At the Feet of the Goddess:
A Comparative Study of Local Goddess Worship in Khurdapur, a Village Settlement in Orissa and Cholavandan, a Small Town in Tamilnadu

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University of Wales College, Newport
Summary

This thesis examines local goddesses and their worship in two contrasting field sites in India. The settlement of Khurdapur consists of five villages situated near to Bhubaneswar in Orissa. Cholavandan, on the other hand, is a small town located near to Madurai in southern Tamilnadu. Maps, tables, temple plans, and a large collection of photographic evidence are an important component of the overall research, making the distinctions between temples, shrines, and the variety of goddesses at the two field sites evident to the reader.

A thematic approach has been used to analyse the three general areas of investigation. The temples and shrines are examined, especially their spatial and symbolic layout at the two sites. The character of the goddesses is analysed, addressing such questions as, are the most pure goddesses really the most powerful in a local setting? The worship and main festival rituals of the goddesses are examined and a comparison made between the two sites.

While this study sought to provide a comprehensive view of local-goddess worship in differing environments, it also addressed three questions. The research has shown that the goddess-centred literature, written at the beginning of the century, is not in many cases, applicable to contemporary goddess worship. Furthermore, local goddesses generally do not warrant the negative labels ascribed to them by some scholars, such as "malevolent" or "ambivalent". The goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan do not adhere to the characterisation outlined in previous research. I have shown, by examining a wider range of goddesses than previous studies, and at sites in different parts of India, that a three or two-way categorisation is too narrow, since the majority of goddesses straddle former classifications. Finally, this research has identified both correspondences and divergences between the goddesses and their worship at the two field sites, Khurdapur, and Cholavandan.
DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed ............................................. (candidate)

Date ..........23-03-99

STATEMENT

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed ............................................. (candidate)

Date ..........23-03-99

STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

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Abstract

This thesis is an examination of the local goddesses and their worship in two contrasting field sites. The settlement of Khurdapur consists of five small villages situated a short distance outside Bhubaneswar in Orissa. Cholavandan, on the other hand, is a small town located near to Madurai in southern Tamilnadu.

While this study seeks to provide a comprehensive view of local goddess worship in differing environments it also addresses three questions. 1) Is the goddess-centred literature, written at the beginning of the century, still applicable to contemporary goddesses? 2) Do local goddesses really warrant the negative labels ascribed to them by some scholars, such as "malevolent" or "ambivalent"? 3) Is there uniformity or divergence between the goddesses and their worship at the two field sites? In order to address these concerns the research is concerned with three general areas of investigation 1) the temples and shrines 2) the character of the goddesses 3) the ritual worship of the goddesses. These three areas are analysed thematically in terms of the opposites, sacred and profane, order and chaos and the pairs, power and purity, anger and unpredictability. Maps of Khurdapur and Cholavandan are included, as are tables, plans, and photographic evidence, supporting and clarifying the findings in each section.

The temples and shrines of Khurdapur and Cholavandan are examined in relation to standard temple configuration, with the conclusion that the temple and shrine structures do not necessarily conform to the patterns given in written sources. An analysis is made of the spatial and symbolic layout of the temples and shrines, in particular as it relates to conceptions of sacred and profane in the two local settlements.

An analysis of the character and nature of the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan is the pivotal section of the thesis. The pairs, anger and unpredictability, and power and purity are examined closely in relation to the character of the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan, addressing such questions as, are the most pure goddesses really the most powerful in a local setting? In many cases, it is apparent that impurity accompanies an abundance of power.

The final section details the main ritual practices and festival rites in Khurdapur and Cholavandan, comparing practices at the two sites and making a distinction between the rituals that take place inside and outside the sacred precinct of the temple.

In conclusion, I have provided evidence to suggest that local goddesses have been erroneously generalised as "malevolent" according to previous research. Although many goddesses have a dualistic nature, generally they more readily heal than afflict. The goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan do not adhere to the characterisation outlined in previous research. I have shown, by examining a wider range of goddesses than previous studies, and at sites in different parts of India, that a three or two-way categorisation is too narrow, since the majority of goddesses straddle former classifications. The evidence collected has also provided various suggestions about general trends of local worship across India.
Acknowledgements

There are a great many people to whom I am most sincerely grateful for their help in writing this thesis. First and foremost I should like to thank my supervisor Dr Jeaneane Fowler since without her faith and encouragement I would not have had the confidence to embark on such a monumental undertaking. Throughout the writing of this thesis Jeaneane has been my mentor and my friend whose energy and vitality have seen me through the highs and lows of this project. I should also like to thank Professor Ursula King for her supervisory input into this project. Her critical appraisal, always offered with a generous heart, has been an inspiration to me. Before going on to acknowledge the help of the many people in India I should like to express the debt of gratitude that I owe to my husband Graham who has supported me wholeheartedly through the good times and the bad. His contribution to this work has been considerable since many of my India contacts were made through his business associates.

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Finally, I should like to thank the pūjāris and the many informants in both Khurdapur and Cholavandan who were prepared to answer my many questions and to share the experience of their goddesses with an outsider from a distant land.

Although many people have given me considerable assistance, I take full responsibility for any mistakes in this work.
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<p>| Abhiseka (Tam.) | Ritual bath given to a deity |
| Abārī (Tam.) | Carpenter |
| Acutta (Tam.) aśuddha (Skt.) | Impure; non-vegetarian |
| Akini-catti (Tam.) | Fire-pot |
| Āḻvar (Tam.) | Tamil saint |
| Ammaṇ (Tam.) | Mother; Lady |
| Anaiṅku (Tam.) | Sacred power; afflicting |
| Aruā (O.) | Holy rice, uncooked but dried in the sun. |
| Asura | Demon |
| Aśvamedha | Horse sacrifice |
| Baiśākh (O.) | April/May |
| Bali | Sacrifice (animal) (Tam. pali) |
| Balikhumba | Sacrificial post |
| Balipīṭha (Skt.) | Sacrificial post |
| Bāūrī (O.) | Scheduled caste group |
| Bindu | Seed or point from which creation is manifest |
| Bhoi (O.) | One of higher scheduled castes - from Bāūrī group |
| Bhūā | Ghost |
| Cāmyāti (Tam.) | &quot;God dancer&quot; (possessed person) |
| Cantāṇa (Tam.) | Sandalwood |
| Channa | Chick peas |
| Chakkiliyars (Tam.) | Sweeper caste |
| Cutta (Tam.) Šuddha (Skt.) | Pure; vegetarian |
| Dalma (O.) | Mixture of vegetables and lentils |
| Dāmaru | Drum with a snake wrapped round it |
| Dāru | Sacred tree |
| Dārśan | Sight of a deity |
| Daśa-Mahāvidyās | Ten goddesses of transcendent knowledge |
| Dhūhū | Wood resin used to make fragrant smoke |
| Garbhagrha | &quot;Womb house&quot;, inner sanctum |
| Ghatak (O.) | Decapitates animal at sacrifices, from the dhobi caste |
| Grāmadevaṭa Grāmadēvata | Village Goddess |
| Gopuram (Tam.) | Temple tower |
| Hāḍi (O.) | Sweeper or drum-making caste |
| Himṣa | To cause harm |
| Homā | Sacrificial fire |
| Iraṅku (Tam.) | &quot;Descend&quot; (possess) |
| Jaggery | Unrefined sugar made from palm sap |
| Kailāsa | Śiva's mountain home |
| Kalasam (O.) Karakam (Tam.) | Water pot |</p>
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<tr>
<td>Pūjā</td>
<td>Worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pūjāri</td>
<td>Non-Brahman priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pūkapparai (Tam.)</td>
<td>Flower kapparai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pū-k-kulī (Tam.)</td>
<td>Pit of flowers (fire walking pit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pūrṇamimā (O.)</td>
<td>Full moon day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rakṣasa</td>
<td>Demon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sādhanā</td>
<td>Tantric practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sāg</td>
<td>Spinach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sakti</td>
<td>Feminine term denoting power or energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sakti Karakam</td>
<td>Pot representing the goddess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saṃsāra</td>
<td>Cycle of birth, death and rebirth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saṭī</td>
<td>Immolation of wife on her husband's funeral pyre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śilpa - śāstras</td>
<td>Texts outlining the formula for temple building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śilpi (O.)</td>
<td>Carpenter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tai (Tam.)</td>
<td>January/February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tapas</td>
<td>Inner heat, power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tilak</td>
<td>Mark on forehead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiraupatiyamman (Tam.)</td>
<td>Draupadi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tīrtha</td>
<td>Ford or crossing place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trimūrti</td>
<td>Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triśūla</td>
<td>Trident (Tam. Vel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulasī</td>
<td>Goddess Lakṣmī in the form of a sacred basil plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ugra</td>
<td>Terrible, Fierce aspect of a deity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vāhāna</td>
<td>Vehicle, Bearer of a deity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaikāi (Vaigai) (Tam.)</td>
<td>River running through Madurai and Cholavandan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaikāci (Tam.)</td>
<td>May/June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valayars (Tam.)</td>
<td>Fishermen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vannar (Tam.)</td>
<td>Hunting caste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vāstupuruṣamaṇḍala</td>
<td>Spatial representation of the cosmos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vel (Tam.)</td>
<td>Trident (Skt. triśūla)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Velāḷaṭ Pillai (Tam.)</td>
<td>Caste including Pilḷaimārs and Vellars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vellam (Tam.)</td>
<td>Jaggery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vellar (Tam.)</td>
<td>Potter caste</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schedule caste: Caste including Pillaimārs and Vellars.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vēṭṭukal (Tam.)</td>
<td>&quot;Cutting stone&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vimana</td>
<td>Tower above the sanctum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vināyaka (Tam.)</td>
<td>Gaṇeśa the elephant-headed god</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vīra</td>
<td>Tantric hero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viśvarūpa</td>
<td>All-containing form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vrat (Skt.)</td>
<td>Vow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yantra</td>
<td>Mystical diagram</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction
India's towns and villages abound with the myriad local goddesses that are so characteristic of Hinduism on a wide scale. Fuller makes the claim that "there are about half a million villages in India and four-fifths of the population live in them."\(^1\) Hinduism at a local level embraces ritual, worship, and iconography, rather than philosophy and metaphysics, and this factor pertains to the majority of the population of India rather than a minority. This thesis entitled *At the Feet of the Goddess: a Comparative Study of the Local Goddess Worship in Khurdapur, a Village Settlement in Orissa and Cholavandan a Small Town in Tamilnadu* is an investigation of this popular form of Hinduism. I refer to the goddesses under scrutiny as "local goddesses" rather than the most commonly used term "village goddesses", to avoid any confusion. Local goddesses are found in a variety of settlement types, including towns and sometimes in cities; they are not solely inhabitants of India's thousands of villages. In this way I aim to distinguish the goddesses from the more famous pan-Indian goddesses or from the tribal goddesses, the latter being more often referred to as "village goddesses". The local goddesses fall somewhere in between these two types, in some cases bearing some characteristics of either group.

What do I actually mean when I talk about local religion, which, it would appear is often goddess-centred? Local religion is evident in the numerous villages and towns across India where the majority of deities have a distinctly local character that makes them part of the regional culture, thus sealing the bond between deity and devotee. However, although local worship is ritually based and grounded in a tradition that may not be comprehended by its adherents, it is also partly based in, and is a reflection of, a

more complex metaphysical undercurrent. Local goddesses in particular, while representing anthropomorphised figures for the majority of their devotees, are concurrently the personifications of the abstract concept of śakti, female divine energy. The local goddesses, therefore, should not be dismissed out of hand as being without intrinsic worth: by close analysis they can enhance the study of the multifarious system of belief referred to as Hinduism.

The aim of this research is to undertake a detailed analysis of the character of the goddesses, their mode of worship, and their spatial and symbolic placement within two contrasting settlements in India. I intend to contrast the full range of goddesses within a village settlement in Orissa with those of a small town in Tamilnadu, with the objective of comparing the findings in literature and fieldwork. More specifically the rationale for this research is to find an answer to three questions:

- Written many years ago, the most wide-ranging local goddess studies are somewhat prejudiced being compiled in the main by Christian missionaries, are they now out of date?
- Has the more recent research that focuses on local goddesses represented them accurately?
- How far does the analysis of the goddesses in the two sites contribute to an understanding of the extent of pan-Indian uniformity or does it reveal significant differences between north and south?

The thesis will be divided into four sections. Section one is introductory in nature, detailing the rationale and methodology informing the research and introducing the two field sites. In section two the temples and shrines of Khurdapur and Cholavandan are
examined in relation to their correspondence with written sources and analysing, in particular, their location and the spatial relationship between sacred and profane in the two local settlements. Maps of the two settlements, Khurdapur and Cholavandan are included, as are tables and plans detailing the nature of each temple or shrine and the direction they face. Section three provides an analysis of the nature, character and iconography of the goddess collectives of Khurdapur and Cholavandan. Of particular importance in this section are the questions I raise concerning the correspondence and appropriateness of previous research in relation to contemporary local goddesses: certainly at my two field sites. The final section details some of the main ritual practices and festival rites in Khurdapur and Cholavandan, comparing practices at the two sites and making a distinction between the rituals that take place inside and outside the sacred precinct of the temple. A large collection of photographic evidence is an important component of the overall research, making the distinctions between temples, shrines, and the variety of goddesses at the two field sites evident to the reader. A glossary is provided to help the reader with the Tamil and Oriya terminology.

The two specific field sites, Khurdapur and Cholavandan, although they have not been researched previously, nevertheless represent contrasting sites in an area that has been subject to research, i.e. Tamilnadu and South India generally, and an area where very little research has hitherto taken place, i.e. Orissa. It is hoped that by conducting a study of contrasting sites, a more comprehensive picture of locally based goddess worship might be arrived at.

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2 I prefer to use the term “goddess collective” instead of the more common term “pantheon” because the latter term assumes a hierarchy that is not the concern, nor the scope of this particular research.
SECTION ONE
Chapter 1
Rationale and Methodology for the Research
1.1 Choice of field sites

The first field site chosen for this study is a group of five villages in Orissa that I have collectively named Khurdapur in order to protect its anonymity. I first visited this site in 1992 when I was collecting material for my BA dissertation. I was, and still am, interested in a relatively new goddess, Santōṣī Mā, who has only become prominent over the last 25-30 years, and while staying in Bhubaneswar in 1992 I was fortunate enough to be invited to a nearby village containing a Santōṣī Mā temple. Unfortunately I had very limited time, but I felt that this village would be an interesting place to examine more closely, not least because there was evidence of how a new goddess, Santōṣī Mā, had become integrated with other, more ancient, goddesses. From my preliminary visit to Khurdapur I became aware that the goddesses and their associated religious practice did not necessarily correspond with other documented accounts of village worship, making it an interesting place to research. I remained in contact with my informant and friend, and when I started to look for a suitable location in which to base my research, Khurdapur, as an ideal rural village settlement, where goddess worship is prominent, seemed an obvious first choice. Orissa is an ideal state for study as there has been very little research into local goddesses, or indeed Orissan goddesses in general. The majority of research in Orissa to date has focused on the worship of Lord Jagannāth in Puri and on tribal religion.

Having established one field site where I had ascertained that goddess worship is important, I now needed to locate another site with which to compare and contrast it. I decided that Tamilnadu would be a good choice for the second field site, as goddess worship is predominant in this state. As I had not travelled in South India, I enlisted the help of my husband's Indian business associates to help me find a suitable contact. Dr
P. Sarveswaran, Professor of Modern History at Madurai Kamaraj University offered his help and support in my efforts to find a suitable site in the Madurai area.

I visited many prospective village settlements for the second field site, but my final choice was the small rural town of Cholavandan, the home of the Professor from Madurai Kamaraj University. I chose this particular field site for a number of reasons, but most importantly, because I believe that the comparison between a village settlement and a town could yield more interesting and wide-ranging results than a comparison between two villages. The fact that the Professor is a resident of Cholavandan also influenced my choice. When there is limited time for field research, an inhabitant of the place of study is invaluable in establishing contacts and assisting in obtaining information relatively quickly.

Criteria

There were a number of criteria that each site needed to fulfil if it were to be suitable for my purposes. This particular study revolves around the worship of local goddesses. So the most important criterion was that religion in both field sites should be essentially goddess-centred. In this respect the two field sites, Khurdapur and Cholavandan, represent those settlements where the goddess is prominent. I am not trying to assert that goddess worship is the centre of all local worship as I have little knowledge of other parts of India, but I would suggest that it is widespread and therefore is an important part of contemporary Hindu religion.

Both field sites meet this criterion amply, as worship in both sites revolves primarily around the numerous goddesses who inhabit the two locations. In order to put the
chosen field sites into perspective I have tried, where possible, to ascertain the general patterns of worship in Orissa and Tamilnadu by venturing further afield than my two field sites. However, the primary focus has been the two settlements, Khurdapur and Cholavandan.

The second most important criterion was that the field sites should provide me with original research, ideally providing evidence of undocumented goddesses and rituals. Therefore, I looked for settlements that had not been studied by other scholars. Khurdapur proved to be an excellent choice as no other non-Indian people have ever ventured into Khurdapur. Several of the goddesses in Khurdapur are so far undocumented, due to the general lack of studies of Orissan goddesses. By comparison, Cholavandan is not quite so remote as Khurdapur, and some of the local students have studied the history of two of the larger temples.¹ I have only come across two scholars who mentioned Cholavandan in published works. Alf Hiltebeitel has examined Draupadī temples in South India² but, as far as I am aware, his research is confined only to the Draupadī, Tiraupatiyamman temple in Cholavandan. Similarly, Sarasvati Venugopal has briefly mentioned one of the temples in Cholavandan, belonging to Ankālaīśvarī and Vālakurunāthacēmi, that she describes is in Teṅkarai, an ancient part of Cholavandan.³ Therefore, Cholavandan does meet the criterion as a source of original research as no comprehensive studies of its goddesses have been compiled.

I considered it preferable that the field sites should not contain any very large temples. Many of the temple studies already completed are centred on large established temples with Brahman priests who rely on established texts and practices. My intention, however, was to examine the lesser known temples frequented by the majority of the population. Temples like Mīnākṣīsundaresvara in Madurai and Liṅgaraj in Bhubaneswar are important, but they are not the centre of daily worship for the majority of the local inhabitants. They form a supplementary aspect of worship as they are mainly the focus of pilgrimage, some festival rituals, and special ceremonies such as birthdays etc. But it is the town or village temple that is the mainstay of normal religious life. These temples prove much harder to research because the priests or the devotees often do not know the meaning and significance of ritual and practice, as such aspects are not documented. Another important criterion lay in the necessity for a range of different types of temples between the two sites and, although all have a distinctly local character, both the selected field sites comply with this criterion of variety.

I was anxious that the second site, like Khurdapur, should be relatively small and I particularly wanted to compare and contrast two sites within a rural setting. I felt that rural settlements would typify the majority of Indian towns and villages, and they would be less likely to be affected by the Western influences that are presently altering many of India's larger cities. Cholavandan certainly has a rural nature, set in an area of paddy fields and banana plantations. However, it has a larger population than I had anticipated, as the most recent population estimate (1995), of approximately 22,000, suggests that the last published figures in the 1981 Census, (8-9000) are grossly out of

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4 An important part of many local festivals is the custom, at either the end or the beginning of the festival, for individuals to take offerings to a nearby large temple. Other occasions that warrant a visit to the temple include a special visit early on the morning of a devotee's birthday and a special visit in order to ask for a particular favour.
date. Nevertheless, by Indian standards, it would still be considered a small town, and, with its small town or village atmosphere, I believe that Cholavandan can still provide a suitable contrast to Khurdapur.

It is important that the two field sites should provide a contrast rather than a similarity. One main reason for contrasting a town and a village is to try to establish the extent to which there are changes between town and village and between North and South India. Khurdapur and Cholavandan have proved excellent choices for this task as Khurdapur, as a settlement, is growing and developing – something that can be seen in its temple development. Cholavandan, on the other hand, appears to be static in terms of temple development, perhaps representative of a settlement that has already undergone the process of change.

My aim in selecting the two field sites was to examine settlements that could be considered typical of towns and villages across India. Therefore, in Orissa in particular, I did not want to examine a tribal settlement, which in many ways is untypical, although very intriguing and valuable. It is important to note that both my field site choices are presented as being representative of many other ordinary sites of a similar nature: they can be viewed as a snap-shot of two forms of Indian life, but are not in themselves definitive.

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5 See Table 1- Population Statistics, on following page.
Table 1. Population Statistics for Khurdapur from 1991 Census (As yet Unpublished)\(^1\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Pop.</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>SC</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>ST</th>
<th>Lit.</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bandanapur</td>
<td>974</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhagavanpur</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jatesvar</td>
<td>863</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batesvar</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarasvatipur</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>2751</td>
<td>1356</td>
<td>1395</td>
<td>671</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1450</td>
<td>978</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In this report Bhagavanpur was listed as uninhabited. This is incorrect, as there are at present an estimated 200-300 people living there.

Population figures for Cholavandan from 1971 Census\(^2\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pop.</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>SC</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>ST</th>
<th>Lit.</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>8,308</td>
<td>4,094</td>
<td>4,214</td>
<td>1,107</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4,525</td>
<td>2,810</td>
<td>1,715</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KEY
- Pop. = Total population
- M = Male
- F = Female
- SC = Scheduled Castes
- ST = Scheduled Tribes
- Lit. = Literacy total

The population of Cholavandan increased little between the 1971 and 1981\(^3\) census reports but the latest population figures indicate that the population has since risen sharply. According to the 1995 Panchayat Board Annual Report the population of Cholavandan is estimated to be 22,182.\(^4\)

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\(^1\) Information collected in person from Census of India Office in Bhubaneswar, November 1997.
\(^2\) Census details to be collected
\(^3\) 1981 is the date of the last published census.
1:2 Orissa and Khurdapur

The state of Orissa is on the north-eastern coast of India. It has an area of 155,707 sq. km with a population of approximately 32 million. Its coastal region is lush and fertile, in contrast to the Eastern Ghats on its western boundary, which are covered with dense jungle and are the home of the majority of Orissa's large tribal population. Around 23% of the population in Orissa is tribal which is probably the highest percentage of all Indian states. Much of Orissa's interior today is still covered by jungle and forms areas that are among the poorest and most backward in the country.

Orissa is one of the states of India that has a high percentage of goddess devotees. This is probably because large proportions of the population live in villages and are still concerned with agriculture. Although its capital Bhubaneswar is mainly Śiva-centred religiously, the surrounding villages and towns are principally goddess-centred. Orissa is predominantly rural and has very much a rural atmosphere about it, even in the centre of its capital Bhubaneswar.

Alongside its large tribal population, Orissa is also a state with a rich cultural temple heritage especially evident in Bhubaneswar. Of the one thousand temples reputed to have been built around the Bindusagar Lake, said to contain water from all the rivers of India, only one hundred remain. Orissa also contains one of the four most sacred pilgrimage sites in India, the Jagannāth temple in Puri. The influence, on the surrounding districts, of the Puri temple complex as a place of pilgrimage should not be underestimated.
**Khurdapur**

The first field site chosen for this study is a village settlement comprising five hamlets or villages that I have collectively called Khurdapur. The Khurdapur collective has an estimated total population of 3000, although available figures are somewhat out of date.⁶

![Khurdapur Settlement Map](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Batesvar</td>
<td>2. Sarasvatipur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Bhagavanpur</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The five villages that make up the fictitiously named settlement, Khurdapur, namely, Sarasvatipur, Bandanapur, Jatesvar, Bhagavanpur and Batesvar have been renamed to protect their anonymity.⁷ Due to their close proximity, the five hamlets or villages naturally form a group. To the north, they are abutted by a Muslim village and to the south and east by fields, beyond which the adjoining villages are not visible. To the

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⁷ There are two reasons why I have renamed the villages that make up the Khurdapur settlement, first, the renaming was carried out at the request of some of the villagers, including my interpreter, and also the woman who regularly becomes possessed by the goddess Santos̄ Mā. The second reason for disguising the identity of these villages is to avoid any unwanted attention from uninformed but interested spectators who would, I am sure, find Santos̄ Mā’s Friday worship and some of the festivals outlined here, fascinating. In 1992 when I visited a Kālī temple outside Kathmandu in Nepal I was disgusted and sickened by the large group of tourists scrabbling up on walls and banks, armed with video cameras trying to glimpse the mass animal sacrifice, without, however, any respect or comprehension of the ceremonies they were so rudely intruding upon. I feel that Khurdapur is the more vulnerable of the two settlements, being a very small rural settlement. Situated dangerously close to Bhubaneswar, a growing tourist destination, it should not be subjected to the same treatment.
west, Batesvar consists mainly of open ground with its adjoining village some distance away. The inhabited areas of Sarasvatipur, Jatesvar, Bandanapur and Bhagavanpur are so close together that on my first visit to this settlement I was unaware that I was moving from one village to another.

The settlement, Khurdapur, is situated approximately 12 km outside Orissa's capital Bhubaneswar. Despite its close proximity to the state capital, Khurdapur could be in the heart of India's agricultural land. The settlement is surrounded on three sides by rich agricultural land that is farmed by the inhabitants of Khurdapur. There is no sanitation in the settlement although there are numerous water pumps and an electricity supply. Daily life goes on much as it must have done for generations, with the inhabitants defecating in the fields and taking their daily bath in the local tank. The houses are of a traditional construction with a straw roof. There is expansion as more large brick-built houses are being constructed at the edge of the settlement. In most of the houses, cooking is done outside on traditional clay stoves with cow dung cakes being the main source of fuel. They are still a readily available source of fuel as most families keep one or more cows or cattle. The traditional hand-printed cow dung cakes, left to dry in the hot sun, line many of the walls in the settlement, giving it a distinctly rural look. The main diet in the settlement is rice and vegetables or dalma, which is a mixture of vegetables and lentils. Those families who can afford it will eat a meat, poultry or a fish meal at the weekend. Although some of the inhabitants of Khurdapur commute to Bhubaneswar to work, the majority work in the surrounding fields where

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8 See Appendix 1, figs. 3 and 4.
9 See Appendix 1, fig. 2.
10 This practice seems to be common across India even among Brahman families. However, those who are more orthodox still eat only pure vegetarian meals, which also exclude onions and garlic.
rice paddy is the main crop. Sugar cane is also grown and herds of cattle and goats are a common sight wandering through the narrow village streets.11

**Patterns of worship in Khurdapur**

This study is an analysis of all the goddesses in a particular location, in this case the composite settlement of Khurdapur. I first examined all of the shrines or temples that are dedicated to goddesses within the five villages that make up Khurdapur. I then took account of any goddesses that did not have their own temple or shrine but who occupy a position within another temple. The goddesses covered in this study include goddesses belonging to all caste groups in Khurdapur. Finally, I charted on a map all of the temples and shrines dedicated to both male and female deities.

In Khurdapur there are a total of eighteen temples or shrines with thirteen of those devoted to the goddess.12 As well as the various goddess temples there are a number of Tulasī shrines13 scattered throughout the settlement. Of the five temples dedicated to male deities, four of them are devoted to various forms of Śiva, Balunakeśvara, Candraśekar, Brahmaśevara and Mahādev, and the fifth dedicated to Trinath, Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahmā combined. Among the male deities in Khurdapur, Candraśekar and Balunakeśvara are the most widely worshipped. Balunakeśvara appears to be the most important as he is considered to have the power to cure snakebites. The majority of the Śiva shrines are concentrated centrally within the settlement with only one, to Mahādev, being located at the edge of the inhabited area.

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11 See Appendix 1, fig. 1.
12 See below Map 4 - Khurdapur settlement, p.72.
13 *Tulasī* is sweet basil that is also a representative of the goddess. See Appendix 1, fig. 69.
In order to supplement the information about the various goddesses obtained in the village settlement, I also visited several shrines and temples in the surrounding area. Foremost of these was a visit to Kakatpur, to the goddess Maṅgaḷā's temple, which houses the most important incarnation in Orissa.\textsuperscript{14} Although as a non-Hindu I was unable to enter the temple and take \textit{darśan} of the goddess, the priests there did supply me with some valuable information that enabled me to compare this brahmanised version of Maṅgaḷā with the more traditional incarnations in Khurdapur.

\textbf{1:3 Tamilnadu and Cholavandan}

Tamilnadu is at the southern extreme of the Deccan peninsula and is the southernmost state on the eastern side of India. Tamilnadu has an area of 130,058 sq. km. with an approximate population total of 56 million. It has a variety of agricultural and climactic regions that range from the Nilgiri mountains on its western boundary to the lush paddy fields, banana and coconut plantations of its rich alluvial regions.

The cultural heritage of South India, in religion, history, and literature is very rich. Religiously, Tamilnadu is sometimes described as the "Temple State of India". It has a myriad of important ancient pilgrimage sites and cities, among them one of the four holy \textit{dhāms} of India - Rāmeśvaram, on its eastern coast. Tamilnadu's many towns and villages also abound with small shrines and temples that teem with life. The feeling of South India is of an area rich in religious tradition and practice.

Among its many holy cities Madurai, situated on the banks of the holy river Vaigai, stands out as being one of the oldest cities in southern India as its history dates back

\textsuperscript{14} See above Map 2 - Central Orissa, p. 15.
over 2000 years. It is a centre of learning and more especially of pilgrimage to its impressive Minākṣī temple. Legend claims that it was where Madurai stands now that some divine nectar fell from the hair of Lord Śiva and so the place was named Madhurpuri, "City of Nectar".

Cholavandan

Cholavandan is a typical South Indian small to medium sized town with an estimated population of just over 22,000: this figure has risen sharply since the last published population figures. It is situated an estimated 25 km from the ancient city of Madurai and is located within an area of rich agricultural land surrounded by coconut and banana plantations and lush green paddy fields. According to the Madurai district gazetteer, Cholavandan "was for centuries an important halting place for pilgrims travelling to Rāmeśvaram."

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15 See Appendix 2, figs. 136-138.
16 Madurai also figures prominently as the city burnt to the ground by the goddess Kaññaki in the Tamil Epic, Cīlapattikāram (The Tale of an Anklet) of Ilāṅkō Aṭīkal. See Parthasarathy, R. (trans.) (1993) The Cīlapattikāram of Ilāṅkō Aṭīkal: An Epic of South India, New York: Columbia University Press.
17 Technically the correct spelling is சோலவாண்டன் Cholavāntam. However, the references and signs in English in Tamilnadu say either Cholavandan or Sholavandan. In order to aid clarity I shall refer to it throughout as Cholavandan.
18 See above population statistics for Cholavandan, table 1, p. 13.
Map 3 - Southern Tamilnadu
Cholavandan itself is a very ancient town as its name indicates, "Coḷa" being derived from the Coḷa kings who ruled between the ninth and twelfth centuries. Its original name was Vaigaikarai, which makes reference to its position on the banks of the sacred river Vaigai, which runs through Cholavandan and also through Madurai.

Cholavandan has also had a variety of other names, Janakaipuri, Janatha Chaturvedi Mangalam, Anandasakaram, Janagaiyampati, Cholakulantaga Chaturvedi Mangalam, and finally Cholavandan. The name Cholavandan is a composite of two words, Coḷa and vantan. Coḷa indicates the ruler of the Coḷa dynasty and vantan, "he who came", or possibly Coḷa uvantan, ruler of the Coḷa dynasty who came with admiration and wonder. One of its oldest names Jenakaipuri, remains in two of the oldest deities, Jenakai Mariyamman and Jenaka Perumal, a form of Viṣṇu, the temples for whom are found in the centre of the town.

Cholavandan comprises a variety of different caste groups and the town's inhabitants include a few Muslim and Christian families. The majority of caste groups are concerned with agriculture but the first group to settle here were the Brahmans as is indicated in its names, Janatha Chaturvedi Mangalam, and Cholakulantaga Chaturvedi

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20 Raja, "Janaka Perumal Temple.", p. 9.
21 I have recently discovered that the town of Cholavandan, according to the 1906 Gazetteer of Madurai district, (Francis, Madras District Gazetteer, p. 296) is comprised of two villages, Mullipallam and Tenkarai, on opposite sides of the river Vaigai. The scope of my study is confined to the settlement on the east bank of the river and outlined on Map 5 - Cholavandan town, see below, p. 108.
22 Chaturvedi Mangalam is a common term denoting that the village was donated to Brahmans during the time of the Pallavas and Cholas, ibid., p. 11.
23 Cholakulantaga means "God of death to the Cholas" and is a reference to Virapandya (939-954 A.D.) who cut off the head of a Chola king. Cholakulantaga was the name given to Sundara Pandya who ruled Madurai (1104-31 A.D.) ibid., p. 12.
24 Ibid., p. 9.
25 Ibid., p. 10.
26 During the Pandyan and Nayak periods, two groups of Brahmans came to Cholavandan. This information and the rest of the information presented about the castes of Cholavandan was supplied by informant 24, a Professor of History at Madurai Kamaraj University and also an inhabitant of Cholavandan.
Mangalam. The other castes comprise Nāṭārs, who are in the main merchants, Vēḷāḷaṟs which include two groups of Pillāimārs, agriculturists, and Vellars who make pottery.

The Naidus and the Mutaliyārs originated from military officers or the defeated soldiers who supported the Nayak rulers. The scheduled castes occupying hamlets at the edge of the town, are comprised of two main groups, Pallars and Parayars who came with the cultivators. In this group Oddars are fishermen and hunters and Vannars provide a service as dhobis, washermen. The lowest levels of the scheduled castes in Cholavandan are the Chakkiliyars who originally assisted the Mutaliyārs and are the sweepers and dirt collectors. Scheduled castes are a minority in Cholavandan.

**Patterns of worship in Cholavandan**

In Cholavandan the number of temples and shrines dedicated to goddesses far outnumber those for male deities. Therefore, patterns of worship in Cholavandan are predominantly goddess centred. The goddesses presented in this study represent all of the goddesses who have their own temples or shrines. I have also detailed the goddesses of significance who inhabit the temples in Cholavandan dedicated to both male and female deities. The selection has not been bound by any class or caste restrictions and therefore represents a composite picture of goddess worship in Cholavandan. However, one area that this study does not cover is the myriad of personal goddesses contained within each home.

Although goddess worship is predominant, there are a number of important temples to male deities in Cholavandan. In the centre of the town is perhaps the oldest temple dedicated to Jeṉaka Perumal, a South Indian incarnation of Viṣṇu. The old men of the
town use this temple enclosure in particular as a meeting and talking place. However, the temple itself, although very grand, seems very subdued and quiet compared to the evident popularity of the nearby Jeṉakai Māriyamman temple. Other notable temples include Irulaparicāmi Kōvil, dedicated to Śiva, which houses a svayambhū Linga. Alongside Śiva in this temple are a number of interesting secondary goddesses. Listed in the 1961 *Census of India* volume on Temples in Madras state is the Piralaya, (Skt. Pralaya) Nāyakaswami temple, dedicated to Śiva and Śakti. Although the primary deity in this temple is Śiva it is constantly referred to by the town's inhabitants as Piralaya Nāyakiyamman temple, after the sakti form here. Therefore, throughout this study, I too, refer to it as Piralaya Nāyakiyamman temple.

The other temples dedicated to male deities comprise an Aiyanār temple located next to Jeṉakai Māriyamman temple, a temple dedicated to Kṛṣṇa in the Brahman hamlet in Double Street and, perhaps of most interest, a small temple which houses a huge image of Vināyaka (Ganēśa) which faces towards the Irulaparicāmi Kōvil, temple. The explanation for its position is that the collective deities at Irulaparicāmi Kōvil are so powerful, and can be so ferocious, that Vināyaka is needed to keep this power in check.

In the various goddess temples, there is a wide range of male deities but their function in most cases is as watchman or guardian. Therefore, their role is considerably less than the secondary goddess prevalent in practically all the temples. The male deities, whatever their role, are generally confined to the temples which house a variety of deities. In Cholavandan I have only come across one shrine exclusive to a male deity:

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situated on the edge of the town boundary, by a huge water tank, he is said to be Madakarappu, guardian of the tank shutter.

In order to supplement information about goddesses in Cholavandan that were previously unknown to me, I visited a number of temples outside the field site. Among the places I examined, the most important were a temple dedicated to Pēcciyamman in Madurai, and a selection of villages in the Madurai area. Another place of local importance is a temple dedicated to the goddess Rākkāyiamman at Alagerkoil, which is famous for its sweet water spring, over which the temple has been built. This particular temple is important as its water is collected and used in many local festivals. During the December 1996 - March 1997 research trip I was fortunate enough to attend the Natham Māriyamman fire walking ceremony, which was part of her annual sixteen-day festival. As I have been unable to attend the Jenakai Māriyamman fire walk, these comparable rituals provided me with valuable experience and additional information.

1:4 Comparison between Orissa and Tamilnadu

In each state there is one of the four holiest sites, dhāms, divine abodes in India which mark out the four cardinal points, for example, in the east in Orissa is Puri, a Vaisnavite temple and in the south, in Tamilnadu, is Rāmeśvaram, the place where Rāma worshipped Śiva in the form of a linga, when he returned from Lanka. To a certain extent the religious practices in both Tamilnadu and Orissa seem to have undergone significantly less change than some of the northern states where a strong Muslim influence is evident even today. The goddess-centred worship, which is a prominent

28 Alagakoil is marked on Map 3 - Southern Tamilnadu, see above, p. 21.
29 Natham is marked on Map 3 - Southern Tamilnadu, see above, p. 21.
feature of both states, has certainly an ancient legacy. There is evidence in both field sites to suggest that many of the goddesses have undergone relatively little brahanical influence.

1:5 Comparison between Khurdapur and Cholavandan

The two field sites were carefully chosen to contrast with each other, being in different states and representing different types of Indian settlement. The two sites are very different from each other in many ways. However, after closer inspection, it has become clear that there are also a number of similarities, perhaps indicative of underlying correspondences between local settlements across India.

Similarities between Khurdapur and Cholavandan

The tropical climate, and consequently the lush vegetation, coconut palms and banana trees, are very similar in the two places. Cholavandan is fundamentally similar to Khurdapur in many ways, but on a larger scale. In fact, Cholavandan was first introduced to me as a village, and one reason why I say that the two are similar in many ways is that both have a rural feel about them, not least as they are both surrounded by agricultural land which is worked by the inhabitants of each place.

The majority of temples and shrines in both Khurdapur and Cholavandan are dedicated to goddesses rather than gods and consequently the religious practices of both sites reflect this. Each of the two field sites has the influence of an ancient holy city nearby and many occasions necessitate a visit to either Liṅgaraj Temple in Bhubaneswar or
Minākṣī temple in Madurai. The temples of Puri and Rāmeśvaram also influence the religion in each respective site with periodic pilgrimages being an important part of monthly or yearly cycles.

Contrasts between Khurdapur and Cholavandan

Since Cholavandan is the larger of the two settlements, the temples are more numerous than in Khurdapur, and accordingly there is a much more complex system of religious practice. The goddesses in Cholavandan also represent a much greater variety of character types as opposed to Khurdapur. However, this may simply be credited to the greater number of goddesses evident in Cholavandan and its ancient tradition that is apparent in its name, unlike Khurdapur, which probably originated later.

The relative simplicity of the religious patterns in Khurdapur are most likely representative of small village settlements of this type as opposed to the larger sites represented by Cholavandan. Therefore, by comparing and contrasting these two field sites, Khurdapur and Cholavandan, a village and a town, rather than two village settlements, there is a chance to examine how goddesses and their temples develop and change with the growth of their community as is evident in Khurdapur, and equally what they may develop into as at Cholavandan. This trend is certainly evident in Khurdapur where new temples are under construction in direct contrast to Cholavandan where temple building appears to be static. Presently, Khurdapur has a predominance of shrines rather than temples but this situation looks set to change and develop over a period of time.

30 In Khurdapur on festival days the day may be started by going to perform pūjā at Liṅgaraj temple. In Cholavandan those who celebrate their birthday go early in the morning for pūjā at Minākṣī temple in Madurai about 25km away.
1:6 Chosen categories for investigation

Although the primary focus is a study of the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan, they are examined using a thematic approach and therefore I have divided the data into three sections according to these themes. The first examines the placement of the goddesses' temples and shrines in Khurdapur and Cholavandan, also taking account of other sacred sites within each settlement. This will enable the reader to gain an overall picture of the religiously spatial territory in which the various goddesses exist. Having examined the placement and types of temple or shrine that the goddesses inhabit, a detailed analysis of their character and nature is made in the second section. The third section will then analyse the worship and ritual that is associated with the various goddesses of the two field sites, looking especially at a few of the major festivals in both Khurdapur and Cholavandan. Throughout the study 1) the temples and shrines, 2) the goddesses, and 3) the rituals and worship will be carefully compared and contrasted between the two field sites, with any pertinent observations detailed. The areas of investigation can be summarised as follows:

1:6:1 The temples and shrines in Khurdapur and Cholavandan

The first area of investigation of goddess worship in Khurdapur and Cholavandan, then, is an examination of the temple and shrine layouts at the two sites. Here, I am
especially interested in the way the opposites, *sacred and profane*, are represented in local settlements and particularly the way that they shift and impinge on one another as sacred becomes profane and *vice versa*. It is the theme of *sacred and profane* that is particularly relevant to this section but to a lesser degree the themes of *order and chaos* and *power and purity* are also pertinent in relation to boundary and sacred and non-sacred space, respectively. The idea of the goddess and her temple representing a connection between the three worlds, heaven, earth and *pātāla*, the netherworld, is also explored. It is this concept that provides the nexus between *sacred and profane*, with the local settlement as the fulcrum between these opposites.

As the opposites *sacred and profane* are an important feature in this particular chapter it was necessary to begin by defining these terms, not just in English but in Sanskrit, Hindi, Tamil and Oriya also. Then, the context in which they are to be used can be outlined. Before going on to examine the temples and shrines at the two field sites I shall briefly outline the general theory underlying classical temple building with a summary of some of the metaphysical implications of temple symbolism, as a point of reference. I can then categorise the various sacred enclosures belonging to the goddesses at Khurdapur and Cholavandan into three basic types, temple, temple/shrine or shrine.31

The temples in Khurdapur are the first to be examined with a consideration of their spatial position with regard to one another, and with an analysis of the various temple types within the Khurdapur settlement. I am then in a position to examine any changes and developments that have taken place, or are in the process of taking place. My

31 When talking about a variety of sacred places, e.g. temples, temple/shrines and shrine, I shall refer to them simply as temples.
temple examination is supplemented with an examination of other places considered sacred in the Khurdapur settlement, looking especially at the way sacred and profane are juxtaposed. Another significant juxtaposition under analysis in the course of this section is boundary associations, and temple orientation in relation to the settlement boundary. In Orissa, in particular, trees are important, as much of this state is still forested; thus, the importance of trees in relation to the temples of Khurdapur, is an area of examination. Trees relate to the sacred and profane primarily in two ways, as a connection between the three worlds, and as sacred symbols in their own right.

The same investigations into the temples of Cholavandan is explored. Here the focus is particularly on the temple orientation and the importance of direction.\(^{32}\) The importance of the structure of the wide range of temple types found at this site will also be analysed. I consider the importance of the temple as a nexus between the three worlds, and examine the significance of those temple features not evident in the temples in Khurdapur. Finally, the contrasts and comparisons between the temple orientation, types, structures, and position in the two field sites is noted.

1:6:2 The goddesses in Khurdapur and Cholavandan

In the second section of this thesis, I shall present a critical analysis of the character and nature of the various goddesses in Khurdapur and Cholavandan. A commonly used phrase is "all the mothers are one", and with this phrase in mind, I shall endeavour to discern to what extent this idea is evident at the two field sites. Local goddesses are as

\(^{32}\) The significance of temple and shrine direction is less of an issue in Khurdapur as all the temples and shrines face towards the east. In contrast the temples and shrines in Cholavandan face in numerous directions.
much representatives of śakti, feminine divine energy, as the pan-Indian goddesses, therefore I shall examine how this abstract idea is personified in the character and nature of the goddesses in Khurdapur and Cholavandan. In this context, I examine the goddesses in the two field sites, both collectively and on an individual basis.

Having established the theoretical context in which the goddesses are apparent, I shall analyse the goddesses and their worship in terms of the theme of power and purity. I shall determine the nature of, and any correlation between, power and purity in the goddesses of the two study areas, and analyse whether power is synonymous with purity or impurity in the nature of local goddesses; also considering the often-complex relationship between the local goddesses and their devotees.

Local goddesses are invariably linked with disease, as either its cause or its cure, and are consequently considered to have an angry and violent nature. The theme of anger and unpredictability is particularly relevant here. However, some diseases such as smallpox have now been eradicated. Therefore, by examining the character and nature of the goddesses at the two field sites I shall discover to what extent local goddesses are still considered the cause of disease. I also evaluate to what extent local goddesses warrant the label "malevolent", and determine whether their infliction of disease on and protection of, the village -- to the extent that these occur -- should be termed ambivalent. Finally, having carefully examined the variety of goddesses at the two field sites I can outline to what extent they correspond with previous village pantheon models.
1:6:3 Ritual and worship in Khurdapur and Cholavandan

In the third section, the general worship of the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan will be examined but, more importantly, a detailed analysis of a number of specific festivals that are important at the two field sites. In Khurdapur, three specific festivals and rituals are examined in detail: the Pāna Sankrānti festival that involves a fire walk; the Pauṣa Pūrṇimā Maṅgāla festival celebrated annually by the Hāḍi community in Jatesvar and culminating in an animal sacrifice; and the Friday worship of Santōṣī Mā where, each Friday, a local woman becomes possessed by Santōṣī Mā and draws large crowds from outside the settlement.

In Cholavandan a few festivals and rituals are examined in detail, starting with the Vaikāci Māriyamman Festival which culminates in a fire walk, and which also used to include hook swinging. I shall also analyse the biannual festival of Māhā Śivarātri as celebrated at the Ankāḷaīśvarī temple, which includes cremation ground ceremonies. Pradoṣam at Piralaya Nāyakiyamman temple is an example of a minor ritual that revolves around abhiśekam, a deity's ritual bath. This receives some attention and, as supplementary evidence, my experience at the Natham Māriyamman Māci fire walk. In addition to being analysed in their own right, specific festivals and rituals are examined with reference to the extent to which they are related to the four basic themes, sacred and profane, power and purity, anger and unpredictability, order and chaos.

1:7 Themes selected for analysis

In this examination of the various goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan, I shall conduct my investigation thematically, based on a series of two sets of opposites, sacred and profane and order and chaos, and two sets of pairs, power and purity and anger.
and unpredictability, that seem particularly pertinent in an investigation of local goddesses. The following themes will be interwoven throughout the three main sections of this research, at times becoming more or less prominent.

**Sacred and profane**

The opposites *sacred and profane* are particularly relevant in an examination of the placement of the sacred temple of the goddess in the essentially profane settlement. It will also be a prominent theme during an analysis of some of the most important rituals and practices in Khurdapur and Cholavandan, especially when possession and animal sacrifice are considered.

**Power and purity**

The second theme that I have selected relevant to local goddesses is the relationship between *power and purity* and the extent to which this pair is represented in the character of the goddesses. I have chosen this particular combination of *power and purity*, rather than power and impurity, as various scholars, most notably Babb and Wadley,³³ have made assumptions that the most pure goddesses are the most powerful. This is an assumption that will need to be analysed in relation to the goddess collectives at the two field sites.³⁴ It is a theme most pertinent in the examination of the character of the goddesses but also has some bearing on the other two sections.


³⁴ I hesitate to describe the variety of goddesses at each field site as a pantheon because, although they do have a hierarchical order, to try to define them within such a confining structure would result in the distortion of their character. I shall take up this point and explain it further in Chapter 8.
Anger and unpredictability

The third theme, *anger and unpredictability* considers certain attributes that have been associated with local goddesses. I shall therefore analyse how appropriate these terms of reference are to the character of the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan, and assess whether, if they are evident, the occurrence of one necessitates the appearance of the other. This particular theme is most closely associated with section two, which examines the character of the goddesses, but may also be pertinent to the section analysing worship and ritual.

Order and chaos

The opposites, *order and chaos*, represent a less prominent theme which is nevertheless appropriate, albeit subtly, in all three sections of the thesis. However, the significant juxtaposition of *order and chaos* is most evident within the spatial layout of the settlement, and abstrusely interwoven into patterns of ritual and worship.

1:8 Methodology

My previous research had focused on local goddesses but, due to the limitations imposed by the scope of the work, had left many questions unanswered. Consequently, for this present thesis I wanted to build on my previous work and carry out a more detailed investigation of local goddess worship. Initially, a significant part of the work was to be based on written and textual sources, approaching local goddess worship from a theoretical and philosophical perspective, with a small amount of field research as a secondary element. I therefore began my research by familiarising myself with the previous studies concerning local goddesses. The preliminary review of literature
identified that the majority of local-goddess researches had been carried out by anthropologists. And while anthropologists have made some attempt at analysis of village religion, their findings seem to be a by-product of their much wider research. My research revealed that very little investigation of the purely religious perspective of local goddesses has been carried out.

Fieldwork in India consisted of three research trips, one in 1996, and one at the beginning and one at the end of 1997. The first field trip was primarily to establish contacts, and commence the data collection in the North and South Indian sites. I started in Orissa where I had already chosen the first field site after my chance visit there in 1992. This rural settlement had seemed an ideal site for research on my first brief encounter, however, it was important to conduct a closer inspection and to establish the viability of the site for further research. Therefore, the initial work in Orissa consisted primarily of a general survey of the field site that I later named Khurdapur.

During the first research trip to Khurdapur I commenced a survey of all the temples and shrines within the five villages. I particularly wanted to attend the Friday worship of Santoṣī Mā, which I had heard about from local sources, but had not personally witnessed myself. The other main elements of my initial data collection in Khurdapur were to establish links with a variety of contacts who could supply me with information about the goddesses, rites and festivals, and the collection of photographic evidence.

I arrived in Madurai, Tamilnadu, for the first time not knowing whether I definitely had a contact there or not. I was relieved to make initial contact with Dr P. Sarveswaran,
Professor of Modern History at the Madurai Kamaraj University, who was to help me with my research, primarily assigning me two of his students who acted as my interpreters. As I had not visited South India before, my first task was to familiarise myself with the general religious culture of the south. The majority of time during my first research trip to Madurai, my base, was spent searching for a similar village settlement to the one already established in Orissa. However, I discovered that the task was not to be an easy one as I visited numerous villages around the Madurai and Kanyakumari districts, but none seemed suitable. Many people, including a professor at Madurai Kamaraj University, extended invitations for me to visit their village only for me to discover that the village was what I would consider a town. However, this experience proved valuable as it prompted me to consider whether a comparative study between a town and a village would provide a better research project. It occurred to me that by comparing a village settlement to a small town I could not only compare types of goddesses and patterns of worship, but I might also be able to determine what religious changes occur when a village becomes a town. Therefore, I chose Cholavandan for my second field site.

As I do not speak Oriya or Tamil my interviews were carried out through interpreters. However, wherever possible I carried out translation checks using the Tamil Lexicon and the Pūrṇnachandra Ordiā Bhāśākośa -- an Oriya lexicon -- in conjunction with an English-Oriya dictionary. In particular I investigated the meanings of the goddesses’ names and managed small amounts of Tamil translation in two festival programmes that were given to me. Educated Tamil or Oriya speakers provided the other more substantial translations used in this research.

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After the first field trip to India, my plans changed significantly since it became apparent that there was clearly a discrepancy between previous research and contemporary local-goddess worship. It was also clear that few textual sources were applicable to local worship. At this point, the emphasis of my inquiry shifted and fieldwork became the most important part of the research: I set out to investigate the discrepancies that I had initially found. Although fieldwork became the greatest part of the research, I also undertook a comprehensive analysis of written sources concerning local goddesses and, where appropriate, I collected primary source material.

In December 1997, I made my second research visit to India, again dividing the three-month period between Orissa and Tamilnadu. In Orissa, I continued to collect data about the various goddesses and their associated worship in the five villages that make up the Khurdapur settlement.

In Tamilnadu, I was fortunate enough to attend two festivals — the bi-annual Māhā-Śivarātri festival in Cholavandan, and a fire walk dedicated to the goddess Māriyammaṉ in the nearby town of Natham. Although the second festival did not take place in Cholavandan, it nevertheless proved to be an excellent research opportunity as one of the most important festivals in Cholavandan also incorporates a fire-walking ceremony to the goddess Māriyammaṉ. Because Cholavandan is a much larger site than Khurdapur in Orissa, I was lucky enough to be given a street plan of the town by the Panchayat Office, on which I located the various temples and shrines in Cholavandan.

During this second visit the methodology for fieldwork finalised and utilised according to the following criteria:
• Interviews with temple priests.
• Visits to village temples on auspicious days or festivals, primarily to observe the rituals and the attitude of the devotees.
• General observations of a number of village goddess shrines recorded in notes and through photographic evidence.
• Interviews with knowledgeable village inhabitants.
• The compilation of temple plans, tables, and site maps detailing the location of each temple or shrine. This was essential for emphasising spatial patterns, and for making comparisons between the two sites.
• Photographic evidence which proved essential for detailing the changes and developments to temples and shrines, and for illustrating the iconographic nature of the respective goddesses, and their appropriate rituals.

My return home in March 1997 heralded the most intensive period of data analysis, since during this second field trip I collected the majority of the data that I required. The evidence collected indicated that the categorisation of local goddesses outlined in previous research did not correspond to the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan. When the data analysis was complete, it became clear that there were one or two loose ends that needed to be tied up before my research would be complete. Therefore, it was decided that one last field trip was necessary.

During the final, five-week, field trip in November 1997, I completed the data analysis in both Khurdapur and Cholavandan, checking my maps and following up on the questions that had arisen during my analysis in the U.K. The most important research during this trip was a follow-up interview with the chief pūjārī who officiated during
the Māhā-Śīvarātri festival, earlier in the year. At that time, I was unable to interview him owing to his commitments and my time constraints.

The final year (1998) was principally spent in writing up my research. I also had the temple plans, gathered mostly in Cholavandan, and my maps computerised. The compilation of a variety of tables showing the incidence of rituals between the various goddesses, or the features of their characters compiled during this year, illustrate some of the detail of the data collected in Khurdapur and Cholavandan.

1:9 Review of Literature

Throughout the course of this research, the review of literature has been an important and continual process. This particular piece of research will rely principally on the data collected during the research trips to India. However, before the material could be collected in India it was essential to be familiar with the written sources concerning local goddesses. In general, there appear to be relatively few, considering the vast number of local goddesses and their centrality as the focus of devotion for the mass of the population. In this respect, a field site in Orissa provides an ideal location for original research as currently there is a dearth of studies examining the goddesses of Orissa. It is significant to note that in Fuller's résumé of village studies and their authors, none is listed for Orissa. Fuller presents a map of India detailing numerous field sites and their respective researchers. According to Fuller's illustration, Tamilnadu has the most prolific number of explored field sites. Therefore, Tamilnadu, where one

of my field sites is situated, represents one of the most researched states, compared to
the other, in Orissa, which is one of the least researched areas.

The majority of research in Orissa is concentrated principally in two disciplines,
anthropological studies of tribal religion, and religious and anthropological studies of
the Jaganāth temple complex at Puri. Among the few existing studies of the goddesses
in Orissa, Preston's research stands out. 36 Although unsatisfyingly brief, Preston's
article is the only study that centres on an examination of a range of Orissan goddesses.
His other research, based in Cuttack, is centred on only one temple, dedicated to the
goddess Caṇḍil. 37 In their combined research, Eschmann, Kulke, and Tripathi, have
made some examination of Orissan goddesses (mostly tribal), but primarily in relation
to Lord Jagannāth. 38 Marglin's study is also centred on the Jagannāth temple, but she
does mention some of the goddesses who have an association with that temple. 39 Most
recently, Fischer in his research on folk art in South Orissa touches on a couple of
Orissan goddesses. 40 There is most clearly a need for more research into the local
goddesses in Orissa. The area of investigation that seems most lacking is into the most
common, local, Hindu goddesses that so far have received little attention, as distinct
from the tribal goddesses who are presently the focus of Orissan research.

There is considerably more material written about various goddesses and sites in Tamilnadu. However, the studies that are available are limited in a number of ways. The research carried out in Tamilnadu has been undertaken predominantly by anthropologists which, whilst being of value, is nevertheless limited from the point of view of a specialist in religion. Very often the religious aspect of the anthropologists' study occupies only one portion of the total research and consequently is not necessarily its focus. Dube, Lewis and Moffatt have all provided very worthwhile and valuable studies of local communities in North and South India, but only one chapter in each book defines the religious beliefs of the group in question.41

A number of the studies that focus on local goddesses, principally in South India, were written many years ago by less than objective observers.42 While they are of value for the details of local worship which they have recorded, the way they are written -- emphasising the more spectacular and bloodthirsty aspects of local worship -- is somewhat flawed. Bishop Whitehead, in particular, delivers his findings with a distinct air of condemnation, leaving much to be desired. However, because there are virtually no current replacements, these somewhat outdated studies are still being widely relied on by many scholars. Of the more recent research, Brubaker, in particular, covers the scope of these early works with a good deal of insight and understanding, although sadly his work is based exclusively on written sources rather than on any first hand


research in India. In this respect, his unpublished thesis is somewhat of a disappointment, although it does bring much of the former research together and analyses it using a much more critical approach.

The majority of research pertaining to local goddess worship during the last twenty years is concentrated in two areas, either on individual goddesses or on a particular festival. This research, while it provides an often-insightful analysis of a goddess or a festival, is nevertheless limited, as it does not supply any substantial comparison between goddess or festival types in a given area. It appears to me that the research undertaken so far, although useful to other scholars, remains somewhat isolated.

Meyer and Hildebeitel have pursued more comprehensive lines of enquiry as their research, although each based on only one particular goddess, does, however, examine her in a variety of temples and situations across Tamilnadu. Meyer's research has been

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of particular value during the analysis of the *Māhā-Śivarātrī* festival in Cholavandan, as the details that she has collected in some of the larger temples have helped me to understand the rituals practised at the relatively small temple in Cholavandan, the meaning of which were unknown to the local participants.

Lawrence Babb has been one of the most influential scholars to define the character of local goddesses in recent years. His research, which examines the religious systems in the Chhattisgarhi region of Eastern Madhya Pradesh,\(^{48}\) has posited a strong assertion for the nature and characterisation of local goddesses. Babb has taken his lead from Harper's equally influential research\(^ {49}\) that categorises local deities as being of basically three types, Sanskritic gods, local deities, or malevolent spirits. Babb typifies the local deities as being simply Sanskritic or non-Sanskritic, and has concluded that local goddesses are malevolent as opposed to the male deities who are described as benevolent. I consider this view too polarised and rather misleading in terms of a vast number of local goddesses. However, other scholars have carried on with this same line of thought with Babb's ideas having strongly shaped their own research.\(^ {50}\)

The most recent published research devoted to a religious-based study of Hindu goddesses was carried out by Kathleen Erndl.\(^ {51}\) Erndl was the first published scholar to

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question tentatively the rigidity and appropriateness of Babb's assertions, in relation to the three goddesses in northwest India that formed the focus of her research. There is a need now to address the limitations of Erndl's research, making a reassessment of a wider range of goddesses, discovering whether they should be so closely confined to the categorisation suggested by Babb. Therefore, research that examines a variety of local goddesses in more than one area in India will more accurately and conclusively determine to what extent local goddesses, in general, comply with the assertions made about them by Babb or, conversely, support the characterisations discovered by Erndl.
SECTION TWO

The Temples and Shrines of Khurdapur and Cholavandan
The shrines of the village deities, destitute of uniformity or comeliness, are characteristic of this whole system of religion. They represent the dwelling-places of petty local deities concerned with the affairs of a petty local community. They express the meanness of a religion of fear. There is nothing about them to suggest feelings of adoration or love.  

Introduction to Section Two

Bishop Whitehead produced probably the first written study to focus on a wide range of deities and religious practice observable in South India at the beginning of this century. As his title, Bishop might indicate, although he provides a valuable record of local religion his account is written from a western Christian perspective, therefore it is often lacking in sympathy for a religion he finds hard to comprehend. Whitehead's scorn of the village shrine, cited on the previous page, and the religion centred upon it completely misrepresents the scope of local religious practices that constitute goddess worship. Whitehead, in this often quoted passage, mistakes the simplicity of the local shrine for "the destitution of uniformity and comeliness". What grounds are there for Whitehead's denigration of village shrines and the concomitant system of religion?

