In Praise of the Goddess
In Praise of the Goddess

The Devīmāhātmya and Its Meaning

Devadatta Kālī
Translator and Commentator

Nicolas-Hays, Inc.
Berwick, Maine
Lovingly dedicated
to the memory of my Guru,
Swami Prabhavananda,
and to my Guru Mā,
Ma Jaya Sati Bhagavati
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All quotations are the author’s own translations.

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The cerebral consonants, \( \text{ṭ, ṭh, d, dh, n} \), are pronounced with the tip of the tongue curled back against the hard palate, farther back than the English point of articulation. The dental consonants, \( t, th, d, dh, n \), are pronounced with the tip of the tongue touching the edge of the front teeth, a position more forward than in English. Similarly, the cerebral sibilant, \( s \), is articulated farther back in the mouth than the palatal sibilant, \( ś \). When following another consonant, \( v \) is pronounced like English \( w \).

The accentuation of syllables in Sanskrit is weaker than in English. The stress falls on the penultimate (next to last) syllable when that syllable contains a long vowel, a diphthong \( \text{e, ai, o, au} \), or a short vowel followed by two or more consonants. Otherwise, the stress falls on the antepenultimate, or preceding, syllable. Thus: ahaṁkāra, advai ta, adharma, ala kṣmī, a sura, aparājitā.
INTRODUCTION

Fifteen or more centuries ago an unknown author or authors in northwest India wove together the
diverse threads of already ancient memory and created a dazzling verbal tapestry that remains even
today the central text on the Hindu Goddess. Called the Devīmāhātmya (“The Glory of the
Goddess”), this poem of seven hundred verses is recited daily in temples and widely disseminated in
the original Sanskrit and in vernacular translations. Part myth and part philosophy, part narrative and
part hymn, it is a spiritual classic that addresses the perennial questions of our existence: What is the
nature of the universe, of humankind, of divinity? How are they related? How do we live in a world
tom between good and evil? And how do we find lasting satisfaction and inner peace?

Cast as the narrative of a dispossessed king, a merchant betrayed by the family he loves, and a sage
whose instruction leads beyond existential suffering, the Devīmāhātmya teaches through a trilogy of
myths. The sage’s three tales are allegories of outer and inner experience, symbolized by the fierce
battles the all-powerful Devī wages against throngs of demonic foes. Her adversaries represent the
all too human impulses arising from the pursuit of power, possessions, and pleasure, and from
illusions of self-importance. Like the battlefield of the Bhagavadgītā, the Devīmāhātmya’s killing
grounds represent the field of human consciousness on which the drama of individual lives plays out
in joy and sorrow, in wisdom and folly. The Devī, personified as one supreme Goddess and many
goddesses, confronts the demons of ego and dispels our mistaken idea of who we are, for—
paradoxically—it is she who creates the misunderstanding in the first place and she alone who
awakens us to our true being.

Our ancient ancestors, whose beliefs constitute this text, found enchantment in nature’s bounty,
faced terror in its destructive force, and revered both aspects of their experience as manifestations of
the Great Mother. As relevant today as ever, the Devīmāhātmya has the power to reawaken us to a
sense of wonder at the surrounding universe through a dazzling, integrating, and ultimately liberating
vision of reality.

This translation is the fourth by a native English speaker but the first ever to combine Western
scholarship with an insider’s perspective, based on my 37 years of spiritual practice within the Hindu
tradition. I attempt to convey, in modern English, a dignity and eloquence befitting a sacred text and to
allow you easy access to its inspiration. I have included the Sanskrit original in Part IV in order to
fulfill the needs of those who want to study the Devīmāhātmya in depth.

Translating an ancient, literary language poses challenges unlike those met in dealing with modern
languages spoken today, especially when the languages differ so radically from each other as Sanskrit
and English in terms of vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and modes of expression. The translator has to
find simple, natural ways to convey the ideas of the original text when, paradoxically, fidelity to the
letter often obscures the very meaning it seeks to communicate. Previous translations by Indian and
Western scholars often provide context and historical precedent, but their guidelines are neither
consistent nor infallible, and some decisions ultimately rest, by necessity, on the translator’s personal
judgment.

This edition is unique on several counts. A comprehensive historical and interpretative
introduction prepares you for a meaningful experience of the Devīmāhātmya, whether you are
approaching it for spiritual or scholarly reasons. The full commentary—the first ever in the English language—reveals the Devīmāhātmya as the spiritual classic it is, a universal allegory of human experience and a guide for the inner life. Additionally, this edition contains eight other texts closely associated with the Devīmāhātmya, for the first time presented with English commentary. Finally, I have included a glossary of Sanskrit terms and proper names for your convenience.
PART I

ORIGINS AND CONTEXT OF THE DEVĪMĀHĀTMYA
The story of the Devīmāhātmya begins long before its actual composition. Throughout the Eurasian land-mass as far back as Paleolithic times, women and men observed the female’s awesome capacity to create new life and identified that power with divinity. They left traces of their beliefs in figurines that display the universal physical attributes of female fertility and motherhood. These mute but eloquent reminders continued into the Neolithic period, reaching a high state of development in the ancient Near East. Fashioned from stone, clay, ivory, or bone, they convey a message across the millennia that our ancestors long ago understood feminine divinity as presiding over the natural functions of birth, growth, maturation, death, and regeneration.

In the winter of 1980, a team of Indian, American, and Australian archeologists and anthropologists uncovered what may be the oldest evidence of religious practice on the Indian subcontinent. Dating as far back as 9,000 BCE, the site is in the Son valley, below the nearby Vindhya mountains—a region that will play an important part in the story of the Devīmāhātmya. There, the researchers excavated what appears to be a circular shrine, measuring about three feet across and made of sandstone blocks. In the center lay another sandstone block, measuring about 12 by 6 by 4 inches. Its weathered surface reveals harder layers that stand out in relief to form a natural pattern of concentric triangles. Tribal villagers assisting in the excavation immediately recognized the stone as a sacred emblem of Śakti, the Goddess. Such stones, they confirmed, are still sought out today and installed in the local villages, in both individual and communal shrines. According to the archeologists, this dramatic evidence of cultural continuity indicates that the veneration of Śakti in the mountains of north central India stretches back at least 10,000 years.
Reconstructing the Past

The early history of India remains a highly contentious field of study, where there are more questions than answers. Many pieces of the past are irretrievably lost, and attempts to form a comprehensive picture are complicated by nationalistic, ethnic, and religious feelings and the legacy of pioneering European scholars, who frequently injected the prejudices of a foreign worldview into an area where they clearly do not belong. At the heart of the conflict lies the problematic chronology, identity, and relationship of two peoples: those who created the great Indus Valley civilization in the third millennium BCE and the Indo-European-speaking Āryas, who composed the Vedas, India’s oldest surviving sacred texts. Even in the light of emerging scientific data, wildly conflicting theories abound, and even the best are not without seemingly irreconcilable anomalies.

Out of this poorly understood cultural matrix the Devīmāhātmya emerged, encompassing the beliefs and practices of prehistoric agriculturists, tribal shamans, ancient city dwellers, and nomadic pastoral clans whose early deification of natural forces eventually led to lofty philosophies on the nature of reality. Presently, there is no way to make historical sense out of all the pieces, but the legacy of this mosaiclike past lives on in the resounding verses of the Devīmāhātmya.

Harappan Religion

Three thousand years before the Devīmāhātmya’s appearance, a civilization as advanced as those of Egypt and Mesopotamia arose on the vast flood plain of the Indus and Sarasvātī rivers and flourished in full glory between 2600 and 1900 BCE. Its cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro were among the largest in the world, and there is increasing archeological evidence that this India of the Bronze Age was as culturally and ethnically diverse as it is today. As in most of the ancient world, multiple religious cults probably coexisted there, more or less peacefully.

Long before the rise of the Harappan, or Indus-Sarasvātī, civilization, at highland settlements in Baluchistan, north and west of the Indus Valley, the pre-Harappan cultures regarded the Mother Goddess or goddesses in much the same way as other peoples throughout the Neolithic Near East. Predictable for an agricultural society, the pre-Harappan goddess images display themes relating to fertility and the cycles of nature. Made of baked clay, the figurines share common features, such as elaborately styled hair, ornate necklaces, birdlike faces, broad hips, and full breasts. Often they represent the female form from the waist up, as if to suggest an earth goddess emerging from the ground. Some, with hands on their breasts, suggest a benevolent, nurturing mother. Others, often hooded and displaying grim, sometimes skull-like faces, hint at an underworld goddess who is the guardian of the dead and perhaps of planted seed-grain. Their gruesome faces and distorted mouths seem designed to evoke terror, and it is easy to envision the goddess they represent as an antecedent of Kālī. Often the images of the terrible goddess have been found in connection with those of an angry and destructive wild bull. That association may express the idea of inauspicious or evil forces being subdued by a higher divinity, and it is not beyond the realm of possibility that this goddess prefigures Durgā, who slays the buffalo demon in the Devīmāhātmya’s central episode. Most significantly, the portrayal of goddesses in gracious and formidable aspects is a dual distinction that passed into the Indus Valley and continues to characterize Hindu religion to the present day.

The pre-Harappan images lead directly to the later icons found in the cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, which appear to have been centers of goddess worship. Thousands of terracotta female figurines, outnumbering male images by seven to one, display the same wide hips and full
breasts to express the theme of female fertility and creative power. Although many represent ordinary women engaged in domestic tasks, those identified as goddesses share a set iconography. Naked but for a girdle and adorned with jewelry and an elaborate headdress, they match another figure frequently found carved on the exquisite Harappan stone seals.

The seals, thousands in number, bear brief, still-undeciphered inscriptions along with scenes of animals, mythical beasts, plants, trees, anthropoid figures, and deities. These images offer the richest source of information—and speculation—concerning Harappan religion. The pervasive motifs of pipai (Ficus religiosa) and banyan (Ficus indica) suggest that sacred trees or groves may have been the primary sites of religious observance. Indus Valley artifacts frequently display scenes of worshipers with water jars bowing before a tree, and both the pipai and the banyan endure in later Hindu mythology as symbols of fertility and protection. The deity who is shown standing beneath an arch of pipai leaves on the seals from Harappa corresponds to the one portrayed in the terracotta figurines. On seals from Mohenjo-daro, a deity appears standing in the midst of a pipai tree. Conceivably, the two are regional variations of the same goddess, or perhaps distinct goddesses. In either case, this early conceptualization appears to live on in an epithet of Tārā, an aspect of the Devī closely resembling Kālī; she is called Vṛkṣamadhyanivāsinī (“she who dwells within trees”).

One seal from Mohenjo-daro illustrates a worshiper prostrate before the goddess in the tree, with seven identically-clad figures standing in the foreground. Some scholars regard these as seven sister goddesses, whose birdlike motifs link them to Neolithic fertility figurines. They will return later in our story. A homed goddess fighting with a tiger appears on many seals, which seem to illustrate a particularly prevalent, but otherwise unknown, myth. Occasionally her hand is upraised in what appears to be a gesture of assurance, possibly foreshadowing the fear-dispelling abhayamudrā of later Hindu iconography.

A few seals depict a bearded male deity on a low platform, seated in a yogic posture with knees widely spread and heels touching. Wearing a headdress of curving water-buffalo horns crowned with three pipai leaves, he combines human, animal, and vegetable motifs. Two surviving seals portray this homed god with three faces, looking left, right, and forward, similar to the Trimūrti of later Hinduism, which depicts Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva as the creative, sustaining, and destructive functions of the supreme God. On the so-called Paśupati seal from Mohenjo-daro, the triple-headed seated figure is shown with an erect phallus and surrounded by wild animals—a rhinoceros, a water buffalo, an elephant, a tiger, and two antelope. Paśupati, the lord of beasts, is an epithet of the later Hindu god Śiva, and after decades of debate scholars still disagree whether or not this ancient seal represents Śiva in a prototypical form.

Like Rorschach ink blots, the Harappan artifacts elicit widely varying interpretations that are, at this point, only conjectural. That said, it is evident that the Harappan goddess religion represents a continuum of the earlier and widely pervasive worship of female divinity that was connected to the earth and all forms of fertility. Certainly some features of it endure in later Hinduism.

Goddesses in Vedic Religion
European scholars of the 19th and early 20th centuries hypothesized that Indo-European tribes from the north migrated to the Indian subcontinent and founded the Indian civilization around 1500 BCE. With the discovery early in the 20th century that a great urban civilization already existed in the Indus Valley a thousand years before the supposed arrival of the Indo-European Āryas, the theory was
revised to present the Āryas as invaders who conquered the Harappan people. There is no archeological evidence to support such a conquest, and the idea itself arose from a misreading of Vedic texts.

On closer scrutiny, the textual evidence actually suggests a much earlier Āryan presence in the Indus Valley than 1500 BCE. The Sarāḥhitā of the Ṛgveda, consisting of more than a thousand hymns composed over hundreds of years, is India’s oldest sacred text. It is thought by Western scholars to have reached its present form between 1500 and 1200 BCE, although Hindus have always claimed it is much older. There is compelling evidence for that claim in the Vedic hymns themselves: they describe a landscape that vanished hundreds of years before the hymns supposedly were composed. Those hymns describe the Indus-Sarasvati region as the Land of Seven Rivers. Part of that region is known today as the Punjab (from Sanskrit pañca ap, “five waters”).

Of the seven rivers, the deified Sarasvati was celebrated as surpassing all others in majesty and might (ṚV 7.95.2). Since modern scientific data now confirm that the Sarasvati began to dry up around 1900 BCE, the hymns extolling her glory have to date from before then, when the holy river still flowed abundantly and civilization flourished along her banks. If the Āryas arrived on the scene only around 1500 BCE, they would have had no knowledge of the Sarasvati’s former magnificence, nor would they have chosen to deify a dying or already vanished river.

A gigantic environmental catastrophe, not an invasion, brought the Harappan civilization to collapse. How the Āryan, or Vedic, people fit into this picture, if at all, is a problem archeologists and historians have yet to solve. The evidence of the Vedic texts, to which we will return, chronicles the gradual disappearance of the Sarasvati beneath the desert sands and at least hints at interaction between the Vedic and non-Vedic peoples and their religions.

It used to be accepted that the patriarchal Vedic religion looked skyward to its gods and centered on a sacrificial cult directed to a pantheon of mostly male deities for the purpose of maintaining cosmic order. Indra, the chief god, wielded a mighty thunderbolt that rumbled throughout the heavens. He was the awesome lord who caused life-giving rain to fall upon the earth. Other, mostly male, deities had overlapping functions associated with the atmospheric phenomena of wind and storms and with the ordering of day and night. Sūrya, the sun god, was revered as the source of warmth and light, although he was heralded daily by the lovely Uṣas, goddess of the dawn. On earth, the celestial light existed as fire, deified as Agni, who delivered terrestrial offerings to the gods on high. The Sanskrit word for god, deva, derives from a verbal root meaning “to shine,” and it implies the linkage of light to the concepts of sovereignty and transcendence.13

The earliest strata of Ṛgvedic hymns should reflect features common to the still older Indo-European cultural matrix from which the Āryas emerged. The supreme Indo-European deity was the sky god Dyaus, whose name derives from the same source as the word deva. In India, Dyaus had already lost his supremacy to Indra by early Vedic times, and his name signified little more than the shining physical sky.14 Not so in other Indo-European cultures, where Dyaus Pitar, the sky father, survived until classical times as the supreme god Zeus Pater in Hellenic religion and as Jupiter in the Roman pantheon. In India, the sky father, Dyaus, and the earth mother, Pṛthivī, were originally understood as procreative partners, but from an initial relationship of parity Pṛthivī soon gained dominance over Dyaus. The Ṛgveda most often links them as Dyāvāpṛthivī, a grammatical compound which means “heaven-and-earth” conceived of as a single entity of feminine gender, and some hymns even present Dyaus without Pṛthivī as feminine.15 This process, unique to India, suggests
a dramatic reshaping of the fundamentally patriarchal Indo-European religion by a strong goddess
tradition.

In reality, the presence of all kinds of goddesses in the Ṛgveda and the honor accorded some of
them raises important questions about their origins and significance. The early Vedic period saw a
multiplicity of deities with similar attributes and intersecting functions, and such richness already
points to the confluence of diverse traditions. It is important to remember that the Vedic hymns were
composed over many centuries by members of loosely related, and not always mutually friendly,
Āryan priestly clans. Although no consistent pattern of development emerges from the exuberant,
overlapping, and sometimes contradictory profusion of gods and goddesses, the trend was toward the
coalescence of deities that closely resembled one another.

The Ṛgvedic goddesses belong to four broad categories: the weak, poorly-defined consorts of
gods, named after their male counterparts; the personifications of qualities expressed by abstract
feminine nouns; the deities with a basis in the natural world; and the goddesses who were powerful in
their own right.

The goddesses who personified abstractions expressed by feminine nouns bore names such as
dhiṣṇā (“intelligence”), Śraddhā (“faith”) and Nirṛti (“decay”) and represented both positive and
negative qualities. Numerous Ṛgvedic hymns document the process whereby such deities arose from
the observation of physical phenomena and then became philosophical abstractions and personified
goddesses. For example, śī Śrī (“light, lustre, radiance”) appears first as the all-encompassing
glory ascribed to Agni, Rudra, Uṣas, and other deities. Only much later did Śrī emerge in her own
right as a personified goddess who soon thereafter merged with Lakṣmī. Initially, Lakṣmī (“good
fortune, prosperity”) was probably a non-Āryan agricultural deity; and her negative counterpart,
Alakṣmī (“misfortune”), suggests a further connection to the older, dual-natured Neolithic goddess.

The Śrīsūktā, a hymn appended to the Ṛgveda in late Vedic times, documents the merging of Śrī and
Lakṣmī into a single goddess, whose propitiation grants protection from Alakṣmī, her dark aspect.

Some Vedic hymns celebrate feminine power in the beauty of night, the forest, the rivers, and the
earth, personified as goddesses who, for the most part, played a smaller role in the pantheon. An
exception is the frequently and ecstatically hymned Uṣas, goddess of the dawn, who in earlier Vedic
times figured prominently among the sky deities. Likewise, the deified Sarasvatī River figured as a
powerful goddess, extolled for annually bringing new life to the farmlands and sustaining the towns
and villages along her banks. A singularly beautiful hymn (ṚV 10.146) glorifies Aranyānī, whose
name (from aranya, “forest”) identifies her as the guardian of the wilderness and the mother of beasts
and all sylvan things. This elusive Lady of the Forest, gently rustling like the tinkling of bells, is
sweet-scented, benevolent, and protective, giving forth an abundance of uncultivated foods. She slays
only murderous enemies, understood by the 14th-century commentator Sāyaṇa to mean tigers.

Assuming a Harappan-Vedic interaction, could this unique hymn to Aranyānī be addressing the tiger-
vanquishing goddess of the Indus Valley seals? Whatever the historical reality, the distinguishing
feature of the Ṛgveda’s goddess hymns is their joyful wonder at nature’s luminous visage. Thousands
of years later, their words still evoke the same ineffable feelings that must have stirred the hearts of
the seers who composed them.

Among the few female divinities who were powerful in their own right, the primary Vedic goddess
was Aditi, whom the hymns extol repeatedly as the Great Mother. In what is believed to be the
earliest stratum of Ṛgvedic hymns, she appears fully formed and surpassing any specific natural
phenomenon from which she might have arisen. Writing in the late 19th century, the great Indologist Max Müller described Aditi as one of the oldest Āryan deities,\textsuperscript{22} although more recent scholarship sees her origins “largely shrouded in pre-Vedic religion.”\textsuperscript{23} The Vedic hymns repeatedly praise Aditi as a universal, abstract goddess who represents the boundless expanse of physical creation and everything it contains.\textsuperscript{24} According to one hymn: “Aditi is the heaven; Aditi is the atmosphere; Aditi is the mother, the father, the son / All the gods are Aditi, and the five [Āryan] clans; Aditi is that which is born; Aditi is that which will be born” (ṚV 1.89.10).

Her Sanskrit name means “boundlessness” and speaks of unity and inconceivable vastness. By later Vedic times, Aditi had gathered an array of attributes relating to both transcendence and immanence. On the one hand, she was the impersonal, limitless, and imperishable One, encompassing existence and nonexistence alike. On the other hand, she was the universal mother and protector, nurturing and upholding the world, and guarding the cosmic order (ṛta). Absolutely free, she could grant liberation to those who took refuge in her.\textsuperscript{25}

A comprehensive statement of the one supreme Goddess is formulated in a hymn of the Ṛgveda known as the Devīsūkta (“Hymn of the Goddess,” ṚV 10.125). Its eight verses, ascribed to the daughter of the sage Ambhrṇa, are the vehicle through which the goddess Vāk, who is identified with both Sarasvaṭī and Aditi, reveals herself. First-person utterances are rare in the Ṛgveda, but here the Devī, who is the shining consciousness, proclaims that she works through all the gods and reveals herself in manifold ways. In her, all live who see and breathe and hear what is said, not knowing that they abide in her, the mother of all, who rules and upholds the universe. So vast is her greatness that, pervading heaven and earth, she transcends their limits. The Devīsūkta is of incalculable importance, because it is widely regarded as the Devīmāhātmya’s point of origin.\textsuperscript{26}

**The Late Vedic Age**

On the evidence of the Vedic texts, the division between the early and late Vedic periods coincides with the drying up of the Sarasvaṭī River. To the early period before 1900 BCE belong the hymn portions or Saṁhitās of the Ṛgveda and Sāmaveda; to the later period belong the Saṁhitās of the Yajurveda and Atharvaveda, along with the later Vedic texts known as the Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, and Upaniṣads. Sweeping religious change rarely takes place in a vacuum, and the altered circumstances after the collapse of the Indus-Sarasvaṭī cities initiated the gradual and complex transformation of the old Vedic religion into modern Hinduism. Historically, the rise of Brāhmaṇical religion seems to coincide with the Harappan economic collapse and the disappearance of the Indus Valley script around 1700 bce.\textsuperscript{27} The theological treatises known as Brāhmaṇas address the practical concerns of a priestly class and the proper performance of sacrificial rites in the post-urban setting.

Additionally, the Brāhmaṇas document the gradual drying up of the Sarasvaṭī River between 1900 and 1300 bce.\textsuperscript{28} Once mightier than the Indus and believed to originate in heaven, the Sarasvaṭī was known to flow on earth from the Himālayas to the Indian Ocean. Ṛgvedic hymns and the Brāhmaṇas alike allude to sacrifices performed along her banks,\textsuperscript{29} and the discovery of typically Indo-European fire altars at the town of Kalibangan are persuasive evidence for a Vedic presence along the Sarasvaṭī River in the third millennium bce.\textsuperscript{30} Long before the Gaṅgā took preeminence as India’s holiest river, the Sarasvaṭī, whose name means “the flowing one,” claimed that honor. Understandably, fertility and purification must have been among her earliest attributes, but even the Ṛgveda extols her not only as
the great flood but also as the bright goddess of intelligence, who illumines every righteous thought (ṚV 1.3.10–12). With the onset of desiccation, the Sarasvaṭī appears in the Brāhmaṇas less often as a holy river and increasingly as a personified goddess. By the fifth century BCE, Yāska noted in the Nirukta, the oldest surviving commentary on the Vedas, that the Sarasvaṭī’s flow to the sea could be taken figuratively as the flow of thought into the great, shining sea of consciousness.\(^{31}\)

Additionally, the Brāhmaṇas repeatedly identify Sarasvaṭī with Vāk,\(^ {32}\) the creative Word personified as the Ṛgvedic goddess who proclaims her own universal power and transcendence in the Devīsūkta. As such, Sarasvaṭī-Vāk represents the intelligent power of creation, and her vast network of subsequent associations, including her later and current role as Brahmā’s consort or power (śakti), perpetuates her reputation today as the beneficent goddess of knowledge and the arts.

Reflecting the growing popularity of other female deities, the Brāhmaṇas introduce many new goddesses unknown to the Vedic Saṁhitās. The tendency for similar deities to coalesce at this time indicates the contact and mingling of diverse religions, likely to have taken place in the new village settlements that proliferated in the outlying areas between the 19th and 17th centuries BCE\(^ {33}\) as a direct result of the widespread abandonment of cities and towns, especially along the Sarasvaṭī River.

Following the Brāhmaṇas in the Vedic canon, the slightly later Āraṇyakas (“forest treatises”) likewise reflect life in the new, post-urban environment, and the name of this class of texts in particular refers to the emergent ascetic tradition of seers who retired to the forest to practice spiritual disciplines.

The Vedas reached completion with the composition of the principal Upaniṣads, the earliest of them overlapping the late Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas. The Upaniṣads are sometimes called the Vedānta, owing to their physical position at the end (anta) of the Vedas and to the culmination of spiritual knowledge they reveal. Concentrating on the mystical experience, the Upaniṣads follow the course of later Vedic hymns that had already ventured boldly toward the knowledge of a higher, nontheistic reality. The word upaniṣad means “sitting down near” and evokes images of disciples circled around an enlightened seer, who addresses the fundamental questions of existence and imparts the answers revealed in the state of deepest meditation. Reflection on the transience of life led the Upaniṣadic seers beyond time and space to the eternal, unchanging reality called Brahman, and in the silent depths of their being they discovered that the indwelling Self (ātman) and the supreme godhead (Brahman) are one.

Toward the end of that murky, unsettled period that saw the creation of the Brāhmaṇas, the Āraṇyakas, and the earliest Upaniṣads, the Bronze Age blended imperceptibly into the Iron Age, and a new culture was born from the fading remnants of India’s magnificent past.\(^ {34}\) As small Indo-Āryan chiefdoms grew into larger kingdoms, a new sociopolitical order slowly evolved. By the third century BCE, the Āryas ruled India, and Sanskrit became the dominant language of politics, culture, and religion. During this time, Hinduism branched out simultaneously in several directions.

**Post-Vedic Hinduism**

Building on Vedic knowledge, philosophers developed the six orthodox schools of thought, or dārsanas (“ways of seeing”), which embodied their teachings in the form of aphoristic statements called sūtras (“threads”). Among the dārsanas, the dualistic Sāmkhya philosophy, attributed to the sage Kapila, offered a rational inquiry into the nature of reality and the mind and provided a
philosophical basis for Patañjali’s closely related Yoga, the science of meditation as a means to achieve the ultimate consciousness. The nondualistic (advaita) Vedānta philosophy was systematized in Bādarāyaṇa’s Brahmasūtra (or Vedāntasūtra), based on Upaniṣadic teachings concerning the attainment of Self-knowledge.

Beginning around 300 BCE, new religious movements arose that emphasized devotion as a spiritual path. Bhakti, originally loyalty or dedication to a personal deity, soon grew into the attitude of intense love that continues to characterize the major devotional sects—Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, and Śākta—of modern theistic Hinduism.

The Vaiṣṇava sect exalted Viṣṇu, formerly a minor solar deity in the Ṛgveda, to the status of supreme god. He became the universal guardian of the moral order (dharma), who assumes a human form (avatāra, literally “descent”) whenever worldly conditions call for the restoration of righteousness. India’s two great epics, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, celebrate Viṣṇu’s earthly incarnations in turn as Rāma and Krṣṇa. Part of the immense Mahābhārata, the Bhagavadgītā presents Krṣṇa’s teachings as an all-embracing synthesis of the religious and philosophical thinking of the second century BCE, and its universality places it among the most widely-known Hindu scriptures.

The Śaiva sect similarly elevated Śiva to absolute supremacy. Originally, Śiva may have been a non-Āryan, possibly Harappan, deity assimilated around the second century BCE to the volatile Vedic storm-god Rudra, who ultimately may also be pre- or non-Vedic. To Śaivas, he is Mahādeva (“Great God”), the lord of yogis who embodies renunciation and destroys ignorance. He is also the transcendent Absolute, whose dynamic power is personified as Śakti, the divine consort.

The Śākta tradition reveres the Divine Mother as the universal creative power, the all-pervading source of change within and identical to the changeless reality. Here, Śakti is not the consort of Viṣṇu or Śiva, as the Vaiṣṇavas or Śaivas envision her, but their source, to whom they and all other gods are subordinate. The formless and immeasurable power that is Śakti can be conceptualized only in relation to her activity as the creator, sustainer, and destroyer of the universe. Accordingly, Śakti is Mahādevī, the Great Goddess, worshiped throughout India in various forms, beneficent and awesome, including the powerful Durgā and Kālī. Sir John Woodroffe, who wrote his authoritative studies on Śākta religion under the name of Arthur Avalon, observed that the worship of Śakti preserves the essential features of the ancient, widespread religion of the Mother Goddess, who was called by many names and venerated in many forms by the peoples of the remote past.35

Śākta religious practice is primarily, though not exclusively, Tantric, and the two traditions overlap but do not entirely coincide.36 Tantra, which exists in Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, and Śākta forms, is most broadly defined as a complex of ancient practices outside the Vedic sphere. Tantra evolved into a highly sophisticated philosophical nondualism that views the world as the projection and transformation of Śakti, the divine creative principle. This idea is inherent in the word tantra itself, which derives from a verbal root meaning “to extend, spread, be diffused.” In the intransitive sense, what is extending is the divine reality itself, in a seamless continuum that encompasses both transcendence and immanence, infinity and finitude, being and becoming, spirit and matter.37 In the transitive sense, what Tantra extends is knowledge of the divine reality. Accordingly, the word applies to a class of sacred writings, also called Tantras or Āgamas. Of unknown authorship and disputed age, the major Tantras are thought to be no older than the 12th or 14th centuries CE, although
the practices they record have roots in pre-Buddhist times, some two thousand years earlier.\textsuperscript{38} The nondualistic philosophy they present is based on the Upaniṣads, even though Tantra remains apart from the six darśanas of orthodox Brahmāṇical tradition.

As a spiritual practice (sādhana), Tantra aims at union with the Divine. In its Śākta form, it requires strict discipline, ritual purification, and devotion to the Divine Mother. Paradoxically, the instruments used to overcome the limitations of body, mind, and intellect are the body, mind, and intellect themselves. The aim is to break free from the ever-repeating cycle of birth, death, and rebirth by cultivating freedom from desire and detachment from the objects of sense perception. Ultimately, it is knowledge (jñāna) that leads to liberation.

With the gathering momentum of devotional theism in the fourth and fifth centuries CE, the Purāṇas emerged as a new class of sacred literature. The word purāṇa means “ancient,” and the texts characteristically present a highly mythologized history of the universe through successive cosmic cycles. As the Purāṇas grew through the absorption of local histories and myths, non-Āryan popular traditions entered the prestigious realm of Sanskrit literature\textsuperscript{39} as part of the ongoing process of assimilation that has marked Indian religion since time immemorial. Through colorful myths and allegories, the Purāṇas gave popular access to the abstract truths of the Vedas and Upaniṣads, and in doing so, harmonized the paths of jñāna and bhakti—of spiritual knowledge and devotion.
In the fifth or sixth century CE, the appearance of a unique text within the Purāṇic fold marked a defining moment in Indian religious history. The Devīmāhātmya, which is the primary text of the Śaṅkta tradition, united many and diverse strands of Indian myth, cult practice, and philosophy spanning at least four millennia and created one great hymn of glorification that proclaimed an all-encompassing vision of the Great Goddess. It revealed her as the omnipotent yet all-compassionate Mother, who is at once the source of this perplexing universe, a protective and guiding presence, and the bestower of supreme knowledge and liberation. From northwest India, the Devīmāhātmya spread rapidly eastward to Bengal, where it became known as the Candī. By the ninth century CE it had spread throughout the southern subcontinent under the title of Śrī Durgāsaptaśatī (“Seven Hundred Verses to Śrī Durgā”).

The Devīmāhātmya forms Chapters 81 through 93 of the Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa. In typical Purānic fashion, the sage Mārkaṇḍeya relates to his disciple Krauḍṭuki Bhāguri the history of the world through its cosmic ages (manvantaras). When Mārkaṇḍeya begins his account of the eighth manvantara, the Devī suddenly appears out of nowhere, becomes the focal point of the chapters that constitute the Devīmāhātmya, and then vanishes just as suddenly. Her absence from all other portions of the Purāṇa and the abrupt transitions immediately before and after the Devīmāhātmya point to the likelihood that it is an interpolation by a Śaṅkta redactor rather than a part of the original text. Three other facts strengthen that likelihood. Although the Purāṇas typically grew over time by accretion, the text of the Devīmāhātmya remained relatively fixed. Few manuscripts of the entire Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa are known, but many of the Devīmāhātmya survive and attest to its widespread popularity. The Purāṇas generated few commentaries, but the Devīmāhātmya inspired many. From the beginning, it seems to have enjoyed an independent existence, and in all probability it arose independently as well.

It probably was transmitted orally at first, but committed to writing not long afterward. The early Purānic literature belongs to the period of transition from an oral to a written culture, and the Devīmāhātmya exhibits the repetitive, formulaic quality consistent with the bardic style of the late preliterate period.

At the same time, the text is a compilation and synthesis of far older myths and traditions, skillfully integrated into a single narrative. It consists of three episodes based on previously known but formerly unassociated myths from Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, and indigenous tribal sources, interwoven with Harappan and Vedic strands and refashioned to affirm the Devī’s absolute supremacy and glory. Connecting the myths is a frame story, told by Mārkaṇḍeya, about a king, a merchant, and a sage. In turn the sage, named Medhas, becomes the narrator of the three myths describing the Devī’s activity (caritā) in vanquishing the forces that threaten the world order, personified as demons variously called asuras, daityas, or dānavas.

A myth should not be regarded as fiction simply because it does not describe a historical event. As
Indeed, a myth illustrates elusive truths that are difficult to express by more conventional means, precisely because it ventures beyond the realm of fact and into the realm of meaning. Open to multiple interpretations, a myth is valuable as a window through which one’s experience of the world can be understood. Through symbolism, it plumbs the deeper levels of the human psyche, and at one time myth may have functioned as an ancient form of psychology. Mythologist Joseph Campbell identified the four functions of myth as inspiring a sense of awe, explaining the origin and nature of the cosmos, supporting the social order, and awakening individuals to their own potential, especially in the spiritual domain. We find all four functions at work in the Devīmāhātmya.

The Devīmāhātmya’s three mythological narratives are allegories of outer and internal experience. Outwardly, the asuras symbolize the chaos or adharma that threatens cosmic stability or dharma. Inwardly, they symbolize the ego-based ignorance that plagues the human condition. The gods and the all-powerful Devī in her many aspects represent light and truth, and their clashes with the asuras symbolize the internal struggles that human beings face daily. Reflection on the myths’ often gory details reveals an underlying psychological and spiritual wisdom.

If the battle sequences concentrate on the Devī’s destructive side as the vanquisher of evil, the text’s four sublime hymns emphasize her auspicious and protective qualities. Although integral to the narratives, the hymns are markedly different in quality. Writing in the mid-18th century, the commentator Bhāskararāya characterized the hymns as dṛṣṭa (“seen”) rather than kṛta (“made”), thus conferring on them the exalted status of revealed knowledge generally accorded only to the Vedas. Because of their surpassing beauty and devotional fervor, they are frequently chanted in ritual. These four hymns—the Brahmāstuti (DM 1.73–87), the Śakrādistuti (DM 4.3–27), the Aparājitāstuti (DM 5.9–82) and the Nārāyaṇāstuti (DM 11.3—35)—additionally speak of perennial, universal themes and have continued over the centuries to nourish philosophical thought.

The King, the Merchant, and the Seer

The Devīmāhātmya begins with Mārkaṇḍeya relating how a virtuous king named Suratha suffers the loss of his kingdom, then rides off alone into the forest and comes upon the hermitage of Medhas, a holy man. Soon afterward, a merchant named Samādhī, dispossessed of his wealth and cast out by his greedy family, arrives at the forest retreat. Amid the beautiful, peaceful surroundings, the two of them expect to find tranquility but encounter instead their own inner turmoil, fueled by recurring thoughts of loss, betrayal, and attachment to what they have left behind. The king feels that as men of knowledge they ought to know better than to be so overcome with misery. Together they approach Medhas, who recognizes that by “knowledge” the king means awareness of the objective world and not a deeper understanding of the true nature of things. The sage’s task will be to awaken his two disciples to a higher, spiritual awareness.

Medhas tells Suratha and Samādhī that, like everyone else, they are deluded by Mahāmāyā, the goddess who hurls even the so-called wise into the dark whirlpool of attachment. Having seized their minds, she binds them to this transitory existence (saṁsāra) and all its attendant woes.

Medhas explains that nothing in this world is as it seems to be. The world as perceived through the senses constantly deceives. Humans and animals alike share the ability to see, hear, smell, taste, and touch, but the faculties are differently attuned and developed according to species. To speak of sensory knowledge of the world is to describe only one’s own experience, and since the world is
experienced differently according to the capacity of each experiencer, there is no single empirical world that is the same for all living beings. Additionally, the knowledge gained through the senses is conditioned by the physical properties of time and space, causing things to appear not as they are in themselves, but as they seem in relation to everything else.

If a simple act of sensory perception can be so fraught with deception, are not the more complex issues of animal and human behavior even more likely to confound? Medhas observes that birds feed their young even while feeling the pangs of hunger, whereas humans raise their children with the expectation of future reward. Birds act out of instinct according to predetermined patterns. Humans, also possessing instinct, additionally have the capacity to reason and make choices, but those choices are most often driven by self-interest, desires, and expectations. The Devīmāhātmya classifies both instinctual and rational awareness as lower forms of knowledge, because neither has the ability to liberate. Living creatures are bound to the ever-repeating cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. Medhas instructs that Mahāmāyā creates the universe, then “seizes the minds of even the wise and draws them into delusion” (DM 1.55). But, he adds, she is also “the supreme knowledge and the eternal cause of liberation” (DM 1.58).

The delusion of which Medhas speaks is a basic fact of life. The Sanskrit word moha is translated variously as “delusion, bewilderment, distraction, infatuation, error, folly,” but none of these is an adequate synonym for the total pattern of thinking that fails to recognize that things are not as they seem to be and instead accepts appearance as reality. The fundamental meaning of moha is “loss of consciousness,” and its cause is māyā, another word with no English equivalent. Initially māyā denoted extraordinary or supernatural power, and later, magic or sorcery, sometimes in the negative sense of deception. In the later Upaniṣads and the contemporaneous Sāṁskhya and Vedānta philosophies, māyā took on metaphysical dimensions. The Devīmāhātmya’s understanding of māyā is closest to that of the later Upaniṣads, where it appears as the divine power of self-concealment. What it conceals is the infinite consciousness that is Brahman. Now the definition of moha as loss of consciousness begins to make sense.

The Śvetāśvataraopaniṣad equates māyā with prakṛti as the female energy by which Śiva, the Lord of Māyā, projects the universe (ŚU 4.9–10). This portrayal as Śiva’s female counterpart implies the personification of māyā as a goddess, and such a goddess is the first one encountered in the Devīmāhātmya. Her name, Mahāmāyā, means either “the great māyā” or “she whose māyā is great.” Either way it signifies immense power.

The king wants to know more about this goddess Mahāmāyā, and Medhas responds by relating the first of three stories. There will be three stories, because everything in the world has a beginning, a middle, and an end, over which the Devī presides as the universal creator, preserver, and destroyer. In the first episode (carita) she appears in her cosmogonic, world-creating aspect.

Mahāmāyā

Long before the present creation, when the previous universe was dissolved into an endless primordial ocean, the blessed Lord Viṣṇu lay in deep meditative sleep. Suddenly, two demons named Madhu and Kaiṭabha sprang forth from the wax in his ears, intent on killing Brahmā, who sat on the lotus growing from Viṣṇu’s navel. Desperately, Brahmā tried to awaken Viṣṇu but in vain, for the sleep that had settled over the supreme lord’s eyes was the goddess Mahāmāyā herself. Brahmā extolled her with a hymn and asked her to release Viṣṇu from her spell. Awakening, Viṣṇu beheld the...
raging Madhu and Kaiṭabha and engaged them in combat for five thousand years until Mahāmāyā confounded them with pride. Having withstand the might of Viṣṇu himself, in their arrogance they decided to grant him a boon, but they realized their folly too late, for what Viṣṇu asked was to slay them then and there.

Comprising only one chapter, the story of Madhu and Kaiṭabha is a succinct reinterpretation of an earlier Vaiṣṇava myth found in the Mahābhārata and other sources. In the earlier accounts, Viṣṇu is the great hero and supreme lord who defeats the asuras through his own strength. In the Devīmāhātmya, the Devī is supreme, holding the sleeping Viṣṇu in her power until praised by Brahmā. When released, Viṣṇu battles Madhu and Kaiṭabha without victory until the Devī again intervenes. In the Vaiṣṇava versions, the asuras’ pride arises as a consequence of their own enormous strength, but in the Devīmāhātmya, the deluding power of Mahāmāyā tricks the pair into sealing their own doom. As retold, the myth establishes the Devī as the ultimate power in the universe, upon whom even the gods are dependent.

The brutish Madhu and Kaiṭabha are ultimately done in by their own arrogant stupidity, and the obvious message is that pride goes before a fall. Their destructive impulses, anger, and brute force represent the basest aspects of human nature. The demonic pair symbolize tamas, one of three fundamental energies (guṇas) pervading all creation. To combat this negative force, the Devī appears also in a tamasic manifestation as Mahāmāyā, “the dark goddess” (DM 1.89) who casts her veil of delusion and obscures the light of truth.

Brahmā’s hymn (DM 1.73–87), with its focus on the Devī’s tamasic, cosmogonic aspect, reveals deep insights into the nature of divine reality and the ever-changing physical universe. The initial verses establish the Divine Mother’s ultimate transcendence and identify her as the creator, sustainer, and dissolver of the cosmos. She is both consciousness and creativity—the substratum of existence and the great deluding power that projects the world out of herself. She is the all-encompassing source of good and evil alike, both radiant splendor and terrifying darkness, yet ultimately she is the ineffable bliss beyond all duality.

