Chapter: 2
Goddess Cults and Cult Centres in Rajasthan: a contemporary overview:

Sources:

The sources for a contemporary over-view of goddess cults and cult centres in Rajasthan mainly include the Gazetteers, the Census Reports, the Village Survey Monographs and other secondary sources written and researched by various social scientists. The following sources provide us information regarding the cult centres for female deities, their location, acceptance and their forms of worship in the society of Rajasthan.

The cult centres as pointed out in the sources are located both in the towns and the villages. The temples like those of Siladevi, Kalikamata and Karnimata are located in the towns of Rajasthan and Burmanidevi, Sitalamata (Sitala) and Heelmata temples are found to be located in the villages. Siladevi temple is situated in Amber of Jaipur, Kalikamata in Udaipur and Karnimata temple in Bikaner. Burmanidevi temple is situated in the village of Nangal Soosawatan, Sitalamata in Ābaneri and Heelmata temple in the village of Ganvi. In each of these temples people come to offer their worship to the female deities. Festival like Navaratra is organized in each of these temples.

The Gazetteers and other secondary sources provide us references to a large number of female deities.¹ The available references to the goddesses contain two of the main categories: the non-Sanskritic-non-Puranic (also the local/indigenous) and the Sanskritic-Puranic (also the Brahmanic). For example the goddesses like Kailadevi, Heelmata and Peelmata are accepted as local goddesses and Kalikamata, Ambadevi and Brahmanidevi are the

¹ See the table in the end of the chapter
Sanskritic-Puranic goddesses. The basic features of the local and the Sanskritic-Puranic goddesses as derived from our sources are simple and straight. The local goddesses do not have Sanskritic-Puranic names. They appear to have originated and risen into prominence in a particular locality, adopted and patronized by the clan/community living in the area of their origin. Even spiritual grandeur of them is limited and confined to the locality of their origin. They have their local legends. The Brahmanic goddesses have more pan-Indian Puranic names and legends. Their religious eminence is not confined to a particular locality it, rather, spreads far beyond that. The sources also reveal that each and every female deity is linked either to a particular clan/family or a community. Each clan and community promotes and patronizes its own female deity. The female deities like Jogmaya, Sachiyamata, Swanjiaji and Siladevi are linked to respective clans like Rathor Rajputs, Oswals, Bhattis and Kachwaha Rajputs. Karnimata, Hingulajmata, Harshatmata and Sitalamata are linked to their respective communities of Raikas, Charanas, Pushkarna Brahmanas and Meenas. Such a typology of the goddesses is elaborately discussed in the sources.

The Village Survey Monographs of Rajasthan provide us a good deal of information regarding goddess tradition in the villages of Rajasthan. It reveals links of clans/communities to its goddesses, fairs and festivals held in the name of the goddesses and the rituals adopted to invoke female deities. The most important and elaborate information given in the sources is about the Kula Devi tradition. The sources reveal that most of family deities (Kula Devi) have their local origin and have close link with it. The spiritual grandeur of most of such goddesses is confined to their locality and most of such
female deities are not known outside their place of origin. For example, goddesses like Ashadevi, Jiwanmata, Sirsadevi and Bangamata originated in the villages of Ganvi, Nangal Soosawatan, Bhangarh and Ramnagar respectively and religious eminence of each of them is confined to their villages.

The indigenous goddesses are not only greatly revered in their own locality, but, rather also, considered at par with all other deities belonging to any sect or creed, sources reveal. As for Jogmaya it is reported that Charans are closely affiliated to Her and they have erected the temple in Her name. Sources also reveal that they feel so close to Jogmaya that they can sacrifice even their lives for Her.

The Village Monographs supply a good deal of information regarding fairs and festivals held in the name of the female deities. They inform that the festivals like Gangaur, Navarata, Sivarata (Sivaratri) and Teej are organized in the name of the female deities like Gauri, Durga and Parvati. On the occasion of Gangaur Gauri is invoked together with Siva and on Sivarata Parvati with Siva. Navarata and Teej festivals are solely dedicated to female deity Durga. Months and week-days for celebration of each of the festivals are well pointed out in the sources. It is also pointed out that each of the festival is organized together with fair.

Pattern of spatial Divisions: tribal, rural, urban, sub-regional, regional:

The identity of Rajasthan as a region has emerged gradually. Each part of Rajasthan has its own separate identity. The geographical variation, ecological and ethnographic composition always has created difficulty to

3 Ibid. Nangal Soosawatan, p. 33
4 Ibid. Bhangarh, pp. 4-5
5 Ibid. Ramnagar, p. 32
identify the actual boundary of the state. The region of Rajasthan has two landscapes of great contrast: the large desert areas of Marwar, and the Aravalli ranges and the plateau basins of Mewar. Here I shall briefly take into account the physical division of the regions of Mewar and Marwar, caravan centres, local markets, and economic organization. The peripheries of the sub-regions of two of the regions of Mewar and Marwar have also been discussed.

As mentioned above, Rajasthan consists of two major physical divisions: one, Aravalli Range, running northeast-southwest through the center of the state for over 600 km. It separates the Thar desert from the plains and the plateaus of eastern Rajasthan. Moreover, it divides Rajasthan into north-western and south-eastern divisions. Two, Marusthali, falls in the west of Rajasthan. It is a long stretch of arid zone. Such physical diversities reveal that Rajasthan does not consist of homogeneous physical or natural regions.

Mewar region falls in the south-eastern division of Rajasthan. Udaipur, Chittaurgarh, Bhilwara, Banswar, Dungarpur are some of the districts of Mewar region. Due to its conducive and congenial ecological factors, moderate rainfall, cultivable soil of south-eastern division, Mewar attracted a larger population to settle there in. Wheat is an important crop of Mewar. Its north-eastern and south-eastern zones contains greater amount of mineral resources. Iron-ore is an important mineral of north-eastern and south-eastern zone. In the south-east of Udaipur is situated the Zawar mines which are famous for hoard of lead-zinc. Lead and zinc are available in Rikhaldeo and Debari in Udaipur districts, Ghughra and Mando in Dungarpur district.

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8 V.C. Misra, op. cit., Delhi, 1967, pp.110-11
and Wardalia in Banswara district. All these places lie in the south-eastern part of Rajasthan. In north-east there are various pockets in which we find the hoards of lead-zinc. The areas are as follows: Chanth-Ki-Bärwara in Sawai Madhopur district and Gudha Kisoridha in Alwar district. Copper and Mica ores are also two important products in Mewar. Copper ores are found in Bhilwar, Churu and Jhalawar districts. Mica is found in Dungarpur, Bundi and Sikar.

Within the well-recognized region of Mewar, some of the researchers have located traditional sub-regions in it on the basis of nuclei of core areas and peripheries. The physical division of Mewar comprises two distinctive geographical sub-regions of upper Banas plain and Mewar hills. In upper Banas plain lie the modern districts like Bhilwara, Chittaurgarh and Rajsamand and eastern tahsil of Udaipur districts like Mavali and Vallabhanagar. The river Banas and its tributaries like Khari, Kothari, Berach, Gambhiri and Wagar are main source of water for whole of the plain. There is an extensive agricultural activity in the Banas plain and the cultivable food items are maize, wheat, cotton, sugarcane etc. In Bhilwara and Chittaurgarh district, there is enough black soil where cotton is produced in greater amount. The Mewar hill covers area of 17,007 km of Mewar region of Rajasthan. The northern part of Mewar hill consists of Udaipur districts except two of its eastern tahsils like Mavali and Vallabhanagar and

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9 H.D. Sankalia, *Archaeology in Rajasthan*, Udaipur, 1988, p. 74
10 Ibid. pp. 122-23
13 R.K. Dhabai, “*Regional Structure of Mewar*, M.Phil. Dissertation (Unpublished), Centre for Studies in Regional Development, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1975, p.110
The southern part of Mewar hill comprises Mahi basin linked to the districts of Dungarpur and Banswara. The highest part of Mewar hill is called Bhorat plateau. Merwar region of Mewar hill is situated between Kumbhalmer (Kumbhalgarh) and Ajmer. Mahi basin of Mewar hill has moderate rainfall that is likely to be 50-100 cm. The south-eastern part of Mahi basin is full of forest trees and south-west have ridges, grass and valleys. The food crop products in Mahi basin are maize, gram, oilseeds, barley and wheat.

The Mewar hill sub-region is greatly inhabited with the Bhils and Gerasia. Bhils were ancient inhabitants of the Aravallis and even today they are largely distributed. Majority of inhabitants in this part is tribe. The Bhorat plateau is occupied with the Bhils, and is divided into two: one, the south-western division is known as the Kotra Bhomat; other is Merwara. The Merwara is inhabited with the tribe of Mers. The table given below reflects the strength of the Bhil population in Mewar hill of Rajasthan:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the District Division</th>
<th>Number of Bhils</th>
<th>Percentage of Bhils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

16 Ibid. pp. 169-81
17 C.E. Yate, *Meywar and Partabgarh, Gazetteer of Maywar, Vol. III*, (1880), quotes Tod: the Bhils are "uncultivated mushrooms of India, fixed, as the rocks and trees of their mountain wilds, to the spot which gave them birth" pp. 65-66; Subhashini Aryan, *Folk Bronzes of Rajasthan*, 1994, opines that the area of Mewar (Meywar) consists of a large population of the community of Bhils. p. 7; Maj. K.D. Erskine, Reprint, 1992, points out that the Bhils are in the majority among the indigenous people. They dwell in large number in South-East of Rajasthan. p. 169
21 Moj. K.D. Erskine, 1908, Reprint, 1992, p. 227
Udaipur 1,18,138 11%
Banswara 1,04,329 63%
Dungarpur 33,887 34%
Partabgarh 11,513 22%

Some local legends also reflect the inhabitation of the Bhils in areas of Mewar hill.

Local interpretations for the origin of the names of Banswara suggest the fact that the area of Banswara is a tribal zone. Banswara is said to be a corrupt form of Vasnawara and the territory takes its name from a Bhil Chieftain, Vasna whose pal or village was on the site of the present capital and who was defeated and slain in about 1530 by Jagmal, the younger son of Rawal Udai Singh of Bagar. This interpretation is not acceptable to all. Others assert that the word Vasnawara means the country (wara) of the bamboo (bans). In Banswara in the Khalsa villages (names of the Khalsa villages not mentioned), the Bhils are found to hold thirty seven percent of the cultivation and in the un-surveyed villages they held practically the whole of the land. Villages like Khjoora, in the district of Banswara situated in the north-eastern side of Kushalgarh are fully inhabited by the Bhils.

22 D.O. Lodrick, Rajasthan As A Region: Myth or Reality? in K. Schomer, J.L. Erdman, D.O. Lodrick, L.I. Rudolph (ed.), Idea of Rajasthan, Exploration in Regional Identity, Vol. 1, American Institute of Indian Studies, 1994, reports that in 1981 the population of Bhils in the southern districts of Dungarpur and Banswara had riven as high as 64.4% and 72.6% respectively, p. 19
23 Maj. K.D. Erskine, 1908, Reprint, 1992, p. 159
24 C.S.Gupta (edit.), 1961, Khajoora, p.32-33
Local interpretations given for the origin of the Dungarpur also suggest substantial presence of the Bhils in Dungarpur. The word Dungarpur is derived from *dungar*, meaning a hill or mountain, while others say that the state takes its name from its capital, Dungaria, whom Rawal Bir Singh caused to be assassinated in the fourteenth century.\textsuperscript{25} Bhils are widely scattered habitants in Dungarpur.\textsuperscript{26} Here in Dungarpur the Bhils formed more than one-third of the population and are found throughout the territory, but are least numerous in the north-east.\textsuperscript{27} The forest areas of Banswara, Dungarpur and Patabgarh Darbaras are inhabited with the Bhils. Here, trained Forest Officers are appointed to prevent Bhils from felling trees. “The Bhils, who are incorrigible in these matters, live in the heart of the best forests.”\textsuperscript{28} “In olden days, the territory now comprising the states of Dungarpur and Banswara was called the Bagar, the land, as couplet tells us, “of five gems, namely water, rocks, leaves, abusive language, and looting of clothes”. It was occupied chiefly by Bhils and to a small extent by Rajputs of the Chauhan and Paramara clans, and was gradually taken from them by the Sesodias during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.”\textsuperscript{29}

In Udaipur\textsuperscript{30} the tribe may be divided into two distinct classes: one inhabiting the wild of the Chappan in the south-east, and the other found in the plain country, more particularly in Jahazpur. Jahazpur *zila* (district) in the north-east, a portion of which is included in the rugged tract of county known as the Mina Kherar, is known to be the home of Parihar Minas, claiming half-blood with the famous Parihar Rajputs of Mandor. Twenty one

\textsuperscript{25} Maj. K.D. Erskine, 1908, Reprint, 1992, p. 127  
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid. p. 136  
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid. p. 138  
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid. p. 176  
\textsuperscript{29} Maj. K.D. Erskine, 1908, Reprint, 1992, p. 131  
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid. p. 35
GODDESSES AND THE CENTRES OF GODDESS WORSHIP IN
EARLY RAJASTHAN (7th to 15th CENTURY)

Thesis submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Marwar region is famous for rearing of the best cattle, sheep, goats and camels. Camel rearing is the monopoly of Marwar region of Rajasthan. Bikaner is the main producer of cattle and supplier to other parts of Rajasthan. Cattles are supplied to the Chittarurgarh area via Churu, Sikar, Jaipur, Ajmer, Pali and Udaipur. In fact, south-eastern part of Mewar is dependent upon the north-western of Marwar region for dairy products.

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36 S.P. Chatterjee, ‘Physiography’, *The Gazetteer of India, I*, Delhi, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1965, p. 34

draught animals and for the Mallani horses. Jodhpur is famous for the production of shell bangles. Marwar contains some important minerals like gypsum, lignite, ceramic and fuller's earth.\textsuperscript{38} The available building materials here are marble, asbestos, bentonite, soapstone and tungsten.\textsuperscript{39}

On the basis of physical features, the researchers have made divisions of some traditional sub-regions in the Marwar region of Rajasthan that are as follows: the Luni Basin, Nagaur, the Ghaggar Plain and the Shekhawati. The Luni basin consists of various important towns of Rajasthan like Jodhpur, Pipar, Bihara, Siyal town, Pali, Sadri, Balotra, Jalore and Dhimal. Nagaur is known for variant natural bonanza like salt lakes, land drainage, rocky and hilly areas. On the salt lakes are the areas like Didwana, Degna, Ladnu, Nagaur, Kunhaman, Nawa, Makrana, Parabatsar, Merta including Sambhar. The Ghaggar plain is comparatively the most agriculturally productive part in the Marwar region of Rajasthan. The whole of Ghaggar plain contains two of the important tracts like Ganganagar plain and Nohar-Bhadra plain. Both the plains are famous for crop production. The famous towns of Ghaggar plain are Ganganagar, Nohar, Karunpur, Bhadra, Raisinghnagur and Sangaria. Sekhawati plain, known for its agriculturally productive area, is divided into two main parts (i) the north-east Churu region and (ii) the western Sikar-Jhunjhunu plain.\textsuperscript{40}

\textbf{Cultural Distribution:}

Mewar hills and Banas plains of Mewar have evidence of the presence of cult centres for various deities. The temple of Aranyavasini came into

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid. p. 59
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid. p. 60
shape in the hilly areas of Mewar. Ekalinga, Saiva temple, one of the most famous cult centres of Rajasthan, is constructed on the Trijuta hills at Nagahrdra. The area of upper Banas plain also has the evidence of emergence of the various cult centres at different points of time. Chittaurgarh lying in Banas plain holds upmost cultural importance in the region of Mewar. The temple of Bharmamata is located in Chhoti Sadri lying in the southern part of Chittaurgarh district bordering Mandasaur touching to the part of the upper Banas plain. Temples for Kalikamata and Kumbhasyama are constructed upon the hill in the town of Chittaurgarh. A temple for Ksemankari is constructed and situated in Chittaurgarh in the dry tank right in front of the Kalikamata temple.

Under the physical division of Mewar and Marwar, the part of Sirohi, lying in the south of Rajasthan, to the west of Aravalli, is inhabited by tribes and it draws greater cultural significance. The temple of Ksemarya

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41 Nandini Sinha Kapur, State Formation in Rajasthan, Manohar, Mewar during the Seventh-Fifteenth centuries, 2002, p. 37
43 D.C. Sircar, EI, vol. XXX, Two Inscriptions of Gauri, No. 22, Chhoti Sadri Inscription, year 547, pp. 120-24;
44 C. Lin-Bodiaen, “Chronology of Chandravti, Kusma, Chitorgarh: A Case Study in the use of Epigraphic and Stylistic Evidence” Archives of Asian Art 33, 1980, informs that Manabhanga, an early eight-century Maurya ruler may have been responsible for the construction of the early Surya and Siva temples. pp. 49-64
46 Memoranda of Information Regarding Certain Native Chiefs, Vol. III, Rajpootana, No. XVII, Sirohi, available in Central Secretariat Library, Delhi, reports that Sirnooe, the area located in south-west of Rajasthan, is corrupted to Sirohi (p.1). C.A. Baylay, Gazetteer of Meywur, Memoranda of Information Regarding Certain Native Chiefs, Vol. III, Rajpootana, No. XVII, Sirohi, 1880, available in Central Secretariat Library, Delhi, states that from the chronicles and records of Sirohi it appears that the first inhabitants were the Bhils, whose system of Government was patriarchal, their chiefs being the heads of the families. Their villages were all in the hills. Grains were not produced and people subsisted on their flocks. Before the advent of the Rajputs, it is said that no cultivation was made and no grain was grown and the Bhils had been surviving upon their flock, the wild products of the earth, and by the chase. The first clan of Rajputs, the Gehlots, came to settle here. All possibly that the tribes held their sovereignty at Edar – now one of the Mahikanta states, situated not at a great distance from Abu. Tribes then settled down at Dungarpur, which they still hold under the title of “Aharya” as referred in Tod’s Rajasthan, 2nd edition, vol. I, chapter VII, p. 77. Memoranda of Information Regarding Certain Native Chiefs, Vol. III, Rajpootana, No. XVII, Sirohi, informs that with passage of time Paramaras took over control of Sirohi.
(Ksemankari) is situated in Vasantgarh in the district of Sirohi.\(^{47}\) Dadhimatimata temple, another important centre for cultural activities is located in Nagaur.\(^{48}\) Osian, situated in the Luni basin in the region of Marwar, is one of the prolific grounds of the growth of cult centers.\(^{49}\) Contiguous to its areas are the temples constructed at Buckala,\(^{50}\) Bhundana,\(^{51}\) Bhitu,\(^{52}\) Auwa,\(^{53}\) Khed,\(^{54}\) Pali,\(^{55}\) and Bali.\(^{56}\)

Bikaner and Jaisalmer have the evidences of the growth of Jain as well as Hindu cult centres. In Bikaner and in its tehsils like Taranagar, Reni, Nohar and at Palu\(^{57}\) are the Jain temples are constructed. Other than the Jain temples, cult centres for local female deities are also constructed. At Desnok in Bikaner, a temple for KarniDevi is famous for its religious significance.\(^{58}\) In Jaisalmer greater number of temples for Swanjiaji is constructed.\(^{59}\)

**Clan/Family deity (Kula Devi), Community deity:**

The Kula Devi and the community female deity can be identified two separate types of the goddesses. They are found different to each other in

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\(^{49}\) D.R. Bhandarkar, “The Temples of Osian”, *ARASI*, 1908-09; A. Kalia, *Art of Osian Temples*


\(^{51}\) D.R. Bhandarkar, *PRASIWC*, 1911, p. 6


\(^{54}\) M.W. Meister and M.A. Dhaky (ed.), op. cit. 254-59, pls. 569-77

\(^{55}\) E. I. Vol. 39, No. 27

\(^{56}\) *PRASIWC*, 1907-08, p. 48-49


respect of their space of influence and occasion. The Kula Devi as such is found associated with a particular clan and the family, associated with a clan, and is invoked for the good of a singly member of the family or for the family as a whole. Community female deity is linked to the community as a whole and deity is invoked on particular occasion in association with each of the member for the welfare of the community. For example, the Kula Devis like Nagnecheji, Siladevi and Sachiyamata remained associated with respective clans/families like Rathor Rajputs, Kachvaha Rajputs and Oswals. But the female deities like Hinglajmata, Karniji remained associated with the respective communities like Charans and Raikas. But both Kula Devis and community female deities are found equal and same in their spiritual potency and religious grandeur, but they were different in their space of influence and occasion.

**Clan/Family deity (Kula Devi):**

One of the distinctive types of the goddess worship in Rajasthan is the form of the Kula Devi. Kula Devi has an independent image, free from link with the male deity. She is linked to varied clans/communities and sub-communities of Rajasthan. She is considered to be the sentinel of the family, real protectress of the family members. She is understood as *Pativarata/Suhagan*, virgin, symbol of fertility, a warrior in the battlefield, moral support to the rulers, a Satimata, a bundle of virtues, a

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60 People believe that Kula Devi helps to produce child. The goddesses are the key for increasing fertility in woman. If birth of a child takes place by the grace of the goddess, the child will have some uncommon abilities.

