The Making of a Modern Temple: Kālīghāṭ and Kolkata
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Introduction: The Temples of Modern India

India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, once anticipated a time when dams and power plants would become the temples of modern India.[1] He was not alone in envisioning the nation's future as one in which religion would take a back seat to industry. In the intervening decades, industries have indeed flourished, but temples have not receded from the forefront of public life. This is a book about what Hindu temples do for Hindus so that they have not been abandoned in moves to modernize India, but have become an integral part of modernizing projects. For many among the middle classes in particular, religion's public forms have been transformed over the past long century into emblems that declare proudly to the world who they are, where they come from, and where they are going. Counter to Nehru's prediction, then, the temples of modern India are in fact temples.

Kālīghāṭ temple in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta)[2] is an ideal site for a case study in the now widespread phenomenon by which India's middle classes work to modernize temples. This temple, which is dedicated to the dark goddess Kālī, who accepts animal sacrifice, and is situated in a neighborhood inhabited by priests and sex workers, has been roundly critiqued by elites throughout its history for representing superstition and backwardness. This was especially true when Calcutta was the capital of the British Empire in India. Kālīghāṭ epitomized for colonialists, Orientalists, Christian missionaries, and Hindu reformers alike everything that was wrong with temple Hinduism. The most studied of Calcutta's colonial middle classes[3] – the likes of

Rammohan Roy, Rabindranath Tagore, and Vivekananda – ignored or denounced Kālīghāṭ. They worked to reform Hinduism by expunging it of places like Kālīghāṭ and the practices of image worship and animal sacrifice that accompanied them. This temple still represents backwardness for many middle-class Hindus who decry its rituals as superstitious, its administration disorderly, and its physical state messy and chaotic.

Yet beginning in the late-nineteenth century, Kālīghāṭ became the subject of major modernization projects undertaken by lesser-known middle-class Hindus in the city. Those Hindus wrote history books and journal articles that worked to rationalize Kālīghāṭ's history and bourgeoisify its Hindu practices. In the mid-twentieth century, middle-class men filed and adjudicated lawsuits to make this once-private institution public, and to secularize and democratize its management structure. They now form non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and file further lawsuits with the aim of gentrifying its physical space. For these individuals, Kālīghāṭ *ought* to represent Indian modernity, and they work hard to make it so. Their efforts mirror those at other temples across India from Chennai to Delhi to Bangalore.[4]

This temple remains important to these Hindus and others because the goddess within remains a potent force and a familiar figure in their lives. But it also remains important because the conceptual, institutional, and physical forms of this religious site are facets through which they can produce and publicize their modernity, as well as their city's and their nation's. In Kolkata, the distinctive black, oval form that Kālī takes at Kālīghāṭ (see Figure 1) – with wide red eyes, a long golden tongue, and hands that hold a sword and severed head – adorns the walls of the most upscale houses to those of the most humble shops, and from the home screens of smartphones to the rearview mirrors of

rickshaws. She literally permeates this city. Bengali Hindus – those living in the region of India that now spans the Indian state of West Bengal and the nation of Bangladesh – call her "Mā," meaning "mother." Kālīghāṭ is further thought to be one of the most potent of South Asia's 51 Śaktipīṭhs (seats of the goddess) where pieces of the goddess' body fell in a primordial age.[5] It is visited by Kālī devotees from all over the world.

Figure 1: *Mūrti* of Kālī in the Inner Sanctum of Kālīghāṭ
Source: Unattributed photograph purchased by author at stall near Kālīghāṭ

Since their earliest beginnings in the Indian landscape, temples have been sites where people have worked to publicly demonstrate their piety and social standing. Royal families built some of the most famous of India's temples in the early medieval period. In constructing and renovating grand façades and patronizing opulent ritual performances, rulers legitimized their rule by demonstrating their economic prowess and their close relationship to the deities within.[6] The wealthy landholders who built Kālīghāṭ in 1809, while not kings, surely demonstrated the same through that building.[7] It is likely no coincidence that they initiated construction in 1799, the very same year that the East India Company's governor general, Lord Wellesley, initiated the construction of Government House (now Raj Bhavan) just a few miles north. Devotees, too, have funded new archways, pillars, and other architectural features at this and other temples and have patronized their rituals and festivals, displaying to both Kālī and their peers their social status and devotion. Middle-class actors do the same when they work to modernize this temple.

Modernizing projects at Kālīghāṭ have three features that set them apart from pre-modern building and renovation projects. First, they deploy modernist idioms including rationality, democracy, order, and cleanliness. These stand in stark contrast to idioms governing changes to temples in pre-modernity – purity, divine power, and the valor of aristocratic lineages. This novelty is one of substance rather than form, as people always work on sites that are important to them according to the values of their historical contexts. By definition, modern idioms were not available in pre-modern eras. Second, and similarly, the notion of the Indian nation was not available in pre-modern eras. Beginning in the 1890s, alongside the early intimations of Indian nationalism, middle-class actors began to fashion Kālīghāṭ as a site that would represent the unique cultural heritage of Calcutta and the Indian nation – first to colonial powers and, now, to the world. Middle-class actors felt that this temple could then become part of a project by which India would be perceived as modern but not Western.

Finally, and the most novel of the three transformations, is the role that is played by middle classes at the temple today. While sometimes espousing their subjugation to the divine power that temples house, middle-class actors also feel empowered to wield the worldly influence they have over those temples. Today, they join hands with state bodies to alter many aspects of temple life. In many ways, these men and women have taken on the role of those kings who once built grand temples and played an administrative role in them. Yet they are not kings. In fact, their class sensibilities would compel them to be troubled by the comparison. They see themselves instead as representatives of the public. They frame their modernizing efforts as "public interest" projects, self-evidently beneficial to everyone who visits the temple. An examination of

opposition to their modernization projects reveals that the middle classes do not, in fact, represent the entire public. For many devotees, as well as temple Brahmins and members of the lower classes who make use of this site, Kālīghāṭ is not in need of transformation. Nor is it primarily valuable for its ability to represent their identity. Instead, it is a site of community, commerce, and worship, in which ties are forged between human and divine figures. Nevertheless, the middle classes do exert control over temples – at least at an official level – through the justification that they represent the public. This signifies a dramatic shift in the place of the temple in Indian society.

This argument will unfold throughout the pages of this book, but requires first an introduction to the specificities of Kālīghāṭ, as well as the highly charged concepts of "modernity," "the middle classes," and "the public." By way of introducing the temple and the kinds of significances it holds for individuals of many class backgrounds today, I offer a series of vignettes taken from my fieldwork in Kolkata in 2011 and 2012.

Following is a description of my visit to Kālīghāṭ one Saturday morning in October, 2011, with Kamala, a friend of my neighbor in the Tollygunge Phari neighborhood of Kolkata:

"This is a Śaktipīṭh, you know? It is a special place of the goddess. Long, long back, goddess Kālī's little finger fell here in this spot. There are 58 places all over India where pieces of her body fell."[8]

Kamala, an IT executive in her early forties, dressed in a crisply ironed, floral sari described to me the significance of Kālīghāṭ temple as we slowly approached it in her chauffeured, air-conditioned car. I had heard the Śaktipīṭh story many times before and would hear it many times again. The details always differed – Was it one finger or a few? Was it fingers or toes? Was it Kālī's body parts or Satī's? Or are all goddesses really manifestations of the one goddess? Are there 58 places where her body fell, or 51, or 108? For devotees who visit Kālīghāṭ, the details of this story are not nearly as important as its truth – Kālī has been in that place "since time immemorial" and she is therefore immensely powerful there. She is more "jāgrata" (awake) at Kālīghāṭ than at any other temple. "There are many Kālī temples in Kolkata," a professor of education once told me, "but if you want the real *thing, you have to go to Kālīghāṭ." Devotees come from far and wide to visit this most famous Kālī temple in the world, and what is held to be the most potent pilgrimage site in Bengal.*

"We are all Kālī's children," Kamala continued. "Some people come to her for bad deeds and others come for good. But Kālī doesn't discriminate." Kamala visits Kālī as often as she can. On this day, she had her twelfth-grade son in mind as she went to pray to this goddess known for her immense, undiscriminating power. According to her estimation, he had not studied nearly enough for his upcoming exams. "Typical teenager!" she quipped.

The car crept along the crowded Kali Temple Road, barely wide enough for one car to squeeze through. We were only a few hundred feet away, but it was hard to make out the temple façade as it is neither very large nor very grand, and has many makeshift shop stalls attached to its walls (see Figure 2). It was a Saturday morning – a day

particularly auspicious for the goddess – so the crowds of devotees approaching the site

swelled to the thousands. They were accompanied by hawkers selling everything from

purses and bangles, to ritual accoutrements including coconuts and garlands of prayer

beads and of Kālī's favorite red hibiscus flowers (see Figure 3). As we came nearer to

the temple itself, pictures and physical representations of Kālī and Śiva and other

members of the Hindu pantheon were being sold (see Figure 4). Devotees purchase these

images of the gods and goddesses as mementoes of their visit, and as mūrtis

(embodiments of deities) to install in their home shrines.

Figure 2: Photo of Kālīghāṭ from northeastern corner

Source: Photo taken by Ankur P. in 2017

Figure 3: Kālīghāṭ Flower Seller

Source: Photo taken by author in 2009

Figure 4: Photo of a hawker's stall in front of temple

Source: Photo taken by author in 2009

The presence of the hawkers selling these products hid storefronts and

restaurants (called "hotels") selling hot, milky chai alongside jalebi and gulab jamun –

some of the sweets for which Bengal is best known. Beggars filled in the spaces between

hawkers and devotees, some knocking on our window, hoping to be the beneficiaries of

our generosity. Many were aged and crippled. Most were women. Pāṇḍās (male

Brahmin ritual officiates and temple guides) young and old lingered, offering assistance

to guide pilgrims through the temple. One pāṇḍā nodded at me, knowingly. Having

visited the temple regularly for about a month before this visit with Kamala, I had come

to know a few of the hundreds of pāṇḍās *and beggars who work on temple grounds.*

I had walked along Kali Temple Road many times and knew that it would have

taken us 5 minutes to walk the few blocks it took us almost 20 minutes to drive. Apart

from the crowds slowing us down, much of the road in front of the temple was closed off,

so that our route was circuitous. Kamala was my neighbor's friend who, upon hearing

that I was interested in this famed Hindu temple, offered to bring me along next time she

went to visit. "I never go to Kālīghāṭ because of the pāṇḍā *problem" my neighbor had*

remarked, offhandedly, when we first met. She complained that pāṇḍās *harassed her*

every time she visited the temple, demanding exorbitantly large "tips." Kamala

complained instead of the huge crowds at the temple – "too much to manage" – she

explained. Neither of these women visited Kālīghāṭ unless they had arranged to visit with

a man named Jaidev – a "good pāṇḍā*" in their words – who could be trusted to help*

them navigate the crowds and to conduct pūjā *(worship) in the correct ways, without*

extorting money from them. Kamala's husband is an orthopedic surgeon at a nearby

hospital. His division sponsors this pāṇḍā *so that all surgeons and their families can visit*

Kālīghāṭ with his assistance. This does not provide the completely "hassle-free" visit

Kamala longs for, but it helps.

