

Aztec and Hindu Goddesses: Some Close Parallels

R. N. Prasher

(Abstract)

We had, in an earlier paper, deduced some new pointers to contacts between India and Pre-Columbian America.¹ We had shown how in an Aztec marriage scene, “the marriage was performed before a fire and the garments of bride and groom were knotted together”.² This literal tying of the knot has remained an important part of marriage ritual in India for millennia; “. . . Saptapadi is performed near a fire; and after each of the seven oaths to each other, the groom and bride perform the ritual of agnipradakṣiṇā – walk around the fire, with ends of their garments tied together.”³

We had deduced similarities between Mexican rain god Tlaloc who, like the Vedic god Indra, is ruler of heaven and is shown holding a thunderbolt. The name Tlaloc was found to be similar to the prefix in Trailokyapati, Trailokyarāja and Trilokeśa, the various names of Indra.

This paper is an attempt to show striking similarities in the two forms of Durgā, viz. Kālī and Caṇḍikā on the one hand and the Aztec goddesses Coatlicue and Chantico, on the other. In the latter case, even the names, Caṇḍikā and Chantico are tantalizingly close to each-other.

Re-presentations of the Great Mother or the maternal face of divinity have been found in all ancient cultures. Patrizia Granziera has very aptly summarized it in the following words, “They are expressions of a tradition that may be as old as

humanity itself. The earliest image of the divine feminine made by human hands is of the Goddess as Great Mother. Humanity has imagined her as the immensity of cosmic space, moon, earth and nature itself. The divine feminine is seen as life energy constantly moving - an irresistible power that destroys old forms and brings new ones into being. Her essential quality is all-inclusiveness. She contains all opposites within herself, including male and female, creation and destruction, life and death".⁴

However, there have to be several additional specific common attributes, which may not be mere coincidence, in addition to those enumerated above by the learned scholar, to show a strong resemblance between the deities of the two cultures.

To begin with, a noticeable common denominator between Aztec and Hindu iconography is that multiple forms of a deity are differentiated by specific attributes. Esther Pasztory's typology culminates in deities which she sees as complex insignia that represent natural forces: "Sacredness does not reside in their bodies but in their costume and in associated insignia and symbols. . . The anthropomorphic sun deity is represented in different aspects by several gods - Tonatiuh, Huitzilopochtli or Piltzintecuhtli, [but] the solar disk image stands for the more abstract concept of the sun as the equivalent of the Aztecs'cosmic era."⁵ Alvarado, one of the conquistadores was named "the sun" (Tonatiuh) by the Aztecs and he was given the name sign as in Fig.1.⁶