61 The temperament of a Kula Devi in the battlefield is different to the Kali. A Kula Devi, we understand, does not lose her temper like Kali. For Kali, it is narrated that when she turned ferocious fighting with the enemies in the battlefield she began killing her own people. This is not the case with Kula Devi. Kula Devi's temper is always under control and is always keen providing protection to her own people. Kula Devi is more similar to Matrikas who are motherly at domestic level and in the war field they are present to succor deities. *Devi Mahatmya* of David Cuborn, op. cit. (314-16) informs that Saptamatakas are produced to fight with the demon. Michael Meister's "Regional Variations in Matrikas Conventions" *Artibus Asia*. 47, Nos. 3-4, 1986: pp.233-46 (242ff) informs that Matrikas have the motherly elements and they bestow love.
family member and a ferocious lady if she is avoided. Kula Devi is "a supreme deity who grants them valour and strength."62 Origin of Kula Devi generally has the local background. This tradition has strong impact upon the psyche of the people of Rajasthan.

The Kula Devi in Rajasthan is acknowledged as real protectress of the families. It is understood that family deity is the "foremost divine guardian of the fortune and honour"63 of the members of the clan/family. She has the multifaceted image among the people. She stands together with family members in all sorts of family and social problems. The members have staunch faith in her. They think that she is able to rescue them in the event of crisis. Family members acknowledge her as the member of the family. Admata is called "spinster auntie" of the family.64

Married woman feels more close to the Kula Devi.65 For them the Kula Devi is a married woman and in local terms they call Kula Devi Patentrata

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on Kartikeya. Rajput women of Rajasthan have the same impression for their Kula Devi that she is an independent fighter in the battlefield and is mother at domestic level. She is the combination of 'maternal and martial form.' But the story of Bhukmata, Hungry Mother, provides us a different idea about Kula Devi. It is said that in the second battle of Sisodiyas with Alau-d-din who was committed to conquer Chitor, the capital city. The Sisodiya ruler was very upset after the battle. In this state of mind he heard a deep voice coming from far of place. In the voice it was uttered that 'I am hungry' and then his Kula Devi appeared. The king told Kula Devi that you are still unhappy as thousands of Rajputs sacrificed their life in the battlefield. The Kula Devi wanted regal blood. So one night when the king was busy in council meeting she appeared there and asked blood of his sons. The king decided to move himself in the battlefield to sacrifice so that his sons will remain safe. This story Bhukmata portrays the Kula Devi as a devourer of her devotees.

M.N.M, The Hind Rajasthan, privately published as a tribute to H.H. Maha Raol Shri Pratapsingh Gulabsinghji, Bansda, 1896, narrates that the story of Kula Devi Ad Mata. He depicts Ad Mata as a deity of peculiar nature. She is one of the deities who devour her devotees in order to protect them. According to the version known to the Dhrangara branch of the Jhala line, she ate the leg of Harpal, the Jhala founder. He had offered it to her in a feast he had prepared for her at a Solamki Rajput cremation ground. After consuming his flesh, she restored him to health and enabled him to found a dynasty. pp. 511-13

62 V.K. Srivastava, op. cit. p. 124
63 Lyndsey Harlan, Religion & Rajput Women, The Ethic of Protection in Contemporary Narratives, Munshi Ram Manoharlal, 1994, p.52
64 This is term used for the goddesses which is quoted in the story telling.
65 Lyndsey Harlan, 1994, op. cit. p. 66
and Suhagan. People of Rajasthan also believe that Kula Devi is the virgin.\textsuperscript{66} Like a Pativrata she takes care of the whole family. She is committed to protect the whole family like a quintessential Suhagan.\textsuperscript{67} She is married and at the same time unmarried, depicts a very unique character of the deity. Ad mata and Karnimata are some examples of it.

Kula Devi, people believe, is always positive towards the family members. The common perception reveals that Kula Devi and Satimata are the same and both contain similar positive attitude. These deities, people say, can become angry if they are not offered regular worship. Out of wrath, the female deities can cause some physical infirmities to the family members. Even animals that are the mainstay of the families are affected due to their wrath. “Children and husbands are targets of Kula Devis if she is annoyed” Harlan says. At larger level, groups and units are also affected if she is annoyed. Certain narratives depict the consequences how groups and political units got affected due to wrath of the deity. Jamvaimata was primarily the Kula Devi of Minas. Minas least cared for the goddess. She got angry with them as they offered her non-vegetarian items. She, therefore, resolved to demolish their political strength. Jamvaimata then supported Dularai to defeat Minas. There is a story linked to Sachiyamata also. In the narrative it is stated that when people gave precedence to the Jain god over Sachiyamata, the goddess turned angry and brought death to many. People then offered her worship to save their own life. The wrath of the goddess has some strong reasons. It is not caused out of frustration of the goddess.

\textsuperscript{66} David Dean Shulman, \textit{Tamil Temple Myths: Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Saiva Tradition}. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980, quotes Teviparakkiramam 9 that Shakti (the goddess) is Bhavani (the great genetrix) and also Durga (the female warrior). The Kula Devis are, if even, unmarried, they are supposed to be mother to their proteges p. 310

\textsuperscript{67} I have quoted one of the legends in which Ad Mata is addressed ‘spinster auntie’ which suggests two aspects: (a) virgin and (b) family member
Various temples for the Kula Devi of Rajasthan have been constructed. Different clan/communities are the patrons of the Kula Devi. In the name of Jogmaya, there are the following temples: one in Auwa tehsil in Sojat district of Jodhpur and the other in the village of Kalijal in the district of Jodhpur. Jogmaya is accepted as the family deity for the Rathor Rajputs. Charans are the patrons of Jogmaya temple situated at Auwa and Rathors for Kalijal temple.

The Rathor Rajputs of Kalijal village also accepts Jogmaya as their family deity.68 Each family of Rathors in the village bears the expenses of the Kalijal temple and offers regular worship to Jogmaya in the temple. On the eve of Deshera a special worship is offered to her with the assistance of Rathors.69 Other than Jogmaya, Rathor Rajput has faith in some other Kula Devis like MansaDevi, Pankhaei, Rashtrasena and Naganeechi. They think that each of these Kula Devi is linked to four of the epochs: Sat Yug, Dwapar Yug, Tita Yug and Kali Yug. They say that MansaDevi is associated with the epoch of Sat Yug, Pankhaei with Dwapar, Rashtarsena with Tita and Naganeechi with Kali Yug.70

The temple of Sachiyamata is situated in the town of Osi or Osian,71 the headquarter of a tehsil of the same name. It is about 68 km north-west of Jodhpur city, lying between 25° 51' and 27° 40' North Latitude and 71° 44" and 72° 30" East Longitude spread over an area of 22,860 square kilometers. The temple of Sachiyamata (or Durga Mahishasuramardini), constructed at the top of the hill, is one of the celebrated temples of Jains. Now the whole place is known by her name and people from far and wide

68 C.S.Gupta (ed.), Kalijal, 1961, the source do not highlight at all about the shape of image of the goddess p.29
70 Ibid. p. 245-46
71 Osian is also spelt as Osi, Ausian, Osiya etc.
come to visit this place. It is the most sacred place in Marwar. Osian was once an important cultural commercial center of Marwar, it is only a straggling town now. The name of the important city Osian, has been changing from Melur Pattan, Osaspattan, Okeshpur, Upeshpur and finally to Osian.

The temple for Sachiyamata is constructed at the top of the hill. It is the most celebrated temple. Even people from as far South as Patanpur come to visit this place. Oswal Jains have peculiar regard for this goddess. They take all care of the shrine. Its structure is renovated and resurrected but its location holds the same place. Oswals organize tonsuring ceremony of their children here. They offer sumptuously to the goddess on marriage ceremony. The worshippers dare not to pass the night at Osia without paying homage to the goddess. If they do so, they are sure to be overtaken by some calamity or the other. Her worship during the Navaratas is especially popular.

In the temple of Sachiyamata there are images of various other male-female deities and all those deities are respected and revered by the community of Oswals. Candika and Sitala exist on the northern wall and Ksemankari and Ksetrapala on the southern, all in pillared niches. Principal back niche of the Sachiya temple contains an image of Mahishasuramardini which corresponds to the name Saccika of the epigraph. Under the sukanasa are two rows of sculptured panels. The upper register depicts Mahishasuramardini in the centre, Nirti and Yam on her right and Varun and Bhairava on the left. The second row displays Ganesa in the centre with

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72 D.R. Bhandarkar, *ARASI*, 1908-09 pp. 100-03
74 D.R. Bhandarkar, *ARASI*, 1908-09 pp. 100-03
75 Devendra Handa, *Osian: History, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*, p. 15
Brahama, Indra and Agni on his right and Visnu, Siva and Kubera on his left. Ganesa is also over the karna-srngas.

Nagnecheji is the family deity (Kula Devi) of Rathor Rajputs of Jodhpur and Bikaner. Swanjihiji is family deity for the Bhatis of Jaisalmer state also. Temples for Swanjiaji are erected at various places in Bikaner and Jaisalmer. Members of Sewag community are the priests of the Nagnechi temple located in Bikaner. In Navaratra and on other occasions special worship to the goddess is offered all through Bikaner. The worshipers, on the eve of Navaratra, install ghat (pitcher) in the temple and also at homes in the name of the goddess. A fair is held before the start of the festival. Temples of Devi are decorated with electric lights and the images of Nagnechi ji in the Bikaner temple are also decorated with beautiful saries, flowers and ornaments. Vedic incantations are recited at the time of installation of the ghat and for other puja rituals. Particularly at homes other than the ghat, on the eve of Navarata, mark of trident and swastik are made on the walls with the colourful paste of oil and vermilion.

On the day of Vijaya Dashmi Solanki Sardars sacrifice buffalo in the name of Devi. The image of Naganechi is in the form of Mahishasuramadani. Goddess Swanjiaji is worshipped by the common masses of Jaisalmer in the name of goddess Kalka.

One of the temples for Swanjiaji situated three miles to the south of Tannot is named as a temple of Ghatiyali Ray. The origin of temple of Ghatiyali Ray contains a legend. People believe that once Swanjiyaji had

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76 Lindsey Harlan, op. cit. 1994, pp. 56-57  
77 L. Harisingh Bhatti, Ghazni Se Jaisalmer (Bhattiya Ka Purva Madhyakalin Itihas), XVII (V), 1998, p. 590  
78 Hindi Newspaper released in Bikner named “Patrika”, 3rd April, 2003  
79 Dr. Hukum Singh Bhati (Director, Pratap Sodh Pratishtahn, Udaipur), Bhattiya Ki Kula Devi – Swangiyun, Un-published Paper, Available in Idian Council of Historical Reseach, Delhi
been returning from Tannot. On way to Jaisalmer she killed a demon named Ghantiya and saved people, therefore, the temple was named by the name of Ghantiya. There are many such temples dedicated to Swanjia ji but they are named differently. These temples are as follows: Temple of Kalo Dungar Raya, Temple of Bhadriya, Temple of Tannod Ray, Temple of Temare Ray, Temple of Gahatiyali Ray, Temple of Dev Ray and Devalaya Gajruo Sagar.80

The temple of Siladevi or Silamata is constructed in the precincts of the fort of Amber in the town of Jaipur. It is known for its eminence. This temple is popular for its religious importance in and outside the territory of Jaipur. The goddess Siladevi is a manifested form of Amba and her devotees since the earlier time are supposed to be the Meenas.81 The temple for Devi is constructed by Kachvaha ruler Maharaja Man Singh I in 1604.82

Mina (Meenas) is a tribe found in Rajasthan mainly concentrating in each north-eastern parts of Rajasthan and they hold strong faith in the Shakti cult. Each of the clan of Mina that is eighty in number has its own mother goddess. They hold their female deity in high esteem. Their family goddesses are Jiwanmata,83 Sitalamata,84 Burmanidevi85 and Siladevi.86 They are the worshippers of Durga and the warrior Siva’s wife Parvati also.87 Minas claim that the origin of Siladevi is linked to them and, therefore, they have special regard for the Devi. But Subhashini Aryan88 postulates that the

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80 Ibid.
83 C.S.Gupta (ed), 1961, Nangal Sooswatan, p. 33
84 Ibid. p. 33
85 Ibid. p. 33
87 Subhashini Aryan, *Folk Bronzes of Rajasthan*, 1994, p. 44
88 Ibid. p. 11
aboriginal tribes of the Meenas were the devout worshipers of Amba. Therefore they gave the name of Amber to their village. Association with Siladevi is a later development.

The image of Siladevi is in the form of Kali. It is the sole image in the temple. Rosita Forbes gives a vivid description of her image. "The appalling goddess within the second gate at Amber wears serpents round her waist and a necklace of human skull. Blackened with age and evil, reeling with the blood of sacrifice.......... She has hideous hanging breast, her protruding tongue thirsty for blood, her crooked limbs and black shriveled body". Forbes is of the opinion that goddess Kali always remained in inspiration for the unsocial elements of the society and so she writes that the goddess was "the inspiration of the thugs. The professional murderers offered the fearful Kali with proportions of the goods left from the travellers whom they had strangled". She again quotes the rituals followed for her worship. "At Amber a heap of rags and some blood-stained sand where goats are beheaded by the priests shows of the sinister goddess." 89

Navarata is an important festival organized with great pomp and show in the temple of the goddess Siladevi at Amber. People assemble in large numbers on Navarata to visit the shrine and offer worship to Devi. The Kachwahas who are the patrons of the temple, visit the shrine to offer worship to the Siladevi. They bear the expenses incurred on the days of the festival.

Abaneri, now a village, situated in the district of Jaipur of Rajasthan has a famous temple of Harshatmata.\textsuperscript{90} The Harshatmata cult is a very old tradition followed quite widely in the west of India. We have traces of the advent of this tradition from Sind in the past ages. The original temple of Harshatmata is situated at a distance of 10 miles from Dwarka. People believe that King Vikramditya of Ujjain persuaded Devi to come to Ujjain. Devi agreed and since then, the goddess resides at Harsiddhi temple of Ujjain in the day and at Dwarka in the night.

Local people believe that the village Abaneri is named after the name of Harshatmata. The “joyful mood” of the Devi is linked with the name of the village. It is said that the word \textit{abha} means, the brightness oozing out of the face of the Devi, so it is called \textit{Abha Nagri}. Abaneri is better known to the historical world as the \textit{Abhay Nagri}, literally the “fearless city” of Raja Bhoj.\textsuperscript{91} The principal image in the temple is of Mahishasuramardini. Besides the image of Mahishasuramardini, images for various other deities like Ganesa, Siva, Parvati are also carved upon the walls of the temple. Some fragmentary images of Narshimha and Ardhanarisvara are also discovered.\textsuperscript{92}

The goddess Harshatmata is closely linked with the members of Pushkarna clan of Brahmama community. The Pushkaranas are the worshipers of the goddess Lakshmi of the Hindu tradition as well. The Pushkarnas claim that they emanated from the grace of the goddess Lakshmi and goddess Lakshmi gave the name of Pushkarna to them. The mythological narratives speak about the origin of the Pushkarnas.\textsuperscript{93}

\textsuperscript{91} C.S.Gupta (ed.) Abaneri, 1961, p.32-34
\textsuperscript{92} C. P. Atherton, 1997, op. cit. pp. 64-67
\textsuperscript{93} K.S. Singh, (Gen. Edit.), 1998, pp. 760-764
story follows that: “At his daughter Lakshmi’s marriage rishi Bhrigu had invited rishis and Brahmans. They numbered about fifty thousand of which five hundred Brahmans had come from Sindh (now in Pakistan). When Gautam rishi was offered dakshina first, the Brahmans of Sindh objected to it saying that all Brahmans are equal and they should be treated equally. On this issue, the remaining forty-five thousand Brahmans who were rishi Gautam’s disciples cursed the Sindh Brahmans. So the Sindh Brahmans were degraded from their high status of Brahmans and they went back to jungles for Tapasya in Shaal forests. Goddess Lakshmi conferred the name Pushkarna on them meaning one who makes teaching of religion and Veda strong. Henceforth, the descendants of those five hundred Sindh Brahmans are called Pushtikarna which in due course became Pahokarna or Pokarna or Pushkarna”. The story reflects that the Pushkarnas, in fact, came down to India from Sind and settled down in the west of Rajasthan together with the Harshat mata.

Pushkarnas built a temple for Harshatmata in the village of Abaneri in the district of Jaipur and the whole of its management is in the hand of Pushkarna Brahamanas.94 There is a tradition here that only the persons from Pushkarna clan will be appointed to do puja in the temple. Puja ritual is Brahmanical in nature. Caretakers and the priests for the temple are appointed only from members of Pushkarna clan.

Pushkarnas in Rajasthan have assembled in groups in different places of western Rajasthan and are quite in number. They are living in the west of Rajasthan in the areas of Jaisalmer, Bikaner, Jodhpur and Phalodi. Pushkarnas are called Vedapati; they are well versed in the knowledge of Veda. They are experts of puja like havan and other ceremonies. They

94 C.S.Gupta (edit.), Abaneri, 1961, p.32-34
always try to spread the knowledge of Veda and religion. Pushkarnas are one of the largest Brahman communities in Rajasthan.95

Lakshmi is also an important deity for the Pushkarnas. Like Harshatmata, Pushkarnas revere various other goddesses also96 who came down to Rajasthan from outside and are not directly linked to Brahmanic tradition. Such goddesses are as follows: Shakti Jatiyalji (Latiyalji or Jatiyedji), Ushtadevi, Chamunda, Ashapuri, Seengi Bhagwati, Dehramata, Sandhaji etc. These goddesses, it is believed, came from Sind. Sindhi Ji Kalla, a Pushkarna Brahman accompanying the deity, erected a temple for the female deity Shakti Jatiyal Ji on goddess’s instruction herself at Phalodi.

Community Deity:

In the west of Rajasthan, in Surpura, sub-tehsil of Bikaner in the areas of Deshnok (Deshnook), there is a famous temple of Karnimata and the goddess is commonly styled as Karniji. It is believed that in former time, the temple had a special significance that “any outlaw if he had reached the premise of the temple for refuge, it was the customary that he was forgiven punishment”.97

In Bikaner there are many temples dedicated to Karnidevi. Other than the famous temple of Deshnok, temple of Nehri and temple of Junagarh are also dedicated to Karnidevi. If we take into account all the temples constructed in various tehsils of Bikaner in the name of Kaniji, it is really quite significant in number. The temples are as follows: in Churu tehsil there are eleven temples for Karniji, in Ratangarh tehsil – twelve, in Sujangarh tehsil-

Raika,\footnote{K.S. Singh, (Gen. Edit.), 1998, p. 767} a pastoralist community, is linked to Karniji. They inhabit in thirty-six villages of Bikaner district. The bigger clans of these such as Gadhwala and Amarpura live in Bikaner tehsil, Udasar Raikan in Nokha, Baiju and Charanwal in Kolayat and Jaitpur in Lunkaransar. The rituals Raikas follow to worship Karniji, are different from those of other communities. The trend of blood sacrifice is unpopular among the Raikas. There is no calendrical ritual or rite of animal sacrifice in them. The mother is propitiated with sweetmeats. For instance, Karnimata in her principal temple at Deshnook is offered \textit{bali} but no such offering is made to her in the Gadhwals hamlet of Raikas. Female deities are conceptualized as role model mother for them. For the Raikas all the goddesses are equal and one. They do not differentiate the goddesses as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ and ‘mother’ or ‘whore’. The Raikas say that fundamentally the mother goddesses are all one,\footnote{O' Flaherty, \textit{Women, Androgynes and Other Mythical Beats}, Beasts, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980, p. 78} but they accept that there is varied type of goddesses and types are as follows: (a) for them some of the goddesses are known for their special aggressive mood. Under this category they put goddesses like Kali Ma, the fierce form of Chamunda Ma. The goddess is adorned with a necklace of skull; (b) goddesses are distinguished on the basis of the areas they migrated from. For instance Dilwara Ma, who migrated from Sadri-Desuri road from Dilwara; Mundaradevi, who originated in the village Mundara (c) the goddess like Sitalmata, the pox-goddess, is distinguished and known for causing temporary indispositions while Bayan Sa, the goddess who cures
stammering as well as the problems of infertility, is known for alleviating ailments; (d) some others are known for the place they dwell in like Jaldevi, the goddess who lives in water and Bayan Sa who travels in the air (e) there are goddesses who take care of the animals like Handmata - the goddess who rides camel.

All of the goddesses worshipped by the Raikas may be divided into four categories:101

1) The original goddesses, such a Kali Ma, Chamunda Ma, Sital Ma.
2) Incarnations of human form, like Karni Mata, who was born in a Charan family and helped Maharaj Bika Sing to found Bikaner (Powlett 1894: 98); the other example is the Dilwara Mata, who are the seven sisters born in Dilwara.
3) The wife of a god incarnate king who was later elevated to the status of a goddess, such as Bayan Sa, believed to be the wife of Ramdeo-ji.
4) Women who committed suicide to save the honour of their community or who followed their husbands or sons to death-pyre.

