

Sculptures of Navadurga of National Museum: Illustrative Terracotta Art of Nepal

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DOI: 10.29322/IJSRP.12.08.2022.p12846

<http://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.12.08.2022.p12846>

Paper Received Date: 4th August 2022

Paper Acceptance Date: 20th August 2022

Paper Publication Date: 24th August 2022

Abstract: *This paper deals with the terracotta sculptures of Navadurga of National Museum. According to Hindu religious texts Shailaputri, Brahmacharini, Chandraghanta, Kusmanda, Skandamata, Katyayani, Kalaratri, Mahagauri and Siddhadatri are the nine manifested forms of goddess Durga or Gauri or Parvati, especially worshipped during the festival of Navaratri where each of the nine manifested forms is consecutively venerated throughout all the nine nights. There are some noteworthy illustrations of Nepalese terracotta art in different museums in Nepal. Out of them, Navadurga icons of national museum are considered as the important specimen in terms of religion, culture, style, skill and technology. In these terracotta images the figures of Shailaputri, Brahmacharini, Chandraghanta, Kusmanda, Skandamata, Katyayani, Kalaratri, Mahagauri and Siddhadatri have been sculptured very beautifully. This paper has been prepared to explore the authentic facts regarding on what are the major iconographic features of the sculptures? and to examine why these sculptures are considered as the importance terracotta art heritage of Nepal? It is based on qualitative approach because it has been prepared on the basis of qualitative data rather than quantitative one. Researcher has used both primary and secondary data in this study. Primary data have been collected by doing field survey in national museum while essential secondary information were collected from journals, books and electronic versions of different sources.*

Key words: Philosophy of Navadurga Cult, Forms, Sculptures, Features, Terracotta Art Heritage.

Introduction

The religious sect which gives high priority and emphasizes to worship the goddesses as the sources of supreme power is called Shaktism. History of this sect can be traced back till to the prehistoric period in the world. The findings images of Venus from *Laussel*, *Kostenki* and *Brassempouy* (Burkitt, 1992, pp. 141-143) are known as the authentic evidences to prove its antiquities. In eastern society and culture *Rigved* is recognized as the oldest literature and source, which mentions the names like *Usha*, *Sabita*, *Shachi* and *Waka*. Later on, since the late Vedic, Sutra, Smriti and Epic period the worship of Shakti was still become popular and developed as a separate cult in Hinduism in Indian sub-continent.

Gradually, in the process of development of religious beliefs, faiths, feelings and emotion different sub-sects like *Saptamatrika*, *Asthamatrika*, *Navadurga* and *Dasa Mahabidhya* have come into existence within Shaktism. According the Hindu Mythology, *Durga* is collective power of nine goddesses who killed the demons including *Mahisasur* and victory over evil power. Then she becomes identified as the goddess *Mahisasurmardani*. While she was fighting with demons, the colour of her face gradually changed into blackish in nature, then due to this event she also known as goddess Kali.

As per the Pauranic literature for the purposes of killing, victory over demons power and finally establishing peace and welfare in the divine world, goddesses were evolved in different forms such as *Saptamatrika*, *Asthamatrika* and *Navadurga*. To fulfilling the prescribed goals, during the field of battle goddesses *Navadurga* killed the demons like *Madhukaitab*, *Mahisasur*, *Sumbhanisumbha*, *Chamunda*, *Raktabij*, *Kolasur*, *Lavanasur*, *Gayasur* and *Tarakasur* (Jadhari, 2072, pp. 30-31). After victory over evil power people started to pay and offer obligation to them which caused to be the origin of different sub-sects including *Navadurga*.

From the very early *Durga* had been worshipped as a powerful goddess in the forms of group in Nepalese society and culture. *Navadurga* is her collective name and identity where *Shailaputri*, *Brahmacharini*, *Chandraghanta*, *Kusmanda*, *Skandamata*, *Katyayani*, *Kalaratri*, *Mahagauri* and *Siddhadatri* are included (Sharma, 1999, p. 427). Especially, during the Dashain festival she is paid special honor and worship including animals sacrifice within different communities in the various parts of Nepal (Khatiwada, 2074, p. 608). For paying respect to them, special *Navadurga* dance was brought into practice to perform on the occasion of Dashain festival during the regime of King Raya Malla in *Bhaktapur* (Parajuli, 2063, p. 149).

In Nepal to pay obligation and worship people started to create images of the goddess *Navadurga* from earlier. In this process inhabitants of this holy land have started to use terracotta as the constructions materials of art from the early history of culture and civilization. Though, there were several terracotta images and utensils moulded and constructed through the ages. From the archaeological sites of *Lumbini* and *Kapilvastu* some of the important terracotta specimens were collected during the process of archaeological explorations and excavations, which are displayed in archaeological museum in *Kapilvastu* and National Museum in Kathmandu as well. Thus, along with other deities' goddess *Navadurga* also started to depict on the terracotta sculptures. Today, they finds in an individual and group as well. Among them, this research paper has based and discussed only to the images of goddesses *Navadurga* of national museum.

Problems and Objectives

There are several studies have been conducted concerning on sculpture arts of Nepal, but specific studies on terracotta sculptures of *Navadurga* of national museum, has still not been properly carried out. Due to lacking of adequate studies and researches, several aspects of sculptures of *Navadurga* still remain unexplored. This is considered as the huge problem and research gaps in the field of academia. Specially, what are the major iconographic features of the sculptures? and why these sculptures are considered as the important terracotta art heritage of Nepal? are the major problems which inspire to the researcher. Therefore, to address them, researcher has prepared this research paper with the specific objectives such as to explore and analyze the major iconographic features and examine to them as the important terracotta art heritage with the authentic facts.

Review of Literature

The theoretical foundation is an important tool and lens through which a researcher evaluates the research problem and research questions as well. Reviewing the literature is only one approach of constructing solid theoretical foundation. On the basis of above mentioned doctrine the following literatures have been reviewed in this paper.

Regmi (1966, pp. 927-929) in his book 'Medieval Nepal Part II', has mentioned about the terracotta work including different sculptures, dolls, tympanum and other decorative objects. In his studied he also described the terracotta images of goddesses *Navadurga* of national museum very shortly. Oldfield's (1974) book 'Sketches from Nepal' deals with different aspects of goddesses *Navadurga* dance which is directly related to the *Durga puja* festival in the Kathmandu Valley, but, he is remained behind to explore and highlight their iconographic approaches.

Levy (1990) wrote a book entitled 'Mesocosm, Hinduism and Organization of the Traditional *Newar* City in Nepal' is based on field work which has conducted research on *Newar* community of *Bhaktapur* city. Levy has mentioned about the tale or legend of the origin of Nine *Durga* especially in *Bhaktapur*. But, his study is remained behind to address the sculptures of goddesses *Navadurga*. Chhetri & Rayamajhi (2056, pp. 185-192) wrote a book entitled 'Nepali Kala, Vastukala ra Pratimalakshana' which deals with different aspects of Nepalese arts and architectures including terracotta work. Meanwhile writers slightly describe about the terracotta sculpture of goddesses *Durga* of national museum, but detail study regarding on iconographic features of such sculptures have still remained non touch issues.