The Devīmāhātmya, already having pointed out that nothing in this world is as it seems, explains the origination of the universe with the startling paradox that the world is created by an act of simultaneous self-concealment (āvaraṇa) and projection (vikṣepa). The supreme Devī’s māyā veils her infinitude and causes the universe of name and form (nāmarūpa) to emanate from her limitless consciousness. “She is eternal, having the world as her form,” says Medhas (DM 1.64). This verse is an unequivocal statement of Śākta nondualism and affirms an ontological continuity between undifferentiated divine reality and its manifestation as the material universe.

Next, the Devī is prakṛti (DM 1.78), usually translated as “primordial matter” or “nature.” As a verbal noun that literally means “making at first,” prakṛti does not signify inert, insentient matter but a dynamic process endowed with awareness. Latent within the unmanifest prakṛti are the three basic energies, the guṇas. During the cyclical periods when the universe is not manifest, the guṇas exist in a state of perfect equilibrium. When the Devī disturbs their balance, she produces a cosmic vibration, a manifestation of energy of which the approximate sound is OṂ. The activation of the guṇas is the first step in the differentiation within prakṛti—an early event in the cosmic process of transformation from potentiality to actuality.

The guṇas—called tamas, rajas, and sattva—are the three basic energies, and their complex interactions create the physical universe. Tamas is inertia. The Sanskrit word signifies physical or
mental darkness, and the force it represents manifests as heaviness, dullness, ignorance, error, and negative human behavior. Rajas is activity. The word signifies intermediate dimness between darkness and light, and the force it represents manifests as restlessness, impurity, urgency, and passion. Sattva is balance. The word signifies something like “being-ness” or “truth-ness.” Sattva is not reality itself, but it points toward reality; and its manifestations include light, calmness, purity, goodness, and wisdom. Tamas veils, sattva reveals, and rajas allows those two polarizing forces to interact. As the basic forces operative in the universe, the three guṇas determine everything from the structuring of physical matter to the subtleties of human behavior.

It is easy to regard inanimate mineral matter as devoid of consciousness and to regard plant life as limited in awareness, but to do so is to forget that everything consists of forms assumed by the supreme Śakti through her guṇas. Minerals are intensely tamasic, but their greatly obscured consciousness is observable in the consistency of their atomic and subatomic organization. At the other end of the observable spectrum is the sattva-steeped awareness of the seer who has experienced the Divine. The Devīmāhātmya speaks of all the universe, moving and unmoving, as divine manifestation in which nothing is devoid of consciousness. Matter, perceived as solid objects in space and time, is in fact a relatively stable form of energy, highly organized into systems of many kinds of subatomic particles or waves that are themselves made of still smaller quanta of energy. Overall, quantum physics and Śākta philosophy agree in viewing the physical universe as a manifestation of energy. Just as vibrating quanta of energy form ever more complex units of matter to produce the entire cosmos, so the three guṇas combine and recombine with increasing complexity to structure the material universe and its living beings. Scientists claim that the amount of energy in the universe is constant; late in the 19th century, Swami Vivekananda wrote that the Divine Mother is “the sum total of the energy in the universe.” While science continues to probe deeper for the ultimate simplicity—the perfect, unbroken symmetry before the beginning of creation, before matter crystallized out of energy—Śākta philosophy has known all along that the ultimate form of matter is energy and that the ultimate form of energy is consciousness.

Ādyā Śakti—the primordial power devoid of all duality—is the ultimate reality, an inconceivable formlessness that is neither female, male, nor neuter but is pure, undifferentiated being-consciousness-bliss (saccidānanda). Though without beginning, Ādyā Śakti is the beginning of all else. Śākta philosophy agrees with the Upaniṣads that Brahman and māyā, which it calls Śiva and Śakti, are one undivided reality; it is called Śiva when experienced as the unchanging ground of existence and Śakti when experienced as the dynamic power of becoming. This power of becoming (māyāśakti), which manifests as mind and matter, is the power through which the infinite changelessness dons the ever-changing veils of time and space and becomes a universe that is none other than the resplendent form of the formless (śūnyasyākāra), a universe wherein spirit, mind and matter are ultimately one.

Although compiled from disparate sources, the Devīmāhātmya reveals a consistent philosophical basis, but later commentators have exercised wide latitude in attempting to reveal its secrets according to one philosophical position or another. The two greatest commentaries are the Guptavatī (“Confirming What is Hidden”), written around 1741 by Bhāskararāya, and the slightly earlier commentary of Nāgoji Bhatta. While Bhaṭṭa held in large part to the established practice of interpreting the Devīmāhātmya according to the Vedānta school, Bhāskararāya was the first commentator to write from the Tantric standpoint.
Although Śākta philosophy and the Advaita Vedānta of the eighth-century philosopher-saint Śaṅkarācārya are both nondualistic in agreeing that one reality underlies all diversity, they reach radically different conclusions about the nature of the world. For Śaṅkara, the world is neither real nor unreal. His nondualism posits an ontological hierarchy of the absolutely real or transcendental (pāramārthika), which is the nondual Brahman; the empirical (vyāvahārika), which is the objective universe of human experience, lying somewhere between absolute truth and complete falsity; and the apparent or illusory (prātibhāsika), which includes illusions, hallucinations, and dreams. According to the process known as sublation, a new experience disproves something formerly experienced as true. For example, a dream is revealed as unreal when the sleeper returns to the waking state. Similarly, the experience of the phenomenal, objective universe is sublated by the experience of Brahman, and the universe disappears. But because Brahman, the Absolute, cannot be sublated by any other experience, it is the ultimate and sole reality.

The absolute Brahman is nirguṇa, or without qualities, and according to Śaṅkara the universe is only a superimposition (adhyāsa) on that changeless reality. This doctrine, known as vivartavāda, explains the universe as merely a matter of mistaking one thing for another. The classic example is of seeing a rope in the semidarkness and thinking it to be a snake. As long as the misperception lasts, the snake is very real to the perceiver, who reacts accordingly. But the snake and the fear of it vanish when the light reveals it to be a rope. In the same way, the empirical world vanishes with the experience of the infinite Brahman. Śaṅkara’s philosophy does not regard the world as pure illusion but as a flawed experience of reality through māyā’s veils of time and space, and this contingent reality exists only in the fleeting experience of it.

In contrast to Śaṅkara’s doctrine of vivartavāda, Bhāskarāya’s Guptavatī and the Devīmāhātmya articulate the doctrine of pariṇāmavāda, the world as an actual transformation of divinity. The classic analogy expressing this view is that of thread being woven into cloth. The cause (thread) is transformed into the effect (cloth) through a change of form but not of substance.11 The Upaniṣads support the Śākta view of the universe as real. The Chāndogyopaniṣad’s pronouncement, Sarvaṁ khalvidaṁ brahma, “Truly all this [universe] is Brahman” (ChU 3.14.1), continues, “From that all things originate, into that do they dissolve, and by that are they sustained.” The Śvetāśvataraopaniṣad affirms the identity of the Absolute, the relative, and the māyā that bridges them, and declares all three to be Brahman (ŚU 1.9, 12). Through a mystery beyond the mind’s understanding, Śakti becomes the manifold universe even while Śiva remains unitary and transcendental, and divine reality encompasses both the experience of the whole and the partial within the whole. For the Śākta, everything exists in the infinite Śakti, even all limitations within her wholeness are but her other aspects.12 In glaring contrast, for Śaṅkara the absolute reality of Brahman lies in its immutability, which admits to no possibility of the imperfection inherent in change.

In truth, no philosophy can take the human mind beyond the finitizing principle of māyā to encompass the infinite, all-transcending consciousness. One can accept Śaṅkara’s position that the world is no more real than the snake misperceived in the rope, or one can accept the Śākta position that the unchanging One somehow transforms itself into the ever-changing many even while remaining one and unchanging. Either way, there is a threshold that reason cannot cross, where wisdom becomes silence, and inexpressible experience alone can reveal its truth.

Now what is the relationship of that supreme consciousness to the world of human experience?
Without Self-realization, humans live, deluded, in a universe projected by Mahāmāyā, who is both “the great goddess and the great demoness” (DM 1.77). The universe is a kaleidoscope of limitless possibility, of breathtaking beauty and appalling horror, where life oscillates between pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, success and failure. In such a world, the necessity arises for making choices. If Medhas’s initial characterization of the Devī in her tamasic aspect inspires philosophical contemplation on the nature of reality, his depiction of her in her rajasic aspect inspires the vision of a goddess actively involved in her creation. Here she has the twofold nature of a compassionate mother worthy of devotion and a protective warrior intent on the victory of good over evil. Medhas’s second story, related in Chapters 2 through 4, forms the Devīmāhātmya’s second carita.

Mahiṣāsuramardinī

Long ago, the demonic forces of Mahiṣa, the buffalo demon, battled with the heavenly forces of Indra for 100 years and defeated the gods. Cast out of heaven, the dispossessed gods appealed to Viṣṇu and Śiva for help. Thereupon a great radiance issued first from Viṣṇu’s angered face and then from Brahmā’s and Śiva’s. From all the other gods, light also came forth and united into a fiery goddess, to whom each god gave a weapon or adornment symbolic of his power. Thus arrayed, she laughed thunderously and defiantly until the very universe shook.

Hearing the disturbance, Mahiṣa and his demon hordes rushed to the scene and beheld the Devī Durgā in all her awesome glory. Millions upon millions of asuras attacked her, but she serenely cut through their weapons as if in play. Her exhaled breaths became her legions, and amid scenes of horrific carnage the Devī stood victorious.

Next, Durgā destroyed Mahiṣa’s generals one by one until she faced the buffalo demon alone. With boundless anger he pawed the earth with his hooves, bellowed in rage and rent the clouds with his thrashing horns. Whenever Durgā struck him, he changed his form, from buffalo to lion to man to elephant and back to buffalo, evading her death-blows until she leapt upon him, pinned his neck underfoot, and pierced him with her spear. Then from his buffalo’s mouth, Mahiṣa’s hideous, true form emerged halfway, and the Devī Durgā beheaded him with a single stroke of her mighty sword.

In the centuries before the Devīmāhātmya’s composition, the goddess Durgā emerged in the Śākta movement as one of the Devī’s principal forms. She seems to be of indigenous origin, and many early references associate her with the Vindhya Mountains south of the Indus Valley, a region peopled by hostile tribes. The word *durga* (“difficult of access”) occurs in the Ṛgveda only as a masculine or neuter adjective or noun and never as a feminine name, and this textual evidence suggests that Durgā was absorbed into the Vedic pantheon after the period of the Saṃhitās. She first appears as a goddess in Vedic literature in the Taittirīyāraṇyaka, which characterizes her as “the flaming one” connected to the power of Savitṛ and Agni, the gods of the sun and fire (TA 10.1).

Early traces of Durgā’s defining myth, concerning the slaying of the buffalo demon, are found in six statues and a terracotta plaque from the northwestern Indian state of Rajasthan. Dating from the middle of the first century BCE to the early fourth century CE, they illustrate the myth’s climactic moment and depict Mahiṣāsuramardinī—Durgā as the slayer of the buffalo demon—as a goddess armed with trident and spear in combat with a buffalo. The plaque additionally shows a lion accompanying her.

Although the myth’s ultimate origin remains unknown, circumstantial evidence places it in the
extremely remote past. We recall that pre-Harappan images of a formidable goddess were found in Baluchistan in connection with those of a wild bull and have been interpreted as credible symbols of good conquering evil. Such an interpretation finds support in the work of archeologist Jacques Cauvin, who contends that the wild male bovine so terrified Neolithic people with its brute force and destructive ferocity that it became a universal symbol of evil, of the chaos that threatened the peaceful order of sedentary agricultural societies. Without direct evidence it is impossible to ascribe such a remote origin to the story of Mahiṣāsura, but we cannot rule out the possibility that one of Hinduism’s most captivating myths preserves a primeval cultural memory.

Later terracotta tablets from Harappa show a male figure killing a water buffalo in the manner described in the Devīmāhātmya, by pinning the head underfoot and thrusting a spear into the shoulder. This act takes place in the presence of the homed male deity, speculated to be proto-Śiva, seated in the yogic position.

This evidence hardly suggests a direct connection with Durgā but becomes noteworthy in light of the oldest literary account of myth, preserved in the Mahābhārata. There Mahiṣa is slain by Śiva’s son, Skanda (MBh 3.221). In the Harivaṁśa, a later supplement to the Mahābhārata, Mahiṣa’s slayer is given once as Śiva himself and three times as an unnamed goddess. The Vāmanapurāṇa, thought to postdate the Devīmāhātmya, contains two accounts of the slaying, one associated with Skanda and one with Durgā. Arising from yet undetermined origins, the myth remained for a long while in a state of flux as to whether Skanda, Śiva, or an unnamed goddess killed Mahiṣāsura, until its unequaled formulation in the Devīmāhātmya for the first time actually linked the names of Mahiṣa and Durgā.

The argument for Durgā’s antiquity becomes all the more compelling in light of her linkage to another ancient goddess, Vindhyavāsinī. This identification is consistent in two hymns interpolated into the Mahābhārata—the Durgāstava (in MBh 4.5) and the Durgāstotra (in MBh 6.22)—and in three hymns of the Harivaṁśa. Among the latter, Viśṇu’s Praise of Nidrā first extols Vindhyavāsinī for foiling Kaṁsa’s plot to kill the infant Kṛṣṇa (HV 47.38–57). Then a later, fifty-eight-line addition to the hymn (HV Appendix I, No. 8) not only makes it clear that Vindhyavāsinī and Durgā are one and the same goddess but also identifies her in line 32 with Aditi, the universal mother of the Rgveda. This is highly significant, considering that the references to Aditi in the Rgveda may well be the most ancient surviving records of any goddess in the Indian literary tradition.

Durgā’s association with the Vaiṣṇava themes of the destruction of wickedness and the protection of virtue is another thread running through the Durgāstava and the Durgāstotra. The Durgāstava’s hymnist is Yudhiṣṭhira, the dispossessed king whose situation resembles Suratha’s. Significantly, the Durgāstotra, one of the earliest Sanskrit hymns to the Devī, occurs immediately before the 18 chapters that form the Bhagavadgītā. Arjuna, about to engage in battle at Kurukṣetra, is counseled by Kṛṣṇa to recite the Durgāstotra in order to insure victory. Arjuna descends from his chariot and invokes the Devī as Kālī, Bhadrakālī, Caṇḍī, and Durgā, and by other names and epithets found scattered throughout the Devīmāhātmya. Together, Yudhiṣṭhira’s ecstatic praise and Arjuna’s invocation present a vision of Durgā as a dark and resplendent goddess, the destroyer of Kaiṭabha and Mahiṣāsura, worthy of worship by the Vedic gods. Endowed with all manner of weapons and adornments, she grants victory in battle and removes human burdens. Many are the boons she bestows on those who seek refuge in her. The two hymns share a multitude of themes, images, and epithets
with the Devīmāhātmya, even entire, closely-corresponding passages, especially relating to the Devī’s promises of protection and blessing.

The strategic positioning of the Durgāstotra in the Mahābhārata forge a link between the Devīmāhātmya and the Bhagavadgītā. So does the forced enumeration of the Devīmāhātmya’s text into seven hundred verses in order to conform to the Bhagavadgītā’s similar number. Despite its alternative title, Śrī Durgāsaptāśatū (“Seven Hundred Verses to Śrī Durgā”), the Devīmāhātmya actually consists of fewer than six hundred full couplets (ślokas). To arrive at the requisite seven hundred, redactors have variously numbered some single lines, partial lines, and interlocutory phrases (“so-and-so said”) as full Ślokas. For wishing to draw such a parallel to the Bhagavadgītā, they must have had a compelling reason. Indeed they did. They wanted to equate the Devī Durgā’s activity with the redemptive role of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Vaiṣṇava religion.

The idea of divine intervention in worldly affairs belongs to the Vaiṣṇava tradition of the avatāra, or incarnate deity. In the Bhagavadgītā (BhG 4.6–8) Kṛṣṇa declares that whenever righteousness declines and evil proliferates, he is born into the world to protect the good, to destroy wickedness, and to re-establish the natural order, the dharma that upholds (dhāryate) the world. In the Mahābhārata, protective intervention is a role ascribed also to the Devī. On Kṛṣṇa’s advice, Arjuna invokes Durgā with a hymn immediately before the battle of Kurukṣetra, whereupon she appears and assures victory. And just as the opening words of the Bhagavadgītā declare the field of Kurukṣetra to be a metaphor for the field of dharma—the battleground of human life with its perpetual conflict between good and evil—the battlefields of the Devīmāhātmya embody a parallel symbolism. To compare the Devīmāhātmya to the Bhagavadgītā is to reinforce the Devī’s protective, redemptive role and her saving grace in the face of adversity. Whenever evil prevails over good and upsets the natural order, the Devī, who is the universal mother, protector, and salvific goddess, intervenes.

The second carita of the Devīmāhātmya has theological and practical dimensions in portraying the Devī as the salvific Durgā, and the story is intended for Suratha. Having lost his kingdom to evildoers, he can relate to the dispossessed gods; having ruled by divine authority, duty-bound to uphold the dharma, he can relate to its overturning. The heaven-storming asuras and the gods represent the good and evil tendencies that pervade the world in perpetual opposition. Mahiṣa’s fury symbolizes the ego-based sense of attachment that plagues Suratha over his lost kingdom. The buffalo demon’s behavior embodies the guṇa of rajas, the fiery, active energy that manifests as restlessness, desire, rage, and corrosive passion. The Devī also appears in her rajasic aspect, as the inherent splendor (tejas) of the male gods. And she is subordinate to none of them. Their individual strengths and virtues, which emerge from their bodies with fiery brilliance and coalesce into one supreme female form, are but facets of her own undivided might.

The episode of Durgā’s triumph over evil is her defining moment, a myth so powerful that it has been celebrated in sculpture and painting for at least two thousand years. Beyond moral victory, the multilayered imagery of the myth has deeper psychological and spiritual implications. As a metaphor, Mahiṣa represents more than anger, however monumental. Whenever Durgā attacks, the buffalo demon eludes her deadly blows by using the protective shield of his changing forms. Until he reveals his true form, he remains elusive and seemingly unconquerable. In the same way, human delusion dons an array of guises to mask and protect an ego ruled by attachment, aversion, and deep-seated fear. Personal demons will continue to bedevil in one form or another until recognized for what they are. Of course, Mahiṣa’s unwillingness to reveal himself stems from a sense of self-preservation, and
Durgā forces the revelation by piercing his side with her spear, symbolizing the penetrating light of the higher knowledge. When Mahiśa emerges in his true form, Durgā decapitates him with her sword, a metaphor for viveka, the ability to discern between the apparent and the real, the transient and the eternal.

The myth reveals an intimate connection between good and evil and the ego. The experience of duality and finite selfhood arises from moha, the limitation of consciousness. Without a nondualistic understanding, the presence of evil in the world remains a vexing question. Some dualistic religions seek a solution by acknowledging God as the source of good and inventing a devil as the source of evil, but in doing so they create the further problem of a diminished God, who is no longer the supreme being but one of two mutually-limiting adversaries. The simple fact is that good and evil coexist in the relative world and neither is possible without the other to define it. Practically and philosophically, evil is that which distances from the Divine, and good is that which leads toward it. As for the ego, when the Devī enters into her creation to experience it as her divine play (līlā), her infinite consciousness appears fragmented as finite centers in time and space that define everything in their experience in terms of “I, me, and mine” and their negative corollaries. Inevitably, the interests of one ego clash with those of another, and the need arises for moral choices between divisive egocentrism and the uniting power of selfless love. Durgā’s slaying of Mahiśāsura symbolizes the conquest of ego-based attachment and all its consequent pain. No wonder Mahiśa’s final expression, gazing up at his sword-wielding slayer, is one of rapt awe.

In the eloquent, richly detailed Śakrādistuti (DM 4.3–27) that follows, Indra and the other gods praise Durgā’s supremacy and transcendence before elaborating on the meaning of Mahiśa’s slaying, which centers on the salvific nature of the Devī’s power and on her unconditional compassion. Her purpose is to preserve the moral order, and to that end she appears as “good fortune in the dwellings of the virtuous and misfortune in the abodes of the wicked” (DM 4.5), granting abundant blessings and subduing misconduct. “Ever intent on benevolence toward all” (DM 4.17), she reveals even her vast destructive power as ultimately compassionate, for in slaying those enemies of the world who “may have committed enough evil to keep them long in torment” (DM 4.18), she redeems them with the purifying touch of her weapons so that they “may attain the higher worlds” (DM 4.19). Since good and evil exist only relative to each other, no evildoer meets with eternal damnation. In the end, all are assured of the Divine Mother’s blessing.

The Devī’s promise to return whenever she is remembered by the gods or humankind in times of distress prompts Medhas to announce that he has yet another story, and so begins the Devīmāhātmya’s longest and most elaborate carita, which constitutes Chapters 5 through 13.

The Devī—One and Many

Long ago, two arrogant asuras, the brothers Śumbha and Niśumbha, seized Indra’s sovereignty over the three worlds, and once again the gods were dispossessed. The Devī had promised that whenever remembered in times of distress, she would appear and put an end to misfortune, and so the gods invoked her with praise.

She emerged in a resplendent form from the body of Śiva’s consort, Pārvaṭī, and took up her abode in the Himālayas. Soon her captivating beauty caught the attention of Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa, Śumbha and Niśumbha’s two servants, who reasoned that since their masters had already stolen everything of value from the gods, should they not also possess this most beautiful of goddesses? Śumbha sent his
messenger, Sugrīva, to beguile the Devī to come to him and Niśumbha. But Sugrīva returned with a challenge, for the Devī had vowed long ago that whoever she married would first have to conquer her in battle.

Śumbha appointed the chieftain Dhūmrilocana to bring her back by force, and after his failed attempt, Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa were sent to fetch her. The Devī saw them and their immense army approaching, and when she scowled, the frightful goddess Kālī sprang forth from her brow and slaughtered the demon hordes.

Next, Śumbha marshaled all the asura clans, and in turn the Devī evoked her śaktis, seven fierce goddesses who sprang forth from the bodies of the gods. From her own body the most terrifying śakti of all, Śivadūti, came forth and sent the great Lord Śiva himself as a messenger to Śumbha and Niśumbha to warn them of the consequences of battle. The arrogant asuras took no heed, and fighting of unprecedented fierceness left in its wake a scene of gruesome slaughter.

While the surviving demons fled from the fury of the śaktis, the great asura Raktabīja strode onto the battlefield. Whenever a drop of his blood touched the ground, it grew into an asura of equal size and strength, and soon the Devī’s hosts again battled countless foes. Terror seized the gods, but the Devī merely laughed while Kālī began to drink in the drops of blood and the asuras being born therefrom. As she consumed them, others did not arise. Finally the mighty Raktabīja, drained of blood, fell dead.

Then Śumbha and Niśumbha themselves battled with the Devī and her śaktis until Niśumbha, too, lay slain. In rage and grief, Śumbha reproached the Devī for relying on the strength of others, but she replied that the śaktis were but projections of her own power. Drawing them back into herself, she stood alone against him, and at the climax of battle, the two leapt to the sky and fought in midair until the Devī sent the great Śumbha crashing to the earth. When he lay dead, the sky cleared, the sun shone in glory, and the universe rested in luminous calm. The gods praised the Devī in a great hymn of thanksgiving, and she pledged her protection and blessing thenceforth to all who praise her with hymns, recite the destruction of the asuras, and worship her with devotion.

Of the Devīmāhātmya’s three myths, the story of Śumbha and Niśumbha is the least attested in Sanskrit literature. In all likelihood, it originated among aboriginal, goddess-worshiping peoples of north India who perpetuate their ancient traditions to the present time. Among those same peoples the legends of Kṛṣṇa as the beloved cowherd Gopāla first arose, and the few traces of Śumbha and Niśumbha in Sanskrit literature before the Devīmāhātmya appear in connection with Kṛṣṇa Gopāla’s exploits, later absorbed into the Vaiṣṇava fold.

From the same Vaiṣṇava milieu comes yet another myth, briefly alluded to in the Devīmāhātmya (DM 11.41–42): the story of Kṛṣṇa’s birth and the role played in it by the goddess Vindhyavāsinī.

It had been foretold to the wicked king Kaṁsa that his sister Devakī would give birth to a child at whose hand he would die. Preparing to take birth as the child Kṛṣṇa, the great Lord Viṣṇu asked the goddess Yoganidrā (Mahāmāyā) to be born at the same time to the cowherd Nanda and his wife Yasodā, and with the help of Yoganidrā’s deluding power, the babies were switched at birth. When Kaṁsa rushed to Devakī’s side to murder her newborn child, the baby escaped his grasp and assumed the goddess’s eight-armed form. Telling Kaṁsa that his slayer had been born into the world, Yoganidrā flew off to the Vindhya mountains, where she is still worshiped as Vindhyavāsinī.

This myth demonstrates that the goddess Yoganidrā, or Mahāmāyā, belongs to a pre-existing
Likewise, hymns interpolated into the Mahābhārata and the Harivarṣa invariably describe the Mahādevī, the Great Goddess, who incarnates to aid Viṣṇu, as abiding permanently in the Vindhya mountains—a designation that places her among non-Vedic tribal peoples of the natural wilderness. However, Vindhyavāsinī’s Vaiṣṇava association is not exclusive; the Matsyapurāṇa, one of the six Śaiva Purāṇas, considers her, Caṇḍikā, and Kālī as three manifestations of the Devī, each again connected with wild, mountainous regions.

Today, Vindhyavāsinī’s temple complex dominates the north-central Indian village of Vindhyācal (Uttar Pradesh). Just north of a pavilion that bears upon its marble walls the recently inscribed text of the Devīmāhātmya, an ancient and unprepossessing stone shrine houses the goddess. She stands upon a lion and gazes out through wide, silver eyes set in her black, birdlike face. Her startling appearance recalls the avian-faced terracotta figurines from Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, which in turn look back to the still earlier goddesses with birdlike heads from Baluchistan, and from there the chain recedes ever farther back into the incomprehensibly remote past.

By the time the myth of Śumbha and Niśumbha attained definitive form in the Devīmāhātmya, the Devī had either replaced Kṛṣṇa Gopāla as their slayer or had been restored to a role that was originally hers. Additionally, the Devīmāhātmya’s version of the myth contains details that signal a Śaiva influence, for example, the shift of locale from the Vindhys to the Himālayas (Śiva’s abode), the emergence of the Devī from the body of Śiva’s consort, and the importance of Kālī in the narrative.

As described in the seventh chapter, Kālī has loosely hanging, emaciated flesh that barely conceals her bones. Gleaming white fangs protrude from her gaping, blood-stained mouth, framing her lolling red tongue. Red, too, are her eyes, which peer out from her black face. We can take this black, red, and white—the colors of tamas, rajas, and sattva—to indicate that Kālī is no subsidiary goddess but the supreme Mother of the Universe (Jagadambā), in whom the three guṇas reside. In short, she is the resplendent Devī in another, darker form.

Manifesting to confront Śumbha’s escalating evil, she carries the skull-topped staff that traditionally accompanies her in battle. This staff, also associated with shamans, supports Kālī’s presumed origin among the tribal societies of India’s mountainous regions. Although her ultimate origin remains shrouded in mystery, her dark skin may point back to the dark, fertile earth, and her dual aspects as the giver and taker of life point back to very ancient times. Conforming to her predominantly fearsome character, Kālī’s early temples were situated at the edges of civilization, often near forests and cremation grounds.

Her name comes from the feminine adjective kālī, meaning “dark” or “blue-black.” It is probably related to the masculine noun kāla (“time”), which fits the concept of Kālī as ever-turning time, the relentless devourer who brings all things to an end. The name first appears in Sanskrit literature around 2,500 years ago in the Muṇḍakopaniṣad, where it identifies one of Agni’s seven flaming tongues that devour the oblations of clarified butter in the Vedic sacrifice (MU 1.2.4). This is scarcely sufficient evidence to confirm or even to suggest that Kālī originated as a śakti of Agni, but it is noteworthy that fire dissolves matter back into energy—in the form of heat and light—just as Kālī, the destroyer, dissolves the material universe back into undifferentiated śakti. The same verse of the Upaniṣad designates another of Agni’s seven tongues as Karālī (“formidable, dreadful, terrible,
having a gaping mouth and protruding teeth”). This word appears twice in the Devīmāhātmya’s final hymn to describe Kālī’s terrifying mouth (11.21) and Bhadrakālī’s flaming trident (11.26).

Kālī first appears unequivocally as a goddess in the Kaṭhaka Gṛhyaśūtra, a ritualistic text from late Vedic times that places her among Vedic deities to be invoked with offerings of perfume during the marriage ceremony.

During the epic period, sometime after the fifth century BCE, Kālī makes a startling appearance in the Mahābhārata. When the Pāṇḍava brothers’ camp is attacked one night by the sword-wielding Aśvatthāman, his deadly assault is seen as the work of “Kālī of bloody mouth and eyes, smeared with blood and adorned with garlands, .. crowned and holding noose in hand.” She, the Night of Death (Kālarātri), laughs derisively while binding men, horses, and elephants with her terrible snares of death (MBh 10.8.64–65). Even though the passage goes on to describe the slaughter as an act of human warfare, it makes clear that the fierce goddess is ultimately the agent of death who carries off those who are slain.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, Kālī’s characterization changed radically, when Bengali Tantrics and devotional poets such as Rāmprasad and Kamalakānta envisioned her as voluptuously beautiful and began to sing her praises as the loving, universal Mother and supreme metaphysical reality. That characterization of Kālī remains the predominant one today.

The eighth chapter of the Devīmāhātmya relates how the Devī multiplies her strength in the escalating battle by calling forth seven individual Śaktis from the bodies of the male gods. The seven Śaktis are known collectively as the mātrgaṇa (“band of mothers”), the Saptamāṭrkās (“Seven Little Mothers”) or simply the Mothers. We learn from the Brhat Samhitā, a text contemporary with the Devīmāhātmya, that in the sixth century there existed a prevalent and powerful cult centered on a group of fierce goddesses, usually seven in number. The same text recommends that images of them should display the same identifying marks as the gods to whose names their own correspond. The abundant iconographic evidence from this period includes a sculptured panel from a temple to the Saptamāṭrkās, portraying the seven goddesses accompanied by an inscription that invokes the benefits of their protective power. As in the Devīmāhātmya, the Mothers’ function is to fight for the preservation of the world.

But who are these Mothers? When we meet them in the Devīmāhātmya, they have already been absorbed into the Brāhmaṇical fold and considerably tamed, but they were not always considered so benevolent. Only in the century or two immediately preceding the Devīmāhātmya did they take on the role of battling demons, as they became increasingly identified with male deities, and only then did they evolve into the differentiated forms recognizable as the seven Śaktis described in our text. Before then, the seven appeared as uniform figures.

Predating the Devīmāhātmya by about 500 years, references to the Mothers in later strata of the Mahābhārata invariably link them to the war god Kārttikeya (Skanda) and describe them as exceedingly ferocious and bloodthirsty minor goddesses in whom, paradoxically, the impulses of motherhood are deeply ingrained. Their number is often unspecified but implied to be very large, and they are portrayed not only as inauspicious but also as downright dangerous. These goddesses are predators of children until Kārttikeya persuades them instead to assume a protective role. Nevertheless he concedes to them the right to torment the young until the age of sixteen! Their names, when given, do not yet correspond to the names in the Devīmāhātmya.
Earlier still, the Mothers were an independent group of violent goddesses associated with the dangers of pregnancy and childbirth, infant mortality, and illnesses afflicting small children. Many such goddesses survive to this day in the folk religion of Indian villages, where they still receive blood offerings for their appeasement.

Given ample evidence that features of the Indus-Sarasvati civilization endure even today in Indian villages, if we look back two millennia or so before the references in the Mahābhārata, we discover that some of the Harappan stone seals bear the carved images of seven identical figures, all standing in a row, sometimes with hands joined. Clad in matching tunics, with hair in a braid and a bird’s plume on the head, they display avian qualities in body and attire, but their faces are human. Could these mysterious figures, peering at us across more than 4,000 years, be early representations of the Seven Little Mothers?

The Mahābhārata describes the Mothers as dark-skinned, speaking various languages, and inhabiting mountains and caves. Together, these traits suggest that the Mothers were present in the multi-ethnic diaspora of Indus-Sarasvatī emigrants, who resettled in remoter, peripheral regions after abandoning their doomed villages, towns, and cities. Although the Brāhmaṇical culture that produced the Mahābhārata viewed the probably non-Āryan Mothers with suspicion, the Śākta author(s) of the Devīmāhātmya accorded them full legitimacy, fixing their identification with the Vedic and post-Vedic gods and then revealing them not as mere goddess-consorts but as individualized powers of the one Great Goddess.

As allegory, the myth of Śumbha and Niśumbha has particular immediacy, because the sphere of action is decidedly terrestrial rather than cosmic or celestial. The gods, distressed that the asuras have once more overturned the world order, invoke the Devī in a magnificent hymn, the Aparājitāstuti (“Praise to the Invincible Goddess,” DM 5.9–82), which celebrates her immanence in the world as the consciousness that manifests in all beings.

Thereupon, the Devī appears on the bank of the Gaṅgā. Her effulgent manifestation, emerging from the body of Parvaṭī, embodies the guṇa of sattva, the energy of light, purity, peace, and goodness. Having already revealed her tamasic and rajasic aspects, she appears as sattvic and bewitchingly beautiful, although she will take on multiple and varied forms in the course of battle. Śumbha and Niśumbha’s traditional characterization as mountain demons further emphasizes the terrestrial locale, and of all the Devīmāhātmya’s villains, they and their cohorts appear the most human. Individually, Śumbha represents the ego, and his younger brother represents its sense of attachment. They are central to the entire catalog of human failings and vices. The portrayal of Śumbha amid the glittering excess of his ill-gotten riches and powers is a sickening picture of corruption and materialism gone mad. The toady Candā and Munḍa appeal to their master’s immense vanity and inflame his lust with tempting descriptions of the Devī’s captivating beauty. Courting the young goddess for Śumbha, the unctuous Sugrīva speaks with the intent to dissemble, and her refusal, citing a vow to marry whoever can conquer her in battle, establishes the pattern of challenge and counterchallenge that will drive the narrative’s steady escalation from that point on.

When Śumbha orders Dhūmrarocana to bring the Devī back “kicking and screaming” if need be, the dim-witted thug becomes a casualty of the proverbial violence that begets violence. Śumbha, now driven by unreasoning rage, sends Candā and Munḍa to reattempt Dhūmrarocana’s failed mission, whereupon the sattvic Devī evokes her fearsome manifestation, Kālī, who quickly slays the two servants and their army.
When Śumbha mobilizes for all-out war, the Devī multiplies her forces with seven fierce śaktis, evoked from the gods, and with her own śakti, the terrifying Śivadūtī. In counter-response there appears Raktabīja (“he whose seed is blood”) with his amazing replicative ability. His red blood, symbolic of rajas, represents the awesome power of desire and mental restlessness. Just as each drop that falls to earth produces another asura, so does one desire or thought lead to another. Indulgence leads to insatiability, and the ghastly metaphor of Kālī lapping up the dripping blood symbolizes the sound principle that human desires and uncontrolled mental activity are best conquered if nipped in the bud.

Raktabīja’s death marks the turning point. Henceforth the theme of escalating multiplicity reverses itself. One by one the outward manifestations of ego have been vanquished, and only its essence, represented by Śumbha and Niśumbha, remains against the Devī and her forces.

The prolonged battle with Niśumbha runs parallel to the Devī’s victory over Mahiśāsura. Both myths involve the demon’s metamorphosis, the piercing by her spear, and the revelation of an inner being who is beheaded. When Niśumbha, symbolizing attachment, sprouts 10,000 grasping arms, his awful transmutation is not a graceful evasion like Mahiśa’s, but an act of ugly desperation. In both myths, the Devī’s spear, representing insight, leaves the asura exposed and vulnerable. The mighty demon that emerges from Nisumbha’s gaping chest wound calls for the Devī to stop, but in sādhana halfway measures simply won’t do, and she annihilates him with her sword of knowledge.

Now only Śumbha, the naked ego, remains. When he reproaches the Devī for relying on the strength of others, she responds that the śaktis are only projections of her own power and recalls them into herself. Meeting in final combat, the lone Devī and Śumbha rise to the sky, signaling disengagement from the world. After the ultimate struggle, when Śumbha lies dead, the veil of individual nescience (avidyā) that obscures the indwelling Self is lifted. Metaphoric clouds disperse to reveal the brightly shining sun and beatific peace, the realization of infinite consciousness.

If the myth of Mahiśāsura is intended for King Suratha, whose duty and interests lay in conquering evil and governing righteously, the third of Medhas’s tales is intended for Samādhi, the merchant. With its imagery of material wealth and human passions, it resonates with his bitter experience of the vanity of riches and ephemeral pleasures and the folly of lamenting their loss. His goal is not to regain a kingdom but to renounce the world and attain liberation.

The Devīmāhātmya’s final hymn, the Nārāyaṇīstuti (DM 11.3–35), comments on the foregoing action. Popularized through widespread liturgical use, it lauds the Devī in her universal, omnipotent aspect and also in the diverse expressions of her power. Once again pleased by the gods’ praise, she renews her promise to confer well-being upon the world and to intervene whenever evil arises. In a fascinating sequence of verses (DM 11.40–55), she predicts five of her future incarnations, which in fact reveal their origins in humankind’s remote past.

Chapter 12 is a phalaśruti, a conventional literary form that details the benefits of reciting or hearing a sacred text. Cast in the Devī’s own words, it names specific blessings and protections and pronounces the Devīmāhātmya “the supreme way to well-being” (DM 12.7).

In the final chapter, Medhas resumes the thread of his original discourse, repeating that the Devī is both the binding ignorance (avidyāmāyā) and the liberating knowledge (vidyāmāyā). She alone is, and nothing exists apart from her. Medhas instructs the king and the merchant to take refuge in her. At this point (DM 13.6), Mārkaṇḍeya again becomes the narrator of the framing story and relates how the Devī appears to Suratha and Samādhi after three years of austerities. To each, she grants his
fondest wish. Sādhi, who has grown wise and dispassionate toward the world, receives eternal liberation. The virtuous Suratha, who remains duty-bound, regains his earthly kingdom and receives the promise of rebirth as the manu named Sāvarṇī, who will rule over a future cosmic age (manvantara).

The Limbs of the Devīmāhātmya
In the centuries following the Devīmāhātmya’s composition, three dhyānas ("meditations") were incorporated into the text before Chapters 1, 2 and 5 to signal the beginning of each carita. These brief meditations describe the three cosmic aspects of Śakti—the tamasic Mahākālī, the rajasic Mahālakṣmī, and the sattvic Mahāsarvasvati. The dhyānas are thought to be a Tantric addition because of their carefully defined imagery, which facilitates the practice of visualized meditation.46

Exactly when they were added is uncertain, but literary evidence points to the period before the ninth or, at the latest, before the 12th century.47

Around the 14th century a set of ancillary texts, the six aṅgas ("limbs"), gravitated toward the Devīmāhātmya.49 The first three—the Devyāḥ Kavacam, Argalāstotra, and Kīlakastotra—are preparatory ritual texts, always chanted before the formal recitation of the Devīmāhātmya. The remaining three—the Prādhānika Rahasya, Vaikṛtika Rahasya, and Mūrtirahasya—deal with philosophy and formal worship (pujā) and are optionally recited afterward.

Directly before and after the Devīmāhātmya itself, two ancient hymns are customarily chanted as a kind of auditory jewel box, symbolically to enclose it and separate it from the angas. The Vedic Rātrisūkta ("Hymn to Night," RV 10.127) praises the starry night as the beautiful goddess Rātrī, who brings rest to all creatures; at the same time it asks for protection from predators that lurk in the darkness. The Vedic Devīsūkta ("Hymn of the Goddess," RV 10.125) is the Devī’s own unequivocal revelation of herself as the Divine Mother and transcendent reality.

Since Tantra recognizes the word (vāk) as an actual manifestation of Śakti, it sees a correlation between the physical universe of form and the divine, formless reality. According to this view, the verses of the Devīmāhātmya are not mere poetry (śloka) but the actual embodiment of the divine presence (mantra), a power so great that Śiva himself is said to have restrained it “as if with a bolt” to prevent its intentional or unwitting misuse. Accordingly, the Devīmāhātmya is recited publicly in temples and also privately in homes, often by a paid professional, since proper recitation must be preceded by careful ritual preparation in order to gain access to that power, which then may be directed either to temporal or spiritual goals.

With the Devyāḥ Kavacam ("The Devī’s Armor"), the reciter dons divine protection. The verses invoke the individual śaktis who inhabit various parts of the body, and the prayer insures the Devī’s indwelling, protective presence. The Argalāstotra ("Hymn of the Bolt") is another series of invocations; all but three of its verses have the form of a dhāraṇī, a Tantric mantra that first praises a deity and then appeals for assistance. In this case, the appeal is an unchanging refrain that requests contact with the indwelling divinity, the assurance of victory, glory, and the destruction of hostile forces. The Kīlakastotra ("Hymn of the Pin") is the pivot on which access to the Devīmāhātmya’s limitless power hinges. Its language is deliberately obscure, lest its knowledge fall into the wrong hands, and its hidden key to the Devīmāhātmya’s power is the reciter’s attitude of complete surrender and selfless dedication to the Divine Mother.
If the function of the first three aṅgas is to assure the reciter’s safe access to immense power, the purpose of the remaining three is to instruct in philosophy and ritual worship. The Rahasyas (“secrets”) form a continuation of King Suratha’s dialogue with Medhas and relate to Śakti’s manifestations. Together, the three Rahasyas have been called the “earliest systematic statement of Śaṅkta philosophy.”

