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# Can Tantra Make a Mātā Middle-Class?: Jogaṇī Mātā, a Uniquely Gujarati Chinnamastā

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**Abstract:** The Gujarati *mātās*, village goddesses traditionally popular among scheduled castes and often worshipped through rites of possession and animal sacrifice, have recently acquired Sanskritic Tantric resonances. The contemporary iconography of the goddess Jogaṇī Mātā, for instance, is virtually identical to that of the Mahāvidyā Chinnamastā. Yantra and mantra also feature prominently in Jogaṇī worship, which has begun to attract upwardly mobile urban middle-class devotees. Drawing on ethnography from three Jogaṇī sites in and around Ahmedabad, this paper identifies a tendency among worshippers and *pūjārīs* to acknowledge Jogaṇī's tantric associations only to the extent that they instantiate a safe, Sanskritic, and Brahmanically-oriented Tantra. The appeal of these temples and shrines nonetheless remains the immediacy with which Jogaṇī can solve problems that are this-worldly, reminiscent of the link identified by Philip Lutgendorf between Tantra and modern Indians' desire for 'quick-fix' religion. This research not only documents a rare regional iteration of Chinnamastā, but also speaks to the cachet that Tantra increasingly wields, consciously or unconsciously, within the burgeoning Gujarati and Indian urban middle-classes.

**Keywords:** Gujarat; tantra; goddess; ethnography; middle-class; Hinduism; India

## 1. Introduction

In Gujarati folklore, the term “Jogaṇī” or “Jogṇī” has typically denoted a female ghost or spirit often associated with cholera, among other ailments. In this way, the term follows its obvious homology with the Sanskrit “yoginīs”, minor female divinities thought to serve collectively as Durgā's entourage. While Gujarat has no famous yoginī temples to speak of in this pan-Indian idiom, a singular Jogaṇī has often functioned on her own like a goddess, and so small shrines (or *derīs*) dedicated to her abound in villages, fields and roadsides throughout the region. At these sites, the singular Jogaṇī appears to have been portrayed in aniconic form and worshipped with meat offerings, liquor oblations and possession-like trance states overseen by “*bhuvās*”, ritual preceptors customarily tied to non-elite groups. Today “Jogaṇī” is still an operative word in Gujarati religion; now, however, there are an increasing number of prominent shrines and temples to Jogaṇī Mātā in major cities where she is worshipped as a bona fide Great Goddess. In these new spaces, Jogaṇī Mātā has moved toward what worshippers commonly describe as *sāttvik* (“virtuous” or “pure”) rituals, completely separated from the *tāmasik* (“dark” or “ignorant”) non-vegetarian and alcoholic rites. As with other goddesses bearing the title “Mātā” or “Mā” (each of which denotes an honorific form of “mother”) who have undergone similar changes as they move beyond their traditional low-caste and village contexts, Jogaṇī Mātā has also taken on a new and distinct iconography (see Figure 1) beyond the simple stones, trees or *triśūls* that formerly signified her sites. Yet while sweetening and sanitizing efforts have seen virtually all the Gujarati Mātās adopt lithographs depicting them as smiling young women on idiosyncratic animal mounts—Bahucarā Mātā a rooster, Khoḍīyār Mātā a crocodile, and Melaḍī Mātā a goat—following after the pan-Indian style, Jogaṇī's iconography stands in sharp contrast. Jogaṇī is a headless female,

one of her hands carrying the scimitar with which she has self-decapitated, another bearing her own head. She is naked save for a garland of skulls, and stands atop the copulating pair of Kāma and Rati while her two female attendants drink the blood spouting from her neck. This is the iconography of the tantric Mahāvidyā<sup>1</sup> Chinnamastā, “she who has cut off her own head.”



**Figure 1.** A common Gujarati representation of Jogaṇī Mātā, captioned here as “Śrī Phūl Jogaṇī Mā”. Photo by author.

This representation would seem to mark Jogaṇī Mātā as one of the few examples of a regionalized Chinnamastā in contemporary India, comparable with those found at Cintapūrṇī in Himachal Pradesh (Benard 1994, p. 145) and Rajrappa in Jharkhand (Mahalakshmi 2014; Singh 2010). Jogaṇī Mātā’s history, however, is not so easily elucidated. The phonological similarity between her name and “yoginī” opens up multifarious Sanskritic and folkloric connections that have no doubt influenced the goddess throughout her development. Folk elements are especially crucial, chiefly the Gujarati notion of “Jogaṇī” in the singular,<sup>2</sup> which marked an entity that was almost as much a ghost as she

<sup>1</sup> The Mahāvidyās are a group of ten tantric goddesses that are worshipped collectively throughout India. For more on the Mahāvidyās, see (Kinsley 1997).

<sup>2</sup> To avoid confusion, I should mention that throughout this essay I will often make reference to both a “singular” Jogaṇī and “plural” Jogaṇīs or yoginīs. The “singular” Jogaṇī (also given as “Jogṇī” or “Jognī” depending on transliteration method) refers to the standalone ghost/goddess Jogaṇī of Gujarati folklore that appears to have been worshipped as an individual

was a goddess, and seems to be at the core of the present-day Jogaṇī Mātā. In addition, Jogaṇī's more recent assumption of the "Mātā" mantle marks her as one among a series of divinities in flux, as many of the Mātās such as those mentioned above have been Sanskritized and gentrified for an upwardly mobile urban audience, particularly following the liberalization of India's economy in the early 1990s.<sup>3</sup>

While Jogaṇī Mātā's background may be multifaceted, her Chinnamastā imagery and her Yoginī-homonymous name suggest that she has some undeniably tantric aspects. These tantric resonances do not appear to clash with the sensibilities of her expanding devotional base, as Jogaṇī's temples attract an increasingly middle-class, mainstream audience, who readily consume her images and seek the benefits of her yantra and mantra. And yet despite the presence of these tantric accoutrements, Jogaṇī officiants and devotees alike rarely acknowledge her ties with tantra—in fact, they often de-emphasize or deny them. Of course, following Douglas Renfrew Brooks' proviso to his polythetic definition of what constitutes tantra, any given text or tradition need not explicitly refer to itself as tantric to be considered tantric (Brooks 1990, p. 53). With this in mind, I take this unrecognized tantra at contemporary urban Jogaṇī Mātā temples as my point of departure.

This essay attempts to understand not only why Jogaṇī's tantric elements are so often downplayed, but more importantly how tantra functions in conjunction with her ongoing sweetening for a middle-class audience. I will begin by sorting through the plurality of historical, iconographic and popular literary associations Jogaṇī Mātā has accumulated on account of her links with both Chinnamastā and the yoginī(s). In the process, I hope to establish the presence in the past of a grammatically singular Jogaṇī from which the contemporary Jogaṇī Mātā evolved. From here I will move into ethnographic data collected in urban Gujarat in 2014 and 2015. We first visit a pair of Jogaṇī sites that are representative of the abovementioned tantric de-emphasis, and then a third that provides a critical exception to this trend, wholeheartedly accepting Jogaṇī as tantric. Reading all of these Jogaṇī sites through the insights of a self-identifying *tāntrika* from this outlying temple, I argue that they are united by their acceptance of tantra insofar as it situates the goddess within a Sanskritic and Brahmanically-amenable form of religious expression. That is, each site has been able to realize, tacitly or overtly, a positive, *sāttvik* tantrism that contrasts malevolent, "black" tantra, their enduring appeal attributable to the immediacy with which the "white" tantra of Jogaṇī Mā solves worldly problems. This being the case, I contend that these temples, even the ones that downplay the tantric components, actually speak to how *prevalent* tantra has become in Gujarat, in that it can operate unacknowledged and unproblematically in a fairly conventional context. This speaks to the cachet tantra wields within the expanding Gujarati urban middle-class, to the extent that it may even be able play a role in the sweetening or sanitization of Mātās like Jogaṇī. All three temples illustrate how tantra, as a *sāttvik*, Sanskritic power, can aid in an ongoing effort amongst members of relatively non-elite groups (among them Rabaris, Patels and Barots) to cultivate and perform perceived

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entity primarily in villages of the region, which will be discussed in a section to follow. The "plural" Jogaṇīs or yoginīs refer to the notion of a cadre of attendant spirits, usually sixty-four in number, that are also acknowledged in Gujarati folklore, as well as in Sanskritic and tantric literature. The localized spelling "Jogaṇīs" will be used to discern folk Gujarati imaginings, while "yoginīs" will denote references to a similar entourage of spirits in the pan-Indian idiom. References to "Jogaṇī Mātā", meanwhile, will refer to the goddess as she appears in contemporary Gujarat. With that being established, it must be stated that there is considerable overlap and cross-pollination between each of the categories delineated in this note, as I hope this essay will demonstrate.

<sup>3</sup> The widening upwardly mobile audiences of some Gujarati goddesses have been touched upon in previous studies. For a discussion of Bahucarā Mātā, see Sheikh (2010, p. 96), who describes how the wealthy Bahucarā temple at Becharji in Gujarat's Mehsana District has adapted with a growing variety of pilgrims in mind. As such, animal sacrifice, among other potentially "unseemly" aspects of her worship, has been replaced with symbolic substitutes at this site. For a comparable discussion of Khoḍiyār Mātā, see (Shukla-Bhatt 2014), who links the rise of Khoḍiyār Mā's profile with a simultaneous Sanskritization and "vernacularization" undertaken by her *leuva* Patel followers. That is, Khoḍiyār worship has adopted Sanskritic, upper-caste practices, rendering her as an omnipresent great goddess while at the same time including popular vernacular forms of religious expression. The expansion of Khoḍiyār's glory, then, parallels the rise of her *leuva* Patel followers up the social ladder. Shukla-Bhatt's article builds upon earlier work by Tambs-Lyche (1997) identifying Khoḍiyār's mythology as an expression of resistance by her upwardly mobile followers against established social hierarchies.

hallmarks of high status such that their social rank can parallel their desired—or, in some cases, actualized—economic ascendancy.

