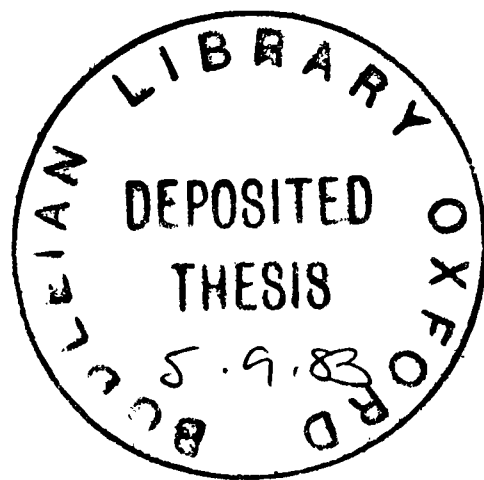


THE WORSHIP OF CLAY IMAGES IN BENGAL .

J.D.ROBINSON

LINACRE COLLEGE

Submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Oriental Studies Dept.
Oxford.

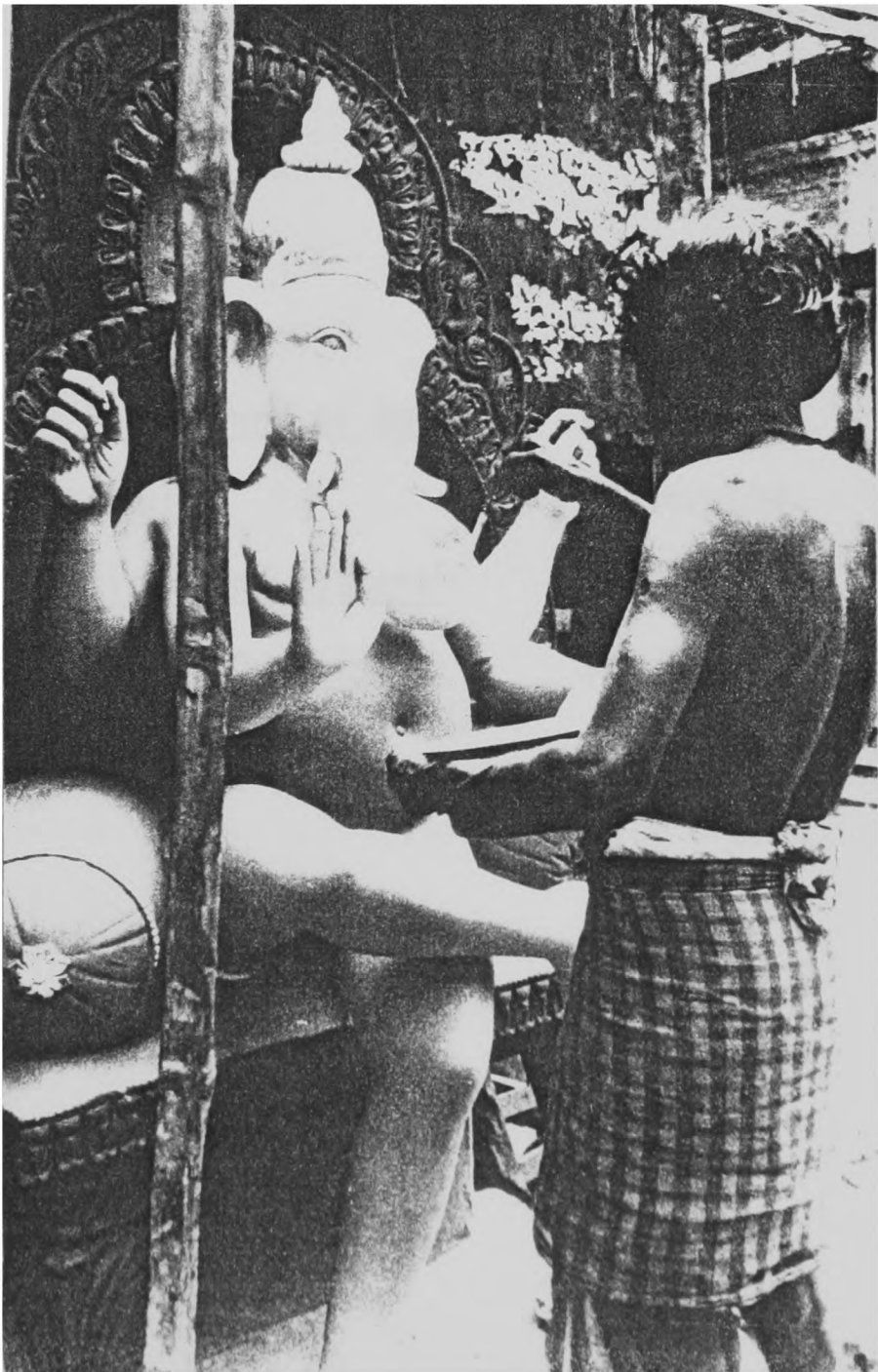


Hilary 1983.^{rr}

putula pūñjo kare nā hindu/
kāṭha māṭi diye gaṛā//
mr̥nmaya mājhe cinmaya dekhe/
haye jāya ātma-hārā//

The Hindu does not worship an idol
Made of wood and clay.
He sees consciousness
Within the earthen-ness
And loses himself in it.

(Swami Vivekananda)



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ABSTRACT:

The Worship of Clay Images in Bengal.

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Submitted for the degree of

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The thesis examines the contemporary Bengali practice of worshipping clay images. By clay is understood 'unbaked' clay. The thesis makes a distinction between 'baked clay' (terracotta) images and 'unbaked' clay (terracruda) images and examines the preference for worshipping terracruda images.

The worship of clay images is examined within the context of image worship in general in India, referring to the classical iconographical canons and other texts in which clay is mentioned as a suitable medium for the making of religious icons. The study is restricted to the Hindu religion. The thesis does not restrict itself to a purely iconographical approach.

The thesis discusses the artistic tradition that gave rise to the clay images of Bengal, as well as attempting to understand the religious significance of the images. In tracing the tradition, the author has used vernacular sources as well as early records of travellers. In describing the contemporary technique of clay image making, the author has relied on recorded interviews and photo-documentation taken during a three month period of fieldwork in West Bengal.

The thesis establishes that there has

been a tradition of worshipping clay images in Bengal that is at least two centuries old and suggests that there are earlier precedents for the tradition. It also concludes that it is a strongly regional tradition that developed in Bengal and influenced the neighbouring states of Bihar, Assam and Orissa. The worship of terracruda images in Bengal is a regional practice that is the product of both classical and 'folk' influences.

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All photographs copyright of J.D.Robinson except the following:

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Calcutta)

INTRODUCTION.

This thesis examines the contemporary practice of worshipping clay images in Bengal and attempts to find the possible origins of this practice. It establishes that there has been a tradition of worshipping clay images in Bengal that is at least two centuries old and suggests that the tradition may extend further back to classical times.

By the term 'clay images' is meant 'unbaked' clay images rather than 'baked' or 'fired' (terracotta) clay images. For the purposes of this thesis, I have formulated the word 'terracruda' to indicate 'unbaked clay image'. This is an important distinction which raises a number of questions regarding the permanent or impermanent nature of clay images.

There appears to be a religious injunction against the use of terracotta images for purposes of worship. This injunction is maintained in Bengal but is not explained in any text. Some texts suggest the use of either terracotta or terracruda images although they give preference to the use of terracruda images. Others remain silent on this distinction and simply refer to the images as clay images. I have given the appropriate textual support as well as suggested possible reasons for this tenet.

By 'Bengal' I refer to West Bengal, although I also use Bengal to refer to the various districts which comprised the area now known as West Bengal and Bangladesh. The tradition of worshipping the kind of clay images discussed in this thesis is peculiar to Bengal and its neighbouring states of Bihar, Assam and Orissa. It appears that the original impetus for worshipping terracruda images of this sort came from Bengal.

The thesis emphasises both the artistic and the religious aspects of the worship of clay images in Bengal. It is not simply a study of technique or iconography, although these are both discussed. Rather, it explores the various categories of images and worship to see how socio-religious factors influence religious icons. I have also chosen to adopt a phenomenological approach and describe the various factors at work in determining the kind of image used for worship. The thesis concentrates on a regional practice and is largely descriptive rather than adopting a particular bias to support a particular line of argument.

METHODOLOGY.

I have divided the thesis into three parts. In Part One I have discussed the practice of image worship in India, the iconographical canons and methods of Hindu worship, in order to present the worship of clay images within the context of image worship in general. Because of this, I have discussed the making of images in various other materials. In outlining the classical tradition of Indian art, I have drawn from the works of T.A.Gopinatha Rao (Elements of Hindu Iconography, vols I and II) and J.N.Banerjea (The Development of Hindu Iconography) who in turn relied on the classifications and iconographical rules devised by the Vaiṣṇava schools of the Vaikhāṇasas and the Pañcarātras of south India. Where possible, I have used Vaikhāṇasa and Pañcarātra texts, although I also refer to a number of Purāṇas to show that clay images were used by each of the principal Hindu sects. In most cases, the dating of the Purāṇas has been taken from R.C.Hazra.

I have also drawn material from the work of K.M.Varma, whose monograph on 'The Indian Technique of Clay Modelling' is the only work I know which deals systematically with the

technique of clay image making in India. Varma's monograph discusses the textual injunctions of the southern schools regarding the making of clay images, the archaeological finds of certain clay images and the current Bengali practice of making clay images in comparison with the classical tradition, illustrating this with photographs. He also mentions the important distinction made between baked clay images and unbaked clay images. Both Gopinatha Rao and Banerjea also refer to this distinction. It is hoped that this thesis will dispel the popular misconception that all clay art is necessarily terracotta art.

I have also made a distinction between the 'classical' artist working according to the classical tradition with its recorded iconographical rules, the 'traditional' artist who usually works according to an oral tradition and makes images according to regional custom and the so-called 'folk' artist, the unskilled layperson who makes images for personal use. My study of the worship of clay images in Bengal concentrates on the work of the traditional artist who may be said to stand between the classical and the folk traditions of Indian art. Unlike the classical tradition, the contemporary Bengali practice of making clay images is not regulated by any recorded text. There is therefore no iconographical canon to which we may refer when discussing the Bengali practice of making clay images. This makes the task all the more difficult and a number of avenues of investigation have been taken in order to try and bypass this obstacle. On the other hand, because the tradition is oral, it enables us to see how such traditions survive within the Indian context, how they are maintained and also, eventually transformed. There does not seem to have been any attempt by Bengali artists to record rules for the making of clay images, nor do the artists appear to feel the need for such rules.

In Part Two I have outlined the construction of terracruda images in the contemporary Bengali practice, the style of the images and the modes of worship in Bengal. The aim of this section is to consider not only the technique of clay image making, which is undoubtedly of importance as K.M.Varma has shown, but also the use to which the images are put. I have given a survey of the various occasions when clay images are used for worship and details of some of the major Hindu festivals of Bengal. The information for Part Two was obtained mainly during a three month period of fieldwork in West Bengal during which time I carried out photo-documentation of the construction of the clay images and conducted interviews with artists and their patrons. The views of the local informants are included where possible in order to compliment any textual interpretations. In all cases, I have attempted to present the facts in a descriptive manner rather than attempting to draw too many conclusions. For rituals of worship, I have used Bengali ritual texts such as the Purohita Darpana of Surendra Mohana Bhattacharya. I attended most of the major festivals during my fieldwork in Bengal and have also recorded the Durgā pūjā celebrations in England. The photo-documentation of Durgā pūjā included in this thesis was taken during the annual Durgā pūjā celebrations at Belsize Park, London, which first started in 1963. Expatriot Bengalis in Europe, America and Canada have been importing clay images from Calcutta for the past decade.

In Part Three I have attempted to investigate the possible origins of the worship of clay images in Bengal, looking back through the history of Bengal and concentrating especially on the British period (18th-20th c). There are extensive records of the wide-spread worship of clay images during this period

and the history of the Bengali practice of worshipping clay images is intimately connected with the foundation of the city of Calcutta. Most of the accounts of clay image worship are connected with the worship of the clay image of the goddess Durgā, whose annual festival is the highlight of the Bengali religious calendar. Because of this, I have attempted to trace the background of Durgā worship in India, concentrating on her worship in Bengal and in particular the worship of clay images of Durgā, in order to find links with the current practice.

Finally, I have discussed the village tradition of Bengal, relying on vernacular poems dedicated to popular village deities, in order to see whether the current urban tradition of making clay images was a transformation of a village tradition and had its roots in an unrecorded past.

TRANSLITERATION.

All words in Sanskrit and Bengali are represented in bold type. Words in Sanskrit are transliterated according to the standard conventions. Words in Bengali are spelt with the inherent vowel 'a', whether it is pronounced or not except in the possessive case (for instance, **āmār** instead of **āmāra**) and in compound words (**cālcitra** instead of **cālacitra**). The labio-dental spirant (represented by the letter 'v') does not occur in Bengali which has 'b' instead. Therefore 'b' has been used in transliteration except where a cluster of consonants plus 'v' occurs or where the reference is to a Sanskrit word.

Place names are given in the Anglicised form. Proper names are also given in their Anglicised form if they have one, if not, they are transliterated according to the conventions mentioned.

PART ONE.

CHAPTER ONE: IMAGE WORSHIP IN INDIA.

There are indications of image worship in shrines and temples dedicated to Vedic deities in the early centuries B.C. . The Gr̥hya Sūtras and Brāhmaṇas allude to both images and temples¹. But the systematic worship of cult images in India developed much later, in the early centuries of the Christian era, when the Vedic homa (fire sacrifice) slowly gave way to the practice of **deva pūjā** ; the worship of images of deities kept in houses². This development can be linked with the appearance of a corpus of mythological literature (Purāṇas) connected with various sectarian deities, and the rise of popular Hinduism. It can also be related to the composition of iconographical texts (Śilpa Śāstra) which set about standardising the physical representations of the sectarian deities.

Deva pūjā could be performed by men and women of all four classes of Hindu society - priest (Brāhmaṇa), warrior (Kṣatriya), peasant (Vaiśya) and serf (Śūdra) - including untouchables³. It was governed by the notion of **adhikāra-bheda** , the difference in rites, duties and ceremonies dependent on the difference in the intellectual, emotional and spiritual abilities of the worshipper⁴. Image worship was not necessary for everybody and it was emphasised that the worshipper did not simply pay homage to a material

1. J.N.Banerjea, The Development of Hindu Iconography (Calcutta: Univ. of Calcutta, 1st.ed. 1941), pp.76-77; T.Bhattacharyya, The Canons of Indian Art (Calcutta:Firma K.L.Mukhopadhyaya, 1963), p.325; P.V.Kane, History of Dharmaśāstra, Vol.II, pt.II (Poona: Bhandarkar Research Institute, 1941), p.709.

2. Kane, Dharmaśāstra (1941), p.706.

3. Kane, Dharmaśāstra (1941), p.714.

4. Kane, Dharmaśāstra (1941), p.714.

object, but to the One Supreme Spirit in the form of an image.

The image was seen by Hindus both as a symbol of the divine as well as the divine itself. Hindu icons are described as the actual bodies of the deities they represent and are called **tanu** , **rupa** or **vigraha** ; the visible manifestation in anthropomorphic form to which the devotee can direct devotion (**bhakti**). They are also referred to as **arcā**, **bera**, **mūrti**, **pratimā** or **vimba** . The word **mūrti** means 'materialisation', 'embodiment' or 'tangible substance'⁵. **Vimba** means 'an image', 'shadow', 'reflection' (as opposed to **prativimba** , the counterpart to which it is compared⁶), which J.N.Banerjea thinks is because the image is reflected in a mirror placed before it⁷, although there is also the sense in which the image is a reflection or the true reflection of the deity. In the Tibetan tradition, the mirror placed in front of the icon reflects it and thus signifies that all things, including sacred icons, are the reflexes of the imagination⁸.

The image is both identified as the divine as well as pointing beyond itself. Like the 'eikon' of the Greek Orthodox Church, the Hindu image is sacramental, yet not in itself holy. It helps the worshipper focus his attention on godhead to the exclusion of all distractions⁹ and in ritual acts as an

5. Alain Danielou, Hindu Polytheism (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), p.363 and p.246.

6. Sir Monier Monier-Williams, The Sanskrit-English Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p.731.

7. Banerjea, Development (1941), pp.39-40.

8. W.Zwalf, Heritage of Tibet (London: British Museum Publications, 1981), p.83.

9. Kane, Dharmaśāstra(1941), p.714.

intermediary for man's sacrificial worship dedicated to God¹⁰.

Deva pūjā is considered a sacrifice (**yāga**) in that materials are offered up accompanied by **mantras** with reference to the deity¹¹. The tangible cult image is there to receive the offerings of the devotee and in this sense, the cult image replaces the sacred fire of Vedic ritualism whose smoke carried the sacrificial oblations to the gods¹². In ritual, the cult image represents or is the deity and is consequently treated with due care and respect. Outside ritual, the icon loses its sanctity and reverts to being an inanimate object, no longer infused with the divine presence. Consecration confers sanctity upon the image, whereas deconsecration removes that sanctity.

The icon depicts what is not in the material world and reveals spiritual truths. Its appearance is governed by stylised, iconographical conventions. Images may be aniconic (without human or animal form), semi-iconic or fully iconic¹³. The cult image, whether in the temple or the domestic shrine, could be any of these, although the artistic conventions which concern us here are related to iconic, anthropomorphic images of deities. Background information on the iconographical conventions governing the appearance of deities can be found in Hindu mythological

10. Albert C. Moore, Iconography of Religions (London: SCM Press, 1977), p.129.

11. Kane, Dharmaśāstra (1941), p.714.

12. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.86.

13. Haridas Mitra, Contribution to a Bibliography of Indian Art and Aesthetics (Calcutta: Visva-Bharati Research Publications Committee, 2nd.ed. 1980), p.21 refers to the aniconic images such as the Śiva **līṅga** as ' **niṣkala** ', semi-iconic images such as the Śiva **līṅga** with the face on it (**mukhaliṅga**) as ' **miśra** ' and iconic images as ' **sakala** '.

literature (Purāṇas), ritual texts (Āgamas) and canons of iconography (Śilpa Śāstra).

THE PURĀNAS.

The Purāṇas describe myths connected with the sectarian deities (the five principal Brahmanical deities being Śiva, Viṣṇu, Sūrya, Gaṇeśa and Devī) and contain religious instructions for their worship. They are said to have been composed by Vedavyāsa, the legendary author of the Mahābhārata, and traditionally deal with five topics : 1. creation (*sarga*); 2. destruction (*prati-sarga*); 3. genealogies of gods and sages (*vaṁśa*); 4. description of the four mythological ages (*manvantara*); and 5. the history of the solar and lunar dynasties of kings (*vaṁśānucarita*)¹⁴. There are considered to be eighteen major Purāṇas (Mahāpurāṇa) and as many or more minor Purāṇas (Upapurāṇa). According to P.G.Lal, most of the Mahāpurāṇas were completed between the 5th/6th c -9th c A.D., and new material was added to the Purāṇas as a result of a Brahmanical revival that occurred during the Gupta period (4th-6th c A.D.)¹⁵. The exact dating of each Purāṇa and its place of composition is often uncertain. Purāṇas from the Gupta period onwards deal with a variety of topics such as gifts, initiation, *homa* (fire sacrifice), sacrifice to the planets and their pacification, consecration of images and the foundation of temples (*pratiṣṭhā*), glorification of holy places (*pīṭha*), *tithis* (lunar months), dedication (*utsarga*), vows (*vrata*) and worship (*pūjā*)¹⁶. The practical aspect of worship is outlined in sections dealing with the construction of temples (*deva-*

14. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.22.

15. P.G.Lal, Studies in the Devī Bhāgavata (Bombay: Popular Prakashan 1973), p.21.

16. R.C.Hazra, Studies in the Upapurāṇas, Vol.II, Calcutta Sanskrit College Research Series no.XXII (Calcutta: West Bengal Govt., 1963), p.265.

grhanirmāṇa), installation and consecration of images (**pratiṣṭhā**) and the iconography of deities (**pratimā lakṣaṇa**)¹⁷. The principal topics regarding image worship are the measurement of the images and their proportions, the materials from which the images are made, the principal deities worshipped and consecration and ritual worship¹⁸. Matsya Purāṇa 258.3 states that of the three paths to spiritual progress (**karma yoga** , the path of action; **bhakti yoga** , the path of devotion; and **jñāna yoga** , the path of knowledge), **karma yoga** is the one dealing specifically with the making of images, their installation and worship. It praises the benefits of **karma yoga** , saying:

"Know that as karma yoga which severs the bondage of this world , which is the installation of the Devas' images, the worship of the Devas, reciting their names and beholding sacrifices and utsavs (festivals) in honour of them"¹⁹.

THE ĀGAMAS.

The Āgamas of the principal Hindu sects are usually divided into four sections or **pādas** , each dealing with a topic related to sectarian religious practices:1. **jñāna pāda** (on doctrine); 2. **yoga pāda** (on concentration); 3. **kriyā pāda** (on the construction of temples etc); and 4. **caryā pāda** (on conduct and daily rites). The **kriyā pāda** section of the Āgamas corresponds to the topics included in the notion of **karma yoga** in the Matsya Purāṇa (MP). The **kriyā pāda** section of the Āgamas belonging to the two Vaiṣṇava schools of south India - the Pañcarātra and the Vaikhānasa -have been used extensively by T.A.Gopinatha Rao and J.N.Banerjea.

17. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.22.

18. Kane, Dharmaśāstra(1941), p.712.

19. J.D.Akhtar, trans., Matsya Purāṇa, Sacred Books of the Aryans Series, ed. S.V.Shastri Vol.I (Delhi: Oriental Publishers, 1972), p.302.

Although the Pañcarātra and Vaikhānasa schools differ in their ritual, they share a common iconography²⁰. J.N.Banerjea remarks that among all the other Brahmanical cults prevalent in India, the Pañcarātras were no doubt the most responsible for the wide diffusion of the practice of image worship²¹. The Āgamas of the Vaikhānasas are allegedly composed by the sage Vikhanas and his disciples Atri, Marīci, Kāśyapa and Bhṛgu²². The Pañcarātra teaching was popularised by the Alvars of the 3rd-8th c A.D. and more regularly formulated and incorporated into the Vaiṣṇava teaching by Rāmānuja through whom it was carried to north India and later modified²³. Both Vaikhānasa and Pañcarātra forms of worship occur today in limited form in south India²⁴.

THE ŚILPA ŚĀSTRA.

The canons of Hindu iconography, the Śilpa Śāstra, were derived in part from the iconography outlined in the Purāṇas and Āgamas, in part as a result of the accumulated experience of generations of artists²⁵. Most Śilpa Śāstra are attributed to legendary figures and even gods, although some medieval texts can be traced to historical characters. The Śilpa Śāstra were considered a subsidiary branch of the Vāstu Śāstra, those texts dealing with

20. H.Daniel Smith, Vaiṣṇava Iconography (Madras: Pancaratra Parisodhana Parisad, 1969), p.xxv.

21. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.369.

22. Daniel Smith, Iconography, p.xxvi.

23. S.K.Aiyangar, ed., Paramasaṃhitā, Gaekward Oriental Series no.LXXXVI (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1940), p.27-28.

24. J.Gonda, Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit, History of Indian Literature Series (HILS), Vol.II, 1 ed. J.Gonda (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977), p.141; Aiyangar, Paramasaṃhitā, p.8.

25. Banerjea, Development (1941) p.14.

architecture²⁶. The science of architecture (Vāstu Vidyā) was given great importance and consequently the architect (sthapati) had pride of place over all artists²⁷. The number of teachers of Vāstu Vidyā varies from text to text. MP 252.2-4 mentions eighteen great teachers; 1. Bhṛgu; 2. Atri; 3. Vaśiṣṭha; 4. Viśvakarman; 5. Maya; 6. Nārada; 7. Nagnajit; 8. Viśālākṣa; 9. Purandara; 10. Brahmā; 11. Kumāra; 12. Nandīśa; 13. Śaunaka; 14. Garga; 15. Vāsudeva; 16. Nīruddha; 17. Śukra; and 18. Bṛhaspati²⁸. The Mānasāra Śilpa Śāstra 3.1.2., 3.68.5-9 and 3.70.5 mentions thirty-two teachers, the Agni Purāṇa lists twenty-five, while the Bṛhat Saṃhitā refers to various sages who learnt their craft through the god Brahmā²⁹. It is apparent from these texts and from the Brahmanical iconography of north and south India, that there existed a northern and a southern school of classical Indian art³⁰. The northern school was the Ārya school of the legendary artist Viśvakarman, while the southern school was the Drāviḍa school of Maya³¹. Śilpa texts were translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan and Chinese as well as into the regional languages of India such as Tamil, Telugu, Canarese, Oriya and others, often with glosses and quotes by the craftsmen³². No doubt there was considerable liason between the two schools of north and south India, just as there was considerable plagiarism between

26. Mitra, Bibliography, p.3.

27. Banerjea, Development (1941), p. 17.

28. S.C.Mitra, "Bengal School of Art", Indian Historical Quarterly (IHQ), Vol.I, no.1 (March 1925), p.69.

29. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.15.

30. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.34.

31. D.N.Shukla, Vāstu Śāstra, Vol.II, Hindu Canons of Iconography and Painting, Bhāratīya Vāstu-Śāstra Series Vol.IX (Gorakhpur: Gorakhpur Univ., 1958), p.57; Mitra, Bibliography, p.4.

32. Mitra, Bibliography, p.5.

texts. Generally speaking, south India seems to have maintained the classical tradition, whereas the north is weak in canons of iconography and major temple architecture. The study of Indian iconography depends largely on the south Indian Śilpa texts.

A certain amount of information on iconography can also be gleaned from the **dhyāna mantras** (meditation formulas) or **stotras** (prayers) of deities incorporated in religious works of the principal Brahmanical sects which have their counterpart in the **sādhana**s (prayers) of Vajrayāna Buddhism³³. **Dhyāna mantras** may be found in the Purāṇas and are succinct iconographical descriptions of the various forms of a deity, but as the word **dhyāna** (meditation) indicates, they are for use in mentally visualising a deity and very often have no counterpart in extant images. **Stavas** (hymns sung in honour of the deity) also include iconographical details, although they are of secondary importance³⁴.

THE ARTISTS.

The artists involved in the construction of images and temples usually worked as a team. The Mānasāra Śilpa Śāstra lists four kinds of artist (**śilpin**):

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. sthapati | architect |
| 2. sūtragrahī | draughtsman |
| 3. varddakī | painter |
| 4. takṣaka | engraver ³⁵ . |

33. Banerjea, Development (1941), pp.25-26.

34. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.27.

35. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.16.

There was also the *mṛtkarmajña* ³⁶ or moulder, who was probably responsible for making clay (*mṛt*) images from moulds, although D.N.Shukla refers to the *kumbhakāra* (potter) as the traditional maker of clay images³⁷. The Brahavaivarta Purāṇa lists nine sons of the patron god of artists, Viśvakarmā:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. <i>mālākāra</i> | garland maker |
| 2. <i>karmakāra</i> | blacksmith |
| 3. <i>śaṅkhakāra</i> | conch maker |
| 4. <i>kubindakāra</i> | weaver |
| 5. <i>kumbhakāra</i> | potter |
| 6. <i>kāṁsakāra</i> | maker of bell-metal |
| 7. <i>sūtradhāra</i> | carpenter |
| 8. <i>citrakāra</i> | painter |
| 9. <i>svarnakāra</i> | goldsmith ³⁸ |

These *śilpīns* followed the tradition recorded in various *Śilpa Śāstra*. Their patrons were the dynastic rulers who built temples near their capitals and established images of their family deity in them.

THE TRADITIONAL ARTS.

The *Śilpa Śāstra* standardised what was previously a heterogenous oral tradition. They represent the elite, classical tradition of ancient and medieval Indian art with its rules of symmetry and aesthetic values. But the fact that the previous oral tradition became codified in *Śilpa Śāstra* did not mean that anomalies

36. N.R.Ray, *Mauya and Suṅga Art* (Calcutta: Univ. of Calcutta, 1945), pp.9-8. Ray mentions the Buddhist *Jātaka* stories which list eighteen different arts or crafts (*Śilpa*), including carpentry, smithery, leather-dressing and painting.

37. Shukla, *Vāstu-Śāstra*, p.99.

38. P.N. Bose, *Silpa Sastram*, Punjab Oriental Series no.XVII (Lahore: Punjab Oriental Series, 1928), pp.xvii-xviii, from Brahavaivarta Purāṇa, Brahmā Khaṇḍa 10.

could not occur. There are some ancient and medieval images whose iconographical descriptions cannot be found in any text, just as there are iconographical descriptions which have no counterpart in extant images. J.N.Banerjea attributes this to our lack of thorough knowledge of Indian iconography and the destruction of images by iconoclasts³⁹. Nor did the texts remove the emphasis on the hereditary teacher-pupil relationship. The information given on technique in the Śilpa Śāstra often omits much that is tacitly understood and is part of the practical instructions given by the teacher (**ācārya**) to his pupil. Contemporary **śilpins** working according to the recorded traditions of classical Indian art are also compliant with customers' demands. They may refer to texts (translated into the regional language in most cases) but depend largely on practical experience and knowledge of the artistic conventions.

A distinction may be made between the 'classical' Indian artist who follows the textual injunctions, the 'traditional' artist who follows an oral tradition and works according to regional customs, and the so-called 'folk' artist, the layperson who produces works of art for personal use and has no technical skills and who does not use tools related to a particular craft. This study of the worship of clay images in Bengal concerns the second category, the 'traditional' artist.

The 'traditional' artist follows an oral tradition, works in small endogamous groups bearing a common guild title, producing his work in a standard, repetitive way. He is capable of great ingenuity and artistic expertise and often maintains the conventions of the 'classical' tradition without adhering to the rules

39. Banerjea, Development (1941), pp.35-36.

of measurement or the iconographical proportions. The work of the 'traditional' artist bears a strong regional character which is a blend of the pan-Indian classical tradition and the rural 'folk' tradition. Whereas the 'classical' artist works according to the orthodox Brahmanical tradition, the 'traditional' artist may also produce icons of regional, village deities.

It is therefore necessary to examine the clay images of Bengal in the light of the artistic conventions of the classical tradition as well as the rural tradition in order to discover the possible origins of the practice of making clay images in Bengal.

CHAPTER TWO: ICONOMETRY AND ICONOGRAPHY.

ICONOMETRY.

According to the Indian rules of iconometry, the basic system of measurement is the **aṅgula** (Skt.portion, finger). Three kinds of **aṅgula** are usually referred to in the texts:

1. **mānāṅgula**
2. **mātrāṅgula**
3. **dehalabdhāṅgula** ¹

J.N.Banerjea thinks that the first is not applicable to image making, the second is only a provisional measurement, while the third is the real system of measurement used by image makers². The **mātrāṅgula** is the length of the middle digit of the middle finger of either the sculptor or the architect or the sponsor of the temple and its image³. The **dehalabdhāṅgula**, or **dehāṅgula**, was obtained by dividing the height of the image nine times and then subdividing these twelve times. One of these subdivisions was then called an **aṅgula** ⁴. Twelve **aṅgulas** constitute a **tāla** (Skt.palm), the next largest unit of measurement⁵. The **tāla** is described as the size of the hand from the wrist to the top of the middle finger or the face from the chin to

1. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.347.

2. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.348.

3. T.A.Gopinatha Rao, "Talamana or Iconometry", Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India (MASI), no.3 (1920), p.38.

3. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.350.

5. B.K.Sarkar, trans., The Sukranīti, Sacred Books of the Hindus (SBH), Vol.13 (Allahabad: The Panini Office, 1914), p.169.

the hairline⁶. The *tāla* determined the overall height of the image, whereas the *aṅgula* was the unit of finer measurement and was used to measure the proportions of the various parts of the body. Images may vary in size from one to ten *tālas*. There are also superior (*uttama*), middle (*madhyama*) and inferior (*adhama*) *tāla* measurements. This system of measurement using the *aṅgula* and the *tāla* was endorsed by the Vaikhāṇasas and the Pañcarātras.

THE SYSTEM OF PROPORTIONS.

The Indian system of proportions (*māna*) places great emphasis on symmetry or 'right proportions'; the balance and harmony produced by co-ordination of the various parts of the body according to a uniform system of measurement. If the figure is to conform to the ideal of beauty, it must be correctly proportioned. An ill-proportioned or badly-executed image could bring disaster on the worshipper, whereas conformity with the rules prevented any mishap. For instance, the Sukranītisāra (SS) 4.4.292-295 says that an image with limbs less than the fixed proportions injures the householder, with more, it injures the artist, images which are too thin cause perpetual famine, images which are too thick cause perpetual disease, whereas the properly made image increases happiness⁷.

Some texts mention a sixfold system of measurement:

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 1. <i>māna</i> | the proportions laid down according to the <i>tāla</i> , whether it was <i>uttama</i> , <i>madhayama</i> or <i>adhama</i> |
|----------------|---|

6. K.M.Varma, The Indian Technique of Clay Modelling (Santiniketan: Proddu, 1970), p.35.

7. Sarkar, Sukranīti, p.175.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 2. pramāṇa | the measurement of the breadth
or horizontal extension of the image |
| 3. unmāna | the depth of the figure |
| 4. parimāṇa | the circumference of various parts
of the figure |
| 5. upamāna | the relative measure of different parts
of the body from each other and from
the axis |
| 6. lambamāna | the measure of the surface elevation
of different parts of the image ⁸ |

Interestingly, the SS 4.4.305-306 states that not all kinds of image are subject to the rigid system of proportions laid down in the canons. The proportions need not be followed at all in making images of sand, earth (i.e. clay) and flour and in the case of paintings⁹:

"If there be an absence of one of two marks in the images made by painting, drawing or of sands, earth and pastes, there is no offence"¹⁰.

The SS continues to say that one should only consider the defects in proportion in images of stone and metal¹¹.

The system of proportions referred to images made in high relief (**citrāṅga**), middle relief (**ardha-**

8. D.R.Thapar, Icons in Bronze (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1961), p.144. See also Banerjea, Development (1941), p.343, T.A.Gopinatha Rao, Elements of Hindu Iconography (Madras: Govt. of Travancore, 1914), Vol.I, pt.I, Appendix B, p.5, Mitra, Bibliography, p.22.

9. Gopinatha Rao, "Talamana", p.43.

10. Sarkar, Sukranīti, p.176. Gustav Oppert, ed., Sukranītisāra, Vol.I (Madras: Oriental Publishers, 1882), p.142:
lekhyā lepyā saikatī ca mṛṇmayī paiṣṭikī tathā/
etāsāṃ lakṣaṇābhāve na kaiściddoṣa īritah//

11. Sarkar, Sukranīti, p.176. Oppert, Sukranītisāra, p.142:
pāṣāṇadhātujāyām tu mānadoṣaṇ vicīntayet/

citrāṅga) or bas relief (**ābhāsāṅga**)¹². **Ābhāsāṅga** could refer to images painted on cloth, on a tablet or on a wall¹³. These three divisions of images may be referred to by alternative terms. The **Kāśyapaśilpa**, at the beginning of its section on iconography (**pratimā lakṣaṇa**), speaks of **citra** , **ardhacitra** , and **citrābhāsa** images¹⁴, whereas the **Paramasamhitā** (PS) 23.22-26 divides images into **acitra** , **citrābhāsa** and **bhaktivardhana** (that which increases devotion); the latter being painted on cloth or on a wall¹⁵. Indian sculpture is fundamentally relief sculpture¹⁶.

The height of the image was determined by a number of factors. In the case of the temple image, the height of the image was to be proportionate to the height of the temple. In the **Bṛhat Samhitā** of **Varāhamihira** (c.6th c A.D.), the height of the image and its pedestal is seven eighths the height of the gate of the shrine: two thirds is the height of the image, one third is the pedestal and the image and the pedestal measure one hundred and eight **aṅgulas** ¹⁷. The **Hayaśīrṣa Pañcarātra**, a north Indian work of c.9th c A.D.¹⁸ says that the height of the shrine door should be divided into eight equal

12. P.K.Acharya, trans., Mānasāra Śilpashāstra, Vol.IV, Architecture of Mānasāra (Allahabad: OUP, 1933), p.517.

13. Śilparatna 64.3-4.

14. K.Vajhe, ed., Kāśyapaśilpa , Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series no.95 (Poona:Ānandāśrama Press, 1926). p.167:

ardhacitraṃ ca citraṃ ca citrābhāsam iti tridhā/

15. Aiyangar, Paramasamhita, p.149.

16. P.S.Rawson, "The Methods of Indian Sculpture", Oriental Art (OA) Vol.IV, no.4 (1953), pp.136-143.

17. Gopinatha Rao, "Talamana", p.77.

18. Gonda, Medieval, p.55. Gonda says that the **Hayaśīrṣa Pañcarātra** is of northern origin and texts of it have been found in Orissa. B.M.Sankhyatirtha, ed., Hayaśīrṣa Pañcarātra Vol.I (Rajshahi: Varendra Research Isoc., 1952), p.vi.

parts: two of these parts should constitute the height of the image and one part of it divided into three parts, the height of the pedestal¹⁹.

A differentiation was also made between the size of the temple and household images. The PS 23.26-29 says that the temple image of Viṣṇu should not exceed five *hastas* (one *hasta* equals two *tālas*), whereas in the domestic shrine, the image should not exceed one *hasta* ²⁰. Other texts make this distinction but vary in the heights they stipulate.

The standard height of the temple image was generally determined either by the *navatāla* (*nava* , nine) or the *daśatāla* (*daśa* , ten) measurement whereby the image was divided into nine or ten equal parts. According to K.M.Varma²¹, Āgama texts prescribe the *daśatāla* system for the measurement of images of the gods, while the Purāṇas prefer the *navatāla* system, comprising as it does one hundred and eight *aṅgulas* (108 being an auspicious number). In the Āgamic system, the *uttamadaśatāla* is used for images of supreme deities, the *madhayamadaśatāla* for principal *śaktis* (female consorts of the male gods) and *adhamadaśatāla* for Indra and Lokapālas²². The *tāla* measurements of the lesser deities decrease from *aṣṭatāla* (eight *tālas*) to *saptatāla* (seven *tālas*) right down to one *tāla* . Differentiation is made between male and female, major and minor deities.

19. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.354.

20. For variant measures, see Matsya Purāṇa 258.22-23 and Devī Purāṇa 50.32-34.

21. Varma, Technique, p.37.

22. Gopinatha Rao, "Talamana", p.36 and p.40.

CLASSICAL IMAGES.

Classical images are composed of several elements, but an image in the strictest sense usually means an image plus pedestal. The Sanskrit terms **āsana** , **pīṭha** , **pīṭhikā** or **piṇḍikā** (referring to the holy seat) are used synonymously for the pedestal. The Suprabhedāgama mentions five pedestals which are said to be used for different purposes;

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. anantāsana | for entertainment |
| 2. siṃhāsana | for when the image has to be bathed |
| 3. yogāsana | for invocation |
| 4. padmāsana | for pūjā |
| 5. vimalāsana | for offerings ²³ |

The two most common **āsanas** are the **siṃhāsana** , which is rectangular with four legs carved in the shape of lions, and the **padmāsana** , which is circular and shaped like a lotus (**padma**)²⁴. The MP lists ten different kinds of pedestal for different deities: 1. **sthaṇḍilā** ; 2. **vāpī** ; 3. **vakṣī** ; 4. **vedī** ; 5. **maṇḍalā** ; 6. **pūrṇacandrā** ; 7. **vajrā** ; 8. **padmā** ; 9. **ardhaśaśī** ; 10. **trikoṇā** ²⁵. In the Śiva Purāṇa 22.33, the pedestal itself may be an object of veneration²⁶.

The pedestal is the foundation of the image and supports the backframe known as the **prabhāvalī** . The **prabhāvalī** rises above the figure of the deity and forms an arch above

23. Banerjea, Development (2nd. ed. 1956), p.273.

24. Banerjea, Development (1956), p.273.

25. Akhtar, Matsya, p.313.

26. J.L.Shastri, trans., Śiva Purāṇa , Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology, 1 (Delhi: Motilal Barnasidas, 1970), p.149; D.C.Sircar, The Śākta Pīṭhas (Calcutta: Motilal Barnasidas, 1948), p.3, n.1.

its head. H.Daniel Smith writes that the **prabhāvalī** is associated with light or radiance and is equivalent to a halo²⁷. It is sometimes decorated with tongues of flame (**jvālās**) such as those round the aureole surrounding south Indian images of Śiva Natarāja. Deities also have a halo behind their heads known as a **śiraścakra** , which is usually shaped like a lotus in full bloom²⁸.

The **pīthikā** and **prabhāvalī** are decorated with various animal and vegetal motifs as well as divine and semi-divine figures. On the pedestal may appear a leogryph showing the **gaja-śārdūla** motif (lion upon an elephant)(Fig.3). Above this may be a **makara** (mythical animal). On the lower part of the **prabhāvalī** may be two small figures of celestial musicians (**gandharvas**), one playing a musical instrument, the other dancing. Alternatively, there may be two small **sundarīs** (female attendants with flywhisks). On the upper part of the **prabhāvalī** will be two flying garland-bearers (**mālā-dhārīs**) and finally, at the top of the **prabhāvalī** , a lion-faced gargoyle (**kīrttimukha**)²⁹ (Fig.2). **Prabhāvalīs** may include all or only some of these elements. They are in effect the decorative background for the principal figures, but may also include figures of lesser deities, consorts of the principal deity, or its family (**parivāra**). Deities are represented singly or in pairs (male deity and female consort) or as a triad (central deity flanked by minor deities) with the central deity always larger than the others.

H.Daniel Smith writes that some **prabhāvalīs** are made of cardboard, wood or other foil-covered

27. Daniel Smith, Iconography, 109.

28. Banerjea, Development (1941), pp.323-324.

29. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.326.

materials³⁰. The pedestal (pīṭhikā), on the other hand, should always be of the same material as the image. The MP 262.19-21 states that if the image is made of stone, then the pedestal should also be made of stone ; if it is clay, then the pedestal should also be made of clay; if of wood, then of wood, and if the image is a mixture (miśra) then the pedestal should also be mixed³¹.

ICONOGRAPHICAL CONVENTIONS.

Although each deity had its own distinct iconography there were certain artistic conventions that applied to all representations of the gods. The fundamental purpose of the image, as mentioned in SS 4.4.147-151, is its ability to aid contemplation and **yoga** . According to the SS, meditation is the only way of knowing the character of an image; even direct observation is no use³². Consequently, the maker of the image should possess noble qualities and produce his work while in a meditative state.

The Indian artistic conventions also demanded that the images of the gods should be ideally beautiful and seem alive, as though breathing. The SS 4.4.289-291 states that gods should always be shown without beards and eyelids, sixteen years old, with beautiful ornaments³³. It adds, in 4.4.403-404 that the artist should always design the appearance of the very young, very rarely that of the infant, but never that of the old³⁴. The gods are forever

30. Daniel Smith, Iconography, p.109.

31. Akhtar, Matsya., p.314. and Matsya Purāṇa, Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series 54, lines 19-20, p.537:

śaile śailamayīm dadyāt pārthive pārthivīm tathā/
dāruje dārujām kuryān miśre miśrām tathaiva ca//

32. Sarkar, Sukranīti, pp.167-168.

33. Sarkar, Sukranīti, p.175.

36. Sarkar, Sukranīti, p.182.

youthful and vigorous. Their transcendental nature is emphasised by their composed, smiling appearance, even when they are engaged in dynamic action. Harmony and lack of tension signify the eternal³⁵. The Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa says that the figures of deities should be endowed with life as though breathing³⁶. Figures are shown as if they have inhaled a deep breath, their chests are expanded and they are smiling.

QUALITIES.

The gods are shown as fearful (**ugra**) or benevolent (**śānta**). Their appearance indicates their inherent qualities (**guṇa**)³⁷. Passionate (**rājasī**) images are usually four-armed, standing and red or yellow in colour. Malignant (**tāmasī**) images are usually multi-armed and shown in dynamic poses and are dark blue or black, whereas the tranquil (**sātvikī**) images are two-armed, seated and white³⁸. These qualities or **guṇas** may also be relayed by hand gestures called **mudrās** ³⁹.

MUDRĀS.

The commonest **mudrās** are **varada** (indicating the bestowal of a boon upon the devotee by the god) and

35. N.R.Ray, "Certain Notions relating to Form and Style in Indian Art", J.N.Banerjea Commemoration Volume (Calcutta: Univ. of Calcutta, 1960), p.175.

36. Ray, "Notions", p.167.

37. These three **guṇas** are : **sāttva**, **tāmas** and **rajas** and the idea of the **guṇas** stems from Sāṃkhya philosophy, see Michel Hulin, Sāṃkhya Literature , HILS, Vol.IV, 3, p.144.

38. Pushpendra Kumar, Śakti Cult in Ancient India (Varanasi: Bhartiya Publishers, 1974), p.230. Sukranītisāra 4.4.312-313 mentions white as the colour of **sātvikī**, red for **rājasī** and black for **tāmasī** deities (Sarkar, Sukranīti, p.176).

39. **Mudrā** can also mean 'parched corn', mixed with ghee, curds etc and used in the '**pañcamakāra**' (**madhya**, **māṃsa**, **matsya**, **mudrā**, **maithuna**) (Lalye, Studies, p.118).

abhaya mudrā (indicating the bestowal of fearlessness). **Varada mudrā** shows the hand turned downwards, palm facing out, **abhaya mudrā** shows the hand turned upwards, palm facing out. Sometimes the word **hasta** (Skt.hand) is used to denote a hand pose, but **hasta** generally refers to the whole arm plus hand, whereas **mudrā** refers only to hand gestures⁴⁰. **Mudrās** may be single hand gestures (**asamyukta**) or combined hand gestures (**samyukta**)⁴¹. **Sātvikī** images are shown with **yoga-**, **abhaya -** and **varada mudrās**; **rājast** images have weapons and **varada -** and **abhaya mudrās**; and **tāmasī** images are shown fighting, killing demons⁴².

ATTRIBUTES.

Multiple arms and heads indicate mastery over the universe and the ability to fulfil several functions simultaneously. The figures of the gods are distinguished by such characteristics, whereas human figures are always two-armed. The hands of deities may be in **mudrās** or contain particular weapons, implements or symbolic objects. For instance, the trident is associated with the god Śiva, whereas the discus (**cakra**) and conch (**śaṅkha**) are the symbols of Viṣṇu. Common weapons and implements are: **kaumodī** (mace); **khetaka** (round shield); **dhanus** and **śara** (bow and arrow); **aṅkuṣa** (goad); **pāśa** (noose); **khadga** (sword); **paraśu** (battle-axe); **śūla** (trident); **śakti** (spear); and **khaṭvāṅga** (club)⁴³. Hindu deities are elaborately dressed and decorated with jewelled crowns (**mukuta**), necklaces, bracelets (**kaṅkana**), arm-bands, anklets and waistbands

40. Banerjea, Development (1956), p.247.

41. Gosta Liebert, Iconographic Dictionary of Indian Religion (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1976), p.182.

42. Gopinatha Rao, "Talamana", p.41.

43. Banerjea, Development (1941), pp.329-330.

(**kaṭibandha**) or belt (**mekhalā**). According to Varāhamihira in the Br̥hat Saṁhitā 57.29, there should be a similarity between the dress and ornamentation of the people of a country and that used on images of their deities ⁴⁴. This would account for the regional variations in the appearance of the images. Clothes are said to be of a colour that will match the complexion of the deity in the case of polychromatic images⁴⁵. Śiva is white, Viṣṇu is dark blue, Brahmā is red and Durgā is golden and so forth.

POSTURES.

The gods are shown in a variety of graceful postures, either standing (**sthānaka**), sitting (**āsana**) or reclining (**śayana**)⁴⁶. If the main icon is shown standing, the subsidiary icons in the temple are to be shown likewise, but if the main icon is reclining, the subsidiary images should be shown standing or seated. The reclining posture is not common⁴⁷. Standing (**sthānaka**) icons may be shown in four different standing postures or **bhaṅga** :

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. samabhaṅga | with no bends in the body |
| 2. ābhaṅga | with a slight bend |
| 3. tribhaṅga | with three bends |
| 4. atibhaṅga | an exaggerated form of tribhaṅga ⁴⁸ . |

Another standing posture is **ālīḍha** (fig.5, 5) with the figure shown standing sideways, the right knee in front and left leg retracted and

44. Banerjea, Development (1956), p.246.

45. B.C.Bhattacharya, Indian Images, Vol.1 (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1921), p.55.

46. Banerjea, Development (1956), p.264.

47. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.300.

48. Banerjea, Development (1956), p.264.

diagonally stretched behind. **Pratyālīḍha** (Fig.5, 6) is the opposite of **ālīḍha** with the left leg bent. Both these poses are used for figures shown firing arrows⁴⁹. Only a small number of the many poses mentioned in texts were actually used by the image makers and the frontal pose (in **samabhaṅga**) was considered the most appropriate for the depiction of the main cult deity⁵⁰. The sitting (**āsana**) postures are **lalitāsana** (Fig.5, 4) and **padmāsana** (Fig.5, 3), the so-called lotus posture, are both common. In the former the left leg is tucked under the seat and the right leg dangles along it, in the latter, both legs are placed on top of each other and tucked up into the groin. There is also **sukhāsana** (Figs.5, 1 and 2) in which the left leg rests on the seat, while the right knee is raised upwards on the seat or dangles down⁵¹.

VĀHANAS.

Besides these characteristic colours, gestures, poses and attributes, deities also have a mount (**vāhana**) which may be an animal or mythical being connected with the deity through myth. Śiva's **vāhana** is the white bull, Nandin, Viṣṇu's is the mythical snake-eating Garuḍa bird, Gaṇeśa's is the rat (**ākhu**) and so forth. Deities are shown riding upon their **vāhanas** or with their mounts beside them. When they are not on their **vāhanas**, it is common to find deities depicted as seated or standing upon a lotus, **padmāsana** being one of the **āsanas** mentioned in the list of pedestals in the Matsya Purāṇa.

49. Banerjea, Development (1956), pp.264-267.

50. Banerjea, Development (1956), p.269.

51. Banerjea, Development (1956), p.270, p.272 and (1941), p.296.

CHAPTER THREE: MATERIALS USED IN IMAGE MAKING.

CHOICE OF MATERIALS.

A number of materials are suggested for use in image making. The Agni Purāṇa 43.10 mentions seven (clay, wool, iron, gems, stone, sandal, flowers)¹, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa 11.27.12 lists eight (stone, wood, iron, sandalwood, drawn figures, those made with sand, of precious stones or purely mental images)², while the Mānasāra Śilpa Śāstra 51.2-4 mentions nine (gold, silver, copper, stone, wood, stucco, mortar and plaster or gravel, transparent marble and clay)³. The most commonly mentioned materials are metal, stone, wood and clay. Alternative substances include precious gems, flowers, sandalpaste and mixed (*miśra*) substances.

Some texts grade the materials in terms of suitability and durability. PS 18.24 states that the materials for making images are silver, copper, wood, stone and earth (i.e. clay) in that order of suitability⁴, while the SS 4.4.151 says that images are made of sands, pastes, paints, enamels, earth, woods, stones and metals in order of durability⁵. There is no concept of 'evolution' in the choice of materials or evidence that, as technique developed, certain materials were abandoned in favour of others. The materials chosen would necessarily depend on their availability in the local environment

1. M.N.Dutt Shastri, trans., Agni Purāṇam, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Studies, Vol.LIV (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1967), p.160.

2. Kane, Dharmaśāstra (1941), p.175.

3. Mitra, Bibliography, p.20.

4. Aiyangar, Paramasaṃhitā, p.116.

5. Sarkar, Sukranīti, pp.167-168.

as well as regional preference.

The selection of materials also depended on the financial resources and caste affiliations of the sponsor, the spiritual 'rewards' desired and the intended function to which the image was assigned⁶.

CLASSIFICATION OF IMAGES.

Images could be worshipped in temples (**prāsāda**), temporary pavilions (**maṇḍapa**) or in domestic (**bhavana, grha**) or wayside shrines.

Temple images are often divided into three categories:

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|--------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. cala | mobile |
| 2. acala | immobile |
| 3. calācala | mobile-immobile ⁷ |

The main icon in the temple shrine (**garbhagrha**) was regarded as immobile (**acala**). Once fixed in place and consecrated, it was not to be moved. The MP 266.60 says that, once installed, an image should not be removed again from the spot and that it is a sin to do so⁸. The **acala** image could only be moved from its position if it had been seriously damaged or was decayed beyond repair, in which case it was replaced with a new image. The main cult image, which was permanently fixed in the central shrine, was referred to as the **mūla vighraha** or more commonly, the **dhruva bera** . The PS 18.21 says that the permanent images should be regarded as **dhruva** (everlasting) and are very strong, whereas the others are called middling and inferior, according

6. Daniel Smith, Iconography, p.15.

7. T.A.Gopinatha Rao, Elements of Hindu Iconography, Vol.I, pt.I (Madras: Govt. of Travancore, 1914), p.17.

8. Akhtar, Matysa, p.323.

to the time they are likely to last⁹. In the *Kāśyapa-jñāna-khaṇḍa* (KJK) the **acala** image is said to represent the 'form of the Highest Light', the inexpressible, omnipresent deity¹⁰.

Although the main icon in the temple was attended to daily, most ceremonies and festivals were performed on a number of subsidiary images. Whereas the main icon was immobile, these subsidiary images were mobile (**cala**). The **cala** images were usually described as:

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| 1. arcā bera | used for worship and sometimes called kautuka because it is decorated with flowers and ornaments and therefore appears delightful |
| 2. utsava bera | used for festivals (utsava) and processions |
| 3. bali bera | used for receiving offerings |
| 4. snāpana bera | used for ritual bathing in the sea, tanks or rivers ¹¹ |

Not all temples contained this number of subsidiary images. In the KJK there are only three subsidiary images : the mobile image, which is known as the **kautuka bera** or 'auspicious image'; the festival image; and the bathing image, the **arca bera**. These images were to be used in the main worship, for festivals and for bathing¹². In most

9. Aiyangar, *Paramasaṃhitā*, p.115 and text, p.120:
 teṣu nityā dhruvāścāpi jñeyā brahman mahābalāḥ/
 madhyamā ścādhamaścaiva sthitikālena kīrtitāḥ// v.21.

10. T.Goudriaan, *Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom* (The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1965), p.162.

11. K.M.Varma, "The Role of Polychromy in Indian Statuary", *Artibus Asiae* (AA), Vol.24, no.2 (1961), p.119.

12. Goudriaan, *Kāśyapa*, p.161. *Kāśyapa-jñāna-khaṇḍa* ch.57 gives details of the casting of a metal **cala bera**, p.165.

cases, the subsidiary images are replicas of the main icon or else forms of the main deity.

The category *calācala* refers to the main icon, which, in the absence of any subsidiary images, is immobile in the central shrine, but is also taken out on procession on festival occasions and is therefore mobile. The use of subsidiary images is more common in the larger temples of south India than the more modest temples of the north.

The *acala dhruva bera* was usually large and heavy and made of the main materials such as metal, stone, wood or clay. *Cala* images were usually made of metal and were portable. The PS 22.16.17 says that, for the purpose of *yātrā* (festival procession), the image should be small and made of gold, silver or copper and no other material¹³. According to the KJK, there are two forms of worship: one in which both the *dhruva bera* (immobile) and the *kautuka bera* (mobile) are worshipped; and the other in which only the *dhruva bera* is worshipped. In the latter case, the *dhruva bera* is made of unpainted stone¹⁴. The *kautuka bera*, on the other hand, is to be made of gold, silver, copper or wood¹⁵. However, the KJK also dedicates several chapters to the construction of a clay *dhruva bera*, which seems to imply that its preference lay with clay. Each text advocated a different material.

OTHER FACTORS.

The choice of material also varied according to the various spiritual rewards desired by the sponsor.

13. Aiyangar, Paramasāṃhitā, p.142.

14. Goudriaan, Kāśyapa, p.161.

15. Gourdiaan, Kāśyapa, p.163.

Worshipping an image in each of the materials brought its own special corresponding 'reward', although the texts vary in their opinions as to what these rewards were. The KJK sees this as a means of deciding the material for the **dhruva bera** in the temple:

"He who desires longevity, prosperity and reknown should make the main manifestation of stone; if he desires increase, offspring and religious merit, of red copper; if he longs for mastery of yoga and happiness, of wood; if he desires gold, land etc., of clay"¹⁶.

The *Br̥hat Saṃhitā* 60.4-5 says that an image made of wood or clay gives long life, prosperity, strength and victory; one made of precious stones, the welfare of the world; one of gold, health; one of silver, fame; one of copper, increase of children; and an emblem of Śiva made of stone, acquisition of immense landed property¹⁷.

The financial resources and caste affiliations of the sponsor also played a part in the decision over the materials. The *Devī Purāṇa*, for instance, says the worshipper should make the image 'according to his means'¹⁸. Caste affiliations seem to have played a minor part in the selection of materials, although the social code would have certainly determined the mode and scale of worship. The only differentiation between the four classes (*varṇa*) of Hindu society as regards the choice of materials was in the colour of the material. In the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* bk.3.19, the **sthapati** goes to a hill and selects a particular stone for an image. White, red, yellow or black stones are to be used by Brahmins,

16. Goudriaan, *Kāśyapa*, p.129.

17. V.S.Shastri, ed., *Br̥hat Saṃhitā* (Bangalore: V.B.Soobiah and Sons, 1947), p.522:

āyuh śrībalajayadā dārumayī mṛṇmayī tathā pratimā/
lokahitāya maṇimayī sauvarṇī puṣṭidā bhavati//
rajatamayī kīrtikarī prajāvivṛddhim karoti tāmramayī/
bhūlābham tu mahāntam śailī pratimāthavā liṅgam// v.4-5.

18. P.Tarkaratna, ed., *Devī Purāṇa* (Calcutta: Navabharata Publishers, 1384 B.S.), p.422, DP 76.24..

Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras respectively¹⁹. The same colour scheme was followed in regard to the selection of clay²⁰.

THE DIFFERENT MATERIALS: METAL.

Metal images (*lohajā pratimā*) could be made from gold, silver, copper, iron, bronze or brass. Advanced knowledge of tin, lead, silver, copper and iron appears in later Vedic literature²¹. According to Louis Frédéric, true bronze is rare due to lack of tin and consequently most metal images are made with different alloy with a copper base²². In south India, five alloys are used, the compound being known as *pañcaloha* (gold, silver, copper, iron and lead)²³, while in north India eight alloys are used, the compound being known as *aṣṭadhātu* (gold, silver, copper, iron, lead, tin, quicksilver and zinc or brass or steel)²⁴. Images were cast by the *cire perdue* (lost wax) method²⁵. By this method, the image is either sculpted in wax over a clay core or from a solid piece of wax. The wax is coated in mud usually in thin successive layers which are then carefully allowed to dry. This covering forms the mould in which there are openings to allow the wax to run out when heated. The metal is

19. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.236.

20. A similar list appears in Śiva Purāṇa 20.7.

21. Ray, Maurya, p.8

22. Louis Frédéric, Indian Temples and Sculpture (London: Thames and Hudson, 1959), p.338.

23. Frédéric, Temples, p.338.

24. Liebert, Iconographic, p.26. See also D.R.Thapar, Icons in Bronze (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1961), p.145 and M.V.Krishnan, Cire Perdue Casting in India (New Delhi: Kanak Publications, 1976), p.85.

25. The Mānasollāsa gives an elaborate description of *cire perdue* casting (Krishnan, Cire, p.1. Suprabhedāgama 34.21 states that if an image is metal it must first be prepared in wax (Gopinatha Rao, Elements (1914), p.50).

then poured in. The mould is broken and the metal figure tooled where necessary to give a better finish. The cast is hollow if modelled over a wax and clay core, but solid if the original model was in wax²⁶. Some metal images were studded with precious gems²⁷ and inlaid with different coloured metals. Small images were usually made by solid casting, whereas larger images were hollow²⁸. Different varieties and blends of clay were used in the casting process. The ŚR 1.38-41 mentions different kinds of clay compound used for moulding as well as for making the crucible : kaṭhinā (hard clay); mandakaṭhinā (semi-hard clay); mṛdu (soft clay); and mṛduttarā (very soft clay). Adding cowdung is mentioned as a means of softening the clay. In the moulding, strained cowdung is used and the Mānasollāsa and the Śilparatna both refer to the mixing in of charred rice husks, cowdung and cotton fibre or cloth with the clay used for moulding²⁹.

STONE AND WOOD.

Various kinds of stone (śilā) were collected from suitable places for stone (śailajā) images. As with the selection of wood, the artist and priest would go into the forest or other such suitable place, select a stone, propitiate it with offerings, observe the auspicious signs and the next day commence work. Stones could be masculine, feminine or neuter. The Śālagrāma (a black stone containing fossil ammonite found in the Gandaki river near a village called Śālagrāma) and the bāṇalinga (from the Narmada

26. Zwalf, Heritage, pp.108-109 and Banerjea, Development (1941), pp.233-234.

27. Devī Purāṇa 50.35 says an image of gold, silver or copper should be studded with costly gems.

28. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.234.

29. Krishnan, Cire, p.3 and p.25.

valley) are natural stones used in the aniconic worship of Viṣṇu and Śiva respectively³⁰. Trees for making wooden (*dārujā*) images were propitiated then cut down and carved. As with the stone, various types of wood were considered suitable and these vary from text to text and , of course, depend on the type of tree growing in the region. The PS 23.4 mentions the following types of wood: *khadira*, *panasa*, *madhūka*, *sarala*, *devadāru*, *jāti*, *asana*, *timīśa* and *candana* ³¹.

CLAY.

Clay (*mṛt*) for making clay (*mṛṇmaya* or *mṛttikā* ³² *pratimā*) has always been mentioned along with metal, stone and wood in lists of materials in the Purāṇas, Āgamas and Śilpa Śāstra. The major sects, Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva and Śākta, have all recommended the use of clay in the making of images of their principal deities. The Vaiṣṇava tradition of south India favoured the worship of a clay *dhruva bera* as can be seen from the Āgamas of the Vaikhāṇasas and the Pañcarātras. This tradition is also apparent in the Haribhaktivilāsa of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa which drew from the Hayaśīrṣa Pañcarātra and describes the initial stages in the construction of clay images of female deities (*śtrīmūrtti*). The Śaivas practised the worship of a clay Śiva *liṅga* . It is also clear from the Purāṇas and related works, that the worship of a clay image of Devī was favoured by the Śāktas, although there does not seem to be any major text dealing with the construction of a clay image of Devī.

30. Kane, Dharmaśāstra(1941), pp.715-716. See also Sarkar, Sukranīti, p.176.

31. Aiyangar, Paramasaṁhitā, p.148.

32. Mṛttikā , earth, loam, consisting of clay, Monier-Williams, Dictionary, p.830.

The clay mentioned in texts related to image making was not always fired. In fact, some texts indicate a preference for unbaked (terracruda) images, while others expressly forbid the use of a terracotta image in ordinary worship. The distinction between unbaked clay images (*apakva-mṛṇmaya-pratimā*) and baked clay images (*pakva-mṛṇmaya-pratimā*) is important. From the point of view of the iconographer, it must remove the assumption that all clay art is necessarily terracotta art. However, the distinction appears to be made according to religious injunctions which are not adequately explained in any text and which raise several questions regarding the nature of clay images used for worship.

THE ŚAIVITE TRADITION:CLAY LINGA IN THE ŚIVA PURĀṆA.

In the Śiva Purāṇa (ŚP), several chapters are dedicated to the preparation, installation and worship of clay images and more specifically, the clay *linga* (phallic emblem, sacred to Śiva)³³. It states that the worship of clay images bestows wealth, suppresses misery, wards off premature death, procures sons and all one's worldly desires (16.3-4), that the earthen *linga* of Śiva is the most excellent of all images of Śiva and that Brahmins have achieved great things by worshipping it (19.4). The propitiation of the earthen Śiva *linga* is sanctifying, bestows bliss, longevity and fortune etc and it must be worshipped by all devotees of Śiva (19.17). If one worships a deity without previously installing a clay *linga* , the worship is fruitless (21.4). Worshipping different numbers of clay *lingas* also produces different results (21. 15-21). Both men and women may collect clay from riverbeds, lakes and wells (16.5). The

33. Shastri, *Śiva*, p.132. SP 19.7 says that the Śiva *linga* made of precious gems was considered the best in the *kr̥ta* age, of pure gold in the *dvāpara* , of mercury in the *tretā* and of earth in the *kali yuga* .

clay is placed in an auspicious place, washed thoroughly with water and mixed with scented powder and milk (20.8-9). It is kneaded and made into an image by hand upon a platform (16.6), shaped with all the necessary ornaments, seated on a **padmāsana** (lotus seat) and worshipped (16.7). The five deities Gaṇeśa, Sūrya, Viṣṇu, Pārvatī and Śiva may be worshipped in this way (16.8). The earthen **liṅga** is made in one piece rather than separate from its pedestal. The best (**uttama**) height for an earthen Śiva **liṅga** is four **aṅgulas** (21.29). Mobile (**cala**) images are made as a single whole, whereas immobile (**acala**) images are to be made in two pieces (19.28 and 19.31). Worship of the earthen **liṅga** is done by chanting **mantras** and should be done on the bank of river or tank or on top of a mountain or in the forest or in a Śiva temple ; it must be a clean place (20.5).

