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Jenkins, Joyce Louise Plath (M. F. A., Fine Arts; Creative Arts)

Hinduism's Destructive Female Goddesses

Thesis directed by Associate Professor John D. Hoag

This thesis for the Master of Fine Arts degree by
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HINDUISM'S DESTRUCTIVE FEMALE GODDESSES

by

Joyce Louise Plath Jenkins

John D. Hoag

B. A., Coe College, 1964

Lynn R. Wolfe

Lynn R. Wolfe

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate
School of the University of Colorado in partial
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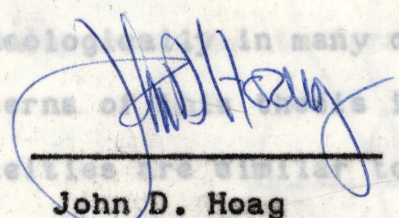
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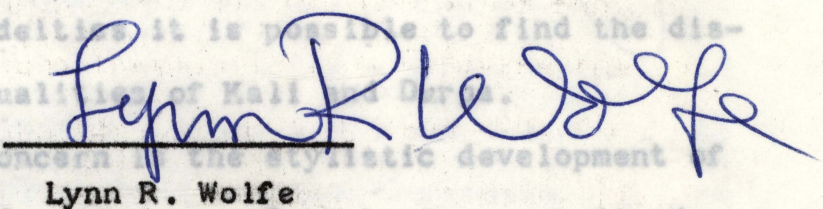
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Hinduism's Destructive Female Goddesses these goddesses

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This thesis is concerned with the development of Kali and Durga as destructive personifications of the mother goddess concept in India. They both grew out of a primitive fertility goddess found in the Indus Valley Civilization. This development from a mother goddess to a goddess of war and destruction was paralleled iconographically and ideologically in many other civilizations. One of the concerns of this thesis is a discussion of how the Hindu deities are similar to and differ from their counterparts in other cultures. Through comparisons with other deities it is possible to find the distinctly Indian qualities of Kali and Durga.

Of primary concern is the stylistic development of Kali and Durga in sculpture. Both begin as stylized fertility deities or folk fetishes. During the early Gupta period they begin to have the traditional attributes of Hindu beauty. Durga continues to evolve along these traditional lines. Kali is still a beautiful woman type in the Medieval and early Tantrik periods but changes into an image of distinct horror, a unique development

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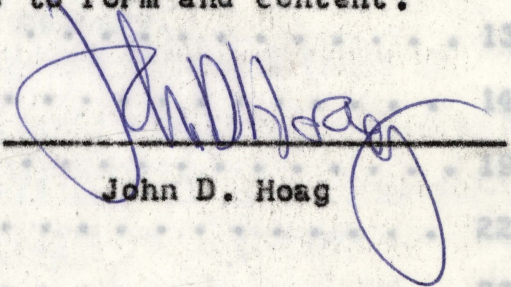
Statement of problem 1

It is necessary to consider the myths and symbols associated with them. Their iconographic symbols are similar to those of war goddesses in other parts of the world. Their mythology is distinctly Indian and reflects the Hindu view of reality. Through comparisons with other deities it is possible to find the distinctly Indian qualities of Kali and Durga.

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Each god and goddess in Hinduism represents one aspect of the Universal Oneness. The concern here is the stylistic, mythological, and iconographical development of the destructive female deities, Kali and Durga. These goddesses had their counterparts in other civilizations. Female deities from a number of cultures will be related to and contrasted with Kali and Durga. Although goddesses

¹ Mukl Raj Anand, The Hindu View of Art (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1933). A good source for information on Hindu aesthetic theory.

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time.

HINDUISM'S DESTRUCTIVE FEMALE GODDESSES

In Hindu art one finds a meeting of the inner and the outer worlds. The disciplined state of inner realization is translated into the outer state of material reality. Beauty in art is an aspect of the cosmic soul which is reached by the contemplation of the many personifications of God.¹ Hindu literature, written by priests and ascetics, emphasizes the contemplative, other world, aspect of art. Works of art were in practice created by craftsmen who were very much involved in the material world. The sense of vitality and movement found in Indian art is due to the artist's visual appreciation of what he cherished in his world as well as what he thought of the world of greater reality.

Each god and goddess in Hinduism represents one aspect of the Universal Oneness. The concern here is the stylistic, mythological, and iconographical development of the destructive female deities, Kali and Durga. These goddesses had their counterparts in other civilizations. Female deities from a number of cultures will be related to and contrasted with Kali and Durga. Although goddesses

¹Mulk Raj Anand, The Hindu View of Art (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1933). A good source for information on Hindu aesthetic theory.

of war and destruction in India, these deities are also worshipped as Mother Earth. The earth goddess is beyond time and change. She is the universal principle who represents procreation and is a precedent to the first born. While the Mother nourishes all her creatures with the substance of life so also she devours them. She is the common grave, malignant as well as benign. It is out of her timeless womb that the human sphere of becoming proceeds. Through her all pervading maya² she is aware of the delusive quality of the earthly life of human beings as a mirage born of her. As the secret nucleus of life her visualizations are "historical projections on the shifting plane of the art and symbol of man's experience in an unchanging transcendental reality."³

The Goddess appears in the earliest known culture in India, the Indus Valley Civilization.⁴ In the Zhob Culture (2500-2000 B.C.) of North Quetta⁵ there are examples of grim, fierce females with enormous thighs

²Maya, cosmic illusion, the world as a dream, mirage, or figment of the imagination.

³Heinrich Zimmer, The Art of Indian Asia (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955), p. 131.

⁴Sir Mortimer Wheeler, The Indus Civilization (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953); a good source for information on the Indus Valley.

⁵Radhakamal Mukerjee, The Flowering of Indian Art (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1964), p. 35.

and yoni.⁶ Nothing quite so suggestive of the destructive mother appears in the Indus Valley itself. Primarily she appears in the form of small figurines, probably used for household worship. Scarfs crossing the breasts and the jeweled girdles of these figures suggest later Arta-Veda longevity symbols. A depiction of a human sacrifice to a goddess on the reverse side of a seal from Harappa suggests similar worship in honor of Kali. Any direct continuation of style or symbols must have been handed down in the form of folk art used by this conquered race after the Aryan invasion.

