

Shakta Iconology of Nepal

-Mrs. Sony Maskey

Introduction

Shaktism appears to be a compound of Hinduism with an Aryan beliefs. It differs from most sects in not being due to the creative or reforming energy of any human-founder. The worship of the goddess Durga is in fact the worship of Shakti or the female principal, incarnate as the Source par excellence of all life and death and of all wellbeing and misery in general. Hence Shaktism is the worship of Shakti or Siva's spouse under various names, of which Durga, Devi and Kali are the best known.¹ Hinduism has recognised and represented the feminine principle. Since the one is beyond all pairs of opposite it must encompass both male and female,² without the female energy there is no creation or evolution, perhaps following the identification of Rudra and Agni, Shakti was identified with the tongues of fire and similarly named.

The Brahmana literature mention her as a Source of Strength, naturally she became a source of power.³

1. Antiquity of Shaktism

Due to a popularising of the Sankhya idea of Purusha and Prakriti, it helped to invest the Devi with all the powers and form a union of power and will, all things were produced. The prakriti is identified with Maya, the goddess of illusion in *Vai-vartha purana*.⁴ The same record shows the division of prakriti into five portions and She is, therefore, the cause of Siva. The worship of Devi, thus naturally is one of the considerable antiquity and popularity.

Regarding the antiquity of Shaktism it can be said that the worship of female deities became prominent somewhat in Indian literatures and represent the better ideals of the period when it appeared.⁵ The

1) Eliot, Sir Charles, 'Hinduism and Buddhism' Volume II, Great Britain, 1921, p. 274.

2) Donald and Jeanjohn Son, 'Gods and Goddesses in Hinduism' New Delhi, 1972, p. 65.

3) Munshi, K. M; Majumdar, R. C; Pusalker, A. D; and Majumdar P. K., 'The Classical Age' Vol. III, Bombay, 1962, p. 444.

4) Alkinson, T. Edwin; 'Religion in the Himalayas' India 1974, p. 735.

5) Eliot, 'Hinduism and Buddhism', *Op. Cit.* p. 275.

Goddess of Rgveda are insignificant but this veda is evidently a marmal prayer from which many departments of popular religion were excluded. It has been said in the Rgveda that without affiliation and single with her other than the devini nothing existed. In one Vedanta philosophy and popular sects all created things are held to be illusory, the Shakti; or active will of the deity, is always disintegrated and spoken of as Maya, Mahamaya. The worship of the female principal, as distinct from the divinity, appears to have originated in the literal language of the vedas in which the will to create the universe, is represented as originating from the creator, and co-existent with him as his consort, and part of himself.¹

In the Arthava-Veda many spirits with feminine names are invoked and there is an inclination to personify bad qualities and disaster as goddesses. Nor we do find any goddesses attaining a position comparable to that held by Durga. But there is no doubt that the worship of goddess as great powers is both ancient and wide spread,² we find the figure of goddess Anhita on the coins of the Kushana, who must at one time have been known on the North-western borders of India. There are groups of goddesses varying in number and often melovent.

The Kalika Purana mention of the

offering of blood drawn from the sacrificers own body. The goddess like Kali, Bhairavi, Chhinnamastaka are not the products of purely Hindu imagination but represent earlier stages of amalgamation in which Hindu and aboriginal ideas are already compound.³ The notion of Shakti as the supreme power seems to appear fully only in the 'Svetesvatara Upanishad'. 'She is the source of all the universe creator, she is the form of all that is conscious' according to Devi Bhagavat Purana.⁴

According to some scholars, Shaktiam has been derived from lower cults. In 'Yajur Veda', we find Rudra associated with a female deity called Ambika, who is noted as the daughter of the Himalayas. She was perhaps originally a sacred peak.

She has been mentioned in the epics under a number of names. Many of her myths and their meanings are given in the Puranas, particularly the Brahma-Vaivarta, Kurma the garuda. The Kali Upanishad and Tara Upanishad advocate the worship of the goddess as the symbol of the unqualified principle, the immensity, the Brahman. According to the Suta Samhita to be freed from the world, one should worship the witness of all the transcendent energy, whose shape is the self and in whom are found neither the manifest world nor its pleasure.⁵

In Kena-Upanishad, Uma Memavati explains to the gods that a being whom they

1) Wilson, H. H., 'Religious sects of the Hindus', Calcutta 1958, p. 136.

2) Ibid. 167.

3) Ibid.

4) Danielon, Alain, 'Hindu Polythesism' London 1964, pp 254 to 255.

5) Ibid. p. 257.

don't know is Brahma and later we hear of a similar goddess in the Vindhyas, Mahavindhyesvari, who was connected with human sacrifice.¹ Deities have different aspects and has many forms classified as white and black or terrible. Uma belongs to the former class but the later Durga, Kali, etc. are more important.

Shaktism regards the goddess as the active manifestation of the godhead and is also identified with Maya and Prakriti, which is pictured as female. Shakti is not in emancipation or aspect of the deity and there is no distinction between Brahman and Shakti. She is Parabrahman and supreme of the supreme.²

Shaktism as a definite sect started from North-Eastern India and still it is chiefly popular in Bengal and Assam as proved by the inscription of the Kings. We find the mention of Durga in the Mahabharat who is said to love offerings of flesh and wine. The hymn addressed by Arjuna to Durga proves that Durga had already acquired such an importance that she was adorned by men as a powerful goddess, able to fulfill their desires, at the time when this hymn was composed. She was addressed in the following names as Kumari, Kali, Kapali, Vijaya, Kansika, Uma, Kantara, Vasini, etc.³ Bana (630) does not speak of saktas in his list of sectaries.

