

Appendix I

Further references from other parts of India

The purpose of the following references is to show that the themes which we have discussed with reference to Tamilnadu are not alien to other parts of India. What we offer is not an exhaustive list of references, nor do these references touch upon all the themes discussed. They are meant as an incentive for other studies in the field of folk religion rather than being a supplement to the present study.

1. Birth of a deity, ancestors and heroes

Where the cow releases its milk, a stone, a liṅga, is found. In Kharsuṅḍī (Maharashtra) the deity (Kharsuṅḍī Śīd) manifested as follows: There was a herdsman who daily brought the milk from his cows to Mhasvaḍ. He did this for many years and when he was old the god appeared to him and said: 'You need not come here any longer. I shall come to your place. I shall be born in the belly of a barren cow.' There was one cow that did not bear calves, that did not move about. When the cows went to graze on the mountain, suddenly milk flowed forth from this cow and the cow started to run. Where the milk began to flow are the two liṅgas; this is where the temple is today.¹ From Gujarat comes a different version of this theme. Here the cow does not indicate the deity by releasing its milk but leads the herdsman directly to the deity. One evening the herdsman followed the cow and noticed that she disappeared in a hidden palace. He entered the palace and there saw a beautiful goddess (Ambikā) sitting on a swing.² The liṅga or the stone gets injured and blood flows. In another example from Maharashtra it is not blood that issues from the stone but turmeric powder, a substance especially sacred to the god Khaṅḍobā³: A cow kept going daily to a particular place, stood there and licked a particular stone. When the herdsman cut the grass around it with his sickle, he hit the stone and turmeric powder flowed from it. The more he hit the stone, the more turmeric powder flowed from it. Finally he understood: 'There must be a god here.' It turned out to be Khaṅḍobā. Later a temple was built for the god.⁴ Sometimes the cow, rather than

¹ Sontheimer 1976: 34.

² Fischer et al. 1982: 61 ff.

³ Sontheimer 1984a: 165.

⁴ Sontheimer 1976: 182.

releasing her milk over a stone, brings it to feed an ascetic. The ascetic who lives on a mountain in Rajasthan and gets fed by a cow reminds us of Paṅṭāra Appicci.⁵

We have mentioned that the termite hill and the snake both can be forms of a goddess or god. The god Bhairava/Maskobā took the form of a snake and asked his devotee to place him in a termite hill;⁶ Khaṅḍobā/Mailār is associated with the termite hill.⁷ According to one myth, the goddess Pārvatī took human form in a termite hill from where she revealed herself as Reṅukā to king Giri Razu.⁸

Deities are transported from one place to another. They are carried as a stone in a basket, on a bullock cart; they travel by river. A stone had become stuck in the hoof of one of the bullocks that were brought to Loṭevāḍī by a merchant. In Loṭevāḍī the stone fell out. A few boys took the stone and began the worship it. That is how the god Mhasobā came to Loṭevāḍī in the form of a stone.⁹ In Andhra Pradesh the goddess Bandlamma decided she wanted to change her residence. She followed some carts en route to Madras. 'At night they camped at the village of Ravuru, near Ramapatnam. That night she appeared in a dream to one of the cartmen who was a native of that place, and told him that she desired to change her residence, and would protect them if they built her a temple and worshipped her'.¹⁰ We have seen how the god Karuppar was thrown into the river by the angry Brahman priest. The same punishment was meted out to the god Birobā. Birobā had stayed a long time with a widow and her son. He was in a box which the boy guarded. Feeling that he wanted to move on, the god one day took the form of a snake and bit the young boy. When the widow saw her dead son, she lamented and complained to Birobā: 'I have served you for twelve years; what have you done?' In anger she took the box and threw it away. It fell into a deep water hole. Twelve years the god remained in the water hole.¹¹ In an example from Orissa, the river serves as transport and place of revelation: thieves had stolen the image of the goddess Bhaṭṭārikā. 'But when they tried to cross the river in a boat, they lost their orientation due to Bhaṭṭārikā's power of illusion. To save their lives, they threw the image into the Mahanadi.' That night the goddess told the Rājā of Baramba where he could find her. He rescued her and kept the image in his fort.¹²

⁵ Singh 1993: 413.