## 2. “Sweetening” Goddesses for Upwardly Mobile Sensibilities

Before tracing Jogaṇī’s background, it is first necessary to address in greater depth the patterns of change that often take place relating to rituals, theologies and iconographies of some South Asian deities—more often than not goddesses—so as to render them agreeable to upper-caste or upwardly-mobile sensibilities. While this phenomenon is often glossed as “sweetening” or “sanitizing”, terms I have employed above, it more accurately involves a complex of interwoven processes encompassing religious and economic factors. For that reason, scholars working in South Asia have proposed a number of theoretical apparatuses in an attempt to understand these sorts of changes.

The broadest of these theories is M.N. Srinivas’ notion of Sanskritization, referring to a process by which lower castes incorporate the customs, rituals and beliefs of ostensibly more refined groups such as the Brahmins or—as was often the case in Gujarat—the Jains (Srinivas 2002, p. 200).<sup>4</sup> A closely related and slightly more historically contextualized theory of upward mobility is that of Vaiṣṇavization, a process in which communities or caste groups gradually adopt the iconography, mythology or rituals of Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa and his consort Lakṣmī. This pattern of change champions values of “dignity” and “self-limitation”, and encompasses a preference for the pan-Indic, Sanskritic, and Brahmanical over the local, vernacular, and folk.<sup>5</sup> Movements from local to pan-Indian and folk to Brahmanical can also be attributed to what Cynthia Humes has called “universalization” (Hume 1996, p. 69). Based on fieldwork at the Vindhyachal pilgrimage site in Uttar Pradesh, Humes observed how the patron goddess Vindhyavāsini evolved from a highly localized tribal deity into a singular, transcendent *Ādiśakti* in an Advaitic<sup>6</sup> mode as Vindhyachal began drawing a broader, more cosmopolitan audience (Hume 1996, p. 74). With universalization, as with Sanskritization and Vaiṣṇavization, the emergent ethos almost always necessitates vegetarianism, abstinence from alcohol, and the spurning of other non-elite ritual expressions such as spirit possession.

Taking socioeconomic factors into account, particularly the rise of the middle-class after the liberalization of India’s economy in the early 1990s, it has become fashionable to talk about “gentrification of the goddess” (Waghorne 2004; Harman 2004). As Indian middle-classness<sup>7</sup> has come to be defined by ownership of luxury commodities,<sup>8</sup> as well as more intangible forms of symbolic capital such as education and cosmopolitanism,<sup>9</sup> these and other attendant sensibilities have had noticeable effects upon religion. Once again, this informs the elimination of animal sacrifices and possession states at religious sites, which has almost gone without saying at urban and suburban temples to Māriyamman and Śītalā Mātā, small pox goddesses of South and North India, respectively (Harman 2004, p. 11; Ferrari 2015, p. 98). However, gentrification also involves the physical

<sup>4</sup> Srinivas himself applied Sanskritization to goddesses. For the sake of demonstrating how Sanskritic Hinduism absorbs localized deities, Srinivas brings in the figure of the Devī. “Village goddesses in most parts of India,” he writes, “have been identified with Shakti, who is in turn a manifestation of Parvati, the wife of Shiva” (Srinivas 2002, p. 225).

<sup>5</sup> See Lutgendorf (2007, p. 387), as well as Hawley (2001, p. 219). For further discussion of Vaiṣṇavization, see (Van der Veer 1988; Van der Veer 1988).

<sup>6</sup> Throughout this paper, I use the phrase “Advaitic” to reference non-dual theological understandings in the spirit of (or directly borrowing from) the ninth-century philosopher Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta. This system can be glossed as “monistic”, as reality is of one fundamental essence, Brahman, a substratum that is “not two”. Along with these kinds of totalizing philosophical ideas come connotations of pan-Indian, Sanskritic, upper-caste and Brahmanical qualities.

<sup>7</sup> The term “middle-classness” is often used in place of “middle-class” by scholars of contemporary South Asia, given the difficulty of defining the latter term. Rather than establishing a solid definition of what middle-class must be in terms of income, etc., “middle-classness” attempts to appreciate the principles and practices that constitute this social field, which is more often dynamic and unstable than it is fixed. For more on middle-classness, see (Donner and De Neve 2011, p. 7), as well as Saavala (2010), where the author argues for middle-classness as a means for understanding *who* considers themselves to be middle-class rather than struggling with economic indicators in order to group people as such (Saavala 2010, p. 10, emphasis in original).

<sup>8</sup> See Fernandes (2006, p. xviii).

<sup>9</sup> See Christiane Brosius (Brosius 2010, p. 7).

transformation of worship spaces, and so many of Māriyamman's compact shrines have in the past decades given way to elaborate urban complexes featuring ornate *maṇḍapas* and *gōpuras*, hallmarks of "proper" south Indian Brahmanic temple construction (Waghorne 2004, p. 132). Meanwhile, elements of religious expression therein have been subject to a "cleaning up and ordering", accommodating middle-class inclinations toward tidiness, prosperity, comfort, community involvement, and some degree of democratic inclusiveness (Waghorne 2004, p. 131).

Other commentators have opted for more generalized descriptions of goddess-related reconfigurations. Starting with the traditional Indian distinction between *saumya* ("benign" or "gentle") and *ugra* ("ferocious" or "wild") goddesses,<sup>10</sup> Annette Wilke has proposed that examples of the latter such as Akhilāṇḍeśvari and Kāmākṣī often undergo a "taming" by way of marriage (Wilke 1996, p. 126). Comparably, the disheveled goddess Dhūmāvati, who like her fellow Mahāvidyā Chinnamastā has been predominantly connected to the tantric context and identified by her inauspicious traits, has from the late nineteenth century onward been reconfigured as world-maintaining and well-wishing (Zeiler 2012, p. 181). Even though *pūjārīs* at Dhūmāvati's popular Benares temple are aware of her tantric background, the goddess is solely depicted for her patrons at this site as a benign manifestation of Durgā or Mahādevī. Xenia Zeiler has labelled Dhūmāvati's transformation as a "saumyisation" (Zeiler 2012, p. 190). Other scholars have described analogous transformations as "domestication", as is the case in Sanjukta Gupta's study of the Kālīghāt Śakti Pīṭha in Bengal. Here Vaiṣṇava influences have rendered the patron goddess Kālī more and more like Lakṣmī while at the same time attenuating the number of animal sacrifices made to her at the site (Gupta 2003, pp. 65–66). In a Gujarati context, Samira Sheikh also uses "domestication" to describe the reining in of "questionable practices" such as animal sacrifice and transgenderism at the Śakti Pīṭha to Bahucarā Mātā (Sheikh 2010, p. 96). While Rachel Fell McDermott similarly refers to Kālī's "sugar-coating" in Bengal as a domestication, she goes on to attribute the goddess's elevation and popularization to a multiplicity of additional factors, including Sanskritization, Vaiṣṇavization, urbanization and class (McDermott 2001, pp. 294–97).<sup>11</sup> All these processes are often closely tied together in modern reimaginings of goddesses. And while no one of these processes provides a complete description of the transformations taking place at many modern goddess temples, they are all useful in varying measure when applied to the ethnographic contexts encountered in this essay. In particular, Sanskritic, Vaiṣṇavic, universal and gentrified elements factor heavily into elite-ness, or at least in the perceptions among the upwardly-mobile as to what putative elites such as Brahmans, Vaiṣṇavas and wealthy Jains do in their religious lives.<sup>12</sup>

Tantra may also be a factor in reimagining goddesses and gods for mainstream, middle-class and upwardly mobile audiences. Perhaps most obviously, tantric texts have been above all Sanskrit texts,

<sup>10</sup> For more on this distinction, see Michaels, Vogelsanger and Annette Wilke (Michaels et al. 1996, p. 19).

<sup>11</sup> McDermott observes that compositions to Kālī came to present the goddess as a loving, compassionate, attractive mother, often borrowing heavily from Vaiṣṇava poetic conventions. Additionally, this sweetening process, she contends, was also tied into sociopolitical factors such as "a growing class of Western-influenced *bhadralok* who were embarrassed by what they perceived to be idolatry, blood-sacrifice, and primitive mythology" (McDermott 2001, p. 295).

<sup>12</sup> The religious activities of these groups held to be "elite" do not necessarily differ drastically from those observed at Mātā temples. It is not unheard of that higher-caste Hindus would attend Mātā temples in both the present and the past. Writing in the 1880s, Forbes reports that Brahmans and Baniyas worshipped Bahucarā Mātā at the Becharaji site under the cover of night, sometimes even offering sacrifices (Forbes 1973, p. 427). Writing almost a century later, Pocock similarly suggests that Brahmans would offer blood-sacrifices to a *mātā* if the goddess herself made such a request (Pocock 1973, p. 66). In my own fieldwork, I spoke to a number of Brahmans who had gone to a *mātā* site or had a family member who did as much, more often the latter scenario. Compellingly enough, the Brahmans with whom I spoke often framed visits to *mātā* temples, whether involving themselves or others, as desperate measures for particularly desperate times in life. Jains from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds also engage with a diverse array of religious practices, including tantra and goddess worship. John Cort, for example, has noted the longstanding importance of goddesses in the Jain tantric tradition (Cort 1987, p. 237), one such example being Ambikā, who has been widely worshipped by Śvetambarā Jains of Gujarat (Cort 1987, p. 247). In Mātā-like fashion, popular Jain goddesses are especially revered for their ability to aid in worldly affairs and bestow tangible rewards on worshippers (Cort 1987, p. 248).