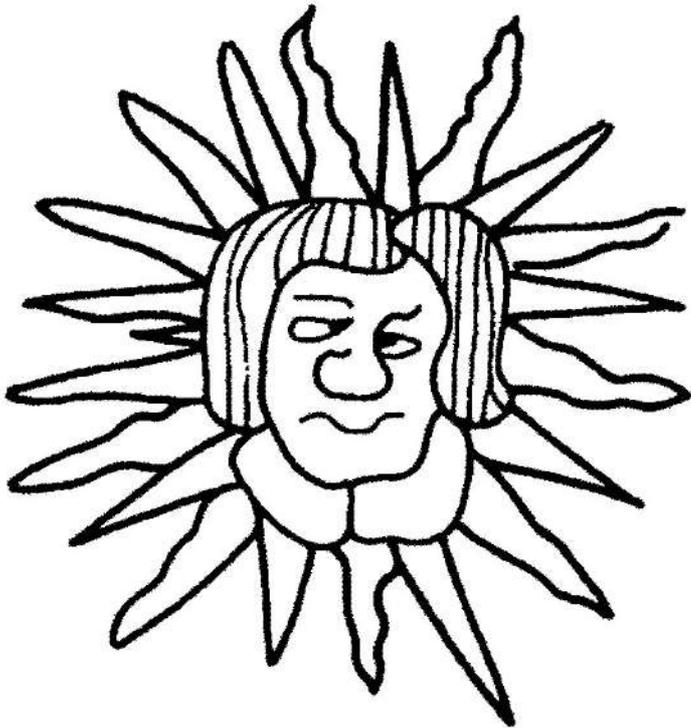


Fig.1 : Alvarado was named "the sun" (Tonatiuh) by the Aztecs

Speaking of multiple forms of an original god in the Hindu pantheon, A.A. MacDonell has pointed out the bewildering variety of iconographic detail when he says, ". . .it is doubtless due to the evolutionary multiplication of forms of what were originally single gods, and the consequent necessity of differentiating these forms by modifications and additions of distinctive features. Thus, all twenty-four forms of Viṣṇu, the twenty-five of Śiva, and the thirty-two of Gaṇeśa have to be distinguished."⁷

Regarding the goddesses of Hindu pantheon, it has been said that, “The Great Goddess of the *Mahābhāgavata* appears in many forms. However, the text neither establishes a clear hierarchy among them nor describes the Goddess's supreme form consistently; sometimes she “looks” like a classic Kālī, but at other times, she is more like a Durgā, or even like a conflation of the two. Nevertheless, characteristics typical of Kālī appear in many descriptions of the Great goddess or her supreme physical form in the *Mahābhāgavata*, and Kālī (by name or by description) is central to most of its narratives.”⁸

Similar overlap is noticed in Aztec pantheon. Huitzilopochtli, the central war deity of the Mexico is sometimes identified as the Blue Tezcatlipoca. Itztlacoliuhqui, the god of frost, ice, cold, winter, sin, punishment and human misery is considered a variant of Tezcatlipoca. Quetzalcoatl, the primordial god of creation is also called White Tezcatlipoca. And attributes of Tonatiuh, the Sun god overlap with those of Huitzilopochtli.⁹ This evokes similarity with the way various forms of the Hindu goddess flow into each-other. It has been said of the Aztec deities, “The natures of central Mexican deities are not circumscribed by fixed boundaries that delimit their realms of influence; instead the supernaturals are fluid beings with realms that tend to flow into or overlap those of others. . . . Many supernaturals known by separate names are merely different aspects of the same.”¹⁰

Thus, it is not surprising that we find some of the attributes of Coatlicue, Chantico and Coyolxauhqui similar to those of Kālī, some to those of Caṇḍikā and a few to other forms of the goddess.

Coatlicue, which in Nahuatl means “Serpent Skirt”¹¹ also called, Teteoh Innan (mother of gods), is an important member of Aztec pantheon. She is the primordial earth goddess who gave birth to moon, stars and to Huitzilopochtli, the god of the sun and war. Her most famous image is in the National Institute of Anthropology and History, Mexico City. The 257 cm statue (Fig.2) “made in andesite is one of the most important representations of the Mexica cosmogony. It was discovered on August 13, 1790, during the remodeling of the Plaza Mayor in the capital of New Spain.”¹²

Some similarities in the above mentioned statue of Coatlicue and Kālī have been pointed out earlier by Elizabeth U. Harding. She says, “We find Kālī in Mexico as an ancient Aztec Goddess of enormous stature. Her name is Coatlicue, and her resemblance to the Hindu Kālī is striking.”¹³

Harding quotes Frank Waters to further elaborate on the theme, listing the attributes of Coatlicue without drawing parallels with Kālī:

“The colossal Aztec statue of Coatlicue fuses in one image the dual functions of the earth which both creates and destroys. In different aspects she represents Coatlicue, “Lady of the Skirt of Serpents” or “Goddess of the Serpent Petticoat”; Cihuacoatl, “the Serpent Woman”; Tlazolteotl,