We turned left on Kālīghāṭ Road in order to reach our meeting place with Jaidev.

Priests from Kālīghāṭ live on the eastern side of this road, while sex workers live on the

western side in an old but still operative red light district (for a map of this neighborhood

and its location within Kolkata, see Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 5: Map of Kolkata

Source: Gai Moodie, Illustrator [not to scale]

Figure 6: Map of the Kālīghāṭ neighborhood

Source: Gai Moodie, Illustrator [not to scale]

*This is the road on which Mamata Banerjee, Chief Minister of West Bengal, would approach the temple from her home, just a mile north. Having grown up in this neighborhood, "*didi*," (elder sister) as she is known, touts her humble origins as evidence of her being one with the people. Kamala pointed out Jaidev as we passed by Mother Teresa's Home for the Sick and Dying (Nirmal Hriday) on our left. The building in which it is housed was formerly a resting house for pilgrims visiting Kālīghāṭ. In 1952, the city gave it to the famed nun to pursue her work of providing care for the dying. Nuns and mostly foreign volunteers fed and bathed those nearing the end of their lives. That work was on pause during the year of my fieldwork as the building was under internal construction.*

Jaidev held the car door open for us as we slid off our cool leather seats into the thick, humid air. He wore a white dhoti *(traditional male garment consisting of a floor-length cloth that is wrapped around the waist). His sacred thread indicating his Brahmin caste identity was visible through his short-sleeved, collared shirt's opened buttons. He handed Kamala a basket with a coconut, some red bangles, and a small piece of red and gold sari cloth. He poured water from a copper bowl into our hands so that we could*

purify ourselves before entering the temple grounds. We passed through the small lane in between Nirmal Hriday and the temple, which was flanked by more shop stalls.

We sat on a bench outside a sweetshop adjoined to the temple for a few minutes while Jaidev's assistant selected pieces of miṣṭi *(sweets) to add to the basket. These would become part of Kamala's offerings to the goddess. The smell of butchered goat meat wafted into the shop area. We were very near where goats are taken after they are sacrificed. While animal sacrifice has ceased in almost every other temple in the city, it continues here on a daily basis. Part of the first goat sacrificed to Kālī each day becomes part of her midday meal. The rest of the goat meat is either taken by the family who offered it, or sold in a small meat market in the corner of the temple. This sanctified flesh is cooked and eaten as* prasād *(blessed food). There is a great deal of ambivalence surrounding this practice. One priest had previously assured me that Kālī does not eat the meat – her "*bhūt*" (ghostly attendants) do. Most who offer sacrifices disagree. Noticing the smell, Kamala smiled politely and stated: "Some people offer animal sacrifice here. I have a different opinion about that, but* jay hok *(let it be)!" She performs what Jaidev calls "Vedic" – rather than "Tantric" –* pūjā, *meaning that she and her family sacrifice gourds as a substitute for goats.*

We left our shoes at the sweet shop and entered the temple (see Figure 7 for a plan of the temple). There was a long, winding queue of devotees waiting to enter the garbha gṛha *(inner sanctum) where Kālī resides. They sometimes waited for hours to have* darśan *(divine visual exchange) of Kālī. Instead of waiting in that line, Jaidev led us to the front, squeezing past a very frustrated young policewoman clad in a smart gray salwar kameez (a long tunic worn over long pants). She was having a very difficult time*

physically holding back the crowds of devotees who also wished to skip the long line. But Jaidev was clearly known and was allowed to bring clients into the inner sanctum this way. We were close to – but not in – the VIP area, which is reserved for Bollywood stars, cricket champions, and heads of state. Those who are famous and Bengali must visit Kālīghāṭ when they come to the city.

Figure 7: Plan of Kālīghāṭ drawn by Indrani Basu Roy (not to scale)
Source: Roy, Indrani Basu. 1993. *Kālighāt: Its Impact on Socio-Cultural Life of Hindus.* New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, Backmatter, Map No. 2.

It turned out that Jaidev was not just a pāṇḍā*, but a* sevāyet *(literally, "one who serves"). This means that he is a member of the Brahmin family who inherited the rights and responsibilities of worshiping Kālī at Kālīghāṭ hundreds of years ago. The temple is managed by these* sevāyets *– known often by their surname, Haldar – through a system of* pālā *(turns). Because there are now over 1,000 members of that family, members have as little as a few hours, or as many as a few days for which they are responsible for having Kālī's material and ritual needs met and during which they are also entitled to a share of the offerings that are made to her. This day was one of Jaidev's* pālās, *so he was entitled to special privileges, including jumping the queue with devotees.*

Just outside the inner sanctum, a policeman in a white uniform forcefully blew his whistle to keep the darśan *line moving, while men wearing* dhotis *and bare chests with sacred threads shouted and sometimes physically pushed people through. Devotees who had waited for hours, sweating in that long queue had merely a moment to stop and behold Kālī, giving her their offerings and presenting to her their prayers. Bodies*

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pushed against us on all sides as goat's blood mingled with crushed hibiscus flowers on the soles of our feet.

Within a few minutes, the darśan *queue was stopped and we were pushed in front of Kālī. She was draped in multiple silk saris and garland upon garland of flowers – mostly red, but some purple, orange, and white. Her husband, the god Śiva, lies prostrate below her feet. His presence recalls the incident in which Kālī's dance of destruction was so powerful that it threatened to ruin the whole universe, and in order to stop her, Śiva played dead so that Kālī would step on him and come to her senses.*

Jaidev's assistant held the basket and handed its contents to Kamala, one by one. Jaidev instructed her to smear yogurt, rose water, water from the Ganges River, and coconut water onto Śiva while he chanted Sanskrit mantras. I was sure I had heard that no one was allowed to touch this mūrti, *though a beggar friend later told me that this was "*poyshār byāpār*" (a matter of money). I stood next to Kamala as she was led through this ritual and men and women threw garlands of flowers from a balcony behind us to Kālī. They had been in a shorter queue that allowed them a more limited view of the goddess through an opening in the* garbha gṛha *wall. Unfortunately, those of us inside the* garbha gṛha *were blocking their garlands from reaching Kālī. Most landed on our backs and heads and fell to the floor. Those throwing the garlands did not abate. They had made their offerings to the goddess and trusted her to accept them even if they did not physically reach her. Jaidev's assistant bent down to retrieve one and placed it around my neck. He then placed pieces of* miṣṭi *in Kamala's hands and told her to put them in Kālī's right hand. He poured coconut water on Kālī's slide-like tongue, and Jaidev told Kamala to catch it with her mouth. She drank the water, catching the rest of*

it with her hands, applying it to the top of her head. Jaidev instructed me to do the same. I awkwardly caught some of the water in my hands and followed Kamala in daubing it on my head.

We left Kālī and went to visit some of the shrines of other gods and goddesses who share this temple. First, we visited one of the Śiva liṅgās on the eastern side of the temple, and then the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa shrine. A flower seller – whom Kamala mistook for Jaidev's assistant – put a lotus flower into her hand. She offered it to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and was then perturbed when the flower seller demanded payment. She was not supposed to deal with hawkers directly. Suspecting deception on the part of the flower seller, she finally relented and asked Jaidev to give him 20 rupees.

I saw Singha in the distance. Singha, meaning "lion," is surely not her actual name, but the one her friends call her because she is known to be proud, and fierce when she needs to be. She had her hand outstretched before a nicely dressed man. This is a posture I assume she takes often, but one she had never knowingly let me see.

We returned to the sweet shop, this time sitting inside under the fan, as we recovered from the confusion of the crowds. Kamala had apparently relayed to Jaidev that I wanted to know the "real facts" about Kālīghāṭ. She – like countless others I spoke with throughout the course of my research – had interpreted my interest in varying conceptions of the temple as an interest in its history. With the main task of pūjā *complete, Jaidev's older brother Debasis came to sit with us, and launched into an explanation of the historical significance of Kālīghāṭ. He corrected Kamala's recollection of the Śaktipīṭh story, saying that in fact it had been part of Satī's right foot, along with the accompanying toes, that had fallen in this spot. The Bengali word*

"āṅguli," which means "digit" seems to be at the root of this confusion, not just for Kamala but for many with whom I spoke. Debasis explained that Raja Mansingh, a Hindu general of Emperor Akbar, had established a temple in this spot many years ago when a Brahmin named Ātmārām was worshiping the goddess deep in a forest. Sellers of conch shell bracelets who lived in the area came to worship Kālī, but had no pakkā (proper or permanent) temple for the purpose. As Debasis explained this history, Jaidev handed Kamala a historical pamphlet about the temple that he had earlier sent someone to find. Debasis told me this was "kichu nā (nothing)" and that instead of reading that, I should search for the correct information about the temple from the National Library, in a book entitled, "Old Calcutta." I frequently encountered these kinds of quarrels regarding where one might find an accurate history of Kālīghāṭ, and they were often far more heated than this one.

In the air-conditioned car once again, I asked Kamala what she would do with the coconut and the flower garland she was bringing with her from her visit to Kālīghāṭ. She said she would eat the coconut as blessed food and put the flowers on items at home that needed to be blessed, including her son's school books. In what appeared to follow as an explanation of why she engaged in these practices, as well as a defense for her mistaken version of the Śaktipīṭh story, Kamala reflected that her father used to take her to temples and ashrams when she was younger, but she never thought anything of it. "But now, later in life, these things are coming back. We people are instilled with these things, so we do them, even if we don't know all the detailed facts."

