

= Chhinnamasta =

Chhinnamasta (Sanskrit : चिन्नामस्ता , Chinnamastā , " She whose head is severed ") , often spelled Chinnamasta , and also called Chhinnamastika and Prachanda Chandika , is one of the Mahavidyas , ten Tantric goddesses and a ferocious aspect of Devi , the Hindu Divine Mother . Chhinnamasta can be easily identified by her unusual iconography . The nude self @-@ decapitated goddess , usually standing or seated on a copulating couple , holds her own severed head in one hand , a scimitar in another . Three jets of blood spurt out of her bleeding neck and are drunk by her severed head and two attendants .

Chhinnamasta is a goddess of contradictions . She symbolises both aspects of Devi : a life @-@ giver and a life @-@ taker . She is considered both a symbol of sexual self @-@ control and an embodiment of sexual energy , depending upon interpretation . She denotes death , temporality and destruction as well as life , immortality and recreation . The goddess conveys spiritual self @-@ realization and the awakening of the kundalini ? spiritual energy . The legends of Chhinnamasta emphasise her self @-@ sacrifice ? sometimes coupled with a maternal element ? sexual dominance , and self @-@ destructive fury .

Though Chhinnamasta enjoys patronage as part of the Mahavidyas , her individual temples ? mostly found in Eastern India and Nepal ? and individual public worship by lay worshippers are rare . However , she remains a popular Tantric deity , worshipped by Tantrikas , yogis and world renouncers .

Chhinnamasta is recognised by both Hindus and Buddhists . She is closely related to Chinnamunda ? the severed @-@ headed form of the Tibetan Buddhist goddess Vajrayogini .

= = Origins = =

Chhinnamasta is popular in Tantric and Tibetan Buddhism , where she is called Chinnamunda (" she with the severed head ") . Chinnamunda is the severed @-@ head form of goddess Vajrayogini (or Vajravahini , a ferocious form of Vajrayogini) , who is depicted similarly .

Buddhist texts recount the birth of the Buddhist Chinnamunda . One tale tells of Krishnacharya 's disciples , two Mahasiddha sisters , Mekhala and Kankhala , who cut their heads , offered them to their guru , and then danced . The goddess Vajrayogini also appeared in this form and danced with them . Another story recalls how princess Lakshminkara , who was a previous incarnation of a devotee of Padmasambhava , cut off her head as a punishment from the king and roamed with it in the city , where citizens extolled her as Chinnamunda @-@ Vajravahini .

In the early decades of the 20th century , the scholar B. Bhattacharyya studied various texts such as the Buddhist Sadhanamala (1156 CE) , the Hindu Chhinnamastakalpa , and the Tantrasara (late 16th century) . He determined that the Hindu Chhinnamasta and Buddhist Chinnamunda were the same goddess , in spite of the fact that the former wears a serpent as a sacred thread and has an added Rati @-@ Kamadeva couple in the icon . In the Sadhanamala , the goddess is called Sarvabuddha (" all @-@ awakened ") , and is attended by Vajravaironi and Vajravarini ; in the Hindu Tantrasara , she is called Sarvasiddhi (" all @-@ accomplished ") , and is accompanied by attendants Dakini , Vaironi , and Varnini . In the Chhinnamastakalpa , she is called Sarvabuddhi (" all @-@ enlightened ") ; her attendants retain their Buddhist names . Bhattacharyya concluded that the Hindu Chhinnamasta originated from the Buddhist Chinnamunda , who was worshipped by at least the 7th century .

While Bhattacharyya 's view is mostly undisputed , some scholars such as Shankaranarayanan attribute Chhinnamasta to Vedic (ancient Hindu) antecedents . S. Bhattacharji says that the Vedic goddess Nirrti 's functions were inherited by Kali , Chamunda , Karali , and Chhinnamasta . Hindu literature first mentions her in the upapurana Shakta Maha @-@ bhagavata Purana (c . 950 CE) and Devi @-@ Bhagavata Purana . Elizabeth A. Benard says that whatever her origins may be , it is clear that Chhinnamasta / Chinnamunda was known in the 9th century and worshipped by Mahasiddhas . Though essentially agreeing with Bhattacharyya 's view , Karel R. van Kooij goes further and associates the iconography of Chhinnamasta with the Tantric goddesses Varahi and

Chamunda .