⁶ Sontheimer 1976: 204.

⁷ Sontheimer 1976: 183.

⁸ Elmore 1925: 82.

⁹ Sontheimer 1976: 30.

¹⁰ Elmore 1925: 74.

¹¹ Sontheimer 1976: 46 ff.

¹² Kulke 1993: 121.

The deification of those men or women who died through violent means is a theme as vast as the study of folk cults itself. The types of deification that we have discussed are found throughout India, with other patterns added. We cannot describe here in detail all the ancestor cults, a few examples from other areas and appropriate references will have to suffice. A clear study of deification is the one by Coccari on the 'Bir Babas of Banaras'.¹³ The story and deification of Bachau Yadav follows very much along the lines of the Tamil heroes. Bachau Yadav died at the beginning of this century. He lived in a small village near Varanasi, was a good wrestler, strong, courageous. He even fought tigers. A group of men from another caste, together with a traitor from his own caste, treacherously killed Bachau Yadav. A shrine was set up for Bachau Yadav and since then he has been worshipped as a 'bir' (vira), especially by his own caste people (Ahirs). According to Coccari, some of the deified heroes are guardians (Dih Babas) of certain areas of Varanasi. It is common to set up a shrine or a statue/memorial stone for the ancestor who died an unnatural or premature death. These hero stones often depict the ancestor on a horse. The 'palios', as the hero stones are called in western and central India, are established at the village boundary, in an open field under the sky.¹⁴ In South-Rajasthan the hero stones are called 'aghāt'¹⁵ and are found even within the village.¹⁶ In Gujarat the ancestor receives votive offerings of horses (the belief being that the ancestor rides around on a horse) and tigers (if the ancestor was killed by a tiger). Food offerings include rice, alcohol and animals.¹⁷ Elaborately carved hero stones survive in Karnataka;¹⁸ and in the Coorg area the 'biras' (heroes who died violently) 'are regarded as more powerful than other ancestors'.¹⁹ 'Vira' ('hero') can designate a heroic ancestor, a spirit or malevolent deity and a fully established god who is not attached to an ancestor cult.²⁰

Certain types of suicide are 'rewarded' with deification. Yeśvant Rāo is the guardian deity of the Khaṇḍobā temple of Jejuri (Maharashtra). His shrine is near the main gate, and he is famous for healing broken bones. Yeśvant Rāo was a Māṅg (Mātaṅga), a Dalit. He sacrificed his life for the successful construction of the hill fort in which Khaṇḍobā has his temple. It is because of this deed of love (bhakti) that Śiva remained on earth in

¹³ Coccari 1989: 251 ff.

¹⁴ Enthoven 1989: 90.

¹⁵ Kumar 1980: 63 ff.

¹⁶ Mayer 1965: 193 ff.

¹⁷ Shah 1985; Shah 1982: 101 ff.

¹⁸ Settar 1982: 192 ff.

¹⁹ Srinivas 1952: 160.

²⁰ Enthoven 1989: 87; Sontheimer 1976: 194 ff.

Jejurī as Khaṇḍobā.²¹ Women who became satīs (by dying on the funeral pyres of their husbands) are remembered with a satī stone (showing a hand), some of them became goddesses.²² In Andhra Pradesh a great number of goddesses seem to have evolved from women who died while their husbands were still alive. They are called ‘perantalu’ and not all of them had a violent death.²³ A different type of deification follows the ‘ritual killing’ of a tribal person for the sake of a king’s consolidation of power over an area in Orissa. ‘In all cases the victim, before being killed, requested the future rājā to worship his head as the *iṣṭadevatā* of his family. These ‘heads’ of the victims – usually in the form of an aniconic stone – have been worshipped till recently in minor shrines near the palaces’.²⁴ These deities are distinct from the other, more powerful deities, e. g., the tutelary goddesses of the kings.²⁵

