CHAPTER III

MOTHER GODDESS CANDI AS DEPICTED THROUGH THE AGES

The present chapter aims at presenting the multifarious ideas centred round the Mother Goddess that have been forming her nature and character through the ages. The data in this chapter have been divided into three distinct categories like the Pre-Vedic, the Vedic and the Post-Vedic time to understand the trend of beliefs and ideas on the Mother Goddess in the different cultural historical background of the Indian Society.

3.1 MOTHER GODDESS : IN THE PRE-VEDIC CIVILISATION

The existence of the idea of the Mother Goddess is conspicuously seen in the various centres of the ancient civilization in India. This particular concept of the Mother Goddess has passed through the centuries and in course of change and development it has taken its root into the culture of the later period. India, after the most dramatic and encouraging discoveries of the Indus Valley sites, could be recognized along with Iran, Egypt and Mesopotamia. So also, her religion faced different stages of time and facets of the people, such as, common folk, rulers and invaders.
The female deity like Candi or almost similar to her form and nature, to-day whom we call or identify as the Sākta deity, has gained ground in the pre-literate society, though in course of time introduction of various philosophical ideas have helped to change the crudest form, nature and shape of the deity in question. Many of the current features of later Hindu-Brahminical religion and religio-philosophy could be traced directly to the pre-Vedic sources, and in this connection referred to the philosophical Samkhya system, the practice of Yoga, the cult of the Mother Goddess and many other allied features (Bhattacharya : 1971 : 109). But it is to be remembered that the conception of a 'Spirit of the Universe' or the 'Eternal Goddess' revered as 'Devi' or 'Sakti' (female principle), to whom all other gods and goddesses regarded as her subordinates or incarnations are the matters of comparatively later origin.

Historical development of the concept of the Mother Goddess or more precisely speaking Candi the Sākta deity, whom we refered as almighty Devi could be traced with the help of popular episodes and mythologies prevalent in the society with the study of innumerable representations of the deity in sculptures and paintings preserved in the different museums situated in West Bengal as well as in the neighbouring areas. –

The genesis and historical development of the Sākta religion and philosophy as well as the related socio-religio-culture of India,
may broadly be placed in the following periods:

(i) Ancient period, which goes back to the second half of the Third Millennium B.C. or earlier,

(ii) Mediaeval period beginning from the Christian era, extended up to the 12th Century A.D., and

(iii) Modern period commencing from the 13th Century A.D. and onwards.

The relics and antiquities recovered from the different sites of the Indus Valley, especially from Harappa in the Montgomery district in Punjab and Mohenjodaro in Larkana district of Sind (both the sites are now in Pakistan) have helped us much to throw 'New Light on the Most Ancient East'. Simultaneously, they have created a lot of problems to draw a line between the secular and religious concepts of such an early culture, and at the present state we are practically forced to turn round our concept and ideas on seals, a good number of clay sealings, a variety of small figurines (of human female and animal form) made of terracotta and metal, ring-stones and also a few stone images, just to form an idea about the religious concepts and principal deities of the inhabitants of the Indus Valley sites.

Amongst the finds recovered from the Indus Valley sites, most striking and extremely common are the female figurines. Almost same type of female figurines have also been found in large numbers
from Iran to Aegean basin, notably in Elam, Mesopotamia, Transcaspia, Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, Cyprus, Crete and Egypt. It is ascertained that these female figurines must have originated from a community of religious sects or almost common ideas shared by the countries where they were found. The generally accepted view is that they represent the Great Mother or Nature Goddess, whose worship, under various names and forms, is still very common in the Indian Sub-continent.

On the whole, the religion of the Indus people consisted of worshipping the Mother Goddess, the deification of trees and their spirits, certain animal motifs and forms, therianthropic figures, the prototype of Śiva, the aniconic phallic symbols and the Swastikas. Of these, the cult of the Mother Goddess was very popular and common throughout the ancient world (Cf. Vats: 1970: 121-6; Wheeler: 1960: 88-90).

About the popular religion prevalent amongst the dwellers of the Indus Valley sites, Wheeler opined that, in particular the numerous terracotta figurines of an almost nude female, which have been supposed to represent a Mother Goddess, have no clear counterpart in the seals or major sculptures and may more easily be related to a household cult than to a State religion. Such a cult was wide-spread in time and space (1960: 89). Obviously, the religion of the Mother Goddess existed until the dawn of civilization and even later in the different parts of the world (Bhattacharya: 1971: 10), and India is no exception.
There are only a few countries in the old world, who possess like India, the deep-rooted tradition of the worship of Mother Goddess from time immemorial. It is also found that the Mother-right elements in India are stronger, both in extent and in degree than those in any part of the world and that in spite of the ruthless efforts to establish male superiority, Mother-right elements could not be eradicated from the minds and lives of the masses of this ancient country (Ehrenfels : 1941 : 121-29; 201-4). There is no doubt that the distinct evidences of the Mother Goddess adoration in India have the root in the relics of the ancient sites like Harappa, Mahenjodaro, Kulli, Zhob, Chanhu-daro, Rana Ghundai, Ruper, Kali-bangan, Lothal and so forth, and by which it is obviously proved that the worship of the Mother Goddess or the Earth Goddess was a popular religion and custom.

The most striking features of the major part of the female figurines found at Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, are significantly nude but for a very short skirt like clothing round the waist secured by a girdle and bedecked with jewellery and occasionally with ornamental check cones and a long necklace, armlets, bangles, ear-rings, anklets, while the head-dress is more or less crescent-shaped (Marshall : 1931 : 49-52; Wheeler : 1960 : 73).

Marshall was of opinion that the range of these sorts of female figurines now extends practically without a break from Indus to Nile. The vast tracts were united by a common bonds of culture.
in the Chalcolithic period. Even without the analogy of the stated female figurines from Western Asia, there would be a strong presumption in favour of the examples from Mohenjo-daro, Harappa and Baluchistan being effigies of the Great Mother Goddess or of one or other of her local manifestations.

A few terracotta female figurines certainly indicate the prevalency of the worship of Great Mother and the close association of Her three aspects, namely, Creator, Preservator and Destructor, e.g., the pregnant woman, the mother and the child, the nude female figure, head downwards and legs stretched out upwards, and with a plant issuing from her womb are the most mentionable (Cf. Marshall : 1931 : Pls.XX.20; XCV.20,24,29,30; XII.12 and Vats: 1950 : 42, Pl.XCIII, 304 and Wheeler : 1960 : 89). Here it may be pointed out that the archaeological objects found at the southern part of Sind along the course of Indus include a good number of terracotta figurines exactly like the specimens from Harappa and Mohenjo-daro. The figurines of the Mother Goddess from Chanhu-daro are also of Mohenjo-daro type (Majumdar : 1934 : MASI-48).

