

CRITICAL INTERCONNECTIONS:
MAITHILI AND TANTRIC ART FROM NORTHERN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

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The study investigates the historical traditions of Maithili art in Northern India, and its connections to Tantric art. Further investigation between the two art forms reveals critical connections between the two. These connections are then explored in the art practice of indigenous Maithili artist Ganga Devi and contemporary Tantric artist, Anita Ghei Malhotra, the researcher. This study could thus open up new avenues of inquiry in art history as well as art education, cultural studies, and indigenous studies. This type of research could further establish strong connections between indigenous ways of knowing and contemporary art education

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

I had been familiar with and captivated by the earthy simplicity of Maithili paintings since the 1980s. At that time, I lived in New Delhi, India. As I wandered through the city street fairs looking at Maithili paintings and conversed with the indigenous women artists, I sought to know more about them and their work. Bewitched by their haunting and direct beauty, bold colors and child-like simplicity, I often bought the paintings. Being an artist myself, I continually compared the indigenous art of these Maithili women to Tantra, an art form which I practice. (Field Notes, Anita Ghei Malhotra, 2007)

Origin of Maithili Painting

Mithila was an ancient province of many kingdoms, also known as Videha. It was ruled by King Videha of the Videha tribe in the Northern region of the Indian sub-continent.¹ Early Buddhist and Tibetan works refer to Mithila as *Madhayadesa* or the middle land, and to the whole province of Videha as *Tirubhakti*, with Mithila as its capital (Srivastava, 1999, p. 12) (see Figure 1). Because of political unrest over several centuries, the boundaries of this ancient Indian province have continually changed. The

¹The earliest references to Videha appear in the *Satapata Brahmana* (roughly 1000-600 B.C.), the *Brhd-Vishnu Purana* and the *Ramayana* (Srivastava, 1999).

Province now extends from the state of Bihar in India into the district of Mithila, with Janakpur as its capital in Nepal (see Figure 2).



Figure 1. *Old map of Mithila*²

²This map is reprinted from the web site http://cc.iasphost.com/mithila/map_mithila.asp (retrieved on September 2, 2007).



Figure 2. *New map of Mithila*³

Maithili art, also known as *Madhubani* painting, is an indigenous form of Indian art traditionally passed down from a mother to a daughter (Vequaud, 1977). These paintings are created to invoke the powerful mother goddess or universal feminine energy called *Kundalini Shakti* through a rich repertoire of fertility symbols such as plants, flowers, and animals. The materials used in Madhubani painting were simple and natural. The painters drew from a range of natural, mineral or vegetable colors. For instance,

³The region of Mithila was a part of the Indian sub-continent and is now divided between Northern Bihar in India and Nepal. The area surrounded by the Ganges River to the South, the Himalayas to the North, and the now-gone Kosee and Kandakee rivers to the East and West, has been home of the ancient kingdom of Mithila (<http://www.geocities.com/maithillok/pages/paintings/mapmith1.gif>, retrieved on September 2, 2007).

black was made from soot, red color from local clay, and yellow color from *palash* flowers.⁴ The medium for mixing and diluting paints with these pigments was goat's milk or bean plant juice. Brushes were made using twigs and rags, and squirrel's hair was used for fine drawing (Aman, 1992; Jayakar, 1980; Vequaud, 1977). Artists also used rice paste, turmeric powder, and vermilion for painting on the walls and floors.⁵ The process of preparing the materials and grinding the colors was accompanied by chanting, as part of invoking the Creative Energy of the Tantric ritual (Jayakar, 1980).

The *Bindu* or the dot is a symbol representing the whole universe. Consequently, the triangulation of three connected *Bindus* represents the manifestation of the individual being with the male and female divinities. This concept of male and female symbols bears close resemblance to those in Tantric art. Some of these basic elements and symbols are also linked to the Tantric yantras and cosmological diagrams. Figure 3 shows goddess Kali's yantra with the inverted triangles and a dot in the center. Figure 4 shows the Siva-Sakti Trikona yantra, or the union of male and female energies, as the intersection of ascending and descending triangles as *Shiva* (Male) and *Shakti* (Female or *Kali*). According to Jayakar (1980), "the identity of these two great energy forms [is] integral to all *Mandalas* and *Vrata* pictographs" (p. 123).⁶ The intersections of the two

⁴Soot is the carbonized residue collected from the smoke of an earthen oil lamp. *Palash* is the Hindi name for yellow laburnum flowers that blossom in the early summer months on trees that grow naturally in the Northern plains of India.

⁵Vermillion is a reddish powder used by Hindus for worship. It is also used by married women to adorn their forehead.

⁶*Mandala* 1 (mn'dl) (KEY), [Sanskrit.,=circular, round] a concentric diagram having spiritual and ritual significance in Hindu and Buddhist Tantrism. The mandala may have derived from the circular *stupa* and the ritual of walking around the stupa in a circle. The mandala is seen as a microcosm embodying the various divine powers at work in the universe, and it serves as a collection point for the gods and universal forces. Numbers of deities have specific positions in the diagram, and the symbolism and structure of the mandala are highly elaborated. The mandala symbolizes the totality of existence, inner or outer. Mandalas are used in meditation, particularly in Tibetan Buddhism and Japanese Tantric Buddhism (see Kukai).

inverted (female) and upright (male) triangles represent their fusion. These triangles and dots appear in various Maithili paintings and denote the same meaning.

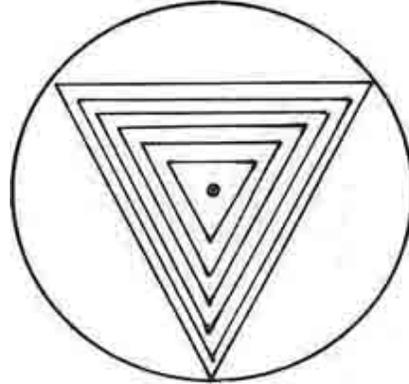


Figure 3. *Kali Yantra* (Rawson, 1973)

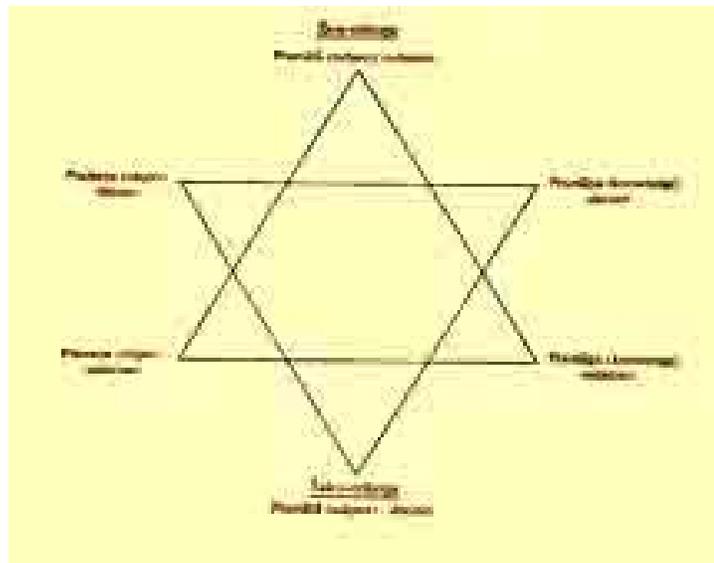


Figure 4. *Siva/Shakti Trikona male-female triangles* (Singh, 1989)

Similar ritual drawings have been found in the sand paintings of Native North Americans and in other traditions. For an analytical psychology perspective, see C. Jung (1972), *Mandala symbolism* and Tucci (1969), *Theory and practice of the mandala*.