The Prādhānīka Rahasya (“The Secret Relating to Primary Matter”) relates to the cosmogonic Devī of the first carita. Reaffirming the nondualism of the Upaniṣads and proclaiming the uncompromising unity of ultimate reality and its manifestation, the Prādhānīka Rahasya considers how formless, singular consciousness assumes the forms of the ever-changing plural universe. The Vaikṛtika Rahasya (“The Secret Relating to Transformation”) explains that the supreme Devī’s manifestation is a modification (vikṛti) from formless transcendence to perceptible form. The Mūrtirahasya (“The Secret Relating to Forms”) elaborates on her incarnations as foretold in Chapter 11 of the Devīmāhātmya, describing their iconography and specifying the benefits of worshiping them. The final anga reaffirms the Devī’s maternal beneficence and salvific power, often conjuring up telluric and agricultural images connected to the ancient Earth Goddess.

About the Commentary
In the classical Indian sense, a commentary seeks to enlighten by arguing the fine points of a text from a particular philosophical position. Such commentaries are intended for people already well-versed in Hindu religion and philosophy.

Mine is not a commentary in that sense. Instead, it is meant for readers who may have little or no previous knowledge of Indian culture or Hindu thought. It draws broadly on diverse sources of information—religious, philosophical, scientific, or historical—that help to reveal the Devīmāhātmya’s deeper levels of meaning. In the traditional manner it refers to the external authority of scriptures that would have been known to the author(s) of the Devīmāhātmya, particularly the Upaniṣads and Vedic hymns. But, departing from tradition, its approach relies heavily on the Devīmāhātmya’s own internal evidence, revealed through analyzing the text and its structure as well as the derivations of key Sanskrit words. Despite the differences of method, this commentary arrives at conclusions completely in accord with the Śaṅkta philosophy underlying the text. Its purpose is to promote a deeper understanding, not a novel one.

On one level, the Devīmāhātmya is an allegory of the spiritual journey; on another it is a blueprint of the soul. Much of the commentary is written in simple language, aimed at explaining the practical application of the Devīmāhātmya’s teachings. Other portions, dealing with matters that may at first seem purely theoretical, but which are essential to a fuller understanding of the Devīmāhātmya’s profound teaching, are unavoidably more technical. Some of the most difficult passages occur at the very beginning of the commentary in connection with the meditation on Mahākāli and the opening mantra invoking the Divine Mother as Caṇḍikā. After that, the commentary becomes much less daunting.

Making no claim to be a definitive interpretation, the commentary is only a guide to what can become a voyage of discovery. The Devīmāhātmya is no ordinary book. It can serve us equally in times of personal difficulty and decision, in moments when we look in rapt wonder at the beauty around us, or in those indescribable moments when the profound quiet of holiness reveals its presence. The deepest meanings of this great poem make themselves known only through direct
experience, and such immediacy can only come from within.

The Devīmāhātmya Today
In present-day Bengal, the autumn Navarātri is one of the most widely-celebrated religious festivals. Occurring in September or October, it coincides with the harvest season and carries associations of agricultural fertility. The central deity worshiped is Durgā as Mahiṣāsuramardini, the ten-armed goddess of golden complexion. Specially created for the occasion, the crowned, bejeweled, and garlanded image of the buffalo demon’s slayer stands triumphant upon her lion while Mahiṣa lies below, emerging from his decapitated buffalo’s body and regarding her with awestruck wonder.

While an air of festivity reigns amid the rhythms of pūjā, devotional singing, and the recitation of sacred texts, Navarātri is at heart a time for inner purification. For the first three days, devotees invoke Durgā—the warrior-Mother’s destructive and protective aspect—to destroy the asuras within, the acknowledged personal shortcomings of fear, passion, selfishness, and anger. For the next three days, they worship her as the beneficent Laksṇī and ask for sufficient prosperity along with the positive virtues of courage, tranquility, generosity, kindness, devotion, and the desire for liberation. During the following three days, they appeal to Sarasvatī for spiritual knowledge. The festival culminates on the tenth day, called Dasārā or Vijayā Daśamī. This day, sacred also to Vaiṣṇavas as a celebration of Rāma’s victory over the demon-king Rāvaṇa—with help from the Devī—is for Śāktas an occasion for joyous feasting. Spiritually, it commemorates the great and total victory, the realization that the individual soul is one with the Divine.

Sixteen centuries after its composition, the Devīmāhātmya still shines as a beacon from a primordial age when men and women, enchanted by nature’s beauty and abundance, yet terrified by its fierce, destructive power, honored the source of creation as the Great Mother. It enshrines many an ancient memory in the resounding cadences of its verses and continues to sing her glory. At the same time as the last open expressions of Goddess-centered religion were vanishing from the Western world, the Devīmāhātmya took shape on the more tolerant soil of India, where the religion of the Divine Mother flourished and continues to flourish. Even today, the great hymn of praise that is the Devīmāhātmya reveals to us an all-embracing vision of harmony between the Mahādevi’s abiding earthly presence and the transcendental unity proclaimed by Hinduism’s seers.
Besides filli ritual chanting of the Devīmāhātmya in temples or on special occasions, less elaborate methods of recitation may be practiced on a daily basis. One of these is to recite the Devīmāhātmya continuously in a seven-day cycle: Chapter 1 on the first day; Chapters 2 and 3 on the second day; then successively Chapter 4; Chapters 5 through 8; Chapters 9 and 10; Chapter 11; and Chapters 12 and 13.  

Another method is to recite the text in a highly condensed form, known as the Śrī Durgāsaptaślokāstotra (“Song of Seven Verses to Śrī Durgā”), or simply as the Saptaślokī Durgā. This consists of those mantras in which the Devī’s power is most concentrated: 1.55, 4.17, 11.10, 11.12, 11.24, 11.29 and 11.39. In a preface to the Saptaślokī Durgā, Śiva praises the Devī’s accessibility and asks the means for accomplishing what is desired. Lovingly, the Devī reveals this song of praise, which she calls the Ambāstuti (“Hymn to the Mother”), saying it is the highest path to spiritual attainment:

>jñāninām api cetāmsi devī bhagavati hi sā
balād ākṛṣyāya mohāya mahāmāyā prayacchati

1. She, the blessed goddess Mahāmāyā, seizes the minds of even the wise and draws them into delusion.

durē smṛtā harasi bhītim aśeṣajantoḥ
svasthaih smṛtā matim atīva śubhāṁ dadāsi
dāridryaduhkhabhayahārini kā tvad anyā
sarvopakārakaraṇāya sadārdracittā

2. Remembered in distress, you remove fear from every creature. Remembered by the untroubled, you confer even greater serenity of mind. Dispeller of poverty, suffering and fear, who other than you is ever intent on benevolence toward all?
3. Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇi, who are the good of all good, the auspicious one; to you who accomplish every intent; to you, the refuge, the all-knowing, shining Gaurī!

4. Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇi, who are intent on rescuing the distressed and afflicted that take refuge in you; to you, O Devī, who remove the suffering of all.

5. O Devī, who exist in the form of all, who are the ruler of all, possessing all power, protect us from fears. O Devī Durgā, salutation be to you!

6. When pleased you destroy all afflictions, but when displeased you thwart all aspirations. No calamity befalls those who have taken refuge in you, and they who resort to you become a refuge to others.
र्नाथाप्रस्मश्नं त्रेतोक्षयस्याखिलेश्वरिः
एवभेक्त्या कार्यमर्द्दश्रिविनाशनम् ॥ ७ ॥

\textit{Sarvābādhāpraśamanam trailokyasyākhileśvari evam eva tvayā kāryam asmadvairivināśanam}

7. O ruler of all, may you allay all the miseries of the three worlds and so, too, annihilate our enemies.
PART II

THE DEVĪMĀHĀṬMYA TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY
OM. I revere Mahākālī, who holds in her hands the sword, discus, mace, arrow, bow, iron club, spear, sling, human head, and conch; who is three-eyed, adorned on all her limbs, and sparkling like a sapphire; who has ten faces and ten feet; and whom Brahmā extolled while Viṣṇu slept, in order to slay Madhu and Kaiṭabha.
The Slaying of Madhu and Kaiṭabha

OM. Salutation to Caṇḍikā.

1.1 OM aiṁ. Mārkaṇḍeya said:

1.2 Sāvarṇi, who is Sūrya’s son, is called the eighth manu. Listen while I relate the story of his birth

1.3 and of how, by Mahāmāyā’s authority, he—the illustrious son of the sun god—came to be the lord of an age.

1.4 Long ago in the age of the manu Svaroṣība, there arose from the line of Caitra a king named Suratha, who ruled over the whole earth.

1.5 He looked after his subjects justly, as if they were his own children. But there were princes at that time who attacked the native hill tribes and became his enemies.

1.6 Though mightily armed and resolved to fight against them, he suffered defeat in battle, despite his enemies’ inferior forces.

1.7 And so, with only his native province left to rule, he returned to his own city. There, powerful adversaries set upon him, the illustrious Suratha,

1.8 now bereft of strength. His ministers, mighty, corrupted, and disposed to evil, seized power and plundered the treasury, even there in his own city.

1.9 Thus robbed of his dominion, the king mounted his horse on the pretext of hunting and rode off alone into the dense forest.

1.10 He came upon the hermitage of Medhas, chief among the twice-born, and beheld a forest retreat, graced by the sage’s disciples. There he saw beasts once wild now peacefully abiding.

1.11 Welcomed by the sage, he remained at the hermitage for some time, wandering here and there about the enclosure.
In that setting, self-centered concerns came to seize his mind, and he reflected:

I have left behind the capital that my ancestors governed before me. Are my perverse officials overseeing it justly or not?

My prized elephant, valiant and of unceasing prowess, has fallen into the hands of my enemies. I know not what comforts he’ll now enjoy.

Those retainers of mine, constantly eager for favor, wealth, and feasting, now surely submit to other lords.

Their habitual squandering will soon deplete the wealth I so laboriously amassed.

While pondering those and other questions, the king caught sight of a lone merchant approaching the sage’s hermitage.

“Who are you,” he asked, “and what brings you here? Why do you look so sorrowful and dejected?”

Hearing the king speak in friendship, the merchant bowed respectfully and replied.

The merchant said:

“I am a merchant named Samādhi, born in a wealthy family. My wife and children grew wicked through avarice and cast me out.

Destitute of riches, wife, and children, my wealth taken from me, I have arrived in the forest, distressed and forsaken by trusted kinsmen.

Being here, I know not whether good fortune or ill has befallen my children, wife, and family.

At present is well-being or misfortune theirs at home?

How are my children? Is their behavior virtuous or vile?”

The king said:

“Those greedy sons, wife, and others who dispossessed you of your wealth—why does your mind still cherish them?”

The merchant said:
“Even as you say it, this very thought occurs to me. But what can I do? My heart is not inclined to rancor but still turns with affection to those who drove me away, scorning love for father, husband, and kinsman, out of lust for wealth.

I recognize this, O wise one. Still, I do not understand how my thoughts are drawn in love to my unworthy kinsfolk.

Because of them I sigh, overcome with despair.

What can I do, since the pain has failed to harden my heart?”

Mārkaṇḍeya said:

Then together they approached the sage, that merchant named Samādhī and Suratha, the best of kings.

Having observed the respect that was the sage’s due, the merchant and the king sat down to tell their stories.

The king said:

“Revered sir, I wish to ask you one thing. Please reply.

Without control of my thoughts, my mind is coming to grief.

I remain possessive toward my lost kingdom and all parts of the realm as if unaware that they are no longer mine. Venerable sage, how can this be?

And this fellow has been humiliated by his children and wife, deserted by his servants, and forsaken by his own people. Still he feels exceeding affection for them.

It is the same with me. We both are distressed to the utmost, held by attachment to things, even though we see their faults.

Venerable sir, how is it that we who should know better can be so deluded? Ours is the perplexity of those who are blind to right understanding.”

The seer said:

“Illustrious king, through the perceptions of the senses, every living being has knowledge of the manifest universe. The objects of sense-perception reveal themselves
Some creatures are blind by day, and others are blind by night. Some creatures see equally by day and night.

Truly, humans are endowed with the power of perception, but they are not alone, for cattle, birds, wild animals, and all other living creatures also perceive.

That awareness which humans have, birds and beasts possess also; and their awareness, humans have, too. In other ways also the two are similar.

Look at these birds. Though feeling the pangs of hunger, out of delusion they still busy themselves by dropping food into the beaks of their young.

Illustrious sir, humans long for offspring, surely expecting gratitude in return. Do you not see this?

In this very manner they are hurled into the whirlpool of attachment, the pit of delusion, by the power of Mahāmāyā, who produces the continuing cycle of this transitory world.

Do not be astonished. This same Mahāmāyā is Yoganidrā, the meditative sleep of Viṣṇu, the lord of the world. By her this world is deluded.

She, the blessed goddess Mahāmāyā, seizes the minds of even the wise and draws them into delusion.

She creates all this universe, moving and unmoving, and it is she who graciously bestows liberation on humanity.

She is the supreme knowledge and the eternal cause of liberation,

even as she is the cause of bondage to this transitory existence. She is the sovereign of all lords.”

The king said:

“Revered sir, who is that goddess whom you call Mahāmāyā? How did she originate, and in what ways does she act?

And whatever her glory, this goddess, whatever her form and origin,

all that I wish to learn from you, who are supreme among the knowers of Brahman.”

The seer said:
“She is eternal, having the world as her form. She pervades all this.

Yet she emerges in various ways. Hear it from me.

Although she is eternal, when she manifests to accomplish the purpose of the gods, she is said to be born in the world.

At the end of the cosmic day, when the universe dissolved into the primordial ocean, the blessed lord Viṣṇu stretched out on the serpent Śeṣa and entered into meditative sleep.

Then two fearsome asuras, the notorious Madhu and Kaiṭabha, issued forth from the wax in Viṣṇu’s ears, intent on slaying Brahmā,

who was seated on the lotus that grew from Viṣṇu’s navel. When he saw the raging asuras and the sleeping Viṣṇu,

Brahmā could think of nothing but to awaken him, and to that end he extolled Yoganidrā, who had settled over Viṣṇu’s eyes

as his blessed sleep. The resplendent lord Brahmā extolled her who rules the universe, who sustains and dissolves it. He extolled her who is incomparable.

Brahmā said:

‘You are the mantras of consecration to the gods and the ancestors. At your bidding they are uttered, and they are your very embodiment. You are the nectar of immortality, O imperishable, eternal one. Truly, you abide as the transcendent being,

yet in every moment you abide, inseparable and inexpressible, as the eternal source of all becoming. Indeed you are that. You are Sāvitrī, the source of all purity and protection; you are the supreme mother of the gods.

By you is this universe supported, of you is this world born, by you is it protected, O Devī, and you always consume it at the end.

You are the creative force at the world’s birth and its sustenance for as long as it endures. So even at the end of this world, you appear as its dissolution, you who encompass it all.

You are the great knowledge and the great illusion, the great intelligence, the great memory and the great delusion, the great goddess and the great demoness.
You are primordial matter, differentiating into the threefold qualities of everything. You are the dark night of periodic dissolution, the great night of final dissolution, and the terrifying night of delusion.

You are radiant splendor; you reign supreme yet are unassuming; you are the light of understanding. Modesty are you, and prosperity, contentment, tranquillity and forbearance.

Armed with sword and spear, and with club and discus, waging war with conch, bow and arrows, sling and iron mace, you inspire dread.

Yet, you are pleasing, more pleasing than all else that is pleasing, and exceedingly beautiful. Transcending both highest and lowest, you are indeed the supreme sovereign.

Whatever exists, true or untrue, and wherever it may be, O soul of everything, you are the power of all that. How can I praise you?

By you, even he who creates, protects, and devours the world is subdued with sleep. Who here can praise you?

You have caused even Viṣṇu, Śiva, and me to assume our embodied forms. Who then can truly praise you?

Thus extolled, O Devī, may you with your exalted powers confound those unassailable asuras, Madhu and Kaiṭabha.

Let Viṣṇu, the lord of the world, be quickly awakened from his slumber and be roused to slay the two great asuras.”

The seer said:

“Praised thus by the creator to rouse Viṣṇu into slaying Madhu and Kaiṭabha, then and there the dark goddess emerged from his eyes, mouth, nostrils, arms, heart, and chest, and appeared before Brahmā, who is born from the unmanifest.

And released by her, Viṣṇu, the lord of the world, arose from his serpent couch on the undifferentiated ocean and beheld the evil-natured Madhu and Kaiṭabha, exceedingly strong and courageous, seeing red with anger and determined to devour Brahmā.
Then the blessed, all-pervading Viśṇu rose up and fought with them in hand-to-hand combat for five thousand years.

And they, mad with the arrogance of power and confounded by Mahāmāyā, exclaimed to him, ‘Ask a boon from us!’

The blessed lord Viśṇu said:

‘Since you are pleased with me, so be it. I will surely slay both of you now. What other boon is there to ask?’

The seer said:

“Thus deceived, and beholding that the world consisted entirely of water, they addressed the lotus-eyed Viśṇu, saying:

‘Slay us where water does not flood the earth.’”

The seer said:

“‘So be it,’ said Viśṇu, the wielder of conch, discus, and mace. Taking the two of them onto his lap, he cut off their heads with his discus.

Thus did the Devī herself appear when praised by Brahmā. Hear still more of her glory, which I will tell you.”
Meditation on Mahākālī: This brief meditation (dhyāna) invites us immediately to plunge into one of the most profound of all mysteries, the age-old question of how the universe came into being. The Hindu idea of creation differs from the naïve conception, popular in the West, that God called forth the world out of nothingness. To the Hindu mind, this idea of *creatio ex nihilo*—that something can come out of nothing—is illogical and absurd. Instead, according to the worldview of the Devīmāhātmya, the question to be posed is this: How does the One, which is eternal being-in-itself, manifest as the many? The question becomes an inquiry into the nature of the creative process itself, and the inquiry reveals that the creation of the universe is in fact a transition from potentiality into actuality. This truth is inherent even in the Sanskrit word for creation: *sṛṣṭi* literally means “emission” or “letting loose” from a latent to a manifest state.

Each of the Devīmāhātmya’s three sections begins with a meditation on one of the supreme Devī’s three primary forms. These forms—Mahākālī, Mahālakṣmī and Mahāsarasvatī—are not to be confused with her aspects as Kālī, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī, goddesses of popular devotion who belong to a more immediate level of human experience. Instead, each is an immensely more powerful, cosmic aspect (*vyāṣṭi*) of the Devī. The *vyāṣṭi*s are the universal energies of inertia, dynamism, and luminosity—the three guṇas, known in Sanskrit as tamas, rajas, and sattva. In the phenomenal universe, they underlie all the subsequent activities of creation, sustenance, and dissolution.

At this early stage of differentiation, the pure guṇas are still unmanifest (*avyākṛtā*) as causal energies. Though indescribable, they are conceived of as the four-armed forms of Mahākālī, Mahālakṣmī and Mahāsarasvatī. Through subsequent modification (*vikṛt̐ti*), these in turn become manifest forms with the same names. It is these that are described in the dhyānas as the ten-armed Mahākālī, the eighteen-armed Mahālakṣmī and the eight-armed Mahāsarasvatī. This imagery is intended to facilitate the Tantric technique of visualized meditation.

A physical image such as a sculpture or painting or a mental image visualized in meditation allows us to approach the Infinite through finite symbols and to interact with divinity. Such symbols correspond to psychological or spiritual truths, and every gesture, posture, color, or object associated with a deity stands for a particular attribute or power. A few symbols have universal significance, but others are esoteric, with meanings not readily obvious or easily understood. Not all symbols are invariable in meaning, and even the interpretations found in ancient sources such as the Purāṇas may differ among themselves. Later explanations of some symbols grow increasingly divergent, but even modern reinterpretations can convey valid new insights.

Mahākālī, the Devī’s tamasic aspect who presides over the first carita, has ten hands that symbolize the ten directions (the four cardinal points, the intermediate points, and the points above and below) and convey the idea of divine omnipresence. Her sword represents the knowledge that destroys ignorance by severing what is apparent and transitory from what is real and abiding. The discus is the constantly turning wheel of time, which inexorably destroys all that has name and form. According to the Varāhapurāṇa, the mace destroys unrighteousness (adharma). The Viṣṇupurāṇa interprets the bow as the tamasic aspect of ego and the arrows as the sensory and motor organs. Restraint or self-control is the general idea behind the iron bar. In the Devīmāhātmya’s battle
narratives, the Divine Mother’s spear is a metaphor for the penetrating insight of spiritual awareness. The severed human head represents the vanquished ego and thus the triumph over the limitation of personality that obscures the infinite Self (ātman). The conch destroys ignorance; its auspicious sound symbolizes the power of awakening to divine awareness. Mahākāl’s three eyes, witnessing past, present and future, symbolize omniscience. Her blue-black complexion, more than a mere reminder of her obscuring tamasic power, resembles the vast night sky and speaks of her infinitude.

Invocation: The mantra Oṃ namaścaṇḍikāyai (“Oṃ. Salutation to Caṇḍikā”) invokes the Devī in her supreme, samaṣṭi form. Unknown in the Vedas, the name Caṇḍikā first appears in the Devīmāhātmya. Occurring there 29 times, it is second in frequency only to the term Devī itself. Thus we see that the name is both of non-Vedic origin and of great importance.

Caṇḍikā means “the violent and impetuous one,” whose anger and fierce passion, according to the commentator Bhāskararāya, inspire awe. Nevertheless, this literal meaning should not limit our understanding of Caṇḍikā as only a fierce, horrific goddess. She is the ineffable Devī, whose many and varied manifestations in the course of the mythological narratives will reveal also a benign side that is maternal, protective, physically beautiful, and salvific.

Moreover, the Guptavatī, Bhāskararāya’s great commentary on the Devīmāhātmya, boldly asserts that “Caṇḍī[ka] is the highest Brahman,” the supreme nondual reality. She is sarvavit, the pure, unitary consciousness that projects the three vyaṣṭīs in the process of cosmic manifestation. In the language of the Śāktas, these energies are called, respectively, Mahākāli, Mahāsarasvatī and Mahālakṣmī. This threefold differentiation, Bhāskararāya notes, is described in the Svetaśvātaropaniṣad (SU 6.8) as Brahman’s icchā (“will”), jñāna (“knowledge”), and kriyā (“action”)— the divine will to create, the knowledge for doing so, and the action that carries out the intent. For Bhāskararāya, power (śakti) and the possessor of power (Śaktiman) are one and the same, and the vyaṣṭīs are non-different from the Devī’s ultimate unity. Accordingly, the name Caṇḍikā represents both the formless Absolute in itself (Ādyā Śakti, or nirguṇa Brahman in Vedantic terms) and that same reality in association with its inseparable, threefold power (the Devī’s samaṣṭi form, or saguṇa Brahman). It is important to remember that this so-called aggregate (samaṣṭi) form, which is triguṇa (“consisting of the three guṇas”), is not the result of the combined energies of the vyaṣṭīs; it is instead their source.

The Prādhānika Rahasya, which is part of the earliest commentary on the Devīmāhātmya, describes the supreme Devī as laksyālakṣyasvarūpā (“with and without distinguishing characteristics”) (PR 4). In essence, divine reality is both definable and indefinable—at once immanent and transcendent. In the 18th century this paradox was voiced by the Bengali poet Kamalākānta in the epithet Śunyasyākāra (“the form of the formless”). Such utterances reflect the true sense of the mantra Oṃ namaścaṇḍikāyai: “Salutation to the absolute consciousness that manifests as the created universe.”

1.1: Oṃ and aiṃ are not words in the ordinary sense but bījas (“seeds”). A bīja is the essential sound of a primary cause or principle from which something is produced. As a syllable of concentrated power with its own distinct vibration, a bīja is the essential component of any mantra. Oṃ, the first and greatest of all mantras, is the mahābīja (“great seed”) that represents the absolute
Brahman. It is the source of all other bijas. Aiṁ, the bija of Mahāsarasvatī, proclaims that the Divine Mother’s nature is pure consciousness.

In the opening scene of the Devimāhātmya, the sage Mārkaṇḍeya relates to his disciple Krauṣṭuki Bhāguri the history of the world throughout its cosmic cycles. The setting is the present, or seventh age, and to explain what will come to pass in the eighth, Mārkaṇḍeya recounts the story of a king, a merchant, and a seer who lived long before, during the second age. From verse 1.46 onward, Medhas, the seer of Mārkaṇḍeya’s tale, becomes the narrator and relates the Devimāhātmya’s three myths concerning the Divine Mother’s activities. Mārkaṇḍeya returns as narrator in verse 13.6 to bring the Devimāhātmya to its conclusion.

1.2–3: The purpose of Mārkaṇḍeya’s story is to relate how Sāvarṇi will become the ruler of the eighth cosmic age through the authority of the Devī, here called Mahāmāyā. In Purāṇic cosmology, a period of cosmic manifestation, called a day of Brahmā, lasts 4,320,000,000 human years. This scheme need not be taken literally but does indicate the ancient Indian awareness of the vastness of time. A day of Brahmā is divided into fourteen ages (manvantaras), each with its own mythical progenitor and sovereign (manu). Although Sāvarṇi, the future manu, is described as the “son of the sun god” (→ 13.22),* he lived in the second manvantara as a mortal king named Suratha.

1.4–34: One of the functions of the Purāṇas is to chronicle the history of the ruling Āryan dynasties. Verses 1.4–16 present a brief account of Suratha’s reign and establish his character as just and virtuous. Verses 1.17–25 introduce the merchant Samādhi and identify him also as a good and righteous man. Having suffered betrayal and loss, each of them seeks refuge in a holy man’s forest retreat (āśrama). In the tranquil setting, Suratha continues to suffer mental and emotional turmoil over recurring thoughts of his lost kingdom. Samādhi, in his despair, fails to understand his own lingering feelings of love toward the family that betrayed him.

1.35–38: When the king, the merchant, and the seer meet, we recognize that they represent the three higher castes of Indian society. Medhas, a brāhmaṇa, belongs to the priestly class; Suratha, a ksatriya, to the class of kings and warriors; Samādhi, a vaiśya, to the class engaged in trade or agriculture. In the traditional fourfold caste system, these three upper classes are called “twice-born,” because their privileged access to the Vedas signifies an initiatory second birth. Such a privilege is not shared by the śudra, a member of the fourth, or servile, caste.

Additionally, the names Medhas, Suratha, and Samādhi identify Mārkaṇḍeya’s characters as archetypal. The word medhas means “insight”; suratha means “he whose chariot is good”—a metaphor for the king’s unimpeachable conduct; samādhi signifies union with the Divine—a fitting name for the merchant, who is poised to disentangle himself from worldly attachment.

1.39–45: The king’s appeal to Medhas marks the first step of the spiritual journey that he and Samādhi are about to begin. Suratha confesses that feelings of possessiveness toward his lost kingdom torment him unceasingly and that the merchant’s loving concern for the family that robbed and humiliated him persists. How can the two of them, who should know better, react so illogically? When the king declares, “Ours is the perplexity of those who are blind to right understanding,” he
assumes that he and Samādhī are possessed of superior knowledge, although vulnerable to the same pitfalls as those who are less wise. Medhas’s task will be to show the king and the merchant how very wrong they are.

1.46–50: In order to distinguish between ordinary knowledge as the king understands it and higher, spiritual knowledge, Medhas begins with the example of senseperception, or knowledge in its most concrete form. He points out that animals and humans alike have sensory awareness, although the faculties of perception differ according to genus and species. Despite those differences, both human awareness and nonhuman awareness are expressions of the same underlying consciousness.

1.51–52: In the more complex area of behavior, Medhas points out that birds ignore their own hunger for the sake of their young; but humans, hoping for future reward, harbor ulterior motives in begetting children. It is not that birds are altruistic and people are scheming. Birds act out of instinct, but humans possess the additional faculties of reason and will. What Medhas means to demonstrate is that even those forms of awareness that relate to behavior belong to the category of lower knowledge and are subject to the delusion (moha) inherent in the world.

1.53: If even the basic acts of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching do not reveal an objective world as it really is but only our flawed experience of it, how much more fraught with confusion the world becomes when experienced through the additional filters of reason, emotion, memory, and will! Given imperfect data, our reason may easily draw the wrong conclusion, or it may take more than one path to different ends. Emotion colors everything. Memory is selective at best and rarely impartial. Will all too often arises from an ego motivated by self-interest, desire, or expectation. Since all knowledge as we understand it is thus relative and imperfect, we are, indeed, subject to delusion.

The cause of this delusion, says Medhas, is the goddess Mahāmāyā. That name, which occurs only in the first carita, can mean either that the Devī possesses great māya or that she herself is the great māya. Either way, māya is the power that produces the cyclical flow (saṁsāra) of this ever-changing world. It is the power of self-concealment that imposes the interwoven limitations of time and space upon the infinite, absolute consciousness. And it is the power that projects the sense of personal identity, the ego, that beclouds the underlying unity of reality.

1.54: Medhas also refers to Mahāmāyā as Yoganidrā, another name of the Devī that occurs only in the first carita. Its meaning will soon become evident.

1.55–58: When Medhas says that not even the wise escape Mahāmāyā’s deluding power, he is simply stating that nothing in this world is as it seems to be. Time and space distort our perceptions, and we know the universe not as it is but only as we individually experience it. For example, from our vantage point the moon appears to be much larger than the stars, but that is an illusion created by its proximity to the earth. The stars only appear tiny in comparison because they are so distant. Moreover, the starlight we see twinkling in tonight’s sky has traveled through vast reaches of space over vast stretches of time, and the stars that emitted it may have ceased to exist millions of years ago. Medhas refers to this deluding goddess as “blessed” and reassures that Mahāmāyā has two aspects.
As avidyāmāyā she is the veiling power that binds through the limiting sense of individuality, and as avidyāmāyā she is the liberating knowledge that breaks asunder every bond.

Finally, this passage marks the first appearance of two additional themes that will recur throughout the text: that of divine grace and that of the Devī’s supremacy over all the male gods.

1.59–64: Two words in Medhas’ statement, “She is eternal, having the world as her form. She pervades all this” (1.64), are particularly revealing. The adjective nitya (“eternal”) originally meant “found inside of” or “innate.” During the Rgvedic era, its usage expanded to connote “one’s own, constant, permanent.” By the time of classical Sanskrit, nitya had acquired the meaning of “eternal,” colored by the idea that eternity implies an interior, intrinsic and unchanging quality that is readily equated with the nondual Absolute.

The word jagat (“world”), from a verbal root meaning “to go,” portrays the world as a realm of motion, life, and activity. Previously, verse 1.56 described the natural world with the poetic expression carācaram (“moving and unmoving”). To understand this imagery in terms of “animate and inanimate” would be to miss the point entirely. Those English terms, derived from the Latin anima, with its multiple connotations of air, breath, life, mind, and soul, imply a distinction between sentient beings and dead matter.

To the contrary, the Śākta worldview understands all material forms, “moving and unmoving,” as emanating from divinity. Whether brilliantly shining like the sun, in constant motion like the wings of a hummingbird, or seemingly inert like an outcropping of granite, everything is pervaded by consciousness. When Medhas utters the words nitya and jagat in the same breath, he is saying in effect that the Devī is both the immutable ground of existence and the dynamic universe it supports.

1.65–66: The Devī manifests as the universe and pervades everything. “Yet she emerges in various ways,” Medhas continues. Beyond taking form as the varied natural forces and objects of the material world, she manifests as personified goddesses, some of whom we shall meet in later chapters. She does so “to accomplish the purpose of the gods,” whose function is to defend the cosmic order against the chaos wrought by demonic forces. But the Devī is in no way subservient to the gods; for whenever they fail, she herself, who is immeasurably more powerful, must intervene. She who manifests as this world (1.64) enters into this world (1.66). The universe becomes her sphere of activity, and that activity (carita) is the subject of the three tales Medhas now begins to relate.

1.67–71: According to Purānic cosmology, at the end of a kalpa or day of Brahmā, the manifest universe dissolves back into the causal, or potential, state. The traditional Vaiṣṇava symbolism for such an interim period represents the supreme god, Viṣṇu, in meditative sleep (yoganidrā), stretched out on the thousand-headed serpent Śeṣa, who floats on the undifferentiated ocean of potentiality.

Predating the Devīmāhātmya, an earlier and more elaborate account of the Madhu and Kaiṭabha myth, found in the Mahābhārata (MBh 3.194), extols Viṣṇu’s blazing splendor and might and characterizes him as the eternal One, source of all and creator of the world. The lotus growing from his navel is as radiant as the sun. Brahmā himself, intimidated by the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha, awakens the sleeping Viṣṇu, unaided, by shaking the lotus stalk.

This and other early Vaiṣṇava versions of the myth found in the epic literature make no mention of the Devī. In the Devīmāhātmya’s retelling, only a trace of the original Vaiṣṇava outlook remains in
verse 1.67, where Viṣṇu enters into yoganidrā presumably of his own volition. But note the change of emphasis three verses later. He is now in the power of the Devī, who as the goddess Yoganidrā has taken the active role of settling over his eyes. Viṣṇu is no longer omnipotent; instead it is the Devī who controls the universe in both its manifest and unmanifest states. Also, Brahmā’s shaking of the lotus stalk is no longer the cause of Viṣṇu’s awakening; instead, to release the sleeping god from Yoganidrā’s spell, Brahmā must praise “her who rules the universe, who sustains and dissolves it... who is incomparable” (1.71).

As for the demons, Hindu mythology recognizes various classes of malevolent beings. The terms asura, daitya, and dānava are often applied interchangeably to demons of the first order, whose shared characteristic is a perpetual, implacable hostility to the gods. These terms themselves shed light on the Hindu understanding of evil. In the Ṛgveda asura originally denoted a god, and its probable derivative, sura, also signified a god or sometimes the sun. But in later usage asura came to mean “demon,” the dark half of the asura/sura pair. Similarly, the word dāitya forms the dark half of a pair. Aditi, one of the most ancient Indian goddesses, is the mother of the solar deities, the Ādityas. Her name signifies “boundlessness, freedom, inexhaustible abundance.” Her mirror-image is Diti, mother of the daityas, who represent the dark forces. The name of the dānavas, offspring of the demoness Danu, can conceivably be linked also to the word dāna (“cutting off, splitting, dividing”). From the lexical pairs sura/asura and āditya/daitya and from the semantic pair dāitya/dānava, it becomes clear that the Divine is associated with boundlessness, wholeness, freedom, and light, and that the demonic implies limitation, separation, bondage, and darkness.

1.72: The brief statement “Brahmā said” announces the Devīmāhātmya’s first hymn, the Brahmasūta (1.73–87). Building upon the themes of Medhas’s discourse and on the Madhu-Kaiṭabha myth, the hymn centers on the Devī’s cosmogonic aspect, first celebrating her absolute and all-transcending nature, then extolling her threefold powers of creation, preservation, and destruction, which account for the universe as we know it.

1.73–74: In trying to express the inexpressible truth of how the One manifests as the many, the Brahmasūta’s first two verses use technical terms from Vedic ritual and Sanskrit prosody as metaphors. The translator’s task in dealing with these extremely difficult verses is to preserve the immediacy and eloquence of the metaphors while conveying their broader meaning. Complicating the task are the Sanskrit terms themselves, which allow ample room for interpretation.

A literal translation would read:

You are Svāhā. You are Svadhā. You are surely the vaṣaṭkāra, having sound as your essence. / You are the nectar, O eternal and imperishable one. You abide as the essence of the triple mātrā.

You abide as the half mātrā, eternal, which cannot be uttered specifically. / You are indeed that; you are Sāvitrī; you are the supreme mother of the gods.

Unfortunately, such a translation makes little or no sense to most of us, unschooled as we are in the finer points of Vedic tradition.
In Vedic ritual, svāhā is the mantra of consecration intoned when an oblation to the gods is poured into the sacrificial fire; svadāhā is the mantra that accompanies an oblation to the spirits of departed ancestors. Both mantras are sometimes personified as consorts of Agni, the fire god who conveys the ritual offerings to the gods.

During the ritual the priest who recites the sacrificial hymns utters the word vaṣaṭ to signal another priest to pour the oblation into the fire. The exclamation, reified as Vaṣaṭkāra and personified as the deity Vaṣaṭkāra, is identified here with the Devī. In other words, it is truly through her agency that the sacrifice is carried out. In the broader scheme of things, she who is svarātmikā (“having sound as her essence”) is also the agent of creation, because the universe is potential energy made manifest through the vibration of sound, or sacred speech.

The idea that creation proceeds from sound (svara, śabda) is not unique to Hinduism. Judaism and Christianity hold similar views on creation through the agency of the Word. In the first chapter of Genesis, the phrase “And God said ...” signals in turn the creation of light, the heavens, the earth, and all living creatures. The Johannine Gospel proclaims the Word (Logos) as the creative force coeternal and consubstantial with God. Similarly, in the Ṛgvedic hymn known as the Devīsūktā (ṚV 10.125), the goddess Vāk (“Speech”) proclaims herself to be both the supreme reality and the source of all becoming. One of most important Vedic goddesses, Vāk is often characterized as the all-pervading cosmogonic principle.

The imagery now shifts from Vedic ritual to linguistic technicalities. In Sanskrit, a mātrā is a metrical unit representing the time required to pronounce a short vowel. Metaphorically the triple mātrā refers to OṂ, which consists of the three short vowels a-u-m. The vowel a resonates deep in the throat, and the vowel u carries the vibration forward, linking it to the mouth’s foremost position, where the closed lips articulate the sound m. OṂ thus encompasses the entire apparatus of vocal production and is considered symbolic of the beginning, middle, and end of all things. As the triple mātrā, the Devī is Brahmā’s power of creation, preservation, and destruction; and because that power (śakti) and its possessor (śaktiman) are indistinguishable, the Devī is proclaimed here the supreme, nondual reality.

The half-mātrā, written in the Devanāgarī script as the dot (bindu) that nasalizes the preceding vowel, is unprounceable by itself. Here it stands as a metaphor for the condensed state of power immediately before the actualization of the universe, the point of all possibility (bindu) from which the creation emanates. This elusive concept recently entered Western science when a refinement in Big Bang thinking, called the “cosmic inflation” theory, proposed that the entire universe popped out of a point with no content and no dimensions and instantaneously expanded to cosmic size in a miraculous event hinting at the agency of some higher force. Symbolizing the bindu, the source of all becoming, the half mātrā of Brahmā’s hymn represents the all-pervasiveness of the divine presence, which remains inseparable from all experience yet inexpressible in ordinary thought or language. Taken together the symbolism of the triple mātrā and the half mātrā makes the fundamental Śākta point that the Devī is both the Absolute and the relative, the supreme reality and the source of all becoming.

Known in mythology as the wife of the creator god Brahmā, the goddess Sāvitrī, or Gāyatrī, is the personification of the Ṛgveda’s most sacred verse, the Gāyatrī mantra: OṂ bhūr bhuvah suvahḥ tat savitur varenyaṁ bhargo devasya dhīmahi dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt (“May we meditate upon the splendor of the divinity, the supreme effulgence, and may That inspire our thoughts”) (ṚV 3.62.10).
She is the source of sacred knowledge, and this Gāyatrī mantra, her embodiment in sound, is considered the seed from which the Vedas sprang.

1.75–76: The creation, preservation, and dissolution of the universe are functions generally ascribed respectively to the gods Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. In keeping with the Śākta point of view, the Devīmahātmya claims that these powers belong to the Devī alone.

Periodically created, sustained, and dissolved, this world or universe is referred to here by two common Sanskrit words. Each tells us something about the nature of the universe. Jagat, already discussed (→ 1.59–64), derives from a verbal root meaning “to go” and reveals the world as the realm of motion, life, and activity. Viśva (“all”), possibly from a root meaning “to pervade,” carries the idea of inclusiveness and immensity, similar to the idea of wholeness and boundlessness evoked by the name of the Ṛgvedic goddess Aditi. Together jagat and viśva express the immense and ever-changing phenomenon of existence, played out against the immutable backdrop of pure being.

1.77: With sharp contrasts this verse characterizes the Devī as the supreme, liberating knowledge (mahāvidyā) of the changeless reality but also as the veiling power (mahāmāyā) that projects the world of our experience, as supreme insight (mahāmedhā) and unbroken continuity of memory (mahāsmṛti), but also as the deluding power (mahāmohā) that makes things appear as other than they truly are.

She is both the great goddess and the great demoness. The so-called Bombay recension of the text alters this startling phrase (mahādevī mahāsurī) to the less problematic mahādevī maheśvarī (“the great goddess, the great sovereign”), but that evades the essential point. By one interpretation, “the great demoness” implies that the Devī controls everything, negative as well as positive. After all, the text has established her as the supreme power of the universe. Still, the deeper, nondualistic understanding considers her the single source of all that is. We cannot dispute that both good and evil are present in the world, but we must understand that they exist only in a relative sense, because neither would be possible without the other to define it. As the source of both, the Devī encompasses —yet transcends—all duality.

1.78: The term usually translated as “primordial matter” or “nature” is prakṛti, a verbal noun that implies not inert, insentient matter but a dynamic process. Latent within the unmanifest prakṛti (mūlaprakṛti or māyāśakti) and existing in a state of perfect, nonactive equilibrium are the three basic energies or guṇas, called tamas, rajas, and sattva. When the Devī upsets their balance in the process of transformation from potentiality to actuality, there arises a bipolar tension in which tamas veils consciousness, sattva reveals it, and rajas becomes the force through which the one acts upon the other. Combining and recombining in patterns of ever-increasing complexity, the guṇas produce everything in the universe, from solid physical matter to fleeting human emotions.