“Goddess of Filth” and Tonatzin, “Our Mother”, who was later sanctified by the Catholic Church as the Virgin of Guadalupe, the dark-faced Madonna. . . . In the statue her head is severed from her body, and from the neck flow two streams of blood in the shape of two serpents. She wears a skirt of serpents girdled by another serpent as a belt. On her breast hangs a necklace of human hearts and hands bearing a human skull as a pendant. Her hands and feet are shaped like claws. From the bicephalous mass which takes the place of the head and which represents Omeyocan, the topmost heaven, to the world of the dead extending below the feet, the statue embraces both life and death. . . . As the art critic Justino Fernandez writes in his often quoted description, it represents not a being but an idea, 'the embodiment of the cosmic dynamic power which bestows life and which thrives on death in the struggle of opposites'.”¹⁴



Fig.2 : Coatlicue in National Institute of Anthropology and History, Mexico City. Accessed at www.inah.gob.mx/foto-del-dia/6864-foto-del-dia-coatlicue-mna

Let us consider the parallels in Kālī or her other forms for the attributes of Coatlicue enumerated by Waters:

1. “Dual functions of the earth which both creates and destroys”

As a Śākta work, the *Mahābhāgavata* (same as *Devī-Bhāgavata Purāṇa*) understands the Mahādevī, the Great Goddess, as the supreme deity of the cosmos. She is ultimately responsible for the creation, preservation, and destruction of the universe.¹⁵

In the *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra*, Śiva praises Kālī as: Thou art the Beginning of all, Creatrix, Protectress and Destructress that Thou art (4.30-34).¹⁶

The *Devī-Bhāgavata Purāṇa* celebrates the divine feminine as the origin of all existence, the creator, the preserver and the destroyer of everything, as well as the one who empowers spiritual liberation.¹⁷

The *Devī-Mahātmya* too describes her as the creator, preserver and the destroyer:

*Vyāptam tayaitatsakalam brahmāṇḍam manujeśvara
mahākālyā mahākāle mahāmārīśvarūpayā/
Saiva kāle mahāmārī saiva sṛṣṭirbhavatyajā
sthitim karoti bhūtānām saiva kāle sanātani//*¹⁸

O king, by her all this universe is pervaded, by Mahākālī, who takes form as the great destroyer at the end of time.

At that time, she herself is the great destroyer. Existing from all eternity, she herself becomes the creation. She, the eternal one, sustains all beings.¹⁹

In the *R̥gveda*, in the Devī Sūktam hymn makes the Devī sing her own attributes as the creator and the preserver:

“Through me alone all eat the food that feeds them, – each man who sees, breathes, hears the word outspoken.

They know it not, yet I reside in the essence of the Universe. Hear, one and all, the truth as I declare it.

I, verily, myself announce and utter the word that gods and men alike shall welcome...

I created Earth and Heaven and reside as their Inner Controller.

On the world's summit I bring forth sky the Father: my home is in the waters, in the ocean as Mother.

Thence I pervade all existing creatures, as their Inner Supreme Self, and manifest them with my body.

I created all worlds at my will, without any higher being, and permeate and dwell within them.

The eternal and infinite consciousness is I, it is my greatness dwelling in everything.”²⁰

2. “Lady of the Skirt of Serpents or Goddess of the Serpent Petticoat . . . She wears a skirt of serpents girdled by another serpent as a belt. On her breast hangs a necklace of human hearts and hands bearing a human skull as a pendant”

Kālī is represented as wearing a skirt of human hands. She wears a necklace of snakes and uses snakes as bracelets.