Vrata (Sanskrit) means will, command, law, ordinance, rule; obedience, service; dominion, realm; sphere of action, function, mode or, manner of life, pure manner of life, conduct, manner, usage, custom; a religious vow or practice, any pious observance, meritorious act of devotion or austerity, solemn vow, rule, holy practice (<http://www.bartleby.com/65/ma/mandala.html>, retrieved on September 7, 2007).

Figures 5 and 6 show section and full views, respectively, of the ceremonial wall or floor drawing *Sarvotobhadra* mandala, “a supreme symbol of the virgin Goddess and the rising sun” (Jayakar, 1980, p. 123), with Tantric elements and principles used in the composition. These *vrata mandalas* continue to be drawn even today by Maithili women around the *tulsi* plant at the time of the *Durga Puja*.⁷

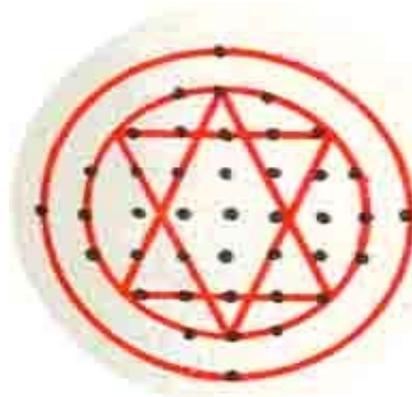


Figure 5. *Section view of Sarvotobhadra* (Jayakar, 1980)

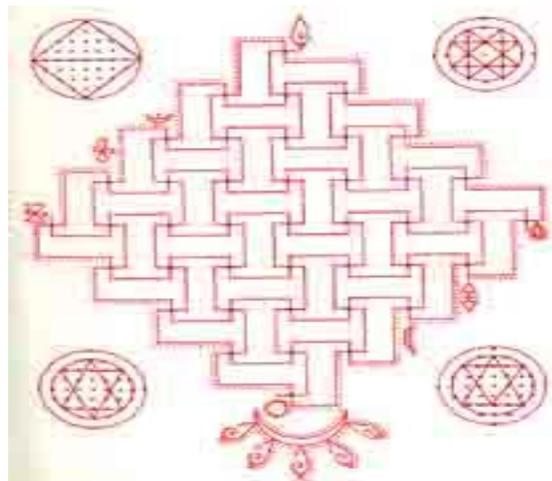


Figure 6. *Full view of Sarvotobhadra* (Jayakar, 1980)

⁷The *Tulsi* or basil plant is worshipped daily by Indian women through watering and praying; it is considered to have many beneficial and healing properties. This plant is commonly found in the center of the courtyards in many Indian homes. *Durga Puja*, the Indian Goddess worshipping festival, is celebrated in autumn.

The composition to draw the sacred diagram began by the artist placing a dot in the center of the floor or wall using the vermillion. This was further enhanced by adding successive rows of one, three, five, seven, and nine dots. According to Jayakar (1980), these dots were placed in formal arrangements of two triangles, one with its apex pointing towards the sky, the other towards the earth. The dot represented the *pramanu* or atom, which in turn represented the cosmic macrocosm as a microcosm, and connected with other dots to form linear chains of meaning and metaphoric manifestations of the divine. In this three-pronged expression of *Anuttara* (triangle of supreme reality), *Pramana* is identified as *Shakti* (feminine principle) or the experienced knowledge. *Pramaya* (human subject) as object of experience and *Pramata* as *Shiva* (male principle) or experient is identified as *Ichha* or the Divine will (Dupuche, 2003). The intersection of these two triangles represents the union of the male principle of Lord *Shiva* with that of the female principle of *Shakti*.⁸ This forms the basis of Tantric art, and I argue that these principles are visible in the indigenous art form of Mithila.

Identification of the Problem

Jayakar (1980), in the introduction to her book *Earthen Drum*, confirms the connection between Maithili and Tantric art. This connection, she argues, was previously made by Archer (1949) in his article, "Mithila painting," where he describes the symbols and motifs of the bamboo intersecting the lotus flower used in the wedding ritual or the Kohbar paintings as sexual and representative of the male/female union. Rawson (1973),

⁸*Shiva* or *Śiva*: The Absolute; the good, the transcendent divine principle. *Shakti* or *Śakti*: (1) The power of *Śiva* to manifest, to maintain the manifestation and to withdraw it; (2) The *spanda* or creative pulsation of *Śiva* or foundational consciousness (Singh, 2003, p. 258).

however, does not refer to Maithili art in his book *Art of Tantra*, but focuses on the erotic aspects of Tantric art in the *Pahari* schools of *Kangra* and *Basohli* styles of painting and the Tibetan *Mandalas*.⁹ Whereas, Brown (1996) creates a complex argument based on the definite binaries of sexuality versus fertility, male against female, thus arguing that Tantra is a recent fashion in contemporary Asian and Western Art. Although Brown (1996) states that she uses “women’s commentaries, contextual ritual analysis, and trope theory” to support her argument, she does not acknowledge any association between Tantric art and Maithili art. I argue otherwise. Hence, the purpose of this study is to offer a comparative analysis of Tantric and Maithili art, and argue that the two are connected in theory as well as practice.

Research Questions

The following research questions arise from the problem statement above:

- What historical traditions were used in *Madhubani* painting in Northern India?
- What is the relationship between Maithili and Tantric art? In what ways does the art practice of the contemporary Indian women, i.e., Maithili artist Ganga Devi and Tantric artist Anita Ghei (myself) reveal this connection?
- What kind of implications does this type of historical study hold for the field of art education?

⁹The Rajput kings, who ruled in the sub-Himalayan state of Himachal Pradesh, were great art-lovers. Under their patronage, Pahari painting flourished from the 17th to the 19th centuries. The breathtaking landscapes of the mountain ranges inspired artists, who used these as the backdrop of their paintings. These paintings were usually rendered in miniature style. Pahari painting underwent significant modification during its lifetime. Its development can broadly be classified into three distinct schools: *Basohli*, *Guler-Kangra*, and *Sikh* (see http://www.ethnicpaintings.com/indian_painting_styles/pahari-paintings.html, retrieved on September 7, 2007).

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is twofold. One, it adds to the body of research on Maithili and Tantric art. Second, through a comparative analysis of the two art forms, this research hopes to establish a broader framework for understanding the connection between these two art forms. These kinds of comparisons are necessary as they help understand the importance of Indian indigenous art in relation to Indian contemporary art. This study also introduces South Asian students to one of the many forms of Indian indigenous art. Further, it initiates an educational inquiry that is comparative and cultural in nature, thus providing a platform for further research. The complex interrelationship between my Indian and Western education gave me the insight, inspiration, and research to craft this comparative and cultural narrative.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the topic of looking at a specific art form of Maithili art, and is focused on the life of Ganga Devi, a well-known Maithili artist. It is also limited to the art practice of one contemporary woman artists—myself. It does not intend to promote or refute any particular religious belief, philosophy or system. The following portrait of Maithili art and Tantra is obtained by my own privileged position as an Indian woman residing within India's social structure, but also working outside this community in an American educational setting. This peripheral perspective may not represent the complete truth or an "insider's view" of Ganga Devi's life. The story of Ganga Devi's life has been reconstructed using secondary sources. Time constraints and financial limitations prevented further levels of investigation for this study.