2. Guardians, hierarchies, wilderness themes

Deities guarding villages, fields, water sources and other deities can be found throughout India. One such deity who seems to be popular in a number of regions is Kṣetrapāla (the ‘guardian of the kṣetra’). Jain mentions Kṣetrapāla (Kheterpal, Khetiyo) as a well known god in Rajasthan.²⁶ One of his places of residence is in a tree that is near a pond.²⁷ In Gujarat Kṣetrapāla becomes Khetaliyo and seems to have the form of a snake. Khetaliyo lives near a pond and is connected to the goddess Khoḍiār who rides a crocodile.²⁸ Enthoven writes that in Maharashtra and Gujarat Kṣetrapāl is the ‘guardian spirit’ of fields.²⁹ The god apparently likes to take possession of young women, and it is believed that the mental illness of a young woman can be healed by marrying her to the god. Kṣetrapāl is associated with spirits and healing.³⁰ He is a god known along the western part of India down to Kerala. Kētrappa, as the god is called in the Coorg (Karnataka) area, came from Malabar.³¹ He receives non-vegetarian offerings and liquor. Srinivas does not tell us much about the guardian function of Kētrappa, however, he

²¹ Sontheimer 1989a: 313.

²² Elmore 1925: 59 ff.

²³ Elmore 1925: 27 ff.; 59 ff.

²⁴ Kulke 1993: 117.

²⁵ Kulke 1993: 118 ff.

²⁶ Jain 1973: 73 ff.

²⁷ Jain 1973: 97.

²⁸ Fischer et al. 1982: 74 ff.

²⁹ Enthoven 1924: 316, 328.

³⁰ Enthoven 1924: 112.

³¹ Srinivas 1952: 181.

identifies him as the Vedic Kṣetrapāla, 'the presiding deity over every field'.³² During the festival of Kētrappa women who are in an impure state have to leave the village. Kṣetrapāla is a son of Śiva³³ and in Kerala also guardian of Bhadrakālī³⁴. In Maharashtra it is Mhasobā, an important god who protects cattle and people, who has the function of guarding the fields. His temples are in the middle of fields or at their border and at the village boundary.³⁵

Another popular god with guardian functions is Bhairava. Most of the time he is guardian of another god or of a goddess; however, in central and western India he also guards the water sources.³⁶ As Aṣṭabhairav, the god 'is to be found as the guardian deity of almost every village in the northern districts of Maharashtra ...';³⁷ and Kāḷbhairav is worshipped in many towns of Maharashtra.³⁸ Great fame is attributed to the Bhairava of the city of Varanasi. In Varanasi Bhairava was released from his sin of having killed a Brahman (Brahmā), and he became the ruler and guardian of the city.³⁹ Hanumān has shrines in many parts of India and is worshipped in connection with diseases, possession by spirits, and in general for health and strength. He is a bachelor god, son of Śiva or Vāyu,⁴⁰ and, because of his size and physical strength, a favorite god of men.⁴¹ Hanumān is known in Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, and his shrines are often at the village entrance or outside the village.⁴²

Each state or area, of course, has its local deities and many of these will have particular guardian functions. One such god is Thakur Dev, god of the Baiga (in central India). 'Thakur Dev is the protector of villages. He is said to station himself on their outskirts, from which point he can resist the intrusion of sinister forces'.⁴³ Thakur Dev is also the guardian of the goddess. 'In Sitapur, Thakur Dev is physically represented by a small heap of stones lying directly in front of the door leading into the shrine of the goddess'.⁴⁴ Thakur Dev is a fierce god, one who gets angry and who

³² Srinivas 1952: 223.

³³ Jain 1973: 97; Tarabout 1986: 371.

³⁴ Tarabout 1986: 371.

³⁵ Sontheimer 1989: 196 ff.

³⁶ Jain 1973: 90; Mayer 1965: 189.

³⁷ Sontheimer 1989: 198 ff.

³⁸ Sontheimer 1989: 97 ff., 207 ff., 210 ff.

³⁹ Chaliar Visuvalingam 1986; 1989: 157 ff; 1995.

⁴⁰ Wolcott 1978: 660.

⁴¹ Wolcott 1978: 657 ff.

⁴² Jain 1973: 90; Wolcott 1978: 653; Babb 1975: 239; Koppers 1948: 279; Enthoven 1989: 67; Enthoven 1924: 189.

⁴³ Babb 1975: 208.