We approached the metro station where she was dropping me off. As we parted, she lamented again about the crowds and chaos at Kālīghāṭ and said that I should visit

Dakṣiṇeśvar, another famous Kālī temple on the northern side of the city, which she said

had a better system of management.

Prahlad Roy Goenka filed a PIL [public interest litigation] lawsuit against the Kālīghāṭ

Temple Committee in 2005, and then again in 2011 shortly before I visited him:

"Back in Rajasthan, my whole family worships Kālī. When my father moved to Kolkata,

each Tuesday he walked ten kilometers to Kālīghāṭ." I sat with Prahlad Roy Goenka and

his wife in the office of their home in the affluent Ballygunge neighborhood of Kolkata.

He was dressed in a suit, and sat behind a mahogany desk, as he explained to me

Kālīghāṭ's significance both for his own family and for Hindus in general. "All Kālīs are

important but Kālīghāṭ is special," he continued, "just like there are churches all over

the world but Rome is special, and there are mosques all over the world but Mecca is

special. It is not that God is not in all of them or that God is different, but they are

special." Prahlad's phone must have rung every two minutes during our hour-long

conversation, which he later told me was due to his many business ventures. He only

answered it twice. When he did, he wife engaged me in small talk. Drawing her own

connection to my being from America, she spoke of her family's recent vacation to Miami

and Orlando. They loved the beaches there, just as they loved the beaches in Bali and

the Andaman Islands.

Prahlad had filed a lawsuit against the Kālīghāṭ Temple Committee – comprised of sevāyets *and public representatives – in 2005 alleging their mismanagement of temple funds. Before he spoke to me about that suit, he told me about the service work that he was involved in, particularly in cleaning the Ganges River. "For Marwaris [the ethnic group of which he is a part],[9] charity is our family habit." Then he corrected himself. "Service, actually. Not charity." He defined service as an obligation –something one must do, whereas charity is about going above and beyond one's duties and taking credit for it. "In the [Bhagavad] Gītā, we believe everything is done by God, so individuals cannot take credit." Turning to Kālīghāṭ, he explained what he saw as the problem: "On important days,* pālās *are worth millions of rupees, so* sevāyets *sell their* pālās. *Now there are anti-social elements because the new* pālā *owners have to collect more money than they paid for the* pālā, *and they extort devotees to do that." He described* sevāyets *as behaving like investors rather than Kālī's caretakers. Their concern was for profits rather than the goddess. He couched this discussion of* sevāyets' *"money-mindedness" within a wider critique of commercialism in many Hindu forms in recent years, including yoga and Tantra.*

The court bench adjudicating Prahlad's case in 2006 sided with him, and ordered the Temple Committee to increase security measures so that the temple income could be properly collected. In this suit and its judgment, there was considerable slippage between the terms "pāṇḍā" and "sevāyet."[10] Judges seemed not to distinguish between these groups of Brahmins, implying that both contribute to the avaricious atmosphere of the temple. The court also ruled that the temple's income be allocated toward transforming the temple space into one that is comfortable for pilgrims. This meant

cleaning the temple, and also allowing the construction of a tourist center and hotel that

had been proposed by the International Foundation for Sustainable Development (IFSD).

Six years after the Calcutta High Court ruled in favor of Prahlad's suit, the vast

majority of its demands had not been met. Prahlad filed another suit in 2011 alleging

that the Kālīghāṭ Temple Committee was in contempt of court. That suit was ongoing

when I conducted my fieldwork.

I met with Gopal Mukherjee, *sevāyet* and acting secretary of the Kālīghāṭ Temple

Committee, on the day of his *pālā.* We had arranged to meet in the morning, but his many

duties had detained him. We met in the afternoon instead, in his sweet shop that faced

the temple.

 "This temple is so important that pūjāris *(Brahmin priests) from all over India must*

come to touch Mā's feet." He explained to me that other temples in the area – including

Dakṣiṇeśvar and Tārāpīṭh – are important, but Kālīghāṭ is a "Mahāpīṭh" (a great seat of

the goddess) and therefore more important. "At Kālīghāṭ, her body is actually here, and

it is always here."

Gopal then verbally led me through the rituals and procedures that occupy him

from 4:30am until 11:00pm when it is his day to manage the temple. "At 4:30, there is

Moṅgal Arati. Then at 5:30, Nitya Pūjā where Kālī is offered flowers as well as mounds

of uncooked rice and fruit in odd quantities [three, five, or seven]. Before noon, one goat

must be sacrificed. Some meat from that goat, as well as its head, would be offered as part of Kālī's meal. When her food is given, the temple is closed from about 1:30 until 4:30, depending on the crowds. The poor who gather around Kālīghāṭ are fed at that time too. At 6:30pm, Sandhyā Ārati is done. A dessert of sweets, milk, and fried bread is offered to the goddess with the door closed. Again at 7pm the doors are opened to the public and at 10:30pm, a new sari is given to Kālī, along with flower garlands, another ārati*, and then the temple is closed." He did not personally perform the rituals or cook the food that Kālī was to be offered. Nor did he control the crowds that thronged to Kālī's* garbha gṛha *all day long. But he did pay for, and manage, the services of the* pūjāris*,* miśras *(dressers), and cooks that were required to see to all of Kālī's needs. He also paid for the ritual accouterment from oil to ghee to flowers and all of the food – including food that would feed over 600 people in the daily Daridranārāyāṇ service in which the poor are honored and fed as forms of Viṣṇu. I acknowledged that this was a huge financial commitment. He surmised that this would cost up to 25,000 rupees (about $500),[11] though some of that would come from donations. In return for this service and financial outlay, he would receive half of the monetary offerings that devotees made to Kālī. The rest would go to the Kālīghāṭ Temple Committee.*

As we were finishing our conversation, Gopal's wife and teenaged daughters drove up to the sweet shop in a white ambassador car. The girls attended a private English-medium high school in the city that had just been let out. Knowing this was a big day for their father, they had come by to wish him well.

Mridul Pathak is a self-styled philanthro-preneur, who has garnered state tourist monies to fund his plans to renovate the Kālīghāṭ neighborhood. I met with him in early 2012:

"This is a catalyst organization," Mridul Pathak explained, referring to the International Foundation for Sustainable Development (IFSD), an NGO he founded in order to clean up Kālīghāṭ and its surrounding neighborhood. "It compels other Indian organizations and the Indian government to make changes." We sat in the IFSD office, about a five-minute walk from the temple itself, nibbling arrowroot biscuits and drinking chai out of porcelain teacups while a window air-conditioning unit blasted cold air at us. The IFSD building is painted with a beautiful, brightly-colored mural. The semi-abstract design of people, trees, and flowers has a rustic, artisan feel to it (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: IFSD Office Exterior

Source: Photo taken by Yuri Awanohara on January 18, 2011

Mridul laid out before me a 20-by-30 inch, 100-page, spiral-bound notebook with his plans for the temple and neighborhood. He is a retired Indian government employee who once worked on development projects in Uganda and Nigeria. He now splits his time between a home in Kolkata and an apartment in New York City where his wife is a doctor. Due to his previous development work, he knew whom to call to get architectural plans drawn, budgets calculated, and glossy color prints made and presented to the right government offices. He had already successfully persuaded the Union government

(India's central government) to invest 50 million rupees (about $1,000,000) in his project to develop Kālīghāṭ.

"Kālī doesn't care if you make it clean or not," he explained. "But she definitely cares if you have tried to do something." The front page of his book of plans features a picture of Kālī and a quote by the Bengali poet, Rabindranath Tagore: "I've seen the whole world but not the dew drop on the grass in front of me." For Mridul, Kālīghāṭ is one such dewdrop. "Bengalis move all over the world, but they do not care for their own neighborhood." They suffer, he said, from "Macaulay syndrome." He credits the colonial officer Thomas Babington Macaulay, who once advocated English education for all Indians, with making Indians ashamed of their vast cultural and spiritual wealth. "People have enough money to clean up the Writer's Building and Victoria Memorial [British-designed buildings in Kolkata], but not Kālīghāṭ. They are of a colonial mindset… People today will proudly take you to the Muslim Taj Mahal and Victoria Memorial, but they will not take you proudly to Kālīghāṭ. The pride is not there. But this *is the original Calcutta – not Park Street or the 'center' as it is seen. 300 years before the British, this area existed." Mridul feels that it is a moral responsibility incumbent upon all Indians to work to improve their country – especially the cultural monuments that signify its unique heritage. That is what he aims to do at Kālīghāṭ.*

"What other neighborhood in the world has this sort of richness? We have the oldest Greek church in Asia, Mother Teresa's which is a Muslim-architecture building, Keratolah (a cremation ground), a gurdwara, a red light district, and a community of traditional artisans, all with Kālīghāṭ at the center." He wants to revive this multicultural space so that its appearance matches the international importance he feels

it has. He has plans to pave the entire area surrounding the temple with red bricks, "just like in front of Buckingham Palace." Beggars and hawkers would be gone. Goods would be sold from kiosks with a traditional Bengali āṭcālā roof design.[12] There would be a vegetarian restaurant, parking lot, and hotel for tourists. That was the hotel that the court bench on Prahlad's case had ordered the Kālīghāṭ Temple Committee to build in 2006.

I visited with Asha, frequently throughout the period of my research. She lives on Kālīghāṭ's grounds and begs for a living:

I visited Asha one afternoon when the temple was closed for Kālī's midday meal. The slats of wood placed upon a platform of bricks just outside the temple wall that serve as a bed for her and her six-year-old son, Abhijit, had been transformed into a workspace. She was joined by other women, including Singha, who live on temple grounds and earn a living by begging from temple visitors. These women are not technically related, but they might as well be. They care for one another's children, and borrow and lend money to each other with great frequency. On this afternoon, they were taking a break from begging and worked together to cut out pictures of Bollywood stars from old newspapers. They teased one another in Bengali, saying things like, "You like that one?! But look at his clothes! This one looks much better." Asha showed me with pride that she had styled Abhijit's hair like that of Jon Abraham – her personal favorite. Abhijit hid behind his young mother's dupatta *(scarf). "*Bhoy pācche*" (Is he afraid?) I asked. "*Bhoy na.*

Lojja." (Not afraid. Shy.) Asha responded with a smile and a pat on Abhijit's head.