Summary

This chapter outlines the historical tradition of Maithili and Tantric art, thus identifying connections between the two which form the core of this study. This chapter is followed by a chapter on methodology, in which I discuss the importance of historical and descriptive research. The chapter on critical connections explores a wider historical understanding of the artistic connections between Maithili and Tantric art using historical and contemporary sources. This is followed by a chapter which compares the art practice of Ganga Devi, a Maithili artist, and Anita Ghei, a Tantric artist. The thesis concludes with a brief discussion of the research questions and implications for art education.

Chapter II

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This historical and descriptive study traces the history of Maithili art in India, followed by a comparison between the art practice of two artists, indigenous Maithili artist, Ganga Devi, and contemporary Tantric artist, Anita Ghei (myself). The purpose of this study was to offer a comparative analysis of Maithili and Tantric art, and argue that the two are connected in theory as well as practice.

Historical Research

History is a tool, a form of inquiry by which its impact extends beyond written documents, physical objects, chronological location or the assessment of a given event (Hamblen, 1985). Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) define historical research as “the systematic and objective location, evaluation and synthesis of evidence in order to establish facts and draw conclusions about past events” (p. 48). One of the principal differences between historical research and other forms of research is that historical research must deal with data that already exist. Sources of data, also known as historical evidence, are classified into two groups: Primary and Secondary sources (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Primary sources have been described as those items that are

original to the problem under study and may be thought of as being in two categories. The first includes remains or relics of a given period, whereas the second includes items that have a direct physical relationship with the events being reconstructed. Secondary sources are those that do not bear a direct physical relationship to the event being studied and are made up of data that cannot be described as original (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Kantawala, 2007).

Data Collection

The data for this study were collected through an examination of several primary and secondary sources. The data for reconstructing Ganga Devi's life as an indigenous artist were collected mostly via secondary sources because primary sources were not readily available in the United States. The sources included records of press interviews with artists, biographical information from articles, educational journals, books on art, art education, art history, and commentaries by various scholars on Maithili art. Jyotindra Jain's (1987) critical commentaries and contributions on Ganga Devi's work were a vital source of information for this study.

My own art works served as primary sources for this study. I have provided supportive documentation of dates, exhibitions, press clippings, and critical reviews by relevant authors and journalists who have reviewed and documented my work. I have also shared reflections from my personal diaries and field notes.

Data Analysis

Constant Comparative Method

Devised by Glaser and Strauss (1967), the constant comparative method is used for interpreting texts, and consists of four stages. This method combines inductive category coding with a constant comparison of all social incidents observed and coded (LeCompte & Preissle, 2003). The first stage is that of comparing incidents applicable to each category. The second stage is integrating categories and their properties, followed by the third stage of delimiting theory. The final stage is of writing theory (Glaser, 1969, cited in Flick, 2002, p. 231). The researcher continually compares coding over and over again with the coding and classifications already made (Flick, 2002). Through the comparative analysis method, connections between Maithili art and Tantric art will be established.

Summary

By carrying out this historical inquiry, I will establish that Tantric and Maithili art are connected in theory as well as practice. In the following chapter, I will identify and explore some historical traditions that bridge the two art forms of Mithila and Tantra.

Chapter III

CRITICAL CONNECTIONS: MAITHILI AND TANTRIC ART

William and Mildred Archer chanced upon these paintings among the debris in the aftermath of the great earthquake in India in 1934.¹⁰ As Suhrud Shankar Chattopadhyay (2005) writes in an article in *Frontline*:

This result of his [Archer's] subsequent research over a period of fifteen years was published in the art journal *Marg* in 1949. However it took almost another twenty years and another natural calamity, this time in the form of a drought, for this art to come into the mainstream. The Indian government, in its attempts to find alternative sources for income for the affected people through the All India Handicrafts Board, encouraged women of *Madhubani* to paint on paper instead of floors and walls to facilitate an income other than from agriculture, and sent a well known artist Bhasker Kulkarni in the 1960's to promote their art. (Chattopadhyay, 2005, p. 2)¹¹

This chapter examines the scholarly and historical connections between Maithili and Tantric art through historical and contemporary lenses.

¹⁰William Archer was a British civil servant assigned to the district of Mithila during the colonial era and discovered this art form in 1934 while surveying the houses crushed by an earthquake that hit the region. The Archers obtained some drawings on paper that the women painters were using as aids to memory. The works that the Archers collected went to the India Records Office in London (now part of the British Library), where a small number of specialists could study them as creative instances of India's folk art (Chavda, 1990, p. 26).

¹¹"The Harijan's or the scheduled caste artists' community's entry into painting on paper was facilitated by Indian artist Bhasker Kulkarni, who was working for the Handloom Handicrafts Export posted in Madhubani to facilitate the drought relief effort. He was given a grant of Rupees 50000 (US \$1000)" (Chavda, 1990, p. 26).

Mithila: An Ancient Land of Artistic Renaissance

A kind of literary and artistic renaissance seemed to have occurred in the ancient kingdom of Mithila during the age of King Videha. The women painters of Mithila have carried on this ancient ritual-based art in the face of many social and political adversities as well as natural disasters. As Chavda (1990) points out, “As early as 3102 B.C., Mithila became a well known art center. Since then, Mithila has survived many invasions, including that of the *Pandava* brothers as described in the *Mahabharata* (p. 26). This is also indicated in the writings of the famous Maithili poet Vidyapati (A.D. 1350-A.D. 1450), who said that “Mithila was the home where the enlightened and learned might always find generous patrons, peace and safety, where courts were devoted to learning and culture and where poets and philosophers lived in harmony and affluence” (Srivastava, 1999, p.12). According to Aman (1992), the “fact that each painter retained and carried on this skill and prowess is a proof that this was no ordinary traditional art, but had some inherent qualities in its essential composition that passed on over thousands of years” (p. 7).

Research and Marketing of Maithili Painting

Yves Vequaud, a French scholar and journalist, was among the first foreign scholars to visit Mithila. He was soon followed by the German anthropologist and folklorist Erika Moser, who set up the Master Craftsmen Association of Mithila. Presently, several international, national, and non-governmental organizations promote the study and research of Mithila painting in local and international institutions. Several noted Indian historians and artists gave impetus to this art form. For example, Pupul

Jayakar, Bhaskar Kulkarni, Upendra Marathi, and Lalit Narayan Mishra, to name a few. As a result of a scholarly as well as commercial interest, a multitude of Maithili women artists found a renewed expression of their inherent creativity as a means of livelihood.

In Mithila, mothers teach their daughters from an early age to mix colors and start drawing the floor paintings called *aripana*, in which mystical charts, diagrams, *Tantric yantras*, and *mandalas* can be seen. This leads to an understanding of the mysteries of the universe, the sun, and the lunar cycles within their natural environment. These indigenous women painters of Mithila made efforts to retain the original and primordial nuances of the Hindu Tantric *Sanatana Dharma* traditions for over 3,000 years. These nuances can be traced through the symbols and representations of icons belonging to the major cults of *Saktism*, *Shaivism*, *Hindu Tantrism*, *Buddhist Tantrism*, *Brahmanism*, and *Vaishnavism*. Some of the main historical traditions or thought processes that impacted the evolution of Maithili art during the 6th century, particularly focusing on *Vaishnavism* and *Tantrism*, are presented below in Table 1 (Aman, 1992, p. 9).