In the *Devī-Mahātmya*, when Durgā, confronted with demons Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa, she becomes very angry, Kālī springs from her forehead. She is black, wears a garland of human heads and a tiger skin, and wields a skull-topped staff.²¹ The garland of severed heads, variously called *muṇḍamālā*, *kapālamālā* or *ruṇḍamālā* is often found in the iconography of Mahāvidyās, a group of ten fearsome Tāntric goddesses.²² The number of heads in the *ruṇḍamālā* is generally described as fifty. Kālī, Chinnamastā, Bhairavī, Dhūmāvati and Mātaṅgī are depicted or at least described as wearing *muṇḍamālā*.²³

3. “Goddess of Filth”

Mātaṅgī, one of the Mahāvidyās of the ten Tāntric goddesses, is a ferocious aspect of Devī, the Hindu Divine Mother. She is often associated with pollution, inauspiciousness and the periphery of Hindu society, which is embodied in her most popular form known as Ucchiṣṭa-Caṇḍālinī or Ucchiṣṭa-Mātaṅginī.²⁴ She is described as an outcaste (Caṇḍālinī) and offered left-over or partially eaten food (Ucchiṣṭa) with unwashed hands which is considered impure in classical Hinduism.

4. “Her head is severed from her body and from the neck flow two streams of blood in the shape of two serpents”

One form of Kālī is Chinnamastā, a goddess which forms part of both the Hindu and the Buddhist pantheons. Her name literally means the “one with the severed-head”. The *sādhana* in the *Sādhanamālā* describes Chinnamuṇḍā as one “who is of yellow colour, who holds in her left hand her own severed head which she severed with her own scimitar (*katṛ*) held in her right hand . . . She is nude . . . streams of blood issuing from the sacred body fall into the mouth of her severed head and into the mouths of the two Yoginīs on either side.”²⁵

5. “Her hands and feet are shaped like claws”

The same attributes are given for Kālī:

“She has long, sharp fangs, is often depicted as having claw-like hands with long nails. . . .”²⁶

7. “. . . .the bicephalous mass which takes the place of the head. . . .”

Agni or the fire god is the only god in Hindu pantheon who is shown with two heads. Though it does not make a parallel in any sense, it is interesting to note that the name of Kālī, which appears for the first time in Sanskrit literature in the *Muṇḍakopniṣad*, is referred as one of the seven quivering tongues of the fire god Agni:

*kālī karālī ca manojavā ca sulohitā yā ca sudhūmravarṇā/
sphuliṅginī viśvarucī ca devī lelāyamānā iti sapta jihvāḥ//*²⁷

Kālī, Karālī, Manojavā, Sulohitā, Sudhūmravarṇā, Sphuliṅginī and Viśvarucī are the seven moving tongues of fire.

In addition, Kālī is the goddess of fertility. Chinnamastā too is shown standing upon the union of Kāmadeva and his consort Rati. In turn, Chinnamastā signifies that life, death, and sex are interdependent. Her image conveys the eternal truth that “life feeds on death, is nourished by death, and that the ultimate destiny of sex is to perpetuate more life which in turn will decay and die in order to feed more life.”²⁸ Coatlicue is also a fertility goddess. Her breasts are depicted as hanging flaccid from suckling her 400 sons and a daughter. She got impregnated by a ball of feathers and gave birth to god Huitzilopochtli.

Kālī, as her name, is dark in complexion. Aztec goddesses were mainly of dark complexion. As a result, Our Lady of Guadalupe is black, being a synthesis

of Virgin Mary and goddess Tonatzin, the black mother of gods. In modern Mexico, there is renewed pride, particularly among feminists, for their dark skinned ancestors as recorded by Suzanne Bost:

“ . . . Anzaldeúa and Muraga emphasize the importance of mixture in their political practices, their relationships in history, and the frictions within their racial experiences. In opposition to the story of the tragic mulatta, the source of shame or tragedy for these Chicana women is not the existence of darker ancestors but ties to lighter, colonizing ones. Both writers value the India in their identities, the powerful dark-skinned women from whom they descend. . . . They differentiate themselves from feminists, who base their theories on the Euro-American tradition, and they insist on the resistance of their colonized, dark-skinned ancestors. La Malinche, Coatlicue (the goddess of fertility and death), Coyolxauhqui, (the moon goddess), Cihuacoatl (the snake goddess) and others present indigenous foundations for Anzaldúa's and Moraga's feminisms . . . ”²⁹

Thus, there are striking parallels between Kālī and Coatlicue which go beyond the universal attributes of the divine feminine.