⁴⁴ Babb 1975: 228.

demands great sacrifices.⁴⁵ Tubraj is a god known in Gujarat. He guards the mountains near the border to Rajasthan. The god used to be at the foot of the hills, but over the years moved up to their top. Once a year the villagers celebrate a festival for Tubraj. They climb the hill, sacrifice goats and provide the god with terra cotta elephants and horses. Only men are allowed to perform the sacrificial ritual. Tubraj has two brothers who guard other hills.⁴⁶ In Gujarat the goddess Rakhi is guardian of the fields. She receives offerings of terra cotta horses and wheat. After the ceremony, the man who waters the fields, called 'rakhewal' ('guardian of the fields') receives this wheat.⁴⁷

Deities stand in a hierarchic relationship to each other. The main god of a temple generally is considered the king, while his sub-deities or guardians have various kinds of tasks. In Maharashtra Khaṇḍobā's minister is Hegaḍī Pradhān;⁴⁸ while in Devaraguḍḍa (Karnataka) the god Mailar's minister is Viṣṇu.⁴⁹ Pfaffenberger, in the context of Sri Lanka, remarks upon the fact that not all deities are equally efficient and that different deities are worshipped for different kinds of problems.⁵⁰ Muṇiyappar is a god who can take care of problems to do with legal justice, he says.

In Gujarat: 'In large sanctuaries the gods have to be worshipped in order of hierarchy. So the chokidar (watchman) is approached first, then the nakedar (sentry), followed by the lesser deities, until it is the turn of the principal deity'.⁵¹ Caste hierarchy within the society and the ostracism of Dalits from caste temples, even though their deities are part of the caste temples, is a fact throughout India. Srinivas noted this situation for the Coorg area of Karnataka.⁵²

One of the most popular guardians of northern India is Bhairava. We have met him already as guardian of territories, of water places, but he is also (and perhaps mainly) a guardian of a main deity. In Gujarat we find him at the entrance to the goddess temple and in Madhya Pradesh he holds the same office of door-guardian: '... in the Mahamaya temple, Raipur's largest and most important goddess-temple, the two deities associated with the goddess are Lal Bhairav and Kal Bhairav (Red and Black Bhairav). These are two rather sinister looking images standing outside and to either side of the door leading into the goddess's inner

⁴⁵ See Jayakar 1989: 68 ff.

⁴⁶ Shah 1985: 123 ff.

⁴⁷ Shah 1985: 45.

⁴⁸ Stanley 1989: 278.

⁴⁹ Sontheimer 1989a: 328.

⁵⁰ Pfaffenberger 1979: 261 ff.

⁵¹ Shah 1985: 16.

⁵² Srinivas 1952: 185 ff.

shrine'.⁵³ Similarly Bhairava is a guardian of many deities in Rajasthan.⁵⁴ Bhairava's division in Central India into a light one (*gora*, *goraji*) and a dark one (*kala*, *karaji*) reflects the vegetarian/non-vegetarian dichotomy and, as is to be expected, the dark, non-vegetarian Bhairava is believed to be more powerful.⁵⁵ In the temples of Aiyānār in Tamilnadu we have encountered Bhairava or Iruḷappan among the vegetarian deities and, although his ferociousness is retained in the iconography, he is not generally a malignant god, much in contrast to Bhairava in Central India of whom Babb says⁵⁶: 'Moreover, there is an identification between malignant ghosts and Bhairav. Bhairav, a Baiga told me, is himself a ghost, in fact 'the *sardar* (chieftain) of ghosts.' Another god in Central India who is both village guardian and guardian of a goddess is Thakur Dev: 'In Sitapur, Thakur Dev is physically represented by a small heap of stones lying directly in front of the door leading into the shrine of the goddess'.⁵⁷ Bhairava (together with Hanumān) also appears as guardian of Vaiṣṇo Devī.⁵⁸

Purity rules, those to be observed by priests and devotees in front of deities and especially in front of wilderness deities, are common in the whole of India. Koppers mentions with regard to the Bhils that no women are allowed near the guardian deity.⁵⁹ We have attributed the fact that women have no access to certain deities' shrines and that they themselves tend to avoid wilderness deities to a woman's potential pollution and her vulnerability to malignant spirits. Stanley gives this argument some weight when he says that bhūts can enter people more easily when they are in a state of pollution;⁶⁰ and the belief in Maharashtra that spirits are afraid of cleanliness points in the same direction in the sense that the spirits seem to prefer disordered or liminal states.⁶¹ Interesting is also that the reason Tamil informants again and again offered to explain a deity's preference for wilderness space, namely the deity's dislike of certain village sounds, coincides with what villagers in Andhra Pradesh believe. 'Usuramma was a woman of good deeds who died before her husband.' Through a diviner the spirit demanded to be worshipped. 'She (Usuramma) instructed them to build her a shrine outside the village

⁵³ Babb 1975: 223.