I take issue with Whitehead's dismissal of village shrines, by showing instead their profound symbolism and religious complexity, and considering whether they are a nexus between the three worlds, heaven, earth and the netherworld, or more simply between the macrocosm and the microcosm. I seek to establish, if such a connection is evident, in what ways it is manifested in Khurdapur and Cholavandan. However, before a detailed study of specific temples and shrines in Khurdapur and Cholavandan can be undertaken, an examination of the concepts sacred and profane must be dealt with, since their relationship is influenced by temple type and position, and the theoretical background of classical temple building. Only then can a meaningful examination of the variety of temple and shrine types in Khurdapur and Cholavandan be completed, making a comparison between these two differing sites. The settlement composition is an ideal context in which to examine the extent to which the sacred impinges on the profane, and vice versa, in goddess-centred religion. Sacred and profane are opposite
ends of the spectrum and it is in rural settlements where their close proximity appears most revealing.
Chapter 2

Definition and Categorisation of Terms and Terminology
2:1 Definition of the terms *sacred* and *profane*

During my examination of the temples in Khurdapur and Cholavandan, I analysed the extent to which the interaction between the dual concepts *sacred* and *profane* is evident in the spatial layout of the two field sites. Before any discussion can take place, it is important to make my understanding of these terms explicit. The terms *sacred* and *profane* are complex as they encompass a variety of meanings.\(^1\) Therefore, I shall present a summary of the various definitions of the terms *sacred* and *profane*, not just in English but in Sanskrit, Hindi, Tamil, and Oriya as well. Any anomalies between languages will be identified and a working definition presented which I shall use throughout my examination of the goddesses in Khurdapur and Cholavandan.

**Sacred and profane in English and Latin**

The term *sacred* originated from Middle English, as past participle of the verb *sacren*, to consecrate, from Old French *sacrer*, and from Latin *sacrâre*, from *sacer*, *sacr-*, *sacred*.\(^2\) In current usage, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, definitions of *sacred* are "consecrated or held dear to a deity, dedicated or reserved or appropriated to some person or purpose; made holy by religious association, hallowed."\(^3\) It also presents a secondary meaning as "safeguarded or required by religion or reverence or tradition, indefeasible, inviolable, sacrosanct".\(^4\) Therefore, it can be concluded that the common understanding of the term *sacred* is that it is something which is closely

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related to a deity, being of or associated with divinity. What is sacred appears to be special, set apart from the ordinary.

I have deliberately chosen the term profane, rather than secular, as the logical opposite to sacred in order to make a more definite distinction between these two aspects of reality. The term profane appears more complex than the term sacred. There is a significant difference between the implications of the noun, adjectival and verbal forms of profane. It would appear that the meaning of profane has shifted somewhat since the term was first coined and it is particularly its original meaning that, in terms of the spatial arrangement of temples, seems most significant for this study. In a general sense, I use profane in its original interpretation: "Not pertaining or devoted to what is sacred ... unconsecrated, secular ...." The origins of this definition of profane come from Middle English prophane, from Latin profanus, from pro fāno, in front of the temple: pro-, before, outside, fāno, ablative of fānum, temple. This original definition is important in two ways. First, it reinforces the idea that what is profane is outside of what is sacred. Secondly, as the rituals associated with the goddess are examined, a parallel will be established between the definition of the space before the temple and the place where sacrifice and other rituals occur. This would strongly indicate that it is through ritual that a meeting of the sacred and profane aspects of reality takes place, and that ritual can determine sacredness rather than locality per se.

There are three major adjectival definitions of profane given in the English dictionary. The first definition in the Oxford Dictionary is the more moderate: "Not pertaining or

5 The Oxford English Dictionary, Vol. VIII, p. 1425
6 The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language.
7 A detailed analysis of the rituals and worship of the goddess will be discussed in Chapter 9.
devoted to what is sacred ... unconsecrated, secular ...8 In this respect profane can be seen as the opposite end of the continuum to sacred. However, definitions two and three have a very different emphasis; "Applied to persons or things regarded as unholy or as desecrating what is holy or sacred: unhallowed; ritually unclean or polluted...",9 and even stronger, "Characterised by disregard or contempt of sacred things, esp.... in later use, the taking of God's name in vain; irreverent, blasphemous ... wicked".10 The verbal definition of profane is; "...to treat (what is sacred) with irreverence, contempt, or disregard; to desecrate, violate...".11

These various definitions outlined for the term profane show quite clearly that there is a wealth of meanings encompassed within this one term. They range from simply meaning "outside" or "other than" the temple, i.e. not sacred, to a deliberate defilement of what is sacred. Somewhere in between these two extremes is the idea that what is profane has an inherently impure and defiling nature by virtue of it not being sacred. Out of the idea of violation and desecration associations are made with impurity, as one of the definitions of profane implies: "Applied to persons or things regarded as unholy or as desecrating what is holy or sacred: unhallowed; ritually unclean or polluted...".12 This association of purity with what is sacred, and impurity with what is profane or not sacred, is important to bear in mind as we examine the Sanskrit and Hindi definitions of sacred and profane.

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9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language.
Sacred and profane in Sanskrit and Hindi

When the related terms are examined in Sanskrit, an important distinction becomes evident. The emphasis of the definition of sacred is very clearly related to purity although there are separate terms for purity. Of the Sanskrit terms offered, a) pavita – purified, cleansed; b) pavitā – purifying, averting evil, pure, holy, sacred, sinless, beneficent and c) puna – purifying, cleansing, the term pavitā is perhaps the most important to examine as it has the widest breadth of meaning.

Hindi terms for sacred vary little from those in Sanskrit, a) punīt – pure; b) pavitr – pure, as soul; c) devāpit – holy, hallowed, divine, reinforcing the link between purity and holiness and d) punya – meritorious, holy, sacred, auspicious, establishing a further link between merit and sacredness. Within the definition of the term pavitā there is a very strong correlation between holiness, what is sacred, and purity. One question which must therefore be considered is how and why there is such a strong association between sacredness and purity. Much has been written about the pure-impure dichotomy in Hinduism as it is in fact a very fundamental division. However, the majority of studies have discussed purity and impurity from a sociological perspective, in particular their connections with class and caste.

14 Monier Monier-Williams, A Sanskrit - English Dictionary, p. 611.
17 This link is further reinforced by the Tamil definitions of sacred given below p.53.
18 In the English definitions of sacred, purity was not clearly implied. However, impurity was directly referred to concerning profane.
19 In Chapter 6 I shall analyse the correlation between power and purity in the goddesses of Cholavandan and Khurdapur.
20 The hierarchy of purity in terms of caste is religious as well as social but the debate here is concerned with purity in a personal and ritualistic context in relation to goddess worship. Purity and caste have been explored thoroughly by many scholars already, for example Dumont, L. (1980) Homo Hierarchicus: The
Many Hindu rituals, and indeed much of the behaviour of daily life, are devoted to the maintenance of purity, which would suggest that the normal human condition is not one of natural purity. In the Hindu context, all that is natural to a human, i.e. childbirth, menses, sexual intercourse, defecation and death, are highly impure. Consequently, rites of purification follow all impure states. Therefore, the state of purity can be conceived of as being set apart from "the ordinary" and that of impurity as being an inherently normal state of being. There is then perhaps a logical tendency to equate purity, which is not the norm but a special state and set apart from daily life, with sacredness. Consequently, impurity, which is the body's natural state, is equated with the profane aspect of reality, the normal state which, through ritual, can be transcended. In examining the occurrence of sacred space within the village and town setting, it can be discerned in what ways human life is separated from the divine.

In Sanskrit, Hindi and Indian languages generally, duality and opposites are more easily recognised and conceptualised since the opposite term is defined by adding - a - at the start of the word. Therefore, the word is altered, only in the sense that it is reversed. In this respect opposite terms appear more straightforward. As might be expected, the terms offered for profane in Sanskrit, Hindi, and meaning "unholy", "impure", are apavita, apavita, apuna21 apunīt, apavitā, adevāpit22. In its connection with impurity profane is very closely linked to the normal or natural state of the world.

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21 Monier Monier-Williams, A Sanskrit - English Dictionary.
Sacred and profane in Tamil

There are various terms for sacred or holy in Tamil that fall into roughly two categories, those which associate merit and virtue with sacredness and those which associate purity with sacredness. The term *punniyam* links both categories as it means variously, "virtue"; "moral or religious merit"; "charity"; "good deeds"; "merit of good deeds done in previous births", and "purity", "holiness"; *tūymai*.\(^{23}\) Merit is directly linked with the sacred in two terms meaning sacred place, *punniya-talam* and *punniya-pūmi*\(^{24}\) thus showing that the two terms can be used interchangeably. There are a number of terms offered in the *Tamil Lexicon* which, as with those offered in Hindi and Sanskrit, associate purity with holiness: a) *tūtu*, "that which is pure", "clean", "immaculate", "holy", b) *tūymai*, "purity", "cleanliness", "immaculateness", "holiness"; "truth"; "salvation"; "good", and c) *tūya* adj. "clean", "pure", "holy".\(^{25}\)

The terms for profane in Tamil are not so easy to find as they are not indicated by the negative particle, - *a* - before a word, as is the case with Sanskrit and Hindi. However, significant is; *Tūytaṃmai* - "impurity", "uncleanness", "as of body"; "pollution".\(^{26}\) In this term, as with the previous definitions there is indicated here a strong association between purity and sacredness, and between impurity and what is profane. Other terms for profane include, *apavittiramāṇ, akattamāṇ, pāvamāṭa*, "not sacred or holy", "unholy", *teyvatūṣanaiyāṇa, apacāramāṇ, avamatippāṇa*, "irreverent", "impious", "blasphemous", *laukikamāṇa, *secular", *apavittiramcey, violate", "desecrate",

\(^{24}\) Ibid. Vol. V, p. 2755. தமிழ் லேனிக்
\(^{25}\) Ibid. Vol. IV, p. 2019 தமிழ் லேனிக்
\(^{26}\) Ibid. தமிழ் லேனிக்

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"pollute", and *tūsi*, "treat with irreverence." Once again the wide range of meanings that are evoked by the term *profane*, indicate the complex nature of its character.

**Sacred and profane in Oriya**

The Oriya terms for *sacred* and *profane* are similar to those given in Sanskrit and Hindi. However, in Oriya there are in addition, *pakitra*, termed variously, "holy", "sacred", "sincere", "pure" and "pious". In an English-Oriya Dictionary, *pakitra* is termed as "sacred", "holy" or "inviolable". In Oriya other terms for sacred are *pūta*, meaning "pure", "sacred", "holy", "clean", "dirtless", "consecrated", and *dhārmik*, "righteousness", "religiousness", or "piety". Oriya, like Sanskrit, Hindi and Tamil, indicates opposites by the prefix -*a*-, therefore, in Oriya profane is termed *apakitra, adhārmik*, or *apūta*.

Having summarised the various terms for both *sacred* and *profane* in a number of languages it is now possible to outline a few interpretations that I shall use throughout my examination of the goddesses in the two study sites. The various associations with each term, e.g. purity and merit with *sacred*, and impurity with *profane*, should not be forgotten and indeed will reappear and be discussed periodically in this, as well as other, sections of this thesis. As the two terms, *sacred* and *profane*, are so replete with

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30 Ibid., p. 479.
32 Ibid., p. 736.
meaning, my intention here is to outline a few of the points which are important in using
them in an examination of local temples and their relationship with their surroundings.

Throughout this thesis, the opposites, sacred and profane, will be utilised in a variety of
ways. In a general sense they mark the distinction between divine space and all that is
not divine, profane indicating secular, worldly space. However, because the term
profane has such a complex character, on one hand denoting anything not sacred but
also incorporating a more active defilement of the sacred, its meaning is multivalent.
The degree to which the term profane is being used in a particular circumstance is of
great importance in an understanding of the subtleties in the interplay between sacred
and profane as opposites. At this point it is also important to make clear that the term
profane should not be considered purely as a negative, as it does not always cause a
defilement of the sacred, but instead simply makes apparent the distinction between the
sacred as "other than" this world. In terms of the two study sites, all that is not sacred I
shall term profane. However, sacred and profane cannot be merely viewed in such
simple terms, as the associations with purity and pollution indicate. Sacred and profane
are simply two complementary aspects of reality. What is sacred is closely related to
divinity and what is not sacred is profane, secular, indicating the natural state of being
in the human world. Together they are opposites, which make up a composite whole.

As this study unfolds it will become clear that although there are boundaries between
the sacred and profane realms, they do interconnect and, more importantly, they are
reversible.\textsuperscript{33} However, this is not a paradox as, according to some Hindu systems of

\textsuperscript{33} Transformation through ritual is a prime example of the way sacred and profane becomes reversed.
belief, all duality is in essence a unity. Therefore what is sacred and what is profane are but opposite ends of one continuum; in essence they are one reality.  

2:2 A brief outline of the principles and theory of classical temple building

Before detailing specific temples in Khurdapur and Cholavandan, I shall briefly outline the basic theory underlying the ideal of classical temple building, and the metaphysical implications of temple symbolism. Although the temples in both field sites are on a much smaller scale than the classical temples, to a certain extent they nevertheless adhere to the same principles. Essentially all temples, large or small, are religious expressions, the creation of a symbolic doorway to another world. One question being addressed here is what is the importance of the temple as a sacred space in each of the field sites, and symbolically what does the temple and its spatial position represent?

The complex temple buildings of the classical period have evolved over a considerable period from humble beginnings. Originally, early humankind created small shrines in order to express the awe and wonder they felt in their encounter or experience of the mysterious nature of existence. Such early shrines may have consisted of an unusual stone, tree, or particular place. From 1000 BCE, the earliest step in the evolution of the classical temple was established when an aniconic image was placed on a stone pedestal completely open to the elements. Over time the platform was surrounded by a railing, first of wood or bamboo and eventually of stone, with the size also

34 A detailed discussion of Hindu concepts of duality and unity are not relevant here: I intend to let the local goddesses and their worship illustrate this point. Having examined specific goddesses, I shall then refer to various elements of the Hindu concepts of unity and duality, as they are appropriate.


increasing. The next step was to surround the image with stones on three sides and a further flat stone placed on the top, which formed the basis of the sanctum. This basic structure then became steadily elaborated with a mandapa or hall with columns before the sanctum, and eventually the flat roof of the sanctum was embellished with a tower.

The culmination of the process of temple development, both in architectural form and, more importantly, as the refining and expanding symbolic "visions of the priest-architects" is given form in the Śilpa-śāstras, the canonical texts which outline the precise formula for temple building.

According to the Śilpa-śāstras, on an abstract level the temple complex is the spatial representation of the cosmos theoretically based on the Vāstupuruṣaṁāṇḍala. The Vedic concept of sacrifice of the cosmic puruṣa and the Upaniṣadic idea that the essence of Brahman, ṛtman, is identical with the soul of human beings, has led to the expression of the cosmos manifest in terms of the human body. The Vāstupuruṣaṁāṇḍala, described as a "symbolic blueprint", directly brings together this correlation, and through its complex layout, "incorporates the directions, the lunar mansions, the planets, the gods, and the human body and symbolically transmits their forms to the temple rising above it."
Not only does the *Vāstupuruṣaṇāṇḍala* underlie the placement and construction of temples but it is said to underpin the layout of temples or shrines in any given settlement, e.g. city, town, or village.\(^4^4\) Theoretically, each type of temple or shrine has a specific place in the community dependent on the deity and its nature. There is little complicity between texts as to which deity should be placed in which direction. However, three basic principles of temple orientation can be elicited from the texts. First, the temple should face towards the east on a cosmic orientation, as it is the direction of the rising sun. Secondly, the primary deity should be placed in the centre of the settlement in correspondence with the centre of the *Vāstupuruṣaṇāṇḍala* which has as its core Brahman. Thirdly, the peaceful deities should generally face toward the settlement houses in expectancy of transmitting well-being towards the settlement.


inhabitants, and those deities who have a fierce nature should be placed outside the settlement and facing away from the houses.\footnote{Kramrisch, \textit{The Hindu Temple}, p. 235.}

The four cardinal points which form the axis of the \textit{Vāstu puruṣa mandala} were originally said in the \textit{Brāhmaṇas} to have fixed the free-floating earth and to have established a link between heaven and earth at the points where the sun rose and set, east and west.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 29} The emphasis placed on the layout of the temple is extremely important, and the position in relation to the four cardinal points, the placement and direction in which a temple or shrine faces, is of utmost significance. Part of my purpose in the examination of the temples and shrines at the two field sites, then, has been to ascertain to what extent the temples and shrines in Khurdapur and Cholavandan conform to these two standards of placement and direction. As will soon become apparent there is a considerable difference between the theory and \textit{ideal} of classical temple building and the \textit{reality} of temple and shrine building in local sites, which I surmise, is probably common across India.

The temple is a deliberately created expression of the religious beliefs of its creators. Therefore, as the temple is a tangible manifestation of an abstract concept, every part of the temple structure is infused with symbolic meaning and the texts that outlined its construction were very precise. The ground plan of the temple is as important as the symbolic detail of its architecture. The \textit{Vāstu puruṣa mandala} square which represents the base of the temple structure is precisely divided. Brahman as the power of the
cosmos is represented in a central square with various deities represented by individual squares in different directions.\textsuperscript{47}

To a certain extent, all temples contain symbolic features that represent other forms of sacred space, either constructed or natural. Thus, the roof, cupola, dome, or gopuram,\textsuperscript{48} are all symbolic of the sacred mountains Kailāsa\textsuperscript{49} or Meru that represent the centre of the cosmos. The deliberate association of the temple tower with symbolic pivots of the cosmos, Kailāsa and Meru, reinforces the notion that the temple is also a form of world axis, the centre of its own surrounding microcosmic world. The temple, as a world axis and conductor of divine energy between heaven and earth, in its symbolic architecture is the means by which the devotee can ascend to a higher plane of awareness. Temple architecture, principally the tower, stretches quite deliberately towards the heavens. Kramrisch goes so far as to claim that "the High Point of the filial above the superstructure of the temple is the visual equivalent of the Bindu."\textsuperscript{50} The bindu is the symbolic "point of potentiality"; the seed or point from which creation first becomes manifest, and the point, where, at the time of dissolution, manifestation again becomes unmanifest.

The temple is the symbolic centre of the cosmos around which all else revolves. It therefore becomes the spiritual and sacred centre of the profane settlement. The temple, to a greater or lesser extent, offers itself as the portal to a sacred oasis within the secular


\textsuperscript{48} Temple tower which is characteristic of south Indian temple architecture. In the large temples, e.g. Minakṣī temple in Madurai, the gopuram is above the gateways in each of the four cardinal points.

\textsuperscript{49} The mountain home of Śiva and Parvati.

\textsuperscript{50} Kramrisch, \textit{The Hindu Temple}, p. 137.
village or town environment. It is a place where the worshipper can come to be refreshed and re-energised by the power of the goddess. As the devotee progresses through the temple complex the environment becomes progressively more sacred until the heart of the temple is reached, the *garbhagrha* or "womb house", sited above the central square of the *Vāstupuruṣaṇaṇḍala* representing Brahman.

The *garbhagrha* is a small windowless room that houses the image or representation of the presiding deity. *Garbhagrha* means "womb-house" or "house of the seed" or "embryo", and in any of these definitions its meaning imparts the importance of the *garbhagrha* as the point of origin or sacred nerve-centre of the temple. However, its significance with regard to its creative aspect is perhaps far reaching. "The Garbhagrha is not only the house of the Germ or embryo of the Temple as Puruṣa, it refers to man who comes to the centre and attains his new birth in its darkness."

The *garbhagrha* is completely self contained at the heart of the temple, in which the image of the deity is completely enclosed. On one hand, the *garbhagrha* protects the most sacred element of the temple, and on a metaphysical level, it reinforces the concept that ultimately creation is derived from darkness or nothingness: what is manifest originated from the unmanifest. In this structure is housed the very essence of the temple’s sacredness and, consequently, the very essence of the cosmos.

The clear divide between the devotee and the *garbhagrha* indicates that the world of the gods is separate from the world of humankind. This is successfully achieved through interior temple structure as is clearly illustrated by Michell's comment:

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The interior spaces of temples are arranged to promote the movement of the devotee from the outside towards the sanctuary through a series of enclosures which become increasingly sacred as the sanctuary is approached.\(^{52}\)

The journey into the temple for the devotee is a passage, not only from profane to sacred but perhaps, on a more important and metaphysical level, it is a journey into the self. The temple provides an accessible contact between the divinity and humankind and as such is a place of transcendence where the profane devotee can become infused with the purifying power of divinity.\(^{53}\)

There are a number of features of the temple complex that suggest that, on a metaphysical level, the temple represents the world axis through which there is a connection between the three worlds, heaven, earth and pātāla, the netherworld. In this context the temple can be seen as a tīrtha, a ford or sacred crossing place between one world and the next.\(^{54}\) What now needs to be examined is how these features of classical temple building correspond with the temples found in Khurdapur and Cholavandan. The following classification of sacred space is confined to only those encountered in the two field sites.

**2:3 The categorisation of sacred buildings in Khurdapur and Cholavandan into three groups -- temple, temple/shrine or shrine**

I shall now proceed to examine the various sacred enclosures in my two field sites, Khurdapur and Cholavandan. Owing to the diversity of the houses of the various

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\(^{52}\) Michell, *The Hindu Temple*, p. 67

\(^{53}\) Possession is a prime example of the sacred infusing the profane and this point will be discussed in detail below, Chapter 9 section 9:3.

goddesses and based on the evidence collected I have categorised them into three basic types. In order to simplify this discussion, if I am making a general reference to a variety of goddess enclosures, then I shall simply call them temples. However, in order to scrutinise the nuances between these varied structures I shall divide them into three basic categories:  

- **Shrines**  
  Those in the group that I have classified as being shrines, vary from a goddesses represented simply as a tree, to images under trees, open images or very small, constructed buildings.  

- **Temple/shrines**  
  As may be expected the temple/shrine group falls somewhere between the previous two types. In the main, these small structures mimic the temple, but on a much smaller scale. They can be entered, but usually only by the pūjāri.  

- **Temples**  
  Those that I have classified as temples have a structure that can be plotted, with an interior area that usually houses more than one goddess or a variety of deities.  

**The features of a shrine**  

There are a variety of shrines in both Khurdapur and Cholavandan. They range from vermillion and sandal-paste markings on a sacred tree, which represent the goddess, as in Khurdapur, to an image of the goddess under a constructed thatched roof, as is

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55 Appendix 1 and 2 includes photographs of the temples and shrines in Khurdapur and Cholavandan.  
56 See Appendix 1, figs. 10 and 16.  
57 Bana Durga and Mā Mangāla (Bhoi Sarasvatipur) are examples of this type of shrine.  
58 See Appendix 2, fig. 117.
evident in Cholavandan. Other shrines comprise of small constructed shelters at the base of trees or simply open images of the goddesses.

The main characteristic of the shrines in both Khurdapur and Cholavandan is their openness. They may have a roof, but there is generally no constructed barrier between the deity and the devotee. This factor is an important consideration as the relationship between deity and devotee alters depending on the proximity between them. For example, in the temple the devotee would never enter the sanctum of the deity but instead would give his or her offerings to a priest or pujari who mediates between deity and devotee. At a temple/shrine the devotee would come directly to the threshold of the sanctum and may place any offering at its doorway. There may still be a pujari mediating but as the temple/shrine is less removed from its surroundings, so the deity and devotee have a closer relationship. In some cases the devotee may enter the sanctum and directly place offerings before the deity. Finally, when a devotee approaches a shrine there is generally no priest or pujari and usually there is no door to separate the deity from the devotee, therefore contact between them is direct, as any offerings are presented directly to the deity.

One anomaly to the rest of the shrine group is the former home of Mā Khanduāla, in Khurdapur, which is a very small enclosed sanctum under a banyan tree. It has a door, so there is some separation between deity and devotee, but the shrine is not big enough

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59 Ammacciyamman has this type of shrine.
60 Mā Maṅgala (Bhoi Bandanapur), Baghei, Dullādei, and Kanaka Durgā in Khurdapur for example. See Appendix 1, figs. 35, 36, 21, 11, and 12.
61 Capta Kaṇṭimār (Seven Virgins) and Nava Kaṇṭimār (9 virgins) in Cholavandan are good examples. See Appendix 2, figs. 125 and 126.
62 See below Chapter 4, p. 131. Devotees may enter the temple/shrine of Mutaliyār Koṭṭai Kāliyamman.
63 See Appendix 1, fig. 46.
to fit comfortably into the temple/shrine group. The fact that Khurdapur is a much smaller settlement than Cholavandan, with a much smaller population, is reflected in the predominance of shrines. Despite the religious sentiments of the inhabitants, shrines cost very little to establish, whereas temples -- even small ones -- cost a great deal of money to build. Therefore, small rural communities, of which Khurdapur is a representative, tend to express their religious beliefs by the establishment of shrines.64

The features of a temple/shrine

The sacred structures that I have termed temple/shrine are simple in their construction and usually fairly small, although they are large enough for the pūjāri to enter. They combine certain elements of both the temple and the shrine. In most cases, they consist of only the core of the temple structure, the goddess's sanctum, *garbhagrha*, or "womb house". Therefore, the sacred heart of the temple, the sanctum, becomes more integrated into the community rather than, as is evident in temple building, a forced separation between the devotee and the object of his or her devotion. The degree of division between deity and devotee is an important distinction between the temple/shrine and the temple group, implying that in the temple/shrine the goddess is related more closely to the settlement inhabitants, the division between them being less defined spatially and, therefore, relationally. However, one of the temple/shrines in Khurdapur has also added

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64 I have visited similar settlements in South India and they have a high proportion of shrines as opposed to temples or temple/shrines.
The features of a temple

The temple is the most developed and complex sacred structure found in both Khurdapur and Cholavandan. The temples house a variety of goddesses and other deities with some of the larger ones in Cholavandan encompassing a number of separate sanctums or perhaps more correctly sub-sanctums. At both field sites, those goddesses that I have categorised as inhabiting a temple reside in a more developed structure, usually having an inner and an outer space. The temple is much larger than the temple/shrine and is a specially constructed building with a door separating the inner sanctum from the outside world. One of the most significant features of the temple is that from the outer door to the inner sanctum the entire enclosure becomes progressively more sacred. This increased sacredness is indicated by the passage through other gateways and is emphasised by the use of steps.

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Categorisation of Sacred Buildings in Khurdapur and Cholavandan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEMPLE</th>
<th>TEMPLE/SHRINE</th>
<th>SHRINE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Largest Sacred Building</td>
<td>Medium Sized</td>
<td>Small, Various Types</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex Structure</td>
<td>Sanctum Only</td>
<td>Basic Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various Doors and Doorways</td>
<td>Door is Usually Unlocked</td>
<td>Usually Open - May Have a Roof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priest or Pujari Officiates</td>
<td>Pujari Usually Officiates</td>
<td>Generally No Pujari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always Separation Between Deity and Devotee</td>
<td>Some Separation Between Deity and Devotee</td>
<td>No Separation or Separation Between Deity and Devotee at a Minimum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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65 Ma Jagesvari is an example of this, see Appendix 1, fig. 40 and 41.
66 Especially Piralaya Nayakiyamman, Aukalaiasvari (West Street) and Aukalaparamisvari (nr. Agrahara Street) temples in Cholavandan, see below temple plans 6, 7, and 3, pp. 127, 128, and 116.
67 These features are especially noticeable in Jenakai Mairiyamman temple in Cholavandan, p. 122-3.
In both locations, the temples are relatively small when compared to the famous temples of Madurai and Bhubaneswar.\footnote{See Lingaraj temple in Bhubaneswar, Appendix 1 figs. 71 and 72 and Minâkṣî temple in Madurai Appendix 2 figs. 136-138.} However, it is possible to draw up plans of the sacred enclosures that I have termed temples in both Khurdapur and Cholavandan. The most noticeable difference between the two field sites is that now there is only one structure that falls into the temple category in Khurdapur. At present, it is fairly small in comparison to those in Cholavandan, however, it is in the process of expansion. This finding reinforces the criteria for selection of the field sites, as they were chosen to contrast with one another. Cholavandan provides evidence of developed temples whereas Khurdapur provides evidence of temples and shrines in transition. Therefore, by comparing and contrasting the evidence at the two sites some idea is gained of the way settlements grow religiously, in parallel with their population growth.
Chapter 3

The Location and Spatial Relationship between Sacred and Profane Associated with the Temples and Shrines in Khurdapur
Key to Khurdapur settlement map showing the location of temples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mā Khanduāla Complex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bana Durgā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mā Maṅɡaḷa (Bhoi- Sarasvatipur)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bagheī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dullādei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mā Jagesvari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Trinath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Brahmesvar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Chandraśekar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Balunkeśvara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mā Maṅɡaḷa (Hāḍi - Jatesvar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Kanaka Durgā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Aḷiala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Santoṣī Mā Ashram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Santoṣī Mā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Mā Kṣetrapāla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Mā Maṅɡaḷa (Bhoi - Bandanapur)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Lakṣmī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Mahādev</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Sacred enclosure of Mā Maṅɡaḷa (Bhoi - Bandanapur)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3:1 The location of temples and shrines in Khurdapur

In the settlement of Khurdapur, there are a total of eighteen temples with thirteen of those devoted to the goddess. All the deities within the Khurdapur settlement face towards the east and consequently it is taken for granted by the inhabitants that all temples face this way. Furthermore, no one deity in Khurdapur occupies a central position spatially nor in terms of power, and popularity. Santōṣī Mā appears to be the most popular deity in Khurdapur but, spatially, her temple is not centrally located: instead it is situated at the edge of the settlement near to the fields. Therefore, the location of temples in the Khurdapur settlement does not necessarily reflect the degree of sacredness with which they are regarded by the inhabitants of Khurdapur.

Khurdapur functions on two levels, as a conglomerate of five individual villages¹ and, owing to their close proximity, as a single unit.² The positioning of the various temples in Khurdapur emphasises this dual character of the settlement. Although from one perspective the goddesses are situated separately within the various villages of the Khurdapur composite settlement,³ when examined collectively they present an interesting pattern. Only three of the thirteen goddesses, Kanaka Durgā, Aliala, and Mā Maṅgaḷa belonging to the Ḥādis of Jatesvar, reside within the area of habitation. The other goddesses are located at the edge of the settlement, residing between the houses and the fields. This nebulous area between the houses and the agricultural land was on numerous occasions described to me as the village boundary. However, when I specifically asked about the paddy fields, I was told that they were also part of the

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¹ Sarasvatipur, Bandanapur, Batesvar, Bhagavanpur, and Jatesvar are the names I have given the five villages to protect their anonymity.
² In a number of cases, only a narrow path divides the houses of one village from the houses of the adjoining village.
³ Table 3 overleaf details the location of each of the goddess temples within the Khurdapur settlement.
Table 2. Designation of Temple, Temple/Shrine or Shrine to Goddesses in Khurdapur.

* A new image of Mā Khanduālā has recently (1997) been installed in a new temple/shrine close to her original shrine.

# A new structure is currently under construction to house Baghei and Dullādei.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goddess</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mā Maṅgala (Bhoi)</td>
<td>Sarasvatipur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā Maṅgala (Hādi)</td>
<td>Jatesvar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā Maṅgala (Bhoi)</td>
<td>Bandanapur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghei</td>
<td>Batesvar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā Kṣetrapālá</td>
<td>Sarvasvatipur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santoṣī Mā</td>
<td>Bandanapur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dullādei</td>
<td>Batesvar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bana Durgā</td>
<td>Sarvasvatipur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā Jageśvarī</td>
<td>Sarvasvatipur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanaka Durgā</td>
<td>Batesvar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aliāla</td>
<td>Bhagavanpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakṣmī</td>
<td>Bandanapur</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Location of Goddesses in Khurdapur.
village. Furthermore, in Khurdapur there are no shrines either in the agricultural area or on its outer edge, in contrast to the other field site Cholavandan. As the area between the fields and the houses is a boundary of sorts, the placement of the majority of the goddess’s temples along this area, and facing towards the fields, not the houses, may indicate that the goddesses have a protective role or, perhaps provide a separation between the settlement and the “outside” surrounding, profane, environment. To a certain extent, the marginal position of some of the goddesses may reflect their complex nature, being not entirely benign, and occasionally displaying an element of fierceness.

3:1:1 The Variation of Temple and Shrine Types in Khurdapur

I have divided the thirteen goddess temples between the three groups already outlined, as temple, temple/shrine or shrine. There is one temple, four temple/shrines and eight shrines. The majority, eight, fall into the category of shrine, but within this group, three are in the process of changing to the temple/shrine category. The ratio between shrines, temple/shrines, and temple is indicative of the small and rural nature of the settlement.

The only structure which could be classed as a temple in Khurdapur is for Santosi Mā. It is relatively small compared to the temples in Cholavandan, nevertheless it has the fundamental temple characteristics. There is a clearly defined separation between the sacred temple of Santosi Mā and the surrounding profane village. Many features of the temple emphasise its sacred nature and the concept that it forms the threshold of a different world. The steps at the doorway transmit the message to the devotees that they

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4 The only exception is the new dwelling for Dullādei and Baghei.
5 Table 2 on the previous page, outlines the various groups into which the thirteen goddesses fall.
6 For location of temples see Khurdapur map above, p. 72 and temple plan 1 below on, p. 77.
are leaving the limitations of their profane environment and entering the sacred realm of the goddess, which through her healing power represents limitless possibility.

During the period of my research, I have seen a distinct change in the relationship between sacred and profane space connected with this particular temple. When I first visited this village the temple was open on all sides, and although it was elevated above the surrounding area, there was a feeling of accessibility about it. At that time, it was possible to enter the temple at any time. This apparent closeness between the sacred space of the temple and the profane area outside was further established as Santosi Mā's Friday worship was, in the main, conducted outside the sacred confines of the temple. Therefore, the part of the village directly surrounding the temple was regularly treated with the same reverence as the sacred temple precinct and, as such, was considered to be an extension of the temple. However, the determining factor that dictates that the space around the temple should be considered sacred appears to be ritualistic rather than spatial, evident in both the temple rituals performed on it and the rituals performed by the devotees to express their attitude towards it. The temple rituals consist of Santosi Mā's possession and her consequent healing practices, and the offerings made to her outside the temple. The devotees' attitude to this space is most clearly evident in the ritualised removal of their shoes before entering the area outside the temple.

Improvements to the temple during 1996 included the erection of grilles on the sides of the temple. The temple is now enclosed and entry to it is restricted to the doorway.

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7 See Appendix 1, fig. 59.
8 Every Friday, a woman from Bandanapur, enters the temple and becomes possessed by Santosi Mā. Formerly, before the grilles were erected, she left the sacred confines of the temple, gave advice, and performed acts of healing on the devotees gathered outside the temple. For full details see Chapter 9, section 9.3.1.
9 A detailed analysis of worship and festival rituals in Khurdapur and Cholavandan will be carried out in Chapter 9.
10 See Appendix 1, figs. 60 and 62.
Santoṣī Mā Temple - Bandanapur

NOT TO SCALE

Plan No. 1
Although the number of people seeking assistance from Santoṣī Mā has increased, the Friday worship is now conducted inside the temple precinct itself. Here is evidence that, during the last two years, practice is changing and developing. To a certain extent the temporary realm of sacredness, which imbued the area surrounding the temple on Fridays, has decreased as the power and divinity of Santoṣī Mā is now contained within the temple. There is now a greater distinction between the sacred inside and the profane outside of the temple, with the outside being effectively excluded. This, it appears, is a characteristic of temple worship that, as shrines become temples, or in this case that the temple itself evolves and grows, the separation between deity and devotee, sacred and profane, becomes more distinct.

Although the temple itself is relatively small, the power, sacredness and the sphere of the influence of the temple is being transferred to areas beyond its precinct, which are being given sacred status. The home of informant 00,11 who regularly becomes possessed by Santoṣī Mā, is now being considered to be a place of heightened sacredness, being referred to as Santoṣī Mā Āśram.12 It has been extended to include a waiting area and in some respects parallels the temple, as the inner room appears to have become a sanctum in its own right.13 One important reason why the house has been considered sacred is that Santoṣī Mā made her first appearance in the village here. It is the belief of the villagers that one day in the house of informant 00 a plate of chickpeas, which are closely associated with Santoṣī Mā, started to cook by themselves. This was considered to be a sign that Santoṣī Mā had manifested her presence in the house in order for her worship to be initiated in the village. As there was no image of

11 Due to technical difficulties with the sequential numbering of my informants kept on database, I have had to allocate 00 to this informant rather than 100.
12 See Appendix 1, fig. 67 and no. 14 on the Khurdapur map above, p. 72.
13 See Appendix 1, fig. 68.
Santoṣī Mā in the village a picture was installed in informant 00's house. Therefore, due to the initial appearance of the goddess, the original installation of the image of Santoṣī Mā, and the continued possession of informant 00 by Santoṣī Mā, informant 00's house is now considered sacred. Santoṣī Mā is becoming increasingly more popular and already attracts devotees from far afield. There will be further expansion in the future as the temple has bought more land and there are plans to build a guesthouse.

Despite the fact that Santoṣī Mā's temple is situated on the edge of Bandanapur, she is the nearest to a primary deity in the Khurdapur settlement. Her popularity is growing steadily although the majority of her devotees come from outside Khurdapur. The information given by the inhabitants of Khurdapur suggests that as Santoṣī Mā's popularity grows the local inhabitants visit her less on Fridays. The crowds who visit her for Friday worship are increasing which leaves less time for the local people. Thus, the local inhabitants may visit her more at the Āśram and she is believed to visit those local devotees who are ill or dying. However, informant 00 is only able to express the healing power of Santoṣī Mā when she is possessed by the goddess i.e. on Friday, so the locals, alongside the outsiders, must attend her weekly worship if they are in need of the goddess's help. Currently, the status of informant 00, when she is not possessed by Santoṣī Mā, is nebulous as increasing numbers of people bring offerings to her house, thereby conferring divine status on her, which appears to be increasing.

The temple/shrines to two goddesses, Mā Maṅgaḷā (Hādi - Jatesvar) and Mā Jagesvari are typical of this particular category and very typical of local style Orissan temple

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14 On a number of occasions I have spoken to the devotees who attend Santoṣī Mā's Friday worship and all of those that I spoke to (randomly selected) came from outside Khurdapur.
architecture. Both these goddesses originally had small shrines at the base of a tree. Figure 31 shows Mā Maṅgalā's old shrine which has now become enveloped by the banyan tree's root system. Mā Maṅgalā's temple/shrine is distinct as it is one of the few sacred sites centred within the inhabited area. Its position is in the centre of the Hāḍi community who make drums and do the work of sweepers. It is exclusively for the Hāḍi community who have their annual festival in January as opposed to the rest of Khurdapur whose main celebration is Pāna Saṅkrānti. There are no boundary walls to this temple/shrine but to a certain extent the area in which it stands, which includes the old shrine and a well, is considered sacred. This is an indication that the sacred properties of the temple or shrine are not always confined within its walls, but that its sacredness can radiate to its surrounding area. At no time is this idea more evident than at the time of the annual festival when a key function is the transference of the temple's sacred power to its profane environment. However, in the case of this particular temple/shrine the sacredness of the well and the lingering sacredness of the old shrine help to extend the sacredness of the goddess.

The Jagesvari temple/shrine is very similar in appearance to that of Mā Maṅgalā (Hāḍi - Jatesvar) but it is distanced somewhat from the village around it by a low wall. This temple/shrine is the location for the Pāna Saṅkrānti festival which culminates in a fire walk in front of the temple. The fire pit is visible throughout the year but is a temporary sacred place, as it is given no special dispensation during the rest of the year. Once more, there is evidence that it is the annual ritual activity and not its structural or spatial element that determines the sacredness of the fire pit. This is a clear indication

15 See Appendix 1, fig. 32 and 40.
16 A detailed analysis of some of the important rituals in Khurdapur and Cholavandan will be examined in Chapter 9.
17 See Appendix 1, figs. 41 and 70.
that sacredness is not a static state, rather that there is a vacillation to varying degrees, between the opposites sacred and profane.

The open shrine to Kṣetrapāla has changed considerably since my first visit to Khurdapur in 1992. At that time the goddess consisted of a stone image propped at the base of her pīpal tree. Her image is now on a raised platform and is surrounded by two low walls. There are two small sets of steps in order to access the goddess's image. As her name suggests she is a protective goddess, ksetra, "field" and pāla, "watchman". In this respect her position at the edge of the inhabited area, under a pīpal tree is entirely appropriate.

The small temple/shrine dedicated to Laksminārāyaṇa, and also the adjoining shrine for Mahādev, have a curious placement in Khurdapur. They are situated on the far side of the Bandanapur water tank that is at the periphery of the settlement. According to tradition, benign goddesses and deities of the pantheon are situated within the inhabited area with those of a fierce nature occupying a position at the edge of society. The fact that this pan-Indian goddess and Mahādev, also a pan-Indian deity, are situated on the periphery of the settlement would indicate that in at least some rural settlements the traditional rules of temple building and placement do not apply. Therefore, the placement of temples and their concomitant meaning should not be taken for granted. Laksmi's temple seems very quiet and remote from the rest of the settlement.

18 The pīpal tree is associated with the Trimurti. Brahma is said to be the roots, Viṣṇu the trunk and Śiva the foliage in the Asvattha Stotra. See Gandhi, M. and Singh, Y. (1989) Brahma's Hair: The Mythology of Indian Plants, Calcutta: Rupa and Co, pp. 135-6.
19 This evidence is supportive of my earlier supposition that the placement of the goddesses around Khurdapur has a protective aspect.
20 See Appendix 1, figs. 18 and 19.
21 Discussed above, p. 60-1.
The positioning of her temple/shrine may have led to her appearing to have a minor role in the general scheme of goddess worship in Khurdapur or, conversely, her minor role as a goddess in this particular settlement may have led to her peripheral position. Whatever the case, the nature of this particular goddess, her minor role in the general religion of the settlement and her related position, appear to dispel a number of factors that have been taken for granted by many scholars. Here is evidence that a goddess who most closely resembles the most pure and powerful consort goddess ideal, is not centrally located and is certainly not considered to be the most powerful goddess in Khurdapur. This is an important point that I intend to take up in the context of an examination of power and purity below. 22

3:2 Temple change and development in Khurdapur

The line that divides sacred from profane is not static. Changes to each temple or shrine emphasise and alter this ever-shifting balance. I have been fortunate in the course of my research to witness first hand the transformation of a number of the temples in Khurdapur. 23 Perhaps the most significant in terms of the vacillation between sacred and profane is apparent in the evolution of the Mā Khanduāla complex which has been slowly developing for a number of years. 24

Mā Khanduāla is the most important goddess of Sarasvatipur and is probably one of the oldest in the settlement. Local tradition believes that she originated in a place called Bhatarika, 40-50km towards the south. Before the village of Sarasvatipur was there, the whole area was woodland or forest. A wise person who lived in the area had a dream

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22 This point is examined below Chapter 6 section 6:3:2.
23 The first time I visited this settlement was in 1992.
24 See Appendix 1, fig. 47.
that the goddess wanted to move to the area. She requested that she be given a small
tree. The villager put a stone by a banyan tree and the goddess took up residence
there. In 1976, a small shrine was built to house her image and this is still her present
place of residence. Mā Khanduāla no longer lives alone in her shrine by the tree, as
twelve other goddesses, Maṅgālā, Ramā (Baghei), Jhadakhandī, Bimalā, Bhairavi,
Jagaśvari, Birajā, Umā, Bhagābatī, Vijayā and Kātyāyanī, known collectively as
Barabhuja, have also taken up residence there. The pundit informed me that these
goddesses originally inhabited other trees in the village but now they live in the banyan
tree with Mā Khanduāla. In this respect, there is a concentration of sacred power into
this particular place, which was formerly diffused with the scattered twelve goddesses.

The current shrine for Mā Khanduāla is somewhat different from the others in the shrine
group and was difficult to categorise. All of the other shrines are relatively open in that
they may have some form of enclosure wall, as Mā Maṅgalā (Bhoi- Sarasvatipur), or a
protective covering like Kanaka Durgā, Mā Maṅgalā (Bhoi- Bandanapur) and the
current Baghei and Dullādei shrine, but they do not have an enclosed sanctum or
garbha-grha. These shrines may have a roof and two side walls which protect the image
of the goddess, but there is no separation between the deity and the devotee in the form
of a door. However, the Mā Khanduāla shrine could be described as a micro-sanctum
as it has doors that close it off from its surroundings and so separate it from its less
sacred situation.

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25 See Appendix 3, information from informant 6.
26 See Appendix 3, informant 6.
27 I originally made the assumption that this shrine would be too small for a human to enter but I
discovered that in carrying out pūjā, a small pūjāri can squeeze inside.
Deliberate efforts have been made over the last few years to define the Mā Khanduāla site as being special and apart from its surroundings. A new residence for the goddess has recently been completed, which would fall into the temple/shrine category. The whole Mā Khanduāla sacred site has been carefully constructed and now contains a well, and *bilva* "wood-apple", and *nim* trees have been planted. The entire area of the banyan tree, the old shrine and the new temple/shrine and the well, have been enclosed by a fence of *champa* flowers. This is very clearly an effort -- not just on a practical level to keep the roaming cattle and goats out -- to define clearly, and preserve, the sacred nature of this particular place.

In an effort to discover how sacred and profane are defined, and the interaction between them, the building of the new temple/shrine for Mā Khanduāla has proved invaluable. By examining various stages of its building, it is clear that a temple or shrine with a goddess installed becomes a different entity from a temple shell. This particular temple/shrine has been constructed under strict guidelines as to its position and the architectural elements in order, finally, to make it a composite and complex sacred space.

During my last research trip to Khurdapur (Nov. 1997), the shell of the new temple/shrine had been completed with the throne of the goddess installed and some of the interior decoration in place. There was still quite a lot of work to be carried out before the new temple/shrine would be completed. I was informed that a stone crocodile will channel the holy water, which has been poured onto the goddess, from

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28 See Appendix 1, figs. 49, 50 and 56.
29 The wood-apple tree is sacred in its own right but it is especially important in Orissa and to Mā Khanduāla as it is used to make the *pāna* drink necessary for her main festival, Pāna Saṅkrānti.
her throne to the exterior of the sanctum. This water, that becomes infused with the sacredness of the goddess, and also the flowers offered to the goddess, remain sacred even after their use.\textsuperscript{30} Therefore, at the place where the holy water drains out of the temple a special pit will be dug in order to distinguish this water from the less sacred space outside. This special pit will also be a receptacle for the old flowers as they are also considered sacred and therefore no one should walk on them. Two guardian deities are to be placed on either side of the doorway to the sanctum. On the outer walls of the sanctum (facing north and south) there will be put two deities who will also act as watchmen. An ox will be placed facing into the shrine but this is not Nandi, the guardian of shrines to Śiva. Two lions will be placed outside the temple as is typical of Orissan architecture.\textsuperscript{31}

The most interesting element of the interior is the goddess's throne. There is a small square hole cut into the throne which, as well as containing precious items of gold and silver, will also house a pot that contains the goddess's soul or essence.\textsuperscript{32} A pot containing mud from the old shrine will be sealed into the throne, directly underneath the new image, when it is installed. It is believed that in this way the soul of the goddess is transported to the new shrine. This is the local counterpart of the ceremony, \textit{garbhādhāna} or \textit{garbha-nyāsa}, 'impregnating' the temple. According to textual sources, this ceremony is carried out before the sanctum is built and a hole is dug beneath it in which a copper pot containing nine precious stones,\textsuperscript{33} metals, herbs and soil is placed.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{30} At a small shrine in Paravai, Madurai District, the \textit{prāṣad} of the goddess consists of the water and tender coconut juice used in \textit{abhēkām}, "ritual bath", which is collected by the priests and distributed to the devotees.

\textsuperscript{31} See Appendix 1, fig. 43.

\textsuperscript{32} See Appendix 1, figs. 53 - 55.

\textsuperscript{33} In Cholavandan one common ceremony is the growing of nine grains in a pot, perhaps there is a parallel here. It is discussed below in Chapter 9 section 9:1:3.

This pot represents a womb as it contains the symbolic germ of creative power, and its placement directly beneath where the deity will eventually be placed, represents the source of divine power. Therefore, as soon as this ceremony is completed, the temple becomes infused with divinity and as such should be regarded as a holy place.

It was apparent in November 1997 that the new temple was currently not considered sacred. Although it was situated within a recently (1996-97) constructed enclosure, it had been violated by vandals. The mirrors decorating its doorway had been smashed and its inner walls had graffiti scrawled on them. For some at least, the fact that this is a semi-sacred building inside a sacred space has little credence. It would seem that the actively profane nature of the world outside the temple had invaded its potential sacredness. The temple/shrine is now completed and the damage inflicted on it has been removed. Now that the installation of the goddess has taken place, the temple/shrine is considered fully sacred.

The temple of Mā Khanduāla is not the only one that is undergoing radical transformation. In January 1997, the small shrine for Baghei and Dullādei at the edge of Batesvar consisted of two small boxes under a tamarind tree. However, by November 1997, the tree had disappeared and a new temple/shrine was under construction. It is too early to know what the details of this temple/shrine will be, but it is certainly a huge change from the original shrine. The position of this particular temple is interesting as when it is completed it will be the only shrine or temple within the paddy fields or agricultural area.

35 See Appendix 1, figs. 51 and 52.
36 See Appendix 1, figs. 55 and 56.
37 See Appendix 1, figs. 21, 23 and 24.
38 The new temple, I was informed, is being undertaken by a private individual rather than a group.
The development of the shrines to temple/shrines of Má Khanduāla, Baghei, and Dullādei are important in respect of two points. First, the changes that have taken place indicate that the settlement of Khurdapur is not static in terms of temple development. As a religious settlement it is still developing and growing. Secondly, the change and transformation of shrines into temple/shrines or temples emphasise the fluidity of the sacred and profane duality.

The most prolific goddess in the Khurdapur settlement is Má Maṅgalā, a goddess especially popular in Orissa. It is interesting to examine the nature and orientation of these forms of Má Maṅgalā and then compare them to the common conception of Má Maṅgalā in Orissa as a whole. Each of the three images of Má Maṅgalā belongs to three groups of scheduled castes, Bhoi in Sarasvatipur, Hādi in Jatesvar, and Bhoi in Bandanapur.³⁹ It is an important consideration that in Khurdapur all the temples for Má Maṅgalā belong to scheduled castes. Má Maṅgalā is arguably the most popular goddess in Orissa and her main temple is situated at Kakatpur, where she is served by Brahman priests and access is denied to non-Hindus.⁴⁰ Much of Má Maṅgalā's prestige has come from her involvement in the Navakalevara ritual in which she directs the priests to the new dārus used to renew the deities at the Jagannāth temple in Puri.⁴¹

The three temples to Má Maṅgalā are all closely connected to trees. Má Maṅgalā belonging to the Bhoi colony of Bandanapur resides in a small shrine at the foot of a bilva, "wood-apple", tree. She is situated on the edge of the colony between the inhabited area and the fields. Má Maṅgalā, who belongs to the Hādīs of Jatesvar, used

³⁹ See Appendix 1, figs. 16-17, 31-34 and 35-37.
⁴⁰ See above Map 2 - Central Orissa, p. 15.
⁴¹ The images of Lord Jagannāth, Balabhadra, and Subhadrā are all made of wood. Every twelve years the Navakalevara ritual is held, when new images are created and the old images immersed.
to occupy a small shrine at the base of a very large banyan tree. However, she has now moved to a small temple/shrine and her old shrine has become smothered by the tree. This is one of the few temples that is situated within the inhabited area of Khurdapur. Finally, Mā Maṅgala who belongs to the Bhoi community in Sarasvatipur is one of the two goddesses in Khurdapur that is represented as a tree. Mā Maṅgala is represented by a kochilla tree and has been separated from the surrounding area by a low wall of un-cemented blocks. Like Mā Maṅgala of Bandanapur, this goddess occupies a position at the edge of the community with which she is so intimately connected. There is no uniformity in the types of trees associated with Mā Maṅgala, in the way she is represented at each site, nor in the location of her temples. However, what is clear is that trees are an important part of her conception and worship.

3:3 The significance of other sacred sites in Khurdapur

As well as the numerous temples and shrines there are a number of other places which should be considered in an examination of the sacred and profane duality as represented in Khurdapur. Khurdapur has a number of specific locations which are either continually sacred or are regarded as being sacred only temporarily. The settlement has an underlying sacredness because it, too, is loosely based on the Vāstu plan, aligning it with cosmic forces. Indeed, Kramrisch highlights the generality with which this plan is used:

Hamlets, villages, market towns, citadels, cities, capitals and suburbs, all these walled habitations, as the Prāsāda itself, are laid out on the Vāstupuruṣamāndala, and the temples of the village or city have their place assigned on it.

42 Bana Durga is the other goddess who is represented by a mango tree.
43 The English equivalent of this tree was unknown to my interpreter.
In a general sense, there are a variety of sacred places such as trees, tanks, temples etc. In Khurdapur, there is one tank in particular that is continually considered to be sacred. To a certain degree all the tanks are sacred but are not set apart. They are used for bathing and as such continually come into contact with pollutants. The sacred tank is kept apart and therefore remains "other than" the rest of the tanks. Its only usage is as a provider of water for holy rituals. The water from this holy tank would also be used for ritual cleansing and would only be approached by those in a state of purity. Ritual, again, is an integral part of the sacredness of this tank, both in the attitude of those who approach it and in the usage of its water. It therefore remains ritually separate from the profane influences that, by their very nature, defile what is sacred. The water in this tank must also have some fame outside the settlement of Khurdapur as one day, when I happened to be visiting the village, a procession of 108 yellow-clad ladies, carrying yellow pots crowned with mango leaves and a coconut, proceeded through the settlement to gather water from the holy tank. I was informed that they were performing a Gāyatrī ceremony somewhere near to Bhubaneswar. It is not the site of the tank that is important but the ritual purity of its water.

The fire pit, which is the focal point of the Pāna Sankrānti celebrations, is a good example of a temporary sacred space. Although at other times of the year its position can clearly be seen, there is no attempt on the part of the settlement inhabitants to honour it or give it special treatment. Once again it becomes part of the settlement as a whole, therefore indicating that the fire pit is only considered sacred in conjunction with ritual practice.

45 See Appendix 1, fig. 70.
Opposite the Mā Maṅgalā (Bhoi - Bandanapur) shrine is a sacred space that is completely set apart from its surroundings. It has been marked with a dāru, "decorated tree". This enclosure is used for festival preparations as a place where the participants can separate themselves from their ordinary, secular lives. It is vitally important for the participants of the festival who intend to walk on the fire pit to be able to separate themselves completely from the rest of the settlement. This especially sacred space must be continually protected from the profane influence of the settlement in general. Therefore, in contrast to the fire-walking pit, which only manifests itself as a sacred space at the time of the festival, this sacred place of preparation remains apart and sacred continually. It is dissimilar to the fire pit by its use of the dāru, its ritual marker that functions as a reminder that this particular place is ritually set apart from the rest of the settlement, and therefore remains ritually pure.

3:4 Temple and shrine orientation in relation to the village boundary

The various temples and shrines in Khurdapur come under the category of permanently sacred places and, theoretically, should have some correspondence to textual prescriptions. In Khurdapur the cremation grounds are on the northern edge of the settlement, corresponding to its desired position given in the Vaikhānasāgama Chap. II. However, the placement of the majority of the goddesses on the outer edge of the settlement, does not correspond with any textual formula. Generally, fierce deities should be located outside the inhabited area and face away from it. The goddesses of Khurdapur cannot simply be described as fierce.

46 See Appendix 1, figs. 38 and 39.
48 Ibid.
The settlement of Khurdapur can be split into three contrasting areas, the inhabited space, the agricultural land and small areas of open rough ground. The inhabited area is mostly surrounded by agricultural land growing rice and sugarcane. Although the inhabited area and the fields are separated by a dirt road, they are both technically part of the Khurdapur settlement. However, the evidence that I have elicited from the randomly questioned inhabitants of Khurdapur indicates that in a religious context the boundary of the settlement is at the edge of the inhabited area. I have collected other evidence which would also bear witness to this point as I have seen discarded offerings\textsuperscript{49} and food pots for the dead\textsuperscript{50} placed at the edge of the inhabited area of Khurdapur.

Two important areas of examination have been uncovered here, which prompt the questions, what is the significance of the goddesses occupying the perimeter of the settlement, and what is the symbolism of that boundary? There appear to be two boundaries under consideration here, the boundary between the inhabited area and the agricultural area, and the boundary that separates the whole settlement\textsuperscript{51} from other settlements around it. From interviews with the inhabitants of Khurdapur, an ambivalent attitude towards the agricultural land can be inferred. It would seem that, to a certain extent, the agricultural land is envisaged as being different from the area of habitation.

A boundary clearly exists between the inhabited area and the fields even though technically they both belong to the village. The fact that the goddesses are situated

\textsuperscript{49} See Appendix 1, figs. 5 and 6.
\textsuperscript{50} See Appendix 1, figs. 7 and 8.
\textsuperscript{51} Comprising of the inhabited area and the agricultural lands.
along the divide between the houses and the fields, seeming to encircle the settlement, serves to emphasise this place as a margin between two types of land. If, as I have suggested,\textsuperscript{52} the goddesses are protecting the settlement, then the fields and the land beyond must contain some danger or perhaps defiling influence. As well as the boundary between the inside and outside, the settlement also consists of a series of margins or minor boundaries which operate within the inhabited area itself, separating sacred temple and other permanent and temporary sacred spaces from those regarded as less sacred or even profane.

The symbolism of the boundary is an explicit example of the way the opposite concepts of sacred and profane, order and chaos are expressed in rural Indian settlements. The settlement is an ordered environment, presided over by the sacred presence of numerous goddesses and other deities, as opposed to the relative disorder of the profane land outside, which is not bound by the same sacred jurisdiction. In this respect, the rural settlement represents a sacred, ordered microcosm, bordered in this case by a variety of goddesses, as opposed to the profane, disordered or chaotic land outside.

The margin between the inhabited area and the fields where the majority of the goddesses are situated acts as the spiritual boundary of the settlement. It is in this nebulous area where various boundary rituals take place.\textsuperscript{53} Ritual, once more, plays an important part in establishing the importance of this spatial divide as the pots of food for the dead, left in order to keep them out of the settlement, and the discarded coconut used to expel diseases indicate. Is it unreasonable, then, to conceptualise the ritual boundary

\textsuperscript{52} Discussed above, p. 75.

\textsuperscript{53} This will be examined in detail below Chapter 9 section 9.5.2.
in Khurdapur as a place of transit between the three worlds, divine, human, and the netherworld. The numerous goddess temples link the boundary to the three worlds and the fact that certain offerings are left there indicate that negative forces can be dispelled from that location.

Each settlement is set apart from its surroundings, whether they be tracts of open land or other settlements. The settlement area is known intimately to its inhabitants whereas the lands outside, whether it is another village, open land, or the wilderness, represents “the unknown”. The concept of wilderness as a symbol represents a variety of different terrain -- jungle, forest, or desert. The main characteristic of the wilderness is its capacity to represent the disorder of the unknown. Therefore, the settlement and the “wilderness” outside are conceived of variously as sacred versus secular, order versus chaos or even dharma versus adharma.

In Orissa, the forest or jungle is the way that the wilderness is most readily conceived of. A large part of Orissa is still forested and many areas are relatively unexplored, being the home of the many tribal groups that still inhabit this area. The area where Khurdapur now stands was, according to village sources, an area of forest in the past. The forest areas are outside the ordered inhabited towns and cities and are places of the unknown. The area outside the norms of society is generally considered to be inhabited by rakṣasas "demons", and bhūtas "ghosts". The forest is a place where wild animals

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54 Since the world is situated between the cosmic divine realm and the netherworld below, any place of transit must connect all three worlds. Temples, although they are essentially sacred places that connect the world to the divine realm and vice versa, also abound with symbolism that suggests a connection to the netherworld as well. Discussed below Chapter 4 section 4:2.

55 Information from a reliable source at the Tribal Research Centre in Bhubaneswar indicated that a number of tribes have only encountered outsiders relatively recently.
roam and is a place of dread, functioning without rules, outside the ordered existence of the community.

The forest, as a place "outside", and containing unknown dangers, is a metaphor for "wilderness". The wilderness is metaphorically related to the chaotic forces of the cosmos, especially dissolution, which is unknown and frightening, although ultimately dissolution or unmanifestation is the precursor of manifestation. In Tantric texts, the wilderness is the place where temples for Kālī should be built as both Kālī and the wilderness symbolise the dark and destructive elements of the cosmos. However, as the following quotation points out, Kālī has, through her ferocious nature, a much more profound insight to impart on the nature of life's opposites:

Kālī puts the order of dharma in perspective, perhaps puts it in its place, by reminding Hindus that certain aspects of reality are untamable, unpurifiable, unpredictable, and always a threat to society's feeble attempts to order what is essentially disorderly: life itself.

In terms of the sacred/profane duality emphasised by boundary symbolism, this quotation signifies that distinctions between opposites are a necessary part of this worldly life, as without one we are unable to distinguish the other.

