

KALI WORSHIP AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE
STUDY OF BENGALI WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

The subject of this thesis is the description of the logic of power relations between men and women as they correspond with images held of Kali, a Hindu goddess. Kali is described in the religious literature as both a benevolent mother goddess and a demonic shrew. Kali is seen here, in my analysis, as a symbolic manifestation as well as a model for male-female interaction in the traditional Indian society.

The thesis serves as a prelude and justification for intended research in Bengal. It is meant to challenge the notion that the social worlds of men and women can be reduced to two spheres (domestic and public) with power limited to males in a so-called public arena. Power is defined as that aspect of social relations what has the effect of constraining or directing the behavior of another (Belshaw 1967).

Two features of Kali are considered especially important; Kali's dual-nature and the fact that in India, women are seen as goddesses and goddesses as women. Mostly the analysis considers women as wives and mothers, however one chapter looks at the Indian courtesan. The courtesan represents an interesting juxtaposition of relations with the wife.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of all that is to follow is the exploration of the bases for conducting future research among the Bengali people (with a specific reference to women) with a view to ascertaining what relationship exists now, or has existed in the past, between their social behavior and the Goddess Durga-Kali. Kali is the theistic manifestation of the religious principle of Sakti, or Power, or the proto-typical image of the worship of Feminine Power. As the Goddess (Devi) she is regarded as both Mother of Timelessness and Life and Arbitress of Time and Death.¹ The only clue of an empirical nature that I have that there is, in fact, an existing association between the Goddess and Bengali people themselves is their own claim that "Every woman is, in some sense, a Mother Kali."

The initial inspiration to do research among Indian women came over two years ago, during the course of an academic study among the East Indian Hindu community in Vancouver. The original purpose of the study was to attempt to discover to what extent this immigrant group used folklore in the acculturation process. What struck me as most significant, however, during the course of these interviews, was the women themselves: their articulateness, their assertiveness and their strength of purpose. Not only did women's own behavior influence me but also the attitude of the men towards the women, which was deferential and respectful.

Having been 'brought up' in the feminist tradition of the 60's and 70's - a tradition used in an attempt by women to gain equal political and economic power - I was somehow unprepared (and I admit this with

some embarrassment) for my rude awakening. Such traditions not only taught one how to think and behave as a woman in this society, but they also taught one (unconsciously) how to believe other women, from other social systems, were. Armed with notions of Indian women as 'meek, submissive beings' and myself well indoctrinated in the traditions of individualism, feminism and materialism, I was very quickly confronted by the fallacy of my own bias.

The next important phase in this 'process of diminishing ignorance' came about one year later in Bengal during a language study grant. The purpose behind this study grant (unofficially) was to achieve some sort of understanding of the family network of relations and more particularly of the women in it. By this time there was a greater abundance of background material on Indian women in my head - material relating to women's status in society and their participation in the family as daughters, as wives and as mothers. Many of my encounters took place with women who had no knowledge of English. To my surprise, looking at the situation from the outside and without the aid of a verbal dialogue, and hopefully achieving a more objectivist or behavioral perspective, many of the more common North American stereotypes fit. Women appeared to be dedicated, smiling, complacent and subservient to their menfolk.

At the same time, subjecting myself to what I would call some sort of 'psychological closeness' with them (and I am convinced that this is possible because there are universal forms of communication - for example,

empathy - which, if pursued with conviction, can be achieved) I became aware of the presence of what one might define as a strength of purpose and a will or sense of self.² The major problem at this point became, of course, the problem of those anthropologists who attempt to convey in intellectual terms an idea of selfhood. It is perhaps as difficult, if not perhaps as impossible, as attempting to translate the mystical, supra-intellectual, supra-sensory experience into words. And, even further, to convince the aesthetist and scientist that God, in fact, does exist. The task was laid out for me.

The challenge, then, was to move from some 'general mood which I presumably captured in my spiritual versatility' to a 'set of readily observable symbolic forms' and what might be labelled a rational comprehension.³ Not totally ignorant of these problems before leaving for India, I had given some thought to possible methods of investigation of 'women's selves.' Certain avenues of exploration were apparent. For example, traditional and contemporary novels written by and about women, various symbol systems, religious literature and practices, mythology and, of course, last but not least, actual fieldwork which included an investigation of relevant social ambiances. Actual fieldwork, of course, for the time being, was out of the question. Therefore, only the others remained viable.

With the perspective in mind that religious symbols can be considered, in some real sense, to act as a mirror of the socio-political

structures of human relations and further, perhaps to reveal some of the deeper structures of the human mind, I began randomly to collect samples of female goddesses. Before long, the popular image of Kali standing upon the prostrate body of Siva (Appendix A), a most outstanding representation of a male and female relationship, especially if one is to believe that Bengali women are indeed submissive and subservient to their husbands, came to light. Further evidence, both from the religious literature and from the people themselves, concerning the centrality of Kali to Bengal society indicated that there was merit in attempting to discover the meaning of this image.

It has become evident since that time that I am not alone in my pursuits. There is a fairly substantial anthropological and psychological tradition that has attempted to explain the importance of the Mother Goddess figure in ancient society. Most of these studies have included a search for an appropriate framework for the cross-cultural analysis of women's status roles and activities. These explanations are based on certain anthropological or psychological premises involving the use of concepts such as power/powerlessness, deference/privilege, sexual standards, purity/pollution, submission/dominance, status/lack of status and involve functional and structural-functional evolutionary theories of women's situations in society. Explanations for the source or cause of women's power (or lack of it) and the significance of a mother goddess figure to the society or societies involved mainly refer to social phenomena such as the division of labor (more specifically the nature of female labor), women in groups, matrilineality and/or matrilocality, patri-

lineality and/or patrilocality, role differentiation, property rights and rights of inheritance, polygyny versus polyandry and public versus the domestic or private sphere.

These accounts, while not dealt with in any great detail in the thesis, have been taken into consideration as historical background in the development of my own hypothesis. The hypothesis which I am presenting is that Kali is a complex symbol which represents certain Hindu social relationships. As wife of Siva, as Mother, and as ultimately a female of dual aspects, She is a manifestation of as well as a model for the interaction of men and women in the Indian society. A more detailed explanation of this hypothesis will be provided in the second chapter.

In spite of the diversity of norms in India, my studies indicate that there is sufficient integration of cultural premises and definitions to talk about patterns of classification and action in the Indian family. Similar to the work of Inden and Nicholas (1977) on Bengal, I have attempted throughout to see the relations between men and women in India through the more general categories and assumptions of that culture.⁴

While the thesis concentrates on the woman in the Indian context, it makes reference to other cultures as well. This comparative data is included because in so much of the literature I have come across the same characteristics of women and the same problems in explaining women's behavior recur for the analyst. It would, in my opinion, be unnecessarily narrow and perhaps even be misleading to avoid reference

to these studies.

Kali seems to be representative of the way many women are seen, are, and perhaps in the final analysis, see themselves. Kali is ambiguous, as the Mother, the Creatrix, she is good, protecting, benevolent and gentle; as Death and the Destroyer, she is terrifying and dangerous.

There is much literature to refute the idea that women are dangerous or powerful; which claims that there have been only degrees of oppression of women over the centuries. Perhaps I am merely playing the devil's advocate by arguing otherwise. However, simply on an ethical and logical basis, the presumptuousness of western writers who attempt to class millions of women over centuries into one subservient and mindless lump is motivation enough. This presumptuousness, to me, in terms of arrogance, parallels that of the 19th C. British Evolutionists and their view of primitives as an inferior species.

The hypothesis which follows relates to the logic of power relations and suggests that men in positions of public and political responsibility are influenced by persons (in this case wives and mothers) without temporal power who are 'free' from such responsibilities. In this analysis, the concepts of power and deference are differentiated as in the tradition of Stephens (1963).⁵ Stephens admits that power is more than a ritual expression or a cultural expectation, as deference can be seen to be, and that it is more fundamental: power is the 'real thing'. He argues furthermore that power is more difficult for the ethnographer to observe and record because it is less public and less open to scrutiny.⁶

By the term power, as it is used in this instance in relation to women, is meant "that aspect of social relations which has the effect of constraining or directing the behavior of another."⁷ This definition of power is, I believe, broad enough to incorporate such variables as authority, persuasion and influence. It also suggests that power has some correspondence with social roles rather than answering the question of whether it has a locus in individuals. Regardless of the source, it is something which certain individuals (that is, wives and mothers in certain societies) have access to and may learn to use effectively. Recent literature indicates a trend away from general studies which presume the dominance of the masculine sex toward the definition and investigation of more particular aspects of women's position, leading to more refined studies of the various domains in women's lives and activities. Some analyses of power concentrate upon individual goals and strategies pursued in the competition for power; Matthiasson (1975), Colleen (1974), Chinas (1973); Nelson (1974); Riegelhaupt (1967).

It is my contention that women, as wives and mothers dependent on men as providers and as those responsible for their economic well-being among other things tend, at the same time to be influential upon that very position of responsibility that man holds in the society. Wives may threaten, enhance or, at the very least, help sustain their husband's status and his honor in the community by their own behavior. Thus, it is a woman's position of non-responsibility in this public sphere that can very well be used to wield power over her spouse. Men, by either

accepting or being coerced into the role of husband, become vulnerable to women's actions.

According to Schneider, there is an inseparable relationship between moral codes for conduct and inherited natural substance in Bengal.⁸ Schneider's analysis concludes that some of the most important things used as symbols in Bengali culture are; "a person's body (sarira), his house (grha), food (anna), semen (sukra) or seed (bija), the womb (dharma), love (prema) and purity (sauca) and its opposite, impurity (asauca)". Women, it appears, use these very symbols, consciously or unconsciously, to their own advantage. Through such social and psychological mechanisms as the fear of pollution, public and private anger, lack of respect or deference, domestic rights and sexual misbehavior, women can, and do, endanger men's social status - as men and as honored persons in the public sphere.

The thesis constitutes a critique of Harper's "Fear and the Status of Women", which claims that 'groups of adults who lack power and prestige, who generally do the bidding of others, and who have minimal control over their own social environment are likely to be portrayed as dangerous or malevolent beings in that society's belief system.'⁹ Harper concludes, however, that there may be, in fact, little realistic basis for such fear. My own thesis presumes that the fear is real, that women are in some sense dangerous to men and that there is a structural basis to that fear. Further, the presence of this fear is manifested in the behavior of men and women and in their symbol systems.

The second portion of this thesis concerns Kali's dual nature and women's position of 'no public responsibility' but carries it one step further. The corollary is that woman's position of no public responsibility places them in a recurring state of liminality or peripherality. The way in which the significance of such a liminal position is explained is through the religious principles of dharma and adharma, order and disorder. While perhaps for men there tend to be culturally instituted opportunities for liminality, such as the role of the Sanyasi, wars, initiation ceremonies, pilgrimages among others, - these institutions are less frequently available to women. However, descriptions of women as ambiguous characters seem to support a notion that women constantly vacillate between order and disorder in their behavior. Yet the woman does not move from one social position to another, but constantly moves back and forth between dharma and adharma. Such movement is exhibited in the two extreme aspects of her seen character, from a possible madness and uncontrolled behavior to loving and pure wife and mother.

Another aspect of philosophies associated with women which is explored is that regarding acts of faith and devotion. One of the statements made by a Bengali woman which most impressed me was an avowal of her belief that if any woman continued to love her husband and to be devoted to him he would inevitably come to love her. In spite of any efforts made by me to argue this position, she was unshakeable. My skepticism and empiricist bias came through: why would anyone surrender himself-herself to any other human being: I soon recognized the absence of this sort of 'faith' in much of contemporary thinking. In my opinion, it is the influence of the

philosophy of the individualist and the positivist which creates difficulty for the social scientist in his or her attempts to comprehend the behavior of Indian women. It further leads to efforts to 'explain away' certain kinds of phenomena (such as the fear of women) as opposed to efforts to explain them as things of ontological reality.

States of submission and dedication such as the woman experiences in her total love and devotion to her husband/God do not necessarily terminate there. The woman can, if she adheres to Indian philosophical and religious principles, transcend her own role, while at the same time identifying with it, and gain a degree of detachment. Such detachment is a form of power as it enables the individual to control or influence his or her own actions, as well as those of others. Devotion becomes a form of tapas (or strength) and can be used by women to enslave, ensnare or control their husband's actions. Devotion is also a form of self-discipline, similar to the self-discipline practiced by the initiate which enables the individual to ultimately gain a spiritual power and to accept their social role.

This implies, of course, that Indian women are not without will in their devotion nor without consciousness of the power entailed in their devotion. Hopefully, this thesis demonstrates that this is entirely likely. It is meant to illustrate that such a mechanism for achieving power is built into the system of wifely duties and to counteract assumptions that dedication and devastation are synonymous.

Therefore, it seems that the woman achieves power through both adharmic behavior and through dharmic behavior. Both are essential to

her being. The nature of the reality of the role of wife and mother is an ambiguous or ambivalent one. The female's access to power and her achievement of it can only be accomplished because of her potential to behave ambivalently; in other words, she exerts power over men in both the domestic and public sphere because of her unpredictability.

In an attempt to demonstrate logically the substance of the above hypothesis, I first provide a detailed description of Kali's characteristics, including her relationship to her husband in the religious system, and then move on to the significance of this as it relates to literature regarding Indian women (including Indian courtesans as well as wives and mothers). In the concluding chapter, I suggest problems for field analysis of the female self and her interaction with others.

CHAPTER I WHO IS KALI?

A. Historical Origins

In spite of some controversy among scholars, Kali's origins in India have been frequently traced back to pre-aryan times and the female idols of Mohenjo-Daro¹ and Harappa² some 3,000 years B.C. and associated with matriarchal society in many historical, religious and iconographic studies. According to these findings, she does not remain there. She has moved in history through Indian religious traditions to take up a prominent place in the Hindu pantheon and to establish herself in the Tantric and Sakta religious practices as well as in the Bengali devotional literature.

While often associated with the Great Mother or Earth Goddess complex of Non-Vedic times (giving her a peripheral character),³ many authors have indicated that she is, in fact, a legitimate part of later Hinduism. Many of the myths, rites and festivities in homage to the Goddess are particularly associated with Bengal.

This chapter provides an historical perspective to the question of Kali's identity as it has been written by those scholars concerned with placing Kali in her appropriate religio/historical context.

A. (1) Pre or Non-Aryan Associations

Religious and iconographic studies have illustrated the primitive, aboriginal and archaic aspects of Kali, or Durga-Kali as well as the features which are carried on into later phases of Indian religions. Neumann writes of the goddess of the dead who, he claims, is one of the earliest forms of the contemporary Indian Goddess worshipped as Durga.⁴ Figures of the Terrible Mother have been found in the very beginnings of Indian cultural history - in the temple sites of the Zhob River Valley of Northern Baluchistan.⁵

Stone quotes Brown, claiming that the 'Great Mother is not Aryan in origin' and is, in fact, quite different from the female deities of the RgVeda, although she was later incorporated into Brahmanic literature.⁶

"...Durga-Kali rightly belongs to a more expansive sphere of culturo-religious activity which in all probability finds its earliest manifestations in the Upper Paleolithic and Neolithic periods of human evolution. As a 'feminine cipher' her origins are thus pre-historical. The beginnings of her cultural linkage and representational geneology carry us back towards the contemplation and the immemorial figure of the Terra Mater."⁷

E. Washburn Hopkins says that "all these forms of Uma (-Amma, the Great Mother Goddess) go back to the primitive and universal cult of the Mother Goddess (cf. Aditi).⁸ The name Uma is of non-Sanskritic origin and has usually been associated with Ma or Amma (dravidian) denoting Mother. These terms are connected with the Mother Goddess."⁹

Kinsley reminds us of the assumption that Kali has an essentially indigenous non-Aryan character and is often associated with tribal groups living on the periphery of Indian society. He stresses the

fact, however, that at some point Kali ceases to be an indigenous Goddess and gains a significant prominence in the Hindu pantheon, transcending her origins.¹⁰ Kali, (or Goddesses very much like her) according to Kinsley, was recognized in various parts of tribal India and was not identified specifically with any one indigenous group. She was known throughout the Vindhya Mountains, Tamilnad, Bengal, Assam, Orissa and Rajasthan and was seen primarily as a demonic shrew, worshipped by thieves or by cults and peoples outside, or on the periphery of Hindu society.