Table 1. *Historical traditions of Mithila and common symbols and topography of Maithili art*

<i>Historical Traditions of Mithila</i>	<i>Common Symbols and Typography Used in Maithili Art</i>	<i>Gods, Goddesses, and Deities</i>
Shaivism	Damaru hand drum, Trishul, crescent moon, the lingam/Phallus	God Shiva and his consort Goddess Parvati
Brahmanism	Abstraction, linear topography, scriptural references, Vedic mantras and vantras, swastikas ¹²	Brahman, Lord Shiva, Lord Vishnu with female consorts, textual references
Hindu Tantricism/ Shaktism	Yogic/scientific diagrams, yantras, swastikas, spirals, tortoise, lotus plant and patterns, bamboo, chakras, serpents, icons, Kohbars, fish, coconuts, women's ornaments, flames of fire, the third eye, Sricakra diagram (intersection of nine triangles), triangular intersections, astrological charts and diagrams, naina jogin, triangles with third eye.	Maha Kalis, Maha Saraswati, Maha Lakshmi, Yoginis, Mahavidyas
Buddhist Tantricism	Mandalas, geometric diagrams, lotus, cosmic wheels.	Yoginis/Dakinis (witch) ¹³
Vaishnavism	Literal representations, story boards, stylized narratives, stories of Lord Rama and Krishna	Vishnu with consort Goddess Lakshmi and his avatars, Lord Rama and his wife Sita (earthly manifestation of Lakshmi), Krishna and Radha, the celestial lovers

¹²The word “swastika” comes from the Sanskrit *svastika*, “sv” meaning “good,” “asti” meaning “to be,” and “ka” a suffix (<http://history1900s.about.com/cs/swastika/a/swastikahistory.htm>, retrieved October 23, 2007)

¹³There is a distinction among the terms *goddess*, *shakti*, *yogini*, and *dakini* (also *shakini*), although in general conversation, it is blurred and the terms are used interchangeably. From the 9th through 13th centuries, the cult of dakinis (called yoginis in modern India) was active. Some believe that the cult originated in the animistic traditions of Adivasi (aboriginal) peoples and/or folk traditions of *grama devati* (female nature deities). Around the late 7th century, those beliefs blended with the cult of Shakti and tantrism (http://www.khandro.net/dakini_the64.htm, retrieved October 24, 2007). According to Dehejia (1986), “The Kulanava tantra uses the term Yogin in three different contexts, to refer to the Devi herself, to describe the female partners of the cakra ritual and to describe the goddesses” (p. 32).

*Vaishnavism in Maithili Art*¹⁴

The Epics of Ramayana and the Mahabharata

Tulsidas in his magnum opus the *Ramcharitramanasa* gives a vivid account of Mithila painting decorated for the marriage of Sita and Rama. Influenced by this wonderful pair—Rama and Sita-*Gauri*, the consort of *Siva*, desired to participate in the actual marriage ritual and wanted to paint the *Kohbar 21* where *Sumangalis* had to perform songs and related rituals for this ideal divine couple. These decorations are mythological murals, added with deities of the Hindu pantheon, besides regional flora and fauna. (Mishra, K. K., 2006, p. 1)

It is apparent from the quote above that Maithili painting had received mention in the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata. The epics were regularly recited by chanting, story telling, and performing in the Mithila culture and thus formed the core of Madhubani paintings. An example of the *Vaishnava* style of painting of Sita offering Rama a garland of flowers by Ganga Devi can be seen in Figure 7 below.¹⁵

¹⁴*Vaishnavism* is the worship of Vishnu and his various incarnations, principally as Rama and as Krishna. It is one of the major forms of modern Hinduism. During a long and complex development, many Vaishnava groups emerged with differing beliefs and aims. Some of the major Vaishnava groups include the Shrivaisnavas and Dvaitins (philosophical or religious dualists) of South India (see <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9010/Hinduism>, retrieved September 1, 2007).

¹⁵This painting refers to the famous event in the Ramayana when Prince Rama won the archery contest in order to win the hand of Princess Sita of Jankpur, the capital of the kingdom of Mithila ruled by King Janaka (Vequaud, 1977).



*Figure 7. Vaishnava style of painting, Ramayana Series.
Sita offering Rama a garland of flowers by Ganga Devi (Jain, 1998)*

The Tantric Tradition in Maithili Art

Srivastava (1999) mentions the artistic evolution in the beauty of the black stone sculpture related to the pre-Mauryan period (before 326 BC). This is where he notes an early evidence of Tantric art in Mithila. Thus, it appears that the influence of Tantric traditions can be seen in the lifestyle and art of the Maithili people over several centuries. The agricultural lifestyle in the Mithila region comprises cultivation and fertility rites based on the Tantric traditions. The following sub-sections will explore some prominent Tantric traditions of Mithila in greater detail:

- The Srividyas, Kalis, and Yoginis
- The Mahakalis
- The Kula Tradition: Kula Kundalini as the Serpentine Goddess

- Ardhanarishwar: The Androgynous Union

The Srividyas, Kalis, and Yoginis

In his writings of the Tantric modes of Srividya worship, Brookes (1992) echoes the same idea as Dehejia (1986) by mentioning the significance of Srividya as a central deity in the practice of ritual worship in Southern and Northern India. He associates this with the circle worship of female yoginis and the sacred yantras that were used in a Tantric ritual practice.

At the level above the anthropomorphic image in Srividya's pantheon is the supreme goddess's subtle (suksma) form as the mantra, at the transcendent (para) or supreme level, the diagrammatic sricakra. The *sricakra*, formed by the intersection of nine triangles surrounded by lotus petals and lines is, as Gaudrian [Goudrian] has said, the most famous visual image in all Hindu Tantrism. (Brooks, 1992, p. 416)

The Srividya cult is a part of the ancient Tantra ritual and is associated with the term yogini meaning a Goddess. For example, *Kulanava Tantra*, *Lalita Sahasranama* (Thousand names of *Lalita*), *Skanda Purana*, and the *Kallika Puranas* are several ancient texts which list these deities and also reveal their connections to the Greek Goddesses (Dehejia, 1986). In Mithila, a yogini means *Naina Jogin* or an ancient witch representing good luck and marital happiness for newlyweds. A Naina Jogin in Mithila art is shown with a serpent as an essential feature of the *Kohbar* and drawn on the bottom left of the painting¹⁶ (see Figure 8).

¹⁶The *Kohbars* are the marriage ritual paintings in which many motifs and diagrams depict various Tantric elements, rituals, and practices. Based on female perceptions, these diagrams may have more symbolic or iconic references. There is a stylistic fusion of pure geometricism in the mandalas and yogic diagrams with representational imagery, in which the yantras and the chakras are painted alongside images of the goddess, and plant and animal life. The term *Kohbar* is also used to mean the room where the bride will receive her husband and where the couple will spend their first four nights together chastely (Aman, 1992; Jayakar, 1980; Vequaud, 1977).



Figure 8. *Ganga Devi: Naina Jogin detail from bride's wedding chamber wall paintings. Pigment on concrete wall, 1987 (Catalog, Crafts Museum, New Delhi)*

The Mahakalis

The theme of Kali as the supreme Goddess with several forms and manifestations assumes an important aspect as a central and powerful deity in Tantra. This is represented as the ten *Srividyas*, with individual attributes, dress codes, and moods. The most common representation is that of the terrifying and powerful destroyer of evil with eight arms, as *Kali-Durga*. Kali is often depicted with loose hair and slanting eyebrows; she wears a tiger skin saree and a necklace made of human heads. She carries a sword and the decapitated head of the demon. Figure 9 represents Kali as *Chinamastika* in Maithili painting. The symbolic use of red, the cut head, the drinking of blood, and the three streams of blood showing *action*, *knowledge*, and *desire* are the various visual devices representing Hindu Tantra (Bhattacharyya, N. N., 1982).