Rebaris and Raikas are linked to each other in some ways as the Raikas of Rajasthan call themselves Rebari in Gujarat.102 The members of Rebaris community settled down in two separate villages at Ganvi103 in the district of Jalore and also in the village of Kalijal104 in the district of Jodhpur. In the village of Ganvi the Rebaris have a separate Dhani105 in which all members of their community live together. The community of Rebaris lives in the

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101 V.S. Srivastava, Ek Alpagyat Devi – Ashwarurha Devi (A lesser known goddess who rides on a horse) (in Hindi), Rajasthan Patrika, 16, September: 5, 1990
102 V.K. Srivastava, op. cit., p. V
104 Ibid. Kalijal, p.29
105 Most of the villages of Rajasthan are divided in various Dhanis. Dhani is a piece of land in the village itself that is occupied by families of a particular community. For example in the old town of Bhangarh in the district of Alwar, now converted into village, is divided in four Dhanis and each Dhani is occupied separately by the Kolis and the Banjararas together, the Brahmans, the Nais and the Jogis.
village of Kalijal also. The Rebaris living at Ganvi respect goddess Chorasimata as their main deity. Each of the family of the community invokes Chorasimata at the time of their worship and on important occasions. Rebaris living in the village of Kalijal are the followers of the goddess VayanDevi. The group of Rebaris that bi-furcated and settled down at different places adopted deities named differently.

Hinglajmata temple is located in the village Mudh of Kolayal tehsil of Bikaner. She is considered to be a local goddess and is patronized by the Charanas. The goddesses are closely associated with the members of the Charan community. The place of the temple is locally called math, in course of time that came to be spoken as Mudh and it is from this word that the village derives its name. The temple really deserves some special attention. It consists of an image of goddess Hinglaj. Every villager is allowed to visit the temple of the goddess.

The Hinglajamata is widely worshipped in many places of India and has an interesting history of its own. The people of Bhansali or Bhavasar (weaver) caste in Maharashtra have staunch faith in the goddess. She is also worshipped by the Lambadis, also called Lamanis or Vanjaras, who are found living in tandas (cattle camps) in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The original home of Hinglajamata is in Baluchistan, below the peak of the same name on the bank of Hingol river (25° 30' N and 65° 31’ E). A pilgrimage to this place is considered a must for the Yogis of the Natha Sampradaya. The place is sacred for the Muslims also, who call her by Bibi Nani and consider her to be the same as Nainadevi of the Kulu Valley. It is believed that this mother goddess, in her original form, is Nana or Nanaia, or Nana-Shao, a Sumerian mother goddess. It is very likely that

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the worship of this deity was introduced and popularized in Maharashtra by the Lambadis (Vanjaras), \textsuperscript{107} who among others worshipped her for protection of their hazardous travels, as they carried goods on pack-animals along the transcontinental caravan routes. The worship of this deity may have begun in Maharashtra around the first or second century A.D. or perhaps earlier, when the Bhansali weavers specializing in dyeing and printing cloth possibly migrated from a distant region like Sindh-Baluchistan through Rajasthan and Gujarat and settled in the Deccan. No early images of this deity have been found. The goddess was primarily worshipped in the form of burning flame\textsuperscript{108} and quite possibly the image was non-descript vermilion-daubed stone which was later replaced by crude form of a Devi, perhaps Mahisasuramardini\textsuperscript{109}.

Charans of Mudh have constructed the temple for Hinglajmata. Her cult centre is an important pilgrimage centre. Charanas cherish of dreams to become like Hinglaj. They claim themselves to be the Shaktas and reverence their esteemed mother goddess. Charans participate in and perform all sorts of religious rituals for the goddess. They try to emulate in their daily life the

\textsuperscript{107} Irawati Karve, \textit{Maharashtra – Land and its People}, Maharashtra State, Directorate of Government Printing, 1968, observes that the wandering people identify themselves with distant and sacred places. She gives the example of the pastoralists in Maharashtra who worship Hinglajmata, p. 39; Catherine Weinberger-Thomas, \textit{Widow Burning in India, Ashes of Immortality}, trns. by Jeffery Mehlman, Oxford Univ. Press, 2000, also talks about the Hinglajmata. According to her Goddess “seat” (pitha) of Hinglaj appeared in eastern Baluchistan on the Makran coast (the Las bela District of present-day) and gradually her incarnations spread in different periods as in Sind, Kutch, and Saurashtra to the south and the Thar desert to the north. The goddess is considered partial incarnation of the primeval Shakti. She incarnated in forms of Hinglaj at Makran, Jaisalmer in Avar, Asapura at Matanomadh and Khodiyar Bhavnagar. All other energies are believed to have been impersonation of the goddess. pp. 156-157

\textsuperscript{108} Kalyan ‘Tirthanak’ year 1957, pp. 516, 585

\textsuperscript{109} M.N. Deshpande, “Some Aspects of Folk Religion in the Konkan and Desh Regions of Maharashtra” in G.D. Sontheimer (ed.), \textit{Folk Culture, Folk Religion and Oral Traditions as a component in Maharashtrian Culture}, Manohar, 1995, p. 173; Vidya Dehejia, \textit{Yogini cult and temple}, A Tantric tradition, New Delhi: National Museum, 1986, states that no image of the Yoginis out of sixty-four is traced in Khajuraho. Our only data consists of photographs of three Yoginia. The first Yogini, labeled Hinglaja is clearly Mahisasuramardini, the inscription providing us with a local name for this important, widely worshipped goddess. It is also stated that cult center of Hinglaj mata is established on the mouth of river Hingol on the border of Sind-Baluchistan, p. 116.
ideals and ethos linked to the goddess. Charans have some special importance in Rajasthan. This community is linked with various kinds of mythical stories. Charans are called “children of the Goddess (Deviputra). As such they are possessed of her energy (Shakti), and the holy terror it inspires.110 “Charans trace their origin from the Shakti. They believe in eighty-four extra ordinary incarnations of the Goddess in their community. Awadji, Mahmay, Calairy and Karniji are a few such names. A good number of poems, mostly in forms of invocations to these goddesses incarnate, and particularly to Karaniji and to Shakti a legend based on Markandey Purana were written.”111

Besides Hinglajmata, Charans of Mudh are also the worshippers of varied other local deities like Sri Karni mata, Sri Indra Bai, Raj Bai also. Judiamata, Malemata, Khudad mai, Temlarai, Dashnukmata, Mata Mandir of Jaisalmer. For them these goddesses have some regional importance.112 Charans believe both in Saiva and Shakta cults.

Charnas are supposed to be the group of psalmodies,113 and in their songs they claim that the Lord Siva created them.114 In local legends it is said that through songs Charans informed Siva about the death of Sati and initiated other gangs of Lord Siva. They believe that eight of the principal warriors (gans) of Lord Siva who took the course to fight and destroy Dakshayagna were their ancestors. Charanas believe that the following common forms of the goddesses like Hinglaj, Chamunda, Srikarni, Sri Indrabai and Ajbai carried the news of the death of Sati to Lord Siva.

110 Catherine Weinbrger Thomas, Ahses of Immortality, OUP, 2000, p. 66
111 Dr. Hiralal Maheswari, History of Rajasthani Literature, 1980, p.77
113 Charans are the traditional bards and genealogists of the Rajputs.
Charanas bestow high spiritual value Sati tradition. They revere the Satis a lot. According to them after becoming Sati the soul of the dead assumes the highest state of spirituality of a goddess. Earlier we have seen the link of Charans with Siva due to their faith in Sati tradition. Such belief of Charanas in female deities has pursued them to become Sati. Judiamata, Malemata, Khudadmai, Temlarai, Dashnukmata and Mata turned Sati and became equal to goddesses, they believe. These goddesses were once the common females of Charan community, but Charnas believe that they achieved the status equal to female deities by dint of their deeds of sacrifice.

Another temple of Hinglajmata is established in Pali, a flourishing town of Alwar. The status of Hinglajmata in this area of Pali is altogether different. Hinglajmata temple of Pali is no longer associated with the community of Charanas. Here Paliwal\textsuperscript{115} clan of the Brahmanas is the patron of Devi. They are the inhabitants of Pali and are considered as the first settlers of this area. People believe that Paliwals had ample landed property long before the Rathors, a community of Rajputs who colonized the area of Marwar. Next to the lordly Rajputs equaling them in numbers and far surpassing them in wealth are the Paliwals. Tradition is silent as to the manner in which they became possessor of this domain, but it connected them with the history of the Pali or pastoral tribes who from the town of Pali to Palithana, in Saurashtra, have left traces of their existence. Tradition linked to Paliwal may suggest some justification for the cause of association and adoption of Hinglajmata by the community of Paliwals. We know that the original place of goddess Hinglaj is said to be near the mouth of river Hingol on Sindh-Baluchistan border. In fact we find no direct link with the original place of origin of the goddess with the areas of Paliwals trekking

\textsuperscript{115} C.S.Gupta (ed.) \textit{Rajasthan Village Survey Monograph}, Mudh, 1961, p. 6-7
before their final settlement as stated in the tradition. But this can be speculated that in the course of their migration before settlement they would have come across the goddess and finally adopted her. Tradition also suggests proselytizing of this pastoral tribe into Brahman community.

Members of Muslim community are also affiliated with Hinglaj. The right to worship the goddess is assigned to young girls of Juman Khamp who belong to Bachol Branch of Brohi *musalmans*. It is believed that Brohi *musalmans* are the converts of the Charans and they claim that they are the Charan *musalmans*.\(^{116}\) Ranghe Raghav writes in his book “Gorakh Nath Aur Unka Yug” that there is temple of Hinglaj at the place named Hinglaj. *Musalmans* here call Hinglajdevi as “Bibi Nani” and “Hindu as Parvati”. The real in-charge of the temple of Hinglajmata at Hinglaj are the *musalmans* or “Malangs”.\(^{117}\) The ruler of Jodhpur Maharaja Abhaya Singh was a great follower of Hinglajmata and he issued a stamp for the HinglajDevi.\(^{118}\)

The temple of Awardevi is situated in Jaisalmer 21 kms away from the main town on the top of the hill of Girlao and the temple is popularly known as Temra Rai temple. This temple is considered the second most important *pitha* after Hinglaj temple. Other than the temple at Girlao, one more temple of Awardevi is constructed within the premise of Karnidevi temple situated at Deshnok (Bikaner). The temple for Awardevi originated not beyond the 13th century as opined by various historians.\(^{119}\) The goddess is linked to the royal Bhatis of Jaisalmer and is worshipped according to Brahmanical

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\(^{116}\) Dr. Sershingh Bidawat, *Eitihasik Alok Mai Jogmaya Sri Karni Ji*, Published on Karni Jayanti by Manju Kanwar, Vidwat Bhawan, near Shekh Sariya Kuwan, Ward No. 27, Chuk. 331001, 2001, p. 3

\(^{117}\) Ranghe Raghav, *Gorakhnath Aur Unka Yug*, pp. 253-54

\(^{118}\) Dr. Sershingh Bidawat, 2001, op. cit. p. 26

\(^{119}\) The controversy of the origin of the deity and all details of the deity are well discussed in chpt. 4
rituals. Even the image of the deity is designed on the pattern of Mahishasuramardini.

In the village of Abaneri\textsuperscript{120} there is a temple for Sitalamata. Sitala is known as the goddess for the disease of smallpox,\textsuperscript{121} the protectress of infants.\textsuperscript{122} The Meenas, Bhangis (the Gurjars and the Chamars) and the Kolis living in Abaneri have strong faith in Sitalamata. Sitala is patronized and honoured jointly by group of Meenas, the Gurjars and the Kolis. Members of this community are the regular visitors of this temple. The followers of Sitalamata remember her due to their faith and not because of her traditional myths and the religious stories. The other castes and communities of the village such as the Brahman, the Rajput, the Mahajan, the Jain, the Nai, the Mali, the Khati, the Kumhar, also have faith in the goddess.

The shrine of the goddess Sitalamata is unimpressive compared to the temple of Harshatmata of the village. Besides Meenas, Bhangis and the Kolis, members of other communities also visit the shrine of the Sitalamata in the village of Abaneri on respective occasions like breaking out of pox, occurrence of calamity and on the festive day of Sitala Ashtami. They come to offer worship to the goddess on such occasions due to the fear of the wrath of the goddess. They realize that breaking out of the pox and occurrence of calamity arises due to the goddess’s wrath. They visit the shrine of the goddess to propitiate the deity. Pushkarna Brahmans do not take care of the temple of Sitalamata, however, they do for Harshatmata’s temple.

\textsuperscript{120} C.S. Gupta (ed), Abaneri, 1961, p. 34
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid. Kailashpuri, She is considered the goddess of the disease of smallpox. p. 29. In Billani in Bansur at the border of Jaipur and in the village of Bhangarh she is accepted as the goddess of the disease of smallpox.
\textsuperscript{122} Maj. K.D. Erskine, (Text), Reprint, 1992, p. 97
Sitala is one of the popular deities of Rajasthan worshipped almost in every part of it. She has temples in villages like Nangal Soosawatan, Goriya and Bhangarh. Once in a year people honour her essentially on the festive day. On the day of the festival people visit her temple if the one is available in the locality, otherwise they worship her at the house or at the sacred centres (made in any form) reserved for the deity.

In the village of Sikar festival Sitala Astami is organized in the name of goddess Sitala. It is celebrated by variety of other names at different areas of Rajasthan. The other given names of this festival are as follows: Chaita Krishna Saptmi and Sheel Saptmi or Sil Saptmi. This festival is also known by the name of Basoda in the areas of Sikar and Bhangarh.

**Sectarian affiliation:**

The goddesses take various forms and each of their forms is virtually interchangeable. Female deities intermingle with each other and that reflects the underlying importance of sectarian rapprochement in contemporary society of Rajasthan. For example Durga, Kali, Lakshmi etc. at various occasions manifest each other. Durga is manifested as Shailpurti, Bramhacharini, Chandraghanta, Kushmanda, Skandamata, Katyayani,

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123 C.S. Gupta (ed), 1961, p. 33
124 Ibid. p.1
126 B.D. Agrawal, *Rajasthan District Gazetteer, Sikar*, 1978, Sitala Ashtami is the festival given for Sitalmata, p. 77
127 C.S. Gupta, (edit.) Kailashpuri, 1961, She is considered the goddess of the disease of small-pox. In Billani in Bansur at the border of Jaipur and in the village of Bhangarh she is accepted as the goddess of the disease of small-pox. p.29
128 Ibid. p.29
129 Ibid. Kyasara, p. 45
132 C.S. Gupta (ed), Bhangarh, 1961, p 35
133 Phillip B. Zarrilli, *When The Body Becomes All Eyes*, OUP, 1990, p. 69
Kalaratri, Mahagauri, Siddhidhatri.\footnote{Navadurga, Gita Press, Gorakhpur, No. 205, p. 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 16} This is suggestive of the idea of oneness amongst deities. They are considered equal and mutually interdependent whatever form or the status the goddesses belong to. It signifies the “melting pot of social and sectarian divides.”

The interchangeableness of the goddesses is applied not only among the Brahmanical deities but it is rather applied and adopted for local goddesses of Rajasthan also.\footnote{Subhashini Aryan, 1994, the image of Nava Druga is also found in which the forms of goddesses are Shailputri, Brahmcharini, Candraghanta, Kushamanda, Skandamata, Katyayani, Kalaratri, Mahgauri and Siddhidhatri. These goddesses are embossed on silver amulets and pendants and worn by the rural folk all over the state. p. 8} The Brahmanical female deities are manifested for local goddesses of Rajasthan and vice-versa. The family deity Swanjiaji, a local goddess of Rajasthan, accepted as family deity both for the Bhati and the Rathor Rajputs, is manifest Kalkamata.\footnote{C.K.M. Walter, The Rajputana Gazetteer, Vol. II, Jaisalmer, 1879, p.176.} Ashapura, the family deity of Chauhan Rajputs, is considered incarnation of Annapurana.\footnote{Lindsey Harlan, Religion & Rajput Women, 1994, p.57} Sisodiyas named Banmata as Durgamata\footnote{Ibid. p. 57} and Kachvahas call Siladevi, Ambamata also.\footnote{Ibid. p. 57} Pushkarna Brahman considers both Harshatmata and Lakshmi equal to each other.\footnote{K.S. Singh, (Gen. ed.), 1998, pp. 760-764} Sacciymata of Osian, adapted as Jain goddess, is worshipped as Mahishasuramardini. An eight-armed image of Mahishasuramardini found in Sacciymata temple at Churu built in VS 1985 (A.D. 1928) is called Sacciya.\footnote{Devendra Handa, Osian, History, Archaeology, Art and Architecture, Sundeep Prakashan, Delhi, 1984, p. 17}

Manifestation and interchangeableness of one goddess for another is assumed to have emanated from mythical concept of Shakti. Mythical narration reveals that Shakti is the beginning and the end of all forms of
activities. It is eternal and is the cause of creation and dissolution. *Shakti* is worshipped in the various forms like Kali, Tarini, Durga, Sodasi, Bhuvanesvari, Dhumavati, Bagla, Bhairavi, Chinnamastaka, Annapurna, Vagdevi, Kamala, Candi, Camunda, Sakambhari, etc. The Puranas mention various important incarnations of *Shakti* viz. – Kali, Ambika, Vindhyavasini, Saraswati or Sarada, Lalita, Gauri, Sivaduti, Tripura, Bhairavi, Bhuvanesvari, Matangi, Minaksi, Yoganidra or Yogamaya, Sarvamangala and others. *Markandeya Purana* informs that *Shakti* Durga after defeating the demon split herself into three, each form corresponding to one member of the Great Triad – Saraswati, the awesomely cerebral goddess of learning to match and befriend Brahma; Lakshmi, the goddess of earthly pleasures, to match Vishnu and Kali, the powerful and wild destroyer, as a matchless companion to Shiva, the dancer of the wild dance of destruction. *Shakti* is worshipped in the form of the Divine Mothers (*Matrakas*) of whom there are seven, eight or sixteen according to different enumerations. The concept of *Shakti* is implemented at wider level even for the local goddesses. The local goddesses Karnimata (Deshnokh), Mokalmata (Bali), Khokrimata (Tivri), Sakambhari, Asapuri (Sambhar), Kaivasamata (Parvatsar), Khimelmata (Vasantgarh), Kailadevi (Karauli), Sakraimata (Khandela), Jinamata (Raivas), Susanimata (Morkhana) etc are understood as forms of *Shakti*. Raikas in Rajasthan worship Jogmaya as a form of Durga of *Shakti*. Their faith in Durga is coupled with other local deities like Bhumidevi, Bhomiyaji, Pahuji, Ramdeoji, Marmoji, Zunjji, Karnimata and

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142 *Maha-nirvan Tantram*, tran. The Great Liberation by John Woodrofe (Arthur Avalon), Gita Press Gorakhpur, p. 66
143 Pushpendra Kumara, *Shakti-cult in Ancient India*, 1974, p.229
144 *Discover India*, A Media Transasia Publication, September 2005, p. 20
146 K.S, Singh (Gen ed.) 1998, p. 767
Bhatiyaniji. Most of these deities are of regional importance and figure in the legends of Marwar area and all of them are venerated. Hinglajmata is also one of the best examples to reveal the concept of Shakti. Her all pithas are as the part of Shakti.\textsuperscript{147} In the village of Peepal Khoont\textsuperscript{148} a few of the local goddesses are known by some other names of other goddesses – like Hithlamata is named for Seetalmata, Samdamata for Chamundadevi and Margi or Marmimata for Durga. They are the goddesses who are manifestations of goddess Durga. All these given goddesses are known by the name of Durga. We have some examples of the local goddesses who are known by the name of Durga. The family deity Bangamata of Kanjars of Ramnagar\textsuperscript{149} is known by the name of Durga. The nine forms of Durga play a more prominent part in the day-to-day life of her devotees. Again in the village of Kyasara\textsuperscript{150} nine forms of Durga are Adi-Shakti, Bodri, Kesarbai, Phoolbai, Lalbai, Chamunda, Seetla, Annapurna and Hingulaj. Tribal goddesses are brought into the Hindu fold under the concept of Shakti. Goddesses like Mamadevi, mother of the Gods, Annapurna, Sakambhari, Mata Janani, Asapurna etc. known as goddesses for tribes are manifested as part of Shakti.\textsuperscript{151} In the community of Bhils\textsuperscript{152} also we find that some local goddesses are manifested as Brahmanical goddesses. In the areas of Banswara, Samdamata, a local goddess is manifested ChamundaDevi and Margi or Marmimata, Durga of Hindu pantheon. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi once remarked: “One does not realize how many of 330 million gods of the Hindus have been borrowed from various tribes. Man of the tirthas

\textsuperscript{147} Catherine Weinberger-Thomas, \textit{Ashes of Immortality}, OUP, pp.156-157
\textsuperscript{148} C.S.Gupta (ed.) Peepal Khoont, 1961, p. 55
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid. Ramnagar, p.32
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid. Kyasara, p. 41
\textsuperscript{151} James Tod, \textit{Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan}, I, p. 435
\textsuperscript{152} K.K. Sehgal, \textit{Rajasthan District Gazetteer}, Banswara, 1974, p.43.
(pilgrimage centres) and vrata (fasts) have originated from practices of such tribal people who did not have very high social ranking and status. The worship of Nagas, Yakshas, Pirs, ghosts and spirits, Bhairava, Kali-Durga, and even that of Shiva and Vishnu owe a great deal to the belief systems of numerous tribes and systems of numerous tribes and clans."