Shrestha (2060) wrote a book entitled 'Bhaktapur ko Navadurga Gana' which deals with different aspects of goddesses *Navadurga* including their name and forms, origin, dance except their sculptures. But, Shrestha has still remained behind to explore and highlight the iconographic features of the sculptures in detail. Shrestha (2066) has written an article entitled 'Mrinmayakala: ek sihabalokan' in the Journal Voice of Culture (vol. V) which deals with different aspects of terracotta art. She has mentioned the history of terracotta art in the world and in Indian subcontinent. In this respect, researcher highlights the terracotta sculptures including goddesses *Navadurga* of national museum and other forms of art in the article, whereas detail study through the perspective of iconography is still remained behind to cover.

Dulal's (2019) doctoral study on cultural tourism of *Bhaktapur* explored and highlighted several tangible and intangible cultural tourism products including the temples of goddesses *Durga* and their dance as well. But, His study has also not emphasized to explore and analyze the iconographic features of such goddesses.

National Museum (2019, pp. 41-45) published an informative handbook entitled 'Art Heritage of National Museum Part II' which deals with more than twenty art objects display in different sections of museum including *Navadurga* sculptures. There can find some valuable descriptions of goddesses *Navadurga* including their names, forms and iconography as well. But subtle study regarding the issues such as philosophy, legends of origin and iconographic features are still remained unexplored. Pokharel (2077) has written an article entitled 'Shaktika Shrota Navadurgaharu' in the Journal Nepalese Culture (vol. XIV) which deals with different aspects of goddess *Navadurga* especially the concept, philosophy, legends of origin, various names and forms of goddesses *Navadurga* but she has remained behind to discuss about the sculptures of such deities of national museum.

A part from above mentioned literatures Pandey's (1981-82) The terracotta of Nepal, Rajabhandari's (1989) Nepalako Mrinmaya kalako pariprekchhyama Chendeswori mandir sthit mrinmaya murtiharu, Khatry's (2054) Nepalka Darmika Mata ra Samajika Samrachana, Chhetry & Khatiwada's (2054) Hindu Samaj ra Dharma, Jadhari's (2072) Mahakali Naach are also reviewed as the quite useful sources for generating basic information especially about the philosophy of goddesses *Navadurga* and terracotta art of Nepal.

Finally, among the above mentioned literatures only a very few have studied about the terracotta sculpture of goddesses *Navadurga* of national museum while many have been unable to explore and highlight it. The literatures that have not been able to explore to the issues, although are quite helpful to generate the conceptual ideas regarding the origin and historicity, philosophy of goddesses *Navadurga*, traditions and practices of molding terracotta images in the world and Nepal as well.

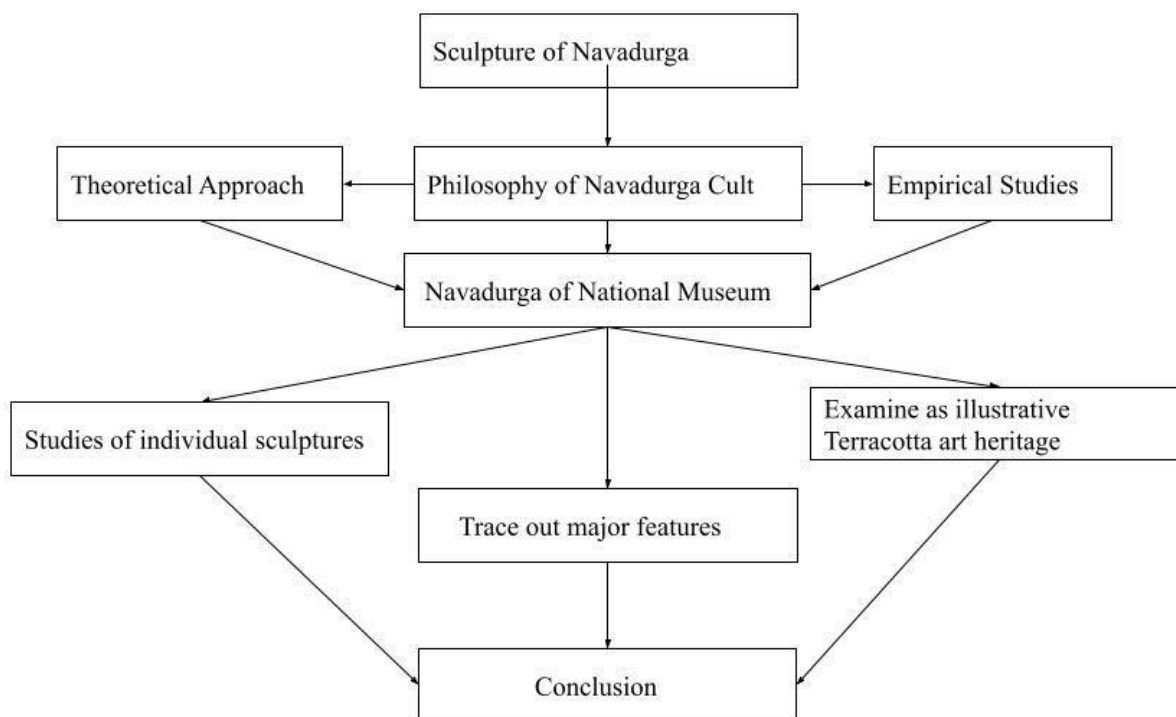
Methodology

The qualitative data regarding on philosophy and iconographic features of *Navadurga* sculpture has been used more than the quantitative one. Therefore, this study is based on qualitative research design. Researcher has applied both primary and secondary

data to explore its objectives and to generate valid information. Field work is the main source for primary data through which the iconographic features of *Navadurga* have been collected. During the field survey researcher has applied observational and interview methods. Similarly, the required secondary data especially on the philosophical aspects of *Navadurga* were collected by reviewing the relevant literatures.

Conceptual Framework

Along with the identification of the philosophy of *Navadurga* and iconographic features of its sculpture by applying theoretical approach and empirical studies this paper helps to examine them as the illustrative terracotta art heritage of Nepal. For addressing the above mentioned research gaps and problems as well as fulfilling the determine objectives this paper has been prepared by adopting the following conceptual framework:



Findings and Discussion

During the field survey, researcher has applied observation and interview method for gathering primary data especially iconographic features of *Navadurga*. Similarly, researcher has used literature review method for generating secondary information such as the concept, origin and development and the philosophical aspects of *Navadurga*. After gathering data and information they were analyzed on the basis of research problems and objectives very subtly. Finally, the findings, discussion and conclusion of the study have been presented after analyzing and examining philosophy of *Navadurga* cult, sculptures of *Navadurga* of national museum, major features of such sculptures and as the illustrative terracotta art heritage as the main issues of the paper.

Philosophy of Navadurga Cult

Kena Upanisad mentions to the *Uma* and *Haimawati* as the second names and forms of Durga. Sankhyayan Shroutasutra imagines to *Durga* as the consort of *Rudra* whereas Bodhhayan Darmasutra describes to the goddess *Durga* as the forms of *Amba*, *Aarya*, *Mahavainavi* and *Mahakali* (Shreewastav, 1990, p. 199). Similarly, Skanda Puran highlights while goddess killed the demon *Durgamam*, son of the demon *Ruru*, than she was identified as the name of *Durga* (Joshi, 2070, p. 423).