David Kinsley agrees with the Buddhist origin theory , but sees other influences , too . According to Kinsley , the concept of ten Mahavidyas cannot be earlier than the 12th century . Ancient Hindu goddesses , who are depicted nude and headless or faceless , may have also influenced the development of Chhinnamasta . These goddesses are mainly depicted headless to focus on the display of their sexual organs , thus signifying sexual vigour , but they do not explain the self @-@ decapitation theme . The beheading and rejoining motif also appears in the tale of the goddess Renuka .

Other Hindu goddesses which might have inspired Chhinnamasta are the malevolent war goddess Kotavi and the South @-@ Indian hunting goddess Korravai . Kotavi , sometimes described as a Matrika (" mother goddess ") , is nude , dishevelled , wild , and awful in appearance . She is mentioned in the scriptures Vishnu Purana and Bhagavata Purana , often as a foe of the god Vishnu . The ferocious , wild Korravai is the goddess of war and victory . Both goddesses are linked to battlefields ; Chhinnamasta is not . Kinsley points out that while there are several bloodthirsty , nude , and wild goddesses and demonesses in Hindu mythology , Chhinnamasta is the only goddess who displays the shocking self @-@ decapitation motif .

= = Legends and textual references = =

Chhinnamasta is often named as the fifth or sixth Mahavidya , with hymns identifying her as a fierce aspect of Devi , the Supreme Goddess . Kinsley says three Mahavidyas ? Kali , Tara , and Chhinnamasta ? are prominent among Mahavidya depictions and lists , but that Chhinnamasta , whose individual worship is rare , barely has an independent existence outside the group . The Guhyatiguhya @-@ Tantra equates god Vishnu 's ten avatars with the ten Mahavidyas ; the man @-@ lion incarnation Narasimha is described to have arisen from Chhinnamasta . A similar list in Mundamala equates Chhinnamasta with Parshurama .

Chhinnamasta appears in two distinct set of legends : the origin myths of Mahavidyas as a group and those explaining the genesis of Chhinnamasta as an individual goddess .

= = = Mahavidyas as a group = = =

In a story from the Shakta Maha @-@ Bhagavata Purana and the Brihaddharma Purana , which narrates the creation of all Mahavidyas including Chhinnamasta , Sati , the daughter of Daksha and the first wife of the god Shiva , feels insulted that she and Shiva are not invited to Daksha 's yagna (" fire sacrifice ") and insists on going there , despite Shiva 's protests . After futile attempts to convince Shiva , the enraged Sati assumes a fierce form , transforming into the Mahavidyas , who surround Shiva from the ten cardinal directions . As per the Shakta Maha @-@ bhagavata Purana , Chhinnamasta stands to the right of Shiva , interpreted as the east or the west ; the Brihaddharma Purana describes her as appearing to the rear of Shiva in the west .

Similar legends replace Sati with Parvati , the second wife of Shiva and reincarnation of Sati or Kali , the chief Mahavidya , as the wife of Shiva and origin of the other Mahavidyas . While Parvati uses the Mahavidyas to stop Shiva from leaving her father 's house , Kali enlightens him and stops him , who was tired of living with her , from leaving her .

The Devi Bhagavata Purana also mentions the Mahavidyas as war @-@ companions and forms of the goddess Shakambhari .

= = = As an individual goddess = = =

The Pranotasani Tantra narrates two tales of Chhinnamasta 's birth . One legend , attributed to the Narada @-@ pancharatra , tells how once , while bathing in Mandakini river , Parvati becomes sexually excited , and turns black . At the same time , her two female attendants Dakini and Varnini (also called Jaya and Vijaya) become extremely hungry and beg for food . Though Parvati initially promises to give them food once they return home , the merciful goddess beheads herself with her

nails and gives her blood to satisfy their hunger . Later , they return home after Parvati rejoins her head .

The other version , from the Pranotasani Tantra and attributed to Svatantra @-@ tantra , is narrated by Shiva . He recounts that his consort Chandika (identified with Parvati) was engrossed in coitus with him in reverse posture , but became enraged at his seminal emission . Her attendants Dakini and Varnini rose from her body . The rest of the tale is similar to the earlier version , although the river is called Pushpabhadra , the day of Chhinnamasta 's birth is called Viraratri , and upon seeing the pale Parvati , Shiva becomes infuriated and assumes the form of Krodha Bhairava . This version is retold in the Shaktisamgama @-@ tantra , in which Chinnamasta forms a triad with Kali and Tara .

