CHAPTER V

Stages of development of Manasa worship and religious practices as described by Narayana Deya in his work.

Textual evidence in Narayana Deya's Padma-Purana indicates that the worship of Padma was first introduced in the lower classes of people and then gradually it spread among the upper classes. This change in the worship of Padma is of much importance in the History of the gradual evolution of the cult of Manasa.

Narayana Deya gives an elaborate description of the worship of Padma and in this connection different rites and practices also have been narrated. Here in this chapter, we shall deal with the episodes relating to the worship of Padma along with other rites and practices observed at the time of the worship as described by Narayana Deya.

1. Worship by farmer Bhashai

After the birth of Padma, Mahadeva led her to Kailasa and on the way, farmer Bhashai happened to meet them. He was charmed by the beauty of Padma and wished to marry her. He told her that he had many wives at his home and was even ready to divorce all of them if she would express her desire to marry Bhashai. Padma got enraged and cast at him a glance through her poison eye. As a result he fell dead on the ground and the information was immediately communicated to his mother, Malati who ran to the spot all on a sudden.
She enquired her identity and begged pardon on behalf of her son for his humiliating proposal. Pādmāvatī revealed her identity and asked her to worship with offerings of one lakh sacrificial animals for the revival of her son. In this connection Pādmā mentioned all other objects and described before her the procedure for her worship. She informed that she should be worshipped in the form of a pot (Ghat) nicely built with the figures of eight hooded Hāgas. Lotus-bud, Alcō wood, sandal wood, incense, earthen lights, fragrant flowers and sweet fruits were to be offered. Women worshippers should attend the function and they should reproduce "Uruli Dhvani" at the time of worship. Duck, pigeon, goat, sheep and buffalo should be sacrificed. Mālatī collected all these articles and worshipped Pādmā as she was told by her. The goddess was much pleased and restored Bāchāl to life. Both mother and son became stern devotees of Pādmā and thus her worship was first established.

2. Worship by the cowherds.

Pādmā and Neta roamed about and met some cowherds. As advised by Pādmā, Neta begged milk from the cowherds. The head cowherd was charmed with her beauty and begged her embrace. He told other cowherds that he


In the Bengali version Bāchāl episode occurs after the cowherd episode and a difference in the description is also found there. In the original text of the Bengali version it is mentioned that the mother of Bāchāl is Bīnātā who rejoices at the presence of Pādmā along with Śiva. She even realises that god Śiva has sent this girl to be married by her only son. Further, it is narrated that Pādmā out of rāth throws her, bracelet at Bāchāl and as a result he falls down senseless. Then Śiva asks the farmers to worship Pādmā, who then revives Bāchāl. Bāchāl then begin to worship her and thus Pādmā's worship is established. Description in the additional verses is similar to that of the Assamese version. (Pādmā Purāṇ(śa) T. C. Dasgupta, PP 23-27)


In the Bengali version the cowherd-episode occurs first. Śiva returned home with Manasā and met the cowherds on the way. Pādmā begged milk but they refused. As a result they fell down senseless. The woman began to weep. Śiva suggested to worship Bisahari. He asked them to bring the sage Surahāra (Sutabara) for the worship. They did accordingly and Pādmā brought them back to life. (T. C. Dasgupta, Op. Cit., P 23).
would keep both of them as his wives. At this all other cowherds, out of jealousy, decided to get them forcibly from their head cowherd. As a result a fierce quarrel took place among them. The head cowherd proceeded to Padma and tried to catch hold of her. Padma became angry and looked at the cowherds through her poison eye and consequently all of them fell down senseless on the ground. Netu advised Padma to revive half of the cowherds so that they could realise her greatness and thereby get inspired to worship her. Padma, accordingly, brought half of the cowherds back to life. They knelt down before Padma who asked them to worship her. She, herself produced different materials for offering to her worship. Then these cowherds began to worship her in the form of a “Ghata” (earthen pot) and earthen light, incense, banana fruit etc. were also sacrificed. Padma was highly satisfied and brought all other cowherds back to life. All of them, since then, used to worship the sacred pot regularly.