Through the perspective of religion as per the Vedic Literatures, *Moharatri*, *Sukharatri*, *Shivaratri* and *Kalaratri* are known as the main and popular four nights for Hindu Pantheon. Among them, *Kalaratri* is associated with the goddesses *Navadurga* during this occasion they have got special honor and worship as the powerful deities (Pokharel, 2077, p. 98). *Durga-puja*, held annually in her honor, is one of the greatest festivals of northeastern India as well (<https://www.britannica.com>, retrieved 10/5/2021).

The practice of goddess *Navadurga* worship is an ancient tradition in India and Nepal as well. In the Kathmandu Valley, especially in *Bhaktapur*, for the victory in battle and to protect and maintain peace in the city, Nine *Durgas* were venerated as the guardian deities during the medieval period. In 12th century A.D. *Bhaktapur* was more protected cities of Kathmandu Valley. Thus, in this context the then king *Ananda Deva* decided to construct a palace named *Tripur* and changed his capital into the *Bhaktapur* city. According to the chronicle records, king *Ananda Deva* has constructed the temples of eight mother goddesses in peripheral four directions and four corners and a temple of *Navadurga* in the middle part of the city (Shrestha, 2060, pp. 17-18). Formally, after establishment of their temples, then the different forms of goddesses have been worshipping as the deities of protectors of the city and city dwellers.

There are number of variants of the tale or legend regarding on the origin of Nine *Durga* especially in *Bhaktapur*. According to a legend, long ago, during the king of *Gunakamadeva* the Nine *Durga* were inhabited in *Jwala* forest, northeast from the city. They used to catch and kill people and drank their blood as sacrifice to themselves. One day an *Achaju* a priest name *Sunanda* was captured and was being prepared to be killed. *Achaju* was not just an ordinary man, he had a great knowledge about *tantras* and *mantras*, which helped him to bound the goddesses *Durgas*. He kept them in his room in a secure chest and periodically looked and worshipped them. Thereafter, the Nine *Durgas* have started to worship and perform dance in *Bhaktapur* (Levy, 1992, pp. 503-504).

Nava Durga dance is directly related to the *Durga puja* tradition in the Kathmandu Valley. It is highly popular dance of *Bhaktapur*, which was begun by the son of the king *Rayamalla* while he heard about the dance of *Nava Durga* in the midnight in *Bhaktapur*. Within a year, it has been performed about forty times only in *Bhaktapur* city by the performers of *Gatha* or *Banamali* people belongs to *Jyapoo* group. It begins from *Nava Durga* temple of *Ganchhetol* (Oldfield, 1974, pp. 295-297).

There are many temples of goddesses *Durga* in and around the *Bhaktapur* core which are generally belonged to medieval period. According to the description of *Vamsabali* the king *Ananda Deva* established the nine Goddesses such as *Brahmayani*, *Maheswori*, *Kaumari*, *Bhadrakali*, *Barahi*, *Indrayani*, *Mahakali*, *Mahalaxmi* in the eighth different directions and corners. And remaining one i.e. *Tripurasundari*, the consort of *Bhairav* in the middle especially at *Tulachhetol* in 930 B.S. *Magha Krishna Pratipada* (Dulal, 2019, p. 208).

There is no exact name of the deities. As per the time and places *Navadurgas* are known as the different names both India and Nepal. Including only one from the goddesses *Tripurasundari*, *Mahisasurmardini*, *Batsaladevi*, *Jayabageswori* and *Guheswori* within *Asthamatrika*, the cult of *Navadurga* is formed in Nepal (Allen, 1975, pp. 48-50). *Aparajit Prichha* an important iconographic text mentions *Mahalaxmi*, *Nanda*, *Kshemsankari*, *Shivaduti*, *Mahachanda*, *Bhramari*, *Sarbamangala*, *Rewati*, *Harashiddhi* as the nine forms of goddess *Durga*. While *Aagam* scripture includes *Nilkanthi*, *Kshemsankari*, *Harashiddhi*, *Rudransha Durga*, *Vana Durga*, *Agni Durga*, *Japa Durga* and *Vindhyabasini Durga* within it (Shreewastav, 1990, p. 130).

In this context, some sources mention that *Brahmayani*, *Maheshwari*, *Kaumari*, *Vaishnavi*, *Varahi*, *Indrayani*, *Mahakali*, *Mahalaxmi*, *Tripurasundari*, *Rudrachanda*, *Prachanda*, *Chandogra*, *Chandanayaka*, *Chanda*, *Chandavati*, *Chandarupa*, *Atichandika*, *Ugrachanda*, *Jaya*, *Vijaya*, *Ajita*, *Aparajita*, *Jamane*, *Tamane*, *Mohini*, *Aakarshini*, *Siddhichanda* are the different names which popularly worshipped as the forms of goddesses *Navadurgas* (<https://english.onlinekhabar.com>, retrieved 10/5/2021).

Once upon a time when Sage *Markandya* requested Lord Brahma to tell about a device that was unknown by all and that would protect the mankind, *Brahmajii* told that such kind of device that existed was only a goddess amour (Devi Kawacha). He added that this amour was extremely disclosed, sacred and of a protective nature. It consist nine icons of goddesses such as *Shailaputri*, *Brahmacharini*, *Chandraghanta*, *Kusmanda*, *Skandamata*, *Katyayani*, *Kalaratri*, *Mahagauri* and *Siddhadatri* within it which called *Navadurga* (Vasistha, 2057, pp. 45-46). *Navadurga* are nine manifestations of goddess *Durga* in Hinduism, especially worshipped during the festival of *Navaratri* where each of the nine manifested forms is consecutively venerated throughout all the nine nights. As per the Pauranic literatures *Shailaputri*, *Brahmacharini*, *Chandraghanta*, *Kusmanda*, *Skandamata*, *Katyayani*, *Kalaratri*, *Mahagauri* and *Siddhadatri* are the nine manifested forms of goddess *Durga* or *Gauri* or *Parvati* (Chhetry & Khatwada, 2054, p. 101).

Sculptures of Nava Durga of National Museum

From the different pre-historic sites of Europe, Africa and Asia plenty of stone sculptures and other forms of art such as Venus of *Laussel*, *Kostenki* and *Brassempouy*, horse head from *Mas d' Azil*, engraving on bone from *Creswell Crags*, fish palette from *Grotte de Rey* etc. have been discovered (Burkitt, 1992, pp. 141-143). No doubt, the findings of such historical evidences strongly support to prove history of sculpturing art is old as the history of human beings. It means, the tradition of sculpturing stone art has been evolved from the pre- historic culture. As the tradition of creating stone sculptures, the terracotta art was also existed from the Neolithic age in the world and Nepal as well (Pandey, 1981-82, p. 1). It is justified through the findings of hand axes and other different art objects which have been displaying in National Museum.

In the context of Nepal, the terracotta art became more popular medium during the Lichchhavi period. The descriptions of inscriptions and archaeological findings from *Dhumbarahi* and *Handigaon* excavations suggest that this form of craftsmanship was existed and practiced during the regime of Lichchhavi rulers. This practice still not only becomes popular during the early and late medieval period although even today. Therefore, there can observe several terracotta images in the museums and elsewhere as well. Rest of them, through the religious, craftsmanship and cultural perspectives the sculptures of goddesses *Navadurga* of national museum are considered significant one.

