

The Saptamātṛkās

Iconography: Meaning and Myths of Icons – Assignment 3

Name: Aditi Trivedi

Class: FSLE 1

Application No.: LE2012761005

Word Count: 2385

The Saptamātṛkās

Worship of goddess is one phenomenon which can be observed across many cultures but it is not a recent idea. The famous 'Venus Figurine' from the prehistoric times is one of the first indications of worship of female deities. Like most other goddesses, this deity is also believed to have been worshipped for fertility¹. While other civilisations have also had male deities of fertility (e.g.: Min in Egypt), women's association with fertility in humans as well as vegetation of the earth has been observed throughout. In Egypt itself, the need for the female principle has been acknowledged and one of the deities of fertility, Hapi is depicted as being half-man and half-woman, while a civilisation like Mesopotamia had a distinct fertility goddess, Ninhursag².

In India, female deities are known to have been worshipped right from the Vedic times. However, back then, their worship was not very popular, and the number of goddesses was limited, with some of the most important ones being Ushas and Aditi. Over the centuries, the number of goddesses in the Brahmanical religion has increased as more people became a part of the cult worshipping goddesses. Goddesses like Lajja Gauri³ and the figurine found of a woman with a flower issuing from her womb (from the Harappan Civilisation)⁴ are some of the earliest references to goddess worship for fertility in India. Also, the Yakshinis (tree spirits) found in Hinduism and Jainism were worshipped for similar purposes with some of them also believed to be serving as protectors from diseases⁵. These tree spirits are also worshipped in Buddhism but a more prominent goddess in this religion is Hariti⁶. However, not all the goddesses have this kind of a calm aura and not all are associated with the essence of life. Another category of deities exists too – the hot goddesses – who need to be calmed⁷. Many goddesses like Hariti and the Saptamātṛkās were initially thought to be malevolent but became benevolent later⁸. The worship of goddess in India now is called Śāktism and one of its main philosophies is that within each person exists Kundalini Śākti, a dormant energy which can be awakened to attain liberation. People from the Śākta cult believe in Devī, the Supreme Being. But other goddesses like Sarasvati, Parvati and Lakshmi are also popular amongst the Śāktas as well as others since they are the consorts of Brahma, Śiva and Viṣṇu respectively⁹.

The Saptamātṛkās (also known as the Seven Mothers) are not like other goddesses but are rather believed to be Śākti (power) of some of the prominent male deities (this is in sync with the Purāṇic

¹ Class notes

² Class notes from Dawn of Civilizations: Beginnings in River Valleys

³ Elgood, Heather. "Exploring the Roots of Village Hinduism in South Asia." *World Archaeology* 36.3 (2004): 335-36. *JSTOR*. Web. 02 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4128335>>.

⁴ Class notes

⁵ Elgood, Heather. "Exploring the Roots of Village Hinduism in South Asia." *World Archaeology* 36.3 (2004): 327. *JSTOR*. Web. 02 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4128335>>.

⁶ Elgood, Heather. "Exploring the Roots of Village Hinduism in South Asia." *World Archaeology* 36.3 (2004): 336. *JSTOR*. Web. 02 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4128335>>.

⁷ Elgood, Heather. "Exploring the Roots of Village Hinduism in South Asia." *World Archaeology* 36.3 (2004): 328. *JSTOR*. Web. 02 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4128335>>.

⁸ Elgood, Heather. "Exploring the Roots of Village Hinduism in South Asia." *World Archaeology* 36.3 (2004): 336. *JSTOR*. Web. 02 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4128335>>.

⁹ Class notes

concept that the goddess is Prakriti and is the energy of Purush). With a normally accepted number of them being seven, mind, life and the five elements are believed to be symbolized by them¹⁰. The Saptamātṛkās are a heptad and scholars have tried to trace back the significance of number seven to the Vedic belief that number seven is sacred¹¹. While their historical origin is still debated over, there are multiple myths explaining why they were created, most of which are connected to the killing of demon Andhakasura¹². According to one version from the Varāha Purāṇa, Śiva had to create one of the Saptamātṛkās called Yogeśvari when he shot an arrow at Andhakasura and realized that each drop of his blood which touched the ground lead to creation of another Andhakasura. Other deities followed him and created the other Mātṛkās – Māheśvarī, Brahmāṇī, Vaishṇavī, Vārāhī, Indrāṇī, Kaumārī and Chāmuṇḍā – and these Mātṛkās helped in the battle by drinking Andhakasura's blood before it could reach the ground. Despite being known as the Seven Mothers, this myth suggests that eight Mātṛkās were created¹³. The Vaishnavite variation of the myth states that it was Viṣṇu who created these goddesses. Since they were terrific initially, he helped them by asking them to protect the world and be benevolent¹⁴.