The Great Mother Goddess may easily have originated in Sumeria in the form of Lilit, the "wind-demon". Sumerian literature describes her as a lascivious goddess who enticed men from their sleep, thus fulfilling her role as patroness of the temple of prostitutes. In the epic, Gilgamesh, she is Ishtar or Astarte, the goddess of the Planet Venus. The Ageans worshipped her as a snake and fertility goddess for plant, animal, and human life. She regulated the heavenly bodies, controlled the seasons, and bore Zeus as her son. As the virgin warrior she killed or tamed fierce beasts. Since the Indus Valley Peoples

⁶Yoni, circular female sex symbol at the base of the phallic lingam; symbolic counterpart to Shiva.

are known to have had contact with Sumeria, it is possible that the concept of the Mother Goddess was adopted from there. Equally probable, however, is the possibility that these people simply followed a universal trend, so frankly expressed in most primitive cultures, to glorify the sexual act and woman's unique role in the creative process of birth. Since the lingam or phallus also appears to have been a prominent object of veneration to these people it is not possible to draw the conclusion that they were necessarily a matriarchal society.

With the coming of the Aryans there was a strong trend toward a male pantheon in which the goddess received a subordinate position. Early literature was handed down verbally among the semi-nomadic herdsmen. The earliest written work is the Rg Veda, in which there is no really specific reference to idols. It seems likely that no idols were recognized by orthodox Brahmins at that time. Reverence for the female deity probably survived from the Indus Civilization in the form of folk art and myth. The first non-Aryan goddess appears in the Kena Upanishad.⁷ She manifested herself to the host of Vedic-Aryan gods and proved superior to all in her knowledge of Brahman. She becomes guru to the male gods and identifies herself with Brahman, the Ultimate Reality.

⁷Zimmer, op. cit., p. 108. (London: Spring Books, 1932), p. 77.

Several images of a goddess have been found dating back at least to the eighth century B.C. These may be a continuation of the folk art tradition from the Indus Valley. The sexual organs of the deity are usually emphasized. Unlike the earlier Indus work there does not appear in these the traditional close, fully rounded breasts; narrow waist; and large, heavy hips of Hindu beauty. That kind of feminine stylization begins to reappear in Buddhist work of the second century B.C. and continues through the Gupta Period. As style and craftsmanship improve, the goddess becomes more sophisticated.

Varshamihira, in Brihatsamhita (sixth century A.D.), thoroughly described contemporary, acceptable feminine traits:

Of good looks are feet marked with fishes, hooks, lotuses, barley-corns, thunderbolts, ploughs, and swords: sweaty and soft in the sole. So too, legs are not hairy, without prominent veins, and quite round. Broad, plump, and heavy hips to support the girdle, and navel deep, large, and turned to the right, are held of good omen in women. A middle with three folds, and not hairy, breasts round, close to each other, equal, and hard; a bosom devoid of hair and soft, and a neck marked with three lines, bring wealth and joys.... Generally speaking, vices will be found with ugly women, whereas virtues reside in one who has a handsome appearance.⁸

Although the above is a comment on mortal women, the same applied to sculpture at this time. It is important to note the identification of the ugly woman with

⁸M. M. Deneck, Indian Sculpture (London: Spring Books, 1962), p. 77.

evil which becomes so important in the development of Kali images. Durga seated on her lion with a lotus at

her feet. During the Gupta Age (320-600) there was a philosophical fusion of Jainism, Brahmanism, Buddhism, and folk cults. It was an age of nationalism with peace, prosperity, and renewed contact with Rome, Iran, and China. The new Hinduism brought with it the concept of the trinity; multiplied duties and legends; and new gods and goddesses. Like the Buddhist, the Hindu sculptor tried to express the sacred power and supernatural force of the divinity he portrayed. The transcendental became a visible principle and the figure acquired the power to express an existence in harmony with the contemporary world. On one

"Stone became the incorporeal center of radiating spiritual light above struggles and triumphs, beyond spheres of feeling and emotion."⁹ Durga she is the daughter of Sin,

In the century before the flowering of the Classical Gupta Age the image of Durga first began to appear. A stone relief from Mathura shows her subduing a buffalo while a lion, later to become her vahana, rushes out at the right and bites the buffalo on the rump. In this early work Durga already has several sets of arms.

⁹Jitendra Nath Banerjea, The Development of Hindu Iconography (Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press, 1956), p. 133.

Number thirty of the Azes coins in the Punjab Museum shows Durga seated on her lion with a lotus at her feet. She has all the attributes of pure Indian beauty. Her war-like task is delicately suggested by the sword she holds in her right hand. The bull of Shiva on the reverse side of the coin supports the identification as Durga as an incarnation of his wife, Parvati.

The association of a war goddess with a lion appears much earlier in other cultures. Ishtar, the Sumerian goddess of the planet Venus, was so famous as the goddess of war in Syria and Canaan that she spread to Egypt, where she appears in hieroglyphic symbols of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries B.C. standing on a lion. On one hand she holds a serpent symbolizing the life of earth and in the other a lotus, the symbol of love. In Babylonian and Assyrian mythology she is the daughter of Sin, the Moon God, and is the "Lady of Battles, Valiant among the goddess".¹⁰ She stands on a chariot drawn by seven lions. As Lamme she was a female vampire who slew children, drank the blood of men, and ate flesh. She became

¹⁰ Larousse, Larousse Dictionary of Mythology (New York: Prometheus Press, 1959), p. 57.

¹¹ Stephan Langdon, The Mythology of All Races: Semitic, Vol. V (Boston: Marshall Jones Co., 1931), p. 366.

¹² W. S. Fox, The Mythology of All Races: Greek and Roman (Boston: Marshall Jones Co., 1916), Vol. I, p. 210.

Lamia in Greek mythology and Gello in Europe. As Gello a dog sucks at her right breast and a pig at her left; she has the Head of a lion.¹¹

The Egyptian goddesses Tefnut and Sekhmet were both portrayed either with the head of a lion or as a lioness. The human and animal symbol were interchangeable. Both were later identified with the Greek goddess Artemis. This great goddess of fertility often appears as a virgin warrior escorted by a lion.

Cybele, the Phrygian goddess of caverns and of the earth in its primitive savage state, sits on a throne or chariot flanked by lions. In the fifth century B.C. the Phrygian slaves introduced her name and worship into Greece. She was associated with the vegetation of tilled lands and still had the traits of the earth goddess. In Greece she was a crowned matronly figure still accompanied by her lion. She held a whip as an emblem of power. Ceremonies worshipping her involved mutilation of the body and orgiastic dances.¹²

It is clear that the association of the lion with a goddess was common and in most cases refers to that

¹¹Stephen Langdon, The Mythology of All Races: Semitic, Vol. V (Boston: Marshal Jones Co., 1931), p. 366.