Before the dramatic discoveries of the archaeological relics from the sites of the Indus Valley, Chanda expressed his views in 1916, that for a conception of the god-head analogous to that of Śakti conception of the Devī we should travel beyond countries dominated by the Vedic Aryans and the Avestic Iranians to Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt and other countries bordering the Mediterranean. The
religious conception of the Śāktas about the Devī as Ādyā Śakti, the primordial energy and Jagadambā, the Mother of the Universe also probably arose in a society where matriarchate or mother kin was prevalent (Chanda: 1916: 148-9). The views of Chanda may be analysed in a way that the city-dwellers of the Indus Valley and the folk of its neighbouring hamlets had a definite type of political and social organization and an intellectual and religious life with an artistic view. The female figurines may be regarded as the Mother Goddess or as the guardian deity of the hamlets, and as taking a human interest in the needs of her votaries. The small-sized breasts of the figurines, compared with those of the more matronly figures which are thought to have been used for votive purposes may indicate that she was regarded as a virgin by the Indus Valley people. It is really interesting to note that figures of male deities in terracotta are distinctly rare. Simultaneously, it may also be noticed that there is a good number of entirely nude female figurines apart from being decorated with necklaces and bangles or with a cincture round the waist. They have sometimes a spring of flowers or leaves rising from the head suggesting an idea of a 'fertility or vegetation god' (Mehta: 1956: 23). Further, the terracotta figurine indicating pregnant women or of women with children may reflect the same pre-occupation with fertility (Wheeler: 1960: 89).

About the religio-philosophic culture of the pre-Aryan Society, some scholars suggested that their cult of the Mother
Goddess may not be exactly the same as Śakti-worship of late days, but both seem to be inspired by the same fundamental belief in a female energy as the source of all creation (Banerjea : 1966 : 112; Sastri : 1973 : 160). The discoveries at Harappa, Mohenjo-daro and their neighbouring areas may lead us to draw general conclusion,-

Firstly, that some fundamental ideas of Hinduism, as well as some primitive beliefs and observances, still current in India, may be traced as far back as the third millennium B.C., and

Secondly, that the worship of Śiva and Śakti may be regarded as the oldest form of Indian theistic religion and the different concepts in relation to the actions and interactions of these two forces of divine perspectives arose very early in the cultural history of India.

In this connection, attention may be drawn to some of the notable archaeological objects, namely, 'Ring Stone' found at the sites of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa may be drawn. The ring-stones of the proto-historic age appear to have indicated the female principle which might have been worshipped as the symbol of the Mother Goddess. Marshall explained them as the emblems of the divine mother, which were utilized as cult-objects by the contemporary people. But his view was not accepted by some scholars who thought that most of these objects, especially the larger ones, might have been used as
the architectural pieces. However, numerous female figurines made of terracotta, unearthed at the proto-historic sites like Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, etc. were generally accepted as the tiny figures of Mother Goddesses. Scholars like Mackay, Marshall, Wheeler opined that they were portable cult objects used for the ritual worship by the common folk of the region (Mackay : 1948 : 54; Marshall : 1931: 49-52; Wheeler : 1960 : 88-90).

Thus it is seen that the concept of the Mother Goddess in the perspective of diverse ideas and complicated beliefs had developed in the soil of India as well as in other ancient centres of civilization of the other parts of the world in the earliest phase of human civilization. In India this particular concept had penetrated into the very psycho-social perspective of the people and ultimately it became a dominating force in the daily life and activities of the people concerned. The Mother Goddess influenced and directed the line of action of the people in understanding the form and function of the behaviour-patterns of the world's events. Ultimately, the whole idea had created a conspicuous sphere in the value-patterns of the people concerned. Naturally an analytical look into the whole system arranged on the time-long process of accumulation would clarify many essential facets of human achievements through the ages in the understanding of the broad perspective of man and his cultural development.
3.2 MOTHER GODDESS : IN THE VEDIC SCRIPTURES

Probably the climatic changes were responsible for the movement of the Aryan-speaking people southwards from the Central Asian steppe lands towards Afghanistan and westwards into Iran and Mesopotamia under the shadow of Elburz Mountains and perhaps a little later in time eastwards over the passes of the Hindu Kush into what is today, Punjab. Armed with horse and sword made of alloy-iron, the fur-skinned, rude and rustic, vigorous and virile, haughty and conquering barbarians overran the prosperous and fertile lands of the Indus and its five tributaries, where the comparatively highly civilized and cultured stock of Dravidians resided with peace and prosperity (Mehta : 1956 : 29-30). History suggests us that the speakers of Aryan languages, who, between 1800 and 1500 B.C. crossed the sub-continent's north-western mountain barriers and soon occupied much of the Indus Basin and Gangetic plains.

The pre-Aryan stock of the Indus Basin, that is, the Dravidians, as we have directly evinced from the archaeological excavations at the Indus Valley sites, were the worshippers of Mother Goddess or the female deities, like the inhabitants of Egypt, Sumeria, the ancient civilized country of the contemporary world. On the other hand, the conquerors of the Dravidian civilization, generally known as the Aryans, were the worshippers of the male gods.
The 'Three' and 'Thirty' gods of the earliest pantheon of the Aryan people, were remarkably all males, and they the allegiance of the Aryans themselves and themselves only (Mitra : 1961 : 230; Cf. RV, VIII.28.1; and Apte : 1957 : 364).

The primitive religion of the stock of Aryans was suggested by whatever was beautiful and striking feature in the phenomena of Nature. The night sky or the bright sky was an eternal object of wonder and of worship. The Sun, the Moon, the dawn and dusk, the storm and the clouds, the thunder and rain, the fire and the earth, all received reverence and worship. But still then the religion was simple and archaic. The myths and legends about the 'Supreme Being' not crumbled down with multiplication, and the ceremonial rites were also not fabricated, at the then period. Aryan people looked up with a manly veneration to whatever was wonderous and beautiful in nature. They offered their praises and prayers with a grateful attitude and fervent heart (Dutta : 1890 : 32).