The Markendeya Purāṇa edges more towards proving the superiority of Devī as the prime goddess, dedicating a whole section called Devī-māhātmya to her. In this case, the Mātṛkās are said to be created not just for one battle but to tackle several demons that Devī had to fight. Each one of them was created from the gods whose Śaktis they were. Like the Varāha Purāṇa, this also suggests that there were eight Mātṛkās out of which Chāmuṇḍā was created by Devī herself. The others emerged out of the bodies of Brahma (Brahmāṇī), Śiva (Māheśvarī), Kartikeya (Kaumārī), Viṣṇu (Vaishṇavī), Varāha (Vārāhī) and Indra (Indrāṇī). Yogini is replaced with Nārasiṃhī in this myth and she said to be created by the Narasimha incarnation of Viṣṇu. Another mythical origin suggested by strong believers of the Śakta cult states that the Saptamātṛkās were all created by Devī herself as she is the mother of all the gods and the creator of the world¹⁵. In this version too which has been recorded in the Devī-māhātmya (self-contradictory as the previous myth in the same text suggests that they were created from bodies of male deities) and the Vāmana Purāṇa, they were meant to help her fight off the various demons¹⁶. A myth focusing on Devī from the Varāha Purāṇa (again self-contradictory because it also previously talks of individual creation of the Saptamātṛkās by their male counterparts) also states that the reason why the Mātṛkās lack control is because they were created not on purpose but by accident when Devī lost her concentration as an ascetic¹⁷.

¹⁰ Class notes

¹¹ Goswami, Meghali, Ila Gupta, and P. Jha. "Sapta Matrikas in Indian Art and Their Significance in Indian Sculptures and Ethos: A Critical Study." *Anistoriton* 9 (2005): 2. Web. 04 Apr. 2013.

¹² Class notes

¹³ Gupte, Ramesh S. "The Goddesses." *Iconography of the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains*. Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Private Limited, 1972. 56. Print.

¹⁴ Class notes

¹⁵ Class notes

¹⁶ Kinsley, David R. "10. The Mātṛkās." *Hindu Goddesses: Visions of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1997. 158. *Google Books*. Web. 02 Apr. 2013.

¹⁷ Kinsley, David R. "10. The Mātṛkās." *Hindu Goddesses: Visions of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1997. 159. *Google Books*. Web. 02 Apr. 2013.

Their exact historical origin is not known yet but scholars have associated the Saptamātṛkās with the seven figures depicted at the bottom of a seal from the Harappan Civilisation. Since the women above them have been depicted with a tree, it has been considered to be a symbol of fertility because of which the seven figures are believed to be predecessors of the Saptamātṛkās¹⁸. The epic Mahabharata talks of an episode where the Saptamātṛkās were sent by Indra to kill Kartikeya when he was an infant. However, upon seeing him, they became benign and asked Kartikeya to consider them to be his mothers¹⁹. Though they are not the only goddess associated with Kartikeya in the Mahabharata, like others they are also shown to be inauspicious initially²⁰. Some of the other goddesses have also been listed as Mātṛkās and at one point their tally has been shown to go up to ninety-two to one hundred and ninety with a possibility of many more of them being present²¹. Over time they were believed to be in a fixed number (seven) and were incorporated into the Brahmanical religion. The people from the Chalukyan Empire worshipped the Mātṛkās during the 7th Century AD and the worship was extended to eastern and northern India by the 10th Century CE. In these regions the Chausath Yoginis were popular²² but the Saptamātṛkās are normally considered to be the deities from which the Yoginis were born and are also at times included as a part of the sixty-four Yoginis²³. Considered to be the Śaktis of the male Hindu deities, the attributes with which the Saptamātṛkās were depicted from the medieval times onwards were the same as that of the male deities they corresponded to²⁴.

¹⁸ Elgood, Heather. "Exploring the Roots of Village Hinduism in South Asia." *World Archaeology* 36.3 (2004): 332. *JSTOR*. Web. 02 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4128335>>.

¹⁹ Kinsley, David R. "10. The Mātṛkās." *Hindu Goddesses: Visions of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1997. 151. *Google Books*. Web. 02 Apr. 2013. <<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=HzldwMHeS6lC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>>.