¹²W. S. Fox, The Mythology of All Races: Greek and Roman (Boston: Marshal Jones Co., 1916), Vol. I, p. 210.

goddess' power in war or violence. The Hindu goddess Durga fits in well with this type of war goddess functioning also as a Mother Goddess or fertility symbol. The literary description of the Durga myth is found in several sources including the Skanda Purana, the Vamana Purana, and The Markandeya Purana (600-800 A.D.). She is most commonly associated with the killing of the buffalo demon, but as Shiva's wife, she is also associated with the lingam-yoni symbol. We read that Durga saw her husband in the form of a lingam--

flaming, burning, and beginning to traverse the world and burn up cities; Durga followed it, uttering the piercing lamentations that re-echo still in the temples. The amazed Brahmans fled for help to Brahma, who advised them to sacrifice to Maha devi and pray to him to calm the fury of Shiva, before earth, hell, and the sky were burnt up. As a result it was settled that the Shiva-Durga symbol should be the chief object of worship in the temple.¹³

Although Shiva is worshipped in the form of the lingam and as the Nataraj dancer maintaining life, he is the sole god responsible for destruction. Because Shiva is the god of destruction it is only logical that both Durga and Kali are personifications of his complementary female essence. Goddesses associated with Vishnu, the Preserver, are much more gentle.

"The Texts of the "Wondrous Essence of the Goddess,"

¹³H. Cutner, A Short History of Sex-Worship (London: Watts and Co., 1940), p. 92.

(Devi-Mahatmya) of the Markandeya Purana contain the best descriptions of the character and deeds of Durga. She is the sublime, unconquerable warrior who came into being through the combined wraths of all the gods. According to legend, a demon (in some versions two brothers) performed austerities for 11,000 years and received a boon from Shiva that they could not be slain by a god. They then proceeded to wage war on the gods. Durga, exemplifying the essence and energy of Shiva, appeared before the gods as:

a female of celestial beauty with ten arms into which the gods delivered their weapons, from Vishnu, the discus; from Shiva, the trident; from Varuna, the conch; from Agni, a flaming dart; from Vayu, a bow; from Surya, a quiver and arrow; from Yama, an iron rod; from Kubera, a club; from Brahma, a bared-roll; from Samudra, precious stones and offensive weapons; from the milky ocean, a necklace of pearls; from Mount Himalayas, a lion for a mount; and from Ananta, a wreathed circlet of snakes.¹⁴

Durga, thus armed, proceeded to the Vindhya Mountains where the demon, Mahisha, tried to capture her.

First annihilating the army of the titan, the Goddess roped the mighty buffalo-form with a noose. The demon escaped, however, emerging from the buffalo body in the form of a lion. Immediately, the Goddess beheaded the lion, whereupon Mahisa, by virtue of his Maya-energy of self-transformation, escaped again, now in the form of a hero with a sword. Ruthlessly the Goddess riddled this new embodiment with a shower of arrows. But then the demon stood before her as an elephant, and with his

¹⁴P. Thomas, Epics, Myths, and Legends of India p. 192.
(Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons and Co., Ltd.), p. 56.

trunk reached out and seized her. He dragged her towards him, but she severed the trunk with the stroke of a sword. The demon returned, now, to his favorite shape--that of a giant buffalo shaking the universe with the stamping of its hoofs. But the Goddess scornfully laughed, and again reared with a loud voice of laughter at all his tricks and devices. Pausing a moment, in full wrath, she lifted to her lips, serenely, a bowl filled with the inebriating, invigorating liquor of the divine life-force, and while she sipped the matchless drink, her eyes turned red. The Buffalo-demon, uprooting mountains with his horns, was flinging them against her, shouting defiantly at her the while, but with her arrows she was shattering them to dust. She called out to the monster: "Shout on! Go on shouting one moment more, you fool, while I sip my fill of this delicious brew. The gods soon will be crying out for joy, and you shall lie murdered at my feet."

Even while she spoke, the Goddess leapt into the air, and from above came down on the demon's neck. She dashed him to the earth and sent the trident through his neck. The adversary attempted once again to abandon the buffalo-body, issuing from its mouth in the shape of a hero with a sword; but he had only half emerged when he was caught. He was half inside the buffalo and half outside, when the Goddess with a swift and terrific stroke, beheaded him, and he died.¹⁵

Myths and symbols were the measure of all things in ancient India, through symbols artists and philosophers searched for an explanation for the phenomena of reality: they sought to understand the unknowable. Supernatural deities gave and maintained order in the universe. The symbols associated with a deity revealed its magic, mythical qualities. Durga's symbols are primarily weapons. Their significance lies in the fact that each

¹⁵ Heinrich Zimmer, Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946), p. 192.

major god in the Hindu male pantheon gave Durga his major symbol or his essence, symbolically recognizing her as the Mother and giving back the essence which she originally gave to him, usually immediately beneath her. Since the

Each of her attributes has a specific symbolic quality. Her precious jewels and necklace of pearls suggest that her destructive power is for the establishment of peace and harmony. Her third eye indicates her intuitive vision into "the infinitude of the cosmic process and its internal harmony with supernatural destiny."¹⁶ The noose¹⁷ with which she fetters her enemy on the field of battle denotes her master intellect which seizes and fixes with a firm hold on objects. Her goad for urging her mount forward is a further reminder of the action that the Goddess represents. The Goddess' power of will is symbolized by the bow and arrow. The bow is also associated with the mind. It dispatches five arrows (five senses) to find their corresponding object--either, hearing and sound; air, touch; fire, vision and light; water,

¹⁶Zimmer, The Art of Indian Asia, op. cit., p. 45.

¹⁷The Sumerian goddess, Lileth, also holds a noose.

¹⁸Vahana, the animal usually associated with a god, often serving as his means of transportation.

¹⁹S.N. Dasgupta, Fundamentals of Indian Art (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1960), p. 25.

tasting and taste; and earth, smell and fragrance.

By far the most important gift from the gods was the lion from Mount Himalaya. As her vahana¹⁸ it appears at the base, usually immediately beneath her. Since the vahana is almost never interchanged from one deity to another, Durga's lion is as dependable as an inscription for identification. Probably this idea of animal and human forms of the same deity originated in Sumerian Culture. Durga's lion is a clear manifestation of her war-like wrath and invincible valor. It presages her ultimate victory. "The lion is an emanation of that disastrous, terrific aspect of the Goddess' omnipotent presence which when aroused inevitably results in annihilation of whatever foe she meets."¹⁹

During the Gupta Age, along with many of the Brahmanic Pantheon, Durga became frequently depicted in sculpture. In a miniature stone relief from Bhita this two-armed Devi is in combat with the buffalo and is clearly conquering him. In later Gupta images, Durga acquired a crown and eight arms. Often a lion rushed out from behind, contributing to the all around movement. Occasionally, the Goddess is not fighting; instead

¹⁸Vahana, the animal usually associated with a god, often serving as his means of transportation.