Shaktism or Tantrism was prevalent before 7th century A. D.

From 12th to 16th century when Buddhism itself deeply infected with tantrism was disappearing and shaktism was probably the most powerful religion but vaisnavism was gaining strength. But in the end of 15th century the Assamese King patronised shaktism. It never inspired any popular movement but was popular among the aristocrats.

But the later upanishads mention shakti in the same sense of creative energy. Shakti, who pervades the universe is also present in the body as Kundalini and it is a part of sadhana to arouse this energy. The shaktis are made to dwell in the human frame in suitable positions.⁴ Shakti is many deities combined into one. Among such forms we find ten Mahavidyas but the most popular manifestation of shakti is Durga and Kali.

The 'Padma-Purana' mention that the chief sanctuary of shakti is at Kamakhya,⁵ with an inscription.

In the 'Harivamsa Purana' we find the mention of Visnu praying Nindra Kala Rupini Devi and it also defines her great shakti. Kali kills Chanda and Munda and she is also called as "Chamunda". In 'Virat Parva' Udhisthir worships 'Mahishasuramardini' (Plate No 1). In the next hymn she is regarded as Apya (Durga) in which she is represented as the goddess of the wild tribes. According to 'Markendaya-Purana', the goddess that killed the 'Buffalo-demon' was made up of the fierce radiance of Siva,

1) Eliot, *Op. Cit.*, p 277.

2) Ibid, p 278.

3) Bhandarkar, R. G., 'Salrism, vaisnavism and other minor religions'. Part I, 142.

4) Eliot, *Op Cit.* p 283.

5) Ibid, p. 286.

Visnu, and Brahmadeva. She is called Chandi and Ambika.¹

We also find the important place of the Saptamatrikas along with shakti in SHT, which are the powers or spirits of the gods from whom their names are derived, are called the excellent forms.² The matrika is mentioned as the knowledge of wisdom so she is regarded as the Janmadata of Brahma. In 'Siva grantha' Siva himself is shown worshipping the matrikas. We find the division of these Saptamatrikas as Uma divided her body into seven pieces according to SHT and in YHT we find the mention of eight matrikas. In India we find Narasimhi instead of Mahalaxmi. It seems that these deities occupy little position because of their quality and in 'Swyambhu Purana' also we find the mention of these deities.

In Rgveda also we find the mention of Saptamatrikas and the 'Govil Smriti' speak of fourteen matrikas. In Markendeya Purana also we find seven matrikas but in Matsya Purana we find hundreds of matrikas. In 'Brihad Samhita' also much attention is paid to the figures of the matrikas. 'Kritya-ratnakar' and 'Devi Purana' speak of the favourite kula also. Many pillar inscriptions, Caves of Ellora and the Palaces of Mathura also speak of its popularity and on the base of images also its antiquity can be traced upto Indus valley civilization. Therefore the matrikas play a very important role in Shakti and Shaktism can be traced to a remote past. In some aspect Shaktism is similar to the erotic visnuite sects but there is little

real analogy in their ways of thinkings and a work like the Mahanirvana tantra presents a refined form of Shaktism modified or it does not prescribe human sacrifices and counseils moderation in the use of wine. This mountane Shaivism had its origin at least before first century before Christ and in the time of Kadphises it was the popular cult of the Kabul and Peshawar valleys.

She is declared not only to be one with the male deity, of whose energy someone of her manifestations is the type as Devi with Siva and Laxmi with Visnu, but it is said that she is equally in all things and that besides her there is nothing. The principal rite of Shakti is derived from tantras although its adoration is authorised by the Puarnas. Some tantras are prior to the puranas and the followers of tantras professed them as the fifth veda, and attribute equal antiquity and superior authority. Therefore, it may be inferred that the system originated at some period in the early centuries of Christinity, being founded on the previous worship of female principal and the practices of the yoga with the Mantras are mystical formulae of the veda.³

She was also worshipped in Egypt, in Mesopotamia, in Greece, in India, etc. In Nepal she is popularly worshipped even today.

(2) Shaktism in Nepal

Now coming upto Nepal it can be said that Nepal has been proved as one of

1) Bhandarkar, R. G. *Op. Cit.* p. 143

2) Ibid.