Qualities of the goddesses from the official pantheon of Hindu goddesses have been sprinkled over various local goddesses found in different parts of India. Mariamma, a local goddess of South India, consists of the head of a Brahman and her body belongs to a low-caste woman. Mariamma is said to enjoy wine and animal blood. Draupadi Amman, a cross between Draupadi, the wife of the Pandavas, and Kaal, is worshipped to help to settle scores with enemies. Then there is Sitala, the goddess of small pox, Nandadevi, the guardian goddess of Utrancalah hills.

**Pattern of affiliation between female and male deities:**

The pattern of association of male-female deities in Rajasthan contains various layers:

1) Female deities worshipped independently without affiliating with male deities.

2) Female deities worshipped with male deities but independently

3) Siva and Gauri worshipped as husband and wife: a blend of brahmanical and non-brahmanical deities

4) Siva and Parvati worshipped as husband and wife

5) Association of Siva with local female deities at conceptual and theoretical level

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154 Discover India, A Media Transasia Publication, September 2005, p. 21
The female deities linked with the members of the royal group of Rajasthan are worshipped in some exclusive fashion. The most important aspect of it is that these female deities are worshipped independently being free from any sort of association with the male deities. At the time of puja these goddesses are invoked independently. Even temples for these goddesses contain single image for a particular female deity. Here are examples of such female deities: Jamvaimata is the Kula Devi of Kachwahas; Ambamata is the first Kula Devi of Sisodiyas. Later Kalikadevi, when Sisodiyas reached Chittaur, became their Kula Devi. Again when some of the areas of Gujarat came under Sisodia’s control they adopted Banmata as their Kula Devi. Ashapura is the tutelary deity of Chauhans, Ad mata for Jhalas; Swanjiaji for Rathor Rajputs and Bangamata for the Hadas. Siladevi is the Kula Devi for Kachawaha Rajputs. The temples for Admata, Jamvaimita, Siladevi do not contain the images of the male deities. There is single and sole image for the given female deities in temples.

Some of the female deities are worshipped with the male gods but independently. In fact, the link of female deities here with male deities is virtually independent. They are not linked in any form as wife or sister. Both male and female deities are worshipped with independent name and importance. They are invoked separately at the time of the puja. It is always an indirect and distant rapport between the male-female deities. In any case the importance of female deities is never marginalized. For example, in the community of Bhils in Banswara, the male god Mahadeo that is

155 Lindsey Harlan, 1994, p. 55-56
156 Ibid. p. 57
157 Ibid. p. 55
159 C.S. Gupta, (ed.), 1961, Ramnagar, p.32
160 K.K. Sehgal, Rajasthan District Gazetteer, Banswara, 1974, p. 43
considered ‘Bhagwan’, a supreme deity, is worshipped with a group of female deities named Pipla or Piplimata, Dasamata, Kalkamata, Beranmata, Bijwamata, Samdamata, Hithlamata, Maulanmata, Thikrimata and Margi or Marmimata.\textsuperscript{161} Here the male and female deities are invoked separately. Similar examples we find in the village of Bhandwasi.\textsuperscript{162} Goddess AmbaDevi is worshipped together with Siva and Rajmdeoji but independently. Two other goddesses of importance here are Chamunda and Sitalamata and they too are worshipped with male god Siva. Chamunda is the Kula Devi of the Nayaks of the village and goddess Sitala is supposed to be the most popular deity in the village whose mount is a donkey. With Siva, both Chamunda and Sital have never lost their independent status.

The Kolis, the Banjaras,\textsuperscript{163} the Brahmans, the Jogis are the main communities of the old town of Bhangarh in the district of Alwar and each of the communities has its family female deities. Mahadeva or Siva is the supreme god of the town Bhangarh. Siva is worshipped along with family female deities of given communities but independently. Siva and family female deities are invoked separately on religious occasions. For example, in the second Dhani of Bhangarh that is known by Jagion-ka-chwara, the lord Siva is worshipped with Sdmhata. Both Siva and Sedhmata are associated with the Jogis. The Brahman household worship Brahmanidevi as a supreme deity, the Nais worship Narainimata and Kolis Jomder and each of these female deities is worshipped with Siva. But the Brahman, the Nais and the Kolis claim that their female family deity is worshipped with Siva but independently.

\textsuperscript{161} Maj. K.D.Erskine, 1908, Reprint, 1992, p.235
\textsuperscript{162} C.S.Gupta (ed.), 1961, Bhandwasi, p. 28
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid. Bhangarh, p. 35
Further I am citing cases of various villages and towns of Rajasthan where male and female deities are worshipped together but independently. Goriya\textsuperscript{164} in the district of Pali in Udaipur is increasingly populated with Girasias and the Bhils. Many local and Hindu male-female deities are worshipped here. The local goddesses are Bamnidevi, Khedadevi and Jogmaya. The other goddesses are Chamunda, Ambaji, Kalika Shesnag and Seetla. All these given female deities are worshipped together with male deities like Siva, Ganapati, Dharma Raj, Indra, and Hanuman. At Kailashpuri\textsuperscript{165} in the district of Udaipur, the Keetwar sect has constructed temple for Eklingji. Sidheswar Mahadev and Vasudeo are their supreme gods and Bhadra Kali is their family deity. They worship Sidheswar Mahadv, Vasudeo and Bhadra Kali together. Village Khajoora,\textsuperscript{166} situated in the district of Banswara, is inhabited with the Bhils. Siva is venerated as their supreme deity. The female deities worshipped with Siva are as follows: Hovanmata, Lalmata, Hithlamata, Dasamata and Kalkamata. At village Panarwa\textsuperscript{167} in the district of Udaipur both gods and goddesses are worshipped together. Siva is worshipped together with local goddesses like Khemajmata, Ambamata, Sikodaridevi, Kalebaridevi, Chamundadevi, Hithalamata, Dasamata and Kalkamata. In the village of Bhangarh\textsuperscript{168} situated in the district of Alwar, we find a trend of worshiping Hindu male god Siva together with other local family deities. Mahadeva or Siva is accepted as a supreme deity and worshipped together with the group of many female family deities like Brahmanidevi, Narainidevi. Enquiring from the members of various clan/communities linked to given towns and villages

\textsuperscript{164} Ibid. Goriya, p. 1
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid. Kailashpuri, p.28
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid. Khajoora, p. 32-33
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid. Panrawa, p.34
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid. Bhangarh, p.35
reflect that male and female deities are worshipped together but independently. Between them there is no direct association.

Another form of association between male and female deities as married couples – husband and wife – is direct. In this case the bonding is strong. Both of them are invoked together. In the village of Kyasara many goddesses are linked to god Siva as his consorts. The god Siva is worshipped here as a supreme deity in the village and a shrine for him stands most prominently in the village; the consorts of Siva are called Shakti (power) and are worshipped together with Siva. Consorts of Siva that are Shakti are worshipped in numerous forms – seven Chandis and nine Durga; sixty-four Yoginis, sixteen Matrkas, Durga and Chamunda are acknowledged as consorts of Siva.

Worshiping Siva with Gauri as his consort is a strong tradition in Rajasthan. Both Siva and Gauri are invoked together on puja rituals. Such a tradition suggests a blend of Sanskritic with non-sanskritic tradition. Gangaur is one of the most popular festivals of Rajasthan in which both Gauri and Siva are invoked together as married couples. Gan-Gauri meaning Siva-Parvati (Gauri) is highlighted in Gangaur festival.171 In this festival, Gauri is installed together with Siva and all rituals of marriage between husband and wife are followed. A strong bond between the two is shown. Gauri is treated equal to Parvati the first wife of Siva even if she came from the tribal community.172

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169 C.S. Gupta (ed.), 1961, Kyasara, p. 41
170 Ibid. Malar, p.36
171 I have discussed the festival Gangaur in the topic related to festival and have detailed observation of the association of Siva with Gauri.
172 G.D. Sontheimer, Pastoral Deities in Western India, Delhi, OUP, 1993, informs that “the tribal or local goddess, as the second wife of the god, has preserved her autonomy just like the first wife, who comes from the higher strata. Mhalsa, Khandoba’s first wife, who comes from the Lingayat caste, keeps her position along with Banai, who comes from the pastoral tribes; in Kharsundi, Balubai has priority independently of
At conceptual and theoretical level, in most of the areas of Rajasthan, the male god Siva is found associated with local female deities as their consort. But in *puja* rituals, most of the time, Siva is not invoked with the female deities. In earlier discussion we have noticed that most of the Kula Devi are linked to Siva. Siva is sometime understood as their consort. Even then He is neither installed nor invoked in *puja* ritual with female deities. Female deities are worshipped independently. In the village of Kyasara\(^{173}\) we notice that a few of the local goddesses are associated conceptually as consorts of Siva. The goddesses are like Kesar Bai, Lal Bai, Phool Bai and Sitala. In all cases the female deities maintain their independent identity. In *puja* rituals Siva is never invoked together with these goddesses.

Information collected about the pattern of association of male-female deities of Rajasthan shows that it is simple and straight. Each group of the people, belonging to any caste or creed, has male-female deities. People generally believe that each deity has special power and spiritual ability. There is no concept of hierarchy amongst deities. Goddesses whether belonging to greater or lower tradition are considered equal in spiritual ability. The idea of big-small or inferior-superior of the deities does not arise once they are adopted. Kula Devi is a local deity but she is equated and revered equal to the goddesses of greater tradition. Widely accepted belief is that deities are complementary to each other.

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\(^{173}\) C.S. Gupta (ed.), 1961, Kyasara, p. 41

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\(^{173}\) Some legends in the areas of Maharashtra also informs about the compatible status of wives of the male gods hailing either from the greater or little tradition. According to the legends of the Korkus, the second wife of Siva here comes from their tribe. Her name is Girija, and the place from which she came from, near Cauragadh, is precisely identified. But Siva’s priests at Cauragarh – Sadhu- equated Girja with Parvati. This assimilation of the local tribal goddess is reminiscent of the legend of Parvati wearing the clothing of a woman of the Bhil tribe and searching in the jungle for Siva, when he is angry with her. Before she reveals herself, Siva falls in love with her.\(^{173}\) p. 67-68
Fairs and Festivals:

Festivals are some big occasions organized on some particular days and months, once or twice in a year, in towns and the villages, to commemorate the female deities. The role of female deities in the festivals of Rajasthan is exceedingly important. Each and every festival of Rajasthan in one form or other is linked to the female deities. A few of the festivals like Navarat, Teej are goddess centric, exclusively linked to the female deities. The festivals like Janmastami, Gangaur, Diwali are linked to both male and female deities.

The festivals of Rajasthan go hand in hand with the fairs. Fairs are organized on the eve of the festivals in which people, other than those of the same locality, come with the purpose of visit in the shrine of the deity and for buying necessary items. State officials also attend the fair, visit the shrine and survey the business activity. Sometimes fairs are held independently without any affiliation with the festivals but even such fairs are always dedicated to deities.

Various researchers have formed their opinion about the purpose and utility of holding festivals in India. Most of the historians have researched the efficacy of the festival. Kinsley says that at the time of festival the whole village is possessed by the goddess. The time of festival is different from ordinary time and is considered a real sacred period. People will have direct access to the sacred.\(^{174}\) Kinsley has also presented a detailed study of the festival of the village goddess and has concluded that the festival of the goddesses is organized with a view to ensure village welfare and its prosperity. The festival is organized periodically to enliven and invigorate

the goddess and the locality itself to fight against invading demon.\textsuperscript{175} Another indication of the identity of village and goddess is the participation of almost all members of a village in the goddess’s festivals. Nearly all castes are represented at her festivals and to some extent they mix freely. Her worship is a community effort, although particular castes may play more important ritual roles than others.\textsuperscript{176} K. M. Shrimali writes that “fairs and festivals are often melting pots of social and sectarian divides.”\textsuperscript{177} Hazari Prasad Dwivedi suggests that “.........Fairs and festivals often sustain memories of such remote pasts, reminding us of several layers of social fabric that are indistinguishably enmeshed with one another, just the way deltaic land is enriched by the layers of the soils brought in by several streams......”\textsuperscript{178} Lannoy shows his concern with Indian festival and tells about its efficacy. To him “the festival rite utilizes the potency of disorder. It harnesses the disorder of “the other mind”, possession, trance, dreams, ecstasy; if these powers are harnessed properly, the society recovers a special potency from chaos beyond the limits or order.” For him the festival is an opportunity that makes the people daring to face disorder. He also emphasizes that the ‘chaotic power’ of disorder may be utilized at the time of festival to revive their lives and to create a new order. ‘Chaos is necessary to regenerate a socio-religious order.’\textsuperscript{179} Turner does not stress that the period of festival is a phase to settle down the state of disorder, but he certainly agrees that this is the phase to formulate new rules to contain the extreme situation. It is a special time. The rules followed at ordinary times

\textsuperscript{175} Ibid. p. 206  \\
\textsuperscript{177} K.M. Shrimali, \textit{Biblio: A Review of Books}, Vol. VIII Nos. 9 & 10, September-October, 2003, p. 25  \\
\textsuperscript{179} Richard Lannoy, \textit{The Speaking Tree: A Study of Indian Culture and Society}, London: OUP, 1971, p. 201
are done away with in extreme situations. Rules and rituals followed at ordinary times are broken and forbidden actions are permitted.  

Masakju Tanaka deals with this issue very differently and says that the “Hindu festivals do emphasize the communal or egalitarian aspect of society, but they also serve to legitimize a political structure by symbolically converting secular power into divine power.” Tanaka again analyzes the dimensions of festivals that are two: “personal or existential and cosmological. Personal meaning is clearly prominent in votive rituals performed during festivals, while cosmological meaning provides a narrative basis (myth, episodes, symbolism) on which the festivals are structured. The writer tries to relate these dimensions to the political functions of the festivals. But it is wrong to imagine that the former is reducible to the latter or vice versa. To repeat, it is necessary to avoid presenting Hindu world as a single tightly bound system. Rather I hope to show how rituals work in various dimensions and, when possible, I present various interpretations of a particular event or ritual. The analysis will concentrate on two village festivals in a single community and discuss the articulation of the meaning of rituals conducted in them with their political function.”

Navarata is an important festival celebrated with great fanfare almost in every part of Rajasthan by both the people of the Hindu and the people of tribal sections. Navaratri remains by far the most important celebration for Rajputs. Both males and females participate equally in this festival. The

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182 Ibid. p. 18

rural communities as well as the tribes, especially the Bhils and Meenas. The festival of Navarata is held for nine days and it terminates on Dussehra that is the tenth day of the festival. We may call that Dussehra is the last day of the festival of Navarata and on this day the festival is finally summed up.

Navarata is organized in honor of the great Goddess Durga that is for all Navaratri (Nine Nights). The tenth and the final day called Dussehra (dasahara), commemorates the victory of the bright and luminous war-goddess Durga over the buffalo-demon (Mahisasura); Durga is honoured on this last day, especially by the Rajputs, as Vijayalakshmi. The whole nine days of Durga puja is celebrated on the bright prakas of Asvin (Asvin Sukla 1-9), ending on the morning of the tenth, the day dedicated to Vijayalakshmi. Though the festival is dedicated to the goddess Durga but each day of the nine days of the festival is dedicated to the secondary names of the goddess Durga and on all those days puja is offered to these goddesses. The first night is dedicated to Mahakali, the dark mother, who stands for Adyakali; the eighth night to sacred Durga. The worship of Durga is preceded sacred Kali also called Adyakali. Adyakali again appears on the last night for the final victory of Durga-Candika and that night is called Kalaratri, ‘Night of Time’ or ‘Night of Death.’ The ninth and last night is sacred to Candika or Candi, as Durga Mahishasura. On this day sacred fire is prepared in which an animal is offered (bali) that stands for the buffalo demon. To this fire, called “the fire of Kali Devi”, a special arti is sung. It is

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184 Subhashini Aryan, *Folk Bronzes of Rajasthan*, New Delhi, Lalit Kala Akademi, 1994, pp. 45-47
from this very fire that the most effulgent form of the Goddess, Vijayalakshmi, will be born in the middle of the night as an embodiment of the victory won by the great Goddess over the buffalo demon and the host of asuras.  

In most of the areas of Rajasthan people do not remember the legend given in the Hindu calendar for the tenth day of Navarata that Durga vanquished Mahishasura and came out with victory (Vijaya). They rather remember the victory of Ram over Ravan. It is, therefore, that at Bhangarh on the day of Deshera Ramachandra is adorned and worshipped. In the name of god Ramchandra, villagers collect some amount of grain from all commodities that are preserved for them to eat for the whole year. A handful amount of these items as wheat, rice, pulse, ghee, curds, milk etc are put in dried cow dung pots separately and covered. The female deities are offered flowers and worshipped along with god Ramchandra. The practice of burning of the effigies of Ravan does not take place at Bhangarh but it is followed in some of the parts of Rajasthan. Kanjars of Ramnagar burn the effigy of Ravan and worship Ram on the eve of Deshera. Dashara in Asoj in Jodhpur (September-October) is held in commemoration of the victory of Rama (king of Ajodhya) over Ravan, the demon or aboriginal monarch of Lanka.  

Dussehra in Sirohi (September-October) is held in commemoration of Rama’s victory over Ravan, when the chief, after holding a durbar in the morning, proceeds in State to worship the Nîlkantha and in the afternoon pays a visit to the Saraneshwar temple.

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187 C.S. Gupta (ed.), Ramnagar, 1961, pp. 32-33
188 Maj. K.D. Erskine, (Text), Reprint, 1992, p. 97
189 Ibid. p. 257-58
During the days of Navarata\textsuperscript{190} the goddesses are worshipped all through nine days. In Rajasthan during the festival the local goddesses are given much prominence and for all ten days they are worshipped individually as well as in-group. The cases of worship of the goddesses in-group in this festival are more than the individual worship of the goddesses. Reason for it was that varied clans and communities participated together to organize the festival and each clan and community had its own deities who wished to invoke directly or indirectly their family deities together with the main Hindu goddess that is Mahishasuramardini or Durga. For example it is organized at all temples of Karnidevi including the temples situated at Ginnani and Junagarh, Gayatri temple of Nattusar gate, Gayatri Bhawan of Ginnani, temple of Ustravahinidevi of Bhatolai, temple of Kela Chamunda of Kirti Stambha.\textsuperscript{191} At Bhangarh\textsuperscript{192} Navaratra is widely celebrated in the name of the family goddesses Sirsadevi, Chandi and Sedh Mata and all of them are worshipped in-group without any consort. At Bhandwasi\textsuperscript{193} in the district of Nagaur of Jodhpur division, on Navarata Ambadevi a family deity of Rajputs, and Chamunda, a family deity of the community of Nayaks are worshipped individually during Navarata at their houses. The Bhils in Banswara\textsuperscript{194} worship number of clan/family goddesses or Kula Devis during Navarata; they are Pipla or Pipli mata, Dasa mata, Kalka mata, Beran mata, Bijwa mata, Samda mata, Hithla mata, Maulan mata, Thikri mata and Margi or Marmi mata. Village Khajoora\textsuperscript{195} in the district of Banswara is inhabited with the community of Bhils and the Bhils have two main family deities

\textsuperscript{190} Ibid. Navarat is celebrated for all nine days in honour of Devi. p. 339
\textsuperscript{191} Hindu Newspaper of Bikaner "Patrika", 4th April, 2003
\textsuperscript{192} C.S.Gupta (ed.), Bhangarh, 1961, p.36
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid. p.28
\textsuperscript{194} K.K. Sehgal, Banswara, 1974, 43
\textsuperscript{195} C.S.Gupta (ed.), Khajoora, 1961, p.34-35
named Hovan mata and Hithla mata. Both of these goddesses are worshipped for all nine days. The reports about the celebration of the festival of Navarata at Peepal Khoont\textsuperscript{196} are incomplete and inconsistent. It is stated that on each of the nine days of Navarata separate female deity is worshipped, but the name of the deity is not mentioned. In the village of Gaoriya,\textsuperscript{197} Navarata and Dussehra are celebrated with great fan-fare and the goddesses like Chamundadevi, Kalkadevi and Khetridevi are worshipped jointly. In the village of Sanswara\textsuperscript{198} we do not find any reference to Navarata but Dussehra is celebrated with jubilation. On the day of Dussehra here at Sanswara only one goddess that is Kalimai (mother Kali) is worshipped.

Veneration of the female deities individually as well as in group in relation, directly or indirectly, with the Hindu main female deity, on the occasion of Navarata festival, gives no indication of hierarchy amongst deities. All the deities are considered manifestation of others and treated equal. They are invoked in-group and are worshipped together in the same fashion and with similar kind of rituals.