¹⁹S.N. Dasgupta, Fundamentals of Indian Art (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1960), p. 25.

she is watching the death of her foe with compassion.²⁰ Sculpturally the Gupta images of Durga drew heavily on realism with a new sensibility to the human female form; yet they contain an idealistic charm and delicacy. Depictions of Durga during this classical era in Indian sculpture--

express the metaphysical and universal through their attributes. Their monumentality and ponderousness shows a profound appreciation of light and dark effects, a dynamic rhythm of supple curves and a spontaneous beauty and economy of linear network that bridges the gulf between man's affective state and suprasensible wisdom.²¹

In early work the Devi is usually two-armed, with only her lion for identification. The buffalo is at first erect but later is turned upside down; finally to be located completely under her feet. In late Gupta work, there is a strong development in the dynamic energy of the scene. The buffalo is forcefully pierced or crushed.

Mamallapuram (plate I) has the earliest example of a Medieval image of Durga. This Pallava relief is in the Mahendra Style dating 600-640 A. D. She is not yet presented in her fullest dynamic energy; instead, the undecisive aspects of the battle are still presented.

²⁰Ramaprasad Chanda, Medieval Indian Sculpture (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1936), p. 60.

²¹Mukerjee, op. cit., p. 99.

Durga advances on her lion; the grotesque demon sulkily yields. Undertones and half shades hint at the meanings of the obvious outcome, as the unyielding Mother insists on the complete surrender of man.

The mythical and iconographical significance of this image are expressed in stylistic terms. The artist's sensitivity to the rock is seen in the delicate, spirited, lyrical sculpture he created. Durga is not depicted through dramatic gestures and deep undercuttings but through a strong sense of composition and design. Her anatomy is generalized and void of any decorative elements. The long pointed crown enhances her supple length and slenderness. Unlike the images in the North, she has a slim abdomen and a narrow chest and shoulders. Her sexual characteristics are not emphasized.

At the same time as Mamallapuram was being created in the South, artists were busy in the Central Deccan under the Calukya Dynasty. On the Durga Temple at Aihole (550-642 A.D.) one finds sculpture in which the matter and weight of stone have vanished into playful contortions of floating figures. Unlike Mamallapuram these sculptures are vigorously carved in the round with deep undercuttings to create strong shadows. The matter of contemplation and dreams are created with no visible

strain on the part of the artist. Again there is little sex differentiation in the display of youthful strength. In keeping with the feeling of the sculpture, the eight-armed Durga pierces the neck of the demon with seemingly effortless grace, while her lion peers on quietly.

The Durga Mahisamardini in the first cave at Badami, also Calukya Dynasty, contrasts with Aihole in its heavy massiveness. The conspicuous poise and power of these vigorous forms contrasts with the suave self-confidence of Gupta images. There is a generalization of the anatomy, subduing all details, but a new interest in the elaboration of clothing and jewels. In this relief Durga reflects a "profound sense of repose that belongs to the earth, with a lyrical sensitiveness that belongs to man."²²

The best known Calukya work is located at Ellora Caves. Here Durga appears in several places, including Dasa and Ramesvara Caves (plate II). In the Dasa Cave she is thick in the action of hard battle which she has just won by severing the buffalo's head. She watches, poised on her lion, as a human demon, lifting a mace, comes out of the buffalo. The appearance of the human

²²Asura-demon: skilled magicians, enemies of the Devas; often more powerful than the gods who conferred their power upon them.

demon brings the iconography of this image into agreement with the literary description of the battle quoted earlier and shows a more developed phase in her portrayal.

The material of living rock in both the Dasa and Ramesvara reliefs was turned into a representation of cosmic energy that continually frustrates, frightens, and destroys while it creates, loves, and protects man and gods. As at Badami, a weightiness is created in simplified forms with a minimum of linearity. The high relief and the half light in the cave niches creates a mysteriousness appropriate to their subject.

Although these reliefs show sharp clarity in aim and purpose, they were not subjected severely to the canons governing representation. Like Gupta art they are calm, poised, meditative and sharp; added to that is a primitive freshness and vigor. The artist has become conscious of the powerful aspects of the physical body and uses them with plastic harmony and rhythm. There is a pleasant blend of abstraction and naturalistic warmth.

In the version presented in the Ramesvara Cave the fight is over and the asura²³ worships Durga. Her lion is replaced by a subservient buffalo; a rare occurrence, but fitting the expression. The triumph of

²³Ibid., p. 149.

the Goddess is reinforced by the breadth and heaviness of the modeling. Through tension and imperturbable poise, she demonstrates the ultimate establishment of justice in the world. With a heroic but placid gesture of her four hands she suggests supernatural strength and majesty transcending the limitations of earthly existence. Her voluptuous elegance and natural, sensuous feeling of beauty are strongly rooted in earthly appreciation of the human female model. The organization of diagonals, verticals, and parallels emphasizes the quelling of evil through might. "Ellora has created a mountainous Durga, unsurpassable in her strength, poise, and consummation and silence of victory, stressing largely the palpable volumes of the features of man and animal."²⁴

Kailasantha Temple, also at Ellora (750-800), built under the Rastrakuta Dynasty, contains a third Durga. Here the battle is approaching the moment of climax. The gods are gathered above to watch the show which is now packed with tension and drama.

Having eight arms and brandishing weapons of all kinds in veritable forest of halo and hands, Durga rides her lion. The mount, with magnificent bound, makes for the adversary, while the attendants of the goddess, from beneath the lion, move forward in support of the attack. All the gods who have been deposed of their cosmic thrones by the bull-shaped titan have come together in the sky, immediately above, full of tension and yet with confidence, watching the struggle that is to liberate the universe and restore their own auspicious rule.

²⁴Ibid., p. 9.

Three arrows from the Goddess' bow are reaching the demon simultaneously and the battle is approaching its climax. The cornered giant is not falling back, however; the scales of balance still are in equilibrium. The moment of supreme tension, when the adversaries actually dash, has been selected as the subject of this effectively dramatic work.²⁵

A late eighth century Rastrakuta Dynasty Durga from Haripur carries further the aggressiveness of the Kailasantha Durga. Here the demon issues from the buffalo's head, as Durga and her lion finish the battle. The stress is less on the easy effortless grace of the divine act than on the dynamic vigor of action.²⁶

Durga comes into her complete development with the rise of Tantrikism and the Sakti Cults.²⁷ Sakti is first clearly referred to in the "Durgasutras" of the Mahabharata (500-100 B.C.). The constituent elements of the cults are set down there. Sakti is a composite Goddess made up of mother, daughter, sister and great savior who delivers men from danger.²⁸

Tantrikism developed first in Buddhism. Hinayana Buddhism stressed the external aspects of religious experience and a simple code of morality. With the

²⁵Zimmer, The Art of Indian Asia, p. 93.

²⁶Sakti: female deity; personified energy of Shiva; in Tantrikism the personification of woman and sex.

