perhaps the myth of her peculiar service to Demeter could provide some explanation of the raised hands. Considering, however, the possibility that the myth of Baubo and Baubo herself, as well as other cognate concepts of the Greco-Roman world, were developments of an ancient motif of the Mother-Goddess baring herself, we feel that the best explanation of the upraised hands and the entire attitude of the figures would be to understand them as the depiction of the birth-giving Mother-Goddess. In the context of the Indian figures at least, this is likely to be the central idea.

148 Cf. ibid. The only figures in which the knees are bent, the feet turned inward and the hands placed on the inner thighs to stretch the legs apart and emphasize the pudenda are the late mediaeval ones of the type illustrated by Maury. But these, as already noted (see above, p.281, fn.43), do not appear to us to be representations of the nude squatting goddess.

149 In the Semitic tradition, and possibly in the western religious tradition in general, the attitude of the upraised hands, as in the Baubo-Phryne type of figures, is one of the well known attitudes of prayer or supplication, or expression of humility before the deity. In India, already in the Rg-veda, VI,16,46, utāna-hasta is used of a man praying to Agni. But the typical Indian form of prayer and supplication, as seen in early Indian relief carvings and modern usage, is the raising of the two hands, folded together, and the open palms pressing each other.

150 JRAI., XLIV, p.95; cf. fn.149 above.

The absence of the head and face in the majority of the Indian figures is paralleled to a certain extent by the terracotta figures of Baubo from Priene, which are without torso and for whom, owing to the depiction of a human face on the belly, Picard uses the word "gastro-cephalic". But the Indian figures form a class by themselves and are thoroughly imbued with Indianness. The most effective device used to obliterate the head and face is by substituting a fully-blossomed lotus in their place. The best and artistically the most satisfying example of this is, of course, the Alampur figure of the 8th century A.D. (Pl.III), but it is already seen in the Bājā terracotta of the Kuśāṇa period (Pl.I,1). The alternative device, as far as can be guessed from the poorly preserved specimens, seems to be the complete omission of the head and neck and the rounding off of the torso to give it the appearance of an elongated stūpa or lingam (Pls.IV,2, V,1-3 and VIII). Perhaps the necessary requirement was the concealing of the face, and no Buddhist or Śivaite meaning need to be read in such forms. But it must be admitted, with Krairisch, that the introduction of the lotus does appear to infuse the figures with a new meaning and significance.

It is difficult to be certain of the reason for the absence of the head and face of the goddess. Despite the Priene figures, there is nothing in the Orphic myth of Baubo or in the earlier history of the goddess, whether derived from the motif of an ancient Mediterranean goddess baring herself or from Hathor, Bebt or other similar concepts from Egypt, to suggest this requirement. It is possible that, at least in India, the hesitation to portray the face is to be understood partially in the light of the blatant immodesty of the figures. The Matsya Purāṇa episode, as we have seen, implies such disapproval. Sankalia, therefore, may be right in suggesting that the modern name Lejjā Gaurī of the Siddan Kotte

---
152 See above, p.299.
153 Picard understands the headless Priene figures in the context of the class of headless spirits; see RHR., 95, 1927, pp.249 ff.
154 See above, p.289.
goddess, as reported by Chapgar, is really a euphemism and simply means a "shameless woman".  

In the present state of our knowledge, the history of the nude goddess in India seems to have been confined roughly to the first eight centuries of the Christian era. But Codrington has noted that her type survives in certain late forms of Kāli and Cāmunda, which are largely identical figures in myth if not in iconography. A form of Cāndikā, which is characterized as Rudra-Cārīkā or Rudra-Cāmunda, is also described in the Agni Purāṇa as Ārdha-pādā, but it may not mean the characteristic pose of the nude squatting goddess since the immediately following verse seems to understand it as a dancing posture. It is interesting to note, however, that Cāmunda is a late entrant into the circle of brahmanical goddesses. She is unknown to the epics and seems to be referred to for the first time in the Mālatīmadhava of Bhavabhūti and the Devī-Mahātmya section of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa. According to the latter, Kāli obtained this appellation after killing the demons Cāndya and Munda. Later she is generally

155 Art. As., XXIII, p. 121.
156 Codrington, op. cit., Man. XXXV, 1935, p. 66; cf. a bronze figure of Kāli belonging to the Cola period illustrated in Basham, The Wonder that was India, pl. LXX. Codrington also relates the squatting posture to the caryatid-friezes of dwarfs (Kicakes, Gaṇas) as at Bharhut, and later at Badami and Ellora, but we feel this parallelism is of no special significance for the basic iconographic form of the goddess.
159 The Act V of Mālatīmadhava introduces this goddess and her temple in the city of Padmavatī and refers to the attempt by her votaries to offer a human sacrifice there.
160 Mar. P., 84.25-6; ibid., tr. Pargiter, 87.24-5, p. 500; see also above, Ch. III, p. 190, fn. 250.
included as the last of the Mātrīs in the traditional group of the Sapta-mātrīkās, and represented along with them in the sculptured panels on the walls of the mediaeval shrines. Since, in myth as well as iconography, Cāmuṇḍā is the dreaded goddess of death and destruction, a comparison is easily suggested with the equally dreaded Hekate who was identified with Baubo. No philological equation, however, can be established between Hekate - Heqt and Cāmuṇḍā to indicate a foreign origin of the latter.

The brass image from Rajasthan, which according to Sisodia derives its form from the earlier figures of the nude squatting goddess in India, should provide another instance of survival of the iconographic form of the latter. But it appears to us to be doubtful. If Sisodia's identification of the image as a Digambara Jain icon, representing Trīśalā - the mother of Mahāvīra, is correct, as also his suggestion that it may have been intended to be put on a swing, both the nudity and the position of hands and legs become intelligible without reference to the figures of the nude goddess.

There is a greater possibility that the form of the nude goddess survives in the mediaeval figure called Chinnamastā. Chinnamastā was one of the ten Mahāvidyās of the Tantric Hinduism who were especially venerated by the Sāktas of Bengal. The iconographic form of this goddess resembles a form of the Buddhist Tantric deity Vajrayogini, and Bhattacharya believed that she was originally Buddhist and later borrowed in the Hindu pantheon. As conceived by the Hindu and Buddhist Tantrics,

---

161 See above, Ch.III, pp.153-4, 185, etc.
162 See above, p.297.
163 See above, pp.290-1 and fn.74.
164 EW., n.s., 19, nos.3-4, p.410.
165 See Banerjea, DHI, p.560, fn.1.
166 Ibid.
167 Bhattacharya, The Indian Buddhist Iconography, pp.1, 247.
168 For the following description of the form of the goddess Chinnamastā-Vajrayogini, see ibid., pp.247-8; Chakravarti, Tantras: Studies on their
Chinnamastā, or the headless Vajrayogini, is a fierce goddess carrying in the right hand the weapon with which she has decapitated herself and in the left her own severed head with its gaping mouth and sticking-out tongue. She is nude, with dishevelled hair, and wears a garland of human heads around her neck. On the two sides, she is attended by two female figures who are also nude and who are said to drink the blood gushing out of the severed neck of the goddess. These attendants are called Ṛkīnī and Varṣīnī in Hindu Tantrism, and Vajravairocanī and Vajravarṇanī in Buddhist.

It will be seen that the nudity and the severed head of the Tantric goddess have clear parallelisms with the "headless" forms of the nude squatting goddess, but the former has very different positions of hands and legs. Her left hand carrying her own head is raised up while the right is placed below. Moreover she does not have a squatting posture but assumes a form which should be best described as virāsana, with the right leg stretched forward and the left bent. In this form, she is said to stand on Rāti and Kāma who are in an attitude of sexual embrace.

The goddess Chinnamastā-Vajrayogini has evidently a complex iconographic form made up of diverse elements, but, since she is the only well known example of a nude goddess without the head, a continuity of ideas with the nude squatting goddess is easily suggested. In fact, it is not improbable that she stands in a relatively direct line of continuity with the nude goddess of our investigation, who, with the passage of time and in the process of absorption, took on a characteristically Tantric form. While her nudity and headless form were retained, both the elements were interpreted in the light of the presumed fierce nature of the goddess. She was thus conceived of as decapitating herself and riding the sexual pair, Kāma and Rāti, in a sprinting posture.

Since the evidence of the cult of the nude goddess is mainly confined to figures in terracotta and stone, and since our knowledge of the beliefs associated with the cult and its ideological basis are mostly hypothetical, it has been possible to speak of continuity only in terms of survivals of iconographic forms. Some aspects of the beliefs and rites associated with the cult may also have survived in later history, but the nature of our
evidence limits any speculation about them. It is not possible to say, for example, whether the worship of the female sex in the Tantric traditions, in the form of diagrams or in the live symbol of a nude woman in the so-called Cakra-pūja,\(^{169}\) has any relationship with the cult of the nude squatting goddess, even though an analogy is easily suggested. Tantrism itself is such a complex phenomenon of Indian religious history, and its origins are so obscure,\(^{170}\) that any inference in this regard might be hazardous. However, keeping in mind the obvious parallelism, and the possibility, as suggested earlier, that folk cults of goddesses may have formed the nucleus of Tantrism,\(^{171}\) it is not impossible that the cult of the nude squatting goddess has some meeting points with the beliefs and rites of the Tantric religion.