From this perspective, the forest or wilderness is not simply a place of fear and dread, it is also the natural retreat for ascetics and those who have shunned the material world and are seeking spiritual fulfilment. Eck makes this point when she says;

Forests, too, have been places of crossing and transition. They are places of testing and trial for travellers and, since they contain the retreats and hermitages of the sages, they are also places of learning and education. Both of India's great epics involve their heroes and heroines in periods of forest exile, and the adventures of the Pāṇḍavas or of Rāma, Sītā, and Lākṣmāṇa are recalled in forest tīrthas throughout India. Most famous, perhaps, is the

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Therefore, although the wilderness may appear to be a place of the unknown it is also the source of enlightenment. In this respect it functions as an alternative reality.

Having examined the layout of the various goddess temples, the variety of sacred spaces, and the nature of the land surrounding Khurdapur, I am now in a position to offer some suggestions concerning the relationship between sacred and profane. The settlement, as an ordered world distinct from the wilderness or other settlements that surround it, can be conceived of as a world in itself. I suggest that this demarcation from the surrounding area is clearly emphasised by the position of the various goddesses' temples which appear to encircle the settlement. Furthermore, I suggest that the goddesses' placement between the inhabited area and the fields indicate that to a certain degree, they protect and enclose the settlement, bringing to it a degree of protected sacredness. Therefore, the settlement becomes a microcosm within the wider world and, as such, in comparison to the wilderness beyond it, is fundamentally a sacred space attributable to its comparative orderliness. The village or town settlement is a world in itself and a replica of the wider world, functioning as a fixed point or centre for the people who inhabit it.

However, the settlement, although subtly sacred, has also a fundamentally secular nature as well. The evidence presented, which indicates the need for permanently sacred spaces to be separated from the rest of the settlement, is an indication that although the village, like the temple, is said to be based on the principle of the

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Vāstupuruṣaṁadala, it nevertheless retains a degree of profane association. The settlement, unlike the temple within it, is not protected from the ordinary defilement that daily life encompasses. However, the relationship between its sacred and secular nature fluctuates in various places and at certain times, indicating that the relationship between sacred and profane is not static, in many instances being dictated by the use of ritual.

Finally, I suggest that one of the most important findings attributable to the location of the shrines and temples of Khurdapur is that the prescribed location of particular goddesses does not match the criteria set out in textual sources which conclude that benevolent goddesses should occupy a position within the inhabited area of a settlement as opposed to the ugra, fierce goddesses, who should occupy a position outside the area of habitation facing away from the settlement. There is, in Khurdapur, evidence of a benign, pan-Indian goddess, Lakṣmī, at the very edge of the settlement and the most popular goddess, Santoṣī Mā, who inhabits the only temple in Khurdapur, who is also situated at the edge of the area of habitation. Therefore, this evidence shows that in dealing with rural sites, predetermined assumptions should not be made.

3:5 The religious significance of trees in Khurdapur

Trees, and the forest in particular, play an important part in the religion of Khurdapur and, indeed, of Orissa as a whole. The forests of Orissa have a significant importance in the history of its religion as they provided shelter for the many deities of the inhabitants when they were under threat of being destroyed. In around 1568, Kalapahada, a Hindu

59 Discussed above Chapter 2 section 2:2.
60 This chapter is primarily concerned with the spatial nature of the sacred and secular fluctuation.
who had reportedly married a Muslim woman and converted,\(^{61}\) was employed by the Nawab of Bengal.\(^{62}\) The Nawab invaded Orissa and Kalapahada became particularly virulent in his attacks on many Hindu temples, including the Jagannāth temple at Puri.\(^{63}\) However, in many cases he was not successful as the priests secretly moved many deities to the forest areas in order to protect them.

Goddess worship in Khurdapur reflects the integral place that trees occupy in the local religion of Orissa. Although trees are generally an important religious symbol across India, and indeed across many religions, they are particularly so in Khurdapur.\(^{64}\) Only three of the thirteen goddesses in Khurdapur are not intimately related in some way to trees.

Trees are a common and important feature of many temple complexes and within a local context, many shrines are built at the base of a tree.\(^{65}\) Some trees are important because of their sacred properties, especially \textit{pīpal} and \textit{nīm} trees.\(^{66}\) A number of temple complexes have been erected specifically around a particular tree.\(^{67}\) Trees are important symbolically as they represent creative power, which is an ever-evolving and ever-growing feature at the temple. In metaphorical terms, the constantly growing tree may parallel other individual temple phenomena, reported by Shulman to be evident in South

\(^{61}\) Trinath Pattnaik (n.d.) \textit{Maṅgalā Mahāpurāṇa}, Orissa: Sri Sarada Store.


\(^{63}\) Village sources claimed that Kalapahada still wanted to be accepted as a Hindu (he had converted to Islam in order to marry a Muslim woman) but the king in Orissa would not accept him. Therefore, Kalapahada’s anger against Hindu deities in Orissa was particularly intense.

\(^{64}\) Trees are an integral part of goddess worship in Cholavandan but not to the extent they are in Khurdapur and in Orissa as a whole.

\(^{65}\) In Khurdapur, Kanaka Durgā, \textit{Bhoi Maṅgala} of Bandanapur, and \textit{Mā Kṣetrapāla} are worshipped in small shrines under a tree. Until early 1997, Baghei and Dulladei also had a shrine under a tree. Since then, the tree has been removed and a temple/shrine is being constructed.

\(^{66}\) The \textit{pīpal} tree or \textit{avvatta} is symbolic of male potency and \textit{nīm} symbolically female. \textit{Nāga} “snake” stones are often placed under these two trees especially if they are side by side.

\(^{67}\) For example the Pēceiyamman temple in Madurai.
India. These phenomena include an ever-growing Śiva linga, in another location, an image of a goddess which reportedly grows each year and, elsewhere, a slowly growing anthill. Each of these wonders, like the tree, represents and emphasises the non-static nature of sacred power. Trees in particular stretch upwards toward heaven with their branches and down towards pātāla with their roots. They are sustained by the creative powers of pātāla just as, metaphysically, the creative process stems ultimately from the darkness and chaos of dissolution that is represented by the watery depth of pātāla.

Two goddesses, Bana Durgā, Durgā of the forest, and Mā Maṅgaḷā, belonging to the Bhoi colony of Sarasvatipur, are represented simply as trees. Significantly, both of these goddesses are especially prolific in Orissa. In Khurdapur, Bana Durgā is represented as a mango tree among the others in a small grove near to the Girl’s High School and the Middle School. In Hindu mythology the mango tree is regarded variously as a symbol of love, as a wish-granting tree and is particularly sacred to the Dewar tribals in Orissa as the following song indicates:

You have cut the Banyan
You have cut the Pipal
Why did you cut the Mango tree?
It was as if you were carrying
a cow’s leg upon your head.
Why have you cast away your virtue?
Why have you killed your nephew?

This song makes clear just how highly this tribal group regard the mango tree as they connect its injury with two most heinous crimes, the injury of a cow and the murder of a

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69 The creative aspect of pātāla is also emphasised by its function as the abode of snakes, symbols of fertility in their own right.
70 Bhoi is a patronymic of the Bauri caste of Bhubaneswar. It is a scheduled caste group but occupies a position at the top of the hierarchical group. Agricultural labour is the main profession. Mahapatra, M. (n.d.) Bauri of Bhubaneswar: A Study on the Urbanization Processes in a Scheduled Caste, Bhubaneswar: Tribal and Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute, p. 53.
71 See Appendix 1, figs. 9, 10, 16, and 17.
72 Gandhi and Singh, Brahma’s Hair, p. 102.
nephew. There are perhaps some Brahmanic influences here as for a Hindu the most unthinkable act is to kill a cow, the sacred provider of such sustenance. It is perhaps the mango's ability to provide such highly prized and nutritious fruit that has led to its high regard.

The particular grove of mango trees where Bana Durgā resides is not considered sacred in its own right as it forms part of the children's playground and is a thoroughfare between Sarasvatipur and the toilet area. The mango grove is privately owned and therefore one family worships Bana Durgā almost exclusively. In this particular instance there is no separation between the sacred goddess and her profane environment.

According to the owner of the mango grove, Bana Durgā expressed a wish to be placed in this tree. She was originally brought to Khurdapur by the informant's great, great paternal grandfather, who had gone to Bhatarika to immerse his deceased relative's bones in the deep water. That night he had a dream in which the goddess asked that he should take a small statue back with him and worship her. He took the statue back with him and for some time kept it in his house. Again the goddess came to him in a dream and asked to be moved outside. He did not know where he should put her but when he went outside he saw a small mango tree and placed her statue there. Eventually it was accepted that the soul or essence of the goddess was transferred to the tree and the statue was then immersed. Although the goddess had left her statue and was resident in the tree, the statue was considered to retain a sacred residue and an aura of power that must

73 Although the mango grove and, consequently, the goddess is owned by informant 75, anyone who so desires is free to present an offering to the goddess.
be dispersed safely. The original tree was eventually destroyed and so thirty-five years ago Bana Durgā was moved to her present location.

Mā Maṅgala is the other goddess in Khurdapur who is directly represented as a tree.74 Her shrine belongs to the Bhoi colony of Sarasvatipur. A kochilla tree that has bitter leaves represents her.75 The priest of this shrine was unable to say how Mā Maṅgala had come to this particular tree, but it was agreed between a number of informants that she has been there for a long time. Unlike the shrine to Bana Durgā, Mā Maṅgala's shrine has been separated from its surroundings by a low wall of un-concreted bricks. The separation between the sacred space of the shrine and the profane world around it is clear. When this shrine is compared to that of Bana Durgā the indication is that Bana Durgā is completely integrated within her surroundings. The demarcation line between sacred and secular is very fine. The fact that Mā Maṅgala is represented as a tree which is a part of the village structure, and yet has been separated by a wall, further indicates the relationship between sacred and profane as opposites.

3:6 The process of renewal in relation to the temples and shrines of Khurdapur

The close connection in Khurdapur, and in Orissa as a whole, between deities and trees denotes another salient feature of religion in Khurdapur -- the renewal of the deity's power through the medium of wood. The periodic renewal of the power of a deity is an established feature of worship in Hinduism. In my research I have found very clear

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74 See Appendix 1, fig. 17.
75 I was unable to find out the English name for this tree.
evidence of power renewal in the *kumbabhiséka*, the ritual bath ceremony\textsuperscript{76} in Cholavandan, which is also popular across Tamilnadu. However, in Orissa the rituals of renewal are not so obvious and take a different form. Here, the most significant ceremony of renewal is the *Navakalevara*-ritual, the festival of the new body, also performed every twelve years, in which the wooden images of Jagannáth, Balabhadrá and Subhadrá are renewed and the deities given new life. Eschmann suggests that the *Navakalevara* ritual has a tribal origin.\textsuperscript{77} In the religion of the various tribal groups of Orissa, numerous rituals involve the renewal of goddesses represented variously as sticks or posts.\textsuperscript{78} On a practical level, any image made of wood will need to be replaced periodically. However, from a religious perspective the fact that a ritual of renewal is deemed necessary, not just in relation to wood, suggests that the sacred character of the deity fluctuates, perhaps due to prolonged interaction with the defiling qualities of the profane world. Once more, we are presented with evidence that the relationship between *sacred and profane* is in a state of constant flux and that ritual is needed to enhance or restore sacredness.

One important difference between Cholavandan and Khurdapur is that in Khurdapur there is no evidence of any permanent sacrificial post or stone connected to the various temples and shrines, although animal sacrifice is an important part of goddess worship.\textsuperscript{79} At the temple/shrine of Mā Maṅgaḷa, belonging to the *Hāḍi* colony, the

\textsuperscript{76} The *kumbabhiséka* ceremony is a ritual bathing of the temple from the top of its tower downwards. It is the climax of the prescribed twelve yearly renewal of the temple structure. Its purpose is to re-energise the deity, discussed below Chapter 9 section 9:1:1.


\textsuperscript{78} A detailed examination of the nature of the goddess's power is made below in Chapter 6.

\textsuperscript{79} In Cholavandan the *pálipitam*, "sacrificial stone" is an important feature of many temples and shrines, including those that do not carry out animal sacrifice.
khambha (Skt. stambha), the wooden sacrificial stake, is installed before the goddess only at the time of her festival. It is not a permanent part of the goddess's sphere but each year with its temporary installation its power is renewed. The yūpa or stambha, sacrificial post, is an emblem of the tree and as such represents a nexus between the three worlds. This sentiment is expressed in the following words:

> Indra himself is said to be the stambha that holds apart the worlds. The gods live at the top of the pillar, while man and the ancestors abide at the lower regions. Communication takes place along this post or tree, for the sacrificial offering is tied to a pillar and thereby delivered upward to the gods, while the yūpa acts as a fecundator bringing the celestial waters to the earth.\(^8\)

Again the medium of ritual has an important part to play in the determination of sacredness as the sacrificial post, in particular, acts as a means of transformation as the profane sacrifice is transformed into sacred power which is directed towards heaven. That power in turn is returned to earth along this same metaphorical axis. The initially profane sacrifice is transformed into the source of sacred power with which to re-energise the goddess and her surrounding community.

The relationship between the temple, the goddess, and an associated tree indicates the nature of the goddess's power and a connection between the three worlds. The tree, which is living and growing, and constantly renewing itself, by its correspondence with the goddess, also represents her constant renewal as the essence of cosmic power. The concept of the tree as a divine conductor of energy from heaven to earth, not solely as a conductor of energy from the temple, is illustrated in the following verse:

> Its roots above, its branches below,
  this is the eternal banyan tree.
> That alone is the Bright! That is brahman!
> That alone is called the Immortal!
> On it all the worlds rest;
> Beyond it no one can ever pass.

---

In this verse the symbolic use of the image of the inverted tree indicates that ultimately all in this world, whether essentially sacred or essentially profane, is sustained by the power of Brahman.

In Khurdapur the goddess is either directly represented as a tree or is housed at the base of a tree. There is no uniformity of types of tree or indeed of the models of shrine. There are a number of goddesses who are directly or indirectly related to trees. Among them are two direct forms of Durgā, Bana Durgā, "Forest" Durgā and Kanaka Durgā, "Golden" Durgā. Bana Durgā's relationship to trees is evident in her name, and in Khurdapur a mango tree represents her. Kanaka Durgā is also closely related to the forest although her connection is less evident.

Kanaka Durgā's shrine is at the base of a tree as she originally came from the forest outside. The myth of her appearance in Khurdapur is as follows. There was once a king called Jadhu who had a fort in the forest. Kanaka Durgā lived near to the fort in a shrine under a tree. The king was very pious and offered her pūjā every day. However, after his death there was no one to tend to the needs of the goddess. One day one of the villagers had a dream that the goddess was living in the forest and would like to be moved to the village so that she could again receive pūjā. When the villagers went out

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82 The variety of trees include banyan, pipal, mango, kochilla, wood-apple and tamarind.
83 I describe these two goddesses as direct forms of Durgā because they bear that name whereas other goddesses in Khurdapur share Durgā's mythology but bear different names.
84 Bana is an Oriya term for forest (Skt. Vana).
85 Kanaka Durgā has further associations with the forest as it is believed by the villagers that she was also the daughter of Śiva and that, because of a misunderstanding with Pārvatī, she was sent from the divine realm to live in the forest. This story is said to be in the Śiva Purāṇa.
into the forest they discovered Kanaka Durgā under a tree and brought her to the village where she has remained ever since.86

Kanaka Durgā is closely associated with kingship as the above myth indicates. She is certainly accredited as a royal goddess at Puri87 and as such was almost certainly moved to the forest to avoid destruction. Her associations with royalty and the meaning of her name, Kanaka, "gold", may suggest that she was originally an image of Durgā made of gold.

Large temples, because of their structured plan representing the Vāstupuruṣaṇaṇḍala, can successfully represent the cosmos, being a world in themselves. The fact that village temples and shrines are so small and may only consist of the sanctum means that spatially they are more closely associated with the surrounding village. The close connection between the sacred goddess and her profane village has been expressed in a number of ways. Brubaker provides evidence that in some villages a representative of the village is ceremonially married to the goddess.88 Although there is no evidence of this practice in Khurdapur, the intimate bond between the goddess and her settlement is, nevertheless, apparent. I suggest that this bond is particularly prevalent in the close association between the goddesses and the trees that could be said to be the original inhabitants of this settlement.

The temple houses the soul or essence of the village and as such functions in much the

---

86 Story told by informant 02.
same way as the sanctum in the large temples which houses the soul or essence of the sacred space and consequently the cosmos. The temple, whether or not it is physically in the centre of the settlement, nevertheless is a spiritual and cosmic centre. The temple as centre is the conductor through which divine power and energy is transferred, through ritual, between the three worlds. This power is latent until the village inhabitants, as devotees, activate it. In this capacity, it is the temple and village together which represent the cosmos -- a microcosm within the wider world, suggestive of the subtle "sacredness" of the village as opposed to the profane, beyond the community in the wilderness. The settlement of Khurdapur, composed of five villages, has provided the means to analyse the spatial layout of the temples and shrines in a rural setting. However, in order to gain a wider perspective of the way local goddess temples are arranged, an analysis of Cholavandan, a town in South India, must be considered next.
Chapter 4
The Location and Spatial Relationship between Sacred and Profane Associated with the Temples and Shrines in Cholavandan
Map 5 - Cholavandan Town

- RAiLWAY STATION
- SOUTH CAR STREET
- DOUBLE STREET
- NORTH CAR STREET
- WEST CAR STREET
- BUS DEPOT
- CLOCK
- VAyGAI RIVER
- NOT TO SCALE
4:1 The location of temples and shrines in Cholavandan

The temples of Cholavandan are numerous and are evenly distributed between the three categories, temple, temple/shrine, and shrine.¹ In Cholavandan the temple group is much bigger than in Khurdapur, with eight of the twenty-seven residences of the goddess devoted to, or containing, a number of goddesses. The temple/shrine group is marginally the largest with ten falling into this category. Because of the greater number of temples generally in Cholavandan, worship and religion are more organised, visible, and varied.

The temples of Cholavandan are spread throughout the town but with a number outside the inhabited area and two, Ammācciyamman,² protectress of the road, and Capta Kannimār, "Seven Virgins", on the extreme border of Cholavandan.³ Many of the temples within the inhabited area belong to a particular caste group, for example the temple/shrine of Uḷuntār Kāliyamman⁴ situated in Vellar Street belonging to the potter community, or Pillaimār Patirakāliyamman temple,⁵ belonging to the Pillaimār community who are traditionally agriculturists. However, there are a number of temples that are not particularly associated with any one caste or are actively worshipped by many groups. Of these, Jenakai Māriyamman stands out as the most popular goddess in Cholavandan. Her centrally located temple reflects her popularity and, perhaps more

¹ For details see table 4 overleaf that lists the goddesses belonging to the three categories of temple, temple/shrine or shrine.
² Ammācci is said to be a Malayalam term meaning "concubine of kings" as Ammācciyamman is said to have come from Kerala. However, in Tamil Ammācci means "maternal grandmother". Ammācciyamman was described as the protectress of the road.
³ I use the term extreme border to differentiate between the placement of these goddesses which, unlike in Khurdapur, are situated beyond the agricultural area on the border of the town.
⁴ See no. 4 on Cholavandan town plan, p. 108.
⁵ See no. 8 on Cholavandan town plan, p. 108.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temple/Shrine/Unfinished Temple/Shrine</th>
<th>Temple/Shrine/Unfinished Temple/Shrine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jenakai Mariyamman</td>
<td>Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piralaya Nayakiyamman</td>
<td>INCLUDES Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durgai</td>
<td>Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahâ Lakṣmî</td>
<td>Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kâlîyamman</td>
<td>Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaṭâkatti Kâlîyamman</td>
<td>Temple/Shrine</td>
</tr>
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<td>Temple/Shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Temple</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ankâlaîsvârî</td>
<td>INCLUDES Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pëcciyamman</td>
<td>Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Temple</td>
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<tr>
<td>Râkkâiyamman</td>
<td>Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virâiyamman</td>
<td>Temple</td>
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<td>Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Ammaciisîyamman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cantaṇa Mâriyamman (by road)</td>
<td>Shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capta Kapîmâr</td>
<td>Shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ujîntâr Kâlîyamman</td>
<td>Temple/Shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cellaîyamman</td>
<td>Temple/Shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutaîlyâr Kottai Kâlîyamman</td>
<td>Temple/Shrine</td>
</tr>
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<td>Tirâupatiyamman (Draupadîyamman)</td>
<td>Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Jenaka Perumâl Temple (Viṣṇu)</td>
<td>INCLUDES Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tirâupatiyamman (Draupadîyamman)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paccaîvallî Kâlîyamman (also)</td>
<td>Shrîne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenakai Mâriyamman</td>
<td>Shrîne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nâkamâl</td>
<td>Shrîne</td>
</tr>
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<td>Temple/Shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ujjainî Kâlîyamman</td>
<td>Temple/Shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ucciînî Mâkâlîyamman</td>
<td>Unfinished Temple/Shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Iruḷaparicâmi Kôvil (Śīva)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pëcciyamman</td>
<td>Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Râkkâiyamman</td>
<td>Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muttu Cînka Iruḷayîyamman</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capta Kapîmâr</td>
<td>Temple</td>
</tr>
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<td>Nâka Kapîl</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pâtâlâmman</td>
<td>Temple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Designation of temple, temple/shrine or shrine to goddesses of Cholavandan.
importantly, that she may be the original grāmadevatā, "village goddess" of the present settlement. Her name, Jeṇakai, is a reference to a place name, Jeṇakaipuri, a previous name for Cholavandan. The central location of Jeṇakai Māriyamman's temple also indicates the sacred centre of Cholavandan, evident by the naming of the surrounding streets as North, South, East, and West Car Streets respectively. Consequently the temple, especially with its prominent gopuram, an earthly portrayal of Mount Meru, represents the navel or central axis -- metaphysically a source of great power connecting the three worlds -- in this particular context and setting.

4:1:1 Temple orientation and the importance of its direction in Cholavandan

In contrast to Khurdapur, in Cholavandan there is no uniformity in the direction that the various temples face. Although in a number of cases the temple may face east, the secondary goddesses who are housed inside may face a significantly different direction. Therefore, in Cholavandan the symbolism and associations of the cardinal points are important in an examination of worship and religion, indicating nuances in the sacredness of Cholavandan as a religious unit. East and west, the points where the sun rises and sets, are particularly significant and regarded as being where heaven and earth meet, as is outlined by Kramrisch:

The earth is round. The Brāhmaṇas say that the whole earth, once floating and mobile remained in this condition until the cardinal points, becoming fixed themselves, also fixed the earth. In its fixed position it is spoken of as four-cornered (caturbṛṣṭi; RV.X.58.3) ...

6 See above p. 22.
8 See table 5 below, p. 113.
9 See plans of Piralaya Nāyakiyamman temple, Aṅkāḷaisvarī (West Car Street), Irulāparicāmi Kōvil, and Aṅkāḷaparamīṣvarī, pp. 127, 128, and 130.
10 In the following chapter the character of the various goddesses is examined in relation to the direction their shrine or temple faces.
Indeed the symbolism of each of the cardinal directions plays an important part in temple orientation and architecture, for just as directional influences are said to have "fixed the earth", they now theoretically fix the temple and the Vastupurushamandala together.

When looking at the temples as a group in Cholavandan, it is clear that there is some uniformity as they more readily correspond to the theoretical ideals of classical temple building. In this respect, three of the eight temples are situated in the centre of the town and all face towards the east. The other five temples are situated just outside the area considered to be the centre of town as these temples are associated with particular caste groups. All but one in the temple group in Cholavandan face towards the east and it is only the temple for Pillaimār Patirakāliyamman that faces north. It is significant that this goddess should face northward, as this is the only form of Kāli represented in the temple group. As Patirakāliyamman is an essentially fierce, warrior goddess, her north-facing attitude suggests that she is positioned towards the direction from which disease is thought to enter a settlement, and is therefore oriented to protect the town, or her caste group. On a metaphysical level, Patirakāliyamman very clearly protects the sacred from the defiling influence of the profane, represented by disease, originating outside the settlement.

12 See Cholavandan town map temple nos. 1, 2, and 3.
13 See Cholavandan town map temple nos. 8, 10, 12, 13, and 16.
14 See Cholavandan town map temple no. 8 and temple plan 2 below, p. 115. Patira in Tamil means fierce. This goddess is the Tamil equivalent of Bhadrakāli.
15 As Patirakāliyamman's temple is not situated on the northern boundary of the town, it can be concluded that she is probably protecting her caste group.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Direction</th>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piralaya Nāyakiyamman (includes)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durgai</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māhā Lakṣmi</td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Cantaṇa Māriyamman (by road)</td>
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<td>Uḷuntār Kāliyamman</td>
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<td>Tiraupatiyamman (Draupadiyamman)</td>
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<td>In Jenaka Perumal Temple (Viṣṇu)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Āṇṭāl</td>
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<td>Paccavalli Kāliyamman (also)</td>
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<td>Nākamāl</td>
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<td>Muttu Cīṅka Irulayiamman</td>
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<td>Aṅkālaparamśvari (includes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pātālamman</td>
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</table>

Table 5. Goddesses of Cholavandan and the direction they face.
4:1:2 Temple/shrine and shrine orientation and the importance of their direction in Cholavandan

The main variation in orientation is apparent in the direction that the numerous shrines, temple/shrines and individual goddesses face. Statistically, twenty goddesses face towards the east, seven towards the west, fifteen towards the north and two towards the south. Although the largest group faces towards the east, as might be expected, taken as a whole the majority of goddesses in Cholavandan face in directions other than east. This evidence suggests that the majority of goddesses in Cholavandan do not conform to the benign, consort, east-facing, goddess models, overwhelmingly represented in the Hindu pantheon.

The two axes north-south and east-west represent two pairs of opposites that in turn parallel cosmic dualities, i.e. sacred and profane. The east, as has already been mentioned, is the direction of the rising of the sun, and consequently it is associated with the sun god Sūrya. Metaphorically east is homogeneous with new beginnings and is the most auspicious of the four directions. Beck claims that people generally, "when they undergo any of the auspicious life-cycle rituals, such as ear-piercing or marriage, are careful to sit facing east." Therefore, east is generally considered a very sacred direction. East is the accepted direction for the vast majority of Brahmanic deities to face, emphasising the structured nature of their worship. Conversely, the fact that the majority of goddesses in Cholavandan do not face east indicates that their worship is, in certain respects, less straightforward and more complex. West is not symbolically the direct opposite of east as it has various correlations. Beck claims:

The several terms for west have mixed word associations, however, patu, which means 'to set' (as the sun does) equally means 'to perish' or 'to die'.

Pillaimar Patirakaliyamman Temple
Cholavandan

1. Copper image of Patirakaliyamman
2. Bhairava
3. Karuppanacami
4. Siva Kamalamman
5. Tilai Siva Nataraja
6. Female figure
7. Male figure of Nayak appearance (may be Thirumalananayak)
Yet the term for the associated compass point (mekk) also means 'height, superiority, or excellence'. ... Interestingly, this makes the west more ambivalent than the east in terms of its symbolic associations.\(^\text{17}\)

Therefore, despite the auspiciousness of east, west as its opposite is not completely malevolent and should not be considered to represent the profane opposite of sacred. However, west is an unusual direction for a temple to face; in fact, in Cholavandan the only individual shrine to face west is that of the Nava Kannimar, "Nine Virgins". According to the inhabitants of Cholavandan the Nava Kannimar face west because of their connection to water. They direct their attention towards the Vaigai river which forms the western border of Cholavandan. The other six goddesses who face west reside in an east-facing temple.

North and south can more readily be seen as opposites, more closely resembling sacred and profane, although north is the most symbolically complex of the four directions, encompassing a number of dualities within its diverse meanings. The god associated with north is Soma who represents "the essence of life".\(^\text{18}\) North has several associations, being the direction of Mount Kailása, Śiva's abode, and the direction from which knowledge, especially the Veda, comes.\(^\text{19}\) At a local level north is the direction from which the local goddesses originally came\(^\text{20}\) but also the direction from which disease and affliction emanates.\(^\text{21}\) Therefore, north as a direction encompasses both sacred and profane associations.

\(^{17}\) Ibid.
\(^{19}\) Beck, "The Symbolic Merger of Body, Space and the Cosmos in Hindu Tamil Nadu.", p. 216.
Van Den Hoek notes that Cellattamman, the guardian of the northern gate in Madurai, is positioned there to guard against the dark powers of death and disease or demons that might otherwise enter through the northern gate.\(^{22}\) In respect of these correlations it would seem that the local goddesses' associations with the northern direction are important, indicating a dualistic nature to their character. How far do these ideas relate to the goddesses in Cholavandan that face towards the north?\(^{23}\) Of the fifteen goddesses who face towards the north, twelve of those receive blood sacrifices. Their nature is somewhat fierce and, therefore, given their character and orientation, they can be seen as protectors.

According to the evidence in Cholavandan, north appears to be particularly associated with the various forms of Kāliyamman that are so prolific in Cholavandan. Of the ten forms of Kāli, Mākāliyamman (Pallarkal), Kāliyamman (in Piralaya Nāyakiyamman temple), Vaṭakatti Kāliyamman, Nāṭar Patirakāliyamman, Pīḷaimār Patirakāliyamman, Mutaliyār Koṭṭai Kāliyamman, Uḷuntār Kāliyamman, Paccaivalji Kāliyamman, Ujaingeni Kāliyamman, and Uccīni Mākāliyamman, only three face towards the east.\(^{24}\) However, this does not appear to be an indication of a difference in character as fierce and less fierce forms appear in both groups.

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\(^{23}\) Pēcciyamman, Uccīni Mākāliyamman, Mākāliyamman (Pallarkal), Celliyamman, Uḷuntār Kāliyamman, Muttu Iruḷāyiamman, Virāyiamman, Rākkāyiamman, Muttu Pēcciyamman, Pēcciyamman, Pīḷaimār Patirakāliyamman, Nāṭar Patirakāliyamman, Vaṭakatti Kāliyamman, Kāliyamman, and Durgai.

\(^{24}\) See above Cholavandan map, p. 108, Mutaliyār Koṭṭai Kāliyamman no. 15, Paccaivalji Kāliyamman no. 24, and Ujaingeni Kāliyamman no. 7, face east.
According to the *Vaikhānasāgama Chp. II*, it is not desirable for the temple to face towards the north, as it is in this direction that the cremation ground and its associated Cāndālas²⁵ are located. "The contagion of the dead body, its impurity, must not enter the temple."²⁶ The location of the cremation ground in the north, the opposite direction to that which represents death, i.e. south, is perhaps a reaffirmation of the complex dualities that characterise its nature. Not only is the cremation ground a place of death but it is also where new life begins. Therefore, its position in the north may be directly linked to the north's association with Soma the sap of new life.²⁷ In no other location are sacred and profane juxtaposed so closely. The cremation ground is a place of abject fear as the source of the most extreme and defiling pollution, and yet, simultaneously, it is the source of creative power and the doorway through which ultimate bliss, *mokṣa* is reached.²⁸ In Cholavandan, as will be discussed in Chapter 9, the sacred and profane characteristics of the cremation ground are utilised by particular goddesses, as certain festivals involve rituals at the cremation ground.²⁹

The prescribed direction for the shrines of village goddesses is often to the north,³⁰ possibly emphasising the fierce/benign duality inherent in the character of many local goddesses. In Cholavandan there is evidence that various goddesses,

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²⁵ Those defiled by the impurity of death.
²⁷ In both Khurdapur and Cholavandan the cremation ground is located to the north of the settlement.
²⁹ Chapter 9 section 9:4:3.
Ammaciyyamman, Jenakai Māriyamman (No. 22), Nakamāl, Paccaivali Kāliyamman, Celliyamman, and Capta Kannimār, "Seven Virgins", have their temple to the north of the town. The position of these goddesses in the north of Cholavandan represents not only a northern orientation but also a situation outside the sacred area of habitation. Therefore, these various goddesses occupy a position at the fringe of their respective society and, as such, reveal a great deal about the nature of local goddesses generally and their relationship to the sacred and profane aspects of reality. It is they who, much more overtly than the pan-Indian goddesses, occupy a position which straddles both the sacred and profane aspects of reality. This point is emphasised in both their spatial position and the northern boundary's dualistic characteristics as source of sacred knowledge and source of profane disease.

South is the abode of Yama, the king of death and, as such, is an inauspicious direction. Death is one of the greatest mysteries and so south as the abode of Yama may be symbolic of what is unknown, of chaos, of the profane aspect of reality. South is the direction in which the head of a corpse is placed in readiness for cremation and the direction people face when performing rites for their ancestors. In Cholavandan, only one goddess shrine faces towards the south, Cantana Māriyamman about whom very little is known.31 The local inhabitants could give no origin story, nor any reason for the position and orientation of her shrine. However, another goddess Pātālamman in the Aṅkāḷaparamīśvarī temple, who is the only other goddess who faces south, may provide some suppositions.32 According to Pātālamman's origin story, four hundred years ago a group of people came to this place for a bamboo folk dance and they stayed here for

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31 See Appendix 2, fig. 127.
some time. Among the party were a brother and sister. There was a problem with the marriage of the sister and so she committed suicide by falling from a tree which was where her shrine is now.33 The girl was buried at this spot and is now considered a goddess. There is no image of her, only a large pālipitam "altar", possibly sacrificial.34 The marriage problem was unknown to the informant but assumptions can be made as there are a number of local goddess origin myths in which a human woman commits suicide and, as a consequence of her untimely death, gains divine status. The girl's suicide probably had some connection to the defilement of the girl, either being pursued by a low caste male, being somehow duped, wrongly accused, or having suffered a loss of virtue.

These types of myth, which centre on a woman becoming a goddess in death, are numerous. It could be suggested that in this case Pāṭālamman's shrine faces south, to the abode of Yama because, as a divine human she has met death in its most fundamental form and has overcome it.35 A further suggestion posits the idea that, since she has faced death and now it is no longer a threat to her, her regeneration as a goddess, and her power, are apparently drawn directly from death. Therefore, this is one of numerous occasions, mostly connected to sacrifice and possession, when profane is transformed into sacred, in this case through the power of death.36 This or some similar idea may also have some bearing on the genesis of Cantaṇa Māriyamman's south-facing shrine, although it was not articulated by any of the informants.

34 Although the pālipitam has associations with sacrifice, no blood offerings are given to this goddess. See Appendix 2, fig. 110.
36 Details of other transformations from profane to sacred will be examined in Chapter 9.
Temple and shrine structure in relation to sacred and profane

Temples of all sizes and types are sacred spaces within profane surroundings. In a local setting, town and village, the separation between sacred and profane is less marked because the separation between deity and devotee is less distinct than in a city with large temples. When temples such as the Mīnākṣī temple in Madurai or the Liṅgaraj temple in Bhubaneswar are approached there is an immediate awareness of the difference between the temple and its surroundings. The huge gopurams, the towers of the Mīnākṣī temple, fill everyone who encounters them with great awe, and as the threshold of the temple is crossed, the feeling of entering another, separate, world is keenly felt. By contrast, the encounter with a local temple or shrine is much less dramatic, not least because the distinction between the profane village and the sacred temple enclosure is not always evident. In many instances, the distance between deity and devotee is greatly reduced.

In Cholavandan there is a wide range of temples and shrines which minimise this separation and others that employ various devices to reinforce it. Nowhere is the separation between sacred and profane more evident than in the Jeṇakai Māriyamma temple where the goddess is positioned a considerable distance from the devotee. Temple architecture is designed to make the devotee aware that the place being entered is sacred and that the further into the temple one progresses the more sacred it becomes. Michell says of the temple:

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37 See Appendix 2, figs. 136-138.
38 See Appendix 2, figs. 71 and 72.
39 See below temple plan 4, p. 125.
Penetration towards the image or symbol of the deity housed in this setting is always through a progression from light into darkness, from open and large spaces to a confined and small space.\footnote{Michell, George (1977 repr. 1988) *The Hindu Temple: An Introduction to its Meaning and Forms*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, p. 70}

At Jeṇakai Māriyamaṇ temple, the separation between the sacred sanctum of the goddess and the profane worshipper is emphasised by the use of distance, doorways and numerous steps. In order to take *darśan*, sight of Jeṇakai Māriyamaṇ, the worshipper must pass through two doorways in the traversal of two halls or *mandapams*. At the front entrance the steps lead down into the first hall only to lead up again at the other side. The second hall has the same arrangement until finally the worshipper climbs steps to see the goddess. The worshipper is aware that the space has become progressively more sacred. When visiting the goddess at close quarters, an honour bestowed on me, there is a feeling that the dark confined channel leading to her sanctum is a metaphorical vaginal passage leading to the womb. Metaphysically, by leaving his or her profane surroundings and travelling toward the goddess's sacred centre, the devotee is making a journey back to the source of creation -- to be, in a sense, reborn.

By contrast, the temple of Tīraupatiyamman (Skt. Draupadī) is relatively simple in its construction.\footnote{See below temple plan 5, p. 126.} Although separated from the surrounding shops by a wall, it is relatively low at one side, thereby lessening the division between the sacred temple and the profane town. On entering the main gateway, a few steps are all that separate the goddess from her devotees. The separation between sacred and profane is less distinct as there is no structural contrast between light to dark, large to confined space, evident at Jeṇakai Māriyamaṇ temple. This contributes to the distinctly different atmosphere
at Tiraupatiyamman's temple. The temple generally is much quieter than that of Jenakai Mariyamman, which, I suggest, is attributable to the character and nature of Tiraupatiyamman and the changes to her annual festivities. Presently, Tiraupatiyamman resembles the essentially benign pan-Indian goddesses rather than her more overtly powerful counterparts, i.e. Jenakai Mariyamman. Tiraupatiyamman in other locations may preside over more active and powerful worship, however, in Cholavandan at present her worship is much diminished. Originally, her devotees proved their faith by an annual fire walk but for the last ten years this has not taken place, since the top of the flagpole fell down. This was seen as a sign to stop the annual sacrifice that took place only for the guardian deities. Since this time, Tiraupatiyamman has not given her permission for the fire walk to take place.

The most elaborate temple complex in Cholavandan is that of Piralaya (Skt. Pralaya) Nayakiyamman which incorporates a number of temple structures and diverse deities.\(^{42}\) The temple complex is clearly separated from its profane surroundings by a high wall that gives the impression that this place is separate, a microcosm within the microcosm of the town. It is peppered with the individual nodes of divine power in the form of its various gods and goddesses. The idea of this temple being apart, and a world in itself, is further emphasised as Śiva and Śakti in their festival processions circumambulate only the interior of the temple complex, not the streets surrounding it, thereby emphasising the ritualised sacredness of the temple compound. I was informed that due to economic reasons the festival image of the goddess was no longer taken round the surrounding streets during the "nine-night" Navarātri festival. Whatever the underlying reason, in this particular temple, the impingement of sacred and profane on each other is

\(^{42}\) See below temple plan 6, p. 127.
Jeṇakai Māriyamman Temple
Cholavandan

Margosa Tree

Margosa Tree

Old image of Jeṇakai Māriyamman standing embedded in the wall

Banyan Tree

Nākas (Snakes)

Jenakai Māriyamman

Vinayaka

Flagstaff Mandapam
Built 1854

Nandi

Pālipīṭam

Murugan

Main Doors Installed
4-02-1912

Built 1881

Pālipīṭam

NOT TO SCALE

PLAN No. 4
Tiraupatiyamman
(Draupadiyamman) Temple
Cholavandan

Plan No. 5
Piralaya Nāyakiyamman Temple
Cholavandan

VAIGAI RIVER

Plan of the temple complex:

1. Vināyaka
2. Sabhaṁsya
3. Anjaneya (Hanuman)
4. Māhā Lakṣmī
5. Daksīna mūrti
6. Brahma
7. Iccha Śakti
8. Kriya Śakti
9. Jñānya Śakti

NOT TO SCALE

1. Vināyaka
2. Sabhaṁsya
3. Anjaneya (Hanuman)
4. Māhā Lakṣmī
5. Daksīna mūrti
6. Brahma
7. Iccha Śakti
8. Kriya Śakti
9. Jñānya Śakti

NOT TO SCALE
Ankālaśvari Temple
West Car Street
Cholavandan

Plan No. 7

1. Sankalli Karuppan
2. Lord Sannasi
3. Muttu Irulayiamman
4. Virāyiamman
5. Rākkāyiamman
6. Madurai Viran
7. Conai Muttu
8. Cappāni
9. Muttu Karuppan
Irulaparicami Kōvil (Śiva) Cholavandan

1. Capta Kaṇṇimār
2. Nāka Kaṇṇi
3. Rākkāyiamman
4. Pecciyiamman
5. Periyar Karuppanacāmi (Male)
6. Muttu Karuppanacāmi (Male)

Cenpakattamman and Muttu Ciṅka Irulayiamman are inside the main sanctum

NOT TO SCALE

Plan No. 9
minimal. Sacred and profane are separated to a greater extent than at temples where the festival image leaves the sacred temple precinct and traverses the profane streets of the town.

However, not all the representations of sacred and profane within Cholavandan are so defined. Two examples seem particularly poignant in expressing the instances where sacred and profane interact closely with each other. The shrines of Capta Kaṇñimār,43 "Seven Virgins", and Nava Kaṇñimār,44 "Nine Virgins" are almost completely undifferentiated from their surroundings, apart from the plinth that they stand on. Here the separation between deity and devotee, sacred and profane is at its least obvious. Any inhabitant of the town can have direct access to the goddesses because they are unhampered by any structural restrictions and are not reliant on the mediation of a priest or pūjārī. However, it does not follow that the shrines where the devotee can deal directly with the deity are more popular than other shrines. It would appear that the small shrines are less popular, although they are a resource that is always available to the devotee.

The temple/shrine of Mutaliyār Koṭṭai Kāliyamman presents an interesting alternative to the rest of this group in Cholavandan and those in Khurdapur.45 Instead of being surrounded by walls, which separate her from her profane surroundings, the goddess's sanctum is comprised of bars. Another interesting feature of this temple/shrine is that the devotees enter the sanctum to present their offerings. Therefore, this presents another situation where the interaction between sacred and profane is direct. My

43 See Appendix 2, fig. 125.
44 See Appendix 2, fig. 126.
45 See Appendix 2, figs. 119 and 120.
informants were unable to say why this particular temple/shrine had been built in this distinctive fashion and I can offer no explanation either. However, I am in a position to make some suggestions as to why the devotees of this goddess enter her sanctum.

I believe that two points are valid here, the first being on a practical level. This is a very busy temple, perhaps owing to its position at the entrance to the two communities with which she is most closely associated so, as there is not always a priest in attendance, the devotees must deal directly with the goddess herself. However, this direct contact between sacred goddess and profane devotee might not be accepted, were it not for the distinctive construction of the temple/shrine in this particular instance. The fact that the goddess is not completely separated from her profane surroundings, and is in fact visible at all times, indicates that the defiling nature of her surroundings is not considered a threat to her sacredness.

The close contact between Mutaliyār Koṭṭai Kāliyamman, Capta Kaṇṭimār, "Seven Virgins", and Nava Kaṇṭimār, "Nine Virgins" and their devotees, prompts me to pose the question, how then are these goddesses protected from the inherently polluting nature of the profane devotee? I suggest that although there may be no structural restrictions between deity and devotee there are, nevertheless, symbolic restrictions. In the manifested world, there must always be some differentiation between sacred and profane duality. Although there is interplay between sacred and profane, and at the core of some rituals transference between them, they nevertheless remain diametrically opposed.46

46 This point will be examined in detail in Chapter 9.
There is little difference between the temple/shrine group in Khurdapur and those in Cholavandan. Both consist of the sanctum, the core of the temple, although in Cholavandan the architectural adornment is very different to that in Khurdapur. This difference appears on two levels, the difference of temple styles between Tamilnadu and Orissa, and the relative simplicity of the temples in Khurdapur. Two important features of South Indian temple style are the intricately carved gopurams, temple towers,47 and the red and white striped temple walls, which indicate the sacredness of the site, distinguishing it from its profane surroundings.48 The gopuram represents Mount Meru, the centre of the universe and in this capacity indicates the centrality of the temple as a connector between heaven and earth.49 However, the temple does not only represent the centrality of sacredness, it also represents, albeit subtly, the peripheral nature of sacredness as well. This marginal nature is evident in two ways, spatially and conceptually, as the temple is conceived of as a symbolic tīrtha. Eck aptly points out that “In a sense, each temple is a tīrtha, especially consecrated as a crossing place between heaven and earth.”50

The temple as a tīrtha "links the borders of two cosmological realms."51 In Cholavandan, the variety of temples and their respective locations emphasise the dual nature of the temple as being both central and marginal. The shrines for

47 Probably the most impressive example of the temple gopuram can be found in the Minakṣī temple in Madurai, see Appendix 2, figs. 136-138. For a local version of the gopuram, see Jenākai Mārtyamman temple, Appendix 2, figs. 76 and 77.
48 See Appendix 2, fig. 122-123 Celliyamman.
49 Tantric practitioners also equate the mythical Mount Meru with the centre of the body. "The Mount Meru at the axis should be identified with the centre of the inner body through which runs as axis a subtle spinal tube called 'Merudanda' or 'Sushumna.'" Mookerjee, A. and Khanna, M. (1977) The Tantric Way, London: Thames and Hudson, p. 71.
Ammacciyanman, Jenakai Mariyamman (at White Vinayaka temple area), Nakamal, Paccaivali Kaliyamman, Celliyamman, and Capta Kannimār are all on the periphery of the town. Conversely, in the centre of town there are the temples for Jenakai Mariyamman and Tirupatiyamman (Draupadiyamman) emphasising world involvement and the centrality and integration of goddess worship in Cholavandan. Those temples on the periphery of the town symbolise the opposite end of the spectrum, the equally valid withdrawal from the material world. In other words, the key to enlightenment can be found both inside and outside of society.

4:2 The temple and shrine as a nexus between sacred and profane

There are a number of features of the temples in Cholavandan which emphasise the concept of the temple as a nexus connecting not just heaven and earth, but also connecting the temple to the nether world, pātāla. There are four features of particular note in Cholavandan, the pālipītām or altar stone; the flag-staff; Nāga, "snake" stones or shrines; and certain goddesses who are embedded in the earth.

4:2:1 The significance of the pālipītām, sacrificial stone

In south Indian temple architecture, the pālipītām, or altar is a prescribed feature of the temple complex. Although in Cholavandan the shrines and temple/shrine groups do not have a pālipītām, it is nevertheless a prominent feature in several of the temples. The pālipītām is the altar on which offerings are placed, and in the assimilation of the body.

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52 The features examined here are common in temples throughout Tamilnadu and possibly southern India, not solely in Cholavandan.
53 An examination has already been made of the way that trees, especially important in Khurdapur, are a connecting force between the three worlds, above section 3.6.
54 See Appendix 2, figs. 75, 80, 81, 107, and 110.
to the temple, it corresponds to the navel. The navel is itself a metaphor for the centre of the world or "an opening by which passage from one cosmic region to another is made possible (from heaven to earth and vice versa; from earth to the underworld)". It is also a source of life energy and, as such, indicates that the temple is the receptacle of divine power.

The Narayana-samhita claims that the pālipūtam and the tower above the sanctum, the vimana, are the same as places where divinity is concentrated. I suggest that the vimana and the pālipūtam mirror each other in a more profound way. The pālipūtam is situated directly in front of the deity and is usually grouped with the flag-staff and the deity's vāhana "vehicle", usually Nandi, Śiva's bull, even in one temple that is dedicated solely to a goddess. As a group, Nandi, the flagstaff and the pālipūtam represent profane, worldly concerns, and the progression of the devotee away from them, towards sacred divinity, represents the metaphorical shedding of the ego. The pālipūtam and the vimana are places of direct communication between heaven and earth via the power of the deity. In this capacity, the relationship between them forms a vertical and horizontal axis.

57 Ibid.
58 See temple plans 4, 7, 6, 3 and 9 on, pp. 125, 128, 127, 116, and 130.
59 The idea that the pālipūtam represents the world was conveyed to me during a conversation with informant 69, a Professor of Śaiva Siddhanta, University of Madras.
The offering presented by the devotee is placed on the pālipītam and directed towards the goddess. Through the acceptance of the offering by the goddess, the power accumulated is directed upwards to nourish the world of the gods. In turn, divine energy is directed back towards the temple, through the goddess, as her blessing, via the offering as praṣad, and back to the devotee. Therefore, there is transference of sacredness, through the devotee towards the less sacred settlement.

The Jenakai Māriyamma temple has a particularly interesting layout as it has two pālipītams. The pālipītam inside the temple is characteristic of the position and grouping within many temples in Tamilnadu. However, one of its most striking features is the very large pālipītam situated outside. As far as I am aware, it is uncommon for the pālipītam to be situated outside the temple complex. The informants at the temple were unable to say why it is outside and, therefore, only suppositions can be made about its meaning and purpose. This pālipītam is very much a part of the sacred complex of the temple, as offerings are put on it at each pūjā; it is now considered to be a

60 See above temple plan 4, p. 125.
61 See Appendix 2, fig. 75.
watchman, indicating that although it is outside the temple, through continued ritual, it retained its sacredness. Therefore, in this case a part of the sacred symbolism is now firmly incorporated within the profane town setting. To a certain degree, this structural evidence lessens the divide between the sacred - profane duality and emphasises that ritual is a key factor in establishing sacrality.

4:2:2 The significance of nāga worship

A common feature of South Indian worship is the veneration of snakes (Skt. nāga, Tam. nāka), particularly a snake goddess called Nākamāl or Nāka Kānni, “Snake Virgin”. There are temples dedicated exclusively to snake worship, but more commonly an image of Nākamāl is installed within the temple complex or, as in most temples, to either god or goddess: nāka (Skt. nāga) stones are placed at the base of the temple tree, often nim. Snakes occupy an ambiguous position in Indian culture, having both sacred and profane associations. On one hand they are feared and thought to be evil, however, conversely they are also deified as the power of fertility. In this capacity snakes or nāgas are inextricably linked both to trees and to the netherworld. Pātāla is the abode of snakes as they have been assigned guardianship of it. The nāga resting place and doorway to this world is very often among the roots of trees or, in the case of Nākamāl in Cholavandan, a specially made snake house has been provided. Snakes are considered to be powerful creatures and are offered milk and eggs in order to divert their potential to cause trouble, or to persuade them to offer their help in matters of infertility.

62 See Appendix 2, fig. 133.
63 See Appendix 2, fig. 103.
The significance of the flag-staff in the temple layout

The flag-staff, (Tam. Tuvaca-t-tampam) (Skt. Dhvaja-stambha), is a prescribed feature of the large South Indian temples. However, in Cholavandan there are only two temples which incorporate a flag-staff into their structure, Jeṅkai Māriyamman and Tiraupatiyamman (Draupadiyamman). The symbolic significance of the flag-staff is diverse. On the mundane level, the flag-staff is simply a marker for the sanctum, indicating its sacred nature. As many of the large temples were built by kings the flag-staff was used as a royal insignia. However, other references and evidence indicate that as a religious symbol its meaning has become much more complex.

The ceremonial raising the flag at the start of a festival (Tam. tuvacārōkaṇam) is an important ritual which emphasises the associations of “raising a banner” (Tam. tuvacaṅ-kattu), setting out with zeal, conquering.65 This ritual and the ritual of lowering the flag at the close of the festival (Tam. tuvacāvarōkaṇam) are also markers separating sacred time from its ordinary profane counterpart. According to Van den Hoek’s account of the Cellattamman festival in Madurai, the flag-staff is given abhiṣeka before the flag is raised with the flag possibly being a representation of the goddess.66 This would suggest that the flagstaff itself and the flag, through the medium of ritual, have sacred associations.

The sacred nature of the flag-staff is further confirmed by Diehl’s claim that the flagstaff represents Śiva’s fire liṅga and its endless expansion.67 The flagstaff, like the

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64 Ramachandra Rao, The Hindu Temple, p. 104
temple tree, forms a connection between the three worlds with its base firmly planted in the earth and its top, extending above the temple tower, stretching towards heaven. Under these conditions, it may become a conductor of divine energy into the temple and, most importantly, through the festival rituals, to the village or town also.

4:2:4 Goddesses as connectors

The three worlds are linked through the goddess herself, particularly because many of the original temple images were self-manifesting: their origin myths describe the way they were originally found by drawing attention to themselves in some way. The self-manifesting goddess appears from under the earth although she has a divine nature. Her subsequent installation in a temple helps to reinforce the notion that the temple as the place where the goddess now resides is, therefore, connected through her, to the other worlds. However, in some cases the representation of the goddess may present a more explicit connection. In South India at least, there is evidence of goddesses who have become immersed in the ground and the prefix pāṭāla added to their name. In Cholavandan there are two such goddesses, Pāṭāḷaṁmaṇi and Pāṭāḷa Ṛecciyamman.69 One informant70 claimed that the villagers had immersed Pāṭāḷa Ṛecciyamman in the ground, in order to control her anger.71 Therefore, it is beyond this world to pāṭāla that the devotee must resort in order to communicate with this particular goddess. Pāṭāḷaṁmaṇi, as we have already seen, was a human who gained divine status after her

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68 This will be examined in detail below in Chapter 5 section 5:1:2.
69 See Appendix 2, figs. 110 and 87.
70 Informant 57, the wife of the last pujārī and mother to the present pujārī. She said that this Ṛecciyamman was suspected of harming children, although she could not say why.
71 There are discrepancies among informants as to how Pāṭāḷa Ṛecciyamman came to be immersed in the ground. Although the pujārī (informant 93) denied that the goddess had to be calmed by the villagers, he had no other explanation for her position.
untimely death. This would certainly suggest that at the temple there are strong links between the divine, as the goddesses' nature is essentially sacred, the human, as she has chosen to be accessible to her devotees on earth, and the netherworld where she now resides.

Sacred places and new shrines can appear anywhere, as I discovered in Cholavandan during my research there. At the beginning of 1997 there appeared a series of turmeric coloured stones with vermilion and ash markings. Before them had been placed small lamps, and the stones were adorned with flowers. The stones had become sacred objects worthy of veneration. When I inquired about the origin of the stones, I was informed that the place where they were had originally been used as a latrine and defiled by many people. In an effort to combat the defilement, the local people have cleaned up the area and installed the stones that are now venerated. In essence, the local people have manufactured the sense of sacredness now felt to be present at this particular spot. The installation and worship of the stones in a place that was originally polluted expresses a concept of reversal, as profane becomes sacred. The reversal of profane to sacred is evident in a number of ways, in this case spatially and ritualistically, but also, in other cases, subtly in the fierce/benign character of the goddess, and especially in the divine reversal that can be seen in some festival rituals, most significantly when a profane animal becomes sacred through the act of sacrifice.

Ultimately, from various forms of pollution, i.e. the pollution of death, new life can spring. Everything has the potential for transformation. It will be interesting to monitor how this particular site evolves in the future, and whether a particular deity becomes

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72 Detailed above, pp. 120-21.
73 This point is examined in detail below, Chapter 9 section 9:4.
4:3 Comparison of the location, layout, and religious significance of the temples and shrines in Khurdapur and Cholavandan

Having carefully examined the various temples and other sacred spaces within the two field study sites, I am now in a position to evaluate whether there are any consequential differences between the spatial arrangement, the location and constructed symbolism of the temples and shrines in Khurdapur and Cholavandan.

As might be anticipated, there are considerably more temples and shrines in Cholavandan, the much larger field site, than there are in Khurdapur, the village settlement. In Khurdapur, there is only one temple as opposed to eight in Cholavandan. The number of temples in Cholavandan reflects the larger population in that site but, perhaps more importantly, it indicates the development of religious sites over a period of time. Therefore, the patterns and places of worship are much more elaborate than in Khurdapur. During the period of my research, I have collected evidence that suggests that the temples and shrines in Khurdapur are in a state of change and development. During the same time period the temples and shrines of Cholavandan have shown no indication of change, as development has already occurred. The only visible religious development in Cholavandan is the appearance of stones made holy by the local inhabitants. This particular change is one that could provide important research in the future, investigating to what extent and in what way they are incorporated into the town pantheon.

There is a considerable difference between the orientation of the temples and shrines in the two field sites. In Khurdapur the temple and all the shrines face east, which has led
to the complacent belief of its inhabitants, that all temples face east. Conversely, in Cholavandan many of the shrines and one of the temples face in directions other than east. In fact, the various goddesses within the temples and shrines face each of the four cardinal points. Therefore, in Cholavandan the symbolism of direction is a salient feature of the goddess worship there.

The layout of the temples and shrines in the two sites also varies considerably. In Khurdapur the majority of the temples and shrines circle the settlement in a position between the inhabited area and the agricultural land, indicating a separation or spiritual boundary between these two areas. In Cholavandan there are more centrally located temples and shrines but also those that occupy a position either in the fields or beyond the agricultural land, on the technical border of the town settlement. Therefore, in Cholavandan the agricultural land is integrated much more as a part of the town, rather than being outside it.

The ratio of temples, temple/shrines, and shrines varies considerably between the two places. In Khurdapur, there is only one temple, four temple/shrines and the major group, eight, being shrines. This distribution reflects the small and rural nature of this field site. In contrast, Cholavandan has a much more even distribution between the three categories, indicating that development has already taken place. Although there is a difference between the one very simple temple in Khurdapur and the more complex structure of the temples in Cholavandan, there is very little difference between the temple/shrine group at each site.
There are some important differences between the temple features in Khurdapur and Cholavandan, as representatives of North and South India. These differences emphasise the extent to which the local temple or shrine is considered a nexus between the three worlds, heaven, earth, and the netherworld. This connection is evident, and manifested in a number of ways in Khurdapur and Cholavandan. In Khurdapur, trees are a particularly important feature of the worship and religion there. Of the thirteen abodes of the goddess in Khurdapur, twelve of them are closely related to a particular tree. In two cases the goddess is directly represented as a tree. This close contact with trees is particularly prevalent in Orissa as much of this state is still forested. Although trees are a feature of some temples in South India, they are not a salient feature of the religion in Cholavandan. In Cholavandan, and South India especially, snake or nāga worship is a prominent feature. To a certain extent these two modes of worship are indicative of the same concept, the temple as the nexus between the three worlds fed by the creative power of pātāla, represented in the properties of fertility inherent in both snakes and trees.

Two important features of temples in South India are the pālipītam, sacrificial stone, and the flagstaff. Once more, both of these features are indicative of the function of the temple as a nexus, connecting the three worlds. Neither of these temple features is evident in Khurdapur, where there is no permanent sacrificial post, despite its importance in the main festivals of the settlement. In Khurdapur, the yearly renewal of the wooden sacrificial post indicates a renewal of the goddess's power. In Cholavandan the periodic renewal of the goddess's power is initiated by the kumbhābhisekam, ritual bathing ceremony, when the whole temple is ritually bathed, therefore, reinforcing the

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74 This will be examined below in Chapter 9 section 9:1:1.
The temples and shrines in both Khurdapur and Cholavandan have undergone relatively little brahmanical influence. In Khurdapur only Santosi Mā's temple is served by a Brahman priest and in Cholavandan only three temples, Jeñakai Māriyamman temple,75 Piralaya Nāyakiyamman temple, and Jeñaka Perumal temple, which houses Āṇṭāl] and Jeñaka Valliyamman, are served by a Brahman priest. This makes the worship and religion at each of the field sites more varied and interesting, as it does not necessarily conform to prescribed rituals. This means that the rituals and worship have a more independent nature, possibly being more closely associated with indigenous practices.

Through the examination and analysis of the temples and shrines in two contrasting field sites it is possible to perceive the various ways in which sacred is distinguishable from profane. In Khurdapur, because there are a majority of open shrines, there is a diminished separation between the sacred shrine and the profane devotee who can freely interact with his or her chosen goddess. However, in Cholavandan where there are an increased number of more developed temples, there is a greater separation between sacred and profane. This separation is observable in the temple structure as dividing walls, and the use of doorways and steps leave the devotee in no doubt that the temple is another world, separate from the one that he or she inhabits. The temple, separated from its surroundings, also emphasises its function as a locus of divine power that is available to the inhabitants of the settlement. As such each temple represents a cosmic centre supporting the microcosmic world around it. Therefore, as Eliade states, "as
house of the gods, hence holy place above others, the temple continually re-sanctifies the world, because it at once represents and contains it". In this capacity, each of the two field sites, Khurdapur, and Cholavandan can be considered smaller microcosms within the wider world. Both the settlement and its various nodes of divine power continually supply each other's needs, keeping the cyclical bond between all elements of manifestation functioning interactively.

