LIVING GODDESS AS INCARNATE IMAGE:
THE KUMARI CULT OF NEPAL

A Thesis

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The photographs shown in Plates VII and VIII were taken by John C. Huntington. Unless otherwise noted, all other photographs were taken by Larry Hill.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

One of the most popular tourist attractions in the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal (Figure 1) is the home of a young girl who is believed to be a "living goddess"—a human manifestation of the goddess Kumāri. Located at the royal Darbar Square of the capital city of Kathmandu, the structure bears elaborately carved decoration displaying a rich iconographic program relating to the Kumāri cult. If visitors to the residence are fortunate, Kumāri will make a brief appearance at a third storey window in the south wall of the courtyard of the structure (Plate I). Distinctive in her characteristic red garment, jewelry adornments, upswept hair, and elaborate eye makeup, the goddess quietly gives darsan—that is, permits herself to be seen—but never smiles or interacts with her visitors (Plate II).

The Kathmandu Kumāri is the most well known and popular manifestation of the goddess Kumāri, but, in fact, there are between eleven and thirteen incarnations of Kumāri at any given time in the Kathmandu...

1The term \textit{kumāri} literally means "little girl" and, in Nepal, is used in general when referring to all young girls. In addition, the term connotes that the child is unmarried. The term "living goddess" was used by Michael Allen in his precedent-setting book \textit{The Cult of Kumāri} and is popularly used by tourists in Nepal. See Michael Allen, \textit{The Cult of Kumāri: Virgin Worship in Nepal}, second ed. (Kathmandu: Madhab Lal Maharjan, 1975).

2The term \textit{incarnate} is used when referring to human manifestations of the goddess. However, I use it with some hesitation here, as it carries certain connotations that are not appropriate when referring to the human form of Kumāri. \textit{Incarnate} refers specifically to that which is endowed with a human or animal body, and it is in this sense that the term is used here. However, the term \textit{incarnation} is also used in the Aryan context to refer to a birth or rebirth in a form that is kept for a single lifetime. For example, prior to his rebirth as the young prince Siddhārtha, Sākyaṃnika Buddha was incarnated in various animal forms, such as a monkey king, during numerous lifetimes. The stories of his former lives are referred to as the Jātaka tales. Therefore, when used in reference to the goddess Kumāri in this paper,
Valley. Because of her royal status, the Kathmandu Kumāri, along with the rituals and ceremonies associated with her, the iconography of her residence, and other practices associated with her, is often thought to epitomize the cult. However, each Kumāri plays an important role in her individual context, and, to understand the phenomenon of the cult, a thorough study must also take into account the full range of Kumāri manifestations.

The Kumāri phenomenon has been a principal focus of Buddhist and Hindu religious practices in the Kathmandu Valley since before the eleventh century. As such, Kumāri has attracted serious scholarly attention by cultural and religious historians, anthropologists, and others who attempt to understand this Nepali phenomenon as part of the broader religious, social, and political context of the culture.

Studies dealing with Kumāri and the religious practices associated with her have focused primarily on three aspects of the Kumāri phenomenon. The first is the concept of the goddess manifesting in human form or her status as a "living" deity. The second emphasis has centered on the term incarnate is intended in the literal sense of the word. The goddess Kumāri manifests in the body of a young girl that, like a vessel, receives the essence of the deity.

3 Allen, 11; and Mary Shepherd Sluss, Nepal Mandala: A Cultural Study of the Kathmandu Valley, 2 vols., vol. 1. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), 311. The reason for this variance in number is likely due to the fact that certain Kumāris are relatively obscure and are propitiated in such a limited manner that they are difficult to identify. Also, at any given time, some minor Kumāris may not be formally installed.

4 Nearly all scholars who have addressed Kumāri worship have engaged in discussions concerning these three points. The most substantial analyses have been put forth by Michael Allen, with the works of Nikola Marov, Mary Sluss, and John K. Locke contributing some new information, but relying heavily on Allen's interpretations of the Kumāri cult. Because most scholarly works that deal with Kumāri worship and practices are primarily reiterations of Allen's work, references to scholarly opinions, unless otherwise noted, imply views generally held throughout the scholarly community. John Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal: A Survey of the Bāhās and Bāhus of the Kathmandu Valley, (Kathmandu: Sāhāyogi Prāvī, 1985); Nikola Marov, "Enquete sur les Kumāris", Kaultsh, 2, no. 3 (1974); and Sluss, 311.
the virginity of the girls selected to serve as Kumārī, as Kumārī worship has often been attributed to the child's "virginal" status. Finally, the third emphasis concerns Kumārī's role as a validator of Nepali kingship. Emphasis on these three aspects of the Kumārī cult has led to the generally accepted view that Kumārī worship, as a form of religious practice, is a phenomenon unlike the other religious practices in the Kathmandu Valley, and, indeed, in the Buddhist and Hindu realms of Asia. For example, Michael Allen, whose 1975 publication on Kumārī remains the definitive work on the subject, describes the Kumārī cult as a "most notable and perhaps unique feature of [the] religion." In other words, Allen sees the phenomenon of an incarnate goddess as strikingly different from the more widespread patterns of deity worship in the Valley. Based on this premise, many scholars approach research on the Kumārī cult with the assumption that the worship of Kumārī is anomalous within the traditions and practices of the Buddhist and Hindu communities in Nepal.

By emphasizing Kumārī as a deity who is "alive", scholars have set her apart from the thousands of images fabricated from stone, metal, and other materials by Nepali artists over the centuries. Further, this distinction implies that the fabricated images are empty containers that are void of essence and being. While Western notions of art might lead to the conclusion that such images are, indeed, inanimate references to deities, to their devotees these images are understood as the bodies of the living deities who manifest in them. Like Kumārī, they are "alive" and are treated as living guests who require every consideration of hospitality and respect. Research

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5 Allen, see n. 1 above.
6 Allen, 1.
by scholars, such as Joanne Punzo Waghorne, Norman Cutler, and others demonstrates that, in the Indian context, deities are embodied in a variety of ways, manifesting in stone, metal, human, and other forms. Further, just as the embodiment of deities is central to Hinduism in India, so is it a central feature of Buddhism and Hinduism in Nepal.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the parallels between Kumāri and images as used in the Hindu/Buddhist religious context of Nepal. My research will demonstrate that the incarnate manifestations of Kumāri closely resemble the "living," but inanimate, images worshiped throughout the Kathmandu Valley. Specifically, I suggest that the devotion shown to the incarnate goddess, the treatment of her physical form, and the philosophical understanding of this deity manifestation bears significant similarities to that of the painted and sculpted images fabricated out of stone, metal, and other materials that are ubiquitously enshrined in temples and paraded ceremonially through the streets of the cities of the Kathmandu Valley. Through exploration of the similarities found between Kumāri and other deities, I hope to place the worship of the "living" goddess in the broader Hindu and Buddhist contexts and to present the possibility for new avenues of interpretation. Consideration of the similarities shows that singular emphasis on the "living" aspect of the goddess Kumāri can be misleading regarding the overall relationship of the Kumāri cult to other religious practices in Nepal. In the South Asian context, Kumāri worship, regardless of the goddess' form, is not an atypical or unique occurrence. Rather, it exemplifies the Hindu and Buddhist understanding of divine manifestation.

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for the benefit of the devotee. In other words, the nature of the goddess Kumārī is not changed depending on whether she is embodied in the form of a little girl or an image created by craftsmen.

Reflecting their prioritization of the human form, scholars have, if inadvertently, divided the worship of the goddess Kumārī into two categories: worship that includes the incarnate form of the goddess and worship that involves all other manifestations of the goddess. I suggest that this dichotomous division is artificial within the context of Hindu and Buddhist religious practices in Nepal, for devotees would not make these distinctions in this way. Rather, Kumārī, regardless of her form, and the various devotional acts to her, would be perceived as aspects of the same, larger whole. As David Gellner states, "Kumārī as a deity is not limited to the well-known living goddesses....these girls are simply human manifestations of a much wider cult...." However, when discussing Kumārī, scholars frequently note the worship practices that center around the propitiation of young, human girls who are understood as incarnations of the goddess Kumārī. These practices necessarily include the physical presence of the incarnate forms of Kumārī and represent what scholars typically refer to as the "Kumārī Cult". The festivals of Indrajātrā in Kathmandu, Macchendranath in Patan, and Dasain throughout the Kathmandu Valley are examples of festivals that fall into this first category. At each of these festivals, devotees propitiate an incarnate form of the goddess Kumārī.

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Although scholarly attention has primarily emphasized those practices that involve the human manifestations of the goddess Kumārī, of equal importance are practices that do not include her human form. In such cases, the goddess is usually invoked or present in a non-human form. Many life cycle rituals and most rituals that note an observation day for a particular deity are completed by worshiping Kumārī. Gellner notes that Kumārī's presence is often invoked into a pot. During many rituals in Nepal, the presence of a deity is requested and the deity is typically invoked into a pot by the invocation of a Buddhist or Hindu priest. The deity will either remain in the pot throughout the ritual, or the priest will request that the deity reside in a particular image. Just as the other deities, such as Ganeśa, are invoked through the use of a mantra at the beginning of a ritual, so is Kumārī's presence frequently invoked through the performance of Kumārī pūjā near the completion of rituals. Further, like other goddesses, she can also be represented by a yantra.