Beyond saying that the Devī is “primordial matter, differentiating into the threefold qualities of everything,” this verse tells us nothing more about the creative process. The later Prādhānīka Rahasya and Vaikṛtika Rahasya offer two different, mythologically expressed scenarios of how the unmanifest becomes manifest. Both agree that the supreme Devī contains within herself the three guṇas, represented as the unmanifest four-armed Mahākālī, Mahālakṣmī, and Mahāsarasvatī.
According to the Vaikṛtika Rahasya, these three unmanifest (avyākṛta) vyaṣṭis then assume the manifest (vikṛti) forms of the ten-armed Māhākālī, the eighteen-armed Mahālakṣmī, and the eight-armed Mahāsarasvatī, described in the Devīmahātmya’s three dhyānas. Such imagery can only hint at the inscrutable cosmic process by which the One projects itself as the manifold universe. In truth, there is no partition in nature; all is continuous.

Because they are Vaiṣṇava Tantric texts, the Rahasyas refer to the Devī in her supreme aspect not as Caṇḍikā but as Mahālakṣmī. They regard the unmanifest Mahākālī (tamas) and the unmanifest Mahāsarasvatī (sattva) as proceeding from—not coequal with—the unmanifest Mahālakṣmī, who they contend contains the power of all three guṇas. This creates a confusion in nomenclature, because in the Vaiṣṇava context the name Mahālakṣmī denotes the Devī’s samaṣṭi form and not merely her purely rajasic vyaṣṭi form.

The three terms kālarātri (“dark night”), mahārātri (“great night”) and moharātri (“night of delusion”) all have “night” as their second element, which underscores the first carita’s emphasis on the Devī’s dark, tamasic quality. Beyond that, each term carries a specific meaning. In the mythical language of Purāṇic cosmology, a day of Brahmā is followed by a night of periodic dissolution (kālarātri) of equal length—4,320,000,000 human years—while Brahmā sleeps. Three hundred sixty such days and nights constitute a year of Brahmā, and Brahmā is said to live for one hundred years, a time span well in excess of three hundred trillion human years. After that, everything in the universe dissolves completely into the Absolute, and the correspondingly long period of dissolution is called the Great Night (mahārātri). Then the cycle of creation begins anew.

Creation has no absolute beginning, because the self-existent One alternates between states of potentiality and manifestation. In one sense, creation is an event marking the beginning of time-space, but in another sense it is an ongoing process that continues for as long as the universe endures. In the same way, dissolution, creation’s inseparable companion, is not only a future event of cosmic catastrophe but also a continuous process inherent in the natural world. The passing of the seasons and the rhythms of the agricultural cycle, for example, demonstrate the interplay of life and death necessary for the continuance of the here and now. On the microcosmic level, matter in the form of ephemeral subatomic particles constantly crystallizes out of energy and dissolves back to its source, while in the vast macrocosm, over inconceivably long eons, galaxies are born, live, and die. The threefold process of interdependent creation-preservation-dissolution is Śakti’s pulsating dance of existence.

The “terrifying night of delusion” (moharātri) differs qualitatively from the other night-based terms. It refers not to a lesser or greater unmanifest phase in the cosmic cycle but to the manifest state of nescience (avidyā) through which the vast majority of us experience the world, bound by the delusion of attachment and unaware of our own divinity. In short, it denotes the human condition.

1.79: After such dark imagery, Brahmā now extols the Devī with the attribute of dazzling light, both as perceptible splendor (śrī) and the metaphorical light of understanding. The many meanings of śrī include “light, luster, radiance, splendor, glory, beauty, grace, loveliness, prosperity, good fortune, wealth, majesty.” Brahmā then names the positive, beneficial qualities that śrī engenders, often personified as goddesses in later Vedic literature. The word puṣṭi, translated in an abstracted sense as “contentment,” originally related to the raising of livestock and the accompanying benefits of nourishment, prosperity, and well-being. Occurring frequently in the Vedas, the concept of puṣṭi
preserves ties to India’s age-old pastoral culture.

1.80–81: The contrast of opposites, illustrating the Devī’s all-inclusiveness, continues here with imagery of the horrific and the benign. The dual portrayal of terrible and beneficent goddesses that was a feature of pre-Harappan and Harappan religion endures in the Devīmāhātmya. It reflects the universal fact of our dualistic perception of the universe. The weapons mentioned here are the same ones that appear in the dhyāna on Mahākāli, symbolizing her destructive power and the dread she inspires. The next verse praises her surpassing physical beauty. With these vivid contrasts we are dealing with a literary device known as a merism, which employs opposing pairs to imply totality. Another merism tells us that the Devī transcends “both highest and lowest,” meaning everything. In other words, she is the Absolute.

In calling her the supreme sovereign (parameśvarī), Brahmā introduces the theme of divine omnipotence, continued in the next three verses.

1.82–84: The Devī’s power is unequaled. She is said to subdue even Viṣṇu, “who creates, protects, and devours the world.” That passage, which endows Viṣṇu with the triple functions of creation, protection, and destruction normally divided among Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, once again reveals a trace of the Madhu and Kaiṭabha myth’s Vaiṣṇava origin. But any idea of Viṣṇu’s supremacy vanishes in the next breath, which alludes to the Devī’s power over him as the sleep-inducing Yoganidrā. Moreover, she is said to cause even Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva to assume their embodied forms. So great is her glory that three times Brahmā asks if there is anyone at all who is capable of praising her.

1.85–87: Finally, the hymn pleads that Madhu and Kaiṭabha be killed. Note that Brahmā’s petition has two parts: that the Devī confound the asuras and that she rouse the sleeping Viṣṇu to slay the demonic pair. The emphasis is clear: through her power, and not Viṣṇu’s alone, will Madhu and Kaiṭabha be destroyed.

1.88–1.103: In the original myth as told in the Mahābhārata, for unexplained reasons, Viṣṇu, upon awakening, reacts with pleasure and offers the two asuras a boon. They are too proud to accept and instead respond with haughty laughter that they should grant him a boon. Viṣṇu assents and asks that the two of them should die by his hand. Since Madhu and Kaiṭabha, strangely, consider themselves devoted to truth and dharma, they must agree; but in a final attempt to save themselves, they impose the condition of being slain where space is uncovered. Viṣṇu finds such a place atop his own uncovered thighs, and lifting them there, he severs their heads.

The story unfolds very differently in the Devīmāhātmya. Responding to Brahmā’s praise, Mahāmāyā, “the dark goddess” (devī tāmasī) emerges from Viṣṇu’s recumbent figure, whereupon Viṣṇu arises and battles hand-to-hand with the asuras. After five thousand years the still undefeated Madhu and Kaiṭabha grow intoxicated with power. In their foolish arrogance they offer Viṣṇu a boon, because, as the text makes clear, they are “confounded by Mahāmāyā” (1.94). Note that the word vimohitau (“confounded”) derives from the same source as moha. Of course, Viṣṇu is glad to oblige his strange combatants and makes the obvious request to slay them, adding, “What other boon
In what follows, the literary quality shows that great care was lavished on retelling this myth, however briefly it unfolds. Instead of simply trying to outwit Viṣṇu by asking to be slain where space is uncovered, as the asuras did in the Mahābhārata’s account, here the battle of wits hinges on a pun. Realizing their fateful mistake, Madhu and Kaitabha survey the endless expanse of flood and ask to be killed where the earth (*urvi*) is not covered by water. In response Viṣṇu lifts them to his thighs (*ūrvī*) and slays them there.

Madhu and Kaitabha represent the ego in its most benighted, almost bestial, state. They attack Brahmā out of brute aggression for no reason other than that he is there. Their prowess in resisting Viṣṇu leads to self-aggrandizement, and eventually their hubris proves their undoing. The story serves as a cautionary tale that taking ourselves too seriously can have unforeseen and disastrous consequences. With this myth, Medhas illustrates the essential point made earlier that the human condition is the product of Mahāmāyā’s deluding power.

1.104: The final verse links the first carita to the second. Medhas has another story to tell and bids the king and the merchant to listen.

* Arrows in verse citations indicate cross references within the commentary. Simple verse citations without arrows refer to the text of the Devīmāhātmya.
OM. I revere Mahālakṣmī, who holds in her hands the prayer beads, ax, mace, arrow, thunderbolt, lotus, bow, waterpot, staff, lance, sword, shield, conch, bell, wine cup, trident, noose, and the discus Sudarśana; whose complexion is radiant like coral; who is seated on a lotus; and who is the destroyer of Mahiṣāsura.
2

The Slaughter of Mahiṣāsura’s Armies

2.1 OṂ hrīṁ. The seer said:

2.2 “Long ago, when Mahiṣa was chief of the asuras and Indra was chief of the gods, there was a war between their forces for a full hundred years.

2.3 The valorous asuras vanquished the army of the gods, and after all were conquered, Mahiṣa became the lord of heaven.

2.4 Then led by Brahmā, the lord of beings, the defeated gods went to Viṣṇu and Śiva

2.5 and related in detail what had happened. The thirty gods told how Mahiṣāsura had wrought their defeat:

2.6 ‘He has usurped the authority of Sūrya, Indra, Agni, Vāyu, and Candra, and of Yama, Varuṇa, and all the others.

2.7 Cast out from heaven by the evil Mahiṣa, all the multitudes of gods wander over the earth as mere mortals.

2.8 We have related all that this foe of the gods has done, and we seek refuge in you. Be pleased to devise a means for his destruction.’

2.9 When Viṣṇu and Śiva heard the entreaties of the gods, they knit their brows in fury and contorted their faces,

2.10 whereupon a great radiance came forth from Viṣṇu’s rage-filled countenance, and so, too, from Brahmā’s and Śiva’s.

2.11 And from Indra’s body and from the bodies of all the other gods, a very great light issued, and it united and became one.

2.12 The gods saw before them a peak of light like a mountain, blazing brightly and pervading the sky in every direction with its flames.
Unequaled light, born from the bodies of all the gods, coalesced into a female form and pervaded the three worlds with its splendor.

From Śiva’s light came that which formed the Devī’s face. Yama’s radiance formed her hair, and Viṣṇu’s effulgence became her arms.

The moon god’s soft light formed her breasts, and Indra’s brilliance became her waist. Varuṇa’s light became her legs, and earth’s splendor formed her hips.

Her feet took shape from Brahmā’s light and her toes from Sūrya’s brilliance. From the Vasus’ light her fingers formed and from Kubera’s light, her nose.

From Prajāpati’s lustre came her teeth, and from Agni’s radiance her three eyes were born.

Dawn and dusk became her eyebrows, the wind god’s splendor shaped her ears, and all else born of the other gods’ light shone too as the auspicious Devī.

Then, beholding her who appeared from out of their amassed light, all those gods, tormented by Mahiṣa, rejoiced.

Then the gods bestowed on her their own weapons and adornments. From his trident Śiva drew forth another and gave it to her,

and Viṣṇu bestowed a discus spun out from his own. Varuṇa gave her a conch; and Agni, the eater of oblations, gave her a spear.

Vāyu, the wind god, presented a bow and two quivers filled with arrows. Extracting a thunderbolt from his own, Indra, the lord of the immortals,

the all-seeing one, gave it to her along with a bell from his elephant Airāvata. From his staff of death Yama produced another staff, and Varuṇa, the lord of waters, gave a noose.

Brahmā, the lord of beings, gave prayer beads and an ascetic’s waterpot. Sūrya, the bringer of day, bestowed his rays of sunlight on all the pores of her skin;

and Kāla, the lord of time, presented a sword and shining shield. The ocean of milk bestowed a necklace of flawless pearls, ever-new garments,

a celestial crest-jewel, earrings, and bracelets, a radiant crescent-shaped ornament, armlets for all her arms,
a pair of shining anklets, a necklace beyond compare, and bejeweled rings for all her fingers.

Viśvakarman gave her a gleaming ax, weapons of all kinds, and impenetrable armor.

Garlands of unfading lotuses for her head and breast the ocean gave to her, and yet another magnificent lotus to grace her hand.

Himālaya, the lord of mountains, gave her a lion to ride upon and jewels of many kinds; and Kubera, the lord of wealth, presented a drinking vessel ever-brimming with wine.

Śeṣa, the lord of serpents, who supports this earth, gave her a garland of snakes, adorned with precious gems.

Honored also by the other gods with adornments and weapons, the Devī laughed thunderously and defiantly again and again.

She filled the entire sky with her terrible roar, and from the immeasurable din a great echo resounded.

All the worlds shook, and the oceans churned. The earth quaked, and the mountains heaved.

In joy the gods exclaimed, ‘Victory!’ to the lion-mounted Devī; and with bodies bowed in devotion, the sages praised her.

When the enemies of the gods saw the three worlds in upheaval, they readied all their forces for battle and rose up as one, with weapons held high.

‘Aha! What is this?’ Mahiṣāsura bellowed in wrath. Surrounded by countless asuras, he rushed toward the sound

and then beheld the Devī, who pervaded the three worlds with her radiance, bending the earth under her tread, scraping the sky with her diadem,

shaking all the nether regions with the resonance of her bowstring, and standing there, penetrating every direction with her thousand arms.

Thereupon, the battle began between the Devī and the enemies of the gods. Swords and missiles, hurled in every direction, lit up the quarters of the sky.

Mahiṣāsura’s general, the great asura named Cikṣura, battled there, and Cāmara led cavalry, charioteers, elephant-drivers, and foot soldiers.
The great asura called Udagra commanded sixty thousand chariots, Mahāhanu gave battle with his ten million,

and the mighty Asiloman fought with forces fifty million strong. With sixty million Bāṣkala fought in the conflict.

Encircled by streaming multitudes of elephants and horses, Parivārita fought in that battle with ten million chariots,

and he who is called Biḍāla, with five billion chariots surrounding him, engaged in combat there.

Amid chariots, elephants, and horses, myriads of other great asuras battled with the Devī,

their countless chariots, elephants, and horses surrounding Māhiṣāsura there in the fray.

With lances and javelins, spears and clubs, swords and axes, and sharp-edged spears, they fought with the Devī.

Some hurled spears while others threw nooses; intent on killing her, they began an assault with their swords.

But she, the Devī Caṇḍikā, showered down all manner of weapons and cut through their armaments as if in play.

Praised by gods and seers, she remained serene, even while unleashing her weapons at the asuras’ bodies.

Her lion-mount, shaking its mane in fury, stalked among the demon throngs as fire rages through a forest.

The sighs that Ambikā heaved while fighting became at once her legions by the hundreds and thousands.

They fought with axes, javelins, swords, and sharp-edged spears, and drawing strength from her power, they destroyed the demon hordes.

Some of her throngs beat war drums resoundingly, some blew conches, and others drummed upon tabors in their zest for battle.

Then the Devī, with her trident, club, and volleys of spears, with her swords and other weapons, slew great asuras by the hundreds
2.57 and brought down still more with the confounding din of her bell. Binding other asuras with her noose, she dragged them along the ground.

2.58 Her swordstrokes slashed others in two, while crushing blows from her mace brought still more down,

2.59 and those bludgeoned by her club vomited forth blood. Others fell to the ground, pierced through the chest by her trident.

2.60 Her steady stream of arrows made some on that battlefield resemble bristling porcupines, and those tormenters of the gods breathed their last.

2.61 Some had their arms severed, others their necks broken. The heads of others rolled, and still others had their bodies ripped apart.

2.62 Great asuras, their legs cut from under them, toppled to the ground. Some, severed lengthwise by the Devī, were left one-armed, one-eyed, one-legged.

2.63 While others there in the battle danced to the throbbing drums, those that she decapitated fell and rose again,

2.64 headless bodies, still grasping swords, spears, and lances in hand. ‘Stop! Stop!’ other great asuras cried out to the Devī.

2.65 Where that great battle raged, the earth was impassable with fallen chariots, elephants, horses, and corpses.

2.66 Torrents of blood, like mighty rivers, gushed from elephants, asuras, and horses there in the midst of the demon army.

2.67 In an instant, Ambikā led that vast legion of foes to its destruction, as quickly as fire consumes a heap of straw and wood.

2.68 And her lion, roaring thunderously and shaking its mane, prowled about in search of life-breath still issuing from the enemies’ bodies.

2.69 So did the Devī’s hosts wage war against the asuras. So also did the gods in heaven shower down flowers in praise.”
Chapter 2 Commentary

**Meditation on Mahālakṣmī:** The coral complexion of Mahālakṣmī, who presides over the second carita, identifies her as the Devī’s rajasic vyaṣṭi; and her lotus throne, growing out of the mud but remaining immaculate, symbolizes spiritual purity and detachment from worldliness.

Mahālakṣmī holds in her eighteen hands the symbols of her attributes and powers. Six of them—the mace, arrow, bow, sword, conch, and discus—she shares with Mahākāli. As for the others, the prayer beads symbolize spiritual knowledge or devotion. The ax stands for the ignorance-destroying wisdom that severs worldly ties. The thunderbolt, associated with Indra and storm gods of other cultures, is a symbol of invincibility and illumination. Another natural symbol is the lotus, which in Hindu tradition represents the auspicious qualities of beauty, prosperity, peace, happiness, eternal renewal, purity, and spiritual unfoldment. The waterpot can signify either fertility and wealth or purification; through identification with ascetics it can also stand for renunciation. In connection with Mahālakṣmī its primary meaning is fertility and abundance. The staff is a symbol of discipline; the lance, of the penetrating power of knowledge; the shield, of protection. Among the divergent meanings of the bell, the one that best fits the Devīmāhātmya’s narrative is the power to inspire fear in enemies. Its clear tone symbolizes the spiritual insight that dispels ignorance. The wine cup is linked to joy or bliss. Usually the trident’s three points are said to represent the divine powers of creation, preservation, and destruction; alternatively they symbolize the destruction of time, space, and causation. The noose stands for worldly attachment. While in one sense representing a deity’s powers, these weapons esoterically symbolize the internal functioning of human consciousness.¹

2.1: *Hrīṁ*, known as the śaktibīja or māyābīja, signifies the Devī’s all-pervasive being. In ancient times, the Vedic seers described Brahman as saccidānanda—being-consciousness-bliss absolute—a phrase not expressing three separate qualities but attempting to suggest something of the supreme reality that is unitary and indefinable. We can relate this Vedic locution to the Tantric bīja mantras that open the Devīmāhātmya’s three caritas. As aīṁ (1.1) declares the Devī to be pure consciousness, hrīṁ (2.1) affirms her essential nature as absolute being. In the third carita, klīṁ (5.1) will proclaim that she is unconditional bliss. Together, the Tantric bīja mantras aīṁ hrīṁ klīṁ are another way of expressing the supreme reality.

By itself, the bija hrīṁ stands as the Devī’s supreme mantra, the Śākta equivalent of the Vedic OM, the sound-form of the Absolute in herself, who is not different from her energy that gives birth to all creation.²

2.2–8: The impetuous, ill-tempered Mahiṣāsura, whose name means “buffalo demon,” is the central demonic figure of the second carita. As told by Medhas, the story of his defeat at the hands of Durgā differs significantly from the only account known with certainty to predate the Devīmāhātmya. That version, found in the third book of the Mahābhārata, makes no mention of the Devī. Instead, during a prolonged battle between the gods, led by Indra, and the asuras, Mahiṣa emerges as a menacing but heroic figure. He scoops up a great mountain and hurls it down upon the gods, crushing the celestial
hosts in vast numbers. Later, when he attacks Rudra (Śiva), the god refrains from killing him because of an earlier decree that Mahiṣa will meet his death at the hand of Skanda, who then hurls his blazing spear (śakti) and with a fatal blow splits open Mahiṣa’s head.

In the Devīmāhātmya’s retelling, which intertwines threads from several disparate Indian traditions, Mahiṣa is already the established chief of the asuras (2.2) when he defeats Indra—here called Purāmdara (“destroyer of strongholds”). The epithet alludes to the power of Indra’s thunderbolt to release life-giving rain from the clouds. Mahiṣa then becomes the lord of heaven (2.3). In Sanskrit the verse reads, *indro ‘bhun mahiṣāsuraḥ* (“Mahiṣāsura became Indra”). To clarify, in the post-Vedic understanding, Indra is no longer the supreme deity nor even a specific individual god; the name designates instead the presiding position in the pantheon, just as the title manu designates an office occupied at various times by different individuals. The same is true of earthly kingship, and here Medhas intentionally draws a parallel between Indra’s dispossession and Suratha’s. The teaching of the second carita is intended specifically for the king.

The beginning part of the narrative (2.2–8) further reflects the transition from the old Vedic religion to the devotional sectarianism of Purāṇic times. When Brahmā leads the defeated gods to Viṣṇu and Śiva (2.4), the three deities named are those who form the Trimūrti of modern Hinduism. The group of thirty gods mentioned next (2.5) refers in rounded numbers to the thirty-three primary Vedic gods, seven of whom are named in the following verse. The bleak picture of multitudes of the old Vedic gods wandering dispossessed over the earth (2.7) illustrates the weakened state that leads them to appeal to the two great post-Vedic deities, Viṣṇu and Śiva, for refuge and deliverance (2.8).

2.9–19: Here we come to a nexus that joins two additional strands of Indian tradition to the already intertwining threads of Vedic religion and devotional sectarianism. This passage introduces the Śākta element in the person of the Devī and reveals also a connection to the Hindu law code known variously as the Manusmṛti, the Manusaṁhitā, or the Mānavadharmaśāstra.

This segment runs almost parallel to a portion of the Manusmṛti (MS 7.1–11) that explains how God creates a king to rule over humankind with justice and order, fashioning him from particles of the Vedic gods Indra, Vāyu, Yama, Sūrya, Agni, Varuṇa, Candra, and Kubera. The first seven of these eight “lords of the gods” are the same ones named by the Devīmāhātmya in verse 2.6. In the same way as a king is formed from the lustre (tejas) of the gods and is a deity in human form, the Devī Durgā emerges in fiery splendor from the bodies of the gods to assume a superior embodied form.

Although appearing to be modeled on the Manusmṛti, written around 200 CE, the Devīmāhātmya’s account of Durgā’s emergence does not imply that the goddess is a magnified version of royal power. In fact, the opposite is true. Royal power, with its obligation to uphold the dharma, is based on the divine model. What happens in the celestial sphere reverberates in earthly affairs. The seizure of Suratha’s kingdom by wicked foes echoes the woeful dispossession of Indra and the other gods by Mahiṣa’s demonic forces. In Purāṇic India, the accepted correspondence between divine and human affairs insured Durgā, the warrior goddess, a favored position among members of the ksatriya caste, and under royal patronage her worship spread throughout the subcontinent.

The first sign of her appearance in our text comes when Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Brahmā contort their faces in fury and a great radiance (tejas) comes forth (2.9–10). Rage and brilliant light are both emblematic of the rajasic energy that predominates in the second carita’s characterization of the Devī. Every verse describing her emergence (2.10–19) refers to the divine light as tejas. This term, derived
from the verbal root tij (“to sharpen, to stir up, to excite”), can mean either the point of a flame, radiance, splendor, brilliance, lustre, magical power, spirit, or essence. Thus, we can understand tejas as an essential quality of brilliance with the power to excite or inspire. Tejas is a rajasic manifestation of spirit.

This radiance coalesces into a female form, said to be “born from the bodies of all the gods” (sarvadevaśarīrājam) (2.13). Are we to understand that the Devī is somehow derived from the male gods? The internal evidence of the Devīmāhātmya says no. In Chapter 1, Medhas tells us that the Devī is the sovereign of all lords (sarveśvareśvarī) (1.58), and Brahmā calls her “the supreme mother of the gods” (devajanani parā) (1.74), who wields the all-inclusive powers of creating, sustaining, and dissolving the universe (1.75–76). She causes even Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva to assume embodied form (1.84). Surely the supremely powerful mother of the gods cannot also be born from their bodies. In the phrase sarvadevaśarīrājam, the element ja means not only “born” or “descended from” but also “growing in, living at, belonging to, connected with.” The tejas that emerges from the bodies of the gods is not their creation but the Devī’s already indwelling presence.

In the subsequent verses (2.14–18) that detail the process of her materialization feature by feature, note that in no instance is the tejas that forms any part of her anatomy said to be born of the gods themselves, but only of their tejas. This distinction is important, because it implies that what coalesces into the Devī’s magnificent form is actually her own power, previously fragmented among the various gods and now reuniting.

This idea is not original to the Devīmāhātmya. The Ṛgvedic Devīsūkta, presented in full in Part III, makes this same point. Vāk’s repeated affirmations of supremacy in the later verses impart to her opening statement the impression that the gods are agents of her power.

Regarding the Devī’s three eyes (2.17), “three-eyed” is a common figure of speech that signifies the ability to see past, present, and future—a metaphor for omniscience, also expressed visually in paintings and sculptures of Hindu deities. The god Agni, from whose radiance the Devī’s three eyes take form, reappears four verses later. There he is called the “eater of oblations” (2.21) in an allusion to his role in the Vedic sacrifice, when, as the sacred fire, he consumes the offerings and conveys their essence to the gods and ancestral spirits.

2.20–31: In the language of metaphor, the weapons and adornments bestowed upon the Devī represent her diverse powers as already manifested through the gods. Note that the gods do not relinquish their weapons but give her duplicates extracted from them. In the same way as the gods do not relinquish their tejas, because all tejas belongs ultimately to the Devī, so do they not surrender their weapons but continue to act as conduits for the varied powers that are ultimately hers, even while those individualized powers reunite in the vastly more potent person of the Devī. In terms of the highest philosophical abstraction, this is a statement of the Śākta doctrine of simultaneous divine immanence and transcendence.

The powers itemized here correspond to seventeen of the eighteen attributes given in the dhyāna on Mahālakṣmī, and we can assume that the missing club (gadā) is included in the “weapons of all kinds” not specified (2.28). Besides the predominant martial symbols (and the slightly fewer than half that represent the benign qualities of creativity, knowledge, purification, and detachment), the recital of the gods’ gifts includes adornments and clothing suggestive of feminine beauty and gentleness.

In the description of Durgā’s fiery manifestation, we see two sets of intertwined images. One
presents a mighty female goddess whose attributes encompass warlike ferocity, feminine beauty, and spiritual knowledge. The other, expressed in the language of nature, evokes solar effulgence, cool lunar light, earthly splendor, and the auspicious periods of dusk and dawn, when the mind is drawn to spiritual reflection. This connection to nature illuminates the meaning of the Devī’s ever-new garments (2.25). We still speak of nature clothing herself in seasonal array, a metaphor that probably was not lost on the ancients. Under the crushing weight of centuries and millennia, once-great works built by human endeavor lie in ruin, while living nature abides ever glorious in its power of self-renewal. All this disparate imagery of the divine feminine, which flows from Vedic and various pre-or non-Vedic sources, merges here in Durgā’s dazzling, syncretistic personality.

Verse 2.30 marks the first appearance of the lion, Durgā’s vāhana (“vehicle”). In Hindu iconography, the vāhana is a deity’s particular mount, emblematic of divine powers. The lion symbolizes either the Devī’s ferocity or, according to the Vaikṣṭṭika Rahasya, the principle of dharma (VR 30).

2.32–39: Durgā’s ferocity dominates this passage’s portrait of her immense power, which reverberates through the sky and sends shock waves throughout the earth. The natural imagery of sky, earth, and sea in tumult speaks of her awesome immanence, to which the gods react not with fear but with rejoicing. The asuras, in contrast, react with angry resistance and gird for battle while Mahiṣa bellows in wrath.

2.40–49: Judging by their suggestive names, the high-ranking demons in Mahiṣāsura’s army are a colorful group. That impression endures in the exquisite Kangra Valley miniature paintings of the 18th century, which depict the asuras as monstrous and bizarre. Although the meaning of the name Cikṣura is uncertain, Cāmara has associations with the yak and suggests a bestial nature. The names of the Devī’s adversaries here and in the following chapter connote either evildoing or physical unpleasantness. Mahāhanu means “large-jawed” and suggests coarseness. Asiloman is “sword-haired,” and Bāškala possibly alludes to bellicosity. Parivārita, meaning “covered, concealed, veiled,” indicates a mental state hemmed in by depressive thoughts, pictured here as his “streaming multitudes of elephants and horses.” Biḍāla most likely suggests fetidness and therefore impurity.

2.50–69: For the first time, the name Caṇḍikā, which we encountered in the invocatory mantra, appears in the text itself, referring to the immense power of the Devī’s ferocious but splendid form. Her power is so great that while the asuras resolutely attack, she remains serene, responding effortlessly to their exertions as if in play. Her allies mirror her own effortlessness. The lion, shaking his mane in rage, is compared to fire sweeping through a forest, an image of unimpeded energy. The Devī’s legions (gaṇas), arising from her exhalations, likewise suggest a natural, effortless projection of power.

The word līlā literally means “play, sport, diversion, amusement,” as well as “ease, facility, mere appearance, charm, elegance, loveliness.” This simple term represents an important Indian philosophical concept: the phenomenal world does not follow a rigid, preordained course but at every moment is open to multiple creative possibilities. In contrast to this divine playfulness, Mahiṣa and his grim hosts are definitely not playing, any more than were Madhu and Kaitabha, who with a little help from Mahāmāyā took themselves too seriously and brought on their own downfall. Mahiṣa
and his forces are deadly serious in combat, while the Devī Durgā, never in peril, remains calm and detached.

A second philosophical concept comes into play when we consider that the Devī’s active expression as līlā is the reverse of her eternal immutability, described in the first carita by the word nitya (1.64–66). The second carita introduces līlā to make the point that the Devī is actively playing in the universe she projects out of her own being. Together the two terms tell us once again that Śakti, the divine energy-consciousness, is one, whether transcendent or actualized.

For all its ease, Durgā’s power proves formidable when unleashed, and scenes of horrendous violence and grisly mutilation follow. Paradoxically, the awful carnage represents the victory of good over evil. While the Devī’s gaṇas zestfully beat upon drums and blow conches (2.55), the asuras are drawn irresistibly into the dance of destruction (2.63–64). If we recall the earlier declaration that the Devī is “the great goddess and the great demoness” (1.77), we can interpret it here to mean that she has power over the gods and the demons, over the impulses of harmony and cooperation as well as the opposing forces of discord and divisiveness. In the gruesome dance of death that enrathls the asuras, we see that the pull toward divine unity is stronger than the impulse to pull away. Considering the dance metaphor further, we remember that in music one always speaks of dissonance resolving into harmony as the natural state of affairs. Ultimately it is the Devī who always wins.

Interestingly, the name Ambikā (“mother”) first appears in connection with this gory battle scene (2.53, 2.67). After the terms Devī and Caṇḍikā, Ambikā is the third most frequent name in the Devīmāhātmya, occurring twenty-five times. Used also to address one’s own mother or any other woman respectfully, it unequivocally affirms the Devī’s maternal nature. Because its frequency and context run parallel to those of Caṇḍikā, Ambikā too refers to the Devī’s all-powerful samaśṭi form, the point being that the supreme Goddess is both horrific and benign.

In late Vedic texts Ambikā appears in association with the emergent figure of Rudra-Śiva, and in the Kāḍhaka recension of the Black Yajurveda her name designates the harvest season as the most productive—that is to say nurturing—time of the year. The connection is clear: parain addition to all her other attributes, Ambikā is the ancient Mother Goddess, associated with the earth and agricultural fertility.
3.1 The seer said:

3.2 “Now when he saw the army being slaughtered, Cikṣura, the great asura general, went forth in fury to battle with Ambikā.

3.3 He rained showers of arrows on the Devī in the combat, just as a raincloud showers the summit of Mount Meru.

3.4 But easily shattering his volley, the Devī killed his steeds and charioteer with her arrows.

3.5 Like lightning, she slashed through his bow and highflying banner. Having destroyed his bow, she wounded him in the limbs with her swift arrows.

3.6 With bow broken, chariot wrecked, and horses and charioteer slain, the asura, armed with sword and shield, rushed at the Devī.

3.7 First striking her lion on the head with his sharp-edged sword, he violently struck the Devī’s left arm.

3.8 O king, as soon as the sword touched her, it shattered. Then, the great asura, his eyes red with rage, seized his blazing lance

3.9 and flung it at Bhadrakālī, as though he were hurling the very sun from the sky.

3.10 Seeing it approach, the Devī released her lance and shattered the great asura and his weapon into a hundred pieces.

3.11 When Mahiṣa’s mighty general lay slain, Cāmara, the afflictor of the gods, advanced, mounted on an elephant.

3.12 He dispatched his spear toward the Devī. Quickly Ambikā’s contemptuous outcry sent it hurtling powerless to the ground.
Seeing it fallen and shattered, the enraged Cāmara flung a lance, and that, too, she destroyed with her arrows.

Her lion then leapt up and, astride the elephant’s forehead, engaged fiercely in direct combat with the enemy of the gods.

Struggling, the two fell from the elephant to the ground, still locked in dreadful combat.

In a flash the lion sprang skyward, then alighted and severed Cāmara’s head with a single blow of its paw.

In the fighting the Devī assailed the asura Udagra with rocks and trees; and biting, punching, and slapping Karāla, she felled him, too.

Enraged, the Devī crushed Uddhata to a pulp with the blows of her mace. She killed Bāṣkala with her javelin and Tāmra and Andhaka with her arrows,

and with her trident the supreme three-eyed goddess slew Ugrāsya, Ugravīrya, and also Mahāhanu.

With her sword she struck Biḍāla’s head from his body, and with her arrows she dispatched both Durdhara and Durmukha to the abode of death.

While his army thus met destruction, Mahiṣāsura terrified the Devī’s hosts with his own buffalo form,

jostling some with his snout and pawing others with his hooves. Others he lashed with his tail and lacerated with his horns.

He toppled some of them to the ground with the unleashed force of his bellowing and wheeling about, and the blast of his breath brought still others down.

After destroying the great goddess’s forces, Mahiṣāsura rushed forward to slay her lion. At that, Ambikā became enraged.

But Mahiṣāsura, great in valor, struck the earth angrily with his hooves, flung mountains skyward with his horns, and bellowed frightfully.

Under his frenzied wheeling, the trampled earth broke apart. Lashed by his tail, the ocean overflowed all around.

Thrashed by his horns, the clouds fragmented and dispersed. Tossed about on his blasting breath, mountains by the hundreds fell from the sky.
When she saw the great asura approaching, inflated with rage, Caṇḍikā aroused her wrath and prepared to slay him.

She threw her noose over him and bound him. Fettered thus in the fierce battle, the great asura left his buffalo form and assumed the shape of a lion. No sooner had Ambikā severed his head than he appeared as a man with sword in hand.

Instantly, with her arrows the Devī cut him to shreds along with his sword and shield. Then he took the form of a great elephant and dragged her mighty lion along with his trunk, but while he trumpeted loudly, the Devī chopped off his trunk with her sword.

Once more the great asura assumed his buffalo form and caused the three worlds, with all that is moving and unmoving, to tremble.

Angered, Caṇḍikā, the mother of the worlds, drank a divine potion, and with eyes reddened she laughed again and again.

The asura bellowed in return, intoxicated with his own might and valor, and with his horns he hurled mountains at Caṇḍikā.

Her volley of arrows reduced them to dust. Her face flushed with inebriation from the divine drink, and she addressed him excitedly.

The Devī said:

‘Bellow, you fool, bellow for now while I drink this potion. After I have slain you, the gods will cheer in this very place.’

The seer said:

‘Having declared that, she leapt upon the great asura, pinned his neck down with her foot, and pierced him through with her spear.

Trapped there under the Devī’s foot and crushed by her might, he emerged half-way in his true form from his buffalo mouth.

Half-revealed and fighting still, that great asura fell to the Devī, beheaded by her great sword.'
3.43 Then crying out in alarm, the whole demon army perished, and all the divine hosts exulted.

3.44 Together with the great heavenly seers the gods praised the Devī, the celestial musicians sang, and throngs of cloud-nymphs danced.”
3.1–20: This chapter, which completes the battle narrative begun previously, falls into two halves, consisting of verses 1 through 20 and 21 through 44. The underlying theme of the first half is the ease with which Durgā and her lion counter the strenuous efforts of Mahiṣāsura’s generals, whom they defeat one by one. This allegory tells us that the dharma which the Devī upholds is the natural state of affairs and that the asuras—the negative impulses arising from the ego—are in a sense swimming against the current.

Durgā is said to be as immune to attack as Mount Meru, a mythological mountain made of gold and gems that stands at the center of the world. The planets revolve around it, Brahmā dwells on its summit, and its slopes are home to the paradises of Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa. Gaṅgā is said in her heavenly descent to fall upon its peak and then flow downward to the earth. Durgā’s unassailability is such that Cikṣura’s swift, sharp arrows raining upon her pose no more of a threat than the gentle rain falling on the summit of the holy mountain (3.3).

Cikṣura is not so invulnerable, though. With lightning speed, Durgā’s counterattack destroys his bow, chariot, horses, and driver. When the wounded asura strikes the Devī on the arm, the violent blow only shatters his sword, for she is indestructible. Cikṣura’s eyes, red with rage, and his blazing lance, which he flings with great effort, “as though he were hurling the very sun from the sky,” remind us of the rajasic quality of the struggle. But his heroic exertion is no match for the Devī, who with a single throw of her lance destroys him and his weapon (3.10). The battle with Cāmara (3.11–16) likewise confirms her effortlessness in combat.

In the next four verses (3.17–20) Mahiṣāsura’s other mighty generals meet their destruction. Like those previously defeated (→ 2.40–49), these also have names that describe their repulsiveness: Karāla (“gaping-mouthed”), Uddhata (“arrogant, rude”), Tāmra (“oppressing”), Andhaka (morally “blind”), Ugrāsyā (“fierce-faced”), Ugravrīya (“brutally strong”), Durdhara (“bearing evil”), and Durmukha (“foul-mouthed, abusive”).

As for Durgā’s characterization, twice this episode emphasizes her maternal nature by calling her Ambikā. Verse 3.9 introduces the name Bhadrakalī (“the auspicious dark one”). Although this goddess’s historical background is sketchy, in the Kāthakagrhyasūtra, Bhadrakalī appears as the benign or propitious aspect of Kāli invoked in household worship. Today in the South Indian state of Kerala, Bhadrakāli is a simultaneously fierce and beautiful goddess—a wrathful warrior and a loving mother who blesses her children with fertility and prosperity.

3.21–44: The chapter’s second half contains Durgā’s defining moment—her defeat of Mahiṣāsura, who is described here as a wrathful beast with formidable power (3.21–27). That description serves as an eloquent, cautionary metaphor, because Mahiṣa’s anger jolts heaven and earth, and ruins everything in its path; not even the gentle clouds are immune to his pernicious fury. Such fury is a purely negative expression of rajas. To meet its challenge the Devī heightens her own rajas (3.24, 3.28), but while Mahiṣa’s rage controls him, the Devī’s is completely under her control. Now
consider human anger, individually and collectively. Depending on the choices we make, it can manifest either as destructive rage or as the righteous indignation that counters evil.

In the combat, Mahiṣāsura undergoes a series of metamorphoses (3.29–33), and as long as he continues to mutate from buffalo to lion to man to elephant and back to buffalo, Durgā does not slay him. While this play goes on, her weapons appear ineffectual. Each time she delivers what should be a fatal blow, Mahiṣa eludes destruction by changing form. The buffalo demon becomes intoxicated by his own might, no doubt bolstered by his evasive ability, and in response Durgā drinks a potion that reddens her eyes and flushes her face with inebriation (3.34–36). Note again the rajasic symbolism. When she declares her intention to slay him (3.38), the final struggle begins in earnest. The text mirrors this change of attitude by three times employing the name Caṇḍikā (3.28, 3.34, 3.35) in connection with her wrathful determination to slay her adversary.

Durgā triumphs over Mahiṣa only when he is forced to reveal his true form. Her act of pinning down his neck underfoot is a potent metaphor, because even today in English to “pin down” means to find out, to ascertain or to determine. From this point on, there will be no more evasion. It is a psychological truth that an unidentified, underlying state of mental dis-ease can manifest within a range of dysfunctional behavior or even as physical symptoms without an apparent organic cause. In drastic cases of psychosomatic illness, there are accounts of blindness being “cured” by a cathartic experience such as faith healing, only to be replaced later by another impairment such as deafness or paralysis. Until the underlying cause is ascertained, the problem evades proper treatment.

That principle applies as much to behavioral and psychosomatic pathologies as to the normal, existential uneasiness that underlies and sometimes pollutes the conduct of our daily lives. Even though our ordinary conduct may be far from crossing over the line into pathology, as individuals we react irrationally to certain situations, repeating the same nonproductive patterns of behavior time and again. Until the true cause is pinned down, we remain subject to unsettling influences. Our mental states may mirror Suratha’s and Samādhi’s confusion and despair or Mahiṣāsura’s overwhelming rage.

The symbology of the slaying (3.40–4) casts more light on the process of spiritual awakening. Durgā’s piercing of Mahiṣa’s side with her spear represents the penetrating light of understanding; it forces the demon to emerge in his real form. Hindu teaching identifies “six passions” which are universal to human experience—desire, anger, greed, pride, jealousy, and delusion—along with other forms of ignorance, such as fear, shame, prejudice, and hatred. Like the protean Mahiṣāsura and his attendant demons, these present themselves in an interacting array and are exceedingly difficult to deal with until recognized for what they really are. Desire (kāma) is in the broadest sense any kind of longing for sensory gratification, material wealth, or power. Inherent in it is the sense of deficiency, limitation, or separation. Any desire is ultimately the desire for wholeness. When thwarted, it may turn to anger (krodha); paradoxically, when gratified it may become inflamed into greed (lobha)—excessive, insatiable want. Because the ego, by its very nature, remains deficient, no amount of gratification can fill the void. Additionally, fixation on the ego manifests as pride (mada), a sense of superiority that in turn can engender feelings of jealousy (mātsarya)—apprehensive resentment of the prestige, possessions, or good fortune of others. All these entangled passions thrive in the atmosphere of delusion (moha), which keeps us in denial of our true motivations, prevents us from seeing things as they really are, and keeps our awareness beclouded by a false and finite sense of self.