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SECTION THREE

The Goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan
But the village deity is nothing more than a petty local spirit tyrannizing over or protecting a small hamlet, occasionally venting her spite or her ill-temper on a handful of poor villagers. She inspires fear because of her power to do grievous harm by inflicting diseases and injuries on man and beast when she is offended, but she has no relation to the universe or even to the world: she is the product of fear untouched by philosophic reflection; so she does not draw out any feelings of wonder and admiration, still less of love and gratitude, nor does she lead her worshippers on to any higher ideals of morality.¹

Introduction to Section Three

Whitehead's denigration of the character of the local goddess as the source of fear and affliction in India's villages has led, in part, to the acceptance of a misinterpretation of a huge number of popular deities. It is only in recent years, because there is no modern equivalent of Whitehead's work, that scholars have seriously started to question his perception, and to accept that local goddesses across India can be seen as significantly more than "petty local spirits". Local goddesses in general have been categorised as malevolent, the source of disease and disaster, as the quotation from Bishop Whitehead clearly suggests. In the two field sites under investigation in this research, I have found goddesses whom I would term essentially benign or essentially fierce, but not malevolent. I am particularly interested in the nature of these so-called malevolent goddesses. Therefore, I shall endeavour to ascertain to what extent local goddesses are still considered the cause of disease, evaluating to what extent they warrant the label "malevolent", and determining whether their infliction of disease and protection of the village should be termed "ambivalent", as has previously been the case. By critically analysing the character of the many local goddesses in Khurdapur and Cholavandan I intend to reveal the diversity and complexity of these goddesses' natures. Furthermore, I shall examine the extent to which there is a correlation between power and purity in the character of the goddess in the two study areas. In practice, are the most pure goddesses the most powerful? By examining the character of the individual goddesses at the two field sites, I shall be in a position to outline the nature of the power of the local goddesses. I also intend to pose the question, to what extent are the goddesses subject to the power of their devotees? 

1 This particular question will also be answered in terms of worship of the goddesses of Khurdapur and
the goddess models developed by a number of scholars. It is my intention to assess how applicable they are to the goddesses in Khurdapur and Cholavandan, and to suggest a new approach to their categorisation.
Chapter 5

"All the Goddesses are One"
5:1 "All the goddesses are one"

Metaphysically, all the goddesses in Khurdapur and Cholavandan, whatever their nature, shape and form, represent various nuances of the energetic principle of the universe termed šakti. Therefore, before examining the various ways in which these goddesses personify individual aspects of the nature of cosmic energy, I shall first establish the basis of their connection.

Textually, two concepts have encouraged and supported the concept of divine correspondence and the interconnectedness of all. The *Upaniṣads* elucidated the concept of Brahman, considered the unmanifest source of all cosmic manifestation. The all-encompassing nature of Brahman gave rise to the theory that all life, whether divine or human, in its essence was identical to Brahman, therefore, establishing a connecting factor, the ātman or essence, in all life.¹

> This self (ātman) of mine that lies deep within my heart - it contains all actions, all desires, all smells, and all tastes; it has captured this whole world; it neither speaks nor pays any heed.
> It is brahman. On departing from here after death, I will become that.
> *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.14.4

However, it was not until the relatively later texts that a concept arose which posited the suggestion that the various goddesses were aspects of one, all-encompassing power, šakti, the energetic principle or creative force which enabled Brahman to manifest itself, but was simultaneously personified as the Māhādevī, or Great Goddess.²

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Perhaps the most important and popular goddess-centred text is the *Devi Mahātmyam*.³

It is here that the concept of an all-inclusive Goddess was fully elucidated. In this text, a goddess is created from the combined powers of a number of gods.

Then issued forth a great light from the face of Viṣṇu who was full of intense anger, and from that of Brahmā and Śiva too. From the bodies of Indra and other devas also sprang forth a very great light. And (all) this light united together. The devas saw there a concentration of light like a mountain blazing excessively, pervading all the quarters with its flames. Then that unique light, produced from the bodies of all the devas, pervading the three worlds with its lustre, combined into one and became a female form.

*Devi Mahātmyam* 2: 10-13⁴

The great power that the gods have created then becomes a female form in her own right. She is entirely separate from the gods and able to produce further powers of her own which, unlike herself, return into her being when their work is completed. The text reinforces the conceptual notion of a Great Goddess, Māhādevī, the embodiment of power in all its myriad forms. The *Puranic* texts then firmly established the various pan-Indian goddesses as having the power to create other forms or *saktis* as the need arose.⁵

In an investigation of the meaning and importance of local goddesses, the *Devi Mahātmayam* makes clear that the "Goddess" as a concept cannot be easily categorised. The "Goddess" so carefully outlined in the text leaves the reader in no doubt of the fluidity of her character. She is the personification of all aspects of energy, being simultaneously creative, preservative, and destructive.

`By you this universe is borne, by you the world is created. By you it is protected, O Devī and you always consume it in the end. O you who are (always) of the form of the whole world, at the time of creation you are the form of the creative force, at the time of sustenance you are the form of the protective power, and at the time of`

³ Jagadiswarananda, Swami (trl.) (1969) *Devi-Mahātmyam (Glory of the Divine Mother) 700 Mantras on Śrī Durgā*, Madras: Śrī Ramakrishna Math. Although this was one of the earliest texts to be translated into English, it was not until relatively recently that its importance and interpretation has been considered seriously.

⁴ *Devi-Mahātmyam*.

⁵ See below Chapter 7, pp. 219-20.
dissolution of the world, you are of the form of the destructive power. You are the supreme knowledge as well as the great nescience, the great intellect and contemplation, as also the great delusion, the great devī as also the great asuri.

*Devi Mahātmyam* 1:75-77

This verse makes it clear that the all-encompassing Goddess in this text represents all aspects of power and energy, both positive and negative, as she is described as both devī, “goddess” and asuri “demoness”.

The *Devi Mahātmyam* is not the only text to offer an all-inclusive concept of female divinity who is equated with the principle of Brahman, Ultimate Reality. The *Devi Bhāgavatam*, which encompasses a version of the *Devi Mahātmyam*, is more metaphysically orientated, often proclaiming that there is a conceptual goddess who is the power behind all other deities.

... That Goddess is Eternal and Ever Constant Primordial Force. ... She is the source of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and the others and all of these living beings. Without Her force, no body would be able even to move their limbs.

*Devi Bhāgavatam* 3: 30. 28-30

The wide range of her aspects presented in the texts, giving her character fullness, is mirrored by the local goddesses in contemporary Hindu settlements, as I intend to show by this examination of the complete range of goddesses in two specific settlements.

5:1:1 Local goddesses as representatives of śakti energy

The Goddess said:

"I alone exist here in this world; what second, other than I, is there? O wicked one, behold these my manifestations of power entering back into me!"

*Devi Mahātmyam* 10.3

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6 *Devi-Māhātmyam.*  
7 *The Śrīmad Devī-Bhāgavatam.*  
Here the goddess plainly states that all manifestations, i.e. goddesses or śaktis, are all aspects of her all-encompassing self. This feminine term, śakti, is defined by Monier-Williams as meaning “power, ability, strength, might, effort, energy, capability”.9 Also indicated in the dictionary meanings are “capacity for, power over”.10 The most important definitions are those of “power” and “energy” as these best sum up the central character of śakti and the goddesses who personify this principle.

Local goddesses are no exception to that rule and are just as much manifestations of the Great Goddess as are the Brahmanical pan-Indian11 goddesses. In fact, the pan-Indian goddesses themselves have numerous manifestations, a point emphasised in the Kūrma Purāṇa in the chapter in praise of Pārvatī, the Sahasra-Nāma of Pārvatī. Here, one epithet of the goddess is Ekanekavibhāgasthā, meaning “stationed in one as well as in many divisions”.12

Two other textual sources, the Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa whose primary goddess is Rādhā, associating her with Prakṛti, and the Devī Bhāgavatam Purāṇa, that stresses the supremacy of the feminine divine principle, both express the conceptual idea that all goddesses spring from one reality. Although Rādhā is only one of many goddesses featured in the Devī Bhāgavatam Purāṇa, she is, in the following example, considered to be an essential part of reality, as the text states, “Every female in every Universe is

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10 Ibid.
11 The pan-Indian goddesses are those that are known across India and whose names are mentioned in textual sources. Some of the most well known are Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Pārvatī, Gaurī Umā, Durgā and Kāli, to name but a few.
12 Kūrma Purāṇa 1 Ch. 12, V. 64.
sprung from a part of Śrī Rādhā or part of a part.¹³ Rādhā herself is described as being
one fifth of Prakṛti, along with Durgā, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī and Sāvitri.

By the desire of the self-willed Kṛṣṇa to create,
The goddess Mūlaprakṛti suddenly became manifest;
By his command she became fivefold through division in the act of creation;
Or rather, out of consideration for her devotees, she assumed a form for their sake.
Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa PKh 1.12-13¹⁴

These verses draw out an important point, that it is for the sake of her devotees that the
goddess assumes myriad forms. All these forms are simply parts of the one energetic
source, in this case referred to as Mūlaprakṛti. The text goes on further to denote that
the village goddesses are kalās or fractions of Prakṛti,¹⁵ therefore all are aspects of one
reality.¹⁶ It is likely, I suggest, that the widely held view that "all the mothers are one",
may have its genesis in these fundamental correspondences.

5:1:2 Origin myths of local goddesses

The myths concerning the origin of local goddesses fall into two basic categories, myths
that explain the genealogy of village goddesses in general terms, and specific local
myths that explain the source of particular goddesses. The myth of Ammavaru
expresses the correlation of all goddesses in a local, rather than textual form, providing
one explanation of the relationship between the village goddess and her cosmic
counterpart.

¹³ The Śrīmad Devī-Bhūgavatam, (IX. 1.58).
¹⁴ This verse is translated and given in Brown, Cheever Mackenzie (1974) God as Mother: A Feminine
Theology In India (An Historical and Theological Study of the Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa), Hartford,
Vermont: Claude Stark & Co, p.142.
¹⁵ ya yāsca grāmadevas tāh sarvāscapraṇīṭeh kalāḥ || (Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa PKh 1.142) ibid., p. 143.
¹⁶ Prakṛti in this particular text is not a negative term denoting the impermanence of life, but is considered
one aspect of the Adīśakti's unmanifest character.
Ammavaru is described as the primordial Śakti who existed before anything else. She laid three eggs out of which were born Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. Ammavaru wanted to marry, so in turn she asked the three gods if they would oblige her. In turn each one refused because they considered her to be their mother. However, Śiva eventually agreed to marry her if she would give him her middle eye. Ammavaru agreed to relinquish her power but as soon as she did, Śiva used the third eye to destroy her. Kinsley claims that it is from her body that the plurality of šaktis who become village goddesses are created.17

The textual sources and the Ammavaru myth provide a theoretical or metaphysical context for the relationship between the village or local goddesses and their cosmic origins, but how is this correspondence evident at a local level? The above myth, or any similar localised version that accounts for the origin of local goddesses, was unknown in the two field sites where this study took place or unknown to the individuals that I interviewed. It has to be asked, therefore, how far the inhabitants of both sites connect local goddesses with unifying cosmic origins? In many respects the connection is subtle, being implicit rather than explicit. Many of the goddesses in Khurdapur and Cholavandan are connected to pan-Indian deities by their association as forms of the goddesses, especially Pārvatī and Durgā. Therefore, after having examined the various local origin myths of the goddesses at Khurdapur and Cholavandan, I shall explore the connections, if any, between the various goddesses and their cosmic counterparts.

The origin myths of the goddesses in Khurdapur

The origins of many of the goddesses of Khurdapur were unknown to the village informants. Of the thirteen primary goddesses,18 seven are of unknown origin. However, the remaining goddesses whose origin is known fall roughly into two groups, those who came from Bhatarika, a place to the south of Khurdapur, and those who have come from the forest. The correspondence between all of these goddesses is that they have all come from outside the village. Mā Khanduālā, who is said to have been there since the inception of the village, is one of two goddesses who originated in Bhatarika, contrary to the idea that village goddesses come from the north.19 Bana Durgā is the other goddess whose origin is attributed to Bhatarika.20

Kanaka Durgā and Ājiala are both said to have come to Khurdapur from the forest area which formerly surrounded it, however, their origins most probably lie elsewhere, especially Kanaka Durgā who may have been a royal goddess.21 Lakṣmī is a different case as her origins are cosmic and the appearance of a temple to honour her is a common feature in many villages and towns. The connection between Santoṣi Mā, a goddess with cosmic origins, and the settlement of Khurdapur is interesting. She, too, is originally from outside the settlement but particularly chose to install herself there by appearing in the house of informant 00 in the form of a plate of self-cooking canna "chick peas", and the informant now becomes possessed by Santoṣi Mā.22

18 I am not counting the Maṅgaḷā and Lakṣmī images recently introduced into the Santoṣi Mā temple as primary goddesses.
19 Very little research has been conducted into village goddesses (rather than tribal goddesses who have received more attention) in Orissa. It is therefore difficult to determine whether a significant number of goddesses originate in the south or any other direction. The idea that village goddesses mainly come from the north may apply more readily to South India.
20 For the origin myths of Bana Durgā and Mā Khanduālā see above pp. 99 and 82.
21 Detailed above, pp. 103-104.
22 Chickpeas are one of the main offerings given to Santoṣi Mā.
Oppert\textsuperscript{23} expressed the opinion that the grāmadevata is the "founder and creator" of the settlement, with Brubaker\textsuperscript{24} supporting this view and giving the example of the grāmadevata's installation at the "naval stone", or under the settlement's communal tree, being indicative of her role as settlement foundress. He states, quite clearly, that "the village comes into being because she first appears and causes it to rise up about her." Surely, if such an important event had occurred within the Khurdapur settlement, some remembrance of it would have been related by the many informants there?

The appearance of Santoṣī Mā in Khurdapur, epitomises the pattern that I have discovered is prevalent in both the field sites. Very often, the goddess makes the choice to be installed in a particular place, as she makes an appearance there or communicates her wishes in a dream. This pattern indicates that the formation of the village around one or more goddesses is not universal as suggested by some scholars.

The origin myths of the goddesses in Cholavandan

The origin myths of the goddesses in Cholavandan are more varied than in Khurdapur, with informants generally being able to supply more details. Jenakai Māriyamman originated near the settlement in a clump of bushes, where she made herself known. She was discovered by some Harijans and Velāla Pillais, agricultural workers, from the south side of Cholavandan. It was reported to me that the goddess made her presence known by causing trouble to anyone who passed near to the bushes where she was concealed. The villagers decided to tackle the problem and so they went to the troublesome area one day armed with spades. When the spade struck the stone, blood is


said to have come out. They then realised that this was a goddess and, since then, she has been worshipped as Jēkakai Māriyamman.

The current shrine of Vaṭakatti Kāliyamman is said to be 300 years old. Vaṭakatti Kāliyamman was brought here by one of the forefathers of informant 56, the present pūjārī. He travelled to north India with the military, where he prayed to Kālī and brought her back with him in a box. The goddess travelled happily in the box in spirit form, and was later transferred to the current temple where there is now an image of her. Vaṭakatti means "northern side" or "coming from the north" therefore, Vaṭakatti Kāliyamman is Kāliyamman from the north.25

Pillaimār Patirakāliyamman presents one of a number of origin myths in Cholavandan that indicate that many deities came from Kerala.26 According to the temple sources a man went to Kerala and came back with two boxes. In one box was the image of Patrakāliyamman and in the other was the Vaṭakatti Kāliyamman image.27 As well as the goddesses there were old things in the box, which were taken to the Vaigai River.28

The conception of various deities being transported from Kerala to Cholavandan in a box reappears at the Aṅkālaśvarī temple. The origin story of the deities here is that during the flooding of the Vaigai River a box was washed up. A number of people, Vēḷāḷas, Mutaliyārs, Valayars (fishermen) and an Ācāri (carpenter) saw the box. All the people wanted the contents of the box except the Ācāri who wanted the box. The

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25 Informant 56.
26 See Appendix 4, Songs from Aṅkālaśvarī temple.
27 This part is not accurate since the pūjārī of Vaṭakatti Kāliyamman shrine, informant 56, said that she came from the north.
28 The nature of the “old things” was not known.
box was opened and there were 21 deities in it in the form of small stones,\textsuperscript{29} which were taken by the Mutaliyārs. Eveline Meyer has carried out research across Tamilnadu and South India and according to her findings:

In the Madurai, Ramnad and Tiruelveli districts the parivāra deities will often number 21. This number is not exclusive to Āṅkālamman temples, Aiyaṅār temples also usually house 21 gods. Only few pūcāri were able to name all 21 gods;\textsuperscript{30}

Clearly, there is some significance in the number 21 and, furthermore, this group of 21 guardian deities is not solely confined to Cholavandan.\textsuperscript{31} The stones were installed in the original small temple, as parivāra, attendant, or guardian deities. The temple was built in a forest area by an old couple, after the bushes had been removed. Many of the parivāra deities have been represented in anthropomorphic form and all now reside at the temple in West Car Street, which was built 50 years ago.\textsuperscript{32}

Ammacciyyamman is another goddess who originally came from Kerala. Ammacci is a Malayalam term meaning "concubine of kings". At one time in Kerala, there was a spate of contagious diseases and a number of deities were thought to be responsible. They were put in a box that was thrown into the river. The box containing the deities eventually ended up in the Vaigai River near Cholavandan, at the site of an Aiyaṅār temple. Again, some people wanted the box and others wanted the contents of the box. The deities were brought to Cholavandan but, unlike the other deities, Ammacciyyamman said that she was not ready to come into the village. She said that

\textsuperscript{29} The 21 deities are Vināyaka, Vālakurunāthacāmi, Āṅkālaśvarī, Māyaṉṭicāmi, Muttu Pēciyyamman, Pēciyyamman, Muttu Karuppan, Cappāi, Coṇai Muttu, Madurai Vīraṇ, Rākkāyiamman, Vīrāyianman, Muttu Iruḷiyiamman, Lord Sannasi, Virapatraṇ, Candaṇa Karuppan, Periya Karuppaṇ, Sāṅkai Karuppaṇ, Pāṭāla Pēciyyamman, Cilaikkāriyanman, Pooṇa Thai.


\textsuperscript{31} However, Meyer's examples of the 21 deities varied from those given above in footnote 29 at Cholavandan.

\textsuperscript{32} Informant 53, the pūjārī and informant 57, his mother see also temple plan 7 above, p. 128.
she did not want to hear any village sounds — especially the pounding of rice. Another
goddess who was brought in the box with Ammacciyamman was Cantana Māriyamman.\(^{33}\) It appears that the concept of deities coming to a particular place in a
box is not peculiar to Cholavandan. Eveline Meyer relates similar stories from other
places.\(^{34}\) Furthermore, according to Meyer, gods and goddesses may be moved in a box
if they are in a moveable form, e.g. small stones etc. One reason for the deities to be
moved is if a family moves to another village and wants to take their deity with them.\(^ {35}\)
However, in the majority of stories related in Cholavandan the deities, housed in the
box, surface in the river apparently of their own volition.

Mutaliyār Koṭṭai is an ancient fort area comprising of seven streets.\(^{36}\) The small temple
dedicated to Mutaliyār Koṭṭai Kāliyamman was established because a Mutaliyār woman
called Ulakhathal from Uthamapalayam, brought Koṭṭai Vassal Kāliyamman, “fort
gate” Kāliyamman, to safeguard this area.\(^{37}\)

The shrines situated outside the inhabited area, to the north of Cholavandan and
dedicated to Paccaivalli Kāliyamman, Jeņakai Māriyamman, and Nākamāl,\(^{38}\) are

\(^{33}\) Informant 35, the pūjārī of Cantana Māriyamman temple.

\(^{34}\) Ibid. p. 64. Meyer relates the following story.

A Tēvar and a Nāyakkar were at the river. They saw a box floating down the river and
captured hold of it. A fight ensued over the ownership of the box and to settle the matter,
they drew lots. The Tēvar would get the contents and the Nāyakkar the box. Since the box
was locked, the nearby washerman was asked to guard the box, while the Tēvar and the
Nāyakkar went to fetch the Aiyar priest and an Ācārī to open the box. Inside the box was
the idol of Ankalamman. The Tēvar took the idol to his side of the village, the Nāyakkar
took a handful of earth from where the box had lain and with this he established a temple in
his part of the village.

This story relates to Nēcanēri village in the Tirumaṅkalam Taluk of Madurai district. Therefore, it may
represent a story line common to Madurai district.

\(^{35}\) Ibid. p. 62.

\(^{36}\) This community of Mutaliyārs are different from those associated with Aṅkāḷaṅsvārī in West Car Street.

\(^{37}\) Informant 37 of Mutaliyār Koṭṭai East St. who was the chief priest and leader of this community (now
deceased).

\(^{38}\) See above Cholavandan map, p. 108 nos. 22, 23, and 24. See above temple plan 8, p. 129.
thought to have been established by a *sannyāsin* or *sādhu* called Thavaththiru Kaśicāmikal, whose real name is Subrahmani.\(^{39}\) He was immersed here when he died and it was he who built some of the temples and shrines in this area known as Veḷḷai Pillaiyār Kövil, White Vināyaka Temple.\(^ {40}\)

Nāṭār Patirakāliyamman was brought to Cholavandan with the *Nāṭār* community, who came as merchants. Similarly, the temple dedicated to Mākāliyamman belonging to the *Pallarkal* caste (Harijans), was created when Jenakai Māriyamman came to the settlement, so it is considered to be very old. This is primarily an agricultural area and the *Pallarkal* accompanied the *Veḷḷalā*, and are considered part of the Pillaimār group, since originally these two groups worked together. The *Pillaimārs* have a goddess called Patirakāliyamman, and mud from her temple was brought by the *Pallarkal* to make the original Kāliyamman. However, this goddess, as with the following goddess described, is said to come from the north, from Ujjain, being described as Ujjaini Kāliyamman.\(^ {41}\)

The small temple behind Rauth Naiker Street, dedicated to Ujjaini Kāliyamman is considered to be about 200 years old. This particular Kāliyamman came with the informant’s ancestors from Calcutta. They were told by Kāli in Calcutta to take a small cow with them and travel in a southerly direction. When the cow stopped and lay down they should settle in that place. The cow walked continuously for six months until it came to the place where this temple is today. Here it lay down and died and was buried

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\(^ {39}\) Thavaththiru Kaśicāmikal is considered to be a saint and a shrine has been built over his immersion site. He settled in the area for 36 years in a small house until his death. He is said to have become *samādhi*. The swami came from South India but had spent some time in Benares, hence the reference in his name to Kaśī.

\(^ {40}\) Informant 52.

\(^ {41}\) Informant 62, Harijan Community Leader, 63, 64, *pujāri*, 65, and 68.
under the goddess's shrine. There seems to be some confusion in the informant's mind as this goddess's name is Ujjaini Kāliyamman, i.e. Kāli from Ujjain, although Ujjain is nowhere near Calcutta.

Piralaya Nāyakiyamman is said to be a universal goddess whose temple was established by the Vaigai River to protect the settlement against floods. Likewise, the goddesses in the Jenaka Perumal Temple, dedicated to a South Indian form of Viṣṇu, Ānṭāḷ and Jenaka Valliyamman, Śrī Devī and Bhū Devī, represent cosmic concerns and therefore represent the common feature of a classical temple within a local settlement.

A number of goddesses have no particular origin myths or, more correctly, the origin myth was unknown to the informants. However, they are known to have originated outside Cholavandan. Uluntūr Kāliyamman, as her name suggests, was originally from Uluntūr, although my informant was not familiar with the location of this village. Uluntūr Kāliyamman, as her name suggests, was originally from Uluntūr, although my informant was not familiar with the location of this village.43 Tiraupatiyamman (Draupadiyamman) came originally from Maylur, 23 km from Chennai (Madras).44 Another form of Tiraupatiyamman (Draupadiyamman), came from Pokkari near Ramanathapuram, where much of her ritual worship still takes place.45

Thus, in both the field sites the majority of known origin myths of the goddesses indicate that they originated from outside the settlement, rather than the settlement being formed around them. Many goddesses appear to have chosen to settle in each respective site, miraculously making their wishes known. None of the informants that I

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42 Informant 41.
43 Informant 40, mother of the present pūjārī.
44 Informant 33, who did everything at the temple (now deceased).
45 Informant 98.
spoke to could provide me with any general village goddess myths, such as the Ammavaru myth noted by Kinsley, which link the goddesses together. Generally, the goddesses seem to be thought of individually, although if one probes a little more deeply, the informants generally take for granted the concept that “all the mothers are one”.

5:1:3 Local goddesses' associations with pan-Indian goddesses

One factor that does overtly provide a link between all goddesses is their association with pan-Indian goddesses. Although the goddesses in Khurdapur and Cholavandan may or may not have a point of local origin many of them are also considered to be closely associated with, or in fact incarnations of, other more well-known goddesses. The two goddesses most readily associated with their local counterparts are, in general, Pārvatī and Durgā but, specifically in Cholavandan, the most prolific goddess is Kālī.

Associations with pan-Indian goddess in Khurdapur

The majority of the local goddesses in Khurdapur are closely associated with Durgā. Two goddesses in the settlement, Kanaka Durgā and Bana Durgā, represent different forms of Durgā and here the association is fully realised. However, the association between a number of the other goddesses and Durgā is less straight forward.

Mā Maṅgalā, who is represented three times in Khurdapur and is generally the most popular goddess in Orissa, is closely associated with Durgā, considered to be one of the śaktis that Durgā produced in her struggle against the demon Mahiṣāsura. More
unusually for a local goddess, she is also closely associated with Viṣṇu. A pamphlet produced and sold in Kakatpur, the site of the most important temple of Maṇgalā in Orissa, the *Maṇgalā Mahāpurāṇa*, details the goddess's conception.

Legend states that Mā Durgā is called Maṇgalā because one day, after she had fought with Mahiṣāsura she became very tired, but the demon had plenty of energy. He put her in the middle of the sea and she was helpless. She breathed out and gave birth to Maṇgalā as a baby who immediately became big. She held onto one hand of the demon while Durgā held the other hand and together they took him out of the sea and killed him. Because she had benefited everyone, she was called Maṇgalā and Durgā decreed that she should receive pūjā everywhere. In the text she is described as *Vaisnavi* -- "calm" and "quiet". This may be applicable to her form at Kakatpur, but in other places, for example Khurdapur, she receives blood sacrifices and has some association with smallpox.

Maṇgalā is not the only goddess in Khurdapur who is considered to be a śakti of the Goddess Durgā. Mā Ksetrapālā, her name meaning kṣetra, "field" and pālā, "watchwoman", is also considered by the villagers to be one of the śaktis produced by Durgā in order to destroy Mahiṣāsura, although there are no written sources to confirm this. There is a tenuous link between Mā Kṣetrapālā and Viṣṇu as it is claimed that he provided her with the name Kṣetrapālā.

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46 Ma Maṇgalā at Kakatpur plays a key role in finding the dārus used to make the new images of Jagannāth, Bālabhadra and Subhadra at the Navakalevara ritual, held every twelve years.


48 This myth of how Maṇgalā originated is translated by Niranjan Mohapatra from Trinath Pattnaik (n.d.) *Mā Maṇgalā Mahāpurāṇa*, Orissa: Sri Sarada Store (purchased in Kakatpur).

49 The main rituals for this goddess are examined below in Chapter 9 sections 9:4:1 and 9:4:2.
Mā Khanduālā is another Khurdapur goddess who is closely associated with the Goddess Durgā. Her name indicates that she is a goddess who holds a sword, *khanda,* and she is said to have an angry face, although this is not discernible in her aniconic image. It is said that one day Śiva looked at her, holding the sword with an angry face and he named her Mā Khanduālā. She is further associated with Durgā and Kālī in her yearly acceptance of animal sacrifices. When I asked why she received blood offerings, I was informed of her association with Kālī and Durgā, functioning as the slayer of demons, therefore prompting her periodic blood lust.

At this point, I should like to draw the reader's attention to the apparent regional difference between the myth of Durgā's victory over the demon, Mahiṣāsura, and the version presented in the numerous renditions of the *Devi Mahātmyam,* which are without the sexual references apparent in the following regional version. This story, related to Marglin by P.C. Mishra, is an Oriya version, of the myth of Durgā's fight with Mahiṣāsura, the essence of which is echoed in Khurdapur.

... the gods had given a curse that the only way the buffalo demon would die was when he saw the sexual organ of a woman. Durgā, when she started her fight with the buffalo demon, did not know this. While fighting, Durgā in her anger produced other goddesses. There was Mangalā, Hingulā, and Sitalā. Goddess Mangalā whispered into Durgā's ear what the curse of the gods was. Durgā in anger took off her robes and placed each of her feet on two distant hills. The buffalo was under her, between her legs, looking up at her vagina, and at that moment Durgā kills him by piercing him with her trident. Then Durgā was extremely angry with the gods for having given such a curse to humiliate her. Her anger grew so terrible that she transformed herself, grew smaller and black and left her lion mount and started to walk on foot. Her name then became Kālī. With tongue lolling out and dripping with blood, she then went on a blind destructive rampage, killing everything and everyone in sight, regardless of who they were. The gods and the people became extremely worried and appealed to Śiva for help. Mahadev [Śiva] agreed and lay himself down, sleeping, on the path on which the furious, black and naked Kālī was coming. In her blinded anger she did not see him and stepped on his chest. At that moment Śiva's *linga* [penis] became erect and entered Kālī. At that instant Kālī recognized her husband and pulled out her tongue in ecstasy ...  

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50 Marglin, *Wives of the God-King,* pp. 214-5. This version of the Durgā myth also includes the goddess Mangalā, as one of Durgā's attendants was indicated in the local *Mangalā Mahāpurāṇa.*
The Khurdapur version of this myth simply states that Durgā must be naked in order to kill Mahiṣāsura. The Khurdapur myth attributes Kālī's lolling tongue to her shame at stepping on her husband, a version widely echoed across India.51

Two goddesses in Khurdapur are considered to have close connections with Pārvatī. Dullādei, originally called Dullā, is described as the servant of Pārvatī. Because of her devoted service she was deified by her mistress and sent to receive worship on the earth. Aliala, has an even closer relationship with Pārvatī as she is said to be one of her many forms. According to village sources, she was named Aliala, meaning "only one", by her father, Himavan.

Santoṣī Mā and Lakṣmī are themselves considered to be pan-Indian goddesses. Santoṣī Mā is a relatively new goddess, popular in North India. Her genealogy is as the daughter of Ganeṣa and his two wives Riddhī and Siddhī.52 Her increased popularity over the last twenty years is considered to be due to the release of a Hindi film about her, called "Jai Santoṣī Mātā".

Therefore, in Khurdapur, the majority of goddesses are ascribed as having some connections to pan-Indian goddesses. Durgā, quite naturally, is the most obvious choice for a connection as her many powers are endless, and although individual local goddesses in Khurdapur may not be mentioned specifically in the text, correspondences


52 This is the origin of Santoṣī Mā according to the influential film, Jai Santoṣī Mātā, first screened in 1975 which has greatly increased the popularity of this goddess. There is no origin given in her kathā which is available in pamphlet form across north India. Examples are anon. (n.d., purchased 1996) Śrī Santoṣī Mātā Kī Kathā, Calcutta: Śrī Lokanāth Pustakālay and Brand, Michael (trl.) (n.d., purchased 1969) anon. Santoṣī Mātā Kī Kathā, Delhi: Gupta and Co.
between the textual šaktis and the powers of the local goddesses are not hard to find.

Associations with pan-Indian goddess in Cholavandan

The most prolific goddess in Cholavandan is Kāliyamman in her various aspects. These forms emphasise various characteristics that associate her with particular groups or castes. Therefore, there seems to be at work in Cholavandan a reverse characterisation, which, instead of associating local goddesses with pan-Indian goddesses, in fact localises the various forms of Kāli who, although she has a complex, dualistic nature, is nevertheless considered to be a pan-Indian goddess, known across India. However, I hesitate to refer to Kāli simply as a pan-Indian goddess because her profound "otherness" is so unique. Her dualistic nature is in stark contrast to the benevolent and subservient nature of the other pan-Indian goddesses, e.g. Pārvatī, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Gaurī, Ümā, Rādhā, etc. Kāli's nature is much harder to categorise as she is considered to be, simultaneously, a nurturing mother but also the destructive force that periodically threatens existence.

Vatakatti Kāliyamman, called north-facing Kāliyamman, was originally called Padmāsura Mahiśāsuramardinī, an epithet of Durgā the demon slayer. In fact her iconography of eight arms, holding weapons and poised to slay the demon at her feet, is more indicative of her associations with Durgā than with Kāli.53 Nāṭār Patirakāliyamman, is the fierce, (Tam. patira) form of the goddess who originated in order to save the Nāṭār people from their oppressors. She is considered their mother. Patirakāliyamman (Skt. Bhadrakāli) belonging to the Pillaimārs, is another fierce form

53 See Appendix 2, fig. 100.
of Kaṭi, whose iconography, of eight arms, holding various weapons and standing on a
demon, suggests that she is considered to be a parallel aspect of Durgā.⁵⁴

There appears to be some confusion about the nature of Mutaliyār Koṭṭai Kāḷiyamman
on the part of her devotees. She was originally described as a non-fierce incarnation of
Pārvatī. However, when I asked about her name Kāḷiyamman, I was told she
represented Kālīghāt Kāḷī, who is generally considered to be fierce. Therefore, the dual
nature of this local goddess becomes evident since her genealogy indicates a
contradiction to the general perception of her devotees. Kāḷī is both fierce and
benevolent. Here is an example of the type of duality that appears to permeate the
characteristics of many goddesses in Cholavandan.⁵⁵

Aṅkāḷaśvarī is said by the temple informants to be a benign form of Pārvatī. However,
according to the Tamil Lexicon, the goddess Aṅkalamman is an incarnation of Kāḷī.
This dual personality is perhaps evident in the essentially benign iconography of this
goddess⁵⁶ coupled with her close proximity to animal sacrifice and cremation ground
rituals.⁵⁷ Paccaivāḷi Kāḷiyamman, as her name suggests, paccai, “green” or “raw”,
indicates the penchant of this goddess for eating raw flesh, through the medium of a
possessed man.⁵⁸ Mākāḷiyamman (Paḷḷarkal), Ujjainī Kāḷiyamman, and Uccini

⁵⁴ See Appendix 2, fig. 131.
⁵⁵ Duality will appear throughout this thesis, being interwoven through each section: evident in the
placement of local temples and shrines, as already examined, through the character and nature of the wide
variety of local goddesses, only to reappear again when the worship and rituals of the goddesses are
examined. Duality is a subtle motif, like the pattern woven into a fine piece of silk or the recurrent
melody skilfully woven into a musical masterpiece.
⁵⁶ Aṅkāḷaśvarī is seated with four arms. Her upper right holds a damaru, a drum beaten by a snake, in
her lower right is a trisula, her upper left holds a snake and her lower left holds the ambiguous small pot
of kumkum, or originally, most likely, a kapāla or skull. Unfortunately I was unable to take a photograph
of this goddess's mūrti (Skt. mūrti).
⁵⁷ See Appendix 4 - Songs from Aṅkāḷaśvarī Temple. In the song used to summon Aṅkāḷaśvarī, she is
connected with the cremation ground, in this case supplying the wood.
⁵⁸ An analysis of the importance of possession will be dealt with in Chapter 9 section 9.3.
Mākāliyamman are simply various representations of Kāliyamman, without any particular associations to other goddesses.

Celliyamman, the goddess who guards the northern approach to the settlement, is associated with the killing of Mahīṣāsura. The pūjāri of this small temple/shrine claimed that Mahīṣāsura was threatening the gods so they sought the help of Ādiparaśakti, whom he described as the wife of Śiva. The informant claimed that only she was the saviour. Celliyamman is then associated with Kālī who drinks the demon's blood. Therefore, Celliyamman has been successfully connected not only to Durgā and Kālī, but also primordial śakti in its cosmic form, Ādiparaśakti.59

There are undoubtedly a variety of correspondences between the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan, and a number of pan-Indian goddesses. Whereas some links are obvious, others are more subtle and implied. However, what is important to bear in mind is that all goddesses, both local and pan-Indian, are representatives of śakti, divine feminine power, with both negative and positive aspects to their natures. The next step in this study is to examine the nature of this power in a local setting. Therefore, the following chapter will concentrate on various aspects of the local goddesses' character. I shall commence with an examination of the nature of the local goddesses' power, both individually and collectively, but perhaps more importantly, I shall examine the extent of the devotees' power over the goddesses. Finally, an analysis will be made of the extent that purity is an indication of the greatest power, questioning whether the most powerful goddesses in Khurdapur and Cholavandan are the most pure.

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59 Informant 99 - President, head trustee and pūjāri.
Chapter 6

The Relationship between Power and Purity in relation to the Goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan
6:1 Local goddesses' representation of power collectively and individually

I commence this chapter with an examination of the nature of the local goddesses' power, both individually and collectively, but perhaps more importantly, I shall examine the extent of the devotees’ power over the goddesses. Finally, an analysis will be made of the extent that purity is an indication of the greatest power, questioning whether the most powerful goddesses in Khurdapur and Cholavandan are the most pure.

The local goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan characterise all the powers that are personified by the pan-Indian goddesses. Therefore, collectively they represent the all-encompassing power of śakti, in both its negative and positive forms, embodying the power of destruction alongside the power to heal. Individually the various goddesses of the two field sites reflect the huge variety and degrees of cosmic power, which they personify and make accessible. What is also clear, in a local setting, is that power is not static, it continually shifts and changes like the sands of the desert that are never still. There is also interdependence between the goddesses and the inhabitants of their settlement as the power of the goddesses is regularly confirmed and renewed by the worship and rituals performed by the devotee. However, it appears that there may be a price that the goddesses have to pay for the devotion of their worshipers, as devotees, too, possesses certain powers. Not only do the local goddesses have dominion over their respective settlement, but their devotees also appear to have considerable power over their goddesses.
The power of the goddesses in Khurdapur

Santoṣī Mā personifies the power to heal and this is reinforced at her Friday worship by her many curative acts performed on the ever growing crowds that now seek out her help. She is the "Mother of Satisfaction" whose main function is to attend to the needs of her devotees, protecting and nurturing them.

Mā Maṅgalā, in her many forms, is a goddess whose power is complex and esoteric. In Khurdapur, she reveals both her benign and fierce powers, having the power to inflict or cure smallpox. Now that smallpox has been eradicated, Mā Maṅgalā is associated with other ailments. In Khurdapur it was her power to cure disease that was most evident. However, this subjugation of her fierce nature may be due more to the influence of Vaiṣṇavism on this goddess, which is quite strong in Orissa. Although Mā Maṅgalā's healing aspect is most evident, she is also considered to have the power to punish those who defy her.¹

Many local goddesses are primarily concerned with the more mundane powers required by their devotees. Mā Khanduālā is typical in this respect as she is considered to have the power to intervene in worldly affairs, being instrumental in fixing jobs and successful marriages etc. Mā Kṣetrapālā, as her name implies, functions as a village guardian, protecting the inhabitants from any malign influences that might threaten the stability of the settlement.

¹ Details are below, p. 214.
The power of the goddesses in Cholavandan

The Irulaparicāmi (a form of Śiva) kōvil, "temple", also houses a number of goddesses.2 The main sanctum is for Śiva where there is a very tall svayambhū linga, a self-originated linga, which was found here and out of which blood is reputed to have come. A temple was eventually created around it. The main goddess at this temple is a fierce form of Pecchiyamman, but also residing here are Rakkāyiamman, Muttu Ciṅka Irulayiamman, Capta Kannimār, "Seven Virgins", Nāka Kannī, a "Snake Virgin", and Cenpakattamman. The temple with all its deities is said to be very powerful and collectively fierce. It is stated that the very large Vināyaka (Ganēsa) housed in a shrine opposite,3 is there to control the power of this temple. The pūjāri's wife gave a specific example of the power of the deities. She claimed that a Muslim man who lived in Cholavandan had died. His family wanted to take his body down the road that passes this temple. However, the family was told that they should not do this, but they ignored the warning and proceeded past the temple as they had planned. When the man, who had insisted on taking the route past the temple, returned from the ceremony he died. His death is believed to have been caused by the power of the deities at the temple, in retribution for his refusal to honour the wishes of the temple deities.4

Ujjaini Kāliyamman is also considered very powerful by the pūjāri, whose family, he claimed had been saved by the power of the goddess. The informant related one incident in particular. One night he was sleeping in the paddy field to guard the paddy, which was soon to be harvested. While he slept, some men came and attacked him. The first blow was struck to his neck but a torch that he happened to be holding saved

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2 See above temple plan 9, p. 130.
3 See above Cholavandan map temple no. 17, p. 108.
4 Appendix 3, informant 39, the wife of the chief priest.
him. Another blow was struck to his arm and he still has the scar. However, by the power of the goddess he was saved and the men ran off. The goddess then came to him in the form of a young girl and told him that because she was pleased with his devotion she had saved his life. After this incident, he decided that, as a way of thanking the goddess, he would make the *trisūla*, the trident that now represents her. It is specially made, with much difficulty, of five metals. As a further display of her power, Ujjainī Kāliyamman possessed the boy who carried the *trisūla* to the temple for installation. Finally, eighteen days after the informant was attacked in the paddy field -- a Friday he recalled -- the man who had attacked him died. The aggressor's death was attributed to the retributive power of Ujjainī Kāliyamman.

Mutaliyar Koṭṭai Kāliyamman has an interesting power that is able to reverse normal inauspiciousness. The *pijāri* claimed that the times on Tuesday between 3.00pm – 4.30pm and Friday 10.30am - 12 noon are considered inauspicious times which he referred to as rāku kālam. It is believed that whatever is started at these times will not turn out well. However, at this temple people deliberately come at these times and offer lemon lamps in order to secure a good marriage etc. The *pijāri* claimed that Mutaliyar Koṭṭai Kāliyamman's power is so strong that it can make an action carried out at an inauspicious time turn out well. Perhaps this is an instance of the goddess's power being able to reverse certain superstitions. At this time, Mutaliyar Koṭṭai Kāliyamman is offered lemon lamps that are made by turning a hollowed out half-lemon inside out and filling with oil. I suggest that these lemon lamps represent, not only the offering of

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5 Appendix 3, informant 41 - *pijāri*.
6 Appendix 3, informant 37 (now deceased).
the heart or inside of the devotee, but also the reversal or transformative power that is within the jurisdiction of this particular goddess.

What is the extent of the village/town goddess's power?

Many of the local goddesses of a particular settlement are very much concerned with the needs of that particular place, acting as a local resource for a particular group of people. However, not all local goddesses have a confined jurisdiction. In each of the field sites there is at least one goddess whose power is not confined within the settlement boundary. In Khurdapur that goddess is Santōṣī Mā who is drawing crowds from all over Orissa and as far away as Bengal. Although she is not strictly a local goddess, I would argue that her Friday worship -- which is what has drawn most people -- more readily resembles local ritual patterns and characteristics than orthodox brahmanical temple ritual. Santōṣī Mā’s power, which is displayed by her possession of informant 00 and, through her, her power to heal, is untypical behaviour for a pan-Indian, or semi-pan-Indian goddess, as her new image reinforces. Although Santōṣī Mā is only popular in North India, she is associated with the other pan-Indian deities as her genealogy states that she is the daughter of Gaṇeṣa. She is more readily comparable with the pan-Indian goddesses than village deities. However, this particular incarnation or representation of Santōṣī Mā straddles two worlds as she has successfully combined both pan-Indian and local devī-like characteristics. The fact that she has a foot in two worlds may also explain her sphere of influence both inside and outside the Khurdapur settlement.

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8 See Appendix 1, fig. 63. This recently installed representation of Santōṣī Mā is typical of North Indian pan-Indian goddess images.
In Cholavandan, Santosi Mā’s counterpart is Jenakai Māriyamman who, interestingly, is also a goddess whose character straddles two types. To a certain extent she has been brahmanised but still retains some of her local characteristics, most evident in her continuing association with disease and Jenakai Māriyamman’s annual fire walk. However, it is claimed that if devotees -- even those who have come from far away -- do not fulfil their vows, she will communicate with them through the medium of their dreams. If she is ignored, she has the power to punish them.

Are local goddesses subject to the power of their devotees?

In trying to understand the complex relationship between the goddess and her devotees, I must address the question, to what extent are the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan subject to the power or influence of their devotees? By examining the nature of the various goddesses at the two sites, it would appear that the devotees have a significant influence on the goddesses in a number of ways. Some of the goddesses have been altered by their devotees to a considerable degree as they have had their essential character changed from acutta, "impure", "meat eating", (Skt. aśuddha) to a more acceptable vegetarian, cutta, "pure", (Skt. suddha) state. This process is variously described as Brahmanisation, Sanskritisation, or Hinduisation, being evident across India. It involves the installation of Brahman priests, the cessation of animal sacrifice, and may include the marriage -- either permanent or temporary -- of the goddess, in order to control her power.

In other instances the devotees may simply find the fierce character of the goddess too alarming and by various means may try to make her character more benign. In some cases, the human power over a goddess may be more sinister as she may be deliberately
harmed by a person who has built up considerable power of his or her own. In this context, the human parallels the demon who, through austerities etc., has accumulated a power that rivals that of the deity. Finally, it seems that if the devotee worships the goddess correctly or performs various rituals, e.g. the fire walk or weekly fasts for a prescribed period, then she is obliged to concede to the devotee's demands. Therefore, I shall examine to what extent devotees have changed the goddesses at the two sites.

6:2 Brahmanisation or Sanskritisation of the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan

The process of Brahmanisation or Sanskritisation involves the gradual change of a deity, usually with strong tribal, indigenous or non-brahmanical characteristics, the most obvious of these being the acceptance of blood offerings. As the process of Sanskritisation or Brahmanisation progresses, a number of changes can be evidenced in the character of the goddess, as has been outlined by Kurtz, who sees the whole process as being cyclical in nature.

As a popular deity moves through this process of Sanskritization, its rougher features are said to be softened. It grows less malevolent, for example, and is less likely to accept impure offerings of meat and alcohol. To encourage the process of Sanskritization, the deity is identified with the revered gods and goddesses of the so-called great tradition. Eventually, with success on a broad scale, the deity grows distant from the needs of ordinary people. This then initiates a new cycle. To replace a now ossified deity, a new one emerges from the "little" tradition of the villages.

9 See below Chapter 7, pp. 206-7 where the myth of the origin of smallpox offers an example of a demoness requiring a boon from Śiva.

10 The term "Sanskritisation" was coined by Srinivas, M.N. (1952) Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India, Oxford: Clarendon Press. It indicates the influence of the orthodox (brammanical) religious tradition on the less orthodox religious traditions.

The extent of Brahmanisation and Sanskritisation in Khurdapur

There is little real evidence of the process of Brahmanisation in Khurdapur as generally the goddesses reside in shrines that have been changed little since their inception. However, a couple of the shrines have changed to temple/shrines and two more are currently in the process of change. Therefore, I shall comment on the changes that have happened in relation to the process of brahmanisation.

The shrines for Mā Maṅgalā (Hādi - Jatesvar) and Mā Jageśvarī have been replaced by temple/shrines but, although the original aniconic image of Mā Maṅgalā was replaced by an anthropomorphic image, it has not been modelled on North Indian brahmanical deities. The image of Mā Jageśvarī was not changed when she was moved into her temple/shrine. The new temple/shrine for Mā Khanduālā has just been completed but her new image has remained localised. The aniconic image of Mā Khanduālā that currently resides in her small shrine under the banyan tree has now been replaced by an anthropomorphic representation housed in her new temple/shrine. However, although the image was prepared outside the settlement at considerable expense, it has remained untouched by brahmanical influence being, instead, similar to the more localised image of Mā Maṅgalā (Hādi - Jatesvar).

Currently, a new temple is under construction for Dullādei and Baghei. However, at this time it is unclear what the effect will be on these two goddesses. I have no details yet about whether there will be any significant changes to the current images of Dullādei and Baghei. However, they will most probably be similar in style to those of

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12 See Appendix 1, figs. 33 and 34.
13 See Appendix 1, fig. 63 Santosī Mā, which is a typical North Indian representation.
14 See Appendix 1, fig. 42.
15 See Appendix 1, figs. 48, 57, and 58.
the new image of Mā Khanduālā and of Mā Maṅgalā (Hādi - Jatesvar). This project may well take a number of years to complete, therefore this is one aspect of this study that I intend to pursue in the future.

It would be misleading to say that Santoṣī Mā has been brahmanised although her image has been changed from an anthropomorphic image with a distinctly local characterisation to a clearly North Indian brahmanical representation. This temple has always been served by Brahman priests as Santoṣī Mā is considered to be a brahmanical goddess with an essentially benign nature who has never accepted animal sacrifices. However, there is a side to her character that emphasises her localised situation. Santoṣī Mā regularly takes possession of a local woman in order to interact with and heal her devotees. This is untypical behaviour for a brahmanical goddess but typical of many local goddesses.

I am able to state that at present, the process of Brahmanisation has so far had little impact on the goddesses of Khurdapur. However, the situation is fluid and may well change considerably in the future.

The extent of Brahmanisation and Sanskritisation in Cholavandan

Jenakai Māriyamman in Cholavandan is a prime example of the influence of devotees on the character and representation of the goddess. The types of change that have happened to Jenakai Māriyamman are not restricted only to this location but can be

16 See Appendix 1, fig. 63. Unfortunately, I was unable to take a photograph of the old image. It is interesting that I was not permitted to photograph the old image, but permission was happily given for me to photograph the new one. Very often photographs of brahmanical deities are not permitted. However, permission to photograph the old image might have been denied because the local people were not so familiar with me at that time.
evidenced widely in India. The process of Sanskritisation has certainly changed Jenakai Mariyamman, although so far she has not become distant from her devotees. Among her Cholavandan counterparts, this goddess most readily seems to meet the needs of her devotees. Although her character has become softened, and her worship is generally brahmanical in nature, Jenakai Mariyamman has nevertheless retained a substantial degree of her former, devi-like\textsuperscript{17} qualities, most evident in her yearly festival in which the climax is a fire-walk.

Jenakai Mariyamman has undergone a complete image change since her inception into the Cholavandan pantheon. Her original image remains as an actual part of her temple, although I doubt whether many of the local inhabitants know that it is there. The original image of Jenakai Mariyamman is behind her current image and is part of the sanctum wall. She is in a standing posture in this original image and has a fierce imposing look that is emphasised by her fangs\textsuperscript{18}. This image is concurrent with the origin myth of Jenakai Mariyamman given at the temple. It is an interesting variation on the Reṇukā myth and one that I had not encountered before.

According to this myth, Jenakai Mariyamman was originally Reṇukā Devī. She was the wife of the Saint, Jamadakini Munivar, said to be a form of Śiva. Each morning, due to her great powers, Reṇukā would bring water from the river in a pot made of sand. One day the god Indra flew overhead and she saw and admired his reflection in her pot of

\textsuperscript{17} “Devi” or “devi-like” is a term used extensively by Gatwood, L.E. (1985) Devi and the Spouse Goddess: Women Sexuality and Marriage in India, New Delhi: Manohar Publications, indicating the unrestrained or un-Sanskritised nature of a goddess, the opposite to those goddesses she terms “spouse goddess” -- Sanskritic and under male control.

\textsuperscript{18} Other Mariyamman images also have fangs, which appears to be a general feature of South Indian local goddesses.
water. At that moment, the pot broke and she was then unable to make another pot of sand. Her husband was angry with her and asked his sons in turn to behead their mother. Only Paraśurāma, the youngest, followed his father’s instructions and he chased his mother to a nearby wood and beheaded her. Paraśurāma then went back to his father who offered him a boon for his obedience. Paraśurāma asked for his mother’s life back, but when they went to restore her, they found her body but not her head. The only head that they could find was a very fierce one with fangs that they put on Reṇukā’s body.19

The interesting point in this rendition of the Reṇukā myth is that she ends up with another head, and particularly a fierce head. In other versions of this myth, Reṇukā has her own head attached to a different body, usually that of an untouchable, which ends up as the goddess Māriyamman: her own body with the changed head, usually untouchable, becomes a secondary goddess.20 However, in this case the association is reversed as Māriyamman consists of an impure head, that accepts animal sacrifices, on a

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19 This version of the Reṇukā myth was related to me by the temple clerk and watchman, who said that the goddess is called Māriyamman because she is a changed amman, mother, her head has been changed for that of another amman. The above myth may indicate that she has undergone a change but the spelling of the goddess’s name is mārī, meaning death or rain, and is not changed. In fact mārī is the term given for change in the Tamil Lexicon.


“go out as a changed body... Sprinkle and remove pearls [mutal; the reference is to smallpox, whose pustules are compared to pearls]. ... Since you have the head of a Brahmin and the stomach of a Chakkiliyan, you may receive both vegetarian and meat offerings.” So Renukai went about changing forms as Mutalamman, Mariyamman, Periyapalaiyattar, Sengeniyanman, Kaliyamman, Selliyamman, Dandumariyamman.”
pure body. The physical duality of this goddess and her lesser incarnations, e.g. Yellama, facilitate the dual, pure and impure, nature that is characteristic of many local goddesses.

The original image of Jenakai Māriyamman is a representation of the individual nature of this myth, i.e. a fierce head on a peaceful body. However, the goddess has now been completely changed by her devotees who were apparently frightened of her fearsome countenance, feeling that she may cause chickenpox and smallpox. It was the temple leaders who decided to install the new image, which is estimated to have been there for 200-300 years. In contrast to the old image, the new one is in a seated posture with a benign countenance. Her image in the temple is difficult to see, because of the separation between deity and devotee, but the temple has produced a pictorial image of her which clearly shows her benevolent features and the items that she holds in her four hands. In her left hands she holds a đamaru, "drum", with a serpent coiled round it and a pot of a red substance. This small pot, said to be of kumkum, "red paste", is perhaps one of the goddess's most ambiguous symbols as it may represent a pot of blood or a kapāla, the half skull carried by Tantric ascetics. In this respect, it may represent a remnant of the goddess's original habit of accepting blood offerings, which is now translated as the more innocuous red paste used in so many rituals. In her right hands, she holds a trident and a knife.

Originally at the Jenakai Māriyamman temple there were no Brahman priests and a considerable amount of animal sacrifice. Cocks and goats were regularly sacrificed, at times more than 100, my temple informant claimed. Hook swinging was also an
important ritual at Māriyammaṉ's annual festival as according to Elmore, Cholavandan was famous for this practice.22 These occurrences indicate the original nature of Jeṉakai Māriyammaṉ, of which only the fire-walking ritual remains. The current practice of sacrificing a melon with red kumkum smeared inside it, is a clear substitute for the original animal sacrifice. Now Brahman priests officiate at the temple, which was instituted, according to temple sources, by the Tamilnadu Government that, since only Brahmans are conversant with mantras, wanted qualified priests. Therefore, the Brahman priests have been officiating at this temple for the last 28 years.

One factor which distinguishes Jeṉakai Māriyammaṉ from other more orthodox brahmanised goddesses is her continued acceptance of scheduled castes at her temple. This may also be an important factor in her great popularity among all sections of Cholavandan. The connection between Māriyammaṉ and scheduled caste people can be seen in two myths -- one general, and the other specific -- of the discovery of this particular goddess, Jeṉakai Māriyammaṉ. The first myth is another version of the Renuka myth, but its focus is clearly to establish a connection between the goddess and disease and the goddess and the scheduled castes.

According to this myth, there was a Saint by the name of Jamadakini and his wife called Reṉukai. Jamadakini Munivar died because of his son. Reṉukai became satī [immolated herself on her husband's funeral pyre]. While Reṉukai was committing satī, Indra showered rain [upon the fire] and she was saved, but her body was burned. Because of the burning she had many blisters. She wore a margosa leaf dress because

her body needed covering. Some of the people from the lowest caste [scheduled castes, Harijans] noticed her and could tell that she was a Brahman. She was therefore unable to eat their food so they offered her some raw rice powder, (Tam. *paccarici*), jaggery (Tam. *vellam*), tender coconut water, tamarind and a sugar drink [made of jaggery and spices] (Tam. *pāṇakam*). At that time the lords from heaven, *devas*, appeared and said that if any problems, like blisters, come to the people, especially those who helped her [Renukai], they could use *margosa* leaves and the same foods that they had given her and these would cure them. All these ingredients should also be used for *abhisekam*, [ritual bathing] dedicated to her.²³

The myth concerning the discovery of the image of Jeṇakai Māriyamman also emphasises a close connection between this goddess and the scheduled castes as it was Harijans and *Vēḷāḷaṟ Pillais* that initially found her.²⁴ Furthermore, Harijans have retained their link with the temple as they are trustees of the temple and anyone can visit it.

6:3 Fierce goddesses are made benign

In Cholavandan, in particular, some of the goddesses have been changed by their devotees because they were considered too fierce and frightening. The methods


²⁴ For the origin myth see above, p. 157.
employed by the devotees are varied. Sometimes the change will be a permanent one but at some temples, the goddess is changed through decoration, which of course, is not permanent.

Pātāla Pēcciyamman who resides in the Aṅkāḷaśvarī temple is an interesting subject of control by devotees. In the north-western corner of the temple compound, there is a small concrete shrine with no image in it, only markings of kumkum and sandal or turmeric paste. There is no image of the goddess, only a small yellow-coloured stone canopy, which nevertheless receives regular pūjā. This shrine is said to represent Pēcciyamman who is now renamed Pātāla Pēcciyamman. Pātāla Pēcciyamman, as her name suggests, is the goddess Pēcciyamman who is immersed in the ground, she resides in the netherworld, pātāla. She was immersed underground by the people because she was considered very powerful but was using her power to cause trouble. She is said to have killed some children, therefore she was banished to pātāla where she now remains in a peaceful form. This is indicative that in certain cases the devotees do not find fierce goddesses acceptable and have sought to eradicate such characteristics — seemingly with the power to do so.

I was unable to discover why the people thought that Pēcciyamman would kill children. Therefore, I can only speculate that perhaps this particular Pēcciyamman, at one time displayed her associations with the pēy, demons, who may be responsible for the

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25 See Appendix 2, fig. 87.
26 This information was supplied by informant 57, the present pūjāri’s mother. However, when I later interviewed the pūjāri himself, informant 53, he denied the story but neglected to give an alternative reason for Pēcciyamman’s immersion. I am inclined to believe that there is some truth in the reasons for the goddess’s immersion, supplied by informant 57, so I have decided to include it in this study, but am making the reader aware of the controversy which surrounds it.
genealogy of this goddess. It is very difficult to discover the true or original character of the numerous forms of Pecciyamman prevalent in the Madurai area: Pecciyamman may well be prevalent elsewhere but I am only familiar with the district of Madurai. Some scholars endorse her association with demons by attributing the etymology of her name to an association with pey, "demons". According to the Tamil Lexicon, pecci is a corruption of peycci, meaning "demoness" or "a woman possessed by a demon". However, my numerous informants stated that her name originates from peccu, "speech".

Natar Patirkaliyamman has undergone a far less dramatic transformation than Patala Pecciyamman. Natar Patirkaliyamman is represented in a very unusual way as part trisula, "trident" and part anthropomorphic in her face, which is calm and smiling. She was originally represented only as a trisula, which is more in keeping with her fierce nature denoted by her name, patira, (Tam. fierce) - Kaliyamman, "fierce Kali". The explanation for her peaceful form was that, having fulfilled her original purpose, to save the Natar people from persecution and torture by the rulers of the time (whom they associated with the asuras, the demons) she can now be peaceful. The medium by which she has been made peaceful, it was claimed, was that of piijd. Nevertheless, in her more ferocious form, Natar Patirkaliyamman, parallel to her cosmic counterpart, cut off the heads of the rulers and made a garland with them. Her peaceful form retains this symbolism as she is decorated with a lemon garland, said to please her, and represents Kali's garland of skulls. Furthermore, Natar Patirkaliyamman also receives


28 See Appendix 2, fig. 116.
animal sacrifice so her iconography, character, and symbolism indicate the fundamental
duality within her nature, which her new image cannot fully erase.

The practice of periodically transforming the character of a goddess by decoration is
certainly a facet of South Indian goddess worship. The most enlightening example
that I came across was in a Pečciyamman temple in Madurai where I was lucky enough
to be allowed to take photographs which illustrate the transformation much better than
words could describe. Every Friday one of the pujāris beautifully decorates the
goddess with sandal paste, flowers, ornaments and new clothes, which takes him some
considerable time. However, there is a complete transformation from a fierce looking
goddess with fangs and a lolling tongue to a benevolent and smiling goddess. This
practice of decoration is not confined to Pečciyamman alone. I have merely used her as
an example because here the transformation is most startling.

