An iconographic study of the image of the female divinities, made of stone or metal, found from different regions of Bengal have no scope of doubt that by the 12th century A.D. the Cult of mother-goddess had received an universal recognition among all religious sects and cults, Brahmanical and heterodox. In Brahmanical religion, the later Vedic texts, Epics and the early Puranas propagated the idea of 'Sakti' denoting the female energy of the male divinities. The significance of the concept of "Sakti" is explained in the Devimahatmya section of the Markandeya Purana, which describes the chief goddess Candi or Candika as the personified form of the accumulated energies of at least thirty gods. The goddess who owes her origin from the male-deities, ultimately emerges as the saviour of those gods themselves and thus establishes her supremacy above all. The Devimahatmya draws an outline of the image of the great goddess and the sculptors intending to give plastic form of the goddess more or less followed the Puranic description. In her various manifestations, her iconographic features in respect of placid or benevolent and terrible forms varied, so for as her gestures, posture and attributes
are concerned.

Side by side with the supreme mother goddess, the "Saktis" or female-consorts of different male-divinities were also recognised. For instance, Brahma, Visnu, Surya, Indra, Varuna, Mitra, Candra, Kuvera and Agni have their respective female consorts. They are generally represented as associated with their male counterparts, although some of them like Laksmi, Sarasvati, Vasundhara, Sri, Durga, Gauri and Parvati are found in some cases, represented independently. Even some folk-goddesses like Manasa, and Sasthi and the river goddesses like Ganga and Yamuna were incorporated in the Brahmanical pantheon.

Again, the concept of "Sakti" came to be recognised by the mystic Buddhist sect belonging to the Vajrayana faith. The five Dhyani Buddhas emanated from the AdiBuddha and Adi-Prajna (universal father and universal mother corresponding to Purusa and Prakriti of the Samkhya, and Siva and Sakti of the Tantras). There are Aksobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha and Amoghasiddhi having their respective 'Saktis' or female consorts. Vairocana is associated with white Tara, Usnisavijaya, JanguliTara and Marici. Nila Tara or Ekajata is the female consort of Aksobhya. Yellow Tara, Vasudhara, Vajratara are associated with Ratnasambhava. Rakta Tara or kurukulla, Sitatapatra, and Bhrkuti are the Saktis of Amitabha. Green Tara and Parnasabari represent the female consorts of Amoghasiddhi. The chief goddess of the Mahayanists is Tara who has numerous manifestations.
comparable to those of Puranic goddess Durga. Prajnaparamita and Sarasvati enjoy some individuality in the Mahayana pantheon.

The iconography of Buddhist gods and goddesses derived, to a great extent, their essential features from Brahmanical divinities. For example, Avalokitesvara is derived from Visnu, Indra and even Siva, Manjusri from Sarasvati, Marici from Surya, and Vasudhara from Laxmi. Again, many Brahmanical divinities were incorporated in the Vajrayana pantheon. Different manifestations of the goddess Tara such as Mahamayavijayavahini, Parnasabari, Marici and Vasudhara seem to have been derived from the Puranic concepts inherent in the female-divinities. Jainism also adopted the Cult of Mother-goddess. The Tirthankaras who have been free from all worldly bondages, were also associated with their respective "Saktis", called Sasanadevis, who known as Yaksnis. Thus, Saktism was a common heritage of both Brahmanical and non-Brahmanical religious sects. The universal recognition of Sakti or Mother-goddess having different names and forms appears to be an unique characteristic of the religious life in Bengal. In spite of the diversity of sects and cults, the Cult of mother-goddess has ushered in an unity in diversity. As it is stated in the Padmavatistotra:

Tara tvam sugatagame bhaqavati gauritii saivagame/vaira kaulikasasane, jinamate padmayati visruta / Gayatri srutisalini Prakritiirityuktasi / Samkhya game / Matarbhari 4 Kim prabhutabhanitairvyaptam samastam tvaya

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CLASSIFICATION OF THE FEMALE-DIVINITIES

The classification of the female divinities is a necessity, as the textual reference and archaeological discoveries indicate their varied forms and large number even within a particular sect.

GODDESSES OF THE PURANIC PANTHEON

The Brahmanical female-divinities gained popularity in two forms: (1) in association with the popular gods like Visnu and Siva, and (2) in their independent forms, without association with male-divinities. Those associated with Visnu as Sakti, female consorts, are known as Vaisnavite goddesses and those conceived of as Saktis of Siva belong to Saivite group. As Surya and Ganapati held a comparatively insignificant position, their female counterparts had a quite unimportant status. The female-energy of Ganapati is almost unknown in Bengal. Although the Sarada tilaka-Tantra gives a few dhyanas of Ganesa with his Sakti, none of these dhyanas exactly corresponds to the images generally found in Bengal. Surya is found associated with his two or three wives in some iconic representations. The independent neutral aspects of the goddess might be treated as belonging to the Sakta group. In this respect we may consider the terracotta matrika images as predecessors of the Sakta deities. The independent forms of Sakti having terrible or fierce aspect who gained more prominence in Bengal are Mahisasuramardini, Durga, Candi, Camunda and Sarvani, while the placid forms of
the goddess as Gauri, Parvati and Candi are represented separately or in association with Siva. The Tantric goddesses like Carcika, Camunda, Rudracarcika, Biddha-Yogesvari, Dantura, Rudracamunda, Sapta-matrikas, Mahalakshmi, Aparajita, Sarvani, Kali etc. appear to be Sakta divinities proper. The goddesses associated with Visnu are Lakshmi, Sarasvati and sometime Vasundhara or Prthivi or Mahi (the earth goddess). Lakshmi and Sarasvati are comparatively much popular in their independent aspects as goddesses of prosperity and learning respectively. Some images of Visnu are found associated with Lakshmi and some with both Lakshmi and Sarasvati. Again, Lakshmi and Vasundhara are found standing on both sides of Visnu. Sometimes the river goddess Ganga is found with Visnu but in Bengal epigraphs Ganga has been described as emerging from the matted hair of Siva. To be more precise, except Lakshmi, Sarasvati, Sri [in some Puranas they have been referred to as daughters of Siva-Durga and thus are included in the Saivite group] and Vasundhara most of the other associated or independent female-divinities are recognised as connected with Siva and in every Sakta Pitha of Bengal Siva stays as "Bhairava" or male – consort of the "Devi".

**MAHAYANA BUDDHIST GODDESSES:**

In Bengal Mahayana Buddhism developed as an unique form of mystic Buddhism Known as Vajrayana –Tantrayana. The growth of this peculiar system may be traced to the time of the composition of the Guhyasamajatantra, – the earliest text of Tantric Buddhism, assigned to the 3rd century.
A.D. The system however, had its full-fledged development during the Pala period, and later found shelter in Nepal. Large number of Buddhist images and Buddhist manuscripts that Nepal has yielded, so far might be taken into account as evidence of expansion of Tantric Buddhism from Eastern India. The paintings of Mahayana deities found in illustrated manuscripts of the Nepalese tradition are of much value in this regard.