In addition to life cycle and observation rituals, Kumārī worship is also an important component of the Vajrayāna initiation ritual. On the ninth day of the initiation, the mandalaropanavidhi (Raising the Mandala) ritual is held. This ritual concludes with a Kumārī pūjā, an offering ritual, for the

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9Gellner, 87.
10Gellner, 79. The invocation of Kumārī near the completion of rituals may indicate one aspect of Kumārī's association with the goddess Durgā, for Kumārī is said to be an incarnation of the goddess Durgā. Durgā, particularly in her Mahaśiva-ratnā (slayer of the buffalo demon, Mahisha) form, represents the practitioner's victory over death. In India, Durgā Mahaśiva-ratnā is often depicted at the end of an iconographic program, indicating the devotee's ultimate victory, a victory over death and subsequent release from the samsāric cycle of rebirth. See Susan L. Huntington, with contributions by John C. Huntington, The Art of Ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain. (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, Inc., 1985), 191.
goddess Kumārī. The worship of tantric goddess Vajrādevi (or Vajravārāhī) also generally includes an incarnate form of the goddess, but this ritual can be performed with other manifestations, such as images of stone, metal, or a yantra. A yantra is a cosmic diagram that is often associated with Kumārī and other female goddesses. Although specific forms may be considered more "ritually appropriate" in a given situation, and some forms may be more easily identifiable than others, all of these embodiments and manifestations are understood to be the goddess. Although an easily identifiable form of the goddess may not always be visible, the religious and iconographic presence of the goddess is as important as the human form of the goddess.

Kumārī's nearly ubiquitous presence in ritual through invocation and other non-incarnate forms should not be disregarded as somehow less significant or strikingly different than those rituals that involve the human manifestation. Although the forms of the goddess vary, to the devotee they are merely different representations or manifestations of the supreme, universal Goddess, who is accessible through various forms. Therefore, although scholars have implied, perhaps inadvertently, a distinction between various types of Kumārī worship, the rituals and practices associated with the incarnate forms of the goddess can be, as will be shown in this thesis, understood in the context of rituals involving other forms of the goddess.

11The offering from the Kumārī pūjā is then offered to a painting of Cakrasamvara, 279.
12Gellner, 285.
13Gellner, 87, notes that during many life cycle and other rituals, Kumārī is represented by a plate on which feast dishes are piled prior to serving them.
Finally, the goddess’ manifestation as a young girl is also in keeping with Kumārī’s iconography. Given that the term *kumārī* means "young girl", it is not surprising that the goddess Kumārī is shown in the art as a young girl, just as Kumāra, the youthful Hindu deity, is depicted as a young boy. Therefore, the goddess’s manifestation in the body of a young girl is in keeping with the traditional iconography in the Nepali Hindu/Buddhist religious complex.

Like much of the previous scholarship, this study deals directly with the incarnate Kumāris rather than her other forms. However, rather than highlighting the "uniqueness" of these carnal manifestations, it attempts to place Kumārī within the religious contexts of Nepal by demonstrating that these manifestations of the goddess are understood and worshiped in ways that are remarkably similar to those of the other deities in the Valley. An end result is broader definitions of what has been termed "Kumārī worship and the understanding of Kumārī as an integral part of the worship of other deities in the Kathmandu Valley."
CHAPTER II:
SCHOLARSHIP AND METHODOLOGY

Scholarship

Despite the fact that a discussion of the incarnate form of Kumāri and the Kumāri cult is included in most survey works of the Valley religions, few discuss the phenomenon in detail. As a result, Kumāri worship, particularly in the broader sense of Nepali religious practices, is not very well documented. Only anthropologist Michael Allen’s *The Cult of Kumāri: Virgin Worship in Nepal*\(^{15}\) provides a monographic overview of the cult, at least insofar as it pertains to the incarnate Kumāris, including brief discussions of its permutations and variations. Allen provides a brief history of the Kumāri cult and useful, detailed descriptions of the three royal Kumāris, that is, the Kumāris of the three capital cities of the former kingdoms of Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur. These descriptions outline many of the social and ritual aspects of the cult that are specific to the various incarnate Kumāris, including the castes from which they are chosen, their political functions,\(^{16}\) the ritual care and feeding of the young girls, and the festivals and rituals in which they participate. Situated within an anthropological framework, Allen discusses Newar pre-puberty rituals,

\(^{15}\)Allen, n. 1. above.

\(^{16}\)In modern times, only the Kathmandu Kumāri engages in what is an obvious political function. This occurs during the annual festival of Indrajātṛ, when the goddess is taken from her home in a large chariot-like cart to validate the king’s reign by placing tika on his forehead. Wright’s Chronicles, a translation of the *Vamśavālī* that records a genealogical history of Nepal according to the Buddhist recension, notes the presence of this “validation” ritual in Patan and Bhaktapur during the Three Kingdom Malla Period (1482-1768)\(^{9}\). However, following the unification of what is now the country of Nepal, to my knowledge, only the Kathmandu Kumāri has participated in this type of festival. See Daniel Wright, ed., Munshi Shew Shunker Singh & Pandit Sri Gunanand, trans., *History of Nepal*. (Cambridge, England: University of Cambridge Press, 1877; reprint, Kathmandu: Antiquated Book Publishers, 1955), 232.
primarily the *Ihi* ceremonial marriage ritual, and examines them with respect to concepts of virginity, puberty, purity, defilement, and sexual power. Allen states that these rituals are a response on the part of the Newar community to the caste structure and purity concerns of the dominant Brahmanical Hindus.

Through implication, Allen contends that it is within this sociological framework that the worship of Kumāri becomes apparent. In a Durkheimian fashion, Allen attributes the worship of the "living" goddess Kumāri to the societal structure. According to Allen, Kumāri is powerful because she is understood as a pure, undefiled virgin. It is the importance of purity to the Brahmanical Hindus, as well as what Allen sees as their influence over Newari culture, that causes worship and reverence for this "virginal" goddess. This sociological interpretation reflects the view that the incarnate goddess is first and foremost a little girl whose primary, defining characteristic is her virginity. Viewing the Kumāri in this light separates her, and the worship practices associated with her, from the other religious practices of the Valley.

In contrast to Allen's approach, this thesis attempts to understand the worship of the human manifestation of Kumāri within the broader context of Hindu and Buddhist religious practices. My research demonstrates that

17In the *Ihi* ceremony, young Newar girls around the age of ten are married to a *bel* fruit and are no longer referred to as *kumāri*. For a detailed description of the *bel* fruit ceremony, see Robert I. Levy, *Mesocosms: Hinduism and the Organization of a Traditional Newar City in Nepal*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 660-670.
18Allen, 101-103.
19Allen, 94-103.
when the child’s body is understood as a vessel into which the goddess manifests, the Kumāri cult is no longer an unusual set of worship practices that have evolved primarily from the desire for ‘purity maintenance in the form of restrictive social behavior.’ On the contrary, the Kumāri cult becomes a complex and integral set of practices and rituals that more closely parallel other deity worship in the Valley. Beyond Allen’s work, only Niloufar Moaven, in her article “Enquete sur les Kumāri,” deals exclusively with Kumāri worship. Moaven provides a brief overview of the cult’s well known sacred history, noting several versions, and descriptions of each of the goddesses’ jewelry adornments. The short sacred histories outlined by Moaven were communicated to her by various Nepali informants and vary only slightly. Moaven’s study puts forth useful data, although her work is primarily descriptive and does not provide a thorough analysis of the sacred history or the goddesses’ jewelry adornments.

An assessment of the jewelry adornments, however, provides a great deal of information regarding the goddess Kumāri. When the incarnate form of Kumāri is viewed primarily as a little girl, rather than a goddess, an analysis of her jewelry might not seem important, as it may appear to serve a purely ornamental function. However, because jewelry adornments often relate to a sculpted or painted deity’s iconography, a thorough analysis of Kumāri’s elaborate jewelry might provide insights into her meaning, significance, and relationship to other deities. For example, Plate III shows the front portion of the Patan Kumāri’s jewelry adornments. The silver

21Allen, 7.
22Moaven, n. 4 above.
apron-like overlay is very similar to the iconographic dress of tantric Buddhist female figures called yoginis that are worshiped in the form of images. Garlands of skulls and aprons made from human bone, among other things, make up the adornments of tantric female deities. Plate IV shows the lower portion of the Patan Kumāri’s silver apron. The small human skulls lining the inner portions of the exterior sections and located near the very bottom of the apron identify it as a tantric “bone apron”. I am planning to continue my research on the iconographic assessment of Kumāri, since it is an important component to understanding deities in both Buddhism and Hinduism. The necessity of deciphering Kumāri iconography becomes apparent when the incarnate goddess is understood as a standard part of deity worship in Nepal.

In Nepal Mandala, Mary Slusser discusses the goddess Kumāri against an anthropological backdrop. Slusser’s discussion is greatly indebted to Allen, as it follows his understanding that Kumāri, the “living goddess,” is worshiped because of her virginal qualities. Slusser does not provide an analysis of Kumāri worship, but accepts Allen’s interpretation, stating that Kumāri is Durgā’s “virgin aspect” and that she is the personification of “maiden virginity.”