and so tantra offers a potential avenue for Sanskritization.<sup>13</sup> In a more contemporary context, tantra has shown itself to be very much in synch with Indian middle-class lifestyles and religious expressions. Lutgendorf (2007) has established as much in linking Hanumān's popularity in North India to his tantric characteristics. For a minimal expense, cheaply printed tantric manuals provide the literate with easy access to Hanuman's veritable transformative power without need of an intermediary (Lutgendorf 2001, p. 284; Lutgendorf 2007, p. 104–9). In this way, Hanumān devotion is pragmatic and efficient, satisfying the middle-class desire for a tantric "'quick fix' for worldly problems" that arise in a hectic, market-driven world (Lutgendorf 2007, p. 388; see also Lutgendorf 2001, p. 289).<sup>14</sup> On account of tantra's popularization and the access it provides to powers that even Brahman priests lack, the Indian marketplace has seen the proliferation of mass-mediated tantra-related cultural products such as religious icons like mantras and yantras, TV serials and even stores, not to mention a wellspring of tantric gurus (Khanna n.d., p. 2). Madhu Khanna argues that this kind of "bazaari tantra", as she refers to it, has "work[ed] its way through the ethos of complex networks of corporate capitalism and has accommodated to the profit-seeking values of the capital oriented market" (Khanna n.d., p. 5). That being the case, she claims that *bazaari* tantra actively engages in shaping Indian popular culture. Now businesspersons, Bollywood stars and even politicians<sup>15</sup> claim tantric affiliations (Lutgendorf 2001, p. 287). By virtue of this pop culture cachet, it is not uncommon to hear middle- and upper-class Indians making reference to their tantric gurus, or to the acquisition of various *siddhis* (supernatural attainments). While Khanna decries *bazaari* tantra somewhat scathingly, her work points toward the existence at present of a form of tantra amenable to the Indian middle-class's consumerist tastes and aspirations, its accoutrements and attainments sufficiently mainstream such that it may actually be capable of aiding in the process of mainstreaming. This applies not just to deities but to devotees as well, as their participation in tantric worship that is satisfactorily Sanskritic, universal and bourgeoisie-friendly may very well mark a performance of upward mobility even more pronouncedly than the tangible material benefits they hope to gain from such religious pursuits.

### 3. Chinnamastā, Yoginī(s) and Jogaṇī Mātā

Tracing Jogaṇī Mātā's history and background is complicated due to the nexus of associations evoked by her ties with Chinnamastā and the Yoginī/Yoginīs. While these provide some possible clues as to Jogaṇī's development in Gujarat, care must be taken not to let her name and imagery lead us to underestimate the localized village aspects that also substantially inform her current imagining. Indeed, an earlier, singular, folk "Jogaṇī" seems to be at the core of the present-day Jogaṇī Mā. In this section, I will proceed from present to past, and somewhat circuitously at that, unravelling the layers to move toward this core.

<sup>13</sup> Tantra appears to have participated in the sweetening or Sanskritizing of goddesses in the past. Stories have long circulated in the Śrī-Vidyā tradition about Śaṅkara transforming fierce goddesses into benign ones by way of the *Śrī-cakra*, thereby superimposing a milder tantric theology and ritual system atop folk traditions (Wilke 1996, pp. 124–25).

<sup>14</sup> Similar patterns of religious expression can be found in Jainism throughout northwestern India. Contemporary Digambara Jains, for instance, employ mantras, maṇḍalas and yantras in congregational rituals that Cort describes as being of an "esoteric and tantric nature" (Cort 2009, p. 144). These rituals are often very costly, and their desired outcome is warding off bad luck and guaranteeing success in educational or career-related endeavors (Cort 2009, p. 145). Such is the goal of the *Sānti* or "pacification" rituals, for instance, which seek to eliminate (in markedly tantric fashion), obstacles and enemies in one's life, while also granting wealth, fame and sons, among other rewards (Cort 2009, pp. 145–46). Over and above the material outcomes sought, the performance of these elaborate, expensive tantric rituals in itself seems to demonstrate class mobility. Also popular among Jain worshippers is the shrine of Ghaṇṭākarna (or "Bell-ears") Mahāvīra at Mahudī in northern Gujarat (Cort 2000, p. 417). This site exemplifies several distinctive features of Jain Tantra, in that it emphasizes mantras towards helping visitors gain very worldly goals such as attaining powers and curing disease (Cort 2000, pp. 418–19). Ghaṇṭākarna himself bears similarities to Hanuman, and Cort has referred to him as a "Jain analogue" thereof. (Cort 1997, cited in Lutgendorf 2007, p. 374, ff. 44).

<sup>15</sup> The former Congress party Prime Minister, PV Narsimha Rao, is said to have appointed a Tantric guru as his personal advisor. Lalu Prasad Yadava, the charismatic Bihar politico, is also said to employ *tāntrikas* in an advisory capacity (Khanna n.d., p. 13).

While Jogaṇī's Chinnamastā connections are most evident in terms of iconography, they also span her ritual apparatuses. According to the *Śākta-pramoda*, a popular tantric manual devoted to the Mahāvidyās published in North India in the late nineteenth century,<sup>16</sup> the Chinnamastā mantra is “*Śrīm hrīm klīm aiṃ vajravairocanīye hūm hūm phaṭ svāhā*” (Benard 1994, p. 36). The *Śrī Jogaṇī Vrat*, a cheaply-produced contemporary pamphlet outlining votive rites (or *vrats*) to Jogaṇī Mātā, provides the very same series of syllables under the title of “Jogaṇī Mantra”, adding an initial “*aum*” for good measure (Rasik n.d., p. 4). Mantras presented and performed in urban Jogaṇī sites are also virtually identical, with only minor variations. Also commonly on display at these sites is the Jogaṇī Pūjan Yantra, two inverted triangles enwreathed in eight petals and bordered by a square with projections on each of its sides, which follows after the Chinnamastā Yantra.

While her yantra and mantra correspond exactly with Chinnamastā's, Jogaṇī's standard Gujarati image matches the more contemporary pan-Indian lithograph imagining of Chinnamastā available at sites like Rajrappa.<sup>17</sup> Were it not for the Gujarati script giving her name as “*Śrī Phūl Jogaṇī Mātā*” (as per Figure 1 above), the two images would be interchangeable. This illustration is relatively anodyne when compared to traditional paintings and even early chromolithographs of Chinnamastā. In contrast to many earlier portrayals, the contemporary pan-Indian imagining conceals Jogaṇī/Chinnamastā's nudity with the garlands of flowers and skulls that she wears, and the same goes for her attendants. The pairing of Kāma and Rati upon whom Jogaṇī/Chinnamastā stands, meanwhile, is fully clothed, their intimacy only hinted at rather than depicted graphically as per eighteenth and nineteenth century paintings.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps most notably, Jogaṇī/Chinnamastā and her attendants bear a golden complexion. While earlier paintings and chromolithographs of Chinnamastā found throughout the subcontinent often represent her as dark-blue or red in skin-tone,<sup>19</sup> respectively suggesting a *tāmasik* or *rājasik* character, the golden hue appears to mark the goddess as *sāttvik*, a point of curiosity considering the blood that streams freely in the image (Mahalakshmi 2014, p. 204).<sup>20</sup>

On account of this pronounced overlap of iconography and ritual appurtenances, it is tempting to conclude that Jogaṇī is Chinnamastā. Some Gujarati-language devotional texts posit just such an equivalence. Accordingly, the *Śrī Jogaṇī Vrat* bears the image of Chinnamastā on its cover. Inside, it uses the two theonyms interchangeably from the outset, with the very first sentence referring to the goddess as “Chinnamastā (Jogaṇī)” (Rasik n.d., p. 3). Jogaṇī/Chinnamastā is also homologized with Caṇḍikā, Cāmuṇḍā and a more general Mahādevī or Śakti, and is subsequently credited with slaying Śumbha and Niśumbha, rendering her akin to Kālī or Durgā (Rasik n.d., pp. 3–4). As is perhaps predictable given the Sanskritized Gujarati in which the text is composed, Jogaṇī is dealt with in a decidedly Advaitic fashion, where her name comes to be a transposable signifier for the Great Goddess, assuming the role of divine substratum just as any of the other aforementioned names could.

<sup>16</sup> The *Śākta-pramoda* was compiled and edited by Raja Deva Nandan Singh Bahadur, a zamindar from the Muzzafarpur district in northern Bihar (Khanna 2013, p. 3).

<sup>17</sup> R. Mahalakshmi includes an example of such an image in her study of Rajrappa in Jharkhand (Mahalakshmi 2014, p. 204).

<sup>18</sup> See, for instance, the various images included in David Kinsley's (Kinsley 1997) chapter on Chinnamastā, most notably the picture appearing on page 156 (and the cover of the book itself). Here Kāma and Rati are both naked, the latter squatted astride the former in the *viparīta-rati* sexual position.

<sup>19</sup> For an example of a Chinnamastā chromolithograph dating back to the 1880s, see Pinney (2004, p. 44).

<sup>20</sup> Dating this fair-skinned image of Chinnamastā, as well as its link to Jogaṇī, is difficult. While compendia such as the late sixteenth century CE *Tantrasāra* mandate a brighter complexion for Chinnamastā alongside a “hibiscus red” variation (Pal 1981, pp. 80–81), her *sāttvik*, pan-Indian lithograph appears to be a fairly contemporary development. In his study of printed images in India, Christopher Pinney has documented mass-produced chromolithographs of Chinnamastā published in Calcutta as early as the 1880s (Pinney 2004, p. 44; see the note previous). While this may suggest a possible early limit for Chinnamastā's popular prints—and perhaps even for the dating of Jogaṇī's identification with this Mahāvidyā—the image Pinney includes in his volume depicts the severed-headed goddess's body as being red in color, her attendants portrayed as demonic hags, thereby highlighting the *rājasik* or *tāmasik* elements of the scene. If the Cintapūrṇī temple to Chinnamastā is any indication, images of the goddess were not widely circulated even as late as the 1990s (Benard 1994, p. 47, ff. 23). While circumstantial, these lines of evidence suggest that Chinnamastā's comparatively *sāttvik*, pan-Indian lithograph emerged rather recently.

The *Śrī Jogaṇī Vrat* also links Jogaṇī/Chinnamastā with some other famous faces from Hindu myth and lore. The text explains early on:

Paraśurām was a devotee of Jogaṇī Mā. Nāth Panthī Sadhus also demonstrated piety to this particular Devī. Their own guru Gorakhnāth likewise performed devotion to the goddess Chinnamastā (Rasik n.d., p. 6).