²⁰ Kinsley, David R. "10. The Mātṛkās." *Hindu Goddesses: Visions of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1997. 152. *Google Books*. Web. 02 Apr. 2013. <<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=HzldwMHeS6lC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>>.

²¹ Kinsley, David R. "10. The Mātṛkās." *Hindu Goddesses: Visions of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1997. 153. *Google Books*. Web. 02 Apr. 2013. <<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=HzldwMHeS6lC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>>.

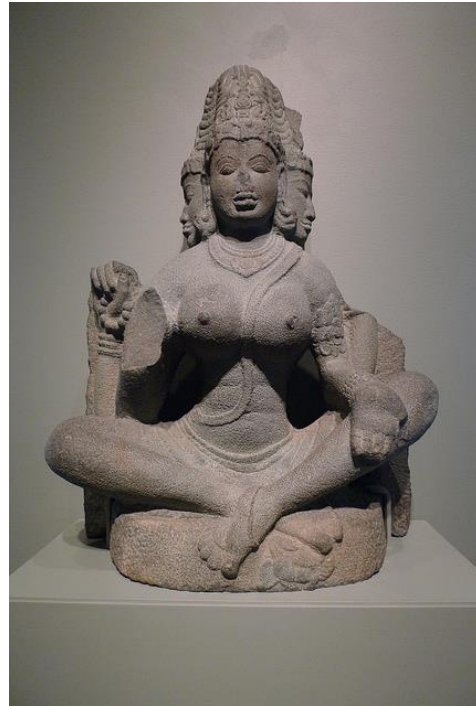
²² Elgood, Heather. "Exploring the Roots of Village Hinduism in South Asia." *World Archaeology* 36.3 (2004): 337. *JSTOR*. Web. 02 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4128335>>.

²³ Class notes

²⁴ Kinsley, David R. "10. The Mātṛkās." *Hindu Goddesses: Visions of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1997. 156. *Google Books*. Web. 02 Apr. 2013. <<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=HzldwMHeS6lC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>>.



25



26

Brahmāṇī is the Śakti of Brahma and like him she also normally has four heads with jatas²⁷. Some of the newer pictures though, depict her with a Karanda-mukuta²⁸. Seated on a swan sometimes, commonly held ayudhas by her include a rosary, ladles and a kamandal. One of her hands is normally in the abhaya mudra and she uses one of her arms to either hold a book or a child²⁹. She is sometimes also known as Brahmi and is often associated with desire of creation³⁰.

²⁵ *Brahmāṇī*. Digital image. *Hindoe*. N.p., n.d. Web. 31 Mar. 2013. <<http://hindoe.eu/index.php?c=4&p=51&l=nl>>.

²⁶ Astor, Marshall. *The Hindu Deity Brahmanī - 10th Century - Indian Art*. 2011. Photograph. Asian Art Museum, San Francisco. *The Hindu Deity Brahmanī - 10th Century - Indian Art - Asian Art Museum of San Francisco | Flickr - Photo Sharing!* Web. 03 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.flickr.com/photos/lifeontheedge/5466964520/>>.

²⁷ Class notes

²⁸ Rao, Sreenivas A. "Saptamatrka - Part Four." *Saptamatrika | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/07/saptamatrka-part-four/>>.

²⁹ Class notes

³⁰ Rao, Sreenivas A. "Saptamatrka - Part Four." *Saptamatrika | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/07/saptamatrka-part-four/>>.



31



32

Śiva's Śakti is Māheśvarī and her attributes are hence similar to that of Śiva – a trident, a drum, a jata and an ornament with a skull on it. Bow and arrow, and kapala are also shown in her arms in some of the icons. She uses Nandi as her vāhana³³. Also known as Raudri, Raudrani and Maheshi³⁴, she possesses a third eye like Śiva. After creation, Māheśvarī is believed to be the one to breathe life into a creature³⁵.

³¹ Maheshwari. Digital image. *Mantra & Shlokas: WORSHIP OF SAKTHI - GODDESS*. N.p., 22 June 2011. Web. 31 Mar. 2013. <<http://mantrashlokas-madhuri.blogspot.in/2011/06/worship-of-sakthi-goddess.html>>.

³² Chatterji, Shymal. Sculpture of Maheshvari. Digital image. *IMAGES OF 'SHAKTI' IN THE LAND OF SIVA - I | Sulekha Creative*. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 Apr. 2013. <http://creative.sulekha.com/images-of-shakti-in-the-land-of-siva-i_524311_blog>.