Regmi (1966, p. 927) and Pandey (1981-82, p. 10) recognized as the images of mother goddesses *Asthamatrika* to the so-called terracotta sculptures of goddesses *Navadurga* of national museum. Among them, *Vaishnavi*, *Indrani*, *Parvati* and *Kumari* distinguished as benevolent goddesses are also represented here in terrific forms like *Chamunda*, *Kali* and *Varahi* (Pandey, 1981-82, p. 10). In this respect Regmi (1966, p. 228) mentions that:

This beautiful art objects created during the regime of the King Jitmitra Malla (1673-1696 A.D.) of Bhaktapur. One of his inscriptions notes (NS 797 Bhadra Sudi Ditiya Stella at Etachok) which pride the repair work done in Etachok, west of Mulchok, where he made strutting with carved images of the *Asthamatrika* group of female deities and got drawn in illustrations over the surface of the wall on the east.

The names of *Navadurga* seem slightly different and varied on the basis of context, place and communities which clearly observe in Bhaktapur as well. By adding to the goddess *Tripurasundari* with *Asthamatrika*, the people of Bhaktapur were worshipped as the forms of goddesses *Navadurga* from the very early days (Shrestha, 2060, pp. 17-18). Therefore, it might be possible that because of the collection from Bhaktapur, the goddesses of *Navadurga* of national museum named as *Asthamatrika*. What so ever, there are nine manifestations of Goddesses in the national museum which might be the sculptures of *Navadurga*. Such name is also used by museum itself and its records as well. Hence, as per the records of museum, researcher has used the name goddess *Navadurga* to identify and denote the same female deities in this paper.

According to legend, *Durga* was created for the slaying of the buffalo demon *Mahisasura* by Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, and the lesser gods, who were otherwise powerless to overcome him. Embodying their collective energy (*shakti*), she is both derivative from the male divinities and the true source of their inner power. She is also greater than any of them. Born fully grown and beautiful, *Durga* presents a fierce menacing form to her enemies. She is usually depicted riding a lion and with 8 or 10 arms, each holding the special weapon of one of the gods, who gave them to her for her battle against the buffalo demon (<https://www.britannica.com, retrieved 10/5/2021>).

Durga Saptashati is an important text mentions *Chamunda* riding on the dead evil spirit, *Varahi* riding on a buffalo, *Indrani* riding on an elephant, *Vaisnavi* riding on a *garud*, *Maheswori* riding on a bull, *Kaumari* flying on the peacock, *Laxmi* sitting on a lotus, *Iswori* riding on a bull and *Brahmi* riding on a duck with different attributes on the hands and ornaments as well (Vasistha, 2057, pp. 47-48). Although, the name of the deities and sculptures as well of national museum observe slightly different then the iconographic features mentioned above in the Durga Saptashati. The identity and iconographic features of an individual sculptures as follows:

Shailaputri

Shailaputri represents *Parvati* in her stage of childhood. *Shailaputri* literally means the daughter of the mountain *Shailai* i.e. daughter of the Mountain King, Lord Himalaya and Queen *Menavati* (Pokharel, 2077, p. 101). After self immolation in her form as Sati; the Mother Goddess took birth in the house of king of Mountains, as the daughter of Lord Himalaya. Since her birth, she experienced a feeling of attachment towards Lord Shiva. Goddess *Parvati* had taken her birth as an ordinary woman to attain the position of a goddess in her journey to become one with Lord Mahadev. She is that incarnation of a little daughter who makes a family, her parents happy, joyous and proud of her (<https://english.onlinekhabar.com, retrieved 10/5/2021>). She is worshipped on the first day of the *Navaratra*.

Iconography mentioned that goddess *Shailputri* is milk white in complexion, with three content eyes as well as a calm mien. She is adorned by light ornamentation on her limbs and was clothed in red and pink robes. She is depicted with two hands with a trident in her right hand and lotus flower in the left. She is seated upon the behind of a holy mount white Nandi i.e. bull (<https://english.onlinekhabar.com, retrieved 10/5/2021>).



Sculpture of

Shailaputri (National Museum, 2019, p. 41).

The above presented image of *Shailaputri* belongs to 17th century CE. It is displayed in the terracotta section of National Museum. According to the records of National Museum it is measured 65 cm and 47 cm in length and breadth respectively (National Museum, 2019, p. 41). The sculpture of *Shailaputri* seems slightly different than the iconographic features mentioned above. Goddess *Shailaputri* is standing on the two demons. She is sculptured with four heads and ten hands as well. Among ten hands, the upper right raising on the chest level and holds a demon skull whereas other holds sword, arrow, bell and remaining last one is holding a bundle of a demon. Similarly, upper left hand is taking into the chest level and presenting fearlessness posture while other carries shield, bow, mace and remaining last one is holding a bundle of hair of a demon. Plain nimbus, decorated crown on the head, round shaped earrings on the ears, rosary bead on the neck, bangles on the wrist, armlets on the arms, specific garments on the lower part of the body are the major ornaments and garments seemed to have been used in the figure.

Bramacharini

After the *Shailaputri* form, Mother Goddess took birth at the home of *Daksha Prajapati*, as his daughter, Sati, who was born to marry Shiva. *Brahmacharini* represents *Parvati* in her phase of asceticism. *Parvati* had attained this epithet due to her performing austere and harsh penances to have Lord *Mahadev* as her husband for years. This unmarried form of the Mother Goddess is worshipped as *Brahmacharini*. This form of her is close to her because as *Parvati*, she had been meditating to become one with Shiva again as *Shakti*, ensuring that her motive is complete. For her to be *Brahmacharini*, not only did *Parvati* wake up *Mahadev* from his penances, but rather, this form of hers was awakened within her in which she'd broken the rules of living life as an ordinary human (<https://english.onlinekhabar.com>, retrieved 10/5/2021).

She is a student and a disciple who makes it her mission to attain the goals of her life through the harsh period of her education and continuously active to enlightenment to the universe regarding the great pleasure forms of the Lord Brahma. Therefore, she identified as the goddess *Brahmacharini* (Pokharel, 2077, p. 101). She is worshipped on the second day of Navaratra festival.

Iconographic science mentioned that *Brahmacharini* is of a fair complexion, with three content eyes as well as a calm mien. She is dressed as a female ascetic and is adorned by dried up *Rudraksha* beads and flowers as her ornamentation. She walks on bare feet, carrying a pray rosary beads (*Japamala*) in her right and a *Kamandalu* i.e. water utensil in her left hand (<https://english.onlinekhabar.com>, retrieved 10/5/2021).



Sculpture of

Brahmacharini (National Museum, 2019, p. 42).

The above mentioned sculpture of *Brahmacharini* belongs to 17th century CE. It is displayed in the terracotta section of National Museum. The records of National Museum informed that it is measured 61 cm and 44 cm in length and breadth respectively (National Museum, 2019, pp. 41-42). The sculpture of *Brahmacharini* observes slightly different what the iconographic features are mentioned above. Goddess *Brahmacharini* is standing on the two demons. She is sculptured with four heads and ten hands as well. As *Shailaputri*, the upper right raising on the chest level and holds a demon skull whereas other holds sword, arrow, bell and remaining last one is catching the foots of the demon. Similarly, upper left hand is taking into the chest level and presenting fearlessness posture while other carries shield, bow, mace and remaining last one is holding a bundle of hair of a demon. Ornaments, garments and other features of the goddess remained same with the features of *Shailaputri*.