CLAY LINGA IN THE ŚILPARATNA.

The Śilparatna (ŚR) of Śrīkumāra (late 16th c), a Brahmin from Kerala in south India³⁴, also mentions the making of a clay Śiva **liṅga** . In this case, the clay **liṅga** may be either baked (**pakva**) or unbaked (**apakva**). The clay compound mentioned in the ŚR bk.3.1 for making a durable clay **liṅga** involves the use of four kinds of clay (white, red, yellow and black) as well as various grains (barley, wheat), a kind of pulse called **māsa** , bdellium and extracts of lac, pumpkin, **syāma** and an aromatic plant called **kunḍuru** , the five products of the cow (**pañcagavya** viz.milk, curd, ghee, urine, cowdung) and oil³⁵. Suitable clay for this compound may be gathered from **tīrthas** and **kṣetras** (both refer to holy places). The clay is kneaded for about a fortnight and left for a month after

34. K.Sambasiva Sastri, ed., Śilparatna of Śrīkumāra, pt.II, Trivandrum Sanskrit Series Vol.XCVIII (Trivandrum: Govt. of Travancore, 1929), p.1.

35. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.246 n.1.

which the **liṅga** and its pedestal (**pīṭhikā**) should be made and dried in the sun for a month³⁶. Although this compound is unbaked (**apakva**), the same section also mentions the making of terracotta (**pakva**) **liṅgas** . In this case, the clay is only mixed with the **pañcagavya** , it is left for a month and then the **liṅga** and its pedestal are baked in an auspicious fire³⁷. The ŚR explains that a **pakva liṅga** is used for permanent worship while the **apakva liṅga** is used for daily **pūjā** and immersed in water³⁸. The worship of the temporary clay **liṅga** (**pārthiva pūjā**) is practised today by modern Bengali girls who make a **liṅga** from riverine clay and worship it for the sake of gaining a husband as worthy as Śiva³⁹.

In both the ŚP and the ŚR, the clay images and **liṅgas** are moulded by hand from a lump of tempered clay mixed with various animal and plant products. The construction of clay images according to the Vaiṣṇava Āgama tradition is more complex and involves a larger number of materials.

THE VAIṢṆAVA TRADITION:THE VAIKHĀNASA METHOD.

The KJK, a south Indian Vaikhānasa text by Kāśyapa (c.9th-10th c), includes several chapters on the making

36. Sastri, Śilparatna , p.6:

tām mṛdām marditām pakṣam māsamātroṣitām punah//
grhītvā kārayelliṅgam sapīṭham lakṣaṇānvitam/
māsam tu śoṣayed gharṁe bimbamāmaṁ tu mārttikam// (I.47-48)

37. Sastri, Śilparatna, p.6:

athavā kevalam mṛtsnām karmayogyām vicūrṇitām/
marditām pañcagavyādbhirmāsamātraṁ tathoṣitām//
grhītvā kārayelliṅgam sapīṭham tviṣṭamānataḥ/
vipacet kuśalairagnau pakvaliṅgam tu tad bhavet// (I.49-50)

38. Sastri, Śilparatna, p.7:

nirmāya sadyastalliṅge śivamāvāhya pūjayet/
viśrjya nirapekṣam talliṅgamapsu vinikṣipet// (I.56)

39. O.C.Gangoly, Indian Terracotta Art (Calcutta: Rupa and Co., 1959), p.18.

of a clay **dhruva bera** of Viṣṇu⁴⁰. Chapters 40-46 deal with the construction and consecration of a piece of wood (**śūla** , frame) which is to become the rough form of the figure and the inner support for an image made of clay. Chapter 42 gives the measurements of the **śūla** , chapters 47-48 mention the preparation of the clay for the image and chapter 49 concerns the finishing of the clay image. The wooden armature (**śūla**) is made according to measurements given in the text. The palms of the hands, the feet and ears are made of copper leaf and the text says that gold, silver and copper may be used for the palms of the hands and the shaft for the head⁴¹. Clay is collected from the banks of auspicious rivers, pools or ponds or the slope of a mountain. It is cleaned and **mantras** are recited while the spot is cleaned with water⁴². The clay is dried in the sunshine upon straw mats or boards. It is ground with a pestle and mortar and laid aside 'for a day and a night' in new vessels. Leaves are added, water taken from the river is sieved, the clay is placed in the water and left for a period. The water is drained away and the clay mixed with barks, saps, barley, crushed sandal, aloe, **koṣṭhu**, **uśīra** , cardomom, clove, **jātī** , fruit, **aṅgana** etc and then rubbed with dust of gold, silver and copper, bark of **kapitha** and coconut⁴³. The mixture is then left in a shady spot for three days. Curds, fresh milk and coconut milk are poured over the clay and the wooden armature is coated with the clay mixture by means of three strands of rope made of coconut

40. Goudriaan, Kāśyapa, pp.129-145.

41. Goudriaan, Kāśyapa, p.132.

42. Goudriaan, Kāśyapa, p.141.

43. Goudriaan, Kāśyapa, p.143.

fibre which should be made like veins⁴⁴. In finishing the image, jewels are laid on at various points: the heart, forehead, neck, arms, navel, penis, feet, eyes, ears, nostrils and mouth. Crushed gravel mixed with perfume is added to the image. Ornaments of clay mixed with pearls are made and placed on the image and it is clothed and given a crown⁴⁵. The image is then painted. An image of Hari (Viṣṇu) is painted white, gold and black, while an image of his consort Śrī (Lakṣmī) is painted the colour of molten gold⁴⁶. T.Goudriaan notes: 'In this way the wood represents the bones; the clay the flesh; the ropes the veins; the crushed gravel the blood; the garment the skin; the paint the soul'⁴⁷.

THE PAÑCARĀTRA METHOD.

The procedure for making clay images is similar in Pañcarātra texts. H.Daniel Smith, who has collated Pañcarātra material used in Vaiṣṇava iconography, summarises one text, the Śrīpraśna 13.1-8, which indicates twelve stages in the construction of a clay image: 1. the wood is selected for the śūla frame; 2. the śūla is built with strings; 3. the string on the frames is smeared with clay; 4. the nerves and joints are moulded in their appropriate places; 6. another layer of clay is applied; 7. the string is wound

44. Goudriaan, Kāśyapa, pp.144-145.

45. Goudriaan, Kāśyapa, pp.145-146.

46. Goudriaan, Kāśyapa, pp.146-147.

47. Goudriaan, Kāśyapa, p.144 note 5. A parallel can be drawn with material found in the Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra, which talks of the burning of an effigy of the deceased, sometimes a year after the decease, as a meritorious act for everyone (Praśna 5, khaṇḍa 12). The effigy is made of the branches of palāśa with their leaves and darbha grass. The palāśa stalks represent the bones, the leaves the flesh, the darbha grass stalks represent the tubular vessels of the body (veins, arteries) and the hair (W.Caland, trans., Vaikhānasasmārtasūtram (Calcutta, Asiatic Soc. of Bengal, 1929), p.144.).

again; 8. the whole surface is smeared with a sandy substance; 9. the figure is wrapped in strips of cloth; 10. certain areas are indented for later application of ornaments and decorations; 11. a final coat of fine white plaster is applied; and 12. the figure is painted with appropriate colours⁴⁸.

THE SOUTHERN ĀGAMIC TRADITION.

The southern Āgamic tradition of the Vaikhāṇasas and the Pañcarātras therefore yields a fairly detailed picture of the construction of clay images. K.M.Varma has assimilated all the fragmentary instructions given in the texts belonging to the Vaikhāṇasa school and reconstructed the entire process of clay image making, illustrating the procedure with photographs of the various stages in the construction of a clay **dhruva bera** ⁴⁹. Varma draws from such works as the Kāśyapaśilpa (KS)(12th c), the Śilparatna of Śrīkumāra (16th c), the Vimānārcanākalpa (8th c), the KJK and the Samūrtārcanādhikaraṇa, otherwise known as the Atrisamhitā (16th/17th c). According to Varma, the construction of a clay image is done with seven materials in seven stages. These materials correspond to the various elements of the human body:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. asthi (bone) | śūla (the armature) |
| 2. medas (fat) | aṣṭabandha (the glue) |
| 3. sirā (veins, arteries) | rajju (the rope) |

48. Daniel Smith, Iconography, p.47 and p.49. See S. Padmanabhan, ed., Śrīpraśna Samhitā, Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha Series no,12 (Tirupati: Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, 1969), p.76:

prathamam dārusaṅghāto dvitīyaṃ rajjuveṣṭanam//
 mṛdālepāstrīyastu turīyo nāḍibandhanam/
 pañcamo rajjuveṣṭaḥ syānnārikelatvacā punaḥ//
 miśritā mṛttikā ṣaṣṭhī saptamam rajjuveṣṭanam/
 aṣṭamaḥ śarkarālepo navamam paṭayojanam//
 bhūṣaṇam daśamam viddhi suklālepamataḥ param/
 dvādaśo varṇalepaḥ syāttattanmūrtyanuśārataḥ// (4-7)

49. See Varma, Technique.

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 4. māmisa (flesh,muscle) | mṛt (the clay) |
| 5. śonita (blood) | śarkarā-kalka (the limestone paste) |
| 6. tvak (skin) | paṭa (the cloth) |
| 7. jīva (life) | varṇa (the colour) ⁵⁰ |

Varma summarises the construction of a clay image as follows⁵¹. The clay is selected from rivers, tanks and lakes and must be clean. It is obtained from the mud (pañka) of three types of soil: 1. jāṅgalā (arid); 2. anūpa (damp); 3. miśra (mixed). The colour may be white, red, yellow or black. The clay is kept in pots filled with a little water, stirred and filtered through cloth into pots. After the mud has settled, the water is drained away and the mud is left to dry. Decoctions from barks of trees are made and poured into the clay which is then kneaded and divided into small lumps while the clay is still wet. Sand and stone are mixed in equal parts and added to the clay in a 3: 1 proportion. The mixture is stirred and kneaded for at least a week and mixed with fruit decoctions. Barley and other cereals are added in powder form and the clay is treated for a further week adding coconut water. Resin is ground finely and added to the clay with yoghurt and the five products of the cow (pañcagavya), oil, saffron, and various powders. The mixture is kneaded again for five days. Coconut fibre is then added and the clay is ready for use.

The wood for the śūla is selected from a number of trees and left on a platform (sthaṇḍila) of coarse sand to season for a year or six months, after which the śūla proper can be made. A platform is built for the image either in stone or in brick, containing the base stone in the centre, on which the image is

50. Varma, Technique, p.7.

51. Varma, Technique, pp.19-23.

built⁵². It is customary to deposit some gems underneath the image in the hole made to accomodate it in the pedestal⁵³. In the first stage of construction, the śūla is measured in aṅgulas and fitted together. It is covered with glue to bind the coconut fibre that is applied over the armature. The rough fibre makes the armature firmer and ensures that the clay remains attached to the frame. A first layer of clay is added and left to dry. Minor ropes are then attached. These ropes are supposed to represent the veins and main arteries in the body according to the Indian anatomical system. Another layer of clay is added and allowed to dry. A third layer of clay is then applied with no intervening layer of rope. The three layers of clay are first the anūpa (damp), then the miśra (the mixed clay) and finally the jāṅgalā (arid). Jewels are fixed at various points on the body and a fourth layer of limestone paste is added (the śarkarā-kalka), then the cloth. The image is given several coatings of white plaster and then the paint (varṇa) is applied. As in the KJK, the hands and feet of the image are made of copper covered in clay.

THE NORTHERN TRADITION: THE HARIBHAKTIVILĀSA.

Although the southern tradition of making clay images can be pieced together using Vaikhānasa and Pañcarātra texts, the northern tradition remains elusively vague in its descriptions. The Haribhaktivilāsa (HB) of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa (16th c) gives some indications of the prevailing trends in Bengal according to the Vaiṣṇava practice.

52. Varma, Technique, pp.33-34 and p.67.

53. Varma, Technique, p.67 n.9.

Gopāla Bhaṭṭa was one of the six 'gosvāmins' or disciples of the Bengali Vaiṣṇava saint, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu (1485-1533)⁵⁴. The HB is a Sanskrit compendium of Vaiṣṇava ritual which includes three chapters (vilāsas 18-20) on the construction and installation of images, their worship and the building of temples. It quotes from the Matsya, Agni, Viṣṇudharmottara and other Purāṇas, but frequently uses the Hayaśīrṣa Pañcarātra (HP), a Pañcarātra text written probably in north India c.9th c A.D.⁵⁵.

In vilāsa 18 of the HB, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa first defines four kinds of images according to the MP:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| 1. citrajā | painted |
| 2. lepyā | plastered |
| 3. śastrotkīrnā | carved |
| 4. pākajā | fired |

Defining these further, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa says that if an image is painted on cloth, a wall or plate, it is called citrajā; if it is made of earth, it is called lepyā; if the image is of iron or metal, it is pākajā; if it is of stone or wood, śastrotkīrnā⁵⁶.

The quote from the MP is followed immediately with a quote from the HP classifying seven kinds of images:

54. The six 'gosvāmins' were: Raghunāthadāsa; Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa; Sanātana Gosvāmin; Gopāla Bhaṭṭa; Rūpa Gosvāmin; and Jīva Gosvāmin (D.R.Kinsley, The Sword and the Flute (California, Univ. of California Press, 1975), p.66 n.18.) There is a popular couplet which runs:

śrīrūpasanatana bhaṭṭa raghunātha/
śrījīva gopāla bhaṭṭa dāsa raghunātha// (Narottama Dāsa)

55. Gonda, Medieval, p.55.

56. S.C.Kaviratna, ed., Śrīśrīharibhaktivilāsaḥ (Beng. trans.) (Calcutta: n.pub., 1911), p.1279.

1. mṛnmaya	clay
2. dārujā	wooden
3. lohajā	iron
4. ratnajā	jewel
5. śailajā	stone
6. gandhajā	made from incense
7. kausumī	made from flowers ⁵⁷

This means that, according to Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's text, clay images are referred to both as **lepyā** (plastered) and **mṛnmaya** (clay). Clay is not classed under the term '**pākajā**', from which we may infer that the clay images referred to here are terracruda not terracotta. '**Pākajā**' here means 'cast' images in metal. The term '**lepyā**' occurs in the HB **vilāsa** 14.98 which states that a wise devotee should immerse a clay image (**lepyāmūrtti**) in the river, keep a drawn image in the house and if it is an image made of gold, he should offer it to his guru at the end of **Rāmnavamī vrata** ⁵⁸.

LEPYĀ.

The term **lepyā** has several meanings⁵⁹. The term '**lepyakarmadika**'⁶⁰ is used in the **Samarāṅgana**

57. Kaviratna, Haribhaktivilāsaḥ p.1279. **Ghandajā** and **kausumī** are temporary types of images.

58. Kaviratna, Haribhaktivilāsaḥ, p.999:
gaṅgāyām prakṣipellepyām lekhyām mūrttiṃ grhe nyasyet/
ācāryāya ca haimādiṃ dadīta pratimām budhaḥ// v.98

59. **lepyā** can mean 'to be smeared', 'anointed', 'moulded' or 'modelled'; '**lepyamaya**' means 'made of mortar or clay', 'modelled'; and a **lepyakāra** is someone who 'makes moulds', 'models' or a 'bricklayer' or 'plasterer' (Monier-Williams, Dictionary, p.902).

60. V.S.Agrawala, ed., Samarāṅgana Sūtradhāra of Mahārājadhirāja Bhoja, the Parmāra Ruler of Dhārā, Gaekwards Oriental Series no.25 (Baroda: Oriental Insitute, 1966), p.xix.

Sūtradhāra of king Bhoja (11th c), the Paramāra ruler of Dhārā⁶¹, to refer to the technique of clay modelling or stucco work. The compound used is **lepyā**, which is clay plaster procured from various places such as the roots of trees and the banks of rivers. This clay should be free from gravel and is mixed with resins from trees, sand, horse hair, coconut fibre and grain husks and then distilled through a suitable cloth⁶². D.N.Shukla refers to this clay plaster as a substitute for modern paints⁶³ and refers to the crayon (**vartikā**) of clay gathered from various sites, mentioned in the Samarāṅgaṇa-Sūtradhāra 72.1-33⁶⁴. **Leptyā** of this variety falls under the category of **miśra** (mixed) since it is a compound of ingredients⁶⁵. According to D.N.Shukla, **lepyā** can be taken to refer to terracruda as distinct from terracotta⁶⁶.

The term ' **lepyacitra** ' may refer to frescoes⁶⁷. Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa bk.3.40.1-30 mentions clay mixed with a variety of substances (including honey, wax, molasses, saffron, yoghurt, oil, tree fibres) as one of the kinds of bases for wall

61. Agrawala, Samarāṅgaṇa, p.xi.

62. D.N.Shukla, Hindu Canons of Painting or Citralakṣaṇam, Bharatiya Vastu-Sastra Series Vol.IX, pt.III (Gorakhpur: Gorakhpur Univ., 1957), pp.52-53.

63. Shukla, Canons, p.53.

64. Shukla, Canons, p.35.

65. Shukla, Vāstu Śāstra, p.99. Shukla also refers to a paint mentioned in the Aparājita-praccha as a compound of butter, milk, flowers, barley powder, wheat grains, bark of milky trees, powdered stone and water which is dried and known as ' **mṛttikābandhana** ' (Canons p.53).

66. Shukla, Vāstu-Śāstra, pp.99-100.

67. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.241.

painting⁶⁸. In the traditional technique of painting on cloth, a smooth piece of cloth is selected and coated with a layer of plastic clay which has been carefully pounded and mixed with cowdung and beaten to a fine paste. When dry, the surface of the cloth is rubbed until smooth and ready for painting. A coat of lime or chalk or even powdered conch-shell is usually applied first before the cloth is painted⁶⁹.

According to K.M.Varma, the term **lepyacitra** can also refer to a clay image and he says that the term ' **lepyabimba** ' in ŚR.17 means 'clay image'⁷⁰. Varma suggests that polychromy was specifically related to clay images but also to images made of stone and brick. He says that polychromy was not used on bronze or metal images in the early period but came to be used later⁷¹ and that when it was not possible to colour an entire stone image, parts of it such as the eyes, eyebrows, lips, palms of the hands etc may be painted⁷². There is little difference in the preparation in the practices of painting and sculpture, only the application is

68. Stella Kramrisch, "The Vishṇudharmottaram", Journal of the Dept. of Letters, Vol.XI (1924), p.15.

69. Ajit Ghose, "Old Bengali Paintings", Rupam, Vol.X, nos.27-28 (July-October 1926), p.99. In traditional Orissan practice, the painter (**patacitra**) does not employ plastic clay. Two pieces of cloth are glued together with glue made from boiled tamarind seed. One side of the cloth is polished and then painted with non-synthetic colours mixed with gum of the **kaintha** plant to make them stick to the cloth. A final layer of laquer is given to the painting (B.C.Mohanty, Patachitras of Orissa (Ahmedabad: Calico Museum of Textiles, 1980), pp.12-13.)

70. Varma, Technique, p.241.

71. Varma, Technique, p.95.

72. Varma, Technique, p.95.

different⁷³. He quotes the KāśyapaŚilpa, which mentions three kinds of polychromatic images:

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. śilā garbha | a stone image |
| 2. iṣṭakā garbha | a brick or stucco image |
| 3. dāru garbha | a wooden image |

Varma refers to the latter as a clay image, since clay images contain a wooden armature⁷⁴. These three kinds of polychromatic images - stone, brick/stucco and wooden/clay - could be painted by three alternative methods. Either by applying śarkarā-kalka (limestone glue), cloth, white base, then paint; or the same but without the cloth; or the same but without the cloth or the śarkarā-kalka⁷⁵. T.A.Gopinatha Rao refers to this śarkarā-kalka as stucco, saying that in the medieval period, the dhruva bera used to be covered in a thin coat of stucco and painted afterwards with the colours appropriate to the deity⁷⁶. However, there is also a contemporary practice of applying a clay base to wooden images before painting instead of the śarkarā-kalka. The wooden images of Balarāma, Jagannātha and Subhadrā in the Jagannātha temple at Puri, Orissa are painted using a clay base⁷⁷.

Lepyā can therefore refer to a plastic paint, a clay base used in painting (whether it is for a mural, painting on cloth or image) or an image made with layers of clay plastered over a wooden frame. In the HB it seems to refer to the latter.

73. Varma, Technique, p.30.

74. Varma, Technique, p.96.

75. Varma, Technique, pp.99-100.

76. Gopinatha Rao, Elements (1914), p.53.

77. See p.70.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE CLAY IMAGE.

Gopāla Bhaṭṭa quotes from the HP regarding the making of a clay image according to which the clay should be gathered from riversides, **kṣetras** or holy places by Brahmins and those of the other castes. Having mixed stones, gravel and iron filings in equal proportions with the clay, it should be kneaded well with extracts of **kaṣāya** (Grislea Tomentosa), **khādira** (Acacia Catechu) or **arjuna** (Terminalia Arjuna) wood, and stirred up with the resin of **sarjja** (Vatica Robusta) and **śrīveṣṭa** (Pinus Longifolia) with extract of **kauṭaja** (Wrightia Antidysenterica), saffron (**kuṅkuma**), curds, thickened milk, ghee etc. (the **pañcagavya**) and then left for a month⁷⁸. A wooden frame (**śūla**) measuring 120 or 125 **aṅgulas** (i.e. **daśatāla**) made of **khādira** or **yajñīya** (sacrificial) wood, is placed on a base (**ratnanyāsa** , jewel base)⁷⁹ and then the clay image is made. The HB gives no indication as to how the image should be made other than saying that it should be made over a wooden frame placed on a base. The omission of further important details suggests that the text was not to be used as a guide for artists but as a reminder that making clay images had Purāṇic sanction and was

78. Kaviratna, Haribhaktivilāsaḥ 18, pp.1257-1258; S.K.De, Early History of the Vaiṣṇava Faith Movement in Bengal (Calcutta: General Printers and Publishers Ltd., 1942), p.388; J.N.Banerjea, Development (1941), p.227, note 1:

mṛttikā varṇapūrveṇa grhṇīyussarvavaṇināḥ/
 nadītīre'thāvā kṣetre puṇyasthāne'thāvā punaḥ//
 pāṣāṇa-karkarā-lohacūrṇāni samabhāgataḥ/
 mṛttikāyām prayojyātha kaṣāyeṇa prapīdayet//
 khadireṇārjjunenātha sarjjaśrīveṣṭakunṅkumaiḥ/
 kauṭajairāyasaiḥ snehairdadhikṣīraghr̥tādibhiḥ//
 ālōḍya mṛttikām taistaiḥ sthāne sthāpya punaḥ punaḥ/
 māsaṃ paryuṣitaṃ kṛtvā pratimāṃ parikalpayet//

79. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.228 note 1:
 sthāpayet pratimāśūlam ratnanyāsasya copari/
 śūlaṅca khādirādīnām yajñīyānām prakalpayet//
 vimśottaraśatam śūlam kuryādvā pañcavimśatiḥ/
 pratimāṅgulamānena kṛtvā samsthāpayed budhaḥ//

recommended by respected texts. Most Purāṇas, as has been seen, do not go beyond mentioning the collection of the clay (*mṛtsaṁgraha*) and its preparation. A great deal was left to the artist's discretion and would have been tacitly understood in the texts.

THE CLAY COMPOUND.

The inclusion of powdered iron (*loha-cūrṇa*), stone (*pāṣāṇa*) and sand (*karkarā*) in the clay compound has led J.N.Banerjea to assume that the clay images made with these three ingredients were more durable than the ordinary clay images. He concludes from the HP quote in the HB, that clay was undoubtedly one of the most commonly used media for making images⁸⁰. However, the inclusion of powdered iron and stone in the rules for the preparation of a clay image laid down in the HP, persuade Banerjea that the compound is similar to the material known as stucco which was so commonly used by the Hellenistic artists of Gandhara from the 3rd-5th c A.D.⁸¹. He says that this is the substance used also in the making of figure sculptures on the towering *gopuras* of south Indian temples⁸². According to Banerjea, this compound is different from the 'real' clay compound mentioned in the ŚR's instructions on the making of an unbaked clay *linga* ⁸³. The *karkarā* mentioned in the HB is referred to by Banerjea as 'sand', but he says that *karkarā* and

80. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.227.

81. Banerjea, Development (1941), pp.227-228. Stucco is a kind of plaster or cement used in architecture and contains limestone chips. *Mānasāra* 51.2-4 mentions *suddhā* (stucco) and *sarkarā* (mortar and plaster, gravel or grit) in its list of suitable materials for making images (P.K.Acharya, trans., *Mānasāra Śilpashāstra*, Vol.IV, Architecture of *Mānasāra* (Allahabad: OUP, 1933), p.517).

82. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.228.

83. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.246 note 1.

śarkarā probably denote the same thing viz. little stone chips, perhaps limestone chips⁸⁴. Banerjea also refers to kaḍīśarkarā, a material mentioned by Gopinatha Rao which is mostly limestone, and states that it is probably something like the compound of the HP which contains powdered limestone as one of its ingredients⁸⁵. Śarkarā-kalka (limestone paste) is used before the final coat of paint on a clay image according to Varma's synopsis⁸⁶, but Varma remains adamant that 'whatever the ingredients and whatever the effects sought by using such ingredients, the clay, in spite of them, will remain clay⁸⁷.

It is therefore advisable to make a distinction between clay plaster and limestone plaster. The latter may refer to the soft plastic mixture of lime, sand and hair used for application on the walls of buildings, while the former refers to the clay compound used in the making of clay images referred to as lepyā. The type of clay, the tempering of the clay and the additional ingredients differed according to use. Clay used in metal-casting, sculpting, pottery or painting was invariably mixed with a number of ingredients, either to harden the clay, soften it, give it more texture or make it smoother. Different kinds of clay were selected from different sites and even amongst contemporary rural craftsmen, there are

84. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.247.

85. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.246.

86. Varma, Technique, p.28. See also Gopinatha Rao, Elements (1914), p.53.

87. Varma, Technique, p.23.

several names for the different varieties of clay according to the ingredients mixed in with it⁸⁸.

SUMMARY.

According to the Śāstric tradition, one may worship both terracruda and terracotta images, although preference is given to the former⁸⁹. In some cases, however, it is clearly stated that terracotta images are unsuitable for ordinary worship. The Kamikāgama, a Śaiva text, outlines the standard procedure for the collection of clay from holy places, moistening, kneading, mixing it with various substances and leaving it for a month, after which a terracruda **liṅga** is made. The baked clay **liṅga** is used only for **abhicārika** (nefarious) purposes; that is, for incantations such as those made to bring about the destruction of an enemy⁹⁰. According to the Vaiṣṇava tradition also, the **abhicārika** form of the deity is worshipped for inflicting defeat and death on the enemy and is looked upon as unfit for worship in temples built in urban areas. Therefore forests, mountains and marshy tracts, fortresses and other such remote areas are prescribed as being fit for the construction of temples to

88. Eberhard Fischer and Haku Shah, Rural Craftsmen and Their Work (Ahmedabad: National Institute of Design, 1970), p.130. The rural potters of Shaurashtra use alluvial clay mixed with grains of limestone to make a dark grey plastic marl that is deposited and used for potter's clay, Fischer and Shah, Rural, p.129.

89. Daniel Smith, Iconography, p.50 section 141 from Viṣvaksena 6.1-10, a Pañcarātra text which mentions the preference for unbaked (**apakva**) clay images:

mṛtsaṃskāramatho vakṣye śṛṇuṣvaikamanādhunā/
 pakvāpakve dvidhā proktā bhūsurādīnanukramāt//
 na sarvalokāśśaṃsanti pratimāṃ dagdhamṛnmayīm/
 apakvā pratimā śastā saiva kāryā vicakṣaṇaiḥ//
 sudhayā naiva kuryādvā nāśmacūrṇaiḥ kadācana/
 mṛdaiva mṛnmayam kuryādyathāvarṇānurūpataḥ//
 brāhmaṇasya sitā mṛdvai kṣatriyasyāruṇā smṛtā/
 viśāṃ pītā bhavenmṛdvai kṛṣṇā śūdrasya kṛtītā//

90. Gopinatha Rao, Elements (Vol.II, pt.II, 1916), p.76.

enshrine this aspect of Viṣṇu⁹¹. K.M.Varma quotes from the Samūrtārcanādhikarana (16th/17th c), a south Indian Vaikhānasa text by Atri, which states that terracotta images (**pakva-mṛṇmaya-pratimā**) should not be used for worship, to do so would bring about calamity. Only images of Jyeṣṭhā, Gaṇeśa and Śāstā may be baked. Terracruda images (**apakva-mṛṇmaya-pratimā**), however, may be placed in the inner sanctuary of temples with impunity⁹². One Bengali author, Śrīnātha Ārcāryacūḍāmani (15th/16th c), writes in his 'Kṛtyatattvārṇava' that an image should never be baked. One who worships the goddess Durgā in burnt clay is converted to ashes by the wrath of the goddess⁹³. The same injunctions held for the Śāktas, therefore, as did for the Vaiṣṇavas and Śaivas.

The injunction concerning terracotta and terracruda images raises questions about the permanence of the clay images used in worship. The injunction is maintained in the contemporary Bengali practice of worshipping clay images. Clay images installed permanently in the temples of Bengal as well as those used for a brief period during a festival are always terracruda. Terracotta may be used for decorative or architectural images such as those on the outer walls of terracotta temples, but the sacred icon is never baked. During the festivals a clay image is made for the festival and immersed directly afterwards. J.N.Banerjea refers to the contemporary

91. Gopinatha Rao, Elements (1914), pp.20-21. Rao says that Vaiṣṇava images are for purposes of **yoga** (self-realisation), **bhoga** (self-enjoyment), **vīra** (military prowess) and **abhicārika** (nefarious purposes).

92. Varma, Technique, p.5.

93. P.Ghosha, Durga Puja (Calcutta: n.pub., 1871), note 1, p.vii.

terracruda images of Bengal as ' **kṣaṇika** ' (temporary)⁹⁴, because some of them are only used for the short duration of a festival. Varma disputes this point by distinguishing between ' **kṣaṇika** ' and ' **tātkālika** ' images; the latter being meant for use over a given period, a day or more, and then immersed in water⁹⁵. According to Varma, the Bengali images are **tātkālika** , but are capable of lasting decades at least if not immersed, whereas **kṣaṇika** images are those made of rice-powder, sand etc⁹⁶. J.N.Banerjea and T.A.Gopinatha Rao agree that ' **gandhajā** ' and ' **kausumī** ' in the HB refer to **kṣaṇika** images⁹⁷. The *Mānasāra Śilpa Śāstra* mentions a temporary **liṅga** which is made of the rust of iron (**maṇḍūra**) mixed with water, or of flowers, or lotus or sweetmeat (**modaka**) or ground cake (**piṣṭaka**) or cowdung or whatever else one wishes to use⁹⁸, and also refers to the temporary (**kṣaṇika**) clay core used in the casting of a metal image by the *cire perdue* method⁹⁹. The contemporary terracruda images of Bengal do not conform to the kind of image described in texts as **kṣaṇika** nor are they temporary, because many are preserved for permanent use in temples throughout Bengal. Thus one cannot say that the images are terracruda because they are temporary or that they are temporary because they are terracruda. If a correlation was to be made

94. Banerjea, *Development* (1941), p.227. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements* (1916), p.76 says that ' **kṣaṇika** ' refers to those images which are made for the occasion and disposed of immediately after their use is over.

95. Varma, *Technique*, p.217 n.8.

96. Varma, *Technique*, p.217 n.8.

97. Banerjea, *Development* (1941), p.226 and Gopinatha Rao, *Elements* (1916), p.76.

98. Acharya, *Mānasāra*, p.542 from *Mānasāra* 52.343-341.

99. *Mānasāra* 68.26-27. See Krishnan, *Cire*, p.6.

between terracruda and temporariness, then one would have to consider the vast majority of votive terracotta figures that are deposited at village shrines as part of ritual observances and then abandoned. These terracottas fulfil a temporary purpose after which they are left to decompose in the open.

K.M.Varma suggests that in the early stages of image worship, icons were made of clay and painted. The five subsidiary images used in the southern classical tradition were included later because of a tendency of devotionism (*bhakti*) to increase the variety of offerings. People were not ready to change the practice of installing polychromatic clay images, so this in turn might have necessitated the number of additional images¹⁰⁰. Varma says that polychromy was prohibited on all images except the *dhruva bera* ¹⁰¹. The *dhruva bera* did not receive the same amount of physical attention as the subsidiary images and was therefore less susceptible to damage. Varma also points out that colour was an essential part of the clay image¹⁰², since colour (*varṇa*) corresponds to the soul (*jīva*) in the sevenfold construction of a clay image. For Varma, the unbaked clay image is durable as long as it is sheltered from water¹⁰³.

The injunction against the use of terracotta images is not explained in any text. One consideration is that the clay is unbaked because it has connections with fertility. The inclusion of pulses and plants in the clay seem to confirm this. If seeds are baked, they are no longer fit for planting and growth and

100. Varma, Polychromy, p.121.

101. Varma, Polychromy, p.128.

102. Varma, Polychromy, pp.129-130.

103. Varma, Technique, p.135.

hence are no longer fertile. Leaving seeds unbaked allows the possibility of germination . The same may apply to unbaked clay which represents fertility in contrast to baked clay which does not. Alternatively, there may be an unwillingness to bake an image which has been carefully constructed in stages and consecrated with *mantras* . The action of baking a clay image may have inauspicious connotations. The Bengali word ' *poṛā* ' meaning 'baked' can also mean 'cursed','vile' and therefore has inauspicious connotations. Besides which there is also the possibility of damaging the internal structure of the wooden armature and the ropes.

Varma suggests that terracotta (clay fired in a kiln) was used for larger figures and that, in some cases, the head of the figure may be terracotta while the body may be of sun-dried clay¹⁰⁴. Some terracottas contain minor supports (*upaśūla*) like the larger supports (*śūla*) of the terracruda images¹⁰⁵.

The construction of the terracruda images according to the Vaiṣṇava Āgama tradition was done in stages with appropriate *mantras* , indicating the religious significance given to the process. The component parts of the image were said to represent the various elements of the human body and in this respect the creation of a clay image is unique. The clay itself is said to represent the flesh (*māṃsa*) of the human body, but in the KJK ch.22 appeared to be equated with 'the Earth' (*mahī*) and is the incarnation of her power¹⁰⁶. This idea is also apparent in rural Gujarat, where

104. Varma, *Technique*, p.135.

105. Varma, *Technique*, p.142.

106. Goudriaan, *Kāśyapa*, p.142 n.2.

there is a close identification between 'man' and 'clay'¹⁰⁷. Clay is often used as the most appropriate material for votive offerings and the correlation between 'man' and 'clay' is common in other parts of the world. The inclusion of certain ingredients in the clay may also have a religious significance. For instance, in the Tibetan tradition, *tṣa tṣa* (painted, impressed clay plaques used as talismans) are made with clay which may be fired but is usually sun-dried or hardened by being mixed with soaked and beaten paper pulp and contain sanctifying substances such as the pulverised bones of lamas blessed with mantras¹⁰⁸.

107. See Haku Shah, "Man and Clay: Tribal Ritual and Folk Myth in Rural Gujarat", in Gods of the Byeways, ed., Julia and David Elliott (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 1982).

108. Zwalf, Heritage, p.114.

CHAPTER FOUR: WORSHIP

Worship is usually referred to by the term **pūjā**, which has its synonyms in **arcanā**, **vandanā**, **saparyyā**, **arhanā**, **namasyā**, **arcā**, **bhajanā** and may also mean a **vrata** or vow done to gain a particular end preceded by an initial vow (**samkalpa**)¹. J.Charpentier says that Gundert and Kittel derive the word **pūjā** from the Dravidian verbal root which occurs in Tamil as **pūḡu**, in Kanarese as **pūsu**. The root means 'to smear', 'to put on sticky substances', 'to daub', 'to paint', and is, according to Gundert and Kittel, the source also of the Sanskrit **puṣṭa(kā)**, a manuscript or a book. Charpentier agrees with this and says that the most characteristic part of **pūjā** is undoubtedly the washing of the idol (or the sprinkling of the **liṅga**) with water, honey, curds, certain ointments, powders or oily substances which are generally of a brilliant red or yellow colour². The marking of images with vermilion (red) and tumeric (yellow) is a common feature of **pūjā**.

Worship may be conducted in private or in congregation, although there is the stipulation that the worshipper worships according to his competence (**adhikāra-bheda**)³. Worship of sectarian deities may be done daily (**nitya pūjā**), on seasonal occasions (**naimittika pūjā**) or on special occasions as optional **pūjā** (**kāmya pūjā**). **Nitya pūjā** refers to daily domestic and temple worship, **naimittika pūjā** to annual festivals (**utsava**) and

1. A.Avalon, Śakti and Śākta (Madras: Ganesh and Co., 1959), p.505.

2. J.Charpentier, "The Meaning and Etymology of Pūjā", Indian Antiquary, Vol.LVI (1927), pp.98-99.

3. L.A.Ravi Varma, "Rituals of Worship", Cultural Heritage of India, ed., H.Bhattacharyya, Vol.IV (Calcutta: RMIC, 1956), p.447.

kāmya pūjā to vows (**vrata**) made to obtain a particular boon. ŚP 16.9 says that **kāmya** rites performed on the **tithi** (lunar day) or particular combination of planetary positions, brings instantaneous fruits⁴. Worship may take place in the domestic shrine, a temple or a temporary shrine or pavilion erected for a specific duration. The PS 18.17-18 divides places of worship into **prāsāda** (temples) and **bhavana** (domestic shrines). An image installed in the **bhavana** is said to bestow grace only to the family of the person instituting the worship, whereas the image installed in the **prāsāda** bestows grace upon all worshippers⁵. A Hindu will worship the temple deity but also the family deity (**kuladevata**) and a personal deity (**iṣṭadevata**) of the worshipper's choice. The worship of the latter is private and initiation into the **iṣṭadevata mantra** is given to the worshipper by the family guru (**kulaguru**). Daily worship is done to the **kuladevata** in the family shrine which is placed somewhere in the house. The sectarian deities are worshipped singly or in pairs, but it is also common to find groups of deities being worshipped together.

PAÑCĀYATANA PŪJĀ.

An attempt was made to neutralise sectarianism by the introduction of a form of worship known as ' **pañcāyatana pūjā** ' (**pañca** , five **āyatana** , shrine). **Pañcāyatana pūjā** was offered to the five principal Brahmanical deities Śiva, Viṣṇu, Sūrya, Gaṇeśa and Devī. According to J.N.Farquahar, **pañcayātana pūjā** was taken from the Grhya Sūtras and involves the pronouncing of mantras and pouring milk, honey, ghee, and Ganges

4. Shastri, Śiva, p.29.

5. Aiyangar, Paramasāhitā, p.115.

water over the images of the five deities, or in contemporary practice, putting liquid in a metal vase known as a **pañcapātra** (**pañca** , five **pātra** , pots)⁶. The five deities are usually worshipped together in the aniconic form of five stones : Śiva in a white stone; Viṣṇu in the black **śālagrāma śila** ; Sūrya in a crystal; Gaṇeśa in a red stone; and Devī in a stone of vague combination of hues⁷. The stones are arranged on a metal dish called a **pañcāyatana** ⁸, with the stone representing the deity to whom the worshipper wishes to pay special homage in the centre. It is not clear when **pañcāyatana pūjā** began, but some attribute it to Śaṅkara (8th c)⁹.

FORMS OF PŪJĀ.

Worship is seen as a twofold process. In the ritual, outward worship (**bāhya pūjā**) is directed towards and image of the **devata** , but this is always preceded by internal worship (**antara pūjā**) in which the worshipper makes mental offerings and meditates on the deity. ŚP 16.19 says also that all items offered should be offered mentally first before the rites are performed¹⁰.

According to L.A.Ravi Varma, the basic form of Āgamic **pūjā** is known as **pañcopacāra** (**pañca** , five,

6. J.N.Farquhar, 'Temple-and-image worship in Hinduism', Journal of the Royal Asiatic Soc. (Jan 1928), pt.I, p.20.

7. P.Thomas, Hindu Religion, Customs and Manners (Bombay: D.B.Tara-porevala Sons and Co. Ltd., 1960), p.33.

8. Banerjea, Development (1956), p.542.

9. R.C.Hazra, "The Bhaviṣyottara, a non-sectarian Upapurana of wide popularity", Journal of the Oriental Institute Baroda, Vol. 3, no.1 (September 1954), pp.8-9. Kane, Dharmaśāstra(1941), p.717.

10. Shastri, Śiva, p.97.

upacāra , offerings)¹¹. The word **upacāra** may refer to an element of ritual and to the various materials used as offerings. The **pañcopacāra** may be elaborated to ten (**daśopacāra**), sixteen (**sodaśopacāra**) and at times even to sixty-four, but the basic five parts of ritual are:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. āvāhana | welcome, invocation |
| 2. sthāpana | fixing, placing |
| 3. sannidhikarana | approaching, bringing near |
| 4. pūjā | worship, adoration |
| 5. visarjana | respectful dismissal of the deity after worship. |

These are the form of ritual addressed to the deity once the image has been installed. The number of **upacāras** , in terms of offerings, varies according to the financial resources of the worshipper¹², but the common number of **upacāras** offered is sixteen. These sixteen **upacāras** are:

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. āsana | sitting |
| 2. svāgata | welcoming |
| 3. pādyā | water for the feet |
| 4. arghya | offerings |
| 5. ācamana | water for sipping |
| 6. madhuparka | honey, ghee, milk, curd |
| 7. snāna | water for bathing |
| 8. vasana | cloth |
| 9. ābharana | jewels |

11. Ravi Varma, "Rituals", p.461. The **pañcopacāra** are part of a tendency to list things in terms of five. The **pañcaṅga** or five modes of devotion are: silent prayer; oblations; libations; bathing icons; and feeding Brahmins (Monier-Williams, Dictionary, pp.577-578.).

12. Kane, Dharmaśāstra(1941), pp.729-730.

10. gandha	perfume
11. puṣpa	flowers
12. dhūpa	incense
13. dīpa	light
14. naivedya	food
15. vandana	prayer
16. dakṣina	gifts ¹³

Āsana refers to the installation of the image on the altar (**vedi**) after which the deity is welcomed (**svāgata**) with hymns of praise, given water for washing the feet (**pādya**) and welcoming offerings (**arghya**) of water, **durva** grass, rice, flowers and sandal paste, bathed (**snāna**) and smeared with ointments and pastes (**gandha**), given incense (**dhūpa** , usually burning camphor) and lights (**dīpa**) and entertained with music and recitation. One of the verses of the **Puruṣa-sūkta** of the **R̥g Veda** 10.90 is recited before each of the **upacāras** are offered¹⁴.

In **Āgamic** worship performed by the **sādhaka** the worship is personal and private and great emphasis is placed on the inner mental worship. The **sādhaka** sits in **padmāsana** on a plank or a carpet facing a particular direction (east,west or north). After worshipping the guru and **Gaṇeśa**, he protects himself from evil influences by purifying his limbs with **mantras** (**aṅganyāsa**). Protected, he does **prāṇāyāma** (breath control) and self-purification (**bhūtaśūddhi**). After purification, the worshipper does **atmaprāṇapratiṣṭhā** (literally,self-inspiration). He then

13. Kumar, Śakti, p.181. See Kane, Dharmaśāstra (1941), p.729 for a different list.

14. Kane, Dharmaśāstra(1941), p.730.

invests the Absolute with qualities and regards it as his *iṣṭadevata* (chosen deity) seated in the *maṇipūra cakra* ('jewel city', the navel). This is *dhyāna* or meditation; the inner, silent recitation of the *dhyāna mantra* which describes the image in ornamental language. *Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa* defines *dhyāna* as the contemplation of *iṣṭadevatas* with the mind concentrated and merged in consciousness¹⁵. The *sādhaka* touches various parts of his body (*nyāsa*, placing), uttering *mantras* and proceeds to the *pañcopacāra* (here meaning five offerings): *pādya*; *arghya*; *gandhapuṣpa*; *dhūpadīpa*; and *naivedya*. If the *sādhaka* does an open act of worship, he transfers the *devata* from his *maṇipūra* to an image and proceeds with the *upacāras*. When the open worship is over, the *devata* is transferred back into the *maṇipūra* of the *sādhaka*, this being known as *udvāsana* (disposal). A final *pañcopacāra* is offered to the deity and the worship is concluded with a benediction¹⁶.

The worship in the temple with *upacāras* is referred to as *tarpaṇa*¹⁷. Two important parts of Āgamic worship are *homa*, the Vedic fire sacrifice adapted to Āgamic requirements, and *japa*, the repetition of the names of the deity (*nāma japa*) or the *mūla mantra* of the deity after *pranayama*.

The object used in the outer worship (*bāhya pūjā*) of the *sādhaka*, is either an image (*pratimā*), picture (*citra*), emblem (e.g. a jar or *kalasa*), stone (*śālagrāma*,

15. Lalye, Studies, p.90.

16. Ravi Varma, "Rituals", pp.450-451.

17. Ravi Varma, "Rituals", p.461.

liṅga or gauripatta) or geometrical design (yantra)¹⁸. The yantra is considered the highest object used in outer worship, while the pratimā is regarded as the lowest. In external worship, the sādḥaka first worships inwardly the mental image of the devata which the outer object assists to produce and then by the life-giving ceremony (prāṇapratīṣṭhā) he infuses the outer object with life by communicating to it light, consciousness (caitanya) and energy (tejas) of the Absolute within him¹⁹. Consciousness is aroused by the worshipper through the prāṇapratīṣṭhā mantra and the sādḥaka realises the essence of the object as consciousness itself²⁰.

According to C.Chakravarti, the very first principal of tantric worship is that the worshipper should identify himself with the deity worshipped. Hence the tantras give preference to internal worship and pure meditation²¹. The Purāṇas began to adopt tantric modes of worship from about the 6th-7th c onwards, including the use of mantras, nyāsa, mudrās, maṇḍala etc²². Tantra works are given various classifications and divisions. Sometimes they are referred to as Āgama (in which Pārvatī asks questions and Śiva answers) and Nigama (Śiva asks questions, Pārvatī answers) or Āstika (Vedic) and Nāstika (non-Vedic) or according to popular tradition, as Sadāgama (good Āgamas) and Asadāgama (bad

18. Avalon, Śakti, pp.506-507.

19. Avalon, Śakti, pp.506-507.

20. Avalon, Śakti, pp.506-507.

21. C.Chakravarti, "Śakti Worship and Śākta Saints", Cultural Heritage of India , ed. H.Bhattacharyya, Vol.IV (Calcutta: RMIC, 1956), p.409.

22. S.C.Banerji, Tantra in Bengal (Calcutta: Naya Prokash, 1978), p.23.

Āgamas)²³. S.C.Banerji mentions three stages in the path of **sādhana** (worship):

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| 1. śūddhi | purification |
| 2. sthitī | gaining knowledge and removing delusion |
| 3. arpaṇa | identification with the object of
worship ²⁴ |

Snāna, **tarpaṇa**, **sandhya pūjā** and **homa** are also imperative for the **sādhaka**. An important part of **pūjā** is **nyāsa**, the process by which the **sādhaka** touches various parts of the body and sees them as identical with those of the deity meditated on or worshipped²⁵. **Dhyāna** (meditation) and **japa** (recitation) are also elements of **pūjā**. Tantric **pūjā** must be done by the **sādhaka** himself or by his guru. It is a great sin if the **pūjā** is done by a **purohita** (priest) for another person²⁶. The Brahmin priest, therefore, has no part to play in these arrangements. The **sādhaka** seeks the help of the guru and one without tantric initiation (**dikṣa**) is not entitled to the performance of tantric rites and rituals²⁷.

VRATA.

Vrata (vow) refers to a vowed observance, act of devotion or austerity taken at a particular time of the year for a set duration which is aimed at obtaining a particular

23. Banerji, Tantra, pp.2-3.

24. Banerji, Tantra, p.11.

25. Banerji, Tantra, glossary p.lix.

26. Banerji, Tantra, p.144.

27. Banerji, Tantra, p.125.

result²⁸. **Vratas** are characterised by such features as fasting, chastity, bathing and vegetarianism²⁹. In the **Purāṇas**, vows are performed by men and women alike and involve fasting, worship of the **iṣṭadevata** and **kuladevata**, feeding of Brahmins (**dakṣina**), reading of the Vedas, baths, performance of **homa** etc ³⁰. Observance of **vratas** can lead to the fulfilment of worldly desires (**bhukti**) but also to spiritual liberation (**mukti**)³¹. **Vratas** mentioned in the **Śāstras** involve : **acamana** (purificatory sipping of water); **svastivacana** (uttering the benediction); **karmārambha** (commencement of the rite); **saṁkalpa** (vow to observe the rite); **ghaṭasthāpana** (placement of the ritual water pot); **pañcagavya** (the five products of the cow); **śodhana** (purification); **śānti mantra** (chanting of the mantra for peace); **sāmānarghya** (ordinary **arghya**); **āsana śuddhi** (purification of the seat); **bhūta śuddhi** (purification of the self); **dakṣina** (gifts to Brahmins); **bhujjya** (a cooked meal, **bhoga**); **vrata kathā** (listening to the story which proves the efficacy of the rite observed)³². Non-Śāstric (**aśāstra**) **vrata** are those carried out by women without the help of a Brahmin priest or **mantras** ³³. Many of the folk deities of Bengal are worshipped according to non-Śāstric **vrata** . Many images used in **vrata** rites were probably temporary (**kṣaṇika**) images made of sand, paste, gum, perfume etc. In the MP there are many references to the use of images in **vrata** rites and in most cases the image is given away to the Brahmin priest at the end

28. S.R.Das, Folk Religion of Bengal , part 1, no.1 (Calcutta: S.C.Kar, 1953), p.7.

29. Avalon, Śakti, p.528.

30. Das, Folk, p.8.

31. Das, Folk, p.8.

32. Das, Folk, p.11.

33. Das, Folk, p.11-13.

of ceremonies, whether it is made of gold³⁴, or clay³⁵ or river-sand³⁶.

TEMPLE WORSHIP.

Once the image had been completed, it was taken to the temple or domestic shrine, installed and duly consecrated. The installation and consecration (**pratiṣṭhā**) are included in textual details regarding the making of images and the iconography of the various Hindu deities.

Prior to installation, the temple image undergoes a preliminary consecration in a temporary pavilion built in front of or near the temple. In the *Bṛhat Saṃhitā* ch.59³⁷, the pavilion (**maṇḍapa**) for the preliminary consecration (**adhivāsa**) is built with four ornamental archways (**toraṇa**) and decorated with garlands and banners. Inside the **maṇḍapa** is an earthen altar (**sthaṇḍila**) sprinkled with sand and covered with **kuśā** grass, upon which the image is placed. The image is bathed with several ablutions of water, various kinds of earth, **pañcagavya** and scented water, to the accompaniment of auspicious music and **mantras** . After bathing, the image is clothed in new cloth, given ornaments and worshipped with flowers and sandal paste. It is then placed on a bed to 'sleep'. Later, the deity is woken, worshipped with flowers, cloth, sandal paste and music and taken into the temple sanctuary. A piece of gold is placed in the mortise hole of the base (**piṇḍikā**), hence it is called **ratnanyāsa** (the **nyāsa** , placing of **ratna** , jewels), and the image is

34. Akhtar, Matsya, p.217 (MP 72.34).

35. Akhtar, Matsya, p.266 (MP 98.12).

36. Akhtar, Matsya, p.229 (MP 81.15).

37. Banerjea, Development (1941), pp.373-374.

fixed in place. This installation (**pratiṣṭhā**) is carried out by a suitable person selected for the purpose at an auspicious time decided by the astrologer. The qualifications of the **sthapaka** (the person who installs the image) are given in MP 265.2.

The MP³⁸ describes how the image is bathed in the **maṇḍapa** with **pañcagavya** , earth, ash, and water and then carried on a charriot (**ratha**) to the temple where it is bathed again, a white thread is tied to its wrist, it is covered with various clothes and given an umbrella, flywhisk, mirror, utensils, seat and bed. The paraphernalia placed at the deity's disposal - bell (**ghaṇṭā**), lampstand (**dīpapātra**), mirror (**darpaṇa**), fan (**vyajana**), umbrella (**chatra**) and footstool (**pādukā**) - are found around the main icon in the temple³⁹. In the MP, the image is installed, **homa** (fire sacrifice) is performed and the ceremonies are concluded with festivities and the payment of Brahmin's fees⁴⁰. Once installed and fixed, the image was not to be moved. This is the standard procedure as mentioned in most Āgamas and Purāṇas.

CONSECRATION.

The consecration of an image is usually described as a twofold process:

1. **akṣimocana/cakṣurdāna** giving sight
2. **prāṇapratīṣṭhā** inspiring with life

In the KJK ch.60 on the opening of the eyes, here referred to as **akṣyunmeṣaṇa** , it is said that the artist paints in the eyes 'without formulas' (i.e. without **mantras**) five days before installation and

38. Akhtar, Matsya, pp.318-320 (MP 265.7-18).

39. Daniel Smith, Iconography, pp.284-285 and p.275.

40. MP 265.18-25.

the priest uses the artist's paintbrush to repeat the procedure with **mantras** during the consecration⁴¹. Bearing in mind that the KJK dedicates several chapters to the making of a clay **dhruva bera**, we may infer that the main icon is of clay, for which painting in of the eyes would have been suitable. In the Pañcarātra text, PS 18.48-49, the eyes of the image are 'opened' with a sharp needle, 'after which the expert architect (śilpi) should open the eyes with instruments'⁴². This takes place prior to installation and seems to refer to those categories of ' śastrotkīrṇā ' (carved) images of stone or wood, although the material is not mentioned in the text. In the MP, the image is given sight with a bar of gold while reciting **mantras** ⁴³. The opening of the eyes indicates the importance of the eyes in conveying the vitality of the deity. As K.M.Varma puts it, 'Painting in the eyes produces the look that brings the statue to life'⁴⁴. The ŚP 36.46 speaks of a reverse process called **lakṣanoddhāra** when the eyes of the image are closed and the deity is dismissed (**visarjana**). This takes place at deconsecration.

The second part of consecration is **prāṇapratiṣṭhā**, establishing (**pratiṣṭhā**) life (**prāṇa**) in the image. In this case, the priest touches the heart of the image and recites **mantras** invoking the deity to come and take up residence in the image. In the KJK, having sprinkled water on the head of the **dhruva bera** and laid the basic syllable (**bfja mantra**) into the heart

41. Goudriaan, Kāśyapa, pp.174-175.

42. Aiyangar, Paramasamhitā, p.118.

43. MP 264.33.

44. Varma, Polychromy, p.124.

of the image, the priest invokes Viṣṇu's presence and 'as if kindling one lamp from another', inspires the subsidiary **cala** images with life⁴⁵. Viṣṇu is then said to pervade the **dhruva bera** and remain in it⁴⁶.

TEMPLE RITUAL.

The temple ritual is conducted by a priest who obtains his income and daily needs from donations and food brought by devotees. The temple may be set in a plot of land which is regarded as belonging to the deity. In Bengal this plot of land is called **devatra sampatti**. The priest opens the temple doors in the morning, 'wakes' the deity, bathes it, clothes it and decorates it with various ornaments, make-up and garlands. Care is taken to ensure that the image is repaired and repainted when necessary. **Pūjā** is done at various times of the day and in the evening the deity is entertained with lights (**ārati**) and music and then 'put to bed'. Sometimes a miniature bed is put in the shrine, although the images are not necessarily put in the beds to 'sleep'. The temple is closed at certain times in the day, but when it is open, devotees may come and pay their respects to the deity (**darśana**, a viewing), present their offerings (money, food or simple offerings of flowers) and be given sanctified water or a **tilaka** mark on the forehead. Certain days of the year are considered auspicious to certain gods and certain days in the year are set aside for festivals.

FESTIVALS.

Pūjā and **utsava** (festival) are said to sustain the universe. **Utsava** means 'creation arisen or

45. Goudriaan, Kāśyapa, pp.195-196.

46. Goudriaan, Kāśyapa, p.195.

produced'⁴⁷. **Utsava** is derived from **ut/sū** - 'waking up', 'stimulating the good forces' and the festival should be accompanied by as much noise as possible and is said to evoke new strength for the image⁴⁸. The festival celebrates the exploits of the deity and usually involves the recital of different themes extolling the deity's power and beneficence. Many festivals are seasonal. A great festival (**mahotsava**) usually lasts several days and involves the procession of the temple image in decorative floats around the perimeter of the city or town. Although the temple is a place of worship for all and the priest undertakes the worship in the temple for the benefit of the universe, worship is not congregational. The temple is not designed to hold large crowds and the inner sanctuary is usually a small, darkened room with restricted public access. Outer halls attached to the temple are used on certain occasions. The festival procession is one time when the image is paraded around the city for all to see. The processional charriot (**ratha**) is often extremely large and elaborate. Sometimes it is drawn by bullocks, at others by humans. The best example of the latter is the huge wooden Jagannātha charriot pulled through the streets of Puri by ropes during the annual Jagannātha festival. Such processions mark out the deity's domain or **kṣetra** as well as conferring blessings on the various parts of the city. Not all temples celebrate festivals with elaborate processions and they are mostly restricted to the larger temples.

BATHING OF IMAGES.

Temple images are often subjected to frequent bathing (**snāna**) with a number of materials and liquids as

47. Gonda, Medieval, p.78. **Utsava** is referred to as the 'remover of inauspicious things' in *Pādma Saṁhitā* 10.6 and *Ānanda Saṁhitā* 20.1.

48. Goudriaan, Kāśyapa, p.270.

can be seen from the **adhivāsa** (preliminary consecration) ceremony mentioned earlier. Apart from the daily ablutions, the temple image is also taken in procession on festival occasions for ceremonial bathing in the temple tank or a suitable stretch of water. Alternatively, the image may be taken to a bathing platform and there bathed several times before being returned to the temple. In the PS, the image is plunged in rivers, waters, tanks, artificial reservoirs, mountain streams, deep pools or rivers and left in the water for three days after which it is taken out and placed on the bathing platform in the **maṇḍapa** to the accompaniment of music⁴⁹. The Agni Purāṇa likewise has a ceremony in which the image is taken down to a platform by the river, immersed and then returned to the temple⁵⁰. In temples with subsidiary images, the metal **snāpana bera** fulfills this function, but there seems to be discrepancy over which image should be bathed in its absence.

The KJK states that the bathing is forbidden in the case of a painted image⁵¹, but also suggests the bathing of the **dhruva bera**⁵² which it suggests earlier was made of stone or painted clay⁵³. The Mahānirvāṇa Tantra 13.199 says that if the image is one that cannot be bathed, then the **yantra, mantra** or **śālagrāma śilā** should be bathed and worshipped instead⁵⁴. Alternatively, there has been a practice of bathing the reflection of

49. Aiyangar, Paramasaṁhitā, pp.116-117 (PS 18.33-48).

50. Dutt Shastri, Agni, p.246 (AP 68.16-18).

51. Goudriaan, Kāśyapa, p.214.

52. Goudriaan, Kāśyapa, p.267.

53. Goudriaan, Kāśyapa, p.129.

54. Avalon, Śakti, p.319.

the image in a mirror placed before it. The water poured over the mirror reflection of the deity is made holy by this indirect contact and is used by the worshipper⁵⁵. The water used for bathing (*snāna*) is mixed with *pañcāmṛta* (milk, ghee, honey and sugar) and is used for *ācamana* (water for sipping) by worshippers and is called ' *tīrtha jala* ' ⁵⁶. However, there seem to have been cases in which the *dhruva bera* is bathed even if it is made of clay and painted.

In his study of the worship of images of Avalokiteśvara in Nepal⁵⁷, John Locke says that the daily bathing of the main temple image is done using a mirror reflection, but during the annual festival, the image is bathed. Locke is uncertain about the material from which some of the Avalokiteśvara images are made. At the temple of Jana Baha the image is a white, plastered figure⁵⁸. Some say that under the plaster the image is copper, the rest being entirely of clay or plaster⁵⁹. Another image, that of Bunga dya, is plastered annually with clay and painted red. The head and the torso of this image are probably of wood and the limbs are of clay plastered over a framework of some sort. Others say that the image is of gold⁶⁰. Because the image is covered with plaster which is painted and then covered in ornaments and garments, it would be damaged by daily bathing, so a brass mirror is placed in front of it and liquids are

55. Zwalf, Heritage, p.83.

56. Kane, Dharmaśāstra(1941), p.731.

57. J.Locke, Karunamaya (the cult of Avalokiteśvara-Matsyendranath in the valley of Nepal) (Kathmandu: Sahayogi Prakashan, 1980).

58. Locke, Karunamaya, p.144.

59. Locke, Karunamaya, p.144.

60. Locke, Karunamaya, p.254.

poured over the reflection of the image⁶¹. During the **mahāsnāna** (great bathing) festival, water is taken from the river and put in large ceremonial water jars (**kalasa**). On the morning of bathing, the priest removes the spirit of Avalokitesvara from the image and induces it into a golden water pot put in its place in the temple. The image is then taken to a bathing platform and placed upon it. The image is derobed except for a loincloth. It is then bathed several times and taken back to the temple. The next day it is taken out of the temple and for the next six days the image is repainted. After repainting, the image is returned to the temple and reconsecrated as though it was a new image⁶².

A similar procedure takes place with the wooden images of Balarāma, Jagannātha and Subhadrā at the famous Jagannātha temple at Puri in Orissa. These wooden images are coated in a layer of clay and painted. Like the Avalokiteśvara image, the bathing is performed daily on a mirror reflection rather than on the images themselves. However, the three wooden images are bathed during the annual festival of **snānayātra** and while they are being repainted after the festival, **paṭa** paintings of them are put in the central shrine for a period of fifteen days⁶³.

THE DISPOSAL OF DAMAGED IMAGES.

A temple image can be removed from its position and replaced with a new image if it has become damaged beyond repair. The three alternative means of disposal of damaged or decayed images seem to have been burial, burning or immersion. Damaged images,

61. Locke, Karunamaya, p.177.

62. Locke, Karunamaya, pp.206-207.

63. Mohanty, Patachitras, p.6.

like damaged temples, were considered to bring bad luck and calamity to their owners and the neighbourhood. It was the religious duty of the patron of the temple to ensure that the temple and its image were carefully preserved.

The Pratimā-māna-lakṣaṇa, śloka 133-134 states that an image of the goddess, if it is burnt, worn out, broken, or split, will always be faulty and that a burnt image brings drought, a worn out image decrease of wealth, a broken image forebodes destruction in the family and a split image war⁶⁴. HB vilāsa 19 concludes with directions regarding the deconsecration or reinstallation of images in case they are displaced by wicked persons, desecrated by the touch of undesirable persons, destroyed by fire and flood, defiled by wine or blood or decayed by age. This process is necessary, it says, because the deity never resides in an image which has been rendered unfit for holy habitation by these things⁶⁵. Likewise, an empty temple in disrepair was considered to be a haunt for ghosts and demons who would terrorise the neighbourhood⁶⁶.

In the KJK ch 104, the damaged image should be carried by various means and thrown into the sea, a river or pool or reservoir, or put on a ship and thrown into deep water. Falling or splitting images of wood or stone should be thrown into a pit dug in a piece of suitable land⁶⁷. The Pratimā-māna-lakṣaṇa śloka 142 is more specific. If the image is of metal, it should be melted down in fire, if of wood, clothed in a new cloth, smeared with

64. P.N.Bose, Pratimā-māna-lakṣaṇam, Punjab Oriental Sanskrit Series no.XVIII (Lahore: Motilal Barnasidas, 1929), p.54.

65. De, Early, p.392.

66. Devī Purāṇa 118.16.

67. Goudriaan, Kāśyapa, p.305.

ghee and honey and burnt. If it is of stone or clay, it should be buried⁶⁸. The Devī Purāṇa 118.12 recommends that a damaged stone image be cast into deep water and a wooden image thrown into a fire. According to the HB vilāsa 18, damaged images should be uprooted from their place and pulled out of the sanctuary using an ox. A wooden image should be burnt, a damaged stone image thrown into water, a metallic image thrown into water, in extremely deep water or left in a forest and clay (lepyā) images should be immersed and an identical image installed in its place⁶⁹. The PS 22.65-68 also recommends that if an image is decayed, the ācārya , having obtained the permission from the Brahmin, should pull out the image with the assistance of servants and carry it in a vehicle to water and deposit it in its midst⁷⁰. The Agni Purāṇa recommends that an acala (immobile) image is unearthed and stored in a room. A stone image is to be broken and thrown away, a wooden image is to be burnt, a metal image or a gem image carried wrapped in cloth and drowned in deep water or the sea⁷¹.

When an old image is replaced, the life of the deity is transferred to the new image using a pot filled with holy water which is usually called a pūrṇakumbha or a pūrṇakalasa ⁷². An undamaged image would otherwise be kept in a temple and repainted and redecorated when necessary. The disposal of ritual objects after the visarjana or respectful dismissal of the

68. Bose, Pratimā, p.57.

69. Kaviratna, Haribhaktivilāsaḥ, pp.1419-1420 (HB 19).

70. Aiyangar, Paramasāṃhitā, p.146.

71. Dutt Shastri, Agni, p.244.

72. Varma, Polychromy, pp.124-125 note 24.

dismissal of the deity in the holy elements of water and fire is common, although the worshipper may also leave them to decompose naturally in the open air, often at the foot of a tree. The word ' **visarjana** ' can also refer to the rite of immersing the image of the deity in holy water as the concluding rite of a festival⁷³.