6:3:1 A goddess as victim

During my research I have come across suggestions from some informants that there are
more sinister ways in which local goddesses have been manipulated. The evidence
appears to be confined to Khurdapur, where it was first brought to my attention. Mā
Kṣetrapālā is believed by some to have been a victim of those humans with accumulated
power having the ability to deliberately wound a deity or, perhaps more accurately, the
power of the deity. The informants in Khurdapur reported that a long time ago a/some
wise men who knew mantras came to Khurdapur, and with the power of their mantras
they damaged the goddess Mā Kṣetrapālā. It is generally believed that men who know

29 This form of decorating the deity with sandal paste seems to be much more prevalent in South India
where, generally, the paste and flowers are much cheaper and consequently more widely available.
30 See Appendix 2, figs. 134 and 135.
Mantras are able to do anything. They are considered to have the power to "put a dead soul into anybody", i.e. make them possessed by a harmful spirit, and in extreme cases they are also said to have the power to kill people. Just as the asuras, in Puranic myth, especially the Devi Mahâtmyam, earned boons from the gods with their severe austerities, these men are believed to call upon the power of a more powerful goddess.31 The example provided was Camuṇḍâ who is considered to inhabit the cremation ground and is therefore considered a dubious and frightening goddess. The "men who knew mantras" used their power to break Mâ Kṣetrapâlâ’s legs, so that she could not leave her shrine, and also made her blind, so that she could not see the wrong that was being done in the village. It is not known who these wise men were, but an attempt was made to heal the goddess, again with mantras. A wise person with a considerable power had to be brought from outside the village at a high price. He healed the goddess but afterwards people who did not want the goddess to disclose their sins came and damaged her again. Some of the inhabitants believe that she remains in this state today, with her power much reduced, unable to help anyone. One source described her as being "like a dead person inside".32

Mâ Kṣetrapâlâ is not the only goddess in Khurdapur who is believed to have been deliberately harmed by those who know mantras and therefore have special power. It is believed that Kanaka Durgâ and Aţiala have also had harmful mantras put on them and consequently they are unable to come out of their shrines.33

31 I was specifically told that the harmful men who knew mantras would not seek the help of a god.
32 Appendix 3, informant 03.
33 Appendix 3, informant 90 a pûjâri.
Although there was no evidence that the same thing had happened to any of the goddesses in Cholavandan, there is a widely held belief that some people have accumulated sufficient power to be able to control destructive spirits or demons. In order to make a financial gain they are able to inflict the spirits or demons that they control on unsuspecting people. These "spirit masters", for want of a better term, then offer to remove the spirit from the person, for a price.

Finally, all deities, it seems, are subject to their devotees in a less sinister way. Many myths provide examples of the alarm of the devas, "gods" when a mortal or an asura's, "demon's" austerities become so intense that their tapas, "inner heat" or "power", builds up to a level that threatens cosmic order. This is very often the way that the demons, the asuras, gain boons from the gods which then give them an advantage in a subsequent cosmic battle. On a mundane level, if the devotee properly performs worship, then the deity propitiated must respond. Much of the worship of goddesses in a local settlement is conducted as a two-way transaction in which the devotee -- if he or she carries out the worship stipulated by the goddess -- expects a favourable result from her. However, this bargaining does not only work for the benefit of the devotee, if he or she is helped by the goddess, then the goddess will expect the devotee's vow to be fulfilled, whatever it may be.

6:3:2 Does purity mean power?

One of the important characteristics of local goddesses is their more tangible impurity compared to the majority of pan-Indian goddesses, whose impurity is subtler. The pan-Indian goddesses, like those in a local setting, appear to fall into two types. However, among the pan-Indian goddesses the majority is essentially benign, conforming to the
brahmanical ideal, and consequently pure in nature. However, a minority, Kālī and Durgā for instance, have a complex nature that might best be described as essentially fierce since they accept animal sacrifice. Therefore, an important element of their character and nature is impurity, because they represent the duality inherent in life. The correspondence between local and pan-Indian goddesses is primarily between this essentially fierce group of goddesses and Kālī and Durgā in particular.

Before analysing to what extent there is a correlation between power and purity in the characterisation of the goddesses at the two field sites, I shall examine how pure the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan really are. In order to do this I shall consider their nature, their iconography and their ritual worship. I shall only make a cursory analysis of ritual worship here as Chapter 9 will deal specifically with this area. Having examined to what extent there is really a correlation between power and purity in the two areas, I shall then pose the question, are the most pure goddesses really the most powerful?

Goddesses are generally grouped into two basic types by many scholars, who usually designate the groups as Sanskritic or non-Sanskritic. In essence, the Sanskritic goddesses are the most pure, being more recognisably brahmanical in character, with Brahman priests, no animal sacrifice, no access for Harijans and, in some of the most sacred sites, no access for non-Hindus. Generally the pure, Sanskritised goddesses do

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not take part in any localised rituals such as possession, fire walking, or hook swinging. They often inhabit the larger temples where there is a distinct separation between deity and devotee, and photography of the deity is generally forbidden.

In both Khurdapur and Cholavandan the majority of goddesses would be considered marginally impure, either directly or by association. The majority of goddesses in both of the field sites would be categorised as non-Sanskritic, having no Brahman priest, localised rituals, and with many of them accepting animal sacrifices or, more recently, a vegetable substitute. Although scholars, such as Harper, have previously outlined a village pantheon, they have neglected to point out that the largest group of deities was non-Sanskritic, local deities.\(^{35}\) I consider this an important point from a religious perspective as it means that, in Khurdapur and Cholavandan at least, the religion is based around less pure or, as they are often described, lower forms of divinity.

In Khurdapur most of the goddesses encompass a certain degree of impurity. The goddesses Baghei, Dullādei, Mā Khanduālā, Mā Maṅgaḷā (Hāḍī - Jatesvar), and Mā Jagesvarī all receive animal sacrifices as part of their annual festival; they are therefore, unquestionably regarded as impure, śuddha. Although they do not accept animal sacrifices, nevertheless Kanaka Durgā and Aļjāla would also be considered as impure because they accept a meat meal at their annual festival. Mā Maṅgaḷā (Hāḍī - Jatesvar) could be considered doubly polluted as she not only accepts animal sacrifice but she is also a Harijan goddess belonging to the most polluted sweeper caste. The other two forms of Maṅgaḷā in Khurdapur, although they are vegetarian goddesses, are

\(^{35}\) I am aware that this pattern mirrors the hierarchical caste and class structure of India as a whole in which the lower classes are in the majority. However, in this particular study I am interested in the religious significance of these proportions rather than the sociological implications, the latter having been investigated by numerous scholars.
nevertheless impure by association as they, too, belong to different Harijan communities, the Bhois in Sarasvatipur and Bandanapur. Mā Maṅgaḷā (Bhoi-Sarasvatipur) is involved in the Pana Sankrāṇti festival at which, Dullādei, Mā Khanduāḷā, and Mā Jageśvarī receive animal sacrifices: therefore, Mā Maṅgaḷā must accept some associated pollution.

On a more subtle level Mā Kṣetrapāḷā and Bana Durgā, although they are vegetarian, would still be considered unorthodox as Mā Kṣetrapāḷā is given marijuana and Bana Durgā's close proximity to the children's playground and a public thoroughfare indicates that these goddesses are localised rather than Sanskritised. Even the goddess Santōṣī Mā's worship has adopted certain localised rituals: most significant is her regular possession of informant 00.

The situation is very similar in Cholavandan as the majority of goddesses accept animal sacrifice. All aspects of Kāli, except one (Ujjainī Kāliyamman) require annual blood offerings. However, Ujjainī Kāliyamman and two other goddesses, Aṅkāḷaiśvarī in West Street and Aṅkāḷaparamīśvarī near Agrahara Street, although they do not personally receive animal sacrifice, nevertheless tolerate it in their temples, commonly for the guardian deities who generally have less integral purity. However, to allow a blood sacrifice must mean that the deity retains a degree of impurity by association.

In certain cases in Cholavandan, the iconography of the goddesses suggests that the character of the goddess itself encompasses a certain degree of impurity. Jēṇakai Māriyamman, and Aṅkāḷaiśvarī have a very similar iconography, the significant aspect being the bowl which they both hold. It was explained as a pot of kumkum, "red paste".
but, more likely, it originally represented a skull, kapāla. Other forms of symbolism and iconography also indicate the underlying impurity of some of the goddesses. Pēcchiyamman in Iruḷaparicāmi (Siva) kōvil is depicted with a demon hanging out of her mouth, and in her left hand she carries a bowl of blood. The lemon garland worn by Nāṭār Patirakāliyamman represents a garland of skulls, and the garland of hibiscus flowers favoured by many goddesses also represents a garland of severed heads or a blood offering.

The picture that has emerged of the goddesses in both Khurdapur and Cholavandan is that the majority of them have a distinctly local or regional character, with none of the goddesses immediately recognisable as Sanskritised, pan-Indian deities. Some degree of impurity appears to be an integral part of their characterisation. Therefore, having established that the majority of goddesses at the two field sites would more readily be conceived of as less pure forms of divinity, I shall explore the idea that power, or at least some power, might come from the “lower” levels of divinity. Therefore, the question arises, do the “higher”, more pure goddesses, utilise the impure power of the non-Sanskritised goddesses for their own greater power? I pose this question because when classical sources are consulted, evidence can be found that Pārvatī and her incarnations make use of, in a religious context, more dubious and impure forms. It appears to me that Pārvatī and especially Satī are most powerful in their terrible forms -- e.g. as Kālī and the Mahāvidyās.

On first appearance, the goddess Satī falls most readily into the category of pure, benign goddesses. However, like Pārvatī, this is only one side of her inherently dualistic nature. She is the first wife of Śiva of whom Pārvatī is said to be an incarnation. Satī is
most widely known for her act of self-immolation at her father’s sacrifice. According to some Satī myths,36 she is anxious to go to her father’s sacrifice although she has not been invited. She tries unsuccessfully to persuade Śiva to give his permission for her to go. However, when her supplications fail Satī decides to remind Śiva of her great power. What is most significant is that Satī’s power is represented by her fierce aspect, initially as the goddess Kāli. Śiva tries to turn away from her but she produces other forms until he is surrounded by the Daśa Mahāvidyās, ten forms of transcendent knowledge.

Seeing the goddess with her lips trembling with anger and her eyes blazing like the conflagration at the end of an aeon, Śiva closed his eyes. Suddenly she displayed her terrible teeth in her fierce mouth and laughed. Observing this, Śiva became afraid and trembled with an averted face. With much difficulty he reopened his eyes and beheld a terrible form. Abandoning her golden clothes, Satī’s skin became discoloured. She was nude with dishevelled hair, a lolling tongue and four arms; her black body was covered with sweat. Decorated with a garland of skulls, she was exceedingly fierce and had a frightful roar. On her head was a crescent moon and a crown as luminous as the rising sun. In this terrific form blazing with her own effulgence, she roared and stood in all her glory before Śiva. Bewildered with fright, Śiva forsook her and trembling with an averted face, he fled in all directions as if deluded.37

Thus, within her meek and accommodating exterior, Satī as the personification of śakti energy, also contains the contrasting aspect of terrible cosmic force. Satī’s representation of her most powerful aspect is considerably less pure -- her body "covered with sweat", "wearing a garland of skulls"-- than her pure, benign form. There seems to be, therefore, a correspondence between power and impurity, rather than the reverse, power and purity. In the more complex aspect of the Daśa Mahāvidyās, Satī shows that although she most often chooses to present herself as the consort of Śiva, content to carry out his wishes, in reality she is the power underlying the entire cosmos, subject to the will of no one, and encompassing all duality.

36 The following aspect of Satī’s character is portrayed only in the myths in which the Daśa Mahāvidyās play a part, e.g. in the Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa and the Brhaddharma Purāṇa.
Two points can be inferred here, first that goddesses have an inherent dual personality, both pure and impure, and more or less powerful aspects, and second, it seems evident that in order for a goddess to be very powerful, a transformation must occur. It would appear that gods and goddesses must transform themselves in order to fully avail themselves of their potential power. A most apt example of this idea is the making of Durgā by the gods, the story told in the *Devī Mahātmyam*; a more potent force, but also less pure.

The Devī that emerges as the personification of powerful force in the *Devī Mahātmyam* is an interesting one. Her source is the united powers of a number of gods which, once combined, incarnates into a feminine form. This personified power constantly reveals its dual nature. As a powerful entity, capable of destroying personified evil in the form of the asuras, she must draw on her two opposites, wonderful and terrible. It is only when the pure power of the gods is transformed into a more dubious form that it is truly effective. In order for her power to work at its maximum, the Devī creates terrible, impure forms and personally indulges in impure behaviour e.g. she quaffs drink.

On a local level, there is evidence that a similar process operates for village or town goddesses. The most conclusive evidence is found in situations where either a goddess has undergone a transformation or where impure and pure elements are combined, for example at the West Car Street Aṅkālaīśvarī temple. The primary goddess Aṅkālaīśvarī has an essentially pure character. She does not personally accept animal sacrifice but she does allow it for the parivāra, the guardian deities. A temple which houses a number of deities functions on two levels, as a seat of *collective* power and also of *individualised* power where each deity is a power in his or her own right. Therefore, the

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38 Given above p. 152.
power that is accumulated by the sacrifice of animals in a temple is shared individually and collectively, even though some deities may not actively take part in, or acknowledge the sacrificial act. I suggest then that here is evidence of more pure goddesses, who are generally considered superior forms of divinity, whose power comes in part from the impure rituals of their less highly regarded guardians. This explanation does provide an answer, perhaps one of many, to explain why essentially pure goddesses sanction animal sacrifice in their temples.

I have not come across the same explanation adduced by other scholars, however, I did find an interesting parallel that I believe supports the theory that pure goddesses, at times, gain their power from their less pure counterparts. In Moffatt's study of a Harijan community in a South Indian village that he refers to as Endavur, he describes the events at the annual festival of Māriyamman belonging to the Harijan colony. Māriyamman has two forms, high and low, pure and less pure. The low form of Māriyamman resides in a well outside the colony and at the start of the festival is drawn out of the well. One particular ritual is important here as a white thread is tied from the well, around three karakams, "water pots", in which the goddess is now embodied, around a drum, and around some holy weapons that represent the goddess's power. According to the villagers, the thread is the means by which, "power (shakti) comes to the goddess, life (uyir) comes to the goddess." In this example, although Moffatt does not articulate it, there is the suggestion that the "higher", pure form of Māriyamman, is given power and life through her "lower", more impure form. Therefore, the more

39 Moffatt, An Untouchable Community in South India.
40 Ibid. p. 256.
41 This idea also corresponds with the point made in Chapter four that the three worlds are connected and that creative power also comes from pātāla, the netherworld which is symbolised by a well. See above section 4.2.
impure goddesses do have an important function within local religion: they appear to be
the means by which the pure goddesses can indirectly utilise the power generated
through their character and rituals. I suggest also that it is only when the pure and
impure components of the goddess's dual nature are brought together, that she has great
power. I therefore pose the question, who has the greater power in practice in a local
setting, the pure or less pure goddesses?

6:3:3 Which goddesses have the most tangible power in the village, the higher or
lower deities?

I have established that the goddesses in Khurdapur and Cholavandan offer examples of
a considerable range of powers. So far, I have examined the localised goddesses most
closely, however, some goddesses are purely pan-Indian goddesses whereas others have
attributes that mean that they straddle the divide between pan-Indian and local
goddesses. In Khurdapur for instance there are two goddesses in particular who could
be considered pan-Indian goddesses, Lakṣmi, who is clearly pan-Indian, and Santoṣī Mā
who is generally regarded to be the daughter of Gaṇeśa. Both are purely vegetarian
goddesses and Harijans are denied entry to their temples. At Santoṣī Mā's temple,
Harijans may attend her Friday worship but they are not allowed to enter the temple.
Therefore these goddesses could be considered the most pure goddesses in Khurdapur,
but are they also the most powerful?

The answer to this question separates the goddesses. It is surely Santoṣī Mā who is
considered the most powerful, a display of which is conducted each Friday, although
her method of conveying that power, through her possession of a local woman, is most
readily associated with the nature of local goddesses. Consequently, Santoṣī Mā's
power is visible and immediate and it is her show of power and its favourable results
which draws devotees to her. Therefore, I suggest that the main reason for her popularity is the local nature of her power. It is this, rather than her religious purity, that attracts a steadily growing following from many places in Orissa.

Conversely, Lakṣmī, who is true to her pan-Indian form and nature, appears as an impotent onlooker from her temple/shrine at the edge of the settlement. She does not draw devotees to her, as does Santōṣī Mā: Lakṣmī's power is more subtle, being emphasised only at her annual festival of Lakṣmī Pūjā. However, to a certain extent, Lakṣmī's power transfuses the settlement in the form of the numerous Tulasī shrines which seem characteristic of this particular settlement.

In Cholavandan, the evidence suggests a similar picture. The purest goddesses, from a brahmanical standpoint, are Jeṉakai Māriyamman, Piralaya Nāyakiyamman, and in Jeṉaka Perumal Temple (Viṣṇu) are the goddesses Āṇṭāḷ, Jeṉaka Valliyyamman, Śrī Devī and Bhū Devī. These are purely vegetarian goddesses served by Brahman priests and residing in large temples at or near the centre of the town. However, the goddess considered the most powerful is Jeṉakai Māriyamman who, among those goddesses mentioned above, is the least pure since she still displays important characteristics of her impure past. Although she is a vegetarian goddess, her moveable, festival image periodically accepts a vegetable sacrifice of a pumpkin smeared with kumkum, which is clearly a surrogate head offering, reinforcing the notion of her power over life and

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42 The Tulasī plant, sacred Basil, is considered to be an incarnation of Lakṣmī's hair when she left her terrestrial body of Tulasī the wife of Śankhachūḍa. "Your hairs will be turned into the sacred trees and as they will be born of you, you will be known by the name of Tulasī. ... Whatever pleasure Hari gets when thousands and thousands of jars filled with water are offered to him, the same pleasure He will get when one Tulasī leaf will be offered to Him." Devī Bhāgavatam IX. XXIV, 31 and 40.

43 Unfortunately, I was not allowed to take photographs of any of these goddesses because it was feared that I would somehow damage the goddesses' power.
The other striking feature of the worship of Jenakai Māriyamman is the yearly fire-walk in her honour. Most certainly this ritual is not associated with pure, pan-Indian goddesses, but is more readily a feature of local goddess worship. However, this ritual is instrumental in continually establishing the goddess's power.

The difference between the temple of Jenakai Māriyamman and the Jenaka Perumal temple, situated close by, is significant. The Jenaka Perumal temple is most often quiet with a trickle of devotees paying their respects to the deities within. On the other hand, Jenakai Māriyamman's temple is very often bustling with life as many people come and ask the goddess for help. It appears that Jenakai Māriyamman is perhaps more approachable, being more attuned to the needs of the town's inhabitants than the more lofty and remote goddesses at the Jenaka Perumal temple.

The goddess Piralaya Nāyakiyamman, considered to be a more direct representation of sakti, occupies a position somewhere in between the obvious popularity of Jenakai Māriyamman and the apparent reserved nature of the goddesses at the Jenaka Perumal temple. Piralaya Nāyakiyamman, as her name suggests, is associated with piralaya (Skt. pralaya), meaning “flood” or, metaphysically, the dissolution of the world at the end of each kalpa. She has a special purpose in periodically protecting the town's inhabitants from monsoon flooding. Therefore, in the past she may well have been

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45 This ritual is examined in detail below Chapter 9 section 9:2:2.

46 I interviewed a number of people around the town and invariably, when I asked who the most powerful deity was, they named Jenakai Māriyamman.

47 Cholavandan does seem to be susceptible to minor flooding but since the Vaigai Dam was constructed major flooding should not present a problem.
considered a powerful goddess, having plenty of chances to prove her power. She is
now paid due obeisance and is more readily appropriated for help with a successful
marriage.

It seems to be taken for granted that the most powerful deities are at the top of the
brahmanical apex, being most pure. However, I have already provided some evidence
that suggests that in some local settlements, this idea does not represent an accurate
analysis of the nature of the goddesses, or it simply does not portray the full picture.
The misconception that purity is an indication of the extent of the local goddesses'
power is not the only one. The nature and function of her anger and the extent to which
her character should be termed unpredictable is also an area for reappraisal. Therefore,
it would now seem prudent to examine the nature of the anger of the goddesses more
closely in Khurdapur and Cholavandan.
Chapter 7

Anger and Unpredictability in the Character of the Goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan
One of the most significant powers of the local goddesses is their dominance over
disease, especially smallpox. The numerous scholars who have written about local
goddesses in the past have inextricably linked them with disease. However, smallpox
has now been eradicated,\(^1\) so what has happened to those goddesses who were
considered the mistresses of smallpox? Not only were the village goddesses considered
responsible for the infliction of disease, but also they were generally considered
responsible for any disaster that happened to befall the settlement. In consequence, they
have been labelled "malevolent". The aim of this chapter is to analyse how close the
connection is between the goddesses and disease at the two field sites, and to assess
whether they deserve the description "malevolent". By examining the goddesses in
Khurdapur and Cholavandan, I shall also consider whether the goddesses' infliction of
disease and protection of the settlement should be termed "ambivalent".

Most of the studies that examined a variety of local goddesses were written many years
ago.\(^2\) Both Whitehead's and Elmore's works are still being used since the only other
comparable study, which examines the types, myths, and rituals of a wide range of local
goddesses, is unpublished and based on secondary sources rather than fieldwork.\(^3\) Each
of these sources is valuable in its own way, however, there is a need to examine whether
the suppositions and goddess characteristics proposed by these scholars are relevant to
the local goddesses currently being worshipped. Other, more recent, studies have

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\(^1\) According to Rao, A. Ramachandra (1972) *Smallpox*, Bombay: Kothari Book Depot, and cited by
Egnor, the last case of smallpox in India, according to the World Health Organisation, occurred in May

Cosmo.

\(^3\) Brubaker, R.L. (1978) "The Ambivalent Mistress: A Study of South Indian Village Goddesses and Their
have tended to concentrate on just one or very few goddesses, which does not give the breadth of information apparent in Elmore and Whitehead's, sadly outdated, studies.

In this research, by comparing the modern goddesses collectives in Khurdapur and Cholavandan to those already compiled, I shall analyse to what extent they comply with each other, discovering whether there have been any substantial changes in local goddess religion. Therefore, I shall commence this chapter by providing some accounts of the link between disease, especially smallpox, and female divinity in a variety of forms, before examining the relationship between disease and the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan.

7:1 Links between disease and female divinity

In Orissa, smallpox is considered the consequence of the anger of Thakurani, a generic term for a number of goddess forms, but also the term for smallpox. Therefore, in Orissa smallpox is inextricably linked to female divinity. One particular goddess who is said to control the disease is Mangala. The kalaśis who appear in order to interpret the goddess's wishes when the disease strikes a settlement, are generally attached to a Mangala temple. It would appear that there is also a link between the goddess Mangala and cholera as, according to Roy, the Yogunis or Yoginees -- followers of Mangala and

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4 I use the phrase "goddess collective" to indicate all the goddesses in one location, rather than the term "pantheon" which presupposes a structured hierarchy. Within the scope of this research, the supposition of a pantheon is not relevant, nor is it possible to research conclusively.


6 There is a dearth of written sources on the goddesses of Orissa, therefore it is difficult to present generalisations about Orissan goddesses.


8 Ibid., p. 204.
Kālī -- are considered responsible for the disease. Fischer makes the claim that "... local thākurānis who received human sacrifice not too long ago ... are evidently replaced for the most part by the Vaiśnava goddess Maṅgalā. Their ferocious aspect is embodied by Kālī and Durgā." However, in Khurdapur, the three forms of Mā Maṅgalā more closely resemble local goddesses, who continue to accept blood sacrifices or have close contact with them, rather than traditional Vaiśnava goddesses.

In South India, and Tamilnadu in particular, the major disease referred to is smallpox. There are numerous myths centred on Māriyamman in Tamilnadu that associate her with disease and particularly with smallpox. The etymology of the name Māriyamman suggests this link between this goddess and smallpox, for as well as meaning "water" or "rain", the Tamil Lexicon also defines māri as "death" and "small-pox". Therefore, Māriyamman, although considered the Goddess of Rain, was most widely known as the Goddess of Smallpox until its recent eradication. Chickenpox is now the most common illness presided over by this goddess.

In mythical accounts, alongside the Renukā myths already given, Māriyamman has been associated with the wife of a sage, Piruhu. When Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva came one day to test her virtue, she turned them into children. In their anger they made her beauty fade and her skin become pox marked, she then became known as the goddess of smallpox. Māriyamman, in another myth, is considered the wife of a poet, Tiruvallar. She was a Pariah woman who had contracted smallpox. She "went from house to

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9 Ibid. p. 205.
10 Fischer, "Oṣākoṭhi: Murals for the Invocation of Goddesses and Gods in Ganjam District, South Orissa", p. 527
11 Detailed above in Chapter 6, pp. 181-82.
house begging for food and fanning herself with *margosa* leaves to keep off the flies from her sores."\(^{13}\) When she was fully recovered, Māriyamman was worshipped as the goddess of smallpox and people hung *margosa* leaves over their doorway in an effort to ward off the disease.\(^ {14}\)

Another myth which provides an account of the origin of smallpox is interesting as it brings together the goddess and disease, but also provides evidence of the power which a devotee who performs austerities can wield over the great Hindu gods. According to this myth, Śiva created a goddess called Bhadra Kālī to kill the demon Dārūka.\(^ {15}\) A long battle took place between the demon and Kālī. During this time the demon’s wife, Manōdari, practised austerities in order to get a boon from Śiva to save her husband. Śiva was reluctant to give the boon, but in the end he had to relent because Manōdari’s *tapas* was so strong. Śiva gave Manōdari a few drops of sweat from his body,\(^ {16}\) saying: “Worry thyself not over thy husband; whenever thou art in need sprinkle a few drops of Our sweat on men, and they shall give thee the best of whatever they have.”\(^ {17}\) In the meantime, Kālī killed the demon and so Manōdari threw the sweat at Kālī. Kālī was then struck down with smallpox. In order to help her, Śiva created a goblin out of his ear, called Ghanṭākarna, whom he sent to lick off the spots from Kālī’s body. However, when Ghanṭākarna was about to lick her face Kālī said: “Let those rashes on my face remain there as a sort of ornament for me. You are my brother; it is not proper, therefore, that your face should come in contact with mine.”\(^ {18}\) When Kālī recovered,

\(^ {13}\) Whitehead, *The Village Gods of South India*, p. 115.

\(^ {14}\) Ibid., p. 116.

\(^ {15}\) This story is related in the South Indian version of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*.

\(^ {16}\) Sweat is an amalgamation of fire and water and generally has a creative quality. O’Flaherty, W.D. (1973 repr. 1981) *Śiva: The Erotic Ascetic*, London and New York: Oxford University Press, p.24. This creative quality gives rise to demons, (p. 31) sages, (pp.118-9) and goddesses (p.119) alike.


\(^ {18}\) Ibid.
Manōdari was brought before her, “her limbs and ears were cut off, and her eyes blinded, and she was asked to remain with the goddess as her vassal.” Manōdari was renamed Vasūrimāla or “Pox-garland”, and it is she who is blamed for epidemics as she carries out Kāli’s bidding. The only sense that Vasūrimāla possesses is smell, therefore strong smelling food should not be cooked near a smallpox house.

A number of important points need to be made in relation to the above myth. It is Śiva's boon to Manōdari, no matter how reluctantly it was given, that eventually results in the initial outbreak of smallpox. This emphasises the point that the gods and goddesses are the source of destruction as well as the source of the power to overcome evil. Śiva's boon was initially given to bring out the best in human beings, yet when used in anger by Manōdari it brought out the worst in Kāli. The reverse effect of the boon may be the result of two factors, either Manōdari’s feelings of anger and perhaps hatred towards Kāli, or possibly because it was designed to be used only on men. The story is completed with another transformation or reversal as Manōdari is changed, by her mutilation and the removal of four of her five senses, from a profane demon into a divine helpmate of Kāli.

Further correspondences between divinity -- especially female -- and disease can be found in the Tamil term anañku, a noun meaning variously, pain, affliction, suffering; disease; fear; lust; killing; deity; celestial damsel; demoness that takes away one's life by awakening lust or by other means; beautiful woman as resembling a celestial damsel; devil; dancing under religious excitement, esp. possession by Skanda; low caste person; beauty; form; young offspring. Thus, Hart III makes the claim that "Anything that

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19 Ibid.
causes pain or suffering or is threatening is said to have a god within it." The term *ananku* is used in ancient Tamil texts and poetry to indicate sacred power, thus in "Akanāṇītu 73, the friend describes the heroine as having "chastity full of afflicting sacred power [ananku uru kapu]". It appears that this particular term especially applies to the sacred power considered to be characteristic of women, although it is not exclusive to them. In terms of women, this sacred power is closely connected to their ability to procreate, as Hart III states:

> Any woman who had come of age and was sexually attractive was thought to be filled with ananku. This sacred power was thought to reside in her breasts and, to a lesser extent, in her loins. Thus, in Kur. 337, the hero exclaims, "The buds of her breasts have blossomed, and soft thick hair falls from her head. Her compact rows of white teeth are full [having completely replaced] her baby teeth, and [on her body] spots have appeared [a sign of puberty] ... I know her, so she afflicts [ananku, here used as a verb] me."

The idea that a woman’s power, which may be used to afflict, is most potent in her breasts is illustrated in the South Indian epic *The Cilappatikāram* or *The Tale of an Anklet*, in which the heroine Kannaki, burns down Madurai by throwing her breast at it.

> She wrenched off her left breast with her hand,  
> And grief-stricken went round the city of Maturai  
> Three times. And with a curse she hurled  
> Her fair breast on its pleasant street.

*Cilappatikāram* 21. 59-62

Kannaki’s action confirms the duality of divinity, as a formerly accommodating, chaste and benevolent wife uses her accumulated power for retributive destruction.

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23 Potentially destructive sacred power was considered to lurk everywhere; therefore, in one poem cited by Hart III, a pubescent girl is told, "Do not go anywhere with your friends who love to wander about. Our ancient town Mutapati has places where ananku assaults [tākkānanku]." Hart III, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil*, p. 93.  
7:1:1 Goddesses and disease in Khurdapur and Cholavandan

I shall now turn my attention to the goddesses within the two field sites, Khurdapur, and Cholavandan, examining their associations with disease. I shall examine the extent to which the goddesses' relationship with disease has become an integral part of their worship. As smallpox has now been eradicated, I pose the question, to what extent are the goddesses who preside over this disease now redundant?

Disease in Khurdapur

Maṅgalā is the goddess in Orissa who was originally associated with disease, especially smallpox. In Khurdapur, although some informants acknowledged her connection with smallpox, she is nevertheless far from redundant once one probes beneath the surface, for on close examination she is now considered to preside over other diseases. Now she is more often associated with chicken pox, dysentery, cholera, and miḷa-miḷa “measles”, especially in children. If the goddess is thought to be responsible for the infliction of a disease -- today less likely to be fatal -- it is considered a warning. The reason for the disease is said to be as an indicator that something is wrong in the household and must be put right. However, Maṅgalā is rarely considered to be the cause of these diseases, but more readily regarded as effecting their cure. Some settlement inhabitants believe that the patient must not have medicine or bad effects may befall them. Puja is carried out at the house with the patient segregated. A bath is taken in coconut water and then the coconut topped with flowers (very similar to the pot that represents the goddess) is taken to the edge of the village. During my visit to the settlement evidence of cures of
this type was visible, as the remains of offerings were left at the edge of the inhabited area, but not beyond the agricultural area.\textsuperscript{26}

The link between the goddess Maṅgaḷā and disease is not immediately obvious in Khurdapur, and now seems somewhat tenuous. The three forms of Maṅgaḷā who preside over the communities in Khurdapur may at times become angry, as I shall reveal shortly but, most commonly, their function is to heal patients suffering with disease, not to cause it.

The goddess, Mā Kṣetrapāḷā, although her primary function is as village protectress, is also believed, in at least one incident, to have shown her command over a disease -- leprosy. I was informed by her pūjāri, that a Harijan man from the nearby community cut some branches from the pīpal tree that forms the basis of the goddess's shrine.\textsuperscript{27} After he did this, he was stricken with leprosy. The leprosy was believed to be in retribution for his injury to part of the goddess's shrine.

The inhabitants of Khurdapur could not recall any epidemics having attacked the settlement and, consequently, they were unable to ascribe any likely cause. None of the other goddesses in Khurdapur is associated with disease in any discernible way. What appeared obvious at this particular field site was that other concerns figure more prominently: for example, there is a specific temple outside the settlement that is dedicated to a god whose prerogative is to find lost cattle.

\textsuperscript{26} See Appendix 1, figs. 5 and 6.
\textsuperscript{27} See Appendix 1, fig 44. It is only since 1992 that this shrine has been built for Mā Kṣetrapāḷā as originally her image was merely propped against the base of the pīpal tree.
**Disease in Cholavandan**

Māriyamman is the South Indian regional goddess of smallpox and in Cholavandan, Jenōkai Māriyamman, the Māriyamman of the village of Jenōkai, provides evidence to support this view. Originally, Jenōkai Māriyamman was certainly closely associated with smallpox and other diseases, as I was informed that a new, benign looking image was created because the old one was too frightening, with people afraid and believing that she caused chickenpox and smallpox. However, rather than becoming redundant, her emphasis has shifted from smallpox to other diseases, most commonly chickenpox, and more emphasis is now accorded to her role as the Goddess of Rain.28 Chickenpox seems to be the most prevalent disease in this particular location and Jenōkai Māriyamman is often approached for a cure. But it is also believed that she may cause chickenpox, fever or dysentery. The infliction of disease is considered an expression of the goddess's anger, which is provoked only if devotees do not keep the promises they have made to her.

In Cholavandan, Jenōkai Māriyamman is not the only goddess who is associated with disease. A few other goddesses are directly associated with it or their name may indicate an etymological connection. Mutaliyār Koṭṭai Kāliyamman is said to have protected her community from a cholera epidemic. There was a severe outbreak of cholera here and so Vallinayagam Pillai, a local inhabitant, made poṅkal and asked the goddess to save the people. A sakti karakam representing the goddess was taken and put in the top of a big tree, charvadi. After some time a woman went in a bullock cart to the tree where the goddess was residing. Mutaliyār Koṭṭai Kāliyamman informed the

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28 Māri means variously "rain", "death" and "smallpox".
lady that she must offer some blood from her leg. Having made this offering, she was able to bring the *sakti karakam* back with her. Immediately the cholera stopped. Mutaliyar Koṭṭai Kāliyamman has been worshipped ever since and there has never again been any cholera epidemics.\(^{29}\)

A more tenuous link with disease may be found in the goddesses Muttu Pēcciyamman and Muttu Iruḷiyamman at Āṅkāḷaiśvarī temple in West Car Street and the goddess Muttu Ćiṅka Iruḷiyamman at Iruḷaparicāmi Kōvil, who may also share some affinity with disease. The term *muttu* (\(\text{JP}^\text{GI}\)) means variously “pearl”, “tears”; and “pock of smallpox”, “pustule”.\(^{30}\) The temple informants did not admit any direct connection here as Muttu Pēcciyamman's name was said to refer to her pearls, adornments. However, no iconographic pearls were in evidence, but this goddess is somewhat fierce as she is shown in the act of decapitating a demon.\(^{31}\)

**The link between goddesses and disease in Khurdapur and Cholavandan**

In Khurdapur, the link between the goddesses and disease appears to be more hearsay than evident. The most likely connection is between the goddess Maṅgalā and disease, but detailed evidence was hard to collect.\(^{32}\) Unfortunately, the Maṅgalā temple at Kakatpur, which I visited for more information, is extensively Brahmanised and consequently is unlikely to link the goddess with disease or disclose any other possible tribal connections. There are very few written sources that concentrate on Orissan

\(^{29}\) Informant 37.

\(^{30}\) *Tamil Lexicon* Vol. VI., p.3255.

\(^{31}\) A number of other goddesses that I have come across in the Madurai area, whose name is prefixed by *muttu*, have been associated with disease and especially smallpox.

\(^{32}\) A comprehensive study is needed in Orissa examining the variety of forms of various goddesses across Orissa. However, this task was outside the scope of the present study.
goddesses, so it is difficult to make any generalisations. As there are fewer goddess in Khurdapur than in Cholavandan, there is less evidence that disease-linked goddesses form any significant part of the Khurdapur goddess collective.

In Cholavandan the range of goddesses is wider, and either because of this fact or because disease has had more of an impact, is more clearly defined. The goddess Māriyamman is clearly and overtly associated with disease in her myths and in the etymology of her name, māri meaning "rain" and "smallpox". Other terms such as muttu, "pearl" or "pock mark", which are attached to numerous Tamil goddesses' names, may be a further indication of the importance of disease and its connection to the goddesses in Tamilnadu. South Indian goddesses figure much more prominently in goddess research than Orissan goddesses, and therefore local information can be verified or substantiated from other studies.

7:2 A critical analysis of the angry goddess

The infliction of disease is not the only consequence of the local goddesses' anger. At both field sites there was a strong indication that on occasion many goddesses have the capacity for anger. However, this anger was not considered to be expressed without provocation. Therefore, I shall present different examples of the goddesses' anger that were related to me by various informants at Khurdapur and Cholavandan.

The angry goddess in Khurdapur

Those with a special relationship with a goddess may be fortunate enough to have an interaction with her in which she is able to make her wishes known. In these cases, it
would seem, the goddess rarely punishes or reacts violently. The pūjārī of Mā Maṅgālā (Bhoi- Sarasvatipur), described his relationship with the goddess. He claimed that many times Mā Maṅgālā has played with him in the form of a little girl. She pulls his hair and slaps him. Sometimes at night, she tells him to get up and get her some of her favourite flowers -- mandar “hibiscus”. She leads him to where there are some flowers growing and then vanishes. He feels that Mā Maṅgālā protects him in the village. If he has done something wrong, she bites him. He related a recent example when an unclean person, who had a death in the family that morning, touched him. He did not realise this but Mā Maṅgālā let him know so that he could purify himself again.

However, others are not so fortunate in their dealings with this goddess. It was related to me that on 2-11-97, one of my informants who had previously told me of his plans to carry out the fire walk one day, died. Apparently he was engaged in making a new throne for the goddess Mā Maṅgālā (Bhoi- Sarasvatipur). His sudden death was attributed to the fact that he broke up the old throne without first offering pūjā to the goddess (in other words he did not seek her permission before he broke the old throne). He went to his house after finishing work and in the night, he suddenly died. Some claim it may have been snakebite, but that really there was nothing to indicate the cause of death. It is a generally held belief in the village that the goddess was angry with him and therefore she caused his death.

This appears to be an isolated incident in which a goddess makes her anger apparent. Only one form of Mā Maṅgālā, as far as I know, has shown her anger so dramatically. The majority of the goddesses in Khurdapur are considered healers rather than the cause of misfortune and in most cases make their desire or displeasure known more subtly.
The description of Mā Jagesvari's interaction with her pūjārī is more typical of Khurdapur goddesses. He explained that she is mainly a peaceful goddess and has never inflicted anything on anyone. The pūjārī said that when he had made a mistake with his pūjā, Mā Jagesvari came to him in a dream and pointed out his mistake and asked him to correct it. He visualises her walking through the village at night carrying a torch with a powerful flame in order to protect the village. Informant 07 also claimed that he had experienced the benevolence of Mā Jagesvari as she healed his brother, who was almost forced to move away, when he had leprosy. It is this informant's belief that through pūjā and medicine his brother was cured and allowed to remain in the village. However, Mā Jagesvari may not have made her fierce side evident but she does receive a yearly blood sacrifice that indicates that she, too, has a dual or bipolar personality.

The angry goddess in Cholavandan

Uḷuntār Kāliyamman, like other goddesses in Cholavandan, is considered capable of showing her angry, fierce side — although again it is never shown unless the goddess is provoked. The informants claimed that Uḷuntār Kāliyamman would only become fierce if mistakes were made: then she will show her anger, maybe even causing death. If one person complains to her that they have been wronged by another, she will intervene. She is thus not inherently fierce as she is considered to help all those who come to her with a pure heart.

Vaṭakatti Kāliyamman's appearance is fierce, and in her eight arms, that denotes her great power, she holds an assortment of weapons. Although she is described as being generally peaceful she can, however, cause disaster if promises to her are not fulfilled. Initially, in such cases, she will come to the person in a dream -- anywhere in the world
it was claimed -- and instruct them on the correct behaviour. Secondly she will threaten them and, only finally, if she is still ignored, she will wreak vengeance.

I was told a story about a man who died in central Mutaliyār Koṭṭai Street and was taken to the cremation ground by the river. Celestial virgins representing Koṭṭai Kāliyamman happened to come to take a bath in the river while the cremation party was still there. Those at the cremation ground mocked them, so the virgins cursed the people saying that those already there, living in Mutaliyār Koṭṭai area, would not prosper, but those who come from outside would be successful. Finally, the virgins cursed those people living in the three streets, Central, North and South Mutaliyār Koṭṭai Streets, whom they decreed would be doomed.

Nāṭār Patirakāliyamman presents an interesting insight into the community feelings about the character of this goddess. It was reported that since Nāṭār Patirakāliyamman has done her work, i.e. saved the Nāṭār community, she can now be peaceful. However, if she does not receive her annual animal sacrifice it is believed that she will become angry and may cause deaths. Just this last year there was a move by some of the men to discontinue the animal sacrifice as they thought that it was no longer necessary. My principal informant’s33 opinion is that sacrifice is carried out for the benefit of those concerned, not for the goddess. However, the wives of the men were afraid that if the sacrifices were not carried out, there might be deaths due to the goddess’s anger. Therefore, this goddess is clearly considered to have an inherent dual nature: although she is generally peaceful and benevolent, she might be capable of acts of violence.

33 Professor of History at Madurai Kamaraj University and inhabitant of Cholavandan
The informant at Uccini Mākāliyamman temple described this goddess as fierce and very powerful, and in order to illustrate her point, she related the story of a man who had wronged the goddess. The informant claimed that the first sign that something was wrong was when his tongue stuck out and he became unconscious in front of the temple. The next day he died. What is of particular significance is the informant’s husband’s visualisation of this goddess. He claimed that some time after midnight he heard the sound of anklets tinkling. When he looked, three small girls -- wearing anklets -- entered the temple. They were very peaceful. He firmly believes that this was a vision of Uccini Mākāliyamman. Again, the dual personality of the goddess is evidenced in the local inhabitants’ perception of her.

Pātāla Pēcciyamman, as I have already noted, was thought by some people to have harmed children, and consequently steps were taken to render her harmless. This is the only enigma that I have come across, as I was unable to elicit her reasons for harming children.

From the examples presented from Khurdapur and Cholavandan it is possible to see an emerging pattern that indicates that the wrath of the goddesses is not arbitrary. In answer to the question, ‘Why does the local goddess become angry?’, a variety of reasons, seem apparent. The anger of the goddess, and her punitive nature appears to be made manifest in three important situations, disrespect, injury, or broken promises. Local religion seems to comprise of an established bond between the goddess and her devotees. An important part of this bond is the fulfilment of vows or promises made by any devotee in return for favours from the goddess. One of the most serious offences to the goddess is the non-fulfilment of a vow made. It is considered better not to make a
vow at all rather than to neglect to carry out a promise made. The goddess may remind
the devotee of his or her unfulfilled vow -- perhaps in a dream, as was reported at
Jenakai Māriyamman temple in Cholavandan -- but to ignore the goddess's warning is to
incite her wrath and expect her subsequent punishment. The goddess's due respect is
also important, even where seemingly unimportant goddesses are concerned. An act
that injures the goddess or her shrine is also sure to incite her wrath and will result in
the offender being punished.

What purpose does the goddess's anger serve the goddess and the villagers? The
periodically visible anger of the goddess has a twofold purpose. First, it provides
evidence of the power of a particular goddess and reminds local inhabitants that her
power has the potential for benevolence, or, if she is provoked, ferocity. Secondly, the
apparent anger and subsequent punishment by a goddess establishes a set of religious
rules that the locals can apply to their transactions with the goddesses in their locality.
Just as a parent must scold the child in order to teach it what behaviour is acceptable
and what is not to be tolerated, the goddess, through her anger and punishment,
establishes a set of ground rules for her local community.

In trying to understand the nature and importance of the goddess's anger I pose the
question, is there any religious significance of this anger or is it purely sociological? I
suggest that the religious significance of the goddess's anger is crucial in an
understanding of the goddess in a local setting and in her conceptual form, i.e. in textual
references to her. Kālī is the goddess most often presented as personified wrath, and the
goddess and her appearance indicates the most important aspect of anger, i.e. its power

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to transform. For example, consider the appearance of Kālī at the climax of the battle between Durgā and the asuras:

They saw the Devī, smiling gently, seated upon the lion on a huge golden peak of the great mountain.
On seeing her, some of them excited themselves and made an effort to capture her, and others approached her, with their bows bent and swords drawn.
Thereupon Ambikā became terribly angry with those foes, and in her anger her countenance then became dark as ink.
Out from the surface of her forehead, fierce with frown, issued suddenly Kālī of terrible countenance, armed with a sword and a noose.

Devi Mahātmyam 7.3-6

Kālī is a transformation and extension of the Devī's anger, which separates from her, becoming a goddess in her own right. This transformation, of which anger is the catalyst, not only produces an individual goddess considered to be personified anger, but also provides an injection of power substantial enough to defeat two formerly invincible demons.

Kālī appears in a number of textual sources as the result of a goddess's anger or as a container for the anger and subsequent power necessary to defeat an enemy. As I have already pointed out, in the Śākta Mahābhāgavata Upapurāṇa Kālī is shown to be the primary appearance of the anger of Sātī. However, as an aspect of Pārvatī, Kālī is the receptacle of wrath, being made partly by the poison in Śiva's neck, rather than being born of the wrath of Pārvatī:

At the behest of Pārvatī, the great goddess slew the demon Dārura who used to attack and kill the chiefs among Devas.
O leading brahmins, by virtue of impetuosity, and the fire of anger, the entire universe became agitated.
Bhava assumed the form of a boy due to his power of Maya and stationed himself in the cremation ground full of corpses and ghosts. Īśvara then cried in order to quaff the fire of her anger.
O brahmins, (sic) on seeing the boy, who was actually Īśāna the goddess was deluded by his Māyā. She took him and suckled him at her breasts.
Along with her breast-milk the boy quaffed up her wrath also and he became the protector of the holy centres.

_Līṅgapurāṇa_ II. 106. 19-23

In this example, Kālī has been transformed apart from, but under the direction of, Pārvatī. However here, rather than being Pārvatī's wrath, her specified task of killing a formerly invincible demon, appears to necessitate a build up of anger. This anger may be vital for the killing of Dāruka but, having completed her task, the anger is left unabated. Two points in this narrative are of particular interest here. Śiva in the form of a boy positions himself in the cremation ground which is perhaps where the most fundamental changes take place, for as a place of death it is where new life starts. What is also of interest is that he drains her anger through her breasts. I have already indicated the importance of the breast as the seat of sacred power, confirming that power and anger are inseparable.

At a local level, there is also evidence of the transformative power of anger, in Cholavandan in the origin myth of Pēcciyamman at Iruḷajaricāmi Kōvil. She was originally a beautiful, pregnant, mortal woman who was tied up by a king who intended to rape her. She became so angry that a transformation took place enabling her to take him into her mouth to kill him. At this point she became a goddess and is now iconographically represented with a demon hanging out of her mouth.

7:3 A critical analysis of the malevolent goddess

The conspicuously dualistic power that is embodied by goddesses such as Kālī, but more commonly by local goddesses, has led to the label “malevolent” being attached to this goddess type. I question whether this label is justified, asking first whether the

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should be considered malevolent and, second and more importantly, are the local goddesses considered malevolent by their devotees? The term "malevolent" seems rather strong, as it is indicative of a feeling of ill will or malicious intent — a deliberate desire to harm. Therefore, should this term really be applied to local goddesses?

Whitehead and Elmore, and more recently, Babb, Beck and Wadley, are the main proponents of the idea of the malevolence of local goddesses. Whitehead's often-quoted characterisation of local deities has done little to dispel their malevolent label and, quite possibly, encouraged its usage.

Babb continues Whitehead's reasoning and posits a relationship between femininity and malevolence, providing as an example, the *solah somvär vrat kathā*, or the myth of sixteen Mondays' fast. In this myth, Pārvatī is said to inflict a priest with leprosy simply because he predicted that she would lose her dice game to Śiva. However, because the priest fasts for sixteen Mondays, Śiva overrides Pārvatī's curse and cures him. This particular incident seems out of character for Pārvatī, who is usually portrayed as intervening on a devotee's behalf, or using her world-saving power to overcome troublesome demons. However, the intention behind this particular myth is to illustrate the beneficence and power of Śiva, seemingly at the expense of Pārvatī's

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39 See Whitehead's quotation above, p. 147.

reputation. Nevertheless, this myth does depict Pārvatī’s fundamentally dual nature that encompasses both positive and negative power, but reduces its significance to the level of pettiness.

Beck’s research divides the goddesses in a local situation into three groups, but mainly describes her third group, demonesses (Tam. pēy), as being malevolent. However, she also says that the second group, which corresponds to Harper’s Kannada term dēvate,41 and is applied to non-Sanskritic, local goddesses, are "not totally malevolent",42 implying, of course that they are considered malevolent to a large degree.

According to the research carried out by Wadley in North India "the goddesses in the category devī are also potentially malevolent."43 This category appears to comprise of independent, non-Sanskritic goddesses of whom, Wadley asserts, "when male authority (usually a consort) is absent, the malevolent use of female power is almost assured."44 The goddesses of class five45 of which, Wadley says, Śītālā, a northern smallpox goddess, is an example, are "almost totally malevolent and act positively only to remedy their own actions."46 Hence, according to Wadley's research there is a clear connection between disease goddesses and malevolence.

The local goddesses are described as malevolent mainly because of their association with disease and their retributive anger. However, as I have already pointed out, their

42 Beck, “The Vacillating Goddess”, p.3.
44 Ibid.
45 Previsouly formulated pantheons of local goddesses from various parts of India will be examined and a comparison made with the collective goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan, in the final chapter of this section, below Chapter 8.
anger is often the vehicle through which greater power can be achieved and through which religious transformation can take place. The relationship of goddesses to disease is now by no means clear: through the research of various scholars, Nicholas in particular, the ambiguous nature of the goddesses' link with disease has been exposed. In any case, the disease is not necessarily considered to be a punishment of the goddess but, according to Kolenda and Nicholas, it is a means of making herself manifest. Thus Kolenda states:

Mother Pox is the illness itself. The victim is possessed by the deity and treated like her image. The sickroom becomes the temple of Mother Pox who manifests herself in the rash and pustules on the victim. The latter are called 'pearls' and are viewed as the mother's teeth.

In this respect, the disease is considered the goddess's “grace” rather than her punishment.

More recently, Erndl, in her study of goddesses in north-east India, has found evidence that contradicts Babb's labelling of independent goddesses as malevolent. Erndl states:

What Babb perceives as malevolence could simply be called realism. Devī is closely connected with the realities and ambiguities of life. She is prakṛti (matter), sakti (divine power), māyā (creative illusion), and samsāra (the worldly cycle) - which encompasses purity and impurity, auspiciousness and inauspiciousness, creation and destruction, life and death.

In my own research I have found that in Khurdapur and Cholavandan the relationship between the goddesses and disease is ambiguous and, furthermore, that there is little

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50 Ibid., p. 158.
evidence that the local goddesses at these two locations are considered by the local inhabitants to be malevolent. There may be evidence to suggest that the dual nature of local goddesses is, on occasion, overt, and locals are certainly afraid, at times, of the power potential of some goddesses. However, they do not consider their goddesses to “tyrannise” over them as suggested by Whitehead. Many goddesses are independent but benevolent, contrary to Wadley’s claim. Even the goddess Jenakai Māriyamma in Cholavandan who is, undoubtedly, closely related to disease, is not considered malevolent, as the mood and frequency of her devotion would indicate. Of this particular goddess, Jenakai Māriyamma, although some informants expressed a fear that she might cause disease, they denied that anyone had ever died from a disease inflicted by her.

7:4 Ambivalence and unpredictability — traits of local goddesses?

Along with the label “malevolent”, the local goddesses have most often been termed “ambivalent” as a method of describing their propensity for benign and helpful characteristics juxtaposed with a fierce and potentially threatening nature. However, I consider the term “ambivalent” to be somewhat misleading.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* links the term “ambivalence” with psychoanalysis and in particular mentions Bleuler. Bleuler was one of the first to be involved in the field of psychoanalysis and was noted for his conception of the mental disorder, schizophrenia, which is associated with a “split personality”, although the over-riding symptom is
confusion. In modern psychoanalysis, “ambivalence” seems to denote inner conflict between pairs of opposites.\textsuperscript{51}

In order to enhance further an understanding of the term “ambivalence”, the University Thesaurus and Roget’s Thesaurus\textsuperscript{52} reveal a number of synonyms :-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>irresolution</th>
<th>opposition</th>
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<tr>
<td>indecision</td>
<td>conflict</td>
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<tr>
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<td>inequality</td>
<td>incompatibility</td>
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</table>

The Thesaurus meanings indicate that ambivalence is irresolution between two opposing feelings or characteristics. The person is uncertain in which direction his or her feelings lie, hence “irresolution”, “indecision” and “uncertainty” as synonyms. It would appear that it is not just a pair of opposites working against one another with a set pattern, but there seems to be in the main an element of unpredictability or indecisiveness encompassed within this term because ambivalence can suggest anything between a pair of dual opposites.


Among these Thesaurus meanings, "ambiguity" and "dualism" seem to have opposite meanings. "Ambiguity" suggests the nuance of being open to a number of interpretations, doubtful, or uncertain. Surely "duality", on the other hand, is very certain, indicating a balance between two, more exact, opposites or a pair? Certainly as far as Hinduism is concerned a "duality" is a balanced pair of opposites.

"Ambivalence" seems to be inextricably linked to the goddess's, supposedly, unpredictable character. Hence Wadley, when differentiating between male and female deities states, "female deities are more ambivalent — less predictable — than male deities." The labelling of the goddess as ambivalent revolves primarily around her wrath which Brubaker claims is "deeply ambivalent", "an explosive primordial force" which exhibits an element of "unruly impetuosity". In other instances, when he talks of the goddess's anger, Brubaker makes it clear that his definition of "ambivalence" does incorporate considerable uncertainty as he states:

the most obvious ambivalence of the goddess: her retributive wrath may consume either villagers or demons, with villagers thus either its victims or its beneficiaries. In addition, as we also noted, this retributive wrath can be experienced as striking out with unpredictable ferocity, a quality “accounted for” in the myths by the goddess’s history of being personally victimized.

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54 All three quotations are from Brubaker, "The Ambivalent Mistress", p. 289.
55 Ibid., p. 147-8

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Therefore, the key issue would appear to be, should local goddesses, whose dual personality is evident, be considered unpredictable, or is there some underlying pattern to their anger?

I can only rely on the evidence that I have collected from the two field sites, Khurdapur and Cholavandan. In these two locations there does not appear to be any residual fear that the local goddess may suddenly, and unpredictably, strike out and maliciously inflict an epidemic disease. Perhaps this is because either there have been no serious epidemics at the two sites or because the people here do not consider them to be the curse of their goddesses.

The evidence that I have collected from both Khurdapur and Cholavandan indicates that although various goddesses may become angry, their anger is precipitated by some action or inaction by the devotee and therefore cannot be considered unpredictable. Surely, wrath is a very decisive emotion, there is no uncertainty of emotion here? It is one aspect of a duality. For the period that the goddess is angry, her character is made very clear. This is not to say, however, that the goddess is always angry. Her anger, no matter how initially perplexing it may appear to the villagers, is only one extreme of the dual character of the village goddess, but is not considered to be capricious or inconsistent.

The goddess acts decisively in one mode or the other, depending on her purpose; the villagers may be uncertain how the goddess will react, but this does not mean that the goddess herself is ambivalent. I suggest that it is the people who may have an ambivalent attitude towards the goddesses. They say the goddess does not inflict evil,
yet at times they are afraid of her. What they are really afraid of is the view of reality so clearly portrayed by many of the local goddesses. The goddess's potential power frightens them. If goddesses have the power to create, heal, and replenish, then they must also have the power to destroy or inflict. Therefore, I suggest that the use of the word "ambivalent" in relation to the local goddesses is unsuitable, as its meanings can be too uncertain and varied. I suggest that better, though still inadequate, terms might be 'bipolar', 'dual' or 'multipolar', depending on whether one is discussing two opposite poles or multiple centres of power or influence.

In order to analyse comprehensively the character of the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan in relation to other research it is appropriate now to examine the assumptions made by influential scholars more closely and to assess the appropriateness of their findings to the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan.
Chapter 8

A Critical Analysis of the Local Goddess Models Proposed in Previous Research
Over a number of years, various studies have categorised the deities and, more especially the goddesses, in different local settings. In the final chapter of this section, I propose to outline the findings already presented by other scholars, and analyse how applicable these findings are to the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan. Although categories of goddess types are presented by previous studies, there are no examples of specific local goddesses provided. Therefore, in this study I intend to contrast the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan with previous goddess models and to provide specific examples where applicable. My original intention was to try to outline a pantheon of the goddesses in question, detailing the individual goddesses in the two field sites. However, on closer examination I see that this task would not provide a comprehensive delineation of the character of many of the local goddesses as many have complex natures that cannot be easily categorised.

8:1 Previous models examined

I shall first examine the numerous categories or characteristics used by the scholars, Harper in 1959, Beck in 1969, Babb in 1970 and 1975, Ramanujan in 1986, and the latest model presented by Erndl in 1993. Wadley also produced a model comprising

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1 See table 6 overleaf, which provides a list of all the categories used by various scholars. This table also indicates the categories used by each individual scholar.
6. Previous Authors’ Classifications of Local Goddess Traits

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>BABB</th>
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</table>

* Indicates the categories that I have used for my classification, which represent the most popular characteristics used by the above scholars.
six categories of powerful beings. However, her research is primarily based on one aspect of the deities in Karimpur — the nuances of their power. Wadley does not define a model based on general characteristics, as the other scholars do, therefore I have not included her prototype based on power, but will refer to her research where it is applicable. Having outlined each of the models by the above mentioned scholars, I shall then make a comparison with the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan, assessing to what extent these goddesses correspond to the previous models, and suggesting a new approach to the categorisation of local goddesses.

Harper's research (1959) has provided the most influential categorisation of local goddesses. In considering the supernatural beings in the village of Totagadde in southern Karnataka, Harper has proposed a three-way categorisation which he considered to be based on the general class distinctions, Brahman/Lingayat, Śūdras, and Untouchables. The three groups he designated by the Kannada terms, Devaru, Devate, and Devva. In very general terms, Devaru refers to Sanskritic deities who are benign in nature, housed in a shrine or temple, only accepting a vegetarian diet and of most intrinsic worth. Devate, Harper describes as local deities with the capacity to harm or protect. They have less purity than Devaru as they may accept animal sacrifices. The third category Harper calls Devva, spirits, they are not iconographically represented and do not have any permanent resting place. They cause harm because they are angry and consequently have no intrinsic worth.

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Beck, in her unpublished paper, "The Vacillating Goddess: Sexual Control and Social Rank in the Indian Pantheon", bases her categorisation on Harper’s three way division. Beck, like Harper, sees a clear three-way division that separates the pure, benevolent deities, or goddesses, from the impure, non-vegetarian, localised deities and the third group which in Tamil she calls pëy or demons.

Although it, too, was based on Harper’s divisions, Babb’s influential research, carried out in a north Indian village, added new categories for comparison in his essentially

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**Harper’s Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dévaru</th>
<th>Dëvate</th>
<th>Devva</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sanskrit deity</td>
<td>Local deity</td>
<td>Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All good</td>
<td>Good / Bad</td>
<td>All Bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iconographic representation</td>
<td>Respectable; Pure</td>
<td>No representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housed in dëvastāna or dëvaru mane, shrine in a private house</td>
<td>Less natural purity</td>
<td>Permanently Impure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More intrinsic worth than Dëvates</td>
<td>Less intrinsic worth than Dëvarus</td>
<td>No Worth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetarian devotees</td>
<td>May accept blood sacrifices</td>
<td>No devotees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not cause disaster</td>
<td>Some protect but can also cause harm</td>
<td>Cause harm because they are constantly angry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant favours and punya, religious merit</td>
<td></td>
<td>Contact with them is avoided</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

10 Compiled from information taken from Harper, “A Hindu Village Pantheon”.

11 Beck’s table 8 overleaf.

12 Beck provides the Tamil equivalent of Harper’s Kannada terms as perundevam, siru devam, and pëy. Beck, “The Vacillating Goddess: Sexual Control and Social Rank in the Indian Pantheon”, p. 9 fn. 4. Terms in the Tamil Lexicon include peru-n-tēvai = supreme deity; tēva-tēvai = supreme being; tēvatai and tēvai = dēvatai or deity, god; evil spirit, this being a particularly ambiguous term.
8. Beck's Table

The information in the following table is a theoretical construction based on Harper's, caste related village pantheon.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste Relation</th>
<th>Brahman</th>
<th>Non-Brahman</th>
<th>Outcaste</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Non-Vegetarian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benevolent</td>
<td>Ambivalent</td>
<td>Malevolent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Universal</td>
<td>Localised</td>
<td>No Shrines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beyond Control</td>
<td>Open to Persuasion</td>
<td>Controllable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harper's Kannada Equivalent</td>
<td>Dèvaru</td>
<td>Dèvate</td>
<td>Devva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Equivalent</td>
<td>Perundevam</td>
<td>Siru devam</td>
<td>Pèy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The table is the compilation of Beck's categorisation taken from Beck, "The Vacillating Goddess: Sexual Control and Social Rank in the Indian Pantheon".
2 Harper, "A Hindu Village Pantheon".
two-way comparison between Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic goddesses and the
differences between male and female deities.

