



Figure of Chamunda Devi

On display

Title/Description: Figure of Chamunda Devi

Object Type: Figure

Materials: Bronze

Measurements: h. 130 x w. 78 x d. 24 mm

Accession Number: 621

Historic Period: 17th/18th century

Production Place: Nepal, Tibet

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1978

As Buddhism spread north into the hills of Nepal and then Tibet, a Tantric form of the religion developed, emphasising the importance of the goddess as a personification of *shakti* (creative power). This Tantric religion became particularly important in Tibet and many of the Hindu gods were incorporated into Tibetan Buddhism. This statue represents one of those goddesses adopted from Hinduism.

Shiva's wife, the normally tranquil Parvati, can appear in a wild, destroying form when evil is to be overcome. In this phase she is worshipped as the goddess Durga (or Kali), particularly in north east India. The goddess Chamunda is a personification of Durga. She is wearing a skull head-dress and a garland of skulls (now broken) looped down from her waist. Her upper right hand probably holds an axe and the upper left probably the Buddhist *ghanta* or hand bell. The lower hands are in more gentle mudras - the right in *varada mudra* (giving gifts), and the left in *abhaya mudra* (offering reassurance or protection).

Margaret A. Willey, 1995

Entry taken from *Art from the Indian Sub-continent in the Sainsbury Centre*, UEA, 1995.
