
A Cross-Cultural Study on the Mythology and Iconography of Goddess Pratyangira

Sanjay S.¹

¹. Department of Archaeology, University of Kerala, Kariavattom Campus, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala – 695 581, India (Email: Sanjaysankar1399@gmail.com)

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Abstract: *The worship of the mother goddess, embodying procreation, fertilization, and preservation, is an ancient and pervasive theme in religious traditions. Pratyāṅgirā, primarily a Hindu Tāntrik goddess, extends her presence into esoteric Buddhism and late medieval Jainism. While her mythology is rooted in Atharva Vedic and Puranic literature, her status as a Tāntrik deity is underscored by the centrality of mantras and yantras in her worship, distinguishing it from icono-centric practices. Despite her ancient origins, artistic depictions of Pratyāṅgirā emerged significantly later in history. The surge in her popularity and worship, particularly in Tamil Nādu and other parts of southern India, signifies a pronounced shift. This emphasizes not only the goddess's enduring relevance across diverse religious frameworks but also the evolving nature of her worship, transitioning from ancient roots to more contemporary and region-specific manifestations.*

Keywords: Pratyāṅgirā, Hindu Goddess, Tāntrik Deity, Mythology, Iconography, Sculptures, Devotional Practices

Introduction

Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* in Hinduism, is depicted with a fearsome visage, featuring a male lion's facial attributes while being seated on a similarly formidable lion. Her sculptures, often four-handed but occasionally with up to eighteen hands, are situated in modern Hindu temples. Sectarian divisions within Hinduism—*Śaiva*, *Vaiṣṇava*, and *Śākta*—shape her worship practices, with devotees attempting to categorize her within a specific sect. This study explores the mythology and iconography of Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* across Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, offering insights into the dissemination of religious concepts. It aims to understand how deities transform to meet the requirements of distinct religions. Given the current surge in the goddess's worship, clarifying her origins and mythology is crucial to counteract misinformation. The research began with on-site visits to *Pratyāṅgirā* temples in Chennai, unravelling the deity's increasing popularity. Primary data encompassed surveys of temples in Tamil Nādu and Kerala, coupled with photographs from temples in southern India. Google and Google Maps facilitated locating temples, and the Oriental Research Institute and Manuscript Library at the University of Kerala provided access to

previously untranslated manuscripts. Secondary sources involved English translations of Purāṇic, Agamic, and Tāntrik texts, as well as unpublished theses and oral accounts from temple priests.

The Mythology and Mentions of Goddess Pratyāṅgirā in Hinduism

In Purāṇic Literature: The term *Pratyāṅgirā* first appears in the Puranic literature, notably in the Agni Purāṇa (314. 18-22), where it is initially associated with ritualistic practices rather than introduced as a distinct deity. In this context, Lord *Agni* instructs the construction of a yantra named *Pratyāṅgirā* within the wheel of *Rudra*, designed for the worship of Goddess *Tvaritā*, a form of *Pārvatī*. The yantra comprises eleven chambers, and its corresponding mantra is intended to achieve various objectives, showcasing the intricate ritualistic and symbolic practices found in ancient texts (Shastri et.al, 1988).

Additionally, the Garuda Purāṇa (Ācāra Kāṇḍa, 20.29) mentions *Pratyāṅgirā* in the context of remedies for snake bites, highlighting the use of the root of *Pratyāṅgirā*, identified as *Acacia Lebbec* or *Sirisha* (Figure 1), in treating snake bites and related conditions (Dutt, 1908). The therapeutic treatise Cakradatta from the 11th century C.E. lists *Pratyāṅgirā* as a significant vegetable substance, likely referring to *Acacia Lebbec* or *Sirisha* (Frosten & Groningen, 2000).



Figure 1: Acacia Lebbec or Sirisha (Courtesy: Wikipedia)

The term *Pratyāṅgirā* is seen subsequently evolving into one of the epithets or aspects of the Supreme mother goddess in the Śākta tradition. In the Brahmanda Purāṇa's *Lalitopakhyanam* section (*Lalita-Stuti* by *Brahmā* and Others), *Pratyāṅgirā* is mentioned among other Śāktis, emphasizing her connection to the powerful *Lalita*, the Queen of the Worlds (Natha, 1997).

Moreover, the *Devī Purāṇa*, a *Śākta Upapurāṇa*, provides the oldest reference to the worship procedure for Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā*, prescribing offerings and ritual specifics. Chapter thirty-nine outlines rituals involving offerings of fish, meat, and wine in the worship of *Kṣemaṅkari*, introducing *Pratyāṅgirā* as part of the ritual. The text specifies that the priest conducting the worship after the *Kula-mārga* should not be a *Naiṣṭhika brahmacārin* or one who has rejected the Vedas (Hazra, 1963).

In the Ancillary Atharvavedic Literature: Two Orissan palm leaf manuscripts categorized as *Āngirasa* (Atharvavedīya) in the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, contain the *Āngirasakalpa* or *Abhicārakalpa*, an ancillary text of the Atharvaveda. These undated manuscripts describe rituals sponsored by a king to subjugate enemies, emphasizing the duties of honouring officiants. The first text provides instructions for worshipping the 2000-armed Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* to ward off hostile spells (*Kṛtyā*) of enemies, referring to her as *Mahākṛtyā*, the lion-faced Goddess invoked for destroying enemies (ff. 110r4–111v3). The second text then outlines a rite to kill enemies using a *kṛtyāmantra*, invoking *Pratyāṅgirā Mahākālī* visualized as furious and 20-armed along with her *Śaktis*, including *Vārāhī*, *Indrānī*, and *Candikā* (ff. 63v2–64r4).

Interestingly in many of the modern Hindu temples for the Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* the Icons of *Vārāhī* will be preceding or seen along with her. When asked about this, the priests in Tamil Nādu attested that since *Pratyāṅgirā* was associated with fighting and warfare, *Vārāhī* was supposed to be the commander-in-chief of her army and the mention of her being the *Śakti* of *Pratyāṅgirā* in this text gives some basis for their claim.

Additionally, the *Bhavrichopanishad* (Verse 8), a *Śākta Upaniṣad* under the Atharvaveda, identifies *Pratyāṅgirā* as *Śrīmahātripurasundarī* with a hymn containing fifteen letters, linking her to primordial cosmic energy. Although these texts are associated with the Atharvaveda, their inclusion of Non-Vedic deities and traces of Tantric traditions suggest a later composition, likely corresponding to or after the *Purāṇic* period (Griffiths & Schmiedchen, 2007; Singh, 1997; Joshi et.al, 2016).

In Agamic Literature: In the *Uttara Bhāgaḥ* of Kamika Āgama, Chapter thirty-seven provides insights into the *Pratyāṅgirā Astra mantra*, a potent formula outlined by Lord *Śiva* (37.1-3). This mantra is attributed with the ability to cure various ailments, including infectious fever, epilepsy, and pestilence, while also serving as a protective measure against misfortunes and diseases caused by adversaries. The chapter details the specific materials and procedures for reciting *Pratyāṅgirā's* mantras to achieve distinct benefits, illustrating a comprehensive approach to ritual practices (Sabharathnam, 2020).

Additionally, the *Lomaśa Samhitā*, a *Vaiṣṇavite* text on astrology, dating possibly to the 16th century C.E. or later, associates *Pratyāṅgirā* with *Vimśāmsā* lords, highlighting her role in astrological divisions (Kumar & Serenadh, 2020).

In the Tāntrik texts of India and Nepal: In the Mālinī-vijaya Tantra, dated to be not later than the 10th century C.E., *Pratyāṅgirā* is enumerated among the manifestations of *Śakti*, showcasing her recognition in Tantra traditions (Chatterji, 2000). The Prapañcha Sārasāra Sangraha, an Agamic and Tāntrik work attributed to Geervanēdra Saraswathi, underscores *Pratyāṅgirā's* potency, indicating her capacity to counteract other deities and her role in annihilation rituals (Sastry, 1962).

The Vamśāvalī chronicle notes the enduring patronage of Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* Licchavi king Śivadeva in Nepal (Sanderson, 2004) and in the Parātāntra, a 15th-century Newari text, Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā*, identified as *Siddhilakṣmī*, is revered as the tutelary deity of the *Sūryavamśin*, bestowing liberation, sovereignty, wealth, and transcendence (3.23d-25b). The text narrates a mythological story of the 290-syllable *Vidyā* of *Pratyāṅgirā*, first acquired by the demon king Rāvaṇa and later passed to Rāma, who eventually returned it to the Sarayū River. The narrative then introduces historical figures, Nānyadeva and his descendant Harisimhadeva, who brought the *Vidyā* to Bhaktapur in Nepal (Sanderson, 2004). These two rulers are identified to be belonging to the Karnata Dynasty with the former being the founder of the dynasty which ruled parts of Bihar and Nepal from 1097 to 1324 CE.