An oral legend tells how the goddess Prachanda @-@ Chandika appeared to aid the gods in the god @-@ demon war , when the gods prayed to the Great Goddess Mahashakti . After slaying all demons , the enraged goddess cut off her own head and drank her own blood . The name Prachanda @-@ Chandika also appears as a synonym of Chhinnamasta in her hundred @-@ name hymn in the Shakta @-@ pramoda . Another oral legend relates her to the Samudra manthan (Churning of the Ocean) episode , where the gods and demons churned the milk ocean to acquire the amrita (the elixir of immortality) . Chhinnamasta drank the demons ' share of the elixir and then beheaded herself to prevent them from acquiring it .

The central themes of the mythology of Chhinnamasta are her self @-@ sacrifice ? with a maternal aspect (in the Pranotasani Tantra versions) or for the welfare of the world (in the Samudra manthan oral version described above) ? her sexual dominance (second Pranotasani Tantra version) , and her self @-@ destructive fury (in the first oral legend) .

= = Iconography = =

The iconography of Chinnamasta is described in the Tantrasara (late 16th century ; Prachandachandika section) , the Trishakti Tantra , the Shakta @-@ pramoda (19th century ; Chinnamastatantra section) , and the Mantramahodadhi (1589 CE) .

Chhinnamasta is described as being as red as the hibiscus flower or as bright as a million suns . She is usually depicted as red or orange in complexion and sometimes as black . She is depicted mostly nude ; however , she is so posed that her genitals are generally hidden or a multi @-@ hooded cobra or jewellery around the waist covers them . She is depicted as being young and slim . She is described as a sixteen @-@ year @-@ old girl with full breasts , adorned with lotuses or having a single blue lotus near her heart . Sometimes , she is partially or fully clothed .

The goddess carries her own severed head ? sometimes on a platter or in a skull @-@ bowl ? in her left hand . Though no legend mentions a specific weapon for the beheading , she holds a khatri , a scimitar or knife or scissor @-@ like object in her right hand . Though generally depicted with two arms , manifestations of the goddess with four arms also exist . While her own severed head and the sword appear in two of her hands , the implements in the remaining arms vary : a scissor @-@ like object , a skull @-@ bowl collecting the dripping blood from her head or blood stream from her neck or a severed head , sometimes identified as that of god Brahma .

Chhinnamasta may have a lolling tongue . Her hair is loose and dishevelled and sometimes decorated with flowers . Alternately , in some images , her hair is tied . Additionally , she is described as three @-@ eyed , with a jewel on her forehead , which is tied to a snake or a crown on the severed head . The crescent moon may also adorn her head . Chhinnamasta is depicted wearing a serpent as a sacred thread and a garland of skulls / severed heads and bones , along with other various gold or pearl ornaments around her neck . Bangles and waist @-@ belt ornaments may be also depicted . She may also wear a snake around her neck and serpentine earrings . Three streams of blood spring from her neck , one entering her own mouth , while the others are drunk by her female yogini companions , who flank her .

Both of the attendants ? Dakini to her left and Varnini to her right ? are depicted nude , with matted or dishevelled hair , three @-@ eyed , full @-@ breasted , wearing the serpentine sacred thread and the garland of severed heads , and carrying the skull @-@ bowl in the left hand and the knife in

the right . Sometimes , the attendants also hold severed heads (not their own) . While Dakini is fair , Varnini is red @-@ complexioned . In other depictions , both are depicted blue @-@ grey . Sometimes , her attendants are depicted as skeletons and drinking the dripping blood from Chhinnamasta 's severed head , rather than her neck . The attendants are absent in some depictions .