3. Worship by Hasan-Husen.

The Mahammadan cowherds tried to break the sacred pot worshipped by the Hindu cowherds. As a result a quarrel took place among them and the Mahammadan cowherds were defeated and driven away. They reported the matter to their “Qasii” who communicated the information to Hasan-Husen. They ordered to capture the cowherds and to bring them before Hasan-Husen. When the soldiers arrived at the place of worship on the bank of the river, ‘Bina’ the cowherds fled away and ‘Qasii’ broke the sacred pot. Padma realised the situation and went to Hastinapur with her Nag soldiers. A fierce battle took place and the Mahammadan soldiers were defeated. Both Hasan-Husen had to come to the battle field for fighting. But they also fell dead at the glance of Padma through her poison eye. Their mother, Fatema Bibi got the sad information and ran to the spot and begged Padma for her sons.
The goddess agreed on condition that her sons would have to worship her offering nine lakhs of sacrifice. Pātama promised and Padmā brought Hāsan-Husen back to life. Padmā asked them to worship her. She expressed that if they would worship her with great pomp his subjects would automatically follow the ideal laid down by their king.

Hāsan- and Husen ordered to collect different articles required for the worship and when everything was gathered they began to worship Padmā in the form of sacred pot made of gold and it continued for nine days. Innumerable objects offered as oblation to the goddess included lotus-bud, pure rice, Bilva-Patra (leaf of wood-apple), Aloe wood, Sandal paste, incense, earthen light, different kinds of flowers, nine lakhs of sacrifice etc. and the ceremony was celebrated in the midst of melodious sounds of musical instruments and "Uralishvanī" of the women. Padmā was highly pleased and restored all the dead to life and then she vanished.

3. Worship by Jālo and Nālo:

Padmāvati along with Neta arrived on the bank of the "Saptanadi" where Jālo and Nālo, the two brothers of the fisherman community were casting their nets continuously for nine days without getting a single fish. Padmā asked them to help her in crossing over the river. As the boat was small and old, Jālo decided to take them to the other bank one by one. But both Padmā and Neta got on board together and crossed the river easily. Jālo-Nālo realised that the woman possessed supernatural power and as such expressed before them their deplorable condition. Padmā asked them to cast the net in the name of Padmā. They did accordingly and the catch was a pair of sacred pots made of gold. Padmā, then, revealed

In Bengali version the Hāsan-Husen episode is missing.
The Jālo-Nālo episode is also absent in the Bengali version.
her identity and asked them to worship the sacred pots in the rainy season specially on the fifth day of the dark half of the month of Sravana and automatically their miseries and misfortunes would vanish and they would be blessed with happiness and prosperity. Padmā and Netā, then, disappeared and both the brothers also returned home with the sacred pots and set up the "Padmā-Ghaṭ" in the pavilion (Maṇḍapa) at an auspicious moment and made elaborate arrangements for the worship. Different musical instruments were being played and various sacrificial requisites including incense, Aloe wood, mus-k, honey, twig of a 'Siju-plant', different kinds of fruits and flowers etc. were being offered to the goddess. Thousands of earthen lights filled with ghee were lighted. The lotus flowers smeared with red sandal, sesame seeds and basil leaves mixed with ghee and some flowers besmeared with vermilion were presented to the goddess with much devotion. Hundreds of sheep were immolated and 'Jekār dhvani' from all sides were produced. Thus the worship was performed and the goddess was highly impressed and blessed Jālo-Mālā with numerous horses, elephants and immense wealth. His home was turned into a royal palace.

5. Worship by Senekā

When Gando was away on his voyage, Padmāvatī as induced by Netā, was eager to be worshipped by Senekā in Campaka Nagar and with a view to installing such a tendency in the mind of Senekā, Padmā one night appeared before Senekā in her dream and asked to bring the "Padmā-Ghaṭ" from Jālo-Mālā and worship it. The goddess, further, told that if she would worship her with devotion her husband would soon return home safely and she would be blessed with prosperity; but if she would not pay any heed to her words, her sons and property all would be destroyed. In the morning Senekā awoke from sleep and narrated before