Ṛg-Veda, the first literary compositions of the Aryans, is marked, in the opinion of the scholars, by a naive realism, by joyous optimism, characteristic of a happy successful, hedonistic folk. But in the later period, through the interaction with the decadent culture of the conquered, fear and superstition crept in, till in fact the Dravidian deities triumphed, counter-balancing the physical victory of the Aryan arms supported by iron-swords and horses (Mehta : 1956 : 31).
In the hymns of Rg-Veda, we find the concept of the religion of an unsophisticated age and mind and in everything whether animate or inanimate, there was a 'thou', everything in nature was inhabited or animated by an unseen spirit or Manā; the true deities of the Veda are none other than the glorified human beings. The gods of the Vedas were inspired with human motives and passions, born like men but immortal. These gods were almost without exception the deified representations of the phenomena or agencies of nature (Macdonell : 1897 : 7). In the earliest religious concepts of the Aryan folk, the gods, as we find in the Vedic compositions and hymns, were conceived doubtless on anthropomorphic ideas, with their respective consorts, forming a couple; but this was done without assigning to the ladies any divine rank corresponding with that of their lords. Agni (Fire), Vayu (Air), Surya (Sun) and Indra (Lord of the divine world) came into being, and easily obtained their respective dominions, but their wives did not share them their power as well as the glory. Indrani (wife of Lord Indra), Lakshmi, Sarasvati and many other female consorts of the Vedic gods were referred in the Rg-Veda Samhita, but they were not accepted as the objects of worship for the faithful with the importance like their male counterparts in all cases (Mitra : 1961 : 230).

Amongst the female deities, whose activities and names can be cited from the Rg-Veda, as Usā, Aditi, Sarasvati, Prithivi, Rākā, Ilā, Vāc, Rātri, etc., are the most prominent. Though Usā has acquired an important place amongst the Rg-Vedic goddesses, but she
failed to hold the same position in the later period. Usā was treated and conceived as the divine matron and she was considered the life and death of every creature. The Rg-Vedic Usa possessed all the qualities and power of becoming an all-creative, all-preserving and evil-destroying power. But Usā was out and out a natural phenomenon and no clear and definite anthropomorphic features would be fixed for her. Therefore, in the later period Usā passed into oblivion (Sinha: 1967: 47-48).

Like Usā, goddess Aditi in the Rg-Veda had long been treated as the all-powerful Mother-Goddess. She was treated as Mother, Father, and Son, and she was whatever should be pulsated in life on earth (Cf. RV, II.27.1; X.36.3; X.132.6). Aditi was concerned prominently with the removal of sins, sometimes with Mitra and Varuna and sometimes alone. She was the giver of wealth free from sin and hatred. She used to release men from the hands of the enemy. Aditi, as we find in the Vedic hymns, was definitely the feminine principle playing the supreme role and she appeared as the Universal Mother. Yet, it could be found that Aditi the Great Mother Goddess gone into oblivion in course of time. The Vedic sage, while contemplating upon the true significance of Dyaus (Heaven) and Prithivī, caught glimpse of the Infinite and he called it Aditi. Max Muller states that, "Aditi, an ancient god or goddess, is in reality the earliest name invented to express the Infinite; .....the visible Infinite, visible by the naked eye, the endless expanse, beyond the earth, beyond the clouds, beyond the sky" (Rig Veda - Tr.-I.p.230).
About Aditi, as is expressed in the Rg-Veda, meant the celestial sphere; she had been considered as the intermediary space; Aditi is the mother, the father, the son; Aditi is all gods, the five classes of beings, the created, and is again the cause of creation (Cf. Monier-Williams: 1883: 182; RV.I.89.10).

Here it may be pointed out that the Rg-Veda Saṣhitā contains nearly 10,500 verses, which were ultimately grouped in 1,017 and placed in ten books or mandalas of unequal length. The said hymns were composed by different religious composers and poets or, we may call, Risis. In the Rg-Veda only, more than half consists of hymns to Indra and Agni; other important gods to whom hymns are sung being Aśvinis, Savitr, Surya, Varuna, Usa, Pusan, Maruts, Rudra, Soma, Visnu and Viśvadevas. Naturally it may be stated that the female deities, or the goddesses in the Vedic pantheon bear comparatively less importance than the male gods, namely, Mitra and Varuna, Savitr or Surya, Visnu, Indra, Agni, though there are a few hymns which were dedicated to the female deities.

Though the female deities occupied minor positions in the Vedic world and sacred scriptures, yet there is only one exception, in case of Usā. But in spite of twenty hymns dedicated to Usā, she bears no significant position or importance in the religious literatures of the later period, and practically absent in the Epics and Puranas. Further, Indra's hostile attitude towards Usā proved that she was not originally the goddess of the Vedic people. Her rivalry
with Aditi suggested that originally she belonged to a different pantheon. It may be concluded that the struggle between Indra and Usā was the reminiscence of the struggle between the two distinct religious ideals in which the mother-worshipping people of the Indus civilization were defeated by the war-lord of a patriarchal pantheon. Just as the forts and citadels of the Indus Valley were destroyed, so also a need was felt by the male-dominated non-Vedic religion.

Moreover, in many hymns of Rg-Veda, it was described at length that the Aryans appealed to Lord Indra to crush out the non-Aryans and requested to seize all the wealth, wife and food-stuff belonging to the non-Aryans (RV,X.22; IX.97.53-54; VII.24.27; IV.30.12-15, 20-22).

Except Aditi, Prithivi the earth-goddess has been recognised as the Divine Mother. In the hymns of Rg-Veda we find that the earth-goddess or the Mother-Earth associated with the Father-Heaven gave birth to a dual compound 'Dyāvaprithivi' (RV,IV.56.4-6 and I.22.13). But apart from her association as a wife with the Sky-god, the Earth-goddess Prithivi appears to have played a very small role in the Vedic religion. In the Atharva-Veda, a literary collection of the Vedic Aryans, which was composed in a much later period than the Rg-Veda, we find a long and beautiful hymn addressed to Prithivi, the Earth-Goddess (AV,XII.I). In it we read: "The Earth is the mother and I am the son of the Earth: Parjanya is the father, may he nourish us!" We further read that "Reverence be paid to the
Earth, the wife of Parjanya, to her, who draws her richness from showers. In the same way, we read: "O Mother Earth, kindly set me down upon a well-founded place! With (Father) Heaven co-operating O thou wise one, do thou place me into happiness and prosperity (Eng. Tr. Bloomfield, 1897 : 199-207).

Sarasvatī was also celebrated as a goddess, but it is interesting to note that Sarasvatī bears dual nature, - firstly, as a goddess of learning, and secondly, as a river-goddess. Commentators like Yaska and Sayana mentioned the dual nature of the deity, though she was not given due importance in the Ṛg-Veda. However, we find him as river-deity in Ṛg-Veda at least in the Chapters I, VI, VII-IX and X. As a goddess she is said to be the consort of Sarasvan Deva. She was described as white in colour and from her two prolific breasts, which are said to be truth and falsehood, the worshippers suck prosperity and riches. As river nymph she was described further as a support and a fortress and as bestowing wealth and fertility (ṚV, VII-96.4-6, 95-6, 96.2; I.89.3, 164-49; VII.95.1-2; Ait. Br. IV.1).

In Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa, she was said to be the wife of Indra and in Mahābhārata (Sāntiparva : V.6811 and 12920) she was called as the Mother of the Vedas and also as the celestial goddess produced from heaven.

It may be interesting to note here that the most remarkable hymn ascribed to Vac in the Tenth Mandala of Ṛg-Veda (10.125) became
known as Devī-Sukta in the later period. It is employed in the
autumnal worship of the goddess, that is the 'Devī', for the Śākta
worshippers of the deity take this composition of Rg-Veda as the
very basis of their devotion (De : 1976 : 178).

There are also some other female deities in the Rg-Vedic
literatures, but in the later period their names became obsolete.
Probably there is no controversy that the goddesses occupy a
subordinate position in the religion of the Vedic times. As wives,
consorts or counterparts of the male-gods the goddess play a still
more insignificant part. They are mere shadowy reflections of the
male-gods but sometimes with little independent power. The Aryan
pantheon did not allow to the wives of gods an equal share in ruling

We do not find in the early stratum of the Vedic literature
the names of such Puranic female-deities, namely, Durga, Kali,
Ambika, Uma and others. But it is only in the scriptures of the
later period we find references of these deities. As there is no
clear reference to these female deities in the Rg-Veda itself, we
may presume that they were originally non-Vedic deities of the more
early stratum, but they were slowly adopted in the divine world by
the religious leaders of the Sanskritised Hindu-Brahminical world
in later period. The different and various names of the Mother
Goddesses appear to have originally indicated different tribal
deities, who were afterwards identified with the wife of Śiva-
Paśupati, the pre-Aryan god, known to have been worshipped by the
inhabitants of the Mohenjo-daro.

Here we may refer to the famous legend of Daksha, Siva, Durga the consort of Siva as depicted in the epic Mahabharata, which is believed to be composed in between the period 4th Century B.C. to the 4th Century A.D. (Vaidya : 1962 : 53).

In the above-mentioned legend, Daksha's sacrifice indicates that the orthodox followers of Vedism did not acknowledge or accept the right of Siva as Devi's consort, to say nothing of Devi herself, to a share of the sacrificial food along with the Vedic gods. The earliest version of the legend is given in the Mahabharata (XII. 284-285). Here it should be noticed that Siva, whom Daksha ignored his sacrifice was not Rudra of the Vedic pantheon, but this Siva was the deity of the monotheistic Pasupatas. No share of the sacrificial food is claimed on behalf of Siva's consort, Durga.

This type of evidences and mythologies lead us to construct a familiar idea that the Vedic Aryans, who developed a patriarchal society based on the cattle-rearing and domesticated animal economy, were surely unwilling to recognize the female deities of the bye-gone days; hence the Vedic-Aryans gave birth the idea of a male-creator, like Daksa-Prajapati, Ardhanārīśvara, etc.

Further, Daksha has been described as one of the Adityas in the Rg-Veda (RV,II.27.1). But in the scriptures of the later period, namely, Śatpath Brahmaṇa (II.4.42) Daksha is identified with
Prajapati, the Creator. It is assumed, therefore, that the Vedic-Aryans, who formed a patriarchal social life, were not even willing to give a minimum recognition to the female deity Aditi, who was the mother of Daksha, as well as the Adityas. In lieu of Aditi, the mother of Daksha and the Adityas, they were gradually developing the ideas of a male creator which were crystallized in the form of Daksha-Prajapati, in the subsequent era.

It was referred by some scholar that in conformity with the transition from mother-right to father-right among the semetics, the progress of things happened to change the female deities into male gods or the goddesses were usually placed beneath the male deities (Robertson : 1899 : 52). In the Indian context, we find the female deities did not change their sex, but they were reduced to minor goddesses, in the Vedic period. But the religio-social history of India of the later period disapproved the hypothesis.

Although the Aryans of the Rg-Vedic period left no stone unturned to place the female deities beneath the male gods, but instead of losing the ground, the worship of female deities, became a potent factor in the subsequent religious and philosophical history of India, and ultimately these have also been reflected in the Indian Mythologies, legends, and lores. In India, it may be marked that unlike the European countries, mythologies, legends and lores are the essential parts of the culture, religion and deities and day-to-day life of the society. Indian myths as well as the religions around which they have grown up are closely tied to the
social structure. In the myths related with Indra and Usā, Daksha, Śiva and Satī, - the deities of the Aryan and non-Aryan or aboriginal origin, wherein it may be marked how the Aryan society has crumbled down the Proto-Australoid or the Dravidian or the non-Aryan culture from its very root and ultimately introduced the new system from matriarchal to patriarchal society by means of myth and consolidated the position of male gods in the minds of the folk and the Hindu-Brahminical pantheon.

However, it may be ascertained that the concept of 'Śakti' (though the term 'Śakti' has not yet gained the ground in the Vedic tradition which includes mythologies, lores and legends) was not unknown to the Vedic seers, but it is generally accepted that Vedic ritualism was dominated by the male gods and the female deities occupy significantly subordinate position in the world of Vedic dogma, belief and worship, and hardly play any significant part as rulers of the world (Macdonnel : 1897 : 134). This idea grows on the fact that only a very few hymns can be found in the Ṛg-Veda which are addressed independently to the female deities like Aditi, Vāc, Usā, Prithivī, etc.

In fact, Ambikā, Umā, Durgā, and Kalī, who individually or collectively came to be regarded as the main divinity of the Śakti Cult appeared in the later period, one after another. In the Taittiriya Āranyaka, we find for the first time several names of the female deities, who held special importance in the development of
Śakti worship, and in the Tenth Book of the same Aranyaka, a very representative description of the goddess Durgā is given in this way:

Tam Agnivarnam jvalantim
Vairochaniṃ Karmaphaleshu jushtām,
Durgāṃ devīṃ śaraṇamahāṃ prapadye
Sutarasi tarase namaḥ.

' - I seek as my refuge the goddess Durga, who is of the colour of fire, burning with austerity, daughter of the Sun (or of fire), who is sought after for the reward of rites; adoration be to thy energy, O impetuous goddess' (Muir : O.S.T : Vol.IV : 427).