73. Monier-Williams, Dictionary, p.1001.

PART TWO.CHAPTER FIVE: CONSTRUCTION OF TERRACRUDA IMAGES IN BENGAL.THE CONTEMPORARY BENGALI PRACTICE.

The current practice of worshipping terracruda images appears to be peculiar to Bengal and the neighbouring states of Assam, Bihar and Orissa. In recent years, the worship of clay images of Gaṇeśa has become popular in Maharashtra during Gaṇeśa Caturthī in the month of Bhādra, but such incidents are less common than the more widespread practice of worshipping terracotta images. Clay images in Bengal are installed in domestic and village shrines and temples, but are especially popular during certain of the annual festivals.

The contemporary Bengali practice of making clay images differs in technique from the Vaiṣṇava Āgama tradition of south India and from the Purāṇa tradition. The clay is not mixed with such ingredients as saffron, oil, pañcagavya, resins or barks, nor is the construction of the image done in seven stages using seven materials as Varma mentions. Instead of the elaborate internal structure of a wooden skeleton, glued and then bound with coconut fibre ropes, the bulk of the Bengali image is made of straw tied firmly together with string. The straw is attached to the base of the image with bamboo rods and given two layers of clay, unlike the several layers of clay mentioned in Varma's synopsis. The contemporary practice omits the limestone paste, although cloth and colour are used in the final stages of construction. Different varieties of clay are used but they are mixed with fewer ingredients than those mentioned in the classical tradition and the process does not take as long. Whereas the classical tradition does not mention moulds in the production of

clay images, the Bengali practice relies heavily on the use of moulds in making heads and ornaments¹. Moulds are also used to make mould clay images.

K.M.Varma suggested that clay modelling in Bengal is not a sudden occurrence, but definitely a continuation of an ancient tradition which has been modified according to circumstances². The use of straw, he says, brought about significant changes in technique³. He also suggests that the reason for these changes is that images made in Bengal today are meant only for temporary worship over a few days and therefore there is no need to spend time over them⁴. He is correct in saying that the use of terracruda images for festivals and their subsequent immersion ensures the continuation of the art form, but incorrect in his assumption that all terracruda images are temporary. Even small terracruda mould images are kept in domestic shrines for at least a year, whereas hand modelled images established in temples are known to have lasted decades. Even 19th c European authors, as we shall see, mention this practice of keeping clay images in temples. The technique is not a reflection of the function to which the image is assigned. Varma also suggests that clay images are immersed because, according to religious prescriptions, these images cannot be retained after the worship of a given period is over⁵. However, not all clay images are immersed even

1. Varma, Technique, p.218.

2. Varma, Technique, p.221.

3. Varma, Technique, p.220.

4. Varma, Technique, p.217.

5. Varma, Technique, p.193.

after festivals and may be left to decompose naturally on the banks of rivers or under trees.

ARTISTS.

Clay images are made by a variety of artists depending on the district and the local tradition. They are made by **sūtradhāras** (architects), **karmakāras** (blacksmiths), **paṭuās** or **citrakāras** (painters), **bhāskaras** (sculptors), **mālīs** (**mālākāras**, decorators) and **kumāras** (**kumbhakāras**, potters). **Kumāras** are generally responsible for making clay images in West Bengal and are most well known in urban areas⁶. They are responsible for having transformed clay image making from a village art into an urban art.

The village **kumāra** may refer to himself as ' **mṛt śilpī** ' (an artist who works in clay) and in Midnapore and Birbhum districts, **śilpīs** invariably come from the lower strata of society, the untouchables such as the Doms, Hādis, Bāgdis, Hāzrās and Bairāgis⁷. **Śilpīs** work collectively, living together as a family and travelling from village to village, sometimes working in towns according to commissions⁸. Many of the **kumāras** who now live in Kumartuli, Calcutta, are the descendants of a family of **kumāras** from Krishnanagar in the Nadia district whose surname was Pāl. Due to the reknown of these Pāls and family links, many of the later **kumāras** who work in Kumartuli, Krishnanagar and Kalighat adopted the surname

6. Yogesacandra Ray, Pūjā Pārvana (Calcutta: Calcutta Univ. Press, 1958), p.84 says that in Rārha (West Bengal) the **sūtradhāra** makes clay images, in Calcutta and East Bengal, the **kumbhakāra** and in East Mymensingh and Tripura, the Brahmin astrologer makes clay images.

7. P.Dasgupta, Temple Terracotta of Bengal (New Delhi: Craft Museum, 1971), p.34.

8. Dasgupta, Temple, p.35.

Pāl⁹. Work is carried out by the male members of the family, although women and children participate when necessary. In Kumartuli today, for example, there is a widow named Kāmākhyā Devī who makes clay images and is currently teaching her three daughters the art form. An urban kumāra often works with a team of apprentices or assistants in a temporary studio. For most of the year he plies his trade as his title suggests, in the making of earthenware. During the winter months, the kumāra also makes clay dolls (putula) for the winter fairs. The art of doll making has been perfected by the kumāras of Krishnanagar who specialise in making realistic clay models of local Bengali characters¹⁰. But unlike the kumāras of the rest of India who make terracotta images using items from their trade such as pots and plates, the Bengali kumāra is adept at creating an independent art form using a variety of materials which are foreign to his trade. The Bengali kumāra does not use the potter's wheel or a kiln in the production of terracruda images.

Although the kumāras do not follow a recorded tradition and therefore have no iconographical treatise (Śilpa Śāstra) as a guide for their art, they maintain the important iconographical conventions such as posture (bhaṅga), gesture (mudrā) and the ideals of beauty and vigour. It is not certain when the oral tradition began, but it is likely that it began as a village tradition which developed during the latter half of the Muslim period (13th-18th c) and came to light as an urban tradition during the British period (18th-20th c). Records of the British period regarding

9. S.Sen Gupta, Patas and Patuas of Bengal (Calcutta: Indian Publications, 1973), pp.25-26.

10. Such dolls were made in Krishnanagar, Lucknow, Poona and elsewhere in the late 19th c and were sent for display at international exhibitions in Europe at the time. See Sen Gupta, Patas, p.28.

the making of clay images, the social history of the artists involved and the relevant styles are more numerous than those of the Muslim period, leading some to believe that the tradition of making clay images in Bengal is of fairly recent origin.

As in the classical tradition of Indian art, the clay images are the result of team work. Until a few decades ago, traditional families hired a group of artists to make their annual festival images. The *kumāra* made the clay image, the *paṭuā* painted it and the *mālī* decorated it. The artists worked and ate in the family home for the fortnight or so that it took to make the festival image. The artists were very often given grants of tax-free land for their services, which they could farm. They became attached to the family for life, so that it became a hereditary tradition. This form of patronage has since broken down with the collapse of the joint family system. Today, most of the work in the studios is done by the *kumāra* and his team of workers, each of whom is assigned a particular task. However, the *kumāra* still relies on the services of other craftsmen during the various stages in the construction of the clay image. A carpenter (*sūtradhāra*, *mistri*) may make the wooden base and drill holes in it at appropriate places under the supervision of the *kumāra* . Most of the materials used by the *kumāra* , such as straw, clay, string and jute, are bought from local tradesmen. The decorations are bought from the *mālīs* . The shops of the *mālīs* are usually placed in the vicinity of the *kumāra's* studio. This enables customers to select the kind of decorations they want for their images. Often the customer buys and attaches the decorations himself.

TERRACRUDA IMAGES OF BENGAL.

The terracruda images of Bengal are referred to in Bengali as *śudhu māṭi* (*śudhu* , only, *māṭi* , clay) or *kāñcā māṭi* (raw clay). Terracotta is called *pākā* or *porā māṭi* (baked clay). Terracruda images are hand-modelled or made from moulds. It is not common to find terracruda images made with just clay apart from the mould images. Both hand-modelled and mould images are popular, although moulds are used to make small images which are seldom larger than two or three feet in height. For practical purposes there appears to be a limit on the height of hand-modelled images, just as there is a limit on the height of the mould images.

HAND MODELLED IMAGES.

The construction of a hand-modelled terracruda image may be divided into four basic stages:

1. construction of the armature.
2. construction of the straw figures.
3. application of clay in layers, formation of additional parts of the body and ornamentation.
4. painting and decoration.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE ARMATURE.

The foundation of the image is a wooden platform known as the *kāṭhāmo* (from *kāṭha* ,meaning wood) (Pl.A, 1). The *kāṭhāmo* is made of intersecting planks of wood which are nailed or bolted together. The wood used in traditional images was mango wood, but now any kind of hardy wood is used. Holes are drilled at appropriate places and vertical bamboo rods are inserted in them. These hold the figures in place. In single standing figures, the entire framework is reinforced with large wooden poles angled strategically to hold the weight of the figures. The figures may be

made on the **kāṭhāmo** base or raised on a dias known as a **siṃhāsana** or **vedi** (both being mentioned as suitable **āsanas** in the Matsya Purāṇa). The **siṃhāsana** is built up over the **kāṭhāmo** using spliced bamboo arranged in strips and tied together. A common feature of the hand-modelled terracruda images is a semi-circular backdrop known as the **cāli** (from **cala**, shelf or roof, the thatched roof of a house) (Pl.A, 1). In complex images having more than one figure, the **cāli** acts as a unifying framework, enclosing the figures and supporting them. Additional figures surrounding the central figure are suspended from bamboo struts tied firmly to the **cāli**. In this case, the figures are supported by the **cāli** rather than by the **kāṭhāmo** below. Single figures do not usually have a **cāli** and are fixed directly onto the **kāṭhāmo**. The **cāli** corresponds to the **prabhāvali** of the classical tradition and in some cases is decorated in similar ways with tongues of flame along its border. **Cālis** are made in different shapes and sizes and range from simple semi-circle or rectangle to more complicated designs. They may be detachable in the case of large images which need to be manoeuvred in and out of buildings. The **cāli** is often made in segments and assembled once the image has been installed in the place of worship.

Whereas the **kāṭhāmo** is made of wood, the **siṃhāsana** and **cāli** are made of strips of bamboo tied firmly together. There is a dying practice of using a hardy red wood from the Sundarbans region of southern Bengal called **gorāṇa** (mangrove) for the construction of the armature. Although **gorāṇa** was once cheap and popular, with escalating prices, it has been replaced by bamboo. In some cases, however, the **cāli** and **siṃhāsana** are made of plywood or matting. Bamboo is popular because it is pliable and light when cut into strips, yet it is capable of being firm as a support. It is used

extensively in India, especially in building. In fact, many of the materials used in the construction of the clay images of Bengal are commonly used in the building of a peasant hut. Bamboo is cut into various degrees of thickness and tied firmly with string to form the bulk of the armature. Once the *siṃhāsana* and *cāli* are formed, they are packed with a rough mixture of clay and straw. This is later covered with a layer of finer clay to produce a smooth finish to the overall structure. The *cāli* is sometimes covered in cloth stretched tightly over the packed surface and tied to the back of the *cāli*. This kind of *cāli* is known as *mārkina cāli* (*mārkina* being a coarse kind of cloth). Attention is given to the front of the image, whereas the back is usually left rough.

The word *kāṭhāmo* may be used to mean the entire armature including the *siṃhāsana* and the *cāli*. K.M.Varma says that the word *kāṭhāmo* implies that the armature was originally made entirely of wood and he includes a photograph of the wooden armature of a Durgā image¹¹. He also refers to the straw cores of the figures as 'mer' or 'ṭhāṭ'¹². Solid wooden *kāṭhāmos* are not as common as those made with a wooden base and bamboo supports, although in some cases, wooden panels are inserted either side of the bamboo *cāli*, these being referred to as *pāśkāṭhi*.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE STRAW FIGURES.

Having completed the *kāṭhāmo* and, where they are required, the *siṃhāsana* and *cāli*, the straw figures are made and attached to the framework (Pl.A, 2). Ulu grass and paddy straw were used for the construction of the straw figures in the

11. Varma, Technique, p.64 n.3 and p.65 n. See also his Pl.XVI, figs. 36 and 37.

12. Varma, Technique, p.203.

19th¹³. Today, the straw figures are made by tying bundles of straw firmly together with string. The straw cores provide the basic shape and most of the volume of the figures and it is at this stage of construction that the artist has to decide the overall composition of the image. Straw figures may be made around the protruding bamboo rods inserted in the **kāṭhāmo** or the struts in the **cālī**, or they may be made separately and attached later. There are no skeletal pieces of bamboo or wood inside the straw figures other than the rods and struts used to attach them to the framework. Small, sharpened bamboo pegs are used to secure one straw figure to another. The angling of the limbs is done by tying the straw tightly with string. The straw figures remain in their postures despite the successive layers of clay, due to the tight packing of the straw. Straw figures are made without extremities such as head, fingers or toes (pl.A, 3).

The straw provides a light structure and maximum flexibility. Clay is heavy in large quantities and the straw helps to reduce the weight of the image. In smaller hand-modelled images, the arms may be made entirely of clay while the rest of the body is made of clay coated over a straw core. The straw provides a rough texture and helps to bind the clay to the infrastructure. Straw also provides volume and is mixed with clay to produce architectural effects such as pillared arches and columns on the **cālī**.

APPLICATION OF CLAY.

There are four kinds of clay used in the making of terracotta images in Bengal:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------|
| 1. eñtela māṭi | loamy clay |
| 2. bālu māṭi | sandy clay |

13. Ghosha, Durga, p.1-2 who also mentions the use of bamboo splints, unpeeled **gorāna** wood and mango wood for the armature.

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 3. doāṁśa māṭi | mixed clay |
| 4. tuṣa māṭi | clay mixed with husks |

Most centres of clay art are located close to rivers. Both Kumartuli and Kalighat in Calcutta are only a few yards from the river Hooghly, although Kumartuli imports clay from Uluberia in the Midnapore district. The most famous centre of clay art in West Bengal, Krishnanagar in the Nadia district, is situated on the banks of the river Jalangi which yields a reddish clay. As in the classical tradition, the clay is tempered and mixed with various basic ingredients before application.

The clay is applied in two layers, the process being known as **do māṭi** (**do** , two, **māṭi** , (layers of) clay). The first is riverine adhesive clay known as **eñṭela māṭi** , a sticky clay that is applied roughly by hand over the straw cores once they have been attached firmly to the framework (Pl.A, 4). After the first layer of clay has been allowed to dry, the second layer, called **bālu māṭi** , because it is a sandy (**bālu**) clay, is watered down and filtered through a cloth and then applied to produce a smooth finish (Pl.A, 5). Cowdung was used in the 19th c, probably being mixed with the **bālu māṭi** to soften it¹⁴. Whereas the first layer of clay is dark, the second layer is usually lighter in colour. Anatomical details such as beauty lines around the neck and navel and so on are excuted with a bamboo stick that is pointed at one end¹⁵. The clay surface may be smoothed with an ordinary paintbrush or a piece of cloth dipped in clayey water. Having added the second layer of clay, it is

14. William Ward, Account of the Writings, Religion and Manners of the Hindus, Vol.III (Serampore, Mirror Press, 1811), p.364; Ghosha, Durga, p.2; W.J.Wilkins, Modern Hinduism (London: T.Fischer Unwin, 1887), p.227.

15. Varma mentions two tools, one of bamboo to sharpen the features and to form the limbs, the other of wood to press and polish (Technique, p.205). These two tools are in current use in the modern practice of clay image making.

allowed to dry thoroughly in the studio or out in the sunshine for a few days. Various means are used to accelerate the drying process such as pinning hot charcoal onto the image and baking mould pieces lightly over an open fire, but these are only emergency methods when there is little sunshine or excessive rain.

Additional items such as head, fingers and toes, are made from moulds or by hand. Faces are made from plaster of paris or terracotta moulds. The clay used in moulds is *doāṁśa māṭi* (do, two, āṁśa, parts) which is a mixture of *eñtela māṭi* and *bālu māṭi*. *Doāṁśa māṭi* is adhesive enough to form an impression, yet not so sticky that it cannot be removed from the mould. For the production of a head, the face mould is first dusted inside with ash. *Doāṁśa māṭi* is pressed firmly into the face mould and then another kind of clay, *tuṣa māṭi*, a kneaded mixture of *eñtela māṭi* and husks or jute fibre, is modelled to form the back of the head. The head is then removed from the mould and allowed to dry in the sun (Pl.B, 2). The head made from a mould is hollow and open at the top and the neck. Face moulds include all the facial details and end at the top of the forehead. The opening at the top of the head is modelled over later when the head has dried and been positioned on the neck of the figure. The neck is either a protruding neck of straw or a bamboo peg inserted at the top of the straw core (Pl.B, 4). The head is often bandaged onto the neck with thin muslin cloth to give the back of the head a smoother finish and to ensure that it stays on the neck. Images facing directly outwards are aligned using a groove incised in the chest as a guideline. The chest groove is aligned with a similar groove cut in the 'hat' or ridge of clay modelled on the top of the head, which later accommodates the *mukuta* (headress, crown). The two grooves are aligned to ensure that the head and the *mukuta* are not

out of line with the rest of the body (Pl.B, 5). Before the head is allowed to dry, the artist refines its features using a bamboo splint and a wet paintbrush (Pl. B, 3). The face is an important part of the image and great care is taken over the features. The head may be modelled by hand, in which case lumps of moist **eñtela māṭi** are added gradually by hand over the neck and details are worked out using a bamboo splint. In certain cases, the head has to be hand-modelled, as with the figure of Gaṇeśa, the elephant-headed god. A straw core is designed to provide the bulk of the head and to give sufficient support for Gaṇeśa's elephant trunk. The head is made in the same way as the rest of the body, using two layers of clay. The same applies for large animal figures, such as the **vāhanas** of deities, but where these are small, moulds are used. Most terracruda images, however, have mould heads. The fingers and toes may also be produced from moulds, although it is more common to see them being made freehand using rolled-out lumps of **doāmśa māṭi** which are then attached by wetting the area with water. As with the heads, thin muslin cloth may be used to strengthen joints, but it is not usual to find an entire image covered in a layer of cloth. The contemporary Bengali images differ in this respect from the classical tradition. They also differ in that glue is only used for attaching additional items such as jute hair and non-clay ornaments to the figures. It is not used in the main construction of the image.

The entire clothing and ornamentation of an image may be done in clay (Pl.C, 4). We may refer to this as **māṭir sāja** (**sāja** , decoration, **māṭir** of clay). Clothing is modelled over the figure using a rough mixture of straw and clay to provide the necessary volume. The folds of the cloth are modelled using a bamboo splint and **bālu māṭi** is added to give a smooth finish. The ornaments are made from moulds using **doāmśa māṭi** and are attached to the limbs

by wetting the area with water while the layer of **bālu māṭi** is drying. The **mukuta** made from clay are built up using small pieces of sliced bamboo covered in moulded pieces of clay. Clay implements placed in the hands of deities are also made in this way. Most of the ornamentation is base on jewelry worn on classical sculptures although it is difficult to decide which designs were used. The ornamentation on clay images resembles that used for religious figures in popular prints and Indian calendar art. These ornaments include earrings, bracelets, armbands, necklaces, anklets and headresses.

PAINTING AND DECORATION.

When the image has been allowed to dry completely and any cracks have been smoothed over with **bālu māṭi**, the painting process may begin. The back of the image is left rough and unpainted since it is not visible during worship. A chalk-based white paint is applied over the entire framework using a damp cloth or paintbrush. This ensures that the colours of the paint remain bright and are not darkened by the colour of the clay beneath. Once the white slip has dried, the paint is applied in one layer (Pl.A, 6). The paint used today is ordinary powder-based water-colour, although it is mixed with the gum of boiled tamarind seed to give it greater viscosity. The traditional mineral and vegetable pigments used in the 19th c probably took a long time to make, whereas modern paints are mixed and ready for use in a short time. Mineral pigments once in use included yellow **haritala** (sulphurate of arsenic ground and mixed with gum of **bela** fruit), **hingula** (a coarse sulphurate of mercury) and **jangala** (verdigris with varnish of **garjana** oil)¹⁶. Indigo (**nīla**) and ground conch-shell (**śaṅkha**) were used to produce blue and white

16. Ghosha, Durga, p.13-14.

respectively. The paint used today is applied with an ordinary paintbrush. There is no sequence to the painting process. Sometimes the eyes and facial details are painted first, or else the body is painted first and the eyes are left until last. Painting in of the eyes is usually done by the chief artist. The colours used on images are bright, primary colours, although the modern trend is towards blended colour and shading. Recently, it has become popular to paint images entirely in metallic colours, in which case the images are first given a red base instead of a white base before painting. Ornaments and decoration are usually painted silver or gold or sprinkled with gold or silver dust.

The **cāli** and **siṃhāsana** are also painted and are given elaborate floral and geometrical designs. They are usually painted light blue, perhaps to symbolise the sky or water, as in images of Sarasvatī and Lakṣmī who both have sloping **siṃhāsanas** painted blue with horizontal, wavy lines in dark blue to symbolise water. Even the **kāṭhāmo** on single images is given a coat of blue paint. The **cāli** on larger images is often decorated with a painted frieze known as the **cālcitra**, depicting mythological scenes connected with the diety. The **cālcitra** may have originally been painted directly onto the top of the **cāli**, but now it is painted on a bit of newspaper and then stuck onto the top of the **cāli** with glue.

After the paint has dried, a glossy sheen is given to the image using boiled arrowroot or varnish (Pl.C, 3). This protects the surface of the image and heightens the colour, but also has aesthetic significance. Varma refers to the varnish resembling mild perspiration, a mark of beauty in Indian referred to as

lāvanya 17. This varnish is called **ghāma tela**, **ghāma** meaning perspiration, which idiomatically denotes oil that gives the effect of mild perspiration¹⁸. The varnish gives a shiny effect on the images which are illuminated at night by lamps placed around them. However, not all images have this glossy sheen and it depends on the artist's discretion or the customer's demands. Realistic, modern images tend not to have a finishing layer of varnish.

The alternative forms of decoration and ornamentation used in Bengal are **śolār sāja** (decoration in **śola**, pith) and **ḍāker sāja** (decoration in **ḍāka**, tinsel). It is probable that ornamentation and clothing was originally done with clay, but in the modern period, alternative materials came into popular use in the urban centres, although the village tradition maintains the use of clay. **Śolā** (*Aeschynomene Aspera*)¹⁹ is white pith taken from the centre of buoyant water reed which is cut into strips and glued together. **Ḍāker sāja** is made from bits of old newspaper, tinsel and wire²⁰(Pl.C,2). It is difficult to say exactly when **ḍāker sāja** came into popular use, but it was probably during the British period. The artists who make ornaments in these materials are the **māITS**, who have centres close to the workshops of the **kumāras**. B.M.Ray mentions several places in Calcutta (Kumartuli, Bhowanipur) as well as Krishnanagar in the Nadia district and Dacca, now in Bangladesh, as centres of the manufacture of **ḍāker sāja** ²¹. **Śolā** is used for

17. Varma, Technique, p.214.

18. Varma, Technique, p.214.

19. Varma, Technique, p.215.

20. For a detailed description of the production of **ḍāker sāja**, see B.M.Ray, "Monograph on the Wire and Tinsel Industry in Bengal", in Art in Industry (New Delhi: Navrang, reprint 1976), p.370.

21. Ray, Monograph, p.369.

several purposes by **mālīs** and other artists. These alternative forms of decoration and ornamentation are tacked or glued on to the figures using a commercial glue after the paint has dried. The style of decorations remains the same in both mediums. Important among the ornaments is a crown (**mukuṭa**) which is tied securely on a raised hat of clay added to the heads of the images for this purpose (Pl.B, 6). **Śolā mukuṭa** are supported by a thin slice of bamboo and transparent cellophane (Pl.C, 1). The **mukuṭa** is shaped in floral and leaf designs and is accompanied by a long breastplate attached to the neck of the figure and allowed to hang down the front of the body. The **mukuṭa** and breastplate are common on female figures but not on male figures who are often bare-chested and wear less elaborate head gear. Female deities wear **śāri** and blouse and male deities wear **dhoṭī**, shawl and black, pointed **nāgarā** shoes. Hair is made with jute dyed black and modelled onto the head using strands of waved jute or jute wound round a stick to produce ringlets. Female deities have long hair flowing over their shoulders, while male deities have shoulder-length wavy hair. The jute hair is either tacked or glued on (Pl.B, 1). The hands and feet of both the male and the female deities are decorated with red paint as a mark of beauty and many have vermilion **tilaka** marks and sectarian markings on their foreheads. Most Śākta deities have a **tilaka** mark above which is a crescent moon and a third eye on their foreheads. The modern Bengali equivalent of a **śiraścakra** (halo) is a multi-coloured paper halo which is placed behind the heads of images. Some of these can be extremely elaborate.

The **cālī** and **siṃhāsana** are also decorated with clay, **śolā**, **dāker sāja** or painted paper decorations. Clay decorations are made from moulds and then painted. They can take a variety of forms, the most common being a repeated lotus shape around

the border of the *cālī* . Painted paper is used to represent lotus petals for those deities whose *āsana* is the lotus. The *siṃhāsana* is decorated with various designs. Some artists paste their name on a piece of paper on the *siṃhāsana* as a means of advertisement, especially on the large images made for communal festivals celebrated in the cities. During festivals, the name of the deity is sometimes written on a piece of paper stuck onto the *siṃhāsana* . During worship, clay images are decorated with paper and tinsel garlands and circular hangings called *cāñḍa mālā* (*cāñḍa* , moon, *mālā* , garlands). These are made of *śolā* and are a series of three or more disks hung in succession with lotus designs and words such as ' *Mā* ' (mother) or a svastika placed in their centre. *Cāñḍa mālā* have a religious significance and are a common feature on images which are being used for worship. During worship, clay images are also decorated with real jewellery made of gold and silver. Incidents of jewel thefts from *pūjā paṇḍalas* are not uncommon.

MOULD IMAGES.

Mould images are made from a pair of moulds, one for the back and one for the front of the image (Pl.D, 6). *Doāṃśa māṭi* is used in both moulds, it is removed and the two halves are joined together, dried in the sun and painted in the same way as the hand-modelled images. They are not decorated with *śolā* or *dāker sāja* since all the ornamentation is included in the mould and does not have to be applied. Some mould images are only partially painted. In some cases, only the eyes and mouth and the jewellery are painted and the rest of the image is left monochrome. There is a constant demand for mould images of Gaṇeśa and Lakṣmī whose mould images are kept for a year and then replaced with new images. Mould images of Sarasvatī and Viśvakarmā are made for the annual festivals as well as those of a

number of other deities, although certain deities, such as Kālī and Durgā, are not represented in mould images. Mould images may be used as mementos such as the Kalighat Kālī sold in the vicinity of the Kalighat temple in Calcutta, while others are used as secular toys. Secular images are baked whereas those used for religious purposes are always unbaked. Mould images made in urban areas are more sophisticated in design than their rural counterparts, but otherwise they have little stylistic importance. On the other hand, the hand-modelled images show a wide range of styles.

ARTISTIC GUIDELINES.

The kumāras do not seem to follow a rigid set of rules regarding proportions, although the head of the image is said to be eight times the size of the body. K.M.Varma suggests that some artists probably follow a system of measurement similar to that of the paṭuās²² and gives rough measurements of a Durgā image obtained from a local artist²³. W.Ward, writing about Bengali artists in the early 19th c, says that the 'Catuṣaṣṭhī-kalanirṇaya' of Vātsyāyana was used as an artist's guide, but 'neither this work nor any work on the arts is to be procured in Bengal at present'²⁴. Most artists work according to the practical guidelines received through the oral instructions of their teachers. The artists are also guided by two factors. When a new clay image has to be made for a temple, the artist is able to make a direct copy from the old image before it is deconsecrated and removed. Likewise, at the end of a festival when a clay image is immersed, the armature, including

22. Varma, Technique, p.194.

23. Varma, Technique, p.203 and p.205 n.5.

24. Ward, Account, Vol.II p.401.

the straw figures, is often retrieved for subsequent use. The clay dissolves quickly once the image has been immersed and the armature may be retrieved shortly afterwards. Kumāras often buy back immersed kāthāmos from hawkers who salvage them from the riverside. Kāthāmos are used repeatedly until they become too rotten for further use, in which case a piece of the old kāthāmo is incorporated into the new kāthāmo. In some families, the kāthāmo is held in veneration and is used in a rite called kāthāmo pūjā, in which the armature, or part of it, is worshipped before the image is made. This practice is restricted to family pūjās and is not mentioned in ritual texts as part of the required ceremonies. The artists are also aided by the use of moulds which are of varying sizes and are used for most images. They aid speedy reproduction and ensure standard features for most images. These moulds are taken from hand-modelled originals made by the kumāras and kept within their own family business.

Kumāras learn anatomical details from contemporary photographs and sculptures in an endeavour to make their images appear more realistic. Greater attention is given to commissioned images and they are made to look as individual as possible, whereas non-commissioned images are standardised. A kumāra will often make a number of non-commissioned images for sale from his studio. Those which are not sold one year are kept in store and renovated to be sold the next year. Prospective buyers come to the studios of the kumāras and bargain over the image they want. Large images are taken away by lorry, whereas smaller images are carried by rickshaw. Thousands of images are made annually in Calcutta alone. Some are exported to neighbouring towns and even abroad, but the majority are for use in the city itself. In this respect too, the contemporary Bengali practice of making clay images differs from the

classical tradition. Instead of spending a great deal of time on a single image destined for the temple, the **kumāras** produce dozens of images from a single workshop and work in several different styles and designs.

CHAPTER SIX:STYLE OF IMAGES.

There appear to be three styles in contemporary clay image making in Bengal:

1. the village style
2. the traditional style
3. the modern style.

The traditional and modern styles represent the urban tradition which emerged from the original village tradition. The sophistication, variety and ingenuity displayed by clay images made in the traditional and modern styles is in contrast to the simple village style. The urban artist is, of course, open to a diversity of influences and works for a wide variety of customers, attending to their own, individual tastes. The money and time spent on image making in urban areas is considerably greater than in the village tradition. The village artist may be commissioned to make only one image per festival, whereas the urban artist may have to make several images simultaneously, both in the traditional and modern styles. The urban artist is therefore more of a professional than his rural counterpart. The urban artist also has a wider range of materials to choose from and he makes images which are more elaborately decorated and designed than those of the village artist. Because of this, the sophisticated images of the urban artist are in great demand amongst the villagers. Urban artists often set up small studios near villages to make and sell a few images to the villagers.

THE VILLAGE STYLE.

Village images are characterised by general crudity of technique (Pl.H, 6). The materials are simple and the artist is paid very little for his work. All the ornamentation is done in clay and little or no **dāker sāja** or **śolā** is used in the decoration. The village style is most common in the villages, although it is also apparent in the less sophisticated suburbs of cities such as Calcutta and in the images produced by unskilled apprentices. The urban style is preferred by villagers if they can afford the services of an urban artist. The village artist does not have to cater for the discriminating tastes of urban clients and may also make images of local deities which are not common in the urban milieu.

The village artist was probably influenced in terms of style and composition, by the art of the village **paṭuā** (painter) who was used to representing both major and minor deities in painted scrolls (**paṭa**). Some **paṭuās** are image makers themselves. With urban influence and the widespread use of popular prints, the village artist produces images which are now closer to the modern style.

THE TRADITIONAL STYLE.

Traditional images are characterised by heavy stylisation of features and a strict adherence to iconographical injunctions. The traditional images belonging to families also tend to be idiosyncratic and contain additional elements.

Faces of traditional images are made in the so-called ' **pāna** ' style, called **pāna** because it resembles the broad **pāna** (betel) leaf which tapers to a point (Pl.C, 6). T.A.Gopinatha Rao says that the classical sculptures of Bengal, Assam and Orissa and surrounding regions are immediately recognisable by the

round face, oblique eyes, broad forehead, thin lips and small chin¹. Nirad.C.Choudhury suggests that the **pāna** face is derived from the face of the goddesses of northern Buddhism², which makes it somewhat mongoloid³. The **pāna** face is characterised by large, tailing eyes, sometimes referred to as **ṭānā-cokha** (**ṭānā**, stretched, **cokha**, eyes) which are shaped like bamboo leaves. These wide, staring eyes help to convey the idea of tremendous energy and are emphasised by thick eyebrows. The eyes are often painted bloodshot and lidless. In this they differ from the half-closed, heavy-lidded eyes of the classical statues of north eastern India. The **pāna** face and **ṭānā-cokha** eyes represent a regional characteristic since they are not mentioned in the list of eye shapes included in the *Ṣaḍaṅga* (Six Limbs of Art)⁴. Images made in the village style also have this **pāna** face, but they also display a type of lunette eye. Both male and female deities have the **pāna** face and **ṭānā-cokha** eyes. This style of face is sometimes called **bāṅglā** (i.e. Bengali). Male deities are distinguished by a moustache. Various male deities are given the Vaiṣṇava **ūrdhvapundrā**; two vertical lines running up the forehead. Śiva has a **tilaka** mark, three horizontal lines and a third eye. The third eye is either embossed as part of the mould or else painted on. There is a tendency to decorate the bridge of the nose and the chin with various designs to heighten the beauty of the face.

1. Gopinatha Rao, Elements (1914), p.37.

2. Nirad C.Choudhury, Autobiography of an Unknown Indian (London: MacMillan and Co. Ltd., 1951), p.64.

3. Nirad C.Choudhury, Hinduism (London: Chatto and Windus, 1979), pp.243-244.

4. Abanindranath Tagore, Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy (Calcutta, A.C.Sarkar, 1914), p.8.

The composition of traditional images is standard. All figures face outwards and are either standing or seated. Limb movements are angular and rigid. The bodies are compact and the heads large in proportion to the body. In complex images with more than one figure, the **cāli** is included and is usually architectural so that the figures are enclosed in an arch supported by pillars on either side. The architectural setting is designed on the European collonaded arch, but may also be based on the design of the Bengali temple. In the latter case, the **cāli** has three pyramidical panels on the top of the **cāli**, which resemble towers on a Bengali temple (**maṭha**). **Cālis** made in this design are known as **maṭhacāuni** (the temple look). The standard shape is a semi-circular frame known as **ekcāla** (**ek**, one **cāla**, roof) (Fig.6). Female deities wear an elaborate crown (**mukuṭa**) which might have been derived from Hindu marriage headress or from Muslim influence, although P.Ghosha comments that the **mukuṭa** has no counterpart in the jewelry of Bengali ladies⁵. Such headresses have become ornate over the years. The traditional headress with its high peak and broad flanges is an exaggerated form of what was previously a simple crown or tiara. Female deities also wear a stylised, tapered breastplate which is the stylised form of what was originally a necklace of pearls⁶. Male deities wear the sacred thread (**yajñopavīta**) across the left shoulder and over the chest. Some male deities wear a small crown or **pugri**.

Traditional images may be large, sometimes extending up to fifteen feet or more, but traditional Durgā

5. Ghosha, Durga, note 2, p.viii.

6. Madhava Chandra Dasa, Mythological Drawings from Woodblocks Calcutta: n.pub., 1860) has excellent examples of 19th c designs.

images are usually about six feet tall and Kālī images about four feet tall. The traditional style is generally restricted to large, hand-modelled images and is not used on mould clay images.

Traditional images are generally decorated with *ḍāker sāja* rather than *śolā*, although both are used. In certain family images it is apparent that the entire ornamentation and decoration was done entirely in clay because underneath the *ḍāker sāja* there is clay ornamentation. Some traditional images belonging to Calcutta families are so over-decorated with *ḍāker sāja* that the faces of the figures are barely visible. Most families with traditional images are conservative and demand that the festival image should not deviate in any way from the previous year's image. The artist has to ensure that the image is reproduced accurately. This works well providing the same artist makes the family image each year. The style and overall appearance tends to alter with the advent of a new artist. Today, artists may rely on previous photographs as well as salvaged *kāṭhāmos* and the use of moulds to ensure that the dimensions of the image remain the same.

THE MODERN STYLE.

Modern images are characterised by realism and free composition. Urban *kumāras* often rely on photographs of models or sculptures and sketch out their compositions before making the image. Figures are put in exaggerated bodily postures and given dramatic expressions. The faces are done realistically rather than in the stylised *pāna* style. The modern style is governed by social changes. Images in the modern style are made for teenagers who organise festivals by subscription. They pay little attention to correct ritual and prefer to celebrate the festival with dancing and music. The modern images reflect the difference in taste

between the younger and the older generations. As can be expected, they are less conservative than the images of the traditionally-minded families of the older generation.

In recent years, it has become popular to make the faces of images resemble those of film stars. Early in the century, the faces and eyes of the modern images were influenced by the sentimental, semi-realistic paintings of commercial artists such as Ravi Varma. The faces and eyes of subjects in these paintings were scrupulously copied by the **kumāras** and the style of eyes taken from them came to be known as ' **chobiyānā** ' (taken from **chobi** , paintings) (Pl.C, 5). They are half-closed and sensuous, in contrast to the wide, staring eyes of the **pāna** face. They make subtle, sidelong glances instead of staring directly outwards. They have eyelids and eyelashes and eyebrows which are realistically painted on. Despite the pink flesh tones given to many modern images, the facial features are those of the average Bengali. The pink flesh tones are the result of western influence and occur in the popular prints produced by contemporary artists. Much of the modern style is also derived from the style of commercial art found in film hoardings in city streets all over India.

In contrast to the traditional and village styles, the colouration of modern images is less harsh. The colours are blended and shading is given to the joints on the body, on the knuckles of the hand, the elbow, round the torso and the face. Shading is done by applying dry powder with a paintbrush. The formal gestures of the traditional images have been replaced by freer movement and there is greater tendency to displace the figures in group compositions. An example of this is the **ālādā** or 'separated' image

(Pl.H, 5)⁷. The conventions of **mudrā** and **bhaṅga** are maintained if only loosely. It is becoming common for modern images to have no crown and for figures to be bare-headed. Many modern images omit the **cālī** and use paper halos instead. Some **pūjā paṇḍalas** scatter the figures in a painted landscape, others dress the figures in European costume. There are so many variations that it would be impossible to list them all, apart from which, innovations are made every year. There is also a tendency to make images from different materials and it has become common for **kumāras** to make images entirely of jute (**pāṭa**), pith (**śolā**) or bamboo (**bāñśa**).

Many modern images are extremely large, ranging up to twenty feet. Most of these are used in public **paṇḍalas** . Many **kumāras** in Calcutta refer to their modern images as being in the 'Ajanta' style (Pl.D, 5) by which they mean the images are modelled in fluid postures with ornate and unorthodox stylisations. The hair, dress and colouration are distinctive. Most of the images in this style are painted entirely in metallic colours or given a rough texture resembling stone. This style was probably inaugurated by renowned Calcutta artists who were commissioned to make an image for an annual festival. The **kumāras** adopted this trend and began to produce such 'Ajanta' style images themselves.

The modern style owes a great deal to European influence, primarily in terms of sculpture and the trend towards realism. Some **kumāras** studied the European style and this had an effect on the clay images. At the same time, at the beginning of this century, art manuals such as the 'Rūpāvalī' of Nandalal Bose

7. J.Sarma, "Pūjā Associations of West Bengal", Journal of Asian Studies, Vol.28, no.1 (May 1969) , p.584 mentions that **pūjās** organised by voluntary organisations in 1947 displayed new types of images, the **ālādā** or separate type of Durgā image.

and Abanindranath Tagore's 'Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy' (1914) gave, for the first time, drawings of figures, postures etc. The modern style is the result of this art college learning, popular prints and lithographs and European sculpture. Today, the kumāras are still eager to create a naturalistic effect with their clay images. They take great care over the composition and study books on western art. They do not use live models, but are intent upon improving their abilities. Their skill at sculpture is emphasised by the fact that many are sculptors in their own right and work to commissions.

CHAPTER SEVEN: WORSHIP IN BENGAL.

Orthodox Hindus of Bengal worship the three main deities Śiva, Viṣṇu and Devī, as well as a number of minor deities. Daily ritual takes place in the family shrine and is directed towards the family deity (**kuladevata**), although a person may have a personal deity (**iṣṭadevata**) to whom private **pūjā** may be directed. Most daily domestic **pūjā** is conducted by members of the family, although wealthy persons may hire a Brahmin priest to do this ritual on their behalf. Such priests (**purohita**) are usually hired for important occasions such as marriage or the performance of the annual festivals. A family may have a family guru (**gurukula**) to whom they may go for spiritual advice. Wealthy persons build temples whether large or small, with the aim of acquiring merit for themselves. Temples in India are generally privately owned and maintained within a family, although the public may perform **pūjā** in them. Each temple is a separate unit and there is no overlapping into the organisation of another¹. The upkeep of the temple is the concern of the patron, but the temple usually has a plot of land allocated to it, called **devatra sampatti** , from which the ritual in the temple is subsidised. W.Ward gives a very perceptive account of the process of drawing attention to a cult in the following extract:

"The trade of keeping gods is common among Hindoos; the only difficulty to overcome is that of exciting attention to the images. To do this the owner of the image goes from village to village to call attention of the neighbours, he also gets some one to proclaim that he has been warned in a dream to perform vows to this image, or he repeats to all he sees that such and such cures have been performed by it. In the years 1807 and 1808

1. Sarma, "Pūja Associations ", pp.579-580.

almost all the sick and imaginary sick Hindoos in the south of Bengal presented their offerings to an image called Tarukashwuru, at a place bearing his name. The Brahmuns owning the image got very rich. This excited the attention of some Brahmuns near Nudeeya who proclaimed another image of Shivu in their possession "the brother of Tarakashwuru", and the people of those parts flocked to this temple as others had done to the original one"².

The Śaiva temple of Tarakesvara in the Hooghly district, mentioned by Ward, now attracts thousands of pilgrims on annual occasions.

FESTIVALS.

Festivals are conducted both privately and communally. Private festivals are celebrated and financed by the members of a family and take place in the precincts of the family home. Communal festivals take place on public property such as parks or even the middle of roads and are subsidised by subscriptions. Temporary pavilions are erected for the communal **pūjā**, whereas the family celebrations usually take place in a sepecial building set aside for the purpose. However, private celebrations are regarded as open to the public and any person, regardless of sectarian or religious following, may participate in events. Those celebrating private or communal functions are expected to feed guests and undertake charitable acts. The spectators in turn make donations and offerings to the deity.

WORSHIP IN VILLAGES.

Besides orthodox forms of worship, there is heterodox worship, conducted in villages throughout Bengal. Village worship is directed towards the **grāma devata** (village deities) who may or may not be linked with the orthodox Hindu pantheon. These **grāma devata** are numerous and are given idiosyncratic names which vary

2. Ward, Account, p.243 n.

from region to region. Their **pūjā** is performed by a village priest who may be a member of the village selected for the specific occasion who, after purification, performs the necessary ritual. In other words, the Brahmin priest plays no part in this kind of **pūjā**. Worship of village deities may take place in small thatched shrines or out in the open, under trees or at the roadside.

TEMPLE WORSHIP.

During the 17th-19th c there was a great deal of temple building in Bengal, undertaken primarily by zemindars (landowners) and later also by businessmen³. Most of these temples were made of terracotta in the distinctive Bengali **bāṅglā** and **cālā** styles. Much of this temple building activity was inspired by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism inaugurated by Caitanya Mahāprabhu, a native of Nabadwip in the Nadia district, who propagated **bhakti** towards Viṣṇu in his incarnation as the cowherd Kṛṣṇa.

VAIṢṆAVA TEMPLES.

Vaiṣṇava temples in Bengal from the 17th c onwards are commonly dedicated to Rādhā-Govinda (Kṛṣṇa as Govinda, the cowherd, with his **gopī** lover, Rādhā). Govinda (sometimes also known as Gopāla) is shown standing in **ardha sama** playing a flute with his two hands and Rādhā stands beside him. Temple images of Govinda are made of black stone referred to as **kāśī** (Benares) stone. The reference to Benares is probably to the stone-cutters rather than to the stone which is imported from elsewhere. Many temple images in Bengal are made from this so-called **kāśī** stone. They are usually decorated with mother-of-pearl inlaid eyes, clothing and ornamental jewellery. Rādhā images are usually smaller than those of Govinda and are made of **aṣṭadhātu** (eight

3. H.Sanyal, "Social Aspects of Temple Building in Bengal: 1600-1900 A.D.", MI, Vol.48, no.3 (July-September 1968), p.201.

alloys) and show Rādhā ('Success') with arms outstretched, legs firmly together, with torso slightly angled to one side (*abhaṅga*). Both images stand on individual lotus bases (*padmāsana*) (Pl.H, 3). Rādhā-Govinda temples may have more than one pair of Rādhā-Govinda images, but the central pair will be the largest. The images are sculpted and cast in the round and are mobile. They are painted annually with red wax around the eyes, on the hands and feet. The eyes are painted with a permanent white paint and black for the pupils. The face and the limbs are decorated with markings in sandalpaste. Some even wear wigs of real hair. Govinda is dressed in a *dhoṭī* and shawl and Rādhā wears a *śāri* of real cloth. The images may have several pairs of costumes, the most elaborate being those used on festival occasions such as Rāsa Yātrā. On such occasions, gold and silver jewellery is put on the images. The images are bathed and decorated daily and put to bed at night.

Vaiṣṇava temples in Bengal are also dedicated to Lakṣmī-Janārdana (Viṣṇu with his consort Lakṣmī), Jagannātha (Viṣṇu as the Lord of the World accompanied by his brother Balarāma and sister, Subhadrā) and Mahāprabhu (Caitanya). Jagannātha temples contain the same kind of images as those in Orissan temples. The three busts are stylised and semi-iconic, made of wood and painted in bright, primary colours and are directly copied from the busts housed in the great Jagannātha temple in Puri. Caitanya visited neighbouring Orissa between 1516 and 1533⁴, which may have led to the popularity of these busts in Bengali temples. Images of Caitanya on his own or with his disciple Nityānanda, the so-called 'Gaura-Nitāi' images, are usually made of *nimba* wood, the traditional wood used for

4. D.C.Sen, Caitanya and His Companions (Calcutta: Univ. of Calcutta , 1917), p.6.

making Vaiṣṇava images in Bengal. Nimba wood is impervious to woodworm and has medicinal properties. Such images of Gaura-Nitāi were made even in Caitanya's lifetime⁵. Although most of the sacred icons in Vaiṣṇava temples are made of stone, wood or metal, it is common to find small mould clay images of Rādhā-Govinda and free-standing images of Gaur-Nitāi. Wooden or clay Gaur-Nitāi images show the two figures standing side by side with arms raised in rapture. One of Caitanya's epithets is 'Gaurāṅga', the 'white-complexioned', although he is usually painted yellow. He is two-armed as is the custom with human (deśika) figures and is dressed in a dhoṭī with a upāvita cord over one shoulder. Wooden Gaur-Nitāi images have a padmāsana base, whereas in clay images, the figures are attached directly onto a wooden kāṭhāmo. This is one way of differentiating between wooden and clay images. It is often difficult to distinguish them in any other way. Shrines are generally dark and it is forbidden to touch the sacred icons. Wooden images are given a slip of clay and whitewashed before being painted and therefore there is a similarity in outer appearance between wooden and clay images. However, if there is no kāṭhāmo visible, it is unlikely to be a clay image.

ŚAIVA TEMPLES.

Śaiva temples in Bengal are usually dedicated to Śiva as lord, Iśvara, and contain a black stone liṅga set in a yoni basin. Also included in the temple shrine may be Śiva's trident and his vāhana, the white bull Nandin. Śiva is seldom represented anthropomorphically in the temples, although when he is ,

5. Sen, Caitanya, p.116 talks of the image of Gaura-Nitai made by Gauri Das of Kalna, a contemporary of Caitanya, and says that in the district of Nadia there are a number of clay images illustrating the incidents in Caitanya's life, made two centuries, which are examples of Krishnanagar art.

he appears as Śaṁkara, the ash-smeared ascetic with matted hair, wearing animal-skin loin cloth, carrying drum (*damaru*) and trident (*triśūla*). He is represented in his ascetic form in images of Kālī. Śaiva temples are extremely common throughout Bengal.

ŚĀKTA TEMPLES.

Śākta temples are commonly dedicated to Kālī and aspects of Durgā as Simhavāhinī (She who rides a Lion). Major temples contain stone images of Kālī such as the image at the Dakṣiṇeśvara temple north of Calcutta where Rāmakṛṣṇa, the 19th c Bengali saint and founder of the Ramakrishna Mission, attained his religious goal. There are semi-iconic stone images of Kālī at such temples as the Kalighat temple in Calcutta and the Vargabhīma temple in Tamluk, Midnapore district. Semi-iconic images tend to be connected with Śākta *pīṭhas* (holy places) or places of pilgrimage (*tīrtha*). The Kālī temple at Kalighat was allegedly built on the spot where Śatī's big toe fell and it thus acquired the distinction of being a Śākta *pīṭha* . However, the Kalighat temple only became popular in the mid-18th c. The semi-iconic images of Kālī are given distinctive markings such as Kālī's lolling tongue, eyebrows, eyes, crescent moon on the forehead etc. which are made of metal and attached to the stone to give it the semblance of a face. The commonest form of Kālī in Bengal is that of Dakṣiṇā Kālī, the 'Boon-Giving' Kālī, also known as Siddheśvarī Kālī. Images of Dakṣiṇā Kālī show Kālī as jet black, naked, with four arms, standing in *ālīḍha* pose on the chest of Śiva who lies corpse-like on his back beneath her. In her lower left hand she carries a severed human head, in upper left a sword (*khadga*) and shows *abhaya*- and *varada mudrās* with top and bottom right hands respectively. She is naked except for a girdle of human arms and a necklace of severed human heads. She wears various ornaments and a

crown. Sometimes corpses are shown emanating from her ears and a jackal is placed nearby. Śiva lies on his back with snakes either side of him, or else raised on one elbow, with half-closed meditative eyes. This is the form of Kālī in the Dakṣiṇeśvara temple and many others throughout Bengal.

Most Kālī temples built in the 18th-20th c are small, flat-roofed buildings usually referred to as **Caṇḍī-maṇḍapa** . Many Kālī temples contain clay images of the goddess (Pl.D, 4). Some of these can be quite old. The Āgamvāgiśa family temple in the Hooghly district is said to be eighty years old. Another image in the Kālī Bārī temple in Krishnanagar, Nadia district, is also said to be extremely old. The images are only removed if they have been damaged or are decayed beyond repair, otherwise they are repainted and renovated annually.

Although Durgā is one of the most popular of the Śākta deities in Bengal, temples dedicated to her are rare and never contain the kind of image worshipped during the autumnal **Durgā pūjā** festival. Some temples are dedicated to Durgā as **Simhavāhinī** and in this form she may be called **Jagaddhātṛī**. Otherwise she may be identified with **Annapūrṇā**, the form of **Pārvatī** giving food to her mendicant husband, Śiva. Some of these images are made of clay, although some are also made of **nimba** wood. W.Ward, writing in 1811, said that clay images of **Siddheśvarī** (Kālī), **Annapūrṇā**, **Kṛṣṇa**, **Pañcānana** (Śiva), **Ṣaṣṭhī**, **Manasā** and **Dakṣinrāya** (a folk deity) are constantly preserved in temples⁶. He also wrote that small brass images of **Durgā**, **Annapūrṇā**, **Jagaddhātṛī**, **Rādhā**, **Gaṇeśa**, **Gopāla** etc., small crystal or stone **liṅgas** , **śālagrāmas** and small stone images of

6. Ward, Account, p.364.

Ṣaṣṭhī, Śītalā etc., were worshipped in houses daily⁷ and that most of the images in temples are made of stone, usually black stone, although he mentions images of Durgā, Rādhā, Lakṣmī, Śīva, Garuḍa, Caitanya and Viṣṇu, usually one to three cubits high, made of nimba wood⁸. In some cases the clay images remain in the temples and W.Ward mentions clay images of Jagaddhātrī which are kept and worshipped daily in different parts of Bengal as well as a variety of images of deities worshipped in villages, almost all of which are of clay, although some are of stone⁹.

ṬHĀKURA DĀLĀNAS.

The mansions (rājbaris) of the wealthy zemindar families often contained an annexe or separate building used for annual festivals. They are flat-roofed buildings called ' Caṇḍī maṇḍapa ' or ' Ṭhākura dālāna ' and are built on a north-south axis so that the images face south when they are installed. In some cases, two such buildings are made. W.Ward says that a separate temple on the same plan as the Caṇḍī maṇḍapa is erected by rich men for the celebration of Śyāmā (Kālī) pūjā¹⁰. In the now derelict Nākāśīpārā rājbari, Nadia district, there are two maṇḍapas, one for the annual Durgā pūjā in the autumn and the other for Vāsantī pūjā (the spring Durgā pūjā celebration) and all the other pūjās celebrated by that particular household such as Kālī, Lakṣmī and Kārttikeya pūjās. Some of the maṇḍapas or dālānas can be extremely ornate such as the

7. Ward, Account, pp.358-359. C.Coleman says that clay images of Gaṅgā, the personification of the river Ganges, were set up and worshipped in numerous temples along the banks of the river (Mythology of the Hindus (London: Padbury, Allen and Co., 1832), p.119).

8. Ward, Account, p.363.

9. Ward, Account, p.147.

10. Ward, Account, p.355.

Durgā dālāna in the Krishnanagar rājbari , Nadia district, erected by Mahārājā Rudra Ray in the late 17th c. These dālānas are rectangular, flat-roofed buildings with pillared façade leading down to steps. In Calcutta homes belonging to the old zemindar families, the dālānas are placed at the end of a courtyard. One plate in Charles Coleman's book 'The Mythology of the Hindus' (1832), shows a Durgā pūjā scene¹¹ in which guests are enjoying a 'nautch' (the anglicised form of nāca meaning a dance) in a courtyard with tarpaulin drawn over it. The dālānas were invariably decorated in white plaster.

DOMESTIC SHRINES.

The family shrine generally contains representations of deities such as the Śiva liṅga and the Śālagrāma stone representing Viṣṇu. Lakṣmī is sometimes represented by a small wicker basket covered in cowrie shells (cowries were a form of currency and are therefore connected with Lakṣmī, the goddess of fortune). Small mould clay images are also common, such as those of Gaṇeśa and Lakṣmī, although more common are gaudy prints of deities which are hung in frames and receive daily worship. The basic Bengali form of pūjā is sometimes referred to as 'ghaṭe paṭe pūjā', the worship with a sacred water pot (ghaṭa) and a painting (paṭa) or print. During the annual festivals, the kuladevata (family deity) is worshipped alongside the festival deity and the family images or ritual objects are brought down from the family shrine and placed beside the festival image. It is possible to find hand-modelled clay images in family shrines and these may be kept for several years. The mould clay images of Gaṇeśa, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī which are used for daily worship are usually disposed of after a year and replaced with new images.

11. Coleman, Mythology, plate 18 (see Pl.D, 1).

Deities are commonly worshipped in groups rather than exclusively. Many shrines contain the images of several deities connected directly or indirectly with a major sect. It is possible to find the clay images of Kālī, Jagaddhātṛī, Sarasvatī, Śītalā and Manasā, for instance, worshipped collectively in one shrine room. The Kalighat temple in Calcutta has several adjacent shrines, containing Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa images.

THE BENGALI CALENDAR.

The Bengali calendar is determined by lunar rather than solar months. The lunar month is divided into two fortnights (**pakṣa**), one light (**śukla**) and the other dark (**kṛṣṇa**). The Bengali lunar month begins with a dark fortnight (**kṛṣṇa pakṣa**) of fifteen lunar days, starting after the day of the full moon from the first day of the moon's waning till the new moon (**amāvasyā**). The light fortnight (**śukla pakṣa**) lasts for fifteen days after the day of the new moon from the first day of the moon's waxing till the full moon (**pūrṇimā**). The Bengali lunar month is therefore a 'full moon ending' (**pūrṇimānta**) rather than a 'new moon ending' (**amānta**) month¹². A lunar day (**tithi**) is divided into sixty **daṇḍas** (one **daṇḍa** equals twenty-four minutes), in other words, twenty-four hours. Stellar constellations (**nakṣatra**) are also important and are included in the astrological almanacs (**pañjikās**) used to determine the precise time for religious occasions. At present, the Gupta Press **pañjikā** seems to be in popular use in Bengal.

There are twelve months in the Bengali year, corresponding to the English months as follows:

12. Ray, Pūjā Pārvaṇa, p.59. See also A.L.Basham, The Wonder That Was India (n.p.:Fontana, 1971), p.494 and Kane, Dharmaśāstra (1958), pp.641-642 for variant calculations.

Vaiśākha	April-May
Jyaiṣṭha	May-June
Āṣāḍha	June-July
Śrāvaṇa	July-August
Bhādra	August-September
Āśvina	September-October
Kārttika	October-November
Agrahāyaṇa	November-December
Pauṣa	December-January
Māgha	January-February
Phālguna	February-March
Caitra	March-April

The Bengali year begins in Vaiśākha, in the middle of April. These months are grouped into six seasons (*ṛtu*):

Vaiśākha-Jyaiṣṭha	grīṣma , summer
Āṣāḍha-Śrāvaṇa	varsā , rainy season
Bhādra-Āśvina	śarata , autumn
Kārttika-Agrahāyaṇa	hemanta , dewy season
Pauṣa-Māgha	śīta , winter
Phālguna-Caitra	vasanta , spring

The Bengali year is calculated according to the Śaka era introduced by Rājā Saliban (78/9 A.D.). The year 1982, therefore, corresponds to Śaka era 1904.

FESTIVALS OF BENGAL.

Festivals of Bengal take place throughout the year. In fact, there is a saying ' **bāro māsa tero pārvana** ' - 'twelve months, thirteen festivals'. The major festivals involving the use of clay images are as follows:

Viśvakarma pūjā	held on saṅkrānti of Bhādra
Durgā pūjā	held from śuklā saptamī-śuklā daśamī of Āśvina
Lakṣmī pūjā	held on pūrṇimā of Āśvina
Kālī pūjā	held on amāvasyā of Kārttika
Kārttikeya pūjā	held on saṅkrānti of Kārttika
Jagaddhātrī pūjā	held on śuklā navamī of Kārttika
Sarasvatī pūjā	held on śuklā pañcamī of Māgha

Many of the images used in these festivals are made of clay. In the absence of images, aniconic objects are used, such as a symbolic stone or a sacred water pot. Paintings may also be used as in **ghaṭe paṭe pūjā** (pūjā with a pot and painting). A small number of clay images are made for the less popular festivals such as those of Manasā on **kṛṣṇa pañcamī** of Śrāvaṇa and Annapūrṇā on **śuklā aṣṭamī** of Caitra. The peak season of the **kumāras** is during the winter months, prior to the large-scale winter fairs (**melās**). The rest of the year, the studios are dormant and the artists make occasional images according to commission. The festival images are both hand-modelled and made from moulds and are usually disposed of at the end of festivities. The majority of festivals requiring clay images are Śākta festivals, although clay images are used to a lesser extent for Vaiṣṇava celebrations. During the celebrations of **Rāsa Yātrā** on **pūrṇimā** of Kārttika, clay images of Śākta deities are displayed alongside those of Vaiṣṇava deities in some towns in the Nadia district. According to Nirad C.Choudhury, the Śāktas in Bengal are mainly of the landed gentry, whereas the Vaiṣṇavas are found mainly in the merchant classes¹³.

13. Choudhury, Hinduism, p.174.

The ritual ordinances for each of the festivals are contained in manuals for worship (**pūjāpaddhatis**). The most comprehensive of such manuals is the 'Purohita Darpaṇa' of Surendra Mohana Bhattacarya, which includes details of most of the major Hindu festivals of Bengal. It is used widely as a **pūjā** manual during festivals. Festivals are organised for the benefit of a family or neighbourhood, but the ritual is conducted by a priest or number of priests, who are elected by the patrons of the festival to perform worship on their behalf. The priest follows the **pūjā** manual and recites the appropriate Sanskrit **mantras** and hymns and the patrons participate at certain points in the **pūjā** . The patron or worshipper (**yajamāna**) appoints a **pūjaka** (one who performs the ritual) and a **tantradhāraka** (one who recites texts). The patron may also appoint a **hota** to perform sacrifice, but the usual number of priests is two.

DURGĀ PŪJĀ.

The most famous festival of Bengal involving the use of clay images, is the **Durgā pūjā** festival held annually in the autumn. The legendary inaugurator of the autumnal **Durgā pūjā** , according to the Bengali tradition, was king Rāmacandra, hero of the Rāmāyaṇa and an incarnation of the god Viṣṇu. Rāmacandra enlisted the help of Durgā in his battle with the demon king, Rāvaṇa. Durgā, true to her role as demon slayer, allowed Rāmacandra to win his battle after she had been worshipped by him. This story is not included in the original Sanskrit epic of Valmīki, but is a later interpolation which can be found in later Upapurāṇas and the Bengali version of the Rāmāyaṇa by Kṛttivāsa. The connections between Rāmacandra and Durgā are also apparent in equivalent celebrations throughout India in the autumn. The festival of Dussera in the south commemorates the tenth day (**daśamī**) in Āśvina after the

nine nights (**navarātra**) festival from **śuklā pratipada** to **śuklā navamī** in Āśvina, in which hymns are recited to Durgā. On this day, Rāmacandra was alleged to have marched against Rāvaṇa. Yogescandra Ray believes that the word Dussera is an abbreviation of **daśa-rātra** (ten nights)¹⁴. **Rāmlīlā** in the north emphasises the martial aspect of the autumnal **navarātra** celebrations and culminates with the burning of papier-mâché effigies of Rāvaṇa and fellow demons to commemorate Rāma's victory. Dussera used to be celebrated with great pomp by **rājās** and involved elaborate military processions. However, neither of these two celebrations of Dussera or **Rāmlīlā** involves the worship of an image of Durgā. In Gujurat, orthodox **smārta** ritual during **navarātra** involves the worship of the goddess in a **yantra** (geometrical design) or garlanded **ghaṭa** with offerings of vegetables and the recital of the 'Caṇḍī' (Devī Māhātmya)¹⁵. In Andhra Pradesh, families worship **ghaṭa** decorated with flowers and saffron and after celebrations, offer them to Brahmins¹⁶. On the sixth day (**ṣaṣṭhī**), Brahmins and Vaiśyas do **Sarasvatī pūjā** , on the eighth day (**aṣṭamī**), there is **Durgā pūjā** , on the ninth day (**navamī**) **pūjā** is performed to the family gods by Brahmins, while Vaiśyas worship weights, agriculturalists and carpenters etc. their implements and on the tenth day (**daśamī**) all visit the **śamī** tree and offer its leaves to friends¹⁷. In Nepal, **Durgā pūjā** is referred to as Dasain, during which the Rāmāyaṇa story is told, along with that of Durgā, and the

14. Ray, Pūjā Pārvaṇa, p.134.

15. M.R.Majumdar, "Earliest Devīmāhātmya Miniatures with special reference to Śakti-worship in Gujurat", JISOA, Vol.VI (1938), p.118.

16. A.C.Sekhar, "Fairs and Festivals", Census of India, Vol.II, pt.VII-B, Andhra Pradesh (Medak District) (1961), pp.110-111.

17. Sekhar, "Fairs", pp.110-111.

object of worship is a *kalasa* (water pot) with an image of Durgā enthroned on the side¹⁸. As with celebrations in Andhra Pradesh, Viśvakarmā (the patron god of craftsmen) is worshipped on *navamī* and implements are decorated with flowers, incense, lamps etc¹⁹.

Durgotsava, the festival of Durgā, is celebrated all over India in one form or another from the first of the bright half of Āśvina to the ninth²⁰. The tenth day is known as *vijayā daśamī*, the victorious tenth day on which Rāmacandra defeated the demon king Rāvaṇa, and occurs on the tenth lunar day of the bright half of Āśvina.

Durgā is first mentioned in the Devī Māhātmya section of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa as a slayer of demons, prominent among whom is the demon Mahiṣa, who ousts the gods from heaven. Although Durgā is regarded as a mighty Purāṇic goddess, she is given a strong regional character in Bengal, which makes her a familiar and loved personality. In popular tradition, Durgā is the daughter of Himavata (the Himalayas) and Menakā, wife of Śiva and mother of Gaṇeśa, Kārttikeya, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī. There is strong emphasis on the aspect of Durgā as ' *Mā* ' (Mother). In the tantric tradition, Durgā is regarded as the virgin daughter of Himavat and Menakā, as ' *Kumārī* ', inspiring devotees to experience a love for the goddess akin to that of doting parents for their daughter²¹. The theme of the separation of mother (Menakā) and daughter (Durgā) is strong in the so-called *Āgamanī* (advent) songs sung prior to *Durgā pūjā* and the

18. Mary Anderson, Festivals of Nepal (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), p.143 and p.146.

19. Anderson, Festivals, p.151.

20. Kane, Dharmaśāstra (1958), p.154.

21. T.Goudriaan and Sanjukta Gupta, Hindu Tantric and Śākta Literature, HILS Vol.II, 2 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981), p.180.

tearful farewell of the women who sing **Vijayā** songs and beseech Durgā to return again next year²². The three days of the main **pūjā** (**aṣṭamī**, **navamī**, **daśamī**) are regarded as the three days during which the daughter Durgā returns to her parental home for a brief visit, before journeying back to the house of her father-in-law. As a result of all these connotations, **Durgā pūjā** can be an emotional and lively occasion. One article in the Statesman newspaper referred to **Durgā pūjā** as being:

"For the welfare of the state, for the protection of the weak, for peace and happiness in the world"²³.