§ Appendix A PP 185-194.
"Pandit Jasaï" what was told in her dream. Jasaï told that she was fortunate as Pālmā, the daughter of Siva was kind to her and so he asked Sonekā to hasten to bring the 'Padmā-Ghata' from Jalo-Mālo at an auspicious moment calculated by him. Accordingly Sonekā mounted on a palanquin and accompanied by women and Brahmins started in a ceremonial procedure. The slokas of the Vedas were recited by the Brahmins and the drums were beaten. Different articles required for the worship of the 'Padmā-Ghata' were taken along with them. Hundreds of young maidens dressed in silk garments proceeded with 'Gālāni' (sieve) on their heads having earthen lights with flowers and 'Durba' grass. Some women took the 'Safurā' (covered tray) with betel-nuts and the cups made of bellmetal filled with fragrant sandal paste and on their way they reproduced 'Jekārdhvani' all along.

When the procession reached the residence of Jalo-Mālo, Sonekā got down from the palanquin and entered the house on foot. Jalo-Mālo received her with due respect and enquired about the purpose of her arrival. She narrated the fact and requested them to allow her to take the 'Padmā-Ghata in lieu of any amount of wealth sought for by them. But Jalo-Mālo flatly refused to part with them. At this, Sonekā got disheartened. In the mean time Pādmā along with Neta appeared before them and asked Jalo-Mālo to offer the sacred pots. Accordingly they offered the pots to Sonekā and made another Padmā-Ghata of gold for them. Sonekā, overwhelmed with joy returned home. Different musical instruments were played and the people of Campakanagar were over-joyed.

A beautiful pavilion (Mandapa) was constructed by Vasumbara Sūtradhār where the Pādmā-Ghata was placed ceremoniously at an auspicious moment. After ceremonial bath, Sonekā began to worship the sacred pots attended by many women. She offered oblation including sesame seeds, rice, coconut, banana etc. Lotus buds smeared with vermilion, branches of 'Sīju' Plant, Durba grass mixed with ghee, were also offered. Earthen light and incense
were burning. Besides these sacrificial offerings, sheep and buffaloes were also slaughtered in honour of the goddess. Thus Soneka used to worship the goddess daily with much devotion. All the subjects of her kingdom too followed the procedure and regularly used to worship the goddess. Campakanagar was shining with joy and prosperity by grace of the goddess. Padmavati was highly pleased and appeared before Soneka and showered blessings over her. She expressed that Gando would be arriving soon safely and successfully from his trade.

6. Worship by Beula and Sunitra

There are some indications in the text of Narayana Deva through which we can realise that Beula and her mother, Sunitra also used to worship Padma. As told by the goddess in her dream Beula decided to proceed to Muktesvara where she would worship Padma after a ceremonial bath for which she was encouraged by her mother. Accordingly Beula along with her friends worshipped the goddess in the form of a sacred golden pot with lotus flowers made of gold. There are some other references in the text to Beula's devotion to Padma. At the time of boiling the iron pills given by Chand to prove her chastity, Beula requested Padma to help her and accordingly she get the blessing. At the time of the marriage ceremony, while Lakhindar fell down senseless at the sight of the serpents sent by Padma, Beula went to the goddess and procured flower and water by which she could restore Lakhindar to consciousness. Further, during her hazardous journey up to the domain of

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6. Appendix A, P 424
8. Ibid, P 425.
10. Ibid, PP 472, 473. But in the Bengali version it is further narrated that Beula went to the goddess along with a Brahmin priest and worshipped Padma(T.C. Dasgupta, op. cit., P41).
the gods for revival of her husband, Beulā got protection from the goddess at the critical moments. Thus from the textual evidence it is proved that Beulā was a devotee of Padmā.