Chandraghanta

Chandraghanta represents the married form of the mother Goddess following on from *Shailaputri* and *Mahagauri*. After getting married to Shiva, Goddess *Mahagauri* started adorning her forehead and also holds on the hand as an attribute with a half moon shaped like bell (Ghanta) due to which, she became known as Goddess *Chandraghanta* (Pokharel, 2077, p. 101). *Parvati* was given this title by Lord *Mahadev* himself, due to her wish to have Lord *Chandradev*, the Moon God, to adorn her as an ornament on her forehead, as her Lord adorned him upon his crown of matted hairs. On fulfilling her wish, *Mahadev* transformed her bridal guise into a new form with a new name. As she's now adorned by the digit of the crescent moon on her forehead, *Parvati* will be known the entire world over as *Devi Chandraghanta*. She is also that aspect of a woman who is independent and fights to establish justice, peace and makes her voice heard to bring about positive changes (<https://english.onlinekhabar.com>, retrieved 10/5/2021). She is worshipped on the third day of *Navaratra* festival.

Iconography mentions *Chandraghanta* is gold complexioned, with three bloodshot eyes and a calm face. She is adorned by heavy ornamentation on her limbs and was dressed in red apparel. She wears the semi- circular moon on her forehead which looks like the bell i.e. *Ghanta* and hence, her name. She is depicted with ten hands carrying with lotus flower, arrow, *Dhanush* and *Japa Mala* (prayer bead) and *Abhayamudra* i.e. fearlessness posture in her right hands. While she holds *Trishul* (trident), *Gada* (mace), *Khadga* (sword) and *Kamandalu* (donation pot) and remaining one is showing *Varadamudra* i.e. blessing posture in her left hands. She mounts on the fierce tigress (<https://english.onlinekhabar.com>, retrieved 10/5/2021).



Sculpture of *Chandraghanta* (National Museum, 2019, p. 42).

Above mentioned sculpture of *Chandraghanta* belongs to 17th century CE. It is displayed in the terracotta section of National Museum which is slightly different what the iconographic features are mentioned above. According to the records of National Museum it is measured 62 cm and 50 cm in length and breadth respectively (National Museum, 2019, p. 42). Goddess

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.12.08.2022.p12846>

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Chandraghanta is standing on the two demons keeping middle another one. She is sculptured with four heads and ten hands as well. In this figure the upper right raising on the chest level and holds a demon skull whereas other holds sword, *japamala* (prayer bead), bell and remaining last one holds a bundle of hair of the demon. Similarly, upper left hand is taking into the chest level and presenting fearlessness posture while other carries shield, bow, mace and remaining last one is holding a bundle of hair of a demon. Ornaments, garments and other features of the goddess remained same with the features of *Shailaputri*.

Kusmanda

Kushmanda represents Devi *Parvati* in her stage of discovering that she is none other than *Mahashakti*. After their marriage, Lord *Mahadev* made Goddess *Parvati* know the fact of her true existence. This form of her is known the world over as *Kushmanda*, as she holds within her, many endless powers of the world. Lord *Mahadev* had helped her realize the fact that she's not just a human; she is a Goddess, who is the Mother of the World and all of creation, as she produced the three planes through her golden womb. She's that aspect of woman who brightens up the lives of those around her by her glee. After taking the form of *Siddhidatri*, the Mother Goddess started living within sun thereby liberating the Sun's energy to the universe. Since then, this form of goddess has been known as *Kusmanda*, namely for her power and capability to live inside the Sun (<https://english.onlinekhabar.com>, retrieved 10/5/2021).

Hindu philosophy believes that there are three great energies in the world that are spiritual, universal and supernatural which known *Kusma*. Goddess can adorned and kept all these energies within her and gives salvation to the universe through these energies. Because of it she is known as the goddess *Kusmanda* (Pokharel, 2077, p. 101). The word '*Kushmanda*' also means '*kubhindo*' or ash gourd. Therefore, this vegetable is offered to this goddess as a sacrifice. This goddess is called *Kushmanda* as it is believed that she created this universe by her smile (<https://english.onlinekhabar.com>, retrieved 10/5/2021). She is worshipped on the fourth day of *Navaratra* festival.

Iconographic science mentioned that *Kushmanda* is of a gold complexion, with three peaceful eyes and a calm mien. she rides on a lioness and has eight hands. She carries a *Kamandalu*, *Dhanush*, *Gada* and *Kamal* in the right and *Amrita Kalash* (pot of nectar), prayer beads, *Gada* and *Chakra* in her left. She is adorned by ornaments on her limbs and was dressed in pink and yellow vestments. She is mounted upon the back of a tiger.



Sculpture of *Kusmanda* (National Museum, 2019, p. 42).

The above presented sculpture of *Kusmanda* belongs to 17th century CE. It is displayed in the terracotta section of National Museum which is slightly different what the iconographic features are mentioned above. The records of National Museum informed that this sculpture is measured 66 cm and 50 cm in length and breadth respectively (National Museum, 2019, pp. 42-43). Goddess *Kusmanda* is standing on the two demons. She is sculptured with four heads and ten hands as well. In this figure, the upper right hand raising on the chest level and holds a demon skull whereas other holds sword, arrow, bell and remaining last one holds a bundle of hair of an evil. Similarly, upper left hand is taking into the chest level and presenting fearlessness posture while other carries shield, bow, rope and remaining last one is holding a bundle of hair of an evil. Ornaments, garments and other features of the goddess remained same with the features of *Shailaputri*.

Skandamata

Skandamata represents *Devi Parvati* in her stage of motherhood. *Skandamata* is known as mother of the goddess of war, Lord *Skanda* i.e. *Kartikeya*. *Parvati* was kept away from nurturing her child from the six *Krittikas*. As the seed of the energy that *Shiva* and *Parvati* created, fell to a sleeve of reeds, it was split into six infants, as they're found by six women, and after working out a fair resolution, as *Shiva* and *Parvati* merged the six babies into one infant with six faces, he would be known to all as *Shanmukha* (six-faced) and as being the mother of this unique child, *Parvati* will be known as *Skandmata*. Also, as the baby *Shanmukha Skanda* had been found by the six *Krittikas*, he will be known as *Kartikeya*, as he's their kid as well as *Shiva* and *Devi's* kid. *Skandmata* is maternity, affection, and love in a woman. Though any child may be biological, adopted, or through surrogacy, she is still a mother (<https://english.onlinekhabar.com,download> 10/5/2021). She is worshipped on the fifth day of *Navaratra* festival.

As mentioned by the iconography *Skandamata* is of a gold complexion, with three eyes as well as a calm mien. She is adorned with light ornamentation on her limbs and is dressed in orange and yellow apparels. She mounts on the ferocious lion. She is depicted with four hands which carries six-headed infant *Kartikeya* i.e. *Skanda* on her lap and presents fearlessness gesture through in right and lotus on her left hands.



Sculpture of *Skandamata* (National Museum, 2019, p. 43).

The above presented image of *Skandamata* belongs to 17th century CE. It is displayed in the terracotta section of National Museum which is slightly different what the iconographic features are mentioned above. According to the records of National Museum it is

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measured 66 cm and 50 cm in length and breadth respectively (National Museum, 2019, p. 43). Goddess *Skandamata* is standing on the two demons keeping her mount peacock on the middle. She is sculptured with four heads and twelve hands as well. In this figure, the upper right hand of *Skandamata* rising on the chest level and holds a demon skull whereas other holds sword, arrow, bell, rosary bead and remaining last one holds a bundle of hair of an evil. Similarly, upper left hand is taking into the chest level and presenting fearlessness posture while other carries shield, bow, hand axe, rope and remaining last one is holding a bundle of hair of an evil. Ornaments, garments and other features of the goddess remained same with the features of *Shailaputri*.