Another article in the same newspaper referred to Durgā as 'this divine incarnation of the Supreme power of womanhood with feminine charm and its spell-binding aspects' and goes on to say how, with the power crisis and spiralling prices 'Puja 1979 seems to have come as a symbol of joy amidst the gloom'²⁴.

ICONOGRAPHY OF DURGĀ.

In Bengal, Durgā is commonly represented as ten-armed, holding in her right hands a sword, discus, trident, spear, arrows, in her left hands, noose, goad, shield, bell and bow . She stands upon her **vāhana** , the lion, and is portrayed in the act of killing the demon Mahiṣa. Durga stands with her left foot on Mahiṣa's right shoulder, right foot on the back of her lion. The lion bites Mahiṣa's right elbow and paws his leg. Durgā's trident pierces Mahiṣa's chest and her snake noose encircles his neck. Mahiṣa bends under the weight of this twofold attack and kneels on one leg, staring upwards at Durgā who looks impassively outwards. Mahiṣa carries a

22. C.Chakravarti, The Tantras-Studies on Their Religion (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1963), p.100.

23. The Statesman Newspaper (October 1965), p.1.

24. Statesman (September 1979), p.1.

sword in his right hand and a shield in his left. Sometimes he is shown half-emerging from the neck of a decapitated buffalo, while other images represent the buffalo by a head placed nearby. Durgā is surrounded by her family of Gaṇeśa, Kārttikeya, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī. Gaṇeśa is shown to the lower left of Durgā, seated on a lotus with his vāhana , the rat, placed below him. Gaṇeśa is four-armed, holding mace (gadā), discus (cakra), lotus (padma) and conch (śaṅkha). Gaṇeśa is sometimes shown holding sweetmeats in the bottom left hand. In some images he is placed to the right of Durgā and in some family images, the two male deities appear above the female deities. To the right of Durgā and on the same level as Gaṇeśa, is Kārttikeya who is two-armed, holding bow (dhanus) and arrow (śara) and seated on his vāhana , the peacock. Above Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya are Lakṣmī to the left and Sarasvatī to the right. Both are usually shown standing on lotuses that rise from the cālī or the base. Sometimes they are shown standing on their respective vāhanas , the owl and the swan, although these are normally placed on the simhāsana . Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī stand in ardha-sama (the pose familiar in Rādhā-Govinda images). Lakṣmī holds a pair of lotus blossoms and Sarasvatī holds a vīṇā (Indian lute). The cālcitra pasted onto the cālī shows in the centre Śiva and Pārvatī with their son Gaṇeśa enjoying domestic bliss in their mountain home on Kailāsa. On either side are the various incarnations of Viṣṇu, the Daśavatāras (Matsya, Kurma, Varāha Nārāsimha, Vāmana, Paraśurāma, Rāmacandra, Kṛṣṇa, Budha and Kalki) and of Durgā, the Daśamahāvidyā (Kālī, Tārā, Chinnamastā, Sundarī, Bagalā, Mātāṅgī, Bhuvaneśvarī, Siddhavidyā, Bhairavī, Dhumāvatī). Figures of Rāma and Śītā and Devī fighting demon armies are also common themes. In some traditional Durgā images, small nooks are left on either side of the cālī . In the left hand nook is placed a small mould image of

Rāmacandra holding a bow and arrow, green coloured and seated on the monkey, Hanūmān. In the right hand nook is a figure of two-armed Śiva holding a horn and drum and seated upon Nandin. The art of **cālcitra** painting is dying out, but in the 19th c it included figures of several deities. P.Ghosha mentions the representations of Indra, Agni, Varuna, the Maruts, Yama and the Aṣṭanāyikās along with scenes depicting battles between gods and demons, a scene showing Rāmacandra enthroned with Śitā to his left, Hanūmān kneeling and the three brothers Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna holding umbrella and fans and a battle scene between Rāma and Rāvaṇa²⁵. The **cālcitra** emphasises, as S.Bhattacharyya points out, that **Durgā pūjā** is a non-sectarian, non-denominational **pūjā** which is not the monopoly of the Śāktas²⁶.

THE RITUAL OF DURGĀ PŪJĀ.

Durgā pūjā is celebrated in the month of Āśvina (Sept-Oct) during the autumn (**śarata**) season and is hence called **śārādīya utsava** , the autumnal festival. It is considered compulsory for all those who can afford it. According to P.Ghosha, the **smārtas** call it a **nitya** ceremony, in other words, its omission is a sin and it is called **kāmyatva** (meritorious) and may be performed with a particular object in view²⁷. Once begun, **Durgā pūjā** has to be celebrated annually. The worshipper follows scriptural authority and his **kulācāra** (family tradition)²⁸. C.Chakravarti sees the present **Durgā pūjā** celebrations as a reflection of family life²⁹. Apart from

25. Ghosha, Durga, pp.9-10.

26. S.Bhattacharyya, "The Worship of Durgā", BRMIC, 5, no.1 (January 1954), p.18.

27. Ghosha, Durga, p.15.

28. Bhattacharyya, "Worship", p.19.

29. Chakravarti. Tantras, p.103.

the family customs, there are also local customs which define **Durgā pūjā** celebrations in Bengal. Celebrations begin with the recital of the **Devī Māhātmya**, otherwise known as '**Caṇḍī**' or '**Durgā Saptaśatī**', which lasts a fortnight, starting at midnight before the **pratipada** . The **pūjā** fortnight is known as **Devīpakṣa** and the non-stop recital of '**Caṇḍī**' on the morning of each day until **mahānavamī** along with the attendant worship of **Durgā** with various articles, constitutes the **kalpārambha** ceremony³⁰.

In traditional families, the construction of the image begins several months before the actual **Durgā pūjā** . On the day of **Ratha Yātrā** , the artist takes a piece of split bamboo into the room where the family images are kept. The family priest, after prayer to **Viṣṇu**, anoints it with sandalwood paste and invokes **Durgā**'s blessings on it. The bamboo remains in the family shrine from **Ratha Yātrā** , the second day of the bright half of **Āṣāḍha** (June-July), until **Janmāṣṭamī** , **Kṛṣṇa**'s birthday on the eighth day of the waning moon in **Śrāvaṇa** (July-Aug), when it is brought down by the **kumāra** and the framework of the **Durgā** image is made³¹. The base, the **kāṭhāmo** , is worshipped on this day in a ceremony known as **kāṭhāmo pūjā** . This ceremony marks the importance of the initial piece of bamboo in the construction of the clay image, although it is important to note that only **Durgā** images receive this attention and that only traditional families perform **kāṭhāmo pūjā** . Parts of the framework or the entire framework of the previous year's image are used in the construction of the annual image.

30. A. Shastri, "Durgā Pūjā", Bharatīya Vidyā, Vol. X (1949), p. 259.

31. Wilkins, Modern, p. 227.

The main **Durgā pūjā** celebrations last five days: **ṣaṣṭhī**, the sixth day; **saptamī**, the seventh day; **aṣṭamī**, the eighth day; **navamī**, the ninth day; and **daśamī** the tenth day. The programme follows that outlined in the **Rāmāyaṇa** of **Kṛttivāsa**. **Durgā** is awoken (**bodhana**) on the **ṣaṣṭhī**, in remembrance of **Brahmā**'s 'untimely awakening' (**akāla bodhana**) of **Durgā** on behalf of **Rāma**. She is roused in a **vilva** or **bela** tree on the evening of the **ṣaṣṭhī**. Also in the evening, the combination of nine plants, known as the **navapatrikā** (**nava**, nine, **patrikā**, leaves) is assembled round a banana stem and tied together with an **aparājita** creeper. Each of the nine plants are said to correspond to one of the nine **Durgās** (**Navadurgā**): **rambhā**, the banana stem, to **Brahmanī**; **kaccī** to **Kālī**; **haridrā**, tumeric, to **Durgā**; **jayantī** to **Kārttikī**; **vilva**, wood apple, to **Śivā**; **dādima**, pomegranate, to **Raktadantikā**; **aśoka** to **Śokarahitā**; **mānaka**, arum, to **Cāmuṇḍā**; and **dhānya**, paddy, to **Lakṣmī**³². The **Navapatrikā** as a whole is considered to be **Durgā**. The plants are tied together with an **aparājita** creeper (proper name **clitoria**) around the stem of a small banana plant. The **Navapatrikā** is also referred to as ' **kalābau** ' (plantain wife) and is supposed to resemble a newly-married bride. The **vilva** fruits which constitute one of the nine plants are tied like breasts onto the banana stem and a **śāri** is tied over the combination of nine plants, covering them completely so that they are not visible. The **kalābau** is placed next to **Gaṇeśa** throughout the ceremonies, although it is not taken to be **Gaṇeśa**'s bride, but rather **Durgā** herself. A. Shastri suggests that the **Navapatrikā** serves as a substitute for **Durgā** at the time of bathing since the image of **Durgā** used during the annual festival is of

32. Chakravarti, Tantras, p.99.

clay which would be damaged by bathing³³. However, other means are taken to circumvent the bathing of the clay image, for instance the bathing of the reflection of the image in a mirror placed before it, and it seems that the *kalābau* has independent significance and probably has its origins in tribal custom. The links with fertility are obvious and the *kalābau* may have harvest festival connotations, in which case it would be the equivalent of the English harvest corndolly made of straw. Yogescandra Ray notes that in Bankura, some people use the *Navapatrikā* instead of an image to represent Durgā or the Navadurgās³⁴ and that in the house of one landlord, a head of clay is tied upon a clothed *Navapatrikā* which is then worshipped as a form of Durgā³⁵.

The beginning of ceremonies on *ṣaṣṭhī* is called *kalpārambha*. A vow (*sankalpa*) is made by the head of the family to perform *Durgā pūjā* in Āśvina and to read the Devī Māhātmya. The priests are appointed and received with honour (*varaṇa*) to perform the promised *Durgā pūjā*. By the *ṣaṣṭhī*, the image has been installed and the place of worship is decorated. The outside and the entrance of the place of worship are decorated with buntings and banana stems. Inside, the image is placed on a raised dias (*vedi*). In traditional families, the *vedi* is made of earth about two feet high and is sown with five grains: rice; wheat; barley; mas and sesamum³⁶. In three to four days, these seed sprout into seedlings. On top of the *vedi* is placed a wooden platform. All around the *vedi* and at the

33. Shastri, "Durgā", p.260.

34. Ray, Pūjā Pārvana, p.78.

35. Ray, Pūjā Pārvana, p.83.

36. Ghosha, Durga, p.14.

entrance to the place of worship, **ālīpanās** (also known as **ālpanā**, sacred designs) are drawn out by women using liquid rice paste or white paint. These **ālīpanās** are floral designs and are considered auspicious.

On the seventh day, **saptamī**, the image is consecrated and full **Durgā pūjā** begins. At dawn, the **Navapatrikā** is taken to the nearest river or stretch of water and bathed (Pl.I, 1). After a brief **pūjā**, it is brought back to the place of worship, clothed in a **śāri** and placed beside **Gaṇeśa**. The priest performs the great bathing (**mahāsnāna**) on the reflection of **Durgā** in a mirror placed below the clay image, using milk, curds, ghee, honey and various types of oil and water (Pl.J, 2). This bathing is performed on the reflection of the head of **Durgā** in the mirror (**darpaṇa**) with various **mantras**. Having done this, the priest installs the sacred water pot in front of the image. The **ghaṭa** is usually positioned on a ring of clay to hold it in place and contains water (preferably Ganges water), herbs and jewels. The lip of the **ghaṭa** is covered first by mango or **pāna** (betel) leaves, and a green coconut (symbol of fertility) and the **ghaṭa** is then dressed like the **kalābau** in a piece of cloth and decorated with a garland. The bowl of the **ghaṭa** is decorated with a **bhumaṇḍala** (universal diagram) in the shape of a man, drawn in vermilion. **Durgā** is invoked (**adhivāsa**) into the **ghaṭa** and it is cordoned off with four, arrow-like sticks placed in the ground and encircled with string (the encircling with string being known as **sūtrabeṣṭana**) (Pl.I, 2). The four sticks are topped with **tāla** (palm) leaves and are known as **tīra-kāṭi**. The image is similarly cordoned off and after consecration only the priest is allowed to touch the image until the ceremonies have been completed. The consecration involves **prāṇapratīṣṭhā** in which the priest

the priest recites the *mūla mantra* , takes a few leaves of *durva* grass and a little sun-dried rice and touches first the chest of *Durgā*, then the subordinate deities and places his hands by the cheeks of the images while reciting the *prāṇapratiṣṭhā mantra* (Pl.I, 3). Taking lamp-black (collyrium) on the tip of a leaf of *kuśa* grass or a *bela* twig, the priest performs *cakṣurdāna* , going through the motions of painting in the eyes (Pl.I, 4)³⁷. On rare occasions, the artist actually paints in the eyes of the figure of *Durgā* while the priest holds the artist's elbow. This is the standard procedure for the *prāṇapratiṣṭhā* of all deities. If there is no image, the *prāṇapratiṣṭhā* and *cakṣuradāna* are omitted and then the object of worship is either the *śālagrāma śila* or the *ghaṭa* , which is regarded as containing the spirit of the deity in its waters.

Having completed the consecration, the priest meditates on *Durgā* and worships her with the sixteen *upacāras* . Various food offerings are made, including the ordinary *arghya* of scented flowers, sun-dried rice, *javā* flowers, *kuśa* grass, sesamum, mustard oil, *durva* grass, the offering of *puṣpa* (flowers), *dhūpa* (incense), *vasana* (cloth), *ābharāṇa* (jewels), *gandha* (perfume) and so forth. The cloth is usually placed in front of the image, but very often the image is decorated with real jewellery specially created for it. This can include nose-rings, earrings and tiara. The image is garlanded every day with flowers. Red flowers are considered appropriate for the worship of *Durgā*, so hibiscus, china rose (*javā*) or marigolds are chosen as flower offerings to *Durgā*. On the last day of worship, the image of *Durgā* is decorated with a garland of one hundred and eight *javā* flowers. The image is also decorated

37. Ward, Account, p.123.

with the **cāñda-mālā** made of **śolā** or **ḍāker sāja** . It is said that the **cāñda-mālā** represents the moon, while the **ghaṭa** represents the sun. The sun and moon probably represent the passage of time or they may have a tantric significance. The sun represents Śiva and the moon Śakti, or else the sun represents a man (the symbolic man or **bhumaṇḍala** , drawn on the side of the **ghaṭa**) and the moon represents woman (as in the **cāñda-mālā** , which often have the word ' **Mā** ', 'Mother', written in their centre). During the feeding of the deities (**bhoga** , corresponding to the **upacāra** of **naivedya**), the priest offers cooked food and drink. The usual practice is to place the food before the image and throw flowers on it when it is offered, although sometimes the priest puts the food and drink to the lips of the images while reciting the appropriate **mantras** . The priest does this behind a cloth drawn in front of the image as an indication of privacy. Deities are said to consume the subtle essence of the food offerings through the sense of smell. After the deities have been fed, the cloth is drawn away. The stipulation regarding **naivedya** is that whatever the worshipper eats (whether vegetarian or non-vegetarian) should be offered up to the deity³⁸. However, I am informed by Prof. B.K.Matilal that Durgā is offered only vegetarian **bhoga** (Durgā being referred to as Nārāyaṇī and Vaiṣṇavī; Vaiṣṇavas being predominantly vegetarian). The non-vegetarian food is prepared and cooked separately and offered to the **dakinīs** by throwing flowers over it. The sacrificial goat meat is considered to be **mahāprasāda** and is eaten by the celebrants.

Although **Durgā pūjā** is not strictly speaking a tantric **pūjā** since a priest (**purohita**) is present, there

38. Kane, Dharmaśāstra (1958), p.733.

are obvious tantric borrowings. These can be seen in the ritual of **bhūta-sūddhi** (self-purification), physical cleansing and **nyāsa** (mentally invoking the gods, **mantras** and holy texts to occupy various parts of the body and render it a fit receptacle for worship and meditation³⁹), showing **mudrās**, the use of certain **mantras**, **prāṇāyāma**, and **dhyāna**. The priest visualises Devī internally (**mānasa pūjā**) and makes mental offerings of cloth of the elements, flowers of the **guṇas**, incense of the breath, the light of energy and so forth. These combined with the use of **maṇḍala** and **japa** (repetition of deities' names) and **kumārī pūjā** (the worship of pre-pubescent girls), introduces the tantric elements into **Durgā pūjā**.

Animal sacrifice (**paśubali**) is done daily in family **pūjā** but not in the communal **pūjās** which have vegetarian sacrifice instead. Buffaloes, goats and rams may be sacrificed to Durgā at a sacrificial post placed some distance from the image. The animal is sacrificed with one blow from the sacrificial sword (**khadga**) and the head is then offered to Durgā. Goats are most commonly used in animal sacrifice and even have the connotations of the 'scape-goat', being regarded as bearing the sins of the patrons of the **pūjā**. The goat is sometimes seen as representing sexuality (**kāma**), but also the six enemies (**ṣaḍa-ripu**) of man (**kāma**, desire, **krodha**, anger, **lobha**, greed, **moha**, delusion, **mada**, pride and **mātsarja**, envy). Animal sacrifice is accompanied by the 'sacrifice' of a gourd and a bundle of red sugarcane. According to Yogescandra Ray, the gourd is a substitute for human sacrifice and the sugarcane for alcohol, since from sugarcane comes molasses and from molasses,

39. Kane, Dharmaśāstra (Vol.V, pt.II, 1962), p.1120.

alcohol⁴⁰. The idea of human sacrifice remains in the human effigies made out of rice paste or thickened milk or flour, which are ritually sacrificed in a rite called 'śatru bali', which refers to the sacrifice of an enemy (śatru).

Ceremonies on mahāṣṭamī, the eighth day, are the same as on saptamī including the bathing of the reflection of Durgā in a mirror and the offering of the sixteen upacāras . On this day, the orthodox observe a fast, except for women whose husbands or fathers are living, and during the day there are athletic displays, hence it is called vīrāṣṭamī⁴¹. Durgā's weapons are worshipped (astrapūjā) with flowers and perfume and extensive worship is done to her attendants, the sixty-four yoginīs and her comrades-in-arms, the eight śaktis , also known as the Aṣṭanāyikās (the eight consorts): Brahmanī; Maheśvarī; Kameśvarī; Vaiṣṇavī; Varāhī; Nārāsinghī; Indrānī; and Cāmuṇḍā. Minor deities are worshipped such as the Bhairavīs and Lokapālas, and there is pūjā and feeding of kumārīs . Clay images of the Aṣṭanāyikās are sometimes made and placed beside the image of Durgā, although not in the traditional family celebrations.

On the junction of mahāṣṭamī and mahānavamī occurs ' sandhi pūjā ', which lasts forty-eight minutes exactly; twenty-four in mahāṣṭamī and twenty-four in mahānavamī . It is considered to be the time when Rāvaṇa was killed in battle by Rāmacandra. The goddess Cāmuṇḍā is worshipped with the sixteen upacāras . Cāmuṇḍā is one of Kālī's epithets and sometimes her clay image is made and worshipped during sandhi pūjā , being placed beside the

40. Ray, Pūjā Parvaṇa, p.78.

41. Shastri, "Durgā", p.261.

Durgā image for this particular ceremony. The sixty-four *yoginīs* are also worshipped and animal sacrifice is performed during the twenty-four minutes of *mahānavamī*. This is followed by *añjalī* and *ārati* and the ceremonies are concluded as usual. Midnight *pūjā* (*ardha-rātri pūjā*) is performed on *mahāṣṭamī* and involves *pūjā* to Ugra-caṇḍā and the Aṣṭanāyikās, the sixty-four Yoginīs, the *Navapatrikā* and Durgā's weapons, with the five *upacāras* (*pañcopacāra*).

Mahānavamī on the ninth day, is a repetition of basic *pūjā* of the previous days, except a greater number of sacrifices are performed and *kumārī pūjā* and *Devī stotra* (hymns to Devī) are included. *Kumārī pūjā* is another familiar feature of tantric *pūjā* and is mentioned in Śākta Upapurāṇas. It involves the worship of pre-pubescent girls (*kumārīs*) of about nine years of age, preferably from the Brahmin caste. *Kumārī pūjā* is an important part of tantric *pūjā* and according to the 'Purohita Darpaṇa', it should be performed on *mahānavamī* (of *Durgā pūjā*), and during *Jagaddhātrī-*, *Annapūrṇā* - and *Kālī pūjā*. It is also an important part of *Navarātra* ritual and may be performed by all sects, Śākta, Vaiṣṇava, etc⁴². The *kumārī* is regarded as the living embodiment of Devī for the duration of the ceremonies. The sacred fire (*homa*) is made and *mantras* are recited (Pl.J, 5). The *homa* represents the Vedic aspect of *pūjā*. Ash from the *homa* is used as a *tilaka* mark (Pl.J, 3). *Mahānavamī pūjā* is concluded with offerings of flowers and prostration.

The final day of *pūjā* is known as the *vijayā daśamī*. Having done the usual *pūjā* with *upacāras* and recited hymns to Devī, the priest performs the act of dismissal

42. Surendra Mohana Bhattacharya, Purohita Darpaṇa (Calcutta: Satyanarayana Library, 1368 S.S.), p.309.

(**visarjana**) on the **ghaṭa** and invokes Devī in the flowers of the offerings. The **visarjana** outlined in the 'Purohita Darpaṇa' follows that of the tantric scholar, Kṛṣṇānanda Āgamvāgiśa in his 'Tantrasāra'. This says that one should visualise all the **avarana** (covering) deities merging into the body of the main deity. A **mantra** is recited and with the **sāmhāra mudrā** one should bring the deity's energy into one's own heart with the scent from the leftover flowers. Then, making a triangular **maṇḍala** (diagram) to the north east, one should place the remains of the offerings upon it. **Pūjā** is done to the five deities (Viṣṇu, Śiva, Śakti, Sūrya and Gaṇeśa) and the **ghaṭa** is removed with a **mantra** . After **visarjana** , the priest takes the coconut off the top of the **ghaṭa** and pours the water from the **ghaṭa** onto the mirror, which is this time angled to reflect the feet of the goddess. The priest sprinkles the remaining water on the heads of the congregation, saying ' **Om śāntiḥ** ' (peace) (Pl.J, 1). The mirror may be immersed in the water of the **ghaṭa** . This immersion of the mirror in the **ghaṭa** is considered to be the immersion proper, rather than the later immersion of the image. Unlike the initial bathing, the immersion is done on the reflected feet of Durgā, as if she was plunging headfirst into the waters. Afterwards, there is a benediction and the payment of Brahmins' fees. Gifts, **prasāda** , usually consisting of food and sweetmeats, are distributed to the congregation and guests. Before the immersion of the image, there are certain concluding ceremonies. The priest leads a circumambulation (**pradakṣiṇa**) of the image and women bring offerings of betel leaf (**pāna**) and betel nut (**tāmbūla**) and vermilion (**sindūra**) and offer it to the images. **Sindūra** taken from the feet of images is kept by the women for use on their own foreheads for **tilaka** marks during the rest of the year. Jewelry and other mementos are removed from the

image. In some cases an unwidowed woman takes a small brass plate of paddy and **durva** grass with a rupee dyed in red lead on it and throws it from the front of the image into the cloth of a man standing behind the image. This is preserved with care⁴³.

Images are traditionally carried on bamboo poles to the water's edge and ferried out midstream between two boats which then draw apart, letting the image fall into the water. On the way to the water's edge, the congregation dance, sing lewd songs and play music. At immersion, mud and dust must be thrown by the participants at each other and obscenities are uttered as part of the ceremonies known as ' **Śāvarotsava** '. This is connected with tribal custom, although it is considered a compulsory part of immersion. The image is always carried by tribals (manual labourers, previously these would have been employed by the **rājās**), so this part of the ceremonies is tribal. In most cases, the **ghaṭas** are immersed along with the image. Sometimes the image is revolved several times (usually seven) before it is immersed. Nirad C.Choudhury writes that the face of the image is kept turned towards the house as the image leaves for immersion⁴⁴. The details of the immersion ceremony are not mentioned in the ritual texts, so that most of the attendant ceremonies are the result of either regional or familial idiosyncracies. Most immersions are lively occasions. Large images are paraded around town in lorries, accompanied by shouts of ' **Durgā māi ki jay** ' (victory to Mother Durgā) and music. In Calcutta, the images are taken to various mooring places along the Hooghly river and immersed. The number of images worshipped

43. P.Lakshminarasiah, ed., The Encyclopaedia of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa (Madras: The Indian Encyclopaedias Compiling and Publishing Co., 1924-5), p.66.

44. Choudhury, Autobiography, p.71.

in Calcutta is so great that it is not possible to immerse the images at the correct time stipulated as auspicious by the religious almanacs, and immersion is delayed for several days.

After the immersion, friends and relatives exchange **viṣayā daśamī** greetings and forgive each other past offences. This is **viṣayā milana** or 'the meeting together in victory', when **viṣayā** songs are sung, bidding farewell to Durgā who has already left for her mountain home⁴⁵. **Aparājita pūjā** is done on a copper vessel on which is drawn an eight-petalled lotus. The **aparājita** creeper is established on the pot and a vow is made. Gaṇeśa is worshipped, prayers said, and the worship concluded⁴⁶.

KĀLĪ PŪJĀ.

The second most important annual festival in Bengal is that of **Kālī pūjā**, held at the dead of night on the new moon (**amāvasyā**) of Kārttika (Oct-Nov), otherwise known as **Dīpānvitā** or **Diwālī**, the festival of lights, when houses are illuminated with lights (**dīpa**). **Śrāddha** (**pūjā** to the ancestors) is celebrated during the day and **Kālī pūjā** by night. The convention is that, once begun, **Kālī pūjā** has to be performed annually for five consecutive years. **Kālī** is worshipped in households as well as communally in **pūjā paṇḍalas**. Many tantrics perform a tantric form of **Kālī pūjā**. Various images of **Kālī** are worshipped, but the most popular is that of Dakṣiṇā **Kālī**.

45. E.J.Thompson and Arthur M. Spencer, Bengali Religious Lyrics: Śākta (Calcutta: Association Press, 1923), p.28.

46. Details of ritual outlined here for **Durgā pūjā** were taken from S.C.Kaviratna, ed., Devīpurāṇokta ŚrīŚrīdurgāpūjā Paddhati (Calcutta: Mahesh Publications, n.d.).

ICONOGRAPHY OF KĀLĪ.

Traditional images of Kālī stand at about four feet and show a four-armed Kālī standing in *ālīdha* pose, with right leg forward and placed on the chest of Śiva who lies beneath her. Kālī is naked and wears a garland of human heads and a girdle of severed arms. She carries in her bottom left hand a severed head, top left a sword (*khadga*), dripping with blood, while her bottom right hand is opened in *varada-mudrā* and top right in *abhaya-mudrā* . Her tongue lolls out of her blood-soaked mouth and her hair hangs dishevelled over her shoulders down to her knees. She wears anklets, armbands, bracelets and a large crown (*mukuta*). She is usually given a stylised breast-plate as in the Durgā images. Two small corpses are sometimes shown emerging from her ears or acting as ornaments. Kālī, as her name implies, is usually painted black, although it is becoming popular to paint Kālī images in varying shades of blue, including sky blue. If she is painted black, the eyebrows and lines around the eyes and mouth are painted red. Flashes of red are painted on her arms, legs, torso, palms of the hands and soles of the feet. The red against the black heightens the already gruesome effect of Kālī's appearance. In contrast, Śiva is shown as a white, ash-smeared ascetic with matted hair, lying on a tiger skin, surrounded by snakes. Śiva's eyes are half-closed in meditation and he lies on his back with arms behind his head or propped up on his elbow. He wears *rākṣasa* beads around his neck and is dressed in a tiger skin. In one hand is his *damaru* drum, in the other a horn. Kālī is accompanied by jackals (Pl.F, 3).

Dakṣiṇā Kālī refers to Kālī in her generous (*dakṣiṇā*) aspect, but there are other forms of Kālī which emphasise her other roles. As *Rakṣā Kālī*, she gives protection (*rakṣā*) from epidemics or misfortune. In Bengal, Kālī is connected

with epidemics, especially cholera⁴⁷, just as Durgā is also called upon in times of disease and calamity⁴⁸. The form of Rakṣā Kālī shows Kālī without protruding tongue or garland of heads and she is only two-armed, holding in her right hand a skull, in the left a bowl of wine. Rakṣā Kālī is also worshipped if one's wishes have been fulfilled on the completion of a vow (vrata). Śmaśāna Kālī is the Kālī of the cremation grounds, where she is worshipped by tantrics. This image is similar to that of Rakṣā Kālī. Śmaśāna Kālī is painted black and stands diagonally across Śiva with her left foot forward instead of her right foot (Pl E, 7). Some Bengalis make a distinction between Dakṣiṇā (in this case meaning 'right') and Vāmā (meaning 'left') Kālī, according to whether Kālī is shown placing her left or her right foot on Śiva's chest. This may refer to the Dakṣiṇācara (Right Hand Path) and Vāmācara (Left Hand Path) of Śāktism, but may also be misinterpretation of terminology by local Bengalis. Images of Śmaśāna Kālī are made and painted on the same day and worshipped at night in a cremation ground and are immersed before the following dawn as part of Kālī pūjā celebrations in the month of Kārttika.

Kālī, like Durgā, is mentioned in the Devī Māhātmya (DM) as a demon slayer, although she is not represented as such iconographically. In the DM 87.4-25, in her fight with the demons Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa, Durgā (here called Ambikā) becomes angry, her forehead grows dark and out of it emerges the fierce black goddess Kālī. Kālī is described as having a terrible appearance, being armed with a sword and noose, bearing a multi-coloured, skull-topped staff, being decorated with a garland of skulls, clad in a tiger skin, with

47. Chakravarti, Tantras, p.92.

48. Chakravarti, Tantras, p.94.

emaciated flesh, wide-mouthed, lolling-tongued, with sunken red eyes. She kills the demons Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa and on returning to Ambikā holding their severed heads, is dubbed Cāmuṇḍā⁴⁹. Kālī is called upon again (DM 88.49-61) to kill the demon Raktavīja, whose blood creates hundreds of other demons if it touches the ground. Kālī opens her mouth wide and devours all the demons, stretching out her tongue to catch the drops of blood from the wounded demon until he is completely drained⁵⁰. The Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa, Purva khaṇḍa 23.6-8, says that at the end of the night on a new moon day, Kālī came down to earth to kill demons. The earth trembled under the weight of her feet and so Śiva, as a corpse, held her on his chest and restored equilibrium⁵¹. She is described as dark (śyāmā), four-armed, with varada and abhaya mudrās in her left hands and a sword and a head in her right⁵². She is naked, dishevelled, with lolling tongue, bloody and fearful. She drinks wine and is surrounded by yoginīs who dance and drink with her. According to tantric tradition, Kālī places her right foot (dakṣiṇa) on Śiva's chest because ' dakṣiṇa ' has favourable and auspicious connotations and because the chest is the location of the twelve-petalled lotus heart (maṇipūra), which is regarded as the place of worship for the iṣṭadevata (personal deity). Śiva meditates on the favourable, auspicious foot of Kālī, which is why he is shown with half-closed eyes and serene expression.

49. F.E.Pargiter, trans., The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa (Calcutta: The Asiatic Soc., 1972), pp.499-500. Kālikā Purāṇa 63.89 says that Kālī emerged out of the forehead of Devī (K.R.Van Kooij, Worship of the Goddess According to the Kālikā Purāṇa, pt.1 (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1972), p.127).

50. Pargiter, Mārkaṇḍeya, pp.505-506.

51. Hazra, Studies, pp.407-408 n.107.

52. H.Sastri, ed., Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa (Calcutta: The Asiatic Soc., 1875), p.152:

pūjayeyurmahākālīm śyāmām cārucaturbhujām/
varābhayakarām vāme dakṣiṇeśinṛmuṇḍakām// (Purva Khaṇḍa 23.12)

Kālī is also connected with Viṣṇu as Kṛṣṇa. In the Kṛṣṇa-Kālī image, otherwise known as Śyāma-Śyāmā, the two deities are combined in a syncretic image which shows Kṛṣṇa with protruding tongue and garland of heads (*muṇḍamālā*). The story connected with this image relates how one day Kṛṣṇa was with Rādhā and other **gopis** when Rādhā's husband, Abhimanyu, was informed of her misconduct by Rādhā's mother-in-law, Jaṭilā and her sister-in-law, Kuṭilā. The infuriated husband, accompanied by his mother, sister and neighbours, went to the Vṛndā groves with drawn sword to punish his wife. Rādhā found out about the danger and prayed to Kṛṣṇa to devise a means of escaping. Kṛṣṇa assumed the form of Kālī and Rādhā fell at her feet in an attitude of worship. When Abhimanyu saw this, he was pleased, because he as a worshipper of Kālī⁵³.

THE RITUAL OF KĀLĪ PŪJĀ.

The *pūjā* for Kālī is as follows. Having done daily rites, the worshipper sits on a seat and does Vedic *ācamana* (sipping water). With a *mantra*, the seat is sprinkled with water and purified. The hands and feet are washed and *mantras* are recited for the removal of sins. With the *mantra* ' *hung* ', the worshipper looks at the place of worship and then writes the *mantra* ' *kling* ' on the ground to remove sins. ' *Hung* ' and ' *kling* ' are the so-called 'seed' (*bīja*) *mantras* of Kālī⁵⁴. The worshipper ties a scarf around himself as a mark of humility. Remembering his teacher, flowers and perfume are given to Śiva and the other gods and the in-

53. D.C.Sen, Baṅga Sāhitya Paricaya (or Selections from the Bengali Literature), pt. 1 (Calcutta: Univ. of Calcutta, 1914), p.iii.

54. These are the so-called ' *bīja* ' or seed *mantras* of Kālī. P.G.Lalje mentions the recitation of the Devī phonemes *hlim* or *hrim* is supposed to be efficacious (Studies, p.124).

vocation and **saṁkalpa** vows are made. The **ghaṭa** is established, the **tirthas** (holy places of pilgrimage) are invoked, the **ghaṭa** is bathed and the worshipper does **ācamana** . The ordinary **arghya** is established and the **dvārādevata** (door deities) are worshipped. A right-handed **svastikā** is usually drawn near the place of worship for this purpose. Then comes the 'removal of obstacles', the purification of the place of worship (the **āsana** and the **maṇḍapa**) with the **mūla mantra** and the **pañcagavya** . The **pūjā** articles are placed to the right and the ghee lamps are lit. The worshipper then purifies his body (**kāyadisódhana**) with the special **mantra** , taking sandalwood and red flowers, rubs them in the palms of his hands, smells them and with a snapping of the fingers, does **daśadigbandhana** (warding off the evil spirits in all directions, literally 'fencing all the ten sides') and **bhūtaśuddhi** . Then, placing his hand over his heart, he does **ātma-prāṇapraṭiṣṭhā** , then **prāṇayāma** , followed by prayer to the **ṛsis** (sages). With **mudrās** various parts of the body are touched and the worshipper meditates on Devī. After meditation, there is **pūjā** with mental offerings (**mānasa pūjā**), the showing of various **mudrās** and the special **arghya** . The the **Kālī yantra** is drawn. The mystic syllables ' **kring** ' and ' **hring** ' are drawn within a triangle surrounded by a circle, eight lotus petals, another circle and then a square. This **Kālī yantra** is taken from the 'Tantrasāra' of Kṛṣṇānanda . Welcoming (**āvāhana**) is done and then the consecration of the image with **cakṣurdāna** and **prāṇapraṭiṣṭhā** . Devī's **pūjā** with the sixteen **upacāras** follows. The eight Śaktis (Aṣṭanāyikās) are worshipped with Brahmins and Lokapālas and their weapons. This is followed by **pūjā** to Śiva and then sacrifice. Animal sacrifice is done according to tantric rules with the sacrifice of goats, followed by tantric **homa** , **japa** and then the conclusion of ceremonies with a benediction

(śānti), the tilaka mark, dakṣiṇa (gifts and payment of Brahmins' fees) and visarjana . A hymn taken from the Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa is sung. Clay images of Kālī are immersed before dawn the following day, although today, many pūjā committees leave Kālī images in paṇḍalas for as long as possible.

The festive worship of Kālī is performed on many occasions, especially during times of calamity, such as the outbreak of epidemics or at times of rejoicing and thanksgiving as at Diwālī, the Raṭanti-caturdaśī day (the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight in Māgha) and the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight of Jyaiṣṭha (which is performed mainly with fruits and is known as phalahāriṇī pūjā)⁵⁵. With the outbreak of epidemics in villages, there is public worship of Rakṣā Kālī or Śamaśāna Kālī⁵⁶. Special worship is done in shrines on new moon nights, which, with tuesdays and saturdays, are regarded as sacred to the deity⁵⁷.

The cult of Kālī became popular in the days of the 'Swadeshi' struggle and there was a strong attempt to identify it with nation-worship; Kālī was Bengal personified⁵⁸.

LAKṢMĪ PŪJĀ.

The festival of Lakṣmī pūjā falls between Durgā pūjā and Kālī pūjā . It is celebrated a few days after Durgā pūjā on the evening of the full moon day (pūrṇimā) in Āśvina, sometimes referred to as Āśvinapaurṇamāsī . Lakṣmī is

55. Chakravarti, Tantras, p.92.

56. Chakravarti, Tantras, pp.92-93.

57. Chakravarti, Tantras, p.92.

58. Thompson and Spencer, Bengali, p.14.

associated with harvest and prosperity and she is worshipped throughout Bengal in both rural and urban areas. There is a practice of leaving a lit lamp on the spot where **Durgā pūjā** was held and for **Lakṣmī pūjā** to take place on the same site. **Paṇḍalas** are generally dismantled after **Durgā pūjā** and the image of **Lakṣmī** is housed in a smaller construction. If images are used, they may be small mould images or larger hand-modelled images, although even these are not usually very large. Also popular are painted earthenware plates called '**Lakṣmī śarā**' (**śarā** , earthen lid). These are painted on the convex side by **paṭuās** and sold from shops belonging to the **mālīs** . **Śarās** are hung from walls and worshipped with a stool, rice-paste decorations (**ālīpanā**) painted on the floor showing the feet of **Lakṣmī**, and a **ghaṭa** . Images of **Lakṣmī** are worshipped on the **pūrṇimā** and immersed on the following day. **Lakṣmī pūjā** is also performed on **dīpanvita** in Kārttika and the **pūjā** on this occasion is the same as **Lakṣmī pūjā** in Āśvina.

ICONOGRAPHY OF LAKṢMĪ.

Images of **Lakṣmī** show a two-armed goddess holding cornucopia in her left hand and showing **abhaya** or **varada mudrā** with her right. Because of her role as the goddess of fortune, she is sometimes shown holding a pot from which pours paddy. She is dressed in a **śāri** , is highly ornamented and has decorative **mukūṭa** . Her hair flows in ringlets over her shoulders and she is sweetly-smiling. **Lakṣmī**'s **vāhana** is the owl, upon whose wings she is sometimes shown riding, although more usually the owl is placed at **Lakṣmī**'s feet and **Lakṣmī** is seated upon a lotus. The owl is sometimes shown perched on a conch-shell. Most **Lakṣmī** images have a sloping **siṃhāsana** , but no **cālī** . **Lakṣmī** is painted golden yellow or pink (Pl.E, 6). Variant images include **Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa** and **Gajā-Lakṣmī**,

referred to in Bengali as 'Kamale Kāminī' (the Lady on the Lotus). Although Lakṣmī is associated with Durgā as her daughter, she is still Śrī, the consort of Viṣṇu.

JAGADDHĀTRĪ PŪJĀ.

Jagaddhātrī pūjā is celebrated on the light ninth day (śuklā navamī) of Kārttika. Pūjā is performed in the morning, midday and evening, combining the celebrations of aṣṭamī, navamī and daśamī into one day's ritual. Jagaddhātrī is another form of Durgā as Protectress of the World. Since her festival is an abbreviated duplication of Durgā pūjā, many families who perform the annual Durgā pūjā do not celebrate Jagaddhātrī pūjā. Jagaddhātrī pūjā is celebrated privately and communally, although it does not enjoy as much popularity as Durgā - or Kālī pūjā. Jagaddhātrī pūjā is celebrated by pūjā committees in towns such as Krishnanagar in the Nadia district and Chandannagar in the Hooghly district, but it is not celebrated in all areas of Bengal.

ICONOGRAPHY OF JAGADDHĀTRĪ.

Jagaddhātrī is a form of Durgā. She is four-armed and has the lion as her mount. This lion is sometimes shown standing upon an elephant and attacking it. Jagaddhātrī is seated upon a lotus placed on the back of the lion. In her four hands she carries a conch and a bow in the top and bottom right hands respectively and a discus and arrow in the top and bottom left hands. A snake is shown draped over one shoulder (Pl.F, 1). Jagaddhātrī is traditionally coloured bright yellow or orange, although the modern trend is to paint her pink. Urban images are extremely large and extensively decorated with śolā and dāker sāja. The Jagaddhātrī scene may have been taken from the DM and represents the battle between Durgā and Mahiṣa during which Mahiṣa assumed various shapes including that of an

elephant. The epithet 'Jagad-dhātrī' (the Protectress of the World, jagad) does not appear in the DM, but appears in the Kālikā Purāṇa⁵⁹, although there is no iconographical description of a goddess called Jagaddhātrī. According to C.Chakravarti, Jagaddhātrī is mentioned in the Māyā Tantra ch.2 and 4 (as quoted in the 'Tantrasāra') under the general name of Durgā⁶⁰.

THE RITUAL OF JAGADDHĀTRĪ PŪJĀ.

Although an image is used in Jagad-dhātrī pūjā , the 'Purohita Darpaṇa' mentions the Nārāyaṇa śīla (i.e. śālagrāma) and the ghaṭa as alternative media for worship. Pūjā starts with invocation and the saṁkalpa vow and the initiated worshipper (pūjaka) and tantradhāraka are nominated. The pūjaka sits on the āsana and does tantric ācamana . The ghaṭa is established and Jagaddhātrī's meditation is done. The mental offerings are made, followed by special arghya . Pīṭha pūjā , meditation and visualisation come next. Invocation is made, the articles of worship are set out, fingers snapped and daśadigbandhana done with various mudrās , followed by consecration of the image. Pūjā with the sixteen upacāras is offered, including āratī and puṣpāñjali . The āvaraṇa (covering) deities are worshipped and pūjā is done to the Navaśaktis. Pūjā is offered to Devī's vāhana and to Jayā and Vijayā (her attendants). After prāṇāyāma there is obeisance and animal sacrifice according to tantric rules. Caṇḍī pāṭha (the recital of the Caṇḍī) and japa follow. Kumārī pūjā is done and the celebrations are concluded with evening pūjā which includes homa , śānti , the giving of the tilaka mark on the forehead, and

59. Van Kooij, Worship, p.184 under Jagaddhātrī.

60. Chakravarti, Tantras, p.95.

dakṣiṇa . The next day, at dawn, there is a brief **pūjā** , **ārati** , then **visarjana** .

KĀRTTIKEYA PŪJĀ.

Kārttikeya pūjā is performed in honour of the god of war, Kārttikeya, otherwise known as Skanda, the son of Śiva and Pārvatī. Kārttikeya is a confirmed bachelor and the god of prostitutes. He is referred to as ' **āiburo** ' (unmarried, a bachelor). **Kārttikeya pūjā** is performed on the last day (**saṅkrānti**) of Kārttika. Kārttikeya is shown riding upon his **vāhana** , the peacock, and holds in his two hands a bow and arrow. A large number of Kārttikeya images are made for communal and private worship and these are immersed directly after **pūjā** . Most Kārttikeya images are hand-modelled and stand at about four feet (Pl.D, 3).

VIŚVAKARMĀ PŪJĀ.

Viśvakarmā pūjā is celebrated on the last day (**saṅkrānti**) of Bhādra (Aug-Sept) directly before **Durgā pūjā** . The construction of the Viśvakarmā images marks the beginning of the peak season for **kumāras** in urban areas, since images are required for **pūjā** celebrations right up till November. Viśvakarmā, the 'All-Maker', is originally a name of Prajāpati, the creator of the universe, then a name of Tvaṣṭā, the artisan of the gods⁶¹. He is described as the 'guru of all artists'⁶². In popular Bengali religious poetry, he is always called upon by the gods to build cities and temples for them and he is still considered the patron god of craftsmen. Strictly speaking, it is obligatory to perform **Viśvakarmā pūjā** before any undertaking of religious art, especially in image

61. Wendy O'Flaherty, Hindu Myths (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), p.357.

62. O'Flaherty, Myths, p.50.

making. Viśvakarmā is worshipped mostly in factories and garages all over Bengal and in Assam and his worship has become increasingly popular in urban areas. Small, temporary shrines are made for the single day of worship, either in or near a workshop. Viśvakarmā is not worshipped in houses or **pūjā paṇḍalas** .

Although it has become customary to use clay images of Viśvakarmā, no doubt the artisan would in the past have performed **pūjā** upon the tools of his trade. The **pūjā** itself follows the standard pattern of invocation, **samkalpa** vow, establishment of the **ghaṭa** , purification, **pūjā** to Gaṇeśa and the other deities, meditation, followed by Viśvakarmā's special **pūjā** . The payment of Brahmins' fees (**dakṣiṇa**) completes the ritual. Images may be kept in workshops after **pūjā** or immersed.

SARASVATĪ PŪJĀ.

In the spring, there are a few more festivals requiring clay images. The first is **Sarasvatī pūjā** which occurs on the light fifth day (**śuklā pañcamī**) in Māgha (Jan-Feb). Sarasvatī is the patron goddess of learning and the arts and consequently she is worshipped in schools and academic institutions throughout Bengal. An ink-pot, books, and **vīṇā** (lute) are used in worship to emphasise Sarasvatī's role. At the end of ceremonies, the priest takes the hand of a young child and guides it through the first letters of the Bengali alphabet, writing them on a piece of paper or a slate. Sarasvatī, like Lakṣmī, is usually worshipped in mould images, although larger, hand-modelled images may be used. Sarasvatī, 'flowing', refers to one of the sacred rivers of India, but also to the goddess Sarasvatī. In the Ṛg Veda, she is associated with various dieties, but she is later identified with **vāc** , speech. Later still, she became the consort of the god Brahmā and was regarded as the

inventor of the Sanskrit language and patron goddess of the arts. As the Śakti (female energy) of Brahmā, she is called Brahmī. Sarasvatī images are very similar to those of Lakṣmī, although Sarasvatī is usually shown standing, with her vāhana, the swan, at her feet. Most images have a sloping siṃhāsana. Sarasvatī is shown as two-armed, holding vīṇā in the left hand and rosary or book in the right hand (Pl.E, 4). It is common to find Sarasvatī images painted completely white with only the facial details painted in. Otherwise, Sarasvatī may wear a blue or yellow śāri. Pūjā to Sarasvatī follows the outline mentioned for other deities.

ANNAPŪRṆĀ PŪJĀ/VĀSANTĪ PŪJĀ.

During the month of Caitra (Mar-Apr), there is pūjā to Annapūrṇā and a duplication of the autumnal Durgā pūjā celebrations called Vāsantī pūjā, because it takes place in the spring (vāsanta). Annapūrṇā pūjā is held on the light eighth day (śuklā aṣṭamī) in Caitra. Annapūrṇā is known in Bengal also as Annadā and in Bhāratacandra's 'Annadā Maṅgala', the poet writes that Annapūrṇā Devī is worshipped at night on the eighth day of the light fortnight in the month of Caitra⁶³. The worship of Annapūrṇā the manifestation of Pārvatī as the giver of food (anna), celebrates a popular myth that Pārvatī became Annapūrṇā as a result of a domestic quarrel with her husband, Śiva. Śiva supplied the family with food by begging. One day, incapacitated by his addiction to smoking bhāṅga (marijuana), the great god could not go out on his rounds. The previous day's food was eaten by the children, Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya and their vāhanas, the rat and the peacock. Husband and wife sat apart, dejected at their hunger. The sage Nārada, noted for starting

63. Annapūrṇā is known in Bengal as Annadā and in Bhāratacandra's 'Annadā Maṅgala', the poet writes that Annapūrṇā Devī is worshipped at night on the eighth day of the light fortnight in the month of Caitra:

caitra māse śuklāpakṣe aṣṭamī-niśāya/

kariha āmār pūjār bidhibyabasthāya//

(Bhāratacandrēr Granthāvali, n.a.(Calcutta: Vasumati Sahitya Mandir, n.d.), p.29)

quarrels, appeared and aggravated the situation by blaming each in front of the other. Pārvatī decided to desert her husband. The following day she took Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya and headed in the direction of her father's house, while Śiva was out begging. Anxious not to let things get out of hand, Nārada tells Pārvatī that despite his faults, Śiva has many good qualities. He tells her to go begging at all the houses on Śiva's round ahead of him and to collect all the food. This she does and as a result, Śiva returns home empty-handed. Pārvatī then feeds Śiva, who is so delighted that he embraces her violently and becomes one with her. The form of Pārvatī feeding Śiva is known as Annapūrṇā, while that of Śiva becoming one with her is known as Ardhanārīśvara⁶⁴.

Vāsantī pūjā in Caitra is not as popular as the autumnal (Śaradīya) Durgā pūjā held in Āśvina, although it is similar in every respect. According to C.Chakravarti, the Caitra worship of Durgā is not referred to by the smārta writers Bṛhaspati or Śrīnātha. Govindānanda quotes from the Kālikā Purāṇa, prescribing the worship of Durgā on the same day as the festive worship of Annapūrṇā on the light eighth of Caitra, while Bṛhaspati and Śrīnātha quote from the Devī Purāṇa eulogising the worship of Durgā on the following day, the ninth⁶⁵. In some families, Annapūrṇā is worshipped at the time of Vāsantī pūjā . A similar celebration takes

64. Thomas, Epics, pp.108-109.

65. C.Chakravarti, "Śākta Festivals of Bengal and their Antiquity", IHQ, Vol.XXVII, no.3 (September 1951), p.257.

place in Maharashtra and is called the Caitra-Gaurī festival⁶⁶; Gauri being another epithet of Pārvatī or Durgā, meaning the 'Fair One'. Throughout Caitra, Maharasthran women celebrate in honour of the goddess who is identified as the goddess of spring. It is believed that Gaurī comes to the home of her parents on the third of the bright half of Caitra and stays there for a month. She returns to her in-laws exactly a month later on the third of the bright half of Vaiśākha. During the period of her stay, a painted **paṭa** panel is sometimes installed in homes and temples.

MANASĀ PŪJĀ.

Clay images are also made during the festival of **Manasā pūjā** in honour of the snake goddess, Manasā, which takes place on the dark fifth day (**kṛṣṇa pañcamī**) of Śrāvaṇa (July-Aug), otherwise known as **nagpañcamī** . The festival occurs in the rainy season (**barṣā kāla**) while there is great danger from snakes, especially in the villages of Bengal. The Purohita Darpaṇa recommends **pūjā** for a month from **kṛṣṇa pañcamī** of Śrāvaṇa to **kṛṣṇa pañcamī** of Bhādra (Aug-Sept). This, it says, removes the fear of snake-bite. In the villages of Bengal, **Manasā pūjā** is celebrated with the recital of **Manasā Maṅgala** songs and boat races, the whole festival being known as **Bhāsāna Yātrā** . In Bengal and south India, Manasā is worshipped on the branch of a **snuhi** plant⁶⁷. The **snuhi** tree (Euforbia nerifolia⁶⁸) is a cactus plant known in Bengal as **sija** and regarded as a snake-repellent. It is associated with Manasā

66. Jyotindra Jain, Treasures of Everyday Art (Poona: Marg Publications, 1977), p.107.

67. Kane, Dharmaśāstra(1958), p.125.

68. Kane, Dharmaśāstra(1958), p.125.

caste people. In the Deccan, clay images of snakes coloured yellow and black are worshipped during this festival⁶⁹. Similar images are worshipped in Bengal, the snakes representing Manasā. Although **Manasā pūjā** is not popular in urban areas, it is popular in rural Bengal and Assam, where it is common to find clay images of this deity during the annual festival.

Manasā is a four-armed goddess shown seated upon a lotus or her **vāhana**, the white goose. She is golden and dressed in a **sāri** with all the usual ornamentation. She is said to be surrounded by eight snakes. She holds four snakes in her hands and the remaining four are in her crown and at her feet (Pl.E, 5). Manasā is usually worshipped in medium sized, hand-modelled images rather than in moulds.

THE RITUAL OF MANASĀ PŪJĀ.

The 'Purohita Darpaṇa' recommends that the householder places a **sija** branch on a **vedi** for the worship of Manasā. After invocation to Manasā, the **sainkalpa** vow is made, ordinary **arghya** offered and after rites of purification, Gaṇeśa and the other deities are worshipped and Manasā is meditated on. **Pūjā** is performed and the **pīṭhas** (holy places) are worshipped. An important part of the ceremonies is bathing Manasā with milk. She is offered sandalwood, a garland, vermilion and sweetmeats. Her eight snakes are worshipped with **pādyā** water. **Puṣpāñjali** is offered, followed by obeisance and the conclusion of ceremonies with **dakṣiṇa** and **visarjana**. It is also said that whoever's parents have died from snake-bite, should on this day do snake **pūjā** so that their parents may be released from snake-bite and go to heaven. To do this, the

69. Kane, Dharmaśāstra(1958), p.125.

worshipper must perform **pūjā** to the eight snakes after making the **sainkalpa** vow. Milk should be offered to the eight snakes as it is a special offering in snake **pūjā**. The hymn recited to Manasā is taken from the Brahmaparivarta Purāṇa, Prakṛti Khaṇḍa. P.V.Kane summarises **Manasā pūjā** saying that after the initial **sainkalpa** in order to remove the danger of snake-bite, Manasā is offered the **pañcopacāra** and then Ananta and the other Nāgas (snake deities) are worshipped, the principal item being the **naivedya** of milk and ghee. **Nimba** leaves are placed inside the house and the **yajamāna** eats them and makes Brahmins eat them⁷⁰. Manasā images are usually immersed after worship, although they may be left to decompose in the open air.

CLAY IMAGES IN SHRINES.

Apart from the clay images used in festivals, there are many that are installed in private and public shrines and in temples. Most private shrines contain mould clay images, although it is possible to find hand-modelled clay images as well, some of which are kept for several years and are renovated when necessary. Mould images, on the other hand, are replaced annually.

Many public shrines contain a collection of images, all of which may be made out of different materials. Single hand-modelled images are common, however, and include images of Gaṅgā (the personification of the river Ganges, with her **vāhana**, the **makara**), Brahmā (carrying water pot and painted red), Śiva (standing beside his **vāhana**, Nandin), Jagaddhātṛī, Kālī, Sarasvatī, Śītalā (the goddess of smallpox), Śani (the personification of the planet Saturn) and a number of idiosyncratic images. Images of Śītalā and Śani are common in urban areas, although Śītalā is a rural goddess. Śītalā is

70. Kane, Dharmaśāstra(1958), p.125.

shown riding her **vāhana** , the ass, and holds in her two hands a pitcher and a broomstick. She is white and wears a white dress (Pl.E, 1). Her name euphemistically means 'cool' and she is said to give protection against smallpox. In Assam she is known as Ai, the Mother, and smallpox is called ' Ai olowa ', the 'appearance of the Mother'⁷¹. Śani is the son of Sūrya, the sun god and Chāyā⁷². He is lame due to Pārvatī's curse, is black and wears black clothes. He rides upon a vulture and is associated with calamities.

Images of Ṣaṣṭhī (the goddess of childbirth) are worshipped during the festival of **Ṣaṣṭhī pūjā** by village women⁷³. She is two-armed, painted yellow and stands on a cat and holds a child in her arms. Ṣaṣṭhī is known as the Cat Mother⁷⁴.

VARIANT IMAGES.

Several variant images are worshipped during the celebrations of **Durgā-** and **Kālī pūjās** . These are normally commissioned by the **pūjā** committees rather than by traditional families who, as we have seen before, were more conservatively-minded. Most of these variant images are the result of a quest for innovation, although in some cases, they are the result of inter-sectarian influence and combined festivals.

Besides the standard Mahiṣāsuramarddīnī format, there are also two kinds of images known as 'Akāla Bodhana' and Śiva-Pārvatī. Akāla Bodhana shows a ten-armed Durgā standing in front of a lion, preventing Rāma, who is shown kneeling below, from firing

71. M.Neog, "Ai, the Small-pox Goddess of Assam", MI, Vol.31, no.2 (April-June 1951), p.76.

72. Thomas, Epics, p.84.

73. Laksminarasiah, Encyclopaedia, p.38.

74. S.K.Ray, The Ritual Arts of the Bratas of Bengal (Calcutta: Firma K.L.Mukhopadhyay, 1961), p.21.

an arrow into his eye. The additional figures of Hanūmān, Vibhīṣana and Rāma's brother, Lakṣmaṇa, are included. The scene is taken from a passage in the Laṅkā khaṇḍa of the Bengali Rāmāyaṇa, which describes how Rāma prepares to remove one of his 'blue lotus-like' eyes as fulfilment of a vow he makes to offer Durgā one hundred and eight blue lotuses. Although Rāma offers the required number of blue lotuses, Durgā steals one, and unable to complete the number he is about to remove one of his 'blue lotus' eyes with his bow and arrow, but is prevented at the last minute by Durgā. The Akāla Bodhana refers to Brahmā's 'untimely awakening' of Durgā in the autumn in order to help Rāma in his battle against Rāvana. This scene is represented in large, hand-modelled images worshipped in urban **pūjā paṇḍalas** (Pl.E, 2).

Śiva-Pārvatī images show Śiva seated on a throne or on his **vāhana**, the white bull, Nandin, with his wife, Pārvatī, on his lap. Their 'family' of Gaṇeśa, Lakṣmī, Kārttikeya and Sarasvatī are placed on either side. This kind of image is popular among spice merchants (**gandhavaniks**) during **Durgā pūjā**. A similar arrangement occurs in another kind of image showing a ten-armed Durgā seated on a lion with the baby Kṛṣṇa on her lap. The 'family' of Durgā are included.

During **Kālī pūjā**, it is possible to find a number of alternative images being worshipped. Although the most popular image is that of Dakṣiṇā Kālī, images of Chinnamastā (depicting Kālī who has severed her own head, standing upon the interlocked figures of Kāma and Rāti and accompanied by **dakinīs**) and other varieties of Kālī image may also be seen. One adventurous **pūjā paṇḍala** in Krishnanagar, Nadia district, includes seven hand-modelled images of Kālī during the annual **Kālī pūjā** festival. These include: Tārā Pīṭha (based on the famous Śākta **pīṭha**); Dakṣiṇeśvarī Kālī;

Ānandamayī Kālī (Kālī seated in padmāsana on Śiva); Śmaśāna Kālī; Kālīghāṭ Kālī (modelled on the semi-iconic stone image of Kālī at the Kalighat temple in Calcutta); Siddheśvarī Kālī (similar to the Dakṣiṇeśvarī image); and Ādyāpīṭha (based on the grey stone image discovered in the Hooghly river and installed in a small temple near the Dakṣiṇeśvarī Kālī temple north of Calcutta). Brahmin priests are employed to do separate pūjā to each of these Kālīs who are placed in adjoining cubicles within a single, semi-circular paṇḍala .

At the annual celebration of Rāsa Yātrā, a Vaiṣṇavite festival, a large number of clay images of Śākta deities are displayed in pūjā paṇḍalas in the cities of Nabadwip and Shantipur in the Nadia district⁷⁵. On this occasion it is possible to see images used in the annual Śākta festivals and daily pūjā such as Durgā, Kālī and Gaṅgā, plus more uncommon images such as Bhadrakālī, Śava-Śiva (Kālī seated upon two corpses representing Śiva) and Kṛṣṇa-Kālī (Devī holding the infant Kṛṣṇa).

Apart from the unusual images commissioned for the urban pūjā committees, there are also those used by the tantrics in their own celebrations. For instance, in the vicinity of the Kalighat temple in south Calcutta, there is an annual performance of a large tantric pūjā which has been performed in that area for the past fourteen years. It is organised by the Shanti Ashram and is led by the tantric teacher, Sivananda Giri. This pūjā lasts twenty-two days and ends on the śuklā daśamī of Āśvina, the final day of Durgā pūjā . A large paṇḍala is erected to house one hundred and eight images, including clay images of the Aṣṭadaśāmahāvidyās (the eighteen incarnations of Devī such as Chinnamastā, Dhumāvatī, Bagalā etc.). These images are immersed after celebrations.

75. C.Chakravarti does not think that this festival is very old and is not mentioned in the Haribhaktivilāsa ("Śākta Festivals", p.260).

PART THREE.

CHAPTER EIGHT: HISTORICAL SOURCES.

In Part One of the thesis I have discussed the classical tradition of image making and the various modes of image worship with particular reference to clay images. In Part Two I have outlined the contemporary Bengali practice of making clay images in the context of image worship in Bengal. In Part Three I will be examining the historical sources for the worship of clay images in Bengal.

To discover the origin and development of the practice of worshipping clay images in Bengal, it is necessary first to examine the historical background of Bengal with particular reference to religion, art and the patronage of art. Next, since Bengali image makers do not follow the guidelines of a Śilpa Śāstra and there does not seem to be any notable Śilpa Śāstra belonging to this region, it is necessary to fall back on other literary sources in order to try and piece together a picture of events leading to the current Bengali practice of worshipping clay images. In this connection it will be necessary to examine: 1. the origin and development of the festival of **Durgotsava**, the most important Bengali festival involving clay images; 2. the rural tradition of Bengal and the worship of village deities (**grāma devata**); and 3. the rise of the urban tradition of clay image making during the British period.

The historical sources for **Durgotsava** are the Purāṇas, especially the Śākta Upapurāṇas, and those pūjā-

paddhatīs (ritual compendiums) directly related to the worship of the goddess Durgā. These Sanskrit sources have been commented upon by many Bengali scholars and there continues to be speculation on the origins of the goddess Durgā and her autumnal worship, **Durgotsava**. Many scholars believe that the festival of **Durgotsava** using a clay image is of fairly recent origin, but there are indications that the tradition goes back several centuries. **Durgotsava** has undergone transformation through the years and the present festival is the result of numerous accretions, although as Yogescandra Ray aptly puts it, those who try to derive explanations for **Durgotsava** from the various parts of the festival are like the proverbial blind men with the elephant - each grasped a part and thought it represented the whole¹.

The historical sources for the rural tradition are the vernacular poems known as the **Maṅgala Kāvya** (**maṅgala**, auspicious, **kāvya**, poems) composed by Bengali village poets, usually under the patronage of a local landlord. Numerous **Maṅgala Kāvya** were written from the start of the Muslim period (13th c) until the 18th c, when the genre waned in popularity and Bengali prose came to the fore for the first time. The precise dating of these poems, as with all Indian literature, is often difficult. Most of the poems were hand copied, leaving wide margin for scribal error and adaptation. There are no critical editions of **Maṅgala Kāvya** and the printed editions that are available have often been heavily edited, detracting even more from the original. Most extant manuscripts do not predate the 17th c. However, these poems provide essential information on the religious tradition of rural Bengal and the social mores of Bengali villagers.

1. Ray, Pūjā Pārvaṇa, p.77.

Once we enter the British period (18th-20th c), the historical sources become Bengali journals and the documentaries of foreign travellers, missionaries, artists and officials. Much of this information is highly personalised and factually incorrect in the light of present day evidence. However, these sources provide interesting, first hand information and are important in reconstructing events of the period.

CHAPTER NINE: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF BENGAL.

GEOGRAPHY.

Bengal began to develop a regional character between the 13th-15th c, the period of Muslim rule. Prior to this period, the various regions of north-eastern India which comprise modern Bengal were offshoots of the great Buddhist and Hindu dynasties of the Pālas (8th-12th c) and Senas (12th c). The name Bengal is an Anglicised version of ' *vāṅgālā* ' ¹, a term used by Muslim rulers to refer to the area between the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers ². When the British East India Company gained control of Bengal in the mid-18th c, Bengal was still part of a vaguely-defined area of eastern India that included Bihar, Assam and Orissa. It was not until the first decade of the 20th century that Bengal became distinct from its neighbours ³. In 1947, with Independence, Bengal was divided into West Bengal and East Pakistan, and later, in 1971, East Pakistan became Bangladesh.

In ancient times, north eastern India was dominated by Magadha, the seat of several major dynasties and the birthplace of Mahāvīra, the founder of Jainism, and Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, both of whom were born in the 6th c B.C. Magadha later came to be known as Bihar, since it was once a land of *viḥāras* (*viḥāra* , Buddhist monastery). To the far east of Magadha was Prāgjyotiṣa, which in early and medieval times was known as

1. R.C.Majumdar, ed., The History of Bengal, Vol.I (Dacca: Univ. of Dacca, 1943), pp.18-19.

2. Banerji, Tantra, p.53.

3. KH.A.Haye, "The Main Aspects of the British Policy in Bengal in the 17th century", IHQ, Vol.XXII, no.1 (March 1946). p.48 n.5.