Figure 9. *Chinmastika: A form of Goddess Kali (Jayakar, 1980)*

The Kula Tradition: Kula Kundalini as the Serpentine Goddess

Women as connected to nature, and as a source of fertility and veneration, are an inherent subject matter and theme in Maithili art as well as in the Kula tradition of Tantra. The *Kula Kundalini* as the supreme feminine principle has been extolled and praised in the tradition of Kaulism. Kundalini is worshipped as the highest aspect of divine energy that resides in the base of the spine, in the form of a coiled and sleeping serpent in all human beings. In the natural setting of the region which abounds with snakes, an annual summer festival called *Naga Panchami* is dedicated to honoring and pacifying the snakes.¹⁷ “She is simultaneously the Power of Destruction and the Power of Regeneration: people have often believed that in shedding off its skin the snake was reborn” (Vequaud, 1977, p. 62).

The snake form is perceived as a Tantric symbol for Kundalini, or the serpentine form of the Mother Goddess, and with a few exceptions, represents wisdom, power, and rebirth in the Maithili tradition. Snakes are a favorite Maithili symbol and have an important role in legends and stories. A variety of shapes of snakes can be found either as female goddesses or as freely floating forms in the composition of the picture, as seen in Figure 10. The painting shown from Mithila shows the *Kundalini* as the Snake Goddess in Figure 11.

¹⁷*Nag-Panchami* is an important Mithila festival, celebrated on the fifth day of the moonlit- fortnight in the months of July and August. This is the time when serpents invariably come out of their holes that get inundated with rain-water to seek shelter in gardens and, many times, in houses. In ancient India, there lived a clan by the name of “Nagas” whose culture was highly developed. The Indus Valley civilization of 3000 B.C. provides evidence of the popularity of snake-worship among the Nagas, whose culture spread throughout India even before the arrival of the Aryans. After the Naga culture became incorporated into Hinduism, the Indo-Aryans themselves accepted many of the snake deities of the Nagas in their pantheon, some even enjoying pride of place in Puranic Hinduism (<http://www.mithilalive.com/Festivals/nagpanchmi.htm>, retrieved on September 7, 2007).



Figure 10. *Snake drawing from Mithila* (Jayakar, 1980)



Figure 11. *The Snake Goddess painting from Mithila* (Vequaud, 1977)

Through intense spiritual practice and the grace of an enlightened master, this serpentine Goddess called Kundalini might be awakened, and the utmost purification and transformation may take place in the seeker. When this principle is activated, she rises up through the six energy centers or chakras, and sets these wheels of energy in motion, thus activating and bringing life to them. The highest chakra is the *Sahasrara* which is located on top of the head and is *Kundalini*'s ultimate destination, where she merges into blissful union with *Shiva*. This is shown as the intertwining of two snakes in Maithili paintings like the *Kohbar*. Each chakra represents different sensory faculties of knowledge and creativity and has its own presiding deities. As psychic centers that lie along the axis of the spine in the human body, the chakras are not materially real and are to be understood as situated not in the gross body, but in the subtle or etheric body. They are usually represented as lotuses which house different Goddess deities (Dehejia, 1986).

Ardhanarishwar: The Androgynous Union

Tantrism celebrates this androgynous unity of *Kundalini* or *Shakti*, representing feminine energy, with *Shiva* as the masculine principle as the highest truth.¹⁸ The illustration in Figure 12 shows the male form of *Shiva* on the right with three horizontal lines on the forehead and a lingam.¹⁹ On the left half of the body is the goddess *Parvati* dressed in a saree. The phallic symbol emerging from inside the coiled serpent is the symbol of the *yonis*, or the feminine generative form on his head.

¹⁸*Ardha* means half, *Nar* means man, *Nari* means woman, *ishwar* means god.

¹⁹*Lingum/lingam*, from the Sanskrit, is a stylized phallic symbol that is worshipped in Hinduism as a sign of generative power and represents the god *Shiva* (<http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary?book=Dictionary&va=lingam>, retrieved October 24, 2007).



Figure 12. *Section view of Tirtha painting depicting Ardhanarishwar by Ganga Devi (Singh, 2003)*

Summary

As seen in this chapter, a connection can be seen between Maithili art and Tantric art. Through these connections, the male principle of Shiva is perceived as passive and potential energy and the feminine principle of Shakti as active, creative, and kinetic energy. Hence, I argue that Tantric and Maithili art are related at the core. This thesis will further investigate these vital aesthetic connections between Tantric and Maithili art by examining the art practice of two women artists: Ganga Devi and Anita Ghei (myself).

Chapter IV

INDIGENOUS CONNECTIONS:

ART PRACTICE OF GANGA DEVI (1928-1991) AND ANITA GHEI (1959)

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce Ganga Devi, a Maithili artist, and provide a systematic analysis of her life and work. This is followed by comparing Ganga Devi's indigenous art practice to my contemporary art practice of Tantric art.

*Life, Education, and Work of Ganga Devi*²⁰

Ganga Devi's birth year is unknown, but according to Jain (1997), it could have been around 1928 in the Chatara village of the Madhubani district of Bihar in Northern India. Her father was a well-to-do *Zamindar* (landowner); her mother was a deeply religious woman and a fine artist who taught her art. Ganga Devi learned to read, write, and paint from childhood through the informal *Kayasth* traditions learned from her mother.²¹ As Vequaud (1977) observes:

Ritual painting and domestic life are not in any way physically separated activities.... In Mithila every woman is expected to spend an hour or two in silence greeting the moon before her offering in the form of *aripana* (floor painting by smearing) at the onset of a particular festival, done on the floor with the edge of her hand in complicated designs. Each painting

²⁰The term *Devi* which means Goddess is normally used after the first names of Mithila women.

²¹The *Kayasth* tradition of painting belongs to a social caste of Hindus in Mithila, where only black and red lines are used in the composition. *Kayasth* is a caste in India that is based on the vocation of buying, selling, and trading of property, both movable and immovable.

is done as a prayer and meditation to invoke the ever powerful mother Goddess in union with the Male God through a rich repertoire of fertility symbols, such as plants, flowers and animals. The artist can only work if she is in a yogic state. In other words in a state of mergence with the cosmic consciousness. (p. 26)

Jain (1998) identifies three main stages of Ganga Devi's artistic life. During her early period (approximately 1928-1945), Ganga Devi painted *Kohbar* (wall painting) and *aripana* (floor painting) style of painting done in the *Kayasth* tradition. Ganga Devi was abandoned by her husband and that led to the second phase (1945-1975) of painting in her life, which also became a means of her livelihood. It is during this time that Ganga Devi was invited to travel to America for the folk arts festiva, and later received a national award for her work (Jain, 1998).

Ganga Devi's third significant phase (1975-1991) began with her work titled *Cycle of Life* (Jain, 1998). Here, she broke some traditions in the areas of visual language, which had been unexplored by any preceding Mithila painter. She started painting self-portraits and everyday events as a part of fascinating narratives, influenced by her journey to America in 1985 (see Figure 13). Ganga Devi was struck by cancer in 1987 and died in January, 1991. While coping with the disease, she stayed at the Delhi Crafts Museum and painted her "Cancer Series," as well as her last *Kohbar* painting in 1989, painted on the walls of the Delhi Crafts Museum.