Katyayani

Once upon a time for the aim of performing duties of the Gods, goddess *Parvati* incarnated herself as the form of beautiful baby on the hermitage of sage *Katyayan*. Sage *Katyayan* enamored through the beauty of the lady. Then he adopted her as the daughter (Pokharel, 2077, p. 101). Later on *Katyayani* is known as the daughter of sage *Katyayan* and venerated as the goddess of destroy demon *Mahishasura*. She represents *Parvati* in her warrior stage. When the Gods invoked *Mahashakti* to protect them from demon *Mahishasura*, *Parvati* materialized from a sacrificial fire in the avatar of a ten armed Goddess, who is then known the world over as She is that incarnation of a woman who shows that she is not vulnerable when the question of protecting her is brought up, as even she can also protect men oftentimes. According to *Devi Mahatmya* (one of the Hindu Scriptures), it is believed that devotion to and worship of Goddess *Katyayani* lead to the easy attainment of virtues, prosperity, sensual pleasure, and salvation (*dharma-artha-kaama-moksha*) (<https://english.onlinekhabar.com, retrieved 10/5/2021>). She is worshipped on the sixth day of *Navaratra* festival.

As mentioned by the iconography *Katyayani* is of a molten gold complexion, with three staring eyes and a relaxing face. She is adorned by heavy ornamentation on her limbs and is dressed in green and pink vestments. She mounts on the magnificent lion with four hands. She carries lotus flower and sword in her left hands respectively and keeps her right hands *Abhaya* or fearlessness and *Varadamudras* blessing gesture.



Sculpture of *Katyayani* (National Museum, 2019, p. 43).

The above presented sculpture of *Katyayani* is belonged to 17th century CE. It is displayed in the terracotta section of National Museum which is slightly different what the iconographic features are mentioned above. The records of National Museum informed

that this sculpture is measured 60 cm and 45 cm in length and breadth respectively (National Museum, 2019, p. 43). Goddess *Katyayani* is standing on the two demons keeping another one in the middle. She is sculptured with four heads and twelve hands as well. In this figure, the upper right hand of *Katyayani* rising on the chest level and holds a demon skull and next one also raised into the shoulder with rosary bead whereas other holds sword, arrow, bell and remaining last one attacking to the demon laying on the middle by a huge trident. Similarly, upper left hand is taking into the chest level and presenting fearlessness posture and the weapon of next one is not seem clearly while other carries shield, bow, rope and remaining last one is holding a bundle of hair of an evil. In this figure goddess wear special huge skull garland on the neck and other ornaments and garments of the goddess remained same with the features of *Shailaputri*.

Kalaratri

Kalaratri represents *Parvati* in her phase of destruction and presents fiercest and the most ferocious form of the mother goddess, in which she manifests to destroy the demons *Sumbha* and *Nisumbha*. She is called the Goddess of time and death because she is above and beyond its reign as she controls the time in which someone's death arrives and she is beyond darkness (Pokharel, 2077, p. 101). She is also that aspect of a woman who is constantly enraged by injustices and fights them to save society as she is aggressive and can bring about destruction when her threshold is crossed. It is believed that she always grants her devotees with auspicious results. According to *Durgasaptashati*, a fierce flame of fire emanates from her nose (<https://english.onlinekhabar.com>, retrieved 10/5/2021). She is worshipped on the seventh day of *Navaratra* festival.

According to the iconography *Kalaratri* is of a pitch dark complexion and has a ferocious expression. She is adorned in electric ornamentation on her limbs and is clothed in red and black robes. She has three bloodshot eyes, unkempt hairs, and wears a garland of skulls around her neck, which shone like lightning. She rides on a donkey and depicted with four hands. She carries baby *Skanda* and presents fearlessness gesture through in right and lotus on her left hands. Her right hands are showing the *Abhaya* or fearlessness and *Varadamudras* blessing gesture while a sword and deadly iron hook in her left.



Sculpture of *Kalaratri* (National Museum, 2019, p. 43).

The above presented image of *Kalaratri* is known as one of the important specimen of 17th century CE. It is displayed in the terracotta section of National Museum which is slightly different what the iconographic features are mentioned above. According to the records of National Museum it is measured 66 cm and 46 cm in length and breadth respectively (National Museum, 2019, p. 44). Goddess

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Kalaratri is standing on the two demons. She is sculptured with four heads and twelve hands as well. In this figure, the upper right hand rising on the chest level and holds a demon skull whereas other holds sword, arrow, and bell. Similarly, upper left hand is taking into the chest level and presenting fearlessness posture while other carries shield, bow, rope and one is holding a bundle of demon hair. Remaining last two hands of both sides seem to hitting to the demons by huge two tridents with crossing mode. In this figure goddess wear special huge skull garland on the neck and other ornaments and garments of the goddess remained same with the features of *Shailaputri*.

Mahagauri

Mahagauri represents *Parvati* in her phase of recovery. Goddess *Shailaputri* at the age of sixteen was extremely beautiful and blessed with fair complexion. Once upon a time, due to her black complex, Lord *Mahadev* jokingly called Kali to the goddess *Parvati* which made her displeasure. Immediately she decided to sit extreme meditation with presence. Finally, she gets successes to change black complexion into white adding with extremely beautification. Later on, due to it, she was known as the goddess *Mahagauri* (Pokharel, 2077, p. 101). In this context, another legend mentions that after she embraced her form of Kali, *Parvati* returned to her normal form but with skin as black as night clinging on to her person. On Lord Brahma's direction, she immersed herself in the *Manasarovara* River and came back out afterward, radiant as the moon and shining brilliantly with her white garments and ornaments. This form of *Parvati* was known as the world over by the name of *Mahagauri*. She's also that avatar of a woman who is a homemaker, devoted wife, and a nurturing mother, as she is the only one who is the foundation of a family. Worshipping this goddess is believed to grant forgiveness to sinners (and purify them) and fulfills all the desires of the devotees (<https://english.onlinekhabar.com>, retrieved 10/5/2021). She is worshipped on the eighth day of *Navaratra* festival.

As mentioned by the iconography *Mahagauri* is of a bright white complexion, with three peaceful eyes as well as a calm expression. She is adorned by light white ornamentation on her limbs and is dressed in white clothes. She rides on the white bull with four hands. She carries *trisul* i.e. trident in one the right and depicted the *Abhaya* or fearlessness gesture in the other. Likewise, she holds a *damaru* (double drum) and depicts *kamandalu* in her other left hand.



Sculpture of *Mahagauri* (National Museum, 2019, p. 44).