Slusser further states that Kumāri is a manifestation of both Taleju (the patron goddess of the Nepali royal family) and the “blood-thirsty” goddess Durgā. While scholars generally speak of Kumāri as an incarnation of the goddesses Durgā and Taleju, a thorough analysis of the relationship

24Slusser, 311.
between Kumārī and these goddesses has not been presented. There is
strong evidence to suggest that Kumārī is not, in fact, an incarnation of the
goddess Taleju, who is seen in Plate V and can be identified by the small
representation of Garuḍa, Taleju’s vahana (vehicle), located below her proper
right foot. During an interview with Sanumaya Shakya, the former Ekanta
Kumārī of Bhaktapur, this question was specifically addressed. Sanumaya
stated that one should not even think about it in those terms. When she was
asked to clarify, she explained that, as the Ekanta Kumārī, she was the bride
of Taleju, not Taleju herself, thus implying that Taleju was a male being.
This statement was particularly puzzling because Taleju is represented in the
form of a goddess, specifically, the śīladesavatā, or chosen deity, of the royal
family. Still, Sanumaya insisted that when she entered the Taleju temple
during the festival of Dasain, she entered as a bride going to meet her future
husband, and that Taleju was the male entity and Kumārī was the female
entity in the relationship.

Further, when she was asked to explain the relationship of Taleju and
Kumārī’s śakti or energy, she stated that Taleju’s śakti was stronger than
that of her own as Kumārī when she was in Taleju’s presence. She then
compared this to the relationship between a husband and wife. That is, even
if a wife’s śakti is very powerful, when she is in the presence of her husband,
she does not assume a role of the more powerful individual. Therefore,

25I am currently researching these relationships within the context of Kumārī’s history,
iconography, and ritual activity.
26The Ekanta Kumārī is distinguished from the other two incarnate Kumāris in Bhaktapur,
the Wala Lakhu and Tewukohe Kumāris, since she was worshiped by the Malla kings prior to
the Shah dynasty. Therefore, she is referred to as one of the royal Kumāris. See Allen, 11.
This interview was the second interview with the Ekanta Kumārī for my research. See n. 38
and the accompanying text.
despite the intensity of Kumārī’s sakti, when in the presence of her husband, Taleju, her sakti is less than that of Taleju. Sanumaya also stated that the Kathmandu Kumārī was also understood as the bride of Taleju, and that this was common knowledge. Unfortunately, I was unable to confirm this with anyone at Kumārī Bāhā.

There is evidence to support the fact that Kumārī is understood as a bride. On the most simple level, the goddess is always adorned in red, the color worn by brides in Nepal. Moreover, Sanumaya stated that the reason she could no longer be Kumārī was because she had to undergo the Ihi ceremonial marriage, in which young Newar girls are married to the bel fruit. Because Kumārī is the bride of Taleju, she must be unmarried. Clearly, this information leads to an entirely different way of understanding Kumārī’s role within the Buddhist/Hindu cultural complex in Nepal. The information provided here is only a cursory glance at a highly complex array of intricately woven relationships between these important goddesses of the Valley, a set of relationships that I hope to unravel in my future research.

With respect to Taleju, Slusser’s most useful contribution is, perhaps, the historical tracing of the goddess Mānēśvari, who, according to Slusser, is identical with the goddess Taleju. This historical tracing will likely be important in understanding Kumārī’s relationship with the goddess Taleju, as the relationship between these goddesses is clearly important to the overall understanding of sakti and goddess worship in Nepal.

27Slusser, 316.
Slusser and other scholars also frequently state that Kumāri and Taleju are incarnations of the goddess Durgā, particularly in her Mahiśāsura-mardini ("slayer of the buffalo demon") form. This theory is more plausible than the notion that Kumāri is an incarnation of Taleju, since Durgā Mahiśāsura-mardini is the supreme form of the goddess and her imagery is ubiquitous throughout the Kathmandu Valley. Allen and Locke’s iconographic interpretations of Kumāri Bāhā have been used to support this theory.28 However, certain discrepancies in this interpretation exist. Located above each doorway and single unit window of the bāhā is a tympanum. A different multiarmed female deity is the central figure of each of these tympanums, similar to the example shown in Plate VI. Each of the main figures uses a trident, held in her second proper right hand, to slay a small male figure. Both Allen and Locke interpret this iconographic component as Durgā Mahiśāsura-mardini at the moment that she slays the buffalo demon. According to Allen, “the numerous carvings of Durgā on the tympanums (torana)...alone [are] sufficient to establish the equivalence between the young pre-menstrual virgin and the beautiful and mature mother-goddess.” 29 However, a closer look at each of the figures indicates that these goddesses are not merely representations of Durgā Mahiśāsura-mardini. Durgā’s vāhana is a lion, but in nearly all of the interior courtyard tympanums the central figure stands on another type of vāhana. For example, the female figure located on the tympanum shown in Plate VI stands not a lion, but on two human figures.

28Allen, 24; also see Locke, 265-267.
29Allen, 24.
Further, Durgā Mahiśāsuramardini generally holds the weapons of all of the gods. However, a close look at the implements in these goddesses' hands indicates varied sets of implements, some of which are not weapons at all. The most obvious discrepancy also can be seen in Plate VI, where the deity's lower, proper left hand holds a severed head. Therefore, while the posture and action of the goddess do seem to refer to the supreme goddess Durgā and her symbolic victory over death, the goddesses located on the tympanums at Kumāri Bāhā are clearly more than standard depictions of Durgā Mahiśāsuramardini.30

I am also currently exploring these and other iconographic issues associated with Kumāri. However, a detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, it seems worth noting that the "idea" of Durgā Mahiśāsuramardini as the ultimate victor over death, rather than numerous, standard iconographic representations of Durga, may reflect a closer understanding and interpretation of the intended iconography of the tympanum goddess figures at Kumāri Bāhā.

Except for these few scholarly undertakings, the Kumāri cult has received only a cursory glance or brief reference in other works. The mention of the Kumāri cult or the incarnate goddess Kumāri is quite common throughout scholarship, but, with the exception of Michael Allen's work, references to the goddess and the religious practices that surround her

30These goddesses may be some combination of the Navadurgā, the group of nine Durgas who are found throughout the Valley. However, this interpretation, too, needs further exploration.
generally are included as part of larger, more general surveys of the religions and cultures or gods and goddesses of the Kathmandu Valley. As a result, these writings often serve as little more than reiterations of Michael Allen's discussion and perpetuations of the understanding of the worship of the incarnate goddess Kumāri as something distinct from the other religious practices in the Valley involving deities with stone and metal bodies.

Methodology

The methodological approach used for my research reflects a combination of traditional art historical and anthropological research methods, including six months of preliminary research, followed by field research in Nepal during the summer of 1994 that included extensive photographic documentation at the sites, and interviews with informants. Informants included ritual specialists, pujāris ("god-guardians"), and a former Ekanta Kumāri. Preliminary research relied heavily on Michael Allen's work and photographs from The John C. and Susan L. Huntington Archive of Buddhist and Related Art at The Ohio State University that were taken by the Huntingtons in 1970. These photographs contain data that is particularly valuable for examining historical developments in the art and architecture of the Kathmandu Valley, and, therefore, the religious practices relating to Kumāri worship.
While in Nepal, I served as a member of an Ohio State University photographic documentation research team that succeeded in documenting every major, and nearly all minor, Newar Buddhist bāhās. A bāhā is a Newar Buddhist, open-courtyard style, religious structure that contains at least two shrines. The kwāpā-dya shrine is a public place of worship that is usually located across from the main entrance of the bāhā. The āgam shrine is an esoteric home for the tantric deity of the bāhā. Access to this deity is restricted to members of the bāhā.

In addition to photographing the bāhās, several major tīrthas, or sacred spaces located at the confluence of two rivers, and yoginis shrines and temples, were also documented, as they are important to both Buddhist and Hindus practices. Each of the bāhās associated with the three royal Kumāris was also documented in detail. With still photographs and videotape, the research team recorded numerous rituals and festivals, many of which utilize the ritual spaces of the bāhās and some of which included participation of the incarnate forms of Kumāri. As much of the research was conducted during the month of Gunla (September/October), the monsoon and festival season in the Valley, rituals and festivals were abundant. Although it was impossible to know of or to attend every festival, the underpinnings and manner of deity worship, particularly as it applies to the lay community, observed throughout these activities remained relatively consistent. Therefore, it may be surmised that many of these activities can be used as a context against which Kumāri practices may be analyzed. Attendance at and photographic documentation
of festivals and rituals helped to provide a framework for understanding the ways in which devotees interact with deities, including those embodied in the stone and metal images fabricated by artists and craftsmen, and those incarnated in flesh forms, such as Kumāri. In addition, the abundance of sādhus (holy men) and the presence of other high-level teachers, some of whom are considered to be incarnate, allowed me to observe the interaction between lay persons and these holy men and teachers. The observations made throughout the summer were invaluable and acted as the major catalyst for the thesis topic presented here.

Most of the bāhās documented were actively in use, and researchers were fortunate to be able to interact with members of many of the bāhās. This interaction generally took the form of interviews with high-level Vajracārya priests33 and the current pujāris (god guardians) of the shrine.34 In Newar Buddhism, a specific series of rituals and practices must be undertaken according to daily, monthly, and yearly cycles. The daily rituals are the responsibility of the pujāri, who is generally a male member of the bāhā (although we did encounter instances when female members of the bāhā served as pujāris).35 Each pujāri usually serves for one month and is responsible for, among other things, the ritual care, feeding, invoking, and propitiation of the enshrined image. As many of the daily rituals are

33Vajracārya are a priestly caste of the indigenous people in the Kathmandu Valley. For further information, see the section titled “The Newars and the Parbatīya” beginning on page 24.
34I am greatly indebted to Dina Bangdel, who conducted numerous interviews and served as a translator for the entire research team. Her efforts were tireless. In addition to being fluent in Nepali and English, as an advanced Ph.D. candidate in the art history of Nepal she brought with her a command of Buddhism, Hinduism, and an awareness of scholarly methodologies.
35At one point during the summer of 1994, two young sisters, Sony and Himla Shaky, were charged with the care and protection of the Mahabuddha Temple in the city of Patan.
performed publicly and at regular intervals, observation of these practices is possible. Interviews often took place prior to and immediately after the performance of these rituals.