Here we see not only the interchange of goddess names, but also an effort to further embed Jogaṇī in Sanskritic mythology by means of tying her to Paraśurāma, the sixth avatar of Viṣṇu, who comes to be associated with Chinnamastā, in some sense, in the *Mahābhārata* (3.117.5–19).<sup>21</sup> The *Śrī Jogaṇī Vrat* leaves this story untold, though it does assert that it was power from the Jogaṇī *vrat* that Paraśurāma used in his battle against the Kshatriyas (Rasik n.d., p. 6).

Similarly, the *Śrī Jogaṇī Vrat* explains that Gorakhnāth gained siddhis from performing its titular votive rights (Rasik n.d., p. 6). This reference to Gorakhnāth and the Nāth Sadhus may provide clues as to Jogaṇī's roots in northwestern India as per emic historiographies, and opens up further resonances for the goddess beyond her depiction as Chinnamastā. Gorakhnāth, a yogic superman who probably lived around the twelfth to thirteenth-centuries CE, was the student of Matsyendranāth, forefather of the Yoginī Kaula aptly named for its founder's special bond with these female spirits.<sup>22</sup> In the thirteenth century *Gorakṣa Samhitā*, the purported author Gorakhnāth continues this Kaula tradition, concluding each chapter with a declaration that the text is transmitting the secret doctrine of the Yoginīs (Dehejia 1986, p. 32). Gorakhnāth is also credited with the establishment of the Nāth Sampradāya, which flourished in western India. Gujarat in particular has a high concentration of Nāth Siddhas, who have monasteries and temples throughout the state (White 1996, p. 118). Gujarat's topography also bears witness to Gorakhnāth's lasting legacy. South of Junagadh in the Saurashtra region sits the Girnar Mountains, the highest peak of which is named for Gorakh (White 1996, p. 117–18; Briggs 1973, p. 119).<sup>23</sup> Predictably, the site abounds with various shrines and sacred spots hallowed by the Nāth Siddhas, and has been an important pilgrimage site for the order since at least the thirteenth century (White 1996, p. 118). Yoginīs—or Jogaṇīs, in the local parlance—are also said to be found in the Girnar area, to such an extent that they too are part of the topography; there is, for instance, a Jogni Hill among the Girnar range (Desai 1972, p. 40). At the nearby Kālīka Hill, the Jogaṇīs were thought to take the lives of visitors, and it was commonly understood that anyone who ventured into the area never returned (Enthoven 1989, p. 46). In referencing Gorakh and the Nāth Sadhus, then, the *Śrī Jogaṇī Vrat* implicitly situates its eponymous goddess at Girnar. Indeed, Girnar and the Nāth Siddhas seem to represent fountainheads of Jogaṇī Mātā's present-day significance; as we will see, some of her officiants trace their gurus to this site.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the connection the *Śrī Jogaṇī Vrat* calls to mind between Jogaṇī Mātā and the Yoginī Kaula prompts us to interrogate the “Yoginī” resonances, both Sanskritic and regional, already rooted in the name of the goddess it describes.

It would be greatly remiss if I did not first mention that Chinnamastā herself is occasionally referred to as “yoginī.” For example, in its hundred-name hymn dedicated to Chinnamastā, the *Śākta-pramoda* lists “Yoginī” among the epithets. While this may speak to her yogic abilities

<sup>21</sup> This story, as told in the *Mahābhārata*, goes as follows: when Paraśurāma's mother Reṇukā becomes infatuated with the king of the celestial musicians, her husband promptly orders his sons to kill her. Paraśurāma is the only son willing to undertake the matricide, and beheads his mother; as a result, Reṇukā comes to be referred to as a “Chinnamastā” (Benard 1994, p. 6).

<sup>22</sup> According to the eleventh century CE *Kaulajñānirṇaya*, Matsyendranāth was responsible for introducing the Yoginī cult among the Kaulas (Dehejia 1986, p. 74).

<sup>23</sup> This naming scheme, which also labels a peak neighboring that of Gorakh after the Siddha Dattātreyā, is accepted by Hindus, but not by Jains, who have their own sacred map of Girnar.

<sup>24</sup> Mount Abu, located in southern Rajasthan bordering Gujarat, also bears strong associations with the Nāth Siddhas and Gorakh (see White 1996, pp. 118–22). One of its peaks features a Shiva temple tied to Gorakh. Yoginīs from medieval temples also feature prominently in the museum at the site.

as much or more so than it does to her identity as a female spirit,<sup>25</sup> the *Śākta-pramoda* does refer to Chinnamastā in passing as a yoginī in its *stotra* portion (Benard 1994, p. 41).<sup>26</sup> This designation of “yoginī” may be a holdover from Chinnamastā’s well-documented Buddhist roots. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya has argued that Chinnamastā is a later Hindu adaptation of the Vajrayana Buddhist goddess Vajrayoginī, who is likewise depicted in her “Chinnamuṇḍa” form as feeding her attendants with sanguinary streams from her self-severed neck (Bhattacharyya 1964, p. 159). It is on the basis of the names of Vajrayoginī’s attendants—Vajravaraṇā and Vajravairocanī—mentioned in her mantra in the twelfth century CE *Sādhnamālā* that Bhattacharya formulates part of his argument. If the “Vajra” prefix indicates their Buddhist character, the fact that it is dropped in the attendant’s names as given in the Hindu literature—Varaṇā and Dākinī—suggests an attempt to make the deity less Buddhist (Bhattacharyya 1964, pp. 160–61).<sup>27</sup> Oddly enough, “Vajravairocanī” remains part of the Chinnamastā (and Jogaṇī) mantra today, as we have already seen. All told, the link with the name “Yoginī”, for Chinnamastā as for Jogaṇī, could simply reflect Chinnamastā’s development out of the Buddhist Chinnamuṇḍa Vajrayoginī.

But the multifarious connotations evoked by the yoginīs are not so easily exhausted. Scholars have made much of the term “yoginī” on account of its numerous semantic trajectories, singular and plural, Sanskritic and folkloric,<sup>28</sup> and so even in Gujarat alone we are left with a complex matrix of yoginī connections to explore. Starting with the Sanskritic—or at least pan-Indian—understanding of the term, the widespread cult of the sixty-four yoginīs is conspicuous by way of its virtual absence in Gujarat. Despite the preponderance of yoginī artifacts in neighboring Rajasthan, among them paper and cloth Chakras dedicated to the plurality of female spirits, there are no well-known sixty-four yoginī temples in Gujarat (Dehejia 1986, p. 75). In her exhaustive study of such locations across India, Vidya Dehejia cites Palodhar in Mehsana district as the only Gujarati example, which she reports “has apparently crumbled away” (Dehejia 1986, p. 80). There is, in fact, a tiny modernized Cosath (“sixty-four”) Jogaṇī temple up and running in Palodhar at present, a few hundred yards away from a much older site decorated with carvings of female figures. Whether the latter structure is a remnant of the ancient yoginī cult or not, the modernized temple is a fairly standard Hindu site, drawing only nominal relations with the sixty-four yoginīs or Chinnamastā, at least from the perspective of the *pūjārī* with whom I spoke. As a case in point, the central shrine is dedicated to a singular Śakti, her head intact. The *pūjārī* informed me that there was a yantra underneath this image, though beyond this, there were few other tantric elements, and certainly no imagery of Chinnamastā or Jogaṇī. In this way, the temple parallels “sixty-four Yoginī” temples in Benares studied by Ferrari (2013) and Bisschop (2013). At these sites, as in Palodhar, there is little to no evidence of tantra or of the iconography and worship of the sixty-four divinities (Ferrari 2013, pp. 149–51). In their place is the non-tantric goddess “Chamsathī Devī” who is basically a modified form of Durgā, a singular deity standing in for all sixty-four (Ferrari 2013, p. 149; Bisschop 2013, p. 55). Cosath Jogaṇī Mātā of Palodhar, then, is not

<sup>25</sup> Consider that in this list of Chinnamastā’s hundred names, “Yoginī” appears in close proximity to titles like “Yoganiratā” (“she who practices yoga”), Yogamārgapradāyinī (“she who bestows the yoga path”) and Yogamayī (“she who embodies yoga”) (Kinsley 1997, p. 154).

<sup>26</sup> It is also worth mentioning that statues at several yoginī temples throughout India bear features reminiscent of Chinnamastā’s imagery. At the Hirapur temple stands a Cāmūṇḍā-like skeletal figure wearing a garland of skulls and wielding a severed head and a dagger. Unlike Chinnamastā, however, she has a concave stomach and pendulous breasts, and also holds aloft a lion carcass (Dehejia 1986, p. 97). Similarly at Bheraghat, several yoginīs are associated with severed heads, skulls and curved knives (Dehejia 1986, p. 136). There is, for instance, a Yoginī Sarvatomukhī who wears a tiara and a long garlands of skulls and is flanked by female attendants holding severed human heads, skull-caps and curved knives (Dehejia 1986, p. 131). The syllable “hrīṃ” is inscribed at the base of the statue, suggesting a mantra. While these and other fearsome yoginīs and their attendants are clearly steeped in the motifs of skulls and severed heads, none of them have auto-decapitated as per the Chinnamastā iconography.

<sup>27</sup> To the same end, the original Vajrayoginī Mantra in the *Sādhnamālā* prefixes Jogaṇī’s attendants with the descriptor “Sarvabuddha”, which is changed to “Sarvasiddhi” in the seventeenth-century Hindu *Tantrasāra* (Bhattacharyya 1964, p. 161).

<sup>28</sup> For some of these trajectories, see Hatley (2013).

Chinnamastā, nor is she strongly associated with Jogaṇī Mātā. While a few Jogaṇī Mātā sites, as we will see, claim some degree of acquaintance with Palodhar, this is definitely not found across the board.