They stuck the cut-outs onto the lamppost next to Asha's platform. This lamppost that

was designed to provide light to temple visitors and workers came to serve as a canvas

upon which Asha could personalize the otherwise very public space in which she lived.

On another visit, I saw Asha speaking to a pāṇḍā *on the steps of the* nāṭmandir

(raised, enclosed platform) facing Kālī's garbha gṛha*. The High Court bench –*

continuing its adjudication of Prahlad's suit – had just ordered that pāṇḍās *and beggars*

be banned from temple grounds. "Not all pāṇḍās *are bad," the* pāṇḍā *explained as he*

held up his hand to me with his fingers outstretched. "Just like there are five fingers and

they are all different – it's the same with pāṇḍās*. And* many *people live on Kālī, not just*

us." As Asha and I walked away to get tea, she also expressed fear of what would

happen if – as she put it – the "sarkār" *(government) took over the temple. Referring to*

*her pāṇḍā friend, she remarked, "*Pāṇḍāra ek dine 800, 1000 ṭākā pācche. O thik hobe.

Kintu āmrā śudhu 200 ṭākā pācche. Jodi sarkār āmāder ucced korā dey, tāhole āmāder ki

hobe?*" (Pāṇḍās get 800-1,000 rupees [about $16-20] in one day. They will be fine. But*

we only make 200 [about $4]. If the government kicks us out, then what will happen to

us?) Trying to comfort her, I said that this lawsuit had been going on since 2005 and not

much had happened since. She seemed slightly relieved and agreed that probably

nothing would come of it.

These vignettes reveal that Kālīghāṭ is not losing its importance in modern India. Kālī's presence and power remain vital components in the lives of all of these individuals. This site's reputation as one of immense power due to the physical presence of the goddess has not lost support. Kālīghāṭ is as crowded and bustling as it has always been. And people continue to negotiate facets of temple life as vehemently as they always have.

These vignettes also reveal that Hindus of different class backgrounds conceptualize and inhabit Kālīghāṭ in very different ways. Kamala wants to drive to the temple and park her car there. She wants to walk through its grounds with ease, and some peace and quiet. She does not want to wait in line to have *darśan* of Kālī. Once she gets to Kālī, she wants to be able to spend a few minutes with her – not the few seconds that other devotees currently have. She would prefer if there were no animal sacrifice. Prahlad and Mridul envision the temple as a site that should be free from the priestly acquisition of wealth and from populations that harass visitors. Mridul in particular wants this site to represent to the world what is good and valuable about India – its heritage and multiculturalism – and to do that, it must be made clean and architecturally grand. These views directly impinge upon the lives and livelihoods of Jaidev, Gopal, and Asha who earn a living at Kālīghāṭ. The latter benefit greatly from the large crowds at the temple. Jaidev and Gopal furthermore feel it is their divinely-given right and responsibility to care for Kālī in the ways they currently do. Asha has never known another life than the one she has begging at Kālīghāṭ. She was born to a beggar woman there, just as her son was.

These varied conceptions about what the temple ought to look and feel like, and how it ought to be managed, are present at temples throughout India. The practice of

modernizing temples through reducing the authority – and thereby wealth – of Brahmins in them, has been ongoing since the late-eighteenth century.[13] The default assumption in India today is that unless a temple is inside a person's home or there is evidence that it was founded as a private endowment, it is public.[14] The public – either through state bodies or as individual citizens – have the right and even the responsibility to determine what goes on at Hindu temples. State bodies and laypeople now exert a great deal of influence over many aspects of temple life throughout India, including their appearance. This can take the form of greater funding for traditional renovations including rebuilding gateways and staging *kumbhābhiṣekam* (rededication) rituals (Fuller 2003, 4-10; Younger 1995, 149). It can also take the form of projects more akin to gentrification.

In Chennai, for example, wealthy Hindus living in India and abroad work to remove trash and "encroachments" of beggars and hawkers from temple grounds. At Māruṇḍeśvara, an elite voluntary organization frames their renovation efforts as protecting Chennai's heritage while simultaneously transforming the temple into a multi-use space, conducive not only for worship, but for "evening strolls and morning power walks" as well (Hancock 2008, 100). At Kolavizhi, neighborhood residents and wealthy businessmen including at least one non-resident Indian living in New York City, frame their renovation project as a community venture that is part of keeping the neighborhood clean (Waghorne 2004, 129). Such projects transform temple spaces in ways that discipline the behavior of its visitors in particular directions – toward quiet and calm and keeping to oneself. While Hindu temples have traditionally been sites of hustle and bustle, those at the helm of these renovation projects want to change that.[15]

The Akṣardhām temple complex in Delhi is an example of a new temple that was built with the same aims in mind. The complex's massive 100-acre grounds are highly surveyed, with security guards and metal detectors prohibiting undesirable materials and populations from entering. Visitors are encouraged to keep their voices low and to prohibit their children from running around, while the grounds are kept immaculately clean (Brosius 2010, 230-1). It is indeed a major tourist attraction, heralded as a marker of both spiritual and economic progress in the nation's capital (Ibid., 149). Grand pathways lead visitors from the central shrine dedicated to the Swaminarayan sect's founder to an IMAX movie theater, animatronics exhibition detailing India's history, food court, and gift shop (Singh 2010, 52). The ISKCON temple in Bangalore, while smaller, has some of the same features, with a shiny class façade and halls of shops selling books, souvenirs, ritual accouterment, and fast food (Mukerji and Basu 2015, 50-2). The Krishna Leela theme park currently being built right outside the city promises much of the same but on a far grander scale (Benjamin 2015, 101). Constructed in the 1990s and early 2000s, these sites achieve from the ground up what modernizers wish to achieve through temple renovations in Kolkata and Chennai.

Scholars have attributed these building and renovation projects to India's middle-class citizens who bring their class values to bear on temples. Waghorne aptly uses the terms "gentrification" and "bourgeoisification" to describe these renovation efforts, as they each necessitate the removal of populations to make room for the kinds of spaces middle-class groups want to frequent (2004).[16] Like gentrification projects everywhere, the needs of people of various class backgrounds are weighed against one another (Ibid., 131). In these cases, the poor's needs for a place to live and sell their goods are weighed

against the middle classes' needs for the preservation of heritage and a place to spend leisure time. In these ways of framing the temple, the language of secular public space is being mapped onto sacred space (Hancock 2008, 117). Gone are concerns for purity and the goddess' efficacy. They are replaced by ideas about what the modern Indian city ought to look and feel like, and how it compares with other cities. A modern temple would symbolize a modern city and modern nation to the world. Thus, temples become part of the creation of a distinctly Indian modernity.

With this book, I want to draw attention both to the contested nature of these projects, and to their historical antecedents. These are only the most recent movements by which middle-class Hindus have worked upon temples in order to cultivate and demonstrate their modernity. They rely upon historical and legal discourses produced by Europeans and middle-class Indians in late-colonial and post-colonial India. In Chapter 1 of this book, for example, I demonstrate that British historical discourse regarding the origins of Calcutta in the mid-nineteenth century compelled Bengali authors to forward Kālīghāṭ as an emblem of the Bengali and Hindu heritage of the city. The use of temples as emblems of Hindu identity and the Indian nation today very much relies upon and revives that line of thinking. In the second chapter, I show that the reading of the secular legal language of "public" onto the temple in the mid-twentieth century is what makes it possible for temples to be subject to state and middle-class control. The gentrification of temples would be unimaginable without this move. Before returning to a description of the contents of each chapter, I turn now to the scholarly conversations upon which I rely throughout the book, and in which this case study on Kālīghāṭ intervenes.

India's Modernities and the Middle Classes Who Publicize Them

The European Enlightenment produced a new set of values that was taken up and carried by Europeans to the many parts of the globe they colonized in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Those values have transformed cultures around the world ever since, producing multiple forms, both within Europe and elsewhere.[17] Modern values rest on an empiricist epistemology and the belief that the social order is not divinely ordained, but can be engineered by the work of individuals.[18] They include scientific rationality, egalitarianism, popular sovereignty, and civic engagement. They often carry with them certain social forms including the press and the public sphere. The values of modernity have not been fully realized anywhere, and yet they shape the values of cultures most everywhere today (see Appadurai 1996; Joshi 2011).

That aspirations of modernity are global does not imply that they are universal (Gaonkar 2001). The circulation of ideas does not mean their replication. Nor could it. These aspirations are always embedded in pre-existing cultural forms, which means their expression will always and everywhere be "fractured," to use Joshi's term. As an example, early moderns in Europe espoused human equality as a modern ideal and yet were deeply steeped in a patriarchal system (Taylor 2004, 146-7). In the same way, as middle-class Indians in colonial India pursued modernity, that modernity was imbued with the religious, gender, and caste distinctions of their time (Joshi 2011). Moreover, in the Indian project of modernity, replication was not the goal. The fact that modern ideals were introduced to India through the context of colonialism meant that they were accompanied by an assumed distinction between British and Indian civilizations. Indian modernity was produced alongside the project of proving that Indian civilization – while

different – was equal or superior to Britons'. In other words, the project of becoming modern in India was deeply inflected by the project of propagating a proud cultural identity that was distinctly Indian.

Early Indian modernists, for example, did not by and large reject their religion and adopt the Christianity that their rulers claimed was the pinnacle of modern religiosity. Instead, Hindus applied modern values to the reformation of their own religions. For some, as with Rammohan Roy and his Brahmo Sabha, that meant rejecting Hindu temple worship with its inherent use of divine images and multiple deities, and instead engaging in rational discussions about the one, universal, divine (see Hatcher 2008; Kopf 1979; Salmond 2004). For others, as with Vivekananda and his followers, it meant espousing a monolithic version of ancient Hinduism, engaging in charitable works, and from time to time, worshiping divine beings including Kālī (see Basu 2002; Sarkar 1993).[19] The mapping of modern values onto Hindu temples is yet another way in which Hindus fashion a distinctive modernity.