The manner in which data was collected for each of the three royal Kumāris, and the Kumāri cult in general, varied. Access to the Kathmandu Kumāri is highly restricted, and, therefore, most information has come from Michael Allen’s work, to which I am greatly indebted. Allen based much of his research on interviews he held with bahā priests and the family of the previous Patan Kumāri. In addition, I was able to observe the goddess a number of times when she chose to make an appearance at her home in Kathmandu’s Darbar Square. Although I was unable to attend her annual festival, other members of the Ohio State research team who remained in Nepal after my departure provided me with photographic documentation and accounts of the festival activities.

The Patan Kumāri was more readily accessible for my research. Since unification of the three cities during the Shah Dynasty (1769 C.E.), the Patan Kumāri no longer functions in a royal context. In addition to observing her and her devotees at festivals and rituals, the research team had the good fortune to be permitted to observe the preparation of the goddess for worship prior to the Paścādāna Festival. Although we did not see the preparation from the very beginning (including the bathing), we were invited into the Kumāri’s residence and were able to witness her being dressed, adorned with

jewelry, and having her eyes painted, and the placement of the third eye on her forehead. Following this, we observed her being carried to her shrine across the street at Háka Bähá, where ceremonies then took place.

While photographing Ajudyaya Bähá in Bhaktapur, the bähá associated with the Bhaktapur Kumári, I had the good fortune to meet the former Bhaktapur Ekanta Kumári, Sanumaya Shakyá. In addition to this initial meeting, Sanumaya was also interviewed at a later date, again by members of the Ohio State research team.37 Sanumaya, who was sixteen years old at the time of the interview, clearly recalled the events that took place during her tenure as Kumári. Extensive photographic documentation was also conducted at the festival of Dasain (Durgá pujá) in Bhaktapur, in which the Ekanta Kumári serves as one of the focal point of worship.

My understanding, analysis, and contextualization of the Kumári cult and the practices that surround her are set against Hindu and Buddhist religious philosophies and presuppositions in both Nepal and South Asia in general. An understanding of the way in which Hindus and Buddhists understand samsára, the cycle of rebirth, and the ways in which one gains merit toward a better rebirth directly influence the way in which devotees behave and understand the nature of the deities that they propitiate.

Huntington defines samsára as a term that "refer[s] to the metempsychosis or countless rounds of rebirth that an individual being experiences upon each death in a potentially endless sequence of lives."38 Through a person’s actions, or karma, an individual dictates the nature of his

37With the help of modern technology (telefaxes and electronic mail), this second interview was conducted for me by Dina Bagdol and John C. Huntington.
38Huntington, Art of Ancient India, 50.
or her next rebirth in the *samsāric* cycle. Both Hindus and Buddhist acknowledge that this perpetual series of births and deaths is an unsatisfactory existence. Therefore, the ultimate goal of an individual is to end the cycle. For Hindus, the goal is described as the realization of the individual's oneness with the Universal. This concept is best described by the equation of *ātmān = Ātmān*, or the Self = the Universal. The realization of this Oneness is described as attaining *mokṣa* ("release"). Buddhists refer to the ending of these rebirths as *nirvāṇa* ("extinguishing"). Like *mokṣa*, *nirvāṇa* can only be attained through a realization and internalization of the unity of all things.39

Hindus and Buddhists in Nepal realize that only the most advanced spiritual beings are capable of fully realizing the Oneness of all things. Therefore, the goal of the average practitioners is often the attainment of a better rebirth for themselves or for their family members. This can be accomplished by undertaking actions that increase a person’s merit (*puṇya*). In Nepal, the propitiation of deities is a common method of gaining merit. Although the deities are often manifest in stone or metal bodies, they occasionally make themselves available in human form40. Such is the case with the goddess Kumārī. Therefore, it is within this cultural and religious framework that I feel the worship and practices involving the incarnate Kumārī are best understood.

40 The existence of other beings who reside in non-human realms is an underlying component of both Hindu and Newar Buddhist religious practices in Nepal. Moreover, these beings, including the gods and goddesses, can choose to manifest in, among other things, images, rock formations, trees, and flesh forms, in the physical realm for the benefit of devotees. Because consideration of this belief is largely the foundation of the views presented in this paper, I have chosen, when appropriate for clarity, to overtly incorporate this perspective.
CHAPTER III
HISTORY AND PRACTICE OF THE KUMĀRΙ CULT

Origin and History of the Kumārī Cult

Despite the differences in practice relating to the various Kumāris, sacred histories describe a unifying reason for the origin of the incarnate form of Kumārī. These histories also describe reasons for kingly worship of these incarnate goddesses. Most histories note that during the reign of a Malla king, usually cited as either King Jaya Prakash Malla of Kathmandu (C.E. 1736-1768) or King Trailoky Malla of Bhaktapur (C.E. 1585-1606), the goddess Durgā used to appear to the king in the form of a mature female. During these frequent visits, Durgā would play dice with the king. Certain accounts relate that, one night, the king began to have lustful thoughts about the goddess. Upon realizing this, she left immediately and did not visit him again until she appeared to him later in a dream. In this dream, the goddess informed the king that, from that point forward, she would only appear to him in the form of a young girl from a low caste.

Other stories speak of Durgā’s anger at the queen’s jealousy or the king’s daughter’s intrusive behavior as the reason for her refusal to appear to him in the form of a sexually mature female. The stories also differ with respect to the castes in which she manifests. Some stories tell that Durgā informs the king that she will only appear to him in the form of a young girl.

41Moaven, 169-70. As stated earlier, these sacred histories were communicated by Nepali informants to Moaven.
42These sacred histories explain the reason for the human manifestation of the goddess and the reason for royal patronage and propitiation of the incarnate Kumārī. However, to my knowledge, there are no sacred histories that explain the reason for propitiation of non-human forms of the goddess.

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from a Śākya or Vajracārya caste. To many Parbatīyās, all indigenous
Newar castes are viewed as lower castes. This may be due, in part, to the
fact that the caste of metal workers, including artists, are viewed in the
Parbatīya Hindu context as a lower caste. However, within the Newar
community, the Vajracāryas and the Śākyas, who are usually associated with
priestly and artist castes, respectively, are seen as two high castes. Political
and religious underpinnings of these sacred histories are clearly present.
However, little work has been done to explore these issues and their
relationship to the religious, cultural, and political complex in Nepal.

Although the sacred histories vary considerably, they are consistent
insofar as Durgā refuses to appear to the king again, except in the form of a
young girl. Further, in each history, the goddess demands that the king
propitiate the young girl as the goddess Kumārī. Durgā’s demand that the
king propitiate this young girl is put forth as a justification for the festival of
Indrajātra, in which the annual propitiation of the Kathmandu Kumārī by
the king occurs. During this propitiation ceremony, the king bows down
before the goddess, taking tīka (red vermilion powder frequently mixed with
yogurt) and receiving prasād (food offerings) from her. Tīka and prasād are
directly related to the notion of an auspicious blessing from the deity. If the
goddess is willing to give tīka to the king, his rule is divinely validated, and
presumably ensures his success and prosperity in the coming year. However, if Kumān does not give tīka to the king, it is seen as a bad omen.

43Meaven, 169-170.
44Gellner defines the term Parbatīyā as “hill people”, indicating the fact that this ethnic
group migrated into the Valley. The Parbatīyās maintain a caste system and are often
referred to as “Gorkhils” because the current dynasty came from an area outside of the
Valley called Gorkha. See Gelber, 12-13.
45Allen, 27.
Although there are very few recorded instances in which Kumārī did not give tika to the king, Wright’s Chronicles tell how the incarnate Kumārī validated the turnover of Valley rule from the Malla dynasty to the Shah dynasty. According to the Chronicles, king Prithvi Nārāyaṇa Shah of Gorkha entered the annual festival of Indrajatra and went before the Kumārī. The goddess placed tika on Prithvi Nārāyaṇa Shah’s forehead, and, through this act, he was recognized as the divinely ordained ruler of the Kathmandu Valley. Although the Chronicles note that the Shahs maintained significant control over the three cities at this time, this history recognizes Kumārī’s role as validator of kingship in the Valley.

Among the eleven to thirteen Kumārīs present in the Kathmandu Valley, the most important, with respect to rituals and other religious practices, are the three “royal” Kumārīs who reside in the Valley’s three major cities, Kathmandu, Patan (Lalitpur), and Bhaktapur (Bhadgaon). These goddesses are referred to as “royal” Kumārīs because they were propitiated by and associated with the king and royal family of their respective cities prior to 1769 C.E when Prithvi Nārāyaṇa Shah came to power. Of the three royal Kumārīs, only the Kathmandu Kumārī continued affiliation with the royal family following the unification of the country and hegemony of the Shah dynasty. The Shahs were originally from Gorkha, an area outside and to the northeast of the Valley. Upon usurping rule from the Mallas over the Kathmandu Valley, the Shah’s established Kathmandu as their city capital. It is difficult to say whether or not the Shahs engaged in some form of Kumārī worship outside of the Valley prior to their rule over

46Wright’s Chronicles, 232, 253-259.
47Wright, 232.
Nepal, although the Chronicles note that, as a youth, Prithvi Narayan Shah obtained prasad from the Kumari of Bhaktapur, and was, therefore, presumably familiar with this practice.48

In the Kathmandu Valley itself, the historical origin of Kumari worship, in both the incarnate forms and images, is also unclear. One record from the Vaṃśavāla notes that Lakṣmikāmadeva, a Kāntipur king (C.E. 1024-1040) chose to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather and worshiped the Kumāris in an attempt to gain wealth and prosperity.49

Kumāri is a general term that, in Nepal, is applied to all young girls who have not undergone the Ṭhā ceremony. Because the worship of Kumāris, that is, little girls, is common practice in the Nepali context, it is difficult to determine whether this statement refers to the practice of worshiping little girls in general or the worship of a ritually "installed" goddess in the form of a little girl. Wright’s Chronicles also credit Lakṣmikāmadeva with having erected an image of Kumāri and establishing Kumāri pūja.50 As Allen states, however, this notation does not clarify whether Lakṣmikāmadeva actually established royal patronage of Kumāri and Kumāri pūja as it exists in Nepal today.