The afore mentioned image of *Mahagauri* belongs to 17th century CE. It is displayed in the terracotta section of National Museum which is slightly different what the iconographic features are mentioned above. The records of National Museum informed that this sculpture is measured 64 cm and 48 cm in length and breadth respectively (National Museum, 2019, p. 45). Goddess *Mahagauri* is standing on the two demons. She is sculptured with four heads and ten hands as well. In this figure, the upper right hand rising on the chest level and holds a demon skull whereas other holds sword, *Japamal* (prey bead) and bell whereas last on holding a bundle of hair

of the demon. Similarly, upper left hand is taking into the chest level and presenting fearlessness posture while other carries shield, bow, rope and last one is holding a bundle of demon hair. In this figure goddess wear special huge skull garland on the neck and other ornaments and garments of the goddess remained same with the features of *Shailaputri*.

Siddhidatri

Siddhidatri represents *Devi Parvati* in her stage of reaching her highest and supreme form, knowing who she is as she has been established as the complete manifestation of Goddess *Mahashakti*, thus reaching her status of becoming a Goddess. *Siddhidatri* is known as goddess of *Adi Parasakti*. In the beginning of the universe Lord *Rudra*, worshipped the unman fest form of the mother goddess, *Adi Prarashakti* for the creation. She has all the supernatural powers and is one with Lord Shiva as *Ardhanarishwara*. She's that avatar of a woman that represents the very source of life and provides education, teaching skills, and discipline into her kids. It is believed that Goddess *Siddhidharti* bestows her devotees with all kinds of supernatural powers (*siddhi*). As per *Markandeya Purana*, there are eight types of *siddhis* that include *adhima*, *mahima*, *garima*, *laghima*, *prapti*, *prakamya*, *ishitvo* and *vishitvo* (<https://english.onlinekhabar.com>, retrieved 10/5/2021). She is worshipped on the ninth day of *Navaratra* festival.

According to the iconography *Siddhidhatri* is of a fair complexion, with three content eyes as well as a calm mien. She is adorned by light ornamentation on her limbs and was dressed in red and blue vestments. She is seated upon a fully bloomed lotus flower and rides on the lion with four hands. She carries *Gada* and Chakra in the right and lotus flower and *Shankha* on her left hands.



Sculpture of *Siddhidatri* (National Museum, 2019, p. 44).

The above presented image belongs to *Siddhidatri* of 17th century CE which is displayed in the terracotta section of National Museum. It is slightly different what the iconographic features are mentioned above. According to the records of National Museum it is measured 44 cm and 53 cm in length and breadth respectively (National Museum, 2019, p. 45). Goddess *Siddhidatri* is standing on the two demons and laying another one in the middle. She is sculptured with four heads and eight hands as well. In this figure, the upper right hand rising on the chest level and presenting fearlessness posture whereas other holds sword, bell and whereas last one is hitting by huge trident an evil of the middle part. Similarly, upper left hand is taking into the chest level holds a demon skull while other carries shield, bow, and hand axe. Ornaments, garments and other features of the goddess remained same with the features of *Shailaputri*.

Major features of the Sculptures

The terracotta sculptures of the Kathmandu Valley executed during the Malla period are of completely different style. There marked influence of contemporary stone art in the terracotta sculptures fashioned after the fourteenth century (Pandey, 1981-82, p. 10). But, in this respect some scholars believed that the terracotta art of medieval period seemed to observe influence like a copy pest of the stone sculpture of that period (Chhetry & Rayamajhi, 2056, p. 191). During the medieval period for making terracotta art objects artists have used especially *Gathicha*, *Pancha*, *Hakucha* and *Gija* types of clay-lumps (Rajbhandari, 1989, p.22).

As per the Hindu religion clay is the most important medium for molding the images. *Kalikagam* a Hindu religious scripture mentions that the clay of holy rivers and the top of the hills is highly preferable for molding the terracotta sculptures (Rao, 1985, p. 76). Similarly, Vidhyaswor *Samhita* of *Shiva Puran* gives emphasize to the clay of rivers, lakes and ponds for the creation of images (Dange, 1987, p. 875). Likewise, *Samrangana Sutradhara* mentions that the clay of ponds, water wells, rivers and the clay associated with the roots of the plants are considered more pure and prosperous for molding the terracotta sculptures (Bhattacharya, 1963, p. 43). The creators used exceptionally good, quality of clay and by means of a system of firing which produce a hard, smooth, shell-like surface, their masonry seems to defy all weathers besides displaying a most artistic coloring (Pandey, 1981-82, p. 12).

All these sculptures seem to mould similar manner. According to *Mahankal Samhita* these sculptures belong to *Bhadrakali Kalpa*. *Bhadrakali Kalpa* denotes the worshipping period of goddesses *Navadurga* which started from *Asminsukla Pratipada* and remains till to *Asminsukla Nawami* (Shrestha, 2066, p. 60). During the medieval period the clay objects were fully burnt in the fire. The baking was done within a brick structure, where the images were laid down on a straw pile and burnt smoothly for about a day and night (Pandey, 1981-82, p. 12). Thus, it is believed that the sculptures of goddesses *Navadurga* might be burnt similar manner as mentioned above. It is considered an important specimen where the images of *Shailaputri*, *Brahmacharini*, *Chandraghanta*, *Kusmanda*, *Skandamata* and *Siddhadatri* have been displayed. This is probably the first terracotta sculptures in Nepal which collectively display in national museum has revealed and examined the following features:

- Each sculpture has four heads, three on the bottom and one on the top layers depicting overlapping or superimposing with each others.
- Artists gave high priority to make beautification to obverse side then the reverse one which makes the sculptures facial oriented.
- Every image has decorated nimbus and head crown which helps to add the aesthetic beauty of the sculptures.
- Every sculpture has big eye bolls looks like terrific in nature which makes the images very ferocious.
- There seems multi heads and hands, maximum use of ornaments on the ears, neck, waist, wrist, and arms in the sculptures which indicate high tantric influence on the work of art.
- To left very few, ornaments, dresses and dress up of the sculptures observe very similar with each other.

- On the sculptures of *Shailaputri*, *Brahmacharini*, *Chandraghanta*, *Kusmanda*, *Skandamat* and *Siddhadatri* there is absence of skull garland while *Katyayani*, *Kalaratri* and *Mahagauri* do have such beads on the neck.
- To left very few regarding on size, forms and features all sculptures look like similar in nature and technology.
- To left very few, standing position, hands gesture and facial expressions of the sculptures also observe similar with each others.
- Lotus pedestal is seemed common platform of all sculptures.
- The images reveal that artists' select high quality of clay during the molding of the sculptures.
- All the sculptures are observed fully burnt objects.
- To left very few like heads and hands, all portions are seemed well preserve and conserve.
- The sculptures suggest that there is lack of adequate application and proper attention of the rules of iconographic sciences while creating them.
- Well representative specimens of religious and mythological legends especially the philosophy of goddesses *Navadurga*.
- This work of art represents the transformation of terracotta craftsmanship through the ages.
- It presents *Shailaputri*, *Brahmacharini*, *Chandraghanta*, *Kusmanda*, *Skandamata*, *Katyayani*, *Kalaratri*, *Mahagauri* and *Siddhadatri* as the goddesses belonged to Navadurga cult.
- Artists provide in depth artistic features while molding the sculptures.
- The artistic appeal and aesthetic emotions of the sculptures suggest that these are the master pieces and illustrative terracotta objects of 17th century CE of Nepal.
- As whole the sculptures prove without any doubt the fact of high and skillful quality, knowledge, technology and excellent terracotta workmanship of the artists' of late medieval period.