We now briefly narrate the fascinating myth about decapitation of Coatlicue which brings her daughter, Coyolxauhqui and along with her, Chantico onto our canvas. This myth was recorded in late 16th century CE (1575-77) and comes to us through Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún who compiled it based on indigenous authors, artists and informants.³⁰

Coatlicue was sweeping the top of sacred snake mountain (Coatepec). A feather ball fell from the sky and she hid it in her garments. She conceived Huitzilopochtli, the sun god of the Aztecs. Her daughter Coyolxauhqui considered it unchaste and convinced her 400 brothers to kill her. While she was decapitated, Huitzilopochtli, born fully developed and armed, cut off the head of Coyolxauhqui and threw it in the sky where it became the moon. He threw the body down the mountain and it broke into pieces during the fall.

Along with the massive statue of Coatlicue, a large disc, showing dismembered female figure (Fig.3) was found during the excavations at Templo Mayor. This was identified as Coyolxauhqui. Its presence at the most important religious site of Aztecs does indicate that the dismembered goddess remained in the



Fig.3 : Coyolxauhqui Stone. Accessed at www.ancient.eu/amp/1-14393

pantheon, though at the foot of the staircase.

In Hindu pantheon, the goddess Kālī was dismembered by Viṣṇu with his discus to stop Śiva from roaming around, distraught, with the dead body of Bhadrakālī. The places where body parts of the goddess fell became holy *śaktipīṭhas*. There is no agreement on the number of *śaktipīṭhas*. There is, however, agreement about the four *ādi śaktipīṭhas*, viz. Bimala (foot), Tara Tarinī (breasts), Kāmākhyā (*yoni*) and Dakaṣiṇa Kālikā (mouth). The total

number, though mostly mentioned 51, may also be 52, 64 or 108. This shows that while the dismemberment is taken as established, number is a matter of opinion.

On the stone disc of Coyolxauhqui, six body parts are shown: four limbs, head and torso. Ignoring the number, if we just focus on the act of dismemberment and the dismembered goddess remaining part of the sacred pantheon, a parallel between moon goddess Coyolxauhqui and Kālī can be discerned. Further, we note that Kālī's consort, Śiva bears the crescent of the fifth day moon on his head.

The third goddess in our story is the Aztec goddess Chantico, a name which brings to mind the Hindu goddess Caṇḍikā. Before elaborating on the parallel attributes of these two, we notice that it is recognized that Chantico merged with Coyolxauhqui. Immediately after the discovery of the disc showing dismembered body of the latter, it was mentioned that "the head closely resembles in its essential features one of the most famous pre-Hispanic sculptures found in Mexico City, the colossal green porphyritic head discovered in the foundations of a colonial building only about a block to the southeast in March, 1830."³¹ ". . .in 1900, the correct

identification of the head was first made by the leading European Mexicanist of the day, Eduard Seier . . . He identified the motifs on both cheeks as bells, with the upper circular elements bearing the well-recognized cruciform symbols for gold - thus, Coyolxauhqui, 'Painted with Bells'. He was also the first clearly to recognize that the head displays various features iconographically diagnostic of the goddess Chantico . . ."32 (Fig.4). "Another very relevant piece is a jadeite mask in the collection of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University . . . also represents Coyolxauhqui-Chantico."33 After a detailed discussion, Nicholson concludes, "Whatever the precise reasons, Coyolxauhqui was apparently considered to have been a manifestation of Chantico."34



6

Fig.4 : Coyolxauhqui-Chantico Colossal Head
Pencil drawing by José Maria Velasco
From Nicholson, (Ref. 31), p.95, fig 6

Chantico, sounding similar to Caṇḍikā, looks also similar to the latter when we see her in Fig.4. The lolling tongue, which is a very distinct feature of the Hindu goddess, is substituted here by a hanging nose ornament that creates the illusion of tongue. Moreover, this ornament is in shape of inverted triangle, which is the symbol of *yoni* in tantric iconography. Her ear ornaments are also inverted triangles. Chantico's alter-ego, Coyolxauhqui has bells as her distinct feature, her name being She With Bells. One of the forms of Caṇḍikā is Candraghaṇṭā (Candra, the moon and

ghaṇṭā, large bell or gong in Sanskrit, hence Candraghaṇṭā, one who has a half-moon shaped like a bell). Coyolxauhqui being the moon goddess, bell-like half-moon as an attribute of the Hindu goddess makes an interesting parallel.