Kāmarūpa⁴. After the invasion of the Tai or Shan people in the early 13th c, whom the indigenous people referred to as Āsām and later Āhom, the area came to be known as Āsām, the anglicised form of which is Assam⁵. In between Magadha and Prāgjyotiṣa was a cluster of small kingdoms which comprised the area now covered by West Bengal and Bangladesh : to the north, Puṇḍra, Varendra and Gauḍa; to the south and east, Samatāta and Vaṅga; and to the west, Rāḍhā and Karṇasuvarṇa⁶. The ancient kingdom of Kaliṅga covered what is now Orissa and the coastal strip of Andhra Pradesh⁷ (Map Three).

DYNASTIC RULE.

The earliest dynasty in eastern India was that of the Mauryas (4th-2nd c.B.C.), who, under the great emperor Aśoka (c.269-232 B.C.)⁸, propagated Buddhism throughout India and as far as Ceylon. Early Buddhist art centered round the stūpa, a large domed building containing the relics of the Buddha. Buddhist themes dominated the artistic output of north eastern India until the advent of the Guptas (3rd-6th c A.D.) who were Hindus. The Guptas were devout Bhāgavatas⁹ (Vaiṣṇavas) who also worshipped Śrī (Lakṣmī) as an integral part of the cult¹⁰. According to V.S.Agrawala, the five

4. S.Sarma, Assamese Literature, HILS ed., J.Gonda, Vol.IX (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1976), p.43.

5. Sarma, Assamese, p.43.

6. Banerji, Tantra, pp.52-53 who says that Rāḍhā corresponds to modern Burdwan district, Karṇasuvarṇa to Murshidabad, Samatāta to Faridpur, Gauḍa to Malda and Varendra to Rajshahi and Pabna; and Majumdar, History, pl.1; B.K.Kakati says that Prāgjyotiṣa comprised the whole of north Bengal (The Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā (Gauhati, Assam: Punya Prasad Duara, 3rd ed., 1961), p.3).

7. Basham, Wonder, p.49.

8. Basham, Wonder, p.xvii.

9. J.N.Banerjea, Paurāṇic and Tāntric Religion (Calcutta: Univ. of Calcutta, 1966), p.52.

10. Banerjea, Paurāṇic, p.59.

principal religious movements during the Gupta period were the Pañcarātra Bhāgavatas, the Pāśupata Śaivas (whose extreme offshoots were the Kāpālikas and the Kālāmukhas¹¹), the Upaniṣadic tradition and the philosophical system of Sāṃkhya and Yoga¹². The Guptas established the beginnings of classical art in the north eastern provinces. In the Gupta classical period, especially in the Sarnath school, the favourite medium was grey sandstone from the quarry at Chunār, about twenty-five miles south west of Vārāṇasī (modern Benares)¹³. Under Samudragupta and Candragupta, who controlled Varendra and Puṇḍra, sandstone figures of Buddha were either sent down to Bengal or arrangements were made, perhaps, to quarry sandstone from Chunār and ferry it by raft to Bengal¹⁴. When the Gupta empire collapsed, there was a period of brief rule by king Harṣa of Kānyakubja (the modern Kanauj) who controlled a large part of north eastern India, including Bengal, in the 7th c¹⁵. Harṣa's court poet was Bāṇa, author of Harṣacarita, the biography of Harṣa, and the Caṇḍīśataka, a poem based on the theme of the Devī Māhātmya, eulogising the goddess Durgā. After the death of Harṣa, there was a period of anarchy which ended with the establishment of the Pāla dynasty by Gopāla Deva in the 8th c A.D.

11. Banerjea, Paurāṇic, p.96.

12. V.S.Agrawala, The Glorification of the Great Goddess (Varanasi: All India Kashiraj Trust, 1963), p.vi.

13. S.K.Saraswati, Early Sculpture of Bengal (Calcutta: Ramendranath Mukherjee, 1962), pp.114-115.

14. According to P.Dasgupta, the carvers were mostly from Magadhan stock and the present **bhāskaras** (sculptors) of Murshidabad and surrounding regions came from the same stock (Temple, p.11).

15. Mitra, "Bengal School", pp.71-72.

THE PĀLAS (8th-12th c A.D.).

The Pālas continued the tradition of the Mauryas and developed Magadha into a seat of Buddhist learning. During the Pāla period, Buddhism spread into Tibet¹⁶. A Pāla school of art was established, owing something to the classical Gupta style, but introducing a regional element, a local idiom which defined it from classical Gupta art ¹⁷. The art centres were often monasteries such as those at Nālandā and further east at Pāhārpur, Maināmati and Mahāsthān (Map Two). These monasteries were all decorated with terracotta plaques on their outer walls depicting scenes from everyday life¹⁸. The clay plaques at Pāhārpur show men and women of different occupations, wild Śāvaras of the outlying regions of Bengal, Brahmanical and Buddhist deities, scenes from Hindu Epics, the Kṛṣṇa legend and stories from the Pañcatantra¹⁹. Most of the monasteries and temples from the Pāla period survived until the advent of the iconoclastic Muslims in the 13th c. The Pālas were great patrons of the arts and the Pāla style spread to Nepal, Kashmir, Burma and even south east Asia²⁰. The artist Dhīman and his son, Biṭpāla, flourished under the Pāla patronage and were largely responsible for the propagation of the Pāla style. Dhīman was a Buddhist living in Magadha and was head of the eastern school of painters, while Biṭpāla was a

16. Mitra, "Bengal School", p.78.

17. Saraswati, Early, p.118.

18. S.Husain, Everyday life in the Pala Empire (Dacca: Asiatic Soc.of Pakistan, 1968), p.64.

19. Husain, Everyday, p.48.

20. Mitra, "Bengal School", pp.77-78.

Hindu living in Varendra and was the head of the eastern school of bronze casting²¹. According to S.C.Mitra 'If we investigate the sculptures in Bengal and Behar, and even Orissa to which Pāla rule Pāla rule never extended, we may be able to identify the works of Dhīman and his son'²². Although pre-Pāla bronzes are rare, numerous small aṣṭadhātu images were cast during the Pāla period and inlaid with copper or silver²³. The Pālas favoured black basalt quarried from the Rājmahal Hills for their sculptures²⁴ rather than the grey sandstone of the Guptas. Pāla sculpture is characterised by images of Buddha and Hindu deities such as Viṣṇu and Pārvatī, established at or near their capital cities²⁵. Pāla influence also extended to the subsequent Sena dynasty (12th c) who were Hindu. By the time of the Senas, Buddhism was dying out in India.

THE SENAS (11th-13th c).

The Senas were predominantly Vaiṣṇavas, like the Guptas before them, although a few were Śaivites and later Senas were worshippers of Sūrya, the Sun god²⁶. They probably originated from Karṇāṭa in the Deccan and had their first capital

21. Mitra, "Bengal School", pp.73 and p.77.

22. Mitra, "Bengal School", p.73.

23. R.Skelton and R.Hollis, ed., Arts of Bengal, heritage of Bangladesh and Eastern India(London: Trustees of the Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1979), p.23.

24. Dasgupta, Temple, p.12.

25. Mitra, "Bengal School", p.77.

26. H.C.Paul, "The State and Culture of Bengal During the Middle Ages (from 12th to 16th century)", Calcutta Review, Vol.174, no.2 (February 1965), p.144. According to T.N.Chakravarti, the tutelary deity of the Senas was Lakṣmī ("Some Manners and Customs in the Light of Early Inscriptions of Bengal and Assam", Calcutta Review, Vol.135, no.2 (May 1955), p.250); Banerjea, says that the Senas were worshippers of Sadāśiva (Development (1941), p.264).

somewhere in Rādhā (i.e. West Bengal)²⁷. Sena rule was considered the golden period of Sanskrit studies in Bengal²⁸. Although no works of Brahmanical philosophy were produced at this time, Sena rulers and their scholars concentrated on ritualistic literature defining the rites a Hindu was required to perform²⁹. They sought to revive Brahmanism in the Buddhist-run land of their predecessors. Vallala Sena (1119-1169) conferred the title 'kulīna' Brahmin on people of various castes according to certain qualities, one of which was ācāra (manner), in a move towards an anti-Buddhist, pro-Hindu revival³⁰. The Gīta Govinda of Jayadeva was written during the reign of Lakṣmaṇa Sena, inspiring later Vaiṣṇavas³¹, and the Rāma cult was popular in north India in the 11th c³². Sena art is characterised by highly polished black basalt images of Viṣṇu and sculptures of Sūrya.

TANTRA.

Tantric practices flourished during the Pāla-Sena period. Eastern India, especially Kāmarūpa, was renowned for its tantric practices. In the 'Sat-sambhava-rahasya' there are said to be four schools of tantra in India: Gauḍa in the east; Kāśmīra in the west; Kerala in the middle; and Vilāsa which is eclectic and not

27. Paul, "State", p.143.

28. Paul, "State", p.144.

29. C.Chakravarti, "Bengal's Contribution to Sanskrit Literature", Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Vol.XI, pt.III (April 1930), pp.247-248.

30. D.C.Sen, History of Bengali Language and Literature (HBLL) (Calcutta: Univ. of Calcutta, 1911), p.80 and Basham, Wonder, p.74.

31. Dasgupta, Temple, p.17.

32. K.Ray, "The Ten Incarnations of Viṣṇu in Bengal", IHQ, Vol.XVII, no.3 (September 1941), p.382. It was about this time that Rāmānuja visited north India.

confined but found everywhere³³. For a long time, Kāmarūpa was geographically and culturally outside the pale of Aryan influence and was regarded with suspicion. The people of Kāmarūpa were supposed to possess magical powers and many travellers were afraid to enter Kāmarūpa for fear of the witchcraft allegedly practised in those parts³⁴. It appears however, that the early dynasties of Assam were worshippers of Śiva and that Śiva pūjā was popular among the aboriginal Kirātas³⁵. According to U.C.Lekharu, Śakti pūjā was introduced by Vaiṣṇavas to replace Śiva pūjā³⁶. This Śakti pūjā centred round the cult of the goddess Kāmākhyā, whose residence was supposed to be the cave of Mount Nīla in Kāmarūpa in which there was a natural stone believed to be the female organ (yoni) of Satī, which fell to earth after the dismemberment of her dead body³⁷. The worship of Kāmākhyā itself was associated with 'magic and incantations'³⁸. It receives mention in the Kālikā Purāṇa, which R.C.Hazra says was composed in the late 10th c, early 11th c A.D.³⁹ by 'Śākta-Vaiṣṇavas' of Kāmarūpa, who wrote the Kālikā Purāṇa 'with a view to convincing the people that Kāmākhyā is none but Viṣṇu's yogamāyā embodied, that Viṣṇu is superior to Śiva, and that everyone must be a Vaiṣṇava before

33. A.B.Ghosh, "The Spirit and Culture of the Tantras", Cultural Heritage of India, ed., H.Bhattacharyya, Vol.IV (Calcutta:RMIC, 1956), p.242.

34. See U.C.Lekharu, "Religion in Assam Through the Ages", Indian Philosophy and Culture, Vol.5, no.2 and 3 (June-September 1960), p.135.

35. Kakati, Mother Goddess, p.11 and p.15.

36. Lekharu, "Religion", p.133.

37. Van Kooij, Worship, p.9.

38. Kakati, Mother Goddess, p.6.

39. Hazra, Studies, p.245.

he sets himself up to Devī-worship'⁴⁰. In the 15th c, the Vaiṣṇava saint and poet Śaṅkaradeva encouraged the monotheistic *bhakti* cult propagated in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and Bhagavad Gītā and sought to eradicate tantra in Assam⁴¹.

Tantra was popular in western India even at the time of the Guptas and there was a pronounced tantric element in the cult of the Matr̥s (Mothers), especially the cult of the Saptamatṛikās (the Seven Divine Mothers viz. Brahmanī, Maheśvarī, Kumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Indranī, and Cāmuṇḍā)⁴². The temples of the Mothers in western India were decribed as the terrible abodes of *dakinīs* (female ghouls) and goddesses who uttered loud shouts of joy⁴³. Unlike western India, however, the tantra of eastern India was influenced by Buddhism, especially during the Pāla period⁴⁴. Tantric elements are apparent in the earliest vernacular literature of Bengal, the collection of forty-seven lyrics known as *cāryā-pada* . These are obscure, mystical verses composed during the late Sena period. They are connected with the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā sect, who followed tantric practices and emphasised 'prema' (love), especially the illicit love typified by the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa theme⁴⁵. The present-day Bauls of Bengal continue this tradition.

Bengal became an important centre of tantric activities from the late medieval period onwards and produced a

40. Hazra, Studies, p.233.

41. Sarma, Assamese, p.53.

42. D.C.Sircar, Studies in the Religious Life of Ancient and Medieval India (Delhi: Motilal Barnasidas, 1971), p.96.

43. Sircar, Studies, p.97.

44. Sircar, Studies, p.97.

45. E.Dimock Jnr., Bengal Literature and History (Michigan: Michigan State Univ., 1967), pp.10-11.

large amount of tantric literature⁴⁶. In the late 17th and 18th c Bengal 'witnessed a revitalisation of creative Hindu tanticism which produced a sizeable body of mystic hymns notable for its expression of emotional devotion (*bhakti*) towards the goddess'⁴⁷. During this period also, the Kālī theme was treated by both tantric and non-tantric authors, whereas previously, nothing had been written on Kālī in the vernacular⁴⁸. Famous among the Śākta tantrics was the poet Rāmprasād Sen (c.1720-1781) whose *iṣṭadevata* was Kālī⁴⁹. According to the fanciful story obtained from Dineschandra Sen by E.J.Thompson, Rāmprasād drowned in the Ganges, following in a trance the clay image of Kālī as it was thrown into the river at the end of Kālī pūjā⁵⁰.

THE MUSLIM PERIOD (13th-18th c).

The Muslim period begins with invasions by Turkish and Afghani dynasties, continues through Mughal rule under Akbar (late 16th c) and his successors and ends with a succession of Muslim Nawabs, appointed in the early 18th c to control the north eastern provinces. The seat of power towards the end of Muslim rule was first Dacca, then Murshidabad (Map Four), named after the Nawab Murshid Quli Khan, who was appointed Subhadar (viceroy) in 1717⁵¹. Although the first invaders caused destruction of Hindu temples and were rigidly orthodox in their iconoclastic views, the Mughals were more liberal and advocated religious toleration. The local Bengalis

46. Goudriaan and Gupta, Hindu, p.180.

47. Goudriaan and Gupta, Hindu, p.180.

48. Goudriaan and Gupta, Hindu, p.192.

49. Goudriaan and Gupta, Hindu, p.194.

50. Thomspon, Bengali, p.18.

51. Skelton and Hollis, Arts of Bengal, p.14.

were correspondingly sympathetic towards Islam and respected Sufi saints (**pīrs**) and Dervishes⁵². However, the indigenous religious culture remained untouched by political events and flourished during the period of Muslim rule.

There was tremendous literary activity during the Muslim period, both in Bengali and in Sanskrit. Bengali language developed during the beginning of the Muslim period and found its outlet in vernacular poems and translations and adaptations of the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas. The vernacular poems were the **Maṅgala Kāvya** dedicated to aboriginal deities such as the goddess Caṇḍī (the 'Caṇḍī Maṅgala'), the snake goddess Manasā ('Manasā Maṅgala') and the god of righteousness, Dharma ('Dharma Maṅgala'), but also to Kṛṣṇa, Lakṣmī, Durgā and even Caitanya. **Maṅgala Kāvya** belong to the larger genre of **Pañcalī**, which are long religious poems given semi-musical and semi-dramatic performance by itinerant minstrels (**maṅgala gāyaka**). Sanskrit literature was popularised through translations of the Epics and Purāṇas such as Kṛttivāsa's version of the Rāmāyaṇa (15th c), Bhavani Prasād Kār's translation of the Devī Māhātmya under the title of Caṇḍī (16th c) and Kāśīrāma Dās's version of the Mahābhārata (17th c). The same process occurred in Assam around the 14th-15th c during which time poems to the snake goddess Manasā, known as Padma Purāṇa, were popular⁵³. According to D.C.Sen, the **yātrās** (popular theatres), **kāthakathā** (narratives, recitations), **pāṭhas** (reading from Sanskrit texts) and **kīrtanas** (Vaiṣṇava songs) had an immense influence on local Bengalis and helped popularise Purāṇic religion all

52. Paul, "State", p.154.

53. Sarma, Assamese, p.46.

over Bengal⁵⁴. Also important among the vernacular poems were the Vaiṣṇava **padāvali** which were inspired by the Vaiṣṇava saint, Caitanya.

Bengal became an important centre of Sanskrit learning in the 15th c⁵⁵. Although the Muslim rulers had little sympathy for Brahmanical culture and the Sanskrit literature which propagated it, they did not interfere with the Hindu aristocracy who could patronise Sanskrit culture without difficulty⁵⁶. The Hindu aristocracy followed the old style of patronage and established **catuspāthī** (the orthodox school, or **ṭola** of Sanskrit learning) where students came and lived and had free education and on festive occasions were given gifts by the wealthy to encourage them in their studies⁵⁷. Nabadwip in the Nadia district became one such important centre, especially in the field of **Navya nyāya** (logic). There was great literary output in Sanskrit and Bengali concerning philosophy and ritual⁵⁸ and there was interest in **nyāya**, **smṛti**, tantra and yoga⁵⁹. Tantra digests such as the Tantrasāra of Kṛṣṇānanda Āgamvāgiśa (17th c) and **pūjāpaddhatis** (ritual digests) such as those composed by Raghunandana Bhaṭṭācārya (16th c), set standards for worship that are still regarded as authoritative today. The Haribhaktivilāsa of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa (16th c) was composed in the Muslim period and contains details on the construction of female deities according to the classical tradition⁶⁰.

54. Sen, HBLL, p.96.

55. Chakravarti, "Bengal's Contribution", p.235.

56. Chakravarti, "Bengal's Contribution", p.250.

57. Chakravarti, "Bengal's Contribution", p.250.

58. Chakravarti, "Bengal's Contribution", p.249.

59. Paul, "State", p.149.

60. See back, p.40.

The 'Gauḍiya' Vaiṣṇavism inaugurated by Caitanya emphasised devotion (*bhakti*) towards Viṣṇu as Kṛṣṇa. As well as inspiring Bengali poets, the Vaiṣṇava revival augmented the new style of temple building that sprang up in Bengal from the 17th c onwards. These temples were usually made of brick and decorated with terracotta panels depicting religious and secular themes in narrative friezes all along the outer walls and sometimes inner walls. This tradition of terracotta art, which dates back to the Pāla period and the monasteries mentioned previously, develops a strong regional character in the Muslim period. Temple building continued in Birbhum and Midnapore districts until the 19th c⁶¹ when it died out due to lack of interest and the more popular use of plaster for surface decoration. There are a number of different styles in the art of the temple terracottas and these vary according to the various districts of Bengal - Burdwan, Murshidabad, Birbhum, Hooghly etc.⁶². All this temple building brings to light the existence of several groups of craftsmen and the way they worked. Many of the terracotta temples of Bengal have been damaged or covered in plaster, but some have survived and give an indication of what this art form was like in the 17th-19th c.

THE BRITISH PERIOD (18th-20th c).

During the 17th and 18th c, the Dutch, Danes, Portugese, French and British arrived in Bengal and Bengal was exposed to a new set of influences. Although the Muslim period was formative for Bengali identity and was a period of intense religious activity, it is only in the British period that we find extensive records of the wide-spread worship of clay images in Bengal and the

61. Dasgupta, Temple, p.22.

62. Dasgupta, Temple, pp.28-30.

patronage of a tradition. The 18th c witnessed the transformation of an obscure village tradition of clay image making into a visible, urban art form. The catalyst for this transformation was the foundation of the city of Calcutta on the banks of the Hooghly river in the early decades of the 18th c. After the defeat of the Muslim Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah by Lord Clive at the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the fortress town of Calcutta grew into a flourishing trade for the British East India Co. and later became the administrative headquarters of Warren Hastings, the Governor-General of India. The rise to power of the British and their subsequent influence on Bengali culture had an important part to play in the transfiguration of the clay art form, but the real instigators were the petty **rājās** and feudal lords whose social rivalry extended to the performance of elaborate and expensive celebrations involving the use of clay images.

Thorough documentation of the rural tradition of clay image making is sadly lacking, but due to the revival of interest in India's past through the foundation of the Royal Asiatic Society by Sir William Jones in 1784⁶³ and the accounts of foreign travellers, missionaries and officials, it is possible to trace the development of clay image making in its urban phase.

63. Chakravarti, "Bengal's Contribution", p.251.

CHAPTER TEN:THE BRITISH PERIOD.

THE COLLAPSE OF NAWAB RULE.

The situation which precipitated the collapse of Nawab rule in Bengal occurred during the reign of Nawab Siraj-ud-daulah. The rule of the Nawabs, the Muslim provincial governors, had begun in 1717 with the appointment of Murshid Quli Khan, who established his capital at Murshidabad. By the time of the Nawabs, Bengal had already been visited by Dutch, Danes, Portuguese, French and British, some of whom were travellers, others businessmen and merchants. The British were primarily interested in trade. The alleged founder of the city of Calcutta, Job Charnock, established his trade centre on the banks of the Hooghly river in 1690. The British bought up three villages in the area and were granted trading rights in Bengal from the Mughal emperor in Delhi.

By the time of Siraj-ud-daulah, the British posed a serious threat to Nawab rule. They had built fortifications at Calcutta, which violated the terms under which the Mughal government had allowed them to live in Bengal¹. They also showed defiance towards the Nawab. When Siraj-ud-daulah came to power in 1756, he accused the Diwan of Dacca, Rājā Vallabha of embezzling public funds and had him imprisoned in the capital of Murshidabad. However, Rājā Vallabha's son, Kṛṣṇa Vallabha, escaped with some of the money to Calcutta on the pretext of going on pilgrimage, and obtained political asylum under the British governor, Drake². Siraj-ud-daulah

1. R.C.Majumdar, History of Bengal, (Dacca: Univ. of Dacca, 1943) Vol.II, p.472.

2. Majumdar, History, p.472.

sent an envoy asking for the surrender of Rājā Vallabha, but the envoy was sent away. All of this angered Siraj-ud-daulah who attacked Calcutta, forcing the retreat of the British³. Some of those left behind were imprisoned, leading to the so-called 'Black Hole' tragedy.

Siraj-ud-daulah was disliked by many and reknowned for his cruelty. He had humiliated the commander-in-chief of his army, Mir Jafar Ali Khan, by removing him from his office and threatened some of the leading Bengali families, many of whom were anxious to see the Nawab deposed. A conspiracy was hatched between the British, Mir Jafar and the Bengali malcontents. The British, under Lord Clive, launched an attack on the Nawab and he was defeated at the Battle of Plassey in northern Nadia district. Siraj-ud-daulah fled, but later fell into the hands of Mir Jafar and was assassinated in a Murshidabad prison. Mir Jafar was installed as Nawab in fulfillment of the agreement he had made with the British, but was himself assassinated by Mir Qasim Khan who succeeded him. Mir Qasim Khan was the last of the Nawabs and ruled until 1764. In the following year, the British were granted the Diwani of Bengal and Calcutta became the centre of power, first of the Governors-General and later of the Viceroys of India⁴. Bengal, and specifically Calcutta, became the centre of power for the whole of India.

THE BENGALI LANDED GENTRY.

During Nawab rule (1717-1764), Bengal was divided into various territories 'ruled' by zemindars (from the Bengali ' **jamidāra** ', landowner) and petty **rājās** who earned their titles on being granted land for services rendered to the Nawab or his

3. Haye, "Main Aspects", pp.473-474.

4. Skelton and Hollis, Arts of Bengal, p.21.

administration. These rulers nevertheless had to abide by the authority of the Nawab. Having established themselves as rulers of various localities, these zemindars and petty *rājās* continued the tradition of patronage towards learning and the arts. Each had a court, a palace (*rājbarī*) and a capital city. The petty *rājās* and zemindars were responsible for dictating religious trends during the Muslim period and well into the British period. *Rājās* performed religious functions, built temples and supported the performance of *pūjā* by giving grants of tax-free land. The *pūjā* of the *rājā* had significance for his subjects. According to Ronald Inden, 'It seems to have been generally conceived in this period that the welfare of the chiefdom depended on the welfare of the *rājā*: 'As is the *rājā*, so is the country'⁵. The *rājā* obtained welfare and prosperity for himself and his subjects by performing elaborate *pūjā* ceremonies to an appropriately powerful deity⁶. The *rājā*'s religious duties extended to expressions of generosity such as giving donations to the sick, building almshouses, feeding Brahmins and guests at festival occasions. The actual cost of a festival could be extremely high. W.Ward of the Baptist Mission at Serampore, wrote in 1811, that the *rājā* of Burdwan spent more than fifteen thousand rupees every year on *Sarasvatī pūjā* , which is a fairly modest celebration⁷. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that many Bengalis bankrupted themselves as a result of such lavish celebrations. N.K.Sinha writes of the 18th c as a 'period of tremendous social rivalry, of competitive

5. Ronald Inden, "The Hindu Chiefdom in Middle Bengali Literature", in Bengal Literature and History, ed. E.Dimock Jnr. (Michigan: Michigan State Univ., 1967), p.39.

6. Inden, "Hindu Chiefdom", p.42.

7. Ward, Account, p.202.

performance of pujas, sraddhs, marriages...rivalry for the acquisition of old and famous deities was also a feature of the era'⁸. These annual festival celebrations performed in the **ṭhākura dālānas** (halls of worship) in the **rājbaris** of the wealthy, would be attended by all the villagers. The landed gentry benefitted from Cornwallis's Permanent Settlement over lands in 1790 and devoted their prosperity to cultivating refined lifestyles. One of the most traditional means of proclaiming wealth and influence was by temple building of which there was a revival between the 17th-19th c.

TEMPLE BUILDING.

The spate of temple building depended largely on the zemindars and petty **rājās**, although later on, Bengali businessmen began commissioning the building of temples. The artists commissioned to build these temples were the **sūtradhāras**, also known as **mistris**. The **sūtradhāra** is the equivalent of the classical **sthapati**, the architect or masterbuilder who co-ordinated a team of artists on a particular project. The name **sūtradhāra** may have been derived from the fact that the artists work with a thread (**sūtra**) or plumbline⁹. The Persian word 'mistar' from which we have **mistri**, also implies the same thing¹⁰. The skills of the **sūtradhāra** were passed down within family groups or '**thaks**', divided according to area and working as far north as Assam¹¹. These groups carried their regional styles with them wherever they were called upon to work, which

8. N.K.Sinha, The History of Bengal(1757-1905) (Calcutta: Univ. of Calcutta, 1967), p.393.

9. Dasgupta, Temple, p.37. See David McCutcheon, "Style of Bengal Temple Terracottas", South Asian Archaeology, (1973), p.270.

10. Dasgupta, Temple, p.37.

11. McCutcheon, "Style", p.272.

could be far afield¹². According to Benoy Ghosh, the name **sūtradhāra** applies to four kinds of artists (**śilpīs**): those working in wood, stone, clay and paint¹³. Such artists were usually versatile and used to working in different mediums, but the style of their work often remained the same, regardless of the material¹⁴. Like the classical **sthapati**, the Bengali **sūtradhāra** was assisted by a team of assistants.

The Bengali temples were based on the design of the village hut (the **bāṅglā** and **cālā** styles) and the pinnacled variety (**ratna** style) which probably originated in central and upper India¹⁵. Many of these temples were built of brick and decorated with terracotta panels on their outer walls as with the temples and monasteries of the Pāla period. Many were situated on the banks of rivers and were made using the same adhesive riverine clay used in the making of images, known as **eñṭela māṭi**, mixed with rice husks and sand¹⁶. Moulds were used for repetitive decorative designs¹⁷, but otherwise the plaques were hand-modelled by the applique method, or else carved. The panels were considered suitable for representing narrative sequences and depicted themes from the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, Śiva-Durgā, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and contemporary village

12. McCutcheon, "Style", p.272.

13. Benoy Ghosh, Paścima Baṅger Saṁskṛti (Calcutta: Pustaka Prakasaka, 1957), see Dasgupta, Temple, p.272.

14. McCutcheon, "Style", p.277.

15. McCutcheon, "Style", p.265.

16. Dasgupta, Temple, p.32.

17. Dasgupta, Temple, p.40.

scenes. The panels were seldom more than an inch deep¹⁸ and are examples of remarkable skill and ingenuity.

The art of building terracotta temples was popular in certain districts of Bengal during certain periods. The Vishnupur school is largely confined to the 17th c, the Hooghly school dies out before the 18th c, while the Midnapore, Bankura, Burdwan and Birbhum schools in the western part of Bengal, continued to flourish in the 19th c¹⁹. Temples continued to be decorated with terracotta in the Midnapore, Burdwan and Birbhum districts right up to the 20th c²⁰, although, according to H.Sanyal, the trend faded in the mid-19th c²¹. At about this time, it became popular to decorate houses with plasterwork and ornamental terracotta decoration on temples was replaced with stucco work. When this happened, many *sūtradhāras* who had previously worked on the terracotta decorations, turned to carpentry²² and some may have continued working with clay and taken up the making of clay images.

PATRONAGE OF CLAY IMAGE MAKING.

The earliest mention of a group of artists being commissioned to make clay images is perhaps in the *Mahārāṣṭra Purāṇa*, a Bengali poem by Gaṅgarāma about the effects of the invasions of the Maratha Bargis. Between 1740-1750, Bengal was faced with periodic invasions from marauding bands of Marathas, known in Bengali as Bargis, who had left their Maharashtra homeland in search

18. Dasgupta, Temple, p.25.

19. McCutcheon, "Style", p.268.

20. McCutcheon, "Style", p.270.

21. Sanyal, "Social Aspects", p.206.

22. McCutcheon, "Style", p.278.

of richer pastures. The Bargis caused widepread damage all over western parts of Bengal, especially in Nadia and parts of the Murshidabad district²³. The Mahārāṣṭa Purāṇa was composed between 1751-1752²⁴ during the rule of Nawab Alivardi Khan, predecessor and grandfather of Siraj-ud-daulah. In the Mahārāṣṭa Purāṇa, there is a confrontation between the forces of the Nawab and those of the Marathas. The Maratha general, Bhāskara, decides to perform pūjā to the goddess Durgā in order to ensure victory. He begins pūjā at a place called Dāihāt and summons all the neighbouring zemindars to tell them of his intentions. When they hear this, the zemindars order image makers (kumāras) to prepare the image of Durgā. The image makers duly make the image and depart²⁵. Various loads of offerings are brought : sweets, delicacies, thousands of buffaloes and goats. The Nawab and his army attack before Bhāskara's pūjā is finished and the Maratha leader is forced to flee, having only completed saptamī (the seventh day) and aṣṭamī (the eighth day) of Durgā pūjā, leaving the image behind with all the offerings. Bhāskara is said to flee in the month of Āśvina. He returns again in the month of Caitra ready for battle and tells his troops to kill all in sight. The goddess Durgā is enraged (probably because Bhāskara failed to complete her pūjā) and tells her bhairavīs (female attendants) to be hostile towards

23. Sanyal, Social, p.204.

24. E.Dimock Jnr., and Pratul Chandra Gupta, trans., The Mahārāṣṭa Purāṇa: an eighteenth-century Bengali historical text (Honolulu: East-West Centre Press, 1965), p.xi.

25. Dimock and Chandra Gupta, Mahārāṣṭa, p.41:
 āsiñā pratimā tārā karena nirmāṇā//
 ei rūpe kumāra pratimā bānāiyā/
 bhāskarera thāi tārā gela bidāe haiyā//

Bhāskara and gracious towards the Nawab. Durgā leaves and Bhāskara is killed in battle.

The story is interesting in that it shows us that *kumāras* were normally hired to make images for the annual festival of *Durgā pūjā* in Asvina by at least the middle of the 18th c, if not before. Gaṅgarāma, the author of the poem, is incorrect in his description of the *Durgā pūjā* celebrations of the Marathas. The Maharashtrians have a tradition of celebrating Daśara (the equivalent of the Bengali *Durgā pūjā*) in which no image is used²⁶. Gaṅgarāma must therefore be referring to a Bengali practice that was prevalent amongst Bengali zemindars of the time. In fact, it is likely that it was a zemindar or petty *rājā* who inaugurated the lavish style celebrations of *Durgā pūjā* that became popular in Bengal in the mid-18th c in Bengal. There are various suggestions as to who was responsible for this trend. One suggestion is Rājā Kāmsanārāyaṇa of Tahirpur²⁷, another, Rājā Danujamardana²⁸ and another, Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra of Nadia. K.M.Varma suggests a zemindar from Baduriya²⁹. Of these, the most popular is Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra of Nadia, and since he is well documented and is active in the religious life of the 18th c, it is well worth while examining his history.

RĀJĀ KṚṢṆACANDRA OF NADIA.

Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra (c.1710-1782) acceded to the title of Mahārājā of Nadia in 1728. He established his capital

26. Coleman, *Mythology*, pp.87-88 for Sir John Malcolm's account of the Marathas' celebration of Dussera.

27. Secondary Bengali Reader, p.46 says that Rājā Kāmsanārāyaṇa did *Durgā pūjā* in 1580 A.D. and his rivals, Rājā Kusumbhī and Jagatnārāyaṇa, performed *Vāsantī pūjā*.

28. B.Bhattacharya, "Festivals and Sacred Days", *Cultural Heritage of India*, ed. H.Bhattacharyya, Vol.IV (Calcutta: RMIC, 1956), p.487.

29. Varma, *Technique*, p.218 from Pāñckadi Bandopādhyāya.

at Krishnanagar, which according to J.H.E.Garret, was originally known as the village of Reui³⁰. A palace was erected at Reui by Mahārājā Raghava Ray, whose son, Rudra Ray, changed the name to Krishnanagar³¹. Since then it has remained the seat of the Nadia Raj.

Krishnanagar became an important centre of clay image making during Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra's time and remains so today. There are three potters' quarters in Krishnanagar : Ṣaṣṭhītōlā; Ghurni; and Ānandamayītōlā. The latter is in the immediate vicinity of the **rājbari** in the area south of the Ānandamayī Kālī temple belonging to the Nadia Raj. Ghurni is in the north eastern suburbs of Krishnanagar and is closest to the river Jalangi which runs past the town. It is now the centre of clay image making of a very different kind. Ghurni is reknowned for its realistic clay models of local characters. Such models were exhibited in Glasgow at the International Exhibition in 1851 along with similar models from Lucknow and Patna³². Although the most reknowned clay modellers still live in Ghurni, the other two quarters produce most of the clay images used for religious purposes. Ghurni existed at the time of Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra, because his famous court poet, Gopāla Bhāṇṛa, came from Ghurni. Whether or not it was the quarter for clay image making during the time of Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra is difficult to say. The area occupied by the **rājbari**, the Ānandamayī Kālī temple and the potter's quarter referred to as **Pālpārā** (the quarter, **pārā**, of the Pāls, the surname of many of the

30. J.H.E.Garrett, Bengal District Gazeteers, (Nadia) (Calcuta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1910), p.174 and Paścima Baṅger Pūjā Pārvana O Melā (The Fairs and Festivals of West Bengal), District Handbooks, Nadia (1951), ed. A.Mitra, pp.231.

31. Rajiba Locana, the court biographer of Mahārājā Kṛṣṇacandra, states that Rājā Rāmjībana Ray established his capital at Krishnanagar which had been founded by his brother, Rājā Rāmakṛṣṇa, who was ruling at the time of Murshid Quli Khan (1717-1727).

32. see back p.77.

potters from Krishnanagar) in the south of the present town, constitutes the old Krishnanagar.

Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra is credited with having popularised the Śārādīya (autumnal) Durgotsava in the form in which it exists today in West Bengal. Bhāratacandra, one of the last great authors of Maṅgala Kāvya literature and court poet of Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra, mentions the autumnal Durgā pūjā celebrations at the Krishnanagar rājbari in one of his poems:

"In the autumn I saw Ambikā pūjā
In the palace of the king
The ten-armed sister of Maināka
The delight of the world"³³.

In his trilogy of poems entitled 'Annadā Maṅgala', dedicated to Annapūrṇā Devī, Bhāratacandra refers to the profusion of Durgā images in the area during the month of Āśvina and of Kālī images in the month of Kārttika. In his description of the twelve months (bāro māsa) of the year, Bhāratacandra writes:

"Durgā images abound here during Āśvina
Who knows anything like it in your land.
I shall fetch singers by river from Shantipur
And arrange for you to listen to new songs.
Kālī images are made here in Kārttika.
You will see the images of Ādyā, the eternally glorious"³⁴.

Besides popularising the worship of clay images of Durgā during Durgotsava , Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra is supposed to

33. Bhāratacandrēr Granthāvali, n.a. (Calcutta: Vasumati Sahitya Mandir, n.d.), p.205:

Śarade ambikā pūjā rājghare
daśabhuja dekhinu mainākānuja
jagater harṣā/

34. Bhāratacandrēr, p.70:

āśvine e deśe durgāpratimā pracāra/
ke jāne tomār deśe uhār sañcāra//
nade śāntipura haite kheñru ānāiba/
nūtana nūtana thāthe kheñru sunāiba//
kārttike e deśe haya kālīr pratimā/
dekhibe ādyār mūrtti ananta mahimā//

have encouraged the worship of other Śākta deities. W.Ward wrote in 1811 that Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra and his two successors, in the month of Kārttika, frequently gave orders to their subjects to perform Kālī pūjā on threat of severest penalties. As a result, Kālī was worshipped in more than ten thousand homes in Krishnanagar alone³⁵. Shib Chunder Bose, writing of the same incident in 1881, adds that the number of animals slaughtered for sacrifice could not have been less than ten thousand³⁶. Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra was himself alleged to have followed a tantric practice started by the tantric scholar, Kṛṣṇānanda Āgamvāgiśa of making a clay image of Kālī for private pūjā, although he later abandoned the practice³⁷. According to local tradition, it was Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra who started the worship of the goddess Jagaddhātṛī. Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra was imprisoned in Murshidabad for failing to pay taxes and missed the annual Durgotsava³⁸. On being released, he was boating down the Jalangi river on his way to his capital, Krishnanagar, when he had a dream in which the goddess appeared as Jagaddhātṛī and told him to worship her in that form on his return. Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra began the worship of Jagaddhātṛī and a clay image of the goddess is worshipped to this day in the Krishnanagar **rājbarī** during the annual festival of **Jagaddhātṛī pūjā** in the month of Kārttika. It is also likely that Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra was responsible for the inclusion of clay images of Śākta deities in the Vaiṣṇava

35. Ward, Account, p.191.

36. Shib Chunder Bose, The Hindoos as They Are (Calcutta: W.Newmann and Co., 1881), p.138.

37. Bose, Hindoos, p.137.

38. See Paścima, pp.234-235. According to C.Chakravarti, it was Tarkacūdāmaṇi of the court of Girīśacandra (19th c) who inaugurated **Jagaddhātṛī pūjā** (Chakravarti, Tantras, p.95).

festival of **Rāsa Yātrā** held at Nabadwip and Shantipur in the Nadia district. Both towns are connected with the Vaiṣṇava saint, Caitanya and his disciples.

The Nadia Raj have been Śāktas (followers of Devī) since the time of their founder, Bhabananda Ray Majumdār (16th c), who was a devotee of the goddess Annapūrṇā. Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra's iṣṭadevata was Durgā. The name of Durgā appears on official documents of the Nadia Raj and on top of the Krishnanagar **rājbari** is an epigraph to Kālī the Victorious - 'Śrī Śrī Kālī Jayatī'. The Durgā image worshipped annually in the Krishnanagar **rājbari** is a large, fifteen foot tall clay image known as 'Rājrajēśvarī' (the Empress) made in the traditional style and immersed in a pond after **Durgotsava** (Pl.G, 1). The Ānandamayī Kālī temple outside the **rājbari** houses an old clay image of a naked Kālī seated cross-legged upon the chest of a supine Śiva who lies arched over a mound below him. This image is very old and appears to have been renovated several times³⁹. Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra's grhadevata (household deity), on the other hand, was Gopinatha (Kṛṣṇa). Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra is alleged to have quarrelled with Rājā Nabakṛṣṇa Deb over an image of Gopinātha which he accused him of having stolen. Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra also favoured the god Śiva, since his most ambitious project was the building of a city of one hundred and eight temples, which he called 'Śivanivāsa' (the abode of Śiva), located some miles to the north of Krishnanagar and now in ruins. One of the remaining temples contains a black stone **liṅga** that is supposed to be the largest in West Bengal. Bhāratacandra compared the city to Benares.

39. See Paścima, pp.368-369.

The Śākta celebrations encouraged by Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra would all have involved the use of clay images as would the Śākta celebrations of his ancestors. These clay images would have been made in Krishnanagar during the time of Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra. There are still many private and communal celebrations in Krishnanagar and other towns in the Nadia district which claim to have started pūjā celebrations at the time of Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra, two centuries ago. Clay images of Durgā, Kālī and Jagaddhātṛī are worshipped on a large scale in Krishnanagar and are taken in procession to the rājbarī before going on to immersion. The kumāras of Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra's time probably travelled to other areas to make clay images to commission, much as they do today. Like the sūtradhāra families, they travelled from district to district and were patronised by wealthy zemindars and rājās. It is evident that the kumāras travelled and were patronised in different localities, because when the landed gentry moved into the new urban centre of Calcutta in the first part of the 18th c, they hired kumāras from Krishnanagar to make clay images for them.

COMMUNAL FESTIVALS.

The trend set by the wealthy landowners in their country homes, spread rapidly to towns. The first urban communal pūjā took place in Guptipara in the Nadia district in 1760⁴⁰ and was organised by a group of twelve Brahmins. It was an innovation because all festival celebrations on a large scale had been initiated by zemindars or rājās or wealthy businessmen. The financial resources required to launch such celebrations were well beyond the means of the average Bengali of the time. This kind of pūjā earned the title ' bāroyāri ', because the first such pūjā was organised by a group of twelve (bāro) friends (iyāra). Rev. James Long of the

40. Sarma, Pūjā, p.580.

Baptist Mission at Serampore wrote of this celebration in 1820, giving it a different date:

"The Baruari Puja is celebrated with great pomp here, this puja was established in 1790 by a number of Brahmans of Guptapara, who formed an association to celebrate the puja not noticed in the Shastra; it is named baruari because they chose twelve members as a committee; they collected subscriptions in the neighbouring village... they celebrated the worship of Jagaddhatri Durga with such pomp, as to attract the rich to it from a distance of a hundred miles around; they procured the best singers in Bengal, and spent a week in festivity; in consequence of the success of the first baruari they determined to celebrate it annually; which is done in various parts of Bengal"⁴¹.

The fact that the Guptipara Brahmins used some of the money gained by subscriptions to hire the best singers in Bengal, shows the extent to which Bengalis of the 18th c felt the need for extravagant display. The term **bāroyāri** later came to mean any form of communal **pūjā** paid for by subscriptions. **Bāroyāri pūjā** was, according to J.Sarma, a practice of the lower classes⁴². The term **bāroyāri** was altered to **sārvajanīna** by the organisers of the associational, nationalistic **pūjās** around 1918⁴³. **Sārvajanīna** means 'for all people', or 'for the universal good'. The first **bāroyāri** celebrated the festival of **Jagaddhātrī pūjā**, as Rev. Long mentions⁴⁴. Reference to **bāroyāri pūjā** to Durgā occurs in the early 19th c, also in the Shantipur, Guptipara area and there is mention of **bāroyāri Kālī pūjā** in a Bengali publication of 1862⁴⁵.

41. Biswanath Banerjee 'Sarbojonin Durgotsab in Calcutta: A Preliminary Report of the Pujas in 1969', Folklore (Sept 1973), Vol.XIV, n.9, p.348 n.

42. Sarma, "Pūjā", p.580.

43. Sarma, "Pūjā", p.583.

44. Sarma, "Pūjā", p.580.

45. Sarma, "Pūjā", p.580. See Kali Prasanna Sinha, Hutoma Pyāñcāra Nakṣā (Calcutta: Motilal Barnasidas, 1948), p.23.

THE CALCUTTA PERIOD.

The worship of clay images became popular in the newly developing trade centre of Calcutta during the 18th c. In the first decade of the 18th c, most of Calcutta was still under jungle. Amidst the swamps and paddy fields lived fishermen who set up small markets on raised patches of land or ' **dehis** '46. The city of Calcutta covers an area once occupied by three villages. To the north were the villages of Sutanuti and Dihi Calcutta, while to the south was the village of Govindapur, where the British established Fort William. Sutanuti was probably a cotton market47 and made rapid progress, with Burrabazar at its centre, supplying the British with provisions. As the British East India Co. grew, it attracted the services of Bengali businessmen. Holwell, an agent of the Company, divided the steadily-growing town into a number of quarters, named according to the business conducted in each quarter48. It is at this time that we hear of Kumartuli or the quarter (**ṭolā**) of the potters (**kumāra**) situated in the northernmost village of Sutanuti, and of Patuapara, the quarter (**pārā**) of the painters (**paṭuā**) which was in the vicinity of the Kalighat temple in the south.

THE CALCUTTA ARTISTS AND THEIR GUILD QUARTERS.

According to popular story, it was Rājā Nabakṛṣṇa Deb who brought the **kumāras** to Calcutta. Rājā Nabakṛṣṇa Deb wanted to celebrate **Durgā pūjā** in honour of the British victory at the Battle of Plassey in 1757. So he summoned a **kumāra** from Krishnanagar to make the clay image for his **pūjā** . Eventually,

46. Sinha, History, p.385.

47. L.S.S.O'Malley, Bengal District Gazeteers, p.29.

48. Sinha, History, p.386.

several other families living in Calcutta at the time also wanted to follow the Rājā's example. As a result, the **kumāra** was inundated with work and, complaining because he had to travel from Krishnanagar, asked for a permanent residence for himself and his apprentices. This was granted and Kumartuli was established as a centre for clay art. The story shows the importance of Krishnanagar and the reputation of its **kumāras**. Many of the **kumāras** who first settled in Kumartuli were probably from Krishnanagar, although today, **kumāras** working in Kumartuli come from a variety of districts. Sankar Sen Gupta suggests that a few **kumāra** families from the towns of Shantipur, Krishnanagar, Nabadwip and Meturi in the Nadia district, moved into Calcutta in the late 18th c and settled on land owned by Govinda Candra Mitra⁴⁹. According to others, it was Gokul Mitra, whose temple stands on the Chitpur road in the immediate vicinity of Kumartuli. The **kumāras** of Kumartuli adopted the surname Pāl, which differs from most Bengali surnames in that it does not indicate the nature of their trade. According to Sankar Sen Gupta, the Pāls of Kumartuli are the descendants of Jadu Pāl, Bakkeśvar Pāl, Rākhāl Pāl, Nibaran Pāl and others who originally came from Krishnanagar⁵⁰.

The **paṭuās** from Patuapara in southern Calcutta originally came from Midnapore, 24 Parganas and Birbhum districts⁵¹ and called themselves **citrakāra** (from the Sanskrit **citrakāra**, a maker of **citra**, paintings). The **paṭuās** worked in the vicinity of the Kālī temple at Kalighat. The prime function of the

49. Sen Gupta, Paṭas, p.25.

50. Sen Gupta, Paṭas, p.26.

51. B.Bhattacharya, Krishna in the Traditional Painting of Bengal (Calcutta: Kamal Banerji, 1972), p.30.

Kalighat paintings produced by the *paṭuās*, was to remind the pilgrims to the temple of their visit and to communicate something of its aura⁵². The Kālī temple at Kalighat is regarded as a Śākta *pīṭha* (holy place of the Śāktas) which, according to legend, was the place where the little toe of the right foot of Satī fell. By the middle of the 18th c, the temple was already attracting pilgrims throughout the year and not just on festival occasions⁵³. According to the 'Pīṭhanirṇaya', a text on the holy places (*pīṭha*) of India, composed c.1690-1720, the popularity of Kalighat was associated with the foundation of Calcutta in 1690⁵⁴. Rājā Kṛṣṇa Dev writes that the present shrine of Kalighat was built by Sontosh Ray of Barisal near Calcutta in 1809⁵⁵, although David McCutcheon, a specialist in the late medieval temples of Bengal, wrote that the temple was renovated in that year⁵⁶. Mildred Archer says that an earlier 16th c temple had stood in the area, but in the early 19th c it was supplemented with a new structure by the Sabarna Chaudhuri family of Barisal⁵⁷. The *paṭuās* concentrated on the rapid reproduction of paintings on single, folio-sized sheets of paper depicting religious as well as secular themes. Their art developed into the celebrated Kalighat style which eventually disappeared with the advent of the modern printing press.

52. W.G.Archer, Kalighat Drawings (Bombay, Marg Publications, 1962), p.8.

53. Archer, Kalighat, p.6.

54. Sircar, Śākta Pīṭhas, p.24.

55. Raja Binaya Krishna Deb, Early History and Growth of Calcutta (Calcutta: n.pub, 1905), p.64.

D.McCutcheon, Late Medieval Temples of Bengal (Calcutta: The Asiatic Soc., 1972), p.33.

57. M.Archer, Indian Popular Paintings in the India Office Library (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1972), p.7.

One of the last of the great **citrakāras** of the Kalighat school was Rajani Kanta Citrakār⁵⁸.

François Balthazard Solvyns, a Belgian artist working for the British East India Co. in the late 18th early 19th c, describes **kumāras** as earthen pot makers 'with the simple and curious method of making their pots by the help of a revolving wheel'⁵⁹. He does not mention that **kumāras** make clay images, which may indicate that the **kumāras**' main trade was still the making of earthenware pots. However, Solvyns also writes of the **paṭuās**, saying:

"The Hindoo painters are also sculptors; they carve and colour the images of their gods; and as there is great consumption of them, both because they are everywhere exposed to public view, and because some of their feasts terminate by throwing them into water, the Puttoas are never in want of employment. They make also toys for children, of earth which they dry in the sun, and sell in the bazars especially on feast days"⁶⁰.

The aquatint by Solvyns shows a **paṭuā** outside a small thatched hut, inside of which is a clay image⁶¹, whereas the **kumāra** is shown at the potter's wheel. Solvyns also says that there are **paṭuās** who only make pictures and drawings on the same subject⁶². From this it is apparent that Solvyns has muddled his facts. Although **paṭuās** are known to make clay images and paint them, their main trade is in the painting of scrolls (**paṭa**). The name of their guild quarter, Patuapara, suggests that the **paṭuās** maintained their trade of painting. The **kumāras** of Kumartuli on the other hand, concentrated

58. Bhattacharya, Krishna, p.32.

59. François Balthazard Solvyns, A Collection of 250 Etchings descriptive of the Manners, Customs, Character, Dress and Religious Ceremonies of the Hindoos (Calcutta: Mirror Press, 1799), p.4 (16).

60. F.B.Solvyns, Les Hindoûs (Paris: De L'Imprimerie de Mame Frères, 1808), Tome I pl.V.

61. Solvyns, Catalogue, p.8 (63).

62. Solvyns, Hindoûs, Tome I, pl.V.

on the production of clay images and jealously guarded their craft, which, as Solvyns says, was everywhere on view and in great demand. **Kumāras** also made the toys (**putula**) referred to by Solvyns and sold them during the annual fairs.

The clay images used in the festival celebrations of the traditional families living in Calcutta in the 18th c were made by a team of artists. These artists attached themselves to the household and could come from a variety of districts. The **kumāra** made the clay image, the **paṭuā** painted it and the **mālī** (garland-maker), decorated it. The artists lived and worked in the household until the image was completed. They were treated as members of the family and given board and lodging and grants of land as payment for their services. This land supported them in the lean months of the year. Today it is still common to find a group of artists being responsible for the making of traditional images. The image may be made by a **kumāra** from Kumartuli, the **cālcitra** painted by an artist from Nabadwip and the **ḍāker sāja** decoration done by a **mālī** from elsewhere. or the whole image may be made by artists from outside Calcutta. The **Durgā** image belonging to the Rani Rashmoni family of Calcutta is made by an artist from Bihar, the **ḍāker sāja** is from Puruliya and the **cālcitra** is painted by an artist from the Nadia district.

There were a number of influential Bengali families living in Calcutta in the 18th c. Some of them are mentioned in a couplet told to me by a **kumāra** from Kumartuli, which translates as follows:

"Jagatseth's money
 Umicand's beard
 Banamali Sarkar's house
 Govinda Mitra's walking stick"⁶³.

The Jagatseths were influential bankers, Banamali Sarkar street is the street that runs out of Kumartuli into the Chitpur road on which is the temple of the Mitra family. Govindarāma Mitra was known as the 'Black Zemindar' and spent large sums of money on temple building and the performance of magnificent *pūjā* celebrations and was probably one of the earliest to determine the social behaviour of the elite groups of Bengalis living in Calcutta at the time⁶⁴. The *ṭhākura dālānas* of these families still remain and the descendants struggle to maintain the traditional *pūjā* begun by their ancestors at the beginning of Calcutta's history. Most of these families live in north Calcutta and their Durgā images maintain the style established two centuries ago.

THE CLAY IMAGES.

Many of the families who moved into Calcutta in the 18th c abandoned the village celebrations held in their country seats and began to perform annual celebrations in their town houses. They maintained their own idiosyncratic images and often used the same artists who had been employed in their ancestral homes. But when the urban *pūjā* committees began celebrating such festivals also, the style of image making changed dramatically. The more modest images of the early 19th c were no more than six or seven feet tall⁶⁵, but they began to get progressively larger. Charles Coleman, writing in 1832, speaks of the startling images made of clay for the annual festivals 'some of which have a very splendid appearance and are of

63. jagatsether kari/
 umicāñdēr dāri//
 banamālī sarkār bārī/
 govinda mitrer chari//

64. Sinha, History, p.389.

65. Ward, Account, p.364.

large proportions, reaching up to ten or twelve feet high'⁶⁶. An aquatint by Solvyns showing the immersion scene of two Kālī images seems to confirm this⁶⁷. By the 19th c, kumāras were making clay images for the public at large as is apparent from the statement by P.Ghosha that no respectable family would purchase a ready-made idol from the bazaar⁶⁸.

W.J.Wilkins, another 19th c author, writes that bamboo, grass and Ganges mud were used in the construction of clay images⁶⁹. Holes were drilled in a piece of wood on which the image was fixed. Rough skeletons were then made and covered with a preparation of mud, cow-dung and rice-husks. Painters painted the image and decorators adorned it and round the figures was a circular 'roof' (i.e. the cālī) which was divided into compartments showing mythological scenes and figures of other deities⁷⁰. Shib Chunder Bose also mentions offerings made to various deities represented on the cālī which is shaped like a crescent over the head of Durga during **Durgā pūjā** ⁷¹. Charles Coleman describes the clay images as being a composition of hay, sticks, clay etc⁷². W.Ward says that the clay images are made of clay mixed with cow-dung, chaff and straw and adds 'clay images for worship are never baked in the fire, but dried in the

66. Coleman, Mythology, p.383 n and p.85.

67. Solvyns, Catalogue, p.25 (10).

68. Ghosha, Durga, p.5.

69. Wilkins, Modern, p.227.

70. Wilkins, Modern, p.173.

71. Bose, Hindoos, p.102.

72. Coleman, Mythology, p.85.

sun'⁷³. Solvyns mentions the varnish used by the **paṭuās** (meaning perhaps **kumāras**) which, he says, is superior to that used by Europeans and better suited to the climate⁷⁴. This varnish is also used today over the entire surface of some clay images both to protect the paint and to give a lustrous finish. On the subject of **dāker sāja** ornaments, B.M.Ray says that it was the hereditary occupation of a group of Hindus called **malakāras** or garland and pith (**śolā**) decoration makers, and refers to a line in a poem by Rāmprasād Sen which refers to the adornment of images of Devī with wire and tinsel⁷⁵. Ray says that the makers of this kind of ornamentation came from the lower strata of society and made their ornaments throughout the year for customers both in and out of Calcutta⁷⁶. He mentions Kumartuli, Krishnanagar, Machubazar and Bhowanipur as centres in Calcutta and Krishnanagar, Sherpur and Dacca as other centres for this art form. His monograph on the wire and tinsel industry in Bengal includes an old photograph, plate X, of an unusual, highly ornamented clay image of Kālī, decorated with **dāker sāja** and placed in a Victorian setting with British flags. Shib Chunder Bose wrote in 1881 of the growing desire to decorate clay images with 'splendid tinsel and gewgaws'⁷⁷. Some of the Bengali 'baboo's', he says, send their orders

73. Ward, Account, p.364.

74. Solvyns, Hindoûs, Tome I, pl.V.

75. Ray, "Monograph", p.369.

76. Ray, "Monograph", p.369,

77. Bose, Hindoos, p.100.

to England for new patterns⁷⁸. This tinsel he calls 'dack', in other words, **dāker sāja** ⁷⁹.

An aquatint by Solvyns of a clay image of Durgā done in 1799 shows the traditional style image still used by Bengali families today (Pl.K). Of this plate, Solvyns writes:

"The Durgah Pooja - the plate represents in the middle Durgah, wife to Mahadeb, the destroying or transforming attribute of the deity; the animal she is mounted on, is called a sing (unicorn) at her feet, is Myhassor, an Evil Genii, which she destroys; on the right and left, are Lutchme and Surusutee, the wives of Vistno, and below them Guneesa and Cartic, Gods of wisdom and war, sons of Durgah"⁸⁰.

Solvyns, who always painted aquatints, has painted the 'sing' (i.e. **siṃha**, lion) white, 'Guneesa' (Gaṇeśa) with a red body and white head, 'Cartic' (Kārttikeya) with a red dhoti, 'Durgah' (Durgā) wears a red **śāri**, blue blouse and gold crown, the same being the case for 'Lutchme' (Lakṣmī), 'Surusutee' (Sarasvatī) wears a red blouse and a blue **śāri** and the buffalo demon 'Myhassor' (Mahiṣāsura) is painted green. The lion is in the style known as ' **ghorā-siṃha** ', the 'horse-lion', which resembles the mythical **vyāli** or **śārdūla** found on **gaja-śārdūla** motifs on temple cornices all over India and in classical sculpture as a base design. This **ghorā-siṃha** is painted white, which is probably why Solvyns thought of it as a unicorn. It has a black mane, wide eyes, beaked nose, clawed feet, small tail and ornamental sash around its thin waist. It is evident in most traditional images such as those belonging to the Nadia Raj, the Hatkola Dattas of Calcutta and Rājā Nabakṛṣṇa Deb's family. It appears on images of Durgā and Jagaddhātṛī and can be seen on Siṃhavāhinī

78. Bose, Hindoos, p.101.

79. Bose, Hindoos, p.112.

80. Solvyns, Catalogue, p.23 (4).

images in temples. This **ghorā-simha** may be the equivalent of the white horse ridden by the final **avatāra** of Viṣṇu, Kalki, with whom Durgā is sometimes equated. Kalighat **paṭuās** representing the Nārāsimha incarnation of Viṣṇu show the **avatāra** in the same form as the **ghorā-simha**. Either there were connections with Viṣṇu, or this was the stylised representation of the lion. It was later replaced by a more realistic lion borrowed directly from the heraldic lion of the British East India Co. Solvyns worked in and around Calcutta between 1791-1803 and it is likely that this plate represents a Durgā image belonging to one of the opulent Bengali families living in Calcutta at the time.

DURGĀ PŪJĀ CELEBRATIONS.

The number of clay images made for annual **pūjā** celebrations was already high by the 19th c. Coleman describes how hundreds of images were carried on platforms through the city of Calcutta on the immersion day, **vijayā daśamī**, during **Durgā pūjā**, and that some images were brought from remote villages to be immersed in the holy river Ganges⁸¹. Shib Chunder Bose says that in Calcutta nearly five hundred images were made during **Durgā pūjā** ⁸². As for the money spent on such occasions, Coleman says that no less than half a million rupees was spent annually and that around the 1830's, a few wealthy Hindus spent a lac of rupees (which Coleman estimated at £12,500)⁸³. Some of the affluent Bengalis were in the practice of inviting officials of the British East India Co. to their **pūjā** celebrations. The foreigners were entertained with dances

81. Coleman, Mythology, p.85.

82. Bose, Hindoos, p.116.

83. Coleman, Mythology, p.85.

('nautches'), music and food (Pl.D, 1). Coleman writes of **Durgā pūjā** :

"During the three days of worship, in Bengal, the houses of the rich Hindus are at night splendidly illuminated and thrown open to all descriptions of visitors; and they acknowledge with much attention and gratitude the visits of the respectable Europeans"⁸⁴.

Solvyns says that **Durgā pūjā** was well known to Europeans, who, in common with those of other religions, were invited by opulent Hindus to take a look and were entertained with refreshments and dances⁸⁵. Rev.W.Ward went to the Sobhabazar **rājbari** of Rājā Nabakṛṣṇa Deb and wrote disapprovingly of the singing before the image on the last night of **Durgā pūjā** in 1806⁸⁶. Coleman gives a vivid account of the immersion scene on the following day of **Durgā pūjā** celebrations, **vijayā daśamī** :

"On the following morning the image is, with certain ceremonies, dismissed by the officiating Brahman. It is then placed on a stage formed of bamboos, and carried, surrounded by a concourse of people of both sexes, and accompanied by drums, horns, and other Hindu instruments, to the banks of the river, and cast into the water, in the presence of all ranks and descriptions of spectators; the priest at the time invoking the goddess, and supplicating from her life, health and affluence, urging her (their universal mother as they term her) to go then to her abode, and return to them at a future time. During this period a licentiousness and obscenity prevail which too well justify Mr. Ward's indignant remarks on the Hindu festivals"⁸⁷.

Many of the genteel Europeans would have been surprised to know that it was compulsory to make obscene remarks on the last day of **Durgā pūjā** as part of the **Śāvarotsava** ceremonies. A painting by Thomas Daniell

84. Coleman, Mythology, p.84.

85. Solvyns, Catalogue, p.23 (4). For the contemporary image see Pl.G, 2).

86. Bose, Hindoos, p.119.

87. Coleman, Mythology, p.84.

finished in 1810, shows an immersion ceremony taking place along one of the elaborate *ghāṭas* (quaysides) on the Ganges (Pl.L). In the centre of the painting a Durgā image is about to be dropped into the river between two boats. Musicians are playing. Behind, an immersed Durgā image slowly sinks into the water. On the top right, two similar images are being carried in succession down the steps of the *ghāṭa* by large groups of bearers. Crowds line the *ghāṭa* and cheer while the images are being immersed. The figure in white seated on the shaded throne in a boat seems to be watching the immersion of the central image. It is possible that this figure is the Mahārājā of Burdwan, who we have heard, spent large sums of money on *Sarasvatī pūjā*. The painting was donated to the Victoria Memorial, Calcutta by the Mahārājā of Burdwan in 1928 88.

We can now turn to the account of a *Durgā pūjā* immersion scene recorded by Fray Sebastian Manrique, who travelled in Bengal between 1629-1643. His account, some two hundred years before Coleman's, confirms that the urban tradition as witnessed in Calcutta, was a transformation of a village tradition of clay image making. Manrique writes:

"The heathen at the new moon in the month of June, in all the larger villages, hold a public procession in honour of an idol named Druga (sic) who, in their books, is described as a prostitute to their false deities"⁸⁹.

He continues:

"This strumpet is carried along in a highly ornamented triumphal car with a large band of dancing girls who besides dancing, gain a livelihood by prostitution. These dancers go in front dancing and playing various musical instruments and singing festal songs.

88. For information on this painting, see Maurice Shellim, India and the Daniells (London: Inchcape and Co. Ltd., 1979).

89. E.Luard and E.Hosten, trans., Travels of Fray Sebastian Manrique 1629-1643, Vol.I China, India etc., (Oxford: Hakluyt Society; 1927), p.71.

After several streets have been traversed in this fashion, these ceremonies in honour of the idol give place suddenly to others full of infamy and dishonour. The idol being taken with all this pomp and circumstance to the river, or if there is no river, to some reservoir, is hurled into it amidst the execrations of the people who pelt it with stones and earth, upbraiding it with being a whore and heaping the most ignominious epithets upon it, accompanied with shouts, yells, jeers and scoffs, when they have thus ended the festival, they return home happy and contented"⁹⁰.

From further comments, it later appears that Manrique is describing a *Durgā pūjā* immersion scene, even though he mentions it taking place in June. The 'heaping of the most ignominious epithets' is part of the *Śavarotsava* ceremonies, having their origin in tribal customs. It seems that foreign observers were drawn as much to the anarchy of *Durgā pūjā* as to the pageantry. The parading of the image is also an important feature of *Durgā pūjā* and the description given by Manrique corresponds to present day *Durgā pūjā* ceremonies.

Manrique's early account of a *Durgā pūjā* immersion in the early 17th c, shows that the practice of worshipping clay images in Bengal dates back further than the British period. It also shows us that *Durgā pūjā* was performed in villages, although it was probably not done in the same style as the *pūjās* of the later zemindars and *rājās*. The image mentioned by Manrique may have belonged to a wealthy landowner who hired bearers to immerse the image, or to villages celebrating communally. Village *pūjās* were and

90. Luard and Hosten, Vol. I Travels, pp.71-72.

still are, celebrated communally. The village **kumāra** makes the image for a small sum of money and the cost of celebrations are kept to a minimum by pooling all the necessary offerings and materials for **pūjā** . The idea of the **bāroyāri pūjā** , or communal **pūjā** subsidised by subscriptions, is an urban version of the village system.