³³ Gupte, Ramesh S. "Iconographical Tables." *Iconography of the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains*. Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Private Limited, 1972. 98. Print.

³⁴ Rao, Sreenivas A. "Saptamatrka - Part Four." *Saptamatrika | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/07/saptamatrka-part-four/>>.

³⁵ Class notes



36



37

Vaishṇavī, being Viṣṇu's energy is shown with some of Viṣṇu's most important attributes like chakra, gada and shankha. She is multi-armed (mostly four-armed) and normally holds a child in one of them. She uses Garuda (eagle) as her vāhana³⁸ and has a Kirita-mukuta on her head. After creation of beings by Brahmāṇī, she is said to give them a symmetry and order along with beauty³⁹.

³⁶ Rao, Sreenivas A. *Vaiṣṇavi Matrika*. Digital image. *Saptamatrka – Part Four | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 31 Mar. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/07/saptamatrka-part-four/>>.

³⁷ *A Bronze Figure of Vaiṣṇavi*. 2011. Photograph. The James and Marilyn Alsdorf Collection, New York. *A Bronze Figure of Vaiṣṇavi | INDIA, KERELA, 16TH CENTURY | Korean Art Auction | Sculptures, Statues & Figures, Figures | Christie's*. Web. 03 Apr. 2013.

³⁸ Class notes

³⁹ Rao, Sreenivas A. "Saptamatrka - Part Four." *Saptamatrika | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/07/saptamatrka-part-four/>>.



Kaumārī, also known as Kumari, is the Śakti of Kartikeya (also called Kumar or Skanda). However, a myth from Mahabharata suggesting that the Mātṛkās were adopted mothers of Kartikeya provides a contradiction to this belief⁴². A peacock is her vāhana and her ayudhas include a trident and a spear⁴³. As the energy of Kartikeya, she can also be depicted with six heads⁴⁴. She is believed to guide people's heart and inspire them to progress⁴⁵.

⁴⁰ Kumari Fighting Asuras. Digital image. *The Devīs and Demons* | IskconKL - News. Iskcon KL, 29 Sept. 2007. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <<http://iskconkl.wordpress.com/2007/09/29/the-Devis-and-demons/>>.

⁴¹ Goddess Kaumari. N.d. Photograph. LOS Angeles CCU Museum of Art, California. *Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts - Slide Show of Digital Images*. Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts. Web. 05 Apr. 2013. <<http://ignca.nic.in/asp/showbig.asp?projid=ac18>>.

⁴² Kinsley, David R. "10. The Mātṛkās." *Hindu Goddesses: Visions of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1997. 151. *Google Books*. Web. 02 Apr. 2013. <<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=HzldwMHeS6lC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>>.

⁴³ Class notes

⁴⁴ Gupte, Ramesh S. "Iconographical Tables." *Iconography of the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains*. Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Private Limited, 1972. 98. Print.

⁴⁵ Rao, Sreenivas A. "Saptamatrka - Part Four." *Saptamatrika | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/07/saptamatrka-part-four/>>.



46



47

Indra's Śakti is Indrāṇī, who is often depicted holding a vajra and seated on a white elephant, Airavat⁴⁶. Like the other Mātṛkās in the heptad, she is also shown with a boon-giving gesture but rarely⁴⁹. Her role in the lives of human beings is to ensure that their rule does not face any opposition or disorder. She is also known as Aindri or Vajri at times and her association with Indra means that sometimes she is also depicted with a hundred eyes on her body (stemming from a curse on Indra)⁵⁰.

⁴⁶ Indrāṇī. Digital image. *Hindoe*. N.p., n.d. Web. 31 Mar. 2013. <<http://hindoe.eu/index.php?c=4&p=14&l=en>>.

⁴⁷ *Sculpture of Indrāṇī*. N.d. Photograph. Patna Museum, Patna. *Huntington Archive: Detail - Indrāṇī*. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <<http://huntington.wmc.ohio-state.edu/public/index.cfm?fuseaction=showThisDetail&ObjectID=30014077&detail=large>>.

⁴⁸ Class notes

⁴⁹ Gupte, Ramesh S. "Iconographical Tables." *Iconography of the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains*. Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Private Limited, 1972. 98. Print.

⁵⁰ Rao, Sreenivas A. "Saptamatrka - Part Four." *Saptamatrika | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/07/saptamatrka-part-four/>>.