The members of India's middle classes I examine in this work are deeply embedded in colonial and postcolonial discourses of modernity, and they publicize those ideas through their access to technologies of societal intervention. It is with these specific qualities in mind that I employ the category "middle class." I do not abide by a Marxist model of class, which posits that individuals belong to self-conscious class groups according to their relationship to the means of economic production. Rather, I rely on Bourdieu's (1984, 1985, and 1987) work that takes class to be a theoretical rather than a real category, finding it intellectually productive to speak of society as stratified according to individuals' levels of multiple forms of capital – economic, cultural, social,

and symbolic. That is to say that men and women who occupy a similar social space share similar experiences of socialization. Those experiences are immensely powerful in shaping who they are, what they want, and what they do. While the men and women discussed in these pages do share a similar economic status in that they are predominantly salaried professionals, what is more influential to their outlooks and behaviors is the fact that they acquired those salaried professions by way of their upper-caste status, access to westernized education, English-language skills, and relatively privileged social networks. According to these social and cultural goods, India's middle classes are reared to value higher education, a global outlook, and modern forms.[20] Their members do not all value each of these things in the same way or to the same extent. I pluralize the term to indicate their highly diverse, unstable, and evolving nature. However, I argue that Bourdieu's concept of class helps us gain purchase on why a certain subset of Kolkata's citizens work to modernize Kalighat.

A brief synopsis of the origins of the middle classes in India and the historical circumstances of their differentiation is necessary here. A middle class emerged when Indian men took up positions in the colonial government in the nineteenth century. They derived mostly from the top three Hindu castes and *ashraf* Muslims (those of foreign descent, indicating their elevated status over Indians who converted to Islam) (see Pernau 2013), and had the cultural and financial resources to acquire an English education. Partha Chatterjee (1993, 37) has famously referred to this class of individuals as an elite that was simultaneously subaltern. Middle-class groups remained subordinate to British colonial powers, and yet they were well educated in westernized institutions and had salaried, professional jobs, giving them a kind of authority and social status that most of

their Indian compatriots lacked. They were thus "middling" both in their political and economic positions, standing in between their colonial overlords and the Indian masses. Societal organization by class rather than caste implied the ability for an individual to move from one social location to another on the basis of merit, education, and money, rather than birth alone. It also meant, however, that one's social position was not stable. It had to be established and re-established through public display (see Joshi 2001; Liechty 2002).

In the region of Bengal, individuals in this group were known as *bhadralok,* the Bengali term for "gentlemen," signaling their refinement and urbanity.[21] The *bhadralok* were typically Hindu and born in one of the upper castes, which in Bengal includes Kāyasthas and Baidyas alongside Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, and Vaiśyas. By and large, while Muslims comprised a large minority in Calcutta, they were not counted among the middle classes there (Banerjee 1989, 27).[22] The *bhadralok* are said to have ushered in a "Bengali Renaissance," setting the terms for cultural progress in art, history, literature, and religion, making Calcutta the cultural capital of India (Kopf 1969).

As elites shut out of official domains of power, this is the class of men who produced India's public sphere – that cultural space for debate that could be engaged by people who had never met before in order to critique state power.[23] Sanjay Joshi has defined members of the colonial middle class as those characterized by their "cultural entrepreneurialism" (2001, 2), meaning that they engaged the resources to which they had access in order to write and publish books and articles, organize public campaigns, and file lawsuits. In this way, they could circulate their ideas, performing and propagating their cultural values.[24] Through these public sphere projects, India's colonial middle

classes were also able to distinguish themselves from British colonialists, and work to remove them from power.

It is one of the ironic qualities of middle-class modernity – in India as in Europe and the rest of the world – that the modern ideal of human equality is coupled with the middle-class necessity of unending distinction between themselves and others. In many cases, as in India, this produces the performance of a moral superiority over the old aristocracy through the values of hard work, thrift, and voluntary civic engagement, and a cultural superiority over the masses as demonstrated through genteel manners, refined dress, cleanliness, and punctuality. Espousing the value of egalitarianism is in fact one of the ways in which middle-class individuals demonstrate *both* a moral and cultural superiority over those other groups. This was the claim that Britons made vis-à-vis Indians, thereby justifying their rule of India as a "civilizing mission"; it was also the claim made by middle-class Indians vis-à-vis the rest of Indian society, thereby justifying their own rule of independent India in the twentieth century.[25]

The differences between the "old" middle classes of the colonial era and the "new" middle classes of the era of India's economic liberalization in the 1990s have been the subject of much scholarship (see Fernandes 2006; Khilnani 1999). In the wake of India's Independence, her new government was peopled by middle-class Indians. At that time, poverty was seen as the most crushing of the nation's social problems, and the solution was sought in socialist policies designed to distribute what were felt to be India's ample natural resources and labor. After centuries of indirect and direct colonial rule, India's new leaders did not have an appetite for forging close economic ties with other nations. Rather, the state was isolationist and focused on India's rural lands and

populations as the sources of both its current problems and its future promise. By the 1970s and 80s, as it became clear that those policies were not raising the economic status of most Indians, trust in the state and its priorities waned among all classes of Indian society. The poor increasingly engaged in electoral politics as a way to assert their power in the democratic state, creating their own class- and caste-based political parties. The middle classes, too, turned away from the ruling Indian National Congress party, favoring instead the Hindu nationalist party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and its affiliates. Many among the middle classes formed their own NGOs in order to work autonomously from, or even against, the state (Ray and Katzenstein 2005). They still focused their efforts on eradicating poverty in many cases, but they sought to take power into their own hands. Meanwhile, those among the middle classes with economic means often moved out of the country, seeking educational, professional, and economic opportunities abroad in Europe, America, Australia, and the Middle East. India's isolationist economic policies did not allow these middle-class citizens to participate in global cultures in the ways they desired.

Middle-class citizens proposed that liberalizing India's economy would more effectively eradicate poverty, though poverty was no longer their main concern. Instead, their concern was that India would be left behind the global economic order. Under Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, the Congress-led government initiated liberalizing reforms in 1991. Those reforms have continued and broadened in the ensuing decade and a half, particularly under the leadership of the BJP and its affiliates. India's new middle classes are thus more globally and materially oriented, concerned with keeping up with international standards of gross domestic product (GDP), consumer goods, global brands,

and world-class cities. They are also more variegated. Their upper and lower echelons comprise quite different cultures. For example, there are members of old middle classes employed in government posts who are unable to uphold their former standard of living due to inflation, and feel they are being squeezed out of new professional opportunities that require different skills (e.g., jobs in the information technology industry) (Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase 2009). There are formerly lower-class individuals who are now able to acquire some hallmarks of middle-class status – perhaps a technical education and some collection of consumer goods. Yet their tastes, modes of bodily comportment, and religious practices prevent their peers from being convinced that they are really middle class (Ortegren 2016). And then there are those who live in rural areas and acquire their wealth from industries like farming, but who do not share the same culture as city dwellers (Jeffrey 2010). The new middle-class individuals who seek to reform Kālīghāṭ are instead part of an urban and upper-middle class with access to higher education, lucrative professions, a wide range of consumer goods, global travel, and networks that allow them to work closely with state powers to achieve their aims. As Fuller and Narasimhan (2014, 19) point out, this upper-middle class resembles the nation's elite in many ways.

By examining the modernist proclivities of middle-class actors' work on the temple, including Prahlad and Mridul's, I do not in turn argue that Jaidev, Gopal, and Asha are unmodern or somehow backward. While they do not work to modernize the temple, they do in fact espouse modernist aspirations in other parts of their lives.[26] For example, *pāṇḍās* do not want their children to have the same occupations as themselves. They want their children to get an education and perhaps even go to college. Many

sevāyets' children, including Gopal's, attend English-medium schools and speak of living abroad someday. Some of Asha's friends are saving money so that they might rent apartments in *pakkā* buildings. They want their children to achieve a better lifestyle than their own. These pursuits of economic development and higher education are thoroughly modern, and perhaps signify the deepening of these values in Indian society since the 1990s.[27] For Jaidev, Gopal, and Asha, then, the temple is a means to an end – a way to make money to achieve or sustain a middle-class life. For Prahlad and Mridul, the temple is an end in and of itself. For them, Kālīghāṭ is a form upon which they can establish and enact their own modernity, and India's.

Temples and Their Publics

India's middle classes have, since the nineteenth century, claimed to represent the Indian public. Then, as now, this is an elite that claims an "everyman" status (Baviskar and Ray 2011). At Kālīghāṭ, too, they see themselves as doing for the temple what is self-evidently good for all Hindus. They see their representative power as justifying their control over temple affairs. Prahlad's lawsuit, for example, was filed in the name of public interest. He did not claim in his suit that he had been individually wronged by the temple's administrative body. He argued instead that temple Brahmins' accumulation of wealth constitutes a grievance to the Hindu public more generally. Similarly, Mridul calls his NGO a "catalyst organization" that does not only reflect his own interests but the interests of a far-reaching public.

Middle-class men and women do not, of course, represent the whole Hindu public, or even the whole Hindu public in Kolkata, as Gopal and Asha's narratives

demonstrate. There are, in fact, all kinds of publics that form around Kālīghāṭ. I take

Reddy and Zavos' notion of "temple publics" to be instructive here. They argue that

communities that form around temples in the modern era are "publics" in the

Habermasian sense that they operate in a sphere that is neither private nor state-

controlled, and produce "horizontal alignments exceeding the locality" of the temple

(Reddy and Zavos 2009, 244). Those alignments include caste, national, and religious

identities. Kālīghāṭ produces all sorts of publics, many of which are overlapping. A

Śakta (goddess-worshiping) public debates what kinds of rites ought to take place at this

Kālī temple. A devotional public compares and contrasts the potency of this form of Kālī

versus those at other Śaktipīṭhs in South Asia. A tourist public takes impressions of this

site to their home countries and shares them with others who have visited it. An animal

affairs public debates animal sacrifice at Kālīghāṭ alongside the treatment of animals

elsewhere in the city, nation, and world. These publics raise many different kinds of

questions and concerns about the temple.