The images of Mahayana divinities, discovered in Bengal, usually follow the descriptions as given in the Sadhanamala (12th century A.D.) and Nisphannayoganali (11th/12th Century A.D.). In some cases, however, the dhyanas available from these two sources do not correspond to the iconographic representation of some divinities. Such variation might have occurred due to local or regional characteristics. Our attention is drawn, in this connection, to the examples of Candradvipe Bhagavati Tara (a special form of goddess Tara prevalent in Candradvipa i.e. Backarganj district), Patikere vumkara Cunda (Cunda of Pattikera Tipperah), and Uddiyana Marici (Marici of Uddiyana, identified with the village Vajroyogini in Dacca).

Of the numerous goddesses in the Mahayana Buddhist pantheon, Tara stand out as the most prominent one. Many female divinities are considered as various forms or aspects of Tara. Later, she was included in the list of Dasamahavidyas (i.e ten incarnations of Sakti). There is keen controversy amongst the scholars regarding the origin
of the goddess. Whatever might have been the place of her origin, the popularity of goddess Tara in Bengal since an early period remains beyond dispute. It is learnt from the Nesari Plate of Govinda that the Rastrakuta king defeated and snatched away an image of Bhagavati Tara from Dharma (Dharmapala), the king of Vangala. Tara appearing on Dharmapala’s banner was most probably a dynastic emblem of the Palas. The Ramacarita, composed during the reign of Ramapala, records (iii.7) that goddess Tara was worshipped in the Jagaddala Mahavihara along with her consort Avalokitesvvara. A Javanese epigraph written in North Indian script records the news of construction of a temple (Tarabhavana) by the preceptor of the Sailendra family in A.D. 778. An inscription found at Nalanda of about the first half of the 12th century A.D. makes reference to the construction of a temple of Tarini (goddess Tara) at Somapura (i.e Paharpur, district Rajshahi). Archaeological finding seem to suggest that the Buddhist goddess Tara gained recognition in a vast area that includes Indonesia, Tibet, China, Japan, Eastern, Western and Southern India and Ceylon.

Among the Mahayana female deities found in Bengal, mention may be made of Tara (or varieties types), Marici, Prajnaparamita, Parnasabari, Cunda and Hariti. In iconographic representation of those goddesses, a miniature form of the parent Dhyani Buddha is found engraved on the tiara over their head, which furnishes a key to proper identification. As already pointed out above, Mahayana
goddesses are associated with their respective Dhyani Buddhas 
emanated from Adi Buddha.

**JAINA GODDESS**: Jainism that preceded Buddhism in Bengal 
suffered decline due to wide popularity of Puranic Brahmanism and Mahayana Buddhism giving stress on devotion to personal gods and goddesses. Analysing the current trend and psychology of the common people, the Jainas seem to have adjusted with the contemporary religious scenario by an adaptation of bhakti and introduction of the worship of some 
divinities. The different Jaina female-deities are 
recognised by their respective mounts, lanchhanas or special 
cognisances like kalpavrksa, mango-leafs and serpent-hood. 
The chief female-divinity, Ambika may be considered as Jaina 
counterpart of Puranic Durga. Apart from Ambika, the Basana-
devi (sakti) of the Tirthankra (22nd) Neminatha, the Jainas 
worshipped some semi-divine beings known as Yaksinis and 
Mahavidyas. However, Jaina images, especially those of female 
divinities are found in the districts of West Bengal 
adjacent to the Chotanagpur plateau.

**ICONOGRAPHY OF THE FEMALE-DIVINITIES OF BENGAL**

A Terracottas: The stone sculpture in Bengal was preceded by 
terracotta art. Terracotta figures and figurines, especially 
those of mother goddesses, found in Bengal are traced to 
remote antiquity. The divinity represented by the proto-
historic terracotta art represented the goddess of 
procreation. The early specimens of terracotta with artistic
design can hardly be dated long before the Maurya-Sunga period. But very recently two terracotta seals containing Kharosthi and Brahmi inscriptions have attracted our attention and require mention in this connection.

(1) The first found from Hadipur, North 24-Parganas, contains a Chiton-wearing female figure standing on an altar, bedecked with crown on her head and earrings. The right hand of the female divinity holds ears of corn (paddy) and the left rests on thigh. A devotee (upasaka) is standing on her right side and the Brahmi inscription, incised on her left side, is read as Dhanaghaji Jitu. The Sanskritized form of this inscription might be Dhanvaji(Devi)jaijayati i.e. "Devi Dhanvajavi Pujya". The image on the seal, assigned to the 3rd century A.D., might be regarded as the earliest specimen of Laksmi.

(2) The second, found from the ancient site of Candraketugarh, North 24-Parganas and assigned to circa 3rd century A.D., is found with a carved image of a female divinity (standing) resting her right hand in the waist, and her left hand holding a stick sprouted from a waterpot, while two lotuses are slanting from both sides of the stick. The following inscription is found: tasanadhiprana chunagasi jaji jirambi. The Sanskritized form of it would probably be tusanadhirnaprana chudaka yaksi Jirambii.e., "the thirsty yaksi jirambi is coming near the well (kupa) to quench her thirst".

(3) The third terracotta seal found from the same site assigned to circa 5th century A.D., shows on its obverse a carved image of a standing goddess and an inscription
written in Brahmi-Odana sana udasi prayuktam, which means 'water for cooking rice'. B.N. Mukhopadhyay, who has deciphered the seal, thinks that the 'rice' here would mean the 'rice of sacrifice' (yajnanna or caru). On the reverse of the seal are carved pot (kalasa), three paddy-straws and some scripturally auspicious signs.

A number of terracotta images of mother-goddess assigned to the Maurya-Sunga period have been collected from different culture-centres of Bengal. One of the early specimens of the goddess of good fortune was found from Bangarh. She stands on a fully blossomed lotus in a stiff samapada posture. Similar figures have been recovered from Candraketugarh, Haroa, Tamluk and other sites of ancient Bengal. One interesting fragmentary plaque from Haroa of the Sunga period visualises her lower part only on a full-blown lotus. Another plaque from Candraketugarh stylistically assignable to the first-second century B.C., furnishes a complete form of the goddess who stands on a lotus, holding full-bloomed lotuses in her hands. The obvious association of all the figurines with lotus establishes their identity as Sri-Laksmi. One terracotta plaque of an early age depicts the scene of 'the churning of the ocean of milk by the gods and the demons', and consequent emanation of goddess Laksmi. The goddess is found seated on a lotus and fashioned according to the Sunga style.