Thus it is clearly understood that the influence of the female deities throughout the whole Vedic period, as is revealed in the Vedic literatures concerned, is worth-mentioned despite the continuous attempts made, during this period, to suppress the importance of them. The numerous female divinities throughout the whole Vedic scripture denies the hypothesis of the non-importance of the female deities. It can be said from close-set observations and analysis of various data that in spite of a spell of suppression the female deities, which were conspicuous and dominant in the pre-Vedic period, they had been exerting their active influence in an internal perspective of the life-activities of the people.
3.3 MOTHER GODDESS : IN THE POST-VEDIC SCRIPTURES

Though it is believed in general that the female deities hold subordinate position in the Vedic pantheon but there are occasions when we see that the goddesses like Prithivi, Usa, Sarasvati, etc., whose activities are no less than the male gods. Here it must be admitted that the goddesses like Prithivi, Usa bear some characteristics of the non-Vedic origin. The worship of the Mother Goddess in some form or other prevailed from very ancient times among the different human communities, living in the vast tract of land extending from India to Mesopotamia, Egypt to Greece, that is, throughout the entire length and breadth of the 'Old World'. In the opinion of Marshall, female statuettes akin to those from the Indus Valley and Baluchistan have been found in large numbers and over a wide area between Persia and the Aegean notably in Elam, Mesopotamia, Transcaspia, Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, Cyprus, Create, the Cyclades the Balkans and the Egypt. (Marshall :1931:50).

It is found in the post-Vedic sacred texts like the Mahabharata ( IV. 6and VI. 22) Harivamsa ( III.3 ) and also in the other Puranaś, that female deities of different forms and names were worshipped in many parts of the Indian sub-continent by the orthodox followers of the Vedic religion as well as by the Sabaras, Barbaras, Pulindas, Kiratas and many other aboriginal tribes, who were undoubtedly not connected with the Vedic dogmas. In the Khila-Harivaśa (an appendix to Mahabharata) it is stated that the goddess Durga was
worshipped by the savages, namely, the Sabaras, Barbaras and pulindas, and that She was very fond of meat and wine (Dasgupta: EMWI : 1963). It is assumed by some scholars, that the above-mentioned tribes of non-Aryan origin, were certainly dominated by the matriarchal system of society (Chanda : 1916 : 153-6). It is believed that due to the matriarchal system prevalent in the then society, the custom of worshipping female deities grew among the aboriginals and in spite of the ever-growing Aryan influence all over India, a large section of those aboriginals, who generally lived in the inaccessible forest and mountain areas, managed to maintain their freedom and individuality, used to worship female deities, as they do in the modern period, with the offerings of country liquor, meat of various kinds of animals, and birds, and other things. It is probable that the aboriginal tribal folk used to worship the female deities mainly for the procuring of staple food and protection from the hands of the ferocious beasts, and in this connection, they ever sacrifice human beings, drank wine, indulged in mystic revel and practised sexual promiscuity. These facts have also been mentioned by the Mahabharata, Devī Purana, Kālikā Purana, Harivamsa, Märkandeya Purana.

The authors of the Puranas hold, no doubt, much broader views than the orthodox followers of the Vedic religion, and ultimately tried to introduce the non-Aryan thinkings into the Aryan world by way of making a compromise between the two antagonistic ideas.
Here we have dealt with a few Puranas and Upa-Puranas, Ramayana and Mahabharata, in which the Mother Goddess or the Sakti deities played an important part, and ultimately helped to form the basis of the Hindu-Brahminical Sākta pantheon in this vast sub-continent:

(1) The Markandeya Purana is esteemed as one of the oldest among the Puranic scriptures. It is believed that this scripture took the present form in the Gupta era.

There are thirteen chapters marked as Durga Saptasati Caṇḍī and Devi Māhātmya in this Purana. These thirteen chapters bear a glorious tradition in the religious concept keeping the female deity in its centre. The text bears, no doubt, soul-stirring value, in which the Supreme Being has been called upon solemnly and glorified under the name 'Devi*. The portion known as Devi-Māhātmya is an elaboration of the concept of Devi of the Vedic doctrine, of an all-powerful, almighty Goddess. The Saptasati speaks of the goddess Caṇḍī, who, in turn, represents a consolidated idea of the various aspects of the divine power and truth.

The Supreme Being or the Mother Goddess has been identified as Pārbaṭī, Umā, Durgā, Caṇḍī, Chandikā, Kālī, Kalikā, Kaushikī, Vishnumāyā, Mahisāsura-Mardini, etc.

The most striking feature of the said Mother Goddess is that She is associated with the mountain Himalaya or such other mountains
like Kailash, Vindhya, Mandara under the name Parbatī, Kaushikī, Vindhyabāsinī, etc. and is depicted as a war goddess under the name Durgā, Caṇḍī, Caṇḍikā, incarnating herself on earth by using various devices at the different crucial situations in order to destroy the demons, that is, the opponents, who threaten the heavenly beings. Not only in the Markandeya Purana, but also in many other Puranas, the Devī is primarily the war-goddess, who, confers victory and success on her worshippers in the war-field, and she herself actually take part in the war, whenever the world is oppressed by the demons (Bhattacharya : 1971 : 63).

In the Markandya Purana we find that "when the demons Sumbha and Nisumbha became too powerful, the Devī being born as the offspring of Yasoda and dwelling in the Vindhyas, declared war against the demons and ultimately destroyed them both. By killing the demon Mahisha, She came to be called 'Mahisasuramardini' (Saptasati - 3.42-43):

It is stated in the Durgā Sáptaśatī that the Goddess is being worshipped by the gods for the welfare of the world -"When remembered in difficulties, You remove tear in all beings; When remembered in safety, You give a mind conducive to doing good. You remove the fear of poverty. Except You, none is there with a heart ever-flowing with compassion to do good to all" (Saptasati: IV:17).

In the Devī Māhātmaya it is found that Durgā is the foundation of the world and She exists in all creatures as the power
(sakti), consciousness (chetana), hunger (kshuda), thirst (trisna), sleep, nourishment, beauty, livelihood, intellect, memory, reverence, fortune, error and what not. She is the Supreme Goddess, the presiding deity of the sense-organs. She is good fortune of righteous persons and adversity of vicious persons, consciousness of the pure in heart, pious persons' faith in God. She is the highest knowledge, that is, Paramāvidyā, and She is the saviour of Her devotees from distress and She gives them worldly prosperity and enjoyment, heavenly happiness and She releases from bondage, and She is the Supreme Goddess.

Though She has been described as benevolent and beneficent in nature but Her fierceness as a victorious war-goddess is dominant in most of the episodes.

It is the collective force and power of the gods that figured as Durgā, Kālī, Canḍī, who helped to destroy the Asuras, in the Puranic texts. In the Purana, the Devī has been treated as the epitome of the three primordial gunas (qualities), namely, Sattva, Raja, Tama; She is the Prakriti, the primal root-evolvent; She is the creative energy, She is the omnipresent and omnipotent creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe; She gives wealth and happiness, Dharma and Moksha (Saptaśatī : XI.11).