With her right leg held straight and her left leg bent a little (the pratyaldha stance) , Chhinnamasta stands in a fighting posture on the love @-@ deity couple of Kamadeva (Kama) ? a symbol of sexual lust ? and his wife Rati , who are engaged in copulation with the latter usually on the top (viparita @-@ rati sex position) . Kamadeva is generally blue @-@ complexioned , while Rati is white . Below the couple is a lotus with an inverted triangle , and in the background is a cremation ground . The Chhinnamasta Tantra describes the goddess sitting on the couple , rather than standing on them . Sometimes , Kamadeva @-@ Rati is replaced by the divine couple of Krishna and Radha . The lotus beneath the couple is sometimes replaced by a cremation pyre . The coupling couple is sometimes omitted entirely . Sometimes Shiva ? the goddess 's consort ? is depicted lying beneath Chhinnamasta , who is seated squatting on him and copulating with him . Dogs or jackals drinking the blood sometimes appear in the scene . Sometimes Chhinnamasta is depicted standing on a lotus , a grass patch , or the ground .

Another form of the goddess in the Tantrasara describes her seated in her own navel , formless and invisible . This form is said to be realised only via a trance . Another aniconic representation of the goddess is her yantra , which figures the inverted triangle and lotus found in her iconography .

The scholar van Kooij notes that the iconography of Chhinnamasta has the elements of heroism (vira rasa) and terror (bhayanaka rasa) as well as eroticism (sringara rasa) in terms of the copulating couple , with the main motifs being the offering of her own severed head , the spilling and drinking of blood , and the trampling of the couple .

Chhinnamasta 's popular iconography is similar to the yellow @-@ coloured severed @-@ head form of the Buddhist goddess Vajrayogini , except for the copulating couple ? which is exclusive to the former 's iconography ? and Chhinnamasta 's red skin tone .

= = Symbolism and associations = =

= = = Goddess of paradoxes = = =

Chhinnamasta is a goddess of contradictions : dichotomies of giver and taker , subject and object , and food and eater dissolve in her iconography . Most of her epithets listed in her namastotra (name @-@ hymn) convey marvel and fury ; few names are erotic and peaceful , which are contrary to Chhinnamasta 's fierce nature and appearance . Her thousand name @-@ hymn echoes paradoxes ; she is Prachanda @-@ Chandika (" the powerfully fierce one ") as well as Sarvananda @-@ pradayini (" the prime giver of all ananda or bliss ") . Her names convey the idea that though she is fierce at first appearance , she can be gentle upon worship .

While other fierce Hindu goddesses like Kali depict severing the heads of demons and are associated with ritual self @-@ decapitation , Chhinnamasta 's motif reverses the ritual head @-@ offering , offering her own head to the devotees (attendants) in order to feed them . Thus , she symbolises the aspect of the goddess as a giver , like Annapurna , the goddess of food , and Shakambhari , the goddess of vegetables , or a maternal aspect . The element of self @-@ sacrifice is the symbol of " divine reciprocation " by the deity to her devotees . As a self @-@ sacrificing mother , she symbolises the ideal Indian woman ; however , her sexuality and power are at odds with the archetype . She subdues and takes the life @-@ force of the copulating divine couple , signifying the aspect of the life @-@ taker , like Kali .

Chhinnamasta 's serpentine ornaments indicate asceticism while her youthful nude ornamented body has erotic overtones . Like all Hindu goddesses , she is decked in gold finery , symbol of wealth and fertility .

= = = Destruction , Transformation and Recreation = = =

The scholars P. Pal and H. Bhattacharya equate Chhinnamasta with the concept of sacrifice and renewal of creation . Chhinnamasta sacrifices herself , and her blood ? drunk by her attendants ? nourishes the universe . One invocation to her calls her the sacrifice , the sacrificer , and the recipient of the sacrifice , with the severed head treated as an offering . This paradox signifies the entire sacrificial process , and thus the cycle of creation , dissolution , and re @-@ creation .

Chhinnamasta is " a figure of radical transformation , a great yogini " . She conveys the universal message that all life is sustained by other forms of life , and destruction and sacrifice are necessary for the continuity of creation . The goddess symbolises pralaya (cosmic dissolution) , where she swallows all creation and makes way for new creation , thus conveying the idea of transformation . The Goddess is said to assume the form of Chhinnamasta for destruction of the universe . Chhinnamasta is considered a fearsome aspect of the Goddess and is included among the Kalikula (" family of Kali ") goddesses . She is said to represent Transformation and complements Kali , who stands for Time . Her hundred @-@ name hymn and thousand @-@ name hymn describe her fierce nature and wrath . The names describe her as served by ghosts and as gulping blood . She is pleased by human blood , human flesh , and meat , and worshipped by body hair , flesh , and fierce mantras .