51



52

Vārāhī is the energy of the Varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu. She is boar-faced, holds a sword and a shield, and uses Garuda as her vāhana. Since some myths suggest that she was born from Yama, she is also shown seated on a buffalo/bull in a few depictions and holds a noose⁵³. Because of this she is believed to take the food offerings made by people to their dead ancestors. She gives people the power to chase after enjoyment, especially that related to food⁵⁴. When she is shown as a part of the Saptamātṛkā group, she is also known as Panchami since she is normally the fifth Mātṛkā (from the left). Dhumavati, one of the Dasa Mahavidyas, is associated with her sometimes. She reached the peak of her popularity during the Gupta Period when she was worshipped at a bigger level than even any of Viṣṇu's incarnations⁵⁵.

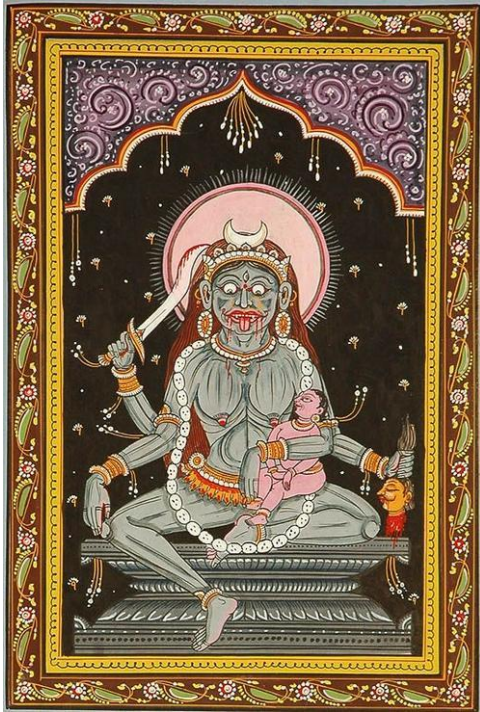
⁵¹ Rao, Sreenivas A. *Vārāhī Sculpt*. Digital image. *Saptamatrka – Part Four | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 31 Mar. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/07/saptamatrka-part-four/>>.

⁵² Rao, Sreenivas A. *Vārāhī2*. Digital image. *Saptamatrka – Part Four | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 31 Mar. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/07/saptamatrka-part-four/>>.

⁵³ Gupte, Ramesh S. "Iconographical Tables." *Iconography of the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains*. Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Private Limited, 1972. 98. Print.

⁵⁴ Class notes

⁵⁵ Rao, Sreenivas A. "Saptamatrka - Part Four." *Saptamatrika | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/07/saptamatrka-part-four/>>.



56



57

Chāmūṇḍā (or Chamundi) is one Mātṛkā who was created from the wrath of Devī herself and not any other deity⁵⁸ due to which she is also referred to as Devī-Śakti⁵⁹. Her main purpose was to kill the demons Chanda and Munda, and hence the name Chāmūṇḍā. Since her creation was quite horrific, her depictions too reflect that. She has sharp canines (almost tusk-like), a mundamala, a katri, has four arms in most cases (but some depictions show her with eighteen arms) and her body in some of the sculptures is shown to be skeletal. Due to this, some people also associate her to Kali. The offerings made to her generally include liquor and meat, and an owl or a dead body serves as her vāhana⁶⁰. Chāmūṇḍā is meant to pave the path of spiritual awakening by destroying evil and illusions⁶¹ but due to her extremely fierce nature, she is rarely depicted with a child unlike the other Mātṛkās⁶².

⁵⁶ Rao, Sreenivas A. *Chāmūṇḍā*. Digital image. *Saptamatrka – Part Four | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 31 Mar. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/07/saptamatrka-part-four/>>.

⁵⁷ *Chāmūṇḍā*. 2008. Photograph. St. Giles's, London. *Chāmūṇḍā | Flickr - Photo Sharing!* Web. 03 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.flickr.com/photos/unforth/2686750029/>>.

⁵⁸ Class notes

⁵⁹ Rao, Sreenivas A. "Saptamatrka - Part Four." *Saptamatrika | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/07/saptamatrka-part-four/>>.