In addition to these references about Kumāri pūja in Wright’s chronicles, Luciano Petech records the existence of two manuscripts that are said to deal with the choosing, ornamentation, and worship of Kumāri.51 These manuscripts, currently housed in the National Archives in

48Wright, 231.
49Wright, 157.
50Allen, 13 and Wright, 157.
Kathmandu, are entitled "Kaumāripuja" and "Kumāripujavidhana" and have colophons that date the texts to correspond with April 30, 1280 C.E. and November 24, 1285 C.E., respectively. I was unable to see these manuscripts, but, if the translations are correct, it is unclear to which deities the texts refer. In the strictest sense, Kaumāri is one of the eight mother goddesses, as indicated by the use of the diphthong "au" in the spelling. Although the goddesses Kaumāri and Kumāri are often conflated, distinctions in their identities are probably important. While the mention of Lākenukāmādeva’s propitiation of Kumāri and the existence of these texts that refer to Kumāri worship do not clearly identify an origin for the cult, they do establish a long-standing tradition that relates to both the worship of the goddess Kumāri in both human and non-human the forms.

The Newars and the Parbatīyās

Despite the diversity of ethnic populations in the Kathmandu Valley, Kumāri worship, as it exists today, reflects the complex relationships between two of the larger groups, the Newars and the Parbatīyās. The Tibco-Burman speaking Newars are the indigenous people of the Valley, many of whom are Buddhist practitioners, although a large number of Newars identify themselves as Hindu. Newar Buddhism includes aspects of Mahāyāna Buddhism, although it is best described as an esoteric form of Vajrayāna Buddhism that includes both lay and highly technical practices. Unlike other forms of Buddhism, Newar Buddhism is a non-monastic, caste-

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52 Allen, 14; Slušer, 312 n. 18; and Locke, 267 all mention the existence of these manuscripts. While Allen states directly that he did not see the manuscripts, it is unclear from their texts whether Slušer and Locke were able to see or analyze them.
based system that includes the Vajracāryas, one of the priestly castes. The practices of the lay community integrate directly with the technical meditational practices of the Vajracārya priests, who oversee many of the daily and life-cycle rituals for members of their community. The Vajracārya priests are generally responsible for, among other things, initiating the members of the Buddhist community in life-cycle rituals and facilitating larger ceremonies and ritual offerings. Initiated members of the Śākyā caste can also perform certain rituals and initiations. However, the Śākyas are generally identified as the Newar caste that makes the images into which the deities are invoked.

As migrants into the Valley, the Parbatīyās obtained rule over the Valley in C.E. 1769,53 when Prithvi Narāyaṇa Shah's conquest of the Valley established the rule of the Shah dynasty and united the areas that make up the modern kingdom of Nepal. As a result of the conquest, the Indo-European language of Nepali, spoken by the Parbatīyās, was made the official language of the state. With very few exception, the Parbatīyās practice Hinduism. Their practices bear a great deal of similarity to Hindu practices as they are understood outside of the Kathmandu Valley, for example, in India, and include many of the same deities, such as Śiva and Viṣṇu. However, Hinduism in Nepal has not been studied within the social, historical, and political context of the country specifically, nor has a thorough iconography of the art been established.

53 Wright, 231-232.
Hinduism within the Newar community is even less well understood than in the Parbatiya community. The complexity of what is usually termed the Hindu and Buddhist religions of Nepal warrants caution when using these broad terms. As Gellner suggests, terms such as the śivamārga and buddhamārga, or followers of the Śaivite and Buddhist paths, respectively, might be more useful.54

Despite the many cultural, linguistic, and social differences that exist between the Newars and the Parbatiyās, the two groups share certain religious practices. Among these shared practices, the worship of the incarnate goddess Kumāri demonstrates an intricate interplay between these peoples. This dynamic influences not only the Newar and Parbatiya religious and cultural practices, but also relates directly to the political and social spheres. For example, although the child who is to become the Kathmandu Kumāri is chosen from a Newar Buddhist caste, she legitimizes the Parbatiya king’s rule each year during the festival of Indrajatra, as mentioned earlier.55

The relationship between the Newars and the Parbatiyās with respect to the role of Kumāri worship in Nepal varies greatly, as the worship of the incarnate goddess is not limited to a single incarnate figure. However, just as the type of worship and number of devotees for a single deity may vary from shrine to shrine,56 so do the devotional practices and obligations associated

54Gellner, 8.
55Allen, 19-20.
56For example, shrines to the elephant-headed god, Ganeśa, are ubiquitous throughout the Kathmandu Valley. However, the offerings made at the different shrines may vary depending upon the social and religious context of the image. In the case of the tantric forms of Ganeśa, blood sacrifices are suitable offerings, while the non-tantric forms are more likely to receive only offerings such as fruit, flower, and rice.
with each of the Kumāris depend upon the circumstances that surround her. Although there are numerous incarnate forms of Kumāri, for the purposes outlined above, this paper will focus primarily on the worship of the three royal Kumāris who preside over the major cities in the Kathmandu Valley, Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur.
CHAPTER IV
KUMĀRI WORSHIP

Kumāri Selection

In all known cases but one, the young girls who eventually become Kumāri are chosen from either the Śākya or Vajracārya castes of the Newar community. According to Michael Allen, only the Kaligar Kumāri is not chosen from either the Vajracārya or Śākya castes but is selected from the Jyāpu caste. Each of these goddesses is propitiated to varying degrees by different castes and in different religious and political contexts. The precise practice of identifying and choosing the child that will eventually become a Kumāri varies. However, the selection processes in the case of the three royal Kumāris include many similarities. In each case, the eligible young girls are between the ages of two and four. The Vajracāryas and other ritual specialists in charge of choosing the child must carefully examine each of the young girls before determining which one will serve as the vessel in which the goddess Kumāri will reside. The child must be perfect in every way, ostensibly displaying the 32 auspicious signs. Some of these characteristics include dark hair, dark eyes, well-proportioned feet and hands, broad shoulders and a narrow waist, long arms, and a beautiful, lustrous complexion. Plate VII and VIII show the current Ekanta Kumāri of Bhaktapur enshrined for worship during the festival of Dusain. In keeping with her iconography, she maintains a calm and controlled demeanour throughout the festival proceedings.

57 Allen, 11.
58 Allen, 105.
In art, the goddess Kumārī is shown as a benign female figure. Plate IX shows a contemporary rendering of the goddess, adorned in her dress, jewelry, crown. A third eye is also painted on her forehead. Her disposition is calm, fixed, and composed. Similarly, the young girl who is chosen to become the vessel for the goddess must display the composure and serenity appropriate for the outward manifestation of the goddess Kumārī. In this way, just as artists and priests painstakingly fashion the stone and metal bodies in order that they may communicate an aspect of the deity, so do the priests carefully examine numerous little girls, choosing only the child who is capable of maintaining the serene composure of the goddess. According to Sammaya Shakya, the former Ekanta Kumārī of Bhaktapur, when she was Kumārī she was taken during the festival of Dasain to the Taleju temple in Bhaktapur in the late evening hours. In the temple courtyard were 108 severed buffalo heads with candles in the eyes. Through the entire evening until morning, the goddess stayed in the temple. During this time, she was not to show any fear or to cry. Allen states that, during a similar invocation ritual for the Kathmandu Kumārī, if the child cries she will be removed, and a new child will be chosen as the vessel for the goddess. In addition, Kumārī maintains this calm disposition throughout other rituals, festivals, and general worship.59

The young girl continues to be worshiped by lay devotees and members of the priestly caste as Kumārī until she no longer is considered appropriate to be the goddess. The reasons cited for a young girl to step down from her role as Kumārī vary. According to Allen, any type of bleeding, including

59Allen, 30-21.
bleeding from the loss of a tooth or menstruation, an incurable illness, or a permanent blemish is just cause to choose another young girl to serve as the body of the goddess. However, Sanumaya Shakya stated that the Ekanta Kumârî steps down only at the time when she must undergo the ihī marriage ceremony. During this ceremony, Newar girls are married to the bel fruit, and, since a Kumârî cannot be married, she must discontinue her service as a vessel for the goddess.

**Propitiation**

During her tenure as Kumârî, the goddess is propitiated in much the same manner as other deities in the Valley. Generally speaking, there are two major aspects of worship that relate directly to the deity worship in Nepal and that are important in understanding the incarnate goddess in the context of image worship. The first is pujâ, that is, hospitality rituals consisting of the offering of food, flowers, clothes, and incense to the deity. This gesture reflects the hospitality extended on the part of the devotee toward the deity. The deity who, at the request of the devotees has agreed to reside in the created image, is treated as a royal guest.