The site of Candraketugarh yields a number of Sunga-kusana terracotta figurines. One female divinity is seen
standing on a heap of paddy-stalks before the devotees. Another of this category is resting her feet on a stupa-like structure with punch-marked coins rolling on its surface. One seemingly visualises the goddess as pouring coins from a bag.

Two terracotta specimens found from Tamluk (ancient Tamralipti) appear to be of considerable interest in connection with the cult of Sri. One of these depicts a vase overflowing with punch-marked coins. The second specimen from Tamluk, now in the Asutosh Museum, illustrates abhisäka (lustration) of Laksmi.

The female divinities on terracotta seals, being associated with paddy-stalk, corn, lotus, pot and coins, and representation of the emergence of Laksmi by churning of the ocean on a particular seal seem to suggest that at the early stage, the goddess of corn and good fortune enjoyed far more popularity than ‘Sakti’, the war-goddess. Later with the development of Eastern Indian Mediaeval School of sculpture from the seventh century A.D., the image of Laksmi can hardly be traced among the stone and metal sculpture. Goddess Laksmi with her usual attributes may be traced only on Gupta and post Gupta coins (upto the time of Sasanka). On the basis of archaeological evidences, it may be said that the Pala-Sena period (8th to 12th century A.D.) witnessed some of her sculptural representations in Bengal. The goddess is often referred to in the epigraphic records of Bengal.

B. STONE AND METAL IMAGES:

The images of the female divinities recovered from Bengal
may be studied after classifying them under three heads, namely, (i) Brahmanical, (ii) Buddhist and (iii) Jaina. Again the images of Brahmanical and Puranic goddesses, so far found in Bengal, may be studied under the following heads : a) Major, b) Minor. The first category includes those surrounding whom there evolved a particular cult or sect, while those who failed to form a separate cult for themselves belonged to the second category. The Vaisnavite, Saivite and the Sakta female divinities may be brought under the first category. The female-divinities associated with minor gods like Surya and Ganapati were relegated to the minor position, as it has been pointed out above. Besides, the deities like Manasa, Sasthi, Sitala, Matrikas, and river-goddess Ganga, whose folk base is beyond doubt, were relegated to a secondary position from elitist point of view.

a) IMAGES OF MAJOR GODDESSES :-

The goddesses associated with Visnu, in different literary texts as well as in some sculptural representations are Laksmi and Sarasvati. We find Laksmi in Bengal sculptures, though few in number, exhibiting herself in twofold aspects, viz. Gaja-Laksmi and Laksmi-Narayana. Two Gajalaksmi images belong to 10th and 11th century A.D. respectively. The goddesses are represented as being bathed by two elephants with upturned pitchers. In the Candimangala kavya, written in mediaeval Bengali, goddess Candi (named Kamale-Kamini) has been portrayed in association with elephants, showing the Devi devouring and eructing an elephant. Image of Laksmi-Narayana, made of black basalt
stone assignable to the Pala-Sena Age (a period stretching from 8th century A.D. to 12th century A.D.) was found in a village Basta, district Dacca. Goddess Laksmi sitting on the left thigh of Visnu reminds us of the type of Uma-Mahesvara images of Bengal. The Visnupattas, found from Raghurampur excavation, contain Laksmi and Sarasvati along with Visnu in one, and Pritivi and Laksmi in association with Visnu in the other. In a specimen found at Vikrampur, Dacca, Visnu is associated with Laksmi and Sarasvati on his both sides, while 'Sri' is seen on the upper compartment of the slab. A small copper image of Visnu along with Laksmi and Sarasvati was recovered from Visnupur, Bankura. Visnu in his Fish and Varaha incarnations is found accompanied by his two wives, Laksmi and Sarasvati, as it is evident from two sculptural representations recovered from two villages of Dacca district. Regarding the image of Sarasvati Bhattasali has observed; "In the Catalogue of the Rajshahi Museum, three images of Sarasvati, found in the districts of Bogra and Rajshahi, are described. Only one of them is entire". The image of Sarasvati usually worshipped in Bengal corresponding the description pustaka-malika -hasta vina-hasta Sarasvati, is however rare in stone or metal representation of ancient Bengal.

From sculptural representations of Bengal it appears that the Sakti of Siva had been worshipped in Bengal in three of her forms-- neutral, accompanied by Siva and with her children, Karttikeya and Ganesa on her lap or in half lying
position beside them. Numerous images of her neutral form, both placid and terrific, are found from the culture-centres of ancient Bengal. The terrific form is found in larger number in comparison with the placid ones. As it has already been said above, by the 7th century A.D. the image of Sakti as described in the Markandeya-Purana came to be prominent in Samatata and Magadha. The eight-armed Sarvani image (octo-alloy) depicting her demon-killing aspect is found in a village named Deulbadi in Tipperah. It is known from the inscription on the pedestal of the image that a queen of Buddhist dynasty had caused to gild the image with gold. It has been suggested that the description of the goddess closely follows that of Bhadra-Durga, Bhadra-Kali, Ambika, Kshemankari and Vedagarbha, as found in the Saradatilaka Tantra of much later date. The Bihar image of this aspect of the goddess has been designated as "Durga killing a demon" by Stella Kramrisch and the two-armed deity is found standing on the head of a demon. One early interesting specimen is found in the Vaital temple (A.D. 775) at Bhubanesvar, Orissa, where the central goddess is seen surrounded by four other prominent deities such as Durga (four-armed), Ardhanarishvara, Sapta-matrikas and Camunda. The eight-armed goddess is terrible-looking. The ninth century Mahisasamardini image, only one found so far, is known to have hailed from a village of Darjeeling, showing her fighting aspect in a graceful fashion. We have at least five or six images of the warrior-goddess, belonging to the tenth century A.D. A very
interesting stone sculpture representing the ten-armed goddess slaying the demon 'Mahisa' was recovered from Dulmi in Manbhum district. The goddess is shown in pratvadahā posture with her right hand and left legs planted firmly on the lion and buffalo respectively. She carries in her ten hands trisula (piercing the neck of the demon), Khetaka, tanka, Sara, Khadga, dhanu, parasu, ankusa, nanapasa and sucimudra. The black-stone ten-armed Mahishamardini image, similar in composition, bears on the pedestal inscription, Sri-Masika-Candi in characters of the 12th century A.D. A specimen of Orissan sculpture of the tenth-eleventh century found from Kitching, Mayurbhanj, is considered as a remarkable piece of this series. One metal piece of the same period was recovered from a village in Dinajpur, where the goddess is found with twelve arms, standing in alidha pose, with her right foot on the back of her mount lion, while the demon is seen here in his human form. An imperfect sculpture, in granite, of a ten-armed Durga in Mahisamardini form is found from Sundarban and in West Bengal, the arms being broken off. The eight-armed Sarvani and the goddess named Simhavahini found from Malda deserve our attention in this connection. The octo-alloy Ambika, hailing from Paharpur (Rajshahi), though couchant lion serves as her seat, has a baby on her lap and another black stone Ambika (four-armed) bears similar characteristics. A number of Mahisamardini images are found from different places of Bankura and now preserved in the Vangiya Sahitya Parisat Museum, calcutta. From an ancient
Jain culture centre on the bank of the river Kumari, a small temple has an early mediaeval image of the goddess installed. A fine specimen of eight-armed Mahisamardini made of black stone is now preserved in the Vangiya Sahitya Parisat Museum, Visnupur (Bankura district) and remains yet unpublished (Plate III Fig-1). A number of Mahisamardini image of the Pala-Sena period are known to be still worshipped in some villages of Dacca, Faridpur, Tipperah and Backarganj, as family or village deities. In this connection, mention may be made of the relief of Nava-Durga (nine-Durgas) found from Porsa, Dinajpur, which is a rare instance in Bengal. The eighteen-armed central figure is Ugracanda and other sixteen-armed goddesses surrounding the central one are Rudracanda, Pracanda, Candogra, Candanayika, Canda, Candavati, Candarupa and Aticandika. One fine specimen of twelfth century A.D. is found from the same place in Darjeeling which yielded a ninth-century image of Mahisamardini. Three Mahisamardini images are known to have been worshipped in three villages of Dacca in the name of Candi (inscribed) during the reign of the Sena kings.