As Chantico merged with Coyolxauhqui, so the former was not so common a goddess at the time of Spanish conquest of Mexico. Yet, Sahagún mentions that as part of Aztec pantheon, there was a shrine to her at the Templo Mayor while the disc of dismembered Coyolxauhqui was at the foot of the temple pyramid. She is represented in the Codices "Rios"(Fig.5), "Telleriano-Remensis" (Fig.6), "Tonalamatl Aubin" (Fig.7) and Sahagún's "Primeros Memoriales" (Fig.8).³⁵

Nicholson, based on Sahagún, surmises that the name Chantico could even be from another language. “The name of the deity is usually translated “In the House”. However, “in the house,” strictly speaking, would be *chanco*. The *ti* could be a non-semantic “ligature”, or the word could be an archaic form of locative – or even, conceivably, a borrowing from another language.”³⁶

We shall now enumerate known attributes of Chantico that find a parallel



Fig.5 : Chantico from Codex Rios
 Accessed at www.famsi.org/research/pohl/jpcodices/rios/rios35.jpg

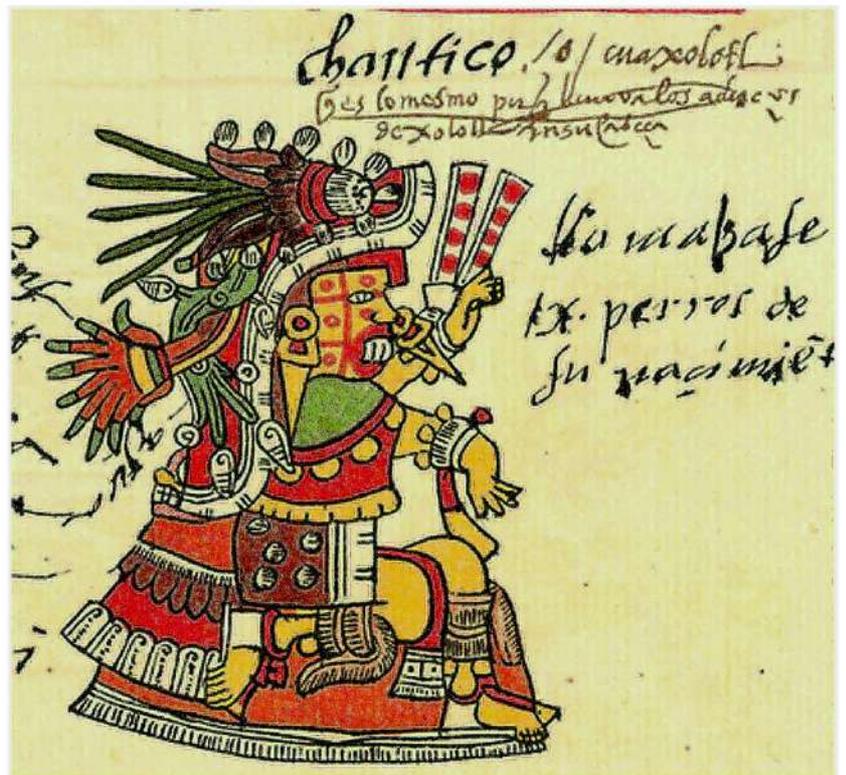


Fig.6 : Telleriano Remensis Chantico
 Accessed at www.famsi.org/research/loubat/Telleriano-Remensis/page_21v.jpg



Fig.7 : Tonalamatl Aubin Chantico. Accessed at www.famsi.org/research/loubat/Tonalamatl/page_18.jpg

flames". At the Jvālāmukhī temple in Himachal Pradesh, there is no idol and flames coming out of crevices in the rocks are worshipped as the goddess Jvālāmukhī.