On the occasion of Navarata, female deities are invoked, but independently, without any consort. Though some male deities like Navagrahas, Bhairon, Ramchandra and some local male deities, ancestors etc. are also invoked, but they are worshipped independently without any close link with the female deities. In the presence of male deities the prominence and the independent status of the female deities is neither neutralized nor overpowered. Both male and female deities are treated

\textsuperscript{196} Ibid. Peepal Khoont, p. 55
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid. Goriya, p. 39
\textsuperscript{198} Ibid. Goriya, p. 33
independent and are worshipped separately. In the areas of Kailashpur\textsuperscript{199} in the district of Udaipur, Malar\textsuperscript{200} in the district of Jodhpur, Rangmahal\textsuperscript{201} in the district of Ganganagar, Durga is worshipped with great fan-fare with Navagraha (the nine planets) but independently. At Bhangarh\textsuperscript{202} the family goddesses like Sirsadevi, Kalkadevi and Chandi Sedhmata (Sitala mata) are worshipped together with a male deity Bhaironji. Navarata is organized here by the Yogis of the village. At Gaoriya\textsuperscript{203} also Chamunda Devi, Kalkadevi and Khetridevi are worshipped with Bhairon. At Janvi\textsuperscript{204} the goddess Jog Maya is worshipped together with Bhaironji. At Peepal Khoont\textsuperscript{205} villagers believe that unmarried males after death take the form of a snake and they are called Khagalia. They are represented and worshipped in the form of snake carved upon a stone slab. The chief of these is called Tamri Nag. Worship is offered to Khagalia together with female deities on Navratra. In the Bhil community there is a popular culture of invoking local heroes called Seero.\textsuperscript{206} According to local tradition they are also equated and worshipped with the goddesses in the festival. Seero is accepted as a demigod in the community of Bhils. In all these given cases, male-female deities are worshipped together, but independently.

Sowing of barley around the earthen pot at the main sacred centres is also one of the most common rituals followed on the festival of Navarata. At Kailashpuri the worshippers celebrate festival of Navarata in which they

\textsuperscript{199} Ibid. Kailashpuri, p.29 \\
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid. Malar, Here we notice performance of a different ritual as all for nine days of Navaratra worship is offered to goddess Durga and to Navagraha (nine planates). At the same time on the ninth day of the festival, most of the Pushkarnas go to Phalodi to offer prayer in the temple of Phalvardhika Devi. In the temple of Phalvardhika Devi, Hawan and Kirtan are also performed on this occasion. p. 39 \\
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid. Rang Mahal p. 36 \\
\textsuperscript{202} Ibid. Bhangarh, p.36 \\
\textsuperscript{203} C.S.Gupta (ed.), Rajasthan Village Survey Monograph, Goriya, 1961, p. 39 \\
\textsuperscript{204} Ibid. Janvi, p.62 \\
\textsuperscript{205} Ibid. Peepal Khoont, p.56 \\
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid. Khajoora, p.34-35
follow certain rituals: a handful of barley is sown in earthen pot in front of the idol of the goddess. They leave barley for Nine days to grow. Puja is done to the goddess for all nine days. On the ninth day a final puja is offered to the goddess and the next day the idol of the goddess is immersed in water of river Indra Sagar.\textsuperscript{207} At Goriya\textsuperscript{208} right on the first day of Navarata the place of worship is cleansed properly and seeds of barley are sown in earthen pot to celebrate festival. In the areas of Peepal Khoont Navarata is celebrated for all nine days. At the beginning of the nine days of Navratra, some grains of barley are sown in an earthen-pan. The shoot which grows out of seeds of barley in nine days is called Jawara. The Jawara is also immersed in the river with the idol of the deity.\textsuperscript{209}

Some more rituals are followed on Navarata which are confined just to some of the localities. At Nangal Soosawatan,\textsuperscript{210} on the day of Dussehra, Minas worship their ploughs and bullocks. They give bath to both – ploughs and bullocks. They colour the bodies of their bullocks. Minas apply Mehandi to colour to the body of bullocks and their horns are painted green with tips red. Pellet-bells are tied round their neck. The horns of cows are also coloured with a mixture of oil and Hartal (powder of dark red colour). Worship is offered to the bullocks on this day. Besides worshipping cultivable items fighting weapons are also cleansed and are worshipped as symbols of the goddess. At Ramnagar,\textsuperscript{211} on the day of Dussehra, devotees cleanse their arms and offer worship to them for hunting. Rajputs of Sirohi\textsuperscript{212} on Nauratra paint the horses and the elephants and cleanse all the

\textsuperscript{207} Ibid. Kailashpuri, p.29
\textsuperscript{208} Ibid. Goriya, p.39
\textsuperscript{209} Ibid. Peepal Khoont, p. 51
\textsuperscript{210} Ibid. Nangal Soosawatan, p. 34
\textsuperscript{211} Ibid. Ramnagar, pp. 32-33
\textsuperscript{212} Maj. K.D. Erskine, Text, Reprint, 1992, p. 257-58
implements of war. In the village of Sanswara a small niche in the wall is cleaned and dressed with cow dung. Vermillion lines are drawn around the niche and the deity is installed in it. The members of the household burn incense near the deity, offer flowers and then invoke blessings. The family members of Kalijal offer worship to their Kula Devi in the houses on the day of the festival of Navarata. Family members, however, cleans their whole house and the weapons. Weapons are put near the wall that bears the emblem of Mataji. In the village of Panarwa, the people of Rajput community offer worship to their arms in front of their Kula Devi Khemajmata on the day of Dussehra. The Bhils of Khajoora and Peepal Khoont invoke the spirit of their dead persons called Khagalia. The other practice found popular in the community of the Bhils is the ritual to sow the seeds of barley in earthen pan. Minas clad themselves in their best clothes and go out drunk singing songs and playing on the Algochas on Dussehra.

Kailashpuri, a village, situated in the south of Rajasthan in the district of Udaipur has a concentration of Bhil population. The Bhils here celebrate Navarata collectively and offer worship to the goddess. Bhopa perform all priestly rituals based on Hindu tradition. The Bhopa stays in the temple for

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213 C.S. Gupta, Sanswara, 1961, p. 34
214 Ibid. Kalijal, p. 29
215 Ibid. Panarwa, p. 36
216 Ibid. Khajoora, p.34-35
217 Ibid. Peepal Khoont, p. 51
218 Ibid. Nangal Soosawatan, p. 34
219 Ibid. Kailashpuri, p29
220 Bhopa is accepted as the minstrel of tribes. He is a sorcerer. He is called on the risk of any danger of the impact of evil spirits in the tribes. Bhopa is treated as priest of the community of the tribes and their participation in some of the festivals to offer worship to the deities has become frequent. Bhopa plays an important role in religious ceremonies of the community of tribes. In festivals and on family gatherings like on the birth of child Bhopa is called to perform rituals. They follow full disciplined life on the occasion of festivals and visit shrines and observe other necessary preconditions to perform rituals on the day of festivals. They look quite aware of the rituals and its perpetration. Bhopa does not lose their trait as to go round and round the village indicating being possessed with the spirits. They always claim themselves to be the master exorcist.
all nine days and he eats just once in a day for all nine days. At Peepal Khoont\textsuperscript{221} another part of south Rajasthan in Banswara, contains greater number of Bhils where Bhopa plays a premier role in Navarata. They visit shrines of different deities and perform worship. They also go round the village as if possessed by some spirit and they ceremonially consign the Jawaras to the river on the last day of the festival. The festival of Navarata continues at Gaoriya regular for nine days and on all the nine days Bhopa offers daily worship to the deity. On the tenth day Bhopa communicates with the spirits and gives his forecasts about the coming year. The Jogis of the village Bhangarh\textsuperscript{222} are much involved in the festival of Navaratra and they strictly follow a ritual of sacrificing a goat for Sirsa Devi. They follow a custom to cut the head from the body of the animal in single stroke in the name of the goddess and the animal is then given to Bhopa to offer to the goddess. The officiating priest i.e. Bhopa, however, prefers to return the goat to worshipers for an Anna. The goat’s skin is later sold to the Khatik i.e. a butcher, and the amount so obtained is spent in purchasing spices, salt etc.

At Khajoora\textsuperscript{223} situated in the district of Banswara Bhopa plays the main role in the festival of Navarata is for sacrificing goat. One of the villagers comes forward to make a sacrifice\textsuperscript{224} of animal, not the Bhopa.

The administrative potentates also intervene in the festival of Navarata. They visit the centres of worship and also follow the rituals of the festival. Collection of tax by the Panchayat members is stayed during festive days. In Bundi\textsuperscript{225} the head of administration comes himself to the centre of worship.

\textsuperscript{221} C.S. Gupta (ed.), Peepal Khoont, 1961, p. 51
\textsuperscript{222} Ibid. Bhangarh, p. 36
\textsuperscript{223} Ibid. Khajoora, p.34-35
\textsuperscript{224} The details of it is given in the last concluding chapter.
\textsuperscript{225} W. Muir and De Fabeck, \textit{The Rajputana Gazetteers}, Vol. 1, 1879, Bundi, the name of the goddess is Asapuri Devi, p. 240
on the day of Dussehra to offer prayers to the deity. His attendants also follow the rituals followed by the chief. Nayaks at Bhandwasi\textsuperscript{226} also participate in the festival. At Abaneri in Jaipur members of village Panchayat organize Navarata in the name of Harshatmata.\textsuperscript{227} Here too during the days of festival realization of taxes is not done by Panchayat members. At Panarwa\textsuperscript{228} in the district of Udaipur, the Rana of the area himself participates in the ritual of sacrificing goat on the occasion of Dussehra. Sacrifice is done in front of the shrine of his family deity Khemajmata. On the days of Dashara officials venerate their Kula Devi and they sacrifice animals in Her name.

Other than the Navarata the important festivals of Rajasthan are Gangaur, Teej, Holi, Diwali, Rakhi, Sivaratri and Janmastami. Sivaratri and Janmasthmi are also celebrated mostly in the temples. But rest of the festivals like Gangaur, Teej, Holi, Diwali and Rakhi are generally celebrated at home.

The festival Gangaur is the most colourful festival of Rajasthan\textsuperscript{229} celebrated almost in every part of Rajasthan. The festival is celebrated in towns like Jaipur, Bikaner,\textsuperscript{230} Jodhpur,\textsuperscript{231} Jaisalmer, Udaipur,\textsuperscript{232} Ajmer-Merwar,\textsuperscript{233} etc. and the villages of Rajasthan like Bhangarh\textsuperscript{234} in the district of Alwar, Goriya\textsuperscript{235} in the district of Pali, Kailashpuri\textsuperscript{236} in the district of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{226} C.S.Gupta (ed.), Bhandwasi, 1961, p.28
\item \textsuperscript{227} Ibid. Abaneri, p.32
\item \textsuperscript{228} Ibid. Panarwa, p. 36
\item \textsuperscript{229} K.S. Singh, (Gen. ed), 1998, op. cit. p. 25
\item \textsuperscript{230} Maj. K.D. Erskine, Text, Reprint, 1992, p. 339
\item \textsuperscript{231} Ibid. p. 97
\item \textsuperscript{232} Tod's \textit{Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan}, Volume I, Chapters XXI and XXII.
\item \textsuperscript{233} C.C. Watson, \textit{Rajputana District Gazetteers}, Vol. 1- A, 1904, Ajmer-Merwara, p. 40
\item \textsuperscript{234} C.S.Gupta edit. 1961, Bhangarh, p.36
\item \textsuperscript{235} Ibid. Goriya, p.38-39
\item \textsuperscript{236} Ibid. Kailashpuri, p.29
\end{itemize}
Udaipur, Kalijal\textsuperscript{237} in the district of Jodhpur, Panarwa\textsuperscript{238} in the district of Udaipur and Peepal Khoont\textsuperscript{239} in the district of Banswara. Gangaur is celebrated in the month of Chaitra with great jubilation. Month of celebration of Gangaur is the same all through Rajasthan but days vary in some areas. In Ajmer-Merwara, the festival of Gangaur begins a week after the Holi and lasts for twenty days. At Bhangarh it begins on 3\textsuperscript{rd} day of the bright half of Chaitra while at Goriya it begins on the 9\textsuperscript{th} of the bright half of Chaitra and terminates on the 7\textsuperscript{th} day of Baisakh. At Kailashpuri it is celebrated on Chaitra Shukla Tritiya. At Kalijal Gangaur is linked to Sheel Saptmi a festival of Sitala and at Panarwa and Peepal Khoont it is celebrated on Chaitra Purnima and in the bright half of the month of Chaitra respectively.\textsuperscript{240}

Gangaur\textsuperscript{241} is an important festival of Rajasthan. It has very close identity with this region. Gangaur is very much confined to the territories of Rajasthan. The name of the festival Gangaur and the name of the male god Isar used for Siva indicate its regional affiliation. K.S. Singh says about the festival: “In quick succession to Holi, the most colourful festival of Rajasthan is Gangaur. ‘Gan’ symbolizes Lord Shankar, while second half ‘gaur’ is a synonym of Parvati, his consort. The festival begins on the first day of Chaitra, the first month of the Indian calendar, and continues up to the fourth day of the bright half of the month. This festival is observed by the virgins as well as by the married women. Virgins follow this festival to be blessed with a good husband and married women observe it for the prosperity and long-life of their husband. The newly married girls are

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{237} Ibid. Kalijal, 30
  \item \textsuperscript{238} Ibid. Panarwa, p.35
  \item \textsuperscript{239} Ibid. Peepal Khoont, p. 52
  \item \textsuperscript{240} Subhashini Aryan, ob. cit. p. 11
  \item \textsuperscript{241} James Tod, \textit{Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan}, Vol. II, 1995, p. 665-669
\end{itemize}
supposed to follow this festival for full course of eighteen days. One married girl invites other newly married girl by sending each of them a twig of Acacia, locally known as 'datun'. The invitees are supposed to provide her company for all eighteen days in the festival. Widows do not participate in the festival. He again points out that the rituals of this festival begin right from the next day of the Holi. Every morning the unmarried girls go to the garden or any orchard to bring blades of the green grass, flowers and water. The wall around place in the house where puja is supposed to be performed is white washed and on the wall the figure of Isar and Gauri is painted. At the time of puja folk tales are narrated which are heard with attention by the attendants. Dance and music is also organized with great fan-fare. Till fifteen days, the rituals of the festival are followed with great enthusiasm, but in the last three days of 'teej' it reaches the climax. On these main days of the festival married women attire in beautiful dress to look glamorous and then they make offering to the goddess. The rituals of these last three days are identical to the traditional marriage.”

This festival is dedicated to the goddess Gangaur or Gauri or Parvati or Isa. The festival is called by the name of the goddess Gangaur. ‘Gan’ symbolizes Lord Shankar, while the second half ‘Gaur’ is synonym of Parvati, his consort. The goddess is named Gauri and Parvati. Parvati and Gauri are used alternatively as manifestation of each other. In

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242 K.S. Singh, (edit), 1998, records the basic feature of the festival Gangaur celebrated at Ganganagar. He states that “Gangaur symbolizes the cultural, social and religious heritage of Rajasthan. It signifies great faith and reverence of the women-folk in Gauri. Married women and maidens celebrate the festival; the former offer worship for the welfare, health and long life of their husbands and the latter for being blessed with good-natured husbands of their choice. The festival commences on the first day of Chaitra and continues up to the fourth day of the first half of the north. The climax is reached during the last three days. The images of Gauria and Isar (husband of Gauri) are dressed in new garments and carried in possession on the hands of married women to some garden or well during these days. On the first and second day the face of the image of Gauri is kept looking backward. On the third and the final day she faces in the same direction as Isar. All the images of Isar and Gauri made of clay are consigned to water in some tank or well on the last day” p. 25
this festival Parvati is worshipped in the guise of Gauri.\textsuperscript{249} At Kalijal Parvati is known by the name of Gauri and at Panarwa the name remains Parvati. At Ulwar\textsuperscript{250} the goddess is named differently that is MahaDevi, she is worshipped without any consort and the festival of Gangaur is called by the name of Sawantij, a local goddess. At Udaipur “Gauri or Parvati is called the goddess of abundance” that may be linked to Annapurna.\textsuperscript{251}

In the festival of Gangaur the female deity Parvati is worshipped with her consort Siva.\textsuperscript{252} Siva is worshipped here in the name of Isar;\textsuperscript{253} Isar is, rather, a local name of Siva. Siva and Parvati are invoked together as husband and wife at the time of \textit{Puja}. Siva is pitted as frequently with Parvati as with Gauri in Gangaur\textsuperscript{254} At Malar, Kalijal and Peepal Khoont female deity Gauri or Parvati is worshipped individually and independently without consort\textsuperscript{255} on Gangaur festival.

The women of Rajasthan are active participants and performers of the festival of Gangor. They observe not only the rituals of the festival, they

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\textsuperscript{243} C.S.Gupta edit. Goriya, 1961, here the goddess is worshipped in the name of Gangaur, p.38-39
\textsuperscript{244} Ibid. Kalijal, p. 30. At the places, other than Kalijal, like Malar and Bhangarh goddess is named Gauri.
\textsuperscript{245} C.C. Watson, \textit{Rajputana District Gazettes}, Vol. 1- A, Ajmer-Merwara, Other than Kailashpuri, in the festival of Gangaur the goddess is worshipped in the name of Parvati at Ajmer-Merwar, 1904, p. 40; C.S. Gupta, 1961, Kailashpuri, p. 29; Malar, p. 38-39, Kailashpuri, p. 29, Panarwa, p. 35, Peepal Khoont, p. 52, the goddess is worshipped in the name of Parvati.
\textsuperscript{246} James Tod, op. cit. p 665
\textsuperscript{247} K.S. Singh, (Gen. Ed.), 1998, p. 25
\textsuperscript{248} C.S.Gupta (ed.), At Malar the goddess worshipped in the name of Parvati as well as Gauri, 1961, p. 38-39
\textsuperscript{249} Subhashini Aryan, \textit{Folk Bronzes of Rajasthan}, 1994, p. 44
\textsuperscript{250} P.W. Powlett, compiled Ulwur, \textit{Gazetteer of Meywar}, p-218
\textsuperscript{251} Maj. K.D. Erskine (1992) informs that Parvati or Gauri at Jodhpur is known as the goddess of abundance stated in Rajputana, p. 97.
\textsuperscript{252} C.C. Watson, \textit{Rajputana District Gazettes}, Vol. 1- A, 1904, Ajmer-Merwara states that Parvati, in the festival of Gangaur at Ajmer-Merwara, is worshipped with Siva, her consort. Here the festival begins after a week of Holi and lasts for twenty days (20 days). It is held in honour of the return of Parvati, wife of Siva, to the home of her parents, where she was entertained and worshipped by her female friends. p. 40; at Goriya goddess Gangaur is worshipped with her consort Isar; at Kailashpuri Parvati with Siva in the form of Eklingji; at Kalijal Gauri with Isar, at Panarwa Siva with Parvati, at Bhangarh Gauri with Siva.
\textsuperscript{253} James Tod, \textit{Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan}, Vol. II, 1995, p 665
\textsuperscript{254} C.S.Gupta (ed.) 1961, Bhangarh, p.36
\textsuperscript{255} Ibid. Malar, p.38-39
\end{flushright}
rather come forward to arrange and organize this festival also. They also hold a procession for the celebration of the festival that is considered as a part of ritual. It is for this reason that women are called the managers of the festival. It is also said that this is the festival for the women. During festival, none other than the females of all communities observe fast and they pray to deities to ensure a long life for their husbands and children. Both married and unmarried women participate in the festival. They participate in greater number in the procession of the festival and they carry the idols of the deity on their head and remain bare-feet throughout the fair. In Girasia community it is specified that a girl from Vansia clan shall carry the idol of Isar and the girl from the clan of Raidara will carry the idol of Gauri during the fair of Gangaur. The most interesting part of women activity in the festival is that they sometimes act as the priest of the festival. Other than the women, at most of the places the common people and some committees also take responsibility to organize and supervise the festival.

In the festival of Gangaur male-female deities are worshipped in the form of idols. Idols are made both for the female deity Gangaur and for the male deity Isar. Sometimes Annapurna’s icons are also made to sit on a throne with regalia on a high throne carrying a big laddu in her hand. “It is held in honour of the return of Parvati, wife of Siva, to the home of her parents, where she is entertained or worshipped by her female friends. Images of Shiva and Parvati are paraded through the streets with music, and the places where they are kept are illuminated at night and worshipped.”

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256 Ibid. at Bhangarh women observe fast on the eve of Gangaur. p. 36
257 Ibid. Panarwa, p.35; at Bhangarh women folk participate in the festival for the long life of their husband, p.36
258 Ibid. Goriya, p.38-39
259 Subhashini Aryan, Folk Bronzes of Rajasthan, 1994, p. 44
places like Malar, Kalijal and Peepal Khoont, the female deity is worshipped alone, without any male deity. Therefore, a single idol is instituted to worship. Religious procession is never taken out without idol. The idols are lifted and carried by the females at the time of procession bare feet. At Goriya the idols of the deities during procession are to be lifted necessarily by the females who belong to Girasia community. People other than the Girasia community are allowed to participate in all sorts of activities in the festival but they are warned not to lift idols of the deities. The Girasias believe that Isar belongs to the clan of Vansia and Gangaur to that of Raidara and therefore, the girls of the same community are allowed to carry the idols of the deities. At Panarwa, Kalijal and Peepal Khoont we do not find reference to the ritual of procession on the days of the festival.