The wide distribution of the Mahisamardini images from Darjeeling in the North to Sundarban in the south and Manbhum in the south-west to Samatata in the east, makes it obvious that the war-goddess, whatever her name might be, earned widest popularity since an early period and this is probably the reason why in mediaeval Bengal she was recognised as the national deity.

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However, the goddess in her placid forms such as Gauri, Parvati, Candi (not killing demon) and Ambika was well-known in Bengal. A remarkable number of images representing her placid aspect are found in the collection of the museums of West Bengal. The images of this type are represented as two or four-armed, with either lion or iguana (godhika), being accompanied by Karttikeya and Ganesa or two female attendants, standing or seated. The best specimen of Bengal school, belonging to the 11th century A.D., shows on the right of the Goddess Karttikeya, with two lions beneath him, and on the left Ganapati, with two antelopes. There are plantain trees on either side, and the miniature figures of the Navagraha and of the donors.

The ninth-century specimen of this series, was found from Bholahat, Rajsahi and is illustrated in the Malda Museum Catalogue. The standing goddess is found accompanied by a bull (mount of Siva), lion and a linga (representing Siva). Two images, one from Mangalbari (Dinajpur) and the other large stone figure of Parvati attended by Karttikeya and Ganesa, from (Rajshahi), are good specimens. The latter one is said to be the best evidence of the Bengal school of art. Two eleventh-century specimens designated as ‘Gauri’, discovered at a later period and now remaining in the State Gallery of Archaeology, West Bengal Govt., is yet to be published. The Birpur (Mursidabad) specimen (Plate-III, Fig-2) is accompanied by Karttikeya and Ganesa, and the Sonapur (district not mentioned) specimen is found as having an iguana carved on its pedestal (Plate-III, Fig-3) Another interesting
unpublished image is found from the Jaina culture centre of Ambikanagar, Bankura and now remains in the Vangiya Sahitya Parisat Museum. The goddess is found with heavy breasts, attended by two female and standing on lotus-pedestal. Below the pedestal there is a carved image of an animal, not properly identified (Plate-III Fig-4). The characteristics of local art are found prominent.

Of the seated images of the benign form of this goddess found from Bengal, some deserve our attention. A well-decorated image of Parvati found from Bogra is found seated on a lion. Seated four-armed Devi was discovered from Nowgong (Rajshahi) with Karttikeya and Ganesa on either side. She holds in her hands vara, padma, trisula and bhringara. She is identified as Sarvamangala aspect of Devi. Aparajita of the Devipurana appears to be represented by a sand stone specimen (9th century) from Niyamatpur showing the attributes of the goddess as vara, sword, shield and trident held in her four hands. A six-armed goddess known as Bhuvanesvari belongs to the Pala-sena period and is still worshipped at a village (Sekhati) of Jessore. One mutilated stone image representing goddess Candi was found from the ruins of Mahasthan (Bogra). Bhattasali reports one four-armed unique image of Candi found from the ancient ruins of Rampal (Dacca), and now worshipped in a temple. The Vangiya Sahitya Parisat Museum, Calcutta, preserves one fine image of Candi found from Dinajpur and another slab of pot-stone containing seated image of Durga, bearing trident and amrta-bhanda in two of her hands.
at a time (found from Calcutta). Three images of Parvati were found from Malda and are now preserved in the Malda Museum. One peculiar image representing Candi with both lion and iguana was found from a village in Jalpaiguri district and is preserved in a Museum. Some images of this type have been reported by Bhattasali as preserved in the Museum and being worshipped by local people in some parts of Dacca. In this connection we may refer to a seated image of twenty-armed goddess with various attributes (fruit, boon, protection, discus, sword, pestle, arrow etc.) showing a miniature Linga on its head, which is tentatively identified by Gopinath Rao as Mahalaksmi. It is a rare specimen in Bengal discovered from a village of Rajshahi.

The terrific forms that the goddess had taken during battle with the great demons may be considered. One of these forms is Camunda, who is also recognised as one of the saptamatrkas. Scholars identify different sculptural representations of the goddess by different names like Camunda, Bhadrakali, Rudra-Carcika, Dantura, Siddha-Yogesvari, Rupavidya, Rudra-Camunda and Siddha-Camunda, on consideration of little variations in those images. The general characteristics are, however, all the same, as skeleton body with eight arms, red sunken eyes, garland of skulls, matted hair and posture of standing on a corpse in some cases. Her ornaments are made of bones, she is often clothed in tiger-skin, her complexion is dark and her laugh is horrible. Since the ninth-century A.D. we find her sculptural representation. The earliest image of Camunda has been yielded
from Itahar, Dinajpur (Plate IV, Fig.5). The four-armed seated goddess is seen resting her right leg on a lying human body. The tenth century Camunda image was also found from North Bengal and included in the Catalogue of the Malda Museum. Of the three images of Camunda of the eleventh century A.D., one was found from Malda, another from Dinajpur and the findspot of the third one (Plate IV, fig.6) is now in the State Gallery of Archaeology, West Bengal Govt., is not recorded. The Dinajpur specimen is styled Dantura, looking grim with extremely emaciated body. One such image of Dantura was recovered from the village Attahasa, Burdwan. It is a marvelously well-executed piece of sculpture. Vangiya Sahitya Parisat Museum, Vishnupur (Bankura), has one image of Camunda in its collection, discovered from Bankura district (Plate IV, Fig.7) but still remains unpublished. In this representation the goddess is found riding on an ass. One such ass-riding Camunda in the collection of the Rajshahi Museum is designated as pisitasana according to the Matsya-Purana (261/33-37). On the basis of resemblance in respect of the ass-mount, we may also designate Bankura specimen as 'pisitasana', although in Bengal 'Sitala' (goddess of small-pox) is known as gardabhavahini (riding on ass).