Durgā’s decapitating sword of knowledge allows us to discern between what appears as finite and fleeting and what is infinite and abiding. In practical terms, it distinguishes between selfish, harmful
impulses and the noble selflessness that promotes harmony and points toward unity. This allegory, directed at Suratha’s concerns, hints at the theme of good and evil, which will be dealt with in the next chapter.
4

Praise by Indra and the Other Gods

The seer said:

“When the Devī had struck down the brave but wicked Mahiṣāsura and his army of the gods’ foes, Indra and the hosts of gods lifted their voices to her in praise, their heads bowed in reverance, their bodies made beautiful by the thrill of rapture.

‘To the Devī, who spreads out this world through her own power and who embodies herself as all the powers of the hosts of gods; to Ambikā, who is worthy of worship by all the gods and great seers, we bow down in devotion. May she grant us that which is auspicious.

May she whose unequalled might and splendor even the blessed Viṣṇu, Brahmā, and Śiva are powerless to describe, may she, Caṇḍikā, be intent on protecting all the world and on destroying the fear of misfortune.

O Devī, we bow before you who are yourself good fortune in the dwellings of the virtuous and misfortune in the abodes of the wicked, intelligence in the hearts of the learned, faith in the hearts of the good, and modesty in the hearts of the high-born. May you protect the universe!

How can we describe this form of yours, which surpasses thought? And your abundant, exceeding valor that destroys evil? And your deeds in battle, O Devī, among all the throngs of gods and demons?

You are the cause of all the worlds. Though containing the triple forces of creation within yourself, you are untouched by any imperfection. You are unfathomable even to Viṣṇu, Śiva, and the other gods. You are the resort of all. You are this entire, manifold world and you are primordial matter, supreme and untransformed.

O Devī, you are the mantra of consecration whose utterance in all sacrifices brings satisfaction to the whole assemblage of gods, and you are the mantra which humans proclaim as the cause of satisfaction to the hosts of ancestral spirits.

O Devī, who are the cause of liberation and great, inconceivable austerities: sages
yearning for liberation contemplate you with senses restrained, intent upon truth, with all faults cast off, for you are the blessed, supreme knowledge.

With sound as your essence, you are the treasury that holds the taintless Vedic hymns, sung to resound joyfully with your holy name. You are the blessed Devī, who embodies the three Vedas. Intent on conferring well-being, you are the supreme destroyer of pain in all the worlds.

O Devī, you are the intelligence by which the essence of all scriptures is understood. You are Durgā, the vessel free of attachments that takes one across life’s difficult ocean. You are Srī, the radiant splendor that abides in the heart of Viṣṇu. You are Gaurī, the shining goddess who abides with the moon-crowned Śiva.

Gently smiling, your shining face resembles the full moon’s orb and is as pleasing as the lustre of the finest gold. Beholding it, how could Mahiṣāsura, even though enraged, be moved to strike it?

Still stranger was it, O Devī, that Mahiṣa did not perish the instant he beheld your wrathful face, reddened like the rising moon and scowling frightfully. For who can behold the enraged face of death and still live?

O Devī, who are supreme, be gracious to all creation, for when angered you can annihilate multitudes. We saw this the moment you brought Mahiṣāsura’s vast power to an end.

Those to whom you are bounteous are honored among peoples, theirs are riches, theirs are glories, and their righteous acts know no limit. They indeed are blessed with devoted children, attendants, and wives.

One who is virtuous and ever mindful performs daily all righteous deeds, O Devī, and by your grace attains to heaven. Are you not, then, the giver of rewards in all the three worlds?

Remembered in distress, you remove fear from every creature. Remembered by the untroubled, you confer even greater serenity of mind. Dispeller of poverty, suffering, and fear, who other than you is ever intent on benevolence toward all?

The world attains happiness when you slay its foes, and though they may have committed enough evil to keep them long in torment, even as you strike down our enemies, O Devī, you think, May they reach heaven through death in battle with me.

Why does your mere glance not reduce all asuras to ashes? Because when assailed by your weapons and thus purified, even those adversaries may attain the higher worlds.
Even toward them your intentions are most gracious.

If the intense light flashing frightfully from your sword or the glaring brilliance of your spearpoint did not blind the asuras’ eyes, it was because you made them behold the moonlike radiance beaming from your face.

O Devī, your nature is to subdue the misconduct of the wicked. Others cannot equal your inconceivable grace, for even while your might destroys those who have wrested power from the gods, you show compassion toward those very foes.

To what may your prowess be compared? Where else is there beauty so ravishing, yet striking fear into enemies? Where in the three worlds are compassion in heart and resolve in battle seen as they are in you, O beneficent Devī?

Destroying all foes, you have saved the three worlds. Slaying them at the battle-front, you led even those frenzied, hostile throngs to heaven, even while dispelling our fear of them. Salutations to you!

Protect us with your spear, O Devī, and protect us with your sword, O Ambikā. Protect us with the clangor of your bell and the resonance of your bowstring.

Guard us in the east and in the west, O Caṇḍikā. Guard us in the south and also in the north, O Īśvarī, by brandishing your spear.

With your gentle forms that move through the three worlds and with your surpassingly terrible ones, protect us and also the earth.

O Ambikā, with sword, spear, mace, and whatever other weapons your tender hands have touched, protect us on all sides.”

The seer said:

“In that way the gods praised her who supports the worlds, honoring her with flowers that bloom in Indra’s paradise and anointing her with perfumes.

Devotedly the assembled gods offered heavenly incense to her. Serene of countenance, she spoke to all the gods, who were bowed down in reverence.

The Devī said:

‘All you gods, ask whatever you wish of me. Well pleased with your hymns, I will gladly grant it.’

The gods said:
“Since you, the glorious one, have slain our enemy, this Mahiṣāsura, all has been accomplished; nothing remains to be done.

But if you are to grant a blessing, O great sovereign, may you destroy our direst misfortunes whenever we remember you.

O you of spotless countenance, may you bring increased wealth, family, and success to whatever mortal shall praise you with these hymns.

Through your power of abundance, O Ambikā, be ever gracious unto us!”

The seer said:

“O king, thus propitiated by the gods for the world’s sake and for their own, Bhadrakāli said, ‘So let it be,’ and vanished from sight.

So is it told, O king, how she came forth long ago from the bodies of the gods, the Devī who desires the wellbeing of the three worlds.

I shall relate further how, for the destruction of Śumbha and Niśumbha and other wicked daityas, she appeared from the body of Gaurī, the benefactor of the gods, for the protection of the three worlds. Hear me tell it. I shall relate it to you as it happened.”
4.1–2: To set the scene for the hymn that forms most of this chapter, the opening verses show the assembled gods bowing reverently in gratitude for the defeat of their enemies. While Indra leads the gods in praise, the ecstasy of their devotion causes their hair to stand on end.

The hymn (4.3–27) is known as the Śakrādistuti (“Praise by Indra and the Other Gods”), because Indra is called here by the name Śakra (“the powerful one”), an epithet derived from the verbal root śak (“to be able”), which is also the source of the word Śakti.

Until now, the Devīmāhātmya’s verses have been cast in the anuṣṭubh meter. Each verse (śloka) of this basic Sanskrit meter consists of two halves, and each half consists of two quarters of eight syllables. A full śloka contains thirty-two syllables. The regularity and directness of the anuṣṭubh meter create a repetitive, bardic quality well suited to epic and narrative texts. In contrast, most of the Śakrādistuti is composed in the elegant, fifty-six syllable vasantatilakā meter, which conveys a complex, rhythmic sinuosity when the hymn is sung. With a matching refinement of language, the eloquent Śakrādistuti is arguably the most beautiful of the Devīmāhātmya’s four hymns.

4.3: The description of Ambikā, the Mother, spreading out this world as if in preparation for her divine play, is one of the text’s loveliest images. This passage, devyā yayā tatam idaṁ jagad, is usually rendered as “to the Devī, who pervades this world.” But that pallid statement of divine pervasiveness fails to express the true intent. The point was not missed in the translations by Pargiter1 and Cobum,2 who take the participle tatam in its primary, transitive sense of extending, spreading out, or expanding something. The distinction is important, because this reading emphasizes the active nature of the Devī’s creative role. More than merely pervading what she has created, she takes a “hands-on” approach to it.

When we read that she “embodies herself as all the powers of the hosts of gods” and “is worthy of worship by all the gods and great seers,” we recall Vāk’s proclamations in the Devīsūkta: “I move through the gods of storm and light, through the gods of the heavens, through all the gods” and “I am foremost among those worthy of worship” (RV 10.125.1 and 3). The Devīmāhātmya’s unequivocal statement of her self-embodiment as the gods’ powers confirms that in her spectacular emergence from their tejas in the second chapter (2.10–19), she is not created from the gods’ energies but manifests through them her own eternally independent power.

4.4: From the image of Ambikā, the loving but all-powerful mother, we pass to the image of a goddess whose glory even Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva cannot describe. Here called Caṇḍikā, she is more than the fierce, wrathful destroyer of evil implicit in that name; she is the transcendent reality beyond the comprehension of even the most powerful gods.

4.5: After two verses extolling her cosmic might, the next verse introduces five epithets relating to the sphere of human activity. They are śrī, alakṣmī, buddhi, śraddhā, and lajjā.

Śrī (“welfare, prosperity, abundance”) and alakṣmī (“misfortune”) form a pair relating to the
reward or punishment of conduct that upholds or contravenes the natural moral order (dharma). The word śrī, found frequently in the Vedic Sāmhitās and Brāhmaṇas, denotes a deity’s intrinsic radiance; it is often found in those texts in connection with the term kṣattra, the ruling power of the ksatriya caste. As a ksatriya, King Suratha has the duty to defend the dharma, and the implication is that duty fulfilled has its rewards. Although śrī, in the present context, is an abstract quality with nevertheless material effects, Śrī is also a goddess of Āryan origin who became identified with the probably non-Āryan agricultural goddess Lakṣmī. The first literary record to identify Śrī and Lakṣmī as a single goddess is the Śrīsūkta. This hymn, appended to the Ṛgveda in late Vedic times, also marks the earliest known occurrence of the term alakṣmī. The Śrīsūkta makes clear that Śrī-Lakṣmī is all that alakṣmī is not. If the resplendent, generous goddess is the source of material bounty (gold, cattle, and horses), food, health, satisfaction, beauty, fame, and increase, then alakṣmī denotes the opposite: poverty and debt, hunger, disease, want, ugliness, anonymity, and misfortune.

The hymnist of the Śrīsūkta takes refuge in Śrī so that his ill fortune (alakṣmī) and illusion (māyā) may be driven away (RV Kh 2.6.5–6). The joint appearance of alakṣmī and māyā in a single breath jolts us back to Medhas’s teaching that the deluding power of māyā is the cause of Suratha’s, Samādhi’s, and indeed everyone else’s woe (1.53–55). Māyā is in some way linked to alakṣmī, and the explanation is simple. The paired terms śrī/alakṣmī reveal the same dichotomy of wholeness and fragmentation, of boundlessness and limitation, of abundance and scarcity, that we observe in other pairs that define good and evil, such as asura/sura and āditya/daitya (→ 1.67–71).

There is one other implication. Whether the Devī confers her blessings of abundance on the virtuous or visits misfortune on the wicked, she is simply upholding the dharma within the sphere of dualistic perceptions of right and wrong. Apart from the moral admonition that virtue is rewarded and evildoing is punished, an inescapable fact is that sometimes adversity is revealed through hindsight to be a blessing in disguise; even alakṣmī may not be considered intrinsically bad. The hymn will return to this important idea later.

However they appear to our practical, everyday sensibilities, good and evil are ultimately two inseparable sides of the same coin, polarized manifestations of the one reality as Mahādevī and Mahāsurī (1.77) or as śrī and alakṣmī (4.5). Without this nondualistic understanding, we would be hard put to resolve the glaring contradiction between the plea to the Devī Caṇḍikā to destroy the fear of misfortune (4.4) and her identification as misfortune itself in the very next verse! We might be forced to accept the distasteful possibility of trembling in fear before an inherently wrathful supreme being who demands constant placation.

But no. Let us observe that verses 4.3 through 5 all begin with praise and end with petition, and that they form a picture of a goddess who receives not appeasement but love. From the maternal Ambikā the gods request auspicious things (śubhāni); from the fierce Caṇḍikā they ask for the removal of the fear of misfortune (aśubha); and from the Devī of manifold attributes they ask again for protection. This pattern of praise and petition, repeated three times, speaks of a reciprocity between the Divine Mother and her children and reminds us that the second carita’s main concern is her active, sustaining aspect within the world.

The three remaining epithets—buddhi, śraddhā, lajjā—are qualitatively different from the śrī/alakṣmī pair. As śrī and alakṣmī, the Devī governs external events that happen to people. As intelligence (buddhi) in the hearts of the learned, faith (śraddhā) in the hearts of the good, and
modesty (lajjā) in the hearts of the high-born, she manifests as internal qualities found within human beings.

To understand what buddhi is, we need to know how a human being is constituted. Every person has a physical body (sthūlaśarīra), a subtle body (sūksmaśarīra) and a causal body (kāraṇaśarīra). The densest of the three, the physical, or gross, body has mass and is perishable. The subtle body consists of the vital force (prāṇa), physically apparent as breath, and the internal organ (antahkaraṇa), the seat of thought and feeling. Buddhi, manas, and ahaṁkāra are constituents of the antahkaraṇa. Buddhi is intellect, the determinative faculty of the mind, which categorizes the impressions received through the sense organs (indriyas) through manas, the cognitive faculty. Ahaṁkāra, the ego or I-consciousness, is the sense of individual identity, which makes the distinction between what it regards as “I” and “not-I.” Some schools of Indian thought also include a fourth component, citta ("mind-stuff"), which is the repository of memory.

Buddhi, which forms and retains conceptions, is the instrument of discernment, doubt, determination, reason, and will. According to the famous metaphor of the Kaṭhopaṇiṣad, the body is the chariot, the sense organs are the horses, manas is the reins, buddhi is the charioteer, and the Self (ātman) is the lord of the chariot (KU 1.3.3–4). As the charioteer can possess varying degrees of competence, the individual buddhi can be more or less developed. Still, of all human faculties, it remains the highest instrument of embodied consciousness (KU 1.3.10). Because of its proximity to the ātman, buddhi facilitates the flow of consciousness from the Absolute to the relative and in the opposite direction as well. Again according to the Kathopaniṣad, “The Self, hidden in all beings, does not [readily] shine forth but is seen by the seers of subtle things with the buddhi focused” (KU 1.3.12). Likewise, the Devīmāhātmya tells us that as intelligence the Devī dwells within the hearts of the learned (kṛtadhīyām, “those of cultivated thought”) as the potential power of divine revelation.

The idea of the Devī as faith in the hearts of the good cannot pass without comment, owing to the differing concepts of faith (śraddhā) in Eastern and Western religions. The East emphasizes experience; the West emphasizes belief. According to the Hindu view, merely saying, “I believe, I believe,” will not whisk one into a state of salvation. At some point, doubt can even be a sign of healthy engagement in the quest for spiritual truth. Śraddhā is not blind acceptance but initially a working hypothesis of trust in the guru’s teaching, an attitude to be cultivated along with prescribed practices, such as meditation and mantric repetition, which provide experience.

The Ṛgveda devotes an entire hymn (ṚV 10.151) to śraddhā, which is less a personified goddess than a principle containing the seeds of later personification in the Brāhmaṇas. The hymn characterizes śraddhā as confidence on the part of worshipers that their sacrifices will produce results. Won by the yearnings of the heart (ṚV 10.151.4), śraddhā is invoked to render effectual the Vedic sacrifice. The concluding phrase, “O śraddhā, endow us with belief;” indicates that, for the Hindu, the conviction of belief is the product of experience carried out in trust. Śraddhā entails expectation and reveals once again a bridge of reciprocity between the human and the Divine.

The role of lajjā ("modesty") in spiritual awakening is self-evident. Modesty entails the lessening of ego and an outward expansion toward unity, just as its opposite—self-aggrandizement—only increases one’s alienation from others—and from the limitless divine consciousness. Through Mahāmāyā’s confounding power, the intoxication of self-importance brought about Madhu and Kaiṇtabha’s downfall. Through modesty, the beneficent Devī leads her children to greater harmony and awareness.
4.6–7: After a transitional verse that previews the theme of the warrior goddess, verse 4.7 marks a sudden return to the cosmogonic theme of the Brahmāstuti. “You are the cause of all the worlds,” the gods proclaim. In this and the next four verses, the Śakrādistuti elaborates eloquently on ideas set forth with spare matter-of-factness in the earlier hymn.

Śākta philosophy recognizes the Devī as both the efficient and the material cause of the universe, the driving force and the substance of creation. The differentiation of the guṇas is a step away from timeless, perfect unity and toward the emergence of a polarized universe with all its potential for inevitable inequalities and conflicts. But even while the Devī is an all-pervasive presence within her often glorious, sometimes messy creation, she also remains ever perfect and apart from the imperfections and deficiencies of relative existence. She is at once this entire world composed of parts (atṁśabhūtam) and the primordial, undeveloped (avyākṛtā) and therefore supreme (paramā) prakṛti from which all things take form. That is the inscrutable mystery of being/becoming sung by an Upaniṣadic seer: “That [Brahman] is infinite, this [universe] is infinite. From out of the infinite [Brahman] emanates all [this universe], ... yet the infinite [Brahman] alone remains” (BU 5.1.1). In the face of this mystery, the present verse again praises the Devī as unfathomable even to the great Hari (Viṣṇu), Hāra (Śiva), and the other gods.

She is the cause (hetu) of this world and also the resort (āśraya) of all. Here we observe a shift from the cosmic to the personal. Comparing the two Sanskrit terms, which occur strategically at the beginning and the midpoint of the verse, we see that hetu (“impulse, motive, cause, reason”) suggests outward motion, or manifestation; and āśraya, from the verb āśrī (“to adhere to, to join”) implies uniting with the source. For the Devī and humans alike, the relationship is intensely personal.

4.8: This verse recalls the opening words of the Brahmāstuti, tvam svāhā tvam svadhā (1.73), but the lyrical elaboration over the terseness of the original statement adds a note of personal warmth. We learn that the Devī not only manifests as the sacrificial mantras but that through them she confers satisfaction. Again, this relates to the reciprocity inherent in the concept of śraddhā (→ 4.5).

4.9: If the Devī is the cause of all the worlds and the power that confers efficacy on the human activity of ritual worship, here she is also seen as the cause of liberation, an idea introduced in the first carita (1.56–57). Now we learn in greater detail that she is also the motivating power behind the conditions and practices for attaining that goal.

Comprehensive spiritual practice (sādhana) cannot succeed without the resolve to persevere. It means continually reining in the senses and consciously rejecting attitudes and actions that could obstruct progress. Vrata, translated here as “austerity,” denotes variously a religious vow, an ascetic observance such as fasting or sexual abstinence, a devotional act or, broadly, an entire way of life.

Such a way of life was systematized in Patañjali’s Yogasūtra, a philosophical and practical manual that predates the Devīmāhātmya by as much as seven centuries. Patañjali, who synthesized various yogic practices known in his time into a sādhana known as rājayoga (“the kingly path”) or aṣṭāṅgayoga (“the eight-limbed path”), prescribed an eightfold practice for spiritual enlightenment.

First comes yama, the five ethical precepts of non-injury to others (ahiṁsā), truthfulness (satya), non-stealing (asteya), chastity (brahmacarya), and abstention from greed (aparigraha). These are to
be observed in thought, word, and deed. These precepts differ radically in some respects from Vedic sacrificial practices, which has led some scholars to believe that they stem from an ancient monastic asceticism that may have been practiced in Harappan times.  

Next, having cast off all faults (as the Devīmāhātmya puts it), the aspirant needs to cultivate the five positive qualities of *niyama*: physical and mental purity, contentment, self-discipline (*tapas*, directing one’s energy), study (reading holy texts and repeating sacred mantras), and devotion. In other words, applying body, mind, and heart to the task.

The first two limbs of yoga concern general dos and don’ts as preliminary requisites. The remaining six apply specifically to the practice of sitting for meditation. They are āsana (posture), *prāṇāyāma* (control of the breath), *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal of the mind from the objects of sense perception), *dhāraṇā* (concentration, literally “holding” the thought), *dhyāna* (actual meditation, which is profound reflection, defined as the unbroken flow of consciousness toward its object), and *samādhi* (a state of complete absorption in the Divine).

Not prescribing anything as systematic as Patañjali’s *rājyoga*, the Devīmāhātmya nevertheless agrees with it in recognizing interior, purely mental forms of worship that involve feelings of devotion and control of the thought-waves that arise as modifications of pure consciousness. Additionally, later passages (12.9–13, 12.21–22, 13.9–12) introduce the externals of formal temple rituals, sacrifices, and pious acts. The outward acts of ritual worship, such as the offering of flowers, incense, lights, water, and perfume, along with mantric recitation and certain mental processes, are symbolic enactments that shape the consciousness of the worshiper and make it receptive to the experience of spiritual truth.

For the Tantric practitioner (*sādhaka*), the physical body is not something to be despised, but a form and dwelling place of the Divine Mother and an instrument of liberation. Within the body, Tantric physiology recognizes seven centers of awareness (*cakras*), represented as lotuses, five positioned along the spine from the base to the throat, and two more at the level between the eyebrows and at the top of the head. Lying coiled like a serpent in the lowest cakra is the indwelling Śakti, called *kuṇḍalinī*. While she sleeps there, the human being is fully awake to the physical world but oblivious to the spirit. Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa taught that when human consciousness is concerned only with physical survival, pleasure, and the exercise of power, the kuṇḍalinī dwells in the three lower cakras: the *mūlādhāra*, at the base of the spine; the *svādhiṣṭhāna*, at the level of the genitals; and the *maṇipūra*, at the navel. Spiritual awareness dawns, he said, when the kuṇḍalinī rises along the *susumnā*, the channel within the spine, to the *anāhata* cakra, at the heart level, where one experiences the awakening of love and the wonder and glory of something beyond the embodied self. Once the kuṇḍalinī reaches the *viśuddha* cakra, at the throat, the sādhaka becomes established in spiritual life, and there is no turning back. Henceforth, all thought is directed toward the Divine. At the ājñā cakra, between the eyebrows, one experiences *savikalpa* *samādhi*, wherein one sees the Divine, although a separation of worshiper and worshiped remains. Finally, in the *sahasrāra*, the thousand-petaled lotus at the crown of the head, *nirvikalpa* *samādhi* brings the realization of oneness with the formless Divine. In Tantric terms, Śakti is united with Śiva, and the material universe vanishes into the infinite, transcendental unity.

Because of its highly esoteric nature, *kuṇḍalinī* yoga or anything resembling it is difficult to trace historically. There is no mention of it in the Devīmāhātmya. Nevertheless, the Śākta sādhana so minimally sketched in the text engages the aspirant at every level—physical and mental, gross and
subtle—in the process of transformation from matter to spirit. The Devī, as the cause of such practice (vrata), is the means to attainment. As the blessed, supreme knowledge (bhagavatī paramā vidyā), she is the goal itself.

4.10: As Śaṅkarācārya, the greatest philosopher of Advaita Vedānta, noted in his commentary on the Brahma-sūtra, the Vedas declare from the earliest times that the world comes forth from the Word (śabda, literally “sound”).13 “With sound as your essence” calls to mind the Vedic goddess Vāk, the creative Word through whom and from whom the universe comes into existence. According to Śākta philosophy, divine reality and its power of self-expression (vāk) are one and inseparable. To simplify an immensely complex subject, pure consciousness is unchanging, motionless, and therefore soundless (aśabda). That same reality as creative energy is dynamic, and its initial motion manifests as the vibration of sound (śabda).14 Vāk or śabda—the terms are interchangeable15—assumes increasing degrees of manifestation in its descent from the motivating (causal) level of the initial creative ideation to the plane of the physical universe with its imperceptible (subtle) sound and its audible (gross) sounds of articulated speech. Recognizing an unbroken continuum through all levels of existence, Śākta Tantra regards mantra as the actual presence, or embodiment in sound, of a deity. In the broadest sense, śabda is the flow of consciousness from the One into the many.

The process by which the One manifests as the many through the creative Word is described in various ways by different philosophical and religious systems, which impose a profusion of synonymous or overlapping technical labels in order to delineate the successive stages of divine emanation. The important thing to remember is that these stages are not incremental steps at all but merely points along a continuum. In reality, divine consciousness remains indivisible as it flows along a seamless spectrum of being/becoming. Swami Brahmananda, a disciple of Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa, put it simply: “Show me the line of demarcation where matter ends and spirit begins.”16 Throughout the apparent diversity of the universe abides the all-pervading unity, which is constant (nitya).

“You are the treasury that holds the taintless Vedic hymns” means that the Devī is the source of the eternal, most sacred Hindu texts. From her springs the Hindu tradition’s highest authority. The word veda itself means “knowledge” in the sense of the liberating awareness that sees the divine reality as it is. The Vedas record that knowledge, revealed to ancient seers in states of deepest contemplation. The phrase “embodying the three Vedas” reflects the belief that the Ṛgveda, Yajurveda, and Sāmaveda are, respectively, the forms of Mahākāli, Mahālakṣmī and Mahāsarasvatī.17 (The reference to three Vedas excludes the fourth and youngest, the Atharvaveda.) In no uncertain terms this verse expresses the Śākta correlation of divinity and mantras. The Devī is both the source of the sacred Vedic verses and their manifestation.

The phrase “sung to resound joyfully at the sound of your holy name” is a free rendering of “recited with delight over the udgītha.” This term refers to a particular method of chanting the Sāmaveda’s hymns of praise. In a general sense, the word udgītha also signifies OM, the highest name of divinity, approximating the sound of the primal vibration that initiates the birth of the universe.18

The second half of the verse shifts from how the Devī manifests as the world to how she acts in it. Through the power of the Vedas, which are an expression of her own supreme power, the beneficent Devī engages in conferring well-being and prosperity upon the world. Of course, in the polarized, relative universe, well-being has its inevitable companion, tribulation; but the verse reminds us that the merciful Divine Mother is also “the supreme destroyer of pain in all the worlds.”
4.11: According to Indian grammarians, the subtle form of śabda is called śphota, literally “bursting, opening, expansion.” Śphota is the eternal, indivisible, imperceptible energy underlying the gross śabda, the articulated sounds that make up words. It is śphota that transmits the idea, which “bursts” or flashes on the mind when speech is heard (or read). Curiously, śphota is manifested by the sounds of speech even while it manifests the meaning of speech. In the language of Śākta devotionalism, we find the same idea: the Devī is at once the source of the Vedas, their embodiment, and the intelligence by which their essence is understood. The word for “intelligence” used here is medhā (“knowledge”), which carries the connotations of insight and latent power; the word for “essence” is sāra, which additionally means “power” or “energy.” Again, what this describes is the unbroken flow of energy-consciousness.

In a sudden shift from the abstract, the remainder of this verse calls the Devī by three personal names: Durgā, Śrī, and Gaurī. This marks the first appearance in the text of the name Durgā, even though the entire second carita centers on Durgā’s slaying of Mahiṣāsura, and even though an alternative title of the Devimāhātmya is Śrī Durgāsaptaśati (“Seven Hundred Verses to Śrī Durgā”). Durgā is Sanskrit for “difficult of access or approach,” and the suggested analogy to a citadel or fortress underscores both her unassailability and her protectiveness. What she grants is refuge from durga, worldly adversity (literally, “rough going”). Like the names Ambikā and Caṇḍikā, the name Durgā relates to the Devī’s supreme form.

The second quarter of this verse, “You are Durgā, the vessel free of attachments that takes one across life’s difficult ocean,” relates to a far older verse from the Ṛgveda in praise of Aditi (ṚV 10.63.10). There, in a long string of epithets, the ancient Great Mother is praised as incomparable Earth-and-Heaven (the shining totality of manifest creation as a personified deity), which in its goodness is well-protecting, granting secure refuge, and safely guiding. Aditi is then likened to a divine ship, well-fitted with oars, free of defects, and admitting no water. “Let us board this ship,” sings the hymnist, “for our well-being.”

We already know that Śrī (“light, lustre, radiance, splendor, beauty”) was originally the Vedic term for the inherent glory of any god or goddess. Later personified as a goddess, Śrī merged with Lakṣmī, Viṣṇu’s beneficent consort, associated with fertility, growth, and abundance.

Contrasting with Śrī’s solar brilliance is the gentler lunar resplendence of Gaurī (“white, yellowish, shining, beautiful”), otherwise known as Pārvatī, the benign wife of Śiva.

Appearing in rapid succession, Durgā, Śrī, and Gaurī—three names of Śākta, Vaiṣṇava, and Śaiva affiliation—together form a comprehensive vision of the Divine Mother that crosses sectarian lines and speaks of her universality and oneness.

4.12–23: The core segment of the Śakradistuti concerns the battle with Mahiṣāsura and acts as a commentary on the two foregoing chapters. First it introduces the themes of evildoing (4.12), divine wrath (4.13–14), divine grace (4.15–17) and redemption (4.18), which it then intertwines in a repetitive summation (4.18–23). At face value, the twelve verses form a theological lesson on the relationship between human beings and a personified deity. On a deeper level the passage works as psychological or philosophical allegory. Both readings have much to teach us.

First we will consider the outward, or religious, meaning. How could Mahiṣāsura, even in his anger, bring himself to commit an act of violence toward the exquisitely beautiful, gently smiling...
While inviting us to contemplate the nature of evil, the question simultaneously defines evil as the profanation of anything that should be revered. The annals of history are strewn with accounts of such disregard for the sanctity of human life, human achievement, and the natural world. They record countless acts of slaughter, pillage, and persecution, which have claimed innumerable lives and toppled untold noble endeavors. Even today, we live with continual affronts to all we hold sacred: we witness terrorism, warfare, genocide, the cutting down of irreplaceable primeval forests, and the remorseless pollution of the very air, water, and earth upon which all life depends. How can we, like Mahiṣāsura, be moved to commit such acts, to condone an uncaring cruelty that inflicts physical and emotional violence upon the defenseless, corruption upon the innocent, disparagement upon the wise? In malevolent thoughts, hateful words, and injurious deeds, collective and individual evil is the human face of Mahiṣāsura’s rage.

Inevitably, we see the Devī’s face no longer gently smiling but wrathful. Note the rajasic imagery of her awful countenance, reddened like the rising moon (4.13). With this abrupt shift arises the question of why such a horrifying vision does not instantaneously destroy its beholder, for her destructive power is formidable and swift (4.14).

Before divulging the answer, the hymn draws our attention to the Devī’s benevolent side. To those who live according to the dharma, she is generous with the blessings of material bounty, progeny, and honor. When remembered, she increases the righteous acts of the already righteous (4.15) and the mental serenity of the already serene. And she dispels the distress of those who live in poverty, suffering, and fear (4.17).

Even toward transgressors she is benevolent (4.18). This is the crux of the entire second carita, stated and restated in the next five verses (4.19–23) as if to make sure the point is not lost. The Divine Mother is benevolent toward the virtuous and the wicked alike. Her grace is unconditional, even though its expression may take dramatically different turns.

Why, then, does the horrific vision of divine wrath not destroy its beholder? Let us compare Mahiṣa’s and the Devī’s rage (4.12–13). We cannot equate the two. Mahiṣa’s destructive rage is just that, destructive. The Devī’s is righteous indignation on a cosmic scale. Her purpose is to restore happiness to the world (4.18) by subduing the misconduct of the wicked (4.21), a role that echoes Kṛṣṇa’s dictum in the Bhagavadgītā: “Though I am unborn and imperishable, the lord of all creatures, controlling my own nature (prakṛti), I manifest myself by my own power (māyā). Whenever righteousness (dharma) declines and evil (adharma) rises up, I come forth to protect the good, to destroy the evildoers, and to establish righteousness. I am born in every age” (BhG 4.6–8).

When battling evil, the Devī confers her grace even upon evildoers (4.18–23). Instead of annihilating the wicked without hope of redemption, she purifies them by the touch of her weapons so that they may attain the higher worlds (4.19), even though they may have committed enough evil to keep them long in torment (4.18). In the Hindu view, there is neither annihilation nor eternal damnation. Hell, and even heaven, are not places in which to spend eternity, but transitory states of punishment and reward between lives on earth. The Devī does not blind the asuras with the intense light flashing from her weapons, because she wants to reveal instead the salvific, moonlike radiance of her face (4.20)—another metaphor for the unconditional grace that excludes none. Whether chastening the wicked or blessing the righteous, her dual aspects evoke visions of incomparable strength, ravishing beauty, and infinite compassion. She is a fearsome warrior goddess intent on the victory of good over evil; she is also a loving mother worthy of trust and devotion. Either way, she is beneficent (4.22), because even her horrific aspect leads the wicked to redemption (4.23).
Beneath this theology of a personal goddess who intervenes in mundane affairs lie subtler psychological and philosophical truths. The battleground is an interior one of the human heart and mind, where conflicts rage daily between the polarities of right and wrong, love and hate, duty and pleasure. The Devī is the indwelling divine Self that calls us to the highest aspirations; the asuras represent everything that is selfish, ignorant, and destructive in the human ego.

“Virtue is its own reward,” as the saying goes. A philosophical interpretation of verses 4.15 through 17 suggests that living in accordance with the dharma confers a sense of well-being and harmony with the larger universe. But what about transgression? Eventually there comes a day of reckoning, of recognizing the true nature and the consequences of one’s misdeeds.

The first carita of the Devīmāhātmya understands the universe as an emanation of divine consciousness, functioning intelligently at every level. According to this impersonal view, the instrument of justice operative in the universe is the law of cause and effect, known as karma. Simply put, no good deed goes unrewarded and no evil deed escapes unpunished. But karma is splendidly more complex than that. Karma (“act, action, deed”) refers equally to an individual action (mental, verbal, or physical), its consequence, and cumulative effect. Each action generates a reaction that becomes in turn the cause of another action, forging a karmic chain that becomes the imprisoning power of saṁskāra. Because every action creates a mental impression (saṁskāra), and those impressions accumulate into ingrained tendencies, our actions determine what we become. Karma determines not only what we become but what happens to us. In this web of cause and effect are interwoven different kinds of karma. Prārabdha (“commenced”) karma, being already activated, governs what happens to us in the present lifetime as the result of actions in past lives. It is beyond our control, like an arrow that has already been shot. Internally, it governs habitual, compulsive, or self-willed activity; externally it operates through the agency of other people or forces of nature to deliver the consequences of past actions. Sañcita (“gathered up”) karma is the latent aggregate of deep impressions created either in this life or a previous one. It has yet to be activated but remains dormant during the present life, like arrows in a quiver. Karma that comes to fruition in this lifetime as the result of actions also performed during the present life is called āgāmi (“coming up”). The terms āgāmi and kriyamāṇa (“being done”) are sometimes used interchangeably, although there are technical differences between the two. Kriyamāṇa karma more specifically pertains to what we do in the present moment. Of course, even in the present moment our actions are likely to be influenced by underlying mental impressions—those programmed patterns of response created by ourselves in this and previous lifetimes, which form our character. But the present moment offers the freedom either to follow the existing impressions or to cultivate new ones, in other words, to determine our destiny. Kriyamāṇa karma is within our control. Some would interpret this freedom of choice as an expression of divine grace.

When misfortune strikes, we suffer the consequences of previous actions. “What did I ever do to deserve this?” we may lament, but later we may talk about a “blessing in disguise.” The most painful lessons are often the most instructive. Physical or emotional suffering may awaken us to the preciousness of life, adversity may inspire heroic resolve, and the hurts inflicted upon us may awaken us to compassion for others. Chastened and purified, we grow in character and behold our world with new insight and wonder. Seeing the Devī about to strike the final blow, Mahiṣa is overcome with rapt awe at the recognition of her salvific grace. This powerful metaphor means that whenever the higher Self defeats the baser impulses within us, we become open to greater awareness.

In theistic language, a god or goddess is said to possess the power to mitigate the painful
consequences of karma through divine grace. In an impersonal, philosophical sense, we can understand grace as the higher awareness (jñāna) that reveals the world in its true light and severs our attachments, thereby lessening our pain and dispelling the shadows of fear. Whichever interpretation we choose, the Devīmāhātmya instructs that grace is unconditional and withheld from none (4.18, 4.21).

The theistic, devotional approach allows us to draw a parallel between the Devīmāhātmya and the Bhagavadgītā. Telling Arjuna to perform every action as an offering to him, Kṛṣṇa expounds the same themes of unconditional grace, mitigation of karma, and universal liberation: “Thus shall you be freed from good or evil consequences, the bonds of your actions. Steadfast on the path of renunciation, liberated shall you come to me. I am alike to all beings; to me none are hateful or dear. But those who worship me with devotion are in me, and I in them. If even an evildoer worships me with utter devotion, he should be regarded as good, for he is rightly resolved. Quickly he becomes righteous and attains eternal peace. O [Arjuna], know that my devotee shall never perish” (BhG 9.28–31).

To sum up, evil can be defined as intentionally injurious and profaning. It inevitably invites punishment, just as virtue invites reward, either through the direct agency of a personal deity or through an impersonal, intelligent process called karma. Divine justice and divine blessing alike purify and open us to greater awareness of the divine reality that is in the end benevolent toward all.

4.24–27: Reverting to the anuṣṭubh meter, the Śakrādistuti’s last four verses assume a vastly different character from the main portion of the hymn. Changing from an outpouring of praise, these last verses are a formula to ward off evil. First the maternal Ambikā’s specific powers of protection are invoked, then the fierce Caṇḍikā and the mighty Iśvarī (“sovereign, ruler,” the feminine form of “lord”) are called upon to guard the four cardinal directions. Next entreated are the Devī’s fierce and gentle forms in the celestial, atmospheric, and terrestrial realms, and finally the whole panoply of her powers is invoked for all-inclusive protection.

4.28–30: Like verses 4.1–2 before the hymn, these three also serve to frame an especially sacred portion of the Devīmāhātmya. The reverence that the gods show the Divine Mother with offerings of flowers, perfumes, and incense reflects elements of the Hindu ritual worship even as it is practiced today.

4.31–37: The recurring theme of reciprocity between the Devī and her creation takes shape here as a dialogue between her and the gods, whom she is ready to reward. When they say that with the slaying of Mahiṣāsura nothing remains to be done, they mean that for now all is well. Note that they leave open the possibility that evil may rise up again. In fact, its resurgence is a foregone conclusion as long as the universe exists, and they would like the assurance of future help for themselves and for “whatever mortal shall praise you with these hymns,” referring to the four hymns of the Devīmāhātmya.

4.38–42: The inclusion of humans in the gods’ request indicates a new direction for the third carita. In the first carita, Medhas’s cosmically remote tale of Madhu and Kaiṭabha centered on Mahāmāyā’s tamasic, deluding power. In the second carita, Medhas presented Durgā, the slayer of Mahiṣāsura, as
an example of the Devī’s rajasic power. Addressing the king’s concerns, he pointed out the link between heaven and earth, drew a comparison between divine and royal power, and illustrated the human responsibility of upholding the dharma. In the third carita, Medhas will tell how the sattvic Devī, as the slayer of Śumbha and Niśumbha, confers spiritual liberation. This most elaborate story of all, comprising several distinct episodes, will be meant for the merchant, and its orientation will be decidedly terrestrial and human.

The Devī’s third, sattvic, manifestation emerges from the body of Gaurī. The adjective gauri means “white, yellowish, brilliant, shining, beautiful.” Its feminine form is also the name of the Divine Mother. All instances of this name/epithet in the Devīmāhātmya refer to the Devī’s supreme form. The Sakrādistuti hymns her as “Gaurī, [the shining goddess] who abides with the moon-crowned Śiva” (4.11), thus identifying her with Pārvatī or Śakti. The Aparājitastuti tells us that she is the eternal one who sustains the universe (5.10). According to the Nārāyaṇīstuti she is all-knowing (11.10). Omniscience equates her with infinite consciousness, which is self-luminous and shining (gauri).

The second carita described Durgā as manifesting through the fiery splendor that emerged from the bodies of the gods. From other evidence in the Devīmāhātmya and on the authority of the Vedic Devīsūkta, we understand that those gods are but differentiated and fragmented aspects of her own power. In the third carita Medhas will describe the Devī’s direct manifestation from herself. The important point to be made is her essential unity, and the third carita will make that abundantly clear.
OM. I worship the incomparable Mahāsarasvatī, who holds in her lotus-like hands the bell, trident, plough, conch, mace, discus, bow and arrow; who is effulgent like the moon shining at the edge of a cloud; who is the support of the three worlds; and who came forth from the body of Gaurī to destroy Śumbha and other asuras.
The Devī’s Conversation with the Messenger

5.1 Oṃ klīṁ. The seer said:

“Long ago, grown arrogant with power, the asuras Śumbha and Niśumbha seized Indra’s sovereignty over the three worlds and his share of the sacrifices.

5.2 In like manner they usurped the authority of the sun and the moon, and that of Kubera, Yama, and Varuṇa—the lords of wealth, death, and the ocean.

5.3 They seized the wind god’s power and Agni’s functions. The gods were defeated, deposed, and driven out.

5.4 Stripped of their powers and cast out by those two great asuras, all the gods remembered the invincible Devī.

5.5 ‘She granted us a boon, saying, “Whenever you remember me in times of distress, from that very moment I will put an end to all your worst calamities.”’

5.6 With that in mind, the gods went to Himālaya, the lord of mountains, and there praised the Devī, who is Viṣṇumāyā.

5.7 The gods said:

‘Salutation to the Devī, to the great Devī. Salutation always to her who is auspicious. Salutation to her who is the primordial cause, to her who is gracious. With minds intent, we bow down to her.

5.8 Salutation to her who is terrible. To Gaurī, the eternal, shining one; to her who sustains the universe, salutations again and again. Salutation always to her who is moonlight, who has the form of the moon and is blissful.