The idols of the deities are made under certain rituals and traditions. The members of the organizing committee in some of the areas of Rajasthan are very particular about the conditions in making the idols as about its size and the material used. The committee members are particular about the expenses of the festival also. Ever since the *Panchayat Samiti*\(^{261}\) took over the charge that is in 1955 to manage the festival at Goriya some alterations have been introduced. Before 1955, the two idols one for Isar and the other for Gangaur were bought by the members of the *Samiti* from the village of Bassi, district Chittaurgarh, at a cost of Rs. 125/ and these idols were made of wood and were painted and decorated with colourful items. The idol of Isar is 114.3 cm and Gangaur 184.14cm in height. It was customary of the village that the idols were immersed in the river Jawai by the end of the fair. Since 1955 the idols of Isar and Gangaur presented to the village by the *Panchayat* are preserved in the Panchayatghar. Other than Goriya, even at Peepal Khoont

wooden idol of goddess Parvati is made in the festival of Gangaur. But in the areas of Kailashpuri of Rajasthan the idols of the deities are made of clay to use in the procession. Some researchers reveal that with the passage of time changes took place in the shape of the icon of Gauri. The columnar figure of Gauri marks a departure from the usual run of Gangaur images. Its lower portion of body down from waist is bulky. The tubular arms are heavier than the other parts of the body.\textsuperscript{262}

The tradition of the immersion of the deities at the end of the procession or at the end of the fair is a common practice in the celebration of the festival of Gangaur. The immersion of the images of the deities is followed with some laid down rituals. The idols of Isar and Gangaur are immersed in Jawai river by the end of the festival at Goriya.\textsuperscript{263} It is believed by the people until this is done the deities will not be restful. The immersion of the idols is performed only in the evening. It is, however, done only after the completion of certain \textit{puja} rituals of immersion. In the community of Girasias, Bhopa performs the \textit{puja} rituals. A \textit{neem} twig is spilt into two and one part is thrown in front of the deities before they are lowered in the river, and the other part is thrown at the back. The coconut that is offered to the deities previously is broken and bits of its kernel along with some \textit{Churma} are distributed among those present as Prasad. At Kailashpuri,\textsuperscript{264} the images of the deities are carried to the river Indra Sagar to be immersed on the last day of the festival. The main participants to do it are the people of the village. Similarly at Kalijal,\textsuperscript{265} on the fourth day of the festival, called Bolavani, or bidding farewell, the idols of the goddess Gauri and her consort Isar are

\textsuperscript{262} Subhashini Aryan, op. cit. 1994, p. 43-44
\textsuperscript{263} C.S. Gupta (ed.), Goriya, 1961, p.38-39
\textsuperscript{264} Ibid. Kailashpuri, p.29
\textsuperscript{265} Ibid. Kalijal, 30
consigned to the well. Even at Peepal Khoont, wooden idol of goddess Parvati is clad in ceremonial dress, bedecked with ornaments and taken to the bank of river Mahi for immersion. The procession for immersion is accompanied with singing and dancing. But at Ajmer-Merwara, Malar and Panarwa we find no reference to the custom of immersion of the idols.

"The last day of Gangaur is full of pathos. It is a day like bidding farewell to the daughter after her wedding. Two women stand erect with the images of Isar and Gauri on their heads. A rupee is presented to Isar as a parting gift usually given to the son-in-law according to Hindu traditions. Gauri then accompanies Isar and the tearful women folk shed their tears into waters of a tank or a well."266 This is not the same everywhere. We find that after the termination of the fair at Goriya the congregation takes the shape of a Panchayat in which 18 villages are represented and various important social issues relating to them are discussed and settled.267

The festival of Gangaur in various areas of Rajasthan is organized under the supervision of a locally constituted body of Panchayat Samiti. Particularly in the areas of Goriya268 the Panchayat Samiti plays a key role in the celebration. The members of this committee keep an eye upon the procession, singing and dancing of the girls, immersion of the deities and the expenses incurred at the time of festival. They remain very particular about the start of the procession and its termination as scheduled. The start of the procession at a given time and its temporary termination at some areas has some religious importance. Before reaching the final terminal point, any delay in the procession is understood inauspicious. The members of the Panchayat Samiti also take interest in management of the funds for the

267 C.S. Gupta (ed.), Goriya, 1961, p.38
268 Ibid. Goriya, p.38-39
festival. Even the idols constructed for the deities especially for the festival are done under the supervision of the members of Panchayat Samiti and they supervise whether the idols are being prepared within the guidelines set by the Bhopaa. The members of the committee take advice in the construction of the idols from the Bhopaa so as to avoid any dissatisfaction on the part of the members of the community.

In addition to the communities as a whole, in some of the areas of Rajasthan individual families also, sometimes take responsibility to organize Gangaur. It is thus the family members who come forward to invite participants for the festival. They even launch the procession that is an important part of the ritual from their own house. We have the information that at places like Ajmer-Merwara and Goriya, some individual families take the responsibility to organize the festival. At Ajmer-Merwara,269 the images of the deities are paraded through the streets with music under the supervision of Mahajan family. The procession for the festival is taken out from the house of th Mahajan who is supposed to be the patron of the festival. At Goriya,270 Patel family is the patron of the festival. They make all sorts of arrangements for it. They take out religious procession from their own house. When the festival is over, the idols of the deities are immersed in a river. Patels use ‘sprouts of newly sown barley’ and “the palas twigs” to invite and inform other Patels living in the neighbouring villages. The Jawaras are sown ten days before the fair and special care is taken by the Patels when these germinate. Worship is offered to these seedlings in the morning and in the evening.271

271 Ibid. p. 39
The festival of Gangaur is very colourful. Certain rituals of the festival make the whole festival much more colourful. At Goriya, the procession takes place by a system of relays, the chain starting from village Ambalia on the 9th of the bright half of Chaitra and terminating at Goriya on the 7th day of Baisakh, visiting a number of villages during the period, the most important of which are Koelvave and Bhimana where it reaches on the Chaitra Purnima and the 3rd day of Baisakh respectively. This festival is important as the people of all ages from Girasia community participate in this festival. In the village of Kailashpuri the procession is held on three consecutive days to the temple of Eklingji.

The procession of this festival starts with a pair of images of Isar (male deity) and Gangaur (female deity). In the procession the idols of deities are not carried by single individual, it is rather transferred skillfully from the head of one person to another as the procession moves forward. The girl who carries the idols of the deity on their head remains bare-foot throughout the fair. On their way to the procession, a group of young girls keep dancing. Even the girl who had been holding the idol of the deity does participate in dance. Women of other communities could participate in a group dancing in the procession. It is definitely a big festive occasion when men and women of all ages come out of their homes to participate in it; the young boys and girls are dressed up nicely and comb their head in an attractive manner to charm the opposite sex. The girls and the boys mix up freely and try their best to attract each other to marry. The girls make use of soap and scent.

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272 Ibid. pp. 38-39
273 Ibid. Kailashpuri, p.29
274 James Tod, in Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan contradicts this tradition and says that “the festival being entirely female, not a single male mixed in the immense groups”. In fact, James Tod has calls immersion ceremony with bathing ceremony, which is not correct. Vol. II, Low Price Publication, Delhi, 1995, p. 666-670
They put *kajal* (soot) in their eyes and also make use of the comb and the mirror as often as possible to assure themselves of their smart appearance. Besides dance, the other way of interaction between boys and girls is by putting up question for the other to answer. The question and answer was put in the form of songs when they used to perform dance on their way to procession. Therefore, many new songs are created on the spot. At various places during festival, arrangement of swing, called “Dolar Hinda”, is made for the joyride. Girasia members make copious use of drinks that add to hilarity and excitement. A very important feature of this festival is that young girls and boys get full opportunity to mix with each other in the course of the procession and they are given freedom to choose their future life partner from their community. In the village of Panarwa\(^{275}\) a fortunate opportunity is offered to young boys and girls to mix freely. They are also given the right to elope on the days of the festival. The relay the procession at Goriya, that I mentioned earlier, is organized also with this intention so that young men and girls could find their future partner from their own community.\(^{276}\)

At Malar on the festival of Gangor village women perform a group dance, dedicated to the goddess Parwati or Gauri. This dance is known as *Ghumar*\(^{277}\) a popular folk-dance of Rajasthan that is strikingly in contrast with *Ghair*. *Ghumar* is performed exclusively by women folk of the locality. The word *Ghumar* is derived from the word *Ghoomna*, pirouette.\(^{278}\) In this dance dancers go round and round in circles sometimes two of them holding the hands of each other at other times singly, with a rhythmic movements to

\(^{275}\) C.S. Gupta, Panarwa, 1961, p.35
\(^{276}\) Ibid. Goriya, p.38
\(^{277}\) Ibid. Malar, p.38-39
\(^{278}\) K.S. Singh, (Gen Ed.), 1998, p. XVIII
the harmony of *Dhol* (drum) and *Manjira* (cymbals), the only instrumental accompaniments. The beauty, splendour and grace of this dance is enhanced by the gorgeous *Ghagra*. It is a full-length skirt reaching below the ankles and has a lot of gathers at the waist. When dancers go round in slow rhythm in circle after circle, the skirt blows up revealing the exquisite ornaments worn on the ankles— the *Payal* and *Jhanjhar*—which make sweet and tinkling music. The dresses are of a bright and gay colour. With dance they sing this sort of song: “the girl asks for permission of her mother to take part in the *Ghumar* dance, which she says is most beautiful and delightful. She would go there not alone but accompanied by her seven girl friends. While dancing in *Ghumar* she feels as great a pleasure as in taking sweets. The *payal* in her feet produces a lovely sound. She is enamoured of the amorous talk of her beloved that she considers more valuable than pearls and diamonds.” This dance is followed all through Rajasthan.

The festival of Teej is also named Akha Teej or Akshaya Tritiya and is dedicated to female deities like Gauri, Parvati and Durga. Gauri, Parvati and Durga are understood as manifestation of each other. All these goddesses are considered one but they are worshipped with different names. The goddesses are worshipped independently without any affiliation with male deities or consorts. But some of the legends reveal relation of female deities with males. Teej is considered as the day of anniversary for Parvati. It is the day, Parvati, after long austerities got reunited with Siva.

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279 Subhashini Aryan, 1994, says that the festival is dedicated to Gauri also. Her image on the days of festival is gaily decorated with red and gold garments and is borne on the *palki* for procession composed of fully caparisoned elephants, camels and horses, p. 11

280 C.S. Gupta (ed), *Malar*, 1961, here we find that all these deities are worshipped together, p.39

281 Maj. K. D. Erskine, 1992, records “The Tij in Bhadon (August-September) being the anniversary of the day on which Parvati was, after long austerities, reunited to Siva” p. 97
The festival of Teej is celebrated for a variety of reasons. Reasons include: the products of Rabi crop became available in the houses, people count the start of New Year from this day; they enjoy the fun of the season Shravan as they repair their gardens; they consider it a very auspicious day and therefore, on this day the births or marriages are solemnized, strides for any new work is taken on the day of the festival, and this day is also declared a day of general holiday. Teej is celebrated also for the daughters of the house. Subhashini Aryan brings to our notice that "like the Gangaur, the Teej festival, traditionally marking the advent of the monsoon season, has great significance for Rajasthanis, especially the rural folk who eagerly look forward to heavy rains for good crops, apart from the relief provided by it from the sweltering heat of summer months."

The festival of Akha Teej is celebrated on the third day of the bright half of the month of Baisakh. At some of the places the people follow the festival almost a month after the festival of Gangaur that falls in the month of Shravan which is a day after Sindhara. Today Teej is much more talked about and more well known than Sindhara. The day of the festival is considered the most auspicious day.

The festival of Teej is celebrated by the women folk of Rajasthan. On such an auspicious occasion, village women offer worship to a clay idol of
goddess Durga. They follow a ritual in which the clay idol of goddess Durga is worshipped with a twig of the neem tree and they sing songs that are intensely musical and appropriate for the rainy season. Like festival of Gangaur, a procession is held on Teej that is dedicated to Gauri whose images, gaily decorated with red and gold garments, are borne on a palki for procession composed of fully caparisoned elephants, camels and horses. On Teej women perform a group dance, dedicated to the goddess Parvati or Gauri. That particular dance is known as Ghumar. Ghumar is performed on Teej also. Women sing songs describing the beauty of the month and most of the villagers enjoy swinging on Jhoolas with their companions.

During Teej festival people take much care of forth-coming dangers. They investigate through their personal experiences the premonitions of natural catastrophe. People go out of the fields to determine from the direction of wind and by the chirping of birds whether the coming year would be prosperous. Main observation of the people is to determine good omens so as to confirm how far the chances for rain are bright. Therefore, they take out four clods of clay and each of the clods is named after the four months of the rainy season viz. Ashadh, Shravan, Bhadrapada and Ashwin. A new

290 Ibid. Malar, p.39
291 Subhashini Aryan, 1994, this observation reflects the pattern of the festival followed all through Rajasthan, p. 11
293 James Tod, Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, Vol. II, Low Price Publicaiton, Delhi, 1995, p. 675
294 C.S.Gupta (ed.), Bhangarh, 1961, women love to dance even at Khajoora (Village Monograph, 1961), p. 35-36; C.E.Yate, Gazeteer of Meywar, Vol. III, Meywar and Partabgarh, states that in all festivals and before a fight, the men dance a ring dance called the ‘Ghana. ’ The drummers stand in the centre, and the dancers revolve in a circle with sticks in their hand, which they strike alternately against those in front and behind: time is kept with the drum all through; and, as the performers get more excited, it becomes lively and they jump about wildly; their long hair falls down; and every now and then one of them disengages himself and dances a pas inside the circle. p. 66-67
296 Ibid. Kyasara, p.45
earthen pitcher full of fresh water is put over them. The clods gradually become soaked up with water that trickles down from the pitcher. The one that gets soaked up first indicates the month that is expected to be rainy. The time taken by the clods in getting soaked is taken as an indication of early or late rains. Worship is also offered to bullocks on this day.

Preparation of delicious dishes by the available new Rabi crop is also a main part of celebration of the festival of Teej. In Akshaya Tritiya a special dish is prepared that is prepared by thrashing whole wheat in a mortar with wooden pestle and after the husk is removed the grain is boiled with milk and sugar and thus a pudding is made. In the preparation of pudding fresh ghee is also mixed which forms a delicious and nutritious preparation. Some special food is prepared by the people on this day such as ghoogri (boiled and sweetened wheat grain), boiled meat, heero (pudding) and porridge of maize etc.

Tod narrates that on Teej festival: “red garments are worn by all classes. At Jaipur clothes of this colour are presented by the Raja to all the chiefs. At that court the Teej is celebrated with more honour than at Udaipur. An image of Parvati on the Tij, richly attired, is borne on a throne by women chanting hymns, attended by the prince and his nobles. On this day, fathers present red garments and stuffs to their daughters.”

Dewali is one of the biggest festivals of Rajasthan. This festival is celebrated in the month of Kartik (October-November). The festival of

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297 Ibid. Malar, p. 39 and at Bhangarh women prepare sweet dishes for the family members and for visiting guests, p.36.
298 Ibid. Khajoora, (p.35) and at Peepal Khoont, people drink heavily with the delicious food, p. 52.
299 James Tod, 1995, p. 676
Diwali is also called the festival of Deepamalika or lamps\(^{301}\) that is celebrated on Kartikya Amawasya.\(^{302}\) The festival of Diwali is preceded by a minor but an important festival called Dhan Teras and it comes exactly twenty days after Dussehra. Dhan Teras is held on the thirteenth day of the first half of Kartik, when all metal utensils are rubbed and old earthen pots are replaced with new ones. People wash their ornaments and polish their jewellery.

The festival of Diwali or Dipawali is celebrated widely throughout Rajasthan and is dedicated to the female deity Laxmi. She is the supreme deity of the festival. At some places Lakshmi is worshipped together with the male god Ganesh.\(^{303}\) It is very rare to find evidence that Lakshmi and Vishnu are worshipped together on the day of Diwali.\(^{304}\) The most common tradition is to offer worship to Lakshmi. Gradually worshiping Lakshmi with Ganesha has become a common tradition.

Lakshmi is considered the goddess of wealth and Ganesha, the divine giver of wisdom and knowledge.\(^{305}\) Devotees on the day of festival wish for prosperity during the year to come. The worshippers are not confined to their houses to worship on the day of Diwali, they go to the temples and evoke blessings from the deities. At Bhangrah\(^{306}\) the Mahajans or Hindu shopkeepers offer \textit{puja} to Lakshmi with the view that she is the goddess of

\(^{301}\) Maj. K.D. Erskine, 1992, The festival of lamps is celebrated in Jodpur, Sirohi and in Bikaner p. 97; p. 257-258; p. 339
\(^{302}\) Reports collected from C.S. Gupta’s, (ed.), Village Survey Monographs of Rajashan, 1961. The festival of Diwali is almost same in whole of Rajasthan. At Kyasara, it falls on the 15th day of the dark half of the month Kartik (p.45); at Malar, in the middle of Kartik (p.39-40); at Kalijal falls on the Amavasya of Kartik, (p.31); at Panarwa, it falls on Kartik Amawasya (p.36); at Bhangahr, it is celebrated on Amasaya or the darkest day of Kartikin (p.36).
\(^{303}\) C.S. Gupta, (ed.) 1961, Kailashpuri, p.29 Other than Kailashpuri, on the day of Diwali, goddess Laxmi and god Ganesha are worshipped at many places like Kyasara (p.45), Panarwa (p.36), Bhangahr (p. 36), Janvi (p.62)
\(^{304}\) Ibid. Only at Kyasara it is cited that Lakshmi and Vishnu are worshipped. p. 45
\(^{305}\) Ibid. Kailashpuri, p.29
\(^{306}\) Ibid. Bhangarah, p.36
wealth and plenty. They also offer worship to Ganesh – the god of wisdom. Worshippers remember legends associated with Ganesh an elephant-headed son of Siva\textsuperscript{307} and Parvati. People have faith that goddess Lakshmi visits each of the houses at night and she loves to see burning lamps. People keep awake for the whole night. Indigents also wait for the goddess of wealth. People believe that the goddess of wealth visits even the houses of indigents. The residents of the Bhangarh remain watchful for the whole night.

The popular legend for the celebration of Diwali in Rajasthan is linked to the story of Ram. Lord Ram was given exile of fourteen years (Vanamasa – living in the forest) on the demand of his stepmother Kaikeyi because of jealousy. She wanted her son Bharta and not Ram to be the king of Ayodhya. In the period of fourteen years in Vanamasa the evil doer Ravan was eliminated along with most of his rakshasas (demons) – by Lord Ram and his brother Lakshman, and by their army of monkeys. After this victory of Ram over Ravan, Sita was retuned to her husband Ram, and then they made their way to Ayodhya in triumph and glory. Kaikeyi, meanwhile, did enough penance for the misery caused to the family. Bharat had refused to sit on the throne, and had kept vigil as a regent. He told Ram that if he did not return on the last day of the fourteen years’ exile, he would immolate himself. On the day of Diwali, Lord Ram returned to his capital Ayodhya after the exile of fourteen years. To commemorate the return of Ram, Sita and Lakshman to Ayodhya people celebrate Diwali with bursting of crackers and lighting up their houses with earthen diya and other lamps in the grandest style, year after year.

\textsuperscript{307} Ibid. Bhangarh, (p.36) and at Kyasara even, the male god Ganesh is remembered as the son of Siva, p. 45
On the day of festival in Rajasthan, the houses are decorated with lights in the evening. People light earthen lamps containing oil and wicks. They arrange plates with fragrant flowers and deep. The Girasias and the Bhils of Goriya, Khajoora and Peepal Khoont light the earthen lamps in the evening of Diwali and they put those lamps near the doors of their dwellings. Some of the Girasias prepare special lamps out of Gourd for Diwali. The gourd is cut into two and pulp is taken out from both halves to form deep cups. Oil is put in them. A small twig of wood is wrapped in a piece of cloth dipped in oil and lighted at the upper end. The lamps burn for the whole night. At Malar the festival of Diwali is celebrated with glaring lights of deep. In the night they light earthen lamps at their houses. They arrange tiny earthen lamps in a row at their houses. Women of the village sing number of good songs on this day. One of the songs is: “We will get a deepak (earthen lamp) constructed of gold and put wicks of silk in it. The deepak will have four mouths and four wicks. We shall fill it with ghee and place it on a plate of silver and then take it to our Rangmahal. The fine wicks of the deepak will shed their brilliant light in the Rangmahal all through the night over.” Clay lamps with wicks in edible oils are lighted and arranged or deposited near cottage doors or on terraces, in the center of courtyards, and in front of cattle sheds at the time of celebration of Diwali at Bhangarh. Diwali in Khajoora is worshipped by the Bhils, however, in a bit different way. Villagers essentially light earthen lamps in front of each house on this day and also at the places where the cattle are kept. The

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310 Ibid. Khajoora, p. 35.
311 Ibid. Peepal Khoont, p. 51
312 Ibid. Malar, pp. 39-40
313 Ibid. Bhangarh, p. 36
314 Ibid. Khajoora, p. 35.
members of the family put some grains like rice in front of these lamps and they also burn some incense there. It is surprising that no worship is offered to any deity except performing of the following rituals mentioned here. At Kyasara,\textsuperscript{315} Panarwa\textsuperscript{316} Nangal Soosawat\textsuperscript{317} the whole house is illuminated with tiny earthen lamps.