A six-armed miniature of the goddess styled Rudracarcika found from Dinajpur is found seated on a prostrated corpse. The forms of Rudra-Camunda and Siddha-Camunda are found illustrated in the District gazetteer of Birbhum. The former is known to be worshipped in a
village with the local name of 'Fulesvari Devi'. Rupavidya was found from Betna, Dinajpur. Twelve armed dancing Siddha-Yogesvari in greyish black-stone was found somewhere in the ruins of Rampal in Dacca. Excavation at Raghurampur yielded a mutilated stone image of Dantura with a jackal eating a lying corpse. Another variety of the image represents Siva and Sakti together representing the inseparability of Purusa and Prakrti of the Samkhya system. Such images variantly styled as Hara-Parvati, Uma-Mahesvara, Siva-Durga, Kalyana-Sundara or Vaivahika culminated in the Ardhanarishvara, half-male and half-female form. We have a number of sculptural representations of this type in Bengal. However, we may begin with an interesting composite image discovered from the ancient ruins of Vikrampura, which depicts a stone Linga (phallus), out of which emerges the half-length figure of a four-armed goddess, identified by scholars as Mahamaya or Tripura Bhairavi, a Tantric form of the goddess.

The growth of anthropomorphic representation of Siva with fervent leaning to erotic sentiment for Parvati is vigorously prominent in some of the conjugal images of Siva-Parvati. Such an image corresponds to the description as given in the Kalika-Purana (ch.6). Uma seated enthusiastically on the lap of her consort resembles with Tripura-Sundari of the Tantric text. An excellent bronze image of this type assigned to the period of Devapala (9th century A.D.) found from Kurkihar, is notable for its artistic form. An image of this category was found from
Boram, Purulia, and is now in the collection of the State Gallery of Archaeology, West Bengal Govt. The image is assigned to c. 10th century A.D. (Plate VII, Fig. 18) and remains yet unpublished. In this connection we may make reference to a (upper portion mutilated) sandstone sculpture looking very simple (Plate VII, Fig. 19). The face-cutting of both the god and the goddess is very much similar to that of the tribal people living in the Chotanagpur area. Only one sculptural representation of Ardhanarishvara was found from Dacca and is preserved in the Rajshahi Museum. Although the image is mutilated, the contrast of the male and female in either parts of the body is evident.

Another variety of the composite aspect is unique. Four seated female divinities (Candi) are found surrounding a Linga on its four sides and styled Caturmukha Linga. A number of sculptural representation of this type, found from different sites in North Bengal, are assigned to the 9th century A.D. Recently, an image of this type was found from a village in south 24-Parganas and scholars assign it to the Sena period.

Another type in this composite category is known as 'Kalyanasundara' or Vaivahika form. A number of images of this type were collected from Dacca and Bogra. The specimens depict a scene of Siva's marriage with Parvati. One artistic specimen, found from Eastern India, is now preserved in Stuard Bridge Collection of the British Museum, London.

Goddess Durga or Parvati in her mother-form exhibits herself accompanied by her sons Karttikeya and Ganesa and
this type is styled as Sadyojata. Generally the stone slabs representing this aspect are marked with a linga carved above the half-lying goddess. From the find-spots of this type of images it appears that this form of the goddess was popular mainly in the Varendri region.

b) **IMAGES OF MINOR GODDESSES**

Side by side with the development of the great goddess in her multifarious forms, some minor female divinities also found recognition in Bengal. Although a number of separate reliefs representing the Dikpalas, Indra, Agni, Yama, Varuna and Kuvera, have been discovered in Bengal, sculptural representations of their female-consorts are rarely found. Indrani, consort of Indra, has few sculptural representations, like Brahmani, female energy of god Brahma. Indrani and Brahmani are included in the list of seven mothers. Among the minor sectarian Gods, Ganapati has hardly any female-consort represented in sculptures, while Surya is sometimes found accompanied by two arrow-shooting goddesses, Usha and Pratyusha. In the Pala period, Surya images are found with Sanga and Chhaya, two consorts of the god.

Images of Sapta-matrkas (seven mothers) carved on a stone slab are found in the collection of the Rajshahi Museum. A metal slab has on it three mothers, Kaumari, Brahmani and Vaisanvi. A stone slab having five mothers is preserved in Malda Museum. But the mothers were sometimes represented separately. We have an image of Indrani riding on elephant found from a village in Bankura and now in the collection of Visnupur Vangiya Sahitya Parisat.
Museum (Plate V, Fig. 9), although the upper portion of the image is mutilated. A fine specimen of Indrani is still worshipped in a temple of Siva at Kurmun, Burdwan. Two Varahi images have come to our notice so far. One was found from the village Dvarvasini, Hooghly, and the other from Bahirha, West Dinajpur (Plate V, Fig. 11). An image of Brahmani of the Pala-Sena period was found from Devagram, Nadiya. An unidentified goddess with some peculiar characteristics is now in the Malda Museum. The pot-bellied goddess is found holding a fish in her proper right hand. It might be reasonably considered as a local Tantric female-deity. Visnupur Vangiya Sahitya Parisat Museum has two such images which remain unidentified and may be taken as some local deities (Plate VII, Fig. 20, Plate VIII, Fig. 21), although the museum authority thinks the latter as Cunda.

Among the minor or folk deities of Bengal, the most prominent position might be ascribed to the snake-goddess Manasa. A number of sculptural representations of this goddess have been found from different parts of Bengal. The iconographic features of the snake-goddess may be described thus: the goddess is seated on a lotus in the *lalitasana* pose with hoods of seven snakes spread over her head, her left hand holding the eighth *naga*, her right hand in the *varada* pose holds a fruit, and she is attended all either side by a seated emaciated figure and a crowned male person. In the four-handed variety of the image, rosary, snake, pitcher and manuscript are held in her four hands. An early bronze image of Manasa found from Rajshahi shows a child on
her left lap and is now preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. The Dacca Museum specimens are found to have usual iconographic traits. The inscribed image recovered from Bangarh is an excellent specimen in this series. Five Manasa images are in the collection of the Malda Museum. A slightly mutilated sand-stone image of Manasa (Plate V, Fig. 10), found from Khatra, Bankura, is preserved in the State Gallery of Archaeology, West Bengal Govt., Calcutta. One inscribed image was found from Paikore, Birbhum, and is assigned to the reign of the Sena King Vijayasena. Two sand-stone sculptures of Manasa (lower portions broken), of inferior type, are in the collection of the Vangiya Sahitya Parisat Museum, Visnupur (Plate VIII, Figs. 22, & 23).