5.9 We bow to her who is auspicious beauty. We make salutations again and again to her who is prosperity and attainment. Salutations again and again to her who is the fortune and misfortune of kings, to Śarvāṇī, the consort of Śiva.
5.12 Salutation always to Durgā, who takes us through difficulties, who is the creator and indwelling essence of all, who is right knowledge, and who also appears dark as smoke.

We bow down to her who is at once most gentle and most fierce. Salutations to her again and again. Salutation to the support of the world. To the Devī, who is creative action, salutations again and again.

5.14–16 To the Devī, who in all beings is called Viṣṇumāyā, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again.

5.17–19 To the Devī, who in all beings is seen as consciousness, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again.

5.20–22 To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of intelligence, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again.

5.23–25 To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of sleep, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again.

5.26–28 To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of hunger, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again.

5.29–31 To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of shadow, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again.

5.32–34 To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of power, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again.

5.35–37 To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of thirst, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again.

5.38–40 To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of forgiveness, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again.

5.41–43 To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of order, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again.

5.44–46 To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of modesty, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again.

5.47–49 To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of peace, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again.
5.50–52 To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of faith, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again.

5.53–55 To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of loveliness, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again.

5.56–58 To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of good fortune, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again.

5.59–61 To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of activity, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again.

5.62–64 To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of memory, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again.

5.65–67 To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of compassion, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again.

5.68–70 To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of contentment, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again.

5.71–73 To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of mother, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again.

5.74–76 To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of error, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again.

5.77 To her who presides over the elements and the senses, and is ever present in all beings, to the all-pervading Devī, salutations again and again.

5.78–80 To her who pervades this entire world and abides in the form of consciousness, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again.

5.81 Praised long ago by the gods for fulfilling their desires and likewise honored daily by the lord of the gods, may Īśvarī, the source of all good, create happiness and prosperity for us, and may she destroy our misfortunes.

5.82 Tormented by arrogant daityas, we gods now honor her, the supreme power. With bodies bowed down in devotion, at this moment we remember her who destroys all afflictions.”

5.83 The seer said:
“O king, while the gods were thus engaged in praise and adoration, Pārvatī came to bathe in the waters of the Gaṅgā.

She who is fair of countenance asked the gods, ‘Whom are you praising?’ From her own body an auspicious form emerged and replied:

‘This hymn is an appeal to me by those whom the daitya Śumbha cast out, by the assembled gods whom Niśumbha defeated in battle.’

And since Ambikā came forth from Pārvatī’s bodily form, she is glorified in all the worlds as Kauśikī.

Thereupon, Pārvatī became black. Thus known as Kālīkā, she makes her abode in the Himālayas.

Then Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa, two servants of Śumbha and Niśumbha, beheld Ambikā’s captivating beauty.

And they told Śumbha, ‘O great king, an unknown woman, surpassingly beautiful, dwells illuminating the Himālayas.

Nowhere has anyone ever seen such supreme beauty. May you learn who that goddess is and take possession of her, O lord of asuras!

She abides there, a jewel among women, fairest of limb, casting her radiance in all directions. O chief of daityas, surely you must behold her!

Master, whatever gems and jewels, elephants, horses, and other riches exist in the three worlds, all those now enhance your dwelling.

From Indra you have taken Airāvata, the jewel among elephants, and also the celestial coral tree and the horse Uccaiḥśravas.

Taken from Brahmā, this wondrous jewel among chariots, yoked with swans, stands here in your courtyard.

Seized from Kubera, the lord of wealth, is his treasure. And the lord of the ocean has relinquished his garland of unfading lotuses.

Varuṇa’s umbrella, which showers down gold, now stands in your house along with this best of chariots, which once was Prajāpati’s.

Master, you have taken Yama’s spear, which grants departure from this life. Varuṇa’s...
noose is among your brother’s possessions.

To NiŚumbha belong all manner of gems born of the sea. And to the two of you, Agni has given garments purified by his own fire.

Thus, O chief of daityas, you have appropriated all things of value. Why then do you not seize this jewel among women for yourself?’”

The seer said:

“On hearing these words of Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa, Śumbha sent the great asura Sugrīva as a messenger to the Devī.

Instructing him, he said: ‘Go to her and speak such words on my behalf that she will be delighted and will quickly come to me.’

Sugrīva went there to the resplendent, craggy place where the Devī dwelt and spoke honeyed words to her in unctuous tones.

The messenger said:

‘O Devī, in the three worlds Śumbha, the lord of daityas, is the supreme sovereign. I am his messenger. I have come here to your presence, sent by him who has conquered all the enemies of the daityas and whose command is never resisted in the dwellings of the gods. Hear what he says:

“All the three worlds are mine, and the gods submit to my will. I enjoy each one’s share of the sacrifices, every one of them.

Indeed I possess all the finest gems in the three worlds, and I have taken Airāvata, the jewel among elephants and Indra’s mount.

The immortal gods, bowed down in reverence, offered me Uccaihśravas, the jewel among horses, born from the churning of the milk ocean.

And whatever else is precious among the gods and celestial beings, all that is mine, O fair one.

We think of you, O goddess, as the jewel among women in the world, which indeed you are. Come to us, for we take pleasure in all the finest things.

Choose either me or my valiant younger brother, NiŚumbha, for with your flashing eyes
you are truly a jewel.

By taking me you will obtain dominion beyond compare. With reasoning mind, consider this well and become my wife.”’

The seer said:

“Thus addressed, the Devī smiled inscrutably. The blessed, auspicious Durgā, who supports the universe, spoke.

The Devī said:

‘You have spoken the truth; there is nothing false in what you have said. Śumbha is the ruler of the three worlds, and so also is NiŚumbha.

But how can I go back on my word? Hear of the vow I once made out of foolishness:

He alone who conquers me in battle, who removes my pride, who equals my strength in the world, will become my husband.

Therefore let Śumbha or the great asura NiŚumbha come here. Why delay? Having conquered me, let him take my hand in marriage.’

The messenger said:

‘You are arrogant, O Devī. Speak not so in my presence. What man in the three worlds surpasses Śumbha and NiŚumbha?

Even against the other daityas, all the gods cannot stand face to face in battle, O Devī. How then can you, who are one woman alone?

Indra and all the other gods could not resist Śumbha and the other demons in battle. How will you, a woman, go forth and confront them?

As I have said, go to Śumbha and NiŚumbha’s side. Suffer not the indignity of being dragged there by your hair.’

The Devī said:

‘So must it be. Śumbha is mighty and NiŚumbha is exceedingly heroic, but what can I do? My rash vow was made long ago.

Go back and tell the chief of asuras exactly what I have said. And let him do what is
fitting.”
Meditation on Mahāsarasvatī: Mahāsarasvatī, who presides over the third carita, is the Devī’s sattvic aspect. She has eight hands, which hold the symbols of her powers. In common with Mahākāli or Mahālakṣñī, she holds the bell, trident, conch, mace, discus, bow and arrows. Only the plough is new, and its obvious symbolism relates to agricultural fertility. But metaphorically, the plough furrows through the individual consciousness, creating auspicious impressions and allowing seeds of wisdom to be sown. Although only implied, Mahāsarasvatī’s complexion is white, signifying the sattva guṇa and its properties of purity and knowledge. The wonderful imagery that compares her beauty to that of moonlight shining at the edge of a cloud also expresses her gentle, auspicious nature.

5.1: The bīja klīṃ signifies the Devī’s essential nature as pure bliss (ānanda). As noted previously, the Tantric bīja mantras that open the three caritas—aiṁ, hrīm and klīṃ—equate the Divine Mother, or Śakti, with saccidānanda—infinite being-consciousness-bliss—expressed by the Vedic bīja mantra OṂ. Thus the three caritas of the Devīmahātmya reflect in turn the Mother’s three essential qualities.

5.2–4: Once again the asuras, who represent the forces of chaos—the antithesis of order (ṛta, dharma)—seize what is rightfully the sovereignty of the gods. In the previous carita when Mahiśā made himself the lord of heaven, we may assume that he also appropriated the gods’ shares of earthly sacrifices and their wealth, although this material theft is not mentioned. To the contrary it is specified, elaborately so, in the third carita. Here the gods’ circumstances after the depradations of the asuras Śumbha and Niśumbha parallel the situation of the merchant Samādhī, whose family stole all his material wealth. Even as the myth of Mahiśāsura is directed to the king, whose concerns as a sovereign ruling by divine right bridge the celestial and earthly realms, the story of Śumbha and Niśumbha is intended for the merchant, a common man whose involvements with business, wealth, and family belong entirely to this world.

Unlike the myths of Madhu and Kaiṭabha or Mahiśāsura, the story of Śumbha and Niśumbha is seldom mentioned in Sanskrit literature before the time of the Devīmahātmya.¹ In all likelihood Śumbha and Niśumbha belonged originally to a mythic tradition of northern, non-Aryan, nonliterate pastoral tribes for whom the supreme divinity was the Great Goddess in both fierce and maternal aspects.² At some later date they became associated with the story of the cowherd boy, Kṛṣṇa Gopāla.³ A passage in the Harivamśa concerning the birth of Kṛṣṇa identifies them as mountain demons who will be slain by the goddess Nidrā Vindhyavāsinī,⁴ an incident also alluded to in the Devīmahātmya (11.41–42).

5.5–7: Dispossessed and driven out from heaven, the Vedic gods, instead of appealing to Viśnu and Śiva as they did before, appeal directly to the Devī. Recalling her promise to intervene whenever remembered in times of misfortune (4.32–35), they proceed to Himālaya, the greatest mountain, and praise her there. This mountainous site is not the Vindhyas, as one might expect, given that wild
region’s association with Śumbha and Niśumbha. Instead, the locale shifts to the more civilized Himālayan region associated with Śiva and signals a move away from the localized goddess Vindhyavāsinī toward a universalized understanding of the Devī.\(^5\)

The gods appeal to her as Viṣṇumāyā (5.7), a name unknown in Vedic or epic texts.\(^6\) Its obvious meaning, at least from the Vaiṣṇava Tantra standpoint, is that she is the Śakti of Viṣṇu, and in support the Kālīkāpurāṇa defines Viṣṇumāyā as that which makes everything manifest or unmanifest through the guṇas.\(^7\) However, the name also resonates with the name Yoganidrā, employed earlier in the Devīmāhātmya to express the Devī’s own supreme power (1.54, 1.70–71), for it was that goddess, closely associated with Vindhyavāsinī, who had settled over Viṣṇu’s eyes as his meditative sleep. From the Śākta point of view, Viṣṇumāyā, therefore, is the one who subjects even Viṣṇu to her power.\(^8\)

5.8: This verse announces the Aparājitāstuti (“Hymn to the Invincible Devī,” 5.9–82). This hymn is a great celebration of the Devī’s immanence, praising her various aspects from the formless abstraction of supreme power to specific forms assumed by that power. Thus, every form offers the possibility of a tangible way to relate to the Divine. Although celebrating her immediacy, the Aparājitāstuti is the Devīmāhātmya’s only hymn to address the Divine Mother in the third person. Perhaps the more reverential tone is intended to impress upon us the Devī’s awe-inspiring majesty as she reveals herself in and through her creation.

The thinking behind this hymn shows a spiritual kinship to the ecstatic fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters of the Śvetāśvataropaniṣad, another outpouring in praise of divine immanence, which beholds divinity as fire, the sun, the moon, and the starry firmament; as woman, man, youth, and maiden; and as a host of natural images such as the dark blue butterfly, the green parrot with red eyes, the thundercloud, and the seasons. According to the Upaniṣad, the source of this creation is the blissful one (śiva), who assumes various forms (anekarūpa) and remains hidden in all creatures (sarvabhūteṣu gūḍha) (ŚU 4. 14–15), having brought everything forth from its own nature (svabhāva) (ŚU 5.5).

The Aparājitāstuti is a treasury of divine names and epithets. Many of them individually carry a host of associations and ideas, and the English language lacks the equivalent terms to express the fullness of the Sanskrit original.

5.9: Although the opening line contains the names Mahādevī (the feminine form of Mahādeva, an epithet of Śiva) and Śivā (the feminine form of śiva, “auspicious”), there is no specific attempt here to identify the Devī as Śiva’s consort. The line should be approached purely and simply as a salutation to the Great Goddess (Mahādevī) who is auspicious (śivā) in her own right.\(^9\)

In the second line the gods bow to her who is prakṛti, the divine energy which manifests as the universe. Moreover, she is bhadrā (“gracious, auspicious, favorable”), and the linking of the two terms creates a positive view of a world that simultaneously emanates from and is pervaded by the Divine Mother.

5.10: The Devī is also raudrā (“violent, impetuous, fierce, wild, inauspicious”). This adjective derives from the name of Rudra, a Vedic storm god once connected to Indra and especially to Agni
and, in post-Vedic times, absorbed by Śiva, who originally may have been a non-Āryan deity. The name derives from the verbal root rud, meaning “to howl,” and the adjective here expresses the frightening destructiveness of the Devī’s terrible aspect.

The verse is quick to remind us, however, that she is also nityā, self-existent and constant. The ever-changing circumstances of the physical universe, however violent they may appear at times, take place against the eternal changelessness of divine reality, the reality that is gaurī, the shining, self-luminous consciousness, and also dhātṛī, the support of the world.

In India, where the blazing heat of the sun can be brutal, moonlight is looked upon as cool and soothing. Likening the Devī to moonlight and saying that she herself has assumed the form of the moon emphasizes her benign aspect. She is indeed sukhā, bestowing happiness, pleasure, delight, and comfort in our lives. However, the apparent redundancy of this line—that she is moonlight and has the form of the moon—remains puzzling until we realize that it embodies a more profound truth. We find the explanation in the Devīgītā, written probably between the 13th and 16th centuries and incorporated into the 12th-century Devībhāgavatapurāṇa. Here the moon/moonlight metaphor reappears in connection with the analogies of the sun and its brilliance and the classic fire and its heat to express the inseparability of consciousness and its power (DG 2.5). The Devīmāhātmya uses the lunar imagery to explain the absolute identity of Śakti as pure consciousness with Śakti as creative power. A deceptively simple, poetic phrase becomes the expression of ultimate nondualism.

5.11: The usage of kalyāṇī (“auspicious, beautiful, lovely”) in the Rgveda commonly denotes feminine beauty, and other Vedic texts link the word to themes of agricultural productivity and the nurturing cow. In one instance, the Atharvaveda declares Kalyāṇī the immortal one who becomes born as the manifold diversity of human life. Not surprisingly, the present verse links her auspiciousness to vrddhi (“growth, prosperity”) and siddhi (“attainment”).

Although she appears as the good fortune of kings, the second line cautions that she also appears as their misfortune, an obvious reference to worldly responsibility and the consequences of good and evil actions (→ 4.5). The terms previously used in the Śakraḥdistūti were śrī and alakṣmī. Here, they are lakṣmī and nairṛtī. The latter derives from Nirṛti, the name of an abstract but nonetheless terrifying Vedic goddess. Because she personified adversity, calamity, infertility, disease, and destruction and presided over death, she was the focus of propitiatory rituals. The noun nirṛtī (“decay”) derives from the verb nirṛ, meaning “to separate, to disjoin,” illustrating that whatever is subject to decay and dissolution is separate from the whole. Nirṛtī is the opposite of the related word ṛta, which signifies the universal moral order. Once again, we see that chaos and cosmos, asura and deva, evil and good, reflect the underlying principles of fragmentation and wholeness. Elsewhere in the Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa, outside the chapters that form the Devīmāhātmya, Nirṛtī appears as the daughter of Adharma and Himśā (Unrighteousness and Injury); she in turn gives birth to Naraka and Bhaya (Torment and Fear). Again, we are reminded of the intimate connection and fluid boundary between evil-doing and misfortune.

The present verse begins with an invocation of the auspicious Kalyāṇī and ends with one of Śarvāṇī, Śiva’s consort and destructive power at the end of a cosmic cycle. Encompassing the benign and the terrible, it reminds us that the same Divine Mother who sustains life and makes it joyful also calls it into dissolution.
Earlier we saw that Durgā’s name means “difficult of access or approach” and suggests her unassailability and protective nature against worldly adversity or durga, which literally means “rough going” (→ 4.11). The compound durgapārā means “she who takes across (rescues, saves, protects from) difficulties.” Note how beautifully the first line resounds: durgāyai durgapārāyai sārāyai sarvakārīṇyai. It means that Durgā, who sees us through the worst of circumstances, is also the essence (sārā) and the maker or doer (kārīṇī) of all things, in other words the Divine Mother who herself appears as and acts in the universe.

Khyāti (“she who makes known”) and kṛṣṇā (“she who is dark”) refer to her dual powers of revelation and obscuration, of liberation and bondage. Emphasizing the latter, dhūmrā (“she who is smoky, dark”) refers to the veiling power of avidyāmāyā.

The first line restates the final idea of verse 5.11, that the same Great Goddess who sustains life also calls it into dissolution. She is most gentle (atisaumyā) and most fierce (atiraudrā). The adjective saumyā conjures up visions of the moon’s cool serenity, and raudrā evokes the tempest’s fierce howling—starkly contrasting images from nature that declare the polarity of a benign yet terrifying deity.

The five introductory verses (5.9–13) of the Aparājitāstuti proceed from an opening statement of divine transcendence to the recognition that the Devī dwells in and acts through all that exists. She is both the world’s support (jagatpratiṣṭā) and the creative action (kṛti) that animates it.

The hymn’s central portion (5.14–76) consists of the well-known litany of twenty-one nearly identical ślokas, of which nineteen differ from one another only by one word. In each case that word is the initial element of the compound ending with -rūpeṇa, meaning “in the form of...” Each such word is a feminine noun expressing an attribute or personified abstraction of divinity. The tendency to personify abstract qualities, found earlier in the Rgveda, may be far older, since people of prehistoric times are thought to have observed the phenomena of their surroundings and then formulated philosophical abstractions, which in turn became personified as deities.14 By the time of the Devīmāhātyma, what originally may have been considered multiple divinities had come to be understood as diverse powers of one supreme deity.

The Aparājitāstuti unites in a single litany a dazzling series of such personified attributes, which we would consider both “positive” and “negative,” for such is the nature of the world we experience. Each epithet makes a self-contained statement, yet in relation to one another they reveal a broader picture. Since recitation of the hymn allows no time to contemplate those relationships, what we sense instead is the incantatory, cumulative effect of the words.

The peculiar numbering of this sequence, which counts each śloka as three, serves in part to extend the Devīmāhātmya’s total number of verses to seven hundred in conformity with the alternate title, Śrī Durgāsaptaśatāl (“Seven Hundred Verses to Śrī Durgā”). Because each of the ślokas contains the salutation namastasyai uttered three times, some interpreters consider the salutations as directed to the Devī’s tamasic, rajasic, and sattvic aspects. This interpretation is convincing in all instances only if we consider that on the level of observable phenomena nothing exists in a pure guṇa state but is the result of the mixing of all three guṇas in complex patterns. Thus, an attribute like intelligence (buddhi), while predominantly sattvic by nature, can be tinged with any of the three guṇas. Sattvic
buddhi is directed to the attainment of higher, spiritual knowledge; rajasic buddhi is concerned with secular knowledge; tamasic buddhi is directed to nefarious ends.

This view of the triple salutation conforms to the twice-stated instruction of the Vaikṛṭtika Rahasya that the Aparājitāstuti is to be chanted in worship of the Divine Mother’s supreme form, who contains the three guṇas within herself (VR 7 and 23).

Alternatively, the threefold nature of the salutation may refer to the divine presence in all three planes of actualized existence—the causal (motivating), the subtle (psychical) and the gross (physical). It is important to remember here that these planes are not spatial realms but states of consciousness. Considering that the Aparājitāstuti is a hymn of divine immanence, it ought to recognize that everything in the empirical universe has a subtle (sūkṣma) and a causal (para) dimension behind its gross (sthūla) manifestation and that all three exist in potential form even within the undifferentiated Visnumāyā.

Hindu tradition supports either approach. The three-guṇa reading reflects the Sāṁkhya model of the universe, with its emphasis on the elements of creation. The three-plane reading reflects the understanding of the Upaniṣads as to how the universe contains causal, subtle, and gross levels of existence.

The Devī, “who in all beings is seen as Viṣṇumāyā,” is the creative power that is inseparable from and ultimately one with the self-luminous Absolute. Viṣṇumāyā is a threefold power, consisting of tamasic āvaraṇaśakti (the power that conceals the transcendental unity of the divine Self), rajasic vikṣepaśakti (the projecting power that sustains the universe), and sattvic jñānaśakti (the liberating power of knowledge). Containing the perfectly balanced, unactivated guṇas, Viṣṇumāyā is the unmanifest Śakti, whose subsequent progression from the One to the many anticipates modern science’s Big Bang.

5.17–19: We can define cetanā as a state of awareness that has emerged from absolute and unchanging consciousness (cit or saṁvit) and developed the distinction between subject and object. Cetanā is both percipient and perceptible, and it not only signals a cosmic event in the unfurling of creation but also abides within each individual as the causal body (kāraṇaśarīra), also known as the sheath of bliss (ānandamayakośā). It is the veil of nescience (avidyā) covering the self-luminous ātman and appearing to limit the infinite consciousness. In the state of dreamless sleep, when there is no longer any awareness of the four outer sheaths (the physical body, life-breath, sense perception, and mental activity), the ānandamayakośa alone remains to conceal the infinitude of the divine Self. Without it, we would attain enlightenment every time we fell into deep sleep.

5.20–22: Buddhi, the instrument of intelligence, discerns, doubts, determines, reasons, and wills. Although it is a limited manifestation of consciousness, it is the highest faculty of the human mind and possesses the potential power of divine revelation. According to the Kathopaniṣad, “The Self, hidden in all beings, does not [readily] shine forth but is seen by the seers of subtle things with the buddhi focused” (KU 1.3.12).

5.23–25: In Chapter 1, Medhas identifies Mahāmāyā with Yoganidrā, “who had settled over Viṣṇu’s eyes as his blessed sleep.” That passage (1.70–71) makes a clear connection between nidrā (“sleep”) and Yoganidrā, who it says is the ruler, sustainer, and dissolver of the universe. She is the
power that projects form out of her own formlessness. She deludes all creatures by limiting their awareness and perpetuating cyclical existence (saṁsāra). When the Devī is said to abide in all beings in the form of sleep, that refers to her cosmic aspect as the creator of the physical universe.

Within the individual, sleep is one of three possible states of embodied consciousness. In dreamless sleep (suṣupti) there is no awareness of the world, the body, the mind, or the ego. This state is not unconsciousness, for everything that exists is a form of consciousness; instead, it is a state marked by the cessation of thought. In the dream state (svapna) the mind acts, but independently of the body and the exterior world. In waking (jāgrat) the mind experiences the physical world. These three states of consciousness correspond to the causal, subtle, and gross planes. They exist as finite forms of awareness distinct from the infinite, transcendental consciousness called Brahman or turīya (“the fourth”).

The metaphor of sleep used to express the duality of knowledge and nescience—of absolute and partial consciousness—is also found in verse 21 of the Durgāstotra. That hymn from the Mahābhārata proclaims that of the various kinds of knowledge, Durgā is herself the knowledge of Brahman, and as the great sleep (mahānīdṛā) she is the knowledge of embodied creatures.¹⁶

5.26–28: So far, the litany section of the hymn has dealt with consciousness in progressively more differentiated forms. At some point along the continuum of being/becoming, we passed imperceptibly into the realm of the physical universe. The attributes of the next sixteen verses become ever more specific or reified, and we are more likely to experience them as they appear to us rather than to regard them as expressions of the one consciousness which, in reality, they are.

The theme of hunger (kṣudha) occurs in the Devīsūkta, where Vāk reveals that: “Through me alone every mortal lives [literally, “eats food’] who sees and breathes and hears what is said, not knowing that he abides in me” (RV 10.125.4). In the same spirit, Viṣṇu, in the Harivamśa, hymns the Devī Nidrā (“Sleep”) as “the hunger of all creatures.”¹⁷

Hunger has a concrete meaning to all life forms, whether they possess the intellect to reflect upon it or merely respond to it instinctively. It is a primary motivation that sustains physical life. When our hunger is satisfied, we say we are full, and significantly, the Sanskrit word for “full,” pūrṇa, is the key to the higher understanding of this verse. Pūrṇa is an epithet of the Absolute, which is complete in itself: “That [Brahman] is infinite (pūrṇam), this [universe] is infinite (pūrṇam). From out of the infinite [Brahman] (pūrṇāt) emanates all [this universe] (pūrṇam), . . . yet the infinite [Brahman] (pūrṇam) alone remains” (BU 5.1.1). As physical hunger signifies lack in the material realm, existential hunger is similarly a state of incompleteness, of being cut off (diti) from the fullness of divine reality (Aditi). As hunger abiding within all creatures, the Devī keeps us in the embodied state, separated from our true wholeness and bound (dita) by māyā’s limitations.

5.29–31: Chāyā means “shade” or “shadow.” In the physical universe it is a visible manifestation of tamas that results from the blockage of light. Metaphorically, chāyā is the blockage of the light of pure consciousness by the veiling power of Mahāmāyā. The shadow thus cast is the material universe, which is nothing less than the formless Devī appearing as form. We must remember that she is the shadow, that which casts the shadow, and the light—the universe, its cause, and its divine source.
5.32–34: The word śakti means “power, ability, strength, energy.” As a common noun, śakti also means the power of any male god, often personified as his consort. (We shall meet several such Śaktis in the course of Medhas’s narrative.) When capitalized, Śakti is the singular, ultimate power, regarded as feminine.

Everything in the universe is nothing other than the Divine Mother herself, shining vibrantly in every form. The Kahopaniṣad teaches that the sun, the moon, the stars, lightning, and fire do not shine by their own light, but by Brahman’s: “That shining, everything shines” (KU 2.2.15). In Śākta terms, we might say, “She shining, everything shines.”

5.35–37: Thirst (ṭṛṣṇā), like hunger (5.26), has a gross form involved in sustaining physical life, and a metaphoric meaning: a thirst for life itself, that is to say a longing to enjoy the objects of sense. Recalling the triple salutation of this and the other verses that form the body of this hymn, we can consider that sattvic thirst is the desire for ennobling experiences that convey a sense of the sacred; rajasic thirst is the desire for excitement; and tamasic thirst could be sexual lust, which is the mind’s most intensive identification with physical matter.

5.38–40: While ṭṛṣṇā, particularly in its rajasic and tamasic forms, sustains bondage, kṣānti (“forgiveness, patience”) is one of several auspicious attributes named in the hymn that have the opposite effect.

The opposite of forgiveness is resentment, which reinforces the initial mental impression (saṁskāra) of a wrong done to us. With sustained ill will, the cumulative mental energy causes the saṁskāra to develop into a vāsanā, a persistent tendency or character trait. The antidote for this kind of bondage is forgiveness, or letting go. Severing the attachment to our own hurt feelings, we experience in forgiveness a liberating sense of expansion beyond ourselves. Moreover, forgiveness plays a healing role in three different ways, regarding the harm we have done to others, the harm others have done to us, and the harm we do to ourselves. Forgiveness releases us from the past and opens our lives to renewal.

5.41–43: The word jāti (“order”) comes from the root jan, meaning “to be born, to come into existence.” Jāti is one’s own form of existence as determined by birth—the genus, species, or class to which each thing belongs. Acorns produce oak trees, humans give birth to babies, and each creature brings forth according to its own kind.

A look at the world around us reveals an order in which we can infer the presence of an intelligence at work. Organic life forms (plants and animals) are composed of cells, and those cells, like inorganic forms (minerals), are composed of molecules. Molecules are made of atoms, which are highly organized systems of still smaller particles or waves, acting in an orderly fashion. The author(s) of the Devīmāhātmya did not have the electron microscopes, particle accelerators, or the developed mathematics that allow modern scientists to study the quantum universe, but they did have the intuitive knowledge that divine intelligence operates in and through everything.

On the level of ordinary experience, jāti functions as a differentiating but also ordering power. The world is filled with forms of every conceivable shape, size, color, or other quality, and ideally everything should coexist harmoniously. Accordingly, some Indian philosophers recognize jāti as an abstract universalizing principle, because the Divine Mother’s universe necessarily has to partake of
and reflect her own nature.

5.44–46: Earlier, we noted the significance of lajjā as the diminution of ego (→ 4.5). This important attribute of modesty occurs in all four of the Devīmāhātmya’s hymns and in the Mahābhārata’s two hymns to Durgā as well. The Durgāstotra additionally links modesty with good fortune and intelligence (verse 56), a triad repeated in Viṣṇu’s Praise of Nidrā in the Harivaṁśa (verse 54). Such recurring connections suggest a traditional understanding that the Divine Mother smiles upon those who act wisely.

5.47–49: Śānti ("peace") is a welcome condition in the often conflict-ridden world. Spiritually, Śānti is the inner peace that comes with the higher knowledge that lessens and ultimately frees us from attachment to the physical body, sensory experiences, and ever-shifting states of mind. It is evenness of mind in happiness and sorrow. In the Harivamśa, Śānti is personified as the daughter of Śraddhā, the subject of the next verse.

5.50–52: Śraddhā ("faith") was understood originally as confidence on the part of the Vedic worshipers that their sacrifices would produce results, and that the trust thus engendered would lead to the strength of unwavering conviction. Since Śraddhā entails expectation, it forges a bridge of reciprocity between the human and the Divine (→ 4.5).

5.53–55: Kānti means "beauty," and particularly feminine beauty or loveliness. We experience beauty in countless ways—in nature, in art and music, in human thoughts and deeds—and in every such experience the Devī is revealing herself and inspiring wonder. Beauty is the Divine Mother’s way of reminding us of her presence. How often we speak of “truth, goodness, beauty” all in the same breath. That is because beauty is a gift of divine grace. Together with the other auspicious qualities named in this hymn, such as forgiveness, modesty, compassion, and contentment, loveliness belongs to a class of the Devī’s manifestations that signify an expansion of consciousness and reveal glimpses of the larger divine reality.

5.56–58: Lakṣmī ("good fortune") is the Divine Mother’s gift of abundance and happiness. The Durgāstotra (verse 56) links good fortune with modesty and intelligence and suggests a further connection between them and dharma. In the Devīmāhātmya, the Śakrādistuti also links lakṣmī and dharma in calling the Devī “good fortune in the dwellings of the virtuous” (4.5).

5.59–61: The term vṛtti ("activity") allows for more than one interpretation. In the physical world (jagat, literally “that which moves”), we perceive vṛtti as the constant motion and change in all things. Even something as seemingly inert as a stone teems with activity, as electrons orbit the nuclei of its atoms. Beyond the physical motion of the material plane lies the subtler activity of the mental plane. And so, within human consciousness, vṛtti is defined as a thought wave or modification of the mind, an impulse of energy that flows out through the senses and makes knowledge of the exterior world possible. Behind the subtle vṛtti that makes the outer world manifest through perception lies the motivating impulse of the causal dimension. As the cause of differentiated thought-forms that arise
from the undifferentiated ocean of consciousness, vṛtti and moha share a parallel, which is to say limiting, function.

However, unlike moha, which only keeps us in delusion, vṛtti can be harnessed to lead us toward enlightenment. In the Yogāsūtra, Patañjali declares with startling simplicity, “Yoga is the control of activity in the mind” (yogaś cittavṛttiniruddhaḥ) (YS 1.2). He defines yoga as the restraint (niruddha) of the thought waves (vṛttis) in the field of consciousness (citta), which encompasses the functions of manas, buddhi, and ahamkāra. Patañjali distinguishes between vṛttis that increase our ignorance and bondage and those that foster knowledge and freedom. In his prescribed sādhana, harmful thought-waves are first neutralized by intentionally raising their opposites, replacing “bad” thoughts with “good” ones. Then even the “good” thought-waves must be stilled in order to experience the infinite consciousness beyond all form.

5.62–64: The physical universe is a manifestation of consciousness. In order for the universe to remain in a manifest or actualized state, continuity is necessary. That continuity is provided by the particular form or modification of consciousness known as smṛti (“memory”).

The universe of our experience is a relative universe, in which all parts exist in relation to all other parts. The process by which we experience our existence in the world is relational, and therefore all empirical knowledge is relational. Without the continuity of memory, the intellect could not function, because it could not relate anything to anything else. It would be devoid of all content except the immediate object of perception, which it would be powerless to interpret. Even the basic process of recognition would be impossible, because recognition, which follows directly upon perception, is experience associated with memory. Without the underlying continuity of memory, none of the intellectual processes could function; the buddhi could not categorize, relate, compare, infer, or determine. In short, the universe of our experience would no longer be possible.

Memory also functions apart from perception when its object is the revived impression of a previous experience. In that sense, memory bridges past and present; again, it provides continuity. This idea finds support in verse 44 of the Durgāstāva, which praises the Devī as knowledge, continuity, and mind.

The word smṛti has a second meaning. The Hindu scriptures belong to two classes: Śruti (“what is heard” or divinely revealed) and smṛti (“what is remembered” or of human origin). The Vedas alone are Śruti; everything else is considered smṛti and is authentic insofar as it conforms to the Vedas. The smṛti texts are repositories of social customs, moral and religious observances, cultural traditions, and spiritual disciplines. They include the law codes, the Sūtras, the epics (Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa), the Purāṇas and the Tantras.

5.65–67: Daya (“compassion”) is one of eight epithets in the litany that deal with the Divine Mother’s auspicious manifestations, the others being forgiveness (5.38), modesty (5.44), peace (5.47), loveliness (5.53), faith (5.50), good fortune (5.56), and contentment (5.68). Four of them—the virtues of forgiveness, modesty, contentment and compassion—imply a lessening of ego or individual ignorance. The other four are more in the general nature of blessings bestowed upon people.

Compassion can be defined as any action that diminishes the suffering of others. For the Hindu, it embraces not merely a sympathetic attitude but a commitment to active service. It is a quintessentially divine quality, and when reflected in human behavior, it opens us to the Divine.
5.68–70: With the other auspicious epithets, tuṣṭi (“contentment”) shares the common quality of expanded awareness. In the material world, we understand contentment as satisfaction or the fulfillment of desires, but that describes only its gross or tamasic form, and such contentment is fleeting, indeed. The higher contentment signals a sense of fullness arising from the cessation of desire. It distances us from the driving sense of lack that inevitably arises when consciousness is associated with the ego. This higher contentment is the Divine Mother’s gentle reminder that the true Self wants for nothing.

5.71–73: It is easy to understand that when the Devī abides in all beings as mother (māṭī), she takes form as the female of the species, who gives birth and who in the more highly evolved life forms nurtures and displays maternal affection. It is the mother alone who wraps spirit in matter, and all mothers of all creatures thus replicate the process of the universal Divine Mother, who gives birth to the universe of name and form. Because male children are also her creations, ultimately they are not different from her, either. She dwells in every one of us, and her indwelling presence is a constant reminder that we are never alone. Moreover, that connection is so intimate that within all embodied beings, male and female alike, the Mother’s divine radiance abides as the true Self.

5.74–76: At the end of this ecstatic litany, the final verse may come as a shock, for we are told that this same Devī abides in everything in the form of error (bhrānti). When understood, this is no cause for worry, but merely the hymn’s way of coming full circle. The Divine Mother is, we remember, Viṣṇumāyā (5.14), who obscures her self-luminous, infinite consciousness in order to project the world. Because the consciousness that animates and illumines us as individuals is fragmented, limited, and imperfect, we do not experience the Devī’s shining fullness directly; instead we see her manifestation through the kaleidoscope of delusion (moha). We experience this sometimes dark, sometimes dazzling world only because the Devī abides in the form of error.

The English word error (from Latin errare) and the Sanskrit bhrānti (from bhram) both derive from verbs meaning “to wander.” A secondary meaning of bhram is “to waver, to be perplexed, to err.” We can understand that error is simply a wandering away from the truth, a misreading of reality that takes the finite parts for the infinite whole. The form that such error takes, the false premise upon which our unenlightened worldly existence is based, will be revealed at the very core of Medhas’s teaching by way of this final narrative concerning the demons Śumbha and Niśumbha.

5.77–80: How do we experience the universe just described? Through the Devī herself, who pervades and presides over the instruments of consciousness and the elements of which the senses and their objects are composed. The Devī herself is pure consciousness, which is both the source and, when modified, the manifestation of the perceptible world. Though translated here as “consciousness,” the term citi more accurately means “the thinking mind.” Citi is not the absolute consciousness (cit), but the Absolute’s ideational energy (śrṣṭikalpanā) that brings about the world-process. The Devī abides in her creation as creative consciousness, pervading the entire world (jagat) that is ever in motion.

5.81–82: At this point the hymn shifts momentarily into the forty-eight-syllable vamśāstha meter, probably to distinguish the petitionary nature of the final two verses from the laudatory nature of the
rest. These verses also prepare for a return to the narrative, wherein the gods will appeal to the Devī, who earlier promised to intervene whenever misfortune should arise.

5.83–88: The mention of the Gaṅgā establishes the sphere of action as right here on earth. Coming to bathe in the holy river, the Devī first appears to the gods as Pārvatī, portrayed less as Śiva’s consort than as an independent and supreme deity in her own right. (When Śiva appears later in the narrative, he is decidedly subordinate to her.)

When Pārvatī asks the gods, “Whom are you praising?” an auspicious (śivā) form emerges from her own body and replies, “This hymn is an appeal to me.” This lovely manifestation, we are told, is glorified as Kauśikī, because she came forth from Pārvatī’s bodily form (kośa). In the first and second caritas, the Devī appeared in tamasic and rajasic aspects; now she manifests in sattvic form. As soon as she emerges, Pārvatī darkens and is henceforth known as Kālīkā, or Kālī, who will play a major role in the course of events. This play of light and dark illustrates graphically the Devī’s dual nature of bright auspiciousness and dark terror.

5.89–100: Mahiṣa was the only demon of the previous myth to be well characterized, while his attendant generals remained little more than colorfully descriptive names. In the elaborately drawn, multiple episodes of the Šumbha-Niśumbha myth, the demons possess fully developed and very human personalities.

First we meet the toady ing servants, Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa, who bring news to Šumbha of a beautiful goddess whose radiance illuminates the Himālayas. Playing upon Šumbha’s vanity, they flatter him with an account of his riches and powers, all stolen from the gods and adding up to sickening excess when concentrated in the asura’s hands. If Šumbha possesses all that, Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa ask, should he not also possess the fairest of goddesses?

5.101–121: His lust inflamed at the thought of the beautiful maiden, Šumbha sends Sugrīva to court her. The messenger, who represents deceit and hypocrisy, knows full well that his fine words intend to mislead. The Devī knows it, too, and ironic humor colors their exchange. With “honeyed words” spoken “in unctuous tones,” Sugrīva glorifies his hideous master by boasting of the asura’s dazzling wealth and power. Note the irony when the Devī pretends to take his words at face value, saying, “You have spoken the truth; there is nothing false in what you have said” (5.118). Sugrīva’s attempt at beguilement represents the seductive nature of the world. As Medhas earlier alerted the king and the merchant, behind the glittering façades of material wealth and temporal power, things are not as they seem.

Even the marriage proposal strikes us as odd, because Šumbha’s exact words, transmitted through the messenger, are: “Choose either me or my valiant younger brother, Niśumbha. . . (5.113). The significance of this becomes clear only much later, when we discover exactly what Šumbha and Niśumbha symbolize (→ 9.4–41).

In response, the Devī issues a challenge, citing a vow to wed only him who conquers her in battle. This initiates an escalating series of challenges and counterchallenges that drive the narrative to its climax.
Insultingly, he asks how she, a mere woman alone, can hope to defy Śumbha and NiŚumbha, against whom even the gods are powerless. And he threatens her with the humiliation of being dragged away by her hair! This conversation ends very differently than it began, and the Devī’s bemused playfulness stands in marked contrast to Sugrīva’s increasing bluster. It is the same playfulness we saw previously when she serenely met Mahiśa’s demon army head on. All the demons—Madhu and Kaiṭabha, Mahiśa, and those we have yet to meet—represent human vices, weaknesses, and failings, and without exception they take themselves very seriously. The Devī is blissfully beyond such silly and ultimately self-defeating posturing. Once again, she voices her challenge to Śumbha, and with her last words, “let him do what is fitting,” the chapter closes on a note of ominous expectation.
The Slaying of Dhūmralocana

6.1 The seer said:

“On hearing the Devī’s words, the messenger was filled with indignation. He returned to the king of the daityas and related everything in great detail.

6.2 On hearing his messenger’s report, the asura king grew enraged and said to Dhūmralocana, the chieftain of the daityas:

6.3 ‘Dhūmralocana, hasten with your army and bring that vile woman here by force, dragging her by the hair, kicking and screaming.

6.4 If anyone rises up to save her, even a god or other celestial being, he is to be slain.’”

6.5 The seer said:

“Commanded thus by Śumbha, the daitya Dhūmralocana quickly set off, accompanied by sixty thousand asuras.

6.6 And when he saw the Devī stationed on the snowy mountain, he thundered, ‘Come to the presence of Śumbha and Niśumbha.

6.7 And if her highness will not come in gladness to my master now, then I will take her by force, dragging her by the hair, kicking and screaming.’

6.8 The Devī said:

‘You who are sent by the lord of the daityas are mighty yourself and accompanied by your army. If you take me by force, what can I do to you?’”

6.9 The seer said:

“Thus addressed, the asura Dhūmralocana rushed at her. Thereupon, with a contemptuous outcry, Ambikā reduced him to ashes.
The great army of asuras, now provoked, rained sharp arrows, spears, and axes upon Ambikā.

Then the lion, the Devī’s mount, angrily shook its mane. Emitting a terrifying roar, it fell upon the demon army.

With blows of its paws, it slew some daityas and crushed others in its jaws. And it trampled other great asuras under its hind legs.