The *Jayadrathayāmala* a text which is a supplement to the *Brahma Yamala* also mentions *Siddhilakṣmī* (*Pratyāṅgirā*) as one of the apotropaic (having the power to avert evil influences or bad luck) deities. Moreover, the Vārāhī Tantra within the Kaula Tradition portrays *Siddhilakṣmī* (*Pratyāṅgirā*) as embodying consciousness, bliss, and the Supreme Word, underscoring her fearful nature and association with eternal bliss (15.10-13) (Pamio, 2014). All these literary mentions originating from Nepal highlight the symbolic and longstanding patronage of Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* by the ruling class, distinguishing it from a notably secretive nature of worship that prevailed for the Goddess in India.

The Śrīvidyā-Koṣa written by S.K. Ramachandra Rao, describes Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* through her *Āmnāya mantra*, highlighting her role as a destroyer of enemies on the battlefield, a vanquisher of negative mantras, and an eliminator of all malevolent influences. The text reveals significant epithets for *Pratyāṅgirā*, referring to her as *Raudrī*, emphasizing her fierce and wrathful nature. Additionally, her association with *Atharvāna Bhadrakālī* is suggestive of her connection to the Atharvaveda and its related texts. Additionally, Tāntrik Literature, including the Niruttara Tantra and the Sammoha Tantra, categorizes *Pratyāṅgirā* within the *Kālīkula*, associating her with the dynamic interplay of *Śiva* and *Śakti* (Avalon, 1922).

Goddess Pratyāṅgirā in Inscriptions: In the Sri Chamundeshwari temple on Chamundi Hills, Karnataka, a golden necklace once held engravings of a *Stotra* for *Cāmuṇḍā Devī*. These inscriptions mention various *Śākta* deities, including *Vārāhī*, *Bhadrakālī*, and notably, *Pratyāṅgirā*. Each verse in the necklace concludes with a plea for Liberation (Epigraphia Carnatica Vol. XIV, 1943 C.E.). Though the original necklace

is untraceable today, the temple holds significance as one of the eighteen *Śakti Peethas*, believed to have been built by the Hoysalas in the 12th century C.E. The main deity, *Cāmuṇḍeśvarī*, is worshipped as a form of *Durgā*.

Non-ascribed and Undated Manuscripts: Several manuscripts shed light on the diverse rituals and invocations associated with Goddess *Pratyaṅgirā*:

Pratyaṅgirā Kavacam (Oriental Research Institute and Manuscript Library, University of Kerala - 16621-X): This Malayalam occult manuscript promises protection from enemies, diseases, and accidental deaths. It attributes the *Atharvana Bhadrakālī Mantra* to *Bhairava Rishi* (Lord *Śiva*). The *Kavacha Mantra* aims to safeguard various aspects of life, offering specific instructions for different benefits such as worldly pleasures or victories.

Pratyāṅgirāsūkta (University of Bombay's library - B.M.C 105.30): This hymn in Devanagari script venerates Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā*, highlighting her protective qualities. Meditation on this Hymn is believed to protect one from enemies, bestow wealth akin to Kubera, and counteract toxins, fever, and death.

Pratyāṅgirāmantrāḥ (Maharaja Serfoji's Saraswati Mahal Library, Tanjore - Supplemental No.364, Burnell's No.7016): This manuscript portrays a conversation between Lord Brahmā and Sage Agastya, emphasizing *Pratyāṅgirā's* protective qualities across various aspects of life. It provides insights into her mantra and yantra for practical use.

Pratyāṅgirāpuraścaraṇavidhiḥ (Maharaja Serfoji's Saraswati Mahal Library, Tanjore - Supplemental No.368, Burnell's No.7020): This manuscript outlines worship rules for Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā*. It intriguingly includes instructions on creating enmity between two individuals by reciting the mantra for twenty-one days, aligning with the goddess's association with aspects of witchcraft.

These manuscripts collectively demonstrate the multifaceted nature of *Pratyāṅgirā's* worship, ranging from protective invocations to rituals with more intricate, and sometimes, unconventional purposes.

Hindu Iconographic Text Mentioning Goddess *Pratyaṅgirā*: The iconography of Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* in Hinduism is depicted vividly in various texts, providing diverse images and details:

Mantramahodadi of Mahidhara

First Form: Naked, dishevelled hair, dark as a rain cloud, hands with a shield and sword, adorned with snakes, fierce mouth devouring enemies' families, and elevated by *Śiva's* lustre (Figure 2) (9.91).

Second Form: Lion rider, extremely dark, flame-mouthed, sapphire-coloured, wearing a pair of new garments with a trident and sword, seated on a lion (Figure 2) (9.107).



Figure 2: Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* in the *Mantramahodadi* (Bühnemann 2000)



Figure 3: The image of Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* in the *Śrītattvanidhi* (Courtesy: Wikipedia)

Śrītattvanidhi: Four-armed lion-faced goddess holding a skull, trident, kettle-drum, and noose. Seated on a lion, she destroys enemies with her power (Figure 3).

Śrī Vārāhī Tantra: A wild black fire emerging on the lotus of the universe, a vulture emblem, seated on a dead body with long hair, teeth, and a mouth filled with human intestines. Five faces, eighteen arms with various weapons (12.12-20).

Kamika Agama (Chapter Thirty and Thirty-Seven): Lion-faced, fiery hair, black complexion, three rounded reddish eyes. Adorned with ornaments made of pearls, holding a trident, drum, severed head, and tender mango leaf (30.21-24). Dressed in black with streaks of blood and pieces of flesh, dancing with delight (37.12-16).

Śrīvidyā-Kosa: Clothed in black garments, riding a thousand lions, having a thousand faces, ferocious facial expressions, gigantic stature, tongue like a big fire, possessing fangs.

Prapancha Sārasāra Sangraha: Black in colour, entirely nude covered only by animal skin, holding a sword, open dishevelled hair, feasting on enemies.

Oriental Research Institute and Manuscript Library (University of Kerala): Manuscript mss.20050 D: Lion-faced, with *Pāśa*, bow, and arrow (Rest of the details illegible due to damages in the manuscript).

Manuscript mss.22082 Z20 (Pratyāṅgirā Dhyāna): Thousands of faces, arms, and legs, three eyes on each face, riding thousands of crores of lions, dark blue, holding a sword and shield, wearing a garland of skulls, hair shining like fire.

These descriptions offer a comprehensive overview of the diverse and intricate depictions of Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* across various Tāntrik and ritualistic texts.

The Oral Mythology of Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* in Hinduism

In the unexplored realms of Oral Hindu mythology, the Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* occupies a distinctive position, her narrative echoing through an intriguing oral concept that diverges from mainstream accounts. According to this lesser-known lore, the formidable *Narasimha*, having vanquished *Hiraṇyakaśipu*, unleashed an uncontrollable rage, prompting deities and sages to seek aid from *Śiva*. Transforming into the ferocious *Śarabha*, Lord *Śiva* engaged in a fierce conflict with *Narasimha*, who, in response, assumed the form of *Aṣṭa-Mukha-Gaṇḍabheruṇḍa Narasimha*. Amidst this cosmic clash, the Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* emerged as the *Śakti* of one wing of *Śarabha*. In this vivid oral tradition, *Pratyāṅgirā* manifested in a colossal form adorned with a thousand faces and arms, riding a chariot steered by a legion of lions, brandishing lethal weapons. Her awe-inspiring presence played a pivotal role in pacifying the tumultuous conflict, compelling Lord *Viṣṇu* to quell his wrath. Intriguingly, this oral account finds echoes in the Uttara-Kāmikagama, where the two wings of *Śarabha* are associated with the goddesses *Kālī* and *Durgā* (Rao 2003). However, a unique facet of

this oral tradition introduces another female deity named *Śulini*, intricately linked with *Pratyāṅgirā* and *Narasimha*. The city of Solan in present-day Himachal Pradesh preserves this mystical connection through the annual *Mā Śulini Mela*. During this festival, a brass mask known as '*Mohra*,' (Figure 4) representing Goddess *Śulini*, embarks on a procession to the *Pratyāṅgirā Mandir* (Temple). Historically, this temple also utilized a *Mohra* to symbolize *Pratyāṅgirā* until it was regrettably stolen. Both masks, symbolizing *Śulini* and *Pratyāṅgirā*, eventually would converge at the *Narasimha Mandir*. This intriguing amalgamation of oral tradition, local festivals, and historical interpretations sheds light on the complex tapestry of Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā*'s worship. While recorded mythology aligns her with the *Kālikula* and, by extension, Goddess *Kālī*, the oral accounts present a nuanced narrative that intertwines *Pratyāṅgirā*, *Śulini*, and the divine conflict involving *Narasimha* and *Śarabha*. The roots of this '*Mohra*' tradition are believed to extend back to the 19th century, coinciding with the settlement of Nepali rulers in the regions of Himachal Pradesh.