Before burning earthen lamps in the evening, cleansing the houses, removing the dirt and white-washing are also some of the common rituals followed at the time of Diwali. The people of Kailashpuri\textsuperscript{318} clean their houses and collect dirt deposited over the months in every corner of the house and then they go for the whitewash. At Malar and Kalijal the houses are just cleaned. But at Janvi\textsuperscript{319} on this day people cleanse and wash their houses. Walls of the houses are coated with cow-dung and mud. At Aghapur\textsuperscript{320} on the day of Diwali, people cleanse their houses and they coat walls and floor of the houses with mud and cow-dung and paint Madnas on them. Diwali is celebrated with great enthusiasm in the village of Nangal Soosawat\textsuperscript{321} The people of this village clean their houses on this day and decorate the floors and the walls with Madnas. Madnas is a very common feature of the village life of Rajasthan as the houses are decorated with this on important festivals and also on the occasion of the birth of a male child and marriage. Madnas was considered to be a sign of auspiciousness. If on a certain occasion the use of Madnas was found missing it was considered a

\textsuperscript{315} Ibid. Kyasara, p. 45
\textsuperscript{316} Ibid. Panarwa, p. 36
\textsuperscript{317} Ibid. Nangal Soosawatna, p. 35
\textsuperscript{318} Ibid. Kailashpuri, p. 29
\textsuperscript{319} Ibid. Janvi, p. 62
\textsuperscript{320} Ibid. Aghpur, p. 35
\textsuperscript{321} Ibid. Nangal Soosawatna, p.35; K.S. Singh, (Gen. Ed.), 1998, A very important ritual of this festival is Mehandi Mandana in which an artistic decoration of roofs, surfaces and courtyards is made with red stones.
bad-omen. There was a proper technique to mark Madnas on the floors and walls of the house. Before the Madnas are worked on the floor and the walls, they are coated with cattle dung. Then with the help of chalk called Geru (coloured powder), women make out delicate figures of various objects. The more important of which are the figures of cart, bullocks, wheels of cart, birds such as the peacock, the parrot, the pigeon etc, animals like the tortoise and house-hold articles such as Pankha (fan), Deepak (earthen lamp). Above all, special importance is given to the designs known as Paglias that are symbolic of the feet of goddess Laxmi. These are always marked with toes pointing inwards representing her auspicious entering in the house. The people of the community of Balais consider design of Paglias as a symbol of the feet of Ramdeoji. Ramdeoji is accepted as the family deity of the community of Balais. Women take special bath with Ubtan or Peethi prepared with powder, til oil, turmeric and barley flour which lend a fascinating grace to the skin complexion. Women decorate their palms with Mehendi and they come out collectively singing melodious songs and worship goddess of youth and beauty.322

Cooking of delicious food, paying friendly visits to each other’s places and rejoicing through singing and dancing are some common traditions that are followed by every community on the day of festival of Diwali. A special dish, ‘dal-bati choorma’ is prepared323. Non-vegetarian item is strictly prohibited and this practice followed by every community of Rajasthan on the day of Diwali. The community of the Bhils, the Minas and the Girasias also prepare vegetarian items to celebrate the festival. At Ramnagar324 in the district of Bundi, Kanjars take food items without liquor and non-vegetarian

323 Ibid. p. 23-24
324 C.S. Gupta, (ed.), Ramnagar, 1961, p. 32-33
items. Non-vegetarian items are strictly prohibited here for three days. The most common vegetarian item that is prepared almost by every community on the festival is *Lapsi* and rice. Boiled *moong* is also an important item prepared on the day of Diwali is exchanged amongst one another. The Bhils and the Girasias of Goriya go to the house of the Patel who entertain them with *Lapsi* or tea. Women sing songs and make themselves merry. Again the members in the area of Kailashpuri that is inhabited with the Bhils exchange greetings with others in the village. The Bhils visit the houses of the elders in the community where sweets are offered to them. At Kyasara, Kalijal people visit each other’s places and offer greetings. Khajoora and Peepal Khoont are inhabited with the community of Bhils and they cook delicious vegetarian food items even if they do not offer *puja* to goddess Lakshmi.

Certain rituals like burning of earthen lamps, preparation of delicious vegetarian food items, cleansing of houses, exchange of visits at one another’s, are some common rituals followed both by the Hindus and by the tribes on the day of Diwali. But the tribes like the Bhils, the Girasias and the Minas follow some extra rituals other than the mentioned rituals. The Bhil women in the area of Kailahspuri, however, remember their departed dear ones whose loss they bewail in the morning of Diwali. The Minas of Nangal

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325 Ibid. Nangal Soosawatna, p. 35; Peepal Khoont, p. 51; Agahpur, p. 35
326 Ibid. Goriya, p. 39-40
327 Ibid. Kailashpuri, p. 29
328 Ibid. Kyasara, p. 45
329 Ibid. Kalijal, p. 31
330 Ibid. Khajoora, p. 35.
331 Ibid. Peepal Khoont, p. 51
332 Ibid. Kailashpuri, p. 29
Soosawatan\textsuperscript{333} perform \textit{Shradh} of their ancestors on the day of Diwali and Brahmins are invited to eat and enjoy \textit{Kheer, Poori} and sweets on this occasion. In the village of Peepal Khoont,\textsuperscript{334} on Diwali, \textit{tapras} are lighted on the full moon day of Kartik and obeisance is paid to the \textit{manas}. People gather before the idols of their ancestors and indulge in drinking and dancing. Some of the Bhils get possessed with the spirit of an ancestor and give out prophecies or instructions on behalf of the dead persons. At Aghapur\textsuperscript{335} Gordhan \textit{puja} is organized but the name of the deity who is worshipped in this \textit{puja} is not mentioned. Two of the places – Kailashpuri\textsuperscript{336} and Kalijal\textsuperscript{337} are inhabited with the community of the Bhils where tradition \textit{Thikra} is followed on the day of Diwali. Under this tradition the horns of the cows and bullocks are painted in green and red and \textit{puja} is offered to the bullocks in the evening at a common place. Cows and bullocks are adorned with flowers and green grass. Bhils apply the auspicious red mark-\textit{tika} – to their forehead and paint their horns. K.S. Singh has researched that it has become a common practice to take care of animals on the festival of Diwali. “Animals are well treated and taken care of on this day. Horns of cows and bullocks are painted with different colours and garlanded. \textit{Kukkurs} (Dogs) are considered to be the incarnation of Dharma Raj and they are also entertained on this day. Besides feeding them lavishly, candles (deep) made of watered flour and filled with ghee are also lighted in their honour. This is the reason why this day is also known as ‘Kukku Diwali’ in Rajasthan.”\textsuperscript{338}

\textsuperscript{333} Ibid. Nangal Soosawatna, p. 35
\textsuperscript{334} Ibid. Peepal Khoont, p. 51
\textsuperscript{335} Ibid. Aghpur, p. 35
\textsuperscript{336} Ibid. Kailashpuri, p. 29
\textsuperscript{337} Ibid. Kalijal, p. 31
\textsuperscript{338} K.S. Singh, (Gen. Edit.), pp. 23-24
Bhopa in tribal communities plays an important role to perform the rituals of Dewali. They offer *dhoop* (incense) to the deities like Hindu priests. The Bhopa beats his body with a heavy iron chain and a club known as *guraj* and trembles vigorously. Initially the shaking is slow but gradually it gathers momentum. It is believed that he shakes his body only when he possesses on a spirit. Due to the presence of spirit, people believe, he does not feel any pain when his body gets beaten with the iron chain. The Bhopa makes gestures indicating that he is in direct communion with the spirits.

Bhil children prepare a wooden chain called *Jhalar* out of the Khejra tree. They move in-group before the festival with *Dholak* and beat gongs and they go to each house imitating Bhopa and demand for grain and money to the family members. It is a great rejoicing hours for them. The demand money and grain and in return they distribute jaggery and sweets to all members of the village on the day of the festival.339

Shiva Ratri is one of the important festivals of Rajasthan. It is celebrated on the 13th day of dark half of Phalgun. People observe fast on the day and also keep awake the whole night. They recite religious songs in praise of the Lord to the accompaniment of music on *dholak*. Tod writes that “a fast common to India peculiar to the women, who perform certain rites under the sacred fig-tree (the *vata* or papal) to perfect them from widowhood, and hence the name of the fast Savitivrata.”340 Group of women sing songs on the eve of the festival and narrate how to offer worship to Shiva:

“Let us proceed to offer worship to Lord Shiva with a wick of camphor placed on a golden plate. The god is in a trance, playing on his *damroo* (hand-drum) and the anklets round his feet are sounding while he is

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339 Ibid. Goriya, p. 39-40
performing the *Tandav Nritya*. Let us pray to Shiva so that he may awake from his trance and open his eyelids. To which household belong the daughter and the wife who have come to offer him worship? Aye, she is the daughter of king Janak, and wife of Shri Ramchandra. Lo! God Shiva has shorn off his *Jata* (locks of hair) and has run away to the jungle and people are clapping in fun and merriment and laughing at him.  

In the areas near the temple of Eklingji the festival of Siva Ratri is celebrated with excitement and in elaborate fashion. On Shivratri day, Eklingji is very specially bedecked in jewellery worth several lakhs. It is observed on the 14th dark day of Phagun. All Hindus, men and women, observe fast and worship Lord Shiva. Over 10,000 persons from Udaipur and other places, visit Kailashpuri on this occasion. Special *puja* is offered to the god Siva. The *puja* consists of Vedic and Tantric rites. The doors of the temple are flung open at 4 a.m. to the accompaniment of devotional musical instruments. With chanting of *mantras* the *puja* is performed by the Gosain himself. From 4 to 6 in the early morning, from 10 to 1 in the afternoon and 6 to 8 in the evening the temple remains open for *darshan* when the deity is first given *panchamrat* of bath, then adorned and worshipped with chanting of incantations. The offerings of flowers, edibles and cash are not directly made. They are collected and then offered at the prescribed time and in the stipulated manner with the recital of *mantras*.  

On the day of Siva Ratri a fair is also organized in some of the localities. In the village of Kyasara a grand fair is held. 3000-4000 people come to visit the festival. People from neighbouring areas also assemble in it.

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341 C.S.Gupta (ed.) Kyasara Village, 1961, p. 46
342 Ibid. Kilashpuri, pp. 28-29
Shopkeepers from the neighbouring areas like Dag, Chaumahla numbering around 30 to 40, attend the fair with the items for sale. People go for buying articles in this and enjoy swings and freak out.\(^{343}\)

General perception of the people regarding Sivaratri in Rajasthan is that it is an auspicious day symbolizing the wedding of Shiva and Parvati. The married and unmarried girls perform puja with great faith, fervour and feeling, Parvati is considered ‘Gaura’ (name of the goddess) the giver of ‘Suhag’(husband) – married bliss, a long and prosperous married life. An unmarried girl prays to ‘Gaura’ to give her handsome husband with wealth, knowledge and talent.

Sitala Ashtami is another important festival dedicated to goddess Sitala. It is organized on the following days at various places of Rajasthan. It is held on 8\(^{th}\) day of Chaitra month of Vikrami era in Sikar,\(^{344}\) on 7\(^{th}\) day of the dark half of Chaitra in Nangal Soosawatan.\(^{345}\) The following days and months for the celebration of the festival, people believe, are auspicious and conducive. It is, therefore, that the people accordingly fix the days of worshipping the female deity.

The festival of Sitalamata is celebrated in continuation of the festival of Holi. At Kalijal\(^{346}\) the festival of Holi continues upto the beginning of the festival of Sheel Saptmi. At Nangal Soosawatan,\(^{347}\) Holi festival terminates with the worship offered to Sitala mata on 7\(^{th}\) day of the dark half of Chaitra. Even at Kyasara,\(^{348}\) the festival of Sheel Saptami is celebrated continuously for seven days and it begins just on the day the Holi ends. In some places

\(^{343}\) Ibid. Kyasara, p. 46
\(^{344}\) B.D. Agrawal, Rajasthan District Gazetteer, Sikar, 1978, p. 77
\(^{345}\) C.S. Gupta (ed.), 1961, Nangal Soosawatan, p. 34
\(^{346}\) C.S. Gupta, (ed.), Kalijal, 1961, p.30
\(^{347}\) Ibid. Nangal Soosawatan, p. 34
\(^{348}\) Ibid. Kyasara, p. 45
together with Sitala some goddesses like Phoolmata and Kesarmata are also worshipped for seven days.

Women folk are quite rigid in observing the rituals of this festival. They dedicate their heart to the goddess on this occasion. They follow a detailed practice of rituals and take no risk of inconsistency that may invite wrath of the goddess. In the festival for Sitala it is a common practice to defer food preparation on the day of festival. No family member is allowed to light the hearth on the day of festival. Food for this day is prepared during the previous evening and neither the kitchen is run nor is the hot meal taken on this day. Due to the practice of taking the food on the day of festival that was prepared on the previous day the festival is, however, known by Basoda. Due to this at some of the places this festival is also known by the name of Basoda also.

In the areas of Kyasara some special rituals are also followed: a toy palanquins is made of mud and woodden sandals are offered to the goddess Sitala. The goddess Sitala is offered with food also that was cooked the previous evening and the food consists of wheat or bajra cakes, maize pudding or cooked rice mixed with curd, and puas (pan-cake) etc. Women sing songs for the goddess in the village to propitiate goddess Sitala. The song is quoted here: “With the cart loaded with Sangeri where are you going? The goddess Sitalamata is herself sitting comfortably on her seat. Revered Yog Maya will you kindly give ear to my prayer? For want of a son my father-in-law taunts, casting aspersions of barrenness on me. Will you not bless me with a son?”

349 B.D. Agrawal, Rajasthan District Gazetteer, Sikar, 1978, p. 77 Even in the areas of Kailshpur, Kyasara, Kalijal and Bhangarh on the celebration of festival for Sitala hearths are not lighted on the day of festival.
350 C.S. Gupta, (edit.), Kyasara, 1961, p. 45
Again in Kyasara\textsuperscript{351} we find that the festival of Sheel Saptmi is organised in the form of a grand fair and that place is known the name by the name Halawas; this is about twenty km away from the village. At Halawas where the fair is held, all the villagers, men and women, go there with their offerings of dishes prepared during the previous night to pay their homage to goddess Sitala. At Bangarh\textsuperscript{352} she is offered with \textit{Rabdi}, \textit{Pooris} and sweet dishes of \textit{gulgula} that are prepared a day before. It shows that neither the deity nor the worshippers eat fresh food. These are the first items that are offered to the goddess the next morning after worship. We find that vegetarian items are prominent. Non-vegetarian items are strictly prohibited. Non-vegetarian items will invite wrath of the goddess.

Sitala Ashtami is Sitala centric. Throughout Rajasthan on this occasion Sitala is worshipped independently. There is a single reference that Sitala\textsuperscript{353} is worshipped together with a male god Bhaironji but not independently. Goddess Sitala is manifested here as Phool Mata and Kesar Mata. Tod reports that this festival is celebrated “in honour of the goddess Sitala, the protectress of children: all the matrons of the city proceed with their offerings to the shrine of the goddess, placed upon the very pinnacle of an isolated hill in the valley.”\textsuperscript{354}

There are some local festivals. Such local festivals are dedicated to local goddesses like Dasa mata, Piplaj mata, Sawantij etc. Its celebration and publicity is restricted to its boundaries where they are celebrated. These festivals are called by the name of the local goddesses and are not known by the people living outside the periphery of its locality. Unlike the festivals

\textsuperscript{351} Ibid. Kyasara, p. 45
\textsuperscript{352} Ibid. Bhangarh, p 35
\textsuperscript{353} C.S. Gupta, (ed.), Nangal Soosawatan, 1961, p.34
\textsuperscript{354} James Tod, op. cit. Vol. II, 1995, p. 664
discussed above, the goddesses in local festivals are not linked to the Hindu goddesses nor are they understood as manifestation of the Hindu goddesses. The goddesses of local festivals are alone, unadulterated and absolute. For example the festival of Dasa Mata-Ka-Varat is popular in the districts of Banswara, Khajoora and Peepal Khoont. At both the places the festival is celebrated in the same way. It is celebrated on the tenth day of the dark half of Chaitra. Married women keep fast on this day and worship Dasa mata wishing prosperity for their family. The goddess Dasa Mata is worshipped together with Pipla mata. Another local festival held at Todgarh in Merwara is dedicated to a female deity Piplaj mata and she is worshipped solitarily and is not linked to any male and female deity whatsoever. Bloody sacrifice plays an important role in this festival. This ritual drives the emotion of the worshipers. A festival called Dahai celebrated in the area of Bahror is organized in the months of Chait and Aroj (March and October) in honour of Devi. Another festival called Macheri is organized in Rajgarh during Chait (March) in honour of Devi. In the village of Kyasara on the 5th day of the dark half of Bhadrapada the snake-god, Takhaji and snake goddess Kesar Kanwar is worshipped. A small havan is also performed at his shrine. Women sing appropriate songs for the occasion: “Come let us go to Kalesar. O’ snake god and snake goddess we follow you. Let us go to the river.”

If we see the pattern of celebration of local festivals we find that to a greater extent these local festivals are organized systematically after a fixed

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356 Ibid. Peepal Khoont, p. 52
357 Ibid. Peepal Khoont, p. 55
359 P.W. Powell, compiled Ulwur, Gazetteer of Meywar, 1879, p-218
360 Ibid. p – 218
361 C.S. Gupta (ed.), Kyasar, 1961, p. 45
interval of time. Particular set of rituals, days and months are followed even in local festivals very much similar to other popular festivals of Rajasthan. A festival named Hang is celebrated in the villages of Goriya organized in the honour of the god Shiv particularly on Mondays of the month of Jesth. On this day the adults of the village observe fast. Wheat is collected from each house along with some gur and a coconut, and churma is prepared from it. Worship is offered to the deity with beal (vilva) leaves and kner flowers (red china roses). The villagers sing and dance all the day long. In the evening prasad is distributed.\textsuperscript{362} Goga Navmi is celebrated on the day next to Janmasthami. All the communities take part in the festival but Jats give special importance to it. On the wall near the hearth, a place is purified with a coating of cow-dung and cow-urine. A mark of snake representing Gogaji is also made on it. Puas are prepared by mixing wheat flour in a solution of jaggery and frying it in sesamum oil. These are offered to Gogaji and then exchanged as presents among relations and members of the communities.\textsuperscript{363} Deevo is a festival celebrated in the village Panarwa on Shravan Amavshya and god Ganesh is worshipped on the day. Bullocks are given a bath and worshipped by all the communities of the village. Again the festival Khekra held here on the day next to Diwali that is on Kartik Shukla Pratipada. On this day villagers offer special worship to the cow.\textsuperscript{364}

Festival Amli Egyaras\textsuperscript{365} is celebrated on the eleventh day of the bright half of Phalgu. Unmarried boys and girls of ages between seven to eighteen keep fast on this day. They go to the pond in the afternoon, wash themselves and bring a small branch of the tamarind tree. Then they fix the branch in the

\textsuperscript{362} C.S.Gupta (ed.), Goriya, 1961, p. 39
\textsuperscript{363} Ibid. Kalijal, p.31
\textsuperscript{364} Ibid. Panarwas, p.35
\textsuperscript{365} Ibid. Khajoora, p.35
ground with the help of earth and stones and go round it seven times, throwing grains of maize, wheat, gram and millets with the left hand and pouring water on the branch with the right. Girls bring a separate branch and offer grains and water to it. While going round the twig the girls sing: “To whom does the twig of the tamarind belong? Who is playing with it? After completion of the seventh round they pick up some of the grains, bring them home and put them in the baskets meant for storing the respective food-grains, considering them to be auspicious and hoping that such baskets may never go empty. In the evening they offer some sweet porridge of maize and ghee to the fire and then take their meals.

Some researchers have formed their opinion regarding relevance of village festivals in India. During the festivals, villagers say, the goddesses are always present in the village to defeat the crisis and overcome the problems. If epidemics spread in village, it is believed that the goddess is overpowered by the demonic power, and, hence, the diseases. In this situation festival is held and myriad rituals are followed. Worshipers believe that by introducing the rituals the power of female deities is strengthened to combat the evil forces.366 The festivals in the village ‘stir up’ everything, ‘mixing up of things’. The caste barrier is defied and everybody, cutting across caste, mixes up freely. Systematic life and regulated habits followed almost every day are disturbed for the time being. Together with variety of rituals some heroic vows are undertaken. Various activities are performed like fire walking, carrying burning parts. These performances carry the sense that the goddess will help them from any casualty now and from now onwards either during spread of epidemics or any other disaster. Kinsley

says that "perhaps the central dramatic events of village-goddess festivals is a blood sacrifice."\textsuperscript{367} In his opinion the female deities at the festivals are projected awesome, violent and disruptive. Traditionally the village goddess festivals were not undertaken regularly or routinely although this seems to be the increasing pattern in some places today. These disastrous situations if they ever arose may be considered either due to the presence of demons outside from the goddess defense or due to the wrath of goddess herself.\textsuperscript{368}

The given opinion of the researchers show that the festivals in the villages are not undertaken "regularly and routinely" and "the animal sacrifice" is the main ritual of all festivals dedicated to the female deities. But the observation is not very apt. The festival like Navarata, Diwali and Gangaur are held as scheduled on auspicious days and months decided by the Hindu calendar both in towns and villages of Rajasthan.\textsuperscript{369} Even bloody sacrifice is not a compulsory practice in most of the festivals dedicated to female deities. Teej, Sitala Saptami, Vasnat Panchmi and even some local festivals (I have referred to earlier) are dedicated to female deities but bloody sacrifice is not a compulsory ritual.