²⁷Banerjea, op. cit., p. 499.

²⁸Ibid., p. 491.

mysticism of Mahayana, influenced by Hinduism and Taoism, Tantrikism was able to grow. When Mahayana Buddhism replaced the historical with the mystical Buddha it allowed for the contemplation of Sakti through an appreciation of the divine emanence in every sentient creature. Sakti images appear in the caves of Ellora and Aurangabad (absent from Ajanta) during the sixth and seventh centuries, usually as Tara.

There are traces of Tantrikism in several inscriptions as early as the Gupta Period. The first inscription actually using the word tantra appears in the first quarter of the fifth century A. D. and comes from Gangdhar (Jhalwar, Madhya Bharat). Lines twenty-two to thirty-three describe the erection of "the very terrible abode of the Divine Mothers, filled full of Dakinis... who stir up the very oceans with the mighty wing rising from the Tantric rites of their religion."²⁹ Early Tantrik cults associated the concept of Sakti closely with Bhauava, the terrific aspect of Shiva. As Shiva's wife Sakti personifies the primeval unfolding of the neuter Brahman into the opposites of male and female. The union of these archetypal parents in productive

²⁹ibid., p. 494.

³⁰Zimmer, Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, p. 127.

³¹Mukerjee, op. cit., p. 182.

harmony is honored in Tantrikism. It represents: "The creative union that procreates, and sustains the life of the universe. Lingam and Yoni, Shiva and his goddess, symbolize the antagonistic yet co-operating forces of the sexes."³⁰ In short they are the polar aspects of the same essence, Sakti as becoming, power of illusion, and time; and Shiva as being and eternity.

In the Tantras there is a constant dialogue of questions and answers between male and female. They provide the most complete literary description of Sakti.

Sakti is both pleasure and wisdom, light and darkness... She is night and twilight. She is death. She also appears under a thousand graceful or splendid forms. She is the resplendence of the stars, the beauty of young maidens and the happiness of wives.... Her body is both the tranquility of the world and the super-³¹ sensuously subtle material of the heavens and hells.

Tantrikism is the metaphysical synthesis of the life of the senses with the life of the spirit; they are identically pure and are considered the same. In the Kularnava Tantra (c. 1000 A.D.) enjoyment becomes the complete union of the subjective self with the real self. Bad acts are changed to good acts and the world has become the seat of salvation. As a beautiful, voluptuous woman, Sakti initiates man in the consecration

³⁰Zimmer, Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, p. 127.

³¹Mukerjee, op. cit., p. 182.

of bhoga or enjoyment.³²

One of the best examples of Tantrik Durga sculpture is the eleventh century Durga Mahisamardini from Vaitala Deul Temple at Bhuvaneshvara (plate III). The moment of climax is selected and portrayed with an exuberant dynamism and drama. The display of direct realistic brutality is the dominant trait of most later works, the gems of slow decline. Corresponding to the precepts of Tantrikism, the artist demonstrated a deep appreciation for the female form in the luxurious smooth limbs, delicacy of modeling, and the angularity of the profile face in contrast to the softened breasts and hips. The elastic rhythm includes the linear and angular which co-exist with the plastic and flowing. Contrasting to the curvilinear tensions of Durga and the buffalo in combat is the straightness of the spear. The vertical shock with which the demon is crushed embodies in the consummation of the Goddess' quick mighty movements.

While Durga embodies the concept of destruction for the sake of living gods, Kail is responsible for the more terrifying task of total world destruction at the end of each cosmic cycle. She is the wife of Shiva as Maha-kal (Time) and at the end of the cycle she destroys even him as she reduces all nature and gods to their formless state.

³² Ibid., p. 182.

The cycles of life are subdivided into four yugas or *hables*; world stages named after the four throws of the dice game-- Krita, Treta, Dvapara, and Kali. As in the Greco-Roman tradition there is a decline in moral excellence as the ages evolve; order loses ground as the life-process gains momentum. Kali Yuga or the dark age subsists in a miserable condition with only one-fourth of Dharma (moral order). In the game of dice Kali is the losing throw. In time it is an age of egotistical, reckless, devouring blindness. The present Kali cycle began on Friday, February 18, 3102 B.C., and has a duration of 432,000 years.³³ After this comparatively short period of time Kali will again perform her terrible act.

Kali, like Durga, is one of the few goddesses to be commonly presented as an entity apart from her male counterpart. She is an intermediate between soul and matter embodying the concepts of energy, power, destruction, and virtue. She is the goddess of epidemics and cataclysms. In the form of Bhavni she is worshipped by thugs before an expedition. Often she has been associated with devil dances, dark rites, and sexual ceremonies. Rites involved the breaking of all common Hindu taboos; sacrifices to her included birds, animals and human beings. Often meetings were held in a private house, temple or burning-ground.

³³ Zimmer, Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, p. 13.

Members might have included both Brahmans and untouchables; the ceremonies allowed for no class distinction and no ritual pollution occurred. After propitiation of ghosts and other ceremonies the group would indulge in the five M's: alcoholic beverages, meat, fish, symbolic hand gestures, and sexual intercourse. These rites mysteriously corresponded to the five elements.

Kali got her reputation for an unquenchable appetite for blood from the myth that she drank the blood of the slain demon Raktavira. Raktavira had a boon from Brahma which would turn every drop of blood touching the ground into another asura. Kali allowed none of it to fall.

The custom of drinking the blood of a living animal, usually a cow, was prevalent among the Aryan herdsman and is still practiced in some tribes in Africa. The Pokomo tribe of Africa tell of a demon who haunts the forests of Tana. The demon has the shape of a woman; she has an iron claw with which she strikes people and then drinks their blood.³⁴ Sekhmet, the terrible goddess of war and battle in Egypt was said to have a love of blood. She almost totally massacred the human race who had rebelled against Ra. A blood-drinker and a bone-

³⁴M. H. Ananikian and Alice Werner, The Mythology of All Races: African and Armenian, (Boston: Marshal Jones Co., 1925), Vol. VII, p. 242.

breaker were among the forty-two accessors at the throne of Osiris, the judgement hall where all Egyptian dead had to appear.³⁵ In China the custom of drinking a cup of the blood of a slain enemy was performed by a Viceroy as late as 1904. The potion was thought to give courage to one who drank it. The blood of criminals in China was gathered as a charm against evil.³⁶

In ancient Mexico images of Coatlicue were sprinkled with blood and incensed with copal while being wrought. Often the artist extracted his own blood as an offering. Coatlicue, like Kali, was an all powerful, terrifying earth goddess who gave birth to all life and in turn devoured her offspring. Her garland of skulls, girdle of snakes, and serpent headdress are closely related to Kali's symbols and are used to convey the same concept of destruction or taking back.