The Yoginīs/Jogaṇīs show up as a plurality more frequently in the Gujarati folk tradition. Alexander Kinloch Forbes, a colonial administrator and founder of the Gujarati Vernacular Society, states in his 1878 *Ras Mala* that yoginīs helped in averting drought. During a dry spell, low-caste exorcists called *bhuvās* were acquisitioned to channel the Mātāji and inquire as to the lack of rainfall (Forbes 1973, p. 605). The *bhuvā* would then put in a request for food sacred to the Devī, and a feast was subsequently set out beyond the eastern gate of the town in question. These offerings were served in broken earthen vessels representing human skulls, out of which the yoginīs supposedly preferred to eat. This banquet for the Devī and the yoginīs, the latter seemingly playing their traditional role as attendants, was deemed successful if rain returned to the area (Forbes 1973, p. 605). The yoginīs were not always so munificent, as they were also held responsible for the spread of contagious diseases among human beings and cattle (Enthoven 1989, pp. 65–68). The only solution to epidemics caused by the sixty-four Jogaṇīs was the offering of a goat or a male buffalo, or else, once again, the observance of a feast in their honor (Enthoven 1989, p. 80). In Girnar, as in other regions, the Yoginīs were specifically called upon when the area was afflicted with cholera (Chitgopekar 2002, p. 105).

These folk rites related to disease shed light on the interplay between the plural and singular nature of the Jogaṇī. Gustav Oppert, writing in 1893, reports that his informants distinguished between three kinds of “Yōginīs” [sic]: *Pul* (flower),<sup>29</sup> *Lāl* (red), and *Kēśur* (hair).<sup>30</sup> The first is integral in the process of casting out disease:

They are invoked when epidemics, especially cholera, rage in the country. With their hair hanging over their shoulders, their faces painted with red colour, the Bhuvās assemble at a prominent Yōginī-temple, and after having partaken of a liberal supply of intoxicating liquor, jump about, pretending that the Yōginī has entered them, and that they speak in her name. At first the Pulyōginī appears alone, complaining about the neglect she and her sisters have suffered threatening the arrival of her sisters Lālyōginī and Kēśuryōginī, if she is not properly appeased now. The people made then in their homes the requested sacrifices consisting of a goat, rice, ghee, and liquor, and in the evening Pulyōginī is in a small carriage, resembling a children’s toy, taken with tomtom beating out of the town, and in the dead of night drives to the limits of the neighbouring village, where the chief Bhuva leaves her without looking backward. The inhabitants of the next village when they find the carriage on the next morning are frightened by the arrival of Pulyōginī and send her with similar ceremonies to another village (Oppert 1893, p. 571 ff. 399).

This passage is edifying for a number of reasons. Firstly, it describes the decidedly non-*sāttvik*, *bhuvā*-based rites that took place in what appears to have been a rural or village-based context. Equivalent forms of possession—referred to as “*pavan*”, literally “getting a wind” of a divinity<sup>31</sup>—can still be found at many goddess shrines and temples today, Jogaṇī sites included. Sacrifice and liquor oblations, while less common due to animal cruelty laws and Gujarat’s “dry-state” status,

<sup>29</sup> Here Oppert has inaccurately rendered *phūl*, or “flower”, as the non-aspirated *pul*. As we will see, the two terms are by all indications interchangeable.

<sup>30</sup> While I did not encounter this particular tripartite division of Jogaṇīs during my fieldwork, several people with whom I conversed mentioned a differentiation between Phūl Jogaṇī and Lāl Jogaṇī. Explanations as to the specifics of the distinctions differed vastly depending on the person doing the explaining—some said Phūl Jogaṇī was headless, others said the opposite. It should be noted, however, that the name “Phūl Jogaṇī”, as I discuss later on, is often found on contemporary Jogaṇī images.

<sup>31</sup> Erndl (1993) explores in great depth the use of the term “*pavan*” as it relates to possession in her study of goddess worship in Punjab. Erndl notes that local goddesses in this region are often worshipped along with servants or bodyguards, including the Hanuman-esque Laṅgūrvīr, who has helped to “tame” or Vaiṣṇavize these goddesses (Erndl 1993, p. 43). Hanuman is himself the son of the wind (*pavana*), suggesting the monkey god’s own resonances with possession-like states (see Lutgendorf 2007, p. 317). For a painstakingly thorough treatment of possession terminology in Indic languages, please see Frederick M. Smith’s 2006 work *The Self Possessed: Deity and Spirit Possession in South Asian Literature and Civilization* (Smith 2006, pp. 15–23, as well as pp. 35–39).

also occur at some Mātā *derīs* in rural or depressed-class areas, which I witnessed on several occasions during my fieldwork. Even more importantly for our purposes, the passage establishes that yoginīs, while treated as a group, were also portrayed as individual entities in Gujarati folklore and approached as such. “Pulyōginī” bears particular significance in this cholera rite, and speaks to the prominence of a singular, discrete Jogaṇī in Gujarati village religion in the nineteenth century. The “Pul” in “Pulyōginī” also corresponds directly with the “Phul” prefix commonly bestowed upon Jogaṇī in many of her modern lithographs.

The singular yoginī or “Jogni” is mentioned in other colonial-era ethnographic writing as well. *The Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency* (Campbell 1901) lists Jogaṇī—rendered here as “Jogni”—as one among many Gujarati words referring to “outside spirits” or ghosts who are female. Also on this list are Meladī, Cuḍel, and Śikotar, all of which at present bear the title Mātā, and all of which have seen major modern temples erected in their names as well (Campbell 1901, p. 417). Alongside these other female divinities, Jogni is elsewhere designated by the *Gazetteer* as being among “goddesses to whom blood offerings are made” (Campbell 1901, p. 406), thereby corroborating the account of the sacrifice from Oppert. The *Gazetteer* also provides a list of the various Dalit and lower castes who perform such blood offerings, including the Vaghris, the pastoralist Bharwads and Rabaris, as well as Kolis and Rajputs, all of whom are among Jogaṇī Mātā worshippers today (Campbell 1901, p. 406).<sup>32</sup> More recent ethnographies also reference Jogaṇī as a single divinity for similar caste groups. Lancy Lobo reports that Thakors, a low status group identifying with the Koli caste category, worship Jogaṇī as a “lower Mātā” (Lobo 1995, p. 142). This group features in a folktale I heard during my fieldwork wherein Jogaṇī beheads a Thakor married couple who did not honor her appropriately. While this story may be a by-product of Jogaṇī Mātā’s Chinnamastā imagery, it may also be based on more general connections between the goddess and blood, specifically bleeding related to the head. Joan Erikson, for instance, in her work on temple textiles in Gujarat, records that Jogaṇī is the goddess consulted by individuals suffering from severe nosebleeds or head wounds (Erikson 1968, p. 28).

Thus, while the term “Jogaṇī” was no doubt in conversation with a panoply of pan-Indian and local semantic connotations, both singular and plural, there is also evidence that “Jogaṇī” referred to a standalone spirit in the folk Gujarati context. Underneath this convoluted plurality of meanings, there is a singular entity—a uniquely Gujarati “Jogni” who was both ghost and goddess. Associated with diseases like cholera, nosebleeds and head wounds, she was worshipped via *tāmasik* means such as blood offerings and liquor oblations as something of a proto-Mātā. This appears to be the core of the current-day Jogaṇī, affixed now with the Mātā title.<sup>33</sup> The historical overlap with regard to castes that pay her worship, the ritual use of *tāmasik* substances and intoxicated *pavan* at some of her village or non-elite sites,<sup>34</sup> and the stability of the prefix “Phul” for a singular “Jogaṇī” all suggest a high degree of continuity between the singular “Jogni” or “Pulyōginī” of the past and the Jogaṇī Mātā who is depicted as Chinnamastā in the present.

And speaking of Chinnamastā, what stands out in all the ethnographic accounts cited above relating to Jogaṇī, both colonial and even later, is what is *not* mentioned. That is, none of the authors previously referenced describe Jogaṇī as bearing the self-decapitated iconography of Chinnamastā. This is somewhat surprising given the proclivity of the colonial gaze to fixate on such evocative images. This gives the impression that Jogaṇī’s Chinnamastā iconography is a relatively recent overlay to the singular ghost-cum-goddess Jognī/Jogaṇī. The question of *when* exactly the adoption of this imagery took place remains harrowing, however. When I asked people at Jogaṇī temples to estimate what

<sup>32</sup> The *Gazetteer* explains that blood offerings are even made on occasion by high caste Hindus, sometimes to secure the favor of a particular female divinity (Campbell 1901, p. 406).

<sup>33</sup> As a variation of “mother”, the title “Mātā” brings with it even further considerations as to the possible origins of Jogaṇī and other Gujarati goddesses that I do not have space to extrapolate upon here. Suffice it to say, both the yoginīs and Mahāvidyās are linked with *mātrkas* (or mothers) in Sankritic and folk traditions (see Hatley 2012; Mahalakshmi 2014, pp. 201–2).

<sup>34</sup> One such present-day example is a Jogaṇī Mātā site, reportedly over 200 years old, located very close to the airport on the outskirts of Ahmedabad. The presiding *bhuvā* informed me that sacrifices still take place there on rare occasions.

decade they remembered the goddess taking on her current lithograph illustration as Chinnamastā, I was told that this had been her image since time immemorial, and could be traced back to Jogaṇī's creation of the universe. Speaking in terms of a more etic historiography, this pairing of Jogaṇī with the Chinnamastā image likely took place in the past two or three decades. The availability of Chinnamastā lithographs in other parts of India may provide some clue as to just how recently Jogaṇī came to be connected to the image. While Chinnamastā's chromolithographs date back at least as far as the 1880s, she has only seen her devotional images widely circulated in recent times, at least if the curio shops surrounding her Cintapūrṇī temple complex in Himachal Pradesh are any indication. It was at this complex that Elisabeth Benard, in the course of doing fieldwork for her 1994 study of Chinnamastā's temples, was informed by *pūjārīs* that household devotees visualize Chinnamastā solely as Durgā when worshipping in their homes. No Chinnamastā prints were sold at the temple's outlying shops, as her form was thought to be of interest only to yogis and other adepts (Benard 1994, p. 47, n. 23). Absence of proof is not, of course, proof of absence, but Cintapūrṇī provides at least some indication that *sāttvik*, gold-complexioned Chinnamastā images (and the Gujarati Jogaṇī images patterned after them) may have only become widely available after the mid-1990s.