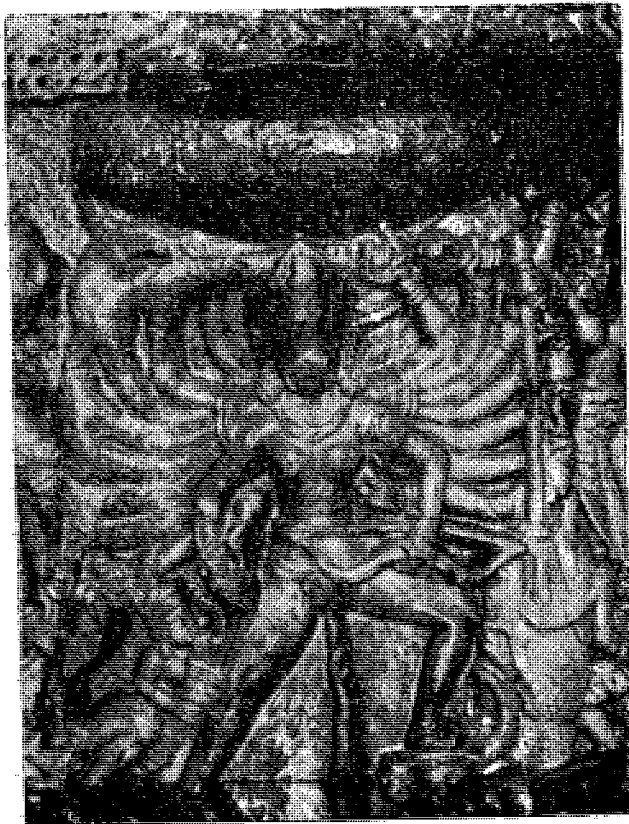
3) Wilson, H. H., *Op. Cit.* pp 139 to 140.

Plate No.1

Ancient Nepal



Ugra Chandi Devi
(Mahismardini), Bhaktapur



Naxal Bhagavati



Palanchok Bhagavati

the most famous sakha pithas .¹ The Pauranic stories of the greater sacrifice of Daksha , the son of Brahma , and the death of Sati therein gave rise to the cosmic dance of Shiva and the cutting down of the corpse of Sati , which Shiva had supported on his shoulder during the frenzied dance , by the Cakra of Vishnu, which brought the wanton destruction of creation by Shiva to a close. The places where the fragments of Sati's body had fallen became each a sacred spot or Pith sthana.

It may be recalled that Sati as the embodiment of the primordial and eternal principle of the mother goddess had already displayed her all powerful forms of Dasamahavidya for inspiring Shiva with awe and reverence and compelling him to grant her the permission to proceed to the sacrifice of Daksha to which neither Shiva nor she had been invited. Thus, this Shakti pith became the embodiment of the basic principle of the union of prakriti and purusha.

We find the high position of Shakti in the Vedas, epics and during upanishadic period. After Buddhism it gained its popularity in a great number. We find the mention of Kali, Tara, Bhairavi and others in the Buddhist epics like 'Kalpa tantra' and these very deities later occupied high position in Hindu tantra. In Jainism also it has acquired good position. The famous Jaina epic 'Ratna-sagar' also speak of Saraswati-who is known as Barahi, Sharada, Bagiswari, Brahmani, etc.

In the famous epics of Hindu like Ramayana and Mahabharata, Devi Bhagavati, Markendeya Purana speak of the great importance

of Shakti. In Mahabharata we find the mention of Kali, Kapali, Mahakali, Chandi, etc. Nepal is a Hindu Kingdom and most of its people are the followers of Shaktism from the very beginning of history. We find the practice of animal sacrifice and we find many temples and images dedicated to Shakti in Nepal.

Only on the basis of inscriptions we are not able to construct the complete history of Shaktism. On the basis of one inscription of Palanchowk Bhagavati we came to know that an image of 'Devi Vijayashree' was installed by queen Vijayaswamini. From this inscription nothing more has come to light except the Devi has got popularity during that reign. But there are many archaeological points to prove it. During Lichhivi period Shaktism seems Co-related with Shaivism the solid foundation of which can be proved. In some inscriptions of that period we find the hymns in praise of Shiva along with that of Bhagavati and the existing Uma-Maheswara or alingana murtis of the Shiva Parivar and others prove this fact.

The next thing to prove the popularity of Shakti cult during Lichhivi period is the coins of Manadeva. In the obverso part of the coin we see a lion with its² Paw raised,³ holding a lotus flower by the raised paw. Perhaps that very loin was to indicate the deity of Shakta cult because it is well known that lion is the pet animal of Durga. In Vaisali the homeland of the Lichhivis this sign has gained much popularity and perhaps the Lichhivis could not forget this and influenced by their 'Istadevi' perhaps minted the lion

1) Regmi, J. C; 'Nepalko Dharmik Itihash', Nepal 2030, p 193.

2) Ibid.

3) Chhochu, Maheswarman: 'Hamro-Sanskriti' Anka 3, Jestha 30, 2024, p 15.

on the coins as viewed by Mr. Alatekra.

In Arya Society the flower is used in peaceful activities. That's why that pose of the lion means that Shakti gives peace or peace is maintained by Shakti. According to K. P. Jayaswal Bhogbati was the 'Istadevi' of Manadeva but it has been proved groundless by the scholars.

In Gunanka coin also we find the four figures. The last figure is a female figure having a pointed crown and it seems that she is holding 'Chanwar'.

The 'Padma Sit' figure of Manaka coin proves that it is a figure of a deity. The hair style of this figure is like that of the Kumari and the posture is almost the same. From the history of the Lichhivis it appears that Devi was their family deity. According to K. P. Jayaswal Bhogbati was the Istadevi of Manadeva and many scholars think that perhaps Bhogbati means Bhagbati. The contemporary of Manadeva—Scanda Gupta's coins also bears a female figure sitting on a lotus which is similar to the former. Perhaps for the prosperity they minted the figure of Laxmi on those coins. And the figure of Manaka coin can also be a figure of a Devi which is a glorious influence of Hinduism and Aryan culture.