\(^{169}\) For the Tantric diagrams (Yantras) as the symbol of the sexual principles, see Zimmer, Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, pp.137-48. For the Tantric Cakra-pūja, see Bhandarkar, Vaishnavism, Saivism, etc., pp.146-7; Farquhar, An Outline of the Religious Literature of India, p.203; Payne, The Sāktas, pp.15 ff.; Kane, HD., V, pt.II, pp.1089-90; see also Zimmer, The Art of Indian Asia, I, p.220; Chakravarti, The Tantras: Studies on their Religion and Literature, p.81.

\(^{170}\) Cf. Renou, Religions of Ancient India, pp.84 ff., esp.87-8.

\(^{171}\) See above, Ch.III, p.249.
Describing the appearance of various evil omens in the enemies' camp when Harṣa got ready for his march of conquest, the Harsacarita of Banaḥhaṭṭa refers to a certain Koṭavī, moving around all day long in the parks, shaking her index finger as if counting the dead. The commentator Śaṅkara understands her as nāgā stri, "naked woman", and in the same sense the word is listed in the Sanskrit lexicons.

It is obvious that Koṭavī was not entirely an obscure figure. Her form and function must have been well understood in the time of Bana even though neither the statement in the Harsacarita nor its explanation by the commentator attribute any divinity to her. There are sufficient indications, however, that Koṭavī was one of the popular goddesses in northern India in our period, and, in all probability, is to be connected to the ancient south Indian goddess Korravai.

V.S. Agrawala seems to have been the first to point out the importance of Koṭavī in the religious life of northern India and the connection between Koṭavī of Harsacarita and the south Indian goddess Korravai. Agrawala identified as Koṭavī about a dozen terracotta figurines from Ahicchatra (Dist. Bareilly, U.P.), four of which are datable between A.D. 450 and 650, showing "a nude woman either moving with a

---

1 Harsacarita (ed. Kane), 6th Ucchvāsa, p.52: gaṇayantaṁ gatayus-tarjanataraśāya tarjanaṁ divasamāṭa vāṭakeṣu koṭavī.
See also, ibid., tr. Cowell & Thomas, p.195.


3 See below, p.326

4 See below, pp.327ff. The transliteration of Tamil words in this chapter generally follows the system adopted in the Tamil Lexicon, but exceptions have been made in the case of words like Tamil, Sangam, Paṇḍya, which are either often rendered without the transliteration marks or for which a different system of transliteration has become popular.

bent body in a dishevelled and disconsolate posture, or simply standing, with right hand drawn parallel to the body and the left akimbo." He also pointed to two local traditions in modern India; firstly, the existence of a shrine of the goddess Koṭamāī in the vicinity of Banaras Hindu University (Dist. Varanasi, U.P.), and, secondly, a local tradition in the Almorah district (U.P.), where a place named Koṭalagarh is believed to have been a stronghold of "Koṭṭavī". The latter, according to the local belief, was regarded as the mother of the demon Bāṇa (Bānāsura), and was conceived of as having the upper half of her body covered with a shield (kavaca) while the lower half was always bare. As the tradition is recorded, when Bāṇa, the son of Bali, was once engaged in battle with Viṣṇu, the demon host, as soon as they were killed, were immediately replaced by the same number of fresh demons, and it was only when, by the gods' efforts, Mahākāli was born that Koṭṭavī as well as the demons were destroyed by her. On this rather slender evidence, Agrawala came to the conclusion that the worship of Koṭavī may even now be much more widely spread over the whole of North India than at first appears. He believed that the South Indian goddess may have been incorporated into the Hindu pantheon by the early Gupta period, "at any rate sometime before Bāṇabhāṭṭa", but the role assigned to her was inauspicious. The Ahicchatra figurines, according to him, probably served an apotropaic purpose and may have been used as "offerings to ward off coming evil and ill-luck".

Whether or not the Ahicchatra figurines portray Koṭavī, enough evidence is available to prove Agrawala's conjecture about the popularity of this goddess. It would also appear that the modern tradition about

6 AI., 4, p.151.
7 Harṣacarita - Eka Sāṁskṛtika Adhyayana, p.134, fn.4.
8 Ibid. The tradition about Koṭalagarh is cited by Agrawala from Amrita Bazar Patrika, 15th May 1952, Hill Supplement, p.3.
9 Harṣacarita - Eka Sāṁskṛtika Adhyayana, p.134, fn.4.
10 AI., 4, p.151.
11 Ibid.
Koṭalagarh is substantially based on old Purānic myths, and that a goddess named Koṭāvi, Koṭarī or Koṭarā, malevolent in nature and connected with the battlefield, was already a popular figure in northern India in the Gupta period and probably still earlier.

The Mahābhārata includes Koṭarā in a long list of Mātrīs in the entourage of Skanda-Kārttikeya, and, in the same place, the so-called Mothers are portrayed as divinities of markedly malevolent nature. In the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, in the story of the destruction of the child-ogress Putanā by Kṛṣṇa, Koṭarā is counted along with Ṭākinīs, Kūśmāṇḍas, Mātrīs, Piśācas, Yakṣas, Rākṣasas, Revati, Jyeṣṭhā, etc., as an evil being, protection from whom is obtained by the performance of a certain apotropaic ritual which involved the recitation of the names of Viṣṇu.

Koṭāvi, Koṭarī or Koṭarā, also appears in an important myth recorded in the Viṣṇuite Purāṇas like the Viṣṇu and Bhāgavata as well as in the Harivamśa. All three texts describe in considerable detail the love of Aniruddha for Uṣā - the daughter of Bānasura, the secret union of the two by the magical means devised by Uṣā's maid Citralekha, the discovery of this secret and the arrest of Aniruddha by the enraged demon-king, and the eventual fight of Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu with Bānasura to secure the release of his grandson. In each version of the story, when Viṣṇu is getting ready to hurl his dreaded discus at the demon, Koṭāvi appears naked in the battlefield to protect the latter. The nudity of Koṭāvi is specifically noted and sometimes her dishevelled hair, and it is also generally pointed out that Viṣṇu had to close his eyes or turn his face away to be spared from her immodesty.

---

12 Ṝbh., IX.45.17.
13 Ṛbh., IX.45.30-40; see also above, Ch.III, pp.168, 174.
15 Vi. P., V.32-3; Ṛbha. P., X.62-3; Ḥv., ch.112.
16 Vi. P., V.33.36-7.
There is a noticeable development in the myth as recorded in the three texts. At least as far as Koṭavī, Koṭarī or Koṭarā is concerned, the Viṣṇu Purāṇa seems to preserve the simpler and more original account, referring to her encounter with Kṛṣṇa briefly, without embellishment. Also it establishes no clear relationship between her and Bāṇa. Koṭarī is only qualified here by the epithet daitya-vidyā, literally, "the (magical) lore of the demons", and is probably to be understood as the tutelary deity of the demons. The reference in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa is equally brief, but there Koṭarā is the mother of Bāṇa, interceding for the protection of her son, and her form, when she appears before Kṛṣṇa, is further qualified by mukta-sīrorūha, "with dishvelled hair". The story in the Harivamsa is the most developed of the three. Not only is considerable space devoted in the text to the Uṣā-Aniruddha episode and the accompanying Bāṇa-Kṛṣṇa battle, but also Koṭavī makes her

16 contd

Bha.P., X,63,20-1:
Tanmātā koṭārā nāma nagna muktasīroruḥā,
Purovātasthe kṛṣṇasya putrapraṇgarirakṣayā. 20
Tatāstiryāmukho nagnāmanirīkṣan gadāgraññā,
Bāṅsaś ca tāvad virathaścinnadhānviśat purām. 21

Hr., 112.97-101:
Cakrodyatkaranā dṛṣṭvā bhagavantaḥ raṇājire,
Pramukhe vāsudevasya digvāsāḥ koṭavī sthitā. 97
Arthānāmupāgamyā tyaktvā sa vasasi punah,
Parītāṇyā bāṇasya vijayādiṣṭhitā tataḥ,
Bhūyaḥ sāmarṣātmakṣa vivastrāvasthitā raṇe. 98
Bāṅsānraṁkarṣapara vākyametaduvāca ha,
Nārāhase deva hantuṁ vai bāṅsāmabhyamāma raṇe. 99
Tataḥ kruddho mahābāḥūḥ kṛṣṇah praharataṁ varaḥ,
Provāca bāṅaṁ samare bhāmasyaścakramuttamam. 100
Yudhyatāṁ yudhyatāṁ samkhye bhavatāṁ koṭavī sthitā,
Āsaktēṇāṁva raṇe dhīgbāṇa tava puruṣam. 101

17 Vi.P., V.33.36, quoted above, fn.16; ibid., tr. Wilson, p.468. Wilson, without warrant in the text, also qualifies Koṭavī as "the mystical goddess"; ibid. It may be noted that while the Gītā Press edition of the text, which is here used, reads the name of the goddess as Koṭari, the text on which Wilson based his translation seems to have read Koṭavī.