⁶⁰ Class notes

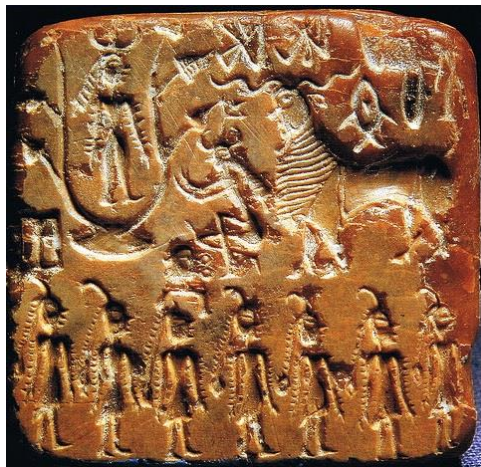
⁶¹ Rao, Sreenivas A. "Saptamatrka - Part Four." *Saptamatrika | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/07/saptamatrka-part-four/>>.

⁶² Class notes

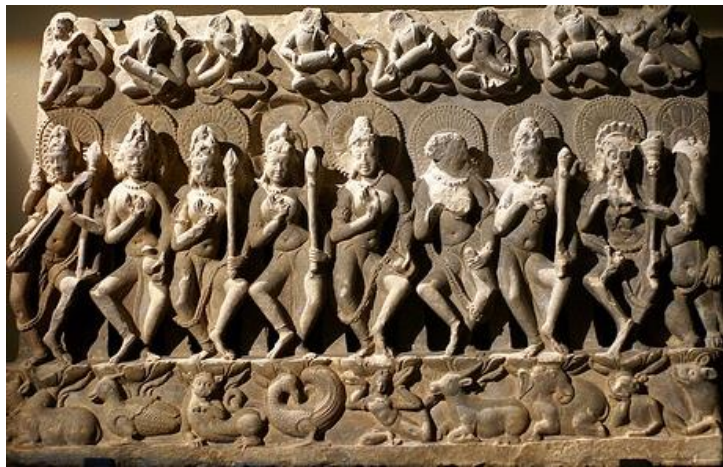


63

Replacing Chāmūṇḍā in many books is Nārasimhī. Like Chāmūṇḍā, she was not created by a male deity but rather from the heart of Devī. In other cases where she is mentioned, the number of Mātṛkās is stated to be more than seven. She is lion-faced like Narasimha and similarly has the rest of the human body but with four arms and claws⁶⁴.



65



66

⁶³ Rao, Sreenivas A. *pratyangira1*. Digital image. *Saptamatrka – Part Four | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 31 Mar. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/07/saptamatrka-part-four/>>.

⁶⁴ Rao, Sreenivas A. "Saptamatrka - Part Four." *Saptamatrika | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/07/saptamatrka-part-four/>>.

⁶⁵ Aggarwal, Vineet. *Indus-Saraswati Durga and Saptamatrikas*. Digital image. *Decode Hindu Mythology: September 2011*. N.p., 28 Sept. 2011. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <http://decodehindumythology.blogspot.in/2011_09_01_archive.html>.

Despite the individual depictions, the Saptamātṛkās are more often depicted as a group, right from what is believed to be a seal depicting their predecessors⁶⁷. At the side of many depictions, a figure of Ganesh and a form of Śiva are normally present. The most famous place which has a relief of this type is the Rameshwara Cave at Ellora⁶⁸. Another place where the Saptamātṛkās sculptures can be found is near the Chausath Yogini temple in Rajasthan where the Saptamātṛkās have been carved on a rock. Even Tantric shrines have a few sculptures dedicated to the mother goddesses and one such place is the Vaital Deul temple in Orissa⁶⁹. While Vārāhī was the most popular goddess during the reign of the kings of the Gupta Dynasty with shrines dedicated to her, other temples were also made in honour of the Saptamātṛkās during the same period⁷⁰. Temples from the Chola Dynasty and the Pallava Dynasty like Sri Kailasanatha have depictions on the walls which have been identified as Saptamātṛkās⁷¹. These along with the Pandya Dynasty lead to creation of sculptures and reliefs of South Indian style⁷². Other dynasty that was also involved in worshipping the Seven Mothers was Chalukyan and the Lakulisha temple built by them in Siddhanakalla and the Bala Brahma temple in Alampur are also considered to be important sites where the Saptamātṛkās were worshipped. In the recent years, new temples dedicated to the Saptamātṛkās have not been built. However, women who childless are still advised to worship the Saptamātṛkās along with other goddesses like Lajja Gaurī⁷³.