9 Babb's Key Differences Between Gods and Goddesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female, Goddess, Devī</th>
<th>Malevolent</th>
<th>Potentially Destructive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male, God, Devtā</td>
<td>Benevolent</td>
<td>Restraining Factor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In particular, Babb claimed that the marital status of a deity, especially the goddesses,
was a strong indication of personality, for example Sanskritic goddesses were invariably
married, whereas independent goddesses are termed non-Sanskritic.

10 Babb’s Differences Between Sanskritic and Non-Sanskritic Goddesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanskritic Goddesses</th>
<th>Non-Sanskritic Goddesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Unmarried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tame</td>
<td>Wild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subservient</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahman Priesthood</td>
<td>Non-Brahman Priesthood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Bloodthirsty, Meat Sacrifices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Possession</td>
<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Association with Disease</td>
<td>Association with Disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scriptural Sanctions</td>
<td>No Scriptural Sanctions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Babb further differentiated between the two groups by categorising the Sanskritic
goddesses as subservient, vegetarian, not associated with disease, not possessing
anyone, and administered to by a Brahman priest using scriptural sanctions.
Conversely, the non-Sanskritised goddesses, Babb claims, are wild, independent,

---

13 Table compiled from Babb, "Marriage and Malevolence: The Uses of Sexual Opposition in A Hindu
14 Ibid.

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bloodthirsty and requiring meat sacrifices, are associated with disease, possess people, and have no Brahman priest and no scriptural sanctions to control their worship. The overriding feeling about this goddess model is that it is too polarised. Babb was writing more than twenty years ago when far less research had been undertaken. However, he has influenced many scholars since but, I feel, his goddess categorisation does not take account of the richness and variation, particularly in the character of local, so-called non-Sanskritic goddesses. Many goddesses, as my research shows, straddle Babb's two groups, being both independent and benign, or married but accepting animal sacrifices.

Wadley, although she does not categorise the goddesses in her field-study area in the same way as the previously mentioned scholars, does however follow Babb's conceptions of goddesses as she makes clear in the following statement.

As Babb (1970) and Beck (1969) have shown, there is an ever present awareness that female power may become uncontrolled. And when male authority (usually a consort) is absent, the malevolent use of female power is almost assured.15

Ten years after Babb's research, Ramanujan also followed Babb's lead, providing a two-way categorisation of goddesses which he terms "Breast Mother" or "Consort Goddess", and "Tooth Mother" or "Virgin Goddess", after Jung's definitions.

11 Ramanujan’s Table\(^{16}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breast Mothers</th>
<th>Tooth Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Consort Goddesses)</td>
<td>(Virgin Goddesses, Amman)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Basically independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subordinate to male.</td>
<td>If married insubordinate or fatal to consort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related to auspicious, life-cycle rituals weddings, births, pregnancies, and good fortune.</td>
<td>Crisis-deities, invoked when life-cycles are disrupted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seen as inflicting as well as removing epidemics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Deities; temples within the village</td>
<td>Temples often outside village boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthropomorphic images</td>
<td>Iconic images, often faceless images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not born of the earth</td>
<td>Of the earth, earthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pure, chaste</td>
<td>Lustful, angry, coquettish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With claims to universality</td>
<td>Associated only with her own village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolent unless offended</td>
<td>Ambivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May intercede (to husband) on behalf of devotee</td>
<td>Dread is an intimate part of the devotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Possession is part of the ritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Blood sacrifices (or substitutes) demanded, offered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahman or Brahmanized priests</td>
<td>Mostly non-Brahman, often untouchable officiants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main difference between this table and Babb's is that Ramanujan's equivalent of Babb's Sanskritic goddess, the "Breast Mothers", he describes as "benevolent unless offended". This important characteristic is absent in the other Sanskritic goddess models. Ramanujan adds further distinctions to the categories already introduced by the previous scholars. He considers in addition whether the goddesses are involved in life-cycle or crisis rites, what is the position of the temple, either in or outside the village, and whether a goddess is of the earth or not of the earth. Ramanujan has added both to a more detailed picture of goddesses in general and has indicated the complexity of the

\(^{16}\) Ramanujan, "Two Realms of Kannada Folklore", p. 58 Table 1.1
Erndl has based her table on the one offered by Ramanujan in order to compare the goddesses in NorthWest India to those of Kannada area which is where Ramanujan carried out his research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSORT (Breast Mother)</th>
<th>VIRGIN (Tooth Mother)</th>
<th>ŚRĀVĪNĪ</th>
<th>VAIŚṆO</th>
<th>KĀLĪ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolent</td>
<td>Malevolent</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life-cycle</td>
<td>Crisis rites</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Village</td>
<td>Out village</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not of Earth</td>
<td>Of earth</td>
<td>Of earth</td>
<td>Of earth</td>
<td>Of earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pure</td>
<td>Impure</td>
<td>Pure</td>
<td>Pure</td>
<td>Impure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaste</td>
<td>Lustful</td>
<td>Chaste</td>
<td>Chaste</td>
<td>Chaste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>Non-Brahmin</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Possession</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Taken from: Erndl, *Victory to the Mother: The Hindu Goddesses of Northwest India in Myth, Ritual, and Symbol*, p. 156
local goddesses' nature. However, he too, presents a model that does not sufficiently take account of the variation and nuances of these goddesses' nature.

Kathleen Erndl has undertaken the most recent study of Hindu goddesses, examining in particular some goddesses prevalent in north-west India. Her research which, interestingly, is based on religion rather than being an anthropological study, is one of the first to question the classification of goddesses propounded by the previous scholars. She makes a comparison of the goddesses Śerāṅvālī, Vaiṣṇo and Kālī, principally drawing on the model offered by Ramanujan. Erndl also questions Babb’s categorisation of benevolent gods and malevolent goddesses, concluding that his findings do not relate to the goddesses that she has researched. Where Erndl only makes a comparison between three goddesses, Śerāṅvālī, Vaiṣṇo and Kālī in a particular location, my comparison of all the goddesses in two locations in India provides a more widespread indication of the relevance of the above studies to particular goddesses, strengthening Erndl's initial findings.

8:2 A new approach to the categorisation of local goddesses

Hitherto, I have provided a brief summary of the previous models of local goddesses defined by several scholars. However, now I shall present a new approach to the categorisation of local goddesses, principally those in Khurdapur and Cholavandan. As a point of reference, I have based my comparison on the classifications that I felt were central to the goddesses' character but have also been used by the greatest number of the above scholars. I have identified the relevant categories as:

For Erndl's findings see table 12 on the previous page.
See below tables 13 and 14 for my findings, pp. 241-244.
**TYPE** - an indication of the status of particular goddesses which is broken down into three types, (1) universal, indicating that the goddess is known across India, (2) regional, indicating that the goddess is popular throughout a region, as is Māriyamman who is popular across South India, and (3) local which indicates that a goddess is popular only in the settlement or the surrounding area.

**CHARACTER** - denotes whether a goddess is considered (1) fierce, (2) benign or (3) a combination of both.

**FORM** - is a description of the goddesses' iconographical representation in which I have used four terms: (1) sculpted, (2) aniconic, (un-sculpted) (3) semi-sculpted and (4) none.

**DIET** - indicates whether the goddess is (1) vegetarian, (2) accepts blood sacrifices, or (3) eats meat, if she is non-vegetarian but does not accept a blood sacrifice.

**MARITAL STATUS** - identifies whether a goddess is considered (1) married or is (2) independent of male control.

**PRIEST** - indicates which goddesses are attended by a Brahman priest, which is one of the conditions required for Sanskritised goddesses.

**POSSESSION** - identifies which goddesses are considered to possess people.

I have marked in red, on my table, those goddesses -- in both Khurdapur and Cholavandan -- that correspond fully to the classification "Sanskritised", according to Harper and Babb's categorisation, since they in particular, use the term Sanskritised.19

According to my tables, among the thirteen goddesses in Khurdapur there is only one, Lakṣmī, who fully meets the criteria of a Sanskritised goddess, and even she does not

19 Other scholars provide fundamentally the same categories but may not refer to them as "Sanskritised" and "non-Sanskritised".
Table 13. Categorisation of Goddesses in Khurdapur

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goddess</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Representation</th>
<th>Diet</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Priest</th>
<th>Possession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mā Maṅgalā (<em>Bhoi-Sarasvatipur</em>)</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā Maṅgalā (<em>Hādi</em>)</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā Maṅgalā (<em>Bhoi-Bandanapur</em>)</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bagheī</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Semi- Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā Khanduāla</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā Kṣetrapāla</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Eats Meat</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santosī Mā</td>
<td>Universal</td>
<td>Benign</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dullādeī</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Semi- Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bana Durgā</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Benign</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā Jageśvarī</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanaka Durgā</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Semi- Sculpted</td>
<td>Eats Meat</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aljiala</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Benign</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Eats Meat</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakṣmī</td>
<td>Universal</td>
<td>Benign</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The red font indicates goddesses that would be termed Sanskritic, or *Dēvaru* according to Harper and Babb’s categorisation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GODDESS</th>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>CHARACTER</th>
<th>FORM</th>
<th>DIET</th>
<th>MARITAL STATUS</th>
<th>PRIEST</th>
<th>POSSESSION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jenakai</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariyamman</td>
<td>Universal</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Vegetable</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pralaya</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niyakiamman</td>
<td>Universal</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Vegetable</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durkai</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaliyamman</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Vegetable</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahâ Laksmi</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vatakatti</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Semi-sculpted</td>
<td>Vegetable</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaliyamman</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Vegetable</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natâr</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patnakâliyamman</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Vegetable</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patnakâliyamman</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Vegetable</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutu Pecchayamman</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Vegetable</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rakkâliyamman</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vrâliyamman</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Vegetable</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiâkkâliyamman</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Vegetable</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutu Trhalâyamman</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Vegetable</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ammaââciyamman</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Vegetable</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canala</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Vegetable</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariyamman</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Vegetable</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
- **TYPE** indicates whether the god/goddess is regional, universal, or both.
- **CHARACTER** indicates if the god/goddess is both male and female, male, or female.
- **FORM** indicates if the god/goddess is sculpted, aniconic, or semi-sculpted.
- **DIET** indicates if the god/goddess is vegetarian, sacrifices, or both.
- **MARITAL STATUS** indicates if the god/goddess is independent, married, or both.
- **PRIEST** indicates if the god/goddess is a Brahman or non-Brahman.
- **POSSESSION** indicates if the god/goddess possesses any property or not.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GODDESS</th>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>CHARACTER</th>
<th>FORM</th>
<th>DIET</th>
<th>MARITAL STATUS</th>
<th>PRIEST</th>
<th>POSSESSION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Goddess</em></td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Both</td>
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<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
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<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
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<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kāliyamman</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Both</td>
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<td>Possession</td>
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<td>Independent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bhū Devi</td>
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<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
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<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
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<td>(Paccaiyamman)</td>
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<td>Possession</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Mākāliyamman</td>
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<td>Vegetarian</td>
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<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
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<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Independent</td>
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<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
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<td>Vegetarian</td>
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<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
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<td>Brahman</td>
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<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
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<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
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<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
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<td>Nakamal</td>
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<td>Both</td>
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<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
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<td>Married</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
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<td>Married</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
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<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
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<td>Kāliyamman</td>
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<td>Both</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
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<td>Married</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
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<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
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<td>GODDESS</td>
<td>TYPE</td>
<td>CHARACTER</td>
<td>FORM</td>
<td>DIET</td>
<td>MARITAL STATUS</td>
<td>PRIESTS</td>
<td>POSSESSION</td>
</tr>
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<td>-------------------</td>
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<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
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<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Possession</td>
</tr>
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<td>Married</td>
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<td>Pecciyammanâ</td>
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<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
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<td>Patalammanâ</td>
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<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In South India Capta Kannimar, Seven Virgins are common regional goddesses as opposed to North India where they are commonly called Saptamâtrkâś, Seven Mothers.

The red font indicates goddesses that would be termed Sanskritic, or Dēvaru according to Harper and Babb's categorisation.

The broken lines indicate the goddesses that share the same temple.
fully conform, as her temple is located at the edge of the settlement.\textsuperscript{20} The same low proportion of Sanskritised goddesses is prevalent in Cholavandan, as among the forty-three goddesses examined, only four meet all the requirements of Sanskritised goddesses. Therefore, it is immediately clear that the majority of goddesses in each of the field sites are more complex beings, falling into the category of \textit{dēvate}, local goddesses, or tooth mothers, depending whose research is referred to. The majority of local goddesses who fall into the categories, \textit{dēvate} or "Tooth Mother" have a wide range of personality traits that are liable to become obscured by generalisation. This is an important factor not considered by previous research, as the proportion of goddesses in each category is not defined. Surely, it is important to know whether a settlement has one or one hundred Sanskritic goddesses, with the same being true for the other categories. I consider this a vitally important factor in establishing the nature of a village or town goddess collective.\textsuperscript{21} At this juncture I should point out that the goddesses listed in my table do not come under the category of \textit{devva}, pēy or demoness, except perhaps for Pécciyamman, whose relationship with pēy is questionable and will be analysed more closely later in this chapter.\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{8:3 The results of a new categorisation of the local goddesses in Khurdapur and Cholavandan}

In consulting my tabular data, it is apparent that in both Khurdapur and Cholavandan the proportion of married goddesses is very low. In Khurdapur only one goddess, Lakṣmī, is married and of the forty-three goddesses listed in Cholavandan, only eleven

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{20} I would expect fully Sanskritised goddesses to be housed in the centre of a settlement, in accordance with classical temple building parameters. This point was dealt with above, p. 60.
\textsuperscript{21} I prefer to use the term "goddess collective" to refer to the range of goddesses in one settlement rather than the term "pantheon", since it has hierarchical connotations. Defining a hierarchical structure for the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan is not the aim nor in the scope of this research.
\textsuperscript{22} See below p. 260.

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are married. Of those eleven, which include the Sanskritised goddesses, Piralaya Nāyakiyamman, Māhā Lakṣmī, Śrī Devī and Bhū Devī, five are more complex than might first appear, having a dubious side to their characters. Each of the five goddesses are considered benign, but Ammacciyamman receives an annual blood sacrifice. Aṅkālaṁśvari in West Car Street and the other form of this goddess, Aṅkāḷaparamiśvari, although they themselves do not receive animal sacrifice, nevertheless allow it in their temples, thereby taking some measure of its benefit which, no matter how inadvertently, is bestowed on the temple as a unit. The two forms of Tīraupatiyamman (Draupadiyamman) do not receive animal sacrifice, but are associated with possession and Tīraupatiyamman in Market Street is also associated with fire-walking. Therefore, none of these goddesses would easily fit into the categories established by Harper, Babb, Beck, or Ramanujan.

Several of the "independent goddesses" in Cholavandan, Durkai (Durgā) and Kāliyamman in the Piralaya Nāyakiyamman temple, Muttu Cinka Irulayiamman, Capta Kaṭṭimār, and Čen̄pakattamman in Iruḷaparīcāmi kōvil, Pēcciyamman and Pāṭālamman in the Aṅkāḷaparamiśvari temple, and Nava Kaṇṭimār -- a category described as wild or bloodthirsty by Babb -- are in reality benign in character, accepting only vegetarian offerings. Only two goddesses in Cholavandan were described as fierce, Pēcciyamman and Rākkāyiamman in Iruḷaparīcāmi kōvil, who nevertheless do not receive any animal sacrifices although, at times, they may possess people. A substantial percentage of the goddesses in both Khurdapur and Cholavandan are, like Erndl's goddesses,

---

23 Other forms of Rākkāyiamman e.g. Rākkāyiamman at Aṅkāḷaṁśvari temple in West Car Street and the most famous Rākkāyiamman in the area at Alagerkoil are both described as benign. However, Rākkāyiamman at West Car Street does receive animal sacrifices.
considered to have a dual or bipolar personality, having the capacity to be both fierce or benign depending on circumstances.

It would obscure the nuances of character of the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan to attempt to assemble them into a definitive pantheon. In order to present a village pantheon it must be based on some defining factor. Should it be based on caste, purity, or general popularity? In each case, a pantheon based on any one of these categories would neglect to show the importance of the other factors, and to try to base a pantheon on all factors would be impossibly complex and probably infeasible. For instance, the largest caste group in a particular settlement may not have the most popular deity overall, nor the most pure one. Similarly, the most pure and Sanskritised deity may be of relatively minor popularity, not truly reflecting the religious practices of the location in question. Nevertheless, where appropriate, I have attempted to use specific examples of goddesses who exemplify various categories, which, I believe, gives this study more meaning and substance.

I have devised a system whereby I can show to what extent the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan correspond to the categories presented by the goddess models of Harper, Beck, Babb, and Ramanujan. In order to contrast, and make apparent, the two extremes of Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic goddesses as proposed by the above scholars, with the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan, I have allocated a numerical value to each of the goddess’s characteristics, dependent only on how many variables there are in each category. For instance, in the category “Character”, which has three variables, I have given a numerical value of two to the benevolent goddesses, one to those who are

24 See table 15 overleaf.
### 15. Numbers Assigned to the Various Characteristics of the Local Goddesses

#### TYPE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Universal</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>0</td>
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#### CHARACTER

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benign</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both (Benign and Fierce)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fierce</td>
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#### FORM

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Aniconic</td>
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#### DIET

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<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eats Meat (Not Sacrifice)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
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#### MARITAL STATUS

<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>0</td>
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#### PRIEST

<table>
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<th>Priest</th>
<th>Count</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>0</td>
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</table>

#### POSSESSION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MAXIMUM TOTAL AVAILABLE** 11
both benevolent and fierce, and zero to those goddesses who are described as fierce. However, in the category “Marital Status”, which has only two variables, I have given a value of one to the goddesses who are married and zero to those who are independent. Consequently, each goddess, dependent on her characteristics, has an individual numerical group. Therefore, I am able to show how closely the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan relate to the Sanskritic model, which is indicated by the maximum number of eleven. The fully Sanskritised goddess, according to Babb, has universal appeal, is married with a benign character and represented anthropomorphically. She is a pure vegetarian accepting no sacrifices, does not possess anyone, and is presided over by a Brahman priest. Conversely, her antitheses, whose attributes are defined by Babb in his category non-Sanskritic should, in theory, have a numerical value of zero. Therefore, by attributing a numerical value to the various characteristics of the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan I am able to illustrate clearly, where, between these two extremes, the majority of goddesses in Khurdapur and Cholavandan actually fall, without having to resort to gross generalisations.25

Although it is a somewhat unconventional way of analysing local goddesses, by measuring their relative proximity to a Sanskritic model, a number of interesting points become evident from this arrangement. What can be gathered from this table is a series of trends or patterns that provide some indication of goddess types as the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan fall into a variety of numerical groups. Those numerical groups with a higher numerical value correspond more closely with the Sanskritic goddess model, conversely, those with a lower numerical value are more cognate with Babb's non-Sanskritic goddesses.

25 See tables 16 and 17 below, pp. 250-253.
16. Classification of Goddesses in Khurdapur for Proximity to Sanskritic Qualities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goddess</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Diet</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Priest</th>
<th>Possession</th>
<th>Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santoṣī Mā</td>
<td>Universal</td>
<td>Benign</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bana Durgā</td>
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<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā Maṅgalā (Bhoi-Sarasvatipur)</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā Maṅgalā (Hādi)</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā Maṅgalā (Bhoi-Bandanapur)</td>
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<td>Both</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kanaka Durgā</td>
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<td>Semi- Sculpted</td>
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<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aļiala</td>
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<td>Benign</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Eats Meat</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Both</td>
<td>Semi- Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
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</tr>
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### Classification of Goddesses in Cholavandan for Proximity to Sanskritic Qualities

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<th>Goddess</th>
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<th>Character</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Diet</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Priest</th>
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The red font indicates goddesses that would be termed Sanskritic, or Devaru according to Harper and Babb’s categorisation.
The most important finding that the table does confirm is that the majority of goddesses in both Khurdapur and Cholavandan do not conform to the categories outlined by Harper, Beck, Babb, and Ramanujan.\textsuperscript{26} Furthermore, more than half of the goddesses in this study are in the lower five numerical groups, leaving a minority in the upper six. This table confirms that none of the goddesses fully corresponds to the category "non-Sanskritic goddess" as defined by Babb. According to Babb, the "non-Sanskritic goddess" is local, independent, and fierce. She is represented aniconically, takes possession of people, demands blood sacrifices and consequently is not attended by a Brahman priest. Therefore, scholars who try to define local goddesses simply as "non-Sanskritic" cannot portray them adequately. As the table of results indicates, this majority numerical group encompasses a wide range of variations.

Although the goddesses in Khurdapur and Cholavandan do not fully correspond to the characteristics of Babb's "non-Sanskritic goddess", by looking for trends and patterns in the various numerical groups certain character tendencies become apparent. At the lower end of the scale, the goddesses in numerical groups 6-1 all have non-Brahman priests with those in numerical groups 5-1 being independent. One very important characteristic of the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan is apparent in numerical groups 4-1, representing a significant number of goddesses; twenty six out of a total of forty three. All these goddesses have dual personalities, being both benign and fierce, and therefore between Babb's two categories. Those goddesses who are least like the "Sanskritic goddesses", in numerical groups 2-1, are predominantly local, have dual personalities, and are not represented anthropomorphically. Their tendency is to be independent, have non-Brahman priests, and possess people. These goddesses are not

\textsuperscript{26} See table 18 overleaf.
## 18. Classification of Goddesses in Cholavandan and Khurdapur for Proximity to Sanskritic Qualities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goddess</th>
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<th>Diet</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
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<td>Benign</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muttu Cinka Iruḷayiamman</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Benign</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goddess</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Character</td>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Diet</td>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Priest</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>Group</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Ammaciyamman</td>
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<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pātālamman</td>
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<td>Benign</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenakai Mariyamman</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virāyiamman</td>
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<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celliyamman</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pēcciyamman</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Fierce</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rākkāyiamman (Paljarkal)</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Fierce</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capta Kannimār</td>
<td>Regional</td>
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<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
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<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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<td>Bana Durgā</td>
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<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaṭakatti Kāliyamman</td>
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<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pēcciyamman</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muttu Pēcciyamman</td>
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<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mākāliyamman (Paljarkal)</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nākamāl</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Eats Meat</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ujaiṇi Kāliyamman</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā Maṅgalā (Bhoi-Sarasvatipur)</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā Maṅgalā (Bhoi-Bandanapur)</td>
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<td>Both</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goddess</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Character</td>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Diet</td>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Priests</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Mā Maṅgalā (Hādi)</td>
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<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanaka Durgā</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Semi-Sculpted</td>
<td>Eats Meat</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aljiala</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Benign</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Eats Meat</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pillaiyamār Patirakāliyamman</td>
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<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ucciniī Mākāliyamman</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muttu Irulāyamman</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cantāna Māriyamman</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghei</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Semi-Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā Kṣetrapāla</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Eats Meat</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dullādei</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Semi-Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nāṭār Patirakāliyamman</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Semi-Sculpted</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pāṭālā Pécciyamman</td>
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<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
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<td>Cilaikkāriyamman</td>
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<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uluntār Kāliyamman</td>
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<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutaliyār Koṭṭai Kāliyamman</td>
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<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
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<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goddess</td>
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<td>Character</td>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Diet</td>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Priests</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>Group</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā Khanduāla</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā Jageśvari</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paccaivali Kāliyammaṇ</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Aniconic</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Non-Brahman</td>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The red font indicates goddesses that would be termed Sanskritic, or Dēvaru according to Harper and Babb's categorisation.

The green font indicates goddesses from Khurdapur.

The pink font indicates the Sanskritised goddess from Khurdapur.
vegetarian as the majority accepts animal sacrifices and the one goddess who does not, Mā Kṣetrapālā, nevertheless does accept a meat meal at her festival.

In this particular study, very few goddesses correspond to the category of "Sanskritic goddesses" although it is relevant as at least five of the goddesses fully correspond to all the requirements of this category as outlined by Babb et al. It is only the goddesses in numerical group 11 who fully correspond to Babb's "Sanskritic goddess" category, although the two goddesses in numerical group 10, Āṇṭāḷ and Jenaka Vañjīyamman differ only because they are regional rather than universal goddesses. Significantly, in numerical group 9, Santoṣī Mā -- a goddess normally considered to be a Sanskritised goddess -- is excluded because of her independent status and in this particular embodiment, her local tendency for possession.

From numerical group 9 through to 1 the characteristics of the goddesses become more varied. However, various trends of patterns are also discernible among the goddesses in the numerical groups that more closely resemble the Sanskritic archetype. The goddesses in numerical groups 11-7 are all vegetarian, with the goddesses in numerical groups 11, 10, and 9 being predominantly married. Two of the patterns that have emerged are that in numerical group 11 and 10 the goddesses are tended by a Brahman priest and the goddesses in numerical groups 11-8 all have benign natures, an anthropomorphic form and are vegetarian. However, there are anomalies with the characteristics of these goddesses which, to confine them to only two categories as Harper, Beck, Babb, and Ramanujan have done, is to dismiss them out of turn, missing or misrepresenting subtleties in their character and nature. There is a strong indication that, even within one location, one goddess can have variable forms. In Cholavandan,
Pecciyamman is a prime example as her various forms appear in numerical groups, 8, 5, 4, and 1, therefore, indicate that a goddess may have many forms with varying levels of Sanskritic associations.

Pecciyamman is an intriguing and complex goddess as her numerous forms within one location, Cholavandan, suggest. Pecciyamman is particularly interesting because of her possible association with pēy or demons. She is perhaps an example of a goddess who straddles the divide between the gods and demons. In Hinduism, this does not create a paradox, for Ultimate Reality as Brahman encompasses all duality. Therefore, Devī in the Devī Mahātmyam can comfortably be eulogised as "the great devī as also the great asuri." Likewise Pecciyamman in Cholavandan is considered to be fierce at Irulaparicāmi kōvil, benign at Aṅkāḷaparamīśvarī temple, and a combination of both in her three forms, Pecciyamman, Muttu Pecciyamman, and Pāṭāla Pecciyamman at the Aṅkāḷaīśvarī temple in West Car Street.

Just as important to consider, if not more so, are the elements that are obscured by this tabular format. The table does not reflect the popularity of particular goddesses at each of the sites, therefore supporting my claim that the most powerful goddesses are not necessarily the most pure, nor the most orthodox. Jenakai Mariyamman, according to her numerical value, appears in numerical group 7, whereas in the Cholavandan popularity stakes she would appear first. Similarly, in Khurdapur Mā Khanduālā who is undoubtedly one of the most popular goddesses in the settlement, appears in numerical group 1. The table in some cases does not convey the importance or development of the goddesses as both Nava Kannimār, "Nine Virgins" and Capta Kannimār, "Seven

27 Devī Mahātmyam 1:77.
Virgins", who have rudimentary, open shrines and sporadic pūjā, appear in numerical group 8 and 7 respectively, which is higher than many goddesses with their own shrines and regular worship.

Having analysed the data that can be gleaned from the table and assessing its deficiencies, this form of assessment can be deemed useful only in a general way. One very important finding of this tabular research is the great variety of characteristics among the goddesses of the two field sites. I have provided some general trends but there are as many, if not more, inconsistencies that make the categorisation of numerical groups of local goddesses extremely difficult.

My broader approach to examining the character of the goddesses in Khurdapur and Cholavandan has, more than anything, established the richness and diversity among local goddesses that has hitherto been overlooked or disregarded. However, in order to complete the composite picture of local goddess worship in Khurdapur and Cholavandan, an examination of their festivals and rituals is a concluding necessity.
SECTION FOUR

Ritual and Worship in Khurdapur and Cholavandan
The worship of the village deities contains much that is physically repulsive. The details of a buffalo sacrifice are horrid to read about, and still worse to witness, and the sight of a pūjārī parading the streets with the entrails of a lamb round his neck and its liver in his mouth would to us be disgusting; and, doubtless, there are much drunkenness and immorality connected with village festivals; while the whole system of religion is prompted by fear and superstition, and seems almost entirely lacking in anything like a sense of sin or feelings of gratitude towards a higher spiritual Power.¹

Introduction to section four

What Whitehead fails to do in his condemnation of local goddess festivals is to look beyond their, often gruesome, exterior and to probe their more profound meanings. This section is an attempt to do just that. It consists of an analysis of a variety of festival rituals and general worship of the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan. In Khurdapur the specific festivals and rituals to be examined are, the annual Pāna Sankrānti festival at the start of the new year, the Pauṣa Pūrmimā Maṅgāla festival, celebrated exclusively by the Hādi's of Jatesvar and, lastly, the weekly Friday worship of the goddess Santōṣi Mā. In Cholavandan the festivals and rituals under scrutiny include the annual Vaikasi Māriyamman Festival, the bi-annual Śivarathri festival celebrated at the Aṅkālaiśvarī temple in West Car Street, and the periodic Pradosam celebrated at Piralaya Nāyakiyamman temple. As supplementary evidence I shall include my first hand experience of the nearby Natham Māriyamman Māci fire walk, which I attended in January 1997.

I shall approach the examination of the festivals and rituals listed above thematically, highlighting various types of ritual, e.g. devotional rituals, rites of protection, and fire walking. I shall also consider sacrifice and possession in some detail as they represent central rituals – the occasions when human and divine are most closely related. Sacrifice and possession appear to be particularly important for two other reasons: first, they have been significant factors in distinguishing between Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic goddesses and, second, it is these rituals more than any other that enable the transformation from profane to sacred to occur. Also of particular interest is the extent to which, and in what ways, the power of the goddess is evident during her worship. I shall also analyse the extent to which the power of the goddess is increased or
reinforced by festival rituals. Festivals can be a time of great power but also great impurity: therefore, an analysis will be made of the effect this has on the goddess and her locality.

In this final section, I intend to use a different approach to that apparent in previous research, which is generally confined to an analysis of a particular festival. In this study of festival rituals, instead of looking simply at one festival, I have examined the variety of festival rituals practised at each of the field sites, examining the ritual pattern as a whole. This method has led to the discovery that many important rituals take place beyond the sacred confines of the temple and is instead carried out in the profane setting outside. As a result of this finding, the nature of these rituals can be analysed and various inferences suggested.

I have already questioned the accepted view of the unpredictable and malevolent nature of the local goddesses' anger but I shall nevertheless examine whether the anger of the goddess is evident in her worship and ritual, considering whether power is mistaken for anger. Ritual is the connecting factor not only between the goddess and her devotees, but also between the goddess and the sacredness of her spatial locality. It is through ritual that profane is transformed into sacred, and through ritual that the goddess and her devotee become temporarily one.
Chapter 9

An Analysis of the General Worship and Ritual Patterns in Khurdapur and Cholavandan
The festival rituals and worship in Khurdapur and Cholavandan are wide-ranging and diverse. A number of festivals are celebrated across India and consequently are well documented, whereas others are more obscure, being either non-documentated or alluded to in only one or two sources. In this chapter I intend to concentrate on the lesser-known or hitherto undocumented festivals and rituals, which are nevertheless important in the regions where they are practised. I shall use a thematic approach drawing examples and inferences from both sites where appropriate. Also important in this chapter is the extent to which the themes, sacred and profane, power and purity, anger and unpredictability, order and chaos, already examined with regard to the character of the goddesses in Khurdapur and Cholavandan and the placement of her temples and shrines, become unified through ritual practice.

This was one of the most difficult areas for research as, typically, in small temples and shrines there are no written sources, and the devotees and pūjāris invariably do not know why they perform various rituals, apart from the fact that they are tradition. Having said this, however, these local rituals should not be dismissed as being without religious merit, for as Eliade points out:

A religious symbol conveys its message even if it is no longer consciously understood in every part for a symbol speaks to the whole human being and not only to the intelligence.1

The following is my effort to analyse critically the festivals and rituals at the two sites, suggesting possible meanings and inferences, where possible within the context of the greater Hindu tradition.

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9:1 Devotion

Rituals of devotion are the most prolific aspects of the daily worship of a deity. They also form a significant part of the annual festival proceedings, although in this context they are generally performed in a more elaborate manner. Devotion rituals take many different forms, from the offering of fruit and flowers to the more obscure and dramatic offerings of hook swinging and fire-pot carrying. The main devotional rituals are carried out across India but with certain additional rites being regionally specific.

9:1:1 Abhiṣeka (Tam. apiṣēka) and decoration of the goddess

Abhiṣeka, or the ritual bathing of a deity, is one of the most frequently performed rituals in India. However, in Tamilnadu it is more overt and complex than in Orissa, and contrasts considerably with that, particularly than in Khurdapur. It was claimed by the informants in Khurdapur that abhiṣeka is only given to male deities with mājanā being offered to goddesses. Mājanā is, it appears, a simpler form of abhiṣeka, and I felt it had slightly less credibility here than the ritual performed for the male deities. However, in Cholavandan and Tamilnadu, there appears to be no such distinction and goddess abhiṣeka is often quite complex. The difference in size between the two sites and the seeming abundance of flowers and other ritual ingredients such as sandal paste may result in abhiṣeka being easier to perform in Tamilnadu.

In Cholavandan and Tamilnadu some temples, e.g. Pēcciyamman in Madurai, a relatively simple version of abhiṣeka, primarily consisting of milk, is performed each Tuesday and Friday, the special days of the goddess. Abhiṣeka is said by the informants to renew the goddess's power, especially the kumbhabhiṣeka, a complex and lengthy
ritual performed over a number of days following the refurbishment of the temple.\textsuperscript{2} The subsequent ritual bathing of the temple, when the \textit{abhiseka} ingredients are poured from the top of the sanctum, is performed in order to super-charge the temple as a whole.\textsuperscript{3} This should, theoretically, be carried out in all temples every twelve years.\textsuperscript{4} However, lesser \textit{abhisekas} are carried out periodically at many of the temples in Cholavandan.

Before the ritual bath, the deity is rubbed with oil in preparation for the various commodities that will be poured over it. There are very few written sources to indicate the significance of the various commodities used in the \textit{abhiseka} ceremonies, with many of the \textit{pūjāris} seemingly unsure of their importance. However, the Piralaya Nāyakiyamman temple uses a pamphlet that lists the various ingredients and their benefit,\textsuperscript{5} although how many of the following ingredients are used would depend on what funds are available and what the devotees bring to the shrine.

The ingredients for \textit{abhiseka} and the benefits they enjoy:\textsuperscript{6}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredient</th>
<th>Benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sandalwood oil</td>
<td>for happiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice flour</td>
<td>for the removal of debt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turmeric powder</td>
<td>for beauty and attractiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragrant smelling commodities</td>
<td>for long life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curd, ghee, milk, etc.</td>
<td>for health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juice of five fruits (\textit{pancamartham})</td>
<td>for salvation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit mixture (mango, jackfruit, banana)</td>
<td>for salvation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>for long life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\textsuperscript{2} Appendix 3 informants 21, 22, and 23.

\textsuperscript{3} At the Tiraupatiyamman (Draupadiyamman) temple in Cholavandan the \textit{pūjāri} (Informant no. 33) said that the \textit{kumbhabhiṣeka} is an injection of power for the goddess.

\textsuperscript{4} I say theoretically because the cost of restoring the temple which accompanies the \textit{kumbhabhiṣeka} is in many cases prohibitive. Many of the larger temples in Cholavandan had not been able to carry out the \textit{kumbhabhiṣeka} for some time.

\textsuperscript{5} \textit{Calendar Informing the Pradosam Festival Days of the Arulmiku Sudeśvarar Thirukoil - Nalattinputhoor (Thirunelveli District) 1995-96.} I am grateful to Dr P. Sarveswaran, Professor of History at Madurai Kamaraj University, for this translation.

\textsuperscript{6} The authority for the ritual was said to come from Vedic texts although the informants, Brahman priests, could not say which texts.

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Curd - for children
Ghee - for salvation
Light hot water - for salvation
Honey - for health
Tender coconut - for becoming a king
Jaggery juice - for a loss of enmity
Juice of sugar cane - for health
Boiled rice - for obtaining a kingdom
Sacred grass and water - for wisdom
Wood apple/Bilva leaf and water - for children
Holy ash - for being rich in all ways
Sandal-paste - for being showered with wealth
Adornment with dress - for a good position in life
Gingely oil - for the relief of household problems
Flowers - for seeing the god or goddess
Fruit juice, especially lemon varieties - for loss of enmity

Afterwards the deity is decorated with garlands, sandal paste etc., is then presented with coconut, betel, kumkum, plantain, flowers and ash, (referred to as acanna), is given sweet poňkal (only in South India) which is the usual prasad at this temple, then arati -- the offering of light and prayers -- follows. Variations of this ritual may be prevalent in other parts of India, but this series of events is common in worship of the goddesses in Cholavandan. It is clear, once the list of abhiṣeka ingredients and their resultant benefits is consulted, that this ritual is of considerable benefit, not only to the goddess, but to the devotee as well.

7 Although this is where my main informant 24 regularly worships, he did not know what significance the various abhiṣeka ingredients had, until I showed him the list of abhiṣeka ingredients and their significance, loaned to me by the temple priests.
9:1:2 Procession around the streets

On many occasions across India, the decoration of the goddess is the precursor to her festival procession. The procession of a decorated image of the deity around the streets surrounding the temple or shrine is a common ritual throughout India. The full festival procession is, however, generally confined to the larger temples that have the finances and the accommodation necessary to acquire and store the festival image, and a suitable vehicle on which to carry it. In my two field sites, Khurdapur and Cholavandan, there was a distinct difference between the two settlements, as in Khurdapur there are no temples big enough nor rich enough to have a moveable festival image or a suitable vehicle on which to transport it.

In Cholavandan, one of the main annual festivals, the fifteen day Jeñakai Māriyamman Vaikāci (May / June) Car festival, consists of the daily decoration and subsequent procession of the goddess's festival image. From the second day of the festival to the eighth, the same pattern of rituals is repeated. At 9 am the moveable image of the goddess is installed in a capparam, a canopied car-like vehicle used for carrying deities and taken around the temple. In the evening, at 7 pm the moveable image of the goddess is taken in procession around the streets of Cholavandan seated on a different vehicle, or vākagam, each day. The vehicles include a cimma, "lion", a yāli "a mythological lion-faced animal with elephantine proboscis and tusks", a kamalā "lotus", Kamatēnu (Skt. Kāmadhenu) "the wish-fulfilling cow", riṣapa "a bull", anṇa "a swan", kutirai (Skt. aśva) "a horse", and yānai "an elephant". After the evening procession various programmes of dance, music, folk songs, and religious discourse are presented each night. Between the eleventh and the fifteenth days of the festival, there is only one procession per night but on days eleven and twelve a special abhiṣēka "ritual bathing"
and decoration of the goddess is carried out. Along with the fire walk, the procession of the goddess around the streets is the major festival ritual, emphasising its importance. The procession of the goddess's image around the settlement streets is a time when barriers are broken down and there is clearly a blurring of the distinctions between sacred and profane.

In Cholavandan the Mahā-Śivarātri festival is celebrated in a number of the temples and shrines to varying degrees, but at the Aṅkāḷaīsvarī temple (West Car Street) it is the most important festival to be celebrated there. Due to financial restraints the festival is celebrated biannually, on the fourteenth night of the dark half of the moon in the Tamil month Māci (Feb/March), as it incurs considerable expense, being celebrated over a three-day period (7th-9th March in 1997). This particular festival consists of a series of processions, between the river and the temple, around the temple and finally to the nearby cremation ground.

The most unusual procession took place on the first evening and entailed the collection of a box containing the implements and sacred weapons of the deities at the Aṅkāḷaīsvarī temple, from a small Vināyakar shrine nearby. The box was then taken in a procession to the Vaigai river where it and its contents were ritually washed and purified, first by the river water, considered sacred, then by being rubbed with cut lemons. They were all arranged on a specially prepared area by the water, made sacred by ritual, and then pūjā was carried out directed towards the box, and all the weapons were then anointed with kumkum, "red paste", sandal paste, and holy ash. At this point in the festival, the weapons are the representatives of the deities, whose power has been invoked into them. The main participants then started to become possessed by the
various deities and, as they did so, they took up the weapon or symbol of that deity. On its return to the temple, the box was put inside the shrine of Aṅkāḷaśvarī, and the ritual tying of the kāppu or protective thread was carried out. Clearly during this procession and the attendant rituals a transformation occurs. The procession that returns to the temple has a divine character, and the fact that the deities -- in the form of possessed people -- proceed from outside the temple to its interior, rather than the reverse, is significant. The collection of the box from the Vināyakar shrine and the procession back to the temple, I suggest, indicates that at this time there is a communal linking of the deities in Cholavandan and, indeed, of all the aspects of the settlement.

Although the smaller shrines and temples may not have a festival image, a procession is often a feature of the festival. In Cholavandan this procession usually centres on the invocation of the goddess's spirit into a pot or karakam, then referred to as the śakti karakam. During the Mahā-Śivarātri festival two śakti karakams representing Aṅkāḷaśvarī and Vālakurunāthacāmi (Śiva) were invoked. The pots contained Vaigai river water, sand, coins, and the karakam representing the goddess had a weapon inserted upright, a symbol of the power inherent in the śakti karakam once the deity has been invoked. On the top of the karakam were placed some margosa leaves and a coconut. Then the whole thing was topped with a pyramid of aralipur flowers.

Generally, this ritual takes place by the river, or a tank if there is no river nearby, and once the power of the goddess has been invoked into the pot, this goddess representative is brought back to the temple in procession. The two śakti karakams were placed in the

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8 A thread is tied to the wrists of each of the main festival participants. Details of this ritual are examined below in section 9:5:1.
9 It is unusual for male deities to be invoked in this way during a festival.
corresponding deities' sanctum on a bed of plantain leaves, *paccarici* "un-boiled holy rice", and flowers. All the men (only) then went into the Vālakurunāṭacāmi (Śiva) sanctum, the temple lights were turned off and in the dark the men started shouting "Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha", which was accompanied with clapping. The *pujāri* informed me later that this chanting is considered a holy sound, although he was unsure why this particular ritual was performed. I surmise that since the invocation and decoration of the *sakti karakam* took place outside the temple, the ritual chanting was either to dispel any negative forces that may have accompanied the *sakti karakam* from the profane and dangerous world outside the temple, or to establish the deities' presence back in the sanctum.

The informants in Cholavandan were very clear in their belief that the *sakti karakam* represents the goddess during the festival. However, in Khurdapur the significance of the *kalasam* (Oriya), usually numbering two, was not so evident. In Cholavandan, this particular ritual was evidently an important part of many of the festivals celebrated there. In Khurdapur, the ritual, although accompanied by a procession, seemed incidental, or completely taken for granted by the local inhabitants. The fact that more than one *kalasam* is used makes their symbolic meaning more obscure.

Certain important symbolic features are evident in both the circumambulation of the temple and the *sakti karakam* procession. During both of these processions, the festival participants do not wear any shoes as they walk along roads that are not normally considered sacred. They may be walking on the same streets as they normally use to travel to work each day, but because this is a part of the festival, governed by sacred rules and sacred time, the once ordinary streets are considered as a sacred extension of
the temple. This idea is most evident when a festival image of the goddess is taken in procession around the streets. As the goddess leaves her sacred sanctum, there ensues a transfer of power to the village or locale, which then takes on the characteristics of the temple. So shoes are not worn during the festival procession, a symbolic gesture normally a pre-requisite for entering the sacred space of the temple. In this way, the normally profane locality of the village or town becomes transformed into a sacred environment.

9:1:3 The planting of mulaipäri, pot containing nine grains and the offering of māvilakku, rice-flour lamps

Two devotional rituals that are specific to Cholavandan and Tamilnadu are the offering of pots planted with nine types of grain, mulaipäri, and the offering of rice-flour lamps, māvilakku. Both of these forms of offering were unheard of in Khurdapur, although the use of nine grains or plants is evident in a variety of rituals throughout India. At a number of temples in Cholavandan, the growing of nine grains in a pot before the start of the festival is common practice. The mulaipäri are treated with the utmost reverence and strict purity rules govern their growing period. However, they are not kept within the sacred confines of the temple but at another location. This place is made sacred temporarily, through ritual, with the mulaipäri only being tended by girls before the age of puberty or women who have been through the menopause. In this way,

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10 Nine grains or dhals are sometimes given as prasad in Cholavandan at the Piralaya Nāyakiyamman temple. In North India in the worship of Durgā, a Navapatrikā is used. Consisting of nine plants or leaves it represents nine goddesses. See Bhattacharyya, N.N. (1977) The Indian Mother Goddess, 2nd rev. ed., New Delhi: Manohar Book Service, p. 44.

11 Vatakatti Kāliyamman at Pankugi (March/April) festival, Nājār Patirkāliyamman at Pankugi, Ammacciyamman at Pankugi, Ujuntār Kāliyamman at Pankugi, Uccini Mākāliyamman at Pankugi, Celliyamman at Vaikāci, Mutaliyar Koṭṭai Kāliyamman at Pankugi, Mākāliyamman (Paḻlarkal) at Vaikāci (May/June), Ujjaini Kāliyamman at Śivarātri. Piralaya Nāyakiyamman and Pillaimār Patirkāliyamman both give nine dhals as prasad.

12 This information was supplied by several of the informants in Cholavandan.
there is no risk of menstrual pollution. The fact that the *mulaipāri* are not grown in the

temple — although great pains are taken to ensure their purity — may indicate that the

power of the goddess is such that sacredness can appear or be induced anywhere. This

idea is reiterated by the great number of rituals that take place outside the temple.\(^{13}\)

The *mulaipāri* have a number of associations representing agricultural and creative

aspects of the festival. According to the local informants in Cholavandan the shoots of

the nine grains should grow straight and tall. This is believed to indicate the measure of

the devotee's faith. However, I feel certain that this is not the only significance of the

*mulaipāri*. The practice of immersing the *mulaipāri* along with the *śakti karakam* in the

river or tank at the close of the festival may suggest that the *mulaipāri* are not simply a

aspect of faith but may have some more profound significance. As the ritual of

immersion is generally carried out in order to dissipate the immense power built up

during the festival, it would indicate that the *mulaipāri*, like the *śakti karakam*, is a

receptacle for the power of the goddess and, as such, is representative of her. This

would indicate that the faith of the devotee and the power of the goddess are closely

linked.\(^ {14}\) The *mulaipāri* could be said to represent the power of the goddess to

transform the profane into the sacred.

The offering of rice flour lamps or *māvilakku* is evident only in South India and is

associated in particular with the goddess Māryamman. The small lamps that are

presented to the goddess are made of raw-rice powder (considered holy) mixed with

*jaggery*.\(^ {15}\) *Māvilakku* are offered at a number of temples in Cholavandan during their

\(^{13}\) This point is explored in detail later in this chapter.

\(^{14}\) See above Chapter 6 for an examination of this idea.

festivals but are offered to Jenakai Mariyamman all year round. According to Diehl, in 1956 the Mīnākṣī temple in Madurai accepted the offering of māvilakkū, although I am unsure whether this custom is still welcomed.16 Māvilakkū are offered to prompt the goddess to relieve some ailment, in the case of Jenakai Mariyamman, the relief from chickenpox or measles etc. In this instance the māvilakkū are often decorated with dots, symbolising the infectious rash of the sufferer. It is hoped that the goddess will remove the spots by the acceptance of their likeness. The māvilakkū is then given back to the devotee in the form of prasad. This form of offering is very much part of local worship but not a part of brahmanical worship. The fact that the tradition continues at the Jenakai Mariyamman temple in Cholavandan suggests that various aspects of her worship have remained un-brahmanised. The offering of the māvilakkū in a devotional setting is further evidence that, although Jenakai Mariyamman is a smallpox goddess, these offerings are not given to appease her wrath, nor as gestures of atonement. They are given as gifts; although the devotees hope to be cured by the goddess, nevertheless, they are making a gift of their ailment to the goddess.

9:1:4 Hook swinging and fire-pot carrying

In both Orissa and Tamilnadu, some forms of devotion are rather more dramatic than those outlined so far. The practice of piercing the tongue or cheeks with metal skewers, placing metal hooks in the back, and either swinging from a pole or pulling a festival car attached to the hooks, often accompanied the fire walking ceremony, especially for the South Indian goddess Mariyamman. Although the British outlawed this practice, it is nevertheless occasionally practised in India today. Hook swinging does not form a

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part of the rituals performed in Khurdapur but, according to Freeman, it is practised in some of the villages in the Bhubaneswar area. The practice is not evident in Cholavandan today although in the past this town was, according to Elmore, "famous for the ceremony". Oppert also remarked on the prevalence of this ritual in the past in Cholavandan as he commented "it is a pity that this detestable custom has been of late revived, as is proved by the hook-swinging festival at Cōlavandān which took place the other day".

Another ceremony practised most noticeably in South India, but possibly in North India also, is to carry an earthen pot filled with hot coals, referred to in Tamil as akkinicatti. According to Lakshman Chettiar women do not take part in the fire walking ritual but instead "they cover their head with a part of their sari and keep a shovelful of embers over their head. The cloth does not burn and the women do not suffer from the oppressive heat of the fire". According to my research in Khurdapur, Cholavandan, and Natham, also in Tamilnadu, both women and children do perform the fire walk, although women and men may prefer to carry a fire pot to the goddess instead. One ritual reputed to be prevalent in Tamilnadu is similar in character to the fire walk and the carrying of a pot of fire. In this rite, the devotee puts his or her hand or leg in a pot of boiling poṇkal, without suffering any ill affects.

On closer analysis it would appear that the practices of hook swinging, carrying of

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17 Freeman, James "Trial by Fire" in Natural History, January (1974), 57.
19 Oppert, G. (1893 repr. 1972) The Original Inhabitants of Bharatavarsa or India, Delhi: Oriental Publishers, p. 482. Although I did not personally encounter any hook swinging, from conversations with people in various parts of India, I believe that it is still a common practice in many places.
20 Chettiar, Folklore of Tamil Nadu, p. 50.
earthen pots full of hot coals and the immersion of the body in boiling pots are all acts of self-sacrifice and self-surrender to the goddess. In this light they can be viewed as equivalents of fire walking but not quite the same as animal sacrifice which, as I shall show, is more complex, and to a certain extent stands alone. None of the devotional rituals are performed to appease an angry goddess who expects her devotees to suffer. Some of the devotional rituals discussed appear to function more readily as occasions when mutual testing is carried out. The faith of the devotees is tested in numerous ways, such as in his or her ability to grow grain successfully, or in their willingness to submit to potentially dangerous practices. Similarly, the power of the goddess is tested, evident in her ability to protect the devotees from what might, under normal circumstances, be injurious to them. In each case, the profane devotees put their faith in the divine power of the goddess to give protection to them from the dangerous effects of the fire and, instead, to be cleansed by its sacred, purifying nature. In this way profane is transformed into something pure and sacred.

9:2 Fire-walking

It is of some significance that fire walking, as a central festival ritual should be prevalent in both Khurdapur and Cholavandan. Although there are relatively few written accounts of this ritual it appears to be common in Orissa and Tamilnadu at least, and may well be practised in other states as well.21 In Khurdapur and Cholavandan, the

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ritual of walking across a pit of hot coals is an important climax rite. In both locations, although the fire walk is not undertaken during the majority of festivals, it is, nevertheless, the climax of the central and most important festivals in each settlement. The goddesses to whom the fire walk is dedicated vary between the two field sites and, as Freeman's account of an Orissan fire walk indicates, may vary within a given region. The inference given in this article is that Kālī is the usual recipient of this ritual, contrary to my own findings in Khurdapur, where the goddesses to whom the festival is dedicated are Mā Maṅgaḷā, Mā Khanduāḷā, Baghei, Dullādei, and Mā Jageśvarī. However, since there is no representation of Kālī in Khurdapur, nor any other sources detailing this ritual in Orissa, I am unable to draw any firm conclusions as to whether the goddesses in Khurdapur are unusual in receiving this form of devotion. In Cholavandan, and more widely in Tamilnadu, the picture is clearer, as two goddesses are the main recipients of fire walking festivals, Māriyamman and Tiruappatiyamman (Draupadī) — an occurrence confirmed in written sources as well as field research.

The detail of exactly how the fire walk is set up and conducted varies between the two sites. In Khurdapur the fire pit is a large square that must be crossed seven times while keeping silent, whereas in Cholavandan and the surrounding area the fire pit is long and narrow, and is crossed only once. In Cholavandan, silence is not necessary when crossing the fire pit, as was evident in Natham24 where devotees uttered mantras and other sacred sounds. These contrasts are suggestive of regional differences rather than fundamental changes to the meaning and importance of this ceremony and I therefore

22 "Climax rite" indicates the most important and central ritual of a particular festival.
23 Freeman, "Trial by Fire", pp. 54-63. In this account of a fire walk in the Bhubaneswar area the festival is dedicated to the goddess Kālī.
24 Although I did not personally witness the fire walk in Cholavandan, I did attend the fire walk in the nearby town of Natham, which has provided me with supplementary evidence.
suggest that the importance of this particular rite remains unchanged.

9:2:1 Fire-walking in Khurdapur

In Khurdapur the fire walk is the high point of the Pāna Sankrānti festival. This festival is celebrated in two separate ceremonies, one involving several goddesses -- Mā Maṅgalā (Bhoi- Sarasvatipur), Mā Khanduālā, Baghei, Dullādei, and Mā Jageśvari -- the other in worship of just one, Mā Maṅgalā (Bhoi - Bandanapur). The festival of Mahābīṣuba Sankrānti or, more commonly in Orissa, Pāna Sankrānti, is so called because of the sweet pāna drink specially prepared and distributed on this day. This festival is celebrated on the first day of the Oriya month of Baiśākh (April/May): in 1997 it was on 14th April, the start of the solar New Year and is the major festival in the Khurdapur settlement.

I relate here the preparations that are deemed necessary, in Khurdapur, to walking across the fire. Although the festival lasts only one day, the preparations commence six days before, with the priests and those who wish to take part in the climax of the festival, the fire walk, moving to the Mā Khanduālā shrine where they eat and sleep until the day of the festival. The participants take only one meal a day, which is prepared at the temple and is purely vegetarian and contains no garlic or onion. One of the food items that is consumed is a very white pure rice called aruā which is not boiled but cooked in the sun and considered to be a sacred foodstuff. The participants sleep at the Mā Khanduālā shrine until the night before the festival when they move to the Mā Jageśvari temple. This practice symbolises their move from their ordinary profane environment to the sacred world of the temple in an effort to purify themselves in preparation for their close encounter with the goddess, in particular during the fire walk.
On the day of the festival everyone bathes and puts on new clothes, and those who are to walk on the fire, fast. At midday the priests representing Mā Khanduālā, Maṅgalā from Mā Khanduālā temple, Baghei and the priest of Mā Maṅgalā (Bhoi- Sarasvatipur) become possessed by the goddesses and come to Mā Jageśvari temple in a procession round Sarasvatipur and Jatesvar, accompanied by a band. Meanwhile the fire-walkers wait at Mā Jageśvari temple and as the possessed priests arrive, the fire-walkers roll along the hot ground in a preliminary act of faith. The possessed priests or, as they are now regarded, the goddesses, beat the rolling fire-walkers with their canes as a sign that they are pleased with their devotion and that they may now stop.

When the possessed priests and the fire-walkers are assembled at the Mā Jageśvari temple, pūjā is performed for Mā Jageśvari. During this time, the villagers prepare a large pit of charcoal in front of the Mā Jageśvari temple, where the main festivities will take place. After ritual bathing, the priests, possessed by whichever goddess they represent, are the first to walk on the fire, followed by the other people who have now also become possessed. In essence, the goddesses walk on the fire first, in an act that perhaps establishes the sacredness of the fire and sanctions the ritual for their devotees. My informants clearly stated that it is crucial to become possessed by a goddess before the fire can be safely traversed, therefore indicating that the power of the goddess sanctions the devotee's participation and consequently protects him or her from harm.

It seems clear that the preparations that the festival participants must undergo facilitate their movement from one world to another. They effectively leave the profane, human world of the village, including their families, and become immersed in the sacredness of

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25 The ground at this time is scorching hot, therefore, this feat is not one to be taken lightly.
the temple.\textsuperscript{26} Everything must change -- their clothes, their food, their normal habits and, perhaps most importantly, their state of mind. In order to retain the level of purity and resultant sacredness required to walk successfully across the fire, representing the sacred realm of the goddess, the participants must physically and spiritually remove themselves from their profane or secular surroundings. Furthermore, the participants' concentration during the period of preparation is wholly directed towards the divine world which, I suggest, they will fully enter when they traverse the goddess's fire. As the period of preparation continues, the devotees become increasingly infused by the sacred; a transformation takes place. This is most necessary as when they walk on the fire or, in the case of the priests who accept the goddess's sacrifice, they are exposed to a superabundance of divine power. They \textit{must} become the channels through which this power is transferred to the settlement.

\textit{The purity of the fire pit}

It seems clear from the intensive preparations that must be performed before the devotee crosses the fire that the fire pit itself is regarded as a very pure and sacred place. Evidence provided by informants in Khurdapur suggests that the fire walk will only be successful if the purity of the fire remains intact, thereby indicating that the fire walkers must, in some measure, step into the sacred world before they become fully immersed in it during the fire walk.

Under normal circumstances, according to my informants, it is not possible to walk across the fire without first making the necessary preparations.\textsuperscript{27} According to the detail

\textsuperscript{26} It is vital for them to become segregated from the polluting influence of their family.
\textsuperscript{27} The goddess has the power to protect someone who is not prepared if she so wishes, see below, pp. 284-85.
given to me, they regard the preparation almost as important as the fire walk itself. I was informed that at the Pāna Sankrānti festival for Mā Maṅgālā (Bhoi- Sarasvatipur), Baghei, Dullādei, and Mā Khanduālā, the devotees who intend to walk across the fire pit must be possessed by one of the goddesses. Local tradition relates the tale of a clever man, some years ago, who knew mantras, but whose heart was not pure. He could not become possessed by the goddess because, the informants claimed, he was not pure. However, he proceeded to pretend that he was possessed and attempted to cross the fire. The man was badly burned and defiled the fire so that no one else could walk across it that year. This is not an isolated incident, and Freeman provides details of another fire-walking ceremony in Orissa that went terribly wrong.\(^{28}\) Again, the catalyst was a magician who was not pure and had not undergone the necessary preparations, pretending to be possessed by the goddess. In Freeman's account, the actions of the impure magician were also considered to have profaned or defiled the fire pit that caused the other fire-walkers to be burned.

The power of the goddess and fire-walking

The establishment of the power of the goddess is an important consequence of an exacting ritual such as fire walking. On one hand, each person who walks across the fire and is unharmed attests to the protective power of the goddess. Furthermore, the main reason for attempting the fire walk is that it was promised by the devotee in return for a desire previously fulfilled by the goddess. More dramatically, the goddess may provide a further example of her power over the whole proceeding. I was told of an important incident that happened at the Pāna Sankrānti Festival of Mā Maṅgālā (Bhoi - Bandanapur) in 1997 when the woman who regularly becomes possessed by the

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\(^{28}\) Freeman, "Trial by Fire", op. cit., pp. 54-63.
goddess was about to walk across the fire pit. Mā Maṅgaḷā communicated through this woman that she wanted the start of the fire walk delayed as someone else was coming to perform the ritual. When the villagers asked her where this person was she said that he was in the capital, Bhubaneswar. Next, she said that he was in a nearby village and somehow he moved very fast towards the village. He is a resident of Bandanapur but was in Bhubaneswar for business concerning his daughter. She had recently been killed by her husband who had poured kerosene on her and set her alight. The man was very distressed because she was his only daughter. When he arrived at the village, Bandanapur, Mā Maṅgaḷā, in the form of the possessed woman, called him to her and said that he should walk across the fire. Everyone was shocked, including the man in question, as he was unprepared to undertake the ritual. Under normal circumstances, it would invite certain burning to attempt to cross the fire without first making oneself pure. However, Mā Maṅgaḷā, speaking through the possessed woman, insisted that he should walk on the fire. Some people were alarmed and believed that he would surely be burned so they reported the incident to the police. The police arrived in the village to see if the man was all right, but he did walk on the fire and was unhurt, just as the goddess had assured him. The goddess thereby showed that ultimately she had the power to overturn the normal conventions of a particular ritual if she so desired.