2. Red is the dominant colour of Chantico's clothes³⁸:

Bhairavī, (also known as Tripura Bhairavī) who is Caṇḍikā herself, is red in complexion. She wears a garland of severed heads and her breasts are smeared with blood.³⁹ When gods created the goddess to kill the buffalo demon Maḥiṣāsura, they presented her with new red clothes. Tārā, in her benevolent Buddhist form, wears red clothes. Tripurasundarī has red

in the attributes of Caṇḍikā or her manifestations:

1. Chantico is goddess of fire and volcanoes³⁷:

The earliest reference to Devī in Hindu scriptures is as tongues of fire (ref.26). One of the forms of Caṇḍikā is Jvālāmukhī, a word used in Sanskrit for volcanoes and literally means "one whose mouth emits



Fig.8 : Chantico from Fray Bernardino de Sahagún Primeros Memoriales,(Códice Matritense del Real Palacio, fol.266 v) Accessed at www.academia.edu/9685163/Las_imágenes_femeninas_en_Los_Primeros_Memoriales_de_Sahagún (p.26, fig. 31)



Fig.9 : Tārāpīṭha Kālī
Accessed at www.Tarapith.com

complexion and wears red clothes. Bhuvaneśvarī too has a red face and a red garment.⁴⁰ Chinnamastā, though nude, has red complexion. Mātāṅgī too has red attire.⁴¹ Durgā, Lakṣmī and Annapūrṇā, all wear red clothes.

In the Tantra literature, both Hindu and Buddhist, the male supreme god is symbolically represented by a white dot, thus suggesting the likeness with semen; the goddess is represented by a red dot, to suggest analogy with menstrual blood.⁴²

3. Red paint covers Chantico's mouth⁴³:

Though many forms of the Hindu goddess are red in complexion as given above, there is the specific case of Tārāpīṭha where the face of the goddess around the mouth is painted red (Fig.9).

Chantico is sometimes depicted with her face painted red above and black below, much like the god of fire.⁴⁴ The image at Dakṣiṇeśvara, where thick red lines around the eyes make the upper part of Kālī's face red and the lower part is black, do evoke similarity with this version of Chantico (Fig.10).

4. Chantico's headdress displays military attributes:

A crown of poisonous cactus spikes, related to danger and aggression and a crest of aztaxalli, warrior's green feathers connect her with warfare.⁴⁵

Durgā, Kālī, Chinnamastā, Bhairavī, all are heavily armed warrior goddesses. The cactus spikes in Chantico's crown remind of a sacred cactus

tree at Kalighat where women prayed for children.⁴⁶

5. The mantle of Chantico (*quahuitl*) is a symbol of death. It was worn by people who were going to be sacrificed⁴⁷:

In the *Mahābhārata*, Kālī is a personification of death.⁴⁸ Caṇḍikā's association with death and animal and human sacrifice is very strong: "Birds, tortoises, alligators, fish, nine species of wild animals, buffaloes, bulls, he-goats, . . . reindeer, lions, tigers, men and blood drawn from the offerer's body are looked upon as proper oblations to the goddess Caṇḍikā . . . By a human sacrifice, attended by the forms laid down, Devī is pleased 1,000 years, . . . and by the sacrifice of three men 100,000 years."⁴⁹

6. Chantico wears the male loincloth bordered with eagle feathers in addition to the skirt worn by females⁵⁰:

Chantico possesses both feminine qualities as well as dominant and masculine traits. Wearing of the female skirt as well as the male loincloth links her both to her femininity and the pregnancy cycle as well as to warfare and aggression.⁵¹ The Hindu goddess combines in herself both male and female principles. Generally Kālī has four hands, symbolic of the blending of male and female principles. Kālī dances the cosmic dance of creating, for within her combine and blend all cosmic forces and energies.⁵² She is the source and the power behind all deities, male and female.⁵³