The roles of the Saptamātṛkās associated with different aspects of creation are refuted by the Tantric beliefs and also some of the Purāṇās which state that the purpose of the seven mātṛkās is to do with destruction. They clear the path to liberation by fighting off any evil obstructing it. Each of the mātṛkās are representative of the morally wrong qualities that one can possess – Desire (Yogeśvari), Anger (Māheśvari), Greed (Vaishṇavī), Pride (Brahmāṇī), Illusion (Kaumārī), Fault-finding (Indrāṇī), Tale-bearing (Chāmuṇḍā) and Envy (Vārāhī)⁷⁴. Such conflict of roles makes it difficult to define their personality as being either calm or fierce despite the frequent suggestion that they became kinder after the battle

⁶⁶ Aggarwal, Vineet. *Later temple relief depicting the Sapta-Matrikas*. Digital image. *Decode Hindu Mythology*: September 2011. N.p., 28 Sept. 2011. Web. 04 Apr. 2013.

<http://decodehindumythology.blogspot.in/2011_09_01_archive.html>.

⁶⁷ Elgood, Heather. "Exploring the Roots of Village Hinduism in South Asia." *World Archaeology* 36.3 (2004): 332. *JSTOR*. Web. 02 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4128335>>.

⁶⁸ Goswami, Meghali, Ila Gupta, and P. Jha. "Sapta Matrikas in Indian Art and Their Significance in Indian Sculptures and Ethos: A Critical Study." *Anistoriton* 9 (2005): 7. Web. 04 Apr. 2013.

<<http://www.anistor.gr/english/enback/Saptmatrika.pdf>>.

⁶⁹ Donaldson, Thomas. "Ekapāda Śiva Images in Orissan Art." *Ars Orientalis* 13 (1982): 156. *JSTOR*. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4629316>>.

⁷⁰ Rao, Sreenivas A. "Saptamatrka - Part Three." *Saptamatrika | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/07/saptamatrka-part-three/>>.

⁷¹ Rao, Sreenivas A. "Saptamatrka - Part Two." *Saptamatrika | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/06/saptamatrka-part-two/>>.

⁷² Goswami, Meghali, Ila Gupta, and P. Jha. "Sapta Matrikas in Indian Art and Their Significance in Indian Sculptures and Ethos: A Critical Study." *Anistoriton* 9 (2005): 7. Web. 04 Apr. 2013.

<<http://www.anistor.gr/english/enback/Saptmatrika.pdf>>.

⁷³ Elgood, Heather. "Exploring the Roots of Village Hinduism in South Asia." *World Archaeology* 36.3 (2004): 336. *JSTOR*. Web. 02 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4128335>>.

⁷⁴ Gupte, Ramesh S. "The Goddesses." *Iconography of the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains*. Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Private Limited, 1972. 57. Print.

against Andhakasura. Because of this scholars have suggested that this battle was not actually fought. Rather, the myths are symbolic of the way in which spiritual knowledge needs to be chosen over ignorance⁷⁵. This simplified deduction tries to make the whole concept behind the worship of Saptamātṛkās for purposes other than fertility justifiable by putting forth the idea that no matter what myths surround their creation and despite the distinctive numbers of mātṛkās suggested by them, they ultimately end with a victory over the demons (destruction of darkness, evil and illusions).

⁷⁵ Gupte, Ramesh S. "The Goddesses." *Iconography of the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains*. Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Private Limited, 1972. 57. Print.

Bibliography - Information

Class notes

Class notes from Dawn of Civilizations: Beginnings in River Valleys

Donaldson, Thomas. "Ekapāda Śiva Images in Orissan Art." *Ars Orientalis* 13 (1982): 153-67. *JSTOR*. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4629316>>.

Elgood, Heather. "Exploring the Roots of Village Hinduism in South Asia." *World Archaeology* 36.3 (2004): 326-42. *JSTOR*. Web. 02 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4128335>>.

Goswami, Meghali, Ila Gupta, and P. Jha. "Sapta Matrikas in Indian Art and Their Significance in Indian Sculptures and Ethos: A Critical Study." *Anistoriton* 9 (2005): 1-8. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.anistor.gr/english/enback/Saptmatrika.pdf>>.

Gupte, Ramesh S. *Iconography of the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains*. Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Private Limited, 1972. Print.

Kinsley, David R. "10. The Mātṛkās." *Hindu Goddesses: Visions of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1997. 151-60. *Google Books*. Web. 02 Apr. 2013. <<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=HzldwMHeS6IC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>>.

Rao, Sreenivas A. "Saptamatrka - Part Four." *Saptamatrika | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/07/saptamatrka-part-four/>>.

Rao, Sreenivas A. "Saptamatrka - Part Three." *Saptamatrika | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/07/saptamatrka-part-three/>>.