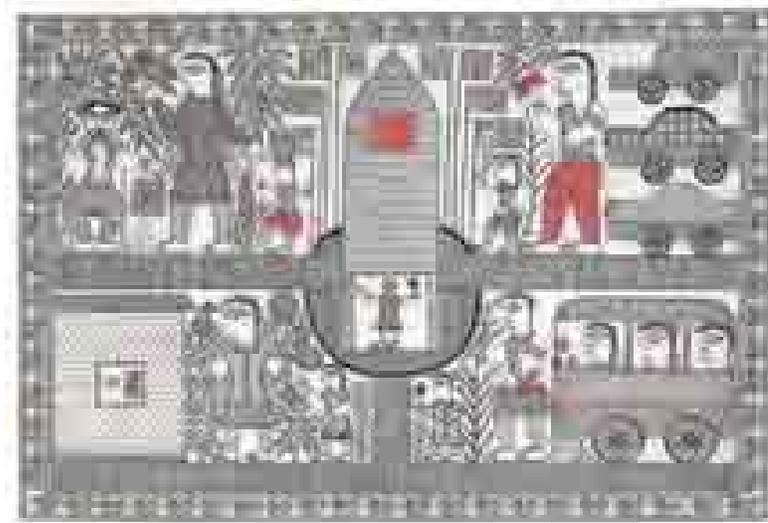


Figure 13. *Festival of American Folk Life (1986)*
Ink on paper, Collection Crafts Museum New Delhi (Jain, 1998)

Anita Ghei: Indigenous Connections

The following section compares the indigenous art practice of Ganga Devi with my art, whereby I argue and establish connections between Tantric and Maithili artists. This section is divided into three broad themes, and each theme is richly illustrated with visuals of the indigenous and contemporary art forms:

- Etymology of a Serpent
- The Goddess Self: Performance and Identity
- Exploring the Male and Female Dualities
 - The Kiss of Union
 - The Opening of the Thousand-Petalled Lotus
 - Swirling Love Games
- The Final Journey

Etymology of a Serpent

While waking up in the morning on New Year's Day in January 2006 after a deep long sleep, I had the most incredible and real vision of a face looking at me. It was not human. I can say that it was the face of a snake or a kind of many-headed cobra that one can find in Indian iconography as Lord *Vishnu*. The face was also decorated with many dots, the kind that is used for an Indian bride's make-over. Immediately, I wanted to capture this in drawing and feverishly made some. I often saw a pair of intertwined snakes, the image of which would expand and contract, sometimes with recurrent close-up views. Once I had a vision of my whole body covered with red dots, and then saw myself as a snake. (Field Notes, Anita Ghei Malhotra, 2006) (See Figures 14 and 15)



Figure 14. *Still clip from film
Etymology of a Snake
by Anita Ghei (2006)*



Figure 15. *Serpentine Play
painting by Anita Ghei (2006)*

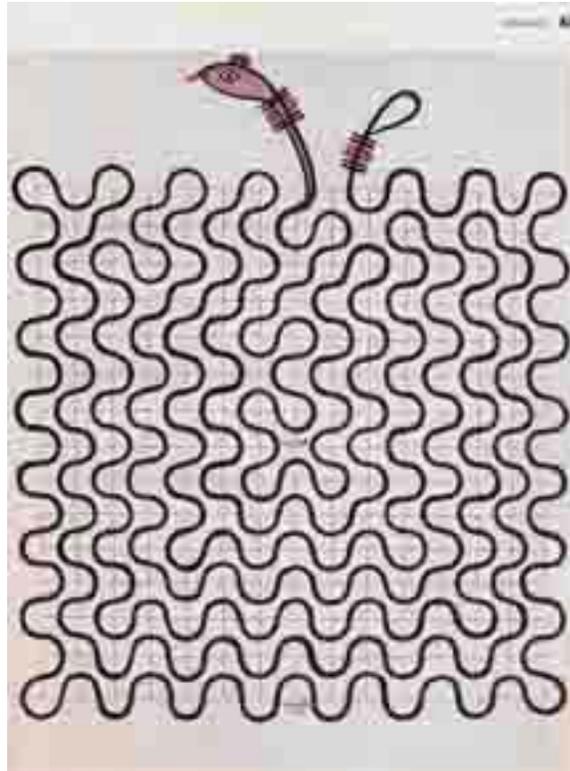


Figure 16. *Sarpabandha* by Ganga Devi (Jain, 1998)

Ganga Devi's painting, shown above in Figure 16, depicts this theme quite clearly since snakes are commonly found in the Mithila region, revered and worshipped as deities, especially during the *Naga Panchami* festival.²² *Nagas* are considered to be auspicious guardians of treasure and wealth, and are descendents of the many-headed serpent *Shesh-naga* that God *Vishnu* reclines on in Hindu iconography. The snake goddess is also called *Naga-Kanya* in Mithila and is described as the coiled one or Goddess Kundalini, also known as the universal serpentine energy in Tantra. While working on my series on the serpentine form, I reconnected with Ganga Devi's art work or *Sarpabandha*, as it resonated with similar forms.

²²Refer to Chapter III , p. 24, for a description n of the *Naga Panchami* festival.

The Goddess Self: Performance and Identity

Ganga Devi portrays the dancing goddess in a beautiful and spontaneous drawing of *Kali Durga* in her earlier style, painted solely with vermillion; the color signifying blood and the feminine principle of energy. A similar concept is evident in my video installation on the *Etymology of a Serpent* (see Figures 17 and 18).

It is believed that this divine power resides in all of us, in the form of a sleeping serpent at the base of the spine in the subtle body. It has been described in the ancient Tantric texts of India and through the philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism as being of a concealing and revealing nature. She is also the root of creation and procreation, life and death, birth and re-birth. The cosmic egg is essentially the womb which is the home of the Goddess or serpentine energy. She has manifested in my meditation experience, through invoking Feminine energy in the form of the Hymn to the Mother of the Universe. (Field notes, Anita Ghei Malhotra, 2006)



Figure 17. *One of the oldest drawings by Ganga Devi showing the Goddess Durga in a dancing mudra (Jain, 1997)*



Figure 18. *Still clip from film Etymology of a Serpent by Anita Ghei (2006)*

Exploring the Male and Female Dualities

Ganga Devi's main narrative theme in the second phase of her life is associated with Ramayana and particularly focuses on Sita, Lord Rama's wife. As mentioned earlier, Ganga Devi touches upon the tragic life of Sita, who was banished by Rama, and sent to the forest. Despite being banished by her husband, Sita continued to worship Rama as her husband. Similarly, Ganga Devi was also banished by her husband and continued to worship her husband through her art. For example, her paintings during the second phase were powerful and depicted the symbolic attributes of a married Indian bride, for example, the *tika* (red dot in the center of the forehead), red saree, bangles, and jewelry. This connects to the Tantric as well as the Maithili view of ultimate reality achieved through the rites of conjugation through marriage or sacred ritual.

When Ganga Devi's husband remarried, she began to live a life of a widow.²³

Ganga Devi's personal life was largely impacted by her social circumstances, which, in turn, were reflected in her art. In her famous painting *Cycle of Life*, she transformed her personal journey into a unique and magical poetic imagery. The painting consists of 24 scenes, each marking a significant event in the life of Ganga Devi ranging from her birth to marriage. In this series, Ganga Devi clearly demarcates her role as a bride, as well as adorning herself with the accessories of a newly married woman (see Figure 19).