The head offering and subsequent restoration of the head signify immortality . The dichotomy of temporality and immortality is alluded to by the blood stream drunk by Chhinnamasta 's head ? interpreted as amrita (elixir of life) and the serpent , which sheds its skin without dying . The skull and several head garlands signify her victory over Time and fear of Death . Chhinnamasta 's black complexion denotes destruction ; her depiction as red or orange denotes life . By drinking the blood , she appears as the Saviour , who drinks the negativity of the world and transforms it to benevolent energies ; in this interpretation , the blood is seen in negative light rather than amrita .

Chhinnamasta signifies that life , death , and sex are interdependent . Her image conveys the eternal truth that " life feeds on death , is nourished by death , necessitates death , and that the ultimate destiny of sex is to perpetuate more life , which in turn will decay and die in order to feed more life " . While the lotus and the lovemaking couple symbolise life and the urge to create life , giving a life @-@ force to the beheaded goddess , the blood flowing from the goddess conveys death and loss of the life @-@ force , which flows into the mouths of her devotee yoginis , nourishing them .

= = = Self @-@ realization and Awakening of Kundalini = = =

The head is celebrated as a mark of identity as well as source of the seed . Thus , the self @-@ decapitation represents removal of maya (illusion or delusion) , physical attachment , false notions , ignorance , and egoism . The scimitar also signifies severance of these obstacles to moksha (emancipation) , jnana (wisdom) , and self @-@ realization . The goddess also denotes discriminating perception . Chhinnamasta allows the devotee to gain a consciousness that transcends the bonds of physical attachment , the body , and the mind by her self @-@ sacrifice . One interpretation suggests that her three eyes represent the sun , the moon , and fire while another links the third eye to transcendental knowledge . Unlike other Hindu deities who are depicted facing the devotee , Chhinnamasta generally looks at herself , prompting the devotee to look within him- or herself .

The Chhinnamasta icon is also understood as a representation of the awakening of the kundalini ? spiritual energy . The copulating couple represent the awakening in the Muladhara chakra , which corresponds to the last bone in the spinal column . The kundalini flows through the central passage in the body ? the Sushumna nadi and hits the topmost chakra , the Sahasrara at the top of head ? with such force that it blows her head off . The blood spilling from the throat represents the upward @-@ flowing kundalini , breaking all knots (granthis) ? those things which make a person sad , ignorant and weak ? of the chakras . The severed head is " transcendent consciousness " . The three blood streams represent the flow of nectar when the kundalini unites with Shiva , who resides

in the Sahasrara . The serpent in her iconography is also a symbol of the kundalini .

Another interpretation associates Dakini , Varnini , and Chhinnamasta with the three main subtle channels (nadis) ? Ida , Pingala , and Sushumna , respectively ? flowing free . The goddess is generally said to be visualised in one 's navel , the location of the Manipura chakra where the three nadis unite , and symbolises consciousness as well as the duality of creation and dissolution .

The ability to remain alive despite the beheading is associated with supernatural powers and the awakening of the kundalini . The Earl of Ronaldshay (1925) compared Chhinnamasta to India , beheaded by the British , " but nevertheless preserving her vitality unimpaired by drinking her own blood " .

= = = Control over or embodiment of sexual desire = = =

Chhinnamasta standing on a copulating couple of Kamadeva (literally " sexual desire ") and Rati (" sexual intercourse ") is interpreted by some as a symbol of one 's control of sexual desire , while others interpret the goddess as being the embodiment of sexual energy .

Her names , such as Yogini and Madanatura (" one who has control of Kama ") , convey her yogic control over sexual energy . Her triumphant stance trampling the love @-@ deity couple denotes victory over desire and samsara (the cycle of birth , death , and rebirth) .