Figure 4: The *Mohra* mask of Goddess *Śulini* and its procession during the *Mā Śulini Mela* (Courtesy: Wikipedia)

The Two Sages Associated with the Goddess

The nomenclature of the Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā*, according to the accounts of her Modern-day devotees, traces back to ancient times when two revered sages, *Āṅgiras* and *Pratyāṅgirās*, discovered the goddess during their profound meditations. In a gesture of honour, the goddess chose to identify herself by amalgamating the names of these sages who had initially encountered her when she was nameless. The rationale behind this account gains clarity through an exploration of Hindu literature, particularly the mention of the sage *Āṅgirasa*. *Āṅgirasa* holds a significant place in Hindu religious lore, being enumerated among the sixteen *prajāpatis* created by *Brahmā* for universal creation, as per the Valmiki Ramayana. The *Māhabhārata*'s *Ādi Parva* designates *Āṅgirasa* as one of *Brahmā*'s six mind-born sons, with *Brhaspati* listed as his son. In the *Vana Parva* of the *Māhabhārata*, *Āṅgirasa*'s radiance surpasses that of *Agni*

through penance, leading to *Agni*'s temporary disappearance until *Āṅgīrasa* intervenes and reconciles the situation (Mani, 1975). Pāli texts also recognize *Āṅgīrasa* as one of the epithets of Buddha, highlighting his enduring significance in Hindu cosmology.

On the other hand, the sage *Pratyāṅgirā* is indirectly mentioned in Hindu mythology, specifically in the *Narasimha Purāṇa* and the *Harivamsa Purāṇa*. The *Narasimha Purāṇa* (5.62-68) notes that the sons of *Pratyāṅgirā* became revered hermits, earning the honour from saints and hermits. In the *Harivamsa Purāṇa*, a verse in the third chapter attributes the origin of the best works (*Riks*) to *Pratyāṅgirās*.

Etymology of the Word *Pratyāṅgirā*

A further study of the etymology of the names *Āṅgīra* and *Pratyāṅgirā* reveals an intriguing connection to the *Atharvavedā*. Out of the four Vedas, the *Atharvavedā* is considered to be the most recent of them in date and composition. However, the oldest name in which this text was known was "*Athravāṅgīrasa-Veda* that is the 'Veda of the *Atharvanas* and the *Āṅgīras*'" (Tiwari, 2021). The *Āṅgīras* are mentioned to be a class of fire worshippers and the term *Kṛtyā* is mentioned to denote Witchcraft in this text. "She is an image of doll, made by hands. The *Kṛtyā* is very skilfully prepared as a bride for wedding (10.1.1). An expert witchcraft-maker prepares the *Kṛtyā* having two feet or four feet (10.1.24). Anyone, who intends to further his desire may prepare *Kṛtyā* and set her against him or her. She may be prepared by a Sudra, a king, a Kshatriya, a Brahmana, any woman or by a woman, who is rejected by husband (10.1.3)" (Singh, 1997).

Hence by analysing the above account one can understand that witchcraft and *Kṛtyā* making can be done by any individual regardless of class or gender much like how the veneration of goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* even today does not have any caste bias and can be worshipped by all. The *Atharvavedā* further states that "*Āṅgīrasas* were adept in preparing *Kṛtyā* who is called *Āṅgīraskṛtyā* (8.5.9)". The same text also enumerates that these *Āṅgīrasas* were also involved in reverting witchcraft. "*Pratyāṅgirās*, the expert leader in witchcraft asks the spell to go back like a crushing army with carts... (10.1.16). She is invoked to kill the cow, horse, or servant of him, who had directed her first and to make him childless (10.1.17)" (Singh, 1997).

This doll in the later stages was deified as evidenced by the mention of the lion-faced *Mahākṛtyā* in the *Āṅgīrasa [Kalpa]* manuscript from the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute in Pune. Even the reasons for preparing a *Kṛtyā* and the present reason for the worship of *Pratyāṅgirā* seem to match, that is for one's gain and material benefit.

In the *Rig-Vedā*, in the hymn XXXI we find the verse that says 'O *Agni*, thou, the best and earliest *Āṅgīras*' and in the *Gopatha Brahmana* an ancillary Upaniṣad associated with the *Atharvavedā* it is mentioned that ten *Āṅgīrasas* were born from Brahman. All this shows clear evidence of the presence of the group of people called *Āṅgīrasas*, who were said to have an important presence from the Rigvedic times. Another hymn from

the *Rig-Vedā* talks about two groups of people namely *Saramā* and *Paṇis*, where the former threatens the other with terrible *Aṅgirasas* (Karambelkar, 1959). So *Aṅgiras* and *Pratyāṅgirās* were both involved in witchcraft but only the latter group is said to perform counter sorcery. Hence these two groups of people in later literature might have become personified into two distinct persons with the names *Aṅgirasa* and *Pratyāṅgirās*, and since the *Kṛtyā* was also deified to become *Pratyāṅgirā*, one can hypothesize that the worshippers of the goddess today understood that it was the goddess herself who gave power to these sorcerers and that the people belonging to *Aṅgirasas* and *Pratyāṅgirās* did not possess the power themselves. Therefore, one can argue that the Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* came to become the personification of counter-sorcery.

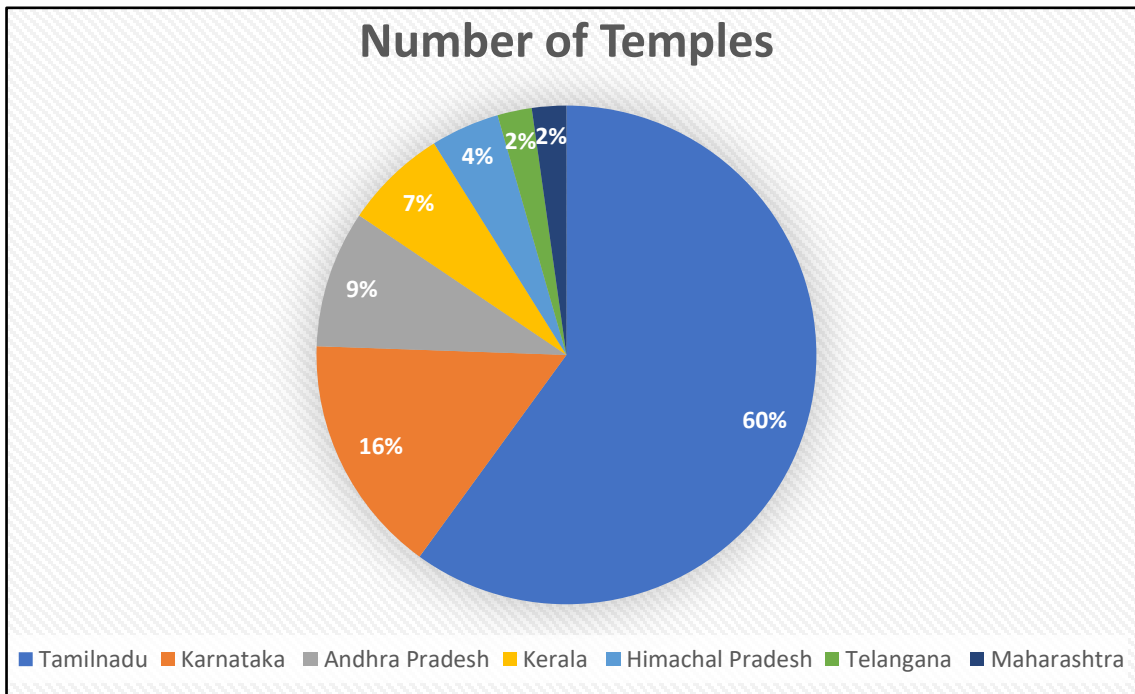


Figure 5: Approximate Number of Goddess Pratyāṅgirā temples in India

The Number of Hindu Temples Dedicated to Goddess Pratyāṅgirā in India

There is no proper published list as to how many modern-day Hindu temples exist for Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* in India and in this study, the help of Google Maps and simple Google searches were used to gather the location and photos if available from all her temples. The first fact that one comes to understand is that the temples of the goddess are mainly found in Southern India with only two temples as far North as Himachal Pradesh. Tamil Nādu is found having the greatest number of temples numbering twenty-seven, while Karnataka has seven temples, Andhra Pradesh has four temples, Kerala has three temples, and Telangana and Maharashtra each have one temple (Figures 5 and 6). So roughly forty-five modern Hindu temples for Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* are said to exist in India according to the findings using Google Maps.