From all accounts, the festival of **Durgā pūjā** is the most mentioned celebration in connection with the worship of clay images in Bengal. It is therefore worthwhile investigating the background of **Durgā** and the festival of **Durgotsava** .

CHAPTER ELEVEN: DURGĀ:HER BACKGROUND AND ICONOGRAPHY.

CHARACTER OF DURGĀ.

Durgā is a warrior goddess whose primary role is the killing of demons on behalf of the gods. She may be called upon to bring victory over enemies and is associated with military campaigns. As a manifestation of Devī (the Goddess), she is given all the qualifications of a supreme deity: she is the great goddess (Mahādevī); she is identical with primary cause of the universe (Prakṛti, sometimes translated as Nature); she is cosmic energy (Śakti); she appears as the creatress of the world (Jagatpraśū); she is the divine creative playfulness (Līlā) by which everything comes into being; she is Mahāmāyā, the personification of creative illusion (māyā); she is the supportress of the world (Jagaddhātṛī); she is pantheistically everything and comprises everything (Jaganmayī)¹.

Durgā the 'Inaccessible', is the deity who removes grave dangers and is known in Bengal as Durgatīnāśinī, 'she who puts down calamities'². In the Markaṇḍeya Purāṇa (MrkP), she is 'the boat to cross the difficult ocean'(84.10), 'she who removes terror from every creature'(84.16) and 'she who is the further shore, difficult to be reached'³. In the vulgate edition of the Mahābhārata, she saves sinners, relieves burdens and rescues people in difficulty (Virāṭa Parva 6)⁴. Durgā dwells in inaccessible regions where there is

1. Van Kooij, Worship, p.31.

2. Chakravarti, Tantras, p.94.

3. Pargiter, Mārkaṇḍeya, p.484, p.485, p.490.

4. Protap Chundra Ray, The Mahābhārata, Virāṭa Parva (Calcutta: Bharata Press, 1886), pp.14-15.

danger, fear and difficulty (Bhīṣma Parva 23)⁵. She is commonly said to dwell in the Vindhya mountains and is thus known as Vindhyavāsini, 'she who dwells in the Vindhyas'. The Devī Purāṇa (DP) refers to her being present in the Ganges and Narmada rivers and in the Vindhya and Himalaya mountains (DP 32.4). She is regarded as the daughter of Himavat (the Himalaya mountains) and Menakā. As wife of Śiva, she is known as Umā or Pārvatī and lives on mount Kailāsa. Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa (DBP) bk.7 ch.28 and SP 50.36 say that she is called Durgā because she killed the demon Durgama. Bhaviṣyottara Purāṇa refers to her as Bhavanī, daughter of Yaśoda, killer of Kāṁsa, wife of Śiva and she is the eternal virgin, Vindhyavāsini.

DURGĀ IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA.

Durgā is mentioned in the vulgate edition of the Mahābhārata, although it is likely that references to her were added later than the original Epic. In the Virāṭa Parva ch 6, when Yudiṣṭhira is on his way to the city of Virāṭa with the Pāṇḍava brothers, he begins to praise Durgā mentally. She is called the supreme goddess; born of Yasodā; fond of boons given her by Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu); of the cowherd race of Nanda; the giver of prosperity; the enhancer of the glory of a worshipper's family; the killer of the evil king Kāṁsa; sister of Vāsudeva (Kṛṣṇa), who is armed with a scimitar and shield⁶. She is said to be identical with Kṛṣṇa; has four hands and four faces; is Padmā, the consort of Nārāyaṇa; has two long arms, the remaining six carrying a vessel, lotus, bell, noose, bow, large discus and various other weapons; is beautiful; has robes made of snakes; has peacock plumes on her head; is a perpetual maiden

5. Ray, Mahābhārata, Bhīṣma Parva (1887), pp.71-72.

6. Ray, Mahābhārata, Virāṭa Parva, p.14.

(*kumārī*); is the slayer of the demon *Mahiṣāsurā* (son of *Jambāsura*); is *Jayā* and *Vijayā*; gives victory in battle; lives eternally on the *Vindhyas*; and as *Kālī* is fond of wine, meat and animal sacrifice⁷. *Durgā* appears before *Yudhiṣṭhira*, grants him victory over the *Kauravas* and disappears⁸. In *Bhīṣma Parva* 23 *Kṛṣṇa* tells *Arjuna* that he should say a hymn to *Durgā* for victory over the enemy. *Arjuna* calls *Durgā* the leader of **yogins**; she who is identical with *Brahman* (the Absolute); who dwells in the *Mandara* forest; who is *Kālī*; wife of *Kapāla*; who brings benefits to devotees; *Mahākālī*, the wife of the universal destroyer (*Śiva*); who grants victory; bears a banner of peacock plumes; bears a sword, spear and shield; is the younger sister of the chief of cowherds; born of *Nanda's* race; fond of buffalo's blood; dressed in yellow robes; devours *asuras* assuming the face of a wolf; fond of battle; *Umā*; *Sakhambarī*; slayer of the demon *Kaitabha*; mother of *Skanda* (i.e. *Kārttikeya*); she is *Sarasvatī* and *Savitṛī*; she always defeats demons and is sleep, unconsciousness and illusion⁹. As with *Yudhiṣṭhira*, *Durgā* appears before *Arjuna*, grants him the boon of victory in war and disappears. According to *B.K.Kakati*, in the early stages of her history, *Durgā* had nothing to do with *Śiva* and was closely connected with the *Vaiṣṇava* cult and *Viṣṇu*¹⁰. The appendix of the *Mahābhārata*, the *Harivaṁśa*, *Arya Stava* 3.3, shows that *Durgā* was very popular in the early centuries of the Christian era and that she was identified with all the chief deities and had appropriated their

7. Ray, Mahābhārata, *Virāṭa parva*, pp.14-15.

8. Ray, Mahābhārata, *Virāṭa Parva*, p.16.

9. Ray, Mahābhārata, *Virāṭa Parva*, pp.71-72.

10. Kakati, Mother Goddess, pp.18-19.

characteristics¹¹. According to S.C.Mukherji, the worship of Durgā was popular in the Gupta period and later bronze images from the Pāla period of the goddess Ekānamśā (a special form of Durgā) have been recovered from Bihar¹². Ekānamśā (or Subhadrā) is associated with Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva, she is the sister of Kṛṣṇa, wife of Arjuna, daughter of Vasudeva and is connected with Jagannātha¹³. The Harivaṃśa refers to Durgā as Nārāyaṇapriyā (beloved of Nārāyaṇa) and Vāsudevabhagnī (sister of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa)¹⁴.

DURGĀ IN THE DEVĪ MĀHĀTMYA.

Durgā is best known through the myth contained in the DM section of the MrkP. The theme of the DM became very popular throughout India, inspired poets and artists and became the liturgy for Durgā pūjā, under the title of 'Durgā Saptaśatī' (the Seven Hundred Verses in honour of Durgā) or 'Caṇḍī'. F.E.Pargiter believes that the DM was probably composed at Mandhātā in the Narmada valley in western India around 5th-6th c. A.D.¹⁵. It comprises cantos 82-92 of the MrkP which was probably completed around 9th c A.D.¹⁶. Pargiter describes the DM as a glorification of Durgā with Kālī as a

11. S.C.Mukherji, "The Cult of Ekānamśā", IHQ, Vol.35, no.3 (September 1959), p.190.

12. Mukherji, "Cult", P.204.

13. Banerjea, Development (1941), p.147.

14. Kakati, Mother Goddess, p.18.

15. Pargiter, Mārkaṇḍeya, p.xx. Mārkaṇḍeya is supposed to be of the Bhārgava race of Western India, p.xx.

16. Pargiter, Mārkaṇḍeya, p.viii.

manifestation of her¹⁷.

The DM concerns the creation of Durgā by the gods, the slaying of several troublesome demons and the subsequent glorification of Durgā by the gods. Durgā's pivotal role is that of Mahiṣāsuramarddinī, the slayer, or literally 'trampler' (marddinī) of the demon Mahiṣa. Although she appears in other guises and kills other demons in the course of the myth, this is Durgā's most well-known form. Several Purāṇas relate the story of the slaying of Mahiṣa by Durgā, but the DM is the principal source of them all.

The story of the DM is related by the sage Medhas to Rājā Suratha and the Vaiśya Samādhi. Rājā Suratha, whose capital was at Kolā (modern Kolhapur in Maharashtra), lost his kingdom to enemies and was banished. Samādhi, on the other hand, was abandoned by family and friends. Medhas tells them both that they are in their predicament through the power of Mahāmāyā, the great power of illusion or the Goddess personified. On being asked who this Mahāmāyā is, Medhas begins the story of the DM, the 'Glorification (māhātmya) of the Goddess (Devī)'.

The first account given by Medhas of Mahāmāyā concerns the slaying of the two demons Madhu and Kaitabha (81.49-77). These two demons emerge from Viṣṇu's ears as he lies sleeping on the ocean of dissolution at the end of the world cycle and attempt to kill the god Brahmā who stands on a lotus that emerges from Viṣṇu's navel. Brahmā eulogises the 'Sleep' (Mahāmāyā) that has overcome Viṣṇu and asks her to wake Viṣṇu so that he may kill the

17. Pargiter, Mārkaṇḍeya, p.xi.

demons. 'Sleep' leaves Viṣṇu who then wakes, fights Madhu and Kaitabha and eventually kills them¹⁸.

In the DM, Durgā is created out of the energies (**tejas**) of all the gods. In MrkP 82.8-17, on hearing how the demon Mahiṣa ousted the gods from heaven, Viṣṇu and Śiva become angry. Great energy (**tejas**) issues from the mouths of Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahmā and from the bodies of the other gods. It amalgamates into a mountain of intense energy and becomes a female created from the energies of all the gods¹⁹. The gods equip Durgā with weapons and ornaments (81.19-31): Śiva gives a trident ; Kṛṣṇa, a discus ; Varuna , a conch ; Agni, a spear ; Maruta, a bow and quiver of arrows ; Indra, a thunderbolt and a bell from his elephant, Airavata ; Yama gives a rod ; the Lord of the Waters, a noose ; Prajāpati, a necklace of beads ; Brahmā, an earthen water pot ; Sūrya shines his rays on her skin ; Kālā gives her a sword and shield ; the ocean of milk, a spotless necklace of pearls and undecaying clothes ; Viśvakarmā, a crest-jewel, pair of earrings, bracelets, a half-moon ornament, armlets, anklets, necklace, rings, a polished axe, weapons of various kinds and impenetrable armour; the ocean, a garland of fadeless lotus flowers ; Himavat, a lion and various gems ; Kuvera, a drinking cup full of wine; and Sesa, a serpent necklace adorned with large gems²⁰.

18. See Śiva Purāṇa ch.45 and Kālikā Purāṇa ch.64.4-43 for similar accounts.

19. The same story appears in Śiva Purāṇa 46.10-18 and Kālikā Purāṇa 61.5-6. In the Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa bk.7, all the gods, led by Viṣṇu, assemble on the Himalayas to find relief from the demon Taraka. Some do **mantra** repetition, some do sacrifice, some do **japa** (recitation). On the ninth day of Caitra, the Goddess appears as a beautiful woman, formed of an effulgent lustre.

20. See KP 61.6-7 for a similar description.

Fully equipped and ornamented, Durgā proceeds into battle against the demon Mahiṣa and his army. Durgā destroys all the **asuras** and finally has to contend with Mahiṣa himself. MrkP 83.20-39 describes how Mahiṣa changes into various animal shapes in his battle with Durgā. First he becomes a buffalo and Durgā flings her noose over him. Mahiṣa becomes a lion. While Durgā cuts off his head, Mahiṣa takes the appearance of a man with a scimitar in his hand. Durgā fires at him with arrows and he becomes a huge elephant, but she cuts off his trunk. Mahiṣa assumes buffalo shape and hurls mountains at Durgā, which she shatters. Durgā then leaps on Mahiṣa, kicks him in the neck with her foot and strikes him with her spear. Mahiṣa half emerges from the buffalo's body and his head is struck off by Durgā's sword and he is killed²¹.

Having killed Mahiṣa, Durgā is praised by all the gods and promises to befriend them always. The gods are defeated again, this time by the demon brothers Śumbha and Niśumbha, and they invoke Caṇḍikā (Durgā). When Śumbha sees Caṇḍikā he wants to marry her, but she declines. Śumbha sends an army under the demons Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa. Durgā grows dark with anger, and from her forehead springs Kālī, armed with sword and noose and looking fearful. Mounted on a lion, she kills Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa and is dubbed Cāmuṇḍā. Śumbha sends all his armies and the gods send their female energies (**śaktis**) to help Durgā. These are the so-called Aṣṭanāyikās (**aṣṭa** , eight, **nāyikā** , consorts). Cāmuṇḍā kills the commander-in-chief of the demon army, Raktavīja, by drinking all his blood. Then Caṇḍikā kills Niśumbha and finally Śumbha, whereupon the gods are overjoyed. They

21. See ŚP 5.46.58-60 and Vāmana Purāṇa 21,49 for similar description. In Skanda Purāṇa 1.3.11, 25-26, the demon is crushed and deprived of his strength before being killed by Durgā. The kick of Durgā's foot occupies the central theme of Bāṇa's 'Caṇḍīśataka'.

praise her and she promises to help them always. The gods regain their supremacy and Caṇḍikā is praised. In her glorification (*māhātmya*) it is said that Durgā bestows *svarga* (heaven) and final emancipation (93.3).

DURGĀ IN THE DEVĪ PURĀṆA.

In the DP version of the DM myth, the demon is known as Dundubhi. R.C.Hazra dates the Devī Purāṇa as late half of the 7th c and argues that it is a work of Bengal²². DP chs. 4-9 and chs. 13-20 describe the story of the slaying of the demon Dundubhi. Dundubhi saw Umā occupying the left half of Śiva's body and became infatuated. Śiva reduced the demon to ashes with a glance, but from the ashes arose another demon who also had a desire for Umā. Umā cursed this dreadful (*ghora*) demon to be born on earth. Śiva reproached her and Umā, in a fit of pique, blesses the demon with lordship over the gods. Śiva cursed Umā to be born on earth where the demon would want to be her husband. Umā said that if the dark-complexioned demon did so, she would kill him while mounted on a lion. In due course Dundubhi became known as Ghora and troubled the three worlds (heaven, earth and the underworld). The gods prayed to Umā, referring to her as Adyā Śakti (the Mother Goddess) and Yoga Māyā, the virgin girl living in the Vindhya mountains, mounted on a lion, known as Vindhyavāsinī. Ghora is informed of Vindhyavāsinī by the sage Nārada and goes to capture her. With the help of the gods and the Matṛs (Mothers), Vindhyavāsinī fights and kills Ghora, who has assumed the form of a buffalo (Mahiṣa) before his death. Vindhyavāsinī comes to be known as the killer of Mahiṣa²³.

22. R.C.Hazra, "The Devī Purāṇa, a work of Bengal", Purana, Vol.IV, no.2 (July 1962), p.355.

23. Hazra, Studies, pp.28-29.

In DP 16.39-40, Nārada sees Bhagavatī (Durgā) seated upon a lion, holding a skin, sword, bow, arrow, lance, iron lance, thunderbolt, elephant tusk, axe, mallet, noose, goad, flag, vīṇā (Indian lute) and bell. She wears a leopard skin and holds a rosary and has one hand lifted in varada mudrā²⁴. In the DP 17.17 she stands holding a snake, plough, hammer, axe, noose, discus, conch, skull-topped bone, staff, goad and various weapons, a trident given by Śiva and a rosary, all the things for killing the demon. She is forever virgin, forever ascetic and was spontaneously created from the communion of the gods²⁵.

DURGĀ IN THE KĀLIKĀ PURĀṆA.

The Kālikā Purāṇa (KP) deals with the exploits of the goddess Kālī as Kālikā, who is 'yoganidrā' or 'māyā' of Viṣṇu and later wife of Śiva as the dark complexioned Dākṣānayanī, Satī and Kālī or Kālikā, daughter of Menakā²⁶. As Viṣṇu's māyā, she is four-armed, seated upon a lion, carrying a sword, blue lotus and showing abhaya and varada mudrās. She is Śakti and Prakṛtī and has many forms²⁷. The KP has strong Vaiṣṇava orientation and Viṣṇu is seen as Brahmā or Puruṣa with Devī as his śakti, māyā or Prakṛti²⁸. According to R.C.Hazra, the KP was written by 'Śakta-Vaiṣṇavas' of Kāmarūpa (Assam) during the late 10th, early 11th c A.D.²⁹. The KP, which extolls the cult of Kāmākhyā Devī in

24. Tarkaratna, Devī Purāṇa, p.121.

25. Tarkaratna, Devī Purāṇa, p.126.

26. Hazra, Studies, p.230.

27. Hazra, Studies, p.230.

28. Hazra, Studies, p.233.

29. Hazra, Studies, p.233 and p.245.

Assam, may have been composed at the time when there was a transition from the previous popularity of Śiva worship in Assam to the introduction of Vaiṣṇavism via Śāktism and the encouragement of Devī worship by the ruling dynasties of the time. The KP also recounts the Mahiṣāsuramarddīnī myth, but with a few variations.

In the KP 62.140-142 the demon Rambha, having performed austerities, is without a son and asks Śiva if he will be his son in three births on the following conditions: that he will be a son that cannot be killed by any living being; who will be victorious in battle; who will have a long life and be famous and fortunate. Śiva grants the boon and takes the form of a cow with whom Rambha mates. Mahiṣa is born and is cursed by the sage Katyayana with the words 'A woman will cause your ruin' (62.150-151). Devī kills Mahiṣa in three successive births in three forms, mentioned in the KP 62.110 as: Ugracaṇḍā (who is eighteen-armed); Bhadrakālī (who is sixteen-armed); and Durgā (who is ten-armed). It is stated in the KP 62.154:

"Therefore the Goddess accepted the demon Mahiṣa who was actually the great god (himself). In three births the lord Śiva was Rambha's son'³⁰.

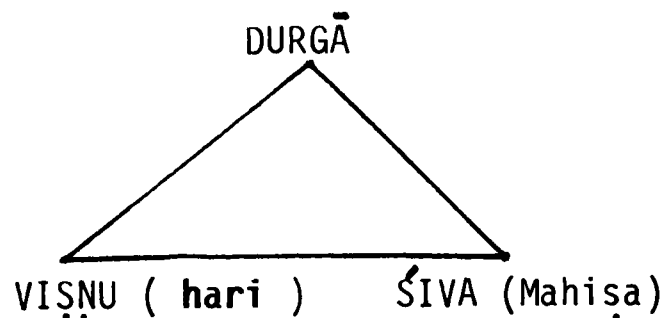
It continues to say in 62.160, that because of this, the demon now remains under the soles of the Goddess's feet³¹.

The reference to Mahiṣa (Śiva) remaining beneath Devī's feet may be a subtle allusion to the subordination of male deities to the supremacy of Devī. In fact, the KP 60.65 and 62.33 states that Viṣṇu and Śiva are nothing more than Devī's mounts

30. Van Kooij, Worship, p.119.

31. Van Kooij, Worship, p.119.

(*vāhana*) or that they form parts of her seat (*āsana*)³². In the KP, Viṣṇu (Hari) is identified with the lion (*hari*) and Śiva is identified with the buffalo demon Mahiṣa (62.153)³³. In images of Mahiṣāsuramarddīnī, the buffalo and lion are placed directly beneath Durgā. She is sometimes shown standing with the right foot on the lion and the left on the demon Mahiṣa, who emerges from the buffalo body. This Mahiṣāsuramarddīnī composition might be a direct means of communicating, in visual terms, the supremacy of Devī over male deities as is implied in the KP reference to Viṣṇu and Śiva being Devī's seats:



In the KP 60.58 Śiva is identical to a white ghost (*sitapreta*) which may allude to the position of Śiva as a white corpse lying recumbent beneath the standing or seated figures of Kālī popular in Bengal and other parts of India. KP 63.59-60 refers to the goddess Kālikā (the Black One) who lives in the Himalayas and appears out of Mātangi's (Durgā's) body. Kālikā is also known as Ugratārā (63.61). She has four arms, is black, adorned with a wreath of heads, holding in top right hand a sword, bottom right a blue lotus (63.64), in the top left hand a knife, in bottom left a skull bowl, she wears a braid on her head (63.65) and a wreath of shaven human heads, she wears a snake as

32. Van Kooij, Worship, P.119. A similar statement is found in the DBP which says that the five **Mahapretas** (great ghosts) Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Indra and Sadāśiva, stay at Devī's feet and she stays beyond them as unmanifest consciousness (Lalye, Studies, p.197).

33. Van Kooij, Worship, p.32 n.1.

her necklace, she has red eyes (63.66), wears a black cloth and has a tiger skin, her left foot is on the chest of a corpse, her right on the back of a lion, she licks the corpse and laughs shrilly, is terrifying and surrounded by an aureole of flames (63.67-68)³⁴.

ICONOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF DURGĀ.

Since Durgā is a warrior goddess, she is equipped with the appropriate instruments of battle. When Brahmā is threatened by the demons Madhu and Kaitabha in the MrkP, he eulogises 'Sleep' (Mahāmāyā), describing her as terrible, armed with sword, spear, club, discus, conch, bow, having as weapons armour, sling and iron mace (81.61-62). Durgā is associated with battle and is capable of being fierce. As such, she embodies the **tamasī** (malignant) quality (**guṇa**), is multi-armed and shown fighting demons³⁵.

MP 260.57-65 gives a very detailed description of Mahiṣāsuramarddinī as Katyāyanī. She is ten-armed, holding weapons that can be seen in the hands of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. She has matted hair, a crescent moon, three eyes, a youthful appearance, is adorned with ornaments, has fine teeth and full breasts and stands in **tribhaṅga** (thrice bent pose). She is the destroyer of the demon Mahiṣasura and is armed with discus, trident, sharp pointed arrows, javelin, sword, bow, noose, goad, bell and battle-axe. Below her is Mahiṣa with severed head, holding sword in one hand, soaked in blood, his chest pierced by Durgā's javelin, his intestines spilling out. Devī has one foot on the lion and the toe of the other on the body of Mahiṣasura. Mahiṣa is encircled by a snake and Durgā holds his

34. Van Kooij, Worship, p.125.

35. See pp.20-21. According to Kumar, Śakti, p.231, Durgā embodies the **rajasī** (passionate) quality. The **triguṇa** aspects of Devī are sometimes seen as Mahākālī, Mahālakṣmī and Mahāsarasvatī (Bhattacharyya, "Worship of Durgā", p.17).

hair with her left hand. Praying figures are said to be positioned around her³⁶.

The Agni Purāṇa 50.1-5 gives a similar description of Durgā, but she is twenty-armed. The buffalo is placed below Durgā, its head is severed and the demon emerges out of its neck, brandishing a sword and vomiting blood. Caṇḍikā stands with her right foot on the back of the lion, her left on the shoulder of the demon around whose neck is twisted the serpent noose (*nāgāpāśa*) of the goddess whose lion pounces on and bites into the arm of the demon³⁷.

In the KP 61.10-20 Durgā has long, twisted hair, a diadem of the half moon, three eyes, a face resembling a lotus and the moon, she is the colour of molten gold, standing firmly, with beautiful eyes, full of blooming youth and adorned with all her ornaments, with lovely teeth, fiery with full, upraised breasts, standing in *tribhaṅga* and crushing the demon Mahiṣa. She has ten arms 'as long as lotus stalks' in which she carries a shield, bow fully-bent, noose, goad, bell and axe in her left hands and trident, sword, discus, sharp arrows and lance in her right hands. Durgā stands with her left big toe on the back of the lion, while her right foot rests on the body of the buffalo. She grasps Mahiṣa's hair with one of her left hands which contains the noose. Mahiṣa's neck is enclosed within the snake noose. Durgā's lion is vomiting blood, Mahiṣa is red with red and trembling eyes and crooked teeth. He is pierced in the chest by Durgā's trident, is half emerging from the severed neck of the buffalo.

36. Akhtar, *Matysa*, p.310.

37. Dutt Shastri, *Agni*, pp.181-182.

According to S.Bhattacharyya, despite Durgā's warlike qualities, 'the elements in Her composite nature that have caught the popular imagination are not so much Her power and grandeur as Her mādhyurya, or sweetness, beauty, or harmony and Her abhaya or protection'³⁸. As J.Pryzluski says, 'Durgā in India was cruel; but those whom she struck blessed her sovereign hand and to make her propitious gave her gracious names like the 'Gentle' or the 'Immaculate'³⁹.

ORIGINS OF DURGĀ.

There are conflicting views on the origin of Durgā and her worship. Gaurinath Sastri claims that Durgā is a Vedic as well as a Purāṇic deity and refers to two hymns in the Ṛg Veda Saṁhitā, the Devī Sūkta and the Rātri Sūkta, which celebrate the praise of Durgā⁴⁰. B.C.Majumdar disagrees and says that she is a Purāṇic, not a Vedic, deity, who was worshipped as a supreme deity from about the 7th c A.D. onwards⁴¹. Literary evidence, such as the DM and the DP, seem to point to a strong Śākta foothold in the religious systems of northern India during the Gupta period (3rd-6th c A.D.) and images of Mahiṣāsuramarddinī have been found dating from the first century A.D. onwards. Bāṇa, the court poet of king Harṣa of Kanauj⁴², whom P.V.Kane dates as c.600-650 A.D.⁴³, mentions the temple of Caṇḍikā and the offerings of blood made to her, her trident and the

38. Bhattacharyya, "Worship of Durgā", p.17.

39. J.Pryzluski, "The Great Goddess in India and Iran", IHQ, Vol.X, no.3 (September 1934), p.421.

40. G.Sastri, "The Worship of the Clay Image of the Goddess Durgā", J.N.Banerjea Volume (Calcutta: The Alumni Assoc.; 1960), p.269.

41. B.C.Majumdar, "Durgā: her Origin and History" Journal of the Royal Asiatic Soc. of Gt. Britain, Vol.XXVIII (1906), pp.355-362. See Epigraphia Indica Vol.9, p.189 and Kane, Dharmaśāstra (1941), p.738.

42. see back p.156.

43. Kane, Dharmaśāstra (1958), p.xiii.

slaughter of the demon Mahiṣāsurā in ch.28 of his 'Kadambari'⁴⁴. In his 'Harṣacarita', the biography of king Harṣa, Bāṇa refers to an image of Durgā in the Vindhya mountains of western India⁴⁵ with which Durgā is connected as Vindhyaśinī. Bāṇa's 'Caṇḍīśataka' is a poetic eulogy based on the Mahiṣāsuramardini scene of the DM. By the time of the DBP, dated by Hazra as 11th/12th c⁴⁶, all village goddesses were seen as partial manifestations of Devī, the Supreme Goddess (DBP 9.1.36) and the concept of the Mother Goddess assumed cosmic proportions, drawing within itself the hitherto unconnected local goddesslings⁴⁷. This had its correlation in iconography in that, as the grāma devatā (village deities) assumed a formal iconography, they invariably assimilated themselves to Durgā and the Sapta Mātṛkās (Seven Divine Mothers)⁴⁸.

ICONS OF DURGĀ.

Mahisasuramardini is one of the most commonly depicted goddesses of the Hindu pantheon. Images of her have been found dating from the period of the Kuṣāṇa dynasty (1st-2nd c A.D.) of northern India. The earliest figure discovered so far, is a terracotta plaque made from a mould which was discovered at Nagar in Rajasthan, dating from the 1st c A.D.. R.C.Agrawala describes it as a terracotta plaque showing a two-armed Durgā with right hand placed on the back of a buffalo whose tail is erect and front leg raised. The left leg of Durgā rests on the head of a recumbent lion which faces

44. Kane, Dharmaśāstra (1941), p.738.

45. N.G.Banerji, "New Light on Durgotsava", IHQ Vol.XXI no.3 (Sept 1945), p.228.

46. Hazra, Studies, pp.346-347.

47. Kakati, Mother Goddess, p.69.

48. J.C.Harle, "Durgā, Goddess of Victory", Artibus Asiae, Vol.XXVI (1963), p.245 n.37.

right. The garments and ornaments appear clearly on the figure. Agrawala adds that it is certain that people of Rajasthan began to worship Durgā from as early as the 1st c A.D. and that the cult of Durgā may have spread from Rajasthan to other parts of India⁴⁹. B.N.Mukherjee mentions the terracotta plaque from Nagar as well as a sandstone relief of Durgā from Bhitar attributed to the age of the Guptas (3rd-6th c A.D.)⁵⁰ and remarks 'It should, however, be remembered that a number of Mahiṣamarḍinī images have been placed earlier than any conceivable date for the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa'⁵¹, which contains probably the earliest full reference to Durgā. Mukherjee suggests that Durgā Mahiṣamarḍinī may have had some connection with the Assyrio-Babylonian goddess Ishtar (otherwise known as Nanā), a warrior goddess riding on a lion, although he says the lion does not generally appear on Mathura icons of Mahiṣamarḍinī dateable to the time of the Kuṣāṇas⁵². There was considerable development in the iconography of Durgā through the ages, but it seems that the prototypes were in existence prior to their own iconographical descriptions as is the case with most religious images in India.

Although the earliest Mahiṣamarḍinī images appear in the Kuṣāṇa and Gupta periods, they are also common, for instance, under the Cālukya dynasties (6th-12th c A.D.) of Badami, the Deccan, and under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas (8th-10th c A.D.) of the west and

49. R.C.Agrawala , "Some Sculptures of Durgā Mahiṣamarḍinī from Rajasthan", Adyar Library Bulletin, no.XIX (May 1955), pp.37-38.

50. B.N.Mukherji, Nanā on Lion (Calcutta: The Asiatic Soc., 1969), p.20.

51. Mukherjee, Nanā, p.20.

52. Mukherjee, Nanā, p.20.

central Deccan⁵³. Complex and multi-armed images of Durgā are common from the late 7th-8th c under the Cālukyas, from the 8th-10th c under the Pallavas and in the 10th c under the Colas. One of the most famous of these is a stone wall relief from the Mahiṣamarddinī temple at Mamallapuram (7th c) from the time of the Pallavas⁵⁴. It shows Durgā seated on a lion and firing an arrow at the buffalo-headed demon, Mahiṣa, who stands holding a club. In early and medieval icons, Durgā is sometimes represented with her **vāhana**, the lion, but without the demon, or she may be represented standing on a buffalo head with no **vāhana** or demon, or the demon may be represented by a buffalo only (in which case the icons are referred to as Mahiṣamarddinī) or anthropomorphically as a man fully or half emerged from the severed neck of a buffalo (in which case the icon is referred to as Mahiṣāsūramarddinī). Durgā's **vāhana** may even be a stag⁵⁵.

The DM theme was taken up later by painters, notably those from Punjab and Rajasthan, during the 17th-19th c. These so-called 'Pāhārī' or hill painters, illustrated important parts of the story of Durgā's struggle against the demons and her creation from the energies of the gods. Paintings illustrating the DM are, in fact, among the earliest examples of the Basohli school of upper Punjab, which F.S.Aijazuddin finds surprising, since the Basohli artists were patronised by Rājā Sangram Pal, a Vaiṣṇava, and after the initial period of Devī paintings, the favourite theme became Viṣṇu in

53. See Aschwin De Lippe, Indian Medieval Sculpture (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Co., 1978). Dates for dynasties taken from Basham, Wonder.

54. De Lippe, Medieval, p.151, plate 144.

55. Harle, "Durgā", p.243.

his incarnation as Kṛṣṇa⁵⁶. The Guler artists of the Punjab also favoured the DM theme. Prominent temples to Durgā were built at the Guler capital at Haripur in the 18th c⁵⁷. Illustrated manuscripts of the DM dating from 15th-18th c from Gujurat and Nepal are also quite common⁵⁸.

ICONS OF DURGĀ FROM BENGAL.

Small terracotta plaques of Mahiṣāsura-marddini have been discovered in Bengal from the Gupta period and there are a few sculptures of the goddess dating from the classical Pāla-Sena period (8th-13th c), although images of the Pāla period were predominantly Buddhist, while those of the Sena period were mainly of Viṣṇu and Sūrya. The most interesting Mahiṣāsuramarddini image from Bengal is that discovered at Dulmi, Manbhum district, West Bengal, dated 10th c and currently in the Indian Museum, Calcutta (Fig.1).

The Dulmi image stands at approximately three and a half feet and is sculptured in black basalt which was commonly used in the Pāla-Sena period. The sculpture shows Durgā in **tribhaṅga pratyālīḍha** pose with her right leg on the lion and left on the buffalo. She is ten-armed and carries **triśūla** (trident), **kheṭaka** (shield), **taṅka** (hatchet), **śara** (arrow), **khadga** (sword), **dhanu** (bow), **paraśu** (axe), **ankuṣa** (goad), **nāgāpāśa** (snake-noose) and shows **śūci-mudrā** ⁵⁹. Durgā's trident pierces the chest of the demon Mahiṣa, who emerges in human shape from the decapitated buffalo.

56. F.S.Aijazuddin, Pahari Paintings and Sikh Portraits in the Lahore Museum (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 1972), p.4.

57. Aijazuddin, Pahari, p.33.

58. Moti Chandra, "Two Illustrated Devīmāhātmya Manuscripts from Nepal", Bulletin of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, no.11 (1971), p.1.

59. Majumdar, History, p.453.

decapitated buffalo. The demon is almost completely emerged except for his left foot, which remains in the buffalo's neck. The severed head of the buffalo is shown below. Mahiṣa carries a sword in his right hand, a shield in his left, Durgā's snake-noose encircles his neck and Durgā pierces the demon's head with a fork-like weapon in the hand showing **śūci mudrā**. The lion is shown biting Mahiṣa's right elbow. There are two **sundarīs** (female attendants) on either side of the base waving yak's tail flywhisks (**cāmara**). Two flying **mālādhārīs** (garland-bearers) are shown at the top of the slab, either side of Durgā's head, and at the top centre is the **kīrttimukha** gargoyle. Durgā wears an elaborate **kirīṭa mukuṭa** (jewelled crown), large circular earrings and ornate jewellery, including a broad girdle. She appears to wear a tight-fitting **śārī** or skirt and blouse. Her face is in the ' **pāna** ' style, as are all the faces in the composition⁶⁰. The forehead is broad, the eyes are slanting and mongoloid. Durgā is faintly smiling and looks benignly outwards through half-closed eyes. The figure of Durgā is the largest in the composition. Her lion resembles the ferocious pugdog-like lions common in the Buddhist art of Nepal and Tibet and foreshadows the heraldic **ghorā-simha** of the traditional style clay images of Durgā made in Bengal. The figures are set within a **prabhāvali** that resembles a typical Pāla temple with square or rectangular cella, its roof built up of three pyramidal, horizontal courses and supported by pillars⁶¹.

J.C.French refers to a stone image of Mahiṣamarddinī taken from the ruined temple at Barakar, Burdwan

60. See back p.96.

61. R.Skelton and R.Hollis, ed., Arts of Bengal, the heritage of Bangladesh and Eastern India (London: Trustees of the Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1979), p.39.

district, dated 8th c A.D.⁶² and to a gold-plated metal image from Chanddagram, Tippera district, of the goddess Caṇḍī standing on a lion, also from the 8th c. A.D.⁶³. The brass image of Mahiṣamarddinī in the Assam State Museum dated 12th-13th c from Tinsukia, Lakshmipur district, Assam⁶⁴, differs in style from the Dulmi image and from many of the classical images of Durgā from Bengal and surrounding regions. The image shows a ten-armed Durgā with pāṇa face, standing with her right foot on the back of a ghorā-simha and left on the neck of the demon Mahiṣa, who is kneeling. A severed head placed beneath the ghorā-simha represents the buffalo. This style of image became popular in the 18th c and has many stylistic similarities with the traditional style images.⁶⁵

CONTEMPORARY CLAY ICONS OF DURGĀ FROM BENGAL.

Contemporary clay icons of Durgā worshipped during the autumnal festival are a combination of classical iconography and regional improvisation. The central figures are those of Durgā, Mahiṣa and the lion, but also included are the figures of Gaṇeśa and Lakṣmī to the left, and Sarasvatī and Kārttikeya to the right (Fig.4). These additional figures in the composite Durgā image are not mentioned in any Purāṇa, Śilpa Śāstra or pūjā paddhati and cannot be found in classical sculpture from Bengal or other parts of India.

62. J.C.French, The Art of the Pal Empire of Bengal (London: OUP, 1928), pl.v.

63. French, Art, pl.ii.

64. P.D.Choudhury and M.C.Das, Treasures of Assam through Assam State Museum (Gauhati: Govt. of Assam Publications, 1959), p.35.

65. See Kalyan Kumar Ganguli for a similar set within a cālī (Designs in the Traditional Arts of Bengal (Calcutta: Govt. of West Bengal Design Publications, 1963), p.115, pl.70.

The composite Durgā image has been subject to various interpretations. Gaurinath Shastri suggests that the additional figures represent the four aims of life: Gaṇeśa as the presiding deity of virtue (*dharma*); Lakṣmī of wealth (*artha*); Kārttikeya of desire (*kāma*); Sarasvatī of learning; and Durgā of emancipation (*mokṣa*)⁶⁶. N.G.Banerjea suggests that *Durgā pūjā* is a ceremony in which all four castes meet and as such Sarasvatī represents Brahmanical culture, Kārttikeya represents the military Kṣatriyas, Lakṣmī represents the farmers and traders, the Vaiśyas, and Gaṇeśa represents the masses, the Śūdras⁶⁷. K.M.Varma suggests that the *maṇḍala* of Devī (two interlocking triangles) plays an important part in the composition⁶⁸. D.C.Sircar says that the present Durgā composition in Bengal is a form of the goddess Lalitā, found in the Agni Purāṇa, who stands on a lotus and has two of her four hands on Skanda (Kārttikeya) and Gaṇeśa, and the other two hold a mirror and a spear⁶⁹. One Bengali informant suggested to me that the additional figures are included in the Durgā composition because they are deities who are worshipped throughout the year by the Hindus of Bengal and that it is therefore only right to find them included in the *Durgotsava* celebrations.

It is a convention in classical sculpture to represent a deity flanked on either side by minor deities, consorts or family (*parivāra*). Although there are five deities present in the composite Durgā image (viz. Durgā, Lakṣmī, Gaṇeśa,

66. Shastri, "Worship of the Clay Image", p.270.

67. Banerjee, "New Light", p.231.

68. Varma, Technique, p.198.

69. Sircar, Studies, p.236.

Kārttikeya, and Sarasvatī) and it is tempting to think of their group worship as a form of *pañcāyatana pūjā* ⁷⁰, this does not seem to be the intention of the composition. Numerous other deities may also be represented in the composition. For instance, in the *cālcitra* (painted frieze) attached to the backframe of the Durgā image there are numerous deities who are mentioned during the festival as part of the recitations during ritual. Śiva, Brahmā and Viṣṇu are just three of the deities represented in this way. The additional figures may represent the family of Durgā, but according to most Purāṇic myths, Durgā (as Pārvatī, wife of Śiva) is only mother to Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya. However, Durgā is mentioned in the DBP bk.9 ch.1 as being the mother of Gaṇeśa, Rādhā, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī and Savitrī and in bk.9 chs. 144-159 as the daughter of Dakṣa and Menakā mother of Kārttikeya and Gaṇeśa and subsequently of Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī⁷¹. The four additional deities are accepted according to popular Bengali mythology as being the children of Durgā, which may explain their inclusion in the clay images of Durgā worshipped during the autumnal festival.

However, not all clay images of Durgā contain the additional four figures and it seems that their inclusion in the Durgā composition is completely optional and restricted to images used during the festival. Some traditional families worship Durgā images which do not have the additional four figures. C.C.Sanyal writes of two contemporary cases of Durgā images undergoing transformation into composite Durgā images⁷². One of these belongs to the house of a zemindar family in Baikunthapur and the other is housed

70. see back, pp.55-56.

71. Swami Vijnanananda, Sri Mad Devi Bhagavatam, SBH 26 (Allahabad: AMS Press, 1921-23) p.809 and p.797.

72. C.C.Sanyal, The Rajbansis of North Bengal, Monograph Series no.XI (Calcutta: The Asiatic Soc., 1965), p.141.

in the Boro Durga Baree temple in Cooch Behar. Both are single images showing a red Durgā standing on a lion that bites the elbow of the demon Mahiṣa. About fifty years ago, the additional figures of Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Kārttikeya and Gaṇeśa were added at the insistence of a south Bengali. Sanyal also mentions a two-handed image of a goddess called Bhandanī, shown holding a pot and bestowing blessings and riding upon a tiger. The additional figures were added later and the tiger was changed into a lion⁷³. In such cases, there is an identification between a village deity and a Purāṇic deity in an attempt to elevate the status of the former. In fact, this process receives Purāṇic sanction in that all minor goddesses are seen as partial manifestations of the Supreme Goddess, Devī. Additional figures can also be found on clay images of the snake goddess Manasā, a village deity⁷⁴.

The composite Durgā appears on terracotta plaques from temples dating from the 18th-19th c, but it is also common to find the additional figures omitted or replaced by the figures of two *sundarīs* waving flywhisks, as in classical sculpture. The same applies for *paṭa* paintings of Durgā.

The earliest reference to the composite Durgā occurs in the description given by the Bengali poet, Mukundarāma Cakravarti (16th c) in his 'Caṇḍī Maṅgala', a poem on the aboriginal goddess, Caṇḍī. In Mukundarāma's poem, the village goddess Caṇḍī takes the form of the Purāṇic deity Mahiṣāsuramarddinī before the startled eyes of the hunter Kālketu and his wife Khullanā:

Caṇḍikā took the form of Mahiṣamarddinī
In eight directions the Aṣṭanāyikās shone forth
Her right foot rested on the back of a lion

73. Sanyal, Rajbansis, p.142.

74. P.K.Maity, Historical Studies in the Cult of the Goddess Manasā (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1966), plate 18 of a clay image from Lakshanpur, Hooghly District.

Her left on the back of the demon Mahiṣa
 With her left hand she held Mahiṣa's hair
 With her right hand she placed the trident in his chest
 On her left side shone her matted locks
 Her headress encompassed the whole circle of the sky
 Bracelets and armlets adorned her ten arms
 In this form she receives pūjā from the whole world
 A noose, goad, bell, mace, and bow
 These five weapons gleam in her five left hands
 A sword, discus, trident, spear and brightly-shining arrows
 In her right hands gleam these five weapons
 To her left is Kārttikeya*, to her right Gaṇeśa**
 Above, Śiva rides on the head of a bull
 To her right is Lakṣmī***, to the left Sarasvatī
 Facing her, deities sing various hymns
 Her limbs outshine molten gold
 The colour of her three eyes outcolours blue lotuses
 And her face outshines the autumnal moon⁷⁵.

(*Kārttikeya is referred to as śikhi-bāhana, he who rides a peacock
 ** Gaṇeśa is called lambodara, the pot-bellied
 *** Lakṣmī is known as jaladhisutā, the daughter of the sea)

In the poem to Caṇḍī of Harirāma
 entitled 'Caṇḍīkāvya', the hunter Kālketu asks the goddess Caṇḍī to
 reveal herself in her true form, in the scene immediately preceding the
 manifestation of Caṇḍī as Mahiṣāsuramardīnī. Kālketu guesses that

75. Aksaya Candra Sarkar, Kavikāṅkaṇa Caṇḍī (Chunchura: Sri Nandalal Basu, 1285 B.S.), pp.184-185:

mahiṣamardīnī rūpa dharena caṇḍikā/
 aṣṭa dike śobhā kare aṣṭa nāyikā//
 siṃha prṣṭhe āropaṇa dakṣiṇa caraṇa/
 mahiṣer prṣṭhe bāma pada āropaṇa//
 bāma kare mahiṣāsurer dhari cula/
 dāni kare tār buke āghātila śūla//
 bāmadike lambamāna śobhe jaṭājūṭa/
 gagana maṇḍale lāge mātḥār mukuṭa//
 aṅgada baḷayā hāra haila daśabhujā/
 jena mate tribhubane lailaka pūjā//
 pāśāṅkuṣa ghaṇṭa kheṭaka śarāsana/
 bāma kare śobhe kare pāñca praharaṇa//
 asi cakra śūla śakti kata mata śara/
 pāñca astra śobhita dakṣiṇa pāñca kara//
 tapta kaladhaita jini haila tanu ābhā/
 indībara jini dui locaner śobhā//
 śaśikalā śobhe tāñra mastaka bhūṣaṇa/
 sampūrṇa śārada indu jiniyā badana//
 bāme śikkhī bāhana dakṣiṇe lambodara/
 br̥ṣe ārohaṇa śiba mastaka upara//
 dakṣiṇe jaladhi sutā bāme sarasvatī//
 ānande pulake debgāṇa kare sttuti//

Caṇḍī is really Durgā in disguise and beseeches her to reveal herself 'In the form of which people make clay images in the month of Āśvina'⁷⁶. In Mukundarāma's version of this scene, the line occurs as 'That form in which you are worshipped in Āśvina'⁷⁷. If Harirāma's line is the original, then Durgā was worshipped with clay images displaying the composite format at the time of Harirāma (16th c). However, there is no critical edition of Harirāma's poem and there appears to be some debate over the authenticity of the manuscript of the poem. It is quoted in the selections of medieval Bengali poetry included in Dinesh Chandra Sen's book 'Baṅga Sāhitya Paricaya'. But even if this is not the original line, the fact that Mukundarāma and Harirāma both describe Maḥiṣāsuramarddī in terms of the composite Durgā with the additional four deities, and the fact that they say that this is the form in which Durga is worshipped in Āśvina, the month of the **Durgotsava** festival, seems to indicate that the composite Durgā image was worshipped by at least the 16th c in Bengal. Since the composite Durgā image is not housed in temples and is not made in any other material than clay, it is evident that the composite Durgā image mentioned by both these poets is a clay image of the kind used only in the **Durgotsava** festival.

The inclusion of the four figures in **Maṅgala Kāvya** literature confirms the regional character of the composite images of Durgā and its strong links with the village tradition of Bengal. Even in the village tradition of the **Maṅgala Kāvya**, the Purāṇic stories of Durgā are briefly alluded to and she is known by all the epithets mentioned in the Purāṇas and the Harivaṃśa.

76. Sen, Baṅga, p.312:
 nija mūrṭti dhara jadi tabemane laya/
 jei rūpe āśvine loka kare mṛṇmaya//

77. Sarkar, Kavikaṇakana, p.184:
 jadi nija rūpa dhara prabodha jāi mane/
 jerupe tomāre loka pūjaye āśvine/

However, Durgā is popularised and characterised as the beleagured wife of the farmer god Śiva. Durgā is seen by Śāktas as a mighty, awe-inspiring goddess who kills demons, but also as the compassionate mother ' Mā ', and the devoted daughter who returns home during the festival of Durgotsava .

CHAPTER TWELVE: THE BACKGROUND OF DURGOTSAVA.

SOURCES.

The festival of Durgā, **Durgotsava**, is mentioned in several major and minor Purāṇas, many of which have been composed in north eastern India. R.C.Hazra lists and dates the following Purāṇas in this connection: Bhaviṣyottara (8th c); Brhannandikeśvara (9th/10th c); Nandikeśvara (9th/10th c); Kālikā (10th/11th c); Mahābhāgavata (10th/11th c); Brahmavaivarta (10th c); Devī Bhāgavata (11th/12th c); and Brhaddharma (13th c)¹. The annual celebration of **Durgotsava** in the autumn is also mentioned in the DP and the DM section of the MrkP². **Durgotsava** in Bengal is performed according to either the Brhannandikeśvara, Devī or Kālikā Purāṇas. These three Purāṇas are included in the 'Purohita Darpaṇa' of Surendra Mohana Bhattacarya, the standard sourcebook for all **pūjās** and **vratas** in Bengal³. As in all parts of India, the Devī Māhātmya, known as 'Durgā Saptaśati' or 'Caṇḍī', is recited as liturgy during celebrations.

According to P.V.Kane, every digest on **vratas** (vows) and **pūjās** (worship) devotes considerable space to the festival of **Durgotsava** ⁴. Several authors have composed religious

1. Hazra, Studies, pp.1-3.

2. Kumar, Śakti, p.195 lists these and adds the Varāha Purāṇa.

3. Banerjee, "New Light", pp.228 lists these three Purāṇas. Chakravarti, Tantras, p.98 mentions the Nandikeśvara, Devī, Kālikā and Matsya Purāṇas plus heavy tantric influence. Sastri, "Worship of the Clay Image", p.268 suggests the Kālikā, Devī, Brhannandikeśvara, Matsya and Liṅga Purāṇas.

4. Kane, Dharmaśāstra, (Vol V, pt.1,1958), p.155.

digests (**smṛtinibandha**) or manuals of **pūjā** (**pūjāpaddhati**) relating to **Durgā pūjā** and **Durgotsava** , drawing from the above-mentioned Purāṇas as sources. Such works include: Jimūtavāhana's 'Kalaviveka' (11th/12th c); the Mithila poet, Vidyāpati's 'Durgābhaktitarāṅgīṇī' (15th c); Vācaspati Miśra's 'Kṛtyacintāmaṇi' (15th c); Śūlapāṇi's 'Durgotsavaviveka' (15th/16th c); Śrīnātha Ācāryacūḍāmaṇī's 'Kṛtyattatvarnava' and 'Durgotsava' (15th/16th c); those written by Govindānanda (16th c) and Pūrṇānanda (16th c); Raghunandana Bhaṭṭācārya's 'Durgotsavatattva' and 'Durgāpūjātattva' (16th c); and Kṛṣṇānanda Āgamvāgiśa's 'Tantrasāra' (16th/17th c). There is also an anonymous work from Kāmarūpa (Assam) entitled 'Kāmarūpiyanibandha'. Other works on **Durgotsava** include the Māyā Tantra and a late work, the Prāṇatoṣiṇī⁵. The Prāṇatoṣiṇī is a large tantra digest written in 1821 by the great grandson of the tantric scholar Kṛṣṇānanda Āgamvāgiśa, Rāmatoṣaṇa Vidyālaṅkāra, which draws from the Matsya-sūkta-mahātānta, Devī Purāṇa and the 'Durgābhaktitarāṅgīṇī' of Vidyāpati as principal sources and is, according to S.C.Banerji, the only published work among the tantras of Bengal to deal systematically with **Durgā pūjā** ⁶. A.Shastri mentions the work of Bhavadeva Bhaṭṭa, the prime minister of Harivarmadeva of south Bengal (11th c), who refers to two previous authors on **Durgotsava** , Bālaka and Jīkana, as well as Śrītkara⁷.

DURGOTSAVA AS A VRATA OR VOW.

Most Purāṇas refer to **Durgotsava** as a compulsory **vrata** or vow. It may be performed by all castes and

5. Chakravarti, Tantras, p.94 n.4.

6. Banerji, Tantra, p.78 and p.181.

7. Shastri, "Durgā", p.253. See V.Thakur, "Development and Growth of Tantric Religion in Mithila", Journal of Indian History, Vol.XLI, pt.III (December 1963), p.195 for a list of other authors and relevant texts.

brings numerous benefits. The festival commemorates the slaying of the buffalo demon, Mahiṣa, by Durgā, but is also linked with the performance of pūjā to Durgā by several legendary kings, including Rāmacandra, the hero of the Hindu Epic, the Rāmāyaṇa. One of the earliest references to these legendary worshippers of Durgā, occurs in the DM.

The DM, which is the glorification of Durgā, is related by the sage Medhas to Rājā Suratha and the Vaiśya, Samādhi, both of whom have fallen on hard times. The goddess is described as Viṣṇu's 'Illusive Power' (māyā), yet, as Durgā, is created out of the combined energies of all the gods for the specific purpose of killing the demon Mahiṣa and restoring the gods to heaven. Having heard the glorification of Durgā and been advised by Medhas to propitiate her, Suratha and Samādhi perform austerities. Both make an earthen image (mahīmayī) of the goddess on a sandbank and worship it with flowers, incense, fire and libations of water⁸. Fasting and dieting, concentrating their minds on the goddess, keeping their thoughts composed, they both offer bali (sacrifice) sprinkled with blood drawn from their own limbs. They continue to propitiate her in this way for three years until Caṇḍikā (Durgā) appears in visible form and grants them boons. Caṇḍikā grants Suratha a kingdom and tells him that he will be the eighth Manu (legendary king) Savarni in a future life. Samādhi is granted the boon of spiritual knowledge. Having granted these boons, Caṇḍikā vanishes⁹.

The BvP 64.1-8 elaborates on Suratha's worship of an earthen image (mṛṇamaya) on the banks of a river.

8. tau tasmin puline devyāḥ kṛtvā mūrtiṃ mahīmayīm/
arhaṇām cakratus tasyāḥ puṣpa dhūpa agni tarpaṇaiḥ// (MP 93.8)
See Jean Varenne, Célébration de la Grande Déesse (Devī-Māhātmya)
(Paris: UNESCO, 1975), p.13.

9. Pargiter, Mārkaṇḍeya, pp.522-523.

It says that, having washed and done **prāṇayāma** (breath control), Suratha invoked the goddess on an earthen image¹⁰. He meditates on and adores Devī, puts an image of Lakṣmī to the right of Devī and worships her. Then, in front of the goddess, he invokes Gaṇeśa, the Sun (Sūrya), Fire (Agni), Viṣṇu and Śiva on a jar and worships them in the manner of a **pañcāyatana pūjā** according to the **dhyāna** (meditation) of the Sama Veda. BvP 64.32-41 refers to Devī as Caṇḍī and mentions the autumnal worship of Durgā.

The DBP reiterates the story of the DM and mentions the worship of Devī by Suratha in his future life as Manu Savarni of the Caitra dynasty. It also mentions several other Manus who worshipped Devī in the same way. DBP bk.10.chs.1-7 narrates the origin of Svāyambhuva Manu from Brahmā's mind and the worship of Devī by Suratha on an earthen image of Devī and worshipped her with various offerings. As a result of their worship, they obtain 'foeless kingdoms'¹¹.

The worship of Devī by Suratha, Samādhi and the Manus takes the form of a **vrata** or religious vow. The individuals are said to make clay images themselves as part of the **vrata** to Devī. The specific references to clay images (and in the case of the six sons of Vaivasvata Manu, it is stated that each made a separate image) implies that there was a tradition of making clay images for this kind of **Devī pūjā**. If the clay images were handmade by the worshippers themselves, they are likely to have been the kind of crude clay images made for use in **aśāstric vrata** today. There is no

10. Vasudeva Shastri, ed., Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series no.102 (Poona: Ānandāśrama Press, 1935), p.303:
dhyātvā devīm ca mṛṇmayyām cakārāvāhanam tadā//

11. Swami Vijnanananda, Sri Mad Devi Bhagavatam, SBH 26 (Allahabad, AMS Press, 1921-23), p.1034 and p.1046.

'earthen' images were terracotta or terracruda and no iconographical descriptions of Devī are given in the passages dealing with the *vrata* involving clay images mentioned so far. However, there are strong indications that the *vratas* involved the use of terracruda rather than terracotta images of Devī. The worship in all cases is performed on the banks of a river (notably the Jumna) using an earthen image. In the case of Suratha and Samādhī, the worship is continued for three years. Banks of rivers are considered suitable places for performing austerities and ablutions. In the DP 90.5-8, the list of suitable places for worship of Devī includes banks of rivers, under trees, on top of mountains, in the forest, at crossroads, in the home etc. Banks of rivers may have been chosen since they are included in the list of suitable places for the collection of clay for the making of clay images. The ŚP 20.5 recommends the banks of rivers, among other places, as suitable for the worship of the earthen Śiva *liṅga*.

THE NAVARĀTRA VRATA AND RĀMACANDRA'S DURGOTSAVA.

The *vrata* performed by Suratha, Samādhī and the Manus using a clay image on the banks of a river, is connected in some later Purāṇas with the *Navarātra* (*nava* , nine, *rātra* , nights) *vrata* undertaken by Rāmacandra, king of Ayodhyā, seventh *avatāra* (incarnation) of the god Viṣṇu and hero of the Rāmāyaṇa. In Bengal, Rāmacandra is regarded as the inaugurator of the autumnal *Durgotsava* and Suratha is his predecessor. The *Navarātra vrata* of Rāmacandra is mentioned in several Purāṇas alongside that of other kings.

ŚP 51.73-77 says that the devotee of Umā (wife of Śiva, otherwise known as Pārvatī, identified with Durgā) should observe the holy rites of *Navarātra* in the bright half of Āśvina. It says that, by performing the *Navarātra* , Rāja

Suratha, son of Viratha, regained his lost kingdom, Sundarśana, king of Ayodhyā, secured his lost kingdom, and the Vaiśya Samādhi was liberated from worldly bondage and attained salvation¹². Although Suratha and Samādhi are not mentioned as having undertaken the **Navarātra vrata** in the DM, their **Devī pūjā** is connected in later Purāṇas with the **Navarātra vrata** of Rāmacandra and other legendary kings.

DBP bk.9.144-159 relates the story of the two kings Subāhu and Sundarśana. Rājā Subāhu, father-in-law of Sundarśana¹³ and king of Kāśī (otherwise known as Vārāṇasī, the modern Benares), is said to have worshipped Durgā in the months of Caitra, Āśvina, Āṣāḍha and Māgha. As a result of his worship, Durgā consents to remain constantly in Kāśī and to protect the city. Rājā Sundarśana eulogises Durgā who instructs him to go to Ayodhyā and establish her image there, worshipping her three times a day, especially on Aṣṭamī, Navamī and Caturdaśī (the fourteenth) tithis, as well as in the autumn season, according to the **Navarātra** method. Durgā also tells Sundarśana to observe the great festivals (mahotsava) in the months of Caitra, Āśvina, Āṣāḍha and Māgha. Sundarśana describes Devī as both ' saguṇa ' (with attributes) and ' nirguṇa ' (attributeless) and praises kāmabīja (the bīja, or 'seed' mantra of Devī¹⁴). Sundarśana returns to Ayodhyā, the capital of the Kosala kingdom, and makes an image of Ambikā which becomes famous in his kingdom. Chief townsmen begin to build temples and to worship Devī in villages and soon throughout the kingdom of Kosala, **Devī pūjā** becomes popular. DBP bk.3 chs.26-27 gives a description of the **Navarātra vrata** to be

12. Shastri, Śiva Vol 4 (1970), p.1672.

13. Lalye, Studies, p.198.

14. Lalye, Studies, p.124.

observed in Caitra and Āśvina, that is in the spring (**vasanta**) and the autumn (**śarat**), because these two seasons cause death and disease and are therefore known as 'Yama's teeth'¹⁵. **Navarātra** lasts from **śuklā pratipada** (the first day of the moon's waxing) to **śuklā navamī** (the bright ninth day) during which worshippers observe a fast. Devī is worshipped either in an image or a **yantra** (mystical diagram) furnished with the nine-syllabled **mantra** (mystical word). A four-armed image mounted on a lion and holding a conch, discus, mace and lotus or an eighteen-armed image may be worshipped. Goats, buffaloes and boars are sacrificed, virgin girls (**kumārī**) under ten years of age are worshipped and honoured with food, cloth and ornaments. DBP bk.8.10 says that the fourth Manu, Jamasa, observed the **Navarātra vrata** and worshipped the excellent, lotus-eyed Deveśī and pleased her¹⁶. It also mentions in bk.6.64.1-4 that Rājā Chamatkāra installed an image called Chamatkārī Durgā in his city. Chamatkārī Durgā is said to have been born of the anger of the gods, is twelve-armed, rides on a lion, is a warrior goddess who went to kill Mahiṣa on the Vindhya and who is worshipped at the time of war¹⁷.

DBP bk.3.26.8-20 describes the **Nava-rātra vrata** of Rāmacandra. Rāma is told to fast for nine nights, build an altar on a level plot of ground and place on it the goddess Bhagavatī. He erects a temporary shelter and decorates it with a post and flag (i.e. a kind of **dhvaja** or votive column), a **vedi** (altar), ornamental gateways and an awning. An image of Devī is placed on the **vedi** which is decorated with a silk cloth. This image has either

15. Hazra, Studies, p.294.

16. Vijnanananda, Sri Mad, p.1034.

17. Kumar, Śakti, p.253.

four or eighteen arms. In its absence, an earthen water pot (*ghaṭa*) may be filled with gold, jewels and water and placed on the *vedi* beside a *yantra* and a *mantra* . *Caṇḍī pāṭha* (the recital of the 'Caṇḍī') and *Bhagavata pāṭha* are conducted on the first day of *pūjā* . The *Navarātra vrata* of Rāmacandra is said to have been undertaken in the month of Āśvina when his wife, Sītā, was abducted and taken to Laṅkā by the demon king, Rāvaṇa. The story of the Rāmāyaṇa is outlined in DBP bk.3 chs.28-30. In bk.3.30.57 it is said that after nine days of *pūjā* , Devī Bhagavatī appeared to Rāma, mounted on a lion, and told him that he would kill Rāvaṇa and that he should worship her also in the spring (*vasanta*). Rāma performs victory celebrations (*vijayā*). In DBP bk.9.1.144-159, there is mention that Rāmacandra and Suratha worshipped Durgā, thus connecting the two.

Rāma's worship of Durgā also appears in the KP 62.24-38 which says that 'in former times', the goddess was woken by Brahmā while it was still the night-time of the gods, in order to favour Rāma and to obtain the death of Rāvaṇa. On the first day of the bright half of Āśvina, the goddess gave up her sleep and went to Rāma's aid in Laṅkā. After she had eaten the flesh and blood of the Rakṣaṣas and monkeys, she caused Rāma and Rāvaṇa to be engaged in a fight during seven days. When the seventh day had passed, Mahāmāyā caused Rāvaṇa to be killed by Rāma on the ninth day. As long as the goddess looked on at the battle, for those seven nights she was highly honoured by all the gods. After Rāvaṇa had been killed on the ninth day, Brahmā, together with all the gods held a special *pūjā* for Durgā. This is said to have taken place in the second age (*treta yuga*) when the goddess appeared in her shape with ten arms for the sake of the welfare of the gods. It is said that in every age

there is a Rāma and a Rāvaṇa and that Devī will repeatedly take action in the same way¹⁸.

The Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa (Mbhp) ch.36 mentions the story of the Rāmāyaṇa and says that Devī was persuaded to leave Laṅkā and to cease protecting her devotee, Rāvaṇa. Pārvatī gives instructions to Viṣṇu (Rāma) and advises him to worship an earthen image during the autumn season before killing Rāvaṇa. Brahmā wants to invoke Devī 'untimely' (i.e. to wake her during the night-time of the gods) for the sake of Rāma. Brahmā takes Rāma to the sea shore and invokes Devī on a vilva (wood apple) tree on the kṛṣṇanavamī tithi (dark ninth day) and instructs him to worship an earthen image of her Purāṇic form with ten arms, mounted on a lion (chs.41-43). The earthen image is worshipped for three days from śuklā saptamī (the bright seventh day) to śuklā navamī (the bright ninth day), during which the war rages on between Rāma and Rāvaṇa. For these three days pūjā with upacāras and sacrifice is offered towards a clay image with hymns from the holy scriptures. On the aṣṭamī and navamī (eighth and ninth days), the war continues and at its height on the sandhi (juncture), there should be great sacrifice and offer of śatru bali (the sacrifice of an effigy of the enemy). It is said that Rāvaṇa will fall in battle on the navamī after sacrifices have been performed. At dawn on the daśamī, having done great pūjā, Durgā's image is immersed in a current of water with great festivities (43.33-34). Mbhp chs.45-48 describe Rāma's performance of Durgā pūjā using an earthen image, the immersion of the image and the killing of Rāvaṇa by Rāma using a weapon given to him by Devī. In ch.48 it is said that Brahmā, having done Devī's pūjā on the morning of daśamī,

18. Van Kooij, Kālikā, pp.109-110.

after the dismissal (*visarjana*), having consigned the image to the waters, returned home¹⁹.

RĀMACANDRA'S DURGOTSAVA IN THE BENGALI RĀMĀYANA.

Although there is no mention of Rāmacandra's autumnal worship of Durgā for the sake of killing Rāvaṇa in Valmīki's original Sanskrit Rāmāyana, the story occurs in the Purāṇas mentioned so far and is eventually incorporated into the Bengali version composed by Kṛttivāsa in the 15th c. In Valmīki's Rāmāyana, the sage Agastya advises Rāma to worship the Sun god, Sūrya, before undertaking his campaign against Rāvaṇa. D.C.Sen thinks that the *Durgā pūjā* of Rāma was inserted into the Rāmāyana by Śāktas to prove their superiority over the Vaiṣṇavas and that it first appeared in the KP, since when it has passed through considerable development in the Bengali Rāmāyana²⁰. However, it is apparent that links were made in several contemporary Purāṇas and that the story filtered down later into Bengali versions of the Epic. It is interesting to note that most of the Purāṇas from north eastern India dealing with *Durgotsava*, were composed within the Sena period when the Rāma cult was popular in northern India²¹. Kṛttivāsa may have drawn inspiration from previous local Purāṇas and inserted the Śākta element into his Bengali Rāmāyana. This tradition is carried on later in the vernacular poems, the *Maṅgala Kāvya*.

19. P.Tarkaratna, ed., Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa, (Calcutta: Sri Natavara Chakravarti, 1914), pp.185-197.