Durga-Kali has frequently been associated with blood sacrificial cults in India. It is often assumed that the earliest manifestations of these cults were among the tribal peoples.¹¹ This ferocious, blood-thirsty aspect of Kali was to survive and carry on into the later traditions, as will be seen when we look at her role in Hinduism.

(2) Early Hindu Associations

It appears as though Mother Goddess figures, such as Kali, took some time before being accepted into mainstream Hindu thought but, nevertheless, were to eventually receive acknowledgement. According to Battacharya,

"We do not find in the early stratum of the Vedic literature the names of such Puranic Goddesses as Durga, Kali,¹² Ambika, Uma and others. It is only in the later Vedic literature that we find stray mention of these deities. As there is no reference to these goddesses in the RgVeda, we may presume that they were originally non-Vedic deities later adopted by the Vedic Aryans. The different names of the Mother Goddess appear to have originally indicated different tribal deities, who were afterwards identified with the wife, or Siva Pasupati, the pre-Aryan god, known to have been worshipped by the Mohenjodero peoples."¹³

Marriott identifies the intermixture of the Little and Great Traditions' deities,¹⁴ demonstrating a reasonable uniformity in their worship. According to Marriott, there is a fairly widespread (Mother) Goddess complex in Indian religion,¹⁵ specifically Hinduism, which virtually bridges the two traditions. In Beane's view, certain factors illustrate a structural-symbolic continuity to the Mother Goddess figure. These include a conception of a Mother in the deity, transcendent creativity, protectiveness and accessibility.¹⁶

Pryzluski traces Kali back, through Aditi, to the Great Goddess of Asia Minor. Aditi, he says, is an exception to the rule of the Vedas of male ascendancy over female goddesses.¹⁷ Aditi's sovereignty is unlimited, rendering her superior to the Gods. He then goes on to suggest that Kala is an avatar of the Great Goddess. Kali, in this conception, is the feminine form of Kala.¹⁸

Kinsley places Kali's appearance in the tradition as a goddess having a cycle of myths and a consistent description in the epic and Puranic periods (circa 200 B.C. to A.D. 300) and states that possible prototypes of Kali in early literature are Ratri devi (the Goddess Night) and the demoness Nirrti.¹⁹ In the process of pinpointing her origins, he adopts a slightly different perspective from some of the other researchers. He states with certainty that Kali is a Hindu deity and a very popular one at that, particularly in Bengal. This popularity, he suggests, supports the notion that Kali is not an aberration of the tradition but is a manifestation of certain fundamental

truths of the Hindu religious and philosophic traditions.²⁰ It is Kali's association with blood sacrifice, and her position as a patron goddess of the infamous Thugs, Kinsley claims, that have won for her a reputation simply as a manifestation of a Great Goddess²¹ or a dark frightening abberation born of a crazed aboriginal mind.²² Kinsley objects to the view of Kali as maintaining essentially an indigenous, non-Aryan character and argues that she is more than this. One has to recognize, he says, that

"Kali has become a Hindu goddess, expressing the Hindu vision of things in her own way. The point is that Kali's origins do not and cannot adequately explain her subsequent history. She eventually transcends her origins."²³

In other words, while Kinsley does not deny Kali's history as being to some extent a process of making her name an epithet of other goddesses, he claims She has an identity of her own and contributes something to the Great Traditions.

In an attempt to explain the divine evolution, Battacharya claims that the only Gods that survive in the history of religion are those that absorb qualities of others and become composite characters.²⁴ This is true, he says, of many of the Earth Mothers and ultimately of the Goddess Durga, who was primarily a goddess of vegetation and fertility but also had associations with inaccessible mountain regions. She was also depicted as equipped with arms and as a destroyer of enemies, a feature which is said to be absent in the conception of Parvati-Uma - one of the benign group. Kali, Candika and others are associated with the group of destroyers while Durga is a composite character said to unite the two independent streams.

Battacharya offers another possible reason for the survival of the Mother Goddess in sectarian religion such as Vaisnavism and Saivism - supposedly the concept of a Mother Goddess was so deeply rooted in the Indian mind that it had to find a place of significance and a rationalization to accompany its acceptance.²⁵

While the preceding arguments concerning the origins of Kali indicate the existence of some controversy, all those referred to agree on one central point. Kali has associations with pre- or non-Aryan traditions which involve the reification of a Mother or Earth Goddess and has been only later accepted into the Hindu pantheon. Allowing this, then, just what part does Kali play in the Greater Hindu Traditions?

(3) Tantra-Sakta Associations

It seems that while the goddess as a religious symbol achieved recognition in Hinduism long before the rise of the Great Tantric religious and philosophical movement, it is only with the emergence of the goddess worship sect (that is, the Saktas) that She gains full recognition.

Kinsley reminds us that while goddesses were known and worshipped prior to Tantrism, it was from the 7th C. onward that they assumed an increased popularity far greater than anything of the past. In the Tantric literature, Kali is affirmed as a great deity, and in fact is often the supreme deity, equivalent to the Brahman. This is confirmed by Zimmer, who states that "Brahman and Sakti are identical, if you accept the one you must accept the other."²⁶

The notion of play (lila) of the Goddess is a fundamental aspect of the Tantric philosophy and it is believed that the Primordial Power is

always at play - She creates, preserves and destroys while at play. This Power is called Kali/Brahman. When it is inactive, it is Brahman; when it is engaged in the activities of creation, preservation and destruction, it is called Kali or Sakti. Ramakrishna said "The reality is one and the same; the difference is in name and form."²⁷

Another philosophical aspect of the Kali religious tradition is that She represents, in some sense, Maya, or contingent reality, as opposed to reality or true seeing. The spiritual adventurer must remove the veil of maya before he is able to confront his true self and the divine. Kali's association with death and fear presumably presents a challenge to the Tantra hero. The forbidden is not to be 'propitiated, feared, ignored or avoided' but rather is to be confronted, overcome and transformed into a vehicle of salvation.²⁸

Marshall implies that the Saktism which arose in India might have developed out of the ancient Mother Goddess cult and that this primitive goddess might have been transformed into a personification of feminine energy (Sakti) and that what followed was "a conception of the eternal productive principle (prakrti) united with the eternal male principle (purusa)." Although the association between Tantrism and Saktism is not always made clear, N.N. Vasu informs us that Tantrism²⁹

"really means the worship of Sakti, or female energy. The female energy is worshipped in conjunction with male energy. The union of male and female is the essence of Tantra."³⁰

The supreme Sakta is worshipped by many names and in many forms - some gentle, some formidable - and she may be referred to as Devi (Goddess), Uma, Parvati, Ambika, Kali, Durga, Sati, Padmi, Candi, Sitala and others." All is the Mother and She is reality itself. "Saham (She I am), the

Sakta says, and all that he senses is She in the form in which he perceives her.³¹ However, the reality of the manifestations is not fixed or permanent, and only the causal Power endures. Therefore, Shakti, in the Shakta tradition, is the active aspect of the immanent God.

"philosophically speaking, Shiva is the unchanging Consciousness, and Sakti is its changing Power appearing as mind and matter. Siva-Sakti is therefore Consciousness and its Power."³²

In some Hindu teachings, the male and female principles are regarded as complementary aspects of the same monism; among the Shaktas, however, the Great Goddess is the personification of a primordial energy and the source of all cosmic and divine evolution. She is the supreme being and the source as well as the controller of nature.³³ Dasgupta, in writing on the primordial goddess, claims that the general view among religious philosophers is that Prakrti (female principle) existed alone, before creation, unmanifested. Through the Purusa (male power) the creation began.

A deeper analysis of Prakrti principle reveals the three powers or qualities - the gunas (sattva, rajas and tamas) - of which Prakrti is constituted. Sattva refers to the "ideal state of being; goodness, perfection, crystal purity, immaculate clarity and utter quiet."³⁴ Rajas, on the other hand, means impurity or passion and in reference to the female body means menstruation or dust. Tamas translates as 'darkness, black, dark-blue and is the "basis of all lack of feeling, dullness, ruthlessness, insensibility and inertia."³⁵ Tamas serves to hold the universe together by counterbalancing the explosive aspect of rajas.

There is, in my opinion, no difficulty in drawing parallels between the three gunas and Kali in her many aspects - sattva, the ideal or good Mother; rajas, female impurity, blood and passion, representing the dangerous or destructive side of Kali and the force responsible for her explosions, and tamas, which relates to her indifference and black or blue color.

This relationship between Purusa and Prakrti is clearly illustrated in the following statement made by Parvati to Siva in the Siva Puranas. Parvati's claim is intended to remind Siva of his dependence upon her power:

"That energy is Prakrti, the cause of all activities...All these (the universe, etc.) are bound by Prakrti continuously...What you hear, what you eat, what you see and what you do - all these are essentially the activities of Prakrti...I am Prakrti and you are Purusa...With my blessing you become qualitative and embodied. Without me, you are attributeless and incompetent to perform any activity. Being always subservient to Prakrti, you perform all activities...You are worthy of the worship, respect and meditation of all living beings for ever, thanks to Prakrti." (S.P. 520-521).

(4) Bengal Associations

As a final aspect of this brief overview of Kali's religious history, the following is concerned with identifying elements of Her influence upon and relationship to Bengal. One of the most important influences derives from the works of the Bengali bhakti devotionalists.³⁶ The philosophy behind this bhakti worship is that one approaches God through a human relationship. The whole world is Lila, the God's play. One can either fight the joke or become an active part of it. Identification with the God comes through love, (earthly love), transformed

into love for God. Some followers can most easily adopt or spontaneously feel the love of a child, the love of a lover, the love of a friend, etc. Bhakti demands devotion, faith, trust and love as opposed to mental processes or meditation. Final absorption in the Lila is salvation.

Such devotion was that of Sri Ramakrishna and Ramprasad Sen, two well-known Bengali Shakta devotees, for the Goddess Kali. Kinsley claims that it is difficult to exaggerate the importance of Ramprasad in the history of Kali's worship in Bengal. Before him, her worship was fairly esoteric, performed in private by Tantric individuals. With Ramprasad, Kali worship became public and appropriate to the masses.³⁷ Ramakrishna (1836-86) also doted upon Mother Kali for most of his life

"The world is created by Kali in play and for her amusement. The world - life and particularly individual biographies - delights her. Man, as her plaything, her toy, her puppet, finds fulfillment in joining Kali's play, in clapping his hands in delight, in giving himself up in self-surrender to her mad escapade. He is redeemed when he lets go of adult pretensions and yields to the Mother's game."³⁸

Kali's popularity in Bengal is manifested in several ways - in the form of images as well as active worship and ritual festivities. For example, representations are found in thousands of Temples throughout the area³⁹, including a large cremation ground in South Calcutta where a very large image is located. Funeral processions are massive and often accompanied by animal sacrifice.

Even in present times, the Temple of Kali (Kalighat)⁴⁰ in Calcutta is famous for its blood offerings and, according to Lederer, is probably the bloodiest sanctum on earth.

"In the temple, which serves as slaughterhouse all year round, animals are decapitated and their heads, like trophies, piled up in high mounds before the Goddess. The faithful carry the carcasses home, for a festive family meal; but the spurting blood - the life blood - belongs to the goddess from whom it came, as a return of the gift of life she bestowed."⁴¹

The ritual sacrifice is presided over by Brahman priests who are not prohibited from sacrificing the animals themselves. Both the priests and devotees (and pilgrims, I have heard) partake of the sacrifice as Prasad after the symbolic eating by Kali.⁴² In the autumn, pilgrims travel to the annual festival, the Kali puja, where, according to some, some 800 goats are slaughtered in three days.⁴³

The Kumari Puja (that is, the adoration of a maiden) began traditionally at the new moon and lasted fifteen nights. It involves the ritual worship of sixteen maidens or virgins who must be aged from one to sixteen.⁴⁴ I have been told that this practice is still carried on in some parts of Bengal today. Such a varied number of appearances and established practices in honor of the Goddess substantiate the reality of her presence in this area. It may safely be concluded, I believe, non-facetiously, that Kali is alive and well and living in Bengal.

B. WHO IS KALI - WHAT CONSTITUTES THE WHOLE?

Up to this point we have attempted to establish Kali's identity by tracing her historical presence as researched mostly by western authors.⁴⁵ What I have described so far provides a picture of Kali as maintaining structural continuity as an important pre or Non-Aryan as well as Hindu deity. In other words, She is a part of the Indian past as well as an influential presence in the Indian present.

The primary task of this work is not solely to establish what significance Kali has in religious or literary terms, however, but also in terms of the people involved with Kali worship and their social and psychological networks. Before preceding further with this proposed task, let us conclude the iconographic, historical and religious investigation of 'Who Kali is' by looking at Her image as an actively worshipped deity - a dual-natured Goddess figure.

It is not uncommon in the Hindu tradition to symbolize aspects of an opposing nature by two deities (Siva-Sakti, Ram-Sita, Visnu-Parvati) or by one deity exhibiting both natures. In the case of the Goddess Kali, in each perspective to be considered (Theosophist, Sanskritic, epic, Bengali) the same image is repeated: an image of a Goddess with dualistic qualities.

The following is a statement elicited from a Bengali Sanskrit scholar in answer to the question 'Who is Kali'? It stands, at the moment, as one of the few examples available to me of the Bengali contemporary concept of Kali. Hereafter the description again must rely upon information extracted from religious texts and/or Western or Indian scholars' interpretations of those texts.

"Sree Sree Kali: Derivative meaning: - One who devours, that is, destroys (this is who is the author of ultimate destruction of the creation) is Mahakal and who devours and destroys even Him (that is engulfs Him or makes him powerless) is Kali.

Kali is the cause of all causes, the totality of ultimate powers from whom the whole of creation has come out - or emanated, and the entire Universe as well as all power and energy are but manifestations of that Great Power. This power has been named by the Hindus as Kali. This power has also been named differently as Durga, Jagadhatri, Annapurna, Lakshmi and Sarasvati and others as they represent the different aspects of manifestations, and wield different powers for diverse purposes.

Kali has been eulogised and worshipped in prayerful hymns giving her enthralling features by the devotees. One such hymn reads as follows:

Her body bears the hue and lustre of newly formed clouds, so enchanting and beautiful. She is always beaming with laughter, her eyes are as bright as lightening. The earth tremors under her heavy footsteps. I bow at her benign feet, she is like the creeper which fulfils all our desires.