I too was dwelling upon humanistic themes and the notion of duality in man-woman relationships at the time of mounting conflicts with my husband. I expressed some of these themes in mixed-media paintings called *Unto Light* from 1992-1994 (See Figure 20). I now realize these works of my academic years were not empty imitations of Western modes, but rather self-expressive renditions which echoed my search for a deeper meaning and for a changing relationship with the Self. The human element is very strong in these figurative or representational works as they explore dualities and confrontations between the most complex of human relationships, i.e., man and woman. I was investigating this dual principle, but based only on observational or existential perceptions and outward signs. (Field Notes, Anita Ghei Malhotra, 2006)

²³*Suhag*: Among Brahmanical Hindus when a woman marries, she enters the auspicious state of *suhag*, which refers to a married woman with a living husband; it suggests she is sexually active and bearing children. She wears the mark of her *suhag* in a tika or red dot on the forehead, as well as vivid sarees, jangling bangles, gold at her neck and ears, and above all, red powder set into her hair every morning. By contrast, *Vidva*: When a woman's husband dies, she becomes a widow (the term *vidva* is cognate to English "widow"). As her husband's body is taken by men to be burned, women take her to the pond where they break her bangles, wash the vermilion/red powder out of her hair, and robe her in a white saree. She will never again wear the ornaments and beautiful sarees of a *suhagin*, but instead will live a life of asceticism in her dead husband's household. She is thought to be inauspicious and stays in the background during all auspicious ritual occasions such as weddings.



Figure 19. *From Cycle of Life by Ganga Devi (Jain, 1997)*



Figure 20. *Unto Light (1992-1994) by Anita Ghei*
Mixed media on canvas

The Kiss of Union

If my earlier work dealt with the dialectic of the masculine and feminine principles, as the inherent and dual forces of nature, the recent work accepts and absorbs both in one whole, and points towards an infinite joy, namely the complete equilibrium born of the annihilation of duality, division and tension converging into a single point. This being the symbolic “bindu,” transcending the limitations of the mind and senses.... In this notion of cosmic consciousness, the one behind the many are not two separate entities. Reality is one without a second, and “prakriti” or female energy as primal matter in its quanta exists as a basis of all objective expression. It co-exists with “parusha” or pure consciousness. Their union, the state of “ananda” or the consciousness of joy, is the subject matter of this particular series. This theme of male-female union resonates throughout Maithili art and is clearly visible in the tantric motifs used both by Devi and myself, as discussed in the following sub-sections. (Anita Ghei Malhotra, Catalogue Kinetic Mantras, 1996)

Shown below in Figure 21 is a painting titled *Bidhu-Bidhata* by Ganga Devi. The two birds called *Bidhu-Bidhata* represent the symbolic union of male and female. This motif, taken from the larger composition of the *Kohbar*, is a typical Maithili symbol. The birds are seen as cosmic deities who oversee and bless the union of a newly-wed couple. The vivid colors (green, yellow, red, and blue) signify fruitful prospects, fertility, and abundance.



Figure 21. Section view *Bidh-Bidhata Kohbar painting by Ganga Devi (early phase), Delhi Crafts Museum (Jain, 1997)*

By contrast, I have painted the union or the kiss of the two serpents that represents the tantra-yoga concept of *Pinda* and *Pingala*, the two subtle channels in the human body that are governed by the moon (left side/feminine energy) and the sun (right side/masculine powers). This knowledge of the right and left channels is vital and important for Tantric healing and balancing of energies in the human body. These symbols of the sun and the moon are also found in Devi's *Kohbar* on the top right and left corners of the painting above the two lovebirds *Bidhu* and *Bidhata*, as well as in my paintings. (Field Notes, Anita Ghei Malhotra, 2006) (See Figure 22)



Figure 22. *Section view from Serpentine Play by Anita Ghei (2006)*

The above images show a thematic similarity in the use of visual syntax in the works of Ganga Devi and myself.

The Thousand-Petaled Lotus and the Ocean of Bliss

As the upward spiraling movement of the Kundalini and the union with *Shiva* on the last chakra, the *Sahasrara* is a central Tantric concept.²⁴ Ganga Devi has beautifully depicted this in her painting where she has placed the head of the Goddess at the top of a column (see Figure 23). In this painting, Ganga Devi also shows the central channel, called *Sushumna*, with six opened lotuses of the risen Kundalini which are painted red, the color representing the goddess in Tantric art.²⁵ The white lotus represents Shiva,

²⁴*Sahasrara*: The thousand-petaled spiritual center at the crown of the head, where one experiences the highest states of consciousness (Chidvilasananda, 1996, p. 227).

²⁵*Sushumna nadi*: The central, most important of 72 million subtle nerve channels in the human body, the sushumna extends from the muladhara chakra at the base of the spine to the sahasrara at the top of the head and contains all the other major chakras (Chidvilasananda, 1996, p. 228).

which was also painted in my series on *Serpentine Play* (see Figures 23 and 24). The pictorial elements of the composition in this painting are not sacrificed or separated for essential concepts, but fused into the picture plane to attain a high level of aesthetic experience for the viewer.



Figure 23. *The Risen Kundalini (section view) of Kohbar by Ganga Devi (Jain, 1997)*



Figure 24. *Section view of Serpentine Play by Anita Ghei (2006)*
Acrylic and pigment on canvas

Swirling Love Games

While observing the swirling and spiraling patterns in the movements of the two playful love birds called *Cakracara* in Ganga Devi's painting (see Figure 25), I began to notice similarities with the Tantric concepts of spirals drawn as a symbol for the mother Goddess by Maithili women. In my own work, these images emerged while editing with I-movie and Photoshop applications. The twirling motion was important to me, as I started with the intention of recreating my experience of Kundalini awakening, or divine initiation bestowed by my spiritual master. I felt a need to record this profound moment of the Kundalini awakening. I wanted to re-capture this spiraling vortex-like space in

moving images which were re-rendered in Photoshop. The vibrating rhythms express this intense movement of *re-birth* during my spiritual initiation (see Figure 26). By decoding the layers of meanings in my own works, I have discovered a very strong affinity with the subtle messages and discrete Tantric metaphors in Ganga Devi's.



Figure 25. *Latpatra or Cakracara Love Birds by Ganga Devi (Jain, 1997)*

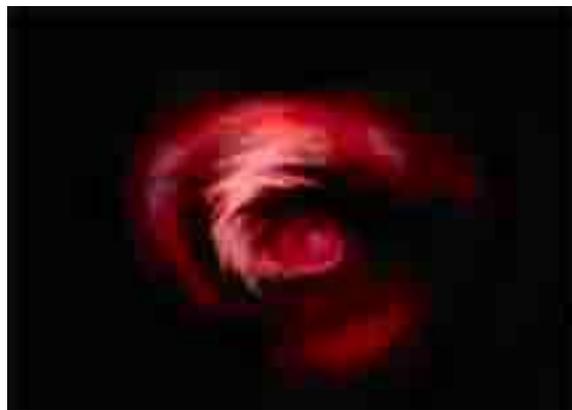


Figure 26. *Still clip from film Etymology of a Serpent by Anita Ghei (2006)*

The Final Journey

The last phase of Ganga Devi's work is dedicated to her critic Jyotindra Jain and titled *Pilgrimage* (Singh, M.S., 2004). The paintings have been inscribed with graphemes in *Devanagari* script, which inform the viewer that these are "not for sale" and are a gift to the critic and art historian Jain²⁶. According to (Eck, 1981, cited in Singh, M.S., 2004):

This continuous painting is a meditation of a devout Hindu artist on the very idea of *tirtha* or what Eck calls the 'locative strand of Hindu piety'. It is a visualization of sacred geography, a sort of sacred map for the journey within, where sins, sickness, and death, and even *samsara* (the material world) itself, may be transcended. This painting can be understood as an occasion for reenacting or reliving the life of a pilgrim for Ganga Devi and at the same time an opportunity for Jain and those who look at it to become part of that spiritual journey. (p. 12)

For example, the detail in the section view of the pilgrimage series titled *Badrinath* shows a detail of the painting *Tirtha*. The painting shows Ganga Devi in a holy bath with a man. This hot spring bath is known as *Tapta Kunda*, symbolizing the transcendental purification at the end of a spiritual journey (see Figure 27).