20. D.C.Sen, The Bengali Rāmāyana (Calcutta: Univ. of Calcutta, 1920), p.115.

21. Ray, "Ten Incarnations", pp.382 says that the Rāma cult was popular in north India c.11th c A.D..

The background of Kṛttivāsa is uncertain. H.C.Paul thinks that Kṛttivāsa composed his Epic at the time of Rājā Gaṇeśa, a zemindar of Dinajpur²², whereas J.F.Blumhardt suggests that Kṛttivāsa was at the court of Rājā Kaṁsanārāyaṇa of Tahirpur²³. Both Rājā Gaṇeśa and Rājā Kaṁsanārāyaṇa have been suggested as inaugurators of the current practice of **Durgotsava** in Bengal.

In the Laṅkā Khaṇḍa of Kṛttivāsa's Rāmāyaṇa, there is a detailed description of Rāma's **pūjā** to Durgā for the sake of killing Rāvaṇa. Rāma reaches an impasse in his battles against Rāvaṇa and despairs of ever being able to free his abducted wife from the clutches of the demon king. He bemoans his fate and the gods decide to help him in his distress. Brahmā suggests that the only way out of Rāma's predicament is for him to awaken the 'ten-armed' (**daśabhuja** , i.e. Durgā) in the autumn²⁴. Indra tells Brahmā to pass on the instructions to Rāma. Brahmā appears before the miserable Rāma and informs him of the means of killing Rāvaṇa. Rāma complains that he has fought hard and in vain against Rāvaṇa who is under the protection of Maheśvarī (Durgā). Nevertheless, says Brahmā, the only way is the 'untimely awakening' (**akāla bodhana**) of Devī Maheśvarī, in order to cross the ocean of suffering. Rāma asks how he should do this, since

22. Paul, "State", pp.147-148.

23. J.F.Blumhardt, Catalogue of the Marathi, Gujurati, Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, Pushtu and Sindhi Manuscripts in the Library of the British Museum (London: British Museum, 1905), p.28. Blumhardt says that Kṛttivāsa was born c.1440 A.D. (Catalogue, p.9). D.C.Sen suggests that Kṛttivāsa was born c.1346 A.D. (History, p.170).

24. Upendranātha Mukhopadhyāya, ed., Kṛttivāsa's Rāmāyaṇa (Calcutta: Bharata Press, 1950), p.402:

tumi pūji je caraṇa jinile asurgāṇa bodhiyā śarate daśabhuja//
pūjā rāma kaile tāṅra rābaṇa habe sāṅhāra śuna sāra sahasralocana/

the time for Durgā's worship is in the spring (*vasanta*) and the autumn (*śarata*) is 'untimely' (*akāla*). He says that, according to the rules, one should do the awakening (*bodhana*) on the *kṛṣṇnavamī* (dark ninth day), which has already passed. Rāma says that there are instructions for starting ceremonies (*kalpārambha*) on the *pratipada* (first day of the moon's turning) as did Rāja Suratha, but that day also has passed, and at dawn it will be *śuklā ṣaṣṭhī* (bright sixth day). He adds that, although it is the month of Āśvina, the *pūjā* has not been performed and time is running out. Brahmā replies that he will tell Rāma how to perform the *kalpa* (initial vow to undertake *pūjā*) on the *ṣaṣṭhī* (sixth day), assuring him that it will cause no obstruction, even if he again breaks the rules, as did Suratha²⁵. Delighted, Rāma proceeds with *pūjā* at dawn on the following day, the *ṣaṣṭhī* , and Brahmā returns home. The *pūjā* of Rāma takes place on the sea shore.

The awakening (*bodhana*) of Caṇḍī is held under a *vilva* tree which is considered sacred to Śiva but is also regarded as an abode of Devī. At dawn on the *ṣaṣṭhī* , Rāma bathes, gives offerings and does *Durgā pūjā* with praise (*stuti*) and prostration (*nati*). He recites 'Caṇḍī' while his monkey army shout 'Victory' and sing and dance. Rāma personally makes a clay image

25. Mukhopadhyāya, *Rāmāyaṇa*, p.402:

śrīrāma āpni kaya basanta śuddhi-samaya śarata akāla e pūjār//
 bidhi āra nirūpaṇa nidrā bhāṅgite bodhana kṛṣṇā nabamīr dine
 tāñra/
 se dina hayeche gata pratipade āche mata kalpārambhe suratha
 rājār//
 se dina nāhika āra pūjā habe ki prakāra śuklā ṣaṣṭhī milibe
 prabhāte/
 kanyārāśi māsa baṭe kintu pūjā nāhi ghaṭe atrayoga saba haila
 jāte//
 bidhātā kahena sāra śuna bidhi dii tāra kara ṣaṣṭhī kalpete
 bodhana/
 byāghāta nā habe tāya bidhi khunḍi punarāya kalpa khaṇḍe suratha
 rājāna//

(*mṛṇmayī*) of the goddess, does *ārati* (the waving of lights), *adhivāsa* (invocation) and ties together the nine plants (*navapatrikā*).

On the following day, *saptamī*, Rāma bathes and performs *pūjā* and festivities. On the *aṣṭamī*, Rāma does *pūjā* and *sandhi pūjā* in the night. Keeping all night vigil, night passes and the ninth day, *navamī*, comes round²⁶. However, Rāma fails to see Caṇḍī and is worried. He is told by his friend, Vibhīṣana, to collect and offer one hundred and eight blue lotuses, 'the flower of the gods, hard to obtain anywhere', to make Caṇḍī happy. The monkey king, Hanūmān, son of the wind and devoted servant of Rāma, fetches the required number of blue lotuses and Rāma makes the dedicatory vow (*saṁkalpa*) and offers them to Caṇḍī. However, Caṇḍī, who has remained hidden all the while, secretly steals one of the

26. Mukhopadhyāya, *Rāmāyaṇa*, p.402:

caṇḍīpātha kari rāma karilā utsaba/
 gīta nāta kare jaya deya kapi saba//
 premānande nāce āra debīguṇa gāya/
 caṇḍīr arccane dibākara aṣṭa jāya//
 sāyāhnakālete rāma karilā bodhana/
 āmantraṇa abhayāre bilbādhībhāṣana//
 āpni gaṛila rāma mūrati mṛṇmayī/
 haite saṅgrāma duṣṭa rābaṇe bijayī//
 ācārete ārati karilā adhibāsa/
 bāṇḍhilā patrikā naba brkṣera bilāsa//
 eirūpe udhyoga karilā drabya jata/
 paddhati pramāṇe āche niyama jemata//
 asādhyā susādhyā tāra nāhi anumāna/
 tribhubana brahmiye ānila hanūmāna//
 gata haila ṣaṣṭhī niśā dibā suprabhāta/
 udaya haila pūrvve dibaser nātha//
 snāna kari āsi prabhu pūjā ārambilā/
 beda-bidhimate pūjā samāpta karilā//
 śuddhasattvabhābe pūjā sāttvikī ākhyāna/
 gīta nāta caṇḍīpāthe dibā abasāna//
 saptamī haila sāṅga aṣṭamī āsila/
 punarbbāra raghunātha arccanā karila//
 niśākāle sandhipūjā karila raghunātha/
 nṛtya-gīte bibhābarī haila prabhāta//
 nabamīte pūjā rāma debīr carāṇe/
 nṛtya-gīta nānāmate niśī jāgarāṇe//

lotuses. Rāma discovers the theft and in despair decides to remove one of his 'blue lotus' eyes to complete the required number stated in his vow. He takes his bow and arrow and is on the point of removing one eye when he is stopped by the goddess, who promises to desert Rāvaṇa and allow him to be killed by Rāma²⁷. To effect the disgrace of Rāvaṇa and fall from Durgā's favour, Hanūmān is sent on a mission by the gods. He becomes a white fly and enters the place where Rāvaṇa is reciting the 'Caṇḍī'. Once beside Rāvaṇa, Hanūmān resumes his heroic form, terrifies Rāvaṇa and steals the book from which Rāvaṇa is reciting, causing him to omit part of the recital. The goddess is thus defiled and returns disgruntled to her mountain abode of Kailāsa, leaving Rāvaṇa to be killed by Rāma. Having been told that the goddess will desert Rāvaṇa, Rāma and the monkeys complete pūjā on the

27. Mukhopadhyāya, Ramayāṇa, p.407:

bhābīte bhābīte rāma karilena mane/
 nīlkamalākṣa more bale sarvvajane//
 jugala nayāṇa mora phulla nīlotpala/
 saṁkalpa kariba pūrṇa bujhiye sakala//
 eka cakṣu diba āmi debīr carāṇe/
 eta balī kahe rāma anuja lakṣmaṇe//
 āra kibā dekha bhai kari ki ekhana/
 nā haila durgār kṛpā biphala jībana//
 kamalocana more bale sarvvajane/
 eka cakṣu diba āmi saṁkalpapūrāṇe//
 eta balī tūṇa hāte lailen bāṇa/
 upārite jāna cakṣu karite prādāna//
 kāṇḍite kāṇḍite rāma karena stabana/
 debīr haila soka dekhiyā rodana//
 cakṣu upārite rāma basilā sāksāte/
 henkāle kātyāyanī dharilena hāte//
 ki kara ki kara prabhu jagata-goṁsāi/
 pūrṇa haila cakṣu upāriyā kāja nāi//

navamī and immerse the image on the daśamī (tenth day). Rāma goes into battle and is victorious²⁸.

In Kṛttivāsa's Epic, Rāvaṇa is a worshipper of Kālī and observes tantric rites²⁹. In the episode known as 'Mahī Rāvaṇer Pāla', Rāvaṇa's son, Mahī, is killed by Hanūmān, who leaps from behind a stone image of Kālī, seizes the sword from the hand of Kālī's image and slices Mahī in two. The image is said to smile and the attendants flee in terror at the sight³⁰. The goddess deserts her previous devotee Rāvaṇa and turns her favour to Rāma. This sudden volteface is inexplicable but is also mentioned in the MbhP. Rāma's autumnal pūjā (śārādīya pūjā) to Durgā in Āśvina is contrasted with Rāvaṇa's spring worship (vāsantī pūjā) in Caitra when the gods are awake and no bodhana is necessary³¹. The same contrast is made indirectly in the 'Mahārāsta Purāṇa' of Gaṅgarāma in which the Maratha general, Bhāskara, performs his Durgā pūjā in Āśvina (i.e. in the autumn), but fails to complete it, returns in Caitra and is slaughtered by the forces of the Muslim Nawab who receive the protection of Durgā's bhairavīs . Failure to complete the Durgā pūjā ceremonies cost

28. Mukhopadhyāya, Rāmāyaṇa, p.408:

akālabodhane pūjā kaila tumi daśabhuja bidhimate karilā binyāsa/
loke jānābāra janya āmāre karite dhanya abanīte karilā prakāśa//
rābaṇe chāṛinu āmi bināśa karaha tumi eta bali haila antarddhāna/
nāce gāya kapigaṇa premānande nārāyaṇa nabamī karilā samādāna//
daśamite pūjā kari bisarjjiyā maheśvārī saṅgrāme calilā raghupati/
ādeśa pāiyā rāma siddhi haila manaskāma caṇḍīlīlā madhura
bhāratī//

29. Sen, Bengali Rāmāyaṇas, p.118, although Sen says that Rāvaṇa was a worshipper of Śiva whom he worshipped through Devī and that the Rākṣasas (Rāvaṇa's followers) are conceived as Śāivas (p.120).

30. Mukhopadhyāya, Rāmāyaṇa, p.397:

debīra haster khadga Tāye hanūmāna/
lāpha diyā mahīre karila duikhāna//
pratimā rūpinī debī mahāmāyā hāse/
anucargaṇa dekhe palāna tarāse//

31. Shastri, "Durgā", p.252.

Bhāskara his life, just as it did Rāvaṇa who failed to complete his recital of the 'Caṇḍī' which is an integral part of the **Durgā pūjā** celebrations. One can see why, in this case, devout Bengalis are anxious to ensure that their own **Durgā pūjā** celebrations are performed without interruption or omission.

The **pūjā** of Rāma is referred to as ' **akāla bodhana** ' (untimely awakening) because Durgā is woken during the night-time of the gods. According to Hindu mythology, the daytime of the gods corresponds to six months of earthly time, the summer solistice (**uttarāyana**) from Pauṣa (December-January) to Āṣāḍha (June-July) when the sun progresses to the north of the equator³². The night-time of the gods is the other six months of the year during winter solistice, when the sun moves south again (**dakṣināyana**) and is held to be an inauspicious time of year. Since Rāma performs his **Durgā pūjā** in Āśvina, which falls in the inauspicious season, the night-time of the gods, the awakening is called ' **akāla bodhana** '. N.G.Banerjee says that it is **akāla** because it is the inauspicious season, which according to the Śāstras, is not the time for any religious ceremony and that this difficulty is overcome by saying that Brahmā woke Durgā on behalf of Rāma, so that Rāma could kill Rāvaṇa³³.

THE REGIONAL CHARACTER OF DURGOTSAVA.

There are certain elements in the performance of **Durgotsava** in Bengal which have a strong regional character and are not found elsewhere in India. In Bengal, Durgā may be worshipped in a ceremonial water pot (**ghaṭa**) by itself or in conjunction with a painting (**paṭa**) or image (**pratimā**). Images of

32. Shastri, "Durgā", p.257.

33. Banerjee, "New Light", p.229.

Durgā may be made of metal, stone, wood or clay, but there seems to be a preference for worshipping the clay image of Durgā, especially during the festival of **Durgotsava**. Purāṇas and Upapurāṇas from Bengal and surrounding regions frequently allude to the worship of the clay image of Durgā during her festival. But the fact that Durgā is not worshipped in such a way anywhere else in India, seems to indicate that it is a regional idiosyncrasy that is restricted to Bengal and the neighbouring states of Assam, Bihar and Orissa³⁴. It is difficult to ascertain when this practice became popular and to estimate the historical causes. Eastern India has always been regarded as a Sakta stronghold and a centre of tantra, and it is possible that the use of clay images may have originated in ideas of fertility and magic connected with the cult worship of Devī and her manifestations.

Besides the preference for worshipping Durgā in the form of a clay image during **Durgotsava**, the following details have been outlined by R.C.Hazra as showing regional influence in the Bengali practice of **Durgotsava** : 1. **bodhana**, the awakening of Durgā in a **vilva** tree on the **kṛṣṇanavamī** or **śuklā ṣaṣṭhī tithi**; 2. the offer of different articles to Durgā on different **tithis** from the **śuklā pratipada** to **śuklā pañcamī**; 3. untying of Devī's hair on **śuklā caturthi tithi**; 4. **adhivāsa** (invocation) of Devī on a **vilva** tree on the evening of the day prior to the **patrikā praveśa**, when a young **vilva** tree is cut down and a small branch bearing two **vilva** fruit is taken into the **pūjā maṇḍapa** and Devī is worshipped in it; 5. **navapatrikā praveśa**, the bringing of the nine plants into the

34. V.Thakur says that the Bengali practice of worshipping clay images of Durgā or Kālī is followed in Mithila (northern Bihar), "Development", p.196. Yogesacandra Ray mentions that clay images of a ten-armed Durgā and of Kālī are worshipped in the autumn in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh (Pūjā Pārvana, p.148).

pūjā maṇḍapa and the worship of the Navadurgā (Nine Durgās) in them; 6. tying of the nine plants with the **aparājita** creeper; 7. performance of **Śavarotsava** (the festival of the Śavaras) on the **daśamī tithi** ³⁵. These and several other details are all mentioned in the Purāṇas and **pūjāpaddhatis** of north eastern India.

In the KP ch.62 it is said that, on the bright sixth day (**śuklā ṣaṣṭhī**) of Āśvina, one should wake the goddess, who resides in the **vilva** tree and its fruit, and on the seventh day (**saptamī**), one should bring home a branch of the **vilva** tree (62.7). The fruit of the **vilva** tree is used in the construction of the **navapatrikā** . On the eighth day (**aṣṭamī**), Durgā is worshipped, woken and presented with an oblation at midnight (62.8). On the ninth day (**navamī**) she is given offerings and is meditated upon in her form with ten arms. On the tenth day (**daśamī**) she is dismissed (**visarjana**). The KP says that **aṣṭamī** is to be known as **mahāṣṭamī** because it causes the goddess to be enjoyed, and **navamī** is to be known as **mahānavamī** and is beloved of Śiva (62.2-3)³⁶. In KP ch.63 there is a description of the worship of Durgā in the month of Śrāvaṇa which corresponds to the worship in Āśvina and speaks of the dismissal (**visarjana**) of the goddess and her immersion in a current of water at the end of ceremonies. This dismissal occurs on the **daśamī** during the daytime and is accompanied by amorous play, music and dance, throwing of dust and mud and the singing of lewd songs, and it is said that if people do not deride each other, they will suffer the curse of the goddess (63.19-23). This is the **Śavarotsava** ceremony of the Śavara tribe. K.R.Van Kooij refers to the

35. Hazra, Studies, pp.4-7. Hazra has given **nibandha** references and their Purāṇic sources for each of these items.

36. Van Kooij, Kālikā, p.106.

paucity of references to images and temple worship in the KP and suggests that where images are mentioned, they are probably of the ephemeral (i.e. *kṣāṇika*) type, which are disposed of at the close of ceremonies³⁷.

According to Van Kooij's translation, the image of the goddess is placed in the water and left there 'for the sake of obtaining prosperity'³⁸. The priest addresses Durgā as she is immersed, saying that she has been put into the water by him in order to obtain sons, a long life, wealth and prosperity, and the immersion is said to be done for the sake of the welfare of all men³⁹. This seems to be a theological explanation for the immersion of the image of the goddess, although the priest asks Caṇḍikā and the Aṣṭanāyikās to go back to their abode, into the water, and remain in the interior of the earth, which seems to imply that the water is seen as conveying the goddess and her attendants back to their original habitat, which is the earth itself. On the other hand, it may be a kind of standard address recited over items that are consigned to the waters at the end of ceremonies and are referred to as *udhvāsana* (disposable). After deconsecration, performed with the *visarjana*, the image loses its sanctity and may be disposed of by various means.

The BvP, Prakṛti Khaṇḍa, also refers to the worship of Durgā in Āśvina. Nārāyaṇa, the narrator, says that Devī should be woken (*bodhana*) on the sixth lunar asterism (*ardha-nakṣatra*), brought into the house on the *mūla* asterism (*mūla-*

37. Van Kooij, *Kālikā*, p.11-13.

38. Van Kooij, *Kālikā*, p.195. *Kālikā Purāṇa*, Śrīvenkaṭeśvara Press Edition (Bombay, 1891) p. :
visarjjanam anenaiva mantreṇa vatsa bhairava//
karttavyam ambhasi sthāpya viṣṛjya ca vibhutaye/ (KP 62.25-26)

39. Van Kooij, *Kālikā*, p.122.

nakṣatra), worshipped on the twelfth lunar asterism (**uttarphalguni**) and dismissed (**visarjana**) on the **Śrāvaṇa** asterism (**śrāvaṇā-nakṣatra**)⁴⁰. This **Purāṇa** says that the immersion of the image on the **daśamī** and worship of **Durgā** for two weeks after **bodhana** , procures the merits of an **Aśvamedha** (Vedic horse sacrifice)⁴¹. This takes place in the month of **Āśvina**. The **BvP** 57.31-40 speaks of the worship of **Durgā** on the sea shore by **Rājā** **Suratha** using an earthen image⁴². **BvP** 64.3 again speaks of **Suratha** invoking the goddess on an earthen image⁴³.

Brhaddharma Purāṇa (**BdP**), **Purva Khaṇḍa**, chs.18-22, gives a brief synopsis of the **Rāmāyaṇa** up to **Rāma**'s return from **Laṅkā** with **Sitā**, in order to explain the introduction of **Durgā**'s autumnal worship. **BdP** ch.22 states the method of **Durgā pūjā** , which includes: **bodhana** on a **vilva** tree up to **śuklā ṣaṣṭhī** ; the bringing of the **vilva** tree into the house of worship; performance of **homa** ; sacrifice of animals; keeping all night vigil on **mahāṣṭamī** ; **sandhi pūjā** on the juncture of **aṣṭamī** and **navamī** ; all night vigil on **mahānavamī** ; and amorous songs on **vijayā daśamī** . The festival is continued for fifteen days and **Devī** should be worshipped especially on **mahāṣṭamī** and **mahānavamī** when there should be holidays and brotherly feeling. On the **saptamī** , **Devī** should be brought into the home. On the **aṣṭamī** and **navamī** there is **bali** (sacrifice). The **sandhi**

40. Shastri, Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, p.307:
kṛtvā visarjanam devyāḥ śrāvaṇāyām ca mānavah/ (**BvP** 65.4)

41. Shastri, Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, p.308:
aśvamedhaphalāvāptyai daśamyām ca visarjayet/ (**BvP** 65.8)

42. Shastri, Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, p.280:
kalpāntare pūjitā sa surathena mahātmana/
rājā ca medhaśiṣyena mṛnmayyām ca yadarbhāsetam// (**BvP** 57.3)

43. Shastri, Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, p.303:
dhyātvā devīm ca mṛnmayyam cakāravāhanam tadā// (**BvP** 64.3)

pūjā on the juncture of **aṣṭamī** and **navamī** is said to be equivalent to one **kalpa**'s worship (a **kalpa** or 'day of **Brahmā**' being estimated at 4,320 million years⁴⁴). Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras are all eligible for worship. It is said that **aṣṭamī** is called **mahāṣṭamī** because it removes grave dangers, and **navamī** is **mahānavamī** because it benefits everyone. **Vijayā daśamī** is said to be a good time to embark on war and it is said that just as Rāma became famous for doing this **pūjā**, so the person who performs it will become famous⁴⁵. The BdP, Purva Khaṇḍa, ch.23.3 also refers to the worship and subsequent immersion of an image of the goddess **Kālī** during **Dīpānvitā** (i.e. the festival of lights, otherwise known as Diwālī)⁴⁶.

On **Durgā pūjā**, the DP 22.5-6 says that all castes may do it, Brahmins and the rest: the Kṣatriyas for the protection of the people; the Vaiśyas for wealth in cattle; the Śūdras for sons and happiness; and women for marriage⁴⁷. Those who perform the **navarātra** vow derive several benefits, including the benefits of an **Aśvamedha** (22.21). It is said that as a result of doing the **navarātra** vow, the great sinner is freed from sins, the worshipper will no longer fall ill or fear his enemy and there will be no oppression, calamity, danger or destruction of kingdom and so on (23.3-10). DP 59.18-22 mentions midnight (**ardharātri**) **pūjā** on the

44. Basham, Wonder, p.323.

45. Sastri, Brhaddharma Purāṇa, pp.247-248.

46. Hazra, Studies, pp.407-408. Sastri, Brhaddharma Purāṇa, p.254:
visarjayettāḥ pratimāḥ paratrāhani tūtsavaiḥ//

47. Tarakratna, Devī Purāṇa, p.142:
kartavyaṃ brāhmaṇadyaistta kṣatriyairbhūrmipālakaiḥ/
godhanārtham viśairvatasa śūdraiḥ putrasukhārthibhiḥ//
mahāvratam mahāpuṇyam śaṃkarādyairanuṣṭhitam/
kartavyaṃ devarājendra devībhaktisamanvitaiḥ//

aṣṭamī of Āśvina. Goats are sacrificed, gifts are offered to demons and there is ratha yātrā (the ceremonial procession, yātrā, of Devī's image in a charriot, ratha) and Durgā's pūjā during the mahotsava (great festival). On the worship of Devī in general, the DP ch.51 states that the man versed in Devī Śāstra, with knowledge of the matrmaṇḍala (mystical diagram of the Mothers) is eligible for the performance of Devī pūjā, regardless of caste⁴⁸. DP ch.98.7 says that Devī may be worshipped in any of the following mediums: sword; dagger; footwear; picture; book; flag; bow; image; altar⁴⁹.

THE MARTIAL ASPECT OF DURGOTSAVA.

Several scholars have drawn attention to the martial aspect of Durgotsava. S.Bhattacharyya sees a similarity between the ancient seasonal festival of Indradhvaja which lasts four days and culminates in the visarjana on the fifth day, and Durgā pūjā which runs from ṣaṣṭhī to navamī and culminates in the visarjana of Durgā on the daśamī⁵⁰. N.G.Banerjee also refers to elements of the Indradhvaja festival in the 'Durgotsava Paddhati' of Udaya Siṃha (16th c) and concludes that Durgotsava started from what was a purely military ceremony performed by kings and generals during the bright half of the month of Āśvina before taking the field against the enemy⁵¹. Banerjee mentions the elaborate description of the ceremony of balanīrājana (lustration of arms), a part of the Indradhvaja festival, included in Bāṇa's account of king Harṣa on the eve of his invasion of Bengal and says 'It seems to have been performed

48. Hazra, Studies, p.52.

49. Hazra, Studies, p.61.

50. Bhattacharya, "Worship of Durga", p.17.

51. Banerjee, "New Light", p.229.

for the purpose of awakening divinity among the component parts of the king's army - horses, horsemen, weapons of war and so on, on the eve of a battle'⁵². In Udaya Simha's 'Durgotsava Paddhati', there is a formal vow (**saṁkalpa**) for victory on **mahānavamī** and a procession of horses on **daśamī** which is preceded by **aśvapūjā** (the worship of the horses) and then **nīrājana** (lustration)⁵³. At the close of the **balanīrājana** ceremony, the priest performs **śatrubali** (the immolation of an effigy of the enemy), another part of the **Indradhvaja** festival.

The festival of **Indradhvaja** seems to have been popular in the late Gupta period and is mentioned in such texts as the *Bṛhat Saṁhitā* (BS) of Varāhamihira (5th/6th c) and the DP (7th c). The festival of **Indradhvaja** includes the performance of **balanīrājana** and **śatru bali**. Both of these component parts of the **Indradhvaja** are mentioned in the KP in its chapter on **Durgā pūjā** and the custom of **śatru bali** is still practised today in some parts of Bengal as part of **Durgotsava**.

THE FESTIVAL OF INDRADHVAJA.

Indradhvaja and its component ceremonies of **balanīrājana** and **śatru bali** are fully documented in BS ch.43.1-67, ch.44.1-2 and 20-21 respectively. The banner of Indra (**Indradhvaja**) is said to have been given by Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu) to the gods under the leadership of Indra for the sake of defeating demons. This banner of Indra is 'born of Viṣṇu's power' and is carried aloft into battle decorated with small bells, wreaths, umbrellas and ornaments. There is a detailed description of the making of the banner and how it is brought into the town on the eighth day of the bright

52. Banerjee, "New Light", p.229.

53. Banerjee, "New Light", p.229.

half of the month of Bhādra by the king, people and ministers. It is covered with a new cloth, honoured with wreaths, perfumes and incense to the sound of music. There is extensive worship and on the twelfth lunar day of the asterism of Śrāvaṇa, the banner of Indra is raised and five or seven minor banners representing the 'Daughters of Indra' are made. The banner is ornamented with various items representing the gods and decked with umbrellas, flags, garlands and mirrors. The banner is raised by the king with an auspicious noise, the chanting of Vedic hymns by Brahmins and music. The tip of the banner is pointed in the direction of the enemy city and it is surrounded by citizens who bow their heads in homage and make various offerings. After worshipping the flag of Indra for four days, the king has it removed on the fifth day in the presence of the ministers for the prosperity of the army. This vow, says the BS, has been followed by many kings⁵⁴.

BS ch.44.1-2 refers to **balanīrājana** which is to be performed when Nārāyaṇa wakes from his sleep (on the eleventh lunar day of the bright half of Kārttika). The expiatory ceremony called **balanīrājana** should be performed also on the eighth, twelfth or fifteenth day of the bright half of Kārttika or Aśwayuja (i.e. Āśvina)⁵⁵. BS ch.44.20-21 describes **śatru bali** and **balanīrājana**. For the lustration (**balanīrājana**), the priest dips a branch of the Indian fig tree into the holy water of the pots (**kalāśa**) and touches the horses, army, king and elephants with

54. Shastri, Brhat Samhitā, pp.316-333. Banerjea, Development(1941), p.114 and note 1 says that the erection of **dhvajās** or votive columns in honour of the sectarian deities in front of their shrines is intimately connected with image worship. The erection of **Indradhvajas**, especially wooden ones, is associated with royalty.

55. Shastri, Brhat Samhitā, pp.333-334.

various hymns of expiation and propitiation. After going through the expiatory lustration for the prosperity of the kingdom, the priest pierces the heart of an effigy of the enemy made of clay with a lance (Śūla) while chanting abhicārika (nefarious) mantras 56. Śatru bali is mentioned in several Purāṇas such as the Garuḍa, Kālikā, Mahābhāgavata, Agni and Devī Purāṇas. DP 22.16 says that one should make an effigy of the enemy of rice paste, cut it with a sword and offer it up to Skanda and Viśākha⁵⁷. Agni Purāṇa 185.13-14 says that the king should worship an image of Durgā annually on mahānavamī and, taking a bath, destroy an effigy of the enemy and offer it to Skanda (i.e. Kārttikeya, the god of war) and Viśākha (sometimes referred to as the son of Kārttikeya, although Kārttikeya is generally believed to be a bachelor god). R.C.Hazra says the earliest reference to Śatru bali as part of the annual worship of Durgā in eastern India, occurs in the 'Samvatsara-pradīpa' of Halāyuddha (12th c), the state officer in charge of religious affairs under Lakṣmaṇasena of the Sena dynasty⁵⁸. The sacrifice of an effigy probably relates to a previous practice in which humans were the sacrificial victims. Human sacrifice has been connected with the worship of Durgā and especially Kālī, who is said to be fond of flesh and blood. The substitute effigy, usually made of rice paste, is still used today in some parts of Bengal. C.C.Sanyal mentions that in Cooch Behar a small human figure made of rice paste is

56. Banerjea, Development (1941), pp.338-339.

57. Tarkaratna: Devī Purāṇa, p.143:
 tasyāgreto nṛpāḥ snāyācchatruṃ kṛtvā tu piṣṭajam/
 khargena ghātayitvā tu dadyāt skāndaviśākhañ// (DP 22.16)

58. Hazra, Studies, p.84.

sprinkled with pigeon's blood on the **mahānavamī** of **Durgotsava** and then beheaded⁵⁹.

There does not appear to be any doubt that **Durgotsava** has martial aspects. **Durgā** is a warrior goddess, she is worshipped by kings to regain kingdoms and for victory in battle and in many myths she is said to help legendary heroes defeat their enemies. The final day of **Durgotsava** is known as **vijayā daśamī** in commemoration of **Rāma**'s victory celebrations on the last day of his **pūjā** to **Durgā**, and is considered to be an auspicious time to embark on military campaigns.

SUMMARY.

From references in the **Purāṇas**, it appears that **Durgotsava** is a **vrata** or vow. It is connected with the **vrata** of **Rāja Suratha** and the **Vaiśya Samādhi**, who performed a three year **vrata** to **Devī** after hearing the DM. **Suratha**, **Samādhi** and several **Manus** performed **vratas** to **Devī** on the banks of rivers or on the sea shore using personally-made clay images. The **vratas** of these individuals is connected in certain **Purāṇas** with the nine nights (**Navarātra**) **vrata** performed by **Rāmacandra** who undertook **pūjā** to **Durgā** as a means of bringing about the destruction of the demon king, **Rāvaṇa**. **Navarātra** is performed by **Rāma** in the month of **Āśvina** during the autumn, but there is also a spring **Navarātra** that may be performed in the month of **Caitra**. In describing **Rāma**'s **Navarātra** vow, some **Purāṇas** refer to **Rāma**'s worship of a clay image of **Durgā** which is immersed on the final day of **pūjā** in a current of water. Most of these details are included in the Bengali **Rāmāyaṇa** of **Kṛttivāsa**, which was probably composed in the 15th c.

59. Sanyal, Rajbansis, p.142.

Nearly all the component rituals that constitute the present form of **Durgotsava** in Bengal may be found in **Purāṇas** that may have been composed in Bengal or Assam probably between the 10th-13th c, and in manuals on **Durgā pūjā** written between the 16th-17th c, referring to these Purāṇic sources. The present practice of **Durgotsava** in Bengal adheres to rules laid down in these **Durgā-pūjāpaddhatis** and maintains the belief that the annual **Durgotsava** was inaugurated by Rāmacandra, although Rāja Suratha established the precedent. If this is so, the present **Durgotsava** of Bengal using a clay image that is immersed on the **daśamī**, may have its antecedents in the pre-Muslim period, possibly during the time of the Senas.

However, there are no detailed references to the construction of clay images of **Durgā** for **Durgotsava**, nor does any text mention whether the images were terracruda or terracotta. The injunction against terracotta images of **Durgā** is mentioned by Śrīnātha Ācāryacuḍāmaṇī in his manual on **Durgā pūjā** and Raghunandana Bhaṭṭācārya refers to the bathing of the mirror reflection of the clay image of **Durgā** in his '**Durgāpūjātattva**'⁶⁰ as in the current practice, and says that it is one's duty to worship the clay (**mṛnmayī**) image of Devī. But the only piece of evidence that the clay images were terracruda is that the **Purāṇas** refer to images being immersed in water. The '**Prāṇatoṣiṇī**' of Rāmatoṣaṇa Vidyālaṅkāra, written in 1821, says that a householder is prohibited to use an earthen image for **Durgā pūjā**, but adds that an earthen image with straw inside is allowed. It also prohibits the use of an image larger

60. S.C.Siddhantabhusana, ed., Durgāpūjātattva of Raghunandana Bhaṭṭācārya, Sanskrit Sahitya Parisad Series no.5 (Calcutta: J.S.Shastri, n.d.), p.9.

than three and a half cubits⁶¹. This corresponds to the present practice, but, as with such injunctions, it remains unexplained. The practice of making clay images personally is not common, although there are indications that it was practiced in Bengal,

According to the uncorroborated account of N.N.Vasu⁶², the tantric scholar Kṛṣṇānanda Āgamvāgiśa, author of the 'Tantrasāra', is alleged to have inaugurated the current practice of worshipping a clay image of the goddess Dakṣiṇā Kālī. He saw a vision of Dakṣiṇā Kālī and was instructed by the goddess to popularise her image. Kṛṣṇānanda is said to have worshipped small images of Dakṣiṇā Kālī made of clay which he made personally every day, immersing them after worship in the river. Shib Chunder Bose, writing in the 19th c, says that Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra of Nadia (18th c) followed Kṛṣṇānanda's example but eventually gave it up⁶³. Kṛṣṇānanda was one of the four contemporary leaders of the Varendra community of Brahmins living at Nabadwip in the Nadia district, and the sacred spot where the first image was worshipped by him is still known as 'Āgameśvarī pāṛā'⁶⁴, although there is no clay image on the site at present. An image named Āgameśvarī is worshipped annually at Shantipur in the Nadia district, but the Āgamvāgiśa family now living in the Hooghly district and maintaining a tantric **pūjā**, worship an image of Ānandamayī Kālī, which is different from that of Dakṣiṇā Kālī. Like most tantrics in Bengal, the Āgamvāgiśa family hires **kumāras** to make the clay image

61. Banerji, Tantra, p.181.

62. Sircar, Śākta, p.74 n.1.

63. Bose, Hindoos, p.138.

64. D.C.Bhattacharya, "The Tantrasāra of Kṛṣṇānanda Vāgīśa", P.K.Gode Commemoration Volume, Poona oriental Series no.93 (Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1960), pp.27-28.

for their special tantric pūjās . The practice of making, worshipping and immersing a clay image of Kālī all in the same day is still maintained, however. Each year in Calcutta, an image of Śmaśāna Kālī (Kālī of the cremation grounds) is made for this kind of tantric pūjā .

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: THE VILLAGE TRADITION.

Referring to the 'village tradition' of Bengal implies a false sense of homogeneity in the face of apparent diversity between the various districts of Bengal. However, for the sake of simplicity, the term will be used to describe practices which may be regarded as 'rural' and even 'regional', in contrast with urban practices. Village traditions throughout India tend to be idiosyncratic. The literature is in the vernacular rather than in Sanskrit; the modes of worship differ from those of orthodox Brahmanism; the village deities differ from those of the orthodox pantheon; there is less emphasis on the worship of anthropomorphic images and the adoption of natural objects instead such as stones and trees as objects of cultic worship; and there is also a tendency towards animistic belief. Where the tradition of worshipping a particular deity has persisted over a period of time, the kind of image made by the traditional craftsman becomes standardised, sophisticated and transformed according to the kind of influences imposed on the artist by the customer. Images of this kind bear a strong regional stamp. However, village worship is generally directed towards aniconic or semi-iconic images.

For the purposes of this survey of the village tradition of Bengal, I will concentrate on material available in the vernacular ' **Maṅgala Kāvya** ' (auspicious poems) composed during the Muslim period (13th-18th c). These are the historical sources for the village tradition of Bengal. Alongside them are the vernacular renditions of the ' **Mahākāvya** ', the Epics and the Purāṇas, and the Vaiṣṇava **padāvali** or religious poems of the post-Caitanya era. Most

ritual and philosophical literature continued to be written in Sanskrit, the language of learning.

The most popular of the **Maṅgala Kāvya** are those dedicated to the snake goddess Manasā and the aboriginal deity, Caṇḍī, who was originally a protectress of hunters, but as we have seen, came to be identified with the Purāṇic goddess Durgā and appropriated her characteristics. The cults of Manasā and Caṇḍī have been widely popular in Bengal and their worship probably dates back to the classical Pāla-Sena period. Manasā and Caṇḍī are still popular today and the **Maṅgala Kāvya** dedicated to them are among the most well-known and well-loved in Bengal.

GRĀMA DEVATA.

Manasā and Caṇḍī are popular **grāma devata** or village deities. The **grāma devata** fulfilled a number of roles connected with childbirth and domestic concerns, but were also called upon in times of epidemic, disease or disaster¹. Many were connected with diseases, such as Śītalā, the goddess of smallpox, while others, such as Ṣaṣṭhī, the goddess of childbirth and Manasā, the goddess of snakes, were worshipped to ward off evil and danger. The village priests who officiated at the cult worship of the **grāma devata** were regarded as possessing cures for the ills from which the worshipper wished to be released. Throughout the **Maṅgala Kāvya**, the **grāma devata** are depicted as very accessible figures who communicate freely with mortals and share their griefs and delights. Of course, they have their powerful Purāṇic aspects as well, but these are perhaps later accretions to the simple village deities who were regarded as invisible forces lingering on the periphery of the village. The

1. S.C.Mitra, "On the Cult of Godlings of Disease in E.Bengal", MI, Vol.3, nos.1 and 2 (March-June 1923), p.39.

Maṅgala Kāvya are heavily influenced by the Purāṇas and Epics, but it is difficult to say whether the village deities took on the characteristics of Purāṇic deities and became transformed, or whether they are merely 'folk' versions of the Purāṇic deities. My own belief is that the former is more likely to be correct. It is notable in the case of iconography where a hitherto unrepresented deity appropriates the iconography of one of the Brahmanical deities and comes to be worshipped in anthropomorphic form².

Most **grāma devata** in Bengal are worshipped in simple shrines or outside in the open air under trees. Places of worship are named after the respective deity. The permanent shrines of the goddess Manasā are known as ' **Manasā bāri** ' (the house, **bāri** , of Manasā). These are small mud huts with thatched roofs, housing painted clay pots, usually odd-numbered, clay snakes (Pl.H, 4) and votive terracotta animal figures. In Bengal, Manasā is worshipped in the form of a pyramid made of banana bark and the place of worship is known as a **maṇḍapa** , a temporary spot with a twig of **sija** placed on it. She is also worshipped in the Manasā plant, a cactus placed on a pyramidal altar and daubed with vermilion. Other shrines are known as **Manasā talā** and are usually by the roadside or at a crossroads³. **Grāma devata** are usually represented by pots (**ghaṭa**), stones or plants which are decorated with distinctive marks to indicate individual deities. **Manasā ghaṭa** are decorated with snake hoods to indicate that they belong to the snake goddess. These simple shrines

2. Vijananananda, Sri Mad, p.985, Dbh 9.46.3 in which the **grāma devata** **Ṣaṣṭhī**, **Maṅgala Caṇḍī** and **Manasā** are parts of **Prakṛti**.

3. F.K.Mahapatra, The Folk Cults of Bengal (Calcutta: Indian Publications, 1972), p.138.

seldom contain anthropomorphic images, although some do contain clay images.

MANASĀ.

The worship of the snake goddess Manasā probably originated in East Bengal. Today, her worship is popular in Dacca, Mymensingh and the Birbhum district of West Bengal. Manasā worship is also very popular in Assam, particularly in the districts of Kamrup, Goalpara and Darrang⁴. There is a popular belief that the Manasā cult spread into Assam from Bengal after the Muslim invasion of Kāmarūpa in the 15th c, although there is no historical evidence to support this belief⁵. Poems dedicated to Manasā in Bengal are commonly known as 'Manasā Maṅgala', whereas in Assam they are known as 'Padma Purāṇa', ' Padma ', lotus, being one of Manasā's epithets. Manasā is also ' kāṇṭī ' (One Eyed), having lost her left eye in a fight with her step-mother, Caṇḍī. Manasā's left eye is her poison eye with which she can kill at a glance, while her right eye is her nectar eye (amṛtanayana), a look from which can revive those killed with the left eye. The 'Evil Eye' is connected with snakes and a person who had only one eye is said to possess the Evil Eye. Manasā is also known as Viṣaharī, because she is regarded as the Remover of Poison, she is also called ketakā because she was born on the leaf of a keyā (Sanskrit, ketakā) or screw-pine plant.

Manasā poems deal with the supernatural birth of Manasā, the origin of her worship, her quarrels with the spice merchant Cāṇḍo, the life of Behulā and Lakhindar, Cāṇḍo's son, and of the eventual victory of Manasā over Cāṇḍo and his submission to her

4. S.N.Goswami, "Snake Worship: Goddess Manasā Cult in Assam", The Journal of the Assam Research Soc., Vol.XXV (1979-1980), p.29.

5. Goswami, "Snake Worship", p.29.

cult. Manasā is mentioned in Purāṇas as the mind-born daughter of Kāśyapa, the pupil of Śiva, the eternal devotee of Viṣṇu, the sister of Vāsukī, and the goddess of serpents, Nageśvarī. She is a sorceress (*siddhayoginī*) and possesses occult powers (*mahājñāyuta*). In **Maṅgala Kāvya** , Manasā is the step-daughter of Śiva and Caṇḍī, wife of the sage Jaratkāru and mother of Āstika. The story of Manasā is mentioned in the BvP 2.45-46 and her *dhyāna* (meditation) is described in the 'Tithitattva' of Raghunandana (16th c) who describes Manasā as a beautiful woman riding on a swan, wearing red clothes, giving boons (with *varada mudrā*), bejewelled and accompanied by eight snakes⁶.

Classical sculpture identified with Manasā appears throughout Bengal from the 10th-12th c ⁷, although Manasā is not a deity with a Vedic or Purāṇic background and consequently does not have an iconographical tradition that can be traced back through the Śāstras. In **Maṅgala Kāvya** , the convention is to describe female deities as beautiful young girls, elegantly dressed and adorned with dazzling jewelry. There is little to distinguish one from the other in terms of iconography. There is no direct mention in **Maṅgala Kāvya** that images, let alone clay images, were commonly used in village shrines, nor is there any mention of *kumāras* making images. But it is possible that villagers worshipped clay images of *grāma devata* in the early Muslim period just as they do today and that the form of their worship steadily took on Brahmanical elements as the *grāma devata* became more popular.

6. Maity, Historical, p.212.

7. N.K.Bhattachali, Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum (Dacca: Rai S.N.Bhadra Bahadur; 1929), p.225.

The BvP and DBP, Raghunandana and Jimūtavāhana in his 'Kalaviveka', all talk of Manasā being worshipped in the *snuhi* or *sija* tree⁸ or in a pot filled with water and covered with a twig of *sija*. In the 'Manasā Vijayā' of Vipradāsa (15th c), *Manasā pūjā* is first conducted by a group of young cowherd boys in the month of Jyaiṣṭha. Manasā tells them to bring a golden pot, fill it with water, place a branch of *sija* upon it and offer libations⁹. In the 'Padma Purāṇa' of the Assamese poet Mankara, a contemporary of Vipradāsa, there is a description of an elaborate *Manasā pūjā* performed by Brahmins. Manasā is placed on a dias (*mañca*) and worshipped in an earthen pot with a branch of *sija* placed on it. In Mankara's 'jāganar gīta' (invocation), he invokes the four-cornered *maṇḍapa*, the plantain trees in each corner, the picturesque cloth (*chandowa*) stretched above, the holy *pūrṇa ghaṭa*, four lamps (*dīpa*), incense on stands (*dhūpa*), offerings of food (*naivedya*) and gold and silver flowers. The holy diagram (*ālīpanā*) is carefully plastered with cowdung, whereupon the goddess Viṣaharī descends with both feet on a goose. Dharma, Gaṇeśa, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Śītalā, Lakṣmī and Suvacanī (the Duck Mother) are also worshipped and animal sacrifice is done. Brahmins perform *pūjā* with *mantra* (incantations) and *viddhi* (rules) and a band of singers sing songs from the 'Padma Purāṇa' while women dance to the music¹⁰.

8. Maity, *Historical*, pp.220-221. *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*, *Prakṛti khaṇḍa*, 46.11-13 and *DevTbhāgavata Purāṇa* 9.48.10-13 contain identical accounts of Manasā and her worship (W.L.Smith, *The One-Eyed Goddess: a study on the Manasā Maṅgal*, *Stockholm Oriental Studies* no.12 (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiskell Interantional, 1980), p.13).

9. S.Sen, ed., *Vipradāsa's Manasā-Vijayā* (Calcutta: The Asiatic Soc., 1953), pp.61-62.

10. M.Neog, "Serpent Lore and Serpent Worship in Assam", *Eastern Anthropologist*, 4 (March-August 1951), p.156; Sarma, *Assamese*, p.46.

In contemporary rural practice, the village priest (*ojha*) is regarded as being able to cure snake-bite with a variety of spells known as ' *sāpe khowā mantra* ' (spells for snake-bite)¹¹. Villagers participate in trance-inducing dances and celebrate with communal feasts. There is no Brahmin priest or adherence to the Āgamic system of *pañcopacāra* . Mankara's description of *Manasā pūjā* seems to refer to an adapted form of the rural *pūjā* and may have used an iconic image, since *Manasā* is described iconographically and the description resembles present day images of her. *Ghaṭa* are usually placed in front of clay images, so the mention of the one does not preclude the presence of the other. One of the characteristics of Brahmanical *pūjā* is an increased tendency for anthropomorphic representation.

In Ketakā Dās's 'Manasā Maṅgala' (17th c), the term ' *mṛnmayī* ' occurs unexpectedly in several places and is used as an adjectival predicate with the epithet *Viṣaharī*. *Mṛnmayī* is a Sanskrit noun, the feminine of *mṛnmaya* , 'consisting of clay'. Since images are always referred to in the feminine, *mṛnmayī* here must refer to a clay image. The term *mṛnmayī* is used in Śilpa Śāstra to refer to either terracotta or terracruda images. It is used in the HB of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa (16th c) to refer to clay images also. It is unusual to find this Sanskrit term introduced into a *Maṅgala* poem when the Bengali word ' *māṭi* ' (earth, clay) would have seemed more appropriate. However, *mṛnmayī* carried a technical significance which *māṭi* does not. *Mṛnmayī* is also found in the *pūjāpaddhatī* of Raghunandana in connection with the worship of the clay image of the goddess *Durgā*. W.L.Smith, who has done a monograph on *Manasā*,

11.Neog, "Serpent Lore", p.153.

has found only two references to images of Manasā (one in Ketakā Dās's poem, the other in the 'Dharma Maṅgala' of Manikrām) and both refer to clay images¹².

In the 'Manasār jāgaraṇa pāla' of Ketakā Dās's poem, there are three references to 'mr̥namayī Biṣaharī'. This section of the poem concerns the voyage of Behulā, who ferries the corpse of Lakhindar on a plantain raft in the hopes of persuading Manasā to revive him. On the voyage downriver, Behulā stops at various places and offers pūjā to Manasā. At Kejāghāṭa, Behulā disembarks to do pūjā at a shrine:

"Having disembarked at the shrine,
The dancer Behulā bathed and did pūjā to Hara's daughter.
Behulā did pūjā for three days before the clay image
Of Biṣaharī, Kejuyā's lotus"¹³.

Behulā also worships at Nārikeladāṅga on her journey to and from her destination and again there are further references to 'mr̥namayī Biṣaharī'¹⁴. E.Dimock, in his translation of Ketakā Dās's poem, interprets the phrase 'mr̥namayī Biṣaharī' as 'the earthen image of Biṣaharī'¹⁵. It is clear that in all these cases, Behulā worships a clay image of Manasā in riverside shrines.

12. Smith, One-Eyed, p.5.

13. Yatindra Mohana Bhattacharya, ed., Kṣemānanda Dāsa Manasā Maṅgala (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1961), pp.270-271:

uliyā deulyār jale behulā nācinī/
snāna kari pūjā kare harer nandinī//
mr̥namayī biṣaharī kejuyāya kamalā/
tina dina tār pūjā karila behulā//

14. Bhattacharya, Kṣemānanda, p.281 and p.303:

pratyekṣa ujāna jala nārikeladāṅgāya/
mr̥namayī biṣaharī ṭhākuraṇī tāya//

15. E.Dimock Jnr., The Thief of Love (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1963), p.261 and p.283.

It is possible that Ketakā Dās uses the term *mṛṇmayī* as a means of elevating the status of Manasā and her *pūjā*. By the time he wrote his poem to Manasā, *mṛṇmayī* would have been a term used to refer to the clay images of respected Purāṇic deities. To say that Manasā was also worshipped in the form of *mṛṇmayī* would equate her with goddesses such as Durgā and make her worship all the more attractive to those who heard the 'Manasā Maṅgala'. In fact, the Caitanya Bhāgavata (16th c) mentions that the Manasā cult was popular at the time¹⁶ and refers to 'māṭir putula' (clay dolls) of Manasā¹⁷. The term 'putula' may refer to images, although it usually refers to the kind of clay doll sold at fairs, whereas images used for religious purposes are referred to as *pratimā* or *ṭhākura*. S.Sen refers to Vidyāpati who gives details of Manasā *pūjā* saying that one should make a clay image of Manasā (*mṛṇmayīm pratimāṃ kṛtvā devatādyaiḥ samābrtāmu* (i.e. Viṣaharī)) and worship it with much singing and dancing¹⁸. Clay images of Manasā are made at present in Bengal and Assam (Pl.E, 5). M.Neog says that in western Assam and eastern Bengal, Manasā is worshipped by Bagdis (basket weavers, also makers of images) with animal sacrifice and offerings of rice, fruits and flowers and that on *nāgpañcamī* (the bright fifth day of Sravana) a four-armed image of Manasā with snakes in each hand, her feet resting on a goose, is taken in procession and finally immersed¹⁹.

16. Sen, HBLL, p.252.

17. S.Sen, Bāṅgālā Sāhityer Itihāsa, pt.1 (Calcutta: Eastern Press, 1940), p.217.

18. Sen, Bāṅgālā, pp. 216-217.

19. Neog, "Serpent Lore", p.151.

CANDĪ.

The most famous 'Caṇḍī Maṅgala' is that of Mukundarāma Cakravartī (16th c), otherwise known as Kavikaṅkaṇa, a native of the Burdwan district who had a vision of Caṇḍī, in which she instructed him to compose a poem in her honour. According to D.C.Sen, after composing his 'Caṇḍī Maṅgala' under the patronage of Rājā Bankurā Ray in Midnapore district, Mukundarāma returned to Burdwan and established a small temple to Caṇḍī as Simhavāhini²⁰.

Mukundarāma's 'Caṇḍī Maṅgala' is divided into two parts: the first concerns the hunter Kālketu and his wife, Phullerā, who are converted by Caṇḍī to her cult; the second is about the spice merchant Dhanapati and his wife Khullanā. The first story is older and is from the ancient kingdom of Kalinga (Orissa) where the goddess was a forest deity giving protection to forest animals and was worshipped by fowlers and hunters²¹. It is a *vrata kathā* (short narrative recited by women in connection with domestic *vratas*)²². In the second story, Caṇḍī is also the guardian deity of animals. Caṇḍī is said to bring unprecedented good luck (*maṅgala*) and gives protection. In fact, Mukundarāma's poem is also sometimes known as 'Abhayā Maṅgala'. Caṇḍī is benevolent and looks after the individual and family interests. She is worshipped under several names: Kului Caṇḍī, Natai Caṇḍī etc ²³. However, she is also associated directly

20. Sen, HBLL, p.338 and p.341.

21. S.Sen, History of Bengali Literature (HBL) (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1960), pp.60-61.

22. Sen, HBL, pp.60-61.

23. Mahapatra, The Folk Cults, p.141.

with the Purāṇic Devī, is given all her epithets and appears as Pārvatī or Gaurī, the wife of Śiva, as Durgā and as Gajā-Lakṣmī. She is called Bhagavatī and Caṇḍikā and is identified with a host of regional deities. Yet Caṇḍī retains the characteristics of a grāma devata. She takes the form of a lizard (godhika), her vāhana in early eastern iconography. She also appears as a white fly and a deer (mṛgi). When she assumes her 'true form' (nīja mūrti), she is a beautiful sixteen year old girl, her body gleaming with ornamentation. But despite her iconographical description, Caṇḍī is rarely represented anthropomorphically. Contemporary illustrations portray her as two-armed, seated on a lotus in padmāsana, wearing a diadem and ornaments. She does not appear to have a vāhana, has no distinctive marks and does not carry implements. Her hands are in abhaya and varada mudrās. She appears to be in the class of many female deities depicted as seated on lotuses - what could be referred to as the 'Lady on the Lotus' type. Large clay images of a four-armed Caṇḍī seated on a throne are currently made in the Hooghly district in West Bengal during the annual festival, but such representations are rare and she is usually worshipped in a ghaṭa.

In tribal lore there are several 'caṇḍīs' or female ogresses, all of hideous appearance and possessing witch-like powers²⁴. Bhāskara Rāya, a celebrated tantric, derives the name Caṇḍī from the masculine Caṇḍa meaning 'one of unrestricted existence and possessing unlimited powers and extraordinary qualities'

24. Majhi Rāmdās, Kherowal Baṅsa Dharam Puthi, a rare book in Santali has woodcuts of the 'caṇḍīs'.

and Caṇḍī is seen as the female counterpart of Caṇḍa²⁵. The word Caṇḍī means 'fierce', but in the sense of having unlimited power is regarded as Śakti, hence the transformation of the village Caṇḍī into the Purāṇic Devī who is also regarded as Śakti. As a regional goddess, Caṇḍī is regarded as a partial manifestation of Devī, although in the 'Caṇḍī Maṅgala', Caṇḍī is capable of assuming the forms of the Purāṇic Devī, something Manasā is not credited with. There seems to have been an ill-fitting merger between the rural Caṇḍī, a grāma devata who was seen as an animistic force who protected hunters and was concerned with the animal kingdom, and the Purāṇic Devī. Caṇḍī was originally a village goddess and is not to be confused with the Purāṇic Devī who is also referred to by the epithet 'Caṇḍī'.

Like Manasā, Caṇḍī is also worshipped using a ghaṭa . In the 'Caṇḍī Maṅgala', the king of Kalinga is converted to the cult of Caṇḍī and proclaims to his people that he will worship the 'Three-Eyed' (trilocana) Devī in the city of Kalinga. The worship is a grand occasion. The king bathes, gives gifts to Brahmins and elephants and horses to the messengers of the proclamation of worship. He puts on a necklace of rudrākṣa beads, worships a pair of golden ewers (hema jhāri jorā) while the Vedas are recited, conches are blown, bells rung and drums beaten. Everyone, young and old, crowd to have a look. Various gifts are offered. On a tuesday, the eighth lunar day (aṣṭamī), the rājā , full of merit, performs pūjā with the sixteen upacāras . He sacrifices hundreds of buffaloes, goats, sheep, deer and geese. With parched rice, eight durva leaves and Ganges water in a golden pitcher, the rājā performs pūjā to Caṇḍī with an oblation of lotus flowers in his

25. Shastri, "Durgā", p.245.

folded hands. The king is said to employ Brahmins daily in the recital of *Saptaśati* (the DM)²⁶. This *Caṇḍī pūjā* resembles the grand celebration of *Durgā pūjā*, although it is not specifically stated. I have already discussed the likelihood that clay images of *Durgā* of the kind currently worshipped in Bengal may have existed at the time of *Mukundarāma* who describes *Caṇḍī* in equivalent iconographical terms.

26. Sarkar, *Kavikāṅkaṇa*, p.86-87:

prabhāte kari snāna dvije karila dāna
 rāybāre dila gaja ghorā/
 pāiya śubha kāla rudrākṣa kanthamāla
 pūjena hema jhāri joṛā//
 pūjena narapati ānande hemabatī
 brāhmaṇe kare beda gāna/
 śaṅkha jagajhampa khamaka ghaṇṭā
 ḍampha bājaye tumbura bidhāna//
 deula ācambita kāñcana
 kalasita dekhiyā sabismaya mati/
 purīr śīśu jubā bihaṅga paśu kibā
 dekhite dhāya laghugati//
 kaṁsanadī taṭa uda taṭa nikāṭa
 puraṭa racitā deharā/
 hailā beda dbhani śuniyā kūla-dhanī
 dekhite dhāya svatantarā/
 amātya purohita kuṭumba jñāti juta
 bandena sarvva bārebāra/
 praśasta nānā bidhi kaṇḍa madhu
 dadhi naibedya dila bhārebhāra//
 mṛdaṅga śaṅkha paṛā dokhaṇḍī
 bāje joṛā mātāṅga prṣṭhe bāje dāmā/
 purer nitambinī badāne jaya dhanī
 dehite āila gajagāmā//
 aṣṭamī bhauma bāre soṛaśa upacāre/
 nṛpati pūje punyabān/
 mahiṣa chāga meṣa rohita rāja haṁsa
 lakṣeka dila bali dāna//
 taṇḍula aṣṭa durbbhā jahrabī jala garbhā
 kāñcane birocita jhāri/
 añjali sarasije nṛpati debī pūje
 nāce gāye bidyādhārī//
 pujiya barebara karila parihara brahmana
 bhume purandara/
 tār sabhāsada raci cāru pada mukunda
 gāna kabibara//

p.90:

dvije niyojila nitya pūjāya nṛpati/
 śateka brāhmaṇa nitya pare saptaśatī//

In comparison, the humble domestic **vrata** to Caṇḍī performed by Khullanā, junior second wife of the spice merchant Dhanapati, indicates an altogether different mode of worship. Khullanā paints the cowdung walls of her hut with perfumed sandal paste in the design of eight-petalled lotus leaves (a form of **ālīpanā**). She places a golden pot beneath the **ālīpanā** and is said to worship in the presence of Gaṇeśa (Gaṇeśa is invoked at the beginning of every ceremony to ensure its success). 'Indra's daughters' play repeatedly on drums, lyres, trumpets and conch and offerings are made of perfume, stones, **durva** grass, garlands of flowers, rice, ghee, fruit, milk and sweetened paddy. First Ganesa is worshipped, then the sun god Sūrya and Śiva, the peacock-borne god Kārttikeya, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī too and Khullanā worships a water pot as Nārāyaṇa, the fear-dispelling Varadārūpiṇī²⁷.

The salient features in all these descriptions of **pūjā** to the **maṅgala** deities, is the use of a holy **ghaṭa** filled with water. The **ghaṭa** filled with water symbolises fertility and the womb and is connected with female deities. It is the

27. Sarkar, *Kavikāṅkaṇa*, p.379-380:

gomaye lepiyā sadma tathi aṣṭa dala padma karila sugandhi candane/
 madhye hemajhārī khullanā sundarī rākhaye abhayā pūjane//
 khullanā pūje caṇḍī śoka-dukha-khandī miliyā indrer nandinī/
 kumārī gaṇa mili jaya hulā-huli saghana kare śaṅkha dhanī//
 kumārī kari bidhi khullanā kare siddhi karāila amar dheyāna/
 indrer kumārī pāśe hemabāri sugandhi gaṅgā jale snāna//
 śikhī ūrddve beyāma tāhār arddha sama bāmakṣī bindu bibhūṣita/
 āsiyā bidyādhārī tāhāre kṛpā kari karila kārjyer parohita//
 prathame lambodara pūjila dibākara rathāṅga pānī umāpati/
 marāla bāhana pūjila saṇānana pūjila lakṣmī sarasvatī//
 tambula aṣṭa dūrbhā jāhrabī jalagarbā kāñcane biracita jhārī/
 añjali sarāsije caṇḍikā rāma pūje nāce gāya bidyādhārī//
 khullanār puṣpa pānī urilā bhabānī abhayā baradāyinī/

most widely-used medium of worship. The **ghaṭa** are often decorated with a face or head or emblems attached to the top to indicate the deity they represent. According to S.K.Ray²⁸, deities represented by heads attached to **ghaṭa** are none other than the portrayals of tribal chiefs and chieftains. These man-gods were completely identified with their respective tutelary deities as time went by. The most striking feature of this type of image is that the deities are represented only by their heads stuck on their own ideographical pedestals. Even these pedestals, argues Ray, are modelled more symbolically than the heads. They are designed to help the worshipper recognise the rank, status, and sex of the deity. Femininity is relayed to the worshipper by the oval or egg-shaped bottom of the **ghaṭa**. These god-heads were a substitute effigy to emphasise the presence of the ruler gods by proxy. According to Ray, these busts represent the image making tradition in its earliest stage.

Although Ray's views on the political nature of the busts are purely his own, what he says about their iconographical significance is extremely interesting. If the shape, size and general appearance of the busts convey a series of complex pieces of information, then they would operate in the same way as a Brahmanical anthropomorphic image designed to convey complex theological ideas.

The use of earthen pots once again draws our attention to the role of the potter. Besides making **ghaṭa**, the potter makes a variety of terracotta animals such as elephants and horses, which are used as votive offerings to the **grāma devata**. In most rural areas of India, such votive offerings and even terracotta

28. Ray, Ritual, p.25.

images of the **grāma devata** are made using elements of the potter's craft. These terracottas are either hollow or solid or a combination of both. In many terracottas holes are retained so that air can circulate during the firing of the clay to enable the clay to bake well. Many terracotta figures are built up around a clay pot or cylinder. This means that at least part of the figure - the torso, base, or the limbs- is made by throwing the clay on the potter's wheel and forming an ordinary earthen pot. Hollow terracotta horses from Gujurat, for instance, are created by throwing cylinders and pots of various shapes on the wheel and then joining them together in a particular way to form terracotta figures. The technique plays an important part in creating the final distinctive form of the figure. The terracottas are often coloured with brick-red **geru** (ochre or red clay) and white chalk. Sometimes they are varnished. The terracottas are placed out of doors and no care is taken to ensure that, once they have been offered as votive offerings, they are kept intact. There do not appear to be cases of deliberate immersion of terracotta figures of deities either at the culmination of a festival or because of decay. On the other hand, water pots are often immersed. at the end of ceremonies.

The use of a clay pot in forming a clay figure would support Ray's theory that out of the clay pots decorated with heads came the fully-fledged images used in **pūjā**, if it was not for important differences in technique. The potter has thorough knowledge of procuring clay, the right places to find it and the correct technique for tempering the clay to the right consistency, but the potter making terracotta votive offerings and images uses a wheel and hand-modelling, whereas the potter making unbaked clay images of the kind found in Bengal uses a mould and a number of materials which

are hand-modelled and organised by methods which do not include throwing or firing.

Many of the clay images used in **vrata** as votive offerings are made by the participants themselves²⁹. We may call this **vrata** art, since the objects produced by the layperson are for the purposes of a **vrata** or vow. Small clay images used in **vrata** ritual also represent the deities as well as human and animal figures. They are crudely-formed, without feet or hands, their facial and bodily details worked out by pinching and incising a soft lump of clay and applying small pellets for decoration. They are usually fired in the domestic hearth and sometimes given a basic glaze or layer of bright paint. Many of the figures of village deities are theriomorphic.

A good example of village women making their own clay images is given by B.C.Majumdar³⁰, who describes the **Kumārī** worship prevalent among the non-Aryan Śūdra castes in the district of Sambalpur, on the south western border of Bengal. The Śūdra castes of Sambalpur celebrate the festival of ' **Kumari osa** ' in the lunar month of Āśvina, from the eighth day of the dark fortnight of Āśvina to the ninth day of the light fortnight. Brahmins officiate at all the religious and domestic ceremonies of these people and the worship of the **Kumārī** (the virgin goddess) during this festival is performed only by unmarried Śūdra girls. On the **kṛṣṇa-aṣṭamī** day, the girls, singing special songs, go out in groups from the village for good clay to make the image of the goddess **Kumārī**. They make the image

29. See S.R.Das, "A Note on the Votive Clay Figurines used in a Folk Rite of Bengal", MI, Vol.XXXII, no.2 (April-June 1952), pp.105-115.