She has found hands, one holding a human head, one a sword, one showering blessings and other giving solace and assurance to the afflicted from evils and fears. On her waist dangles the hands of demons and devils (whom she has destroyed) and her look is fixed on Siva (whose power she is and has come out of him) and who is lying prostrate at her feet (being without any power). I bow at her benign feet, she is like the creeper which fulfils all our desires.

She revels in war dance (against evils and wickedness), her feet are worshipped by Brahma, (hero of creation), Vishnu (hero of protection) and Siva (hero of destruction). I bow at her benign feet, she is like the creeper which fulfils all our desires.

She wears a garland of human heads (of the wicked she has killed), her long hairs reach her feet. She is the Mother of the whole world and she dispels afflictions from the world. I bow at her benign feet, she is like the creeper which fulfils all our desires."

The dual aspects of Kali's nature is clearly revealed in both the general description and in the devotional hymn dedicated to her which preceded. Kali destroys creation and at the same time is the cause of all causes; she is enchanting and beautiful, beaming with laughter and at the same time wears a garland of severed human heads and dangles demons and devils; she destroys wickedness and at the same time gives solace and assurance to the afflicted from evils and fears; and finally, she is described as both emanating from and as Shiva's power and

frequently appears with Shiva lying prostrate at her feet in a state of presumed powerlessness.

Zimmer quotes Sri Ramakrishna, the Bengali Shakta devotee:

"Smasana-Kali is the embodiment of the power of destruction. She resides in the cremation ground, surrounded by corpses, jackals, and terrible female spirits. From her mouth flows a stream of blood, from her neck hangs a garland of human heads and around her waist is a girdle made of human hands."⁴⁶

But as the reader will recall from earlier accounts of Ramakrishna's devotion to the Mother, her dishevelled appearance is of no consequence. She is wild and ferocious, but she is the Mother and the object of his love and devotion. In his account of Kali he follows up his statement concerning her alleged destruction of the universe with a claim that the "Divine Mother garners the seeds for the next creation."⁴⁷

According to Neumann, there are three commonly occurring 'terrible' images of Kali: one with "many, arms, hideously squatting amid a halo of flames, devouring the entrails that form a deathly umbilical cord between the corpse's open belly and her own gullet." A second horrible representation is a Kali "clad in the nocturnal black of the earth goddesses and adorned with the hacked-off hands and heads of her victims." It is this representation in which She is usually pictured standing atop the corpse of Shiva. The third image has two hands; one extended, the other stroking the heads of cobras. ⁴⁸

Nathan and Seely introduce their translations of Ramprasad's poetry by questioning the nature of what they perceive to be contradictions appearing in his devotional songs to Kali. They state that

"Some epithets for Her denote a loving mother or lovable child, while others indicate an overwhelmingly destructive force. Some

point to a transcendent deity, others to the disreputable spouse of the supreme deity, Shiva, forbidding denizen of mountaintops and graveyards."

They emphasize, as others have, that while she is addressed as the mother of the three worlds, she is also known as "Kali, the Dark One, of terrible and menacing aspect." Kali's both fierce and protective nature, her associations with good and evil, her benevolence and her cruelty, her power over life and death, her dedication and her indifference, can all be seen through the eyes of the devotee's poetry:

I Remember, you're the cord connecting
 Every good and evil
 and I's a tool tied to illusion.

 Your name can blot out the fear
 Of Death -- Shiva said,
 But Terrible One, You forget all that,
 Absorbed in Shiva, Death and Time.

 Prasad says: Your games, Mother,
 are mysteries. You make and break.
 You've broken me in this life.⁴⁹

Here we are reminded of Kali's 'Rajas-aspect', and the importance of Lila and Maya in the understanding of her character.

II When a child is bad, his parents correct him,
 But you can watch Death come at me
 With murder in His heart
 and turn away yawning.

 Ramprasad asks: Who taught you to be so cold?
 If you want to be like your Father --
 Stone -- don't call Yourself
 the Mother.⁵⁰

The second piece could be said to call note to Kali's 'Tamas-like' quality - her cold indifference to her own son.

III Mother, incomparably arrayed,
 Hair flying, stripped down,
 You battle-dance on Shiva's heart,
 A garland of heads that bounce off
 Your heavy hips, chopped-off hands
 For a belt, the bodies of infants
 For earrings, and the lips,
 the teeth like jasmine, the face
 A lotus blossomed, the laugh,
 And the dark body boiling up and out
 Like a storm cloud, and those feet
 Whose beauty is only deepened by blood.
 So Prasad cries: My mind is dancing
 Can I take much more? Can I bear
 An impossible beauty? 51

And finally, in this last poem, Kali's contrariety is clear - She is blood and passion (rajas) and she is simultaneously beautiful and ideal (Sattvas). In summary, Kali is mad (insane), she is Mother, she destroys, she gives birth and loves, she devours, and she creates. She obviously exists as a power in the universe to be feared, respected and loved with utmost devotion.

Nathan and Seely, as will be noted from the above reference to their work, have referred to the major aspects of Kali's or Durga's nature as contradictory. The justification for the use of this particular term seems to slip away, however, as their analysis of the Goddess worship proceeds. Initially, they inform us that Ramprasad responds to the Goddesses' various aspects and names. According to them, some of the Goddesses' forms and titles flatly contradict others and there is no clear definition of her character.⁵² This, they go on to say, however, is only really a problem if She is seen as human..."Seen as a principle, She deserves her many names."⁵³ She is a vital principle of the universe,

which has many faces, ranging from gracious to indifferent to cruel and destructive. To Kali's devotees, they say,

"There is no simple way of perceiving the mystery of reality, at least not in human terms." 54

One could conclude from this that Kali's aspects are only contradictory if her characteristics are regarded as human. If they are seen as a Hindu principle, there is no contradiction. Why, then, do they add confusion at this point by making the statement that

"The sum of all her representations, however, points to an overwhelming paradox commanding awed worship beyond conventional usage, just as Kali and her husband stand outside the social order in their behavior and habitat." 55

First, let me draw the reader's attention to the last part of this statement which refers to Kali's and her husband's extraordinary behavior. They are said to 'stand outside the social order.' The significance of this particular statement will be discussed in Chapter II. A second point of consideration and one which is relevant to the immediate issue, is their reference to an overwhelming paradox in Kali's representations. We are back to the allusions toward contradiction. The problem, and the confusion as I see it, lies within the nature of the Hindu philosophy itself. To deny that the Hindu religious philosophy admits to contradiction (or something similar to this) is perhaps to deny the true nature of the system of beliefs itself.

In my evaluation of the nature of Kali's aspects, I have tended to avoid the usage of the term contradictory because this term is often construed as meaning the existence of a logical incompatibility. However, if taken to refer solely to the opposition of facts, forces, tendencies,

qualities or events then the term is certainly appropriate here. Descriptive terms which will more often be used include ambiguous, inconstant, ambivalent and unpredictable. The meaning or justification for these terms is clarified below.

Kali's destructive aspect, as opposed to her benevolent, creative or mothering aspect, from a great majority of accounts is wilful and disrespectful of ordinary human values. Kali not only destroys demons and devils, but she is known to destroy children and infants as well. Poem No. III states explicitly that Kali sports 'the bodies of infants for earrings' and other images describe her as wearing a girdle of children's heads. This indicates that Kali kills not only to protect her offspring but for other motivations as well.

Kali may also be characterized as ambiguous. Ambiguity, as I employ the term, does not mean looseness or vagueness. Rather, ambiguity is applied only when it can be shown that there exists the opposition or contraposition of two or more meanings inherent in one word or symbol or in a consistent set of metaphoric or symbolic words. Further, it is used when it can be shown that some thing or some being is capable of being classified in two or more categories.⁵⁶ Kali, as a Hindu goddess, is capable of being classified in two categories. The name Kali refers to two things at the same time and symbolizes in one character, as has been shown, the opposition or contraposition of two or more meanings.

Kali may also be described as inconsistent; an inconsistency resulting from her vacillation between two opposing types of action or behavior.

This constant manifestation of ambivalence on Kali's part, the oscillation expressed in her behavior by alternating obedience and rebellion, followed by self-reproach is depicted sensitively in the following devotional poem:

"Victory of Gauri, who stands
her lower robe blood-spattered
from the demon buffalo her spear has slain
shamefaced, as if menstuous
before the laughing eyes of Hara." 57

But contrariety, or opposition, or contradiction is not exclusive to Kali, of course. The Hindu religion, rather than denying oppositions and contradictions, at one level revels in them. Siva, too, manifests the same characteristics of contrariety or contradiction. For example, in the following poem regarding Siva's character, the term contradiction is freely employed when the poet speaks of the Master:

"If he is naked what need then has he of the bow?
If armed with bow then why the holy ashes?
If smeared with ashes what needs he with a woman?
Or if with her, then how can he hate Love?"
Poor Bhrngin, seeing these his master's contradictions,
has worried his body till there's nothing left
but the hard bones
knotted with tough sinew. (Yogesvara? Hanumannataka) 58

That oppositions exist is an acknowledged fact of the Hindu religion; that this is not a problem of a logical nature is also a fact of Hindu religion. 59

In acknowledging the oppositional nature of Hindu philosophy, however, it should be pointed out that the author is aware of a theoretical question which underlies the hypothesis which she presents. If not only goddesses such as Kali express ambivalence and ambiguity, but gods like Siva as well, then how might this fact affect the hypothesis that goddesses represent or mirror female behavior. If male gods are characterized by two aspects;

might men then, following the original hypothesis to its logical conclusion, gain power and control over women through inconsistent or unpredictable behavior. In other words, could it be determined that the nature of the reality of the logic of power relations as exercised by both males and females is truly a dialectical principle (based on contradictions) as opposed to being linear or direct. This is, in fact, one possibility.

There is another, however. There is reason to believe that the traits of destructiveness and creativeness in male religious figures may be expressed in different ways than those of female figures. Both the statement and the above problem concerning male and female representations would lead to a much more ambitious investigation of both gods and goddesses, and men and women, than the present thesis anticipates. These, and other questions like these, are fieldwork considerations and although not discussed extensively within, are touched upon throughout the work and are especially dealt with in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER II TOWARD A GENERAL HYPOTHESIS CONCERNING THE NATURE OF
FEMININE POWER IN THE INDIAN SOCIETY

This chapter sets out the theoretical foundations of the analysis of Indian women (and men) vis-a-vis the Goddess Kali. The foundation is based upon the premise that there is sufficient written material to support the suggested hypothesis that Kali, as wife of Siva, as Mother and as a goddess characterized by contrasting aspects, reflects female power relations in the Indian society. The rest of the essay is an attempt to lay the groundwork for field research by demonstrating that there is sufficient reason to carry on: the reason being that there is logical evidence, gleaned from secondary sources of various types, to support the notion that the image of the Goddess Kali, standing astride the prostrate body of Siva (Appendix A) bears a particular relationship to the social behavior of men and women in Bengal. The determination of any discrepancy between Kali's real significance vis-a-vis Indian women and the hypothetical one which I now present can be determined only by such a prolonged period of fieldwork in that area.¹

Two important features of my own hypothesis will be considered in this chapter; firstly, the use (by myself and others) of certain terms such as public and private (domestic) spheres and secondly, the ambiguity observed in female action (in many societies). While at the same time as the hypothesis acknowledges the existence of two separate spheres, it attempts to emphasize the interdependence of the two spheres, rather than assuming a hierarchical or egalitarian relationship between men and women in them.

Another important aspect of the analysis of Indian women is my own belief that many social scientists, looking at women in traditional societies, have tended to adopt certain misconceptions about their situation. These misconceptions appear to be a manifestation of the 'hierarchical thinking' which occurs in state societies. One such assumption, for example, is that decisions made by the female side of the population have little or no influence on the male side and thus on a very wide range of institutions.²

Some authors, in an effort to search for a more balanced distribution of power between the sexes, have come to the conclusion that androgyny is the only possible form of sexual equality.³ Most of these misconceptions and assumptions, in my view, can be avoided by looking more closely into structures of power relations and analyzing what I believe to be an extremely important feature; that is, the ambiguous nature of female actions.

A. The Logic Behind the Hypothesis

As the description in Chapter I has shown, Kali can be described as an ambiguous female being. She is wild, ferocious, untamed and destructive on the one hand, but she is also creative, loving and benevolent on the other. Again, setting aside ambiguity as a word referring to vagueness or looseness, how are we specifically using it in this context. Kali can be interpreted as ambiguous, by the outside observer, because of her behavior. She need not appear vague to the observer in order to be called ambiguous; she need only exhibit contrasting behaviors

or qualities according to her will or whim. And, as I have attempted to demonstrate in Chapter I, she does exactly this. To determine exactly how Kali is seen by the Indian observer is an important task of fieldwork. Whether the actual word ambiguous would be used in describing Kali is debatable, but that descriptions of her conflicting or contrasting aspects exist, as well as accounts of her unpredictable behavior in Indian mythology has been established. It certainly seems that there is a recognition of Kali's inconsistency, at least. The finer details of this experience can be acquired only in the context of Bengal. What must be explained is how these characteristics represent women as they are seen in Bengal or elsewhere in India.

B. Woman's Power and Authority as it Corresponds to the Public and Private Spheres:

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, a commonly held assumption in the anthropological literature is that decisions made by the female side of the population have little or no influence on a very wide range of activities. A fundamental feature of this assumption is that societies are divided into two spheres or worlds corresponding to the two sexes. These two worlds are generally categorized as private or domestic (female) and public (male). The characteristics of narrow and restricted are attributed to the private sphere while to the public sphere are attributed the characteristics of political, broad and expansive. A belief in the segregation of the authority and power structures also exists, with the idea that the major portion of both is contained within, and asserted from, the public sphere.

"The home is regarded as the woman's for internal purposes. Her authority in domestic affairs is an established fact. For internal purposes, the home is the man's, the assumption being that whatever articulates the household to the public sphere is by definition political and thereby a male concern. And the inference drawn from this assumption is that women are far more interested in man's affairs than vice versa."⁴

In my opinion, it is not necessary to correlate the adoption of different roles by men and women with the total dominance of one sex over the other. In other words, men and women's roles or spheres can be segregated or differentiated and still be complementary. I am in full sympathy with Cynthia Nelson's desire to

"challenge the notion that the social worlds of men and women, despite the element of segregation, are reducible to spheres of private and public with power limited to males in a so-called public arena."⁵

Authors like Stephens writing in 1963 frequently claimed that men usually monopolize positions of authority and are more involved with formal political institutions than women are.⁶ This often led to the conclusion that men are dominant and women powerless. Others, like Rogers, argue that concentration upon formal forms of power is misleading. She goes on to say that this has resulted in models which do not allow for the possibility of informal forms of power. The solution to this problem, in my view, is not to allow ourselves to be totally misled by such things as observed displays of public deference by the female members of the society. In my perspective, authority and power can be as much associated with those less commonly recognized and perhaps more subtle variables mentioned throughout this thesis as they are with the more generally accepted ones such as ownership of land, the provision of hospitality,

explicit threats of violence, public political negotiations and so on.

To determine to what extent the two spheres might be of a more complementary nature to one another than the literature would imply, I suggest we investigate in what ways women's capacities for influencing the behavior (action) of others is exhibited. If I am correct, we could discover the existence of reciprocal activities between men and women which involve the constant transference of power. As mentioned earlier, however, this essay does not explore in depth the nature of male forms of power. The recognition of the fact that men do exert power and control over women is, of course, implicit in the argument itself. Women act defensively as well as offensively, which is part of the reciprocity of power relations between the two sexes.