⁵⁴ Carstairs 1963: 122.

⁵⁵ Jain 1973: 73 ff.; Carstairs 1963: 122; Mayer 1965: 188.

⁵⁶ Babb 1975: 228.

⁵⁷ Babb 1975: 228.

⁵⁸ See Erndl 1993: 38 ff.

⁵⁹ Koppers 1948: 186.

⁶⁰ Stanley 1988: 32.

⁶¹ Enthoven 1924: 203.

where the pounding of the grain and the crowing of the cocks would not disturb her'.⁶²

3. *One and many*

The *avatāra* concept as a means of identifying or linking a local or regional deity with a pan-Hindu deity has been noted in other parts of India as well. *Khaṇḍobā* is an *avatāra* of Śiva; *Mhāḷsā*, *Khaṇḍobā*'s wife, is an *avatāra* of *Pārvatī*; *Hegaḍī Pradhān*, *Khaṇḍobā*'s Minister, is an *avatāra* of *Viṣṇu*; *Bānū* or *Bāṇāī*, *Khaṇḍobā*'s second wife, is an *avatāra* of *Gaṅgā*, and so on.⁶³ The characters of the epic *Pābūjī* are *avatāras* of the heroes and the heroines of the *Rāmāyaṇa*⁶⁴: *Pābūjī* is an *avatāra* of *Lakṣmaṇa*; *Jindrāv Khīcī* an *avatāra* of *Rāvaṇa*; *Ḍhebo* an *avatāra* of *Hanumān*, and so on.

4. *Sacrifice*

The belief that non-vegetarian deities are fiercer than vegetarian ones seems to be a rule; what is interesting in this connection is the non-vegetarian deities' great concern for purity and their readiness to punish those who disregard the purity rules. Harper noted the same about deities in Karnataka⁶⁵: 'The blood-demanding *dēvates* tend to be more quickly angered than are the vegetarian ones and more violently take offense over ritual infractions.' Harper cites a number of examples in which an injury or illness of a person was attributed to the anger of a deity over a polluting act (e. g., spitting, urinating near the deity, approaching it in the state of menstruation). As is the case in Tamilnadu, the sacrificial offerings to deities in other areas of India range from the vegetarian to the animal and symbolic human sacrifices. Alcohol and *gañjā* too are popular offerings: the god *Baba Kot* likes tobacco and *chhang*, a 'home-brewn intoxicating beverage';⁶⁶ *bhang* (*gañjā*) was offered to various ghost-deities.⁶⁷ *Ḍhebo* is an 'opium-drinker'.⁶⁸ On offerings of alcohol and blood see also *Carstairs*;⁶⁹ of blood, alcohol and *gañjā* to the *Bīr*,

⁶² Elmore 1925: 61 ff.

⁶³ Stanley 1989 and Sontheimer 1989a.

⁶⁴ See Smith 1991.

⁶⁵ Harper 1964: 185.

⁶⁶ Chaudhury 1981: 2.

⁶⁷ Enthoven 1924: 202.

⁶⁸ Smith 1991.

⁶⁹ Carstairs 1963: 122, 219.

Coccari.⁷⁰ Malla, the demon conquered by Khaṇḍobā, asked as part of a final boon granted by the god 'the bodies of ten thousand men', a request that Khaṇḍobā fulfilled by giving Malla the head of a goat.⁷¹ That 'self-tortures' for a deity imply sacrifice of oneself and can stand for a hero's actual head offering Sontheimer notes in connection with the worship of Mailār.⁷²

⁷⁰ Coccari 1989: 260.

⁷¹ Stanley 1989: 275.

⁷² Sontheimer 1989a: 318. Other references to 'human sacrifices' are in Enthoven 1924: 175, 204, 265, 340; for newer references see Michaels et al. 1996: 560 (under sacrifice).