It is clear that the tradition of the fierceful war-goddess dressed with the deadliest weapons supported with sensational war-cries is certainly derived from a different tradition from that of
benign and benevolent form, as we generally find out in female deities like Pārbatī, Umā, etc.

(2) The Devī Purana has been treated as one of the most important and the oldest Upa-Purana dealing mainly with the various heroic deeds and worship of Devī, known as Vindhyavāsinī (Hazra : 1963 : 36). This text dealt with the important information about the real form and nature of the deity, about the religious contemplation (Yoga) and the method of its practice, about the iconography of the Sākta deities along with the Sākta vows and worship.

In this text, the Devī appears mainly as a war-goddess and She is named as 'Cāmundā' in which form She had saved the life of Vishnu from the rage of the Kālāgni Rudra. Cāmundā is said to be the powerful Šakti, who creates, protects and destroys the life on the universe. She is the prime force belonging to Siva, Vishnu and other gods.

The deity is adored with 108 names out of which 45 names are common with other goddesses but the rest are her appilations which reveal Her nature and heroic deeds.

The Devī Purana is the text par excellence of Brahminical Šāktaism.

(3) The Kālikā Purana is held as one of the most important works on the worship of the Šākta deities (Hazra : 1963 : 195). This
Purana has been originated out of the recitation done by the sage Markandeya on the request of the sage Kamatha and others. This text mainly deals with the exploits and worship of Kālī, who is originally the 'Yoganidrā' and 'Māyā' of Lord Visnu, and later on she has been treated as the wife of Śiva as dark complexioned Satī or Kālī, for the welfare of the universe.

The deity in this Purana is said to have taken the form of Kālikā mounted on a lion, having dark complexion, four hands, beautiful and charming face with red eyes, having a sword and a blue lotus in the two of her left hands and assuring boon (varada) and safety (abhaya) in her other two hands.

The presiding deity of the Kālikā Purana is 'Mahāmayā'. She is also known as Ambikā, Mahisāsuramardini, Durgā, Kāmēsvāri, Bhadra Kāli, Chāṇḍikā, Chāmunda, Tārā, Dikkarvāsinī, Tikshana Kāntā (Dreadfully attractive), Lalita Kāntā (Gracefully attractive), Ekjatā, Urga-Tārā, etc.

Mangala Caṇḍī is the popular name of the deity Lalita Kāntā, alias, Mahāmāyā. By the name of Mangala Caṇḍī, the deity is being worshipped even to-day in some parts of Eastern India specially in Assam and Bengal delta. The colour of her body is yellow, she sits on a red lotus and is adorned with bright crown on her head and is attired in red coloured cloth. She has two arms in varada and abhaya poses and she is always in smiling mood and her charming body is
endowed with fresh youth. Mangala Candra is to be worshipped upon either on a picture, an image or a pot (Kalika P.-80.61-64).

There are many stories in the Kālikā Purana from which the wide prevalence of the Sakti Cult can easily be traced. Further, it is for the first time we find the story about the origin or the creation of the Sakti Pithas in India. This text represents the realistic background of the Sakti Cult in a very elaborate form and order.

(4) The Devī Bhāgvata Purana deals with the various forms and activities of the 'Devī'. The Devī Bhāgvata Purana mentions the word 'Sakti' in order to denote the goddess called as Devī, who, in turn, is known as the Highest Primal Power. Here Sakti is beginningless Brahmavidyā and Sarvachaitanya-rupā, that is, she happens to be the manifestation of all consciousness.

The Presiding Deity of the Devī Bhāgvata Purana is 'Śri Bhubaneswarī'. The deity is sitted on a cot, wearing a red garment and a garland of red flowers. Her eyes are dark-red, her face is full of sweet smile and she holds in her four hands a noose, a goad and signs of giving boons and guarantee of safety or protection for her devotees. The Devī is the great Mahāmāyā - the highest Prakriti, the great lady of the world, the mother of the universe. She is also known as Bhagavatī, Ambicā, Kātyayanī, Śivanī.
(5) In the Brahmavaivarta Purana it is mentioned that Sakti has been manifested in different forms, namely, Sarasvati, Durga, Lakshmi and so on. The cult deity of this Purana happens to be Radha.

(6) Brhad-dharma Purana is very much important for the careful study of the social and religious condition prevailing in Bengal delta at a certain period.

In the Purva Khanda of this text (Ch.XIV), there are many names of the holy mountains, rivers and places.

In the Madhya Khanda of the said scripture, there is a detailed description of the Devi as follows:

Her colour is dark-blue like the new cloud; She wears a tiger-skin which is tied round her waist with the help of a snake; She has three eyes and four hands. In Her hands She holds a sceptre (Khadga), a noose (Pasa), and a skull.

As Mangala Candikā, She is said to have granted a boon to Kalketu by assuming the form of a 'Godhika' (Iguana) and to have saved, by sitting on a lotus and devouring and vomiting out elephants, a merchant and his son Dhanapati and Srimanta by name, respectively, from the rage of the King, Śrī Sālavāhana of Simhala.
The above-mentioned verse refers to the stories of Kalketu and Srimanta Saudagar found in the Chaṇḍī-Mangala Kavyas of Bengal composed during the mediaeval period.

Further, we find a reference of the origin of the stories of Kalketu and Srimanta Saudagar in the Chaṇḍikā-Mangala Kavya composed by Lala Jayanarayan, a Bengali poet of the 18th Century, A.D. Extract of Lala Jayanarayana's Chaṇḍikā-Mangala Kavya is as follows:

"Brhad-Dharma Puraner Uttar Khandete,
Likha Mahāmāyā-prati Visnur Stabete.
Avatirna hayiya tumi yasodar garbhe te,
Kaṃsa cchali Vindhyavasi have nija garbe.
Aerup staba acche bistar kathan,
Tate ek sloka aerupete likhan.
Bharat bhumete candilila prakashia,
Kalketu Uddharibe godhika hayiya.
Mangal Chaṇḍikā nam kariya prakash,
Sambarne karibar kariben gras.
Banik sutake feli ghor sankatete,
Uddhar karibe nṛipa-Salavahan hate."
(7) The Bhavisya Purana is believed to be the last of the Puranas and mostly deals with the vows performed for the propitiation of the Supreme Being, that is, Devi. In this text we find different names of Devi, viz: Lalitā, Bhavani, Gauri, Uma, Satī, Mangalā, Kamata and Mahālakṣmī.

This text reflects the cult of the Śakti deities, which was already in an advanced stage in the then society. The womanfolk considered the Devi as one of the main objects of worship and devotion (23.12-13).