30. Majumdar, "Durga", pp.359-360.

themselves and smear it with vermilion. They sing and dance in honour of the goddess and that is the only thing they do to worship her. In some villages, the figures of Hara-Pārvatī and Lakṣmī are painted on walls by girls, in addition to the figure of Kumārī. The celebration in Āśvina commemorates the birth of Kumārī in this month. At the conclusion of worship on the bright ninth day of Āśvina, the Śūdra girls of Sambalpur throw the Kumārī image into water, singing songs. B.C.Majumdar uses the example of the Kumārī osā celebrations and the resemblances with Bengali Durgā pūjā to suggest that Durgā pūjā had tribal origins of this kind.

This kind of vrata art is not mentioned in Maṅgala literature, which prefers to describe worship addressed to a water pot instead. In the 'Manasā Maṅgala' of Vijaya Gupta (15th c), the merchant Cāṇḍo argues with his wife that it is far better to worship the Purāṇic Durgā than a snake goddess:

"What suffering is left after worshipping the ten-armed Caṇḍī
That you worship a snake goddess."³¹

And later, he says:

"A limbless goddess's worship is forbidden and I have heard that
Padmā (Manasā) has only one eye"³².

The reference to limbless deities concerns the use of the limbless images used in the vrata rituals carried out by Bengali women. The disparagement of limbless deities also refers to the local godlings of Bengal, many of whom were at one time represented in semi-anthropomorphic form as heads upon jars or poles.

31. Sen, Baṅga, p.194 n.4:
daśabhuja kari pūjā kiser santāpa/
tāñhāre chariyā pūjā hena kāla sāpa//

32. Sen, Baṅga, p.194:
angahīna debatār pūjā āche mānā/
tāhāte śunechi padmār eka cakṣu kānā//

Such figures of limbless deities have been found all over India since the Indus valley civilisation. Stella Kramrisch refers to them as being of the 'ageless' type of terracottas, in other words, such figures appear constantly and without change throughout history. Figures of this kind, according to Kramrisch, are characterised by exclusive modelling by hand. Stella Kramrsich also refers to a second category of terracottas, the 'timebound' type, referring to those terracottas which can be classified according to roughly-divided historical periods from the early Mauryan period (4th c B.C.) onwards. Such 'timebound' terracottas may take the form of large-scale, free-standing figures, or small plaques and panels meant for adorning temples. The Ganges valley with its rich alluvial soil has been the ideal source of generations of artists working in the clay medium. P.Dasgupta even goes so far as to say that clay is the most natural medium of Bengali sentiment and culture³³ and that even the stone sculptures of the Pāla period are no other than the spirit of terracotta transformed into stone³⁴.

There are links between techniques used in producing terracottas and the kind of terracruda image made by Bengali artists. The mould is common to both and certain methods of tempering and applying the clay are also commonly shared by artists working in terracotta and in terracruda. However, since the terracruda images are not fired, a number of non-clay materials may be attached to the images, whereas terracotta images are made up entirely of clay. In some cases, wooden dowels are inserted in large terracotta images, but in general, terracotta images are made up of solid or hollow clay.

33. Dasgupta, Temple, p.1.

34. Dasgupta, Temple, p.12.

Terracruda images made in Bengal may even be referred to as a mixed (*miśra*) product rather than 'clay' images, since the bulk of the image is made of straw rather than clay. The actual layers of clay that are applied to the straw are only a few inches deep. Whereas the straw in the Bengali practice is used to make up the bulk of the image and to bind the clay to the infrastructure, in the Tibetan practice of clay image making, other materials are used to achieve similar effects.

W.Zwalf³⁵ says that some clay images made in Tibet can be extremely large and that large images are reported to exist in several major shrines. In Tibetan clay modelling, the figure is hollow and built up from below with clay of fine and even consistency made into a thin wall with the help of paper. Construction of larger images is a lengthy process, performed in sections with a charcoal fire placed in the interior to help dry the fabric while the outer surface is covered with a wet cloth to prevent cracking and to facilitate the join with the next section. (The charcoal appears to be used to dry the clay rather than to 'fire' it , as in the Bengali practice when charcoal is used to dry the clay quickly). Some recent, smaller images are painted with laquer and depend for their stability on the internal use of straw to bind the clay. The use of cloth and shredded paper to bind the clay is quite common in the Tibetan practice.

35. Zwalf, Heritage, p.113.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: SUMMARY:

To summarise, therefore. It has been established that there was a classical tradition of making religious icons in clay. This tradition is mentioned in southern Āgamas, various Śilpa Śāstra from all parts of India and several Purāṇas, which refer to the worship of clay images of the principal Hindu deities of the major Hindu sects. Clay has always been included in lists of suitable materials for making religious icons. In describing the meritorious rewards of worshipping icons of Hindu deities in each of the various materials, many texts recommend the use of clay and, in fact, the Śiva Purāṇa says that it is the best material from which to make the Śiva liṅga .

This classical tradition of making clay images was governed by all the iconographical conventions, iconographical rules and aesthetic ideals of classical Indian art. Clay for making clay icons was carefully selected and prepared. Clay icons are generally referred to as ' mṛṇmaya- ' or ' mṛttikā-pratimā '. In some cases, a distinction is made between baked clay images (pakva-mṛṇmaya-pratimā) and unbaked clay images (apakva-mṛṇmaya-pratimā). This distinction is connected with a religious injunction that regards baked clay images as inauspicious and fit only for representations of inauspicious deities or for nefarious (abhicārika) purposes such as bringing about the destruction of an enemy. Terracotta and terracruda images are seen as fulfilling different ritual functions. Only terracruda icons may be use for ordinary worship. I have not found any textual explanation for this tenet.

According to the classical tradition,

clay icons were made in a number of stages; some texts say seven, others say twelve. Each stage involved the use of a different combination of materials. Clay images are sometimes referred to as 'lepya' or 'lepajā', indicating that the clay is plastered or applied in layers over the wooden frame (śūla). The clay was a compound of ingredients, some of which suggest that the clay was of a hardier consistency than ordinary clay, although it has been stated that despite the ingredients, the clay compound remained just clay. Because the clay was a compound of ingredients, it has also been referred to as 'miśra' (mixed). The process of making a clay icon could take several months and in some cases, each of the stages of construction were given symbolical significance.

Clay itself appears to have had a symbolical significance according to the southern Āgamas. Correlations are made between 'clay' and 'flesh' (māṁśa) and 'clay' and 'the Earth' (mahī). In present day Gujarat, potters draw similar correlations between 'clay' (māṭī) and 'man'. In this, the Indian tradition shares a common global belief, that man is somehow connected with clay or earth, the substance from which all material things are made. The preference for religious icons being made of unbaked clay may be connected with notions of fertility. There is also the belief that, by immersing a clay image after worship, the worshipper is, in effect, returning to the earth what he took from it in the first place. This borrowing and returning may be connected with similar ideas regarding the harvesting of crops and the idea of the earth as the matrix of all things and the source of fecundity. The use of clay in the making of votive figurines may also be linked with fertility. Unbaked clay icons have been linked with fertility. However, clay icons made according to the classical tradition are a combination of a number of materials

which are said to have correspondences to the component materials of the human body. There may be a correlation between the various animal, vegetable and mineral products included in the clay image and the constituent elements of the human body.

It is commonly stated in the classical texts, that out of the three categories of images (viz. mobile, *cala*, immobile, *acala* and mobile-immobile, *calācala*), only the immobile, *dhruva bera* installed in the central shrine of the temple may be made of clay. There are stipulations that the functional, subsidiary images should not be made of clay. The reasons for this being that the subsidiary images were more frequently handled and therefore more likely to be damaged if made out of clay, although there are occasions in which clay images or wooden images plastered with clay, are bathed. A mirror is used as a means of circumventing the customary bathing of images. The ritual addressed to a clay image does not differ from that addressed to images made of other materials except for this use of the mirror during ceremonial bathing in order to bathe the reflection of the image rather than the image itself. Clay images were therefore used to represent the main deity in the temple and appear to have been intended for permanent worship. The literary evidence for this practice does not seem to be supported by contemporary practice in the temples of south India in which the main icon in the temple is usually made of more durable materials such as metal or stone, although of course, clay images are installed in temples in Bengal.

The distinction between inauspicious terracotta and auspicious terracruda is maintained in the current Bengali practice in which all religious icons are made of terracruda, while terracotta is reserved for decorative and ornamental purposes.

Terracruda images are preserved in shrines and temples in Bengal and, contrary to expectations, have been known to survive for decades. They are therefore not to be regarded as 'temporary' (**kṣaṇika**) or 'ephemeral', or even, as K.M.Varma suggests, only meant for a brief period of use (**tātkālika**). They are used both in the temple and in festival worship. In the latter case they may be disposed of at the close of ceremonies. Such disposal does not always entail immersion of the image in water, although immersion is undoubtedly the most popular means of disposal since it allows for a festive procession and crowd participation. The immersion itself is often a grand occasion. However, terracruda images may also be left out in the open, in the street, by a river, or at the foot of a tree, to decompose naturally. Most ritual texts regard the actual dismissal (**visarjana**) of the deity as taking place at the close of ceremonies before the disposal of the image. In some cases **visarjana** can mean the immersion of the image in a mirror by pouring sacred water from the **ghaṭa** over the reflection of the image, or immersion of the mirror bearing the reflection in the waters of the **ghaṭa** itself. In the Bengali practice, the immersion of the **ghaṭa** in a stream of water is often regarded as immersion proper. By the time the image is immersed, it has already been deconsecrated and lost its sanctity. The immersion celebrations are a matter of personal taste and include a wide variety of practices that are not included in the rules of worship. In some cases, the images may be kept and used again owing to extenuating circumstances. In England, for instance, since it is impossible to immerse or abandon an image during **Durgā pūjā** and the cost of replacing it annually would be too high, it is kept for a few years before being replaced with a new image.

The use of straw to create the bulk of

the clay image may have been the result of a need to adapt the classical practice due to the need to produce large numbers of clay images rather than single images made over a long period of time. However, since there is no difference in the technique used to produce clay images used in both temples and festivals, K.M.Varma's argument that the straw was used because the images were for temporary use anyway, does not appear to be convincing. The straw reduces the time taken to dry the clay, since large quantities of clay tend to dry slowly and to crack if not carefully applied, but other factors need to be taken into consideration, such as the size of the images, their weight and the modelling technique itself. The absence of a recorded tradition cannot disprove that the Bengali practice is a modified continuation of the classical tradition, as Varma suggests, but neither can it prove those connections by the apparent similarities with the current practice.

Clay images in Bengal are made by a variety of artists, depending on the availability of the artist in the given locality. It appears that clay image making became the chief profession of potters, or *kumāras*, in the early 18th c when clay image making became an urban tradition based in Calcutta. But the production of clay images has always been the result of team work, just as in the classical tradition. Although the artists do not follow a recorded tradition, nevertheless they are guided by their own knowledge of technique and their understanding of iconographical conventions, although they are also guided just as much by their customers' demands. It has been established that the system of patronage played an important part in determining the style of the images. Three main styles have been distinguished: the village style; the traditional style; and the modern style. A commercialisation of the village style

occured in the urban milieu of Calcutta. The present system of patronage is divided between two main groups: the conservative families and the modern *pūjā* committees. Private individuals and religious organisations constitute the remainder.

There are extensive records of the worship of clay images in Bengal during the last two centuries and one account dating from the 17th c. There are also indications that the tradition may have been practised in the Pāla-Sena period. A survey of *Durgā pūjā*, the most elaborate festival involving clay images, shows that clay image worship of Durgā is mentioned in several Śākta Upapurāṇas from north eastern India dating from the Pāla-Sena period. The worship of the clay image of Durgā is also referred to in several *Durgāpūjāpaddhatis* from this same area dating from the Muslim period (13th-18th c). The earliest reference to the worship of a clay image of Durgā occurs in the Devī Māhātmya section of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa of western India, which has been dated by F.E.Pargiter as belonging to the 5th/6th c A.D..

The majority of clay images used in Bengal are of female deities and all the major Śākta festivals use clay images, although clay image worship is not to be seen as a monopoly of the Śāktas. Clay images of male deities such as Śiva, Brahmā, Gaṇeśa, Śani, Viśvakarmā, Kārttikeya and Kṛṣṇa are also common. The Vaiṣṇavas and Śaivas use clay images for worship.

There are few references in the vernacular literature of the Muslim period to confirm the popularity of worshipping clay images at the time in the village tradition of Bengal. Instead, most of the worship is described as being addressed to an earthen pot or *ghaṭa*. However, there are some references to the worship of clay images of the snake goddess Manasā, and the earliest

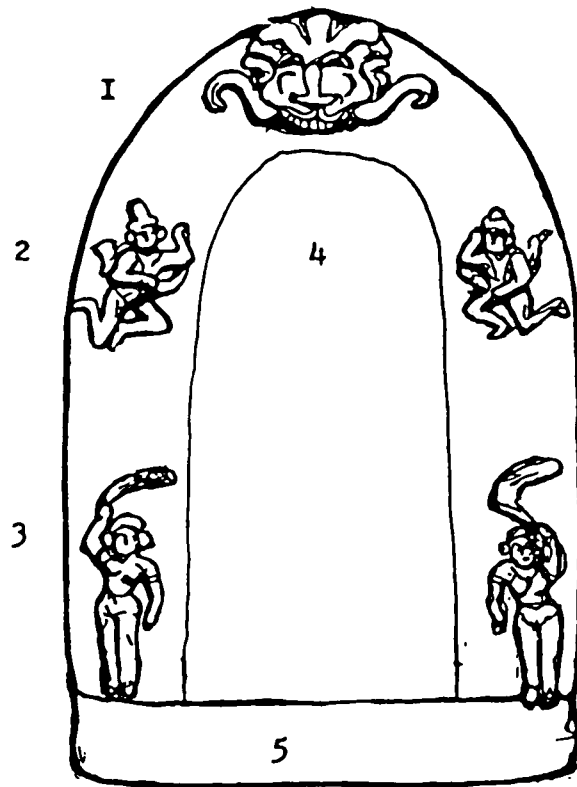
reference to the current type of composite Durgā image occurs in a vernacular poem dating from the 16th c, indicating indirectly that such images were worshipped in villages at the time. The current popular use of clay images in the villages of Bengal indicates the likelihood that such practices had their roots in the Muslim period at a time when Bengali culture began to take on a distinctive form.

FIG.1



Mahiṣāsuramardini

FIG.2.



- 1. kīrttimukha
- 2. mālādhārī
- 3. sundarī
- 4. prabhāvalī
- 5. pīṭhika

gaja-sārdūla motif.

FIG.3

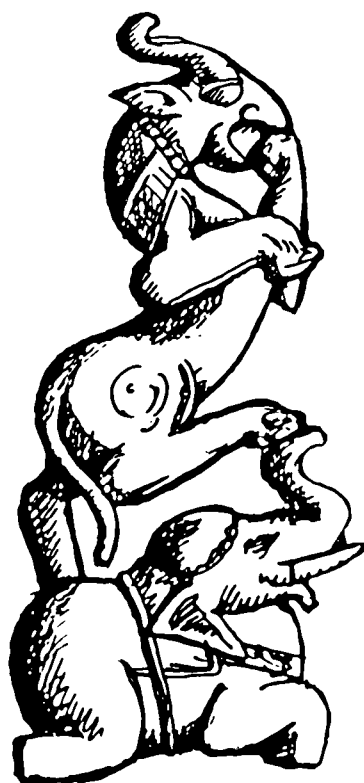
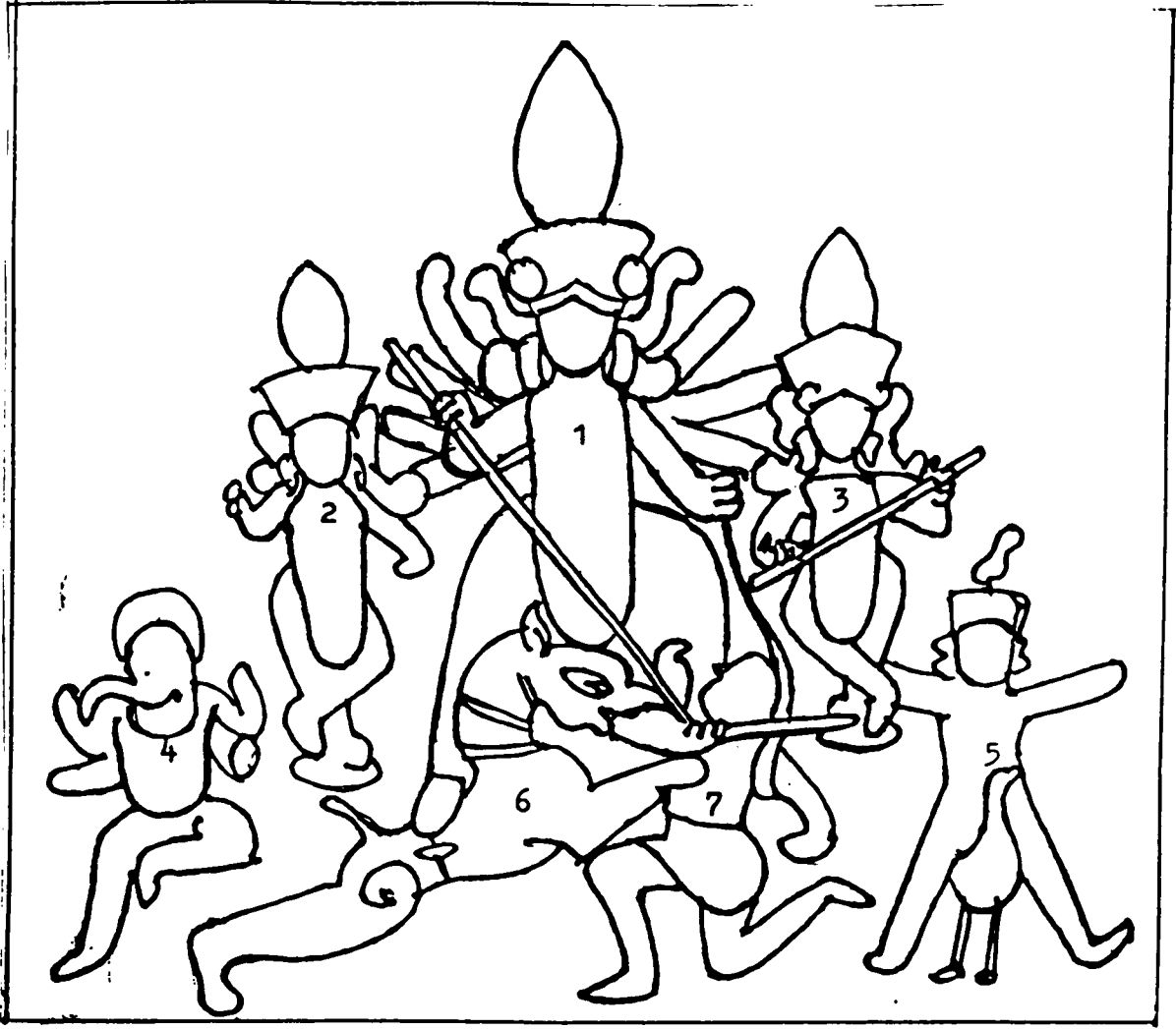


FIG.4



1. Durgā 2. Lakṣmī 3. Sarasvatī 4. Gaṇeśa 5. Kārttikey
6. Ghorā-simha 7. Mahiṣa

FIG.5

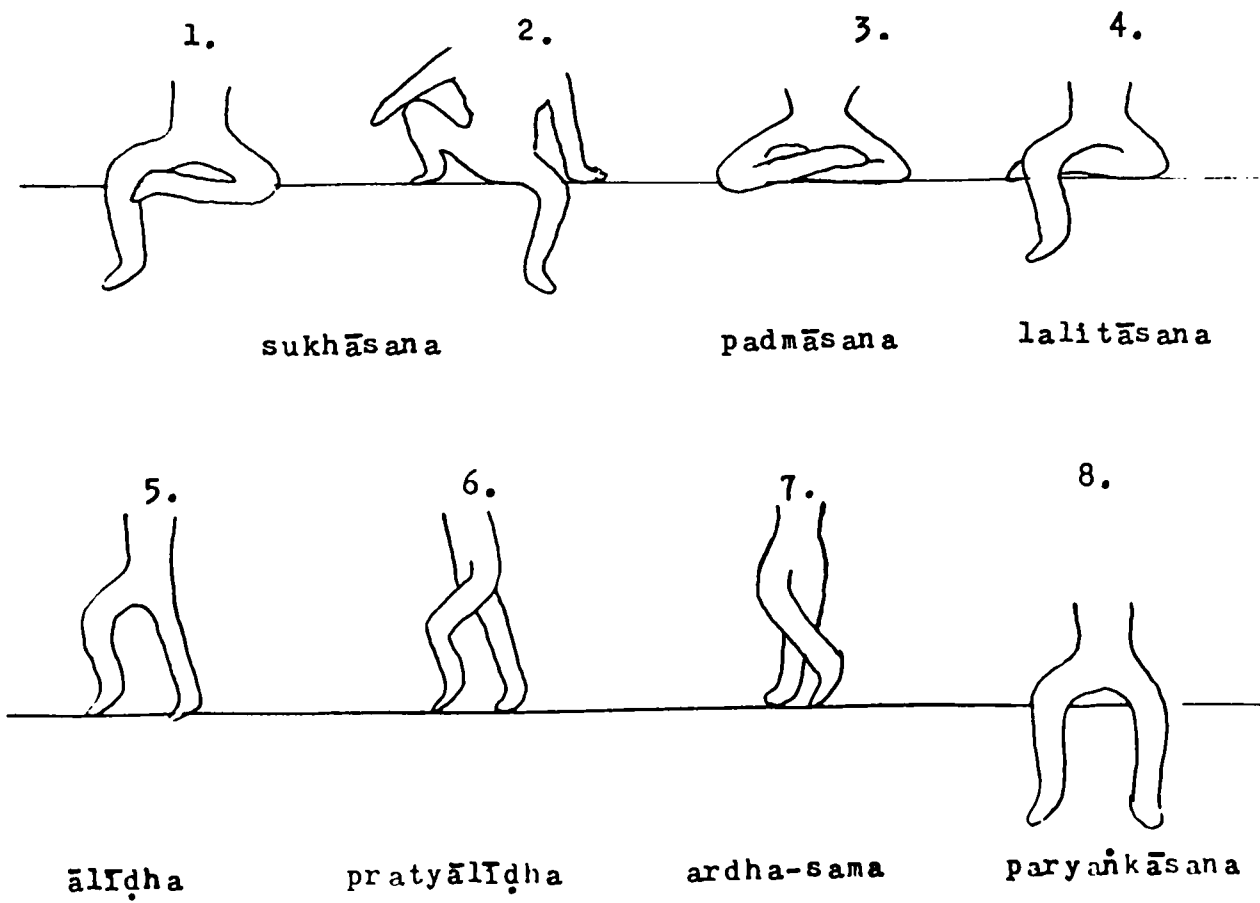
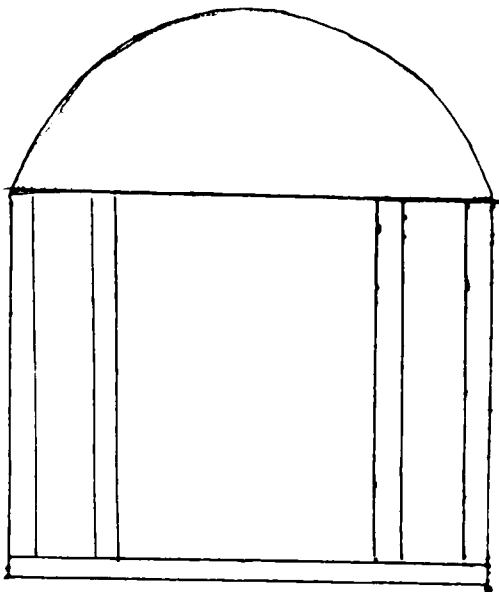
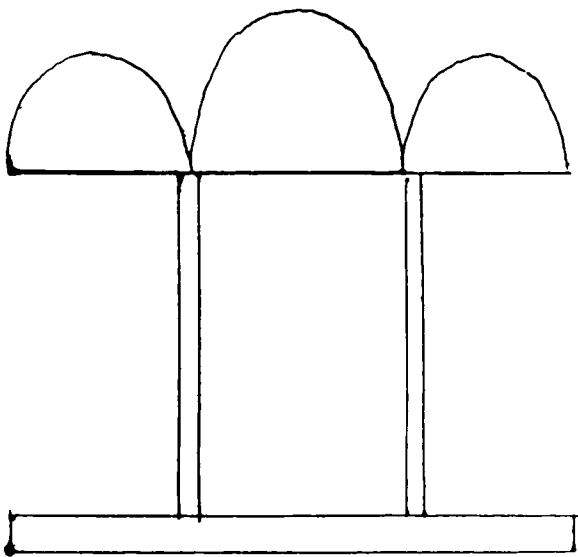
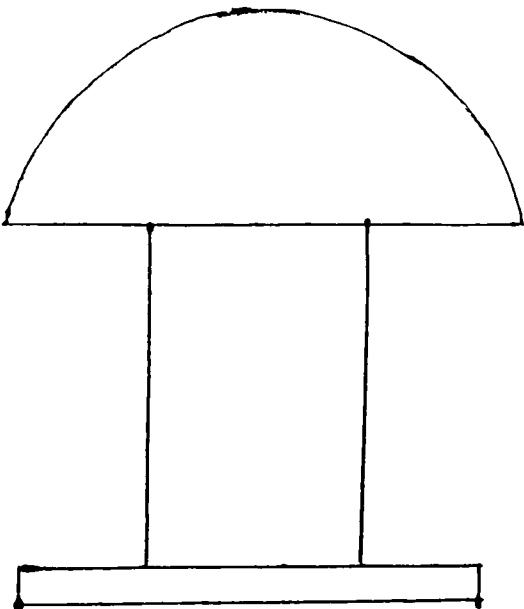
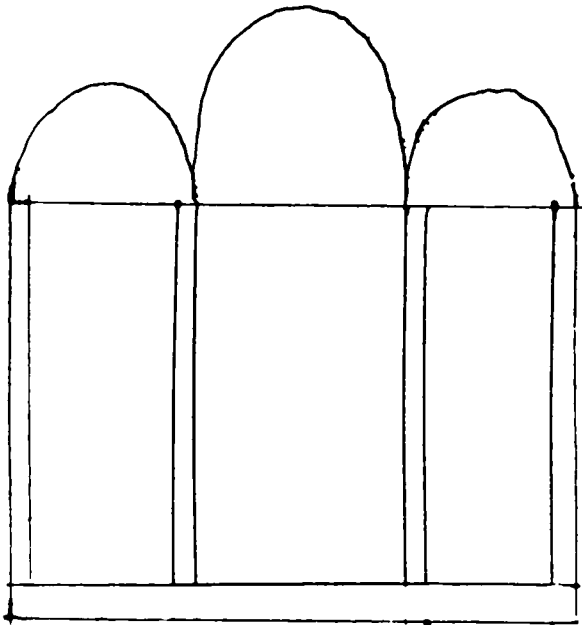
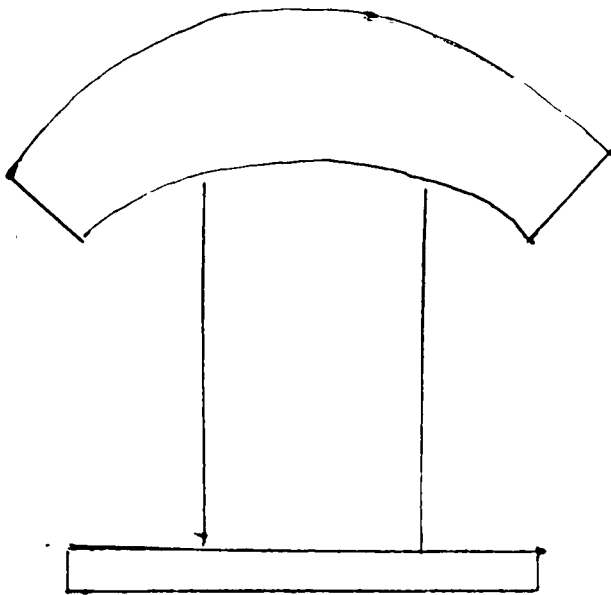
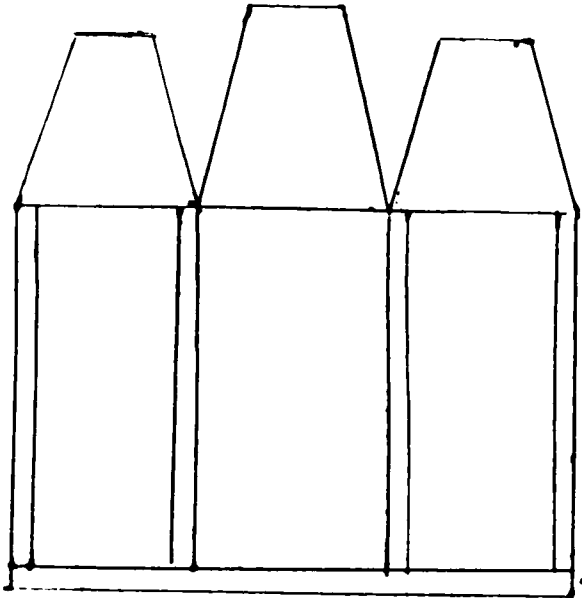


FIG.6

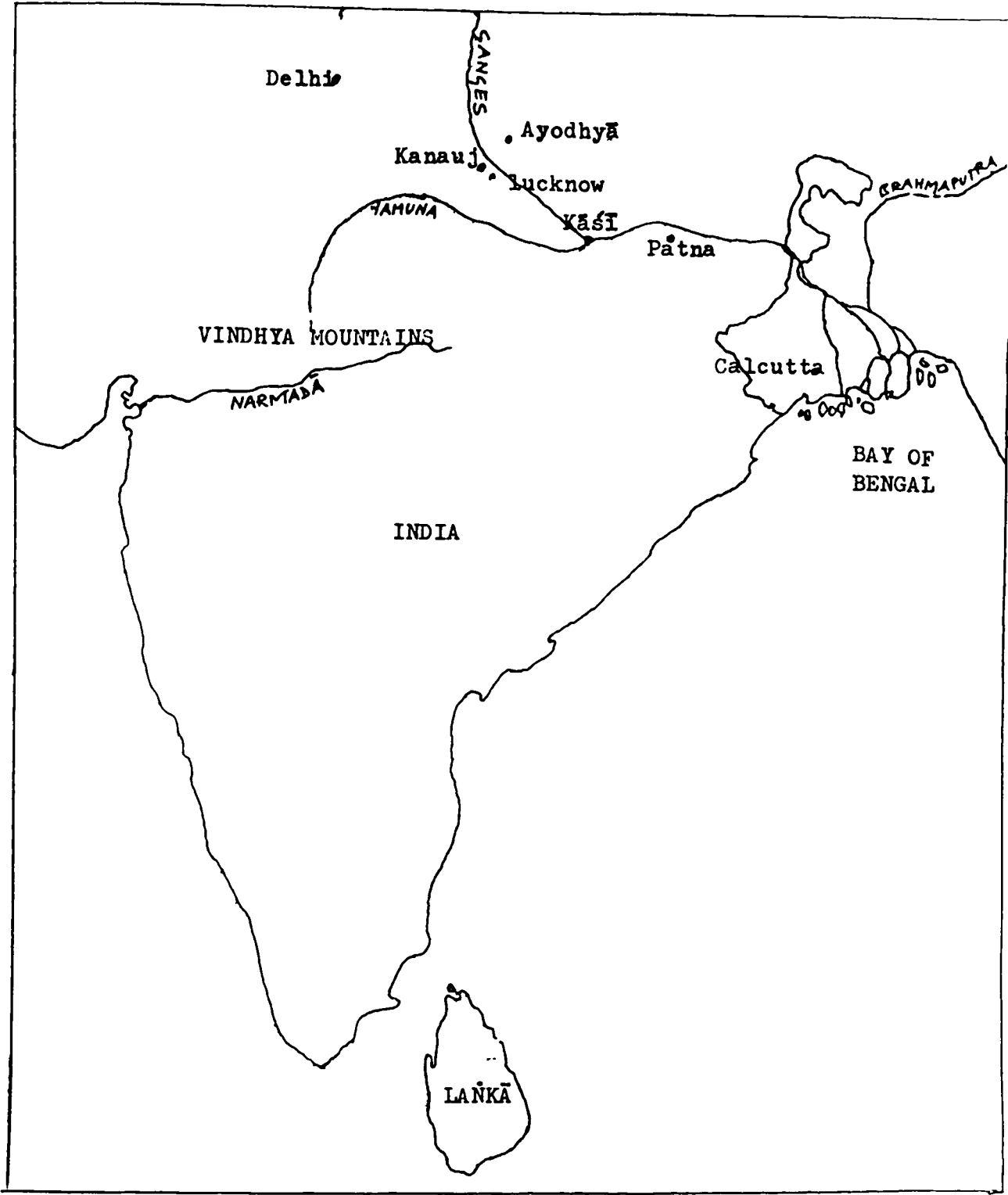
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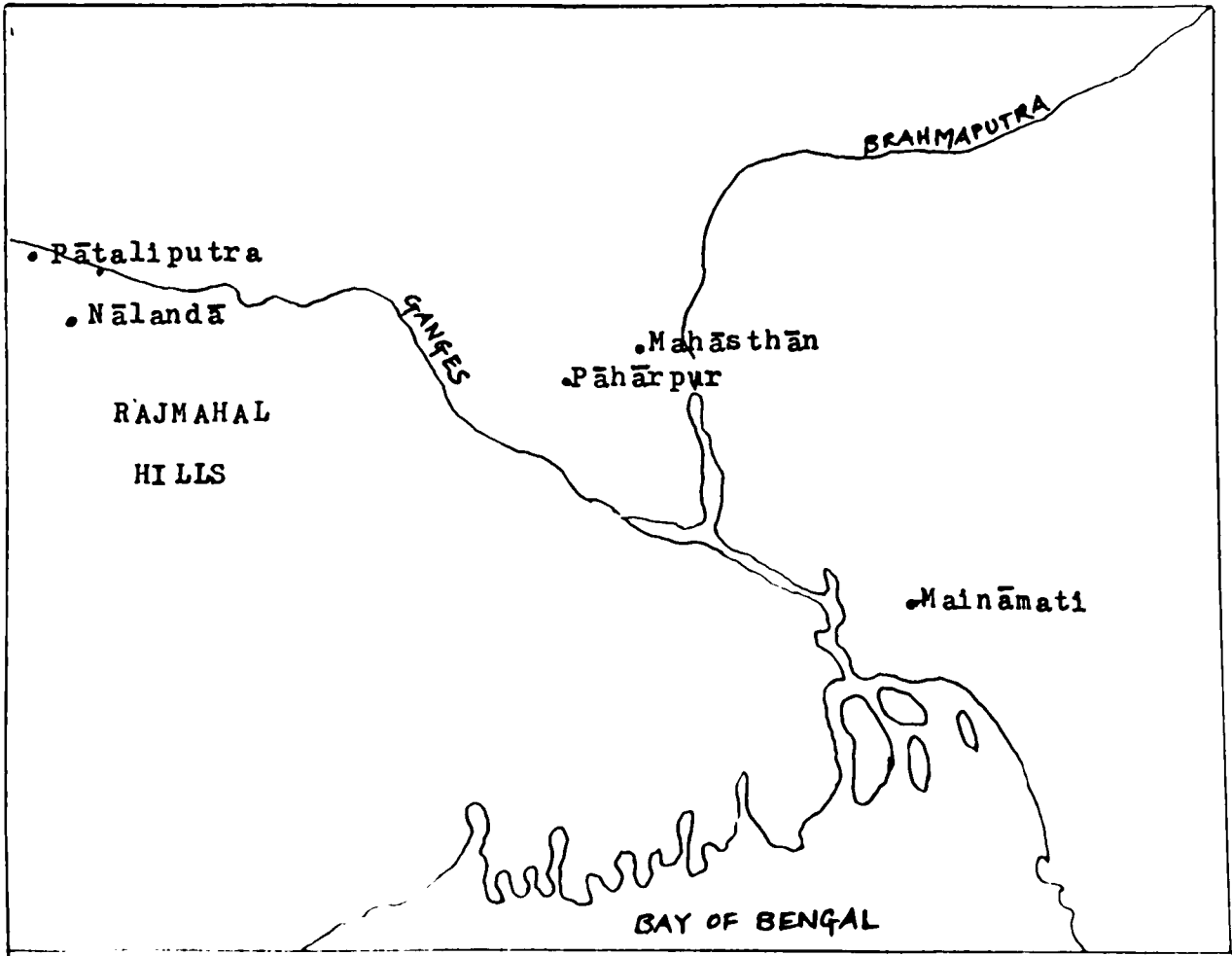
maṭha cāuni



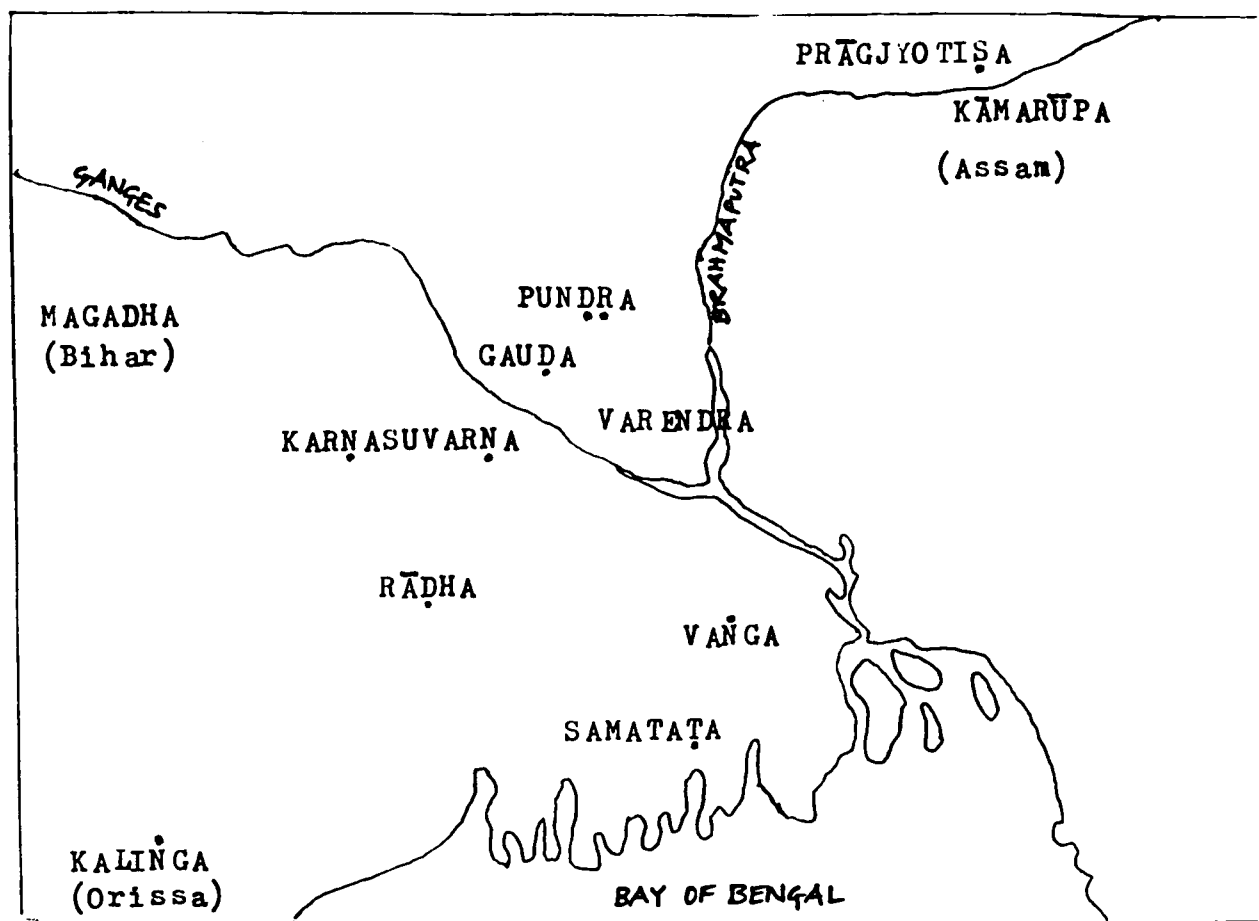
MAP ONE



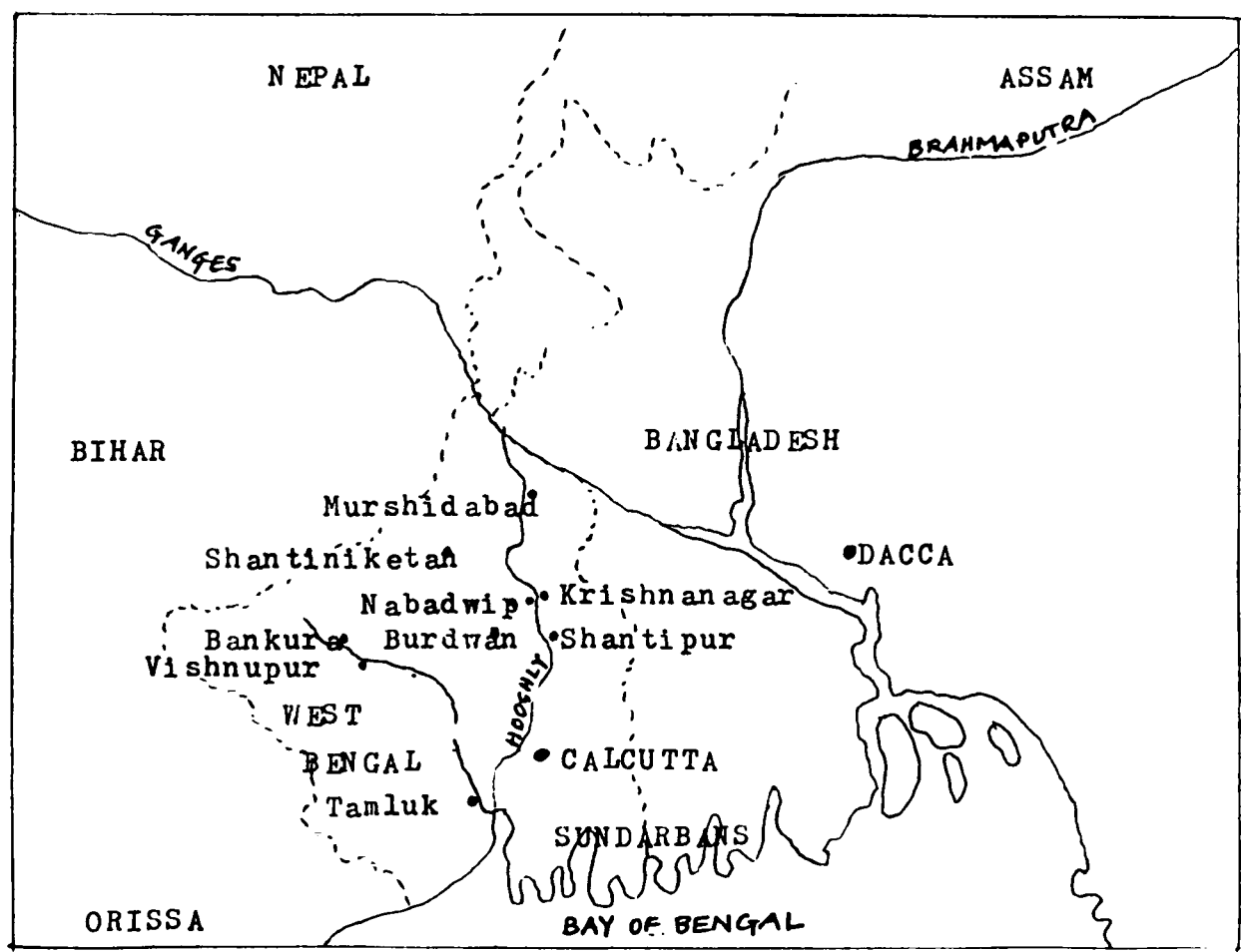
MAP TWO



MAP THREE



MAP FOUR



PLATES.

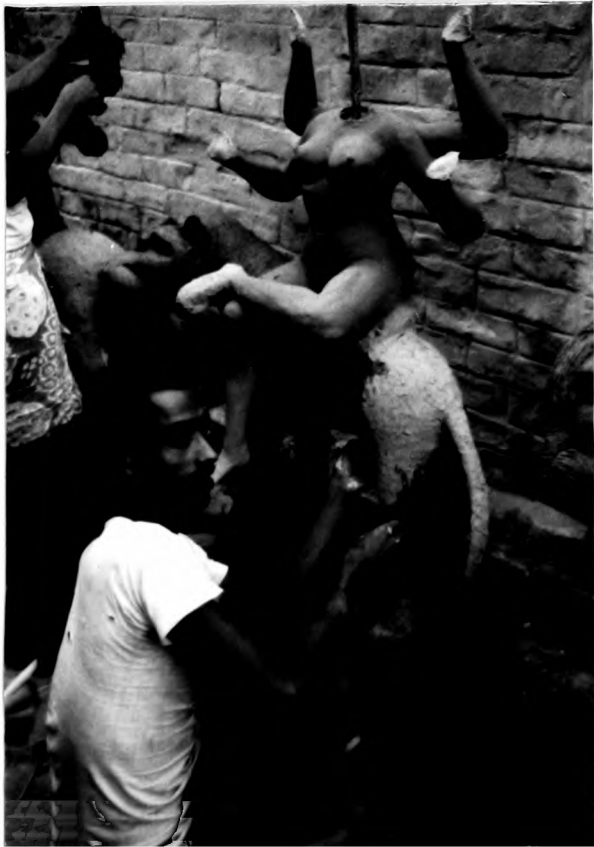
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5,6



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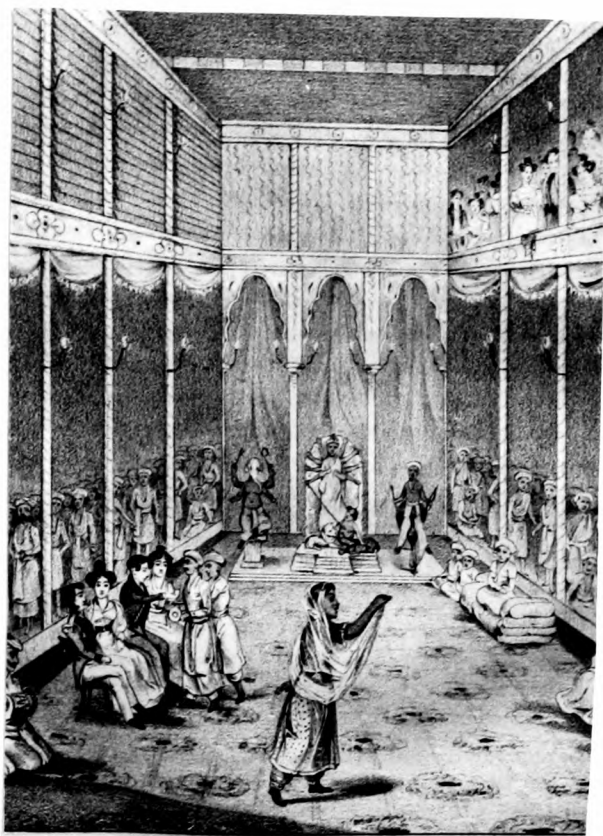
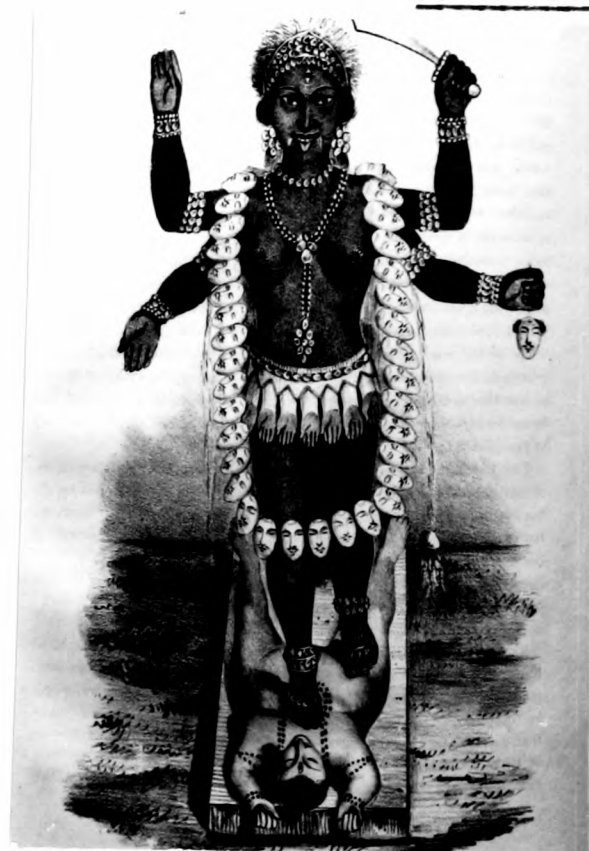


PLATE D.



3,4



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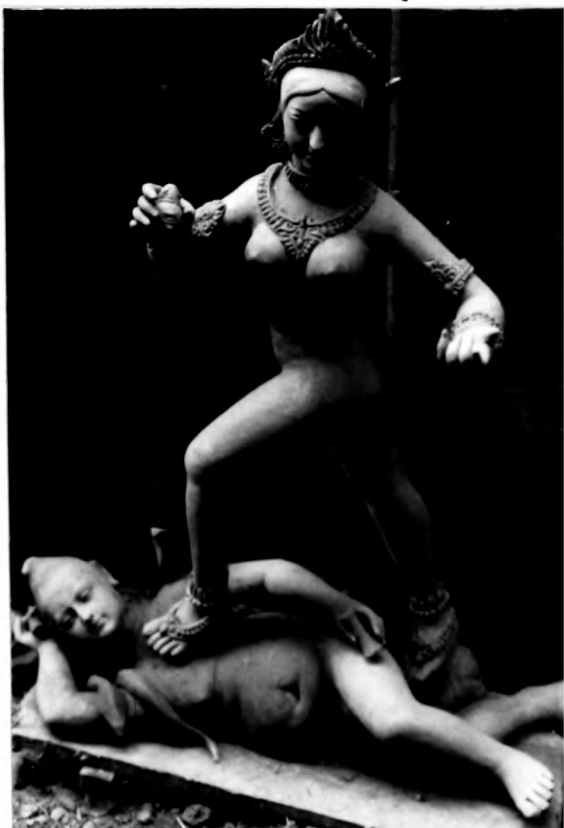
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3,4,



5,6,7



1



2



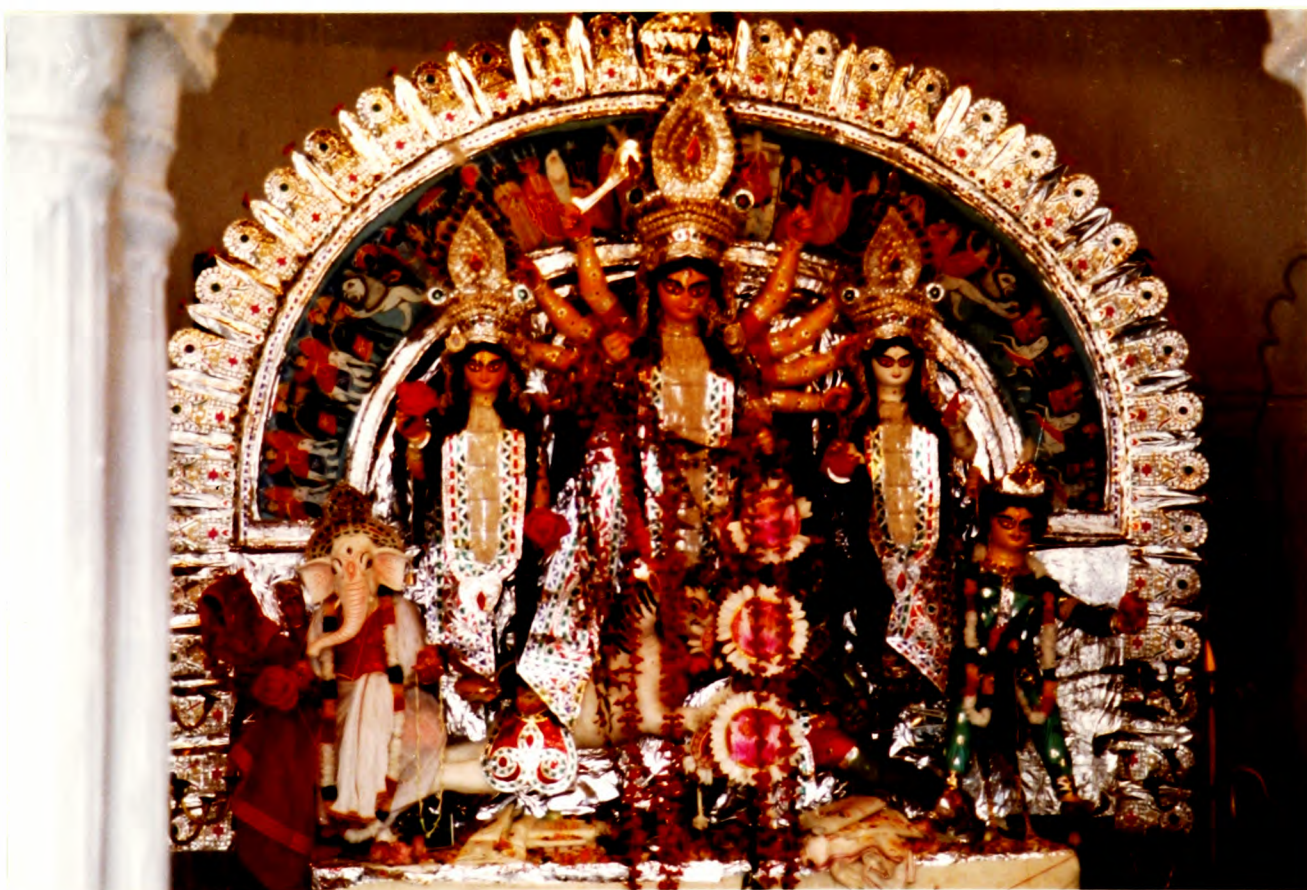
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1



2



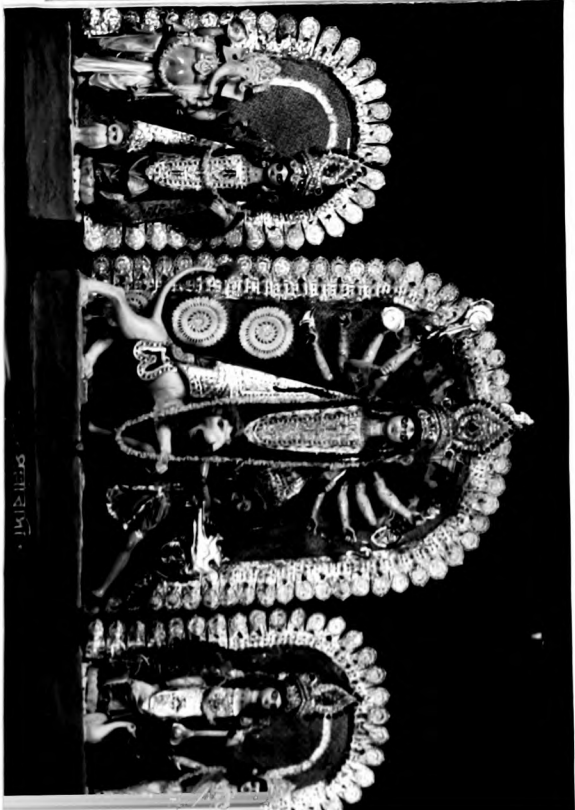
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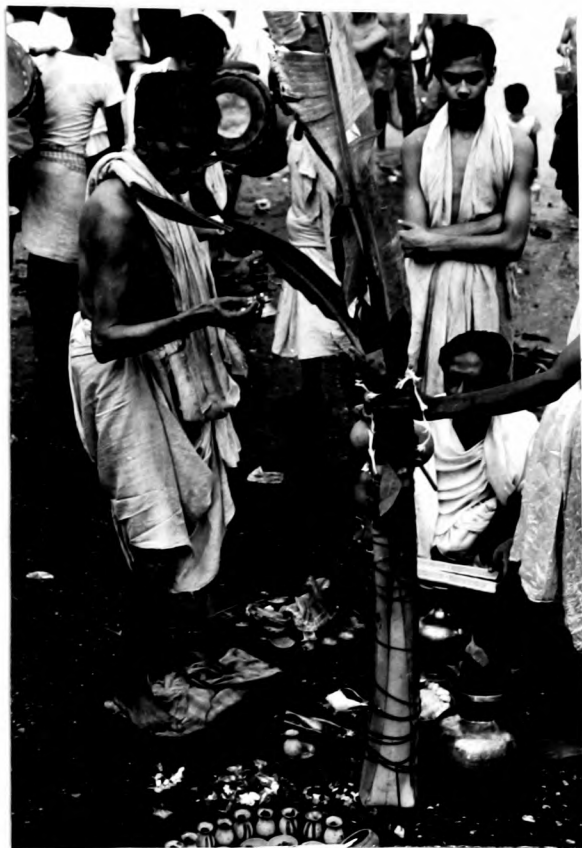
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PLATE J.



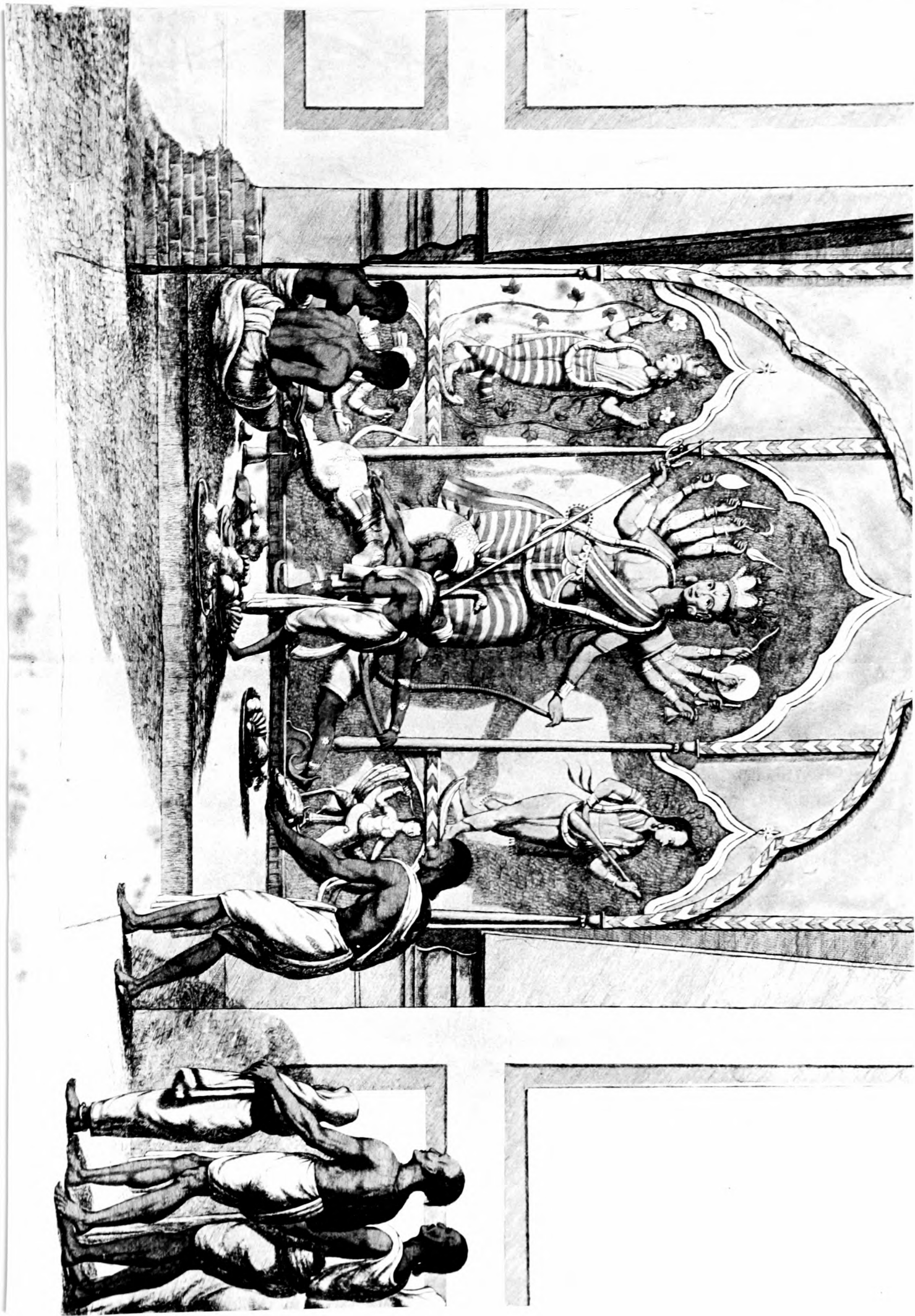
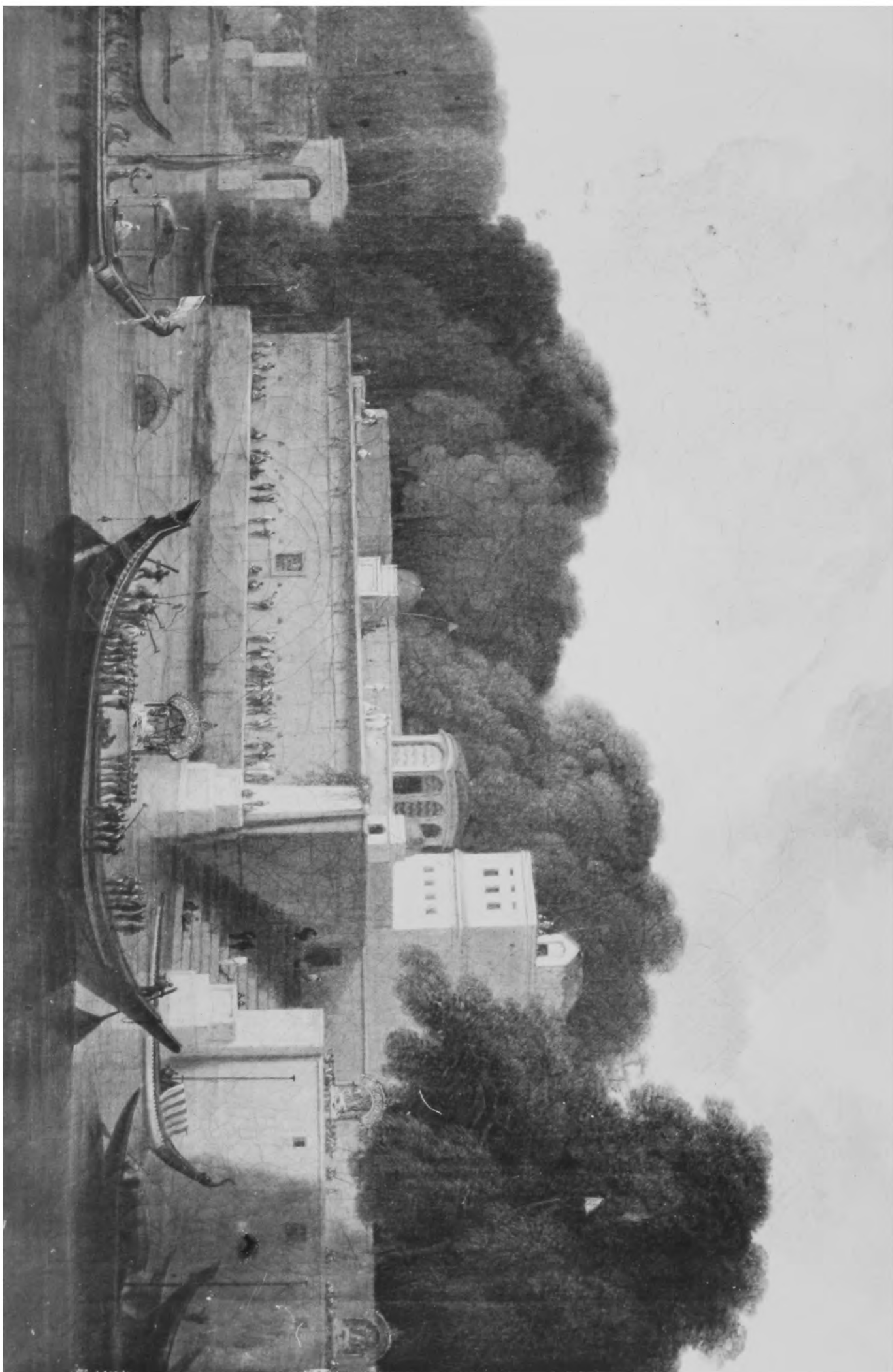


PLATE L.



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ABBREVIATIONS:

JISOA	Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art.
CHI	Cultural History of India, ed. H.Bhattacharyya.
IHQ	Indian Historical Quarterly.
MR	Modern Review.
MASI	Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India.
MI	Man in India.
SBH	Sacred Books of the Hindus.
n.a.	no author.
n.pub.	no publisher.
n.d.	no date.

(Bibliographical details correspond to those given on the title pages of books. In some cases, therefore, books with Sanskrit titles have no diacritical marks, and there may be variations in spelling.)