Images of Sasthi are rare in Bengal, probably due to the reason that the goddess is generally represented by some symbols like earthen pot or a piece of stone under a tree. Two images, assigned to the period within the 12th century A.D., may be recorded. One was found from Rajshahi and the other from Bihar with an inscription, furnishing the information regarding its installation during the reign of Madanapaladeva (A.D.1144-1158). The Rajshahi specimen shows a goddess with a child on her lap. The mount of the goddess is a cat looking upwards.

The river goddess Ganga used to be worshipped by the people of Bengal whose life was affected by the benign and destructive aspects of the river. An image of Ganga (12th century A.D.), was found from Deopara, Rajshahi. Another image was discovered from Bhadrasila, West Dinajpur (Plate X,
Fig 29 ). The image of the goddess hailing from Jessore shows standing on her vehicle Makara, carrying a garland of pearls with both hands and being accompanied by a \textit{naga} and \textit{nagini} on either side. A four-armed variety, dated 12th century A.D., was found at Triveni (Hooghly). Again, the basement sculpture No.23 in the Paharpur depicts the goddess Yamuna standing on a tortoise, with her right hand touching a lotus and her left hand holding a lotus.

**IMAGES OF BUDDHIST GODDESSES :**

The Mahayana-Vajrayana Buddhism, includes numerous deities for whom there are prescribed \textit{dhyanas} or image-descriptions. Apart from the districts of Vanga (Dacca, Faridpur, Barisal, Backarganj), and Samatata (Tipperah, Chattagram, Sylhet, Comilla), the districts of Burdwan, Birbhum, and Murshidabad in Radha, those of Rajshahi, Bogra and Malda in Varendri, and Nalada, Bihar-sarif, Patna, Gaya and Bhagalpur lying Magadha–Anga regions yielded a large number of Mahayana female divinities. Most of these images correspond to the descriptions of the \textit{Sadhanamala} and \textit{Nispannayogavali}, although local variations in some cases can hardly be overlooked.

For an iconographic study of the Buddhist goddesses we have to take into account not only Eastern Indian sculptures but also paintings, compiled and edited by S.K. Sarasvati. Nos.202-Mahasri Tara, 203-Mahasitavati, 205-Mahamantranusarini, 206-Mahasahasrapramardini, 245-Mahaprasitaara, 260-Nairatmayogini, 265 and 269-Mahamayuri, 268-Tara-were found from Eastern India and are preserved now in the collection of

The advent of the chief Buddhist goddess Tara occurred during the 7th century A.D. The first sculptural representation of Tara is found from the ruins of a Gupta temple at Karnasuvarna (Rajbadidanga, Murshidabad) and it might be considered as a production of intermediary stage between the art of the Gupta age and the Eastern Indian Mediaeval School of sculpture. Khadiravani-Tara (emanation of Amoghasiddhi), also known as Syama-Tara (of green colour), one of the commonest varieties of such images, is generally depicted seated or standing, holding a blue lotus in her hand, and accompanied by Asokakanta (Marici) and Ekajata. An image of this variety, dated in the 12th century A.D., was found at Sompara (Dacca).

The first image of Tara belonging to the Pala period was found from Hilsa (Bihar) bearing the epithet *om Tare tuttare Ture Svaha* and an inscription of the 35th regnal year of Devapala. Another ninth century A.D. image of Tara was found from Mangalbari, Dinajpur and a tenth-century specimen hailed from Rajshahi. The Dacca Museum specimens include an image of Vajratara (Tara of yellow colour) recovered from a tank in Faridpur, showing a Tantric *mandala* that is symbolised by a full-blown lotus. Vajratara is known to be an emanation of Dhyani Buddha Ratnasambhava. From an old temple-site of Bhagalpur (Bihar) an image of Vajratara
accompanied by nine Brahmanical and Buddhist deities was found. The image is dated in the tenth century A.D. Two early mediaeval images of Tara (inscribed) were found from Chittagong, one stone bas-relief and the other bronze image covered with silver-leaf.

The Vangiya Sahitya Parisat Museum, Calcutta, has a number of images of Tara, mainly found from different sites of Bihar. Two inscribed images of Tara, one belonging to the reign of Mahendrapaladeva (Pratihara king of 9th-10th century A.D.) and the other belonging to the reign of Ramapala (A.D. 1077–1130), were found from Bihar.

One four-headed image of Vajratara, was found from Baragram, Birbhum, is a fine specimen of early sculpture of Bengal. The State Gallery of Archaeology, West Bengal Govt. preserves an image hailing from Lohapur, Birbhum. It is dated 10th century A.D. The three-faced goddess is found seated in Lalitasana on a full-blown lotus representing a very benign aspect (Plate V, fig.12). Unfortunately, all the hands are found broken. From ancient Samatata an octo-alloy image was found and tentatively identified as Sitatapatra (the goddess of white parasol). It is now preserved in the Dacca Museum. The Dacca Museum also has some other forms of Tara as Bhrikuti Tara (a terrible aspect suppressing the Brahmanical god Ganesa). The image is three-headed, eight-handed, seated in the virasana pose, with Ganesa carved on the pedestal and Dhyani Buddha Amitabha in its crown. An interesting image of Tara with five miniature Dhyani Buddhas round her head was found from the village.
Vajrayogini (Vikrampur) and is now preserved at the Svambag, 106
Dayaganj, Dacca.