The icon of the Devi is described as having a very beautiful form, possessing four hands, sitting in meditation, wearing the skin of a deer, having matted hair and decorated with various sorts of ornaments (Uttar Parva, 25.31-32; 41.1-18).

The Śaṅkta Puranas agree that the Devi, that is the Cult Deity originated out of the Tejas (lustres) of all the gods. This theory, with some variations, is found for the first time in the Saptasati of the Markandeya Purana and then followed by the rest of the Puranas.

Though we find ample evidences of the worship of the female deities in the various works of the Puranic scriptures, but it is only in the Upa-Puranas we find major works dedicated to the Cult of the Śakti. Sometimes the Upa-Puranas refer different forms of Śakti deities and sometimes mention one or other of her principal forms, namely, Caṇḍi, Durgā, Kālī, etc.
At the time of going through the Puranic texts, we have marked that like the history of human civilization there is also a constant "struggle for existence and survival of the fittest" even among the gods and goddesses, the dwellers of heaven. And in this way, many prominent Earth and Corn Mothers, which were originated out of a particular socio-economic and historical background, have to lose their separate identity in another precarious condition and ultimately merged into the other powerful divinities. We find that famous puranic Corn Mother Sākambhari was absorbed by the Goddess Caṇḍī (alias Durga). Further, the rituals connected with the worship of Durga and Nabapatrika are closely connected with the goddess of vegetation and fertility on the one hand, but on the other hand She has been treated as the destroyer of demons and enemies; hence we may ascertain that Durgā - alias Caṇḍī was originally connected with the goddess of vegetation and fertility under the name of Sākambhari, but she was transformed into the goddess of war in the form of Caṇḍī and Durga in later period. This fact bears resemblance with that of Phrygian - Cybele. Further, the primitive form of Caṇḍī alias Durga is the result of syncretism of a mountain goddess worshipped by the dwellers of the Himalayas and Vindhyas, as a female war goddess. As her votaries advanced in the civilization the primitive form of the female war-goddess was transformed into the personification of the all-destroying time (Kālī), the vegetation spirit into the primordial energy (Ādyā-Śakti) and saviourness from Saśsāra (cycle of rebirths) and gradually
brought into the line with the Brahminic mythology and philosophy (Chanda: 1916: 148).

(8) The *Ramayana* does not contain any clear and specific evidence of any independent cult of Mother Goddess in its early and late sections (Banerjea: 1966: 118). But it is also true that the worship of the Mother Goddess was not unknown to the people of that period as we find literary evidences from *Ramayana*.

In the *Ramayana* we find the reference of the Mother Goddess under the name 'Devi' (I.36.6, 10.26; VII.13.22-35, 87,93), who is considered as the wife of Śiva. Umā, Pārvatī and Girijā were her very popular synonyms. In begin form the Devī is very considerate, benevolent and graceful to her devotees. Though there is an evidence about the worship of Śiva and Sakti in this text, but the same cannot be taken as an independent cult.

Besides the remarkable position of Devī, the consort of Śiva, there are other evidences in the *Ramayana* from which the pre- valency of the worship of the Mother Goddess can be proved. As for example, -

(a) In the Fifth Book of the Text there is a goddess named Surasa, who has been accepted as the Mother of Nagas. She is depicted as living in the midst of the ocean as well as on the top of the Mainaka hill (V.58.21-33), and also known as Kāmarupini.
(b) There is another goddess named Siṃhikā, who was seen by Hanumana in the midst of the ocean and she used to kill and devour everything who tried to cross over her (V.I.185-88; 58.35-45).

(c) It is very interesting to note that the Lanka, the capital city of Ravana's kingdom was protected by a demon goddess, who was nothing but a form of Goddess Sakti (V.58.48-59; 3.21-30).

(d) Rama's wife Sita, the well-known female character of the Ramayana, has been described as Kala Ratri, who was nothing but a terrible form of Sakti. Her destructive force was put forward to the term "Sarva Lanka Vinasinim" (V.51.34-35).

(e) The episode of Rama's worshipping the Goddess Durga alias Gaṇḍī for the help in his efforts to destroy the powerful enemy Ravana was narrated in some late Puranas, namely, Devībhāgavata and Kālikā, and in the Bengali Ramayana of Kavi Kṛttivasa can uphold the tradition and the popularity of worship of the Sakti deities, though the said episode does not occur in the Ramayana by Valmiki.

(9) There are many names and clear traces of the worship of the female deities quoted in the epic Mahabharata (Karmakar : 1969 : 87). Two complete hymns addressed to the female deity Durga, can be found
in the Text (IV.6; VI.23). According to the Mahabharata, Durga rescues the people from distress and difficulties. She is worshipped by gods for the protection of the Three Worlds.

The Durga-Stotras recited by Yudhisthira occur in the Virata Parva of the epic Mahabharata (IV.6) stated that the Mother Goddess is the counterpart of Lord Krishna. She is praised as Kumārī, that is, maiden and She holds in her hands the noose, the bow and arrow, discuss and many other weapons. She is said to have four faces. She is addressed as Kāli, Mahākāli, Vindhyābāsinī as well as the slayer of buffalo demon (i.e. Mahisha). Sometimes She is called Durga as She saves her devotees from different types of dangers and misfortunes.

The other Durga-Stotra is in the Bhīmasvarva (VI.23), uttered by Arjuna on the advice of Krishna. In these passages, Arjuna invoked the Mother Goddess as the Siddha-senani (leader of the Siddhas), the Kumārī, the dweller of Mandara, Canḍī, Kapallī, Śhākambara, Kātyāyani, Kirati, Kālī, Bhadra-Kālī and so on, who adorned with various kinds of jewels, fitted with different types of weapons, swords and shields is always delightful in Mahisa's blood and She is the destroyer of the demon Kaitabha. She always bears peacock's tail as her banner.

Perhaps a vivid and graphic picture of the Devī associated with the aboriginal non-Aryan tribal folk can, however, be best found in the hymn of the Āryā-stava (Harivamsa, II.3.6-8) which is as follows:
"O Mahadevi, your dwelling is on the frightful mountain-peaks, in caves, rivers, forests and also in the wilderness. Crowded by cocks, goats, sheep, lions and tigers, and accompanied by the dingling of bell, you are well worshipped by Savaras, Barbaras and Pulindas.

O You having peacock-tail as a mark, so renowned as Vindhyavasini, walk among all people in all places".