In another inscription of the same period, we find a reference to a temple of Indal devi, (Gnoli, V, Basak Nepalese inscription in Gupta character, p 304) evidently a matrika goddess in connection with the installation of a linga known as Ratneswara. The temple of Chhinnamastika is one of the manifestations of the goddess Kali with an inscription of Jisnu Gupta. We also find a number of small images scattered in the yard of the temple at Arya-ghat, which was at one time a centre of Devi worship.

The Handi gaon inscription of Amsuvarma speaks of the donation of money by the king for the construction of the temple of 'Sasthi Devi'. This inscription tells us of some religious activities performed by the queen of Amsuvarma in the name of her husband. On the basis of this inscription this Banakali can be considered as that of Lichhivi period. As this deity was popular among the public. Perhaps Amsuvarma gave financial help for the construction of the temple. In ancient India we don't find the iconography figures of these deities but in Nepal we find it which is a characteristic feature of the Nepalese.

The figure of Tunal Devi was also built. The image of Naxal Bhagavati (Plate No. 2 A) and Sobhabhagavati is similar to the image of Palanchowk Bhagavati (Plate No. 2 B) and from artistic point of view they can be regarded as that of Lichhivi period.

The Sankhamul Sikudahi inscription of 495 tells us that the images of matrika devi were ruined in course of time. Its hands and legs were broken so Babhruvarma wished to repair it but he died. So it was constructed by the mother of Deva, varma. In other way this inscription also proves the fact that the artists used mud as an important material which was not durable.

During 9th-10th century it became more popular. It appears as an independent school but connected with Shaivism.

In our country all the gods have female counterparts. In Nepal the Buddhist deities also have their counterparts. The Nepalese believe Shiva without Shakti but the Buddhas without Tara, Vajra or Prajna are of no value because in medieval period Vajrayana became popular but without Shakti Vajrayana is nothing. In the combination of male and female they combine the ultimate reality.

It is the mother goddess cult which has taught the Nepalese people to struggle than surrender and created harmony among the followers of different faiths. Tantrism is also but the out come of this cult. Thus it has taught the Nepalese to believe more on the cult of life than the cult of death.

Now coming to the medieval period, it can be said that Sthithi Malla was a devotee of 'Maneswari' and got the epithet as 'Shree Maneswari Baralabdha Prasad' which has been mentioned in the inscription of patan Kumbheswar. ¹ We find the mention of this deity in the ins. of Handigaon, Lagan tole and Naxal inscription but we are not able to know more about the antiquity of this deity. The 'Bhasa vamsavali' mention that Manadeva installed the image of Maneswari but we don't have any solid proof. Jyotir Malla was also a devotee of this deity and got the epithet as 'Shree Maneswari Baralabdha Prasadit'. ² and Yaksha Malla also used the same epithet which has been proved by the inscriptions.

Upto this period 'Jhankeswari' also got the popularity and the 527 N.S. inscription shows that 'Jayajitra Singh' got the epithet as 'Shree 2 Jhankeswari Baralabdha Prasadit'. ³

The Devi Purana mention the importance of 'Guhyakali' in Nepal and the 'Bayu Purana' also mention of 'Nepal Pitha'. During late Malla period the 'eight kalikas of Kantipur', 'eight Astamatrikas of Bhaktapur' and 'eight kumaris of Patan', became popular and got many names. They brought the Saivite and Buddhist groups still closer. We have the evidence of two groups of female deities of Shakta

cult. Vaisnavi and Shakti or Raudra. We find the four divisions of Vaisnavi form. They are Yogamaya, Laxmi, Saraswati, Bhu Devi.

In her Raudri form we find Parvati, Bhadrakali, Durga, Mahishasuramardini, Mahakali, Sapamatrika.

In Nepal we find 'Astamatrikas' which consist of Brahmayini, Rudrayini, Kumari, Vaisnavi, Varahi, Indrayini, Chamunda and 'Mahalaxmi'. In Dasa Mahavida' we find Kali, Tara', Tripurasundari, Bhuvanewari, Chhinnamastaka, Tripurabhairvi, Dhumavati, 'Baglamukhi' Matangi, and Kamalatanika. In Astamatrika group we find sometimes Narasimhi instead of Mahalaxmi.

An illustrated Manuscript dated 1732-1771 A. D. show the worship of Guhyaswari by Jayaprakash Malla as his Istadevi and in 17th century Pratap Malla built a temple over this Pithadevata but she is not present in any record prior to 14th century. Saraswati seems to occupy high position during this period but she lost her popularity later on but even today, also an bright full Shree Panchami day she is worshipped. The goddesses like Naradevi, Dacchinkali are offered liquor and blood in orgies to drunkenness and the tradition of Kumari Puja seems to be very active and protent and even today a girl of 6 is duly enshrined as Kumari and worshipped as a true living goddess.

The cult of thiesedeities are very old and is worshipped as Azimas. It has been said that originally they represent 7 or 8 evil aspects of the mind. Some count only seven but is headed by Yogeswari who personifies

1) Regmi, D. R.; 'Medieval Nepal' Vol III, (Calcutta 1966), p 33.

2) Ibid, p 49.

3) Ibid, p 43.

the mental quality of Kama. As the medieval age was the age of superstitious and demons these deities were there to protect the people. And we find many images of these deities.