In order to aid in determining the nature of this power reciprocity, as a first step we must first allow for the possibility that

"Women, like other people, have goals and desires which go beyond their immediate situations - they might seek political power, control over other persons, financial security, love, whatever. Feminine behavior, then, must be interpreted in relation to the goals women are moving toward - to an extent, their actions are bound to be strategically chosen."⁷

This can be accomplished by looking at ways in which women influence men by their own actions and how control may be exercised. As mentioned in the introduction, greater attention to certain symbols such as body, house, food, semen, seed, womb, love, purity and impurity would allow for a different perspective on the social interaction of men and women. To

carry on this analysis, I have categorized these symbols under a broader framework of chaste and unchaste, honoring and shaming, submissive and terrifying and purifying and polluting. By using these categories, it becomes easier to perceive a super-structure of power and influence as it affects both men and women. How these categories are important should become clear as we proceed.

C. The Achievement of Power through Dharmic and Adharmic Means

The next portion of the argument is based on three major conditions:

- 1) that Indian society, and generally other traditional societies, have two distinct spheres divided according to sex
- 2) that these spheres may be equal in terms of the assessment of power and/or authority and
- 3) that there is an interdependence between the two worlds of men and women.

Let us attempt to describe how this interdependency may function.

The best route to the explication of female power as it affects men, as I determine it, is by analogy and through the understanding of the principles of order and disorder (dharma and adharma). In the Hindu religion, the world order is Dharma, which is that principle by which the universe is upheld. Without this principle, the world would fall to pieces and dissolve into nothingness. Disorder (adharma) also exists, however, at the same time, and in particular portions of the world. Order, it is believed, will ultimately assert itself as it is in the nature of things to do so.

According to this religious doctrine, the religious man (or woman, as it is actually more relevant in this case) feels he is bound to all being. The irreligious person, on the other hand, egotistically considers everything from the viewpoint of himself and his (or her) own interests, without concern for others. It is assumed that if such an attitude were adopted by all, it would lead to the negation of Cosmos; that is, Chaos. This type of self-centeredness is considered to be the root of all sin or disorder (adharma), while morality is said to be the true nature of man.⁸

Men, I have said, in many of the traditional societies I have looked at, are usually given the responsibility of the public sector - it is their obligation to control the social order. One of the central ways in which they may achieve this is by maintaining their own status and prestige. In order to do so they must, at the same time, maintain order in their family; that is, they must control their wives. Women, however, it seems are unpredictable and not always subject to these ideals. Women then, as wives, as mothers, as prostitutes, and so on, have the potential to threaten the dharma of society and thus to endanger men's prestige and position. This is a function of the interdependence of the two sexes and women's lack of responsibility in the public sphere, giving her constant access to adharmic forms of power.

In attempting to make this process clearer, I became aware that there were certain similarities and differences between my own description of the way in which this power is achieved by women and other theories of social action. Without weighing down this chapter with complex theoretical comparisons, I will briefly acknowledge them here to clarify for the reader my own particular direction.

The first example is that of Turner's description of the achievement of power through the initiation ritual. The significance of this comparison, as I see it, lies in the theoretical perspectives regarding the acquisition or display of power. The initiate, in Turner's theory, disappears into the forest by himself, gains spiritual power and returns to society in a state of madness where he is overcome and eventually tamed.⁹

There are two events which ensue: 1) the initiate is reinstated into society, but moving up into a new role

2) he contributes some of his supernatural powers to the society itself.

The woman's achievement of power does require the departure of the individual from the everyday ideal of social behavior (dharmic behavior) and her adoption of a state of 'madness' (adharmic behavior).¹⁰ Liminality, however, involves the obtainment of power by the individual through certain intentional actions on his or her part. In the case of the woman, power is gained or obtained through her own action though it is not determined in this thesis whether that action is intentional or unintentional. Also, while there are social consequences of obtaining or of the exercising of this power by the woman, she does not assume a new role in the society. Rather, she continues with the old one in much the same manner as before.

There are also certain similarities and differences between my analysis and Parson's theory of social deviance. The significance of this comparison lies in the theoretical perspectives regarding ideals, norms and deviations. If one thinks about some of the representations of women as they appear in the broad sampling of folklore and literature written on or about women of India, one becomes immediately aware of the the dangerous side of their behavior. Women are dangerous in that they

seem to occasionally go out of control - at odds with order or dharma.

Again let me state that it is not determined in this thesis whether women actually do go out of control, whether they merely assume a certain type of behavior, or whether it should even be properly called going out of control. What is determined is that:

- 1) they are seen by others to be out of control and that they do present an image which is at odds with dharmic or ordered behavior, and
- 2) that they are, at least temporarily, beyond men's influence.

Without belaboring this comparison, it seems at first glance that women in India do deviate from the ideal or the normal expected behavior. According to Parson's theory, and others like it, the average person of any particular society conforms to the ideal. Anyone who deviates from that norm is considered to be abnormal.¹¹ In my understanding of the Indian context, there is a high expectation on the part of the members of that society that women can at any time and do, with the required provocation, act in an adharmic way. This has a particular affect on men. This situation may be assessed by the social scientist as a deviation from the ideal but it is not necessarily in the Indian's experience a deviation from the norm. The emic expectation is part of the reality.

Men continually anticipate the possibility of women's departure from the ideal. It is because of this that women are seen through men's eyes as ambiguous (unpredictable) beings and consequently as beings who wield power over them. The nature of men's reality is that women behave ambiguously and not that they behave in an ideal manner and occasionally

deviate from it. And this, in my own estimation, is in the nature of the system itself.

One of the major distinctions between my own hypothesis concerning the essence of feminine power and Parson's on deviance as I interpret it is that deviance is attributed to individuals. In the case of Indian women ambiguous behavior is an attribute ascribed to women - not to individuals. Ambiguity is more than individual women deviating from a norm and then being characterized as bad or abnormal but it is considered to be in the nature of women to behave ambiguously. In the concept of womanhood, there is a notion of a being subject to classification in two or more categories. The word woman refers to two characterizations at the same time and symbolizes the contraposition of two meanings. This, in my opinion, is the significance of the statement "Every woman is in some sense a Maha Kali."

D. In the Nature of Women

The next portion of this chapter is included to illustrate more clearly what I mean by the dual nature of women as they are seen simultaneously as polluting and purifying, submissive and dangerous, and so on. The descriptions presented are not confined solely to Indian women and show that descriptions of women, in a broad range of literature, depict them as dual-natured and as powerful persons. The brief examples which will be offered under the dual-natured categories listed below illustrate both aspects of female behavior.

As an opening example, the hypothesis concerning woman's influence over the man's world, which arises as a result of man's dependence upon women for his social position, is illustrated in the German expression

"Man without woman is head without body, woman without man is body without head." ¹²

The belief in her access to such power is described in an even more poignant way by the French:

"Women can do everything
because they rule those who command everything." ¹³

(i) Submissive/Terrifying

Andrea Dworkin, in her analysis of sexism, concludes that our childhood models, and their fearful, dreadful content, terrorizes us into submission - if we do not become good, then evil will destroy us; if we do not achieve the happy ending, then we will drown in the chaos. Grown men are terrified of the wicked witch, internalized in the deepest parts of memory. Women are no less terrified, for we know that not to be passive, innocent, and helpless is to be actively evil." ¹⁴ She argues that in the function of motherhood, because it is active, the image of woman is one of "malice, devouring greed, and uncontrollable avarice. She is ruthless, brutal, ambitious, a danger to children and other living things. Whether called mother, queen, stepmother or wicked witch, she is the wicked witch, the content of nightmare, the source of terror." ¹⁵ According to her view, women that are powerful are bad, women that are good are inert; women therefore strive for passivity because they want to be good. ¹⁶

What Dworkin is unconsciously referring to is the potency of women's

adharmic behavior in affecting the social order; it throws the world of men and the society at large into chaos. Whether we call it the active side of women, the other side, or the terrifying side as I have referred to it, it exists as an ongoing potentiality and threat to men's position.

Some of the images of women, as extracted from legendary and traditional tales, folk rhymes, proverbial sayings, superstitions, etc. reveal that woman is regarded as both a complex creature and a miracle of Divine Contradictions.¹⁷ As Lord Byron wrote,

"What a strange thing is man. And what a stranger
Is woman. What a whirlwind is her head
And what a whirlpool, full of depth and danger
Is all the rest about her. "18

Women frequently, in Susan Rogers' words, wield power which is related to the supernatural.¹⁹ She quotes Pitt-Rivers' claim that all women are believed to be potentially able to evoke malevolent magic.²⁰ Women threaten men through the power of dangerous reprisals. In Chaouia society, women are said to exert their influence over the men through sorcery. A sorceress is said to have more power over a man than a saint because of her ability to divine the future, enhance love, deter evil and heal illness.²¹

(ii) Honoring and Shaming

A description of woman's ability to publicly shame men is expressed in the Eastern adage "A virtuous wife causes her husband to be honored, a bad one brings him to shame."²² Cunnison suggests that among the Baggara Arabs women have a profound influence on politics by acting as arbiters of man's conduct. They have, he says, the power to make or break a man's political career. They do this, he says, by

"singing songs of praise or alternatively of mockery....The

songs sweep the country, and the reputations are made and broken by them."²³

Wolf also states that women bring to bear an important influence upon men's honor through informal group pressure. They also manage to affect affairs presumed to concern only men:

"This is precisely where women wield their power. When a man behaves in a way they consider wrong, they talk about him - not only among themselves, but to their sons and husbands...it becomes abundantly clear that he is losing face and by continuing in this manner may bring shame to the family of his ancestors and descendants. Few men will risk that."²⁴

(iii) Purifying and Polluting

In many traditional societies there is often a prohibition against the male members association with women before engaging in important public enterprises such as going to war, to hunt, to fish or to conduct business. The fear of pollution has also led to the exclusion of women from many religious ceremonies.²⁵ According to the authors of 'The Curse', even greater than his fear of death, dishonor or dismemberment, has been primitive man's respect for menstrual blood." The authors explain that the taboos of menstruation are designed to aid others in avoiding the woman's dangerous influence and her deadly power.²⁶ Reich and Freud both agree that the origin of the menstrual taboo lies in the 'ambivalent' attitudes towards women.

(iv) Chaste and Unchaste

The sexual misbehavior of women is one of the most powerful weapons women have, it seems, to threaten man's self-esteem and public image. Among Mzabite women, for example, there is a belief that God's anger befalls the whole community as a result of any sexual misconduct on the

part of women.²⁷

In Mundurucu society most men and women have occasional adulterous relations. While men enter into them for variety, adventure and plain sex, the motivations of women are often mixed with some antipathy for a husband and a wish to publicly abase him.²⁸

In closing this chapter, I submit the following statement. Women in not only traditional situations but elsewhere as well are notoriously depicted as dangerous to man's comfortable existence in the social world. By failing to conform with the prescribed behavior of submissiveness and self-control, women become beings who threaten the order of men's world.

I have used this material to supplement what I feel is still at this point somewhat sketchy data from the Indian situation. The comparative accounts, however, not only support and help illustrate my own argument concerning the nature of Indian women as it is seen by the members of the Indian society, but introduces certain constant anthropological problems regarding the value of emic or etic analyses. It also advances the issue of universalism versus particularism.

To elaborate: firstly, if Indian woman are seen by others in that society to be ambiguous, can the observer extrapolate from that to conclude that ambiguity is in the nature of reality itself? More particularly, does the logic of power relations among the sexes in Indian society operate on a dialectical principle of oppositions? I hypothesize that this is an appropriate description of the substance of those relations. Secondly,

if this hypothesis can be extended to other societies, does this reveal more about the nature of social relations or about the inherent nature of the sexes? Are we discovering more about the human biological system than about the nature and distribution of power?

However, having acknowledged the problem, let us return to the hypothesis at hand. The third and fourth chapters provide an in-depth analysis of Indian women and demonstrate how the literature does, in fact, reveal them to be both submissive and dedicated as well as dangerous, polluting and threatening to Indian men. The main purpose of the next two chapters is to determine what features are common to Kali, the Hindu Goddess, and Indian women.

CHAPTER III KALI AS INDIAN WOMAN, OR, INDIAN WOMAN AS KALI

What I have attempted to illustrate in the second chapter is that the notion that women play an ambivalent role in the family appears to be common to many societies. As the dominant female figure in the family, women have a certain degree of recognized or authorized control over the domestic realm of activity. At the same time, however, they have indirect influence over men and their world of public activity. While they are expected to act as wives and mothers and to exhibit certain acceptable traits or characteristics, they are known to frequently act in contradictory ways. This chapter investigates the Indian woman in marriage and explores the various ways in which she exhibits signs of control and influence. More specifically, I shall look to see in what way Indian women may be seen to exemplify the ambiguous aspects of the Goddess Kali. By presenting images drawn from various types of literature, including religious literature, some fiction, mythology, and social science analyses of the status of women in India, it is expected that a general picture of the Indian woman should emerge. Correlated with this, of course, is the broader question, "In what way do Indian women threaten or maintain the dharma of society?"

Through looking at religious writings which describe Kali's relationship with Siva (along with the significance of marriage itself), I hope to be able to demonstrate clearly the Hindu identification of the Goddess with human behavior. In India, women are Goddesses, and Goddesses are women. What this says is that Goddesses, while revered,

respected and worshipped as deities, also have human characteristics. They are dual-natured and subject to human frailty. It is in this respect that Goddesses reveal the ambiguity of human female behavior.

Brenda Beck, in evaluating a Tamil Folk Epic, discovered that the epic "makes little distinction between human and divine women at any point." For men, she claims, "the contrast, though not ever vivid, is much clearer," and goes on to say

"But if women are goddesses, so too are goddesses typical women. Both are by their very constitution female, or all that is good and all that is terrifying wrapped up in one."¹

This interchangeability is an essential key to understanding the importance of Kali's ambivalent behavior. If Kali is cruel, terrifying and destructive, and also benevolent, kind and creative (exhibiting some sort of remorse later): then can we find these traits manifested in descriptions of Indian women?