In the Mahabharata (500-100 B.C.) there are references to minor semi-divine beings who have many of the evil qualities present in the goddess Kali and her counterpart in other cultures. One variety of these demons is the Raksasas who have red hair and eyes, an

³⁵Larousse, op. cit., p. 35.

³⁶M. Anesaki and J. C. Ferguson, The Mythology of All Races: Indian and Iranian, Vol. VI (Boston: Marshal Jones Co., 1919), p. 157.

³⁸Thomas, op. cit., p. 59.

extremely wide mouth, and ears pointed like spears. These skilled wizards who can change shape at will haunt woods and lonely mountains. They are cannibals desiring human flesh. Ravana, the enemy of Rama, is the supreme example of a Raksasa. The female form of the demon in the Mahabharata is Jara. She is the Mother who dwells in cemeteries, at crossroads, and on mountains. Her speciality is witchcraft. The Pisacas, manifestations of Shiva, are even more hideous and revolting in appearance than the Radsasas. Their origin has been traced to cannibal tribes and their name interpreted as "Eaters of Raw Flesh."³⁷ They, like the Raksasas, drink human blood and rend human flesh.

Because Kali's very feminity suggests the gentle, loving mother it was her more terrific aspects that were usually stressed. She was, and still is, depicted as a half-naked woman with claws and tusks wearing a garland of skulls.³⁸ Her tongue hangs out and drips with blood. Her garland of skulls or severed heads is esoterically the letters of the alphabet and the symbol of the universe. She carries the sword of knowledge that severs man from ignorance and gives him back perfect understanding. Her body is painted black,

³⁷A, J. Carnoy and A. B. Keith, The Mythology of All Races: Indian and Iranian (Boston: Marshal Jones Co., 1919), p. 157.

³⁸Thomas, op. cit., p. 59.

absorbing all color, as all the elements are absorbed in Kali. Kali is without substance; black is the absence of color. She is the master of time--the dark abyssal above time, space and causation. As Primal Mother it is from her that everything proceeds. "She prevades everything, and is conterminous with the Supreme Being himself, who is without beginnings or end and is vaster than the universe."³⁹

Shankaracharya (C. 800 A.D.) gives a full iconographic description of Kali in one of his poems. In the first stanza the Goddess is said to hold on one of her right hands a golden ladle decorated with precious jewels. Gold, a non-corroding metal, is the symbol of life, light, immortality and truth. In one left hand she holds a vessel of abundance dealing out to her children the sweet milk of life. In the second stanza Shankaracharya describes the symbols of death and renunciation which her other four hands hold. These are a noose, to catch and strangle the victim; an iron hook to drag the victim to doom; a rosary; and a textbook of prayers. Shankaracharya addressed the Goddess thus:

Who art thou O Fairest One! Auspicious One!
 You whose hands hold both: delight and pain?
 Both: the shade of death and the elixir of immortality,
 Are thy grace, O Mother!⁴⁰

³⁹Zimmer, Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, p. 212.

⁴⁰Anand, op. cit., p. 134.

Kali as time was honored to some extent by both the Aryans and the Dravidians during the Vedic Age.⁴¹ With the development of the cult of Sakti built around the idea of female energy as Mother of the World, Essence of Reality, and Secret of the Cosmos, Kali, like Durga, rose in importance. The awe and terror of Kali descends quite directly from the Indus Valley and was incorporated into Hinduism during the Gupta Age when Brahmanism accepted folk lore in its orthodox beliefs. Vedantic non-dualism addresses her as "She who takes up her abode in all perishable beings under the form of energy."⁴² The Goddess states of herself:

Whosoever eats food eats food by me;
 Whosoever looks forth from his eyes,
 And whosoever breathes,
 Yes verily, whosoever listens to whatever is said,
 Does so by me.⁴³

In the Nirvana Tantram she is raised to the position of Supreme Godhood. "As the lightning is born of the clouds and disappears with the clouds so Brahman and all the other gods take birth from Kali and will disappear⁴⁴ in Kali.⁴⁵ Tantrik texts describe her as standing in a boat floating in an ocean of blood, the life blood of the children she is creating, sustaining and eating

⁴¹Ibid., p. 212.

⁴²Anand, op. cit., p. 135.

⁴³Mukerjee, op. cit., p. 174.

⁴⁴Zimmer, The Art of Indian Asia, p. 323.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 323.

back. She drinks the warm blood from a cranial bowl through her unsatiable lips.

The development of the concept of Kali can be traced through Buddhism (c. 100-500 A.D.) where she is Kalika, an attendant of the Buddhist Mahakala. Like the later Kali image, Kalika holds weapons of destruction, is dark in color, and stands on a corpse. In Buddhist Tantrikism Kalika is associated with Tara. Hinduism assimilated the doctrine of the void from Buddhism. An image of Mahakali (wife of Mahakala and therefore probably Kalika) from the Deccan shows a seated figure on a lotus with her upper hand holding a fish, the other a human skull. The lower hands hold her consort Mahakala (later known in Hinduism as Shiva) as a new born babe on her lap.⁴⁶

Grim sitting or dancing Kali images of eight different varieties are described in the Agni and Matsya Puranas (600-800 A.D.) from Bengal. The "Devi Mahatmya" of the Markandeya Purana describes her origins. Here also is a description of the proper placement of a Kali temple. It should be constructed facing north and at some distance from its village, facing the dwellings of the undertakers and the cremation grounds.⁴⁷

One of the earliest Kali images appears in the Benaras School of the Gupta Period. In this gray chunar

⁴⁶Chanda, op. cit., p. 40.

⁴⁷Mukerjee, op. cit., p. 153.

Kali still has the attributes of a beautiful woman in sandstone relief Kali assists Durga in killing the demons. She is known by the name Chamunda--received from the demons, Chanda and Munda whom she killed. Unlike other deities in the Hindu Pantheon, Kali's vahana is a human figure rather than an animal. Already at this early stage she is depicted riding on a delicately modeled demon as her eight arms hold her symbols which include a cobra and a cranial cup. She is a melancholy emaciated figure but not yet really terrifying.

In Ramesvara Cave, Ellora, Kali accompanies Mahakala (Shiva). She is a grinning skeleton sitting on two dying men, one of whom is having his leg gnawed by a wolf. Her four hands hold emblems of death. She wears the garland of skulls and a girdle of snakes. With her is one of her sixty-four yoginis. This sculpture established a tradition of Kali as a beautiful emaciated woman with thirsty lips and sunken eyes.⁴⁸

The tenth century image of Chamunda (plate IV) from the Temple of the Sixty-four Yoginis at Bheragat is in the Ellora tradition. The Goddess sits on the flame of the lotus with her mouth open to devour the universe. While her eyes roll in her frenzy of destruction a dying man lies prostrate at her feet begging mercy. Two ghosts or disembodied souls are on her right.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 280.