Rao, Sreenivas A. "Saptamatrka - Part Two." *Saptamatrika | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/06/saptamatrka-part-two/>>.

Bibliography – Pictures

A Bronze Figure of Vaishnavi. 2011. Photograph. The James and Marilyn Alsdorf Collection, New York. *A Bronze Figure of Vaishnavi | INDIA, KERALA, 16TH CENTURY | Korean Art Auction | Sculptures, Statues & Figures, Figures | Christie's*. Web. 03 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/sculptures-statues-figures/a-bronze-figure-of-vaishnavi-india-kerala-5417128-details.aspx>>.

Aggarwal, Vineet. *Indus-Saraswati Durga and Saptamatrikas*. Digital image. *Decode Hindu Mythology: September 2011*. N.p., 28 Sept. 2011. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <http://decodehindumythology.blogspot.in/2011_09_01_archive.html>.

Aggarwal, Vineet. *Later temple relief depicting the Sapta-Matrikas*. Digital image. *Decode Hindu Mythology: September 2011*. N.p., 28 Sept. 2011. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <http://decodehindumythology.blogspot.in/2011_09_01_archive.html>.

Astor, Marshall. *The Hindu Deity Brahmani - 10th Century - Indian Art*. 2011. Photograph. Asian Art Museum, San Francisco. *The Hindu Deity Brahmani - 10th Century - Indian Art - Asian Art Museum of San Francisco | Flickr - Photo Sharing!* Web. 03 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.flickr.com/photos/lifeontheedge/5466964520/>>.

Brahmani. Digital image. *Hindoe*. N.p., n.d. Web. 31 Mar. 2013. <<http://hindoe.eu/index.php?c=4&p=51&l=nl>>.

Chamunda. 2008. Photograph. St. Giles's, London. *Chamunda | Flickr - Photo Sharing!* Web. 03 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.flickr.com/photos/unforth/2686750029/>>.

Chatterji, Shymal. Sculpture of Maheshvari. Digital image. *IMAGES OF 'SHAKTI' IN THE LAND OF SIVA - I | Sulekha Creative*. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 Apr. 2013. <http://creative.sulekha.com/images-of-shakti-in-the-land-of-siva-i_524311_blog>.

Goddess Kaumari. N.d. Photograph. LOS Angeles CCU Museum of Art, California. *Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts - Slide Show of Digital Images*. Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts. Web. 05 Apr. 2013. <<http://ignca.nic.in/asp/showbig.asp?projid=ac18>>.

Indrani. Digital image. *Hindoe*. N.p., n.d. Web. 31 Mar. 2013. <<http://hindoe.eu/index.php?c=4&p=14&l=en>>.

Kumari Fighting Asuras. Digital image. *The Devis and Demons | IskconKL - News*. Iskcon KL, 29 Sept. 2007. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <<http://iskconkl.wordpress.com/2007/09/29/the-devis-and-demons/>>.

Maheshwari. Digital image. *Mantra & Shlokas: WORSHIP OF SAKTHI - GODDESS*. N.p., 22 June 2011. Web. 31 Mar. 2013. <<http://mantrashlokas-madhuri.blogspot.in/2011/06/worship-of-sakthi-goddess.html>>.

Rao, Sreenivas A. *Chamunda*. Digital image. *Saptamatrka – Part Four | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 31 Mar. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/07/saptamatrka-part-four/>>.

Rao, Sreenivas A. *pratyangira*¹. Digital image. *Saptamatrka – Part Four | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 31 Mar. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/07/saptamatrka-part-four/>>.

Rao, Sreenivas A. *Vaishnavi Matrika*. Digital image. *Saptamatrka – Part Four | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 31 Mar. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/07/saptamatrka-part-four/>>.

Rao, Sreenivas A. *Varahi Sculpt*. Digital image. *Saptamatrka – Part Four | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 31 Mar. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/07/saptamatrka-part-four/>>.

Rao, Sreenivas A. *Varahi*². Digital image. *Saptamatrka – Part Four | Sreenivasarao's Blogs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 31 Mar. 2013. <<http://sreenivasaraos.com/2012/10/07/saptamatrka-part-four/>>.

Sculpture of Indrani. N.d. Photograph. Patna Museum, Patna. *Huntington Archive: Detail - Indrani*. Web. 04 Apr. 2013. <<http://huntington.wmc.ohio-state.edu/public/index.cfm?fuseaction=showThisDetail&ObjectID=30014077&detail=large>>.