Prahlad, Mridul, Kamala, and many others among my interlocutors in Kolkata are

part of a public of middle-class modernity. By expressing frustration regarding

Kālīghāṭ's crowds, for example, Kamala and my neighbor assert their class privilege in

otherwise not having to deal with crowds in their day to day lives (they do not often find

themselves riding buses or shopping at the bazaar, for example). As teachers and doctors

and historians expressed their disdain to me throughout my fieldwork, saying that

Kālīghāṭ is "*so* dirty" with a shake of her heads and a furrowing of their brows, they were

expressing modernist concerns while announcing their penchant for cleanliness. And

when newspapers publish reports of the ongoing lawsuit at Kālīghāṭ, decrying the mess

and crowds of hawkers on Kalighat Temple Road, they too participate in this public of

middle-class modernity.[28]

By way of their educational backgrounds and social networks, it is *this* public that

has access to courts and state boards. It is in fact members of this public that sit on those

very state bodies. This public – which is to say, this narrow segment of the broader

Indian public – has gradually extended its authority over Kālīghāṭ over the past century.

As I will outline in Chapter 2, the Calcutta High Court and then the Supreme Court of

India declared this temple to be a public institution in the mid-twentieth century. This

legal designation of "public" is quite the opposite of Habermas's public because it

officially subjects the temple to the state's control. It is a reflection of India's courts first

"defining" and then "regulating" notions of the public (Scott and Ingram 2015, 366).

Through state support for Mridul and Prahlad's projects, among others', Kālīghāṭ's

multiple publics are conflated through this legal designation, because they are represented

by a narrow segment of the population.

Modernizing a Uniquely Bengali Temple

Bearing in mind both the exceptionalism and universalism to which scholars of Bengal

are alternately prone, the specifically Bengali nature of the evolution of Kālīghāṭ's

modernization I am tracing requires some reflection. As I have proposed throughout this

Introduction, efforts to modernize Kālīghāṭ parallel those at other Hindu temples across

India, and this study can therefore shed light on those pan-Indic projects. However, all

modernizing projects draw upon their localized contexts, and the peculiarities of Bengal

and Calcutta have shaped both the choice of Kālīghāṭ as the focus of middle-class

attention, as well as the nature and timing of middle-class modernization projects. It

would be difficult to imagine, for example, that a Kālī temple anywhere else in India

would be written into a history of reformed Hinduism in the colonial era, or that middle-

class Indians (rather than Britons) would be the ones to impose a non-Brahmin system of

management on a temple of Kālīghāṭ's importance. These aspects of Kālīghāṭ's

modernization reflect the specific religious proclivities of Bengal and the colonial history

of Calcutta.

Goddess worship – and particularly Kālī worship – is deeply rooted in Bengal.

There, men and women across caste and class spectra worship Kālī as a powerful warrior

and as a mother. Kālī is the pre-eminent goddess of power in the Hindu pantheon, known

in Tantric and Purāṇic literature as fierce, bloodthirsty, and always victorious over her

foes.[29] She was incorporated into Tantric ritual in Bengal sometime in the first half of the

second millennium CE, as evidenced by the proliferation of Sanskrit texts that describe

her worship (McDermott 2011, 163-5). To vastly oversimplify an immense subject,

Tantric ritual includes the use of impure substances including blood and sexual fluids in

order to propitiate Tantric deities who grant unequaled power. There are left-handed

versions of Tantra (the left hand being impure) in which those impure substances are used

– and even consumed – literally, and there are right-handed versions in which those

substances are instead imagined as part of meditative visualization practices. Both are

purposefully unorthodox, as they work to overcome the duality between purity and

impurity set up by Vedic texts.[30] Kālī's fierce iconic form at Kālīghāṭ adorned with

severed body parts points to this temple's Tantric roots. So does the method that animal

sacrifice takes there. Whereas in Vedic forms of sacrifice, animals are suffocated outside

the ritual enclosure, in Tantric forms, blood is shed and collected as a divinely powerful substance (Doniger 2009, 436-7).

Kālī's Tantric past is one that many Bengali Hindus would like to forget, including one of Kālīghāṭ's priests who explained to me that animal sacrifice at that temple is "Vedic" rather than Tantric, and that Kālī does not consume the sacrificed meat there anyway because that particular Kālī is Vaiṣṇavī and therefore vegetarian. Sanjukta Gupta has written an excellent piece on the various Vaiṣṇava alterations this goddess has undergone at Kālīghāṭ, from her donning a Vaiṣṇava marking on her forehead to her worship as Lakṣmī during the annual celebration of Kālī Pūjā (Gupta 2003, 65-6). This has to do, in part, with the Vaiṣṇava orientation of the Haldar family in whose care Kālī is entrusted, which will be discussed further in Chapter 1. Yet Vaiṣṇavizing the goddess is also a way of distancing Kālī from her Tantric roots and transforming her into a *bhakti* (devotional) goddess. Most of those who worship Kālī at Kālīghāṭ are completely unaware of the Vaiṣṇava reformation the goddess there has undergone. They do not know they are worshiping a form of the goddess associated with Viṣṇu, but they do not consider themselves Tantrikas either. They are, instead, *bhaktas* (devotees) who worship Kālī as mother. This transformation of Kālī into a Vaiṣṇava and *bhakti* goddess requires some further explanation.

Even while the anti-brahminical forms of Tantra have long been sought after by South Asians for the real power they can affect in the world, they have also been widely critiqued for their purposefully anti-orthodox practices. As such, Tantric forms have been amended at various historical moments over millenia so that they might appeal to broader audiences (see White 2003). In the tenth century, for example, the Trika Kaula

sect emerged, in which Abhinavagupta (among others) intellectualized and internalized left-handed Tantric practices (Sanderson 1985). Shortly thereafter, the Śrīvidyā sect also set forth a system in which ritual was dematerialized such that ritual action became "a kind of knowing" (Sanderson 1995, 46). By that time, the Śaiva Siddhānta had already "deodorised" Tantra to a great extent, not by intellectualizing it, but by establishing Śiva as a deity whose grace would be sought through rituals akin to their non-Tantric counterparts (Sanderson 1985, 203). All of these moves made Tantra both palatable and accessible to householders.[31] Within the context of colonial Bengal, Sir John Woodroffe and his Bengali and Tibetan collaborators mysticized Tantra for an English-educated middle class. In their works (written under pseudonym Arthur Avalon), Tantra was described as a monistic and mystical tradition that aligned well with Western philosophy and science (Taylor 2001). [32]

The *bhakti*-zation of Kālī worship in Bengal is one more example of a process whereby Tantra has been cleaned up or refined to appeal to a wider audience. Rachel McDermott has traced this process closely. She writes of the dramatic shift Kālī worship in this region underwent in the sixteenth century whereby her Tantric aspects were sublimated into aspects more acceptable to a householder audience. At that time, wealthy *rājās* and *zamindars* in Bengal began to patronize festivals, temples, and new genres of vernacular texts dedicated to Kālī (McDermott 2011, 165-73).[33] They were eager to associate themselves with her power in the face of both Mughal and European incursions. These men patronized the work of poets such as Rāmprasād Sen and Kamalākānta Bhaṭṭācārya, who infused their poetry to Kālī with a devotional flavor akin to that of *bhakti* poetry (McDermott 2000, 2001). Such poetry had been composed and dedicated

to the god Kṛṣṇa in this area since the fifteenth century and was characterized by "sweetness and emotionalism" (McDermott 2001, 170). The new Śakti poetry paid homage to Kālī's Tantric characteristics, but was also infused with the notion of *prati-vātsalya,* or the love of a child for his or her mother (McDermott 2001, 170). Varuni Bhatia (2017) has written about the way in which *bhakti* was associated with Vaiṣṇavism in the nineteenth century to the extent that the Bengali *bhadralok* sought to recover what they despaired was a loss of this devotional attitude through a loss of memory about Vaiṣṇava figures such as Caitanya.

Whether the new Śakti poetry was composed in such a way that it would compete with or simply incorporate contemporaneous Vaiṣṇava forms is unclear. Either way, in Bengal the Tantric goddess Kālī became a *bhakti* goddess through these Vaiṣṇava-esque poems. She became not just as a goddess of power, but a goddess of love, and specifically motherly love. Kālī gained widespread devotion among people of many caste backgrounds. She became a goddess who could be worshiped not just in folk or secretive practices, but in temples and public festivals. This sense of adoration Bengalis feel for Kālī is echoed in the words of a wealthy Bengali retiree who relayed to me, "I tell you this, every Bengali has a soft feeling for Kālīghāṭ. When we pass by on the road or by metro, we do this (touching his hand to his head and then his heart/chest in an act of reverence) and we don't even know why. It is involuntary."

This puts Bengali Śaktism at odds in many ways with other Indian *bhakti* traditions, about which much has been written (Hawley 2015 traces much of this work). The famous fifteenth- and sixteenth-century north Indian *bhaktas* like Tulsidas and Kabir shunned the goddess worshipers in their midst because they engaged in Tantric rituals

involving blood and sex, and were typically low caste. Even Kabir who castigated both

Brahmanical orthodoxy and caste distinctions denounced Śaktas (Pauwels 2010). As

Patton Burchett has argued, such castigations may have been a way of discrediting the

authority and efficacy of Tantric ritual in favor of the *bhaktas'* own soteriological

methods (Burchett 2013). But in Bengal, the situation is quite different. First, Śaktas are

not only low caste but also high caste, and thus notions of Hindu orthodoxy in Bengal are

derived from Śakta traditions (Bordeaux 2014). Second, devotional and Tantric forms of

goddess worship overlap a great deal (McDaniel 2004).[34] There are certainly highly

specialized Tantric ritualists who worship the goddess using secretive and subversive

practices, but Tantric goddesses like Kālī have now been subsumed under a *bhakti*

canopy. Today, Kālī is feted with the same kind of pageantry as other non-Tantric

goddesses, albeit always with references to her ferocious power.

In the following chapters, as I outline the intellectual, organizational, and

aesthetic reformations Kolkata's middle-class citizens impose upon Kālīghāṭ, we are

witness to one more instance of the transformation of a Tantric site and a Tantric goddess

so that they are palatable to broader audience. A new set of idioms – this time, modernist

– make Kālī and Kālīghāṭ more palatable to a globalized elite.

There is a particularly close relationship between the goddess Kālī and Kolkata.