**FAIRS**

Holding a fair is an important social practice in Rajasthan. Fairs are held with the festivals as well as independently. In our discussion about the festivals we have not focused on one of its important aspects that is that

\textsuperscript{367} David Kinsley, *Hindu Goddesses*, 1987, p.205

\textsuperscript{368} Richard Brubaker, *The Ambivalent Mistress,* says that festivals in the villages were "not undertaken routinely and regularly." But evidences reflect that villagers followed a definite set of rituals and also followed particular days and months to celebrate festivals. p. 166 (This is taken from the book of David Kinsley, *Hindu Goddesses, Vision of the Divine Feminism in the Hindu Religious Tradition*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1987, pp. 197-211

\textsuperscript{369} Major H.E. Drake-Brockman, *Gazetteer of Eastern Rajputana, Native States of Bharatpur, Dholpur and Karauli*, 1905, informs that the Muslims festivals had no fixed schedule to hold. In Dholpur Shabe Barat, Noroz, Barah Wafat, Mohurram and Giarhween had "no certainty of months as they are always changed". p. 287
festivals and fair go hand in hand. The festivals are celebrated combined with the fairs.

In Rajasthan the festivals are generally organized together with the fairs. We know that the festivals are celebrated at temples or otherwise but in all cases the tradition of holding fairs on the eve of the festival is followed. Here the fair is understood almost as the part of festivals. It is held on the eve of the festivals and is followed in a typical manner in which stalls are set up for the sale and purchase of the varied items and for the sake of enjoyment. Fairs provide opportunity to the people of varied communities to assemble together and interact with each other. On the eve of the festival the royal head and their family members come to visit the temple and they enjoy the fun of the fair in presence of the common masses.

Fairs are held independently also devoid of any association with the festivals. The differences between the fairs held with festivals and fairs held independently are quite distinctive. The independent fairs are much more enlarged and extensive than the fairs held on the occasion of festivals. In fact the fairs held on the eve of the festivals have supplementary status. They are understood as part of festival like other rituals. Participation of the people in such fairs is limited and confined to its locality. But the fairs held independently contain greater participation of the people as the items and affairs in these fairs are more extensive and activities are focused more upon the fair. People come from far and wide to attend it. Sale and purchase activity is also extensive and enlarged. Such fairs are given some particular name by the name of the deities and fairs are held around the shrine. Royal head and its family members participate in the fair and come to visit the shrine of deity. In fact such fairs have independent status compared to the fairs held on festive occasion.
The tables of the fairs given below reflect the features of the fairs held in various localities of Rajasthan. The fairs given below are held in areas of Bharatpur:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fair's Name</th>
<th>Police Circle</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NaktiDevi</td>
<td>Uchain</td>
<td>Uchain Town</td>
<td>8-4-1900</td>
<td>2 days</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devi Dig</td>
<td>Iklechra</td>
<td>6-4-1900</td>
<td>1 d</td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZatDevi</td>
<td>Rubbas</td>
<td>Milsanwan</td>
<td>10 to 12-4-1900</td>
<td>3 ds</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaitbati</td>
<td>Thana Sharpqi</td>
<td>Mutra Gate</td>
<td>1-4-1900</td>
<td>1 d</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jita Bati</td>
<td>Thana Garbi</td>
<td>Kumber Gate</td>
<td>1-4-1900</td>
<td>1 d</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jati Durga</td>
<td>Bhusawas</td>
<td>Bhusawar</td>
<td>7-4-1900</td>
<td>1 d</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jati Durga</td>
<td>Bhusawas</td>
<td>Ballabgarh</td>
<td>7-4-1900</td>
<td>1 d</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jati Durga</td>
<td>Bhusawas</td>
<td>Nithar</td>
<td>8-4-1900</td>
<td>1 d</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NaktiDevi</td>
<td>Chikzana</td>
<td>Chichana</td>
<td>6 to 8-4-1900</td>
<td>3ds</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NaktiDevi</td>
<td>Weir</td>
<td>Neyabass</td>
<td>8-4-1900</td>
<td>1 d</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debika</td>
<td>Weir</td>
<td>Kirana</td>
<td>14-4-1900</td>
<td>1 d</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhadrika</td>
<td>Weir</td>
<td>Weir Town</td>
<td>19-4-1900</td>
<td>1 d</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devi Nari</td>
<td>Kumher</td>
<td>Kumher Town</td>
<td>6 to 7-4-1900</td>
<td>2ds</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durga Pir</td>
<td>Nagar</td>
<td>Thun</td>
<td>3-5-1900</td>
<td>1 d</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dussehra</td>
<td>Bayana</td>
<td>Bera Jhil</td>
<td>7-6-1900</td>
<td>1 d</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lila</td>
<td>Kama</td>
<td>Kadam Khandi</td>
<td>8-9-1900</td>
<td>1 d</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dussehra</td>
<td>Thana Sharqi</td>
<td>Muttra Gate</td>
<td>3-10-1900</td>
<td>1 d</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dussehra</td>
<td>Thana Garbei</td>
<td>Bharatpur City</td>
<td>3-10-1900</td>
<td>1 d</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List of Fairs in Dholpur: In Bilara town situated forty-five miles east of Jodhpur city a religious fair, lasting for only one day, is held yearly towards the end of March.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fair’s Name</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Months</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shivaratri</td>
<td>Sepoo</td>
<td>Phagun</td>
<td>6-7 thousand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shivaratri</td>
<td>Baseri</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>3-4 thousand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dabiji</td>
<td>Bari</td>
<td>Chait</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalkaji</td>
<td>Rajkhera</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>5 thousand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ram Liba</td>
<td>Dholpur</td>
<td>Baisakh</td>
<td>2 thousand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mukundji</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Bhadon</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarad Fair</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Konwar</td>
<td>3-4 thousand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deoji</td>
<td>Beperpur</td>
<td>Aghan</td>
<td>1 1/2 thousand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fairs held at Jaipur with religious and trade purposes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>Fair’s Name</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Nearest Rail Station</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chatsu</td>
<td>Dungri-Sel-Mataji</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>Badi station</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaluk</td>
<td>Jwala Mataji</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>Alaspur station</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amber</td>
<td>Sitala Mataji</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>Jaipur station</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diggi</td>
<td>Kalianji</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>Jaipur station</td>
<td>12,000-15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bavwar</td>
<td>Chauth Mataji</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>Jaipur station</td>
<td>10,000 - 15,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides the fairs recorded in the table, we find some more fairs held in different parts of Rajasthan. A fair of Jiwan Mata held in the village of Naila for Sitala Mata. Twelve miles south-west of Karauli at Birwas, on the

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371 Ibid. p. 287
373 C.S. Gupta (ed.) Nangal Soosawatan, p. 32-33
way to Utgirh Fort, on a hill surrounded with *nalas*, a fair of Kaila Devi\(^{374}\) is held at her shrine, in the month of April and the fair lasts for about a fortnight. An amount of six to eight thousand rupees is spent to organize and the people around fifteen to twenty thousand and sometime even more come to attend this. A fair held at Birwas close to Karauli near Panchana is of some note and is dedicated to the goddess Anjani\(^{375}\) and is held in the month of October. Again at Rajkhera in Dholpur a fair is held in the name of Kalkaji\(^{376}\) and is organized in the month of Phagun. People numbering around five thousand have been attending the fair that is next largest to the fair of Shivaratri at Sepoo where six to seven thousands of people attend the fair. At Bikaner\(^{377}\) a fair of Devi and at Bhadlia\(^{378}\) near Lathi a fair of Swangiyogi are held. At Bermar fairs held in different months are dedicated to Vakaldevi\(^{379}\) and Sakambhari and Ashapuridevi.\(^{380}\)

According to the records we find that fairs are attended by a large number of people living in the same locality and even from the areas located away from its boundaries. For example the annual fair held at Karauli\(^{381}\) “on the way to Utgirh Fort was visited by people from the neighbouring states and from the districts of Agra and Etawah. Nearly fifteen and twenty thousand people and sometimes even more than that in number come to visit this” In the festival close to Birwas held at the temple of Anjani,\(^{382}\) the probable gathering is from three to four thousand and usually of natives of this state.


\(^{375}\) Ibid. p.388-89

\(^{376}\) H.E. Drake-Brockman, 1905, op. cit. p. 287


\(^{378}\) Y.L. Bashora, Census 1951, *Rajasthan and Ajmer, Jaisalmer District Census*, 1956, Jodhpur, p.IX


\(^{380}\) Ibid. p. 48.


\(^{382}\) Ibid.
A fair is held at Viratara in the Chohtan area three times in a year in the month of Chait, Bhadon and Magh, respectively, for the worship of the goddess VakalDevi. Rajputs claim that they are the real followers of the goddess and closely associated with the goddess. A temple is also dedicated to the goddess at Viratra village about seven miles from Chotan and Rajputs look into all activities associated with the goddess Vakal Devi. A fair of Jiwan Mata was well attended by a larger number of Meenas. At Timangarh in the Machilpur Tehsil, renowned for its fort, a fair is held in the month of June called “Sagar” fair. There is a large tank amidst the ruins of Timangarh where people mostly Gujars of Machilpur Dang and the neighbouring areas of Bharatpur and Jaipur, take their bath. The gathering is from four to five thousand men.

Most of the local royal authorities also attend the fairs. In the fair of Karauli “his highness, the Maharaja, annually visits the shrine during the fair”. The Mahrajah of Birwas close to Karauli visits the temple of Anjani on the eve of the fair and he drives there with all his attendants and Sardars and takes his bath. The gathering is from four to five thousand men in the fair. Again at Devi Kund in Bikaner, a fair in the name of Devi is held annually. In the months of January, February, March and September, the Maharaja goes in state to visit the sacred temple of Devi located in the campus of the fort. In the month of July Maharaja worships at the Devi kund where there are the cenotaphs and mausoleums of his ancestors.

385 Ibid. 905, p.388-89
386 Ibid. p. 388-89
The given facts above explicitly reveal the popularity of the fairs held in various localities in which people come in large number to attend from far off distance with religious as well as with sale-purchase and trade purposes. The local heads also take ample interest in it and attend fairs. Some of the communities in particular like Rajputs, Gujars, Meenas, Bhils etc. actively participate in the fairs and bear the responsibility to organize it.

**Rituals:**

Here we shall examine some more details about the rituals to offer worship to the goddesses of Rajasthan. First of all I shall probe the pattern of worshiping Kula Devi at home. Creating a seat within house is one of the commonest practices to offer worship to the Kula Devi. Almost in each house separate place for lodging the deity is reserved. In some cases it is a sort of a small annexe which is covered with the roof and protected on either sides. On the front side instead of door, there is low wall about two feet high so that animals may not get inside. At home some vestigial marks in the form of 'dots' are made on the wall and these marks are considered as the symbol of the Kula Devis. Sometimes small silver canopies are offered to the female deities, especially the Kula Devi, if somebody’s cherished wish is

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388 C.A. Baylay, *The Rajputana Gazetteers*, Vol.II, Jaipur, 1879, p.163 & J.D. La Touch, *The Settlement on the Ajmer and Mhairwarra Districts*, 1875, inform that the fair at Pooshkur takes place in October or November. Like other religious fairs it is used as an opportunity for trade – attended by the people about 100, 000 pilgrims. In 1872 the quality of merchandize and the number of animals brought for sale was below the average – there were about 700 horses, 1,850 camels and 1,200 bullocks. The horses are chiefly Marwaree and Kathiawar, and the native cavalry Regiments serving Rajpootana generally send parties to purchase remounts. p. 18

C.E. Yate, *Gazetteer of Meywar* (1880) reports that 'the fair in Meywar is chiefly noted for their religious character. In August there is a large gathering at Nathwada for the festival of the Janam Ashtami and in September there are similar gathering at Kankaoli and Chatarbhuj. At the latter place the fair lasts three days and here is considerable traffic in cattle and cloth. There is a fair also at Charbhaja in August and at Rakabdev both in March and August. In May a fair is held at Matri Kund, in the Banas, some 40 miles east of Oodayapore, which lasts for three days. Pilgrims flock in numbers in bathe in the pool, and here is a considerable traffic. Fairs are held at different places Anjra, Sadri, Gundoli, Gasunda, Kachola, Chotor, Gubor, Badesar, Bihilwara and Richaor at different times of the year. pp. 43-44
fulfilled through the grace of the goddess.\textsuperscript{389} Also, a shallow pit is made if Devi is worshipped in the form of idol and barley is sown on the occasion of the Navaratra. Incense, earthen lamps, and grain and sometimes fowls and goats\textsuperscript{390} are also offered to the deities.

Village Monographs illustrate the pattern of worshiping family deities at home. Devotees create space about 20 cm on the left side of the main entrance gate of every Tapra (a Bhil house).\textsuperscript{391} Even in the wall of the kitchen room a niche is reserved specially for the family goddesses. Generally in these created spaces the family members keep an unidentifiable objects for worship. The objects generally do not contain any definite shape to explain its features. Even the community of the Bhils in the areas of Kalijal\textsuperscript{392} in the district of Udaipur, create a space at the entrance wall of the varandha for their deities. Every Bhils’ house-hold has a sacred spot in his house near the hearth. This is besmeared with cow-dung and on it are the carved figures of Gogaji and Mataji. The former is presented in the form of snake and the latter in dots and trident. The Bhils worship idols of Ramdeoji and Bhaironji which are installed in their houses. Near the shrine of Ramdeoji and Bhaironji the shrine of Jog Maya is located.

Another best example of worshipping of family goddess is found in the village of Peepal Khoont.\textsuperscript{393} Every Tapra (small shrine-like structure) while entering the main gate, on the left hand side, a space about twenty centimeter square is reserved for the family deity. This part of the wall is coated with cow-dung and two human figures in a standing posture thereon are marked

\textsuperscript{389} C.S.Gupta (ed.), Panrwan, 1961, p.34
\textsuperscript{390} The community of Rajputs follows a ritual of sacrifice offering to the goats to the Kula Devis. Rajputs of the villages like Kyasara in the district of Jhalawar (1961, p.35), Panarwas in the district of Udaipur (1961, p.36)and Janvi in the district of Jalor (1961, p.62) sacrifice goats for their Kula Devi.
\textsuperscript{391} K.K. Sehgal, Rajasthan District Gazetter, Banswara, 1974, p.43
\textsuperscript{392} C.S.Gupta (ed.), Kalijal, 1961, p.29
\textsuperscript{393} Ibid. Peepal Khoont, p. 55
with the help of cow-dung and clay. The Bhopa of the village offers worship here every Monday. This feature of the deity reflects a link of the family deity with the deity of the whole Tapra. In the village of Peepal Khoont the deity of Tapra is considered the family deity of each of the families of the village. In the village of Ramnagar, if the members of Kanjars community know that any woman in their family is pregnant, they sacrifice a hen at the shrine of Kula Devi for the good health of the mother. After the safe delivery, cooked meat is served as prasad amongst friends and relatives.

Each Raika sub-caste has a Kula Devi (family goddess) although she demands to be seated in the house, and each house has an alcove (in one of its inner rooms), she may not be physically represented in the forms of a stone or idol. The Bhukus (one of the Raika sub-castes), for instance believe that their Kula Devi is Mummaimata who hails from Jaisalmer. Each Bhuku house has a place for Kula Devi in the alcove where pictures of other deities and renouncers are also kept. When the members of that household fold their palms before the alcove and offer it ritual ingredients like coconut, sugar, waters, lamps and incense; they visualize themselves as offering prayers as well as their ingredients to the Kula Devi along with the other deities, present or absent in a physical form. Ritual ingredients and salutations are offered in the direction of Jaisalmer thinking it is the original abode of Mumaimata after pronouncing or mentally remembering her name. However, the Raika families who have forgotten their original Kula

394 Ibid. Ramnagar, p. 32
395 Mummai Mata – a form of Parvati- is also worshipped by the Rebaris. It is believed that she is mute because she did not approve of her husband’s going away to practice penance and thereafter decided to remain eternally silent. Her priests (called Mogha, meaning ‘mute’ are expected to remain silent during her worship. (Mankad, 1939: 54)
396 Irawati Karve, Maharashtra – Land and its People, Maharashtra State, Directorate of Government Printing, Bombay, 1968, observes that the wandering people identify themselves with distant deities and
Devi have adopted the goddesses of the ruling Rajput lineage or of the dominant caste. Thus, the Karnimata, the clan goddess of Rathor Rajputs of Bikaner has become the family goddess of many Raika households in Bikaner and her framed pictures are kept in the alcoves.  

Some other tribal communities like Sansis and Kanjars in the village of Bagor in Bhilwara district have their own family goddesses and those family deities are presented in the form of stones. These stones of the deities are not placed in the niches of the houses or in some part of the house; they are placed under some trees on a plain high normal plinth made of mud and painted with vermilion. Stones are generally uneven and un-hewn.

Sansis and Kanjars family deities are offered with animal sacrifices and liquor during worship. Liquor is supposed to be an important item for the given communities and it is served to the community members on all occasions like birth of a child, marriages, death ceremonies, fairs and festivals. Women in menses are, however, not kept separate nor are considered unclean. They are allowed to attend all their normal functions and duties. In the menses they are not supposed to take liquor by any means. The community of Meena also follows the same tradition. They offer wine and sacrifice buffaloes and goats to their goddesses named Jiwanmata, Sitalamata, Burmanidevi. But they offer coconut, oil vermilion and even wine to Bhairon.

Khajoora in the district of Banswara is increasingly populated with the Bhils and each clan of Bhil here is associated with its own female deity.

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397 V.K. Srivastava, Religious Renunciation, p. 66
399 Ibid. Nangal Sooswatan, p. 33
400 Ibid. Khajoora, p. 32-33
Each clan worships its family deity in aniconic form. No image is created for the family deity. The female deities like Hovanmata, Lalmata, Hithlamata, Dasamata and Kalkamata are worshipped in an-iconic form. Hovanmata and others are worshipped in the form of trident. Trident is struck on the right side of the earthen platform. The worshiping place for all the family deities is situated in the middle of the village under a Kadai (Sterculia Urens) tree. For the family deities there is no any particular fixed day for worshiping the goddesses.

**Conclusion:**

The tradition of goddess worship is deeply embedded in contemporary Rajasthan. Both males and females have deep respect for female deities. They participate with great zeal and enthusiasm in fairs and festivals organized in the name of the goddesses. They follow the rituals in accordance with the social and religious sanctions granted to them. Of course, married women find more close to the Kula Devi or with other female deities as they abide by the traditions set for them in their daily life. This does not mean that males lack faith in female deities and they revere them less. Participation of males in Dashara, Gangaur etc. is suggestive of the reverence of males toward female deities.

There is a notion that male deities are spiritually stronger than the females is no longer prevalent in the religious beliefs, rituals and practices of Rajasthan. There is no distinction between male-female deities as far as spiritual potential is concerned. For example, the sole goddess Sitaladevi is invoked to protect people from pox. No male deity is involved in this course. In fact, people believe that there is mutual division of spiritual power amongst deities and each of the deity has his/her limitation. This carries

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401 It is irrelevant to talk that the females are more attached to female deities than males.
forward the concept of unison amongst deities and belies the concept of a sole supreme deity.

The distinction between non-brahmanic female deities and the female deities of the brahmanic tradition in contemporary Rajasthan seems to have become irrelevant. Not only at theoretical level but in practice as well this does not exist. Both local and Brahmanic female deities are equated with each other. In *puja* rituals they are invoked by different names but are considered as if they are the same. Festival Gangour is one of the best examples of this. It is celebrated all through Rajasthan and female deities like Parvati and Gauri are identified as manifestation of each other. It is an interchangeableness of Brahmanic female deity with local, rather, mingling of symbiotic local goddess with Brahmanic.
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<td>Birwas</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Karauli</td>
<td>Ibid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khimelmata</td>
<td>Vasantgarh</td>
<td>Town</td>
<td>Jaswantpura</td>
<td>Major K.D. Erskine, 1992, p. 303</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simha-Vahini Durga</td>
<td>Bharatpur</td>
<td>Town</td>
<td>Bharatpur</td>
<td>Indian Archaeology - A Review - 1974-75, p.70</td>
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<td>Mahisha suramardini</td>
<td>Mandore</td>
<td>Town</td>
<td>Jodhpur</td>
<td>Indian Archaeology Review, 1974-75, p. 71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mataji temple</td>
<td>Gahtiyal</td>
<td>Town</td>
<td>Jodhpur</td>
<td>Ibid. p. 117</td>
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