Regardless of the date of its introduction, the Chinnamastā imagery does not alienate the crowds that flock to Jogaṇī temples in Gujarat, including their middle-class and upwardly mobile sections. While Mātās like Jogaṇī sometimes occasion a negative perception among some Jain, Baniya and Brahman elites in view of their link with *tāmasik* practices and lower castes, the gold-complexioned Chinnamastā imagery seems to work in tandem with the relations to Paraśurāma and Gorakh in moving the goddess outside of the village context toward a safer, *sāttvik*, Sanskritic mode. What results is the Jogaṇī Mātā we meet in the temples of urban Gujarat, a deity quite different from the Durgā-like Coṣaṭh Jogaṇī Mātā, but still treated like a Great Goddess in her own right.

#### 4. Ethnography of Urban Jogaṇī Sites

In order to better understand how Jogaṇī's village and tantric resonances function in a contemporary Gujarati context, I carried out fieldwork at a number of shrines and temples dedicated to the goddess in and around Ahmedabad. Here I focus on three urban sites that attract a middle-class, upwardly mobile following, the first located in Gandhinagar, the Gujarat capital, and the other two in the Naranpura and Odhav sections of Ahmedabad. At these sites I undertook participant observation of temple rituals and routines while also partaking in conversations, mostly unstructured, with officiants and patrons.

##### 4.1. Gandhinagar

Tucked away amongst conjoined houses in a comfortable, tree-ensconced residential sector of Gandhinagar is a small but popular Jogaṇī Mātā shrine. The shrine operates out of a tiny room in the home of Anitabahen (see Figure 2), an Ayurvedic nurse, and her husband Mukeshbhai, who works for the state government distributing electricity. Hailing from the Barot community, a bardic caste thought to be strongly linked to goddesses,<sup>35</sup> the couple founded their home-based shrine just over a decade ago. Both have *pavan* of local deities, Anitabahen from Jogaṇī Mātā and Mukeshbhai from Śikotar Mā and Gogā Mahārāj.<sup>36</sup> While it takes Mukeshbhai considerable effort to get *pavan*, Anitabahen can

<sup>35</sup> For a discussion of the Barots of Gujarat, as well as their connection to goddesses, see (Shah and Shroff 1958). While Barots, Charans and other pastoralist groups enjoyed a special relationship with goddesses on account of their status as genealogists of royal families, they were also not, as a whole, a particularly high status group. Pastoralist groups often engaged in *tāmasik* such as goat and buffalo sacrifices, which resonated with royal sacrifices offered by kings (Tambs-Lyche 1997, p. 178).

<sup>36</sup> Gogā Mahārāj, also known as Gūgā, was a disciple of Gorakhnāth who was educated by his guru in the art of charming snakes. There are many *derīs* dedicated to Gogā Mahārāj throughout Gujarat, and he often appears in subsidiary shrines in temples to goddesses. In fact, all three sites discussed in this paper acknowledge Gogā Mahārāj, the Naranpura and Odhav temples by way of subsidiary shrines. For more on Gogā Mahārāj, see (Briggs 1973, pp. 193–201).

get it spontaneously and with greater intensity. For this reason, she represents the spiritual focus of the shrine.



**Figure 2.** Anitabahen in her home shrine in Gandhinagar. Photo by author.

Anitabahen first got *pavan* as an adolescent, when she was approached by a young girl who offered her a flower (or *phūl*), the predominant Jogaṇī symbol. Initially skeptical, Anitabahen passed up the offer, and thereafter experienced pain in her chin and stiffness in her neck. Upon consulting a *bhuvā* about the ailment, it was revealed that the mysterious girl was the *svarūpa* of Jogaṇī from Palodhra. Hearing this, Anitabahen accepted her *pavan*, which only strengthened after she and her husband co-founded their shrine. Now she is able to link up with the goddess at any time, though her *pavan* is especially pronounced, she explains, during the nine nights of Navratri. For the duration of the festival she goes on leave from her work and gives up all housekeeping duties such as cooking and washing, which are taken on by other family members. She also observes a fast, consuming only lemon juice, milk and water. Day and night throughout the festival she stays on the floor of the shrine, even sleeping there, waking around two or three in the morning to meditate and recite mantras. Drifting out of her conventional consciousness, she plays and talks with Jogaṇī Mā, and when people arrive at the site she is able to announce accurately the purpose of their visit.

Anitabahen describes her life's work as a process of transferring her *pavan* of Jogaṇī to her patients, both in her home and in the hospital. When they visit her at her home shrine, she repeats mantras and ślokas in her mind or under her breath to accomplish as much. At some point during this process, she or Mukeshbhai applies a cloth to the visitor, attempting to remove "negativity" (*doṣ*). All the while, recordings of Sanskrit chants play in the background. Consultation also concerns everyday problems in devotee's lives and facilitating Jogaṇī's fulfillment of their wishes, Anitabahen reading beads to provide solutions. One recurrent request involves securing devotees visas to the United States and other western countries. During my visits, a number of people came in seeking aid for just such a desire, as was the case for one Patel woman who was trying to get American work visas for herself and several family members. From Anitabahen's own perspective, however, the shrine's primary achievements involve the alleviation of health problems. In this way, her *pavan* allows her

to heal people in two ways, as she conceives it—directly as the Mātāji, and secondarily through her Ayurvedic nursing. She told me of one woman who was under intensive treatment at a leading cardiac hospital, heart surgery her only conceivable hope for survival. This woman started to visit the shrine regularly, and now needs only minimal medication for her condition, having been blessed by Jogaṇī’s cosmic energy. Anitabahen attributes the entirety of her success at healing and granting requests to her role as a conduit for Jogaṇī, whom she frames in a very Advaitic mode as the most ancient power in the universe from which all other gods and goddesses are created. It is Jogaṇī’s self-beheading that inaugurated the universe, Anitabahen explains, and so the goddess is able to manifest in any part of the world. Because she has the widest jurisdiction, it follows that Jogaṇī is the most effective spiritual force available, in Anitabahen’s words a “Brahmanical” power that brings prosperity, healing and also fertility.

The effectiveness of her method of healing has gained Anitabahen a loyal local following. People show up at the shrine from the early morning to the late evening, and she and her husband are continually handling phone calls from prospective visitors. This following, they inform me, has also spread to other parts of India and even abroad, and so they have accumulated devotees in the USA, the UK, Australia and Canada. During one of my early visits, Mukeshbhai proudly showed me his ringing cellphone, displaying a number with an American area code. Indeed, much of their support comes from Patels based in America. Locally, major events draw crowds well beyond the capacity of the shrine’s tiny confines, as is the case at the yearly *patotsava*, which has brought in as many as 1500 people. In order to provide more space for their devotees, the couple plans to build a full-scale temple nearby on the strength of local and international donations. Despite their success, Mukeshbhai tells me that he and his wife are not seeking big commercial gains. Humility is at the core of their self-definition—that is, they only want the status of *sevaks* or servants rather than *bhuvās*, because *bhuvās* are synonymous with making income and greed.

Tantric imagery covers virtually every square inch of this site, the shrine room festooned with yantras as well as numerous icons of Chinnamastā/Jogaṇī in lithograph prints and framed statuettes. Standing out among these Chinnamastā-styled icons is a plug-in three-dimensional lithograph which simulates the streams of blood from Jogaṇī’s neck in blinking red LED. Yantras sit all around the main *mūrti*, the most prominent being the Jogaṇī Pūjān Yantra. During consultation with her followers, Anitabahen murmurs mantras, counting them off on prayer beads while consulting the goddess. Additionally, there are sixty-four oil-lamps which are lit and offered on peak days such as Sunday and Tuesday, a conscious nod to the Cosath Jogaṇī temple at Palodhra, which Mukeshbhai visits at festivals. When I inquired about the tantric nature of these ritual and visual apparatuses, Anitabahen and her husband were quick to set apart what they did from tantra. Mukeshbhai was particularly skeptical of tantrism, as his grandfather had apparently engaged in some *tāmasik* tantra in the past and had suffered undesired consequences. Having learned a lesson from his grandfather’s dabbling, Mukeshbhai only deals in the *sāttvik*, and the same goes for his wife. Their *pūjā* is entirely vegetarian, with coconuts being the only thing sacrificed in the shrine. In the event that a devotee ever comes in suffering from any sort of *tāmasik* or malevolent sorcery, Anitabahen makes sure to respond as quickly as possible. On the whole, Mukeshbhai says he does not want to deal in tantra, a kind of power which he differentiates from that of the *pavan* he and his wife experience. Their *pavan*, in his view, especially Anitabahen’s, is a direct connectivity with the goddess. Mukeshbhai’s framing of the rituals at his home shrine reflects a tendency I found at many other Gujarati sites to delink a given *mātā* from *bhuvā*-based practices, with so-called “black” or “*tāmasik* tantrism” often included therein. Such practices are held in suspicion by the Gujarati Hindu mainstream, as they would seem to attenuate the power of the goddess through their reliance on an intermediary who is both out for profit and willing to deal in negative forces.

#### 4.2. Naranpura

Comparable attitudes can be found at the the Jay Mātāji Mitram temple to Jogaṇī Mā in the Naranpura section of Ahmedabad. This sleek, medium-sized temple and surrounding complex, constructed in the early 2000s, is centered upon the figure of Maa Laadchi, a woman of pastoralist origin who has had an ongoing *pavan* of Jogaṇī since her adolescence. After suffering a snake bite, Laadchi started to experience *pavan*-like symptoms, though she was not entirely sure what was happening to her and, like Anitabahen, did not immediately open up to the presence of the goddess. Her youth was from then on fraught with troubles until she was assisted by her maternal aunt, who herself had *pavan* of her village Jogaṇī and transferred it to Laadchi. Laadchi subsequently began providing solutions to people's problems and gained a following that has further burgeoned with the construction of the Naranpura temple.

The site has over time come to attract a diverse following, including some fairly well-heeled, upwardly mobile patrons. Among my foremost conversationalists were a number of English-speaking trustees with prominent occupations, including Jayram, a Rabari man in his early thirties who works as cameraperson for an Ahmedabad news station, and Dr. Patel, a physician at a local hospital. While well-employed, Jayram and Dr. Patel, among others at the Naranpura temple, seem to be undertaking nonetheless a continuing negotiation of their middle-classness and social status, still working against lingering upper-caste stigmas toward Patels or Rabaris. That said, the complex also attracts the patently elite. As a case in point, Jayram was proud to report that Narendra Modi's family has visited the site on a number of occasions.