Kali still has the attributes of a beautiful woman in large, close together breasts, slim waist, and voluptuous hips. Kali, as one of the Seven Divine Mothers at Deopara, Rajshahi, East Pakistan (eleventh century), demonstrates her awful demeanour more strongly. She is a bare flesh and bone figure with a contracted belly, erect hair, and wide open eyes. She is seated on a prostrate corpse. The relief projects an awesome feeling of reality. Her pose with one hand on her chin is expressive of her prospect of cosmic destruction.

Plata V, a Kali head, seems also to be in the Ellora tradition, though there is a stronger emphasis on horror. Certainly the face is flawless in its proportions; but it is not the quiet contemplative face of annihilation. Instead its sunken features fairly scream shock and horror from beneath its impeccably groomed crown of locks decorated with skulls. Her eyes look upon the outer world but are clearly absorbed within themselves.

During the eleventh century, when Kali was becoming an extremely prominent goddess, Mahmud of Ghazna had already begun sacking the North. This probably helped emphasize the grim side of war in the Sakti images of both Kali and Durga. The overwrought affections and sentiments of the time show up in the multiplication of

ornament, agitation of figures, and lavishness of decoration.

In the Tantrik reliefs from Jaipur, Orissa, Kali is no longer a beautifully proportioned woman; instead she is truly terror-striking. Her emaciated body now clearly includes a sunken belly, protruding ribs, and veins, bare teeth, sunken eyes with round protruding eyeballs, and a bald head with flames issuing from it. With a weird uncanniness the images concretely represent the esoteric symbolism underlying the Tantrik faith.

Images of Kali dancing on Shiva-Shava go a step beyond the traditional corpse on which the Goddess stands, and show two bodies, one on top of the other. The lowermost body is that of Shava who lies lifeless and dormant because he is out of touch with Sakti, the life giving and taking force. Above is Shiva, a young, beautiful god, who shows evidence of moving slightly. He receives life through the feet of the Goddess. Destruction unending, wrought by generation and life bearing,⁴⁹ is stressed in this iconographic development.

One of the most fantastic forms of Kali is that of Dantura. No longer does she follow the Ellora tradition which relied on symbols to carry her message. As Dantura the concept is carried further through bodily character-

⁴⁹Banerjea, op. cit., p. 507.

istics. A Cola Dynasty bronze (Plate VI) from Tanjore dating about 1150 A.D. is a fine example of an early Dantura figure. Like most Kali images she has fierce carnivorous tusks, a lolling tongue, and a garland of skulls. Here, though, she has only two arms and sits on her haunches with no accompanying corpse. The long distended ears, lean pendulous breasts, projecting ribs, and evil cruel smile create a mocking, ghastly image.

The utter horror of the Dantura concept is seen further developed in a fourteenth century bronze (plate VII). As in the Cola bronze, a terrifying image is presented in terms that are aesthetically pleasing. The neck and chest create an abstract pattern of emaciation. Knobs in the shoulders, elbows, and knees suggest a skeleton but do not describe one in literal terms. As elements the knobs contrasting with the thin round body create a juxtaposition which enhances the leanness of the figure. The face is no longer emaciated but instead is rigidly erect and full-cheeked. Her wide open staring eyes and large mouth containing tusks and teeth add to the effect. She is peace balancing the terms of birth and death, a wonder beyond all ugliness and beauty.

Unfortunately, in the centuries that followed, this balance was not maintained and the wholly negative aspect won out to such an extent that the work tends to

wrath, Durga remains a beautiful woman engaged in the

be strongly underdistanced (Bullough). She became an excessively voracious and gruesome hag. Often she was portrayed in the disturbing task of feeding on the entrails of a victim by drawing out the intestines. She embodied, in later centuries, a cold blooded, self-centered, ungenerous old hag. At her best Kali is a deity who breaks finally with the canons of beauty and symbolic emblems. She no longer has the attributes of a beautiful woman but instead is turned through the artists's more individual expressive power into an extremely expressive work of art. Kali does not require that the perceiver bring a long list of second terms (Santayana) concerning iconography in order to read the meaning. Instead one need bring only an appreciation of visual arts and an understanding of the fears that all men share to receive the message being conveyed. Durga never becomes as horrendous and destructive as Kali. Because she destroys only the bad for the sake of the good, man can hope to avoid her wrath. To understand her destructive elements it is always necessary to be familiar with the mythology and symbolism involved. She remains the physical ideal of feminine beauty, she is expressive of the beauty of this world regardless of her other meanings. While Kali displays her terrifying wrath, Durga remains a beautiful woman engaged in the

somewhat incongruous act of battle. She represents the two sides of woman--the kind, light sides; and the more sinister element of timeless, dark destruction.

India was not unique in its creation of a mother goddess who had the attributes of destruction, evil, giving and taking of life (especially children), protection in war, and witchcraft. Many patriarchal societies recognized woman's double role and gave her a position of honor as a goddess. The symbol most commonly associated with her was the lion. The Sumerian, Ishtar stood on a lion or was pulled in a chariot drawn by seven lions. Tefnut and Sekhmet in Egypt and Gello in Europe had the head of a lion. Artemis, the virgin warrior of Greece was escorted by a lion. Cybele, the Phrygian goddess, sat on a throne or chariot flanked by lions. All of these goddesses, like Durga, were goddesses of destruction, witchcraft, and war. Many, like Cybele, were worshipped by mutilation of the human body and orgiastic dances, much like the rituals in honor of Kali. Unlike the lion-goddess association in other cultures, Durga is never confused with her lion. The lion is portrayed as helping her in the action of battle but he remains always only a helper. He is never substituted for the goddess. Durga remains totally human in form and is never combined with her vahana as a female form with a lion's head.

Durga's other symbols, including the noose, serpent, and sword, are also associated with other war goddesses. Even her mixture of the destructive with the feminine and gentle is seen elsewhere in goddesses such as Ishtar who was a seducer of men. Durga was never so directly associated with sex or seduction in mythology. Her only real connection with fertility is in the lingam-yoni symbol. Even here the association is vague--she can be linked to the symbol only as one incarnation of Parvati, the consort of Shiva. It is normally Parvati, not Durga, who is recognized in the lingam.

Although Durga was not normally considered a goddess of sex, she was a goddess of protection and harmony. Her power was given to her by the gods in recognition of her as mother. With her power she destroyed evil for the sake of the gods, taking only the lives of the evil demons. Along with her symbols of war she had jewels and pearls, symbols not found in non-Hindu war goddesses. These feminine symbols, especially the pearls, suggest symbolically her role of destruction for the sake of harmony and peace.