Images in which Chhinnamasta is depicted sitting on Kamadeva @-@ Rati in a non @-@ suppressive fashion suggest that the couple is giving sexual energy to the goddess . Images where Shiva is depicted in coitus with Chhinnamasta are associated with this interpretation . Chhinnamasta 's names like Kameshwari (" goddess of desire ") and Ratiragavivridhini (" one who is engrossed in the realm of Rati ? [copulation or sexual desire] ") and the appearance of klim ? the common seed syllable of Kamadeva and Krishna ? in her mantra support this interpretation . Her lolling tongue also denotes sexual hunger .

The inverted triangle , found in Chhinnamasta 's iconography as well as in her yantra , signifies the womb (yoni) and the feminine . The goddess is often prescribed to be visualised in the centre of the inverted triangle in the navel . It also signifies the three gunas and three shaktis (powers) ? iccha (" will @-@ power ") , kriya (" action ") , and jnana (wisdom) . The goddess is called Yoni @-@ mudra or Yoni @-@ gamya , accessible through the yoni .

= = = Other symbolism and associations = = =

Chhinnamasta 's nudity and headlessness symbolise her integrity and " heedlessness " . Her names like Ranjaitri (" victorious in war ") celebrate her as the slayer of various demons and her prowess in battle . Her nakedness and dishevelled hair denote rejection of societal values and her rebellious freedom , as well as her sensual aspect .

The triad of the goddess and the two yoginis is also philosophically cognate to the triad of patterns , " which creative energy is felt to adopt " . Besides the nadis , Chhinnamasta , Varnini and Dakini also represent the guna trinity : sattva (purity) , rajas (energy) , and tamas (ignorance) . While discussing Mahavidya as a group , Chhinnamasta is associated with rajas (in the Kamadhenu @-@ Tantra and the Maha @-@ nirvana @-@ Tantra) or sattva (based on her lighter complexion) .

While the goddess is a mature sixteen @-@ year old who has conquered her ego and awakened her kundalini , the attendants are described as spiritually immature twelve @-@ year olds who are sustained on the goddess 's blood and have not become liberated from the delusion of duality . In portrayals where the goddess 's hair is tied like a matron and her attendants have free @-@ flowing hair like young girls , the goddess is treated as a motherly figure of regal authority and power ; the tied hair and headlessness represent contrasting ideas of controlled and uncontrolled nature , respectively .

Chhinnamasta 's association with the navel and her red complexion can be connected to the fire element and the sun while the lotus in her iconography signifies purity .

= = = Worship = = =

While she is easily identified by most Hindus and often worshipped and depicted as part of the Mahavidya group in goddess temples , Chhinnamasta 's individual cult is not widespread . Though her individual temples and public worship of her are rare , Chhinnamasta is an important deity in Tantric worship . She enjoys active worship in eastern India and Nepal . Her individual worship is mainly restricted to heroic Tantric worship by Tantrikas (a type of Tantric practitioner) , yogis , and world renouncers . The lack of worship of Chhinnamasta by lay worshippers is attributed by Kinsley to her ferocious nature and her reputation for being dangerous to approach and worship .

= = = Goals of worship = = =

Tantric practitioners worship Chhinnamasta for acquiring siddhis or supernatural powers . Chhinnamasta 's mantra Srim hrin klim aim Vajravairocaniye hum hum phat svaha is to be invoked to attract and subjugate women . Her mantra associates her with syllables denoting beauty , light , fire , spiritual self @-@ realization , and destruction of delusion . The Shakta @-@ pramoda and the Rudrayamala recommend the use of her mantra to obtain wealth and auspiciousness . Another goal of her worship is to cast spells and cause harm to someone . Acarya Ananda Jha , the author of the Chhinnamasta Tattva , prescribes her worship by soldiers as she embodies self @-@ control of lust , heroic self @-@ sacrifice for the benefit of others , and fearlessness in the face of death . In a collective prayer to the Mahavidyas in the Shakta Maha @-@ bhagavata Purana , the devotee prays to emulate Chhinnamasta in her generosity to others . Other goals common to worship of all Mahavidyas are : poetic speech , well @-@ being , control of one 's foes , removal of obstacles , ability to sway kings , ability to attract others , conquest over other kings , and , finally , moksha (salvation) .