7. Worship by Cāndo

Cāndo was a stern devotee of Cāndi and Śiva. He vehemently opposed the spread of the cult of Manasā in the society. He was, indeed, highly influenced by Cāndi herself who was afraid of losing popularity if the worship of Padmā would happen to prevail in the society and as such she offered Cāndo the "Hematārā" staff with the help of which he was induced to stand firmly against Padmā. Thus provoked by Cāndi, Cāndo rebuked Padmā on many occasions and broke the sacred pot into pieces and did not even hesitate to hurt the goddess by her waist. As a result Padmā took a very revengeful attitude and put Cāndo in the midst of miseries and misfortunes. Inspite of all the evils experienced by him he did not submit to Padmā. But at last, on the arrival of his dead sons and lost boats along with the cargoes and crews, he was requested by Beulā, Soneka and other subjects and consequently he was compelled to worship Padmā. He expressed his willingness on condition that in the pavilion where the goddess would be worshipped a canopy of cloth i.e. a Candratap resembling with his name must be fixed upon the goddess. Padmā agreed and the worship started. A high and well-decorated pavilion was constructed and magnificent "Simhāsana" was placed where Padmā took her seat. Numerous whisps (Cāmar) were hung around the pavilion and it appeared as though the pigeons were flying there. Further, coconuts, bunches of nuts and bananas were also hung around the pavilion. The Brahmans

took their seats and recited the hymns of the Vedas. Thousands of devotees including women joined the ceremony and performed different rites. Widows also attended the function. The "Uruli dhvani" were being produced from all corners and different kinds of musical instruments were being played all along.

Cānda first worshipped Ganesa, the destroyer of all obstacles. Then he worshipped the "Navagrahas", the "Aṣṭānāgas" and then began to worshipped Pādmapī. Various sorts of articles such as Aloe wood, Sandal paste, incense, Raithan light, blue lotus, ghee, milk, coconut, banana, betel-nut etc. were offered to the goddess. Golden lotuses also were offered. Hundreds of persons with large and sharp swords imitated innumerable pigeons and ducks, lakhs of goats, sheep and deer and thousands of buffaloes ; and the heads were offered to the goddess on the large trays. The goddess assumed a fearful appearance with the body as large as a hill, the mouth fully opened, and the two eyes dazzled as the rays of the sun. Cānda got frightened at the terrible appearance of the goddess and asked the men to continue the act of imolation. Thus the worship continued for nine days and Cānda worshipped Pādmapī with much devotion. The goddess was highly pleased and appeared in her uncommon appearance with four-arms and three eyes. Cānda admitted her greatness and begged pardon in inarticulate words for all his evil deeds done to the goddess previously. He cut the "Hematāl" staff into pieces and used as incense. Pādmapī's joy knew no bound. She was successful in her mission in spreading her cult in the society. She laid so much stress on Cānda's worship only because of the fact that if Cānda, the king of Campakā would accept the cult and use to worship Pādmapī, then automatically his subjects would follow it and thus her worship would be permanently prevalent in the society. Now, Pādmapī had achieved that goal and as such showered blessings upon Cānda. He got back his sons, beats along with the men and wealth.
The goddess then disappeared and the ceremony was over. Cande offered valuable presents including gold, cows, horses, elephants, clothes etc. to the Brahmins and the singers.

Thus, we can sum up the following main aspects of the worship of the goddess Manasā from the description of Narayaneuda's Pauṣapuran.

a) Place and procedure of worship:

A beautiful pavilion (Mandapa), high and well decorated is essential for the worship of Pādamā. The goddess is worshipped in the form of a sacred pot (Pādamāghat) nicely built with the figures of eight hooded Nāgas. It may be made of gold even. It is placed in the pavilion which is beautifully decorated with whisk whips (Cāmar) and other objects and the a canopy of picturesque cloth known as “Chandevā” (Candrātapa), is stretched above. A Brahmin priest is required to conduct worship and it is found in the worship of Beulā and Cande. Musical instruments specially the drums are to be played and “Uruli dhvani” is to be produced by the female devotees. Before the worship of Pādamā begins, Ganesā, the destroyer of all obstructions is worshipped first. Next, the “Navagrahas”, the “Aṣṭāyagāras” are worshipped and then only commences the worship of Pādamā which may continue for nine days even.

b) Sacrificial offerings:

The common offerings consist of milk, ghee, rice, coconut, banana, betel-nut, incense, sandal paste, earthen light, sesamum seeds, lotus-bud smeared with vermilion and red sandal, basil leaf mixed with ghee, twig of “Siju” plant, “Durbā” grass mixed with ghee and various fruits and flowers. Golden lotuses are also offered. Animal sacrifices include pigeon, duck, sheep, goat, deer and buffaloes. The animals are slaughtered and the heads are offered to the goddess on the large trays.
c) Purpose of worship:

From the textual evidence it is clear that the goddess is worshipped mainly for the fulfillment of desire, for the general welfare of all the members of the family, to obtain power and property, to get rid of miseries and misfortunes. The goddess can revive the dead and restore the lost. Candó was determined not to bow down to Padma, but at last he was compelled to worship her only for the revival of the dead and restoration of the lost. When the worship started Padma appeared before him in her uncommon appearance with four-arms and three eyes and this description of Manasa's appearance (Caturbhuja Tṛṇayani) etc. has similarity with a hymn to the goddess found in an Assamese "Rishi" of Manasa worship (Trīlokanām caturbhum etc.)

8. Manasa worship and the religious practices described by Manakara and Durgabara:

Manakara in his Manasa-Kavya gives some descriptions of the worship of Padma. Regarding the goddess and her worship the poet mentions the following:

Padma was born on the twelfth day of the bright half (Sukla-advādaśi) in the month of Cāitra. Nāgas constitute the seat and the garments of the goddess and Nāgas hold the wood-apple "Śrī-phaṇi" for the goddess. She wears various sorts of garment ornaments (Kundalā, Kākinī, Nūpura etc.) on her different parts of her body. She takes a mark of vermilion on her front forehead. She is placed on a "Mañā" (altar) and worshipped day and night during the four rainy months. Bhāhari is

to be worshipped in the form of an earthen pot with a twig of "Slju" plant put in it. When worshipped with much devotion दगुबारी blesses the devotees with son and wealth.

Further, it is narrated that Padma is worshipped in the form of साजम a sacred pot with earthen lights burning in a pavilion (Mandap) nicely decorated. Generally she is worshipped by the women devotees in the month of "Sravan". Along with her worship prayer to "Dharma" also has been mentioned by Manakara. In the Jagaran-git (Invocation) the poet mentions different objects associated with the worship of Padma.

A four cornered "Mandapa" with four roofs and decorated with "Cowars" (whisks made of the tail of the yak) and plantain trees, and alter upon which the holy pot filled with holy water is to be placed, a silken "Chandew" (a nicely decorated cloth stretched above the altar), earthen lights, incense, "naivedya" (vegetable offerings) gold and silver flowers are all required for the worship of Padma.

Durgābara also gives some descriptions regarding the worship of Padma. He mentions that Sonke was informed by Oja Dhanvantari that one who would worship Manasa (Mānasāi Mai) in the form of a sacred pot would be blessed with son. She was, therefore, directed by him to have a holy bath in the Ganges uttering the words "Mānasāi Mai" and to offer five flowers of gold and then only she would be blessed with what she would desire. Accordingly Sonka sacrificed two goats Ahira and Mahira by name and dipped herself thrice in the Ganges in sixts first in the name of Dharma, secondly in the name of Kūrqa and thirdly in the name of Manasa (Mānasāi) and offered two flowers of gold.

17. Ibid, P 10
18. Ibid, P 14
19. Ibid, P 18
20. Ibid, P 86
21. Ibid, P 89.
Saradāi accompanied by her six daughters-in-law worshipped Padmā in the form of sacred pot. When enquired by Senekā, Saradāi narrated that Padmā (Padumāi), the daughter of the great God if worshipped with great devotion for four days in the month of "Śrāvāṇa" in the form of a sacred pot would bless the blind with eye-sight, the captives with freedom, the sonless with the sons and the poor with wealth. Moreover, miseries and misfortunes would disappear, prosperity and happiness would prevail.

Senekā was inspired and started worship after Cāndo proceeded on trade. She arranged the place well decorated with garlands of "Java" flowers. A canopy of cloth (Candrātapa) was fixed upon the place and the sacred pot made of gold was placed there. Incense, earthen lights and other objects required for the worship were offered. Senekā herself worshipped the goddess with much devotion and her six daughters-in-law were engaged in reciting the glory of the goddess and reproducing the "Uruli-dhvani".