19 The entire episode of the Bāṇa-Kṛṣṇa fight, however, appears in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa in a developed form, with greater detail.

20 Bha.P., X,63,20, quoted above, fn.16.
characteristic appearance more than once. It even adds Kṛṣṇa's verbal disapproval of her nakedness and a satirical comment on Bāṇa for seeking her aid.

As presented in the Harivamśa, before the engagement of Bāṇa and Kṛṣṇa in battle, Kārttikeya is portrayed as fighting the latter on behalf of the demon-king. Just as in the Bāṇa episode, which is to come later, when Kṛṣṇa is getting ready to hurl his discus, the naked Koṭavī appears to save Kārttikeya. Kṛṣṇa rebukes her for her immodesty and asks her to leave the battlefield. The reappearance of Koṭavī for the sake of Bāṇa is noted by Kṛṣṇa and again a conversation is recorded between the two. It is said that Koṭavī requested Kṛṣṇa to spare the life of the demon-king, and Kṛṣṇa, greatly enraged, turned to Bāṇa and severely chided him for his unmanly conduct in repeatedly seeking the aid of Koṭavī. Koṭavī is here called Bāṇa-samrakṣana-pārā and some color has been added to her appearance by describing her as sāmara-sāmara. There is also more than usual emphasis on her nudity.

---

21 Hv., 112.33 ff.
22 Ibid., 112.49:
   Vyavidhyamāne cakre tu kṛṣṇenāmitatejasā,
   Tam dṛṣṭvā pramukhe taśyā vyatiṣṭhata ca kauṭavī,
   Apagacchāpagaccha tvam dhigdhigityeva so'bravit.
23 This is clearly implied in Kṛṣṇa's satirical comment on Bāṇa; see Hv., 112.101, quoted above, fn.16.
24 Hv., 112.99-101; see above, fn.16.
25 Ibid., 112.99.
26 Ibid., 112.98.
27 The nakedness of Koṭavī is not only expressed by the use of epithets like digvaśaḥ and vivastraḥ, but she is also described, somewhat incongruously, as disappearing and returning again after divesting herself of her clothes; Hv., 112.97-8; see above, fn.16. It is also accentuated by Kṛṣṇa's vehement disapproval, about which the Viṣṇu and the Bhagavata Purāṇa are silent.
The myth of the battle between Bāṇa and Kṛṣṇa, inasmuch as it aligns Siva, Kārttikeya, etc., with the demon-king, has all the materials for the incorporation of Koṭavī into the Śivaite pantheon, but none of the three versions of the story specifically state that Koṭavī is identical with or a form of Śiva's consort. That this was a natural development, however, is fully attested by other texts. It is clear from the nature of the development of the myth in the three texts that Koṭavī - Koṭarī - Koṭarā was essentially an independent

---

28 Baṇa is portrayed as a great devotee of Śiva, for which the latter had granted him the boon of fearlessness; see Vi., V,33.43; Bhā, P., X,63.45; cf. also ibid., X,63.49; Hv., 112.110. According to the Bhagavata Purāṇa and Harivamśa, Śiva always stayed with Bāṇa for the latter's protection; Bhā, P., X,62.5; Hv., 106.6. In Hv., 106.5, Bāṇa is rudraskandasahāgayān. 29 It is interesting to note that in the large number of verses in the popular Calcutta, Bombay and Poona editions of the Harivamśa, which are regarded as apocryphal in the Critical Edition, Koṭavī not only occupies a very prominent place but also her absorption into the Śivaite pantheon is complete. To cite the Poona edition (ed. Kinjawadkar) as an instance, it is said that when Aniruddha was arrested and bound by Bāṇa, he sang a prayer to Devī Koṭavatī, at the end of which the goddess, here called the Mahādevī Durgā, appeared to grant protection to him (II,120,1-2, 35 ff.). The prayer itself begins with salutations to Caṇḍī, Kātyāyani, etc. (ibid., vv,4 ff.). Later, when Kārttikeya is in danger of being killed by Kṛṣṇa, Koṭavī is said to have appeared on the instructions of "Deva", apparently Śiva, and is specifically called "the eighth portion of Devi" (II,126.23). In the description of the Bāṇa-Kṛṣṇa fight, a much longer introduction is added to the account of the intercession of Koṭavī, in which she is said to have been deputed to her task by Rudrāṇi, on the initiative of Śiva (II,126,106 ff.). It also contains a longer dialogue between Koṭavī and Kṛṣṇa (II,126.114 ff.), where the latter addresses her as "the mother of Kārttikeya" (ibid., v,112). Further, as Bāṇa is made a son of Śiva and Pārvatī and a younger brother of Kārttikeya (II,116,16-7), and Koṭavī as the mother of Bāṇa (cf. II,126,117, 120), the identification of Koṭavī with Śiva's consort is easily suggested.

Since Koṭavī is sometimes also called Lambā or Lambamānā in the popular Poona edition of the Harivamśa (II,126,23, 108-9), it may be regarded as a measure of her popularity that Lambā appears in the list of the ferocious Mātris in the Mahābhārata (IX,45,17), Matsya (179,23, 30) and the Viṣṇu-dharmottara Purāṇa (I,226,21, 29). In the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka, XXI (SBE., XXI, pp,373 ff.), she is called an ogress (rañkāṣī).

30 See below, pp,323 ff., 327.
It is not certain whether she was first related to Bāpasura as his mother and then, when the demon-king was affiliated to the Śivaite circle, became a form of Śiva's spouse, or that the two were the simultaneous results of a single process of myth-making. Both possibilities have to be conceded. In fact, since Śivaism is well known to have absorbed many unbrahmanical and demoniacal features in its fold, it is even possible that an independent goddess Koṭavī was first absorbed into the Śivaite circle, whence she was conceived as the mother of Bāpa, although this appears less likely. In any case, the myth clearly establishes the weird demoniacal nature of this goddess and seems to explain the peculiar statement in the Ṣarasarita as well as the modern tradition about Koṭalagarh in Almorah district.

In the various versions of the Purānic myth analysed above, Koṭavī is connected with the battleground, even though she herself does not engage in battle. Constant stress on her nudity, and, it would appear, sometimes also on her dishevelled hair, seem to have the ring almost of an iconographic prescription, but until her images are indubitably identified, it would be impossible to be certain of it. The figures from Ahicchatra may or may not represent Koṭavī. The "emphatic nudity" of the terracottas is by itself too slender a ground to make a definite identification. The same may be said of the so-called "dishevelled and disconsolate posture" of the figures. As for the pointing index finger of Koṭavī, it is attested only in the Ṣarasarita, and there again apparently as an incidental gesture on her part rather than an inalienable characteristic of possible iconographic significance.

The evidence collected above from the epic and Purānic literature is enough to testify to a popular belief in the demoniacal figure variously called Koṭavī, Koṭarī or Koṭarī. The fact that no iconographic text describes her image may be understood as further indication that she was essentially a goddess of the common people. In fact there are definite indications that Koṭavī was not only a mythical figure but that she had her own shrines and sacred places, and possibly festivals were periodically held in her honour.

---

31 See above, pp.315-6.
32 See above, p.315.
Perhaps the earliest reference to the cult of Koṭavī comes from the Jain canonical literature. Nāyadharmakahā refers to a Koṭṭakiriyā-maha, i.e., a festival in honour of the goddess Koṭṭakiriyā (skt. Koṭṭakriyā), which, in all probability, is another variant of the name of Koṭavī. The commentator Abhayadeva Sūri equates Koṭṭakiriyā with Durgā riding a buffalo. The date of the Jain canonical literature is uncertain, but, on the whole, many texts incorporated in it, including Nāyadhama-kahā, give impressions of great antiquity and have been utilized to reconstruct the earliest state of the Jain teachings as well as the life in India in the centuries before the Christian era. In any case, if the identification of Koṭṭakiriyā with Koṭavī is correct, which is highly probable, a popular cult of this goddess can be safely presumed in parts of North India in the early centuries of the Christian era, if not before.


34 Cf. Agrawala, Prācīna Bhāratiya Lokadhrama, p.7.

35 Nāyadharmakahā-ṭīkā, 8, p.138a, as quoted by Jain, op.cit., p.225 and fn.261. According to Pāṁśu-Saddha-Mahāppa, Koṭṭakiriyā is referred to in Aṇugadārassutta and was the name of a fierce goddess like Durgā; the same Dictionary also lists Koṭṭa as a name of Gaurī-Parvati; see ibid., p.262.