With its claws, the lion tore into the entrails of some and beheaded others with the stroke of a paw.

It tore the arms and heads off others still, and tossing its mane, it lapped up the blood from the bellies of others.

In an instant that noble, infuriated lion which bore the Devī wreaked destruction on all that army.

When he heard that the Devī had slain the asura Dhūmralocana and that her lion had destroyed his entire army,

Śumbha, the king of daityas, shook with rage. His lower lip quivering, he commanded the two great asuras, Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa:

‘Caṇḍa! Muṇḍa! Go there with immense forces, and bring her here at once, seizing her by the hair or tying her up. But if you hesitate to do this, then let all the asuras with all their weapons strike her down in battle.

When that vile woman has been wounded and her lion slain, seize her, bind her, and bring her here without delay!’"
6.1–9: At news of the Devī’s refusal of marriage, Śumbha flies into a rage. Suddenly the ardently desired “jewel among women” (5.92, 5.100) becomes “that vile woman” (6.4). The word used is duṣṭā, rendered by previous translators as “shrew” (Pargiter, Jagadīśvarānanda), “wicked woman” (Cobum, Sharma), “wretch of a woman” (Sivānanda), “proud lass” (Siddhināthānanda), and “naughty one” (Satyānanda). Duṣṭā definitely conveys the idea of sexual impurity and is applied to adulteresses and other women of loose morals. There is no doubt that Śumbha’s intention is to be insulting, although not excessively so, and any stronger English term would be inappropriate here.

This would be a classic case of sour grapes, except that Śumbha is bent on possessing the beautiful Devī by any means, even if that means having her taken by force and slaying anyone who attempts to intervene. To that end he dispatches Dhūmrālocana (“the smoky-eyed one”), whose name aptly describes the dim-witted thug whose vision is clouded, metaphorically, by the smoke of ignorance. Remember that the Aparājitāstuti employs dhūmrā as an epithet of the Devī (5.12) in reference to the obscuring power of her māyā, which is, of course, the source of the asura’s ignorance. Note Dhūmrālocana’s sarcasm when he addresses the Devī with the deferential “her highness” (bhavatī) and in the next breath threatens her with force (6.9).

6.10–19: The Devī’s reply (6.11) seems innocent enough, but when Dhūmrālocana suddenly rushes at her, she instantaneously destroys him with an outcry of contempt, the sound huṁ. Understanding only the rule of force, Dhūmrālocana quickly falls victim to the proverbial violence that begets violence.

Previously, sound has been associated with the divine creative power; here it represents destructive might. Such a show of strength is mere play for the Devī, and when she unleashes her lion to wreak havoc upon Dhūmrālocana’s accompanying forces, sixty thousand strong, we are reminded of the similarly effortless destruction of Mahiṣa’s army in the second chapter.

6.20–24: Śumbha is angered to the point of losing self-control. His lower lip quivers with rage as he next sends Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa and an immense army to reattempt Dhūmrālocana’s failed mission. In his desperation to possess the Devī, the asura no longer cares whether “that vile woman” be delivered unharmed or beaten into submission (6.23–24). He simply wants to possess her. Similarly, thwarted human ambition breeds intemperance, and the goal becomes success at any cost. On that note, the Devīmāhātmya’s shortest chapter ends.
The Slaying of Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa

7.1 The seer said:

“Headed by Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa, the daityas’ fourfold army of elephants, charioteers, cavalry, and infantry went forth at Śumbha’s command, brandishing weapons.

7.2 They saw the Devī smiling gently, seated upon her lion atop the great, golden peak of the highest mountain.

7.3 Seeing her, they contrived to carry her off. While some approached with swords drawn and bows poised in readiness,

7.4 Ambikā cried out angrily against those foes, and in wrath her face turned as black as ink.

7.5 From her scowling brow, Kālī sprang forth, frightful of countenance and armed with sword and noose,

7.6 bearing a strange skull-topped staff, adorned with a garland of skulls, and clad in a tiger’s skin. Her emaciated flesh appalling,

7.7 her mouth gaping, her lolling tongue horrifying, her sunken eyes glowing red, she filled the four quarters of the sky with her roars.

7.8 Swiftly falling upon the great asuras in that army, she slew and devoured those hosts of the gods’ foes.

7.9 Attacking the rear guard and seizing the elephants with their drivers, warriors, and bells, she flung them into her mouth with a single hand.

7.10 In like manner, she tossed the cavalry with its horses and the charioteers with their chariots into her mouth and ground them furiously between her teeth.

7.11 She seized one asura by the hair and another by the throat. Crushing another underfoot, she slammed yet another against her breast.
The weapons and great missiles the asuras hurled she caught in her mouth and ground angrily between her teeth.

All that army of mighty and evil-natured asuras she ravaged, devouring some and beating others severely.

She struck down some with her sword and battered others with her skull-topped staff. Other asuras met their destruction between her gnashing teeth.

When Caṇḍa saw the entire army of asuras swiftly struck down, he rushed at the terrifying Kālī.

With a formidable deluge of arrows, that great asura engulfed the glowering Kālī while Muṇḍa hurled discuses at her by the thousands, myriad discuses that entered her mouth as so many solar orbs vanishing into the denseness of a cloud.

With a terrifying roar, Kālī laughed in fury, her fearsome teeth gleaming within her ghastly mouth.

Mounting her great lion, the Devī rushed at Caṇḍa, seized him by the hair, and severed his head with her sword.

Seeing Caṇḍa slain, Muṇḍa attacked her. She pushed him to the ground and struck him in fury with her sword.

Seeing Caṇḍa and also the most valorous Muṇḍa slain, the remaining army panicked and fled in all directions.

And Kālī, grasping the heads of Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa, approached Caṇḍikā. Mingling fierce, loud laughter with her words, she said:

‘I here present to you Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa as two great offerings in the sacrifice of battle. You yourself shall slay Śumbha and Niśumbha.’”

The seer said:

“When she saw those two great asuras, Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa, brought before her, the auspicious Caṇḍikā spoke these playful words to Kālī:

‘Because you have overpowered Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa and delivered them to me, you, O
Devī, will henceforth be known in the world as Cāmuṇḍā.”
Chapter 7 Commentary

7.1–8: As the bloodthirsty demon army approaches the resplendent Devī seated on the mountaintop, the epic magnificence of the scene signals a momentous event. We are not kept long in anticipation. Suddenly the Devī’s gentle smile melts to ink-black wrath, and from her scowling brow springs forth the formidable goddess Kālī. Previously, Durgā emerged as a great radiance from the scowling faces of Viṣṇu, Śiva, and the other gods (2.9–13). This time, in a complete reversal, Kālī emerges as utter blackness from the radiant form of the sattvic Ambikā-Kauśikī, who had only recently come forth from the body of Pārvatī, leaving her darkened and renamed Kālikā, “the black one” (5.85–88). We’ve been given a graphic vision of the Devī’s power of inexhaustible metamorphosis. Kālī is not merely a secondary emanation of the Devī, as this passage might lead us to think. According to the understanding that developed in later centuries, she is the supreme Devī herself in another form, with multiple aspects of her own. Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa remarked that, in many household shrines, Kālī is worshiped as Śyāmā, the tender dispeller of fear and granter of boons. In times of natural disasters, she is invoked as the protective Rakṣākāli. As Śmaśānakāli, the embodiment of destructive power, she haunts the cremation grounds in the company of howling jackals and terrifying female spirits, and as Mahākāli she is the formless Śakti who is not different from the Absolute. At the Dakṣiṇeśvar Temple, where Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa served as priest, Kālī is revered as the beautiful Bhavatāriṇī (“redeemer of the universe”).

7.9–22: In the violent and grisly battle that ends with the slaughter of Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa, Kālī’s favored method of destruction is to pulverize her enemies between her teeth, warranting mention three times in rapid succession (7.11, 7.13, 7.15). The image of grinding teeth brings to mind a turning millstone that crushes grain into flour, and from there it is not a large leap to the revolving wheel of time (kālacakra), which metaphorically grinds all things to dust. The name Kālī is the feminine form of the adjective kāla, meaning “dark” or “blue-black.” This is probably related to the masculine noun kāla (“time”), an epithet of Śiva. As his Śakti, or power, Kālī is ever-turning time, the relentless devourer who brings all things to an end. Note also the cosmic imagery of the myriad discs hurled by Muṇḍa that disappear into her mouth “as so many solar orbs vanishing into the denseness of a cloud” (7.17–18).

7.23–27: Viṣṇu’s slaying of Madhu and Kaiṭabha in the first chapter hinged on a pun (→ 1.88–1.103). There is word-play again in connection with the slaying of Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa when Kālī, delivering the heads of the demon pair to the auspicious Caṇḍikā-Ambikā as trophies of battle, is given the nickname Cāmuṇḍā. Historically, Cāmuṇḍā appears to have been a non-Āryan goddess who was assimilated to Kālī, and this passage in the Devīmāhātmya marks her initial appearance in Sanskrit literature. Even today temple images of Cāmuṇḍā in Bhubanesvar and Jajpur (Orissa) portray the goddess as emaciated, with protruding bones and fierce, round eyes bulging from their sunken sockets. The Jajpur Cāmuṇḍā bares her teeth, and her four hands hold cleaver, spear, skull-cup, and human head (muṇḍā).
Why does Cāmuṇḍā leave the task of slaying Śumbha and Niśumbha to the auspicious Caṇḍikā herself? In the destruction of Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa we saw her violent, horrific aspect in action, just as in ordinary life drastic, heavy-handed means are sometimes necessary to defeat evil. But in the final battle for enlightenment, it is the Devī’s sattvic power that rends the veil of nescience and grants the liberating vision. What we have here is a scene of the Devī talking to herself, as it were, since all her forms are but her own projections. She will make that fact clear before her final confrontation with Śumbha.

A deeper understanding of Cāmuṇḍā emerges from the Navārṇamantra, a nine-syllable Tantric mantra, which the 18th-century commentator Bhāskararāya considered as important as the Devīmāhātmya itself in the worship of the Devī. This mantra, aiṁ hrīṁ klīṁ cāmuṇḍāyai vicce, begins with the three bījas that together identify the Devī as pure being (sat), consciousness (cit), and bliss (ānanda). In the Navārṇamantra the customary salutation (namaḥ) is unspoken but understood, and the name Cāmuṇḍā in the dative case (cāmuṇḍāya, “to Cāmuṇḍā”) occupies a pivotal position. While interpretations of this mantra are highly esoteric and often contradict one another in detail, they all agree that it is Cāmuṇḍā who severs the knot of ignorance, cuts through the illusion of duality, and reveals the Absolute. Although the Navārṇamantra, like any other Tantric mantra, cannot be understood, let alone translated, in a strictly semantic sense, it is generally interpreted as a prayer to the immanent-yet-transcendent Devī for the highest knowledge, which grants release from all limitation.
8

The Slaying of Raktabīja

8.1 The seer said:

8.2 “After Caṇḍa was killed, Muṇḍa slain, and the vast armies annihilated, the lord of asuras burned with rage. His reason overcome, Śumbha ordered the marshaling of all the demon hosts:

8.3 ‘Now let the daitya clans with all their troops go forth, the eighty-six Udāyuḍha and the eighty-four Kambu families, together with their forces.

8.4 Let the fifty Koṭivīrya families and the hundred Dhaumra clans depart at my command.

8.5 So also at my command, let the Kālaka, Daurḥṛda, Maurya, and Kālakeya asuras set out in haste, armed for battle.’

8.6 Having issued his orders, Śumbha, the despotic lord of asuras, went forth, attended by many thousands of mighty troops.

8.7 Seeing that most formidable army approach, Caṇḍikā filled the space between earth and sky with the resonance of her bowstring.

8.8 Thereupon her lion emitted a deafening roar, O king, and Ambikā heightened the noise with her clanging bell.

8.9 Kālī drowned out the din of bowstring, lion, and bell, filling every direction with terrifying howls from her gaping mouth.

8.10 Hearing the tumult, the enraged demon armies closed in on the Devī, her lion, and Kālī from all four sides.

8.11 O king, at that very moment, to insure the well-being of the supreme gods and to annihilate their adversaries, surpassingly brave and powerful
8.13 Śaktis, the gods’ embodied powers, sprang forth from the bodies of Brahmā, Śiva, Skanda, Viṣṇu, and Indra, mirroring the form of each. They approached Caṇḍikā.

8.14 Whatever that god’s form was, whatever his adornments and his mount, in that very form his Śakti went forth to combat the asuras.

8.15 In a celestial chariot drawn by swans, Brahmā’s Śakti came forth with prayer beads and waterpot in hand. She is called Brahmāṇī.

8.16 Māheśvarī arrived astride a bull, holding the finest trident, wearing great serpents for bracelets, and adorned with the crescent moon.

8.17 Ambikā, having the war god’s form and riding a fine peacock, came forth as Kaumārī with spear in hand to fight against the dānavas.

8.18 Likewise the Śakti Vaiṣṇavī, mounted on Garuda, approached holding conch, discus, mace, bow, and sword.

8.19 The Śakti of Hari, who bears the unique form of the sacrificial boar, came forward as Vārāhī in that boarlike aspect.

8.20 Nārasirrhī, resembling Viṣṇu’s embodiment as a man-lion, arrived there, scattering the constellations with the toss of her mane.

8.21 Thousand-eyed like Indra, and in like manner with thunderbolt in hand, Aindrī arrived riding on the lord of elephants.

8.22 Then Śiva, surrounded by those Śaktis of the gods, said to Caṇḍikā, ‘Let the asuras quickly be slain for my satisfaction.’

8.23 Thereupon from the Devī’s body there issued forth Caṇḍikā’s own terrifying Śakti, savage in her fury and howling like a hundred jackals.

8.24 And she, the unvanquished one, said to Śiva of dark, matted locks, ‘Go, my lord, as my messenger to Śumbha and NiŚumbha.

8.25 Say to those two arrogant dānavas, Śumbha and NiŚumbha, and to the other dānavas assembled there for battle:

8.26 “Indra must regain the three worlds, the gods must again enjoy the sacrificial oblations, and you must return to the nether world if you wish to live.

But if through the conceit of strength you are desirous of battle, then come and let my
jackals be satiated with your flesh!”

Since the Devī appointed Śiva himself as messenger, she has come to be known in this world as Śivadūtī.

Hearing Śiva declare the Devī’s words, the great asuras were filled with indignation and went to where Kātyāyanī stood.

At the outbreak of battle, the gods’ adversaries, arrogant in their anger, rained torrents of arrows, spears, and lances upon the Devī.

And she, with great arrows shot from her resounding bow, playfully split asunder their hurtling arrows, lances, spears, and axes.

Kālī roamed about the battlefront, slashing her enemies to shreds with her spear and crushing them with her skull-topped staff.

And Brahmāṇī, wherever she went, left her enemies sapped of strength, disabled by the holy water sprinkled from her waterpot.

Māheśvarī slew the daityas with her trident; so, too, did Vaiṣṇavī with her discus, Kaumārī with her spear, and the wrathful Aindrī with her thunderbolt. Daityas and dānavas, tom asunder, fell by the hundreds, discharging torrents of blood upon the earth.

They fell, scattered by blows from Vārāhī’s boarlike snout, pierced through the chest by her tusks, and ripped apart by her discus.

Nārasiṁhī, tearing other great asuras apart with her claws and devouring them, roamed about the battlefield, filling the sky with her roars.

Dazed by Śivadūtī’s violent laughter, the asuras fell to the ground, and she devoured those fallen ones.

When the enemy troops saw the enraged band of Mothers crushing the mighty asuras by diverse means, they fled.

Seeing the remaining daityas flee, tormented thus by the band of Mothers, the great asura Raktabīja went forth in anger to do battle.

Whenever a drop of blood fell from his body to the ground, an asura of like measure
would rise up from the earth.

With club in hand the great asura fought with Indra’s Śakti. Then Aindrī struck Raktabīja with her thunderbolt.

Blood streamed in torrents from the stricken asura, and from that blood rose up warriors of identical form and might.

As many drops of blood fell from his body, so many beings of equal valor, strength, and courage arose,

and those who sprang up from his blood battled there with the Mothers ever more fiercely, hurling the most formidable of weapons.

When the Devī’s thunderbolt struck Raktabīja’s head, blood flowed again, and from it asuras were born by the thousands.

In the combat Vaiṣṇavī attacked the lord of asuras with her discus, and Aindri beat him with her mace.

Blood flowed from the cuts of Vaiṣṇavī’s discus, and therefrom great asuras of equal measure arose by the thousands and filled the world.

Kaumārī with her spear, Vārhāhī with her sword, and Māheśvarī with her trident struck the great asura Raktabīja,

and he, the mighty, rage-filled daitya, struck all the Mothers one by one with his club.

Out of the blood that streamed upon the earth from the relentless wounds of spear, lance, and other weapons, asuras sprang up by the hundreds,

and those demons born from this one demon’s flowing blood pervaded all the world. Utter terror seized the gods.

Caṇḍikā burst into laughter at their despair and said to Kālī, ‘O Cāmundā, open wide your mouth

and quickly drink in the drops of blood from my weapons’ blows and the great asuras born therefrom.

Roam about on the battlefield and devour the great demons sprung from Raktabīja. So shall this daitya, drained of blood, go to his destruction.
As you consume those fierce asuras, others shall not arise.’ Having spoken thus, the Devī attacked Raktabīja with her lance,

while Kālī avidly lapped up his blood. Raktabīja turned upon Caṇḍikā with his club,

but his cudgel blows caused her not even the slightest pain. From his beaten body blood flowed copiously

in every direction, and Cāmuṇḍā engulfed it with her mouth. And within her mouth those great asuras who sprang into being from the flow,

those she now devoured, even while drinking Raktabīja’s blood.

The Devī assailed Raktabīja with lance, thunderbolt, arrows, swords, and spears while Cāmuṇḍā drank his blood.

O king, battered by that array of weapons and drained of blood, the great asura Raktabīja toppled to the ground.

The gods attained immeasurable joy, O king, and the band of Mothers born from them danced about, intoxicated with blood.”
8.1–7: Śumbha loses all reason upon news of the second failed mission and the loss of his two servants. Overpowered by lust and rage, he marshals the vast numbers of his demonic hosts, clan by clan: the Udāyudha (“with upraised weapons”), the Kambu (“plunderer”), the Koṭivīrya (“eminently brave”), the Dhūmra (“smoky”), the Kālaka (“dark, black”), the Daurhṛda (“evil-hearted, villainous”), the Maurya (possibly “destroyer”), and the Kālakeya, also expressing darkness. This mobilization is the next step in the steady escalation.

8.8–10: At this point the Devī’s opposing forces consist of the lovely Cāṇḍikā- Ambikā, her lion, and the horrific Kālī. Here the text employs various forms of sound to express divine power: the bowstring’s resonance, the lion’s roar, the clanging of the bell, and—drowning them all out—Kālī’s bloodcurdling howls. “Filling every direction” signifies divine omnipresence.

8.11–21: As the enraged asura throngs circle round, the Devī multiplies her forces. She calls forth seven śaktis or individual energies from the bodies of the male gods (8.13). Each śakti, personified as the god’s female counterpart, displays the specific signs of the corresponding deity: his form, adornments, weapons, and vehicle.

From Brahmā emerges Brahmāṇī, riding in a swan-yoked chariot and personifying sattvic, purifying power. In Hindu tradition the swan (hamsa) possesses the ability to separate milk from water, metaphorically to distinguish what is true and abiding from what is impermanent and fleeting. When repeated many times over, haṁsa, haṁsa, haṁsa... is perceived in reversal as the mantra so ‘haṁ, so ‘haṁ, so ‘haṁ... meaning “I am that,” “I am Brahman.” Brahmāṇī’s prayer beads symbolize japa (repetition of the mantra) and therefore contemplation of the Divine. The waterpot, symbolizing wealth, fertility, and immortality, also contains her power of purification in the form of holy water.

Māheśvarī is the feminine derivative of Maheśvara (“Great Lord”), an epithet of Śiva as the destroyer of ignorance and the lord of yogis. She appears riding the bull Nandi, a symbol of dharma, who stands on the four legs of truth, purity, compassion, and generosity. Māheśvarī is bedecked with Śiva’s traditional symbols: the trident (signifying creation, preservation, and dissolution), serpents (symbolizing immortality, fertility, regeneration, and the eternal cycle of time), and the crescent moon (symbolizing passing time, measured by the lunar waxing and waning).

Kaumārī is the śakti of Śiva’s son Kumāra (Skanda), the war god represented as a beautiful youth. As his power, she challenges the spiritually ignorant to battle and thus offers the opportunity for inner growth. Her peacock, Paravāṇi, represents alternatively the glory of the manifest universe or the bewitching power of avidyāmāyā. What distinguishes the two readings is merely a difference of attitude regarding the world.

Viṣṇu contributes three śaktis to the group of seven. First comes Vaiṣṇavī, the śakti of his supreme form, who emerges mounted on the fabulous bird Garuda and holds the symbols of conch, discus, mace, bow, and sword. Traditionally, Viṣṇu has ten avatāras or earthly incarnations, which
follow an evolutionary progression through the forms of fish, tortoise, boar, man-lion, dwarf, the axe-wielding Paraśu Rāma, the Rāma of the Rāmāyaṇa, Kṛṣṇa, the Buddha, and the yet to be born Kalki, whose arrival will mark the end of the present yuga, or world-age. Vārāhī is the sakti of Viṣṇu’s third or boar incarnation. The ferocious Nārasimhī, half-woman and half-lioness, symbolizes the awakening of human consciousness within the physical (animal) body. Whatever it may have meant to the author who conceived it, for us the image of constellations being scattered by the toss of Nārasimhī’s mane reflects with rare poetry that human consciousness is not limited to the confines of the physical body and surrounding environs, but soars through the power of imagination to the realm of the stars.

Aindrī, like the all-seeing Indra, has a thousand eyes, wields the thunderbolt (vajra) that represents strength, and rides upon the elephant Airāvata, an imposing mount for the chief of the Vedic gods. The scholar Thomas B. Cobum notes that Aindrī and the names of the other saktis, except for Brahmāṇī, are not feminine versions of the male names but derivative forms that mean “belonging to” or “proceeding from.” He suggests the reason, especially in Aindrī’s case, may be to break with the earlier mythological concept of goddess-as-consort in order to express the idea of goddess-as-power. In the Ṛgveda and throughout the epic period, Indra’s consort is well known as Indrāṇī. The name Aindrī, first found in the Devīmāhātmya, refashions her identity as independent from her previous role of divine spouse.

Just as we understand the radiance (tejas) of the male gods from which the Devī’s form coalesced (2.9–19) to represent not their own individual powers but her power inherent in them, here, too, we should regard the saktis not as the gods’ own powers but as diverse manifestations of the one Śakti. She herself makes this point clear later on, when she identifies the saktis as projections of her own power. When they withdraw, it is not back into the gods from whom they emerged, but directly into her (10.5–8).

8.22–28: The Śākta view of the Devī as superior to and independent of the male gods becomes abundantly clear when Śiva, who so far seems to have had the role of a bystander, finds himself surrounded by the seven saktis and makes the unexpected remark, “Let the asuras quickly be slain for my satisfaction.” This is not just puzzling, but presumptuous. At least the Devī finds it so, because immediately from her body steps forth her own sakti, more terrifying than all the others. Here called Aparājitā (“the unvanquished one”), this sakti orders Śiva himself to deliver an ultimatum to Śumbha and NiŚumbha! Note the symmetry here with Śumbha’s employment of Sugrīva as a messenger. Accordingly, this immensely powerful sakti is also named Śivadūti (“she whose messenger is Śiva,” 8.28). The point of this name, and of the incident that prompted it, is that no god, however powerful, is superior to the power (sakti) of the Divine Mother.

8.29–39: Inevitably another battle breaks out after the asuras confront the Devī, here called Kātyāyanī. Later described as gentle-faced and adorned with three eyes (11.25), Kātyāyanī was probably the family goddess of the Āryan sages known as the Kātyas. The name reveals her Vedic credentials, although her three eyes suggest a later Śaiva influence. Sources earlier than the Devīmāhātmya, notably the Durgāstotra and Aniruddha’s hymn from the Harivamśa, equate her with Durgā. The Vāmanapurâṇa describes her incomparable effulgence as shining throughout the world.
Without question, the name Kātyāyanī is equivalent to the names Durgā, Caṇḍikā, and Ambikā in signifying the Devī’s supreme form.

Once again, the Devī makes a playful, effortless assault on the asuras. While she remains serene and seemingly above the fray, the śaktis engage more intensively in the battle, each according to her unique abilities. The contrast between the fierce Kālī and the lovely Brahmāṇī is especially instructive. Kālī’s energy is shown as raw and brutal as she slashes and batters away (8.32). Brahmāṇī, on the other hand, demonstrates a gentler power. Call it conscience or innate goodness. We have all been on the verge of doing something we know to be wrong, when an inner voice appeals to our higher sensibility and restrains us. That nobler impulse is symbolized by the sprinkling of Brahmāṇī’s holy water, which leaves her enemies—and our disgraceful urges—sapped of strength (8.33).

Verse 8.39 refers to the seven śaktis collectively as the mātrgaṇa (“band of mothers”). Known also as the Saptamāṭrīkās (“Seven Little Mothers”), or simply as the Mothers, these fierce goddesses fight for the preservation of the world. Although they are extremely ancient in origin and originally quite different in character, the allegory of the Devīmāhātmya presents them as individualized and internalized powers in the sādhaka’s struggle for spiritual enlightenment.

8.40–52: When the demon Raktabīja strides onto the battlefield in the wake of the fleeing demons, he simultaneously makes his first appearance in Sanskrit literature. His very name (“he whose seed is blood”) identifies him as a force to be reckoned with, for whenever a drop of his blood falls to earth, another demon of equal size and strength springs up. Although only one of Śumbha’s retainers, he possesses immense power—enough to warrant as much attention in the text as the chief asura, Mahiṣa, did in the second carita. The account of each one’s battle scene runs to twenty-three verses. The Mothers’ attacks fail to kill him but only draw the blood from which countless other asuras proliferate until utter terror seizes the gods (8.52). Note the symmetry between their terror and the fear that earlier gripped the asuras who fled from the wrathful Mothers (8.39).

8.53–63: Caṇḍikā only laughs at the gods’ despair, because even this fierce battle is nothing but her divine play. Ever in control, she instructs the gruesome Cāmuṇḍā-Kālī to drink the drops of Raktabīja’s blood as they fall, and soon the asura lies dead.

Allegorically, Raktabīja’s amazing replicative ability and the rajasic redness of his blood symbolize the almost unstoppable power of desire. Here we must make the distinction that not all desire is evil. Like everything else in the universe, desire comes in many colors, depending on the particular mixture of the three guṇas. The Devī herself takes form as desire, expressed by the metaphor of thirst in the Aparājītāstuti (5.35–37). But the kind of desire Raktabīja represents is not the divine thirst to experience the joys of the creation, but an aggressive, perverted grasping that stems from the ego’s aching, existential deficiency. Such desire never remains satisfied for long, and the more it is gratified, the more it proliferates. The ghastly image of Kālī lapping up the copious flow of Raktabīja’s blood, which swarms with nascent demons, illustrates graphically that desire is best dealt with before it gets out of hand. Here Kālī’s destructive power manifests as a protective, beneficial force.

Esoterically, Kālī’s slaying of Raktabīja relates to consciousness at a broader and deeper level.
Raktabīja’s replicative power symbolizes the working of the mind, whose every wave (vṛttī) gives rise to others. The battle with the Mothers recalls Patañjali’s instruction to counter negative thought-waves with their opposite. Much to our dismay, just as a conscious attempt to “think good thoughts” often results in arousing our awareness of their opposite (for such is the nature of our dualistic mode of thinking), the Mothers’ attacks only draw more blood and create more demons. Patañjali’s advice is to counter negative thought-waves with positive ones and then to relinquish identification with both. According to Śākta sādhana, here is where Cāmuṇḍā-Kālī comes in. Cāmuṇḍā is the power of concentrated awareness that leads to the awakening of spiritual consciousness, and her slaying of Raktabīja symbolizes that awakening through the destruction or cessation of the vṛttis. The grisly scene of Raktabīja’s destruction illustrates the meaning of the Navārṇamantra (7.23–27): that Cāmuṇḍā is the Divine Mother acting to grant passage from the relative to the Absolute. She alone is the liberating knowledge that stills the vṛttis and brings union with the Divine.

While the gods rejoice at Raktabīja’s defeat, the Seven Little Mothers revel in a blood-intoxicated dance that preserves the distant memory of their primordial, violent nature.
The Slaying of Niśumbha

9.1 The king said:

9.2 “Wonderful is this, revered sir, that you have told me about the Devī’s glorious deed in slaying Raktabīja.

9.3 I wish to hear more about what Śumbha and the wrathful Niśumbha did after Raktabīja was killed.”

9.4 The seer said:

9.5 “After Raktabīja was killed and the others slain in battle, Śumbha and Niśumbha fell into unparalleled rage.

9.6 Seeing that his mighty army was being slaughtered, Niśumbha was overcome with fury and rushed forward with the best of his demon forces.

9.7 In front of him, behind him, and on both sides, great asuras, their lips compressed in anger, advanced to slay the Devī.

9.8 Having battled the Mothers, Śumbha, mighty in valor and surrounded by his forces, came forward in fury to attack the Devī.

9.9 Fierce fighting erupted between them, and like two thunderclouds, Śumbha and Niśumbha rained down torrents of arrows on the Devī.

9.10 Cauḍikā intercepted them with her own volley of arrows and struck the demon chiefs in the limbs with a stream of weapons.

9.11 Niśumbha, seizing his sharpened spear and shining shield, struck the lion, the Devī’s magnificent mount, on the head.

9.12 Her lion assaulted, the Devī swiftly cut through Niśumbha’s superb sword with her razor-sharp arrow and through his shield, emblazoned with eight moons.
His shield and sword broken, the asura hurled his spear, and as it came toward her, that, too, the Devī cut in half with her discus.

Blustering with rage, the dānava Niśumbha seized his lance, and as it came flying, the Devī crushed it with a blow of her fist.

Then swinging his club, Niśumbha flung it at Caṇḍikā. The Devī’s trident reduced it to ashes.

After wounding the onrushing demon chief with ax in hand, the Devī forced him to the ground with a volley of arrows.

When he saw Niśumbha, his brother of fearsome strength, lying fallen on the ground, Śumbha moved forward, greatly enraged, to slay Ambikā.

Standing in his chariot and holding aloft magnificent weapons, he shone forth and filled the entire sky with his eight incomparable arms.

While she watched him approach, the Devī sounded her conch, set off an unbearable reverberation with her bowstring,

and filled the firmament with the ringing of her bell, which sapped the strength of the assembled demon armies.

Then the lion filled every direction with great roars that caused even the elephants’ mighty prowess to falter.

Kālī sprang skyward and alighted, pounding the earth with her two hands. The noise drowned out all the previous sounds.

Śivadūṭī laughed loudly and menacingly. When the asuras grew terrified at the sounds, Śumbha flew into a monstrous rage.

Ambikā cried out for him, that evil-natured one, to stop, and the gods cheered her on to victory from their positions in the sky.

But Śumbha approached and hurled a fearsome, flaming spear, an oncoming mass of fire that the Devī’s own firebrand warded off.

Śumbha’s leonine roar pervaded the space between heaven, earth, and the netherworld, but the Devī’s violent thunderclap drowned it out, O king.

The Devī split Śumbha’s flying arrows with sharp arrows of her own, and likewise he
split hers, each discharging arrows by the hundreds and thousands.

9.28 Then the enraged Caṇḍikā pierced Śumbha with her lance. Wounded, he fainted and fell to the ground.

Meanwhile Niśumbha, regaining consciousness, seized his bow and shot arrows at the Devī, Kālī, and the lion.

9.29

And then, creating ten thousand arms for himself, the daitya chief, that son of Diti, engulfed Caṇḍikā with ten thousand discuses.

9.30

Thus provoked, the glorious Durgā, who destroys adversity and afflictions, cut through his discuses and missiles with arrows of her own.

9.31

Niśumbha, surrounded by his demon army, swiftly seized his club and rushed at Caṇḍikā to kill her.

9.32

Instantly she split the onrushing Niśumbha’s club with her keen-edged sword. He grasped his lance,

9.33 and as he approached with weapon in hand, Caṇḍikā pierced him, the afflictor of the gods, through the heart with a swiftly hurled spear.

From his heart’s gaping wound came forth another mighty and valorous being, who shouted for the Devī to stop.

9.34

Bursting into derisive laughter, she severed his head with her sword, and the figure who had thus emerged fell to the ground.

9.35

The lion then devoured the asuras whose necks it had crushed with its fearsome fangs, while Kālī and Śivadūṅī devoured others.

9.36

Great asuras perished, pierced through by Kaumārī’s spear; others shrank away from the water sanctified by Brahmāṇī’s mantras.

9.37

Others fell, ripped open by Māheśvarī’s trident; some lay on the ground, smashed by the blows of Vārāhī’s snout.

9.38

Dānavas were cut to pieces, some by Vaiśṇavī’s discus and others by the thunderbolt discharged from Aindrī’s fingertips.

9.39

Some asuras perished, some fled from the great battle, and others were devoured by Kālī, Śivadūṅī, and the lion.”
Chapter 9 Commentary

9.1–3: The word māhātmya, which is an element of the title Devīmāhātmya, appears in the text for the first time in verse 9.2 and will recur several times in Chapter 12. Derived from mahātman (“having a noble nature”), māhātmya is an abstract noun meaning “magnanimity, majesty, exaltedness.” By extension, it came to denote a kind of literary composition that glorifies the “distinctive greatness” of a deity, a sacred place, or anything else worthy of veneration.\(^1\)

9.4–41: In a long battle sequence, the Devī fights one-on-one first with Niśumbha, then with Śumbha, and again with Niśumbha. At the end, Niśumbha is slain, and Śumbha lies unconscious. To understand the nature of this battle, we need to know exactly what Niśumbha represents, but by chapter’s end, the slain asura still remains an indistinct personality. The structure of the battle affords an important clue, however. The vacillation, wherein one brother is disabled only as the other rises up again, hints at the intimate connection between the two. At the beginning of the next chapter, which forms a seamless continuation of the narrative, we learn that Niśumbha was to Śumbha “as dear to him as life itself” (10.2). If we recall also Śumbha’s puzzling marriage proposal, made through the messenger, that the Devī choose either him or his valiant younger brother, Niśumbha (5.113), we see again an extreme intimacy. From this, we can deduce that if Śumbha is the ego (ahāmākāra), Niśumbha is its tag-along sibling, the persistent, clinging sense of attachment (mamatva, marnatā).\(^2\) Niśumbha is as dear to Śumbha as life itself, because the ego cherishes its attachment to body, mind, possessions, and all the other adjucts that shape its identity.

In Sanskrit, such an adjunct is called an upādhi, meaning variously a defining attribute, a limiting qualification, a substitute, anything that may be taken for something else, appearance mistaken for reality. The ego’s sense of identity derives from the totality of a human being’s upadhis: physical appearance, demeanor, likes and dislikes, family roles and relationships, relationships outside the family, and societal roles involving gender, profession, nationality, religious affiliation, and whatever else makes each one of us unique. While Śumbha represents the subjective ego-awareness itself (I-ness), Niśumbha symbolizes the attachment to all its objective attributes (me-ness and my-ness). The Devī’s battle with the asura brothers is the infinite spirit’s struggle with the finite ego’s persistent, borrowed sense of personal identity. Ego and attachment are almost inextricably linked, and when one brother is knocked out, the other rises up again.

Niśumbha, gloriously arrayed, represents attachment to fame, influence, wealth, possessions, and the identity they confer. His shield emblazoned with eight moons is a sign of personal identity. But in the end, all that is of little value; the final meaning of upādhi is not “defining attribute” but “appearance mistaken for reality.” That point is made when Niśumbha, in all his splendor, is knocked senseless to the ground. Even so, he rises up again in horrifying desperation, a monster with ten thousand arms, grasping as it were at the countless pieces of his individuality that, in truth, are worthless tokens of his separation from the Infinite. The Devī shatters them all.

Then with her spear, she penetrates his heart. Sometimes spiritual awakening dawns only after the experience of great pain, a severe wounding of the heart. The suffering of the king and the merchant
over their worldly losses is that pain of mamatva ("my-ness"), or attachment (1.42, 44). Now Niśumbha’s essence appears from his heart’s gaping wound, still reluctant to let go, pleading for the Devī to stop, but exposed and defenseless before her sword of knowledge. She slays him, and with Niśumbha destroyed, only Śumbha remains.
10

The Slaying of Śumbha

10.1 The seer said:

"Seeing the lifeless body of Niśumbha, the brother who was as dear to him as life itself, and seeing his forces being slaughtered, the enraged Śumbha spoke these words:

10.2 ‘O Durgā, who are corrupt with the arrogance of power, do not show your pride here, for though you are haughty, you fight depending on the strength of others.’

10.3 The Devī said:

10.4 ‘I am alone here in the world. Who else is there besides me? Behold, O vile one! These are but projections of my own power, now entering back into me.’

10.5 Thereupon all those goddesses, led by Brahmāṇī, merged into the Devī’s body. Then Ambikā alone remained.

10.6 The Devī said:

10.7 ‘I have now withdrawn the many forms I inhabited here, projected by my power. I stand alone. Be resolute in combat.’"

10.8 The seer said:

10.9 “Then a horrific battle broke out between the two of them, the Devī and Śumbha, while all the gods and asuras looked on.

10.10 With showers of arrows, sharp weapons, and terrifying missiles, the two met again in a combat that frightened all the world.

10.11 The wondrous weapons that Ambikā now unleashed by the hundreds, the daitya chief deflected with defensive strikes.

10.12 And the magic missiles that he hurled, the supreme Devī shattered playfully with fierce cries of contempt."
Then the asura covered her with hundreds of arrows. Provoked, the Devī discharged her arrows and split his bow.

His bow broken, the daitya chief took up his spear, but even as it rested in his hand, the Devī cut through it with her discus.

Then, grasping his sword, emblazoned with a hundred moons, the supreme lord of the daityas rushed at the Devī.

As he advanced, Caṇḍikā broke his sword with sharp arrows shot from her bow, and also his shield that shone as the sun’s rays.

His steed slain, his bow broken, his chariot wrecked, the daitya grasped his fearsome mace, intent on destroying Ambikā.

With sharp arrows, she shattered the onrushing Śumbha’s mace. Still, he rushed at her with fist upraised.

The daitya chief slammed his fist down on the Devī’s heart, and she struck him on the chest with her palm.

Struck by that blow, the demon king fell to the ground. At once, he rose up again, and springing upward, he seized the Devī and ascended high into the sky. There in mid-air Caṇḍikā battled with him.

In the sky, the daitya and Caṇḍikā fought hand to hand as never before, to the astonishment of saints and sages.

And after prolonged combat, Ambikā snatched him up, swung him around, and flung him to the earth.

Striking the ground, the evil one immediately raised his fist and ran forward, desirous of destroying Ambikā.

The Devī thrust her spear through his chest and threw that onrushing lord of all demonic creatures to the ground.

Pierced through by the Devī’s weapon, his life-breath gone, he fell to the ground, shaking all the earth together with its oceans, islands, and mountains.

When the evil one was slain, all the universe became calm, regaining its natural order, and the sky cleared.
The flaming clouds of portent that formerly gathered now subsided, and rivers again flowed along their courses when Śumbha fell slain.

All the hosts of gods were overjoyed when he lay slain, and the celestial musicians sang sweetly.

Others sounded their instruments, and throngs of heavenly nymphs danced. Favorable winds blew, and the sun shone in glory.

The sacred fires glowed peacefully, and the sounds born of the four directions faded away.”
10.1–8: The key to understanding the entire third carita lies in the first six verses of Chapter 10. Note that Śumbha addresses the Devī as Durgā (10.3), a reminder that his brother’s slayer is the same supreme goddess who vanquished Mahiṣāsura. With the many names used to refer to her—Devī, Caṇḍikā, Ambikā, Kālī, and a profusion of others—it is easy to forget that the Devī is indeed one. Śumbha has forgotten. In chiding her for depending on the strength of others, he only betrays his ignorance, a refusal to recognize the unity of all existence. The Devī reveals that she is one without a second, saying, “I am alone here in the world. Who else is there besides me?” (10.5). Following this proclamation of divine unity, which has been called the mahāvākya, or great dictum, of the Devīmāhātmya,1 she explains that all the goddesses who fought beside her—Kālī, Śivadūtī, and the Mothers—are but projections of her power, as are all the other forms she inhabits (10.8).

Still, Śumbha, as the individual ego, can never reach beyond Mahāmāyā’s deluding veil, which limits consciousness to the dimensions of time and space and creates the sense of separate but impermanent selfhood. Until Mahāmāyā lifts that veil, the truth of infinite being is beyond comprehension.

The structure of the third carita reveals a pattern of parallel challenge, counterchallenge, and escalation. The initial antagonism involves only the Devī and Sugrīva, then the Devī and Dhūmratalocana. When Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa are sent to capture her, she multiplies her strength by calling forth Kālī, who defeats the two servants and earns the nickname Cāmuṇḍā. When Śumbha mobilizes the asura clans, the Devī calls forth the Seven Little Mothers and Śivadūtī. Then the self-replicating Raktabīja brings the escalation to a climax with the countless asuras born from his blood. His defeat signals the de-escalation that ends with the Devī finally facing Śumbha alone (10.8).