The second aspect of worship relevant to this study is the concept of darśan. The term darśan literally means "seeing". However, it connotes a great deal more than simply looking at the deity. In both the Buddhist and Hindu contexts, "taking darśan" implies that the devotee not only sees the deity, but is also seen by the deity.⁶⁰ According to Diana Eck, "[t]he central

act of Hindu worship, from the point of view of the lay person, is to stand in
the presence of the deity and to behold the image with one's own eyes, to see
and to be seen by the deity. Like other forms of worship, through the act of
taking darśan, devotees gain merit. The gaining of merit is an important
component in worship practices of South Asia, particularly in the Buddhist,
Hindu, and Jain cultures that assume not a single lifetime but the possibility
of countless rebirths. Each rebirth results from the merit of an individual's
actions in his or her previous lives. Therefore, whether the devotee
propitiates the deity with flowers, food, and sweet scents, or simply goes to
the home of the deity in order to take darśan and be in the deity's presence,
the individual hopes to gain something in the process. In particular, one
makes offerings or takes darśan in the hope of gaining merit for a better
rebirth in the next life, but merit is also accrued for the fulfillment of a more
immediate need, such as the gift of offspring or the health of a family
member.

During the act of worship, individuals circumambulate the temple and
shrine areas, moving inward toward the deity, awaiting the moment that he
or she will be able to see the deity. In the Newar Buddhist context, devotees
move clockwise toward the shrines and the deities that reside within them.
The public, or exoteric, Newar Buddhist shrines are typically located across
from the bāhā entrance. Devotees generally move clockwise around the
perimeter of the open courtyard structure, making their way toward the open
area in front of the shrine where they will be able to take darśan of the deity
and make offerings of, for example, uncooked rice, flowers, fruit, and money.

61Eck, 3.
Some worshipers place themselves in front of the shrine where they can see and be seen by the deity and engage in simple prostration. Similarly, Hindus also circumambulate their temples, working their way through the various interior spaces toward the shrine area, where the deity is located. In the Hindu context, the visual exchange between the deity and the devotee generally takes place in a smaller space, since the main shrine, or garbhagṛha, is frequently only large enough for the deity and few people. Although the Newar Buddhists also interact with the images, the spaces within which the devotees move tend to be more open and less obviously formal. In either case, the goal of the devotee is to see the image and to be seen, for "[b]eholding the image is an act of worship, and through the eyes one gains the blessings of the divine."\textsuperscript{62}

Inherent in the concept of dārsan is the notion that the deity chooses to reside in and take on the body of the image, presenting itself to be seen for the benefit of the devotees. Consecrated images are understood to be alive, just as the incarnate goddess is "living". Thus, images made of metal, stone, clay, and other materials are seen as living, sentient beings after they have been consecrated through various ceremonies that invoke the deity into the form.

In addition to receiving worship through offerings and dārsan in order that devotees may gain merit to receive assistance with menses or other bleeding related problems,\textsuperscript{53} Kumāri is also propitiated in other ways. In the context of the initiated members of the Newar Buddhist community, the Vajracārya priests perform esoteric rituals with Kumāri that are not unlike

\textsuperscript{62}Eck, 3.
\textsuperscript{53}Allen, 26.
those performed with esoteric deities manifested in metal images. The
details of these rituals are not well known, although it is clear that, in this
context, Kumārī relates directly to Vajrāvarāhī, the consort of
Cakrasaṃvara.⁶⁴ These deities are frequently embodied in esoteric metal
images that may only be seen by select members of the community.⁶⁵ In
addition to receiving worship from the lay Newar and Parbatīyā
communities, the Acājūs, Hindu tantric priests from the Taleju temple,
perform ritual offerings to the Kathmandu Kumārī each day.⁶⁶ The Acājūs
do not perform pūjā to the other deities in the bāhā.

The royal Kumārī of Kathmandu is generally worshiped in her home,
Kumārī Bāhā, a house that mirrors the format of typical Newar Buddhist
religious centers. Like other bāhās, it consists of a square enclosure around
an open-air courtyard. Also a common feature of most bāhās, the wall
directly across from the street entrance contains the kwapā-dyā shrine where
the esoteric deity of the bāhā resides. The kwapā-dyā at Kumārī Bāhā
contains images of the five Jīna Buddhas, who are propitiated daily by a
Vajracārya priest. The esoteric, or āgam, shrine of a bāhā is located
somewhere on the upper levels. The Kathmandu Kumārī resides primarily in
the third level of Kumārī Bāhā.⁶⁷ Hindus and Buddhists are permitted to

⁶⁴Cakrasaṃvara is one of the most common tantric deities in the Kathmandu Valley, and he
is often the esoteric deity located in the āgam shrine at a bāhā. Whether or not she is shown
in the art, Cakrasaṃvara’s consort, Vajrāvarāhī, is always understood to be in sexual union
with Cakrasaṃvara.

⁶⁵Gelinier, 285.

⁶⁶Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 286-287.

⁶⁷The location of the Kathmandu Kumārī’s residence on the third level of the bāhā may
indicate her association with the tantric āgam deities of Kumārī Bāhā, namely, Vajrāvarāhī
and Cakrasaṃvara. As noted earlier, Kumārī is said to be worshiped as Vajradevi, or
Vajrāvarāhī in certain tantric initiation rites. However, the goddess’s residence in the
uppermost level of the home may also, or perhaps alternatively, reflect the layout of Nepali
domiciles. Traditionally, Nepali homes are laid out in a vertical format with a progression
enter certain areas of her living quarters, where they may perform pūjā to the goddess. During this pūjā, the goddess is generally enshrined.

Unlike the Kathmandu Kumāri, the Patan and Bhaktapur Ekanta Kumāris do not currently reside in their respective bāhās, although the worship of both often takes place at their bāhās. Both of these Kumāris can also be propitiated in their homes. In most cases of which I am aware, however, Kumāri is propitiated in a shrine area. During the festival season in the month of Guṇa (August/September), devotees frequently stop to worship Kumāri on their pilgrimage routes around the cities, in which they have the opportunity to see many deities. During the festival of Mataya in the month of Guṇa, the bāhās bring out all of their images that are otherwise not seen by the public. Devotees go to the different bāhās, often in a pilgrimage fashion, in order to “take dārsān” of the deities and make offerings to them. The Patan Kumāri is also worshiped at this time. As is the case with the other deities of the Kathmandu Valley, devotees make offerings of fruit, flower, rice, and incense to the goddess and frequently take tīka from the deity or the deity’s throne. Devotees place this red powder on their foreheads, indicating a blessing from the god or goddess.

As stated earlier, despite the clear relationship between Kumāri worship and the worship of other deities in the Kathmandu Valley, the Kumāri cult generally has been thought of as different from other religious practices in the Valley. Because considerable attention has been paid to Kumāri’s human manifestation, the questions that have been investigated in

from the less pure space to the most pure space. The animals are usually kept on the lowest level, the most impure area, while the house shrine is often located on the top level, the purest area.
scholarship have focused on the social role of the goddess and her caretakers, the festivals in which she participates, and the social caste from which she derives. Although these topics, indeed, represent important and interesting issues, the emphasis on the sociological dimension of the Kumārī cult has diverted scholars from the importance of what it means to have a deity manifest itself and make itself visible to the ordinary human being. In other words, scholars have emphasized the phenomenon of Kumārī as a little girl, not the issue of the goddess Kumārī, who makes her presence known through the body of a young girl. However, by placing the incarnate goddess in the company of deities who are invoked into images, as I propose, one gains a perspective that reflects the basic underpinnings of deity manifestation in the Hindu and Buddhist communities of Nepal.

68 In the case of the Patan and Bhaktapur Kumārīs, family members, generally the parents and grandparents, care for the young goddess. The Kathmandu Kumārī is cared for by a Kumārīmā, or, literally, "Kumārī mother". The position is hereditary and, throughout her life, the Kumārīmā continues to care for each of the Kathmandu Kumārīs.
CHAPTER V
THE INCARNATE KUMĀRĪ AND HER
RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER DEITIES AND HUMANS

Communication

The worship of human beings who are viewed as holy or as incarnations of various spiritual beings is not uncommon in Hinduism or Buddhism. For example, practitioners commonly worship high level incarnations of great teachers or enlightened beings, such as the Dalai Lama, the spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetan people, who is held to be an incarnation of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. As a bodhisattva, or enlightenment being, Avalokiteśvara is known for his absolute compassion and takes rebirth in human form in an attempt to eliminate the suffering of all sentient beings. Also central to the worship of humans are the saṃnyāsins, or ascetic holy men, who choose to live outside of society, rejecting all material comforts and attachments of life, to wander homeless, begging for their food, and focusing all of their attention on their spiritual progress (Plate X and XI). Buddhists and Hindus seek out these individuals—both incarnations and holy ascetics—and take darsān of them, hoping that such interaction will help devotees gain merit and advance along the spiritual path. However, unlike the encounter between the individual to the deity enshrined in a temple or paraded through the streets, upon meeting these spirituals beings, individuals often request teachings. This practice reflects a direct and obvious form of communication between the incarnation or holy man and the individual.
This is not to say that the gods and goddesses enshrined in stone and metal do not also communicate to their devotees. On the contrary, the attributes held in a deity’s hands, as well as the deity’s fierce or benign disposition, are display devices by which the deities communicate certain concepts to religious practitioners. For example, in Buddhism, certain fierce or wrathful deities, such as Bhairava, communicate the absolute intensity with which one should pursue the spiritual path. In the case of Ganesa, the elephant-headed god who is the overcomer of obstacles, his attributes communicate the ways in which he will help the devotee overcome obstacles that hinder spiritual progress. For example, the noose he holds is used to bind those things that impede the devotee’s progress on the spiritual path, such as attachments. While incarnate beings, such as the Dalai Lama, and beings residing in stone, metal, and other materials, both communicate in some manner to the devotee, there are differences in the form and expectations of such communication. Between the individual and the incarnate being or holy man, the communication can be characterized as a direct, human-to-human interaction, in which teachings are often transmitted and in which a dialogue can occur. The communication between the devotee and the deity residing in an inorganic form is more subtle and, in many cases, more symbolic, but is nonetheless intended by the makers of the images.