Illustrative Terracotta Art Heritage

Clay is very easily available thing which can found everywhere in different forms. It is also considered as an easily molding material for the purpose of art creation and craftsmanship. Artists can mould different shape and size to the clay according to their requirements. Therefore, clay was used as the construction material for creation of art objects from the very early. In this context Pandey (1981-82, p. 1) writes that:

As clay was freely available everywhere and with a slight touch of figures it could be easily molded to any shape, since beginning of Neolithic age. The people of Neolithic period frequently used it to make various kinds of utensils of their domestic use and figurines of human beings, the deities and the animals. Terracotta formed the most popular medium not only of the artistic expression but also for personal ornaments like beads, bangles and rings documentations like sealing's, children's toys and objects of domestic and ritualistic needs.

Terracotta in its varied uses and applications, thus affords us an idea of not only the artistic attainments of the people, but about their life and culture, and fashions of times in respect of dress, coiffures and jewellery (Mitra, 1972, p 100). The art and images of terracotta were started to be made in this sub-continent from the Indus Valley Civilization i.e. 2500 B.C., where there find the figurines depicting a wide range of subjects of human, animal and plant life (HMG, 1996, p. 100). According to *Markandeya Puran* as the other forms of art the sculpture of terracotta of goddess *Durga* has been molded from the Epic Period in Indian subcontinent (Agrawal, 1977, p. 321).

In Nepal, there can be find the terracotta images and dolls of 3rd to 2nd century BC from the archaeological sites of *Lumbini Zone*. The archaeological findings especially broken pieces of utensils, female figures, animal's figures, small dolls and other objects of *Lumbini*, *Kapilvastu* and *Banjarah* from Western Nepal are recognized as the authentic evidences to prove and trace the antiquity of terracotta workmanship of 3rd century BC (Rajbandari, 1989, p.16).

During the Lichchhavi period the Kathmandu Valley did the high priority as stone sculpture to the terracotta as well. The Lichchhavi inscription of 495 AD of *Patan Sankhamul Sikubahi* denotes the terracotta image of goddess Matrika, which is an authentic evidence to prove the tradition of moulding terracotta images in Lichchhavi period (Vajracharya, 2030, p. 211). The excavation of 1966 of *Dhumbarahi* and its findings like the figures of lion, elephant, horse, cow, buffalo belonged to 7th to 8th century CE (Banarjee, 1966, p. 28). Similarly, from the excavation of *Handigaon* the figures *Umamaheswor*, *Kuber*, a dancing couple, lion, elephant, horse and different types of utensils of Lichchhavi period have been discovered (Thapa, 2027, pp. 15-17; in Chhetry & Rayamajhi, 2056, p. 191).

Medieval period was prosperous era for the creation of terracotta figurines and domestic uses utensils. *Mahabuddha* temple of Patan, built in the thirteenth century CE by Abhayaraj Vajracharya on of the model of the *Bodhagaya* temple of Lord Buddha (Pandey (1981-82, p. 9). The temple entirely made of bricks is known as one of the excellent illustration of terracotta workmanship of early medieval Nepal. Each brick of its outer surface has the representation of a Buddha image; therefore, it calls as the temple of 'One Thousand Buddha Image' (Bernier, 1970, 91).

The image of *Dipankar* Buddha NS 502, find from *Itumbahal* is known as the oldest medieval terracotta sculpture of Nepal. Similarly, *Achhobhya* Buddha of Kathmandu *Mahavihar*, *Surashree Mahavihar*, *Ombahal*, *Maitreya* Buddha of *Yamaleswor Vihar*, *Amitabha* Buddha of *Patan Mahabuddha Vihar*, head of *Chamunda* and *Virupaksha* of *Patan Metal Work Museum* are known significant terracotta objects of medieval period (Chhetry & Rayamajhi, 2056, p. 191). The images of *Vishnu*, *Varun*, *Varaha*, *Kuber*, and *Durga* of *Dathu* temple of *Ranipokhari*, *Baban Bhairav*, *Matsya Avatar Vishnu* and *Navadurga* of national museum, the figures of *Shiva*, *Parvati*, *Vishnu Laxmi*, *Ganesh*, *Bhairav*, *Astamatrika*, *Varaha* and *Surya* of *Taleju Temple* of *Hanumandhoka*, *Anantanarayan Vishnu* of *Aryaghat* are also mentionable terracotta sculptures of Malla period (Pandey, 1981-82, pp. 10-11).

In this respect, the images of goddesses *Matrika* and *Bhairav* of *Chandeswori Banepa* are also known as the noteworthy terracotta sculptures of medieval period (Rajbandari, 1989, pp. 22-23). The images of *Nagas* and the *Naginis* of national museum are recognized as the art objects of Shah Period (Chhetry & Rayamajhi, 2056, p. 191). The tradition of moulding and creating terracotta sculptures and utensils still remaining into existence and practices in present day in society.

The above mentioned sculptures are equally important own to show the advance artistic knowledge, technology, skill and craftsmanship of the artists. Still, rest of them, the art appealing and aesthetic emotions, well representative specimens of religious and mythological legends, selection of high quality of clay, in depth artistic features while molding the sculptures, well combination of different physical portions and findings features mentioned above are the major indicators and measuring tools which can well judged and recognized the figures of *Navadurga* of national museum as the wonderful, illustrative and representative terracotta work of art of seventeenth century of Nepal.

Conclusion

Shaktism is a religious sect which gives high priority and emphasizes to worship the goddesses as the sources of supreme power. It was already existed from the prehistoric culture in the world. In eastern society and culture the practice of goddess worship was also evolved from the Vedic period. There are mainly four sub-sects such as *Saptamatrika*, *Asthamatrika*, *Navadurga* and *Dasa Mahabidhya* have come into existence within it. Among them, the tradition of goddess *Navadurga* worship seems very popular. As

per the Pauranic literatures *Shailaputri*, *Brahmacharini*, *Chandraghanta*, *Kusmanda*, *Skandamata*, *Katyayani*, *Kalaratri*, *Mahagauri* and *Siddhadatri* belonged to *Navadurga* family.

There are nine terracotta sculptures of goddesses *Navadurga* in national museum through the religious, craftsmanship and cultural perspectives these are considered significant specimens. This beautiful art objects created during the regime of the King *Jitmitra Malla* (1673-1696 A.D.) of Bhaktapur. Each sculpture has four heads, three on the bottom and one on the top layers depicting overlapping or superimposing with each others, there seems multi heads and hands, maximum use of ornaments, lotus pedestal is seemed common platform, used high quality of clay, fully burnt, represents religious and mythological legends, artistic appeal and aesthetic emotions, high and skillful quality, knowledge, technology and excellent terracotta workmanship of the artists are the major features of the sculptures. On the basis of the features, the sculptures of goddesses *Navadurga* of national museum can be judged and measured as the wonderful, illustrative and representative terracotta work of seventeenth century of Nepal.

Acknowledgement

This paper entitled Sculptures of 'Navadurga of National Museum: Illustrative Terracotta Art of Nepal' deals with the terracotta sculptures of Navadurga of national museum. During the field study researcher has got plenty of help from the chief and other office staffs of national museum, hence I would like to express my sincere acknowledgement to the Museum, Jaya Ram Shrestha, chief of the museum, Bhesraj Neupane, Yamuna Maharjana, Udesch Lal Shrestha, Sarmila Upreti, Rajesh Pariyar and other staffs for their cooperation.

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