Kali was neither so gentle nor discriminating in her destruction. It is logical that her attributes should be more violent in nature. Her symbols, though like Durga's, were far from unique. Kali, like all mother goddesses with the power to reclaim their children in

when their culture called for something else.

death, functioned as a mythical explanation for the phenomenon of death. Because death does not always come only to the old as a gentle escape at the end of a full life but often takes the young, she was not a kind and gentle goddess. Kali's one distinction from other destructive goddesses is her role as the destroyer of the world at the end of each cosmic cycle. She fits into Hinduism as a natural part of the Universal Oneness or total God idea. Kali's destruction was an unavoidable part of the world.

Kali and Durga became major deities of great significance only with the rise of Tantrik cults, at a time when the civilization was being threatened by invasion. When Tantrikism rebelled against the traditional ideas of caste, duty, chastity, and food and drink prohibitions, it elevated the dark, destructive, and female as the new anti-god ideal. Violence and sexual activity no longer were merely a small part of the whole, but in the personifications of Kali and Durga became supreme. Hinduism has always assimilated new ideas and created new gods or goddesses when the situation dictated. In the case of her destructive female goddesses, India simply gave them new power. The change in their importance demonstrates Hinduism's ability to change or adapt to new social conditions. Kali and Durga, like all religious ideas or concepts, represented their culture and changed

when their culture called for something else.



Plate 1. Durga. Krawish, plate 36.



Plate I. Durga. Kramrish, plate 86.

Plate II. Durga. Zimmer, plate 243.



Plate 11. Durga. Zimmer, plate 243.



Plate III. Durga. Zimmer, plate 326.

Plate IV. Chamunda. Kraemlich, plate 127.



Plate IV. Chamunda. Kramrish, plate 127.

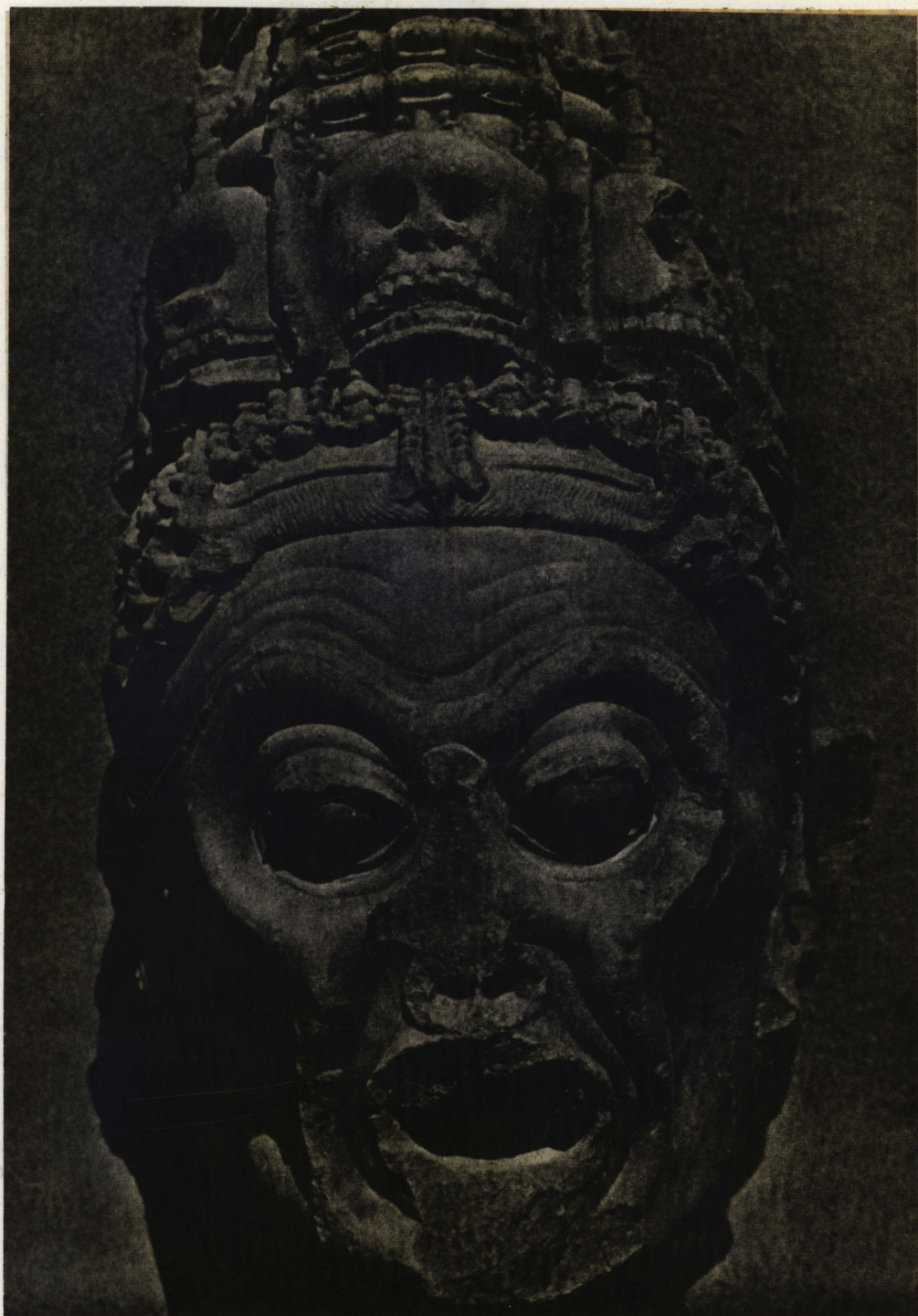


Plate V. Kali head. Kramrish, plate 120.



Plate VI. Dantura. Basham, plate 70.

Plate VII. Karaiikkal. Kramrish, plate 150.

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Plate VII. Karaikkal. Kramrish, plate 150. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1960. 140 pages.

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Joyce Louise Plath Jenkins

has submitted this written thesis as a supplement to the creative thesis

two acrylics, two prints, and one watercolor

40" x 30"	Untitled
20 1/2" x 18"	Untitled
36" x 50"	Untitled
10" x 17"	Untitled
17" x 12"	Untitled

which is in the permanent possession of the University of Colorado and recorded with the Department of Fine Arts.

Approved by Robert Alford
Chairman of Committee

Lynn R. Wolfe
acting Chairman, Department of Fine Arts

Date 15 Aug 66

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which is in the permanent possession of the
 University of Colorado and recorded with the
 Department of Fine Arts.

Approved by *Lowell A. Vogel*
 Chairman of Committee

acting *Lynn R. Wolfe*
 Chairman, Department of
 Fine Arts

Date *15 Aug 66*