1. The General Importance of Indian Marriage and the Role of Sakti

Marriage was an extremely important institution. The union of the man and woman in marriage was conceived of as the creation of a new androgynous being, with the wife taking up half the body of her husband. Regarding Parvati's marriage, the following statement was made to her father Himavat

"After propitiating Lord Siva, the Lord of all by the power of her penance, your daughter will take away half the body of Siva."²

The relationship of Siva and Sakti is held up as an ideal for all husbands

and wives. This ideal is expressed in the following passage:

"Sati and Siva are united together like words and their meaning. Only if they wish, can the separation be even imagined."³

"Just as the sun does not exist without the light nor does the light thereof exist without the sun, so also there is mutual dependence between Sakti and Saktiman (Siva). There is no Sakti without Siva and no Siva without Sakti."⁴

This ideal is believed to be achieved through the identification of all with Sakti. "All men are identical with Siva. All women are identical with Mahesvari (Sakti). Hence all women have then exalted power".⁵ As Daniels herself has discovered, this reference to the containment of Siva's and Sakti's superhuman power in the ordinary man and woman in the family means that the role of the Goddess as the Sakti (power) of the universe is recreated in the woman in the microcosm of the family. The real Indian husband, like the God Siva, "depends upon the sakti of a woman for his very existence and for the sustaining force of his life."⁶

"Without you (goddess), even the Lord is not competent to bestow the benefits of his duty".⁷

2. Kali's Relationship to Indian Women in the Religious Tradition

In Chapter One I introduced one image of Kali expressed in Ramprasad's poetry which I feel demonstrates in a dramatic way her feminine characteristics and suggests both her destructive powers and her (perhaps deliberate) concealment of such powers. In its own way, in my opinion, it encapsulates the description of Indian women which is to follow. I repeat it once more:

"Victory of Gauri, who stands
 her lower robe blood-spattered
 from the demon buffalo her spear has slain
 shamefaced, as if menstrous
 before the laughing eyes of Hara."⁸

This devotional poem presents an almost schizophrenic characterization of Kali. It first commences with Gauri, which seduces the reader into a passive imagery and then suddenly twists the image by placing her in a pool of blood - blood brought about by her own murderous hand. The poem reverts back, almost immediately, however, to a docile figure appearing to be shamed by her own impurity. (Blood here, of course, symbolizes both Kali's destructive forces and her creative forces and her creative potential). This poem, and the description of Gauri's reaction to being observed by Hara, very closely resembles the story which usually accompanies the image of Kali represented in this paper. (See Appendix A). The context of the tale is the Ramayana and may be summarized as follows:

The story commences with Rama's return from Lanka at which time Rama brags to Sita about his conquest of the ten-headed Ravana. Sita, however, merely responds with a smile and a question. She inquires as to what he thinks he would do if confronted by a thousand-headed Ravana and he responds with the claim that he would slay such a Ravana. Taunted by Sita, Rama sets out to find the Ravana. Finally Rama does confront it but is soon defeated. Disheartened, Rama begins to weep. Sita, regarding her husband's predicament, smiles and assumes the form of Kali. She attacks and kills the demon and tosses his head and limbs about, gulping his blood in her frenzy. She then begins an earth-shattering dance which alarms the Gods and

causes them to seek Siva's intervention. He throws himself down on the ground, beneath Kali's feet and among the corpses where She is carrying out her mad dance. Brahma calls to her and points out that Siva is lying below her. As soon as she recognizes Siva, she is astonished and embarrassed and stops her dance. She then resumes her appearance as Sita and accompanies the humiliated Rama to their home.

The action of the story is described by Kinsley in the following way:

"Here She(Kali) dominates the action. Siva is summoned to remedy the situation, to be sure, but he can do so only by lying beneath her feet. He subdues her, certainly but only by humiliating himself."⁹

The significance of the poem and the tale is clear. The Goddess, (a dual personality), if viewed as woman as well, represents a being who is capable of switching back and forth from passive to active form, from submissive to terrifying, with almost unbelievable rapidity.

Earlier in this thesis I suggested that this poem was an example of Kali's ambivalent behavior; ambivalence characterized by oscillating behaviors of obedience and rebellion followed by self-reproach.

To add to this, I have exercised some intellectual freedom, however, in using the term ambivalence in this analysis. To be absolutely faithful to the dictionary definition, one should be able to prove that Kali does indeed reproach herself. This, in my opinion, is a debatable point.

That someone appears 'shamefaced' or with tongue lolling (as in the above poem or the image of Appendix A) does not prove that one in fact reproaches oneself for their own actions. Nevertheless, there is

sufficient expression of signs which can be interpreted as self-reproach to merit the use of this word.

From the small piece of Indian mythology above which describes Kali's activities it can be seen that her relationship to her husband represents at least three of the four categories which I have adopted as corresponding to the principle of liminality, that is She is submissive and terrifying, honoring and shaming, purifying and polluting. She displays her power over her husband, over life and death, and at the same time exhibits her capacity to submit and to be controlled. By this exhibition of mad dancing, Kali portrays an excellent example of rebellion and woman's ability to shame her husband by her adharmic behavior.¹⁰

If we return to the principle of liminality which I have used to describe the ambiguous nature of women's actions, I believe Kali can be better understood. We can see that, at least in religious terms, Kali is, in fact, a particularly appropriate image for conveying this idea of liminality. Kali's madness is an extremely important issue in any attempt one might make to analyze the meaning of her actions. If women are seen by men to be out of control at times, or do, in fact, go out of control (whichever is the case); Kali, according to Kinsley, is definitely out of control. For Kali is said to be mad.¹¹ In Kinsley's own words:

"In her mad dancing, disheveled hair, and eerie howl there is made present the hint of a world reeling, careening out of control. In so far as Kali reflects the phenomenal world, or

is identified with the phenomenal world, she presents a picture of that world that underlines its ephemeral, unpredictable, spontaneous nature.¹²

As will be recollected, Kali's madness is also a consistent theme in Ramprasad Sen's writings. Her rajas-like quality is symbolized in the following poem (previously quoted in the first chapter and which I again quote, in part, for ready reference).

"Mother, incomparably arrayed,
Hair flying, stripped down,
You battle-dance on Shiva's heart,
A garland of heads that bounce off
Your heavy hips, chopped-off hands
For a belt, the bodies of infants
For earrings and the lips,
the teeth like jasmine, the face
A lotus blossomed, the laugh,
And the dark body boiling up and out
Like a storm cloud, and those feet
Whose beauty is only deepened by blood."¹³

Here Kali is the destroyer, full of blood and fury and posing a threat to those around her.

To lend further support to the importance of Kali's madness in relation to the principle of liminality, let us consider the role of the principle of Maya. Kali's relationship to Maya is one in which the voluptuous and smiling Kali is merely an illusion, to be stripped away in order to reveal the frightening and painful world of Maya. This illusion/reality paradox could be said to parallel a social situation in which the role that women play, as submissive and ideal wives and mothers is a false or superficial image. In terms of social science strategy, a deeper, more real understanding of women can only be gained by tearing the 'veil of maya' away. As Kinsley himself says,

"Meditation upon Kali calls into question the stability, order and destiny of the phenomenal world ... There is a chaotic dimension to the world, an unpredictable, frightening 'other' dimension to this world that undercuts attachments to it."¹⁴

In conclusion, the above describes the way in which Kali represents the nature of liminal behavior. Let us go on, however, to look at descriptions or representations of Indian women in order to determine to what extent these descriptions reiterate those of Kali. By doing so, we can establish the ramifications of these descriptions for the hypothesis of liminality. Firstly, let us consider the ideal representation of and for Indian women and, secondly, consider some representations which contradict this ideal. By giving equal importance to both types of descriptions of the Indian female within the family, we should achieve a more balanced and truer picture of the nature of her role in society.

3. The Ideal Indian Woman

A) Introduction:

In describing the ideal Indian woman, the importance of the symbols of body, house, womb, etc. became apparent and the analysis will again bring attention to them under the broader categories of chaste, unchaste, purifying, polluting and so on. By first looking at the ideal side of women, that is the submissive, chaste, honoring and purifying side of her role as wife and mother and then looking at contrasting or contradictory images of her as they are presented in various types of writings, I hope to come close to representing her as she really is as well as how she is really seen by others. In other words, the method of analysis should conclude with a Kali-like representation of Indian women and should

vacillate between a dharmic picture of feminine action and an equally adharmic one.

It should be remembered that the main function of this essay is to study women in their relation to men and not to look at them as individual atoms. Therefore, when we speak of the ideal Indian woman, we are including a number of roles which women are taught to play in Indian society, all of which can be regarded as having some structural position vis-a-vis the male members of the society. The roles which can be identified for women are those of

1. daughter, sister, friend
2. sister-in-law
3. wife, mother, mother-in-law
4. widow
5. prostitute

Because the roles of wife and mother bear the most immediate relation to Kali and also are those which entail most directly a socially recognized bonding between men and women, I am concentrating upon them for the time being. (The fourth chapter, however, does consider the relations between female courtesans and Indian men).

While the subject of motherhood cannot be properly separated from marriage and wifeness, it is such an important aspect that it requires special mention.

"Throughout India, the concept of Motherhood is revered. The words Mata and Ma (mother) connote warmth, protection and life-giving power. Ideally a child should always honor his mother."¹⁵

Kali is of special significance as a symbol of motherhood. Barren women, for example, go to the temple to worship Kali. Sri Ramakrishna, mentioned earlier, worshipped Kali as his own Mother.

"And the priest was associated with all the intimate acts of the day. He dressed and undressed Her, he offered Her flowers and food. He was one of the attendants when the queen arose and went to bed. How could his hands, his eyes, his heart be otherwise than gradually impregnated with Her flesh ... Passion for the Goddess consumed Him. To touch her, to embrace Her, to win one sign of life from Her, one look, one sign, one smile, became the sole object of his existence."16

In taking a further look into the religious literature, we begin to find a model for the correct behavior of the Indian woman. This model represents the ideal - the benevolent being who may be likened to Kali's 'sattva-like' nature. As will be recalled, sattva refers to the ideal state of being; goodness, perfection, crystal purity, immaculate chastity and utter quiet. Kali's sattva aspect is predominantly manifested in the Divine Loving Mother. Kali's (or Shakti's) benevolent aspects, manifested in the form of Parvati (Siva's wife), can be seen in the following passage spoken by the Goddess:

"Even a moment appears to be a Yuga if I do not see you, since I look at you as my own children for whom I am ready even to lay down my life ... No worry or anxious thought need be entertained by you endowed with devotion as long as I stand by you destroying your distress."17

The tenderness of this motherly protection is acknowledged by her children.

There is no deity so compassionate as Sataksi, the great goddess who cried for nine days on seeing her people scorched and distressed."18

B) The Model Woman: (the good or dharmic side)

The ideals of chastity and purity, unselfishness and modesty, self-effacing love and compassion constitute perfection in a wife and mother. These values, wrapped up in one model - Sita - have long been sought

after by the Hindu woman seeking acceptance. Such names as Damayanti and Savitri were also regarded as heroines of conjugal bliss and inspired many epic poets. According to the Mahabharata, it is not the building that makes the home but it is the wife, the mother, the woman who has found peace in her heart that constitutes the home.¹⁹

Brenda Beck suggests that there is a general stereotype held by outsiders of women in India as meek, submissive beings - the family custodians of good conduct, who are expected to display unflinching loyalty to their male relatives at all times.²⁰ Wives were expected ideally to suffer in silence and men frequently recognized this ability by claiming that

"I have a wife who has against me neither anger nor a hard word. She is as good to my friends as to me, her husband."²¹

The ideal wife is also expected to run an economical household and not to cause her husband strain. She is taught to be forbearing, patient and self-abnegating. She is taught to deny herself to such an extent that she will never transgress her husband.

"She by virtue of nature's gift is intended to be soft, tender-hearted, sympathetic to mother and children. She is the embodiment of sacrifice and suffering. As a mother, she is most delightful. The duty of motherhood, which woman will always undertake, requires such qualities that men need not possess. She is passive, he is active, She is the mistress of the house and without her care the race must become extinct."²³

According to Margaret Cormack, "the traditional and strongly maintained emphasis on harmony, compromise, duty and monogamy all result in family integration. Indian women are concerned with duties, not with rights. They are concerned with being wives and mothers - members of

a group - not with being selves or individuals.²⁴

Chastity for the ideal Indian woman is of the utmost importance. According to Wadley, chaste womanhood is powerful and worth of adulation.²⁵ The principle of chastity demands the control over sexual desire. The chaste wife is one who is always sexually responsive and who renounces personal interests. She is expected to be of complete psychological and physical service to her husband. This husband is a god to the ideally chaste wife, and she serves him with utter devotion. The Purana refers to four levels of chastity:-

"the most chaste wife is one whose mind is not aware of any one else and who is conscious of her husband even in her dreams. She who sees another man as father, brother or son with a clear conscience is the middling among chaste ladies. She who ponders over her duty mentally and desists from going astray is inferior among the chaste. Of course she is pure in conduct. She who remains chaste for fear of her husband or the family is very inferior among the chaste ladies."²⁶

There was a strong taboo in existence against any woman acting, even in her own dwelling place, according to her mere pleasure.²⁷ A woman must never govern herself as she likes.

The Laws of Manu are still quoted on the proper role of woman

"She should do nothing independently, even in her own house.
In childhood subject to her father, in youth to her husband
And when her husband is dead, to her sons, she should never
enjoy independence...
Though he be uncouth and prone to pleasure
though he have no good points at all
the virtuous wife should ever
worship her lord as a god."²⁸

In Magahi folklore, for example, according to Sharma, all wives are chaste. Their love is meant only for their husbands. Not only

are they chaste, he says, but

"the character of these wives are so good that all efforts to deter them from the path of righteousness fail."²⁹

In Tamilnad, Sharma states, the most appreciated virtue in a woman is her chastity. "A virtuous woman is elevated to the highest place in society, she is even accorded a superior position to that of a saint."³⁰

In spite of this ideal, however, of the Indian woman as passive, self-sacrificing, devoted to her husband and children, chaste, pure and almost divine, much of the literature recognized the unpredictability of her actions.

C) The Other, or Adharmic Side

To return to the notion of the identification between goddess and women, Brenda Beck, in commenting on this phenomenon in her South Indian epic, says succinctly

"But if women are goddesses, so too are goddesses typical women. Both are by their very constitution female, or all that is good and all that is terrifying wrapped up in one."³¹

The feminine power principle of Shakti "is a combination of many qualities: patience, self-abnegation, sensitive intelligence, grace in thought, words and behavior, the reticent impression of rhythmic life, the tenderness and terribleness of love at its core."³²

In the Siva Puranas, Daniel has observed both a positive and negative side to women. On the positive side, in their complementary role women rejuvenate the soul for a new life. The negative side, however, involves the woman's independence and her conscious manipulation of power. This power gives rise to a sense of helplessness and despair on the part of

the male.

Further, in terms of body symbols, attitudes expressed toward the womb are highly complex. In the positive attitude toward women, Daniel tells us that the woman is believed to transfer to her baby the sakti of life. However, in the negative view, the woman's womb is regarded as a 'fiery machine, boiling and crushing the baby, forcing him into a world he loathes to enter, in a body he considers a burden.'³³ Women are said to use the womb as a weapon in battle and this fear is illustrated, Daniel argues, in the stories about fear of the son born of the wombs of powerful women such as Diti and Parvati. An important point which Daniel makes is that the ambivalence she notes toward the woman's role in reproduction is not matched by an equal ambivalence towards men's reproductive activity.³⁴ The greater ambivalence towards women as a whole then towards men extends itself throughout the Puranas.³⁵

Daniel says that the Puranas swings from one extreme to the other, creating ivory tower ideals of chaste wives and then expressing the equally extreme view that all women are evil and immoral. The woman is cast either in the role of the ruthless temptress out to break the psychological and physical power of the husband through seduction, or as the chaste and obedient wife. However, the ultimate reality, manifested by the goddess, is that these two extremes reside in every woman. "A woman is a mixture of good and evil, and is capable of loving and threatening her lover."³⁶

According to Baig, there are fringe benefits to the practices of

piety and purity. These practices are considered to be conducive to the development of extraordinary powers which are believed to be of considerable help to a husband and his family. A woman's unchaste behavior threatened the man's very existence in the society.