Every Sunday and Tuesday, a long line of visitors winds through the temple waiting for an opportunity to meet with Laadchi. These sessions usually involve a method of divination referred to as "sitting *patla*", which involves throwing seeds to chart a course of action for solving a devotee's concerns, a carryover from earlier *bhuvā*-based practices (see Figure 3). Like Anitabahen, Laadchi confronts visitor's health problems, among them diabetes and cancer. These diseases are framed as "negative power" which has entered a person's body, and when their sickness proves incurable by the best efforts of an allopath, I was told, people then come to Laadchi. As Dr. Patel described it, the cures that result thereafter are 99% on account of the Mātāji, 1% on account of the overseeing physician. Laadchi also handles infertility and, as is characteristic of *mātā* sites, there are stories of women in their late forties who, after years of previous barrenness, conceived children shortly after visiting the temple. As it was explained to me by Dr. Patel, the temple takes on any "time-being" problem with the aim of transferring people from the "ocean" to the "green". That is, Laadchi always reassures people that, while they may be temporarily drowning in an ocean of problems, after coming to the temple they will eventually find the green and then the gold—specifically, land and money. It is not just expedient resolutions that come to temple devotees, apparently, but prosperity as well. Accordingly, Laadchi is just as likely to advise on business deals and career moves as she is to cure ailments. For instance, during one of my visits I met a Brahman woman who had come to give thanks for a wish that had been fulfilled pertaining to the success of her daughters' careers abroad in the United States and Canada. By virtue of its gaining reputation for very quick, very tangible results, the Naranpura temple attracts a wide range of visitors from all over Gujarat, as well as India at large.



**Figure 3.** Maa Laadchi (on left) sitting *patla*. Photo by author.

While the temple grounds are frequented by a significant contingent of Barwads and Rabaris, prominent members of the temple assured me that all castes and creeds attend, including people from the village, and even Christians and Muslims. These visitors span all economic capacities. In many cases, Dr. Patel explained, the underprivileged received healing from the temple they could not otherwise afford from hospitals. The Mātāji, I heard again and again, sees no difference between people, and so all groups are welcome. What was not welcome, I was told, were any people who betrayed, as the trustees phrased it in English, an attitude that was “hi-fi”—apparently referring to a disposition of class or caste-based elitism. This spurning of the hi-fi not only combats snobbery, but also actively encourages the performance of middle-classness in that it promotes a spirit of inclusivism, just one among many middle-class values cultivated by the Naranpura temple. The clean, tidily kept environment and well-ordered queue further underscored the temple’s middle-class sensibilities, as did the overall emphasis on material prosperity. Not only did the temple boast three new automobiles, but on one of my early visits, trustees handed out glossy fliers promoting a temple-sponsored raffle that advertised as prizes flat-screen TVs, air conditioners and motorcycles, among other commodities. Complementing these markers of middle-classness were upper caste influences, most notably vegetarianism, and so non-veg food and animal products are strictly forbidden on the Naranpura temple grounds. Collectively, this constellation of sensitivities suggests the Naranpura temple and its followers foster some degree of upward mobility, involving elements of Sanskritization and/or Vaiṣṇavization alongside gentrification and/or bourgeoisification. Although not elitist by any stretch, the temple still wanted to distinguish itself from other Mātā temples. This seemed to be the motivation on one occasion when Jayram saw me glancing at some advertisements for other Mātā sites outside of Ahmedabad papered to a wall a few feet away from the temple, and approached wanting to make sure I was not confusing the Naranpura site with any of these.

While tantric accoutrements were less concentrated throughout the Naranpura temple grounds than at other Jogaṇī sites, there were still a number of yantras and Chinnamastā images. The trappings

of tantra are more readily discernible in formulations of the Naranpura temple's power and the immanent availability thereof. When I asked what separates Jogaṇī from other goddesses, both Jayram and Dr. Patel gave me variations of the somewhat standardized Advaitic response. Jayram said that Jogaṇī is one, and her expression depends on the community worshipping her. Dr. Patel modified this slightly by saying that all goddesses, like doctors, are essentially the same, though a person ends up going to the one that works best. For Dr. Patel and other temple attendees, Jogaṇī is what works. Dr. Patel then went on to liken the singular, all-powerful Great Goddess to a CEO with a plurality of assistant managers, directors and employees. These middle-management types are the local goddesses and their manifestations such as Laadchi who provide more immediate results to the devotees, and allow people to participate in Jogaṇī's power directly. It is the power of this temple alone, Dr. Patel explains, that draws in passersby who can benefit from it most. But the power at the Naranpura temple is not simply a nebulous philosophical construct; rather, it is both highly efficacious and pragmatically directed. Having noted the busy, fast-paced nature of city life, Dr. Patel stressed that Laadchi cares first and foremost about results, and so her role, then, is primarily in easing the delivery of any given devotee's requests. Be that as it may, when I brought up the topic of tantra with Jayram, he was quick to shake his head. Jayram tells me there is no tantra-*vidyā* at the Naranpura temple, only the reading of seeds and the faith of the people. As a whole, neither he nor the other major players at the temple thought particularly highly of the tantric label.

#### 4.3. Odhav

The Gandhinagar and Naranpura sites are representative of most Jogaṇī locations I visited, where an explicit association with tantra is either denied or de-emphasized. There are, however, exceptions, one such being the small Jogaṇī Mātā temple in Odhav, a residential and commercial suburb of Ahmedabad. This temple began as a small *derī* in 1967 when the area was still fairly remote, and the temple was built up around it in the 1970s, having been further expanded in the past two decades. The temple is currently fronted by Dhananjay, who claims affiliation with the Rāmānandī Sampradāya, a north Indian Vaiṣṇava ascetic lineage,<sup>37</sup> and self-identifies as a Brahman, donning the sacred thread. Rāmānandī Sadhus, he explained to me, have a special relationship with the yoginīs, representing sixty-four dimensions of the one Shakti who are responsible for directing Rāmānandī family goddesses (or *kuldevīs*). Dhananjay also claims affiliation with the Nāga Sadhus, a sub-order of ascetics closely tied to the Nāth Siddhas (White 1996, p. 254). Dhananjay's own guru lives at Girnar, evidently the Gujarati hotbed of Jogaṇī(s) as was intimated by the *Śrī Jogaṇī Vrat*. Śaktis and Jogaṇī have played an integral part in the religious life of Dhananjay's ancestors, as he can trace his own *pavan* back five generations. Dhananjay established his personal connection to Jogaṇī in his late teens, when he received his first *pavan*. Since then, his *pavan* has remained relatively understated, occurring in very short but very intense bursts, usually only on holy days such as Shivaratri and Holi, among others. Though he is trained in the family business of refrigerator and air-conditioning repair, the majority of Dhananjay's energy is dedicated to the temple and to the study of tantrism.

The temple itself operates much like other Jogaṇī sites, based upon consultation between officiants and visitors, though its following is smaller and mostly local. Temple patrons are mainly Rabaris with some Barwads intermixed, though they include an assortment of other castes and even some Sikhs and Muslims from the surrounding community. During Navaratri the crowds swell, with upwards of 400 or more people visiting the temple in the evening throughout the course of the festival. As for day to day routines, Dhananjay's father handles more standard requests from visitors, using a feather broom to whisk away negativity and bestow blessings, while tantric tasks are delegated to

<sup>37</sup> A copious amount of scholarly literature exists concerning the Rāmānandī Sampradāya. For a discussion of the origins of the group, see (Burghart 1978). For a study of Rāmānandī monastics and their efforts regarding social equity, see (Pinch 1996). Rāmānandīs also form a major focus of Peter van der Veer's *Gods on Earth* (Van der Veer 1988).

Dhananjay. In these cases, Dhananjay fixes a timeslot to perform the necessary rituals, which are largely focused upon mantras and, on occasion, the construction of elaborate yantras out of multicolored food grains. These help with the usual difficulties brought to *mātā* shrines; as Dhananjay's father phrases it: "All middle-class problems are solved." The temple also seems to have evolved with the middle-class and upwardly mobile in mind. In the last ten years, the sacrifice of goats has stopped, and now symbolic substitutes such as gourds and betel are used under Dhananjay's direction. Like the other middle-class Jogaṇī officiants, Dhananjay also accentuates the temple's affluence. The temple itself appears not to be suffering financially, as it sponsors a half-dozen *havans* of considerable scale every year, with a team of Brahmans hired for these events (see Figure 4). These *havans*, Dhananjay assures me, cost an exorbitant amount, but the goddess's blessings have easily defrayed the expense. In fact, Jogaṇī's Chinnamastā imagery actually encodes the prosperity that awaits her devotees. In Dhananjay's interpretation of the lithograph print, Jogaṇī stands not on Kāma and Rati, but rather upon Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī.<sup>38</sup> With Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī literally under foot, Jogaṇī secures for her devotees not only the blessing of Viṣṇu, but the lucrative rewards of Lakṣmī, as well.



**Figure 4.** Dhananjay (center, shirtless with glasses) performing *havan* with the help of Brahmans. Dhananjay's father is pictured to his immediate right. Photo by author.

When I inquire deeper into the specifics of the Chinnamastā image, Dhananjay explains that it depicts Jogaṇī after slaying Raktabīj, thereby putting the goddess in a role closer to that of Durgā or Kālī, which we have already seen her assume in the *Śrī Jogaṇī Vrat*. Her nudity is strategic, Dhananjay claims, as it serves to distract her demonic foes. The ostensibly violent imagery of the auto-decapitation, in his view, is also created out of consideration for people from lower castes and classes, who come to

<sup>38</sup> Alternative postulations exist concerning whom the couple underneath Chinnamastā actually is. Usually they are identified as Vaiṣṇava on account of the male's sectarian markings. Philip Rawson, for instance, reports that it is Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā beneath the severed-headed goddess (Rawson 1973, p. 126).