3) The Shakta iconographic features:

Art is the quintessence of a nation's being, for it is the reflection of a people's soul in its varying moods. It is an expression by the creative genius of the inner carvings and desires. In Nepalese art we find the influence of different cults. So it can be said that the religion has inspired the art of Nepal and the art of Nepal subserves the needs of religion.

There is an equally strong belief in the existence of a Kiranti school of art in keeping with the belief in the rule of the Kirantis before the Lichhivis came to power. Now let us describe the different characteristic features of Lichhivis and Malla images.

In early Lichhivi figures we find that the artist is able to present the figures with simplicity, proportionate (limbs), lack of heavy ornamentation, solid and masculine body, use of holy thread, lower dress upto the waist, elaborate hairstyle, slenderness of waist, not too plump breast and the upper part of the body are the characteristic of early Lichhivi period. In comparison to this, the late Lichhivi figures are a bit complicated and we find the use of ornaments, use of different paste and find the dress on the upper part of the body. Now let us describe some important Shakta images of Nepal belonging to Lichhivi and Malla period.

Because of the influence of tantrism we find Durga on her various manifestations. It

is the Raudra aspect of Uma. Sometimes she is named in recognition of one or other of her heroic achievements, e. g. she is called 'Mahishasuramardina' in consequence of her having destroyed Mahishasura. 'Silparatna' describes that the goddess in this form should have two hands and adds by saying that it should have three eyes, wears a Jata mukuta and should have a digit of the Moon. She should have high breasts, and a slender waist with three bends in the body. Her eyes should resemble the blue lily. She carries trisula, Khadga, Sakhya Yudha, Chakra, and a stringed bow in her right hand. While her left hand carries Pasa, Ankusha, Khetka, Parasu, and a bell. At her feet should lie a buffalo with its head cut off and with blood gushing from its neck. From within this neck should be visible the half emerged real asura bound down by the Negapasa of the Devi.

The asura carries a sword and a shield and should have a terrific look and knitted eye brows. The right feet of the Devi should be placed on the back of her lion and her left feet should touch the buffalo-body of Mahishasura.¹

The best and the oldest example of this form of Durga is the Mahishasuramardini of Lichhivi period - a blend mixture of vedic tradition and tantrism is the 'Palanchok Bhagavati' also known as 'Vijaya Shree'. The image of this 'Vijaya Shree' is installed by Vijayaswamini. According to some this 'Vijayaswamini' is the concubine of Manadeva but some mention her as somebody not connected with Manadeva but installed the image during the reign of Manadeva, 'Palanchowk Bhagavati'. The goddess has eighteen hands. The right hands carry Khadga, Parasu, Ghanta, Chakra, Akshamala, Lotus flower, Sal, while the left hands carry Dhal, Dhanush, Trident, Bajra,

1) Rao, T. A. Gopinath, 'The Elements of Hindu Iconography' Vol I Part II, Delhi, 1968, pp 345 to 346.

Khatwang, the buffalos tail, and in abhya posture. The one right hand carry Bindu and the left hand carry a Patra which is in the middle.

The image has proportionate limbs. The left thigh of the goddess is muscular as it rests on the buffalo's body. It is very natural. The right leg is to some extent tilted and rests upon the back of the lion.

We also the slenderness of the waist and the plastic and mobile body and exaggerated hips. The figure is presented with simplicity and the ornaments are also restrained. The hair style is elaborate and the hair is thrown in the back on the sides with beautiful curls. The artist seems to have paid much attention on ear ornaments too and the decorated and diaphanous drapery is the typical characteristic of this figure.

The face of the goddess is quite calm and we see the use of pointed crown. The half emerged real asura from the buffalos neck is stabbed by the trident of the goddess. The asura is shown holding a sword and have a terrific look. The goddess has an eye on the forehead also.

The nimbus is oval shaped and we find the presence of two other small figures. This image is a monolithic one and is carved on black sand stone. It is a fine and adorable specimen of Nepalese sculpture. It is believed that the stone image is one of the master piece of Nepalese sculptures.

According to one legend, after the construction of this image the hand of the artist was cut off. So in comparison to Palanchowk Bhagavati, Naxal Bhagavati, Nala Bhagavati became worse although made by the same artist. There is no doubt that in comparison to these two and Sobhabhagavati, the Palanchowk

Bhagavati is more beautiful and fine. As the above legend is not proved there is the probability of the construction of the coarse images before the construction of Palanchowk Bhagavati. Again there are many scholars who take this Palanchowk Bhagavati as that of 10th-11th century. But acc. to the inscription it was constructed during 5th-6th century. Perhaps the former image was lost and the later was replaced in that place during Malla period. There are many other images scattered around the Bhagavati which is of Malla period. But as the style, posture and group of these Malla images differs from that of Bhagavati it can be said that it does not belong to Malla period. The next fact is the simplicity and calm facial expression which we get in this image and the natural presentation of the image which help us to say that it is of Lichhivi period and not the later replaced one.

Sobhabhagavati:—The image of Sobhabhagavati can also be dated to 5th-6th century. It is to some extent the exact copy of Palanchowk Bhagavati with a slight variation. In this image we see only eight hands. The right hands carry Chakra, Khadga, Parasu and one in barada Poshure. While the left hands carry bell, dhal, trisula, and holding the tail of buffalo demon.