37 The two representative examples would be Schubring, The Doctrine of the Jainas, and Jain, op.cit.. Schubring gives the summary of the contents of Nāyadharmakahāō in op.cit., pp.89 ff..

38 According to Agrawala, the maha referred to in the Jain text may be connected with the navarātra festival of the goddess Durgā observed in the bright half of the month of Āśvina, because it is sometimes called Śabarotsava and appears to have been originally of a gruesome nature; see Prācīna Bhāratiya Lokadhrama, pp.114-5. For a brief description of Śabarotsava, see Kane, HD., V, pt.I, pp.176-7.
The *Matsya Purāṇa* also has interesting information about the Koṭavī-cult. In the context of a description of the family of Pītrs, it records a discourse between Sati, who had mounted the funeral pyre to consume herself, and her father Dakṣa, grown sad on that account as well as owing to her foretelling the destruction of his sacrifice and himself at the hands of her husband. Addressed by her father as "Mother of the Universe" and begged not to forsake him, Sati advised him to practise penance at her own sacred places after his sacrifice was destroyed, and went on to enumerate her different names and forms in which he would find her. In this context she instructs that she would be known as Koṭavī in Koṭitīrtha. Since the names enumerated are specifically counted in the text to be one hundred and eight, the list should be regarded as traditional and arbitrarily compiled, and, therefore, of little historical value. Any relationship between the goddess Koṭavī and Koṭitīrtha also appears imaginary, since several Koṭitīrthas are known from the epic and Purānic literature but nowhere is any relationship established between them and the goddess Koṭavī, except in the above-mentioned verse of the *Matsya Purāṇa* and in exactly similar verses in some other Purāṇas where also the one hundred and eight names and sacred places of Devī are recounted. Nevertheless, the statement in


40 Ibid., 13.37:

koṭavī koṭitīrthe tu.

41 Ibid., 13.54.

42 See Hazra, *Studies in the Purānic Records*, etc., p.45, where he regards the verses 13.10 ff. of the *Matsya Purāṇa* as late interpolation by the Sāktas; cf. also Sircar, D.C., "The Sākta Piṭhas", *JRASBL*, XIV, no.1, 1948, pp.24 ff., where the development of the Sākta tradition of 108 names of the Goddess is traced, and the portion of the *Matsya Purāṇa* where it is found is assigned to the "early mediaeval period".

43 *Mbh.*, III,80,68; 81,14, 171; 82,23-4, 68; 83,58; also in *Mat.P.*, 106,44; 191,7-13, 55-7; see also Dikshitār, *Purāṇa Index*, I, s.v. Koṭitīrtham.

44 The same text about the 108 names of the Goddess is found in the *Padma Purāṇa*, Skanda Purāṇa and Devībhāgavata; see Hazra, *Studies in the Purānic Records*, etc., p.45, and Sircar, op.cit., *JRASBL*, XIV, 1948, p.25. See below, fn.45, for another mention of Koṭavī in the list of the Piṭhas.
the *Matsya Purāṇa* provides some evidence for the existence of the cult of the goddess Koṭāvī, and attempts at absorption of it into the cult of the Great Goddess.\(^{45}\)

Similar conclusions can be drawn from another significant reference in the *Matsya Purāṇa*. It describes a *Saubhāgya-sāyana-vrata*,\(^{46}\) "the giver of all bliss", which was celebrated mainly in honour of Sati and in which the divine couple, Siva and Parvati, was to be worshipped on the third day of the lunar fortnight of the month of Caitra - the day when they were supposed to have been united. In the detailed description of the ritual, rules are laid down for the worship of different parts of the bodies of the two deities, and, in that context, it is said that the abdomen of the Goddess should be worshipped by uttering: Koṭāvī namaḥ,

\(^{45}\) It is interesting to note that the name of Koṭāvī in slightly varying forms is persistent in the list of the Pithas. The first Pitha or seat of the Goddess to be named in the late medieval *Pīṭhanirṇaya* (17th - 18th century A.D.; see JRASBL., XIV, 1948, pp.3, 23-4), regarded as a section of the *Tantracudāmani*, is Hīṅgulā and the form of the goddess associated with it is called Koṭārī. In the probable original of the *Pīṭhanirṇaya* as reconstructed by Sircar, the verse reads (ibid., p.59, v.4b-5a):

> Brahmarandreśā hīṅgulāḥbhyaṁ thairavo bhīmalocanah,
> Koṭārī sa madādevī triguṇaḥ ya digambarī.

Hīṅgulā is identified with modern Hīṅglāj in Baluchistan. A locally-worshipped goddess called Bībī Nānī is, according to Sircar, probably the same as Nānī of the Kuśāṇa coins.

The tradition of the Pithas may be regarded as evidence of the wide proliferation of the Sakti-cult. Also, some names and forms of the Goddess localized in a place may be found to be based on historical facts (cf. Banerjea, J.N., "Identification of Some Ancient Indian Place-Names", *JHQP.*, XIV, 1938, pp.731 ff.; Sircar, JRASBL., XIV, 1948, pp.8 ff.). But this has to be separately examined for each case. Generally speaking, as far as the cult of a special form of the Goddess at a particular place is concerned, the Pitha-lists are more imaginary than real (cf. ibid., pp.22 ff., 29 ff. and 32 ff.). In the case of Koṭārī - Koṭāvī, there is no independent evidence to show that she was really worshipped at Hīṅglāj. But, notwithstanding such a want of confirmation, Koṭāvī's inclusion as a form of Devī in the list of the Pithas speaks of the popularity of the goddess and her inclusion in the Sakti cult.

\(^{46}\) *Mat.P.*, 60. Even this chapter, along with several similar ones incorporating Sārīti material on vrata etc., is regarded as a relatively late introduction into the *Purāṇa*; see Hazra, *Studies in the Purānic Records*, etc., pp.37 ff., esp.39. This, however, does not affect our main argument.
Salutations to (the goddess) Kotavi. Many of the names of the Goddess used here, e.g., Jayā, Bhavāni, Gaurī, Varadā, Tā, Iśānī, Maṅgalā, Rudrāṇī, Kālānapriyā, Sūrahā-Svadā, Candrāmukhapriyā, Lalitā, Vāsavi, Bhūmograsama-rūpīṇī, are either quite familiar or are easily understandable of the Great Goddess in the light of her general nature as well as of her relationship with Śiva. Kotavi is probably the only unfamiliar name, not so easily intelligible. It is obvious that she was an independent popular goddess of appreciable following, for which reason she was sought to be identified with Devī.

Although no certain identification of an image of the goddess Kotavi exists, there appears to be at least one significant historical evidence of the existence of her shrine in the Gujarat-Kathiawad region in the 6th-7th century A.D. A Valabhi copper-plate grant, found at Bhamodra-Mohota near Bhaunagar and dated in the (Valabhi) year 320 (= 639-40 A.D.), records that Mahārāja Dronasiṃha, for the increase of the religious merit of his parents, instituted some kind of a grant for the goddess "Kotṭamahikā-devī" who was established in the svatala of Trisāṅgamaka, and, as the grant had been interrupted for some reason, Mahārāja Dhruvasena II reconfirmed it for regular worship in the temple of the goddess, for any needed repairs, and possibly for the livelihood of the officiating priest or wandering mendicants staying in the temple. There is little doubt that this reference is again to the same goddess and Kotṭamahikā is another variant of the name Kotāvī - Koṭarī - Koṭarū. Jackson, who edited the grant, also added the information that "a temple of Koṭṭarī-devī appears to be still in existence at Tarsamiā", in Hathāb district, with which

47 Maṭ. P., 60,20: kukṣidvayam ca koṭavyai ....

48 It is tempting to think that the ritual proscription of uttering Koṭavyai namāḥ while worshipping the abdomen of the Goddess is inspired by the nudity of Koṭavī. But it may also suggest that Koṭavī was essentially a fertility goddess; see below, p.335.