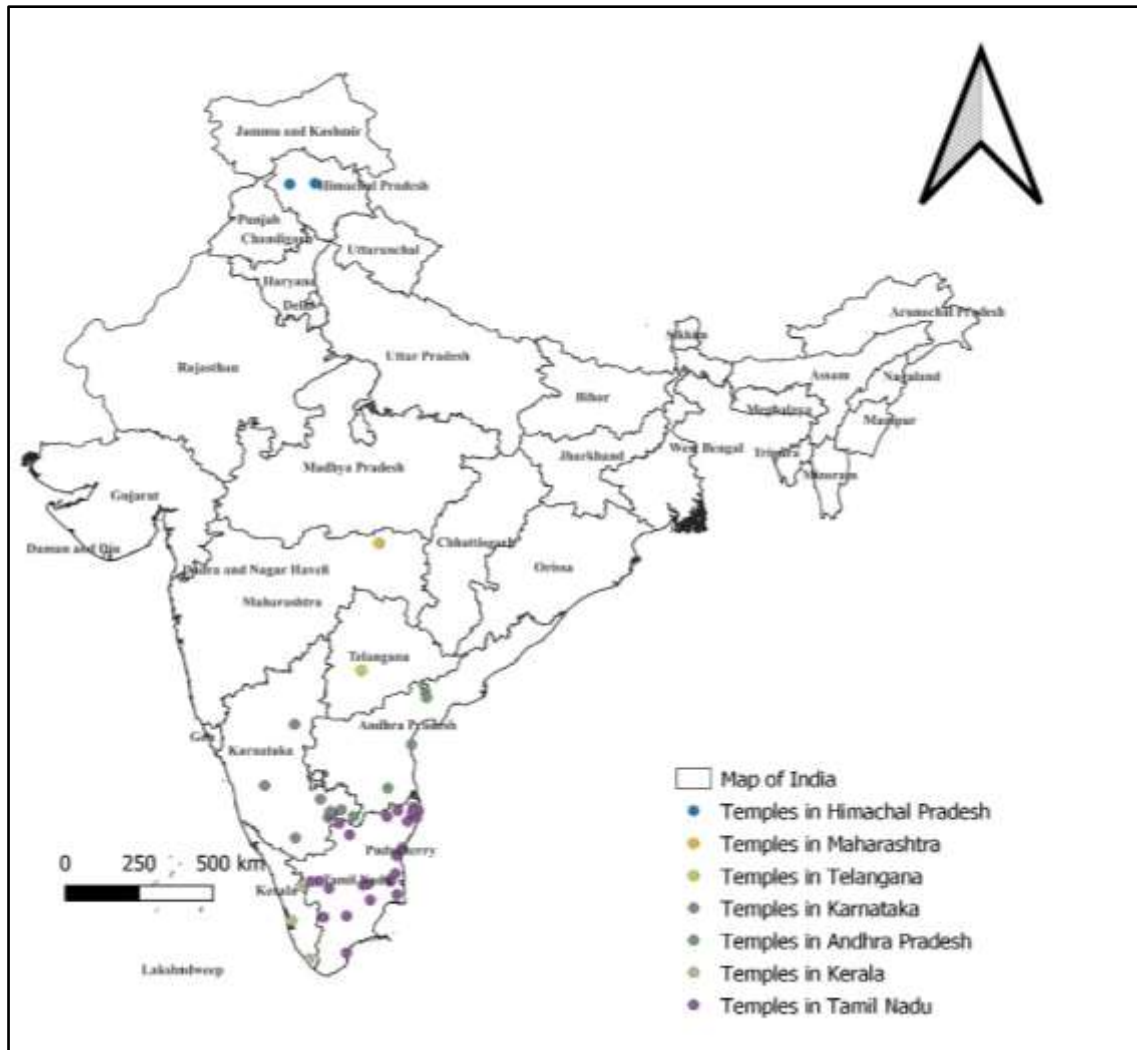


Figure 6: The Locations of the Temples of Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* in India

Icons of Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* in Hinduism

The granite sculpture of *Pratyāṅgirā* now housed in the National Museum, New Delhi (Figure 7) stands as a remarkable piece, attributed to the Chola Dynasty, dating back to the 9th to 13th century CE. This sculpture, previously housed in the Viruthagireeswarar temple in Tamil Nādu, was unlawfully taken and later acquired by the National Gallery of Australia. It represents the oldest sculptural depiction of the goddess who is here seen in a dynamic posture, with her right leg raised, holding a *Ḍamaru* (Kettle Drum) in the upper right hand and a downward-pointed *Triśūla* (Trident) in the lower right hand, suggesting a poised stance for battle. The juxtaposition of her fierce facial features, including protruding teeth and bulging eyes, against the backdrop of a beautifully sculpted female body creates a striking contrast. The flame-like strands of hair called *Agni-Keśa*, along with the adorned short hip cloth, *Pada-Kaṭakas* (ornament for the feet, corresponding to the bracelets for the wrist), and *Pada-Śaras* (anklets) on the feet, contribute to the overall aesthetic allure of this ancient masterpiece. The upper left hand is engaged in the *Vismaya-Mudrā*, a gesture of

wonder, adding depth to the divine portrayal. The broken lower left hand likely once held a decapitated head or a skull bowl, symbolizing the goddess's fierce and formidable nature.



Figure 7: Pratyāṅgirā
(Courtesy: National Museum)



Figure 8: Pratyāṅgirā
(Courtesy: www.google.com)



Figure 9: Pratyāṅgirā
(Courtesy: Ravikumar G.)



Figure 10: Pratyāṅgirā
(Photo: Author)

The *Pratyāṅgirā* stone sculpture from the main sanctum of the Pratyangira Devi temple in Thiruvisanalur, Tamil Nādu (Figure 8), is a formidable representation of the goddess. Seated on her enraged *Vāhana* (mount), the mighty goddess is depicted with

ten arms adorned with *Kaṭakas* (bracelets or bangles). In her top left hands, she holds the *Śaṁkha* (Conch), *Pāśa* (Lasso), a human or goblin devotee, *Dhanus* (Bow), and *Kapāla* (Skull Bowl), while the top right hands carry the *Cakra* (Discus), *Ḍamaru*, *Triśūla*, *Bana* (Arrow), and *Khaḍga* (Sword). The goddess exhibits an *Agni-Keśa* and features five ferocious heads, each brandishing teeth and tongue, with a canopy of a seven-hooded snake adding to her divine aura. Seated in the *Savya Lalitasana* posture (where her left leg is bent while her right leg is hanging), she commands a lion mount with powerful legs, and the lion's face mirrors the frightful visage of its divine master. An accompanying *Utsava-Mūrti* (Idol for procession) made of metal, mirrors the attributes of the stone sculpture, offering a consistent and powerful representation of the goddess.



Figure 11: Pratyāṅgirā
(Photo: Author)



Figure 12: Pratyāṅgirā
(Courtesy: Arjun R.)

The stone sculpture of *Pratyāṅgirā* in the main shrine of the Maa Pratyangira Kalika Aalyam, Hosur, Tamil Nādu (Figure 9), presents a captivating depiction of the goddess. Seated on five majestic lions, the goddess is ready for battle, displaying four hands. In her top two hands, she holds the *Sarpa* (serpent) and *Ḍamaru*, while the bottom two hands carry the *Muṇḍa* (head) and *Triśūla*. *Pratyāṅgirā* is portrayed with an *Agni-Keśa*, and a crescent moon adorns her head. A canopy of a five-hooded snake enhances her divine presence. The goddess is seated in the *Savya Lalitasana* posture, with her right leg placed on a skull, and both legs adorned with *Pada-Śaras*. The sculpture vividly captures the goddess's fierce expression, showcasing menacing teeth and a protruding tongue, creating a powerful and awe-inspiring representation.