This eulogy is very much significant as because it mentions the names of the non-Aryan aboriginals as the worshippers of the Goddess Mahadevi and also for the fact that the Goddess Vindhyavasini had Her access to and popularity in all places. In the Kubjikatantra, the Vindhyan region is referred to as one of the Siddhapishas. Hence, this region is undoubtedly associated with the celebrated non-Aryan deity Vindhyavasini. In the Mahabharata, the Vindhyan region is said to have been the permanent abode of the Mother Goddess. In the Vamana Purana and Devi Purana, Vindhyavasini is identified with Kausikī, Kātyāyanī and Nanda. In the Matsya Purana, Kālī in Kalanjar mountain, Caṇḍikā in Makarandaka and Vindhyavasini in the Vindhya mountain are mentioned as the different manifestations of the Devī. The Devī, on the other hand, is very much fond of spirituous liquor and flesh. The association of Devī with the tribal folk, namely, Sabaras, Barbaras, Pulindas, Nisadas
and so forth, whose references have been made in the religious scriptures like Aitareya Brahmana, Padma Purana, Vajasanee Samhita, Varaha Purana, Brihat-Samhita and Markandeya Purana, etc. The worship of Devi was accompanied with sacrifices of animals and occasionally also human beings (Bhattacharya : 1967 : 56-58; Gohain: 1977 : 83-88; Banerjea : 1966 : 119-120 ; Bhattacharyya : 1971 : 116-117).

These hymns, however, throw a flood of light on the constituents and position of the prevalence of the Mother Goddess cult associated with sublime love and fear, in the period of the Mahabharata.

(10) As for other literary works which contain certain references to the worship of the Mother Goddesses in some of Her many forms, mention may be made of the classical literatures in Sanskrit, such as, Vasavadatta of Subandhu (end of the 6th or beginning of the 7th Century A.D.) and Kadambari, Harsha-Charita both composed by Banabhatta (7th Century A.D. approximately), Malati Madhava, a famous drama written by Bhababhuti (probably belonging to the 8th Century A.D.), and Gaudavaha, - a work in Prakrit language by the poet Vakpatiraja (8th Century A.D.), in which various forms of the mother goddesses seem to be indigenous in origin and to have their worshippers mainly among the lower strata of the then Indian society, and they were to be propitiated with animal sacrifices, with wine, meat and blood. The Gaudavaho and Kadambari record the worship of the
Mother Goddess by the non-Aryan aboriginal folk, namely, Sabaras.

The non-Aryan aspect of Devī is further emphasized by different names like Aparnā (without leaf-cloth), Nagna-Sabarī (the naked Sabara woman), Kālī (dark-skinned). The deities bearing such names like Aparnā, Kālī, Parna-Sabarī, Nagna-Sabarī, etc., may have been originally propitiated respectively by the Mongoloid Xanthoderms of the Himalayas, the naked aboriginals like Nagna-Sabaras and the dark-complexioned Proto-Australoids, and it was due the gradual absorption of non-Aryan ideas and blood by the Aryans that the Mother Goddess became more and more important in the Socio-religious life of the composite people of the post-Vedic India (Sircar : 1967 : 8; Sircar : 1971 : 103-4).

(11) The Nārāyana Upanishad (belonging to the Taittiriya Aryyayaka - 10.1) a hymn is placed in the form of a Gāyatrī addressed to the Divine Energy. The deity in question in this part has been called as "Kanyakumarī" (i.e., young virgin girl) and "Durgī" (i.e. stronghold protector of citadel).

It is of great interest to note in this connection the remarks of the author of 'Periplus of the Erythraean Sea' (Circa 60-80 A.D.) about the prevalency of the propitiation of the deity 'Kanyakumarī' in the extreme southern part of India: "There is another place called Comari and a harbour, hither come those men who wish to consecrate themselves for the rest of their lives, and
bath and dwell in celibacy and women also do the same; for it is told that a goddess once dwelt here and bathed" (Section 58).

Kanyākumari illustrates the young virgin-daughter aspect of the goddess associated with the southernmost part of India from the very earliest period; She has also been identified with the Śakti of Lord Śiva in the Taittiriya Āranyaka (TA-10.1). Further, we find in the first stanza of the Tenth Book of the Taittiriya Āryanaka, several synonyms of the deity which have an importance in the development of the worship of the 'Śakta' goddess like Caṇḍī. This verse contains the Durgā-Śaṁskāra which reads as follows:

"Kātyāyanāya (Kātyāyanyaī) vidmahe
Kanyā-Kumāriṃ dhiṃahi tan no Durgih prachodayat".

— We think on Katyayana (Katyayani ?) and meditate on Kanyakumari; May Durgi advance us.

According to Sayanacharya, the famous commentator belonging to the 14th Century A.D., that the names Durgi and Durga are identical and the names par excellence in connection with the adoration of Śaṁskāra goddesses.

In the second stanza of the said Taittiriya Āryanaka an identical and remarkable description about the Śaṁskāra goddess Durgā is narrated (TA-10.2).
Sakti deities also hold good influence on the Vaishnavites. There is mention of a form of the deity as Bhadrakāli in Bhāgavata. In the same text Bhadrakāli is held as the same as Kātyāyanī, the patron deity of Brajamandala, worshipped by the Gopinis for gaining desirable husbands. It is here where She is mentioned as Nārāyanī, probably for the first time where—after the celebrated text Chandī behold all female principles as Vaishnavi Sakti and Nārāyanī (Ganguli : 1983 : 58; Cf. Raychoudhuri : 1967 : 40-44).

It may be stated now that, roughly between the beginning of the Christian era and the 16th Century A.D., many indigenous, aboriginal and local female deities got a lift from the social sub-strata to find a place of honour and dignity into the fold of Sanskritized Hindu-Brahminical pantheon. By a process of generalization, both in the fields of religion and philosophy, these upgraded female deities were fused together and lastly treated as aspects of the Universal Mother Goddess or the Great Mother Goddess (Ādyā Śakti). Hence, the concept of the mother goddesses in the subsequent periods from Puranic age seems to be a consolidation of various types of mother goddesses. This consolidation became fruitful by the Saktta philosophy introduced and flourished in the post-Epic and post-Puranic periods (Sen : 1372 B.S. : 180; Dasgupta : EMWI, 1963; Sircar : 1971 : 103).

From the stage-wise discussions with the help of concrete illustrations collected from the Vedic, Epic and Puranic sources as
well as from the indigenous sources of Pre-Vedic life it is clear that the adoration of the female deities has passed through many ups and downs along the paths of history. Having taken its origin in the pre-historic phase of culture the female deities experienced variegated modes of behaviour and propitiation patterns and showed their multifarious forms in the perspective of the very nature of the society and its people. This chapter depicts a long process of continuity and change of the female deities which are highly remarkable and useful in understanding the close relation between the patterns of social forces and the flourishing and suppressible condition of the female deities.