49 Jackson, A.M.T., "Two New Valabhi Copper-plates", II - Grant of Dhruvasena II, JBIBRAS., XX, 1897-1900, pp.6 ff.

50 Ibid., p.7. Jackson does not note anything about the image enshrined.
the ancient Trisāngamakā is identified.\footnote{51} Koṭṭamahikā appears in this record as an independent, popular goddess, and the only indication of a Śivaite affiliation may be a triśūla- mark that follows the last word of the grant\footnote{52} and the fact that the two donor kings are known to have been devotees of Śiva.\footnote{53}

The above investigation makes it certain that Koṭavī, recorded variants of whose names are Koṭṭavī, Kauṭavī, Koṭarī, Koṭārī, Koṭṭakirīyā and Koṭṭamahikā, was an independent popular goddess in North India in the early centuries of the Christian era. She was principally conceived of as of demoniacal nature and, as many similar deities were absorbed into Śivaism, she too was identified with Durgā-Parvati as the consort of Śiva. Nudity, dishevelled hair and a marked malevolence must be imagined as the essential characteristics of this goddess. This is not only apparent from the evidence collected above but also because the Sanskrit lexicons, though often aware of Koṭavī as a goddess and a form of Durgā-Śambhā-Śakā, uniformly preserve a very strong tradition of her name simply standing for a naked, forlorn and inauspicious woman. Thus Amarakośa has: stri nagnikā koṭavī syāt,\footnote{54} and the same meaning is repeated in its commentaries.\footnote{55} Similar examples are collected in the Śabdakalpadruma from the Śabdaratnavali and from Jatadhara.\footnote{56} Hemacandra's Abhidhanacintāmani also has: nagnā tu koṭavī, on which the commentary elaborates: nagnā vivastrā yośid muktakesītyāgunaḥ, koṭena lajjāvaśād yātī koṭavī, i.e., "an undraped woman moving about with dishevelled hair and oppressed with deep shame".\footnote{57} A good literary use of the word Koṭavī in

\footnote{51} Ibid., p.2.
\footnote{52} Ibid., p.10, note.
\footnote{53} Ibid., p.4, and p.9: line 13 of the grant under reference. Sankalia imagines that Koṭṭamahikā may have been a local goddess or a form of Śiva's wife; see Sankalia, Archaeology of Gujarat, p.218.
\footnote{54} AK. (NSP. edn.), p.98, 1.1107.
\footnote{55} See ibid., commentary, and ŠKDr., II, p.201, s.v. Koṭavī.
\footnote{56} ŠKDr., II, p.202, s.v. Koṭṭavī.
\footnote{57} Abhidhanacintāmani, III. 98, and commentary, as quoted by Agrawala, Al., 4, p.151 and fn.2.
the sense of a naked woman comes from the Rajatarangini of Kalhana, where a cruel parricide king Unmattavanti is described as: "Instigated by wretched companions, he exercised himself in the use of arms by hitting naked women in the hollow between their breasts with thrown daggers".58 As it is clear from the commentary on the Abhidhana-cintamani, cited above, the mediaeval lexicographers invented new etymologies to arrive at this meaning of Kotavi, 59

The lexicons and commentaries, however, as noted above, are also generally aware of the identification of Kotavi with Durga-Ambika-Candika. Thus a commentary on the Amarakosa identifies her with Candika, understanding the word as denoting the goddess who kills demons of a wicked nature: Kotani kutilasvabham rakgasasuradikam ritati hanti (iti kotavi). 60

Dharam identifies her with Durga, who destroyed the demon Durga, here equated with Kota.61 Similar identification is established in the Trika-bhagavata, and the Kalpadrukoṣa of Kesa enumerates Kotavi as one of the forms of Ambika.62

Agrawala's suggestion that the north Indian Kotavi is the same as Korra vai, the goddess worshipped by the ancient Tamils, is highly probable. It is not only suggested by the obvious phonetic similarities of the two names but also by the consideration of the facts that Korra vai seems to have been the earliest and most important goddess of the ancient Tamils, that she was intimately connected with the battlefield and had a pronounced

58 Rajatarangini, V, 440:
Sampreritah kusacivaih śastrābhyasaḥ ca kāra saḥ,
Pātayan kṣurikāghataiḥ koṭavistana koṭaram.
The translation quoted in the text above follows ibid., tr. Stein, I, p.231.
59 For other examples of such derivations where koṭa is equated with wickedness and shamelessness, see ŚKDr., II, p.201, s.v. Koṭari, Koṭavi. A very different etymology is suggested in Böhtlingk and Roth, SW., 2, pp.444-5, s.v. Koṭṭavā.
60 ŚKDr., II, p.201, s.v. Koṭari.
61 Ibid., s.v. Koṭavi.
63 As quoted by Agrawala, AI., 4, p.151 and fn.3.
demoniacal strain in her character, and finally that, in her later history in South India, she too was identified with Durga-Kāli and absorbed into the Sivaite pantheon. In fact, so complete is this absorption that references to Korravai in her original form even in the earliest Tamil works are relatively rare.

Korravai (pronounced Koṭṭravai) is believed to have been the dreaded goddess of the hunting, fighting tribes of the arid Pālai region—the name for the composite region of Mullai and Kurinji—which was one of the so-called five regions of the earliest Tamil grammatical text Tolkāppiyam. In this work, there is a cryptic reference to "Korravai-nilai, after the victory has been won", which is explained by the commentator Naccinārkkiniyiar in the words that after the fighting was over, the warriors went and prayed to Korravai, the goddess of victory, and on that occasion, they also gave a description of her form. In Kuruntokai, which is perhaps the earliest among the anthologies of the Sangam classics, the mention of a goddess Cūlī, "the one who holds the trident", to whom vows were made by women who prayed to her so that their husbands might achieve success in their missions and return safely, has been regarded as a reference to Korravai, although her name suggests Sanskritic-Sivaite influence. Amongst other works of the Sangam classics, in Paripatēl, and red tilaka on the forehead of a young girl is said to resemble the third eye of Korravai. In Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai, Murukan is mentioned as the son of the victorious Korravai. In Netunāḻvaṭai, where the king is

65 Kuruntokai (ed. Swaminatha Iyer), poem no.2, 1.118, p.461. See ibid., intro., p.9 about the editor's comments on the date of this collection.
68 Pattupāṭṭu, ed. Swaminatha Iyer, p.27, 1.258.
depicted as absent on a distant military campaign and the queen sad and restless on account of the separation, the elderly ladies-in-waiting pray to Korraavai, the goddess of victory, addressing her as "Mother", to grant speedy victory to the king and end the battle.\(^{69}\) In all the instances cited above, except Kuruntokai, Korraavai is referred to by name and therefore instantly recognizable, but the same goddess might be alluded to in several other places in the Sangam anthologies simply as the goddess of war and victory, as identical with the goddess of the forests, as one who performed the tunuikai dance, etc.\(^{70}\) Generally speaking, this is the type of evidence available in the Sangam literature about Korraavai. Although the date of this literature is uncertain, we will not be far wrong if we regard it as reflecting the conditions in South India in the first two or three centuries of the Christian era.\(^{71}\)

Korraavai appears prominently in the Purapporul Vengamalai - a grammatical treatise dealing with heroic themes. Even though the available text of this work is a comparatively late production - it may not be much older than c.1000 A.D.,\(^{72}\) - the picture of the Tamil society presented in it is apparently much older. It seems to reveal the earliest stage of the South Indian tribes who were constantly at war with each other and frequently made raids for cattle-lifting, which is the main topic of the poems cited. Apart from the fact that a mythical origin is provided to the main theme and content of this work,\(^{73}\) Rev. Pope has pointed out that the authors of Kural, Nalaṭiyar, and many other lesser poets seem to draw

---

\(^{69}\) See Somasundaram Pillai, A History of Tamil Literature, pp.249 ff.; esp. 256-8.

\(^{70}\) Several such examples are collected by Srinivasan, op.cit., pp.21-2; see also Diehl, C.G., "The Goddess of Forests in Tamil Literature", TC., XI, 1964, p.313.

\(^{71}\) Cf. Srinivasa Iyengar, K.R., in Majumdar (ed.), The Age of Imperial Unity, p.293; Pillai, Vainyapuri, in Sastri (ed.), A Comprehensive History of India, vol.2, pp.676 ff., esp. 682; and Basham, The Wonder that was India, pp.461-2.

\(^{72}\) Cf. Pope, Rev. G.U., "Extracts from the Tamil Purra-porul Venbā-Mālai and the Purra-nānnūru", JRAS., 1899, p.225; also Kailasapathy, Tamil Heroic Poetry, p.52, where other authorities are also cited.

\(^{73}\) JRAS., 1899, p.225.
their material from it, and, in many respects, it provides an introduction to almost the whole of genuine poetry of the Tamil language. He also suggested that even though the present text may be later, it should best be studied with Puranānūṟu and Tolkāppiyam.