Situated in one of the shrines of the Varahi Amman and Pratyangira Temple in Chennai, Tamil Nādu (Figure 10), is an 18-armed stone sculpture of *Pratyāṅgirā*. The

goddess, depicted alongside her seated lion *Vāhana*, manifests a striking representation. From the top left, she holds attributes such as *Pāśa*, *Śaṁkha*, *Karttrka* (Curved Knife), *Ankusha* (Goad), *Kheṭa* (Shield), *Aksa-Mālā* (Prayer Beads), and *Varada-Mudrā* (Boon bestowal gesture). The top right features her holding the *Ḍamaru*, *Cakra*, *Trisūla*, *Muṇḍa*, *Pāna-Pātra* (bowl containing liquor or blood), and *Abhaya-Mudrā* (Assurance-giving gesture). The goddess exudes fierceness, accentuated by her *Agni-Keśa*.

In the cement sculpture of *Pratyāṅgirā* positioned at the entrance of the Kalikambal Temple in Chennai, Tamil Nādu (Figure 11), the goddess is portrayed with four hands, holding the *Pāśa* and *Ḍamaru* in the upper hands, and the *Trisūla* and *Kapāla* in the lower ones. Riding a lion depicted in a fierce golden yellow hue, the deity exhibits three open eyes, sharp teeth, and a protruding tongue. Her right leg is placed on a skull, and she is adorned with a seven-hooded snake canopy. Encircled by a massive halo with four-tongued flames, the figure is crowned by a ferocious *Kīrti-Mukha* (stylized lion-head) atop the *Prabhāvali* (Halo), creating a striking visual impact.



Figure 13: Pratyāṅgirā
(Photo: Author)



Figure 14: Pratyāṅgirā
(Courtesy: Darshan D. M.)

The colossal depiction of *Pratyāṅgirā* in the entrance Gopuram of the Maa Pratyangira Kalika Aalyam, Hosur, Tamil Nādu (Figure 12), presents the goddess in the *Abhanga* posture with ten arms and her lion *Vāhana* roaring beside her. The top left arms hold the *Śaṁkha*, *Trisūla*, *Dhanush*, *Naga-Pāśa* (Serpent Lasso), and *Muṇḍa*, while the top right arms carry the *Cakra*, *Krpana* (the sword of *Kālī*), *Bana*, *Gadā* (Mace), and *Khaḍga*. Adorned with *Kaṭakas* in all hands, she wears a *Khuja-Bandha* (breast-band) with a heavy necklace and a vibrant *Kaṭi-Bandha* (Girdle) with colourful pleats. *Pratyāṅgirā* is portrayed with a radiant *Agni-Keśa* and a canopy of a five-headed snake. Notably, the imagery includes the Goddess swallowing a supplicant, symbolizing an enemy seeking forgiveness in their final moments, with two divine figures standing on her shoulders.

The metal sculpture of *Pratyāṅgirā* within the shrine of Om Sri Skandasramam, Chennai, Tamil Nādu (Figure 13), features the goddess in a commanding stance with four hands. In the upper hands, she holds the *Pāśa* and *Ḍamaru*, while the lower hands bear the *Kapāla* and *Triśūla*. Seated in the *Savya Lalitasana* posture atop her majestic lion mount, the *Devī* exudes power with a formidable *Agni-Keśa* and a canopy of a seven-hooded snake. Beneath the goddess's feet are the revered rishis *Aṅgiras* and *Pratyāṅgirās*. Adjacent to this, a metal *Utsava-Mūrti* of *Pratyāṅgirā* mirrors these attributes, positioned alongside a six-armed *Śulini*.

Within the Sri Sri Pratyagira Devi temple, Sivamogga, Karnataka, the stone sculpture of *Pratyāṅgirā* (Figure 14) depicts the goddess with four arms. In the upper hands, she holds the *Sarpa* and *Ḍamaru*, while the lower hands carry the *Kapāla* and *Khaḍga*. Seated in the *Savya Lalitasana* posture on her mount, which menacingly bares its teeth as a deterrent to adversaries, the *Devī* is adorned with intricate *Kaṭakas* and *Pada-Śaras*. Notably, this sculpture uniquely features a stone *Prabhāvali*. *Pratyāṅgirā*, with her flowing mane, fearsome teeth, radiant *Agni-Keśa*, and a nine-hooded snake canopy, emanates divinity.



Figure 15: *Pratyāṅgirā*
(Courtesy: www.google.com)



Figure 16: *Pratyāṅgirā*
(Courtesy: Ashok Kumar M.)

The stone sculpture of *Pratyāṅgirā* from the primary sanctum of the Sri Pratyangira Devi temple, Kavali, Andhra Pradesh (Figure 15), portrays the goddess as four-armed, holding the *Sarpa* and *Ḍamaru* in the upper hands, and the *Kapāla* and *Triśūla* in the lower hands. Seated on her lion mount, both the goddess and her *Vāhana* gaze upon the devotee with a discerning expression. With her right leg resting on a human head and adorned with a nine-hooded snake canopy, the *Devī* occupies a pedestal featuring a carved *Śrī-Cakra*. The inclusion of disco lights in the sanctum reflects the temple's contemporary modifications.

The distinctive stone sculpture of *Pratyāṅgirā* from the Sri Maha Pratyangira Temple, Palakkad, Kerala (Figure 16), presents the goddess with four hands. The upper two hands hold the *Damaru* and *Triśūla*, while the lower two hands grasp the *Kapāla* and *Karttrka*. Unlike more ferocious depictions, the lion face of the *Devī* here is tenderly portrayed, with a flowing mane and pointed ears lending a naturalistic touch. Seated in the *Savya Lalitasana* posture on a lotus pedestal, rather than her traditional lion mount, her right leg rests on a bloomed lotus, conveying a sense of benevolence. The sculpture features the customary *Agni-Keśa*, and an emblem of a snake adorns her *Mukuta* (Crown). Adorned with *Kaṭakas* on all her arms and an intricately designed lower garment, this depiction exudes a unique and benevolent aspect of the goddess.



Figure 17: Pratyāṅgirā
(Photo: Author)



Figure 18: Pratyāṅgirā
(Courtesy: Gangadhar Thurpul)

The metal Icon of *Pratyāṅgirā* from the Bhadrachalathu Pratyangira Temple, Vaikom, Kerala (Figure 17), stands out as a unique representation with the goddess depicted with only two hands. Here also there is a departure from the conventional portrayal of the Goddess atop a lion *Vāhana*, as she is seen sitting on a simple pedestal in a *Virasana* posture. Clenching a *Khaḍga* and *Kheṭa*, she conveys readiness for battle against her adversaries. Notably, *Naga-Keyuras* (Snake armbands) embellish her, and a snake coils around her neck, a distinctive feature absent in other *Pratyāṅgirā* sculptures. Displaying sharp teeth and a protruded tongue, she wears *Sarpa-Kuṇḍalas*, earrings formed by coiled snakes. The inclusion of *Agni-Keśa* and the crescent moon aligns this sculpture precisely with the deity's iconographic descriptions in *Mantramahodadhi*.

The stone sculpture of goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* from the Sri Prathyangira Parameshwari Mandiram, Hyderabad, Telangana (Figure 18) positioned to the left, presents a four-

armed depiction with the upper two hands holding the *Pāśa* and *Ḍamaru*, and the lower two hands wielding the *Muṇḍa* and *Trīśūla*. Seated on her loyal lion mount, she exhibits her formidable teeth and tongue. The manifestation of *Agni-Keśa* and the enveloping canopy of a seven-headed snake underscores her divine nature. Notably, the *Devī* is accompanied by a four-armed *Vārāhī*, assumed to function as the malevolent *Pratyāṅgirā*'s commander-in-chief. The inclusion of a *Liṅgā* between these sculptures indicates the temple's pronounced Shaivite affiliation.



Figure 19: Pratyāṅgirā
(Courtesy: Mohit Panpalia)



Figure 20: Pratyāṅgirā
(Courtesy: Munish Giri)

The stone sculpture of *Pratyāṅgirā* within the Pratyangira Devi temple, Nagpur, Maharashtra (Figure 19), depicts the goddess as eight-armed. From the top left, she holds the *Karttrka*, *Pāśa*, *Khaṭvāṅga*, and *Varada Mudrā*, while from the top right, she wields the *Trīśūla*, *Ḍamaru*, *Sarpa*, and *Abhaya Mudrā*. Seated on her lion *Vāhana*, she features a protruding tongue, *Agni-Keśa*, and a seven-headed snake canopy. With a wicked smile, she symbolically awaits her devotees to invoke her in their battles against adversaries.