Fig.10 : Dakṣiṇeśvara Kālī

From the cover page of *Kālī: The Black Goddess of Dakṣiṇeśvara*, Elizabeth U. Harding, 1993

In Hindu mythology, the concept of Ardhanārīśvara, a composite androgynous form, depicted as half male and half female, vertically split down the middle, may have its origins in the Vedic literature's composite figure of Yama-Yamā. The description of primordial creator Viśvarūpa or Prajāpati and the fire-god Agni as “bull who is also a cow”. The *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* says that *Puruṣa* splits himself into two parts, male and female and the two halves procreate all life. In subsequent developments, Śiva and his consort Pārvatī constitute the composite androgynous form. Various manifestations of Pārvatī including Kālī, are seen as consorts of Śiva.⁵⁴

7. Chantico carries the balance of happiness and sorrow, pleasure and pain; she represents the duality of life, the earth and people⁵⁵:

Śrī Aurobindo describes the four great aspects of the Mother as:

- a. Calm, comprehending wisdom, tranquil benignity, inexhaustible compassion.
- b. Splendid strength, irresistible passion, warrior mood, overwhelming will, impetuous swiftness, world-shaking force.
- c. Vivid, sweet, beauty, harmony, rhythm, subtle opulence, compelling attraction, captivating grace.
- d. Intricate knowledge, flawless actions, perfection in all things.

He then names these attributes of the Mother as Māheśvarī, Mahākālī, Mahālakṣmī and Mahāsarasvatī, respectively.⁵⁶

8. Chantico blesses the home with wealth and stability. She rules over material abundance and precious things⁵⁷:

In Hindu pantheon, “Śrī is identified also in the auspicious workings of society; in the peaceful and prosperous realm of a righteous king; in the abundant circulation of gold and commercial exchange . . . In the Vedic consciousness, the stability of the universe (*ṛta*) depends upon the attraction and maintenance of the elusive śrī. . .

By the late Vedic period, when the scintillating and auspicious qualities known as Śrī come to be recognized as manifesting in a particular form, they are also called Lakṣmī, literally an imprint, a sign, a display, an embodied expression, that is, a specifically recognizable manifestation of Śrī. No longer an abstract quality, this divine force now takes the form as a deity and, in

particular, as a goddess, a personification of the abundance, prosperity, splendor and beauty . . . The Vedas now sing of Śrī and Lakṣmī, sometimes as two independent goddesses, and at other times as one and the same goddess.”⁵⁸

9. Chantico, the goddess of hearth and home protects the home from thieves and loss⁵⁹:

In the *Ṛgveda*, “Rātri, sister to the dawn, plays an equally benign role, bringing rest in the night-time although she may also be feared for her association with darkness. She is therefore petitioned for security and protection against the dangers brought by the darkness of night (*Ṛgveda* 10.127)

...

Keep off the she-wolf and the wolf; O Night, keep the thief away:

Easy be thou for us to pass.”⁶⁰⁻⁶¹

In subsequent traditions, Kālarātri, the seventh of the Navadurgās, became the goddess that rules the night.⁶²

10. Chantico's feminity and sensual aspects, alongwith her association with pleasure and pain, has led to her worship by those involved with BDSM sexual practices⁶³:

While the Hindu goddess has been a part of the Tāntric practices with their share of sexual rituals, in modern times, Western ideas of sexuality have tended to adopt Kālī and her worship.⁶⁴ A few years later, these very authors opine that such cross-cultural borrowing ought to be done responsibly and self-consciously.⁶⁵

Thus, Chantico and Caṇḍikā not only have names in proximity, they also have similarity in many of their attributes.

References & Notes

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