In the Vepamalai, Koravai appears as the patron goddess of war-like tribal people constantly engaged in cattle-lifting raids. She is described as leading the fighters in their attacks on the forts of the enemies and making them flee. While she thus leads, we are told, countless demons press around her; her beauteous banner bears the lion's form, and her hands grasp the golden parrot and the bounding stag. This work also refers to the poetical theme of eulogizing a warrior on his destroying his enemies and feeding their dead bodies in a feast to devils and demonesses who are treated as deities in a sacrifice. At the same place, the killing of the enemies is compared with ploughing a field. The commentator Naccinārkkiniyar elaborates on the theme by drawing a detailed comparison between a farmer reaping the ears of grain, heaping them in stacks, threshing them by driving bulls to trample over them, then offering oblations to gods, giving portions to beggars and enjoying the ceremonial meal with his kinsfolk, and the warrior king mowing down the enemies, piling up their dead bodies and getting elephants to trample over them, having the carcasses cooked by a virgin who stirred it in a huge pot containing blood and fat, and offering it as a libation to the gods. That this information should be regarded as having some basis in fact is suggested by parallel

---

74 Ibid., p.241.
75 Ibid., pp.226-7; cf. similar opinions expressed by Kailasapathy, op.cit., p.52.
77 Ibid., p.237, v.20.
78 Purapporul Vepamalai, vv.159-60, cited by Kailasapathy, op.cit., p.241, fn.5.
80 Quoted in ibid., p.241.
allusions in Puranānūru. As Kailasapathy notes, an originally primitive ritual performed in honour of goddess Korraūvai seems to underlie this sacrifice to devils referred to in the heroic poems. He noted the essentials of the ritual as: 1) it was performed at the end of a battle; 2) wholesale sacrifice of men and animals took place; 3) some sort of ritual cooking was done, making use of blood; and 4) priestesses officiated at the ceremony.

The fierce demoniacal nature of the goddess and possible allusions to human sacrifice to appease her are also retained in the Cilappatikārām, even though the work is already thoroughly imbued with brahmanical ideas and there is considerable mixture of the concepts of Korraūvai and Durgā. Canto XII of this epic, entitled Nettuvavari, "the song of the hunters", is generally understood as giving the most detailed information about the form and appearance of this goddess.

Canto XII of Cilappatikārām introduces us to the fierce goddess of the hunters of the Aiyanar-Maraṃvar tribe, and although it calls her by many names and, mixed with Śivaite elements, presents a somewhat syncretic picture of the goddess, there is no doubt that it principally refers to Korraūvai. It would be useful to give a short summary of the contents of this part of the epic to appreciate the nature and significance of this ancient goddess of the Tamils. Canto XI of the epic ends with a spirit of the woods trying to lure the hero Kōvalan and the latter uttering an invocation to "the goddess who rides a deer" to dispel her. Kōvalan and

---

81 Ibid., p.241 and fn.8, citing Puranānūru, 369, 372-3, etc..
82 Ibid., p.241.
83 Ibid., p.242.
84 Most of our references to this epic refer to its English translation by Alain Daniélovitch which follows the Tamil text established by Swaminatha Iyer.
86 Venpānālai also presents Korraūvai as the goddess of the Maravar tribesmen; cf. Pope, op.cit., JRAS., 1899, p.242.
87 See Cilappatikārām, tr. Daniélovitch, pp.75-6.
the tired heroine Kanni walk up to a grove where they find a temple of Kālī, "whose eyes are tongues of fire and who lives in heaven worshipped by all the gods". She was the goddess of the cruel bandits who alone lived in that arid region, attacking travellers and carrying raids on the neighbouring countries. "The goddess gave them victory and expected a bloody sacrifice as a reward for her favour". The following Canto, no.XII, continues the account of these people and their fierce goddess, even though in its opening lines a change of scene seems implied.

Kovalan and Kanni are said to have stopped near a lonely village in which there was a temple of "Aiyai", the goddess of the hunters of Mānavar-Aiyamari tribes. It was an ancient belief of the latter that the goddess would become incarnate in a virgin of that tribe. Kanni - the heroine of the epic - is made to witness the transformation of one such virgin, Calini, into the form of the goddess. We are told that Calini began to perform a frenzied dance, her hair standing on end and hands flung up in wild fervour. While the forest-folk looked at her with awe, she spoke: "The communal store-houses of the Aiyamars are empty; the fierce hunters of the Mānavar tribe, forgetting their glorious art of looting travellers, are behaving like peasants. When the goddess who rides a stag is starved of offerings, she does not grant victory. If you seek happiness, go, get drunk on strong wine and bring the goddess her dues". Calini then rode on a stag, silvery snakes entwined around the crescent-shaped tusk of a boar on her head, wearing a necklace of tiger's teeth and a short skirt of leopard-hide. Aiyamar women came to lay at her feet dolls, parrots, soft-feathered cockerels and blue peacocks, and played with balls of black beans for divination. They followed her carrying powders, fragrant unguents, boiled grain, pastries of sesame seeds, rice cooked with meat, flowers, incense and perfumes. She was led to the temple of Aṇākku who feasts on cruel sacrifices and gives victory in return. The virgin prostrated herself before the goddess "who rides the stag". Suddenly, she became inspired and was transformed into "an apparition of the consort of Śiva".

88 See ibid., pp.76 ff, for the contents of the canto XII of the Cilappatikāram. Srinivasan equates Aiyai with the Sanskrit Aryā; see Srinivasan, op.cit., p.23.
The description of Calini transformed as the goddess is full of Sivaite elements, although she is once specifically called Korravai. It is said that the crescent moon shone on her matted locks. The eye in the centre of her forehead gazed unblinking. She had blood-red lips and shining teeth. Her neck was black with poison. Serpents served as her breast-band and girdle. An elephant-hide covered her shoulders and the hide of the lion formed her skirt. She carried bow and arrow and wielded blazing trident and sword. She is the killer of demon Mahiṣa. Worshipped by all the gods, she is "Amarī", the virgin goddess, the Geurī, the sister of Viṣṇu, etc. She is here also identified with Durgā, Lakṣṇī and Sarasvatī.

Several hymns of praise are introduced after the above description, in all of which the emphasis is on the fierce aspect of the goddess, riding the stag, who grants victory in war and deals death to enemies. Some of these take the form of a description of how, when the proud warriors of the Aiyamar tribe left their humble hamlets to carry raids on the enemies' cattle, they invoked this goddess, and, their raids successfully accomplished, made offerings of blood at her altar, even the blood flowing from their own severed heads.

While the conception of Korravai in the "song of the hunters" in the Cilappatikāram is a very syncretic one, in which she appears identified with Aiyai, Aṉarkku, Durgā, Kāṉī, etc., elsewhere in the epic a distinction seems to be implied between her and some of these goddesses. Thus, when the bereaved Kannaki, full of wrath against the Pāṇḍyan king and seeking redress of injustice done to her, arrives at the palace-gates, the

89 Cilappatikāram, tr. Daniélou, pp.78-9. For the original in Tamil, see Cilappatikāram, ed. Swaminatha Iyer, pp.313-4,11.55-74. It is this description that is generally cited by modern scholars as a description of Korravai; see Venkataraman, Srinivasan and Mudaliar, cited in fn.85 above.

90 Cilappatikāram, ed. Swaminatha Iyer, p.314, 1.64; see also below.

91 See Cilappatikāram, tr. Daniélou, pp.80-5, esp. Tuṟaiṟṟattumathai on pp.83-4. This aspect of the character of the goddess is greatly elaborated in a chapter devoted to Korravai-Durgā in Kaliṇīkattupparaiṇi, a work of 12th cent. A.D., eulogizing the victory of a Coḷa king over Kaliṅga.
door-keeper reports to the king: "A woman is waiting at the gate. She is not Korra\textsc{va}i, the victorious goddess who carries in her hand a glorious spear and stands upon the neck of a defeated buffalo losing its blood through its fresh wounds."\textsuperscript{92} She is not Ān\textsc{ñ}ku, the youngest of the seven virgins, for whom Siva once danced; and she is not Kāli who dwells in the darkest forests inhabited by ghosts and imps. Neither is she the goddess who pierced the chest of the mighty Tārukan ...".\textsuperscript{93}

Modern scholars have found references to Korra\textsc{va}i-Durgā also in the Manimēkalai - another well-known Tamil epic contemporary with Cilappatikārām. This work sometimes refers to Kātamarcelvi and her temple, with the sacrificial altar in its front yard and surrounded by tall posts with severed heads suspended from them.\textsuperscript{94}

It is clear from the above that Korra\textsc{va}i was perhaps the earliest and the most widely worshipped goddess of the ancient Dravidian people. She was essentially a goddess of the semi-nomadic hunting tribes of South India who invoked her for success in cattle-raids and appeased her with bloody sacrifices. As presented in the Tamil heroic poems, there is no marked element of fertility in the character of Korra\textsc{va}i, who remains primarily a goddess of war and victory. This, incidently, is also suggested by her name which is generally assumed to be derived from korram, meaning victory.\textsuperscript{95} The Tamil Lexicon suggests kol, "to kill", as the basic root for these and

\textsuperscript{92} This is a clear allusion to Durgā Mahiṣamardini.

\textsuperscript{93} Cilappatikāram, tr. Daniélou, canto XX, p.127.

\textsuperscript{94} Manimēkalai, VI, 50-3; XVII, 115, as cited by Srinivasan, Some Aspects of Religion as Revealed by Early Monuments and Literature of the South, p.21. Srinivasan tentatively identifies Kātamarcelvi with Durgā or Candika. Kātamarcelvi, "the great lady of the forest", is described in Akanānūru (345: 3-7), as cited in Srinivasan, op.cit., p.21; cf. also Diehl, op.cit., TC., XI, 1964, p.312. The Tamil Lexicon, as usual, calls her a form of Durgā; see Tamil Lexicon, II, pt.1, p.1167, s.v. /Korra\textsc{va}i and Korra\textsc{va}i-nilai. Cf. also Venkataraman, op.cit., /Bhattacharya (ed.), The Cultural Heritage of India, IV, p.252, for Korra\textsc{va}i-Durgā in Manimēkalai.