The metal sculpture of *Pratyāṅgirā* within the Maa pratyangira dham sidh shakti peeth, Samloti, Himachal Pradesh (Figure 20), portrays the goddess as four-armed, holding the *Sarpa*-entwined *Ḍamaru* and *Pāśa* in the upper two hands (concealed by cloth), while the lower two hands clasp the *Kapāla* and *Trīśūla*. Seated on her lion mount in the *Savya Lalitasana* posture, the goddess exhibits facial features with an almost ghoulish quality. Adorned with a headdress, *Kaṭakas*, and *Pada-Śaras*, she presents a formidable image. Notably, her lion mount is depicted with a crown-like feature and a similarly ghoulish expression, echoing the demeanour of its mistress.



Figure 21: Pratyāṅgirā
(Courtesy: Mildred Archer)

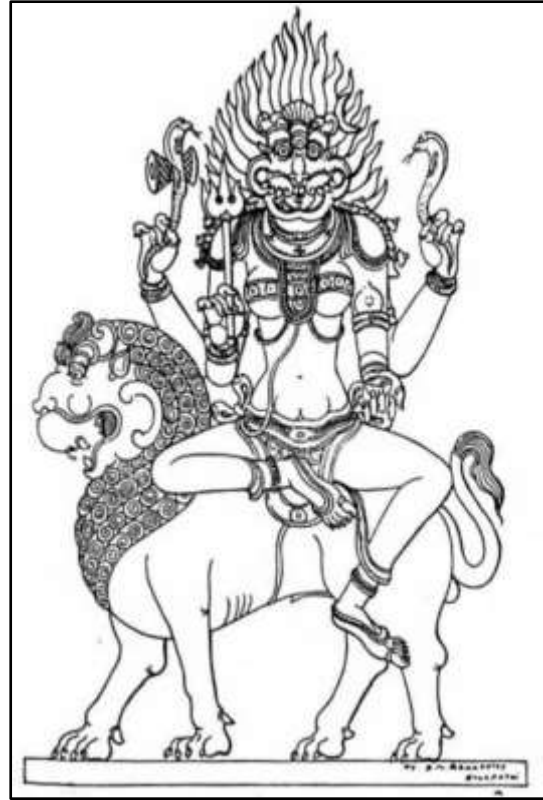


Figure 22: Pratyāṅgirā
(Courtesy: Ganapati Sthapathy)

The painting of *Pratyāṅgirā* from the Victoria & Albert Museum, England (Figure 21), executed in gouache on watermarked paper and estimated to originate between 1820-1825 C.E., stands as an intriguing artefact. The artwork follows the 'Company' style, indicative of the East India Company era, with its likely origin in Tiruchchirappali. Measuring 22cm in height and 18cm in width, the painting features the Telugu inscription "*Durgā Pratyāṅgirā*" and the English inscription "92. Maureeammah at Samiavarom." Despite the absence of her characteristic lion face and *Vāhana*, *Pratyāṅgirā* is depicted in the *Savya Lalitasana* posture on a jewel-studded pedestal, holding a sword, blood bowl, trident, and a *Ḍamaru* (Archer, 1992).

The line drawing of *Pratyāṅgirā* (Figure 22) from the book '*Rupa Dhyana Ratnavali*' by Ganapati Sthapathy serves as the primary reference for contemporary sculptors in Mahabalipuram. They use this illustration to create images of the goddess in the *Navatālā* measure of the southern school of iconometry. These sculptures are then supplied to modern temples in Tamil Nādu, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka. In this depiction, *Pratyāṅgirā* is presented as four-armed, holding the *Sarpa* and *Ḍamaru* in the upper two hands and the *Kapāla* and *Trisūla* in the lower two hands. She is adorned with elaborate jewellery, including *Kaṭakas*, *Kuṇḍalas*, *Keyuras*, *Pāda-Kaṭakas*, and *Pāda-Śaras*. Her attire consists of a simple *Kuca-Bandha*, a *Kaṭi-Bandha* knotted to the right, and a loin cloth. The lion mount is depicted with a stylized, curled mane. These iconographic features align with her portrayal in the *Sritattvanidhi*.

The Mythology of Goddess Pratyāṅgirā in Buddhism

In Buddhist mythology Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* seems to be associated with or is found to be an aspect/manifestation of another Buddhist goddess called *Sitātapatrā* sometimes called the female counterpart to the *Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara* and a deity whose name means 'The White Parasol.'

The *Ārya- Tathāgatosnīsa- sitātapatrā- aparājita- pratyāṅgirā- nāma- dhāranī- sādhana* is attributed to *Candragomin*, an Indian Buddhist philosopher and teacher in the Nalanda University. He is said to have been popular with Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist traditions and is believed to have lived in the last three-quarters of the seventh century (Tatz, 1978). Kriya Tantra is the first of four classifications of the entire Buddhist Tantra of Tibet and in *Kriya Tantra's Uṣṇīṣa* classification, *Sitātapatrā* is featured, along with *Dhārinīs* like *Ārya- Sarva- Tathāgata- Uṣṇīṣa- Sitātapatrā- Nāma- Aparājita- Pratyāṅgirā- Māhavidyā-Rājñī* and the *Ārya-Tathāgata-Uṣṇīṣa-Sitātapatrā-Aparājita-MahāPratyāṅgirā-Parama-Siddhi-Nāma-Dhāranī* written by *Chag Chö-rje-pal* (mostly a scholar from Tibet) who is said to have "went to India and, assisted by Devendra, Ratna-raksita and other *Tāntrik Exorcists*, translated the *Nine Uṣṇīṣa-Tantras*" (Obermiller, 1931). Both these texts were believed to be popular till the 18th century C.E. not only in India but also in other parts of the world as this text is said to have been very often translated to Chinese (Nakamura, 1987).

The *Daibucchō shuryogōn shu* (Hero's March Spell of the Buddha's Topknot) narrates a mythology of Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* from the hybrid Chinese *Suramgama Sutra* apparently reproduced from the second Korean *Koryō* edition (thirteenth c.) of the *Shoulengyan jin* (Keyworth, 2016). This Hero's March Spell details its power with *Pratyāṅgirā* as the *Bodhisattva* of Compassion's manifestation. Sections include homage, syllables for conquering demons and maladies curable. Post-recitation, Buddha guides his disciple *Ānanda* on using the spell for protection, transcribing it on materials for immunity. The Buddha enumerates the benefits of this spell offering protection from fire, water, poisons, maladies, and spiritual advantages for chanters. The text *Unsui nikki* notes that the Hero's March Spell in morning services among Zen monastics is believed to be the longest spell with 427 terms. In contemporary Chinese communities, a belief persists that reciting the spell at night invites malevolent entities. Japanese monastics recognize its accurate transcription of an original Sanskrit *dhāranī* linked to *Avalokiteśvara* worship (Keyworth, 2016).

The *Sarvatathagatosnīsha-Sitatapatra*, also known as *Pratyāṅgirā-Kalpa*, is a manuscript donated to the Asiatic Society of Bengal in the 19th century by British officer Brian Houghton Hodgson. Written in the Newari script, it likely originates from Nepal. The manuscript comprises a collection of mantras believed to have emanated from Lord Buddha's brow during his stay in *Indra's* heaven, receiving worship from numerous *Devās*. Its contents emphasize the merits associated with wearing, reciting, or hearing these mantras. (Mitra, 1882). Hence it might be possible that the text written by *Candragomin* was the one translated by *Chag Chö-rje-pal* and this might have become

popular in Korea and subsequently must have been copied to the Chinese text *Suramgama Sutra* and a recent Newari copy of this might have been donated to the Asiatic Society. This hypothesis is put forward because all the texts mentioned above seem to have the same content.

The presence of Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* in the Buddhist context in Nepal is also highlighted by a palm leaf manuscript titled "Dasatattvasaṅgraha" by Kṣitigarbha, currently housed in the Durbar Library of Nepal. This manuscript discusses ten prominent topics in Tantric Buddhist worship, with the eighth topic focusing on the Mantra of *Pratyāṅgirā*.

Moreover, the word *Pratyāṅgirā* is also found associated with a vegetative material in Buddhism similar to the portrayal in the *Garuda Purāṇa* in Hinduism. The *Ārya tārā kurukullā kalpa*, a comprehensive work on the Buddhist deity *Kurukullā*, suggests blending the root of *Pratyāṅgirā* with milk or ghee, pouring it into a silver dish, and drinking it. This practice ensures protection from snakes for a year; if a snake bites due to unvirtuous actions, it will perish. The root referred to is likely that of *Acacia Lebbec* or *Sirisha*.