= = = Modes of worship = = =

The Tantric texts Tantrasara , Shakta @-@ pramoda , and Mantra @-@ mahodadhih give details about the worship of Chhinnamasta and other Mahavidyas , including her yantra , mantra and her meditative / iconographic forms (dhyanas) . In her puja , her image or her yantra is worshipped , along with her attendants . The heterodox offerings of Panchamakara ? wine , meat , fish , parched grain , and coitus ? along with mainstream offerings such as flowers , light , incense , etc . , are prescribed for her worship . A fire sacrifice and repetition of her stotra (hymn of praise) or her nama @-@ stotra (name @-@ hymn) are also prescribed in her worship . The Shakta @-@ pramoda has her sahasranama (1000 name @-@ hymn) as well as a compilation of her 108 names in a hymn .

Tantric texts tell the worshipper to imagine a red sun orb ? signifying a yoni triangle ? in his own navel . The popular form of Chhinnamasta is imagined to reside in the orb . The Tantrasara cautions a householder @-@ man to invoke the goddess only in " abstract terms " . It further advises that , if woman invokes Chhinnamasta by her mantra , the woman will become a dakini and lose her husband and son , thereby becoming a perfect yogini . The Shaktisamgama @-@ tantra prescribes her worship only by the left @-@ handed path (Vamamarga) . The Mantra @-@ mahodadhih declares that such worship involves having sexual intercourse with a woman who is not one 's wife . The Shakta @-@ pramoda tells the same , adding fire sacrifices , wine , and meat offerings at night . The best time to propitiate her is said to be the fourth quarter of the evening , that is , midnight .

Some hymns narrate that Chhinnamasta likes blood and thus is offered blood sacrifices at some shrines . The Shaktisamgama @-@ tantra says that only brave souls (viras) should follow Vamamarga worship to the goddess . The Shakta @-@ pramoda warns that improper worship will have severe consequences : Chhinnamasta would behead such a person and drink his blood . It further stipulates that worship of Chhinnamasta is to be followed by householders and renouncers . The Todala Tantra mentions that Shiva or his fierce form , Bhairava , be worshipped as Kabandha (" headless trunk ") as the goddess 's consort in her worship .

Chhinnamasta is often worshipped at midnight along with the other Mahavidyas at Kali Puja , the

festival of Kali . However , householders are cautioned not to worship her . The Bakhraabad area of Cuttack district and the 86 Palli pandal of Kolkata have unique traditions of worshipping Chinnamasta , instead of Kali , on Kali Puja .

= = = Temples = = =

The Chintpurni (" She who fulfills one 's wishes ") , Himachal Pradesh temple of Chhinnamastika , is one of the Shakti Peethas and is where the goddess Sati 's forehead (mastaka) fell . Here , Chhinnamasta is interpreted as the severed @-@ headed one as well as the foreheaded @-@ one . The central icon is a pindi , an abstract form of the Goddess . While householders worship the goddess as a form of the goddess Durga , ascetic sadhus view her as the Tantric severed @-@ headed goddess .

Another important shrine is the Chhinnamasta Temple near Rajrappa in Jharkhand , where a natural rock covered with an ashtadhatu (eight @-@ metal alloy) kavacha (cover) is worshipped as the goddess . Though well @-@ established as a centre of Chhinnamasta by the 18th century , the site is a popular place of worship among tribals since ancient times . Kheer and animal sacrifice are offered to the goddess .

A shrine dedicated to Chhinnamasta was built by a Tantric sadhu in the Durga Temple complex , Ramnagar , near Varanasi , Uttar Pradesh , where tantrikas worship her using corpses . Kanpur , Uttar Pradesh , has a shrine of the goddess that is open only three days a year , around Chaitra Navaratri . There are Chhinnamasta shrines on the hill in Nandan Parvat near Deoghar (Vaidyanath) and Bishnupur , West Bengal . Her shrine is also situated in the Kamakhya Temple complex , Assam , along with other Mahavidyas . In Bengal , Chinnamasta is a popular goddess . The goddess Manikeswari , a popular goddess in Odisha , is often identified with Chhinnamasta .

Chhinnamasta 's shrines are also found in Nepal 's Kathmandu Valley . A shrine in the Changu Narayan Temple holds a 13th @-@ century icon of Chinnamasta . A chariot festival in the Nepali month of Baishakh is held in honour of the goddess . In the fields near the temple sits a small shrine to Chhinnamasta . A temple of the goddess in Patan built in 1732 contains her images in different postures and enjoys active worship .