²⁶Even descended from Brahmi script, Devanagari has evolved into a highly cursive script. Many languages in India, such as Hindi and Sanskrit, use Devanagari, and many others throughout India use local variants of the script. Hindu scriptures are written in Devanagari, as illustrated by the etymology of the name. *Devanagari* is a compound word with two roots: *deva* meaning "deity" and *nagari* meaning "city." Together, these roots imply a script that is both religious as well as sophisticated or urbane (<http://www.ancientscripts.com/devanagari.html>, retrieved on October 24, 2007).



Figure 27. *Bathing Lovers (detail view) of Badrinath painting by Ganga Devi (Singh, M.S., 2004)*

I find a striking similarity between me and Ganga Devi here. The idea of immanence and singularity or the individual and the collective conscious of the soul, whether in the case of Ganga Devi or my own self, is really a search for eternal truth, where the given means is the universal language of art (see Figure 28).



Figure 28. *Still clip from film Etymology of a Serpent by Anita Ghei (2006)*

Summary

With my own art practice came the process of peeling away layers of identity of my self and my rebirth through art-making. Maithili art happened to coincide with my search for a suitable language for the inner realm of imagery that my Tantric meditations had opened up for me. In other words, this link between indigenous culture and a mystical entry into the unconscious creates underlying philosophical bridges to and from Mithila's oral histories, culture lifestyles, Tantra, and the development of my own Tantric art practice. The following chapter will further expand on the implications of this research.

Chapter V

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The shared associations revealed in my art practice and that of Ganga Devi's indigenous art lie at the heart of this inquiry. This research inspired a dialogue between myself and Ganga Devi. This study identified the main historical traditions used in Maithili art in Northern India, and established its connection with Tantric art. Further, by comparing the art practice of Maithili artist Ganga Devi, and Tantric artist, myself, I argued that a connection between these two art forms was an important aspect in the history of indigenous art. The following section addresses the implications of this research and its connection to the field of art education.

Implications for Art Education and Further Research

In Indian culture and society, the widely-held beliefs of Tantra make it problematic for artists to talk freely of their usage of Tantric imagery. Given such pre-existing views of Tantra, the study of Maithili painting, and more specifically Ganga Devi's work in connection to Tantra, becomes crucial. Such a connective study could thus open up new avenues of inquiry in art history as well as art education, cultural studies, and indigenous studies. This type of research could further establish strong connections between indigenous ways of knowing and contemporary art education. By

validating and exploring inherent connections, a deeper level of transformation can occur at the grass-roots level of indigenous communities, where rituals, paintings, and representations are not rejected, divided or separated for future progress, but are accepted and included in the *whole* of education through art.

Conclusion

Based on my findings, I have come to understand that even though the modes of teaching are different, the pursuit of truth and the aesthetic expression of the human soul truly have no boundaries. Thus, through the connections of art-making, bridges can be built between the indigenous and the imposed, the intuitive and the taught. Maria Montessori, the so-called Westerner who bridged philosophy and methodology, not only impacted the world, but her pedagogy impacted my early childhood education and helped me to forge certain connections between indigenous and Western ways of doing through the process of art-making. As I connect with this indigenous feminine that Ganga Devi's art unfolds, I continue to educate myself holistically and create new possibilities for knowledge and methodologies in art education, a field that is often thought of as out of touch with reality, crafts-based, or not worth remembering.

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Selected Hindu Tantric Texts in Sanskrit with Notes

Kalikapurana (Tantra), chapters 54-69 translated by K. R. Van Kooij, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1972, compiled around the 14th century C.E.

Kalivilasa Tantra, published by Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodrooffe) in English, 1916.

Kamaratna Tantra, translated by Hemchandra Tattabhusan, Shillong, 1928.

Kularnava Tantra, compiled around 1000 C.E. Available in English translation.

Lakshmi Tantra, translated by Sanjukta Gupta, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1972, compiled sometime between the 9th and 10th centuries C.E.

Mahanirvana Tantra, better known as the Tantra of the Great Liberation, translated by Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodroffe), Calcutta and London, 1913. A very late text, with radical reformist views.

Mahavidya Tantra, possibly dating from before the 4th century C.E.

Other important Hindu Tantras, mostly dating from between the 11th and 17th centuries are: *Chinnamasta Tantra*, *Ganapati Tantra*, *Gandharva Tantra*, *Guptasadhana Tantra*, *Jnanarnava Tantra*, *the Kakachandishvarakalpa Tantra*, translated by Jyotir Mitra, Varanasi, 1970, in manuscript; *Kali Tantra*, *Kamakhya Tantra*, *Kaulavali Tantra*, *Kubjika Tantra*, *Kulachudamani Tantra*, English translation available on the Internet at the Hindu Tantrik home page; *Kularnava Tantra*, compiled between the 11th and 15th centuries, translated by Rai, 1993 and selected parts by Goudriaan, 1992; *Kundalini Tantra*; *Malinivijayottara Tantra*, translated by V. D. Shastri, Punjab University, 1956; *Matrikabhedha Tantra*; *Maya Tantra*; *Netra Tantra*, translation available on the Internet; *Nila Tantra*; *Niruttara Tantra*; *Nirvana Tantra*; *Saraswati Tantra*; *Svacchanda Tantra*, an early Shaivite work, partly translated by Teun Goudriaan, SUNY, 1992; *Tantraloka*; *Tantraraja Tantra*; *Tara Tantra*; *Todala Tantra*, available on the Internet; *Vinashikha Tantra*, translated by Teun Goudriaan, Motilal, Delhi, 1985; *Yogini Tantra and Yoni Tantra*.

Catalogues with Notes

Madhubani, Art Tribal de l'Inde. Catalogue of an exhibition in Reunion. Introduction by Jyotindra Jain. Curator: Jean Barbier, <http://www.cg974.fr> e-mail: musee.villele@cg974.fr

Mithila Folk Paintings. Huntington Gallery, The Art Museum, University of Texas at Austin. September 19 to November 19, 1978. Curator: Raymond Owens, small catalogue.

Videos with Notes

A Day in the Life of Mithila. (video 53 minutes, in French) by Yves Vequaud. 1974. Available from Yves Vequaud, 121 Avenue Parmentier, Paris 75011, France.

Five Painters (video 55 minutes, color, sound) on the lives of five Mithila painters (Ganga Devi, Sita Devi, Krishnanad Jha, Shanti Devi and Baua Devi) 1982. . Co-directed by Raymond Owens, Ron Hess, and Cheryl Groff. Available from South Asia Film Program, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, 53706. tel: (608) 255-0533

Hasegawa, Tokio. *Cosmology of Prayer.* In Japanese. 42 illustrations in color, and 43 in black and white of paintings in the collection of the Mithila Museum. Mithila Museum.

Hasegawa, Tokio. *Ganga Devi.* With Introductions by Pupul Jayakar and Jyotindra Jain. Black and white and color illustrations of 26 painting by Ganga Devi, plus designs of 72 kobhar and aripan motifs. Mithala Museum.

Hasegawa, Tokio. Two videos detailing the paintings of Ganga Devi and several other Mithila painters 1990s (in Japanese)

Munni (video, 28 minutes, color, sound) of a young girl learning to paint. 1981. Co-directed by Raymond Owns, Ron Hess, and Cheryl Groff. Available from South Asia Film Program, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, 53706. tel: (608) 255-0533

Naina, Jogin. *The Ascetic Eye.* (video 59 minutes) by Praveen Kumar, 2005. Available from the South Asia Film Program, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin 53706. tel (608) 255-0533