Figure 23: Pratyāṅgirā
(Courtesy: Dipak Chandra Bhattacharya)



Figure 24: Pratyāṅgirā
(Courtesy: Allahabad Museum)

Iconographic texts of Goddess Pratyāṅgirā in Buddhism

Interestingly Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* has been described separately as an independent deity in Buddhist iconographic texts, unlike her mention in mythological texts. The

Siddhilakṣmīdevārcana section in the *Pūjāpaddhati* describes Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* as a potent deity residing in the realm of resplendence. Depicted with five heads, ten hands, and fifteen eyes, she is of white colour and rests on a corpse. Her iconography includes various divine implements such as a lasso, goad, sword, *Khaṭvāṅga* (shaft of the human forearm surmounted by a skull), spear, and spade, and she exhibits *Varada* and *Abhaya* poses. With hands carrying a sword creating panic, a human head with hair and blood, and a divine pitcher containing treasures, *Pratyāṅgirā* is identified as *Siddhilakṣmi*, the goddess of love, and is renowned as the bestower of victory. The expression according to this text, that calls *Pratyāṅgirā* as the goddess of love indicates that she might have also been propitiated for success in love (Bhattacharyya, 1974).

The *Dharmakoṣa-Saṃgraha*, a Buddhist iconographic text from Nepal, dated to 1826 C.E., describes *Pratyāṅgirā* with five faces displaying various colours and ten hands carrying symbolic objects and in a seated posture on a lotus of jewels. (Bhattacharyya, 1974). In the Buddhist text *Sādhanaṃālā*, a section dedicated to the *Mahārakṣā* deities assigns a *Sadhana* to *MahāPratyāṅgirā*. Described as blue, six-armed, and young, she holds symbolic items such as a sword, goad, *Varada Mudrā*, *Tarjam Mudrā* (Gesture of warning), red lotus, and trident. This portrayal emphasizes her youthful beauty and divine attributes. (Bhattacharyya, 1958).



Figure 25: Pratyāṅgirā (Courtesy: Benoytosh Bhattacharya)

Icons of Goddess Pratyāṅgirā in Buddhism

The gilt copper icon of a deity hypothesized to be *Pratyāṅgirā* by Bhattacharyya (Figure 23), dating back to the 18th century C.E. from Nepal, is described in the book 'Tantric Buddhist Iconographic Sources.' Though presently untraceable, it originally resided in

Bharat Kala Bhavan. This sculpture aligns with iconographic details from Pūjāpaddhati, featuring five faces with three eyes, exhibiting *Varada* and *Abhaya* poses in multiple hands. However, a distinctive aspect is the irregular count of hands—nine right and eight left—resulting in a total of seventeen hands, deviating from the conventional even-numbered sixteen or eighteen. The hands, now mostly empty, once held various implements lost to time. The goddess stands gracefully in the *Sthanaka Abhanga* posture, adorned with necklaces and an intricately etched lower garment, her expression conveying a benign and youthful smile, symbolizing grace to her devotees. The Rajasthani style painting from the Allahabad Museum, Uttar Pradesh (Figure 24), crafted with watercolours, portrays *Pratyāṅgirā Sitātāpartā*, identified by the faintly inscribed name in *Devanagari* script below the painting. This depiction of the Tibetan deity features her seated on a lotus throne, holding a white umbrella, and adorned with loose drapery, accompanied by a radiant halo.



Figure 26: *Pratyāṅgirā* (Courtesy: Los Angeles County Museum of Art)

Again Bhattacharyya's book on Buddhist Iconography (1958) features two Nepali line drawings of Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* (Figure 25). These drawings align with the descriptions given in *Sādhanaṃālā* for *MahāPratyāṅgirā*. One of the drawings shows the *Dhyāni* Buddha *Aksobhya* seated on the head of the goddess. Notably, there was no fixed rule for the posture of this deity in Buddhist texts, allowing for variations where *Pratyāṅgirā* can be depicted as both standing and seated, as evidenced by these line drawings.

The Presence of Goddess Pratyāṅgirā in Jainism

In the realm of Jainism, the mention of goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* is scarce, with the only notable reference found in the thirteenth-century text known as the *Pratyāṅgirā Kalpa*, authored by Bālachandrasūri, a Jain writer from Gujarat. Comprising Twenty-Five verses the opening and closing verses of the *Pratyāṅgirā Kalpa* suggest that the recitation of this hymn is believed to bestow various forms of well-being, alleviate distress, and offer protection from death for the practitioner (Goudriaan, 1978). Bālachandrasūri, hailing from Modhera, Gujarat, gained prominence during his era and was renowned for having a Rajguru of the Chalukyas as his teacher. His work is distinctive not only for its content but also for its claim that he was the adopted son of Saraswati, receiving a boon from her to become a Mahakavi, akin to the legendary poet Kālidasa (Jhavery, 1944). Despite the scarcity of details available, the *Pratyāṅgirā Kalpa* stands as a singular contribution within Jain literature, marking the limited intersection of this goddess with the Jain tradition.



Figure 27: Pratyāṅgirā (Courtesy: Pratapaditya Pal)

Depictions of Goddess Pratyāṅgirā in Jain Yantras

In Jainism, the representation of Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* is exclusively confined to yantras, with no instances found in sculptural forms. Only three yantras featuring Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* alongside Jain symbols have been discovered. These yantras, notable for

their substantial size, depict the goddess amidst a gathering of Hindu deities. In the first two yantras (Figures 26 and 27), minimal Jaina iconography is observed. However, in the third yantra (Figure 28), *Pratyāṅgirā* is situated amidst all the 24 Tirthankaras.



Figure 28: *Pratyāṅgirā* (Courtesy: Christies)

The Yantra of Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* (Figure 26), currently housed in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, is a creation in opaque watercolours and gold on paper with a cloth backing. Originating from Kachchh, Gujarat, it is dated to circa 1700-1750 C.E. The dimensions of this yantra are 56.83 x 52.38 cm. The central depiction portrays the goddess with three-eyed faces and eighteen arms holding various *Āyudhas*. Notable items include a shield, bow, sword, kettle drum, and *Vismaya Mudrā*, among others. Flanked by two lions beneath her lotus seat, she is surrounded by Hindu deities like *Brahmā*, *Urgā Gaṇapati*, *Rāhu* and *Ketu*. While resembling her Hindu counterpart with a crescent moon on her head and a snake canopy, the only Jain indication is the pair of footprints of the *Jina* in the bottom left on the Yantra.

The Yantra Diagram featuring Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* (Figure 27) from the book 'The Peaceful Liberators: Jain Art from India' by Pratapaditya Pal, dated to c. 1500 from Western India, is made with opaque watercolours on cloth. The goddess, situated within a six-pointed star, is depicted with five heads and eighteen arms holding various emblems. Despite its older dating by approximately two hundred years compared to the Yantra in Figure 26, the iconography of the central deity and attendant

figures reflects a close relationship with Hindu concepts. The Yantra's Jain affiliation is evident through the inclusion of a Svetambara monk engaged in the rites of the goddess, seated near the feet of *Bhairava* in the bottom right corner. Additionally, across from the monk, Indra is portrayed worshipping the footprint of the *Jina*. The Yantra is surrounded by various divinities including *Gajalakṣmī*, the elephant-headed Gaṇeśa, and the nine planetary deities.

The Jain Yantra Diagram featuring Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* believed to be from Rajasthan and dated to the 17th century C.E. (Figure 28), was auctioned at Christie's on 21st March 2001 and acquired by a private collector. Painted against a red foliate ground with depictions of elephants and peacocks, this Yantra portrays the goddess at the centre of a six-pointed star and a lotus diagram, surrounded by twenty-four *Tīrthaṅkaras*. A smaller circular diagram at the top showcases elephants purifying a female deity, while Pārśvanath is depicted in a circular aureole at the top left. A figure resembling a Nāgarājā is present at the top right, and rectangular niches at the sides feature Hindu deities and dancers, enhancing the colossal drawing backed on cloth, measuring 112.4 x 78.8 cm. Below, two Svetambara monks are seated in their shrine, accompanied by a row of praying disciples.