Because of previous emphasis on her incarnate, or human, dimension, Kumari has been compared primarily with other human spiritual beings or incarnations. However, I suggest that the manner in which she is propitiated and the way in which she communicates with the devotee more closely
resembles the relationship expected between devotees and shrine images than between devotees and human beings. In fact, despite obvious physiological similarities between Kumārī and other organic incarnations or holy persons, the treatment of the child before she becomes the goddess and the treatment of the goddess herself clearly relates to image preparation and worship.

As noted earlier, young girls are chosen to be the vessel for the goddess provided that their bodies conform to certain standards of perfection and beauty, for only the most perfect vessel should be offered as a body to the goddess. The young girl, among other things, must be beautiful, with dark hair and eyes, appropriately proportioned body parts, and perfectly unblemished skin. These characteristics strongly reflect the ideals sought when fashioning metal, stone, and other images. Just as the images are painstakingly fashioned and selected for their perfection, so is the body of the young girl examined and selected to become the appropriate vessel for the goddess.

As noted earlier, in addition to displaying the appropriate outward characteristics, a potential Kumārī must also maintain a somewhat reserved, even stoic, disposition without a tendency to emotional outbursts. Just as the young girl’s disposition is an important consideration when choosing a vessel into which the goddess will enter, so is disposition of deity important, and is thereby incorporated in the fashioning of the image. A given deity may be characterized by a particular disposition, such as calm and serene in the case of a Buddha, or fierce and wrathful, as in the case of Kali. These dispositions are communicated in the art through particular conventions. For example, in
order to show the serene, tranquil character of a meditating Buddha, art depicting such representations show a Buddha seated calmly in a meditational posture with his eyes cast slightly downward. Plate XII shows a Buddha from Swayambhu, who is seated in meditation. In keeping with the disposition of a Buddha, he is perfectly aware of his senses and is neither fettered, nor deterred from his practices by any distractions. On the other hand, fierce or wrathful deities are typically characterized by wild, uncontrolled matted hair, bulging eyes, ornaments of skulls and bones, and, in the case of Kāli, a tongue protruding from a blood-smeared mouth. Similarly, a single deity’s range of dispositions also can be communicated. Śiva’s intense commitment to asceticism is demonstrated in depictions of him in which his naked, or nearly naked, ash-covered body and matted hair are testimony to his renunciation of the physical world. In this case, he is often shown in serene meditation, however, his fierce aspect is depicted in forms such as Tripurāntaka, or “Destroyer of the Three Cities”. Therefore, the personality or specific aspect of all deities, regardless of their form, is communicated through the “disposition,” via the iconography, of each form.

Devotion

Devotional worship of the incarnate goddess also directly parallels devotional worship of images. Plate XIII shows the Patan Kumāri enshrined on her throne in the same way that she presides as a royal guest at the Macchendranāth Festival held every year in Patan. During this festival, an image of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara is transported in a large chariot, as

69Huntington, Art of Ancient India, 528.
seen in Plate XIV, from the village of Bungmati to the city of Patan.\textsuperscript{70} Just as images are taken periodically from their respective shrines to allow the people to see the gods and goddesses and to enable particular gods and goddesses to see one another,\textsuperscript{71} so is Kumārī brought to the Macchendranāth Festival to receive \textit{darśan} from devotees and to see the bodhisattva Macchendranāth. Participants in the festival approach the goddess, who is seated in full view. As they would for an image of stone or metal, they touch the goddess' feet, make offerings of flowers, fruit, and rice, and take blessings from the goddess by placing \textit{tika} from her throne on their forehead. Plate XV shows the goddess receiving offerings from her devotees during the 1994 Pañcadāna Festival. Devotees made offerings in an identical manner to Kumārī during the Macchendranāth Festival. In Plate XVI, a priest is shown carrying an image of the Buddha Dipānkara to various bāhās during the Pañcadāna Festival. As with Kumārī worship, devotees make offerings of flowers, fruit, and rice to this Buddha. A comparison of Plate XV and XVI, then, shows the worship of two high-level spiritual beings, Kumārī and Dipānkara. Both have manifested themselves so that their devotees have the opportunity to worship them and to take \textit{darśan}. In the case of Kumārī, the goddess has entered the form of a little girl. The Buddha Dipānkara resides in a form made from a copper alloy. Despite these differences in physical composition, the worship practices associated with both beings remains consistent. This worship process is similarly replicated with the image of Macchendranāth who is enshrined in the cart during the Macchendranāth


\textsuperscript{71} The incarnate Kumāris are taken to see different deities (most of whom are in stone or metal bodies) during particular auspicious days. For examples, see Allen, 28-34, 41-45.
Festival. Although, he resides in his cart during the majority of the festival, the time span in which devotees are actually able to make offerings and touch the image’s feet, when the deity is taken from the cart, is more limited than in the case of Kumārī. As with an image, Plate XVII shows a man bowing before the goddess and touching her feet in a gesture of respect and devotion as she is carried from her home to Hakā Bāhā.

During these proceedings, Kumārī responds in no manner that might be identified as human-to-human interaction. Throughout the entire process of worship, the goddess sits quietly viewing the festival procession, listening to music, and occasionally looking at a devotee (Plate XVIII). Her facial expression is unchanging. One needs only to think of the interaction between the holy yogin or a great spiritual teacher and the devotee in order to see that Kumārī resides on her throne as an image, not as human being. Once a deity is invoked into an image, devotees understand the deity to be present in that image. Therefore, like an image, the body of the girl is filled with the presence of Kumārī, thereby giving the goddess a physical form so that she is available for devotion in the same manner as a deity who manifests in a carefully-crafted, inanimate body.

Deity Preparation

In addition to the way in which Kumārī reserves herself from her devotees, the treatment of the goddess’ form more closely resembles that of an image than a human. In the case of most humans who are propitiated, there

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is no set-aside time in which the spiritual being must be invoked into the purified human form. While purification of the body is a common practice in South Asia, in the case of most human incarnations, the being is ready and available for dārsan with little preparation. Great teachers and holy men reside in a single corporeal form throughout their lives and are identified with that form.

However, just as an image would not be propitiated as the deity until the deity had been invoked into it, so is Kumāri simply a little girl until the goddess manifests in her body. In Nepal, following the course of ritual purification, preparation, and selection of a perfect image, the deity is invoked into a kalaśa (pot) and his or her presence in the image is requested. The image becomes the body of the deity, just as the shrine becomes the deity’s home. The god or goddess is offered every courtesy, including appropriate food, water, and the fragrant smell of incense. The deities are regularly bathed and dressed in the finest garments, fanned with a large whisk to keep the flies away, and put to bed in the evenings.

During one of the daily rituals at performed in many of the bāhās, following purification of the shrine area with water, the deity is invoked into the main shrine image by the pūjārī, who makes offerings to him or her and fans him with a whisk.

73This is comparable to the eye-opening ceremony used in India for Hindu sculptures. Vajrayāna priests also perform a similar ritual that centers around a kalaśa. Kumāri pūjā is one of the three most important offerings and is included in all complex life-cycle rituals, except for ancestor worship. During the kalaśa ritual, the five Dīna Buddhas are invoked into a pot filled with water, while a tantric deity, such as Guhyēśvarī (“secret goddess”), is invoked into a pot that contains red beer. See Gellner, 148-153.
74The process of “closing the shrine” varies. However, in every case, there is a sense that the deity is given relief from his or her daily duties.
Similarly, upon examination of the young girls who might serve as vessels for the goddess, and a selection of the child who is deemed perfect in form and disposition, the child’s body is prepared for invocations of the goddess. According to Allen, the goddess is invoked into the Patan Kumārī during a ceremony called Kumārī sthāpanā pūjā (Kumārī foundation worship).\textsuperscript{75} During this “installation” ceremony, the young girl sits naked in front of the priest. Her body is ritually purified with the sprinkling of water and the chanting of mantras. A pūjā ensues that cleanses the body of all previous life experiences, after which, the goddess is invoked into the body of the child. Following the invocation, the incarnate goddess is dressed in her traditional red garment and adorned with jewelry that is specific to her iconography. Her hair is placed in the characteristic bun on top of her head and tied with a red ribbon. In a similar fashion, Plate XIX shows the Patan Kumārī being prepared for worship. During this time, the priest prepares the throne of the goddess.\textsuperscript{76} In essence, the goddess Kumārī has come to reside in the body of the child, and, until the time that the goddess is granted leave from her, the young girl will be understood as a manifestation of Kumārī in the same way that images of Śiva or Kṛṣṇa are understood as gods, not merely images or references to the gods.