"For he, Manu says, who preserves his wife from vice, preserves his offspring from suspicion of bastardy, his ancient usages from neglect, his family from disgrace, himself from anguish, and his duty from violation."³⁷

In Magahi folklore, for example, according to Sharma, there are folksongs in which a wife apparently takes it upon herself to teach a very good lesson to the younger brother or elder brother or a father-in-law if they attempt to lead her away from the path of chastity. Daniel claims that it is through her chastity (rather than tapas, as in the case of the male) that woman gains power. According to her view, it is clear that chastity and devotion can become a form of coercion to which the husband must submit, as the deity must submit to coercion by a devotee. "Greater power" she says, "accrues to those who practice both physical and mental control, best exemplified in the highest class of chaste women". However, all classes of chaste women command a considerable amount of power. This power, in fact, is believed to be greater than the power generated by male yogas at the height of their tapas."³⁸

In the Siva Puranas, Parvati, rather than remaining passive and allowing her husband to battle with her problem son, asserts her power and defends the sanctity of her own chastity. Daniel describes this in the following manner:

"Emerging from her role as a frightened and protected female, she becomes a terrifying and awesome figure, exhibiting her strength in the face of her husband's weakness and in defiance

of her son's importunity. To Andhaka and his troops, as is apparent in the passage quoted above, fear and bewilderment is the response. He sees in the woman he desires not a delicate female, but a deadly rival."³⁹

Daniel notes that devotion and submission are also forms of power and is one of the weapons used by women in marriage. In the Siva Puranas, the goddess tells Brahman that "just as ordinary mortals on earth are subservient to their women folk, so also Siva shall be subservient to a woman due to my ardent devotion."⁴⁰

The Laws of Manu state that where women are treated with honor, the Gods are propitiated. Where women are not adored, all acts become fruitless. "If the women of a family, on account of the treatment they receive, indulge in grief and tears, that family soon becomes extinct."⁴¹ Baig tells us that while a father's influence was outside the home, the Mother's influence was the true integrating force within it. He informs us that there are many examples of great men who attribute their values, their character, purpose and drive to the influence of their mothers.⁴² Bader notes what appears to be a strange contradiction in Manu. He states that while Manu presents woman as the source of all good, for the adoration of man, he suddenly throws her off the pedestal upon which he has placed her and sees in her instead the genius of evil."⁴³

He refers to the Goddess Durga as a symbol of a mother's anger, and mentions the influence this has over the entire household. The story of Diti demonstrates the powerful influence which woman may have on others. Diti captivates the supernatural power of her husband by using the charms of her grace in a cunning fashion. The sacred author remarks that there is

nothing terribly surprising in this sort of success when it comes to women for "creation's Lord formed woman, that being who steals man's reason, which is half of his own personality."⁴⁴ He claims that no man has ever understood the conduct of women. Women are capable, it seems to him, of great power - good or evil. "No one, in fact" he says "is an object of love to women, who are entirely devoted to the object of their desires; they kill or cause to be killed, for their interest a husband, a son, or a brother."⁴⁵

Baig advises that the literature of the Vedic and later periods in India contain a distrust of women and their potential for evil. He quotes passages from the Mahabharata which illustrate a fundamental mistrust of women. One such passage reads as follows:

"A man with a hundred tongues would not be able to describe completely the vices and defects of woman."

and another,

"Women, even when they are of good family, beautiful and married, do not hesitate to transgress morals ... and at the first opportunity they leave their wealthy and handsome husbands to share adulterous beds with other men."⁴⁶

Lannoy comments on the ambivalence and duality of the role of women in Manu, and claims that the ambivalent role is an important feature of Indian society. "As a wife she seduces her husband away from his work and his spiritual duties, but as a Mother she is revered."⁴⁷ He refers to what he considers to be a deep-seated maternal attachment in the Indian culture which is manifested in intense mother-goddess worship and worship of womanhood in the abstract. However, he says,

"The woman is characterised by her ambivalent strivings to become, on the one hand, an overprotective mother and, on the other hand, a demanding and prohibiting one - wishfulfilling and vindictive..."⁴⁸

There exists, because of this, a contempt, uncertainty and distrust of women. While she is looked upon with idealization, she is also looked upon with alarm; while she is subservient to men, she dominates a certain segment of his life in her role as mother. She is raised to the level of Goddess in the home, he says, and is regarded as both a Sita (the selfless and devoted wife) and the terrible Kali whom he describes as a "witch-like Goddess who punishes and deprives her children of pleasure."⁴⁹

Jacobson also informs us that the Brahmanical tradition views women as "shameless temptresses lacking in self-control and likely to go astray unless controlled by their menfolk." A woman is capable of bringing shame to her family by promiscuous behavior and a menstruating woman is believed to have the power to use her pollution to harm others.⁵⁰

Wadley also recognizes the duality in the Hindu concept of the woman and states explicitly

"on the one hand, the woman is fertile, benevolent - the bestower; on the other, she is aggressive, malevolent - the destroyer."⁵¹

The dualistic nature, she further claims, is true for both goddesses and women.⁵² She states that the dual character of the Hindu female emerges throughout both classical texts as well as folk traditions. In both these traditions the mother is given extreme importance. While the wife is generally depicted as under man's control, the mother is depicted as being in control of herself and her children. This is an extension of the

perspective of goddesses as well. "Mothers and the mother goddesses are in control of their sexuality; wives are not."⁵²

In general, Wadley's argument is that women who control their own sexuality are considered to be both malevolent and benevolent; while those whose sexuality is controlled by a man are portrayed as consistently benevolent. When women control their own sexuality, then they become Kali; those regarded to be under the control of men are Lakshmi."⁵³

Women must be controlled by men, it is thought, because of their naturally evil inclination. The ideal woman, on the other hand, is one who does not strive to break the bonds of control.

Chemeen, the major figure in a well-known South Indian novel, is a clear example of a woman whose unchaste behavior leads to the destruction of her husband at sea. Her reputation as a 'bad woman' initially begins to affect her husband's status in the community as a fisherman. In one exchange between the two, the husband proclaims

"You are a bad woman, he said, so they have decided that I am not fit to go to sea."⁵⁴

His final destruction comes about when finally he does go off to sea. His death is attributed in the final analysis to his wife's failure to perform her wifely devotion.

"At the time, like the first fisherwoman of them all, she should be praying for him. Instead she was thinking of Pareekutti."⁵⁵

This story is an extreme example representing the power that it is believed a woman may have over the fate of her own husband.

4. Conclusion

In concluding this chapter, I think it is important to consider Kinsley's use of the word 'humiliating' and my own use of the term 'shaming'. I have indicated that women have the power to humiliate and shame men but I think it must be seriously considered as to whether they actually do so. The evidence is that the threat of public denouncement is there, that men feel that their position in the society is in jeopardy if they cannot control their wives, but there is no proof that women on many occasions actually do rob men of their status permanently. There are signs, however, that women do dishonor, disgrace and humiliate men at least in the short term by their actions. It is not, and I stress this point, women's submissive behavior which threatens men, it is their ambiguous behavior which causes them concern.

This appears to be the case in the tale above. Nothing appears to have been permanently lost for Siva and his status as a man in the society. However, he is now very much aware of his wife's ability to act independently and wilfully and to exert control over him when the occasion so merits it. It is this ability to influence which I have labelled power.

Because a great deal has been written which argues that women are constantly under the influence of men, certain misleading perspectives of the Indian social system are in existence. In my view, this type of theoretical perspective treats societies, especially the Indian society, as lacking in a degree of dynamic interaction between men and women in the public and domestic spheres. I disagree with this interpretation of the

logic of female power relations. The reader should be clear that this thesis is not an attempt to demonstrate that women control men, or that men control women, but that there is a complementarity that exists between the domestic sphere and the public sphere. I have attempted to show, by concentrating on the woman's behavior, that there is evidence that the system of interaction is a dynamic one and that there are mechanisms available to women to keep it moving. This chapter provides a description of how those mechanisms work.

CHAPTER IV KALI AND THE KAMA SUTRA

In the third chapter we described the role of the wife and mother in the Indian society as it has been portrayed in certain texts and certain anthropological studies. These roles were represented both as they have been prescribed for women and as they are seen by others to have been carried out by women. It was also stressed that these roles cannot be analysed in such a way as to treat them as independent from men's roles in either of the spheres frequently referred to as private and public.

This chapter briefly takes a look at the Indian courtesan and analyzes her relationship to the male in Indian society, as well as offering a brief discussion of the correspondence or lack of correspondence which exists between the ideal of wife and mother and that of female prostitute. The major text which will be used is the Kama Sutra, written in approximately the 4th C. B.C. by Vatsyayana.

A. Introduction

The following constitutes a rationale for the inclusion of an analysis of the Kama Sutra in this thesis:

- 1) in general, the text provides an insight into the history, politics, secular life and social customs of ancient India;¹
- 2) more particularly, while the Kama Sutra includes much on the actual art of love-making, it also includes subject matter which is of particular importance to the argument presented in this thesis.

This argument is, of course, that Indian women, vis-a-vis men in the public sphere, behave ambiguously and that women gain power and control over men (consciously or unconsciously) through their access to certain social mechanisms and their unpredictable use of all of them on certain occasions. These social mechanisms include honoring, shaming, submission, frightening, purifying, polluting, chastity and non-chastity. When the woman complies with the dharmic norms, men feel relatively safe; when she fails to comply with this norm and behaves in an adharmic way, the man's position and his sense of security within his own role, are threatened.

The detail which I have chosen as relevant from the Kama Sutra addresses such issues as the manner of living proper to a virtuous woman as well as the ideal behavior for courtesans. The content of this book, then, it should be clear, is not solely addressed toward courtesans but is also directed to those engaged or about to be engaged in the position of wife - its directives going much beyond the pure art of sensual pleasure (Kama).²

Before it can be determined exactly what the correspondence or lack of correspondence is between these two roles, it is first necessary to understand that, in terms of the ideals, there is a fundamental distinction between the two. In the case of the ideal behavior prescribed for the courtesan, as it is spelled out in the Kama Sutra, we are presented with an opposing system of values from which the ideal wife is expected to model herself. The courtesan's primary stated reason for serving a man is to acquire money while the wife's stated reason is love, duty or devotion. (The reader will remember from Chapter 3 the ideal of a wholly devotional type of love of the woman toward her husband, a devotion so intense that the wife is expected to renounce all requirements for personal comfort and all selfish needs).

The courtesan represents in a fundamental way everything the ideal of wife is not; and serves as an example for the Indian woman, supposedly attempting to live out on a day-to-day basis the ideal, to compare and contrast herself with. By having this social model to evaluate herself against, she is provided with one more opportunity to increase the power and control inherent in her own position as the loving and devoted wife and mother. Examples of this type of comparison will be offered later.

B. The Virtuous Woman and the Kama Sutra

Because the ideal of wife has been described extensively in the previous chapters, for comparative purposes let us examine the ideal of the virtuous woman, or wife, as it is documented in the Kama Sutra. The requirements and expected attitudes for the ideal virtuous woman are, in fact, spelled out in a fairly precise manner. As we have seen elsewhere,

a virtuous woman is defined as one who acts in conformity with her husband's wishes as though he were a divine being and, with his consent, takes upon herself the whole care of his family.³ The Kama Sutra dictates that

"The wife, whether she be a woman of noble family or a virgin widow remarried or a concubine, should lead a chaste life, devoted to her husband, and doing everything for his welfare. Women acting this acquire Dharma, Artha and Kama, obtain a high position, and generally keep their husbands devoted to them."⁴

She is not to blame her husband excessively for any misconduct nor use any abusive language toward him but only "rebuke him with conciliatory words, whether he be in the company of friends or alone."⁵ The wife is never to even reveal her love for her husband nor his for her - either in pride or in anger. It is assumed that such an infringement on their privacy will lead to the husband despising her. The inference here, of course, is that it is neither acceptable nor wise for the wife to vacillate from the ideal to the alternative, which is to be proud, wilful and angry.

C. The Courtesan and the Kama Sutra

While the art of love-making and of giving physical pleasure enters into the agreement between the man and the courtesan, the impression I am left with is that the courtesan is expected to provide other things of a more intellectual (this includes her artistic talents, of course) or psychological nature than what one would normally identify as mere pleasure. Therefore, when the term love is used in the analysis which follows, it refers to a conceptual and behavioral framework which goes beyond physical love-making. The ideal of the courtesan as it is laid out in the Kama Sutra is more complex than mere pleasure giving in that

it includes a recommendation for the adoption of certain attributes which are usually associated with the role of wife as well as those which are more commonly associated with the courtesan.

The model for a good wife and mother, as the reader is aware, has been said to analog Kali's benevolent or creative aspect. The courtesan, on the other hand, however, can on the whole be said to manifest Kali's terrifying attributes. These terrifying attributes correspond to those of the courtesan as a temptress, as a scheming and calculating individual - who used her sexuality wilfully and with purpose. While it has been implied, by myself and others, that wives and mothers sometimes consciously manipulate men, it is assumed that the courtesan survives solely by conscious manipulation.

The courtesan is by trade the seductress, and the seductress (of any caste, class or role) is usually seen as a threatening figure not only to the female members of the society but to the male members as well (see Chapter II). The erotic literature in India depicts the seductress as having charm, vitality and mystery of a special kind. Baig describes these women as being involved in a deadly game of fascinating and hypnotizing the male. He claims that

"The combination of sexual play along with the girlish clinging to the man, to which is always added a wide variety of histrionic talents coupled with lying, furious anger, abject remorse, constant turmoil, all effectively lead a man into a deeper and deeper snare."⁶

These dangerous aspects are described at length in the Puranas. And, as Daniel tells us, even the women themselves often confess their own evil nature.⁷

To render this model more explicit: the courtesan in the Kama Sutra is advised as to the most successful way in which to obtain money. There are two main routes which she may follow;

- 1) to attach herself to one man and to obtain as much money from him as is possible and when that begins to fail, to acquire for herself another man.
- 2) to attach herself to more than one man and to obtain as much money as possible from each of them.

In the first instance, the courtesan is advised to act as a wife. Let us examine a little more closely what this means. The courtesan is advised to consciously adopt some of the characteristics commonly ascribed to the role of wife; that is, she is told to appear to be devoted to and to love her mate with absolute faith and dedication, to be chaste, to be submissive, to honor him and so on. More importantly, she is expected to appear to be chaste while in truth it is known, by herself at least and presumably by others, that her main motivation in behaving like a wife is the acquisition of money. She is not primarily motivated by love or devotion or even being a good wife.⁸

The idea of chastity is not commonly associated with the behavior of the courtesan. The courtesan, however, is advised to assume an appearance of chastity when attaching herself to one man. (It is not clear, incidentally, how exactly she does this except that one might assume that she most probably does avoid sexual involvements or flirtations with any other male). Chastity, however, is an artifice employed

to increase the amount of money she receives from him. The advantage to the courtesan attaching herself to one man as a pseudo-wife, so to speak, is that she does not suffer the problem of too many lovers and yet in all likelihood acquires an abundance of wealth.