Thus it is found that the detailed description of the worship of Padmā along with different rites and practices have been incorporated in Assamese Manasā literature. From the textual evidence of Nārāyanadeva’s Padmapuran it becomes evident that the worship of Padmā was established in the society on a gradual scale from the lower classes to the upper classes of people. The instances of worship by farmer Bāchāi the cowherds and Jālo-Hālo indicate that the cult of Manasā was first accepted by the lower classes of people. Then the goddess rose in status and the cult spread among the women folk of the upper classes as is evident from the worship by Senekā. Beulā also was a devotee of Padmā and she was encouraged by in this regard by her mother, Sumitrā. During

**Notes:**
1. Ibid, P 95
2. Ibid, P 98
3. Ibid, P 97.
this stage the cult was not, of course, patronised by the prominent persons
of the society, 

nevertheless, some of them showed favourable
attitude towards it and this significant point can be realised from the
fact that Pandit Jasai encouraged Seneke to bring the sacred pot from
Jaule-Mule and to show due respect. 25

The cult, then, took a step forward and was established in the
upper classes. But in the stage, before the full establishment of her cult
in the society, Padma had to face unnumbered difficulties, specially put by
Cande, the leader of the opposition group. He was the representative of
the Saiva and the Sakti groups and vehemently opposed the spread of the
cult of Manasa among the upper classes. But in the mean time some of the
men-folk had accepted a favourable outlook towards the new cult; as it can
be realised from the fact that, while Beula along with her husband and six
brothers-in-law decided to go back again to the domain of the gods for the
non-submission of Cande to Padma, all his subjects including the father
(Basudeva) of Brahmin Senei requested him to worship the goddess. After all
Cande had to surrender and he worshipped Padma with much devotion. Padma
expressed before Cande that she was more powerful than Sankara and Bhavani
and as a proof she mentioned that she once killed both of them with her
poison-look. By this instance it is suggested that the cult of Manasa was
not less important than Saivism and Saktism. Further, Cande came to realise
that through Padma, was revealed the goddess Bhavani (Trinayani) and thus
Padma had occupied an equal status among the gods and the goddesses worship-
ised by the upper classes of people in the society.

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Thus the cult of Manasa was gradually established among people of all classes. P.K. Maity has rightly observed: "Manasa was originally a local goddess worshipped by the non-Aryans as represented by the cowherds, the farmers and the fishermen, but by and by she came to gain popularity, first among the women-folk of the upper classes and then among the upper class men including the Brahmins."

There is another peculiar aspect of the cult of Manasa established in the society. The goddess was worshipped by the Muslims also and it was supported by textual evidence. Hasan-Husen inspired by their mother, Bibi Fatema, worshipped Padmini with such devotion offering all sorts of requisites including nine lakhs of animal sacrifice. Scholars hold the opinion that there is evidence of Muslim relation with the worship of Padmini in the Manasa Kavya of Manakara also. The poet in his "Jagarang Cit" (invocation) tries to arouse the petency of the "Manapana", the holy "Purna Ghata", the burning "dipa-dhupa", the "Naivedya" and the votaries including "Mariyā Manali". Narayanadeva's Padmāpuraṇ reads the term as "Mariyā Mārinī". Regarding the term "Mariyā Mārinī" Dr. B.K. Baruah and Dr. S.N. Sarma, the two pioneers in the field of the study of Manasa literature in Assamese held the opinion that the term means Muslim community "Mariyā" who according to the popular belief prevalent in Kāmrūp and Mangaldai sub-division of Darrang are supposed to introduce first Manasa worship.

32. Ibid., P 9.
33. Appendix A, P 45.

In Mangaldai sub-division of Darrang, there were many Muslim ojās who recited "Sukanant" till the first quarter of the twentieth century. In Nalbari Sub-division of Kāmrūp also Muslim ojās recited the verses of Manakara and Durgābāra.
But according to our opinion the term refers to the vetary of "Māreī" (Manasa is known as Māreī in Kārzūp) and his wife. In this connection the meaning of the term put forward by Dr. S. Sen as Ḫajamānān "Yajamān O Yajamān-Patjīnī" i.e. vetary and his wife is worth mentioning.

Thus the cult of Manasa, in course of time, got much popularity amongst people of all classes irrespective of caste and creed and had occupied equal status with all the gods and goddesses worshipped by the Hindus.