**Parnasabari** (Sabara woman wearing apron of leaves), is a prominent female divinity of the Mahayana Buddhist 107 pantheon, is considered as a form of Tara. Two images of Parnasabari were found in Dacca by Bhattasati, one known as 'Jiyas Thakurani at a village and the other found from Vajrayogini, Vikrampur, and now remaining fixed in a wall of 108 a Kali temple, Dacca. The three-headed and six-handed Goddess holds Vajra, parasu and sara in her right hands, and tarjani, dhanu and parnapichchhika in the left ones. Of the miniature figures of the five DhyaniBuddhas on the top section of the prabhavali, the central one is Amoghasiddhi. Buddhist solar goddess Marici (manifested from Tara) may be considered as the Buddhist counterpart of Brahmanical 109 'Maricimali, who is not a female and not associated with pig. It may be assumed reasonably that the concept of a female form of Surya originated out of an ideology of syncretism between the Saktas and Sauras. Some of stone sculptures of this goddess were found mainly from Vanga (Faridpur) region, and are now preserved in the Dacca 111 Museum, and Rajshahi Museum, while one was found as a household deity at Tipperah. A beautifully carved image representing Marici is now in the collection of the State Gallery of Archaeology, West Bengal Govt. It was found from Dinajpur (Plate VI, Fig.13). The Dacca Museum specimen, hailing from Ujani (Faridpur) and datable in the 11th-12th century A.D. represents Marici with three faces, the left one being
that of a sow, eight hands holding vajra, ankusa, sara, asokaleaf, suci, dhanu, pasa, and a tarjani pose, with the figure of her spiritual father (Dhyani Buddha Vairocana) on her headdress, and riding in pratyalidha pose on a chariot drawn by seven pigs, driven by the charioteer Rahu. She is accompanied by four subsidiary goddesses, viz. Varttali, Vadali, Varali and Varahamukhi.

Buddhist goddess Hariti, the protector of child like Sasthi, is rarely represented in stone or metal in early medi-
eval Bengal. Only two specimens come to our notice, one from Dacca and the other from Nalanda. The latter is shown as carrying a child on her lap, and the former holds a fish and a drinking bowl.

The attributes of Buddhist goddess Vasudhara are Dhanyamanjari (sheaf of corn), Ratnamanjari (sheaf of jewels), Bhadraghata (auspicious jar full of wealth) and varada pose showing or showering treasures. The sculptural representation of this goddess is not found in Bengal proper, but the adjacent areas of Bihar and Nepal yielded a number of sculptures of this goddess.

Among the twelve Dharani goddesses described in the Nispannayoqavali, Cunda acquires the eighth position. Only a single image of Cunda was found from Kurkihar, Bhagalpur, with an inscription recording its erection in the 31st regnal year of Mahipala-I. But that the worship of this goddess was prevalent in the Samatata region is evident from the label of a manuscript which reads as Pattikere cunda vara bhavane cunda i.e., "Cunda in the excellent temple
of Cunda at Pattikera. Pattikera is identified with a place in Tipperah district. This is a sixteen armed figure of the goddess, while an eighteen-armed representation (9th century) of the goddess was found from Niyamatpur (Rajshahi) and is now in the Rajshahi Museum.

Vagisvāri is the female counterpart of Vagisvara, the Buddhist deity of knowledge. In Eastern India only an image designating itself as 'Vagisvāri' was found and assigned to the reign of Gopala II. The four-armed deity seated on a lion is shown engaged in pulling off the tongue of two demons with forcep. The attributes and attitude do not match with the world of knowledge.

The goddess Prajñaparamita occupies a very exalted position in the Buddhist pantheon. She is believed to be the personification of 'transcendental knowledge' and female energy of the Bodhisattva Manjusri. Her image is rarely found in Bengal. One was found during the Raghurampur excavation at Dacca and noticed by Bhattasali, who expresses doubt about the proper identification of the goddess. Another image, properly identified, remains in the Malda Museum and is illustrated in the Catalogue. The two-armed deity is found seated on a full-blown lotus in a meditative pose and five miniature dhyani Buddhas are seen carved around her. She is shown seated in padmasana, both of her hands placed against her breast, the right in the Vyakhyana and the left in the Jnana-mudra holding the book AstasahasrikaPrajñaparamita. The goddess is painted in bright and variegated colours on the MSS., of the Prajñaparamita.
In the Vajrayana-Tantrayana pantheon, there are five protective goddesses (Panca-raksa), venerable to every Buddhist householders. They are Mahapratisara, Mahamayuri, Mahasahasrapramardini, Mahasitavati and Mahamantranusarini. They are in fact the five deified mystic spells. It is believed that their worship could usher in timely rain and save people from droughts, and ultimate gain for the worshipper being a good harvest. An image of Mahamayuri is datable to the eighth century A.D. was found from Nalanda and Bhattasali noticed one Mahapratisara image being worshipped in a family of Dacca town. He found striking resemblances between the images of Bhrikuti Tara and Mahapratisara. The latter, dated in the 11th century A.D. is in the Dacca Museum. But scarcity of sculptures of this type, is compensated by the paintings of ‘Pancaraksa mandala’ on the manuscripts collected from Nalanda (12th century A.D.), Mahamayuri, Dacca (12th century A.D. Mahapratisara) and Nepal (A.D. 1120, Mahapratisara). The paintings of Pancaraksamandala and Mahamantranusarini were with an inscription dated 14th regnal year of Nayapaladeva.

IMAGES OF JAINA GODDESS

In some districts of West Bengal, situated near the Jaina centre of Paresnath (Chotanagpur plateau), Jaina images were found. Mrs. Debala Mitra during her official tour in the Bankura district noticed some images of Jaina goddesses. An image of the chief Jaina goddess Ambika, belonging to early mediaeval period, was found in a temple of a village named
Ambikanagar, situated at the confluence of the Kumari and Kangsavati rivers. Ambika is recognised as the Sasanadevi or Sakti or Yaksini of Tirthankar Neminatha.

Ruins of another Jaina temple were found in the village named Barkola, Purulia, which yielded an image of Ambika accompanied by other images of Tirthankaras. An image of Parsvanatha with serpent-hood is found to have on its, back side a carved image of Visnu accompanied by Laksmi and Sarasvati.

A notable number of images of Jaina deities discovered at a later date, mainly from villages of Bankura and adjacent areas are now preserved in the Vangiya Sahitya Parisat Museum Visnupur. Most of these images remain unidentified and unpublished.

Two types of Jaina female divinities are found, independent and associated with respective Tirthankaras. A number of Yaksini images symbolised by Kalpavrksa on their heads were found (Plate VI, Fig 16; Plate VIII, Fig 24, Plate-IX, Fig 25, 26). The seated images associated with a male partner, are found with a child on the lap of the goddess (Plate VI, Fig 15, Plate IX, Fig 27, 28). In one of them the male and female are seen as holding babies in their laps. This type may be tentatively called as Neminatha-Ambika or Kuvera-Hariti or Yaksya-Yaksini.

Two similar independent images of a female deity (Plate VII, Fig.17), found from Paresnath, show some peculiar characteristics. The ten-armed three faced image of a goddess is shown as standing on a corpse or a living human. The
weapons are not very clear. It might be some Jaina Tantric goddess or Mahavidya.