The trisula of this Bhagavati is in the left hand which is piercing the hipside of the buffalo demon. According to the iconographic text and in the Palanchowk Bhagavati the trident is in the right hand and piercing the neck of buffalo demon. But in this Sobhabhagavati we see this trisula being hold by the left hand and see the trisula piercing from the hipside to the stomach. This is one difference between the two.

The second peculiarity of this Bhagavati is that the head of the buffalo demon is not cut which we see in the Palanchowk Bhagavati.

In this Bhagavati the real asura is not visible as that of Palanchowk Bhagavati. The next diffe-

rence between these two is that in this image we see the left feet being rested upon the head of the buffalo and the right leg tilted to some extent not rested on the back of the lion. There we see the absence of the lion. Whereas in palanchowk Bhagavati we see the right leg tilted to some extent and rested on the back of the lion and the left feet rested on the back of the buffalo not on its head.

The difference of these, which according to iconographic text, should be in the Mahishasuramardini figure, shows the originality of the Nepalese artist of that period.

In this figure the artist has become able to present the naturalness in the muscled thigh as the feet press the buffalo. As the head of the buffalo is pressed the body of the buffalo demon is seen rise in vertically upward posture. This natural posture—which the artist has presented shows the characteristic feature of the Lichhivi art.

The face of the Devi is damaged so it can be said that probably the Devi had calm expression. This image has proportionate limbs, not too plump breast, slenderness of the waist and exaggerated hips.

The Devi has transparent garment upto the waist and the decorated diaphanous drapery. As the face and head portion is damaged we are not able to say about the hair style. Perhaps like other Lichhivi images it had also elaborate hair style and has pointed crown. The Devi has usual bangles on her hands and the chain or necklace is not clear. It has restrained ornaments. We see two types of earrings in her ear and in her feet we see only 'Tutibaghi'.

So it can be said that the Lichhivi figures contain a magnificent grandeur in their representation. The halo of the Devi is also oval shaped. Above this figure we see a torana containing 'astamatrikas' which is a later addition. Like Palanchowk Bhagavati it is also a monolithic figure and on the side of the goddess we find Jawalamukhi, Ablamukhi, and Bagalamukhi, the ganas of the Devi. This figure is very much similar to the image of the Devi at 'Kankeswari' under a Pipal tree and it seems that both figures are made by the same artist.

The posture, stone and colour of this Bhagavati is similar to that of Naxal Bhagavati. Although the Sobhabhagavati and Naxal Bhagavati are similar in their appearance. The Naxal Bhagavati appears coarse because of the addition of some of the devaganas.

The early Haritis of Kirtipur are not only the monumental but also have their ponderous and heavy forms and the forms are drastically simplified and there is unquestionably reminiscent of the Mathura Yaksis of the Kushana period.¹

The magnificent Pashupatinath Devi dated 7th century is frontally conceived and there is a perceptible change in the modeling and the form is eminently tactile. The outline is defined multifluosly and the transition from one place to the other is velvety smooth and gentle. The clinging drapery is used cleverly.

The only bronze representing a female figure attributed to Lichhivi period is the Bickford Devi dated 8th century. She is not far removed from the Pashupati Devi figure. The garment of both Devis emphasizes the

1) Pal, Pratapaditya: 'The art of Nepal', Neitherland, 1974, p 129.

round shapes rather than conceal them. Similarly proportioned they share the same sense of amplitude and esnsuous delight. But the Bickford figure is more simpler than the Pashupati-devi. The Bickford Devi is in graceful stance. It attains the same sense of monumentality and physical splendour as the overpowering Pashupati-devi. ¹ and are closely related to Indian sculptures. They appear to have undergone a distinct transferablation in the Thakuri Period.

The Uma of 6th century compared with Uma with her attendants in the Rock-feller-stele shows some differences although the later remain still delightful. The breasts are smaller and placed further apart. We see a difference in slender and fragile figures. The torso is slim and the legs long and smooth. ²

Now let us came to some important early Malla images Mahishasuramardini of Kilagal Tole:-

The best example of early Malla period figure is the Mahishasuramardini of Kilagal, which is sculptures in a dark grey coloured and close grained sand stone. The figure is 18" in height. Her right leg with a bent rests on the head of a lion which appears to be roaring while her left feet is seen shepped over the body of a buffalo which is tilted to some extent. She has 10 hands. Her right hands carry Sword, Sar, Chakra, Shakti and Trisula while her left hands carry Shield, Bow, Club, Ankusha and Pasa.

Like that of Palanchowk Bhagavati in this image also we see that the trident is Straightly stabbed and the head of buffalo is cut apart from the body. The demon Mahishasura is visible in real asura form emerging from the neck and the goddess is striking the head of the demon with her trident.

She is wearing a Jatamukuta and a circular Ratnakundala, a three stringed ratnahara, and bracalets. We also see transparent and decorated garment and diaphanous drapery. This image also have plastic and mobile body and restrained ornaments. It looks simple.

Mahishasuramardini of Pharping:-

The second best example of early Malla period is the Mahishasuramardini of Pharping, which is 3 feet in height. The stone is rough and dark grey in colour. In this figure we see the goddess with twelve hands holding different objects. The figure is not so elegant and the conflict appears less real and the posture somewhat contrived. There is no effort on the part of the goddess as she thrusts the trident into the buffalo and even the demon emerges from the buffalo's shoulders.