In addition to these similarities in bodily and image preparation, invocation of the deity and mode of communication between the deity and the devotee, other aspects of Kumārī worship also place her in the category of an “incarnate image.” As is typical for deities in the main shrines of religious establishments, particularly in Hindu shrines, photographs of the

\textsuperscript{75}The implication here is that the goddess can enter a completely pure being.
\textsuperscript{76}Allen, 36-37.
Kathmandu Kumāri are not permitted except during festivals or special rituals when she is taken out for the public to see. Further, just as the images are carried from place to place, so is the goddess carried to various functions, her feet never being permitted to touch the ground. Plate XX shows the Patan Kumāri being carried at the Maccherdranāth Festival. The umbrella next to her is generally over her head and it symbolizes her high-ranking status. Similarly, Plate XXI shows the royal seat, with an umbrella above, used to carry the image of Macchendranāth to his temple in Patan. This image of Macchendranāth is too heavy to be carried by a single individual; therefore, the royal seat with large, extended wooden handles is used to transport the image. With respect to royal treatment, the opposite is generally true for sannyāsins. Having renounced the material world and its comforts, these holy men vow to take on a life of simplicity and asceticism and do not enjoy the luxury of being carried from place to place, nor is their spiritual status identified by the presence of a symbolic umbrella.

Also important is the fact that there are between eleven and thirteen forms of the goddess present at any time in keeping with religious philosophies pertaining to deities in the Valley and South Asia in general. To Buddhists and Hindus, the fact that a deity may reside in a stone image at one temple, in a metal image at another temple, and in other images simultaneously is not a paradox, but merely reflects the universality of the deity. For example, in addition to other temples in Nepal, shrines to Ganeśa are located at the beginning of each töl or “neighborhood”, separating the spaces. Although in some cases, two images can be seen simultaneously, both are understood, in a literal sense, to be Ganeśa. Again, this understanding
does not hold true for sannyásins or holy incarnations, who are born into a single body that they keep throughout this lifetime. They are only present in a single form at any moment in time.

The multiplicity of a given deity, however, does not imply that each of the images or forms of the god or goddess is of equal importance. Owing to specific historical, political, or physical circumstances, certain images or sites associated with specific images gain greater prominence and importance. The great Nepali Śaivite pilgrimage site, Paśupatināth, where one of the most auspicious and powerful images of the god Śiva is located, serves as an example. The auspiciousness and prominence of this site and the Śiva linga contained inside the Paśupati temple may be due to a number of factors. The area near the temple has been religiously important for centuries, but certain historical events, such as royal patronage, may well have increased its international importance. In addition to being an important place of pilgrimage, devotees who feel that the end of their life is nearing will travel to or ask be taken to Paśupatināth, as it is considered an auspicious place to die and be cremated.

Like the other deities of the Valley, such as Ganeśa and Śiva, the various forms of the goddess Kumārī also have different degrees of importance. Although the full range of the historical and religious factors behind the prioritizing of the Kumāris is not well known, political factors have encouraged the privileging of one incarnate Kumārī over another. For example, as stated earlier, prior to the reign of the Shah Dynasty, the three Kumāris of Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur held royal status. Each goddess was propitiated and supported by the Malla king who ruled over her
respective city. However, following the Shah conquest and unification of the country, only the Kathmandu Kumārī continued to enjoy royal patronage. As a result of this shift in political power and monetary support, the political statue of the Patan and Bhaktapur Kumāris diminished. Modern tourism and movements away from a more traditional society have also had an impact on the relative importance of the incarnate Kumāris. The tourist trade has created a nearly constant flow of people into Kumārī Bāhā in Kathmandu. Upon entering the bāhā, tourists are frequently asked by tour guides to make an offering to the goddess by placing money on the mandala nearest to the main courtyard door. Although I do not know the exact quantity, a significant amount of money must be brought in through tourism. Monetary support, whether through royal patronage or foreign monies, often strengthens a religious tradition. It follows, then, that Kathmandu Kumārī, her home, and jewelry will be well maintained.

Similarly, a movement away from certain aspects of traditional society have also had an impact on the state of worship involving the incarnate Kumārī. For example, while trade has always been an important component of Newari culture, the increased value of Nepali art and artifacts has provided a way for individuals to make large sums of money quickly. According to Sanumaya Shakya, the jewelry that she wore as the Bhaktapur Kumārī is no longer used, but is kept in a safe place in order to avoid its theft. A simpler, less valuable set of jewelry is actually worn today. Moreover, as money and land become increasingly more important in the Valley, some of the smaller bāhās, particularly those that are located on prime land in the main cities, consider the possibility of selling the land and
tearing down the structure that is on it. On the other hand, given the fact that since C.E. 1769, Hinduism has enjoyed royal patronage, Hindu temples continue to flourish and be maintained. While these examples do not necessarily indicate that these religions are "declining" or "increasing" as many authors have stated, it is apparent that these historical circumstances are changing certain aspects of the religious and their practices. Each situation represents a complex set of historical circumstances and must be looked at individually in order to determine the social, religious, and political dynamics.

Because of these and other historical and political factors, the importance of all deities, whether they are made of stone, metal, paint, or flesh, is altered. Like the stone and metal images, the incarnate manifestations are also subject to the vagaries of history. This is not to say that a deity's form does not also have an impact on the way in which it is influenced by historical circumstances. On the contrary, depending upon the historical moment, a deity's form can directly influence the way in which it is received.

Current social and political trends and Western notions of children's roles in society continue to affect the way in which the human manifestation of the goddess is interpreted. Historically, it has been considered an honor for a young girl to serve for a period of years as the vessel for the goddess. And, while this is still the case, a growing concern for the child's education and future is becoming apparent. Although the human manifestation of the goddess, particularly in the case of the Kathmandu Kumārī, has attracted a great deal of attention from tourists, world trends toward western education
and an increased value placed on the formal education of children continue to influence the way in which the incarnate goddess is viewed. Because the goddess is considered omniscient, she does not require formal education. However, as the Nepali society and economy change, there is a growing concern that once the goddess is asked to depart from the young girl's body and be invoked into another body, the former Kumārī will have had little or no education of a practical, economically valuable nature. The family of the current Patan Kumārī expressed its concerns regarding this matter. While a complete analysis of this dynamic is beyond the scope of this paper, the point remains that it is precisely the fact that the goddess is manifesting in the form of a young human female that is being taken into account. The result may, ultimately, create a shift in emphasis away from the incarnate forms of the goddess, although it is difficult to say at this point. It is the disparity between the Western understanding and treatment of the incarnate forms of the goddess Kumārī—the perception that Kumārī is first and foremost a little girl—rather than an understanding that each "little girl" is yet another form in which the goddess manifests, that perpetuates concern from foreigners that these little girls are not able to be educated and, therefore, are not leading fulfilling lives. 77 Therefore, an intricate dialogue occurs between the historical moment and the image that practically influences the way in which devotees prioritize the plethora of deities, whether they are manifest in stone, metal, or the body of a little girl.

77This type of comment could be heard frequently from the foreign tourists who interpreted the phenomenon of the incarnate goddess from a Western perspective, as observed during summer 1994.
CHAPTER VI
CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Kumāri cult of Nepal represents more than the worship of a few young girls. The goddess Kumāri, in all of her many manifestations, is an important component of the religious, political, and social spheres of both the Newar and Parbatijā communities. The goddess is, at once, manifest in various forms, each of which is appropriate for religious practices that include her. Rather than a contradiction, this multiplicity of forms punctuates the South Asian understanding of a deity’s universality, an important aspect of Buddhist and Hindu religious thought.

Understanding Kumāri as an “incarnate image”, rather than solely a “living goddess,” helps to situate the Kumāri cult within the context of South Asian Buddhist and Hindu practices. By examining the manner in which she is propitiated, the subtle way in which she communicates with her devotees, and the treatment of the goddess’ form, the strong similarities between the propitiation practices of these incarnate manifestations of the goddess and the other deities in the Valley become apparent. This new perspective not only serves to further our understanding about this socially and politically important goddess within the boundaries of the Nepali state, but it sharpens our awareness of the religious practices that are a major focus of South Asian life. Because the religious practices in Nepal are so intricately linked with the day-to-day life of the people and the social and political spheres of society, it is important to continually reexamine the way in which we understand this important component of society. Indeed, a greater understanding of the way in which cultures understand the nature of religion, and reality in general,
provides a better foundation for cultural interaction. But, perhaps more importantly, these insights lead us, ultimately, toward a greater cognizance of the full range of human expression.
Plate 1: Kumari Bibi, Kathmandu. South wall of the interior courtyard.
Plate II: Kathmandu Kumārī. Date Unknown.
Plate V: The goddess Taleju. Tympanum detail of the Golden Gate to the Taleju Temple in Bhaktapur.
Plate VI: Multiarmed (Camundā?) female figure standing on two human figures. Kumāri Bāhā, Kathmandu, tympanum detail.
Plate VII: Bhaktapur Kumāri enshrined during the Festival of Dasain, 1994.
Plate VIII: Bhaktapur Kumāri enshrined during the Festival of Dāsaṅ, detail, 1994.
Plate IX: Contemporary rendering of the Kathmandu Kumāri.
Plate XII: Buddha enshrined at Swayambhu.
Plate XIII: Patan Kumārī enshrined for worship during the Pañcadāna Festival, 1994, at Hākā Bīhā, Patan.
Plate XX: Patan Kumāri being carried to the Macchendranāth Festival, 1994.
Plate XXI. Royal seat for the image of Macchendranáth, Macchendranáth Festival, 1994.
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