The Visnupur Museum has another interesting image which is still unidentified still(Plate VII, Fig.14). The eight-armed (with weapons) goddess, having a placid attitude, is found resting her right leg on a bird looking like falcon (or it might be a peacock). An animal looking like a lion is found beside the goddess. She might be the Sasanadevi of Anantanatha (cognizance-falcon) or might be Yaksini of Sumatinatha named Ankusa (cognisance-Krauncha, i.e., large size heron), or she might be the Jaina goddess Prajnapti whose cognizance is a peacock. But the last identification may not be decisive, because the other iconographic features do not accorded with the 'dhyana' of Prajnapti. She might be Jaina Sarasvati whose vehicle is peacock, but the weapons are not matching with a goddess of learning. If the bird would be accepted as peacock, the image might be Buddhist Mahamayuri or Brahmanical Kaumari (Sakti of Karttikeya) one of the seven-mothers.

A unique bronze miniature found at Halgora (24-Parganas) represents a female-deity standing on a lotus underneath bent bow of a tree, clasping a child on her waist with her left hand, and holding some in her right, with another nude child standing close to her on her right. Near the bottom of the tree is the miniature figure of a lion which appears to be her cognizance. It most probably represents Kusmandini or Ambika, the Yakshini of Neminatha, her cognisances being a
lion and two children.

An analysis of the iconographic types of Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jaina goddesses indicates a trend towards mutual exchange, assimilation and synthesis. It appears from the available texts, especially the Puranas, that an image of the Mother-goddess had been standardized sometime between the 6th and 9th century A.D. Therefore, it would be reasonable to assume that the iconographic type of the Buddhist goddesses borrowed from the prior form and content of the image of the goddess. Of course the Sadhanamala or the Nispannavagavali, while prescribing the meditation forms (dhyanas) of the goddesses, incorporated the Tantric elements which were inherent in the Vajrayana-Mahayana Buddhist faith. The basic idea behind the artistic creation of the form of the goddess was not remarkably changed. We may in this connection draw a comparison between the image of the Puranic goddess Candi or Mahisamardini on the one hand and the images of the Buddhist goddesses Marici and Parnasabari who are supposed to be manifestations of the supreme goddess Tara. The attributes held in the hands of Candi, Marici and Parnasabari suggest their belligerent mood. Again the fearful aspects which are often found in the Tantric Buddhist goddesses may be traced in different manifestations of Camunda like Rudracanda, Ugracanda, Candogra etc. So far as Tantric elements in the iconographical representation are concerned, we may also cite the examples of the Yuganaddha images of Siva-Parvati which culminated in the form of Ardhanarishvara. It is therefore difficult to ascertain to what extent Buddhist mysticism was
indebted to Brahmanical Tantricism because it has been suggested by some scholars that Buddhist Tantricism might have started the process of Tantrikisation of Bengal art or in other words the 'Tantrayana art'. Whatever that might be there is least doubt about the fact that there was a constant process of give and take between the Brahmanical and Buddhist art and iconography. The Jainas seem to have adopted Saktism in Bengal at a later stage, as it has been pointed out above. The Sasanadevis, Yaksinis and Mahavidyas of the Jainas have hardly introduced an iconographic standard which might be distinguished from the Brahmanical and Buddhist norms. The iconographic norms are to be measured by gestures, postures, attributes, and mounts or cognisances. All these have been maintained as the characteristic features of the images of divinities through the ages. Among the Jaina goddesses Ambika, the female consort of Neminatha, holds the premier position. The characteristic iconographic feature of the goddess is her association with a child seated either on the lap or in her waist. This feature may be traced in the images of Gauri or Parvati accompanied by her two children Karttikeya and Ganesa. The iconographic types known as Sadyojata may also be considered in this connection. However in course of time both conceptually and iconographically Puranic Durga or Parvati, Buddhist Tara and Jaina Ambika was synthesised to form the popular concept of Great Mother goddess in Bengal.

So far as the evolution of the image of Durga in Bengal is concerned, it may be held that the artists' imagination that created image forms of the different aspects
of the goddess to suit the local needs and taste in different centuries seem to have been combined to give a final shape to Devi Durga as she is popularly known in Bengal. From the 9th century onwards we have specimens of the images representing the goddess as the killer of the demon Mahisa, as a goddess accompanied by Karttikeya and Ganesa or by two goddesses identified with Sarasvati and Laksmi, as the goddess whose mount is found to be either a couchant lion or iguana, a species of a rectile. In some specimens of images the upper part of the stone slab on which a goddess is sculptured are to be found Brahma, Visnu and Siva or sometimes Siva alone, we have found different aspects of the goddess like Sarvamangala, Aparajita, Bhuvanesvari, Candi, Camunda etc. in different iconographic representations. Taking all these together, the emergence of goddess Durga, also known as Sarada, as She is usually worshipped in the autumn, might have been possible.
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with Mayadevi. But the presence of carved Linga on the top of the slab indicates the Mother to be Gauri/Parvati/Durga with Karttikeya and Ganesa.

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91. HAB, P. 641.
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94. Saraswati, S.K. op. cit, Pp. 33 -34 ; Ind Arch. 1958-59, p77;
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95. HAB, P. 627
96. HB, PI. LXV 156, PI.LXVI,160.
97. RUPAM, No 40, Oct. 1929, Cal, P. 109
98. HAB. Pp. 638-41
99. Foucher, Buddhist Iconography, Pt. II, Pp. 69-71
100. Jl. on the Buddhist Text Society for 1894, vol. II, Pt II,
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101. ASIAR, 1921-22 , Pp 82-83
102. Museum Catalogue No. C(e)1/269, Pl. VIII,
       C(e) 2, C(e)3, PL. VI (Carved in a pot stone),
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103. ASR, 1920-21, P 35
105. IBBSDM, I B (IV) a
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106. Ibid., Pp. 45-53
107. See Sadhanamala. Sadhana no 150 states Parnasabari as a form
of Tara. It may be reasonably assumed that like the great
goddess 'Candi' of the Markandeya Purana, Mahayana deity Tara
also had been worshipped by many aboriginal tribes, specially
by the Sabaras.
108. IBBSDM, Pp. 61-62
110. Bhattacharya, D.C., op. cit., P. 19
111. IB BSDM, Pp. 43-45
112. Rajshahi Museum Cat. No A (D) 2, A (D) 3
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113. HE, PI.XXVII .65
114. IBBSDM, Pp. 63-67
116. Bhattacharya, D.C., Tantric Buddhist Iconographic Sources,
New Delhi 1974, P 36
117. JBORS, XXVI,P. 245; JISOA, Vol. II P. 72
118. Mss. no. ADD 1643 of Prajinparamita in the Camb. Univ
Library.
119. IB BSDM, P-13
120. HB, PL.XXVI, 64.
121. Bloch, T., Supplementary Catalogue of the Archaeological
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126. *IBBSDM*, PP. 61-62


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131. *HR*, PL. LXIV, 153