\textsuperscript{95} See Burrow and Emeneau, A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary, p.146a, no.1803, where other cognate words in Dravidic languages are also cited.
other cognate words in Tamil. But, considering that sacrifices of blood, including human blood, were made to Korram, and virgin priestesses probably officiated in her worship, an original fertility character of this goddess is not unlikely. In any case, Murukan, with whom she stood in closest relationship as mother, seems to have been originally a dreaded fertility god, propitiated with orgiastic rituals involving frenzied dances by young girls and offerings of blood and flesh.

In the bardic poems of the Sangam age, these ancient divinities of the earliest Tamils already appear with brahmanical colouring, but they have not completely lost their original character. While Korram is identified with Durga, Kālī, etc., she continues to be the goddess of the ancient cattle-raiding tribes, riding her stag, leading the warriors in battle, and demanding her sacrifice of animal and human blood in return.

Little information of iconographical nature can be gleaned from incidental references to Korram in the Sangam literature. What looks like such a description in the canto XII of the Cilappatikāram derives most of its elements from Durga-Kālī as the spouse of Śiva. The one feature constantly noted about the goddess, however, but not generally described of Durga or her common forms, is the reference to riding a stag. The stag as a vāhana is rarely met with and must be regarded as an early characteristic of Korram in the Tamil country. Durga riding a stag must have been conceived under the influence of this south Indian goddess. Such figures

96 Tamil Lexicon, II, pt.1, p.1167, s.v. Korram.

97 In ancient religions, human sacrifice is often found associated with vegetation-fertility goddesses; cf. Sullivan, HR., 4, 1964, p.117, fn.10, esp. citing Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, pp.341 ff., and Przyluski, La Grande Déesse, pp.30-1.

98 This is clear from the Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai; see large extracts translated from it in Somasundaram Pillai, A History of Tamil Literature, pp.194 ff., esp. 212 ff., where Kunrutoraṭal, "the Gods' sport in the hills", and Palamutircōḷai are translated. See also Kailasapathy, Tamil Heroic Poetry, pp.53 ff.; Basham, The Wonder that was India, p.314; Venkataraman, K.R., "Skanda Cult in South India", in Bhattacharya, ed., The Cultural Heritage of India, IV, pp.309 ff.

99 See Srinivasan, op.cit., p.23. We are not aware of any iconographic text specifically prescribing the stag as the vāhana of a goddess.

100 Some such literary descriptions are collected by Srinivasan, op.cit., p.23.
of Durgā have been noticed in the sculptures of the Pallava and contemporary Pāṇḍya and other dynasties from the 7th to the 10th century A.D.¹⁰¹

All the known aspects of Koṭavī, whose worship seems to have prevailed in North India in the early centuries of the Christian era, appear intelligible in the light of the south Indian Korravai. A marked demoniacal nature, close connection with the battlefield, and eventual identification with Durgā–Ambikā and incorporation into the Śivaite pantheon are features that characterise both of them. There is nothing in the available information about the south Indian goddess, however, to justify the nudity of Koṭavī. Since there is little room for doubt that the two goddesses were originally and essentially one and the same, the only way this anomaly can be explained is by assuming that our information about the south Indian Korravai is still very fragmentary. Moreover, it is derived from a type of bardic literature which is imbued with brahmanical ideas and often presents ancient Tamil concepts in a modified form. In all likelihood, therefore, the north Indian tradition of a goddess called Koṭavī retains a still earlier tradition of Korravai when the latter was the dreaded nude fertility goddess of the south Indian primitive nomadic tribes.

Although the popular goddess Korravai has generally been ignored by the historians of religion in South India,¹⁰² it has nevertheless been often acknowledged that she was the goddess of the ancient Dravidian tribes, and that her worship in South India was later merged with that of Durgā and

¹⁰¹ Ibid.
¹⁰² It is understandable that writers like Whitehead (Village Gods of South India), Elmore (Dravidian Gods in Modern Hinduism) and Slater (Dravidian Element in Indian Culture) ignore Korravai because they generally aimed at presenting a sketch of the religion in modern times. Oppert (Original Inhabitants of Bhāratavarṣa, etc.), does not pay any attention to her, perhaps because in his time Tamil studies were yet in their infancy. It is surprising, however, that several recent studies specifically devoted to the history and culture of the Tamils and development of religion in South India completely ignore Korravai.
What has not been realized is the very wide-spread nature of her cult and its contribution to the popular religious life in North India. Our investigation indicates that in the earliest stages of Dravidian religion, the worship of Koravai must have been universal, and thus, through the natural process of acculturation, must have gradually permeated into the brahmanical religions at a very early stage of its history, and also made its contribution to the development of the concept and cult of the Supreme Goddess of the Purānas.

Several such instances have been noted in the course of this chapter. Particularly referred to is Pope, cited above, fn.72. Referring to Pope, Smith inserted a brief notice about Koravai in his Early History of India (3rd ed. p.439), which is the sole authority for the South Indian goddess quoted by Agrawala (AI., 44^9 fn.154). See also Srinivas Iyengar, History of the Tamils, etc., pp.82, 603, and Basham, The Wonder that was India, pp.312, 314.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The bibliography is divided into two main parts, Primary and Secondary. In the first part, we have included the original texts and translations in the Indian and foreign languages. In a few cases, where a text or its translation has been cited in the thesis under the editor's or translator's name, indications have been provided at appropriate places or at the end of the part. The second part lists modern works, but also includes the materials on coins, inscriptions and sculptures. A short section is also added at the end giving the dictionaries and other reference works consulted. All entries have been arranged alphabetically. Since full information about the articles in journals has been given at the places where they are cited, these have been excluded from the bibliography.

Primary Sources


Agni Purāṇa, Anandāśrama Sanskrit Series no.41, Poona, 1957.


Āṅgavijjā (Science of Divination through Physical Signs and Symbols), edited by Muni Shri Punyavijaya ji, with Introductions by Moti Chandra and by V.S. Agrawala, Prakrit Text Series vol.1, Banaras, 1957.


Atharva-veda (Saunaka) with the Pada-pāṭha and Śaṅkara's commentary, edited by Vishva Bandhu and others, in four parts, Vishveshvaranand Indological Series 13-7, Hoshiarpur, 1960-64.

Atharva-veda, translated into English (Hymns of the Atharva-veda, together with Extracts from the Ritual Books and the Commentaries), by Maurice Bloomfield, Sacred Books of the East vol.XLII, Indian reprint, Delhi, 1964.


Baudhāyana Gṛhya-sūtra (see Harting, in Secondary Sources).


Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa, ed. by Vāsudeva Sāstrī Marāṭhe and Puruṣottama Sāstrī Rānade, in 2 volumes, Anandāśrama Sanskrit Series no.102, Poona, 1935.


Candī-śataka of Bāṣabhaṭṭa (see Quackenbos in Secondary Sources below).


Gobhila Gṛhya-sūtra, critically edited by Chintamani Bhattacharya, Calcutta, 1936.


Harṣacarita of Bāṇabhaṭṭa, edited by Mm. P.V. Kane, 2nd edition, Delhi, 1965.

Harṣacarita of Bāṇabhaṭṭa, with Śaṅkara's Commentary, edited by A.A. Führer, Bombay Sanskrit and Prakrit Series, no. LXVI, Bombay, 1909.


Harṣacarita translated into English (The Harṣa-carita of Bāṇa), by E.B. Cowell and F.W. Thomas, Indian reprint, Delhi, 1961.


Jātaka, together with its commentary edited by V. Fausböll, for Pali Text Society, in 7 volumes, reprinted, London, 1962-64.

Kādambari of Bāṇabhaṭṭa, with the commentaries of Bhānuśandra and Siddhacandra, edited by Kaśīnāth Pāḍḍurang Parab, revised by Mathurānāth Śastraī, Bombay, 1940.

Kāśyapa Sāṁhitā (or VyḍḍhajIvākyI Tantra) by Vyḍḍha Jīvaka, with Sanskrit Introduction by Hemarāja Sarma and Hindi commentary and translation of Introduction in Hindi by Satyapāla Bhiṣagācārya, Kashi Sanskrit Series no.154, Banaras, 1953.


Kauśika Sūtra of the Atharva-veda, with extracts from the commentaries of Darila and Keśava, edited by Maurice Bloomfield, JAOS., vol.14, 1890 (New Haven). (See also Weber in secondary sources).

Kojiki, translated into English by Doland L. Philippi, Tokyo, 1968.