Chinnamastā at the end of their workday with feelings of frustration, anger, fatigue, and failure. All of this wild excitement, as he refers to it, is absorbed and withdrawn by this *tāmasik* imagining of the goddess, which she takes on in the evening. By morning, however, she is soft and *sāttvik*. The goddess as Chinnamastā, then, in Dhananjay’s reading, appears to have transformative power, sublimating the *tāmasik* urges of non-elite groups and rendering them *sāttvik*. In this way, her image as Chinnamastā is tantamount to a purifying force. In Dhananjay’s view, Jogaṇī can be both *tāmasik* and *sāttvik*, as well as *rājasik*, a testament to her all-encompassing nature. With this transcendent theological imagining in mind, he assures me that Chinnamastā is just one name of Jogaṇī, whom he describes as being akin to a giant power station that has channels of distribution numbering sixty-four or more. Moreover, as with other Jogaṇī sites we have visited, the main goddess is again attributed with the inception of the cosmos, at which she appeared first on the scene as the primordial *jyot*, or flame. And, once again mirroring the *Śrī Jogaṇī Vrat*, Dhananjay also made repeated references to Jogaṇī’s extensive Sanskritic *itihās*, or history, which he claims can be traced back to various Vedic and Purāṇic texts. Chinnamastā, then, is just one among many facets of Jogaṇī’s all-embracing Sanskritic and Advaitic character.

Unlike the other Jogaṇī affiliates we have met, Dhananjay openly affirms that Jogaṇī is tantric and that he himself is a *tāntrika*. This tantric aspect is plainly reflected in the environment and rituals of the temple. Inscribed high up on the door-facing wall are the syllables of the *Śrī Jogaṇī Mātā Mūlmantra*. There is also a yantra, Dhananjay informs me, underneath the central Jogaṇī *mūrti*. It is necessary to have these apparatuses in place, Dhananjay explains, to maintain not just prosperity but also peace of mind, as they all help to digest the negative symptoms he takes on from visitors. It is for this reason that, on Kālī Caudas, the most inauspicious day of the year, he contracts an extensive tantric *havan*, or fire sacrifice. After midnight on this evening, Dhananjay and his team of Brahmans complete 125,000 mantras in order to recharge the energy of the temple for the entirety of the dawning year. The *havan*, I was told, is highly effective due in part to the temple’s location within several blocks of what used to be funerary grounds. Accordingly, interspersed between the mantras are performances of *arthī* for Jogaṇī as well as an assortment of cremation ground deities like Bagalāmukhī, Bhairava, and Kālī. Because of his tantric erudition and his Jogaṇī *pavan*, Dhananjay maintains an esteemed place among *tāntrikas* in Ahmedabad, and even acknowledges involvement with more secretive tantric rites. A number of these, he claims, have been commissioned by members of the city’s elite, such as prominent bank managers trying to affect CEOs and political figures. When some of these rites began to incorporate black magic, however, Dhananjay ceased to attend.

Dhananjay defines his tantric activities in counterpoint to such malevolent undertakings. When I ask why other Jogaṇī affiliates would be so quick to dismiss tantra, Dhananjay first suggests to me that 90% of people do not have any real systematic knowledge of tantra, and for that reason, they fear their lack of true understanding will be outed. Secondly, many have come to associate tantra with negative ends like the black magic mentioned above. Dhananjay estimates that for 90% of *tāntrikas*, the goal of their practice is negative “black tantrism” seeking to cause ill to others. By contrast, he only takes part in positive or “white tantrism”, which is employed solely to cure physical and psychological pain. True tantra is, in his view, therapy to cure a patient. However, with yantras and mantras as with medicine, every tablet has a side effect if not taken in the proper dosage. Therefore tantra, like medicine, is a deep science that should be applied precisely and carefully. When spoken by a Brahman, a mantra becomes like a “guided missile”, as Dhananjay phrased it, the implication being that more *tāmasik*, less Brahmanic, and less benevolent *bhuvās* are using an exceedingly powerful weapon indiscriminately. Dhananjay assures me that his tantra is strictly *sāttvik* and Brahmanic, as the Brahmanical and Sanskritic further assists in preventing ill effects of the negative residue a white *tāntrika* inevitably takes on from his clientele. While Jogaṇī can be *tāmasik*, *sāttvik* or *rājasik*, she is nonetheless central in attaining to this Brahmanic standard, as Dhananjay sees her as being highly Sanskritic when compared to other goddesses, mostly on the strength of her substantial Vedic and Purāṇic *itihās*.

While Dhananjay was the only Jogaṇī affiliate I found who openly avowed a tantric affiliation or identity, in differentiating two types of tantrism, he provides some insight as to why most Jogaṇī temples de-emphasize the goddess's tantric components. Evidently, they do not want to risk being connected with a form of religion that still carries with it some negative connotations. That said, while Anitabahen, Laadchi, and their followers, among others, may downplay or deny tantric appurtenances, they still offer visitors—as does Dhananjay—access to some degree of “white” tantrism that brings its benefits rapidly and just as importantly removes “negativity”, a concept that was referenced at all three sites. Indeed, Anitabahen, Laadchi and Dhananjay share a direct connection to the Great Goddess via *pavan* which remains uncorrupted by the avarice of *bhuvās* and black *tāntrikas*, who deal in destructive forces for profit. Even when it goes unacknowledged, this positive tantric power seems to play a fundamental role in making Jogaṇī temples appealing for an increasing base of devotees who aspire to a long and prosperous middle-class lifestyle in India or abroad.

## 5. Conclusions

Although Jogaṇī was at one point appeased through sacrifices and liquor oblations, the Jogaṇī Mātā sites we have visited in and around Ahmedabad appear to be participating in an ongoing effort to reimagine and reconfigure their patron goddess. This involves a number of imbricated strategies. While these sites have maintained some village elements like *patla* and *pavan*, all of them appear to have Sanskritized in view of their emphasis upon vegetarianism and symbolic sacrifices, as well as their deployment of Sanskrit texts, recordings and ritual apparatuses, and even the employment of Brahmans. These converge to actualize the kind of Sanskritic, Brahmanic imagining of the goddess put forward in widely-available devotional pamphlets like the *Śrī Jogaṇī Vrat*. In the text as in the temples, this preference for the Sanskritic informs several variations of Advaitic theology for Jogaṇī, each of which figures her as interchangeable with—if not fully embodying—the Great Goddess in a universalistic mode. In their intrinsic refinement, these Sanskritic ritual modes and universalized theologies coincide with middle-class sensibilities, which are readily identifiable in the demonstrations of material prosperity and cosmopolitan, intercontinental ambitions that abound at urban Jogaṇī sites. Middle-class values also inspire the sites' efforts toward inclusiveness, as well as more subtly gentrified considerations such as cleanliness and orderliness. Far removed from the Phūl Jogaṇī of the village, Jogaṇī Mātā has been effectively Sanskritized, universalized and gentrified. These processes, however, have not necessarily “sweetened” her main image.

Bloody though it may be, Jogaṇī's tantric imagery as Chinnamastā does not run contrary to this Brahmanic, Advaitic, and middle-class aesthetic being cultivated at her temples. If anything, it coexists harmoniously, and so Jogaṇī Mātā exemplifies how “tantrification”, as Lutgendorf (2001, 2007) terms it, has operated alongside and in conversation with the processes of upward mobility discussed above. Much as Lutgendorf has argued is the case with Hanuman throughout North India, Jogaṇī exemplifies a positive tantra that satisfies a middle-class need for “quick-fix” solutions in a frenzied modern marketplace, providing fast access to esoteric power. This esoteric aspect is neither off-putting nor transgressive to middle-class and upwardly mobile tastes so long as it presents itself in the context of a respectable form of religiosity, which Chinnamastā, among other Sanskritic signifiers, appears to provide. As R. Mahalakshmi contends regarding Chinnamastā at the Rajrappa site in Jharkhand, the tantric tradition of the Mahāvidyās offers a broader framework within which a local form of worship can be assimilated into the Brahmanical tradition, and this seems to apply to the Jogaṇī Mātā sites in Gujarat (Mahalakshmi 2014, p. 213). By taking on the image of Chinnamastā, Jogaṇī participates in a non-threatening, *sāttvik* tantrism which, whether explicitly identified by her affiliates or not, is satisfactorily removed from black tantrism and the interference of the *bhuvā*. In this light, it does not preclude middle-class involvement. If anything, the rapid material benefits of *sāttvik* tantrism make the ambitions of the ascending classes more eminently attainable. It is not, however, merely *what* is sought after in these rites that is so crucial to class mobility, but perhaps more importantly *how* it is asked for. Tantric imagery and efficacy, it would appear, when present in a certain measure alongside both familiar

folk/village and Sanskritic/Brahmanical elements, can be part of a religious experience that is safe and even self-affirming for the middle-class and upwardly mobile. In short, “white” tantra dovetails with other perceived signifiers of status, such as the Sanskritic/Vaiṣṇavic, the universal and the gentrified. Jogaṇī’s popularity may also reflect just how influential Madhu Khanna’s “bazaari tantra” has become in contemporary India. That is to say, with tantric imagery circulating so pervasively in popular culture by way of mass-mediated cultural products, its visibility and influence has become almost second nature, given how intuitively compatible it is with middle-class tastes and aspirations. This form of consumer-friendly tantra is sufficiently mainstream, and so it does not hinder the mainstream appeal of a goddess. Certainly, for individuals at the sites I visited, tantra appears to play a part in the performance of realizing and reiterating class status.

These speculations aside, countless urban and rural Jogaṇī Mātā sites demonstrate just how ubiquitous a variation of Chinnamastā imagery has become within Gujarati religious and visual space. Kinsley (1997) and Benard (1994) have each characterized Chinnamastā as one of the least worshipped Mahāvidyās, though the literally hundreds of examples of her image throughout Gujarat should prompt some re-evaluation of this claim. While Jogaṇī is not simply Chinnamastā, as many of the people I spoke with confirmed, the image of the severed-headed goddess may be closer to the everyday lives of worshippers than was once assumed.

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