A city resident who self-identified as a non-religious Hindu remarked to me during my

fieldwork, "This goddess belongs to Bengalis," while his friend followed with, "Not just

to Bengalis but to Kolkata – we have this phrase, you know – *Jai Kālī, Kolkatawālī*

(Victory to Kālī, she who is of Kolkata)." This special connection is directly tied to

Kālīghāṭ. In a region so steeped in goddess worship, Kālīghāṭ is literally a seat of the

goddess – a Śaktipīṭh – as Kamala and countless others conveyed to me. It is said to hold the toes of the primordial goddess's body that are so powerful that a person who once opened the box within which they are kept in Kālīghāṭ's inner sanctum was immediately and irreparably blinded. The temple holds a *svayaṃbhū* (self-created) *mūrti* that was found naturally formed in nature. This form reinforces the notion that no human being chose this site as one where Kālī would be worshiped; she selected it herself. Y

Kālīghāṭ's identification with Calcutta is due especially to Calcutta's colonial history. As I will continue to explicate in Chapter 1, this site's pre-existence on the land that would become Calcutta meant that it could be taken up as an emblem of Bengali and Hindu identity at a time when Britons were claiming that Calcutta was an essentially British city. Kālīghāṭ could simultaneously stand for the primordial power of a mother goddess and a political symbol of Hindu presence. So while there are many other very popular Kālī temples throughout Kolkata, none has become so deeply wedded to the story of the city as has Kālīghāṭ.

The fact that Calcutta was the center of *bhadralok* culture in the nineteenth century also deeply influenced the kinds of modernizing projects that middle-class actors would take up at that time. As the capital of the British Empire in India, Calcutta was one of the major centers of English education, where Indians were being trained in European science and literature alongside British and Roman history and law (Banerjee 1989, 42). It was also one of the major centers of the newly emerging discipline of scientific history in India beginning in the 1880s (Chakrabarty 2015, 39). The authors I discuss in Chapter 1 were in the midst of the likes of Bankimchandra Chatterjee, Rajendralal Mitra, Romesh Chunder Dutt, and Jadunath Sarkar. Their interest in history

– in a modern and scientific sense – had much to do with the cultural nationalism that was central to the creation of the Indian nation. Writers of history were aware that the choice of historical narratives one told conveyed quite different portrayals of people and their cultures. As Bankimchandra once famously argued, "the lion is always shown as being defeated… because it was man who painted the picture" (Kaviraj 1995, 109). Writing one's own story is an act of political power. In nineteenth-century India, this act was nowhere more important than at the centers of colonial domination. Colonial-era Hindu reform and revival movements were also particularly influential in urban centers like Calcutta where values shaped through cultural exchange were applied to religion. The writers I discuss were thus also in the midst of *bhadralok* Hindu reformers and revivalists who sought to reshape the history, beliefs, and practices of Hinduism so that they aligned with their newly found values. English education, Indian historical projects, and Hindu reform and revival movements certainly existed in other major cities in India during the colonial era, but Calcutta was a particularly powerful hub of each of these.

To provide a sense of how these aspects of Kālīghāṭ and its modernization are uniquely Bengali, it is useful to compare them to the projects Joanne Waghorne discusses in her expansive work on temples in Chennai. First, goddess temples did not become part of middle-class modernization efforts there until the late-twentieth century when their reigning deities, typically worshiped by lower-caste groups, could be swept up in a characteristically Tamil form of anti-Brahmin politics (Waghorne 2004, 150-63). The goddess Kālī's appeal to a broad spectrum of Hindus in Bengal, and her special connection to Calcutta through Kālīghāṭ, made this site ripe for the attention of the middle classes, even in the nineteenth century. Second, in the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries, temples in the commercial city of Chennai (then Madras) were modern insofar as they were built and re-built according to new models (Ibid., 35-128). Some temples included specific and multiple deities to satisfy Hindu migrants of many stripes. Others were constructed as stand-ins for temples in migrants' homelands. They were built on land of the builders' choosing, rather than land already demarcated as sacred. Former elites also reconstructed ancient temples, but domesticated gods as they did so. The fact that the men I examine in Chapter 1 modernized through writing rather than building very much reflects the unique environment that nineteenth-century Calcutta provided them.

The relative lack of involvement of British officials in the Hindu temples of the Bengal presidency also affected how and when Kālīghāṭ would be modernized institutionally.[35] In once-royal temples where Hindu kings had been relied upon as regular patrons of temples and arbiters in ritual officiates' disputes, Mughal and then British official bodies stepped in to fill that role once they came to rule the lands on which the temples sat. This ensured that temples would continue to run as they always had, generally pleasing the Hindus who frequented them, and also providing good will and financial income to those official bodies. Such arrangements were most frequent in the Madras Presidency where royal temples were many (see Appadurai 1981; Fuller 1984, 112-34; Presler 1987; Price 2008, 106-31). There, district collectors also further stepped in to manage – or appoint managers – to temples where previous managers had passed away, or where there were disputes regarding succession. In the Bengal presidency, with the exceptions of Baidyanāth Temple in Deoghar and Jagannāth in Puri, there was neither the cause nor appetite for such involvement.[36] Kālīghāṭ, for example, was neither founded nor ever controlled by royal powers. The family of Brahmin priests

who managed it privately did not request the intervention of the East India Company

when it arrived. This was a point much appreciated by British officials in that locale who

favored an agenda of noninterference in Indian religious institutions (Presler 1987, 7).[37]

If a wealthy patron had ever built Kālīghāṭ, that patron had not been relied upon for its

financial welfare or management. In 1809, when the Sāvarṇa Rāy Coudhurī family

completed their construction of a new Kālīghāṭ Temple building, the Brahmin managers

ensured that those patrons did not have any authority in temple affairs.[38] So while the

management of other major temples throughout India had been put under the

government's charge as early as the eighteenth century, Brahmins reigned at Kālīghāṭ

until middle-class modernizers took action in the twentieth century.

The impulse to cleanse and monumentalize the temple that is evident in Prahlad

and Mridul's projects is not specific to Calcutta or to Bengal. Some of Mridul's plans

call for the use of "Bengali-style architecture," and he certainly has in mind to make

Hindu architecture more prominent than British architecture in the city, but otherwise, his

use of the temple as an icon, and the gentrification he and Prahlad work toward, are not at

all particular to this city or region. Nor is middle-class control of temples through state

bodies and the nation's courts. Some of the specificities of resistances against

contemporary middle-class modernizing projects that I outlined above and elaborate upon

in Chapter 4 are shaped by the politics of local parties including the Communist Party of

India (Marxist) and Trinimool Congress. But the fact that middle-class projects face

resistance is not limited to Bengal either. So while the roots and development of

Kālīghāṭ's modernization have very much been shaped by its Bengali context, the trend

to modernize – and the forms that modernization take today, in post-1990s India – is

much more pan-Indic.

Overview of the Volume

The chapters of this book are organized both chronologically and thematically as I trace the evolution of modernizing projects that have been carried out upon Kālīghāṭ by various segments of the middle classes. In Chapter 1, I argue that this site was first modernized in the intellectual space of history writing in the late-nineteenth century. When British authors began to write histories of Calcutta, they claimed that the city was built by and for their compatriots, beginning in 1690 when Job Charnok landed on its banks. Bengali Hindus who had the requisite educational background and access to publishers directly countered these narratives in their own books and journal articles detailing the city's history. They employed the most authoritative mode of knowledge production of their time – modernist history, replete with references to ancient and modern texts in multiple languages, accompanied by footnotes. They lifted Kālīghāṭ out of the realm of mythology and superstition and embedded it into the realm of linear history and rationality, pointing to Kālī's presence at Kālīghāṭ as proof of the Hindu origins of the city, and showing that Calcutta had for centuries, if not millennia, been a thriving Hindu area peopled by valorous and pious Hindus before any Briton stepped foot on her soil. European cultures of history writing, in which India's middle classes were deeply engaged, thus significantly altered the role that the temple could play in Indian society. Through this genre and the kinds of commitments it espoused, the temple was ripe to be taken up as an emblem of Hindu identity in both a political and religious sense.

These Bengali writers furthermore wrote Kālīghāṭ into a history of a unified and universal Hindu tradition dating back to the Vedas. These were hallmarks of the Hindu reform and revival movements of the nineteenth century, even while most reformers and revivalists eschewed temples and the rituals that accompanied them. While most of the abundant scholarship on Calcutta's *bhadralok* has focused on that predominant middle-class culture, I offer evidence here that there was another middle-class culture that was developing in late-nineteenth-century Calcutta – one that took up and transformed the temple into something that adhered fully to modern Hindu forms. These writers' works would be deemed incorrect or unimportant to many Hindus of their own context. Yet they set the precedent for later efforts to reform Kālīghāṭ so that it might become emblematic not only of Hindus, but of modern Hinduism.

In Chapter 2, I turn to the mid-twentieth century when changes in laws in Bengal pertaining to religious and charitable endowments allowed middle-class Hindus to reform the institutional structure of the temple. One *sevāyet* brought a complaint against 84 other *sevāyets* to a district court in the 1930s, alleging that his brethren had mismanaged temple funds. Judges at the district, state, and national levels, worked to declare Kālīghāṭ a public temple, and impose upon it a management committee that would be selected by educated, civically conscious Hindus in the city. Court documents reveal that neither of these moves reflected the *sevāyet* plaintiff's objectives, but relied on the judges' selective application of the legal language of "the public" to this religious institution. Drawing on the copious scholarship on temple management (most of which focuses on the state of Tamil Nadu), as well as recent scholarship on the state's regulation of the public in India, I argue that it is through this language that temples became subject not only to state

control, but also to the middle-class values held by India's state officials. Judges of the Kālīghāṭ case declared that Brahmins who inherited their position by birth and made money from their roles as religious officials could not be entrusted with ensuring financial order at the temple. Dissatisfaction regarding the wealth of Brahmins who managed Hindu temples had been growing among the middle classes for at least a century by this time. This wealth – accumulated as it was through devotees' offerings to the goddess – was deemed evidence of corruption, and as constitutive of a grievance to the Hindu public. Through their positions, judges were able to bring that critique to bear upon the traditional structure of the temple institution.