Comparison of the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain Images of Goddess Pratyāṅgirā

Comparing depictions of Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* across Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism reveals notable differences. In Hinduism, she uniquely possesses a male lion's face, a feature absent in Buddhism and Jainism. Similarly, her lion mount is exclusive to Hinduism and Jainism, while in Buddhism, she is often portrayed sitting on a lotus or a corpse. The depiction of *Pratyāṅgirā* in Hinduism shows her as naked, dark blue, or black and in Buddhism, her body is radiant white, while Jain iconography portrays her with a bright red body. Due to a scarcity of Jain texts on Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* compared to Hinduism and Buddhism, it's suggested that Jain worship of the goddess might have borrowed significantly from these traditions. For instance, Jain depictions of *Pratyāṅgirā* align with the Buddhist description of five heads for the Goddess while being surrounded by deities pertinent to Hinduism. Modern Hindu sculptures commonly show a snake hood as her canopy, a feature absent in textual iconography. Additionally, the placement of the goddess's left leg on a lotus pedestal or a human head, as seen in contemporary sculptures, lacks textual support.

The Spread of the Sculptures of Goddess Pratyāṅgirā in the Early and Modern Times

We can only hypothetically state that the concept of goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* was first sculpted in stone in the regions of Tamil Nādu, attested by the figure that was in the Virddhagiriswarar temple (Figure 7) but one cannot with complete certainty say that the depiction of the Goddess originated or was spread to other parts of southern India from Tamil Nādu. However recent evidence shows Hindu sculptures of *Pratyāṅgirā*

overseas being notably linked to the Tamil-speaking Diaspora. In these foreign temples, found in Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and the United States (Figure 29), the sculptures depict the goddess with four hands, crafted in stone and metal, but notably not in cement, underscoring the global dispersion of the goddess's iconography.



Figure 29: Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* from Sri Lanka (Left) and the United States of America (Right)

The Association of *Pratyāṅgirā* and *Durgā*

In Hindu texts, Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* is often linked to Goddess *Kālī*; however, contemporary worship in Tamil Nādu and Kerala associates her more with *Durgā*. The *Śrītattvanidhi* describes *Pratyāṅgirā*'s iconography under various forms of *Durgā*, supporting this regional belief. W.J. Wilkins, in his book 'Hindu Mythology, Vedic and Purānic' notes the association of *Pratyāṅgirā* with *Durgā*, emphasizing nighttime rituals with red flowers, liquors, and animal sacrifices. The worshippers in the region also attribute *Śaivaite* or *Vaiṣṇavite* connections to *Pratyāṅgirā* when considered a form of *Durgā*. The complex cultic associations of *Durgā* herself, identified as both *Pārvatī* and a form of *Lakṣmī* in different Purāṇas, add different layers to the understanding of *Pratyāṅgirā*'s divine identity. Further research is needed to delve into the nuanced relationship between *Pratyāṅgirā* and *Durgā*.

Cultic Inclinations of Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā*

Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā*, with roots in *Śākta* traditions, is often associated with the Supreme Mother Goddess in Puranic mentions. While *Tāntrik* literature, sometimes

leaning towards Śaivaite inclinations, features *Pratyaṅgirā*, she is more prominent in *Kaula* Traditions, emphasizing goddess worship. Contemporary temples predominantly affiliated with Śākta and Śaiva practices often worship *Pratyaṅgirā*. Notably, the Arulmigu Sri Jayamangala Sri Maha Prathyaṅgira Devī Pīḍam in Thiruchirapalli and the Brahmapuram Sree Mahalakṣmī *Pratyaṅgirā* Temple in Thiruvananthapuram showcase a distinct *Vaiṣṇavite* association. In the latter temple, *Pratyaṅgira*'s shrine stands adjacent to the main shrine of *Lakṣmī*, presenting a unique blend of goddess worship within a *Vaiṣṇavite* context.



Figure 30: Goddess *Pratyaṅgirā* decorated as *Mahiṣāsuramardini*, *Lakṣmī* and *Sarasvatī*

The Modern Amalgamation of *Pratyaṅgirā* into Various Goddesses

Modern-day Hindu temples of Goddess *Pratyaṅgirā* are also known for decorating her as various female deities during important festive days (Figure 30). This is a good example of how the deity is getting a benevolent makeover to make her acceptable to more mainstream worshippers who may have become weary of her violent characterization in the past. The worship of the goddess in contemporary Hindu temples involves a distinctive ritual called *Pratyaṅgirā Homa*, predominantly performed during the inauspicious lunar phase of *Amāvāsyā* or the new moon. This contrasts with mainstream deity worship, which often occurs during the auspicious full moon days. A notable feature of *Pratyaṅgirā Homa* is the use of red chillies, a unique element absent in other Hindu rituals. These red chillies are employed to enhance the intensity of the sacrificial fire. Additional ingredients include ghee, black pepper, puffed rice, *Nava Danya* (nine varieties of grams typically used in Hindu rituals), *Shami* (*Acacia Polyacantha* Willd), *Peepal* (*Ficus religiosa*), and various types of wood.



Figure 31: The Firangai Devi Temple in Sivaji Peth, Kolhapur City, Maharashtra
(Courtesy: Tushar Ingawale)

The Oldest Literary Reference to a Temple for Goddess Pratyāṅgirā

The Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency volume XXIV dated 1886 C.E. mentions the temple of *Phirangai* or *Pratyāngiras*, “a beloved goddess of the lower classes in the vicinity” (Campbell, 1886) of present-day Kolhapur. The temple, still standing today with modern architectural additions, is dedicated to *Firangai Devī*, a deity revered by communities in Maharashtra and Karnataka and associated with *Pārvatī*. The popular portrayal of *Firangai Devī* is through rock images painted in orange or red with added facial features. The gazetteer delineates offerings of flour, salt, turmeric, and oil to the goddess, who was believed to possess the power to cure children suffering from itch, noting that in the past, buffaloes were offered, later replaced by goats. No religious text related to Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* talks about this connection with *Firangai Devī* and the power to cure children from itch is also not found in her mythological mentions.

Comparison of Goddess Pratyāṅgirā with Nārasimhī

In Hindu mythology, another lion-faced deity known as *Nārasimhī*, one of the *Mātrkāṣ* or mother goddesses, is described as an extension of the *Devī* or Supreme mother goddess. Depicted with a bell, sword, mace, *vajra* (Lightning Bolt), shield, noose, and protective gestures, *Nārasimhī* emerges to combat demons (Rao, 2003). Notably, the similarity between *Nārasimhī* and *Pratyāṅgirā* lies in their lion faces and lion mounts. However, differences emerge when examining features like the fleshy abdomen and

voluptuous breasts present in Nārasimhī sculptures, not consistently seen in *Pratyāṅgirā* depictions. Unlike *Pratyāṅgirā*, Nārasimhī sculptures from Hirapur, Khajuraho and Satna (Figure 32) portray her with other divinities and lack the *Agni-Keśa*. Mythologically, *Pratyāṅgirā* does not seem to be associated with the *Mātrkāś*, and similarly, *Nārasimhī* is not linked with magico-rituals.



Figure 32: Nārasimhī from Hirapur, Khajuraho and Satna (Courtesy: Wikipedia)

Conclusion

The study of Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* provides insight into how larger sects within Hinduism, emphasizing liberation and ultimate knowledge, incorporated spells and sorcery for immediate material gains. This research article illustrates the transmission of ideas across religions and the transformation of a deity to suit specific religious needs. Contemporary godmen establishing cults in the goddess's name, identifying as *Pratyāṅgirā* Swamigal or *Pratyāṅgirā* Adigal, contribute to her popularity and the perception of her as a benevolent deity. The desensitization to the goddess's aggressive features in modern sculptures might reflect a broader societal desensitization to violence, influenced by contemporary media. The priests associated with the worship of Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā* in Tamil Nādu attribute the origin of her rituals to the semi-historical figure Pulipani Siddhar, believed to have lived in ancient Southern India. Pulipani Siddhar, also credited with contributions to Ayurvedic medicinal doctrines, is thought to have authored palm leaf manuals detailing the goddess's worship rituals. Unfortunately, these manuals are thought to be lost to time, and the current oral tradition followed by the priests is considered a continuation of Siddhar's teachings. While the authenticity of this account cannot be verified, there are intriguing traces of the goddess's mythology in contemporary practices. Notably, the priests refer to the goddess as *Atharvāna Bhadrakālī*, a name exclusively found in manuscripts and absent in the religious literature explored in this study. This usage adds a layer of complexity

to the understanding of Goddess *Pratyāṅgirā's* worship traditions. Numerous undated and untranslated manuscripts in various libraries hold the potential for expanding future studies on this topic.

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