The goddess is standing over a double petalled lotus and below the petals of lotus devotees in Yogapattasana are shown. The hair dress-is in the centre on the top and piled high in characteristic style as an ascetic and then rapped in horizontal coils. The Jatamukuta is recalling the coils of a snake which shows three vertical lines in the front. This goddess known as Jhankeswari is dated 527 N.S.

The deity is decorated with all the feminine dress and ornaments. In this we find the use of upper garment and the lower part of the dress is transparent. The porticen of the waist is tied by a waist band.

Like that of the bracalets of Bhaktapur image in this also we find a special kind of bracalet 'Kalya'. In the feet we find 'Tutibaghi' and in the ear the gogo size rings with flowery designs.

1) Pal, Pratadeditya; 'The arts of Nepal', Netherland, 1974, p 129.

2) Ibid.

In comparison to this Durga, the Durga of Cambridge manuscript cover and a fully modelled bronze in the Heeramanek collection are much lively and spirites. The goddess remains calm in the later and the energy implicit in the powerful buffalo is far better expressed by the 16th century sculptures. The lion below the goddess's right leg is much more active than that of the Pharping lion and the facial expression of the two demons as they lost their weapons enhance the dramatic quality of the scene. The facial expression of the bronze image of Heeramanek collection is neither seen angry nor is engaged in a combat but her face is calm. The simplicity of the outline enhance the compactness of the modeling and the sparse ornaments accentuated her physically while adequately covering her modesty.¹

The Mahishasuramardini aspect of Durga is also portrayed with a slight variation. Despite the iconographic variety there is little deviation either on the formal language or composition.

The Thanhiti Kwabahal Bhagavati is almost the copy of Sobhabhagavati. It was installed by Jayaprakash Malla. In comparison to the Sobhabhagavati it is not nice looking and the body is not proportionate. Although the dhoti is transparent it is profusely decorated. It does not look natural. It has a special kind of shawl rapped from her waist and covering one side of the breast like that of the shawl of the Laxmi of Changu. Although it is a exact copy of Sobhabhagavati the facial expression of this image does not look natural. The nimbus is highly decorated.

The image of goddess Durga, killing the buffalo demon is a spirited relief in the sanctum of Ranipokhari dehata. Here the goddess is represented with more than two legs.²

Now the best example of this Durga during the late Malla period is that of Bhaktapur.

The Ugra Chandi Devi:-

The stone image of goddess Ugra Chandi Devi is hewn out of smooth blocks of stone by King Bhupatindra Malla in 1766 Vikram Sambat. This figure is about 5 feet in height and is a charming figure.

The figure has eighteen hands. The right hands carry Khadga, Sar, Chakra, Vajra, Ankush, and Barada posture, Trisula, Damaru Patro while the left hands carry Dhal, Dhanush, Khatwang, Parasu, Pas, tail of the buffalo demon, Khetak and Bindu. The Trisula is seen piercing the real asura who is visible emerging out of the buffalo's neck.

The left leg of the Devi rests on the back of the buffalo which is tilted to some extent and her right leg, with a bent, rests on the back of the lion. The artist has successfully portrayed even the nail on the fingers. The Devi is standing over a double petalled lotus in the pose of killing the demon (Samharamurti).

The Devi is decorated with all the classical feminine dress and ornaments. The most attractive and the famous ornament in the images of Bhaktapur is the bracelet of 'Kalya' on the hands which we find in this image also. We find the use of armet and the Devi is wearing a kind of necklace known as 'Tayo', Astamala and Mundamala a garland of Skulls. She is wearing a highly decorated waistband and in the legs we see only 'Tutibaghi'. The crown is profusely decorated and we see skulls in this also. In the crown is places a flag like thing in symmetrical order which is a symbol of astamangal. We see Kundala on

1) Ibid, p 156

2) Pandey, Ram Nivas; 'Vasudha' The terracetra art of Nepal' Chaitra 2024, p 36.

both ears with flowery designs. The Devi is wearing a Jama which is highly decorated and shows the tantric influence.

The face is calm and the Devi has almond eyes. The Devi has proportionate limbs has Malla artistic characteristic features.

The asura emerging out of the neck of the buffalo has also profusely decorated dress and ornaments mainly the crown. The face of the demon does not look much terrible, but it looks as if puzzled. The lion is given wings and it just assume leonine appearance. The open mouth of the lion seemly suggest the act of roaring but the appearance is no animated. The lion wears a chain like or beaded necklace suspending a bell and on the head a finial like object with raised top.

The figure of the Devi is natural but it is highly decorated.

Besides this Ugra Chandi Devi the other notable Shakta images of Bhaktapur are the Barahi-carved in a beautiful polished stone. The various figures of goddess Chandi in different poses while killing the buffalo demon at the north hall of Kumari Chowk, and a distinct type of stone image of goddess Bhagavati in the vicinity of the Bhairaba temple.

Then crowning the towering pantheon of female energies we have a unique female energy, a living goddess, a human being in the form of Kumari.¹

4) Conclusion:

The Durga Mahishasuramardini is a slayer of buffalo demon and her iconographic representation is depicted with the scene in the act of killing the demon. The image is a standing one which has been proved by the above mentioned facts.