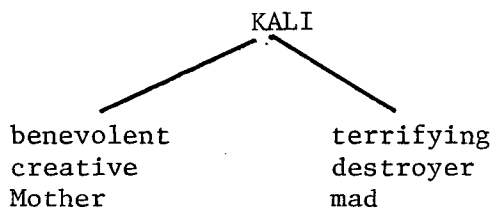
The duty of the courtesan, in the second instance, however, is described as follows:

"The duty of a courtesan consists in forming connections with suitable men after due and full consideration and attaching the person whom she is united to herself; in obtaining wealth from the person who is attached to her, and then dismissing him after she has taken away all his possessions."⁹

D. Comparison Between Ideal of Wife and Courtesan:

At a quick glance, the distinction between the virtuous wife and the courtesan is very minor. The real key seems to lie in the word love versus money. By looking closer, however, one also notices that the ideal of the courtesan (or the teachings of the Kama Sutra in this case) lay out a model for behavior which resembles both sides of Kali's nature. Further, the courtesan is expected to consciously adopt both types of behavior.¹⁰

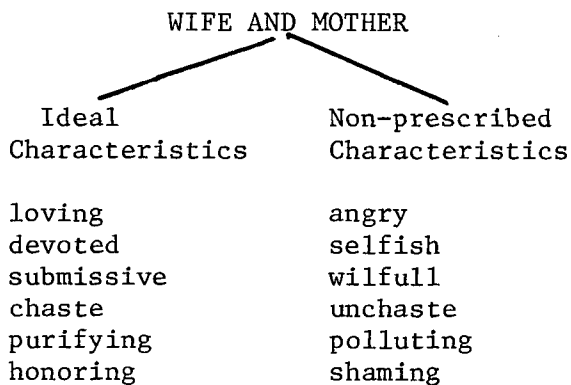
Let me clarify this distinction between the ideal of the wife and that of the courtesan in a diagrammatic form in the event that it remains slightly confusing to the reader:



GODDESS

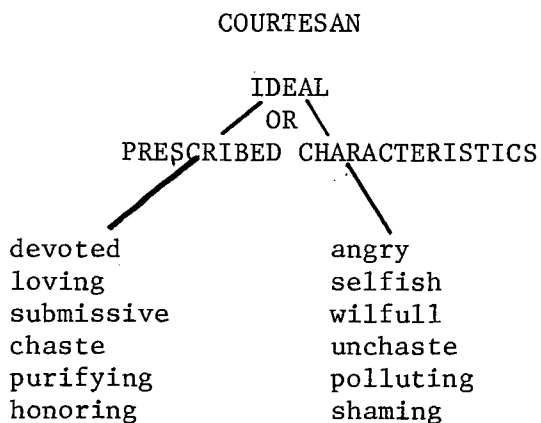
Motivation

- 1) Salvation
- 2) Lila
- 3) Protection
- 4) Wilfulness
and others



HUMAN

- 1) to acquire and
maintain position
associated with
one male
- 2) ideal of love (prema)
- 3) economic and psy-
chological security



HUMAN

- 1) to acquire and
maintain position
associated with
one or more males
- 2) ideal of wealth
- 3) economic and psycho-
logical security

The wife, by conforming to the ideal of love and devotion, submissiveness and dedication to her husband as a God, poses no threat to his status in the society. In this state she represents the benevolent side of Kali. However, by switching over to Kali's negative aspect and into a state of anger, promiscuity and wilfulness, she poses a threat to her husband in a real way. She is now capable of publicly shaming him. In this way she has acquired power over him. The courtesan, on the other hand, constantly vacillates between the two types of behavior, in a deliberate attempt to take advantage of the male's wealth and his status. One would probably be safe to assume that the courtesan, by constantly playing an ambiguous role, is in a position of considerable power vis-à-vis her lovers.

A passage which describes the reaction of a courtesan to hearing the name of her rival mentioned is, in fact, highly analagous to the myth of Kali's battleground dance (cited earlier in the thesis) in which Kali's shakti becomes quite evident. The similarity between the two stories and the way in which ambiguous behavior is a manifestation of power should be quite apparent to the reader when the two are placed side-by-side. The tale on the left is a description of Kali's dance; the tale on the right is a passage from the Kama Sutra:

"Sita, regarding her husband's predicament, smiles and assumes the form of Kali. She attacks and kills the demon and tosses his head and limbs about, gulping his blood in her frenzy. She then begins an earth-shattering dance which alarms the Gods

If such takes place, a great quarrel rises and the woman cries, becomes angry, tosses her hair about, strikes her lover, falls from her bed or seat, and, casting aside her

and causes them to seek Siva's intervention. She then accompanies the humiliated Rama to their home."

garland and ornaments, throws herself down on the ground"... Afterward, the citizen having sent the Vita, the Vidushaka, or the Pithamanda to pacify her, she should accompany them back to the house and spend the night with her lover."¹¹

Both passages - the Indian woman's love quarrel and the Kali tale, describe a certain kind of action. The female commences with a passive/submissive stance (a controller position), moves to an active/angry position (out of or beyond control) and finally reverts to a passive/submissive position and is once again under control.

In summary, one of the fundamental differences between these two roles - the wife and the courtesan - is in the way the roles are conceptualized by the observer. There may be another real difference, however, and that can be discovered only by determining how those persons, involved in each of the roles, see themselves. We have established that the goals are explicitly different - one is love and the other is money. Some clues as to how this question might be answered can be found in a novel entitled "The Courtesan of Lucknow" - a novel based on a real individual who practiced her profession in Lucknow, Mirza Mohammed Raswa, born in 1857 in Lucknow, recorded and wrote up the life story of this woman. In his way of seeing what went on, he says

"Men were consumed with jealousy and these girls deliberately played one against the other. And the irony of it all was that their feelings were not involved because they considered all men worthless. Their affection was mere affectation...A courtesan and love? It was always the lover who was undone."¹²

In the words of the courtesan herself,

"Don't you know that a courtesan's only friend is money". Haven't you heard it said that a whore is no one's wife? If women like us gave ourselves for love, what would we live on?"¹³

Both of these examples represent the courtesan as a consciously calculating individual - knowledgeable of her own goals and ambitions and deliberately striving to achieve them. It can be suspected, however, from the following statement, that the courtesan is also aware of the disadvantage of her own role. In the words of Umrao Jan Ada,

"To women of my profession -
O foolish women, never be under the delusion that anyone will ever love you truly. Your lovers who today forswear their lives for you will walk out on you after a while. They will never remain constant because you do not deserve constancy. The rewards of true love are for women who only see the face of one man. God will never grant the gift of true love to a whore."¹⁴

Again the question crops up as to whether the wife would confess, if queried, to be similarly calculating. Daniel suggests that she might. She claims that within Tamil society, anyway, the male is dependent upon the woman for her Sakti. The wife, however, she states, may manipulate the dependency to her own advantage. It is believed that control by the wife may arise out of and be disguised by the dharmic ideal of the submissive wife, just as Diti used her grace to manipulate her husband. In other words, submissive behavior could be used as a strategy toward certain ends. Later on, it is said, wives often drop their submissive behavior and openly control their husbands. Wives are considered to be extremely clever in this art of deceptive submission.¹⁵

E. Conclusion

To conclude this chapter on Kali and the Kama Sutra, certain interesting characteristics in women's behavior and attitudes have come to my attention. Although the analysis is certainly not as extensive as it might be, it does raise a number of points worth noting. There is, in my opinion, evidence of the interplay of the roles of the wife and the courtesan in the Indian society. On the one hand, the courtesan serves as a model to pose against the ideal wife and her virtuous characteristics. However, she herself, in her Kali-like ambiguity, is in some obvious ways like the courtesan. She consciously or unconsciously employs her own sexuality to develop and wield power in her own situation. In the opposite sense, however, the courtesan becomes like Sita, or duplicates Kali's benevolent or loving aspect (using the ploy of being in love as a tool) in order to gain power over men. This power is used by the courtesan to extract, through clever manipulation, money from men. Both types of women play an ambiguous role - oscillating between love, devotion and dedication on the one hand and wilful anger, fury and the public embarrassment of men on the other. Both, of course, are dependent on the male for economic stability and security - one achieves security through the establishment of a continuous relationship with one man; the other does so by securing a series or plurality of relationships with men. The next and final chapter explores the implications of this interplay, along with other questions raised through the thesis, for future fieldwork.

CHAPTER V CONCLUSION

To summarize and conclude this work, let us return to the beginning again. In the introduction, I stated that this work constituted a critique of Harper's argument concerning fear and the status of women. I have not, however, mentioned Harper since. It is now my intention to verify that statement. The purpose of this verification is two-fold: firstly to show in which way my own argument differs from and disputes Harper's and secondly to provide a summary of my own contribution to Indian studies.

A. Harper's Theory

What is Harper actually arguing? I extracted the following quote from his argument, based on Havik Brahmins in South India, and presented it in the introduction:- It is again repeated here.

"groups of adults who lack power and prestige, who generally do the bidding of others, and who have minimal control over their own social environment are likely to be portrayed as dangerous or malevolent beings in that society's belief system even though there may be in fact little realistic basis for such fear."¹

In order to understand Harper's thesis, it is necessary to attach meaning to some of his terms. I have underlined those which I believe to be most important and will attempt to explain those terms so that Harper's argument becomes clearer.

(i) Status and Power: Harper

The term status, as Harper defines it, is an expression of a fundamental economic theory of rationality - "the allocation of scarce

Scarce resources in this case include not only "wealth, property and prestige", but also an individual's "ability to make choices between alternatives involving self and alter."² When ego has more wealth, more property, more prestige and more choices, then ego, according to Harper, has a higher status than alter.

Among the Havik Brahmins, according to Harper's definition and his analysis, it can be concluded that women have lower status than men. Harper appears to link power, prestige and status all together. The lack of power, it can be assumed, is the lack of prestige, the lack of control over one's own social environment and the lack of choices involving self and alter. Obversely, power is the presence of prestige, the ability to control one's own social environment and the ability to make choices involving self and alter.

(i) Status and Power: My Argument

In my own analysis, I have not equated status or prestige with power and have not said, as Harper does, that the higher status position one obtains, the more power one has. If we were to talk about power in a quantitative sense, then perhaps we might conclude that men in traditional India have more power (and status) than women. This, we could say, follows from the fact that they are responsible for more institutions and more people as leaders in the public sphere. I do not argue with the position that men have status in the society, but claim that in fact it is this very status that is put in jeopardy by women's lack of it. That is, as stated in the beginning of the paper

"women as wives and mothers dependent on men as providers and as those responsible for their economic well-being among other things tend, at the same time, to be influential upon that very position of responsibility that man holds in the society."³

In more simple terms, the question of women's status is not the real issue in this thesis. I am not attempting to argue that women have equal status to men, but that men's status in the society is partially contingent upon the behavior of women. Women do not need status or prestige in the same sense as men do to exercise power over others.

(ii) Dangerous or Malevolent Beings: Harper

a) One type of woman which is considered to be dangerous among the Haviks, according to Harper, is the widow. It is believed that the widow is capable of administering poison and causing the death of others. All members of the community are believed to be endangered by her.⁴ Harper points out that the ability attributed to the widow to poison others is a belief, not a reality. He comes to this conclusion because he was unable to obtain any evidence that widows actually practice poisoning.⁵ His final opinion regarding the fear of widows is that the poison complex is "an unrealistic belief pattern. The poison is not poisonous, and there is no evidence that there are poisoners."⁶ He interprets this belief pattern as representative of an existing fear of the destructive potentialities of Havik Brahman widows.⁷ Harper goes as far as to say that Havik women are thought to be dangerous.⁸ The term 'unrealistic' is important to understanding Harper's thesis and I will return to it shortly.

b) Other women which are thought to be dangerous, in Harper's analysis, are menstruating women and women who have recently given birth to a child. These women are categorized, Harper says, as polluting and ritually impure.⁹ When in this state of ritual impurity, it is believed that women can bring harm to their families.

c) The third type of threatening woman said to be dangerous is one who is reputed to have strong sexual passion and sexual demands. These types of women are regarded as temptresses of the flesh and there is, in association with this, the belief that "sexual intercourse is ritually defiling" and saps male vitality.¹⁰

d) Harper also attaches significance to female deities such as Mariamma. He informs his readers that Mariamma is the deity in the local mythology with the highest malevolency potential. Mariamma, so the story goes, after discovering that her husband had deceived her, slew him in a fit of rage.¹¹ Harper also talks about stories which are frequently told about the Chaudis, "a class of lesser female deities who may be both malevolent and benevolent." His most significant statement, however, is his own claim that

"these stories are relevant to the manner in which women in general are subconsciously viewed."¹²

Harper correlates the notion of the goddess' behavior with the behavior of women. He does so, however, without providing any real theoretical basis. Nevertheless, some of the conclusions he draws are much the same as those which I have arrived at. He remarks

that the important feature of one chaudis story is that initially the chaudis is described as dutiful, helpful and submissive (characteristics which he claims are usually used to describe the 'ideal wife').¹³ Later in the tale, with a change in circumstances, the chaudis is described as wrathful and vengeful. She, "holding anger in her heart, begins a campaign of violence and destruction that may completely wipe out all members of her ex-master's household."¹⁴

What I understand Harper to be saying, in effect, is that goddesses are like women - goddesses represent both the consciously-recognized benevolent side of women as well as the not-consciously recognized malevolent side of women. The conscious view of women that Havik males hold, according to Harper, is that they are weak-willed and superstitious and are constantly in need of male protection.

"The ideal feminine behavior is characterized by submissiveness and deference. Women are believed to be shy, weak and retiring and are expected to orient their activities toward the pleasing of males...A woman in the role of wife is subordinate to the desires, the whims, and the angers of her husband. An oft-quoted statement is that for a wife her husband is her god."¹⁵

A familiar representation of the ideal? It is certainly consistent with the Laws of Manu, with Beck's description, with the Kama Sutra and almost every other source quoted on the ideal of Indian women. But what Harper says is that subconsciously men fear the malevolent potentialities of women and so create goddesses who act ambiguously - both like the ideal (benevolent) and also like its antithesis (malevolent).

(ii) Dangerous or Malevolent Beings: My Argument

There is nothing in (b)'s and (c)'s descriptions above which contradicts my own statements regarding purity and pollution, or the nature of the seductress and her sexual powers. In fact, this aspect of Harper's argument could be used as data to support my own hypothesis.

In what way does (d), however, differ from my own theory? It differs in that while I have hopefully demonstrated that there exists a mirror-like quality to the relationship between women and goddesses, I have, on the other hand, only suggested the possibility that goddesses might reveal some of the deeper structures of the human mind. What I have concentrated upon is the social relations between men and women as well as upon Kali, a Hindu goddess, as a symbolic manifestation of as well as a model for male/female interaction in the traditional Indian society. Psychology enters into the analysis to the extent that the fear that men are said to experience is real. The fear is, in my opinion, not only experienced but there is a social cause for such fear.

Harper seems to be saying that these ambivalent goddess figures are creations of the human psyche: that the fear is not realistic. I am saying that while they may be creations of the human psyche, they represent a system of social relationships which exists on the ground. In this sense they are realistic. At this point, it becomes evident that the term realistic has a very particular meaning.

(iii) Realistic: Harper

Harper contends that this fear of women arises as a consequence

of guilt - guilt caused by the fact that certain women in the society are of a lower status. He claims that the representation of these women as dangerous is unrealistic (that is, the fear is expressed in indirect, supernatural or mystical ways).¹⁶ Harper believes that the power of these 'dangerous women' is drastically curtailed. Therefore, he says, there is little reason for men to realistically fear them. He believes it is not logical for these women to be feared because they cannot directly and openly cause harm to others. He hypothesizes, then, that it has become necessary for this fear to be expressed in indirect or unrealistic ways.¹⁷

(iii) Realistic: My Argument

In my own hypothesis, the basis for the fear of the Indian woman is real. By her unpredictable behavior, the woman exerts influence over her husband. It is not totally by her submissiveness, nor her deferential actions that she gains power over men or is seen by them to be threatening. Rather her power is derived from her ability to behave ambivalently. Harper misses the significance of this ambivalent behavior of women. He appears to deny that there is, in fact any behavior which occurs on the part of women to substantiate these stories and the consequent feelings of fear among the Havik. Thus, he concludes, the fear must be a function of guilt feelings brought about by the status differential.