Mahābhārata, including Harivaṃśa, critically edited by V.S. Sukthankar and others, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1933-.
This is the edition used by us in the thesis, but when another edition of the text is also cited in the same context, the abbreviation "Cr. edn." has been added to "Mbh." to avoid confusion. Also, the vol.II of Harivaṃśa could not be made available to us.

Mahābhārata, with the commentary of Nīlakaṇṭha, edited by R. Kinjawadekar, Chitrashala Press, Poons, 1929-33.

Mahānirvāṇa Tantra, tr. by Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodroffe) (as The Great Liberation Mahānirvāṇa Tantra) - Sanskrit Text with English Translation and Commentary), third edition, Madras, 1953.


Mālatī-mādhava of Bhavabhūti, with commentary of Jagaddhara, edited and translated into English by M.R. Kale, 3rd edition, Delhi, 1967 (see also Wilson, H.H., in secondary sources).


Manu-smṛti, translated into English (The Laws of Manu, with extracts from seven commentaries) by G. Bühler, Sacred Books of the East vol.XXV; Indian reprint, Delhi, 1964.


Mṛcchakatika of Sudraka, translated into English by J.A.B. van Buitenen (in Two Plays of Ancient India, etc.), New York, 1968 (see also Wilson, H.H., in secondary sources).


The Periplus of the Erythrian Sea, translated into English by Wilfred H. Schoff, New York, 1912.


Rājatarangini of Kalhaṇa, edited by M.A. Stein, reprinted, Delhi, 1960.
Rājatarangini of Kalhana, translated into English by M.A. Stein, in 2 volumes, reprinted, Delhi, 1961.

Rāmāyana of Vālmīki, critically edited by J.M. Mehta and others, Baroda, Oriental Institute, 1960–.

Ṛgveda, with the commentary of Sāyaṇācārya, edited by N.S. Sontakke (Gen. editor) and C.G. Kashikar, Vaidika Saṃsodhana maṇḍal edition, in 5 volumes, Poona, 1933-51.

Ṛgveda, translated into German [Ṛgveda: Übersetzung und mit kritischen und erläuternden Anmerkungen versehen] by Hermann Grassmann, in 2 volumes, Leipzig, 1876-77.


Śilpa Prakāśa of Rāmacandra Kaulācāra (see Boner, Alice, in secondary sources).


Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa (of the Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda), with Śāyaṇa’s commentary, published by V.G. Apate, in 2 volumes, Anandāśrama Sanskrit Series no.37, Poona, 1934, 1938.


Taittirīya Samhitā (of the Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda), edited by Narahari Śāstrī, in 8 volumes, Anandāśrama Sanskrit Series no.42, Poona, 1959-66.


Tolkāppiyam: Porulakāram, Purattinai Iyal, with Naccinārkkiniyar’s commentary, Madras, 1963.

Upaniṣads (see Radhakrishnan, S., in secondary sources).

Uttara-rāma-carita of Bhavabhūti, with the commentary of Ghanaśyāma, edited by P.V. Kane, and translated into English by C.N. Joshi, 4th revised edition, Delhi, 1962.


Vayu Purāṇa, published by Hari Narāyaṇa Āpaṭe, Anandaśrama Sanskrit Series no. 49, Poona, 1905.


(The) Vyākaraṇa-mahābhāṣya of Patañjali, edited by F. Kielhorn, 3rd revised by K.V. Ābhyankar, Poona, 1962-.

Yājñavalkya-smṛti, with the Mitākṣarā commentary of Vijñānesvara, edited by Umesh Chandra Pandey, Kashi Sanskrit Series no. 178, Varanasi, 1967.

[For the English translation of the Egyptian Papyrus "The Contendings of Horus and Seth", see Gardiner, Alan H., in secondary sources.]
Secondary Sources


--------------------., Harsacarita - Eka Sāṃskṛtika Adhyayana, Patna, 1953.


--------------------., Indian Art [A History of Indian Art from the earliest times up to the third century A.D.], Varanasi, 1965.


Alchin, Bridget and Raymond, The Birth of Indian Civilization, India and Pakistan before 500 B.C., a Pelican original, Harmondsworth, 1968.


Arbman, Ernst, Rudra: Untersuchungen zum altindischen Glauben und Kultur, Uppsala, 1922.


---------------------------------- *Yaksas*, in 2 parts (part I as Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, vol.80, no.6; part II, by Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art), Washington, 1928, 1931.

Mélanges Franz Cumont, in 2 volumes, Bruxelles, 1936.


---------------------------------- *Coins of Ancient India, from the earliest times down to the Seventy century A.D.*, reprinted, Varanasi, 1963.


Dasgupta, Surendranath, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, in 5 volumes, Cambridge, 1922-.


Dikshit, S.K., *The Mother Goddess (A Study regarding the Origin of Hinduism)*, New Delhi, no date (1957?).


Ghirshman, R., Iran, from the earliest times to the Islamic Conquest, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1951.


Kane, P.V., History of Dharmasastra (ancient and mediaeval religious and civil law), 5 volumes in 7, Poona, 1930-62.


(Since the book adopts continuous pagination, and the author calls the two volumes as first and second half, we have only cited the page numbers from the work, without referring to the volume number.)


Dr C. Kunhan Raja Presentation Volume, published by Adyar Library for Dr C. Kunhan Raja Presentation Volume Committee, Madras, 1946.


Law, Bimala Churn (ed.), D.R. Bhandarkar Volume, Calcutta, 1940.


Mackay, E.J.H., *Further Excavations at Mohenjodaro*, being an official account of archaeological excavations at Mohenjodaro carried out by the Government of India between the years 1927 and 1931, 2 volumes, Delhi, 1937-38.


-------------, *The Vedic Age* (vol.I of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's History and Culture of the Indian People), London, 1952.

-------------, *The Age of Imperial Unity* (vol.II of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's History and Culture of the Indian People), Bombay, 1951.

-------------, *The Classical Age* (vol.III of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's History and Culture of the Indian People), Bombay, 1962.

-------------, *The Age of Imperial Kanauj* (vol.IV of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's History and Culture of the Indian People), Bombay, 1964.


-------------, *Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilization*, being an official account of archaeological excavations at Mohenjodaro carried out by the Government of India between the years 1922 and 1927, 3 volumes, London, 1931-.


Saksena, Baburam, etc. (eds.), *Kavirāja Abhinandana Grantha*, Lucknow, 1967.


Schubring, Walther, *The Doctrine of the Jainas, described after the old sources*, translated from the revised German edition by W. Beurlein, Delhi, 1962.


Shastri, Hiranand, *The Origin and Cult of Tārā*, MASI., no.20, 1925.


Reference Works


Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, edited by Hastings, J., Edinburgh, 1908-.

Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences, ed. Seligman, Edwin R.A., New York, 1930-.


Tamil Lexicon, published under the authority of the University of Madras, in 6 volumes, Madras, 1936. [Issued in 25 parts, with various imprints, 1924-36. Same – Supplement. Madras, 1939.]
Plate I figure 1, Plate IV figures 1 and 2, Plate V figures 1-3, and the figure on Plate VI have been taken respectively from the figures nos. 5, 3, 4, 10, 9, 8 and 7 in the article "The Nude Goddess or 'Shameless Woman' in Western Asia, India, and South-eastern Asia" by H.D. Sankalia, in Artibus Asiae, XXIII, 1960, 111 ff.


The figures on Plate II are taken from pl.E figures 1 and 2 accompanying the article "Iconography: Classical and Indian", by K. de B. Codrington, in Man., XXXV, 1935, pp.65-6.

The figure on Plate III is taken from the figure 2 on p.261 in the article "An Image of Aditi - Uttānapad" by Stella Kramrisch, in Artibus Asiae, XIX, 1956, pp.259 ff.

Plate VII figure 1 is taken from Gupta (ed.), Patna Museum Catalogue of Antiquities, pl.L (antiquity no.7716).

Plate VII figure 2 is taken from pl.X,17, 18 accompanying the article "Female Fertility Figures" by M.A. Murray, in the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, LXIV, 1934, pp.93 ff.

The figure and inscription on Plate VIII are taken from the plate accompanying the article "Nagarjunikonda Image Inscription" by H.K. Narasimhaswami, in Epigraphia Indica, XXIX, pp.137 ff.
1. Terracotta Plaque from Bhīțā Excavations

2. Obverse and Reverse of Sealing from Harappa
Top and Underside of Terracotta Piece from Mathura
Stone Image in Alampur Museum
1. Terracotta Figure from Ter (Surface Find)

2. Terracotta Figure from Ter Excavations
1. Terracotta Figure from Nagarjunikonda

2. Stone Relief from Nevasa Excavations

3. Stone Relief from Vadgaon
Meier carving in Ramesvara Cave, Ellora
1. Terracotta Figure in Patna Museum

2. "Babo-type" Figures from Roman Egypt
Marble Figure, with Inscription, from Nagarjunikonda