Although the Lichhivi Shakta images are less decorated and lack heavy ornamentations than the Malla figures. They are rich in natural artistic beauty. According to Vishnu Dharmottara this form of Durga is known as Chamunda and Chandika, who should have fierce looking. Regarding the iconographic feature of Kali she is a black figure with gaping mouth and protrude tongue, dancing on a prostrate body and adorned with skulls and horrid emblems of destruction. She has a peculiar smell about her calculated to create fear in the mind of all.

The images of Durga on her various manifestations originated on the conception of tantrism. Almost all the Lichhivi figures are clam so although influenced by tantrism the appearance of the figure is clam and are not decorated with heavy ornaments. It is a characteristic feature of Lichhivi art. The late Lichhivi art is influenced by tantrism but as the artists could not forget the previous simplicity the art of this period can be recognised which is a blend mixture of tantrism and vedic tradition meaning they are neither complicated nor simple which is a characteristic feature of early Malla art.

As tantrism got deep-rooted during Malla period almost all the Malla images are complicated which can be proved by the use of heavy ornamentation, postures, different form as having several heads, hands etc. Although the images of Nepal are complicated and have different heads and hands. They have human appearance. As the Malla figures have long hands and feet they are deprived of their natural beauty.

The existence of the Kirata school of art has been accepted by almost all the scholars, which was developed during Lichhivi

1) Saymi, Dhooswan; 'Vasudha' 'The mother goddess cult' Sept-Oct 1968, p 27.

and Malla period with timely changes and influenced by pala, gupta, and gandharva art. In this way the Lichhivi art reached its climax.

We find many Ardhanariswara and alingana murtis or Umamaheswaras and Laxmi-Narayan images also of Lichhivi and Malla period, and although influenced by the art of neighbouring countries Nepal developed a personality of its own and evolved many Vex expressions. Thus the art of Nepal is distinctive in its own right.

Besides the stone sculptures we have many terracotta and wooden carvings. Shiva and Parvati sitting on a sila, depicting on the exterior of a posthard is a fine example of terracotta of Lichhivi period.

Now let us come to the paintings. The art of painting is variously expressed in murals, manuscripts, wooden covers, paubhas, and on papers. We find the painting of the Shakta deities also and the best example of it is an illustrated manuscript of Saptasati, dateable during Indradeva and there are representations of 10 mother goddesses or Durga in her ten manifestations.

The illustrated cover dated 10th century bears the figures of 18 gods and goddesses and we see pointed crown on the head of the Buddhas. They are shown in dhyanī posture. The Taras and Pujadevis wear the printed jamas of different colours and the proportionate limbs and body show the success of the artist in painting.

In the 11th century manuscript wooden covers we find the picture of Shiva Parvati seated in Lalitasana and the yoginis are painted left and right. But the Jata-mukuta of Shiva is not ordinary. We also see the clouds and

find the tantric influence in it. Parvati is shown seated on the lap of Shiva and the dresses and ornaments are to some extent similar to the 10th century paintings.

An illustrated manuscript dated 1732-1771 A. D. shows the King Jayaprakash Malla worshipping the goddess Guheyswari who was his 'Istadevi'. She is not present in any record prior to 14th century. We also find a female embodiment of sensual passion-Vajravahini dated 18th 19th century painted on cloth in Nepal museum.

The paubha of 607 shows the union image of Mahasambhara and his Shakti. We also find Laxmi in a painting dated 17th century on a details from a pata of Vishnu.

In wood covers we have four standing and sitting images of the matrika goddess dated 16th century. The standing image is that of Mahishasuramardini with 16 hands and others are those of Kali in black colour with eight hands and wearing a garland of human skulls. The next is Kumari with eight hands seated on a pair of peacocks and the others seated on lions with yellow colour with bright red colour except Kali.

All these deities wear similar diadems with earflowers, earflaps and have half sleeve blouse and shirts of different colour with different kinds of designs. The garlands are like that of images Kali wears a piece of tiger skin around her lower abdomen.¹

The next set of such illustration is 'Pancharaksa' in the Durbar library has also 16 handed images with one leg placed on the lion and other on the back of the buffalo demon. The whole manuscript represent the Mahishasuramardini with similar dresses and ornaments as discussed above.

1) Regmi, D. R.; 'Medieval Nepal' Volume II, Calcutta 1968, p 976.

We find the Purusa-Shakti image in lotus asana the male in red and female in grey colour embraced by the left hand of the male. The feet is placed on the thigh and the dhoti drawn to the ankles. The body of both is beautifully shaped and the face has a fine modelling and a cornate worn on the forehead adds grace to the appearance. Thus we find many miniatures, paubhas, frescoes, manuscripts having the paintings of Shakta cult in her various manifestations.

The scattered images of Shakti show the

popularity of this cult through out the ages and the various manifestations of Shakti are found with a slight variation. This cult also inspire the art of Nepal which subserves the needs of religion. The art of Nepal not only became famous in itself but also played an initiatory and decisive part in the art of Tibet and China. The art of Nepal was a first inspired by religion so it encompass the Brahmanical gods and goddess and the Buddhist deities and the tantric theory and practice brought about these between the two principle faiths.¹

1) Banerjee, N. R; *An Introduction to Nepalese art*, Oct 1966, Calcutta, p. m.