Chapters 3 and 4 bring this discussion to the turn of the twenty-first century and continue the set of conversations initiated by the vignettes in this Introduction regarding efforts to clean up the physical space of Kālīghāṭ. By the 1990s, Kālīghāṭ had already been well established as an emblem of Hindu and Indian identity, and had been made a public institution. To these facets of its modernization were added new visions of the temple as a public space within the city, and new visions of urban India in which the city represents the Indian nation on an international stage. In Chapter 3, I examine how middle-class men and women seek to expand temple space, knock down buildings that block its view, and remove undesirable materials and populations in order to make it both grand and clean along modernist aesthetic lines. They want it to be a "must-see" tourist attraction that people from all over the world visit when they come to India. Forming NGOs and filing PILs, they glean state support for these projects. State bodies share with those at the helm of these projects an interest in creating of these sites world-class monuments – tributes to an Indian nation that can be modern and uniquely Indian at the

same time. I argue here that transnational conversations regarding the world-class city thus shape the forms of Hinduism authorized for India's urban spaces, as well as the renewed material forms that middle-class Hinduisms take.

The modernizing projects outlined in Chapters 1 through 3 are forwarded by Kolkata's educated and powerful citizens. Those citizens frame their projects at Kālīghāṭ as being in the best interests of the Hindu public. They work to modernize Kālīghāṭ from a distance – through books, courts, and state tourism boards. However, for so many who frequently worship at the temple, or who live and work on temple grounds, the desire to modernize the temple is not shared. In Chapter 4, I draw primarily on ethnographic research to demonstrate that the temple does very different things for men and women of different class backgrounds. Analyzing their conceptions and use of the temple within scholarly conversations on political society in contemporary India, I show that lower-class groups are successful in resisting modernizing projects because they employ tactics that make state control difficult or impossible. *Pāṇḍās* unionize to assert their hereditary right to work at the temple. *Sevāyets* drag their feet when court orders are delivered. Beggars engage in sheer savvy and subterfuge. Through their success, I argue that they too play a central role in shaping the forms of Hinduism that will take place in India's urban spaces.

In a short Conclusion to this book, I reflect on the consequences of modernization projects on Hindu forms and practices, as well as India's cities. Modernizers work to refine the behavior and decorum of Hindus and cleanse the goddess Kālī for bourgeois global consumption. They work together with state bodies to make Hindu temples part of the modern urban skyline and to facilitate transportation between them, creating

pilgrimage circuits in their cities. Even as they are contested, such efforts are sure to affect some changes in the ways that Hinduism is practiced and in the ways India's urban landscapes are experienced. When temples change, so does Hinduism, and so do Indian cities.

In each chapter, I take stock of what this study reveals about the evolution of middle-class forms of Hinduism in India, and the role those forms play in constructions of India's modernities. In each historical moment I examine, it becomes clear that temples are central to the ways in which Hindus construct themselves, their cities, and their nation in the modern world. Whether they reject, protect, or reform temples, the kinds of ideas they enact and publicize about temples reveal their visions of who they are. I argue that scholarly attention must be turned toward the intertwined discourses of temples and modernity as they have developed from the colonial period to the present if we are to understand the kinds of major temple building and renovation projects taking place across India today – the kinds of projects that have proven Nehru's prediction about the nature of modern India's temples to be mistaken.

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[1] In 1954, Nehru made a speech at the inauguration of the Bhakra Nangal Dam in Punjab in which he famously referred to dams as the temples of modern India. An exhibit commemorating this event was recently displayed in the Nehru Memorial Library in Delhi: "When the Big Dams Came Up," *The Hindu*, March 20, 2015.; Khilnani (1999, 61-106) examines the justification and implications of Nehru's view.

[2] A number of Indian cities have undergone name changes since Independence, in order to reflect their indigenous pronunciations. Throughout this work, I employ "Kolkata" when referring to the city after the year of its name change in 2001.

[3] The colonial middle classes comprise the segment of Indian society that acquired westernized education and came to embody the project of modernity in India. I detail further the specificities and evolution of these classes below.

[4] I elaborate on this point later, but see, for example: Srivastava (2011, 364-9); Brosius (2010, 161-268); Hancock (2008, 82-120); Waghorne (2004).

[5] In brief, the Śaktipīṭh story recounts the goddess Satī immolating herself upon hearing that her husband, Śiva, had not been invited to a sacrifice hosted by her father. Distraught, Śiva carried her body all over the world in a wild dance of destruction. Viṣṇu, in order to stop Śiva, cut pieces of that body with his *cakra* (a circular weapon), so that Satī's body parts would fall. There are now Śaktipīṭhs throughout India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. See Sircar for an analysis of this story's evolution in Sanskrit and vernacular literatures, including the varying number of *pīṭhas* each text claims to be in existence. Some list only four, while others list 51 or 108. Each of these are auspicious numbers in Hindu traditions (Sircar 1948).

[6] On the significance of royal temple building, see Davis (1991, 6-9), Ray (2010), Stein (196), and Orr (2007). Orr complicates the picture of royal temple patronage, demonstrating that many temples attributed to the Cholas kings' patronage were in fact patronized by queens and lords, even while those temples were taken up by later kings as emblematic of royal power. On the use of temples for political legitimation, see Davis (1997, 186-221) and Pollock (1993). On temple renovations in particular, see Branfoot (2013) and Meister (2000).

[7] Members of the Sāvarṇa Rāy Coudhurī (often transliterated as Sabarna Roy Choudhury) family were the former *zamindars* of this region and constructed this temple between the years 1799 and 1809. That temple replaced an older temple, but it is unknown for how long a temple stood in this region. I examine various versions of this history in Chapter 1.

[8] Ethnographic material is derived from notes I gathered while doing fieldwork in Kolkata in 2011 and 2012. I did not use a tape recorder for most of these interactions, so quotes are paraphrased and taken from the notes I recorded later the same day on which each of these conversations took place. To protect privacy, names have been changed, except for public figures.

[9] See Hardgrove 2001 on the construction of a Marwari identity and community in colonial Calcutta.

[10] While both of these are Brahmin titles, neither refers to the Brahmin priests who perform daily worship to Kālī. At Kālīghāṭ, that is conducted by male members of a Brahmin Bhaṭṭācārya family whose ancestors were hired by the *sevāyets* 200 years ago.

[11] Throughout, monetary conversions are provided according to the approximate exchange rate during my fieldwork in 2011 and 2012: 50 rupees to $1.

[12] This design resembles a thatched roof. As the name implies, it has eight corners - a roof with four corners tops another with four corners. This is the same design employed for Kālī's shrine within Kālīghāṭ (see McCutchion 1972, 32).

[13] On this phenomenon in Tamil Nadu, see Presler (1987), Appadurai (1981), Fuller (1984), and Price (2008). In a later work, Fuller (2003) explains that the financial status of the Brahmins at Mīnākṣi Temple has in fact increased since the 1990s because priests are more respected due to their government-sponsored Āgamic training, and because

middle-class and state actors are funding more rituals. The modernization of the priesthood through scriptural training programs has thus actually increased the wealth of Brahmins at that temple.

[14] The famous Naṭarāj Temple in Cidambaram and the Puṣṭimarg *havelis* are notable examples of "private" sites of worship in India up until very recently. See Younger (1995) and Bachrach (2015), as well as my discussion of these sites in Chapter 2.

[15] In his study of recent renovations at a Jain temple in Osian, Gujurat, John Cort remarks, "Jains often proudly contrast the cleanliness of their temples with Hindu temples" (1992), 215.

[16] Waghorne also notes that her middle-class informants in some cases desire to draw in the lower classes through their temple projects, citing democratic inclusion as their aim (2004, 129-70). I have not witnessed this same desire in Kālīghāṭ's modernizers, though the desire to reform temple visitors is present. See also Srivastava (2011, 368-70) on the removal of slum colonies near Akṣardhām.

[17] I agree with Dipesh Chakrabarty's (2008) critique of "historicism" - the theory which posits that modernity was fully realized in post-Enlightenment Europe and that all societies are working toward a modernity that resembles theirs. Scholars of multiple modernities provide useful and compelling examples of the ways in which modern values and forms are differently enacted within different societies. The following focus on Indian modernities in particular: Gaonkar (2001), Joshi (2001), Sivaramakrishnan and Agrawal (2002). Van der Veer (1999) has shown how the role of religion in modern society was developed simultaneously in India and England, giving tell to the lie that England had modernity first and India inherited it.

[18] Charles Taylor (2004) has outlined this modern social imaginary, focusing on European societies.

[19] See also Fuller (2009) on the middle-class values that shaped both of these types of Hindu reform and Hatcher (1999) on the continuities between these reforms. Vivekananda is known to have composed poetry to Kālī, though this part of his devotional life was not part of his public persona.

[20] See Donner and De Neve (2011) for a fulsome treatment of the way class has been treated in scholarship on South Asia. I see my work as part of that continuum.

[21] This is an especially well-studied middle class given their location in the colonial capital (see Banerjee 1989; Bhattacharya 2005; Chatterjee 1993; McGuire 1983; Mukherjee 1993).

[22] Banerjee speculates that colonialists suspected Muslims of loyalty to Mughal powers, thereby barring them from collaboration.

[23] Habermas examines the emergence of the public sphere in the European context ([1962] 1989). For an analysis of notions of the public sphere in the Indian context, see the Journal of South Asian Studies' two special issues: "Aspects of 'the Public' in Colonial South Asia" (1991) and "What Is a Public? Notes from South Asia" (2015).

continuing the longstanding pilgrim tax so that they might be reimbursed for that advance. This arrangement garnered great attention in England and prompted a series of reforms to initiate British withdrawal from native religious institutions (see "Superintendence of Native Religious Institutions" 1852, 115, 123).

[37] In the aforementioned Parliamentary Return, Kālīghāṭ is specifically cited as illustrating a "system of united management" to which the government of India could look as an example of how to disengage from other Hindu temples ("Superintendence of Native Religious Institutions" 1852, 156). As Lata Mani (1998) has shown in her work on debates surrounding the Hindu practice of *satī*, noninterference was an ideal that was never achieved. However, regarding Hindu temples in Bengal, there was far less interference than elsewhere in India.

[38] Disputes between the Sāvarṇa Rāy Coudhurī and Haldār (the *sevāyets*) families are intense and ongoing. See "Sabarna Family Link to Kalighat Temple" (*Hindustan Times*, February 18, 2012).