9:2:2 Fire-walking in Tamilnadu and Cholavandan

The Tamil term for the fire walking pit is pū-k-kuli, meaning, "pit of flowers", which the devotees claim is the feeling they get when they walk across the hot coals. In Cholavandan, the fire walk is carried out principally for Jenakai Māriyamman at her annual festival in the month of Vaikāci. In previous years the goddess Tirupatiyamman (Draupadi) was also the recipient of this ritual but for the last few years has declined to
give her permission for the ritual to be performed, indicative, I suggest, that the ritual is a gift from the goddess not an ordeal. The fire walk performed at the Jenakai Māriyāmman festival has always been the most important in Cholavandan, emphasised by the central installation of the fire pit, near the bus station. The Natham Māriyāmman fire-walk is in essence very similar to that in Cholavandan although the Natham festival was on a much larger scale. Therefore, since I was unable to see fire walking at my two sites, I shall supply a detailed account of the fire-walking ritual that I did attend during the Natham Māriyāmman festival in the month of Māci.

In Natham, a town near Madurai, the fire pit is prepared in what appears to be a South Indian style, as opposed to the square pits of Orissa. According to the Natham pūjārī the fire pit should be ten feet in length, five feet wide, and five feet deep. On the day of the fire walk in Natham there were an estimated 50,000 people attending the festival with reportedly as many as 10,000 undertaking the fire walk. The fire-walkers came from many of the surrounding villages with the spectators coming from some considerable distance away to witness this great spectacle. The area for the fire walk was set up directly in front of the temple and the yellow-clad devotees filed through the temple on the way. Many had been waiting -- probably for five hours or more -- before they reached the temple and the goal they must have preparing for, for so long. As they were ushered through the temple by anxious temple personnel, they made their last supplications to the goddess who must be looking on approvingly at such a massive demonstration of faith in her. The huge amount of people walking across the goddess’s

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29 In Cholavandan the estimated fire-walkers numbered hundreds rather than thousands.
30 The majority of goddess festivals that include a fire walk are on a much smaller scale, with tens of walkers being typical rather than thousands.
31 Yellow is a colour of purity, with the cloths being dyed using turmeric, also symbolically pure. Yellow is also a colour associated with the goddess Māriyāmman in particular.
fire is also an affirmation of the power of the goddess, not because she compels her devotees to honour her in such a ritual, but because she must have used her power constructively and benevolently to help them: her reward is their act of self-sacrifice.

The final walk through the temple was particularly chaotic as the marshals tried to keep some semblance of order: those participators who had waited for so long were anxious to complete their task. Apparently during the previous year the fire-walk had not been enclosed and ordered in this way and there was complete chaos with some people lying on the coals and others finding themselves being pushed over. In 1997, the organisers were determined to keep order and so the police were out in force to keep the overexcited crowd at bay.

The gamut of facial expressions among the fire-walkers expressed more than words could ever say. These devotees consisted of men and women, ranging from the very old to the very young. There was a tremendous feeling of emotion there. Some were jubilant when, after waiting so long to face the fire, their spiritual goal, the fire pit, finally came into view. A few seemed to be in a trance-like state barely aware of their surroundings, perhaps completely rapt in a devotional stupor. A number of devotees of this type, mainly men, had already displayed the outward symbols of their devotion as they had long skewers forced through their tongue or cheeks. The tide of mutual devotion bore them towards the climactic conclusion of their consecration. One young yellow-clad girl had a look of terror on her face as she walked through the temple and she found it impossible to hold back her tears. A small boy, who seemed to be with her, her brother perhaps, looked equally frightened. Many of the women uttered prayers or mantras as they proceeded towards the fire-pit, clutching small bunches of margosa.
leaves, especially associated with Māriyamman. They all wore the garlands that are normally given to the goddess and as they passed under the flag-tower erected for the festival, they threw the garlands over its many struts. By the time I arrived, the bottom portion was thick with flowers paying tribute to those who had already undergone this baptism of fire, their faith and purity of heart tested and revitalised anew.

Every available rooftop or vantage point was occupied by thousands more people who were content to observe the spectacle from a distance. The whole area seemed charged with emotional tension, from the devotees themselves to the spectators who could not possibly remain unmoved by the show of mass dedication to the goddess. Especially significant was the surprising number of children attempting the fire-walking feat. For some, the experience of the intense heat of the coals at the last moment was more than they could bear. Understanding adults plucked them up and they were carried across on the shoulders of those undaunted by the potential threat of the fire pit. However, many children did walk the coals unaided and it was to them that the crowd gave special adulation and encouragement. The general feeling was of intense admiration, for all whose faith had brought them before the goddess on this day. From some distance away, the heat of the coals could be felt over and above the intense heat of the afternoon sun.

Having walked through the pit of hot coals the devotees walked to a sacred pool for a ritual bath. There was an air of the conquering hero about the jubilant devotees who were then surrounded by admiring crowds, probably those who had come with them, many from far away. They had been reborn in a more sacred and pure state by putting
their trust in the goddess. In many cases, the devotees were probably feeling the relief of having finally fulfilled a vow that they had previously made to Mariyamman.

The nature of the fire walking ritual, in which devotees undergo a normally harmful experience, has led to the conception that the goddesses, to whom such practices are directed, are demanding such devotion in order to allay their anger. In neither of my field sites was there any evidence to suggest that the purpose of the fire walk was a requirement of the devotees: it was, rather, a gift freely offered by them. The honour and the exhilaration felt by those who had undertaken the fire walk was plain to see by their facial expressions and in the way they were treated by the spectators. There was no sense among the devotees that they had undertaken a penance or punishment exacted by a wrathful goddess but, rather, that they had publicly proved their faith and devotion. More importantly, the goddess had acknowledged that faith through her protection. The fire walk is seen as an honour and a privilege rather than a punishment, an offering of thanks for the beneficence of the goddess rather than to deter her anger. I suggest that this climax of the yearly festival was a celebration of the bond between deity and devotee that re-established their close relationship as well as strengthening community ties.

Furthermore, the testing of an individual's faith by fire is an ordeal resorted to by divinities as well as humans. Hiltebeitel refers to two examples, Sītā's proof of her chastity after her abduction by Ravana, and Draupadī's walk through the flames to re-establish her purity after her defilement during the war with the Kauravas.32 Similarly, I suggest, by walking over the sacred fire of the goddess, her devotees are cleansed: they

emerge from their baptism of fire renewed and purified, their faith affirmed and approved.

It has been interesting to note that although there are no indications to suggest that in essence the symbolic meaning of the fire-walking ritual varies between Khurdapur and Cholavandan, the local informants do stress differing areas of importance. In Orissa, through the informants' detailed accounts, indirect stress is placed on the importance of the preparatory period before the fire walk commences. They also stressed the importance of being possessed by the goddess as a requirement for successfully crossing the fire pit. In turn, these ideas emphasise the purity and sacredness of the fire pit. The divine acceptance of the devotee — since the possession is instigated by the goddess and not subject to the will of the devotee — and his or her entry into a sacred state before stepping onto the fire pit.

By contrast, in Tamilnadu I have evidence that many fire-walkers at Natham were not possessed by the goddess and that generally it is not considered a requirement for successful completion of the ritual. However, what was stressed repeatedly was that the reason for undertaking the fire-walk was in fulfilment of a vow made to the goddess. It is not compulsory to undertake the fire-walking ritual unless the devotee has specifically promised to do so, after which it becomes vitally important to complete the ritual. In fact any vow, no matter how great or small, must be completed, otherwise it may well incite the goddess's anger. This was, in fact, the only instance of the anger of the goddess associated with festival rituals, although it pertained to any promise made to the goddess, not just to the more overt festival rituals.
9:3 Possession

The possession of a mortal by a deity is a central and often pivotal part of many of the festivals examined in both field sites. However, that is not to say that possession is a part of every festival celebrated in Khurdapur and Cholavandan. Nevertheless it is one of the most important transformational rituals, and a close analysis of its more complex meaning is necessary. Possession is a significantly local phenomenon, as in general there is no place for it in brahmanical religion. Possession is also a ritual most commonly associated with local goddesses rather than gods, although there is evidence that in at least one festival, the *Māhā-Śīvarātri* festival in Cholavandan, male deities occasionally possess people too.

Possession is generally considered by the local informants of both field sites to be either a blessing or a curse, dependent on whether the possession is deemed to be instigated by a deity or by an evil spirit. The possession by a deity is referred to in Tamil as *irāṅkku*, to "descend" on a person, who is then referred to as a *cāmyāṭi* or "god-dancer". It is regarded as a privilege to be possessed by a deity, as the emphasis on the term *irāṅkku* indicates. The possession is entirely dependent on the will of the deity so, as Diehl explains, possession is often an indication that a person has been specially chosen, for instance in the selection of a new *pūjārī*.

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33 See below tables 19 and 20 - rituals associated with goddesses in Khurdapur and Cholavandan, pp. 292-94.
34 Diehl, Instrument and Purpose: Studies on Rites and Rituals in South India, p. 177.
### Table 19. Selected Rituals Associated with Goddesses in Khurdapur

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goddesses</th>
<th>Fire walk</th>
<th>Possession</th>
<th>Offering Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mā Maṅgalā (Bhoi - Sarasvatipur)</td>
<td>FW</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā Maṅgalā (Hādi - Jatesvar)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā Maṅgalā (Bhoi - Bandanapur)</td>
<td>FW*</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghei</td>
<td>FW</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā Khanduālā</td>
<td>FW</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā Kṣetrapālā</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santōṣi Mā</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dullādei</td>
<td>FW</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bana Durgā</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā Jageśvarī</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanaka Durgā</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>EM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aliala</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>EM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakṣmī</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KEY**

FW = Fire-walk  
S = Sacrifice (animal)  
M = Marijuana  
P = Possession  
EM = Eats Meat  
V = Vegetarian offerings

* The Mā Maṅgalā (Bhoi - Bandanapur) fire walk takes place separately from the other goddesses.

- Indicates that fire walking or possession is not a feature of that goddess's worship.
## Table 20. Selected Rituals Associated with Goddesses in Cholavandan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goddesses</th>
<th>Fire Walk</th>
<th>Possession</th>
<th>Offering Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jenakai Mariyamman</td>
<td>FW</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>VS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piralaya Nayakiyamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durkai</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kāliyamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māhā Lakṣmī</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vatakatti Kāliyamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nāṭār Patirakāliyamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pillaimār Patirakāliyamman</td>
<td>FW</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankālaisvari</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pēcchiyamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muttu Pēcchiyamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rākkāyamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virāyiamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muttu Irulāyiamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pātāla Pēcchiyamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cilaikkāriamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>EM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ammacciyamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantanā Māriyamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantana Māriyamman (by road)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capta Kannimar</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uļuntār Kāliyamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celliyamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutaliyār Koṭṭai Kāliyamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiruapatiyamman (Draupadiyamman)†</td>
<td>FW</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śrī Devī</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhu Devī</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antāl</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenaka Valliyamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiruapatiyamman*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paccaivali Kāliyamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenakai Māriyamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nākamāl</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mākāliyamman (Pallarkal)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ujjainī Kāliyamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uccinī Mākāliyamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pēcchiyamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rākkāyamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muttu Ciṅka Irulayiamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capta Kannimar</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goddess</td>
<td>FW</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>EM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nāka Kannī</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cenpakattamman</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nava Kannimār</td>
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<td>-</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankālapamīśvarī</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pēcciyamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pātālamman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KEY
FW = Fire-walk  P = Possession
S = Sacrifice (animal)  V = Vegetarian offerings  VS = Vegetable sacrifice
EM = Eats meat  E = Eggs

* The festival of this goddess is celebrated outside Cholavandan.

- Indicates that fire walking or possession is not a feature of that goddess's worship.

# The fire walk has not taken place for the last few years because the goddess has declined to give her permission.
One important difference between possession by a deity in Khurdapur and Cholavandan is the subtle emphasis intimated by the informants about the instigation of the possessed state. In Cholavandan and, it would seem, in Tamilnadu, as I have already indicated, the informants invariably stated that although the goddess could be encouraged to possess the pūjāri, for instance during a festival, possession is entirely dependent on the will of the goddess. Nevertheless, it seemed to be generally understood that, unless something was wrong with the ritual preparation, or with the recipient of the possession, the goddess would, if requested, make an appearance. However, on closer examination of the songs of the Aṅkālaṅkāvatā temple — the singing of which, it was claimed, were essential to the invocation of the goddess — the evidence suggests devotees command her to come, rather than ask her to do so.36 More overtly, in Khurdapur the informants emphasised the need of various pūjāris to be possessed before they could help the goddess's devotees with advice or healing. However, according to them, this posed no problem as they could approach the goddess at any time and expect to be possessed by her. In this attitude, there is a strong indication that the goddess must respond to the pūjāri if he approaches her correctly.

Possession by an evil spirit is considered highly undesirable at both Khurdapur and Cholavandan, and many rituals and practices are performed specifically to guard against this form of possession. This negative possession is generally dependent on the will of the evil spirit, although it may have been made possible by the action or inaction of the person possessed.37 In Cholavandan and across Tamilnadu there is a belief that certain

36 See Appendix 4, Songs from Aṅkālaṅkāvatā temple.
37 Certain actions or places are to be avoided because they are considered inhabited by, or attractive to, evil spirits.
men who are well versed in mantras can trap and control evil spirits, directing them towards their hapless victims whom they then offer to cure for a cash reward.\textsuperscript{38}

Possession takes place at various times and in a variety of situations during a festival or, in some cases, the possession may be the very focus of the festival as is recorded by Claus in South Kanara District, Mysore.\textsuperscript{39} At this festival, the goddess Siri and her descendants possess the variety of caste groups that have assembled for the festival, with those who are more experienced being possessed by Siri herself. This particular example, I presume, is rare, as at most festivals possession is only one ritual among many and it only happens to a select few, most commonly to the attendant pūjārī. However, possession does, it seems, happen at particularly important moments during the festival.

At my research sites three main occasions when possession is particularly prominent occur during the invocation of the sakti karakam (most noticeably in Cholavandan) and its procession back to the temple or shrine, at the time of the main procession (if there is one) and, most importantly, at the climax of the festival, e.g. the sacrifice, fire-walk or other central ritual. The possessed state is most often brought on by the beating of the pampai drum or of a metal gong. This provides an interesting insight into the more complex meanings of possession and, more widely, the inter-relationship between festival rituals, as the above examples could all be viewed as rituals of transformation.

\textsuperscript{38} These ideas are prevalent among the various strata of society with an informant at Madurai Kamaraj University supplying an example of this practice.

\textsuperscript{39} Claus, P.J. (1975) "The Siri Myth and Ritual: A Mass Possession Cult of South India" in Ethnology, 14/1: 47-58.
When a possessed pūjārī accepts the blood of the sacrificial victim on behalf of the goddess, he represents her dual personality in much the same way as a festival image. It is generally the festival image, if there is one, which is presented with the blood offering, thereby avoiding any pollution to her essential form that remains in her sanctum. In Khurdapur, at the Pāṇa Sankrānti festival, the possessed pujāris, having completed the fire walk, suck the blood of sacrificed fowl straight from their necks, on behalf of the goddess they represent. This act represents the literal draining of the life's blood of the sacrificial victim by the goddess, an act that the pūjāris might be incapable of performing if they were acting under their own volition. The relationship between the possessor and the possessed is a very intimate one, and one that is mutually beneficial. Without a mortal, profane body, the sacred goddess would not be able to leave her sanctum nor have such a closely interactive relationship with her devotees. Furthermore, the profane receptacle for the goddess's spirit is protected by his or her newly endowed sacrality from the pollutants of the profane world.

In a number of temples in Cholavandan, when the pūjārī takes the pot or karakam down to the river in preparation to receive the spirit of the goddess, he becomes possessed. The drum or gong that is beaten to call the goddess also initiates the pūjārī’s possession. The very ritual that transforms an ordinary pot into a symbolic representation of the goddess is accompanied by the transformation of the profane pujārī into the sacred body of the goddess. From the moment the goddess takes over the mortal body, the recipient is the goddess. Therefore, profane has become sacred and to a certain extent the sacred

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40 This is not an isolated incident as the same manner of accepting the sacrifice is mentioned by Beck, Brenda E. F. (1981) “The Goddess and the Demon: A Local South Indian Festival and its Wider Context.” Puruṣārthī 5: 88 in her research of a festival for Māriyamman in Tamilnadu. Freeman, “Trial by Fire”, p. 58 also mentions this form of sacrifice at the celebration of the Pāṇa Sankrānti festival elsewhere in the Bhubaneswar area.
The goddess has become one with the world of the profane. Furthermore, the close relationship and interaction between sacred and profane is evident when possession accompanies the rituals at the climax of the festival. Many people attest that for the participants to complete the fire walk successfully they must be possessed by the goddess, although at the fire walk that I personally witnessed, some participants appeared possessed, but others clearly were not.

The possession of a mortal has a number of benefits to the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan, perhaps the most obvious is as a way of communication. Most commonly, the possessed pūjārī or other representative is able to make the goddess's wishes and concerns known to the devotees. If the goddess is angry or pleased with her worship during the year, she will make it apparent through the mouth of her representative who, during the period of possession, is addressed as, and considered to be, the goddess in question.

The goddess's possession of a mortal can also be beneficial to her in terms of revealing her power. Often the main function of the possessed person is to give advice and to heal those who have sought the goddess's help. In many cases, those in need of help have been possessed by a "bad soul" or evil spirit that the goddess is able to dispel through a display of her superior power. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Khurdapur where the goddess Santōṣī Mā regularly possesses a local woman who, through the power of the goddess, is able to heal many people. Consequently, the fame of this goddess has drawn a growing number of devotees to her from outside the

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41 Beck goes as far as to suggest that this relationship is a form of marriage. Beck, "The Goddess and the Demon", pp. 110-11.
42 See Appendix 3, informant 00.
settlement in which she resides.

In the worship of Santosi Mā in Khurdapur possession is the pivotal ritual around which all other devotion centres. The Friday worship of the goddess Santosi Mā is, in essence, a micro-festival, encompassing many elements common in festival worship, and is one of the major religious rituals performed in Khurdapur. Therefore, I offer a previously undocumented account of this particular style of worship of Santosi Mā that I have personally witnessed on several occasions.

9:3:1 Santosi Mā Friday worship

Every Friday many people, mostly outsiders, come for an audience with the goddess Santosi Mā. Khurdapur seems far removed from the hustle and bustle of Bhubaneswar and its modernity. However, many outsiders manage to find their way through the villages in search of the healing power of the goddess. Only a small hand-painted sign in English gives any indication that the tiny village of Bandanapur holds the answer to the prayers for many desperate people.

When I first arrived in January 1996, the village was very quiet, with only a handful of people waiting patiently near to the temple. The temple priests were busy getting the offerings ready, which they sell to the devotees, with bananas being the most substantial part. Bananas are very important in this particular Santosi Mā ritual as they are used by her as part of her cure and made into her special drink. Her close connection with bananas -- the simple staple of many poor Indians -- emphasises her accessibility and lack of exclusivity, and she seems to be a goddess appropriate for the modern day Indian. The approachability of this goddess, as Brand astutely points out, is perhaps the reason for her growing popularity:
Perhaps one reason behind Santoshi Mata's astonishing rise to fame is that it was simply felt inappropriate to ask an ancient goddess for such modern appliances as radios and refrigerators. Another possible reason is that if the older goddesses were seen as increasingly aloof and unapproachable there would have been a definite need for a more humble goddess in whom women in particular could confide, and whom they could ask for assistance away from grand temples and their academic or haughty priests.43

Santoṣī Mā's kathā also establishes her as a goddess for the mass of Indians today as she -- far from fighting epic battles with demons -- protects her female devotee from the continued mistreatment by her jealous in-laws, a situation that must be common throughout India today.

As I waited by the small temple of Santoṣī Mā, more people arrived and went to pay their respects to the image inside the temple. By around 10.30 am an air of expectancy was felt as the devotees waited for the arrival of the village woman who becomes possessed by the goddess each Friday morning. I looked around and there was a very ordinary woman making her way through the assembled crowd. She was dressed in a brightly coloured red and green sari of simple cotton fabric. There was nothing remarkable about this woman, it would seem, and the assembled people took relatively little notice of her. However, her presence had been noticed, as the people followed her into the small temple.

This village woman, informant 00, has been regularly possessed by the goddess Santoṣī Mā, for 10 years now. This usually only happens on a Friday and is totally dependent on the will of the goddess. On a Friday morning, the woman feels feverish and at 10.30 am, she goes to the nearby temple. When she enters the sanctum of Santoṣī Mā, she sits

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before her image cross-legged. The sanctum is blue with the fragrant smoke of dhūha, a wood resin, and Santoṣī Mā is invoked by the deafening sound of a metal gong being struck in a rhythmical beat. Suddenly, the woman uttered a strange cry, the like of which I had never heard before, and it was at this moment that the spirit of Santoṣī Mā had suddenly entered her mortal vehicle. She was then anointed with kumkum and garlanded with red hibiscus flowers, now fully representing the goddess Santoṣī Mā. There could be heard the hula hula cries of the assembled women (made by many women in the Mediterranean as well as Egypt etc.). The men shouted hari bola in response to SANTOṢĪ MĀ's sacred sound. This is the people's way of thanking the goddess for making her sacred sound, considered a blessing to all that hear it.

When the village woman emerged from the sanctum, there was no doubt that a transformation had occurred. The crowd parted as she emerged from the temple. Her whole appearance, demeanour, and especially her voice, had changed although it was difficult to say exactly how. SANTOṢĪ MĀ was accompanied by two priests, both Brahmans, who carried water and a tray with wood apple leaves, some channa "chickpeas" and some bananas and a small lighted dish. SANTOṢĪ MĀ carried a small tightly rolled up cloth and a bundle of canes. The canes are Santoṣī Mā's weapon against evil. She hits those who are ailing to drive the badness out of them. SANTOṢĪ MĀ made the sacred sound and proceeded to demonstrate her ability to eat the fire. She lit the end of her cloth and then placed it in her mouth. Later during that morning SANTOṢĪ MĀ stood directly before me and opened her mouth wide with the burning cloth in her mouth, the flame was burning but there was not a single mark inside her

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44 This information was given by the woman herself, informant 00.
45 The use of the capitalised name, SANTOṢĪ MĀ, refers to the woman possessed by the goddess Santoṣī Mā who, in this form is considered to be the goddess.
46 See Appendix I, fig. 66.
That particular morning a constant stream of people presented themselves before SANTOŚI MĀ, all of them sharing the common bond of having some burden that needed lifting. Some had come from as far away as Bengal with the conviction that SANTOŚI MĀ would be able to help. SANTOŚI MĀ talked to the supplicants in a different voice, hit them with sticks, made her sacred noise, and ate fire. SANTOŚI MĀ blew on the devotees, rubbed the afflicted area with her hand, put her sari on the ailing part, offered water that had been stirred with canes, offered flowers from her garland, and offered small bananas etc. that were to be eaten whole and at once. These are all ways in which she offered her blessing and healed the devotees. Periodically SANTOŚI MĀ was brought a special drink -- sarabat which contains mashed banana, coconut, milk, ginger, pepper and sugar (from sugar cane). At one point a smoking tray with teak sap burning was brought out to waft over her, and a small dish containing camphor, which she blew out and was then re-lit. This she did repeatedly until she had had enough: this was considered her food.

There were numerous problems presented to SANTOŚI MĀ during that particular morning from a wide variety of people, many of whom were from outside the village. Among the medical problems were throat cancer, blindness, failure of menses, and paralysis. All of these people claimed that they had been helped considerably by SANTOŚI MĀ and were regular attendees. Among the other problems were a son who had gone missing and a woman whose husband had left. The woman had come all the way from Bengal to see SANTOŚI MĀ. Some people were very distraught, especially a man who had committed some unspecified misdeed. He had not followed SANTOŚI...
MĀ's advice to him on his last visit and so further ill fortune had befallen him; he was now ready to repent. The old man cried and sang a devotional song to her through his tears, which was very touching.47

At about 12.30 pm the goddess returned to the temple. SANTOŚĪ MĀ entered the inner sanctum and turned around, this again was accompanied by the waving of teak sap smoke and the chanting and beating of a gong. As SANTOŚĪ MĀ again faced Santōsī Mā, the spirit of the goddess left her and she fell to the floor. There she remained for a while. When she came round, she was given a drink and she removed the flower garlands and the tilak from her forehead, signifying that she was returning to her mortal state. A place had been prepared for her outside the sanctum where she lay down and was massaged by a number of women. She was apparently very stiff and tired for the rest of the day. During the morning, assistants had been preparing cooked prasad which was ready at about 3.00 pm and was distributed to everyone there. It consisted of plain rice, cow butter, dalma (one type of lentil mixed with vegetables) sāg, (spinach) and khīri, a type of sweet rice pudding.

The pivotal ritual of Santōsī Mā’s Friday worship is most clearly her possession of informant 00. The establishment of the power of Santōsī Mā, channelled through this woman, is the reason that this goddess is so popular. On one hand, the goddess is able to leave the confines of the temple, gaining direct contact with her devotees. Possession is one of only two ways in which a goddess may emerge from her sanctum and engage more fully with the inhabitants of her settlement. In order for a goddess to be physically brought out of her sanctum there must be a moveable image and a suitable vehicle on

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47 See Appendix 4 for details of interviews with a random sample of the devotees who attended the Santōsī Mā Friday worship on 7th November 1997.
which to transport her. As local goddesses are in the main located in small shrines or
temple/shrines, the goddesses of Khurdapur, invariably only leave their shrines in the
form of a possessed person.

The other benefit to Santosí Mā in possessing a human representative is that she is able
to demonstrate her power more overtly. But perhaps more important is the ability of her
devotees to develop a meaningful relationship with the goddess via her possessed
representative. A few people had heard of the great power of this goddess and came to
see for themselves whether what they had heard was true. This is a more direct method
of communication as SANTOSĪ MĀ is able to give voice to her approval or disapproval
of the devotee and direct him or her towards a solution of problems or towards a more
meaningful religious experience.

Although this goddess continually reasserts her great power during her Friday worship,
it was also clear from my observation of SANTOSĪ MĀ'S interaction with her devotees,
and my subsequent interviews, that at no time is Santoṣi Mā considered angry or
unpredictable. It is important to note that those who approach her believe that she will
give them assistance, they have no fear of her; I saw only love and gratitude in their
eyes. The interviews that I recorded attest that Santoṣi Mā has healed or given
assistance to many people -- many who now regularly come to pay homage to her.48
The most poignant example that fully confirms the lack of anger in Santoṣi Mā's
character, is the old man who had confidence enough to return to Santoṣi Mā even
though he had ignored her advice on his first visit. She did not vent her spite on him but
gently comforted him, promising him help once more. It is clear, then, that Santoṣi Mā,

48 See Appendix 4 for details of interviews with a random sample of the devotees who attended the
Santoṣi Mā Friday worship on 7th November 1997.
for her devotees is a stable, constant force in an ever-changing and unpredictable world. Having now detailed the regular worship of Santoṣī Mā and previously considered her iconography and character, some important conclusions can be drawn. One criticism levelled at my inclusion and interpretation of the character of Santoṣī Mā might be that she should not be considered a local goddess as her kathā suggests that she is the daughter of Gaṇeṣa. However, I would strongly defend my inclusion of her within the context of local goddesses as I consider the most important and interesting element of this particular Santoṣī Mā's character is that, despite her numerous brahmanical characteristics -- her new white temple image, the Brahman priests that serve her and her purity -- her worship and her mode of interaction still retain a distinctly local character. The most important and dominating feature of Santoṣī Mā's worship is her regular possession of informant 00. Possession by a deity, most often a goddess, is most clearly a feature of local religion, it is not normally a part of brahmanical worship. However, Santoṣī Mā could not be simply labelled a local goddess, since in this particular incarnation of Santoṣī Mā the two strands of tradition, brahmanical and local, complement each other rather than being antagonistic. Santoṣī Mā combines the purity and beneficence of a brahmanical goddess with the power, dynamism, and affinity with her devotees, more characteristic of the local goddesses.

9:4 Sacrifice (Skt. bali, Tam. pali)

India has a long tradition of sacrifice, evident in both urban, tribal, and village communities. It was not only an indigenous ritual but the sacrificial act was also sanctioned in the Rg Veda, in the symbolic sacrifice of primordial man in the Puruṣa-Sūkta. Sacrifice was also glorified in the performance of the aśvamedha, "horse
sacrifice", ostensibly the preserve of royalty. While animal sacrifice may be uncommon today in the large brahmanical temples in India's urban centres, it nevertheless continues in many of the small town and village settlements across India. A variety of animals are used for contemporary festival sacrifices, the most common being goats and cockerels, with pigs being used occasionally. It is very rare, but not unknown, that buffaloes and even humans are used in sacrifices, even today. A man, according to the Kālīkāpurāṇa, is considered an "exceedingly great oblation". Animals may be, to a certain degree, surrogate human sacrifices. At the other end of the spectrum, goddesses, who most probably previously accepted animals but are now vegetarian, sometimes accept vegetables as a surrogate sacrifice. One such case in Cholavandan is Jeṉakai Māriyamman, who periodically accepts a pumpkin smeared with kumkum that, when cut, simulates blood. This particular practice was unknown in Khurdapur but is documented by Fuller as a sacrifice at the Miṅākṣī temple in Madurai. A vegetable offered as a suitable substitute indicates that it is the ritual of sacrifice as much as the taking of the life blood of the victim that is important, since technically the pumpkin or melon is already dead before it is cut and offered to the goddess, although ritually it is treated in the same way as an animal sacrifice.

The unblemished and perfect male animal that is offered to the goddess in sacrifice must be deemed acceptable to the goddess, a sign indicated by the animal's shiver after turmeric water is poured on it. The rituals surrounding the sacrifice are often detailed

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50 One exception to this is the temple to Kālī in Calcutta, Kālīghāṭ, where goats are sacrificed daily.
and complex as is evident in the *Kālikāpurāṇa*, a text dedicated to the goddess which deals in detail with the formula and consequent benefits of animal sacrifice.

After the adept has bathed the oblation there, he should worship the Goddess with flowers, sandal and incenses, repeating the oblation-mantras again and again. Having his face directed to the north and looking at the oblation with its face directed to the east, the adept should after this repeat the following mantra:

'Thou art the most excellent, come to me in the shape of an oblation because of my good fortune; so I am bowing to thee who canst assume every shape, (now) having the shape of an oblation; by causing Candikā to be delighted thou destroyest the misfortune of the giver; O oblation, honour, honour to thee who hast assumed the shape of Vaiśnavī oblation; for the sake of the sacrifice the animals have been created by Brahmā himself; I shall put thee to death now; because of this, murder is no-murder in sacrifice'.

(*Kālikāpurāṇa* 57: 6-11)

The verses above clearly indicate that sacrifice has been divinely ordained and that ordinary restrictions, such as pollution and causing *himsā*, "harm", do not apply in this case.

In Khurdapur, but more specifically Cholavandan, there are three places where animal sacrifices or *bali* (Tam. *pali*) take place; either inside the temple or shrine, outside, or, less commonly, at the cremation ground. In Khurdapur, all the acts of sacrifice take place outside the temple or shrine, in a central location, in the heart of the community. In these instances, the sacrifice is regarded as a ritual performed on behalf of the community, although the majority of sacrificial animals are given individually and the body is returned to the donor. The blood, after the goddess has taken her fill, is distributed to everyone as *prasāda*.

9:4:1 *Pauṣa Pūrṇimā* sacrifice in Khurdapur

Sacrifice is an important aspect of the *Pauṣa Pūrṇimā* festival dedicated to the *Hādi*

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54 Van Kooij, *Worship of the Goddess According to the Kālikāpurāṇa Part 1*.
55 The blood is not ingested but used to mark the forehead or to anoint new clothing.
goddess Mā Maṅgalā in Jatesvar. I was informed that people had been generous during the 1997 festival as five cocks and two goats had been offered for sacrifice. First, the goats were offered as one by one they are tied to the balikhumba "sacrificial post" directly in front of the goddess's sanctum. The goat has turmeric water poured on it to purify it and in order to test its acceptability to the goddess. If accepted by the goddess, the goat is beheaded with one stroke. At the time of the sacrifice, only the blood of the goats, their very life's essence, is offered to the goddess and the doors of her shrine are closed. The cocks are then sacrificed at the edge of the temple area in the four directions and are said to satisfy other goddesses and demons. The pūjās are over when the goddess withdraws her possession from the pūjāri and leaves the festival. Bhajans, "holy songs", are sung while a meal is prepared and Mā Maṅgalā is later offered some of the meat meal prepared for the festival feast, in a purely social context. At this festival there is no doubt that the goddess and her devotees fully participate in the animal sacrifice and that the blood sacrifice requested by the goddess herself is a vital part of the festival rituals. Through the death of the victim the goddess and her community are recharged and renewed as a link is forged between the sacred and profane worlds symbolised in a variety of ways – the sacrificial victim, the sacrificial post, the possessed priest and the sharing of the sacrifice itself.

9:4:2 Pāna Sankṛānti sacrifice in Khurdapur

When the fire walk has been successfully completed at the Pāna Sankṛānti festival in Khurdapur, the sacrifice consisting of cocks and goats takes place. The number of animals is dependent on how many are given by the individuals, who offer the animals in return for favours granted by the goddess or in fulfilment of a vow. In 1997 there were one goat and five cocks offered but, according to my informants, Baghei refused
the goat indicating that it was too small, therefore it was offered again the next year (1998). Some of the blood of the sacrificed animals is put into a container for Mā Jageśvarī, who does not actively take part in the festival by possessing a priest. The blood offering is placed inside her sanctum and the doors are closed for half an hour or so. The priests, still possessed by Mā Khanduālā, Mā Maṅgalā, and Baghei, drink their blood straight from the neck of the animal or bird. However, the priest possessed by Mā Maṅgalā (Bhoi- Sarasvatipur) does not accept this sacrifice. The head of the creature is given to the dhobi who decapitated the animal, in Oriya referred to as ghatak. Those who offered the animals get the bodies. The goddesses are only offered the blood, not a cooked meat meal. This is the only time during the year when animal sacrifices are offered to these goddesses.

The majority of animal sacrifices in Cholavandan take place outside the sacred precinct of the temple or shrine.⁵⁶ They usually, however, take place directly in front of the temple or shrine, in full view of the particular goddess to whom they are dedicated. Despite the normal pollution of death, the sacrificial act is by its very nature a sacred ritual, prompting Hubert and Mauss to claim that sacred matter is left after its conclusion.⁵⁷ Therefore, in essence, its very presence outside the temple makes this normally profane space sacred by its proximity to the sacred sacrificial victim.

The majority of sacrifices that take place within the temple are conducted in order to satisfy the needs of the secondary or guardian deities, both male and female, that are a significant presence in the temples of Cholavandan. In some cases, the primary god and

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⁵⁶ This point will be discussed in some detail below in section 9:6.
goddess may not accept sacrifice themselves, so they are protected from seeing the
sacrifice by a screen. However, it is difficult to see how they could remain completely
separate and unaffected in some way by a sacrifice at such close proximity. Surely,
what is of benefit to one deity is, no matter how remotely, beneficial to all in view of
their corresponding fundamental divinity?

Having examined how the sacrifice takes place and where the sacrificial act is carried
out in Khurdapur and Cholavandan, it should now be possible to analyse why the
sacrificial act takes place. On a mundane level, sacrificial animals may be presented to
the particular goddess or goddesses by individuals, either in the hope of a favour from
the goddess or in fulfilment of a vow. Alternatively, the community celebrating the
festival may collect donations for the purchase of one or more sacrificial animals.

According to my sources in Khurdapur and Cholavandan, animals are offered to
goddesses for four main reasons, to ensure the smooth running of the festival; in order
to satisfy the particular goddess's need for blood; in order to please the goddess and,
consequently, to enlist her help with a problem; or, most commonly, in order to fulfil a
vow made to the goddess because she had previously rectified a problem. Important to
note is that sacrifice is not conducted to appease her anger.

At a more profound level, the sacrificial act has a vitally important two-fold purpose --
as a way of transforming profane into sacred, and as a means of communication
between deity and devotee. In the sacrificial victim, \textit{sacred and profane} are fully
integrated, a meeting which, according to Hubert and Mauss, cannot be sustained by a
mortal, profane body, without causing its destruction.

If the religious forces are the very principle of the forces of life, they are in
themselves of such a nature that contact with them is a fearful thing for the
ordinary man. Above all, when they reach a certain level of intensity, they cannot be concentrated in a profane object without destroying it.58

Therefore, the sacrificial act is the ultimate ritual of transformation. The name, "sacrifice" comes from the Latin sacrificare, meaning, "to make something holy", indicating that during the course of the sacrifice the profane victim becomes a sacred object. This idea is expanded by Fuller who claims:

the deity only takes a victim that already participates in its divinity. Thus the ritual of sacrifice merges the victim with the deity, a process completed by the immolation. ... the victim is both an intermediary between the deity and the human sacrificer (the donor), and a substitute for the latter. 59

The liberation of the sacrificial victim from the world of samsāra fully completes its transition from profane to sacred. The sacrificial victim acts as a channel between the donor, or community, that has carried out its sacrifice, and the goddess to whom it has been given. Therefore, wherever or however it is carried out, the sacrificial act has an important function as Hubert and Mauss have elucidated:

beneath the diverse forms it takes, it always consists in one same procedure, which may be used for the most widely differing purposes. This procedure consists in establishing a means of communication between the sacred and the profane worlds through the mediation of a victim, that is of a thing that in the course of the ceremony is destroyed.60

It is not possible for the human world to communicate with the divine nor to tap into that divine power, without some form of mediation, which is one of the prime functions of the sacrificial animal. Its life's essence, therefore, not only nourishes and satisfies the goddess, but it also provides a means of transference of sacred power into the profane world.

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59 Fuller, The Camphor Flame, p. 84.
60 Hubert and Mauss, Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function, p. 97 (author's emphasis).
The sacrificial act also has a creative aspect. The animal offered dies at the peak of its perfection and, as it has fulfilled its dharma, is liberated. Through the death of the animal a new phase of life starts for those who offered it, since a contract with the goddess is fulfilled. For society, an annual sacrifice suggests a reaffirmation of the community and the renewal of the relationship between the goddess and the particular community group. This concept of recreation, of the death of the old and the birth of the new, is particularly pertinent to the ritual sacrifice in the cremation ground.

**Cremation ground rituals and sacrifices**

Less common but more symbolically profound are the sacrifices and attendant rituals performed in the cremation ground. In Khurdapur there are no festival rituals performed in the cremation ground, and the inhabitants expressed surprise at the idea. However, cremation ground rituals represent the climax of the festivals of at least two South Indian goddesses, Aṅkāḷaṅkāḷiṣvarī and Pēcciyamman. In Cholavandan Aṅkāḷaṅkāḷiṣvarī and Pēcciyamman occupy the same temple so they both have some involvement with the cremation ground ceremonies at the Mahā-Śivarāṭri festival. In Madurai a similar festival format is performed for Pēcciyamman, in a temple dedicated to her. In Cholavandan at the Aṅkāḷaṅkāḷiṣvarī temple the most important sacrifices of the Mahā-Śivarāṭri festival take place at the cremation ground.

**9.4.3 Mahā-Śivarāṭri in Cholavandan**

The sacrifices at the cremation ground are performed before representatives of a variety of deities. A three-headed image was made of rice flour paste in the Mayāṇṭičāmi, Lord of the Cremation Ground (Śiva) sanctum behind closed doors. The image, referred to as
The *kapparai* or Kapparaicämi, had one white head with a moustache and a third eye, said to represent Rudra, a red head with fangs and a protruding tongue, said to represent Kāliyamman, and a green head to represent Kapālī, an incarnation of Durgā who sucks the blood of demons. The name Kapparaicämi, suggests that the *kapparai* is male although, according to the informants, two of the heads are female. The *kapparai* has a fierce appearance, possesses all who later carry it, and is offered substantial blood sacrifices. However, according to Meyer's research the *kapparai* is generally said to represent Brahmā's heads, that can be one, three or five, or even the Trimūrti, although these deities are not generally offered blood sacrifices. Although there seems to be no common agreement of which deities the *kapparai* represents, there is no doubt that it is a potent symbol said to have the power to dispel evil. When the model is completed a white cock has its leg cut and the *kapparai* is anointed with its blood.

The *kapparai*, a *piikapparai*, "flower *kapparai" a large flower-strung shape and an image made of rice flour paste, decorated with green and red spots and carried in a winnowing fan of Pāṭalā Pēcciyamman were all taken in procession to the cremation ground. Various deities are represented by possessed people during the procession but only Cappāṇi goes on to the cremation ground. Cappāṇi, one of the temple's male guardians was represented by one of the possessed *pujāris* who carried an earthen pot referred to as the Cappāṇi karakam. It had white spots all over it and inside it were

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61 The meaning of *kapparai*, according to the *Tamil Lexicon* is "bowl of a beggar or mendicant; earthen vessel; brass vessel; or vessel for keeping sacred ashes in the temple". It is therefore possible that the term *kapparai*, for the three-headed form, is to signify that it is a vessel for the essence or spirit of the deities it represents.
62 See Appendix 2, fig. 90.
64 Ibid., p. 124.
65 See Appendix 2, fig. 89.
66 See Appendix 2, fig. 92.
67 See Appendix 2, fig. 91.
eggs, ghee, brandy, chicken legs and burning sticks which are all said to be things that he likes to eat. Although the festival image of Ankalaisvari accompanies the procession around the town streets, she does not accompany the procession of men to the cremation ground, but returns with the women to the temple. It appears that the flour-paste image of Pātāla Pēcciyamman is her representative during the cremation ground rituals.

The procession stopped before going in to the cremation ground. Puja was offered to Ankalaisvari and then the main officiates encircled the kapparai, taking a goat with them. After they had circled the kapparai a number of times, one man drew a bow and arrow and the goat was shot but not killed. This ritual, I suggest, must represent a hunt. By this time it was about 1.00 am, this is said to be the time for hunting, the pursuit of the hero. Perhaps the main participants must prove their valour before going on to the ritually dangerous environment of the cremation ground, or there can be evidenced here some correspondence with the Tantric vīra "hero" who ideally performs his sadhanā at the cremation ground.

Once at the cremation ground, the pūkapparai, the kapparai, and the image of Pātāla Pēcciyamman are placed side by side near the riverbank.

![Diagram of Vaigai River with Pūkappari, Kapparai, Pātāla Pēcciyamman, and Cappāni karakam]
Three animals, a black pig, goat, and cockerel, are sacrificed before the *kapparai* image. *Pāṭāla Pēcciyamman* also shares in the sacrifice, after which, the heads of the three animals are smashed into the ground. This unusual ritual may have its genesis in the myth, outlined below, in which the goddess in her fierce form trampled and destroyed the fifth head of Brahmā.\(^68\) The chief *puṭāri* is possessed by Kapparaicāmi throughout and after the sacrifice goes alone to eat the bones of a pregnant Brahman woman who reportedly died the previous day, the inference being that she died to fulfil the needs of this particular ritual.\(^69\) It is difficult to determine exactly who is symbolically eating the bones, Śiva, the goddess, or Brahmā.

Superficially, eating the bones of a recently cremated woman seems gruesome and archaic. However, it appears that the practice of eating bones in the cremation ground, apart from indicating the domination and power of the deities of this temple over all classes and castes, even Brahmans, has a more profound significance. Śiva and Brahmā both had five faces, however, Śiva was jealous of Brahmā because he had a very powerful face. Śiva then tore off the powerful face of Brahmā, but when Śiva tried to eat, Brahma’s head ate all his food. To overcome this problem Śiva went to the cremation ground and ate bones, which were distasteful to Brahmā, consequently the head dropped from his hand.\(^70\) The practice of eating bones in the cremation ground is also the practice of the Tantric adept and indicates a loss of ego and detachment from the unreality of this world.

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\(^{68}\) The myth is presented in Meyer, *Ankāṭaparamēcuvari: A Goddess of Tamil Nadu, Her Myths and Cult*, p.37.

\(^{69}\) It is claimed by my informants that a local pregnant woman dies at the appropriate time, every time this festival is celebrated.

\(^{70}\) Information given by the chief *puṭāri*, informant 58.
The connection between the beheading of Brahmā and the goddess Anikālaīsvārī is corroborated and emphasised by one of the key myths cited by Meyer.71 According to the informant at Mēl Malaiyanūr, claimed to be the main temple for Anikālamman, the beheading of Brahmā occurred because both he and Śiva had five heads. One day Pārvatī mistook Brahmā for her husband and prostrated herself before him. He found this funny and laughed at her. Pārvatī was angry at his amusement at her misfortune of losing her faithfulness to her husband and cursed Brahmā to lose his fifth head, so that she would not make the same mistake again. Śiva cut off Brahmā's head, an act for which Brahmā cursed him to "go to the cremation ground and wander around there without food, without sleep, like a beggar".72 However, when Śiva did receive food, the kapāla of Brahmā "skull of Brahmā", that was stuck to his hand, ate the food. Only when Pārvatī scattered some food for the spirits, did the head of Brahmā leave Śiva's hand. Finally, the goddess in her fierce form smashed the head of Brahmā and once more the goddess assumed the left side of Śivā and they returned to Kailāsa.73

It was clearly stressed by my informants that the Brahman woman who died would also be pregnant, thereby prompting the question, what is the significance of the death of a pregnant Brahman woman? None of the informants at the Anikālaīsvārī temple had any idea of the symbolic significance of this event. However, I believe I can make some suggestions. In simple terms, the death of the woman -- particularly a Brahman -- and her necessity for this festival, is an indication that this goddess, who is associated with a lower class of people, nevertheless has power over a more superior class. It may also be an assertion that this goddess should not be dismissed or denigrated because she is not a

72 Meyer, Anikālaparamēcuvarī: A Goddess of Tamil Nadu, Her Myths and Cult, p. 36.
73 Ibid., pp. 36-8.
brahmanical deity. However, this event is not just the death of a Brahman woman but particularly one who is bearing a child. The clues to the significance of this particular element are not so clear. However, Meyer's very valuable research of numerous temples dedicated to Ankālaparamēcuvāri, another name of the same goddess, may provide some answers. A myth collected by Meyer from the pūjāri at a temple in Teli, South Arcot may suggest some significance of the pregnant woman, which I supply here in a condensed form.

Four rākṣasas "demons", Vallālakaṇṭāṇ, Mōkanakaṇṭāṇ, Irulakaṇṭāṇ, and Puvalakaṇṭāṇ, were tormenting the gods. The sage Nārada (Tam. Nāratamunivar) planned to destroy the rākṣasas so he visited their leader, Vallālakaṇṭāṇ, and convinced him that he should take the Trimūrti as his servants, as he was so powerful. Nārada told him that he should practise austerities and then ask a boon from Kailāsamūrti (Śiva), asking him to be born as Vallālakaṇṭāṇ's son. In due course, Vallālakaṇṭāṇ had obtained the Trimūrti as his guards and his wife, Nīśāsinī was expecting a child. Nārada knew that Vallālakaṇṭāṇ must be destroyed and so he enlisted the help of Isvari, the wife of Kailāsamūrti. She was to disguise herself as a gypsy and go to Vallālakaṇṭāṇ's fort, predict the birth of the child, the destruction of the fort and the beheading of Vallālakaṇṭāṇ. The goddess would then be thrown into prison, from which she would emerge in her viśvarūpa "all-containing form". She would then make sure that she was the only midwife in the world.

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74 Ankālaśivarī does, however, seem to have a more Sanskritised character than her original nature probably had. She does not directly accept any animal sacrifices whereas her original character almost certainly did.
72 The death of a Brahman woman carrying a child was also said to be necessary for the Mahā-Śivaratri festival as celebrated at the Pēcciyamman festival in Madurai. However, at this temple the need for it is satisfied by a pregnant goat that is about to deliver. The goat is cut and the kid removed. It is then taken around the temple in a cradle. The goat is sewn up and carried round the temple. However, the mother goat is finally sacrificed and the kid is smashed into the ground. Again, the informant did not know why the ritual was important.
and would therefore be asked to deliver the baby. At the time for delivery, the Queen had to go outside the fort walls, to give birth behind a screen, with no one but the midwife/goddess in attendance. Reverting once more to her viśvarūpa "all-containing form", the goddess "tore open her belly, took out the intestines and garlanded herself with them." She took out the child and placed it into the winnowing fan and gave the blood to the Kāṭṭēri", (blood-thirsty spirits). Vīrabhadra came with the Kāṭṭēri and beheaded Vallāḷaṇaṭṭan and the other three rākṣasas, destroyed the fort, and he and the goddess freed the Trimūrti.

This myth, which may at one time have been known at the temples for Aṅkāḷaīśvarī in the Madurai area, suggests a strong link between the goddess and a pregnant woman. In the course of the restoration of world order and destruction of evil, the woman and her child must be sacrificed. However, since the child is an incarnation of Ṣvāra, it is not destroyed, but instead is liberated.

What does the festival indicate about the character of the goddesses involved in it? It would seem that although this particular festival involves animal sacrifices and cremation ground rituals, it does not indicate that the goddesses' participation -- whether indirect, as is Aṅkāḷaīśvarī's with regard to the cremation ground rituals and the animal sacrifices, or direct as is Pēcciyamman's -- is an indication of her angry nature. Surely, it is only on the gross level that acceptance of an animal sacrifice in a temple is mistaken purely as an appeasement of anger? Aṅkāḷaīśvarī does sanction the sacrifice by allowing it, even though she does not directly accept it herself. However, there is no

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6 At many Aṅkāḷaīśvarī festivals the garlanding with intestines of those representing goddess is an important ritual, however; in Cholavandan this practice is not one of the festival rituals.

7 Ibid., p. 14

77 Ibid., pp. 12-15. The full version of this myth is cited here.

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evidence to suggest that Aṅkālaśvari is angry, malevolent or unpredictable. The songs of all the deities at this temple indicate that their main function is to "save" and "bless" the people, not to frighten them. What the songs and the festival rituals do emphasise is the power of the deities here, especially that of Aṅkālaśvari, and particularly the importance of her participation in the rituals that lead up to the cremation ground rites.

What is of significance, and particularly evident at this festival, is that expressions of power are most often accompanied by elements of impurity, rather than purity.

The cremation ground as the setting for any festival ritual is the place of the ultimate transition between sacred and profane and, consequently, between the human and spirit worlds, an idea beautifully elucidated by Kinsley:

> The cremation ground ... represents a more-or-less-permanent "opening" to the spirit world and the beings that inhabit it. It is a place of spirit traffic, of coming and going from one world to another. It is a liminal place, betwixt and between worlds, where radical transformations take place and contact between worlds is relatively common.

Viewed from one perspective, the cremation ground is a place of dread, fear and gross pollution, however, from another perspective the cremation ground becomes a place of rebirth, where the soul is finally released from its gross human body to be reborn in another form. Kinsley, in his analysis of the Mahāvidyās, the ten goddesses that represent forms of transcendent knowledge, states that "worship of nearly all of them is said to be most effective if undertaken in a cremation ground". By the performance of festival rituals in such close proximity to the divine spirit world, the adherent is perhaps

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79 See Appendix 4, Songs from Aṅkālaśvari temple.
80 "It is time that the people take the kapparai so it is essential that you should come." - Songs from Aṅkālaśvari temple.
able to draw more easily on, and amplify the power underlying this place of absolute opposition.

9:5 Protection

Numerous rituals performed during every day life but, more prominently, during yearly festivals, are specifically to afford protection from negative or potentially destructive forces. Some of the rituals performed at the time of, or shortly after, the main ritual, are concerned with the safety and success of the festival at this most dangerous time. The often frenzied activity at the climax of the festival -- a time of great potential pollution and a time when levels of divine power and heat are at their most potent but also most explosive -- is considered attractive to the many negative forces that inhabit this world. Therefore, the majority of the rituals performed at this time are designed to keep at bay or to divert these forces away from the festival proceedings.

The festival, as a whole, embodies in the nature of its rituals -- and perhaps more explicitly in its dealings with negative forces -- a tension between order and chaos. On a mundane level, the pattern of festival rituals often precipitates the fluctuation between order and disorder as the ordered commencement of the festival often builds to a period of chaos at its climax. Similarly, certain rituals in themselves have a chaotic nature: one particularly apt example is the often-frenzied possession experienced by some devotees. At other times, the devotee's experience of possession by the goddess is very calm and ordered. What this indicates is that both order and chaos are part of the same goddess reality, a point perhaps reinforced by the spatial location of many of her temples and shrines between the inhabited and uninhabited boundary of the settlement. However, more profoundly, the goddess as the focus of the festival is, as Pandian aptly suggests,
"the power which mediates between the known and unknown".83 Ostensibly, the evil or negative forces that threaten the order of the festival proceedings symbolise the unknown, the fears of the community, that in turn threaten the ordered and evolved settlement. These negative forces are the unknown entities that are the very embodiment of unpredictability, not the local goddesses. By working together the goddess and her devotees are able to keep at bay those chaotic forces that threaten the settlement's stability.

One of the most common ways of satisfying the demons or other evil forces is to offer them food, a part of the sacrifice, usually some blood-soaked rice thrown into the air at the edge of the settlement. Under certain circumstances the danger of this ceremony is deemed so great that extra precautions must be taken in order to avoid the pūjārī, or whoever performs this ritual, being taken over or killed by the demons or pēy (Tam.) as recorded at the Cellattamman temple in Madurai, by Van Den Hoek:

no people are allowed except for the pūjārī's, all lights in the surroundings have to be extinguished, and the streets leading to the temple are guarded. ... a small procession will go through the streets immediately surrounding the temple. It is led by the acārya paṭṭār, who will throw the mixture of rice and blood into the air -- from where it will not return to earth. This performance which is as dangerous as it is important marks the ultimate difference between the acārya paṭṭār and the other pūjāris. The clear implication is that if anybody else would perform the same act, he would die. In former times it has occurred that an acārya paṭṭār himself was not strong enough to withstand the powers he had to propitiate during this ceremony. Therefore, he had to be put in chains, so that he not be (sic) taken away by them.84

This is an extreme example of the type of ritual, particularly in Tamilnadu, that is used to protect the festival proceedings. However, in Cholavandan the offering of rice and

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blood is carried out at some of the festivals there, although perhaps in a less dramatic form than the one described by Van Den Hoek.

In Khurdapur, there is no evidence that the same form of protection rituals are employed although at the Ḍādi festival, Pauṣa Pūṛṇimā, fowls are sacrificed at the four corners of the goddess's enclosure, but were described as being for other goddesses, rather than to placate demons. The goddesses to whom these offerings are made are not considered harmful and the ceremony is practised more as an abstract offering, perhaps to all goddesses or the great goddess. The most obvious protection rituals in Khurdapur consist of the periodical food offerings left in pots at the edge of the inhabited area that are intended to keep the souls of the recently dead from interfering with the local inhabitants. It seems to be a common belief among the inhabitants in Khurdapur that the cremation ground is the source of the majority of negative forces that might disrupt the settlement.

9:5:1 Tying a protective thread

There are various other rituals and ceremonies that offer protection during the festival period. The centrality of these rituals would indicate that during the festival the participants, and the goddess herself, are particularly vulnerable. This vulnerability may be the result of openness necessary to form a link between the sacred and profane realms, consequently opening a threshold for negative or harmful forces. In order to combat these forces, protective measures need to be employed. The most common form of protection is the tying of a protective thread, generally around the wrist, at the start of the festival.
In Khurdapur, there seemed to be some confusion whether the wrist threads tied at all festival occasions constituted a protective thread. It seems that this ritual is taken for granted to such an extent that no one that I spoke to could give me any concrete reasons for wearing it. However, they did tell me of a custom that to my knowledge is peculiar to Khurdapur, but may possibly be found in other places in Orissa. The wearing of a hibiscus garland around the neck during important festival rituals such as fire walking appears to be normal practice in Khurdapur. It was conceded by the local informants that this practice is a form of protection. However, I cannot help but make associations between this red garland and the idea of self-sacrifice. Many of the goddesses who accept sacrifice are also particularly fond of these blood-red flowers. In the Kālighāṭ temple in Calcutta, dedicated to the goddess Kāli, a garland of red hibiscus flowers is placed around the neck of each goat before it is offered for sacrifice. Therefore, I suggest that there is more than a passing correspondence between the devotees' red-garlanded neck and the bloodied neck of the sacrificial victim. Metaphysically the sacrificial victim is protected by the sacrificial act from being reborn back into the samsāric cycle, being instead assured mokṣa: correspondingly the festival participant is protected in a more mundane way.

The tying of the kāppu or protective yellow thread around the wrist, which is a prominent feature of South Indian ceremonies, has a range of potential meanings. According to the Tamil Lexicon, the term kāppu means variously "watching"; "caution"; "vigilance"; "preservation"; "defence"; "guard"; and "protection". In South Indian festivities where the tying of the thread is most prominent, the goddess also has a thread tied around her wrist, if her image is in anthropomorphic form, or simply around her image if she has a non-anthropomorphic form. Does this indicate that she too is in need
of protection? The festival period in particular is a time when distinctions between sacred and profane are at their most fluid and constantly changing. Furthermore, it is also a time when sacred power is dangerously close to being out of control as the climax of the festival is reached. Therefore, the significance of the kāppu is perhaps twofold. Not only does it give protection from outside forces but, perhaps more subtly, it is a controlling force for the power built up during the festival. Power can be both positive and negative, therefore it is vital that the potentially dangerous power accumulated by the festival rituals is controlled and safely utilised; indeed Diehl describes the kāppu as a "three-dimensional Yantra." The kāppu then, may be tied around the goddess's wrist, not simply to protect her from outside defilement but perhaps more importantly, to control the great power that the festival rituals stimulate. However, what is most clear is that the participants are not being protected from the anger of the goddess, but simply from the harm that might be caused by the mortal devotee's close proximity to an abundance of sacred power.

The kāppu, it would seem, is much more than a protective charm. There is a term for the tying of the kāppu which, according to the Tamil Lexicon, is kāppu-k-kaṭṭu - "to tie an amulet, a yellow string on the arm in token of a vow and of a pledge of its fulfilment; to tie a string round herbs in order to dispel any evil curse; to engage in a pursuit with earnestness; to commence a temple festival." Therefore, the wearing of the kāppu

86 Other examples of the control exacted on the goddess's power are detailed by Fuller who suggests that the sexual power of Mīnākṣī is in the main image during the day where she wears a coloured sari. At night her main image wears a white sari, indicating a lack of power, as her moveable image joins Śiva in the bedchamber. Their sexual union curbs, or keeps under control, her accumulated power. Fuller, C. J. (1980) "The Divine Couple's Relationship in a South Indian Temple: Mīnākṣī Sundaresvara at Madurai." History of Religions, 19: 325. Furthermore, the kāppu, is like a bracelet which is considered to keep a woman under control. See Das, Veena (1976) 'The Uses of Liminality: Society and Cosmos in Hinduism.' Contributions to Indian Sociology (NS), 10/2: 258.
signifies not only that those wearing it are in a different state, but also a bond between
the devotee and the goddess, or the ratification of a vow between them. This idea is
supported by the number of rituals performed by the devotee during the festival, such as
fire-walking, in fulfilment of a previously made vow.

9:5:2 Purification rituals

The purification rituals that are a significant part of festival ceremony should also be
viewed as rites of protection. The most common purification ritual marking the end of
the festival, and a precursor to the return to ordinary life, is the throwing of turmeric
water on the assembled crowd, and the purifying of the temple after sacrifice. Turmeric
is a complex substance that has a variety of associations and meanings. According to
Fuller and Logan, during the Navarātri festival, the sanctum of Mīnākṣī is painted with
a paste of turmeric and sandalwood, which is cooling and purifying. They go on to
suggest that this cooling paste insulates the rest of the temple from the anger or heat of
the goddess during the ensuing battle with Mahiṣāsura.88 Just as it is necessary to
immerse the sakti karakam in the river or tank to disperse its potentially dangerous
power, it is also necessary to dispel the sacred power that is built up by the devotees
through their austerities. Furthermore, the devotees, like the goddess, also need to be
protected and cleansed from their close proximity to the blood of the sacrifice. As they
return to normality, their contact with blood and death becomes defilement once more.
Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the need for purification at the end of the festival
also suggests that sacredness and power are not necessarily synonymous with purity, an
idea that was also apparent when the character of the goddess was analysed.

The Importance of Rituals Outside the Temple

Through the examination of a variety of rituals at two contrasting sites in India, the wide range of rituals that take place in Khurdapur and Cholavandan can be analysed more closely. The most striking difference between many of the rituals is their location. A significant number of the rituals take place outside the sacred realm of the temple or shrine and, instead, are performed in the profane context of the settlement. This is an important distinction because, by analysing the various rituals within this framework, an assessment can be made as to whether there is a certain type of ritual that takes place outside the temple. Furthermore, it is possible to analyse whether there is a fundamental difference between those rituals conducted outside the temple and those that are performed within the confines of the temple or shrine. This approach to the analysis of festival rituals is, as far as I am aware, an avenue hitherto unexplored by previous research.