Harper claims further that the fears are unrealistic because they are associated with the supernatural or mystical realm. However, my own

thesis shows that women's behavior in the secular world is threatening to men; their ability to act contrary to the ideal is the source of their power over men and their position in the public sphere.

B. Where Do We Go From Here

If the task has been successfully accomplished, the preceding pages have demonstrated that there is a basis for conducting fieldwork in the Bengal area on the notion that

- 1) further knowledge about the central Goddess figure, Durga-Kali, will lead to a greater understanding of Bengali women and
- 2) that further study of Bengali women will lead to a greater understanding of the Goddess Durga-Kali.

The work contained herein has established that there is a recurring pattern in the literature analyzed as it regards women and goddesses. This pattern represents the way in which women are seen by others: on the one hand to behave according to a certain ideal of passivity toward their husbands and on the other hand to vary from that ideal and exhibit fury and a lack of controlled, ideal responses.

The latter form of behavior has been compared with the initiate's as he passes through states of transition within the society. What constitutes the liminal state for the initiate is what occurs when he is apart from the structured and controlled segment of the society and literally steps outside or beyond. In the case of the woman, her behavior constitutes a 'going beyond the limits of what is normally prescribed,' leading to her being regarded as a dangerous creature with fringe-like attributes.

It has been shown that this sort of activity on the part of women is considered to be threatening to men. There is, in addition, every evidence that this threat is real and that men can be brought under the control or influence of women by their behaving inconsistently. This results for men in a fear of pollution, of public shaming, of a loss of strength, of death, of dishonourment and a fear of the loss of order.

The problem for fieldwork is to determine not only the presence of the capacity for women to behave in an ambiguous way, which is fairly clearly demonstrated, but to determine the frequency of behavior counter-acting the ideal. Also, one might inquire as to what type of events occasions this ambiguity, as well as attempting to establish what effect this behavior actually has upon the man's social position. If women threaten men publicly, how effective is this in altering their status.

At the extreme, for example, could it be proven that men have died at sea because their spouses have fallen from the ideal path? As outrageous as this might seem at first glance, it becomes important as a problem area of data collection. In order to establish the factual influence of women upon men, one must establish if men do generally feel this threat (as the literature claims that they do) along with the extent to which this behavior influences their own actions. One seeks a correlation between the belief and the action.

One task is to determine the expectations towards women (that is, the beliefs about the nature of female behavior). Another task is to

attempt to determine the number of occasions in which a woman's adharmic action leads to the downfall of her spouse, to his public shaming, or to a temporary state of humiliation.

But from the emic perspective, if the anthropologist is seeking cause-effect power relationships, he or she should look for evidence of constraint upon men's action as well as actions actually brought about by women. Does men's fear of women's unpredictable behavior prevent them from taking certain actions in the public as well as domestic spheres or in a similar way does it influence them to take certain others. If either or both is true and can be proven true, then the beliefs men hold about women can be correlated with their public activities. Women do not have to frequently adopt forms of behavior which is contrary to the ideal to be regarded by others as ambiguous. Men merely have to hold in their heads the expectation of adharmic behavior (brought about presumably by even a small incidence of adharmic actions) for the fear to be labelled by the social scientist as real.

Another question worth considering concerns the issue of women's consciousness or lack of consciousness regarding their ambivalent behavior. Do women consciously manipulate men (as appears to be so in the case of the courtesan) by their adharmic behavior, or does the behavior arise spontaneously. Assuming that it does - that women do lose control over themselves - are they aware of its effects

on men? In order to answer these types of questions, an in-depth study of the woman's perception of herself is most essential.

And finally, what relationship does Kali play in all this. To what extent do women identify with the Goddess and to what extent do men identify women's behavior and attitudes with the Goddess? Is Kali an influential force in the lives of the Bengali people and can her worship be said to lead to women's ambiguous qualities (at least from the Bengali perspective).

In conjunction with the above questions re Kali, can one legitimately treat status or the lack of Indian women's status as independent from the religious system. For example, is Kali or goddesses like Kali merely a rationalization, as Harper seems to imply, for the lower status of women in that society? If this is so then it would not be unreasonable to assume, of course, that Kali and beliefs about women as terrifying and destructive are manifestations of guilt and fear arising from this status differential.

We might, then, assume that the symbols which appear in any given society are determined by the economic base of that society. However, if we regard symbols as creations of the human mind which are meaningful in other ways; ways such as I have suggested in the foregoing, then we are prevented from a priori concluding that they are merely ideological rationalizations.

The above problems represent a confusion of emic and etic analyses; both, however, being important for the final understanding. Part of

the fieldwork proposal is to include a clear differentiation between the two types of analyses. Another portion is to include an effective methodology for their documentation.

Harper claims that because women do not literally poison men, women are not a real threat to men. Kali is not a rationalization in my view, however, she is a part of a whole system of interrelations. The ambiguity which I have ascribed to women is a part of that dynamic set of interrelations between men and women in which women, by their dharmic and adharmic actions, mediate between men's lives in the public world. Men's honor and status as men is dependent upon the necessity of controlling women's actions. Men have the responsibility of maintaining social order by maintaining their own status and prestige. They must, however, control their wives to do so. Women it seems, however, are unpredictable and ultimately uncontrollable.

How can some of these answers be achieved? One approach for the researcher would be to determine how women are influenced by Kali and to what degree women see themselves like Kali, if at all. One then might also attempt to discover if status is an issue for the traditional woman as well as the more modernized one. Another way around the whole problem, of course, is to discover if women really do poison men.

In concluding, let me summarize the fieldwork problem: Although overtly the dark, angry and destructive aspect of Kali is refuted by Bengalis, these aspects of Kali must, it may be presumed, have some relation to the way in which women are, are seen by others

and see themselves. The sociological problem concerns the ways in which the varied aspects and their refractions relate to women's experience of themselves and others within their social ambience.

An investigation in three parts is proposed:

(a) The literature on Bengali Sakta devotionism, typified by two of Bengal's most famous religious figures: Ramprasad Sen and Ramakrishna (mentioned in the earlier chapters). This literature can be more thoroughly researched through the assistance of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture as well as various Sanskrit scholars in the Calcutta area.

(b) An investigation of particular institutions focussed on Kali worship and sacrifice such as the Kalighat Temple in Calcutta, the major Kali festival held every Fall in Bengal, as well as the Kumari Puja, performed periodically at the Dakhineswar Temple in Calcutta.

(c) The life histories and social ambiances of particular individuals selected as a cross-section so as to include members of different local communities, castes, classes, economic and educational positions. This could involve the study of either a few individual families, as in Wolf's study of the Taiwanese family, or could become more extensive to include a fairly wide range of persons.¹⁸

All three phases or aspects of the study being contemplated can be carried out in Bengal, using Calcutta as a base.

FOOTNOTESINTRODUCTION

1. Beane, W.C. 1977: 58
2. Geertz, C. 1974: 481
3. ibid: 486
4. Inden, R.B. and R.W. Nicholas 1977.
5. Stephens, W.N. 1963: 296
6. ibid: 296
7. Belshaw, C. 1976: 247
8. Schneider, D. 1968: xv
9. Harper, E.B. 1969: 81

CHAPTER I

1. Neumann, E. 1974: 150
2. James, E.O. 1959: 32
3. Battacharya, N.N. 1971: 118
4. Neumann, E. op. cit.: 151
5. ibid: 150
6. Stone, M. 1976: 73
7. Durga is almost always closely associated with, or identified with, Kali.
8. Kinsley, D.R. 1976: 83
9. Battacharya, N.N. op. cit.: 62
10. Kinsley, D.R. op. cit.: 85
11. Beane, W.C. op. cit.: 58
12. Kali: Mund. Up, i, 24, ShadraKali and Sri San, G.S. ii 15.4
13. Battacharya, N.N. op. cit.: 104
14. The term 'Great Tradition is used here to refer to the Indo-Aryan,

Brahmanic, Vedic or Orthodox religious traditions.

The term 'Little Tradition' refers to the Dravidian, tribal, indigenous or regional religious tradition.

15. Marriott, M. 1955.
16. Beane, W.C. op. cit.: 38
17. Przyluski, J. 1934: 412. v. 10
18. ibid: 430
19. Kinsley, D.R. op. cit.: 86-7
20. ibid: 5
21. Kinsley disagrees with Przyluski's assumption that there was in existence in Vedic India a being comparable to figures in the Ancient Near East or Mediterranean area.
22. ibid: 82
23. ibid: 85
24. Battacharya, N.N. op. cit.: 62
25. ibid: 92
26. Zimmer, H. 1951: 564
27. ibid: 564
28. Kinsley, D.R. op. cit.: 112
29. Battacharya, N. 1964: 153
30. The Tantras are relatively later sacred writings of Hinduism, dating in the present form from the 7th or 8th C. of the Christian era or even later. The literature is used most commonly by the Sakta who worship the female principle.
31. Woodroffe, Sir John. 1951: 31
32. Zimmer, H. op. cit.: 563
33. Battacharya, N.N. History of Sakta Religion.
34. Zimmer, H. op. cit.: 296
35. ibid: 297

36. The Bhakti Cult took on special meaning as a movement during the medieval period in India.
37. Kinsley, D.R. op. cit.: 120
38. ibid: 122
39. ibid: 122
40. Ghat - the steps of Kali. Campbell, J.1959: 5
41. Lederer, W. 1968: 135
42. Sharma, K.N.: 150
43. Neumann, E. op. cit.: 152
44. Beane, W.C. op. cit.: 190
45. Zimmer, H. op. cit.: 565-6
46. ibid: 565-6
47. Neumann, E. op. cit.: 152
48. Nathan, L. and C. Seely: 4
49. ibid: 34
50. ibid: 39
51. ibid: 86
52. ibid: 4
53. ibid: 3
54. ibid: 6
55. ibid: 6
56. Webster's Third New International Dictionary
57. Ingalls, D.H. 1965: 89

The dictionary denotes two general types of ambivalence: one refers to an attitude, the other a behavior. The first, an ambivalent attitude,

means a contradictory emotional or psychological feeling especially addressed toward a particular person or object (quite probably involving a simultaneous attraction toward and repulsion for). The second, an ambivalent behavior, means an action involving alternating obedience and rebellion, followed by self-reproach; or a continual oscillation (as between one thing and another). Both are used in relevant contexts within this thesis.

58. Ingalls, D.H. op. cit.: 92
59. This analysis of the Hindu religious philosophy was arrived at through discussions with K.E. Bryant, Professor, Department of Asian Studies, U.B.C.

CHAPTER II

1. The topic of fieldwork proposals will be discussed more extensively in the final chapter.
2. Nelson, C. 1974: 552
3. Sacks, K. 1976: 565
4. Nelson, C. op. cit.: 552
5. ibid: 554
6. Stephens, W.N. 1963: 289
7. Lewin et al. 1971: 13
8. Woodroffe, Sir John. op. cit.: 2-3
9. Turner, V. 1969.
10. The term madness is not used in any strict psychological sense but more as an etic description of observed behavior.
11. Parsons, T.F. 1951
12. Thiselton-Dyer, T.F. op. cit.: 3
13. Thiselton-Dyer, T.F. 1906: 3
14. Dworkin, A. 1974: 35
15. ibid: 35
16. ibid: 48

17. Thiselton-Dyer, T.F. op. cit.: 3
18. ibid: 3
19. Rogers, S. 1975: 736
20. Pitt-Rivers, J.A. 1961: 197-8 in Rogers, S. op. cit.
21. Nelson, C. op. cit.: 3
22. Thiselton-Dyer, T.F. op. cit.: 3
23. Cunnison, T. 1966: 117
24. Wolf, E. 1972: 40
25. Lederer, W. op. cit.: 35
26. Delaney, L.T. 1977: 3
27. Farrege, 1971: 318
28. Murphy, Y. and R. Murphy 1974: 153

Chapter III

1. Beck, B.E.F. 1975: 31
2. Shastri, J.L. 1973: 504
3. ibid: 395
4. ibid: 1920
5. ibid: 1923
6. Daniel, S. 1974 (unpublished): 119
7. Shastri, J.L. op. cit.: 2036
8. Ingalls, D.H. op. cit.: 89
9. Kinsley, D.R. op. cit.: 108
10. The terms shaming and humiliating have also been used above and in other parts of the thesis without being adequately defined. In the concluding parts of this chapter they will be discussed in more detail.

11. Kinsley, D.R. op. cit: 135
12. ibid: 135
13. Nathan, L. and C. Seely, op. cit.: 39
14. Kinsley, D.R. op. cit.: 136
15. Wadley, S. 1975: 61
16. Rolland, R. 1930: 15
17. Shastri, J.L. op. cit.: 1666
18. ibid: 1667
19. Mahabharata (X. 144.6)
20. Beck, B.E.F. Unpublished 1975: 1
21. Bader, C. 1964:
23. Sen Gupta, Sri Sankar (ed.) 1969: xxxviii
24. Cormack, M. 1953: 148
25. Wadley, S. op. cit.
26. Shastri, J.L. op. cit.: 705
27. Livre V, sl. 147
28. Basham, A.L. 1959: 180-181
29. Sharma, K.N. op. cit.: 87
30. Ibid: 111
31. Beck, B.E.F. op. cit: 31
32. Woodroffe, Sir John op. cit.: 25, 128

33. Daniel, S. op. cit.: 146
34. ibid: 147
35. Here ambivalence is used in what I believe is the more commonly used form and refers to attitudes of observers towards something, rather than the expression of certain types of behavior. That is, ambivalence in this case is contradictory emotional or psychological attitudes, esp. towards a particular person or object.
36. Daniel, S. op. cit.: 157
37. Baig, T.A. 1976: 138
38. Daniel, S. op. cit.: 122
39. ibid: 82
40. Shastri, J.L. op. cit.: 324
41. Baig, Tara Ali. 1976: 138
42. ibid: 139
43. Bader, C. op. cit.: 55
44. Livre ix, Sl. 7
45. Livre ix, Sl. 7
46. Baig, T.A. op. cit.: 56
47. Lannoy, R. 1971: 103
48. ibid: 107
49. ibid: 107
50. Jacobson, D. 1977: 61
51. Wadley, S. op. cit.: 124
52. She, too, like others argues that there is no differentiation in the Hindu belief system between superhuman and human.
53. Wadley, S. op. cit.: 124
54. Pillai, T.S. 1962: 164
55. ibid: 214

CHAPTER IV

1. Spellmen in Vatsyayana. 1971: 10
2. India had a whole literature of erotica called Kok Shastras of which the Kama Sutra is the most renowned (Baig 1976: 6).
3. Vatsyayana. op. cit.: 159
4. ibid: 163
5. ibid: 160
6. Baig, T.A. op. cit.: 59
7. Daniel, S. op. cit.: 156
8. Vatsyayana, op. cit.: 205
9. ibid: 220
10. ibid: 221
11. ibid: 132
12. Ruswa, Mirza. 1970.
13. ibid: 97
14. ibid: 231-2
15. Daniel, S. (unpublished 1978): 6

CHAPTER V

1. Harper, Edward B. 1969: 81
2. ibid: 81
3. Refer pg. 7
4. Harper, E.B. op. cit.: 83
5. ibid: 84
6. ibid: 85

7. ibid: 85
8. ibid: 85
9. ibid: 85
10. ibid: 85
11. ibid: 86
12. ibid: 86
13. ibid: 86
14. ibid: 86
15. ibid: 89
16. ibid: 93
17. ibid: 93
18. Wolf, M. 1972.

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APPENDIX A