Having separated all the rituals into roughly two groups, those inside and outside the temple or shrine, I have further divided the rituals into two more groups. Those that I term "common" are rituals common to both sites and possibly throughout India. The rest I term "uncommon", and include those rituals which are not widely practised, but which I have encountered during the course of this research. By making these divisions, I am able to show the commonality of the various rituals between the two field sites without negating the more obscure rituals. I have therefore combined the data into two tables showing the rituals, both inside and outside the temple or shrine in Khurdapur and Cholavandan.89

89 See tables 21-23 overleaf: Ritual occurrence inside and outside the temple in Khurdapur and Cholavandan.
Table 21 Key to Tables Showing Ritual Occurrence Inside and Outside the Temples in Khurdapur and Cholavandan

Rituals that take place inside the temple within the sacred realm.

"Common" rituals
1. Puja
2. Abhiṣeka - ritual bath
3. Decoration of the goddess
4. Tying of kappu
5. Sacrifice
6. Possession

"Uncommon" rituals
7. Offering māvilakku, rice flour lamps
8. Flag hoisting and lowering at start and end of festival

Rituals that take place outside the temple in the profane realm.

"Common" rituals
9. Holy dip in river or tank
10. Invocation of the sakti karakam
11. Some sacrifices
12. Festival procession
13. Fire Walking

"Uncommon" rituals
14. Planting and growing mulaiṅari, pot sown with nine grains
15. Poṅkal making and distributing
16. Hunt
17. Cremation ground rituals
18. Boundary rituals
19. Possession outside the temple
Table 22. Ritual Occurrence Inside and Outside the Temple in Khurdapur

1-8 = Rituals which take place inside the temple or shrine.  9-19 = Rituals that take place outside the temple or shrine.

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✓ Indicates the celebration of the particular ritual in the worship of the goddess.
- Indicates the absence of the particular ritual in the worship of the goddess.
* At Santōṣi Mā’s annual festival 108 pots are brought from the tank.
+ Neck-ring of hibiscus flowers that is the equivalent of a Tamil kāppu, sacred protective thread.
# Small procession only.

1 In Orissa mājanā, "ritual bath", is given to goddesses and abhiṣeka to gods.
### Table 23. Ritual Occurrence Inside and Outside the Temple in Cholavandan

1-8 = Rituals which take place inside the temple or shrine. 9-19 = Rituals that take place outside the temple or shrine.

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✓ Indicates the celebration of the particular ritual in the worship of the goddess.
- Indicates the absence of the particular ritual in the worship of the goddess.
--------- Indicates goddesses of the same temple.
+ = Goddess whose temple is on the boundary.

1 Possession is rare.
2 Sakti karakam procession only.
3 Pātāla Pēcciyanman receives her sacrifice before her image at the cremation ground.
4 Cillaikkariyanman used to receive animal sacrifices but now she only receives the karakam carried by Cappāni that contains liquor, eggs and chicken legs.
5 Procession to boundary but no rituals.
6 Fire walking has been a festival feature in the past but for the last few years, the goddess has not given her permission.
7 The festival for this goddess takes place outside Cholavandan.
8 No annual festival.
9 Procession to Celliyamman temple on settlement boundary.
"Common" Rituals

Puja
Abhiseka - ritual bath
Decoration of the goddess
Tying of kāppu
Sacrifice
Possession

"Uncommon" Rituals

Offering māvilakku, rice flour lamps
Flag hoisting and lowering at start and end of festival

By making an examination of this list of the rituals that take place inside the temple or shrine, an analysis of ritual types is possible. What becomes evident is that most of the rituals that take place in the temple, i.e. pūjā, abhiseka, the offering of māvilakku and the decoration or adornment of the goddess, are of a devotional nature. Sacrifice and possession are evident in Khurdapur and Cholavandan both inside the temple and outside, although they seem most common outside. Possession and sacrifice, in a general sense, are really rituals of transformation when there is direct and often dramatic contact between sacred and profane.

Contrary to expectation, many of the most important rituals take place outside the temple precinct. This pattern, I suggest, highlights the importance of the profane realm in connection with sacred ceremonies but, perhaps most importantly, reiterates the point

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90 This ritual seems more prevalent in Cholavandan than Khurdapur. I was informed that in Khurdapur it is only carried out at the Śiva temples there (Informant 30).
91 This may be a South Indian ritual as there is no evidence of it in Khurdapur.
92 Sometimes the flag-staff is erected specially for the festival and may be placed in front of, but outside the temple, as it the case at Nathan Māriyamman Māci festival.
that ritual is the medium of transformation. It also indicates that festivals are primarily based on a complex interplay between sacred and profane, made interchangeable through ritual. Furthermore, this pattern also reveals that the temple or shrine is not always the locus of divine power. From a wider perspective, this suggests that it is the village or town as a microcosm within the wider world that is the all-important concept.

9:6:2 Rituals that take place outside the temple in the profane realm.

"Common" Rituals

Holy dip in river or tank
Invocation of the šakti karakam
Some sacrifices
Festival procession
Fire Walking

"Uncommon" Rituals

Planting and growing *mulaipāri*, pot sown with nine grains
*Ponkal* making and distributing
Hunt
Cremation ground rituals
Boundary rituals
Possession outside the temple

By looking at the above list of rituals that take place outside the temple or shrine, what is most striking is the diversity and amount of rituals. One of the "common" rituals,
holy bathing, which generally happens at the local river or tank, is primarily an act of purification. The remaining four rituals that I have identified as being "common" rites centre on an intimate communication between the goddess and her devotee. They are also rituals where a dramatic and dynamic transformation takes place. During these rites -- especially the sacrifice, the invocation of the śakti karakam, and the fire walk -- the proximity between sacred and profane is at its closest. Furthermore, these rites are the most important in the festival sequence as a whole with the other festival rituals form a framework around these select few.

All the rituals that take place outside the temple in fact establish direct contact between the devotees and the sacred. The rituals unlock the opening between the two worlds. As these encounters take place outside the temple it reveals that contact between sacred and profane can be effected anywhere, not just in the sacred confines of the temple. If so many of the most important rituals take place outside the temple, within the profane aspect of reality, then this must indicate that at the time of these rituals the village or town becomes infused by the sacred or divine power. The festival brings all opposition together, further indicating that the goddess, or more correctly śakti, divine feminine energy, in essence is underlying everything. However, it is only through ritual that this force becomes activated and therefore apparent.

I suggest that one of the aims of a festival is to transfer the sacred power of the goddess to the village. Therefore rituals that take place inside the temple or shrine are in preparation for the power of the goddess or the goddess herself -- either as a possessed person or in a festival procession -- to go outside, into the wider world. The transformative rituals that are the core of the festival enable the goddess and her
devotees to establish a close encounter without either one of them being irrevocably harmed or damaged.

9:6:3 Śakti karakam - invocation and final immersion

Perhaps one of the most significant rituals to take place outside the temple is the invocation of the śakti karakam. The invocation of the power of the goddess into the karakam, which then becomes the śakti karakam, is one of the most important rituals in goddess festivals across India. A specially made, but nevertheless ordinary, pot is taken in procession to the river where it is ritually cleaned, decorated with flowers and offered worship as the goddess’s power is invited to enter into it for the duration of the festival. Certain items may be put into the pot such as coins, white, sacred un-boiled rice, sand and river water as was the case at Aṅkālaśvarī temple, West Car Street in Cholavandan. The śakti karakam is then brought back to the temple carried on the head of the pūjārī and installed in the sanctum, in front of the goddess’s image.

The fact that these ceremonies and the preparation of the śakti karakam take place at the river or tank, rather than in the sacred confines of the temple or shrine, is an important one. At first thought, it would seem logical that the śakti karakam which, through the invocation of the goddess’s power becomes the goddess in essence, should be performed in her sacred sanctum. The sanctum is already considered to be the goddess’s powerhouse, so why should her invocation into the śakti karakam take place outside the temple’s sacred boundary? Perhaps it is because the pot, an object from the profane world, in its un-transformed state, would defile her sanctum? It may also

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97 The pot is usually made of clay or clay mixed with sand. However, brass pots are sometimes used as is the case at Santosī Mā’s annual festival.
98 In Khurdapur tank water would be put into the pot.
suggest that if the *karakam* must be infused with the goddess’s power in order for the festival to proceed, then her power must reside, not solely in her sanctum, or indeed the temple, but outside as well.

In this ritual of the invocation of the *śakti karakam*, there is a direct link between the sacred and profane spheres as the pot is transformed. Although it is made specially for the festival, it is still of the profane world until the moment that the power of the goddess enters it. There appears to be a crossover as a profane object becomes sacred and something of the town, the profane world, is brought directly into the goddess’s sanctum. Therefore, in contrast to the mainly devotional nature of the rituals which take place in the temple or shrine, I suggest that the rituals performed outside the temple or shrine are on the whole transformative in nature. They are designed to activate a change of state, in which, profane becomes sacred.

9:7 Contrasts and comparisons

One of the most noticeable differences between Khurdapur and Cholavandan is that in Khurdapur there is no evident place of sacrifice. A specific example would include the Mā Maṅgaḷā (*Hādi* - Jatesvar) temple where, when I asked where the sacrifice took place, an area just in front of the new shrine was pointed out, although there was nothing tangible to distinguish it from its surroundings. During the yearly festival, when sacrifice takes place, a wooden stake or *halikhumba* is erected for the duration of the festival only. In Cholavandan, by contrast, the *palipīḍam*, or sacrificial stone is very evident, in fact it is often part of the temple layout. The *palipīḍam* can be found at most temples even though there might be no sacrifice carried out there.
The North Indian goddess Santōṣī Mā is not one of the plethora of goddesses in South India, although many people have heard of her. There is no comparison in Cholavandan to the Santōṣī Mā Friday worship of Khurdapur, when the goddess regularly gives advice and heals those devotees who seek her help. This form of worship may also be peculiar to Khurdapur, as many devotees come from various parts of Orissa, and further afield, to see this particular goddess. During my interviews with the devotees of Santōṣī Mā, no one mentioned another incidence of this form of worship. The possession of the priest or some other devotee is, however, a common feature of the festivals in both Khurdapur and Cholavandan. The possessed person may perform some acts of healing and give advice but this is generally a yearly occurrence not a weekly occurrence, as is the case in Khurdapur.

The festival patterns and rituals are generally less complex in Khurdapur than several of those celebrated in Cholavandan. In part, this is a reflection of the large percentage of small shrines and temples in the village settlement of Khurdapur as opposed to several large temples in Cholavandan. Festivals can cost a great deal of money, which may prove to be prohibitive to many of the smaller temples and shrines. However, some of the festivals celebrated at the small temple/shrines in Cholavandan are celebrated for a longer period and exhibit a more complex structure than those in Khurdapur. There is a perceptible difference in religious atmosphere and attitude between the two settlements that, although apparent, is nevertheless very difficult to articulate. I believe that generally the south of India is more traditional in terms of its religion than the north of India. Local temple ritual appears to form a greater part of everyday life for many of the inhabitants of Cholavandan -- and indeed Tamilnadu -- than was evident in Khurdapur and Orissa.99

99 I cannot really comment on other South Indian states as I have no, or very little, personal experience of
In both Khurdapur and Cholavandan the fire walk, possession by the goddess, and animal sacrifices are important core rituals in a variety of festivals celebrated by various caste groups. There is a strong indication that these important rituals of transformation and communication between the sacred and profane worlds are central to local worship across India. They are, however, not generally a part of brahmanical rituals, although, as was apparent at both the Santosī Mā worship in Khurdapur and the Jenakai Māriyamman festival in Cholavandan, brahmanically orientated goddesses may incorporate one or more of these rituals into their worship. Elsewhere in India the same pattern can be evidenced at certain temples, Kālīghāṭ for example, dedicated to the goddess Kālī in Calcutta, where daily animal sacrifices take place, although the temple is presided over by Brahman priests.

The importance of the invocation of the śakti karakam is more apparent in Cholavandan, where it is considered a core ritual of the majority of local festivals, although not a part of brahmanical festival ritual. In Khurdapur the kalasam (Tam. karakam), usually two, are decorated and installed in the goddess's sanctum, they were not specifically claimed to represent the goddess. At some festivals 108 kalasam are decorated and taken to the temple, more readily symbolising the names of a deity, or a particularly auspicious number. The tying of a wrist thread or other protective symbol is much more apparent in Cholavandan than in Khurdapur. In Cholavandan, the term kāppu refers to the protective thread worn at the start of the festival and removed at its end, symbolising protection, but also a bond between deity and devotee. However, in Khurdapur, although wrist threads are worn they are not removed at the end of the festival, possibly being a symbol that the person wearing it has entered a state of the general religious climate there.
increased sacredness. In Khurdapur a more complex protective symbol is the circle of hibiscus flowers worn around the neck, said by my informants to be a protective symbol. I suggest, however, that the meaning of this symbol is more profound as the red flowers around the neck also mark the wearer as a sacrificial victim, thereby giving rise to the idea that rituals such as fire walking, at which the hibiscus garland is worn, are types of self-sacrifice.

Some of the festivals in Cholavandan are more elaborate than those in Khurdapur, most noticeably the Mahā-Śivarātri and Vaikāci festivals detailed above. None of the festivals in Khurdapur takes place in the cremation ground nor do they involve any processions in which a festival image is taken around the streets on a chariot or vehicle. The only way that the goddesses of Khurdapur are able to come out of their sanctums is in the form of a possessed person. However, some of the festivals devoted to the goddesses of Khurdapur do contain what would normally be considered brahmanical rituals that are not apparent in Cholavandan. The homa sacrifice and the symbolism of 108 as part of local rituals was unexpected, but in the festivals of Khurdapur have been successfully incorporated alongside the more traditionally categorised local rituals.

Paṅkugi (March/April) is the most popular festival month in Cholavandan whereas the most important festival time in Khurdapur appears to be Pāna Sankrānti in the month of Baiśākh (April/May) when several temples and shrines celebrate their yearly festival. Both of these months represent the hottest period for the particular state, a time especially associated with local goddesses, supposedly an attribution of their anger. However, in neither field site, was the anger of the goddess an overt feature of her annual festival, other than the offering of a blood sacrifice to please or placate the
More conspicuous is the regenerative and transformative nature of many of the rituals, including animal sacrifice. Therefore, Whitehead's still used commentary on local festival rituals, while it is of value as a specific interpretative stance of a past historical period, seems somewhat outdated as an accurate analysis of the festival practices today. While I cannot deny that some practices are, from a western perspective, undeniably "disgusting", they are not necessarily "prompted by fear and superstition". What has emerged, through a detailed examination of a variety of festival rituals practised in Orissa and Tamilnadu, is that the ritualistic element of local religion is the connecting force between deity and devotee, enabling, not just the goddess but the goddess and her surrounding environment, through an exchange of power, to be to revitalised and reborn each year.

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100 The only goddess who is specifically offered an annual blood sacrifice to avert her wrath is Nāṭār Patirakāliyamman in Cholavandan.

101 See above Whitehead's quotation, p. 263.
Conclusion
This research has presented a comprehensive picture of local goddess worship in two contrasting sites across India. In carrying out this task, the research has answered three questions. Since the most wide-ranging local goddess studies are less than objective and written many years ago, are they now out of date? Furthermore, has the later goddess-centred research -- written during the last thirty years -- represented local goddesses accurately? Finally, how far can my analysis of the goddesses in the two sites, Khurdapur and Cholavandan, contributed to an understanding of the extent of pan-Indian uniformity or does it reveal significant differences between North and South India? Therefore, how far has the research fulfilled these aims and, more precisely, what are its findings?

Are previous studies out of date?

Several of the earliest comprehensive studies examining local Indian goddesses were conducted by Christian missionaries or interested government officials around the beginning of this century. They were biased, undertaken from a particularly Christian perspective, but they presented a valuable and wide-ranging record of local goddess worship at that time. However, since such studies are difficult and lengthy to compile, there have been no later studies of the same magnitude. This has led modern scholars to base their research on this early material, often without, it seems, fully considering whether local religion has changed significantly in the last hundred years. My research indicates that written sources do not necessarily correspond with contemporary local worship, perhaps because ritual practices, and indeed the recipients, the goddesses

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themselves, are prone to change. Perhaps more importantly, the prejudices and misunderstandings that are articulated in these early studies require analytical redress. By presenting local goddesses as deities without intrinsic worth, and as causing fear and tyranny among local people, these early writers have succeeded in obscuring the more complex nature of local goddesses. A thorough examination of the variety of goddesses in Khurdapur and Cholavandan has shown that the positive and negative aspects of the local goddesses' power form a complicated interplay between the two extremes. Many of the more gruesome rituals that the early writers describe are no longer evident, at least in the two sites that I examined. Therefore, I can positively conclude that a number of aspects of the early goddess studies are out of date but, more importantly, the attitude of the scholars must be re-assessed as I also conclude that, in terms of the local goddesses that I have encountered, it is seriously flawed.

Unfortunately, other scholars have taken up the baton left by Whitehead, Elmore, et al. and, it would appear, have used this negative view as their starting point. Therefore, much of the subsequent research has presented local goddesses in a less than positive light. However, although I have been critical of Whitehead, Elmore and others who recorded their research almost a century ago, I must also give them credit for bringing local goddess worship to the attention of a wider audience. They have provided a detailed account of local worship over a wide geographical area, which is undoubtedly of historic value.

Accurate representation of local goddesses

Leading on from the previous aim, one of the central issues of this research is the applicability of the studies, written during the last thirty years, to the goddesses found in
local towns and villages across India today. India's innumerable local goddesses have been categorised by a number of rather negative associations, labels, and characterisations. This has led to a somewhat misunderstood and disparaging attitude towards local goddesses and their worship. This research has tackled this misrepresentation, presenting instead a more comprehensive view of local goddess worship, encompassing not just the character and mythology of each goddess, but also the ritual practice surrounding her worship and her abode within a given settlement. It has shown that the local settlements of India play host to a wide range of goddesses with a broad magnitude of characteristics between them. By comparing the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan with the picture painted of local goddesses in previous research, it has become apparent that the majority of independent goddesses have been erroneously termed "fierce", "ambivalent", "petty" "malevolent".2

Harper3 was one of the first scholars to categorise the goddesses of a particular location, and his work has been of considerable influence in shaping the ideas of subsequent research. Although Harper examined a range of goddesses, he confined his research findings to a three-way classification of them. He did not present them as individuals with names and their own characteristics: nor did he provide any indication of the proportion of goddesses in each category. I have shown that the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan would not fit comfortably into Harper's categorisation

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and, more importantly, an attempt to carry out such a classification would obscure their true nature. Having said that, Harper's research marked the first step in a journey that will continue well beyond the scope of this research.

Other scholars have followed Harper's lead and have categorised the goddesses that they examined in a similar way. The groups in which they have placed the local goddesses have been too confining. By looking at the huge diversity of character traits evident in the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan, it seems clear to me that previous categories could not adequately depict the complexity that is a feature of the local goddesses. Many of the goddesses that I examined straddled more than one category, although previous scholars have made no provision for this occurrence. To my knowledge Kathleen Erndl is the only scholar so far to have questioned previous categorisations, particularly Babb's, in an attempt to provide a more comprehensive account of local goddesses.

One of the most consistent character traits ascribed to the local goddesses is anger and even malevolence. Brubaker, although he admits that the local goddesses' character is both positive and negative, still appears to emphasise her negative side as he describes her as "typically ambivalent -- involved with community destiny, to be sure, but in a manner that is dangerous, can be destructive, and appears capricious." Brubaker and other scholars also emphasise the local goddesses' close relationship with disease as both its source and its relief. While I would not dispute that there is a close relationship

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4 In particular Babb, “Marriage and Malevolence”; The Divine Hierarchy, and Beck, “The Vacillating Goddess”.

between disease and the local goddesses of both Khurdapur and Cholavandan, I feel that the negative relationship has often been overemphasised.  

The overwhelming feature of the character of the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan, when attitudes towards them and their ritual interaction with their devotees is examined, indicates that they do not generally warrant the labels "angry", "malevolent" or "ambivalent". However, there are always exceptions, and a couple of the goddesses that I have examined, such as Pātāla Pēcchiyamman, do have a propensity for fierceness. While many of the goddesses have a dual personality encompassing both benevolent and fierce characteristics, they are not generally feared by the devotees. Although some goddesses, for example Mā Maṅgaḷā (Bhoi- Sarasvatipur), are admittedly prone to anger under certain circumstances, their anger is retributive rather than unpredictable or unexplained, being most often precipitated by a devotee breaking a vow made to the goddess. On examination of the rituals surrounding the local goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan it has become apparent that it is their protective power that is most dominant. Although the local festivals may involve rituals that ordinarily might be harmful to the devotee, it is nevertheless accepted that the power of the goddess, sustained by her bond with the devotee, will act as a protective force. Through making this type of all-inclusive investigation, looking at character and ritual, it has emerged throughout the study that the goddesses of Khurdapur and Cholavandan are most often approached for their nurturing and healing qualities. These are predominant, rather than qualities that elicit any fear or trepidation felt by the local inhabitants.

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6 For example Brubaker who states that "quite often, in fact -- the goddess is cast in the opposite role, as the one who inflicts the disease upon her people." "The Ambivalent Mistress", p. 309.
The correspondence between *power and purity* has been an important issue in this investigation of the character of local goddesses. Since previous research, in particular that of Wadley, has asserted that there is a correlation between *power and purity*, this theory has been examined for its applicability to the goddesses in Khurdapur and Cholavandan. My findings indicate that the reverse is apparent among the goddesses at the two field sites. Very few of the goddesses in Khurdapur and Cholavandan would be considered fully Sanskritised — the most pure category of goddess — as many have traits generally ascribed to local goddesses. The most pure goddesses seem remote, evident in the placement of their shrine or temple, in the frequency of their worship, and in the atmosphere felt within the temple. The most popular goddesses seem to straddle the two types, having both Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic traits, and frequently having impure aspects to their characters. What is often forgotten by many scholars, particularly by anthropologists whose emphasis is on the socio-cultural aspect of local life, is that every goddess is fundamentally an aspect of and representative of *śakti*, the divine feminine energetic principle. *Śakti* energy encompasses both positive and negative aspects of divine power and the local goddesses, no less than the pan-Indian goddesses, represent the various aspects of that power. There is a variety of links evident in the mythology and characterisation of the goddesses in both Khurdapur and Cholavandan that indicate their correspondence with some of the pan-Indian goddesses, most notably Pārvatī, Durgā and Kāli.

Uniformity or diversity?

Having examined the applicability of previous research to the goddesses in the two contrasting field sites I shall endeavour to answer the question, is goddess worship in Khurdapur and Cholavandan representative of local goddess worship across India?
Without an India-wide survey, this question is hard to answer although, in my own assessment, it seems likely that they are. The two field sites represent unremarkable settlements that might be found in many areas of India. Although there will always be variations, especially between towns and villages where the most prominent deities are not goddesses but gods, I believe that the goddesses and the patterns of worship found in both of the field sites are a strong indication of their applicability to general local religious trends.

The examination of the temples, shrines and other sacred places in Khurdapur and Cholavandan was the area which showed most difference between the two field sites. It was also the area that yielded the most evidence to suggest the ways in which settlements develop religiously. Khurdapur, it appears, is presently in a state of transition in which many of its shrines are being expanded. Khurdapur's only temple has been, and still is, in a state of change as alterations are made, and its sphere of influence is increasing. Conversely, Cholavandan represents a town that has already grown and changed, consequently its variety of temples -- albeit small in comparison to that of cities -- appear to have reached their optimum size and are presently in a state of quiescence. Therefore, the differences between the two sites seem to be based more on the contrasting size of their settlements rather than on their geographical differences.

There are certain core ideas defined by the ancient texts on classical temple building that emphasise, in particular, the symbolic nature of the temple itself. Not only does the temple represent a symbolic correspondence between heaven and earth, but it is also representative of the human body. Theoretically, its site and orientation are indicative of the type of deity that inhabits it. However, in practice the temples and shrines of both
Khurdpur and Cholavandan rarely corresponded with the textual formula. Textual sources specify that temples and shrines dedicated to goddesses in a fierce form should be placed outside the inhabited area of the settlement and should face away from the houses, an idea corroborated by Good in his research at one village settlement in South India.\(^7\) However, in both Khurdapur and Cholavandan this pattern is not adhered to, as essentially fierce and essentially benign goddesses occupy a variety of positions. In Khurdapur, the majority of goddess temples and shrines are situated around the inhabited part of the settlement, although it is the pan-Indian goddess Lakṣmī who occupies one of the most outward positions. An examination of the orientation of all the temples and shrines in Khurdapur reveals their east-facing aspect, whereas in Cholavandan the temples and shrines face in a variety of directions. It has also become clear through this investigation that temple orientation is not always indicative of the character of the goddess or goddesses who occupy them.

Although there are a variety of temple types at the two field sites they can, nevertheless, be categorised into three basic groups. Each one is indicative of a different relationship between deity and devotee and between sacred and profane. From evidence collected at Khurdapur and Cholavandan, the closer a goddess is to the Sanskritic or Brahmanised ideal, the more separation there is between deity and devotee. However, one aspect of the temples and shrines at both field sites was that they are all representative of a nexus between the different worlds, albeit expressed in different ways at each site. In Khurdapur, the emphasis was clearly on the importance of trees as symbolic connectors, whereas in Cholavandan the worship of snakes and the palipīḍam, "sacrificial stone",

common in temples in Tamilnadu, provide symbolic evidence of this connection.

The importance of ritual in relation to the character of the goddesses and in establishing the sacredness of the places considered holy, was evident in each settlement. Of some significance is the fact that an annual fire walk was a central ritual at both sites. Although the goddesses who receive the ritual may differ considerably, and so may some of the outward details such as the shape and size of the pit and the number of times devotees cross it, in essence this rite has the same meaning and importance at the two sites, possibly indicating that it is prevalent across India. Possession and animal sacrifice have proved important at both sites, although these rites are not conducted for all the goddesses. Furthermore, it seems apparent that in at least some temples, where the primary goddess is essentially pure, sacrifice is still given to the lesser deities, signifying that in some measure all the deities at the temple partake of its power.

This has been the first piece of research from the perspective of Religious Studies to compare the "goddess collectives" of two field sites in different geographical areas of India. By using this approach, a new aspect has been added to the research already compiled. In examining two contrasting settlements, the evidence collected at each site has been compared and contrasted and various suggestions have been made about general trends across India. This investigation provides a stepping stone to other more probing research that will help to broaden the rather limited knowledge about local goddesses, India-wide. I hope that my research will convince others that the worship of the myriad of local goddesses in India is a worthwhile subject for study since it reflects

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8 I have coined the term "goddess collective" to indicate the range of goddesses in the two settlements, Khurdapur and Cholavandan, rather than the more commonly used "pantheon". I have rejected the term "pantheon" since it presupposes a structured hierarchy. Within the scope of this research the supposition of a pantheon is not relevant, nor is it possible to research conclusively.
the worship patterns and belief systems for the vast majority of Hindus. Therefore, I lay my contribution to the study of local worship at the feet of the goddess.
Bibliography
Texts and Translations


*Cōḻavantāṉ Aruḻmiku Jepakai Māriyamman Tirukkōyil - Vaikāciperuntiruviḻa Aḷaippital* (20-5-96 mutal 5-6-96 mutiyā) (Festival programme)


*Nattam Aruḻmiku Māriyamman Tirukkōyil - Māciperuntiruviḻa Aḷaippital* (11-2-97 mutal 26-2-97 mutiyā) (Festival programme)


**Secondary Sources**


**Unpublished Dissertations**

Brand, Michael (1979) "A New Hindu Goddess." B.A. Dissertation (Appendix and Bibliography only), Australian National University.


Appendices
Photographic Evidence

The photographic evidence is an important component of the overall research. It is provided to make the distinctions between the temples and shrines clear, not just in one settlement, but in making a comparison between the temple types in Khurdapur and Cholavandan. Photographic evidence has also proved instrumental in detailing the developments and changes to the temples and shrines, particularly in Khurdapur. Furthermore, the photographic evidence is essential for illustrating the iconographic nature of the respective goddesses.

The following appendices entitled The Goddesses and Temples of Khurdapur and The Goddesses and Temples of Cholavandan are arranged by temple or shrine. In each case, the attendant goddesses, festival detail, and any associated sacred places are grouped together with their respective temple or shrine. This arrangement, I feel, provides a more comprehensive encounter of individual temples or shrines and the goddesses that reside in them.

In order to familiarise the reader with the two settlements I have included some photographs showing general views. In addition, I have included photographs of the Liṅgaraj temple in Bhubaneswar and the Mīnākṣī temple in Madurai as examples of typical temple architecture from both Orissa and Tamilnadu.
Appendix 1

The Goddesses and Temples of Khurdapur
(Photographs)
Fig. 1  Main street Bandanapur.

Fig. 2  Cow dung cakes, used for fuel, drying on a house wall.
Fig. 3 Hay stacks in Khurdapur.

Fig. 4 A mat salesman plies his wares in Khurdapur.
Fig. 5 An offering left at the edge of the settlement in order to get rid of some illness.

Fig. 6 Tender coconut with hibiscus flower left at the edge of the settlement in order to dispel disease.
Fig. 7 Broken pots which contained food offerings left for the dead at the edge of the settlement.

Fig. 8 Food offerings left for the dead at the edge of the settlement.
Fig. 9 A shrine to Bana Durgā in the mango grove near to the Middle and Girl’s Schools.

Fig. 10 The mango tree that represents the goddess Bana Durgā.
Fig. 11 Kanaka Durgā, who was moved from the nearby forest to this shrine in Bhagavanpur.

Fig. 12 Kanaka Durgā, “Golden” Durgā.
Fig. 13  Aliala temple/shrine in Bhagavanpur.

Fig. 14 Aliala, meaning “only one” is said to be a form of Pārvatī.
Fig. 15 Kanaka Durgā shrine and Aḷiala temple/shrine in Bhagavanpur.

Fig. 16 Mā Maṅgaḷā (Bhoi- Sarasvatipur) shrine showing wall constructed to separate it from its profane surroundings.
Fig. 17 Maṅgalā (Bhoi Sarasvatipur) represented by vermilion and sandal paste markings on a kochilla tree.

Fig. 18 Lakṣmi-Nārāyaṇa shrine situated at the edge of one of the settlement tanks.
Fig. 19 Detail of Lakṣmī Narayan temple/shrine.

Fig. 20 Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa
Fig. 21 Old Baghei and Dullādei shrines under a Tamarind tree.

Fig. 22 New temple/shrine for Baghei and Dullādei situated at the edge of the paddy field.
Fig. 23  Old Baghai shrine under a Tamarind tree.

Fig. 24  Old Dulládei shrine under a tamarind tree.
Fig. 25 Baghei image in old shrine.

Fig. 26 Baghei in temporary shrine.
Fig. 27 Dulladei in old shrine.

Fig. 28 Dulladei in temporary shrine.
Fig. 29  New Baghei and Dulládei temple/shrine showing its position in the paddy field.

Fig. 30  New Baghei and Dulládei temple/shrine with temporary shrines for Baghei and Dulládei in the foreground.
Fig. 31 The old Mā Maṅgaḷa (Hāḍī - Jatesvar) shrine now overgrown by the Banyan tree.

Fig. 32 New Mā Maṅgaḷa (Hāḍī - Jatesvar) temple/shrine with its concreted forecourt.
Fig. 33 Old aniconic image of *(Hādi)* Mā Maṅgalā.

Fig. 34 New anthropomorphic image of *(Hādi)* Mā Maṅgalā.
Fig. 35 Mā Maṅgāḷa (Bhoi - Bandanapur) shrine under a wood apple tree. Alongside is a tulasī plant.

Fig. 36 Detail of Mā Maṅgāḷa (Bhoi - Bandanapur) shrine.
Fig. 37 Mā Maṅgaḷa image (*Bhoi* - Bandanapur).
Fig. 38 A dāru marking a sacred enclosure opposite Mā Maṅgaḷa (Bhoi - Bandanapur) shrine.

Fig. 39 The sacred enclosure for festival preparations, opposite Mā Maṅgaḷa (Bhoi - Bandanapur) shrine.
Fig. 40 Mā Jageśvarī temple/shrine with enclosure wall separating sacred from profane.

Fig. 41 Mā Jageśvarī temple/shrine looking towards tank and fire pit, the site of the Pāna Sankrānti festival.
Fig. 42 Mā Jageśvarī.

Fig. 43 Lion guardian, a feature of Orissan temples.
Fig. 44 Mā Kṣetrapāla shrine with a series of walls and steps that separate the goddess from her surroundings.

Fig. 45 Mā Kṣetrapāla, a goddess of protection. Originally her image was simply propped at the base of this pipal tree.
Fig. 46 The present Mā Khanduāla shrine at the base of a Banyan tree, said to be the home of twelve other goddesses.

Fig. 47 Present and new Mā Khanduālā shrine and temple/shrine enclosed by a fence of champa flowers that define clearly and preserve the sanctity of this site.
Fig. 48 The aniconic image of Mā Khanduāla housed in her shrine under a Banyan tree.
Fig. 49 The new Mā Khanduālā temple/shrine.

Fig. 50 Roof detail of new Mā Khanduālā temple/shrine.
Fig. 51 Interior of the new Mā Khanduālā temple/shrine showing vandalism.

Fig. 52 Graffiti on the interior of the new Mā Khanduālā temple/shrine indicting that this building is not currently considered sacred by all people.
Fig. 53 Sanctum showing the throne of the new Mã Khanduālā temple/shrine

Fig. 54 Space in the throne for a pot containing the goddess’s soul and precious items. A pot containing mud from the old shrine is sealed in the hole directly beneath the new image.
Fig. 55 The newly decorated and restored throne of the new Má Khanduālā temple.

Fig. 56 The newly decorated Má Khanduālā temple/shrine.
Fig. 57 The new image of Mā Khanduālā (centre) and her various guardian deities.

Fig. 58 The *silpi* "carpenter" who made the image, performs the eye-opening ceremony when the new image of Mā Khanduālā is installed in her new temple/shrine.
Fig. 59  santosì mā temple in 1992, the temple was open-sided and her Friday worship took place outside.

Fig. 60  santosì mā temple in 1997 showing the grilles that have been added. Consequently, Friday worship now takes place inside the temple.
Fig. 61 Interior of Santoṣī Mā Temple looking towards the sanctum and showing the goddesses Lakṣmī and Maṅgalā.

Fig. 62 Santoṣī Mā Temple
Fig. 63 The relatively new image of Santoṣī Mā. It is in a typical North Indian temple style in white, in contrast to the black images of the local goddesses and those common in South India.
Fig. 64 Maṅgalā inside Santosī Mā temple.

Fig. 65 Laksṃī inside Santosī Mā temple.
Fig. 66 The local woman possessed by Santōṣī Mā during her Friday worship.
Fig. 67 The house of the woman who becomes possessed by Santoṣī Mā. It is now referred to as Santoṣī Mā Ḡāram.

Fig. 68 The interior of Santoṣī Mā Ḡāram that is becoming a place of worship in its own right.
Fig. 69 Tulasī, sweet basil considered to be an incarnation of the goddess Lakṣmī situated outside the Santoṣī Mā temple.

Fig. 70 The remains of the pit used for the Pāṇa Saṅkrānti fire walk. It is sited in front of the Mā Jageśvarī temple/shrine.
Figs. 71 and 72. An example of typical Orissan temple style - Lingaraj Temple, Bhubaneswar.
Appendix 2

The Goddesses and Temples of Cholavandan (Photographs)
Fig. 73 Central street leading towards Jenakai Māriyamman temple.
Fig. 74 Central street with pālipītam, “sacrificial stone” that is outside the Jeṇakai Māriyammañ temple.

Fig. 75 Detail of pālipītam on which, offerings are placed.
Fig. 76 Jenakai Māriyammaṇ temple.

Fig. 77 Detail of gopuram Jenakai Māriyammaṇ temple.
Fig. 78 Picture of Jeṅkai Māriyamman given by the temple. This representation is in contrast to her original image, which was fierce and depicted in a standing posture.
Fig. 79 Aṇkāḷaśvarī temple (West Car Street) showing the main doorway, indicating a definite separation between the interior and exterior of this temple.
Fig. 80 Interior of Aṅkāḷaīsvarī temple looking towards the central sanctum.

Fig. 81 Interior of Aṅkāḷaīsvarī temple looking towards the south east corner with the pāḷipīṭam in the centre.
Fig. 82 Ankāḷaīśvarī (West Car Street) movable image in preparation for Mahā-Śivarātri festival.
Fig. 83 Muttu “pearl” Pēcciyamman in Aṅkāḷaṁśvarī temple (West Car Street). Her iconography indicates that she is about to decapitate a demon, although her facial expression is very calm.
Fig. 84 Pēcciymmaṇ in Aṅkāḷaśvarī temple (West Car Street). Although her name may be indicative of a connection with pēy “demons” she is said to be the goddess of speech with a benevolent character.
Fig. 85 Vīrāyiamman (seated) and Rākkāyiamman (standing) in Aṅkālaísvarī temple (West Car Street).
Fig. 86 Discarded images behind Aṅkāḷaṅśvarī’s sanctum.

Fig. 87 Pāṭāla Pēcciyamman shrine behind Aṅkāḷaṅśvarī’s sanctum. There is no image of the goddess because she was immersed in the ground (pāṭāla), believed by some, to control her fierce nature. Although there is no image she is still offered pūjā.
Fig. 88 The *Mahā-Śivarātri* procession returns to the Aṅkāḷaīśvarī temple having purified the box of sacred weapons at the Vaigai river.

Fig. 89 The main *Mahā-Śivarātri* procession around the streets of Cholavandan with the *kapparai* and the *pūkapparai* “flower *kapparai*” that will eventually be taken to the cremation ground.
Fig. 90 The *kapparai* representing three fierce deities, Rudra (top), Kāli (left), and Kabālī (right) described as an incarnation of Durgā who sucks the blood of demons. Sacrifices will be made to it in the cremation ground.
Fig. 91 The man possessed by Cappāṇi during the main Mahā-Śivarātri festival procession. He is holding the Cappāṇi karakam that contains rice, eggs, ghee, brandy, chickens legs, and burning sticks. Later it will be taken to the cremation ground.
Fig. 92 A rice-flour paste image of Pātāla Pecciyamman, carried in a winnowing fan. This is the only goddess image to be taken to the cremation ground and therefore may be a representative of Ankālaīśvarī.

Fig. 93 The woman possessed by Pecciyamman during the main Mahā-Śivarātri festival procession.
Fig. 94 Ujaini Kāliyammaṇ temple behind Rauth Naiker Street. Kāli temples traditionally had thatched roofs.

Fig. 95 Ujaini Kāliyammaṇ represented as a triśula made of five metals.
Fig. 96 Tirupatiyammaṇa Draupadi (originally described as Ellaiyammaṇ i.e. boundary goddess) shrine.

Fig. 97 Tirupatiyammaṇa Draupadi (originally described as Ellaiyammaṇ).
Fig. 98 Vaṭakatti “North facing” Kāliyammamē temple/shrine, West Car Street.

Fig. 99 Detail on roof of Vaṭakatti Kāliyammамē temple showing the goddess as green complexioned and seated on a lion.
Fig. 100 Vaṭakatti Kāliyamman (West Car Street). Her iconography showing her killing a demon is more reminiscent of Durgā than Kāli. This representation is typical of South Indian goddess images that are generally black as opposed to the white images of North India.
Fig. 101 Uļuntār Kāliyammaṇ temple/shrine.

Fig. 102 Paccavaḷḷi Kāliyammaṇ shrine at Vellai Pillaiyār Kōvil, White Vināyaker Temple area. This goddess is very fond of raw meat hence her name paccai “raw”.
Fig. 103 Nakamal “snake goddess” shrine at Vellai Pillaiyār Kōvil, White Vināyaker Temple area at the outer edge of Cholavandan.

Fig. 104 Jenakai Māriyamman shrine at Vellai Pillaiyār Kōvil, White Vināyaker Temple area.
Fig. 105 Cantaña Māriyamman temple/shrine.

Fig. 106 Mandu, family shrine at Cantaña Māriyamman area.
Fig. 107 Interior of Aṅkālaparamīśvarī temple showing Nandi with two pālipīṭams.

Fig. 108 Interior of Aṅkālaparamīśvarī temple facing towards the south east corner.
Fig. 109 Interior of Aṇkāḷaparamīśvari temple with the sanctum of Pēcciyamman in the centre.

Fig. 110 Pātālamman shrine, consisting of only a pālipītam, situated behind Aṇkāḷaparamīśvari’s sanctum and facing towards the south. Pātālamman was originally a mortal woman who killed herself at this place, she was later considered to be a goddess.
Fig. 111 Pēcciyyamman in Ankāḷaparamīśvarī temple. She is said to be peaceful and does not accept animal sacrifice, although she appears to be brandishing a weapon.
Fig. 112 A recently constructed shrine for Kāliyamman inside Piralaya Nāyakiyamman temple complex.

Fig. 113 Durgai shrine inside Piralaya Nāyakiyamman temple complex.
Fig. 114 Nāṭār Patirakāliyamman temple/shrine.

Fig. 115 Roof detail of Nāṭār Patirakāliyamman temple/shrine represented with a green complexion and seated on a lion.
Fig. 116 Nāṭār Patirakāliyamman is represented unusually as a *triśula* with an anthropomorphic face. Although she is called Patira “fierce” Kāliyamman, her expression is clearly benevolent.
Fig. 117 Ammacciyamman shrine by the banks of the Vaigai River. She asked to be placed at the edge of the settlement so that she would not be disturbed by the sounds of the town.

Fig. 118 Ammacciyamman (dressed) with her consort.
Fig. 119 Mutaliyar Köṭṭai Kāliyammaṇ temple/shrine on the site of an old fort.

Fig. 120 Detail of Mutaliyar Köṭṭai Kāliyammaṇ temple/shrine with walls consisting of bars.
Fig. 121 Mutaliyār Koṭṭai Kāliyammaṇ represented as a trisula. Devotees enter her temple/shrine to make offerings.
Fig. 122 Celliyamman temple/shrine between the railway line and the paddy fields.

Fig. 123 Celliyamman temple/shrine showing the red and white sacred markings characteristic of temples in South India.
Fig. 124 Celliyamman belongs to a Harijan community and is said to be holding a child in her arms. Although she has an essentially benevolent iconography she also receives a periodic animal sacrifice.
Fig. 125 Capta Kannimār, Seven Virgins shrine situated by a tank on the southern boundary of Cholavandan.

Fig. 126 Nava Kannimār, Nine Virgins shrine facing west towards the Vaigai River.
Fig. 127 Cantana Māriyamman shrine. She is one of only two goddesses in Cholavandan who face southwards.

Fig. 128 Mākāliyamman (Paḷarkal) temple/shrine.
Fig. 129 Mākāliyamman (Pallarkal) with unusually benign iconography.

Fig. 130 Detail of Mākāliyamman (Pallarkal) looks more like Durgā than traditional images of Kāli.
Fig. 131 Piḷḷaimār Patirakāliyammaṇ image made so that her devotees could see her iconography. The image here is similar to that of Vaṭṭakatti Kāliyammaṇ.
Fig. 132 The emergence of new goddesses? Stones decorated with sandal paste and placed in a recently defined holy place are reverenced.

Fig. 133 A typical representation of Nakamal, snake goddess, being offered eggs and milk, at Pecchiyamman temple in Madurai.
Fig. 134 Image of Pēcciyamman at a temple dedicated to her in Madurai. Here she exhibits a protruding tongue and fangs. It is contrasted sharply with her image when it is decorated.
Fig. 135 Pécciyamman in a temple dedicated to her in Madurai. She is decorated in sandal paste brought by her devotees on her special day Friday. Through decoration she is changed from fierce to benign. This is the same basic image as that on the previous page.
Fig. 136 Minākṣī Temple in Madurai, a typical example of South Indian temple architecture.

Fig. 137 Minākṣī Temple in Madurai showing gopuram, tower.
Fig. 138 Detail of *gopuram*, temple tower (Mīnākṣī Temple, Madurai) characteristic of South Indian temple architecture.
Appendix 3
Informants
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Bandanapur</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>General Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>General Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Sarasvatipur</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>General Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Sarasvatipur</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>General Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Sarasvatipur</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>General Interview (Now deceased)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Jatesvar</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>General Interview - Unofficial pujari of many temples in the area</td>
</tr>
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<td>Bandanapur</td>
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<td>General Interview - Pujari at Pinalaya Nayakiamman Temple</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Pujari at Pinalaya Nayakiamman temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Sex</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Special function</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>Pujari at Piralaya Nayakgiyamman temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Main informant and interpreter, Professor of Modern History Madurai Kamaraj University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Madurai</td>
<td>M.Phil student and main interpreter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Madurai</td>
<td>Ph.D. student and main interpreter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Clerk or watchman of Jenakai Mariyamman temple</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Pujari of Patirakaliyamman temple and leader of the Natar community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Natham, Tamilnadu</td>
<td>Pujari at Natham Mariyamman Temple</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Bandanapur</td>
<td>Priest from Damapur</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>Pujari at Patirakaliyamman South Car Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Devotee at Muthaliar Kottai Kaliyamman temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Pujari at Draupadiyamman temple (Now deceased)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Pujari at Jenaka Perumal Koil</td>
</tr>
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<td>Sex</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Special function</td>
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<td>35</td>
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<td>Pujari for Candana Mariamman and Ammachiyamman</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Female</td>
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<td>Devotee at Muthaliar Kottai Kaliyamman temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Chief priest and leader of community at Muthaliar Kottai Kaliyamman temple (Now deceased)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Met near Ammachiamman temple</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Wife of pujari at Irullaparicami Kovil</td>
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<tr>
<td>40</td>
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<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Mother of pujari of Ullundur Kaliyamman temple</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Pujari of Ujjaini Kaliyamman temple Rauth Naiker Street</td>
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<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>Interviewed at bus stand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Son of informant 42, interviewed at bus stand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Interviewed at bus stand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Interviewed at Market Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Sex</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Special function</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Interviewed at house in Santhai Pettai Street</td>
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<td>48</td>
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<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Interviewed outside Mariyamman temple</td>
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<tr>
<td>49</td>
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<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Interviewed outside Mariyamman temple</td>
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<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Lives near Uthchi Eeni Makaliyamman temple</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Showed us Draupadiyamman's shrine</td>
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<td>52</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Information at Pachaivallikaliyamman shrine</td>
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<td>53</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Chief Pujari of Ankalaeswari temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Involved with Ankalaeswari Festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Involved with Ankalaeswari festival</td>
</tr>
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<td>56</td>
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<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Pujari of West Street Kaliyamman temple</td>
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<td>Mother of Pujari at Ankalaeswari temple</td>
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<td>Chief Pujari at Pecciyamman temple</td>
</tr>
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<td>Location</td>
<td>Special function</td>
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<td>59</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>60</td>
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<td>Natham</td>
<td>Information at Natham fire walk</td>
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<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Natham</td>
<td>Uncle of ID60 Uncle</td>
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<td>62</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Community leader Harijan Makaliyamman temple area</td>
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<td>63</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>Devotee at Pallarkal Makaliyamman temple</td>
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<td>64</td>
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<td>Pujari at Pallarkal Makaliyamman temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
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<td>Pallarkal Makaliyamman temple</td>
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<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Information at 7 Kannimar shrine</td>
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<td>Chief pujari of Natar Patirakaliyamman</td>
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<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Informant at 7 Kannimar and Pallarkal Makaliyamman temple</td>
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<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>Professor of Saivasiddhanta - Madras University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
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<td>Madras</td>
<td>Professor and Head of Saivasiddhanta - University of Madras</td>
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<td>Informant ID</td>
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<td>Location</td>
<td>Special function</td>
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<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Bandanapur</td>
<td>Takes care of Kshetrapala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Bandanapur</td>
<td>Community leader and organizer of the Pana Sankranti (Bhoi Mangala) festival</td>
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<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kakatpur</td>
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<tr>
<td>74</td>
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<td>Kakatpur</td>
<td>Priest of Mangala temple</td>
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<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Sarasvatipur</td>
<td>Owner of mango grove and pujari of Bana Durga shrine</td>
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<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Bandanapur</td>
<td>Outside Santoshi Ma temple at Friday worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Bandanapur</td>
<td>Outside Santoshi Ma temple at Friday worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Bandanapur</td>
<td>Outside Santoshi Ma temple at Friday worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Bandanapur</td>
<td>Outside Santoshi Ma temple at Friday worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
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<td>Bandanapur</td>
<td>Outside Santoshi Ma temple at Friday worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
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<td>Bandanapur</td>
<td>Outside Santoshi Ma temple at Friday worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
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<td>Outside Santoshi Ma temple at Friday worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Location</td>
<td>Special function</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Bandanapur</td>
<td>Outside Santoshi Ma temple at Friday worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Bandanapur</td>
<td>Sells prashad and is the brother ID 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Bandanapur</td>
<td>Outside Santoshi Ma temple at Friday worship (sister of ID86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
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<td>Bandanapur</td>
<td>Outside Santoshi Ma temple at Friday worship (sister of ID85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
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<td>Bandanapur</td>
<td>Outside Santoshi Ma temple at Friday worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Bandanapur</td>
<td>Outside Santoshi Ma temple at Friday worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Bandanapur</td>
<td>Outside Santoshi Ma temple at Friday worship</td>
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<tr>
<td>90</td>
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<td>Bhagavanpur</td>
<td>Pujari of Aliara and Kanaka Durga shrines</td>
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<td>91</td>
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<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Pujari of Muthaliar Kottai Kaliyamman temple (cut his head at ceremony in Jan 97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Informant and key holder of Ankalaparamesvari temple</td>
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<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>Chief pujari of Ankalaesvari temple (West St)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Plays pampai and sings songs at Ankalaesvari temple (West Car St)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informant ID</td>
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<td>Location</td>
<td>Special function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-----------</td>
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<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Double Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Double Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Double Street Informant about Draupadiyanman (aniconic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
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<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>Informant about Draupadiyanman (aniconic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Cholavandan</td>
<td>President, Head Trustee and Pujari of the Celliyamman Temple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4

Songs and Interviews
The following songs are sung in order to call the various deities to come to the festival and present themselves. Some will possess people and give predictions and perhaps do some healing. These songs are essential to make the deities come -- they are also a kind of mantra. It is interesting that the devotees are not begging the deities to come but direct them, telling them what they should do. The songs directly confirm the power of the deities to destroy evil but, more importantly, they provide evidence that the purpose of the deities is to "help", "bless", "safeguard", and "speak" to the people. These songs also support the local view that the deities came to Cholavandan in a box, originating in Kerala.

Vālakurunāthacāmi

Most powerful Śrī Vālakurunāthacāmi.
In ancient days very powerful.
Chithan was the pūjārī.
Rajamanikam was another pūjārī (present pūjārī).
He (Vālakurunāthacāmi) is so powerful.
He is so powerful that he conquered all the demons.
They went to the riverbed to bring the sakti kalacam (Skt. kalaśa).²
Now bless the people.

---
¹ Translation by Dr P. Sarveswaran, Professor of Modern History, Madurai Kamaraj University.
² Pots infused with power.
Aṅkāḷaīśvarī

Aṅkāḷaparamīśvarī - she broke all the chains and came out.
She was born in Kerala.
She collected wood that she supplied to the cremation ground.
She supplied the wood for Saints.
Aṅkāḷaīśvarī was originally a *maya* (strange) *Kurathi* (*Karaaivar*) lady (of Dravidian stock).
She came from Kerala to this place.
She has come here to save 21 families.
She came with ornaments of gold in a box.
She came to the eastern side and saved 21 families, Chidambaram's observation - sung by Chidambaram (*pūjāri*).
It is time that the people take the *kapparai* so it is essential that you should come.
She (Aṅkāḷaīśvarī) was the wife of Śiva, wife of Naṭarāja, she had a *sul* (trident) in her hands.
She fights and conquers everyone.
She was very powerful.
Therefore she should come and bless the people.

Māyāṇṭicāmi

Māyāṇṭicāmi - A form of Lord Śiva and guardian of the cremation ground
He was called Muttu Irulā Māyāṇṭicāmi.
He was for the *mayānam* (cremation ground *pūja*).
He was a guard. He has come to be there with us for some time.
He was accompanied by Cappāṇi.
He was going with the *kapparai*.
He should come and stay with us for some time to bless this occasion and the people.

Pēcciyamman

Muttu Vana Pēcci, beautiful forest Pēcci, from Mayiladum Parai.³
She was a ruler, she could not be controlled.
Chithan *pūjāri* composed the poem.
If you tell it will be right.
All the jewels were brought in a box.
She has come to safeguard the people.

---
³ An area where there are many peacocks displaying their feathers on the hills.
Cappāṇi and Periya Karuppan (brothers).

He has conquered many.
He was a powerful devil.
He has also come in a box.
Powerful, immersed in a pot.
He broke it open and he came to help the king.
He dressed with so many dresses.
He was given a lot of respect.
Cappāṇi came with Periya Karuppan.
He is here as a guardian deity to Vālakurunāthacāmi.
Periya Karuppan is also like that.
He has got a curved cleaver, and another flying cleaver of Konkunadu (Coimbatore region).
He should also come and bless the people.

Vīrapatran

He was dressed like a king.
He was here - snakes and fire when he was playing.
He killed the devils.
He also has many weapons including a cleaver.
He was also a great devil.
He should help.

Candaṇa Karuppan

He was from Malayalam (Kerala).
Candaṇa Karuppan was from āgni mulai (NE direction).
He was dressed like a king.
He was peaceful - with a sandalwood smell.
He was something like a serious snakebite.

Coṇai Muttu

Coṇai Muttu came from Malayalamnadu (Kerala) - Malayalam Coṇai Muttu.
He has come here to speak to the people.
He has come as an incarnation of Coṇai Muttu Karuppan as guardian deity.
Madurai Vīraṇ

He was associated with Tirumalai Nāyak. He has come as a guardian. He has come to help to suppress the Kallar menace. He was straightforward. He lost his right leg.

Two females, Pommai and Vellaiamal, came and committed satī. They should come and bless the people.

Rākkāyiamman

Alagamalai (Alagar hills) Rākkāyiamman was the queen. When she was born, people went to Alagamalai to have a dip in the spring there. Rākkāyiamman produced food and water. She should come.

Changaiyyan

Changili (chain) god - we never bothered about you. People made experiments - he proved very powerful.

Nākamāl

When she was playing she saved people. Her words are final. She was a queen. She should come and tell.

Pātālamman

Pātāla Rurpi (Ruby) - she ate dead bodies. 64,000 siddhas were conquered and ruled. She took the shape of the goddesses. Her words are final. She will come and show her appearance to all.

Praising the Cidambaram Śiva
Praising the Lord Ganapathi
Praising the 21 Groups
Praising the 108 Śivaliṅgas
Praising the 1008 Śiva Temples
Safeguard the people in West Street - Cholavandan.

4 The song said Pandian king, which according to Dr Sarveswaran is incorrect.
Songs about Māriyamman and Kāliyamman.

Māriyamman

O Goddess Māriyamman - thousand eyes - Muttu Māriyamman.
She also came in a box.
She was a ruler.
She carried akini-catti (fire pots).
You came and gave power to tell predictions.
To save the people in the kāliyuga.

Kāliyamman

Badrakāli - she came to destroy the demon.
Kāliyamman came around, she went to the priest.
Kāliyamman and Māriyamman they gave blessings to the people.

All the songs were recited by Subramanian and accompanied by the pampai drum.
Intervi"ews with some of the people who came to Santos"i Mā's temple in Bandanapur on Friday 7th November 1997

Throughout the period of my fieldwork, I have conducted a variety of different types of interviews, some general others specific, some interviews have been concerned with establishing general attitudes whereas others have been formulated to check certain facts. I have included the following interviews, in particular, since they were expressly gathered for inclusion in the thesis. I randomly interviewed a selection of the devotees who attended the Santosī Mā Friday worship on one particular day. The purpose of the interviews is to provide an idea of the variety of reasons why people seek an audience with this particular goddess. Although I have made general enquiries on other occasions, this was the only structured interview. The reason being that from experience I have found a formal approach slightly disruptive, when my primary aim is to observe the proceedings, rather than taking an active part in them.

Informant 76, who lives in Bhubaneswar, had been coming to the temple for five years. She came every Friday until she was cured from a "bad soul" that affected her legs and made her run every day. She was also afflicted with a pain in her stomach for which SANTOŚĪ MĀ ¹ advised her to make a shrine in her house and she then performed pūjā every day. By following the instructions given to her by SANTOŚĪ MĀ, the informant claimed that she was cured. However, her sons did not believe in her cure and made her go to hospital where she had her appendix out. Nevertheless, she still firmly believes that she was already cured before she went into hospital. She now comes to the temple about once a month. Today she had come just to offer pūjā to Santosī Mā.
Informant 77, a female from Cuttack has been coming to the temple for seven years but declined to say any more.

Informant 78, a male from Puri, has been visiting the temple for the last five to seven years. Whatever he has asked Santoṣī Mā for has been granted to him. The things that he has asked for have usually been concerned with the welfare of his family. One example was when his son had disappeared and he asked Santoṣī Mā to make him return. The goddess granted this request and his son returned in a few days. He comes to the temple whenever he has the time.

Informant 79 was making his first visit to the temple and had come from a village near Cuttack. His reason for coming was that he had heard about Santoṣī Mā from many villagers in Khalarda near Cuttack and he wanted to come and see for himself if their reports were true. He was impressed with what he had seen so far.

Informant 80, a female from Puri was attending this temple for the first time. She came because her sister-in-law has been coming for the last two years and has been satisfied by Santoṣī Mā. The informant had come today for a specific problem that she declined to define. She said that SANTOṢĪ MĀ had spoken to her but she did not reveal what she said.

Informant 81, a male from Bhubaneswar, said that he has been coming to this temple for seven years, at the behest of his wife. On this particular occasion, he was accompanying his wife who attends regularly.

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1 The goddess in the form of the possessed village woman.
Informant 82 is the wife of informant 81 and has been coming to this temple since she was 14 years old. Since then she has attended regularly, and even after marriage she brought her husband. She said that she had many troubles after her marriage as her new family did not like her worshipping Santoṣī Mā. She also had trouble with her husband. Although the family did not originally join in her pūjā for Santoṣī Mā at home, they now participate along with her. They now have material wealth, which my informant attributes to the power of Santoṣī Mā. This particular informant came today simply to offer pūjā.

Informant 83, a male currently living in Bhubaneswar, has been coming to this temple for the last six years. He first heard about Santoṣī Mā from someone near to his house. The first time he came it was to see if what other people said was true, that one's wishes would be fulfilled. SANTOṢĪ MĀ advised him to build a temple to her in his own village (Banamalipur) which is 40-50km from Bhubaneswar. He claims that many people now come here from his village. Today he had come with his wife.

Informant 84 lives in Bahadalpur and is the brother of informant 100, the lady who becomes possessed by Santoṣī Mā. He now sells prasad at the temple. He related an incident of Santoṣī Mā's ability to heal through the body of his sister. When he was thirteen years old both his legs were paralysed and the doctors said that he could not be cured. After sixteen days of carrying out Santoṣī Mā's fast and vrāt, he was cured by the power of Santoṣī Mā. Since then he has performed pūjā at the temple every Friday and is a pure vegetarian (he does not eat onions and garlic in addition to meat).
Informant 85 is a young woman from Bhubaneswar. She has been coming to this temple for three months and first accompanied her mother who has been coming for one year. Today she came with her sister, informant 86, simply for darsan of Santosī Mā.

Informant 86 is a young woman from Bhubaneswar. She has been coming to the temple recently with her sister, informant 85. When she first came to this temple and came face to face with SANTOŚĪ MĀ, she could not believe what she saw. Santosī Mā then came to her in a dream and since then she has been coming regularly. She came today with her sister.

Informant 87 is female and lives in Bhubaneswar. She has been coming to the temple for the last four years. The first time she came, it was to see if her relatives' claims about this goddess were true. She was not disappointed when she visited the temple. Today she did not come for any specific reason, she came simply to offer pūjā to Santosī Mā.

Informant 88 is female and lives in a village nearby. She has been coming to the temple for the last three years. The first time she came she did not get advice from SANTOŚĪ MĀ. However, the next time she was sick with fever and SANTOŚĪ MĀ cured her. Since then, she has been in good health. Today she came on behalf of her husband. SANTOŚĪ MĀ said to her that her husband was not well but he will now be a bit better, not suddenly cured.

Informant 89 has been coming, from Cuttack, to see Santosī Mā for the last six years. However, this was the first time that she had been for a year. She had not come on her
own behalf but brought a lady who had become possessed by a "bad soul" which made her believe that she was a goddess. The informant claimed that SANTOŚI MĀ had cured that lady. The informant said that in the past she too had been possessed by a "bad soul" and that SANTOŚI MĀ had cured her.