The parallelism suggests that just as Kālī, the Mothers, and Śivadūtī are multiple manifestations of the one Devī, the asuras we have met along the way are Śumbha’s—the ego’s—projections. Are we to conclude that the Devī and Śumbha are equals? Not at all. The Divine Mother is infinite consciousness, and everything in the universe is her projection—even Śumbha. He is a bit of finite awareness whose subsequent manifestations symbolize human weaknesses and failings, the further fragmentations of something that is already partial and imperfect. Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa are the ego’s self-aggrandizing and lust-inciting capacities. They drive Śumbha’s crazed desire to possess the Devī’s lovely physical form, and they flatter him with an account of his own dazzling wealth and power, which, stolen from the gods, is not really his at all. The messenger Sugrīva represents the ego’s capacity for guile in attempting to have its way, and when that fails, Dhūmratalocana steps in as the abject ignorance that resorts to brute force. Raktabīja stands for desire pathologized as rampant greed, which befools the whole world with its presence; and Niśumbha is the sense of attachment that makes all the others possible. He occupies the closest position to ego itself. In these all-too-human asuras we recognize our own faults and shortcomings.

The slaying of Niśumbha is qualitatively different from the Devī’s previous conquests. Earlier Dhūmratalocana, Caṇḍa, and Muṇḍa attempted to capture the Devī by physical force, just as in the first carita Viṣṇu’s struggle against Madhu and Kaiṭabha involved brute strength until Mahāmāyā...
outwitted the asura pair. In each struggle, tamas is the predominant guṇa. Rajas becomes foremost in the battle with Mahiṣa, whose rage is fueled by desire, and in the conflict with Raktabīja, who embodies desire out of control. Since Niśumbha symbolizes the more abstract sense of attachment, the battles with him and his brother Śumbha are existential struggles to be won only by higher forms of spiritual insight through the Devī’s sattvic power. The struggle with Śumbha is the most rarefied and difficult of all, because the ego, the motivating force behind all the other asuras, is extremely elusive. In total, the battle scenes teach that sādhana involves every dimension of who we are, from our gross (physical) and subtle (mental) components, involving actions and attitudes, to the causal ignorance that masks our true nature.

10.9–27: For the first time in any battle scene, the weapons—both the Devī’s and the asura’s—are described as divya, translated here as “wondrous” (10.12) and “magic” (10.13). Of course, when the Devī revealed herself as the source of the various gods’ powers in the second chapter, it goes without saying that those, too, displayed a divine quality. But the specific mention here of the weapons as divya (from the same source as deva, devī, and English divine) indicates a spiritual struggle well beyond the realm of day-to-day existence. This is confirmed again when the combatants metaphorically rise above the earth and fight in midair (10.22) until Śumbha is defeated (10.27).

10.28–32: The figure of Niśumbha taught us that we define ourselves by how we look, what we own, what we do, and what others think of us. Even after his defeat, even after the ego is stripped of all its identifying marks, the sense of individuality still hangs on in the person of Śumbha. Why? Because he still clings to the idea that he is a separate and unique entity. It is not unknown in deep meditation to feel oneself slipping into a still deeper state and to pull back for fear of losing one’s identity or maybe even one’s own existence. But in truth, to let the ego slip away is to relinquish a smaller identity for an unimaginably greater one; in misreading reality, we have also misread ourselves. The “death of ego” marks the passage from ever-changing becoming into pure being.

The Devimāhātmya expresses this enlightenment with the beatific image of a universe restored to perfect order (10.28–32). It presents a lovely picture of calm and clarity, wherein everything is exactly as it should be, but those poetic images fall far short of expressing the soul’s release into inexpressible infinitude. Earlier, the Devimāhātmya itself admitted this inability when it extolled the divine reality as surpassing thought (4.6) and “unfathomable even to Viṣṇu, Śiva, and the other gods” (4.7).

Mystical experience—the immediate, unmediated knowledge of the Divine—cannot be described, but that has not discouraged people of all times and places from attempting to describe the ineffable with the cultural metaphors available to them. Hindus call it saccidānanda (“being-conscious-bliss”) or pūrṇa (“full”), referring to its absolute wholeness. Buddhists employ the negative imagery of śūnyatā (“emptiness”), because it is devoid of all form. Kabbalistic Jews use the term Ein Sof (“there is no end”) to allude to the infinite Absolute beyond all qualities. Christians speak of “the peace that passeth all understanding.” In the third century the Neoplatonist mystic Plotinus described the soul’s return to its source as “the flight of the alone to the Alone.” In our present age, we might prefer the psychological objectivity of “unitive dimension of being” or the philosophical abstraction of “ultimate reality.” In the Śvetāsvataropanisad, a text the author(s) of the Devimāhātmya surely knew, the sage addresses his disciples as “children of immortal bliss” and declares, “I have known
the unchanging, primeval One, the indwelling Self of all, everywhere present and all-pervading, whom the wise declare to be free from birth and eternal” (ŚU 3.21).
11

Hymn to Nārāyaṇī

11.1 The seer said:

"After the Devī had slain the great asura chief, Indra and the other gods, led by Agni, praised Kātyāyanī for granting their wishes. With hopes fulfilled, their faces beamed.

11.2 'O Devī, who remove the sufferings of those who take refuge in you, be gracious. Be gracious, mother of the entire world. Be gracious, ruler of all. Protect the universe, O Devī, who are the ruler of the moving and the unmoving.

You alone are the sustaining power of the world, for you abide in the form of the earth.

11.4 By you, who exist in the form of water, all this universe prospers, O Devī of unsurpassable strength.

Of boundless might, you are Viṣṇu's power, the source of all, the supreme māyā.

11.5 Deluded, O Devī, is all this universe. In this world, you alone, when pleased, are the cause of liberation.

All forms of knowledge are your aspects, O Devī, as are all women in the world. By you alone, the Mother, is this world filled. What praise can be sung to you who are beyond praise?

11.6 O Devī, who have become all things, who bestow enjoyment and liberation—when you are praised, what words, however excellent, can extol you?

11.7 Salutation be to you, Devī Nārāyaṇī, who abide as intelligence in the hearts of all beings, granting heavenly reward and final liberation.

11.8 Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who bring change as the moments of ever-passing time, who are the power at the cessation of the universe.

11.9 Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who are the good of all good, the auspicious one; to you who accomplish every intent; to you, the refuge, the all-knowing, shining Gaurī!

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who are the power of creation, sustenance, and
Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who are eternal; who are the source and embodiment of the threefold energy.

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who are intent on rescuing the distressed and afflicted that take refuge in you; to you, O Devī, who remove the suffering of all.

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who assume the form of Brahmāṇī, riding in a swan-yoked chariot, O Devī, and sprinkling sanctified water.

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who have the form of Māheśvarī, bearing trident, moon, and serpent, and riding a mighty bull.

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who have the form of Kaumārī, the faultless one attended by peacock and cock, and bearing a great spear.

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who have the form of Vaiṣṇavī, holding the supreme weapons of conch, discus, mace, and bow. Be gracious!

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, auspicious one, who have Viṣṇu’s boarlike form, grasping a great, formidable discus and uplifting the earth with your tusks.

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who in the ferocious form of the man-lion are intent on killing the daityas and protecting the three worlds.

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who are adorned with diadem, great thunderbolt, and thousand-eyed radiance; to you, O Aindrī, who took the demon Vṛtra’s life-breath!

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who in the form of Śivadūtī, of frightful visage and piercing shrieks, slew the mighty demon army.

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, whose mouth bares its terrifying teeth and whose neck is adorned with a garland of skulls; to you, O Cāmuṇḍā, destroyer of Muṇḍa!

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who are good fortune, modesty, great knowledge, faith, prosperity, satisfaction to the ancestral spirits, constancy, the great night, and the great illusion.

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, most excellent Sarasvatī, who are intelligence and well-being, the divine consort and the dark one, ever constant. Be gracious, O you who are supreme!

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who exist in the form of all, who are the ruler of all, possessing all power, protect us from fears. O Devī Durgā, salutation be to you!
11.25 May this gentle face of yours, adorned with three eyes, protect us in every way. O Kātyāyanī, salutation be to you!

11.26 May your terrible, flaming trident, exceedingly sharp and destroying all asuras, protect us from dread. O Bhadrakālī, salutation be to you!

11.27 May your bell that destroys the daityas’ life-force and fills the world with its ringing protect us from all evils, O Devī, even as a mother protects her children.

11.28 May your sword, smeared with the mire of asuras’ blood and fat and blazing as the sun’s rays, be for our welfare. O Caṇḍikā, we bow to you!

When pleased, you destroy all afflictions, but when displeased, you thwart all aspirations. No calamity befalls those who have taken refuge in you, and they who resort to you become a refuge to others.

11.30 O Devī, multiplying your own form into many, you have wrought destruction on the mighty asuras who hate righteousness. O Ambikā, who else can accomplish that?

Who other than you abides in all forms of learning, in the sacred texts that are lights of understanding, in the primordial wisdom of the Vedas? Yet who else confounds this universe in the darkest abyss of attachment?

Where malevolent beings and venomous serpents lurk, where enemies and thieves abound, where forest conflagrations rage, there and even in mid-ocean you stand and protect the universe.

O ruler of the universe, you protect the universe. You are the essence of all things, and you support all that is. All kings must praise you, O revered one, and those who bow to you in devotion become the refuge of all.

Be gracious, O Devī. Even as you have destroyed the asuras, protect us always from the fear of enemies. May you subdue the evils of all the worlds and great disasters born of ominous portents.

To those who bow down to you, be gracious, O Devī, who remove the afflictions of all and who are worthy of praise by the dwellers of the three worlds. Confer your boons upon the worlds.’

11.36 The Devī said:

11.37 ‘O hosts of gods, I am the giver of boons. Whatever blessing is your heart’s desire, choose that, and I will grant it for the welfare of the world.’
The gods said:

‘O ruler of all, may you allay all the miseries of the three worlds and so, too, annihilate our enemies.’

The Devī said:

‘When the twenty-eighth cycle in the age of the manu Vaivasvata has come, two other great asuras, also named Śumbha and NiŚumbha, will arise.

Then shall I be born in the home of the cowherd Nanda, brought forth from Yaśodā’s womb; and dwelling in the Vindhya Mountains, I shall destroy the two asuras.

Again, having incarnated on earth in a surpassingly horrific form, I shall slay the demons descended from Vipracitti.

Upon devouring those fierce asuras, my teeth will become red like pomegranate flowers.

Thereafter, in praise of me, the gods in heaven and the humans in the mortal realm will forever call me Raktadantikā.

Again, when no rain has fallen for a hundred years and there is no water on earth, then praised by sages, I shall appear, but not born of a womb.

Since I shall behold the sages with a hundred eyes, humankind will glorify me as Śatāksī.

Causing the rains to fall, O gods, I shall support the entire world with life-sustaining vegetables brought forth from my own substance.

Thus shall I be celebrated on earth as Śākambhari,

and then also shall I slay a great asura called Durgama and thus come to be celebrated as the Devī Durgā.

Again, when I have assumed a terrible form in the Himalayas, I shall destroy malevolent beings for the protection of the sages.

Then all the sages, with bodies bowed, will praise me. Thus shall I come to be celebrated by the name of Bhīmadevī.

When a demon called Aruṇa wreaks great havoc in the three worlds, then shall I assume form as a swarm of countless bees
and slay the great asura for the welfare of the three worlds. Thus will people everywhere extol me as Bhrāmarī.

11.55 And so, whenever danger arises from demonic sources, I shall descend and bring about the complete destruction of enemies.”
11.1–2: By way of introduction to the fourth and final hymn, the Nārāyanīstuti (11.3–35), Indra and the other gods, this time led by Agni, approach the Devī in a spirit of thanksgiving. Here she is called Kātyāyanī (→8.29), a name used interchangeably with Caṇḍikā, Ambikā, and Durgā to denote her all-powerful aspect, presiding over the functions of creation, preservation, and destruction.¹

11.3: Along with the preceding verse, the first four verses of the Nārāyanīstuti (11.3–6) and six near the end (11.29–34) are in a meter called upajātī, which has forty-four syllables per śloka. Like the elegant vasanta-tilakā meter of the Śakrādistuti, it imparts an eloquence to the exalted praise of the verses that frame the main body of the hymn. Reverting to the anustubh meter, the hymn’s central portion (11.7–28), like that of the Apara-jitāstuti, has the character of a litany.

The Nārāyanīstuti has other features in common with the preceding hymns. Like the Śakrādistuti, it comments on the action of the foregoing narrative, and with all three other hymns it shares common language and themes. In a sense, it is a summation of all that has gone before, and on that comprehensiveness rests its reputation as a central statement of Śākta theology and devotion.²

The opening verse concisely presents the themes of divine intervention (as removal of suffering), divine motherhood, sovereignty, and protection. The order of presentation progresses from the personal and immediate relationship with the Devī, who offers refuge and alleviates suffering, to the cosmic understanding that she is the mother of the universe, who rules over all that is moving and unmoving.

11.4: The themes here are support and nurture. The word ādhāra means both a physical support or substratum and a sustaining power. Since the verse also specifies that the Devī abides in physical form as the earth (mahī, having the connotation of ground, soil, or land), ādhāra is best understood as the energy that supports it.

Because the Devī exists in the form of water (ap), everything thrives (āpyāyatē). Although the two Sanskrit words are unrelated (the verb deriving from pyai, “to swell, increase, overflow”), their alliteration and the coincidental connection of water and overflowing make for powerful imagery grounded in the world of nature. The much earlier Ṛgvedic hymns repeatedly refer to the Āpah goddesses, “the Waters,” as “our mothers.” Semipersonified as spirits of the primeval water, these plural goddesses were identified with the universal principle of motherhood.³ According to one hymn, before heaven and earth came into being, the Waters received the primal germ that contained the gods, all gathered together (ṚV 10.82.5–6). Even in later Vedic texts, which explore the idea of water as the basis of all fertility, the Āpah goddesses retained their original connection to natural phenomena.

Combining the imagery of earth and water, the Nārāyanīstuti’s second verse preserves primordial memories of the Mother Goddess as the earth itself and as the waters that cause it to bring forth its abundance. It praises the energy supporting this life-sustaining power of heaven and earth as the Devī’s unsurpassable strength.
Next, the hymn celebrates māyā as both the deluding power that binds (avidyāmāyā) and the power that leads to the knowledge that liberates (vidyāmāyā). This single verse summarizes a longer passage (1.53–58) in which Medhas explains how Mahāmāyā, Viṣṇu’s meditative sleep (yoganidrā), hurls people “into the whirlpool of attachment (mamatā, literally “my-ness”) and “seizes the minds of even the wise and draws them into delusion.” Yet, “it is she who graciously bestows liberation on humanity.”

In the earlier passage, Medhas calls Mahāmāyā “the meditative sleep of [Viṣṇu,] the lord of the world” (yoganidrā jagatpateh) (1.54). The Aparājitāstuti employs the epithet Viṣṇumāyā, the deluding power of Viṣṇu (5.14–16). Both expressions carry the idea of possession, even though in the first instance Viṣṇu is clearly subject to the Devī’s power at that point in the story. The present verse makes a subtle but significant departure with the term Vaiṣṇavī śaktih, which does not mean power as Viṣṇu’s possession (that would be viṣṇoḥ śaktih or viṣṇuśaktiḥ, but power in the Devī’s own right, operative through but not necessarily belonging to Viṣṇu. The distinction may seem hairsplitting, but the broader implication is not. Even as māyā, the Devī is supreme (paramā).

By her the entire universe is deluded (samohita). Some translations of this verse render the adjective as “enchanted,” or “bewitched,” and given that the third carita’s general focus is on the sattvic Devī, the idea of her enchanting beauty is reasonable. Monier-Williams’s Sanskrit-English Dictionary defines samohita in both negative and conceivably positive terms as “stupefied, bewildered, fascinated, enraptured.” But samohita derives from sammuh, to which the same dictionary ascribes only the pejorative connotations of stupefaction, bewilderment, confusion, perplexity, and unconsciousness. In the overall context of Medhas’s discourse on the reason for the king’s and the merchant’s misery (1.53–55), to which the present verse clearly alludes, the likely rendering of samohita is “deluded.”

The same Mahāmāyā is, when gracious, the cause of liberation in this very world (11.5). The adjective prasanna, meaning either “gracious” or “pleased,” leaves open the question of whether liberation is freely bestowed or earned. When the Śakrādistuti praises the Devī as “good fortune in the dwellings of the virtuous and misfortune in the abodes of the wicked” (4.5), it intimates that in this world of cause and effect we earn the consequences of our actions. Yet that same hymn extols her compassion even toward the wicked, whose misconduct she subdues (4.21). Thus we learn that the Mother operates through both principles. Similarly, Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa answered the perennial philosophical question of grace and self-effort with the simple but profound teaching that the breeze of divine grace is always blowing and one needs only to set the sails of the mind to catch it.

The intimate relationship between grace and self-effort is further borne out by the adjective prasanna itself. It derives from the verb prasad, meaning either “to settle down, to become clear or calm” or “to become satisfied, pleased, or gracious.” The former meaning reminds us of Patañjali’s teaching that enlightenment follows upon the restraint of thought-waves in the field of consciousness (YS 1.2). For the restless, finite mind to open itself to the calm of infinite awareness, effort is necessary, but without the underlying constancy of divine consciousness in the first place, all effort would be futile. As with the concept of śraddhā (→ 4.5), we see an element of interaction between the human and the Divine. The word prasanna, with its range of meaning, validates equally the jñāni’s self-effort in stilling the thought waves of the mind and the bhakta’s intimate partaking of the Mother’s love, which we may call divine grace.
11.6: “All forms of knowledge are your aspects” relates to ideas expressed earlier: “you are the light of understanding” (1.79), “you are the treasury that holds the taintless Vedic hymns” (4.10), and “you are the intelligence by which the essence of all scriptures is understood” (4.11). Śakti is pure consciousness (cit) and contains within herself all possible modifications of consciousness, which include the manifold forms of knowledge. The supreme, absolute knowledge (vidya) is unitary, but this verse speaks of “knowledges” in the plural (vidyāḥ), referring to the relative or lower forms of knowledge that include all branches of learning: the sciences, philosophy, politics, agriculture, medicine, commerce, and every other intellectual or practical skill.

The laud that all women are her aspects and by her alone is this world filled echoes the Devī’s abiding presence in the form of mother, incarnate not only in all women but in every creature (→ 5.71–73).

The rhetorical question, “What praise can be sung to you who are beyond praise?” recalls the Brahmāstuti’s similar utterances (1.82–84), designed to suggest divine ineffability.

11.7: Switching to the anustubh meter, which will continue through verse 11.28, the hymn now assumes the character of a litany.

“O Devī, who have become all things” echoes Medhas’s teaching that she has the world as her form (1.64). This is an unequivocal statement of pariṇāmavāda, the doctrine that the multiplicity we experience as the universe is an actual transformation of the ultimate unity and not merely an appearance. Just as clay is transformed into a pot through a change of form but not of substance, or as thread is woven into cloth, the Divine Mother herself takes form as her creation. In this point the nondual Śākta philosophy differs from Śamkarācārya’s Advaita Vedānta, which embraces vivartavāda, the doctrine that the created universe is not a transformation but only an appearance—neither real nor wholly unreal—superimposed on the sole reality of the immutable Brahman.

The Śākta philosophy considers the physical universe—called virāj, the Devī’s cosmic body—to be the supreme intellect permeating the aggregate of gross forms; in other words, consciousness manifest as matter. The term virāj (literally, “ruling far and wide, excellent, splendid”) derives from a root meaning “to rule, shine, be beautiful, be eminent” and underscores the miraculous nature of the creation and its inherent worth. If we concede that the universe is “just māyā,” we should do so with the Śākta understanding that māyā is nothing less than the creative aspect of divinity. Śākta nondualism proclaims that the natural universe, however imperfect in our experience, is “absolutely saturated in the Divine.” It is a point that the Devīmāhātmya makes emphatically: “She is eternal, having the world as her form” (1.64).

The other idea, which follows naturally and inevitably upon the doctrine of pariṇāma and which bears enormous weight, is contained in the eight-syllable compound, bhukti-mukti-pradāyinī. Its modest appearance belies its significance and leaves us wondering whether our author(s) found it so obvious as to warrant little more attention than that. For in that single expression lies a key to understanding the whole of the Devīmāhātmya.

The first element (bhukti, “worldly enjoyment”) is implicit in earlier passages such as verse 4.15, which specifies the pleasures of honor, wealth, love and progeny that the propitious Devī bounteously bestows in this world. But its dramatic juxtaposition to the second element (mukti, “release”), signifying eternal liberation from this world, causes us to regard both in a new light.

We recall that the framing story concerns a king and a merchant who have each suffered betrayal
and loss. The resulting inner turmoil follows them into the peaceful forest retreat of a holy man, who exposes the nature of their suffering by relating three stories of similarly dispossessed gods, evil demons, and the always-triumphant Devī. The first story reveals that she is the supreme reality who manifests as the universe. Perceived through our own veiled awareness, this universe appears polarized, filled with the clashing dualities of light and darkness, pleasure and pain, right and wrong, good and evil. The second story, through the example of Durgā’s defeat of Mahiśāsura, instructs the king how to live in the world, rewarded with the enjoyments that result from virtuous conduct. The third story, relating the destruction of Śumbha and Niśumbha, teaches the world-weary merchant how to break the bonds of saṁsāra and attain mukti, realization of the infinite, ever-blissful Self.

But for the king, there is a caveat. The word bhukti derives from the same verbal root, bhuj (“to enjoy, use, consume”), as the noun bhoga, which broadly encompasses enjoyment, eating, sexual pleasure, feeding upon, ruling over, and experiencing pleasure or pain. Bhukti, although world-affirming, carries the implicit warning that in the relative universe, where opposites define each other, to reach for one is to embrace both. Mukti, to the contrary, is world-transcending. The expression bhuktimuktipradāyinī tells us that the dazzling splendor of the universe is here for us to enjoy, but we must play by the rules, the dharma. Even then, the very fact of living an embodied existence leaves us subject to the inescapable processes of birth, growth, maturation, decline, death, and rebirth. The only way to escape the wheel of saṁsāra is to return to the ineffable source of the world’s bewitching wonder. Finally, one who is enlightened (prabuddha, literally “awakened”) recognizes that the Divine Mother is both nature and spirit and that bhukti and mukti belong to a single consciousness.

The Devī presents both options, and the choice is ours.

Like the preceding verse, this one ends with the rhetorical question of how the ineffable Devī can be extolled.

11.8: The expression buddhirupeṇa (“in the form of intelligence”) occurred in the Aparājitāstuti (5.20–22) and carries the identical meaning here. The first line of the present verse merely restates the idea more eloquently.

The theme of heavenly reward arose previously in the Śakrādistuti (4.18 and 23), and the commentary on those verses explained that in the Hindu cosmology, heavens and hells, like the earth, belong to the relative plane of existence and are no more than transitory states of reward or punishment.

The final phrase, nārāyaṇī namo ‘stu te (“salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī”), serves as the refrain of the next fifteen verses. Nowadays, the name Nārāyaṇī is regarded as an epithet of Viṣṇu’s consort, Lakṣmī. It is the feminine form of Nārāyaṇa, which the Manusmṛti applies to Brahmā, but which the Mahābhārata applies to Viṣṇu and his avatarāra, Kṛṣṇa. Nārāyaṇa signifies universal consciousness, inhabiting all forms: human beings, animals, and plants; mountains, rivers, and forests; the sun, the moon, and the distant stars. The name is a compound of nara (“man, human being”) and ayana (“going, walking, path, progress, place of refuge”), meaning that Nārāyaṇa (or, in this case, the Divine Mother Nārāyaṇī) is the ultimate resting place or goal of all humanity.

11.9: “The moments of ever-passing time” refers not only to the constant change or transformation (pariṇāma) inherent in the time-space continuum but also and more specifically to the relentless, destructive power of time, which brings the universe to periodic dissolution within the never-ending
cosmic cycle.

11.10: Sarvamahgalamāngalye means “to [you who are] the good of all good” (or “the auspiciousness of all that is auspicious”). Beneath the surface of all that is auspicious, the Divine Mother is the very essence of auspiciousness. She herself is Śivā, the auspicious one.

She is addressed as sarvārthasādhike, because she fulfills every aim or purpose (artha). Human life has four such aims (purusārthas): kārna (fulfillment of desire), artha (acquisition of wealth), dharma (fulfillment of duty), and mokiṣa (liberation). Some spiritual teachers like to reorder the purusārthas as dharma-artha-kāma-moksa, because placing dharma first guarantees that righteousness will be the guiding principle for all the rest. Note that dharma, kāma, and artha relate to worldly life (bhukti) and that moksa is liberation (mukti) (→ 11.7). This distinction mirrors the difference between Suratha’s concerns, which remain this-worldly and centered on the first three aims, and Samādhi’s single remaining goal, which is spiritual liberation. Recognizing that, we see that the expressions sarvārthasādhike and bhuktimuktipradāyinī are virtually synonymous.

As śaranyā, the Divine Mother grants shelter and protection from all fears and dangers; in suggesting an unassailable place of refuge, the epithet is closely related in meaning to the name Durgā. Tryambakā (“three-eyed”) refers to divine wisdom and omniscience, and gaurī or Gaurī (→ 4.38–42) denotes pure, shining consciousness.

This highly significant verse is older than the rest of the Nārāyaṇīstuti, being identical to the final verse of the Vedic Śrīsūktka, whose eight concluding ślokas were appended to the original hymn probably in Brāhmaṇic or Upanisadic times.¹²

11.11: As the universal power, the Devī Nārāyaṇī encompasses the threefold energies of creation, preservation, and destruction, generally personified in the Hindu pantheon as the gods Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva. These ultimately are not separate deities but different aspects of the one Īśvara (“Lord”), the transcendent Brahman associated with its inseparable power, variously called māyā, śakti, or prakṛti. But according to Śākta theology, the powers of creation, preservation, and destruction (srstisthitivināśāḥ) belong to the Devī alone (→ 1.75–76), and all three functions are not merely singular events in the cosmic life cycle but interconnected processes in the daily, ongoing life of the natural world (→ 1.78).

The supreme Ādyā Śakti is sanātanī (“eternal, perpetual, permanent, primeval”), the uncaused cause of all things. Because the three guṇas are inherent within her, she is their source (guṇaśrayā); and because she projects and becomes the universe through the differentiated energies of those same guṇas, she is also their embodiment (guṇamayā). This same kind of circularity arose earlier in connection with the Devī’s characterization as both the source and manifestation of intelligence (→ 4.10 and 4.11) and expresses once again the Śākta understanding of the seamless unity of being/becoming.

11.12: The Divine Mother, who is all-compassionate, comes quickly to the rescue of those who turn to her in times of calamity. This verse offers an eloquent, personalized expression of the same theme previously met in verses 4.17 and 11.3.
This passage praises the Seven Little Mothers in their original order of appearance in the eighth chapter, mostly repeating the initial descriptions (8.12–21) but amplifying the information about Vārāhī and Aindrī. The Purāṇic allusion to Vārāhī’s lifting up the earth on her tusks symbolizes the power of physical sustenance (11.17). Aindrī’s slaying of Vṛtra (11.19) is a Śākta reinterpretation of a Ṛgvedic myth concerning the drought demon Vṛtra, who withheld the heavenly waters from creation. When the thunderbolt of the storm god Indra breached the drought demon’s strongholds—a metaphor for clouds—the waters poured down upon the earth to fill the rivers and make the land fertile. Indra’s role in releasing the rain thus assures the earth’s ability to sustain life. The Devīmāhātmya refashions this ancient myth by ascribing Vṛtra’s destruction to the female śakti, Aindrī, who is the source of Indra’s empowerment.

These verses extol the Divine Mother’s terrifying forms as the bloodcurdling Śivadūtī and the crone-like Cāmunḍā, who is Kālī as the slayer of Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa as well as of Raktabijā (→ 8.53–63). Her destructive power, which annihilates evil, is praised through the symbolism of her devouring mouth; but in the next breath, the garland of skulls adorning her neck and symbolizing the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet becomes a metaphor for creative power, relating her to Vāk, the Ṛgvedic feminine face of the supreme reality.

The first line of this verse enumerates auspicious qualities seen in the previous hymns: good fortune (4.5, 5.11 and 5.56), modesty (1.79, 4.5, and 5.44), great knowledge (1.77), faith (4.5 and 5.50), prosperity (1.79), the mantra svadhā (1.74 and 4.8), and constancy (dhruvā is synonymous with nityā in 1.73 and 5.10).

But in a dramatic shift the next line returns to darker epithets from the Brahmāstuti: kālarātri, the great night (→ 1.78) and Mahāmāyā, the great illusion (→ 1.77), both relating to tamasic power. This passage illustrates the impossibility of translating Sanskrit terms that have no English equivalent. For lack of anything better, we follow Pargiter, Jagadīśvarānanda, and Cobum in rendering mahāmāyā as “great illusion,” even though that is somewhat misleading. The Śākta philosophy does not understand māyā as illusion in the sense of mere appearance or unreality (→ 1.53–58) but as the experience in time and space of self (ego) and not-self, rather than the experience of the undifferentiated wholeness of Self (ātman). If, in the present passage, the inadequacy of language forces us to accept the definition of māyā as “illusion,” then we should think of it as the illusion of separation. And we should never forget that in the Śākta understanding, both experiences, the partial and the full, are real.

Contrasting the benign and the terrifying, the first line continues the imagery of the preceding verse, but the second line turns petitionary immediately before the refrain. This pattern of praise and petition characterizes the next five verses as well.

Sarasvatī, who is named in the text only once, is an ancient aspect of the Devī, recognized since early Vedic times. Her name means “abundantly flowing,” and she was venerated first as the deified Sarasvatī River, believed to originate in the celestial realm. In the later Vedic age, she was understood as the flow of thought into the great, shining sea of consciousness and repeatedly identified with Vāk. As such, Sarasvatī-Vāk represents the intelligent power pervading creation.
Even today she is revered as the beneficent goddess of knowledge and the arts.

In the present verse, Sarasvati is readily identified with intelligence (medhā) and well-being (bhūti), although the latter word, denoting also prosperity and wealth, can be linked as easily to Lakṣmī. The epithet bāhkravi derives from Babhru, a name the Mahābhārata applies variously to Kṛṣṇa-Viśṇu or Śiva. Ostensibly, it denotes the śakti associated with one or the other of those gods, and its proximity to tāmasi (“O dark one”) suggests a more likely connection with Śiva. Thus, the multiple names and epithets seem to associate the Devī with Brahmā, Viśṇu, and Śiva, and suggest once again that the Divine Mother transcends sectarian boundaries. For a verse that begins with the idea of divine wisdom, this would be a fitting theme.

11.24: The appeal to Durgā as existing in the form of all reminds us of the Śākta acceptance of pariṇāmavāda, the doctrine that the Mother transforms herself into her creation, a position that Medhas expressed when he said that the world is her form (1.64). Praising her sovereignty and possession of all power, the verse establishes her universal supremacy. Asking for protection from fear, it echoes a similar request in the Śakrādistuti (4.4).

11.25–28: The Divine Mother’s portrayal as gentle, terrible, and protective, together with the mention of specific weapons, creates in these four verses a parallel to the final four verses of the Śakrādistuti (4.24–27). In both hymns, the mantras are intended to ward off evil. At the end, the contrast of bright and dark seen above (11.22–23) is artfully transformed into a symbol of victory, as the Devī’s sword (right knowledge), smeared with the asuras’ gore (ignorance), blazes with the light of truth.

11.29: Marking a return to the upajāti meter, with which the hymn began, this verse rephrases the Śakrādistuti’s assertion that the Devī is “good fortune in the dwellings of the virtuous and misfortune in the abodes of the wicked” (4.5), tying the consequences to divine pleasure or displeasure. The Devī’s ability to thwart all aspirations when displeased stirs memories of the fearsome Vedic goddess Nirrti, alluded to in the Aparājitāstuti (→ 5.11).

A new idea appears in the second half of the verse, where the Devī’s power to grant refuge is said to work indirectly through the agency of those who have taken refuge in her.

11.30: Summarized in a single brief verse are the three overarching themes that successively dominate the three divisions of the Devīmāhātmya: first, that the Divine Mother is the One who projects the many; second, that she intervenes in this world to destroy evil; and third, that she alone is capable of granting liberation.

“Multiplying your own form into many” has repeated illustrations throughout the text. In the battle with Mahisa’s army Durgā multiplies her powers by heaving the sighs that become her legions (2.53). In the confrontations with Śumbha and Niśumbha, she first summons Kālī from her scowling brow (7.6), then the Seven Little Mothers from the bodies of the gods (8.12–13), and finally Śivadūṭī from her own form (8.23). Brahmā’s hymn calls her the supreme reality (1.73) that differentiates (1.78) and abides as the soul of everything (1.82), an idea taken up by the subsequent hymns and the Prādhānīka and Vaikṛtika Rahasyas. In Chapter 10, the process is reversed when the Devī tells Śumbha, “I am alone here in the world. . . . These [śaktis] are but projections of my own power, now
entering back into me” (10.5). Beyond the allegory lies the metaphysical truth that the One becomes many while still and ever remaining one.

The second theme initially appeared when Medhas explained to Suratha and Samādhi that although the Devī is eternal (transcending the universe of time, space, and causation), she manifests in the world to accomplish the purpose of the gods—to uphold the cosmic and moral order (1.66). The theme of divine intervention is inseparable from the fact that struggles inevitably arise in the world of multiplicity.

We have seen time and again that the Devī always wins, for she is the supreme, ultimate, and only power in the universe. No one other than she can accomplish what she does, for the destruction of ignorance is synonymous with spiritual liberation, the predominant theme of the third carita.

11.31: Previously, the text linked the Devī to Vedic knowledge, calling her “the treasury that holds the taintless Vedic hymns, ... the blessed Devī, who embodies the three Vedas” (4.10) and “the intelligence by which the essence of all scriptures is understood” (4.11). The Nārāyaṇīstuti repeats that she “abides in all forms of learning, in the sacred texts that are the lights of understanding, in the primordial wisdom of the Vedas.” This insistent motif seeks to integrate the Devī’s many non-Vedic forms into the hallowed Vedic tradition by identifying her with the supreme knowledge.

Yet, immediately following the imagery of dazzling light and soaring consciousness, this verse plunges into the abyss. Determined to affirm simultaneously the Mother’s Vedic credentials and the unshakable, primal conviction that the Devī has her benign and terrible sides, the author characterizes her as Mahāmāyā, the great deluder who casts her dark spell of attachment over the universe. Since this last idea is phrased as a rhetorical question, the intent is once again to express the uniqueness of her power.

11.32–35: Many details relating to the Devī’s protective role will be elaborated in Chapter 12, of which these verses are a foretaste. The specific language of this passage is not original to the Devīmāhātmya but drawn from older hymns, such as the Mahābhārata’s Durgāstava and Durgāstotra.

The euphony of verse 11.33, which cannot be duplicated in English, warrants mention. Note the alliterative use of the element viśva (“all, universe”), appearing six times, and the similarity of bhavatī (“[you who are] worthy of adoration” or “revered one”) and bhavanti (“[they] become”).

To mark the end of the hymn and the transition back to narrative, verse 11.35 reverts to the standard anustubh meter.

11.36–39: The exchange between the Divine Mother and the gods runs parallel to the corresponding passage following the Śakrādistuti (4.31–37). In each instance, she offers a boon, and the gods respond. But there are differences as well. In the fourth chapter, the gods answer that with the defeat of Mahiśāsura nothing remains to be done; still, they ask that the Devī intervene whenever future misfortune arises and that she bestow her abundance on any mortal who praises her with the hymns of the Devīmāhātmya. In Chapter 11, the gods’ request is simply that she annihilate their enemies and allay the misery of the three worlds.

11.40–42: The Devī’s prediction of her future manifestations in the world (11.40–55) builds upon
Medhas’s earlier declaration that although she is the eternal reality who embodies herself as the universe and pervades it, she emerges also in other ways (1.65). When she manifests specifically to uphold or restore the dharma (“to accomplish the purpose of the gods”), she is said to be born in the world (1.66). For a fuller understanding of the remarkable passage that follows, we must look to the Mūrtirahasya (“The Secret Relating to Forms”), the last of the Devīmāhātmya’s six angas.

The problematical nature of the first prediction concerns the fact that having just slain Śumbha and Niśumbha, she announces that two other asuras of the same names will arise (11.41–42). It is important to remember that the framing story of Medhas, Suratha, and Samādhi takes place in the second manvantara, more than a billion and a half years ago according to mythological reckoning, and that Medhas began his story of Śumbha and Niśumbha with “long ago,” placing it in a still more remote past. In that account, the Devī predicts the future Śumbha and Niśumbha, who will arise at the time of Kṛṣṇa’s birth in the seventh manvantara. Her prediction is of future events that from our vantage point have already come to pass.

That solves one vexing problem but creates a different problem for the commentator. We have used Vindhyavāsini as powerful circumstantial evidence to trace Durgā’s origin to the Neolithic period and to tie the origin of the demons Śumbha and Niśumbha to the non-Āryan peoples of north India among whom the legends of Kṛṣṇa’s boyhood also arose. Here mythology and history collide, since we have attributed all the information surrounding the later Śumbha and Niśumbha to the original pair of demons. Admittedly, this does not stand up to rational scrutiny, but in the often convoluted and contradictory realm of Indian mythology, which disseminates in protean fashion, we can never hope to correlate myth and history. Our conflation of the identically named pairs of demons may in fact reflect more the historical development of the myth than its mythological truth.

Those reservations aside, we recall that when Viṣṇu planned to incarnate as Devakī’s son, Kṛṣṇa, it was foretold that the infant would be killed by his wicked uncle, Kamsa. In order to thwart him, Viṣṇu persuaded Yoganidrā (Mahāmāyā) to be born simultaneously to Yaśodā. When the babies were switched and Kamsa attempted to dash Devakī’s child against the paving stones, the baby assumed the goddess’s eight-armed form and flew away to the Vindhya mountains, where she is still worshiped as Vindhyavāsinī.

The Mūrtirahasya, showing its Vaiṣṇava orientation, offers a radically different portrayal of this goddess born to Nanda and Yaśodā. It makes no mention of her dwelling-place in the Vindhyas, even though the Devīmāhātmya certainly does. Instead, it calls her Bhagavatī Nandā, implying a more beneficent deity than the bloodthirsty Vindhyavāsinī, and describes her not as black and bird-headed but as brilliant like the finest gold, magnificently ornamented, and identified with Viṣṇu’s auspicious consort, variously named Indirā, Kamalā, Lakṣmī, and Śrī (MR 1–3).

Despite its gentler characterization, which is neither confirmed nor contradicted by the Devīmāhātmya, the Mūrtirahasya is essential for understanding the remainder of the Devī’s prediction. The text of the Devīmāhātmya is ambiguous about how many future incarnations are meant. It seems to mention seven goddesses: the dweller in the Vindhyas (11.42), Raktadantikā (11.45), Śatāksī (11.47), Śākambharī (11.49), Durgā (11.50), Bhīmādevī (11.52), and Bhrāmarī (11.54). The commentator Bhāskararāya agrees with this enumeration. But the Mūrtirahasya reduces the number to five by stating outright that Śatāksī, Śākambharī, and Durgā are one goddess (MR 15). That there are five manifestations is clearly understood by comparing the parallel structures.
of the Mūrtiāhāsya and the corresponding passage of the Devīmāhātmya.

11.43–45: After Vindhyavāsinī comes a particularly dreadful incarnation who slays the demonic sons descended from an asura named Vipracitti. In devouring them, her teeth become stained red with blood, and she is called Raktadantikā (“having bloodstained teeth”). Since the Mūrtiāhāsya and the other angas became associated with the Devīmāhātmya around the 14th century, they reflect later Tantric developments possibly unknown to the author(s) of our text. That said, the Mūrtiāhāsya characterizes Raktadantikā as totally red in complexion, hair, eyes, teeth, tusks, nails, clothing, adornments, and weapons. As early as Paleolithic times, red was a symbol of life and fertility. Moreover, Raktadantikā is as red as the inside of a pomegranate, another symbol of fertility frequently connected with the Mother Goddess. She is indeed terrifying, but to her devotees she is as faithful as a wife is to a husband, and she allays all fear. Broad as the earth and with mountainous breasts, she is a maternal goddess who satisfies all desires. She is known also as the Red Cāmuṇḍā or Yogesvarī (“ruler of [divine] union”) (MR 4–11).

11.46–50: The third manifestation is called Śatāksī, Śākambhari, or Durgā, and the question of how she manifests claims our attention. We note that Vindhyavāsinī was born of Yaśodā’s womb (11.42), although under supernatural circumstances. Raktadantikā’s manner of manifestation remains unspecified; the text merely employs the participle avatīrya (“having descended, having become incarnate”), which neither confirms nor denies biological birth. Śākambhari specifically comes into being not born of a womb (ayonijā) (11.46). The reason is that she is the earth. The nurturing Śākambhari is associated with fertile soil and vegetation. After a hundred years without rain, as Śatāksī (“the hundred-eyed”), she pours her tears upon the drought-stricken earth, filling the rivers, reviving vegetation, and causing the land to bring forth all manner of edible plants. The Mūrtiāhāsya’s insistence that Śākambhari and Śatāksī are the same goddess signifies a union of the earth’s dark, fertile soil and the life-giving rain that falls from the sky. Śākambhari-Śatāksī is the ancient Vedic Dyāvāprāthivī by another name. But the five-verse account of Śākambhari is not without difficulties. Most translators render āvṛṣṭeh (11.48) as “until the rain comes,” but that reading makes no sense if Śākambhari and Śatāksī are the same goddess. The Sanskrit is ambiguous, because the ablative āvṛṣṭeh can mean either a separation from the rain (a period of drought) or “proceeding from the rain,” “because of the rain,” or “after the rain.” Among previous translators, only Pargiter grasped the logic of the context and rendered āvṛṣṭeh as “during a period of heavy rain.”

The Mūrtiāhāsya describes Śākambhari as blue, with blue eyes, full breasts, a deep navel, and a slender waist with three ripples of skin, perhaps signifying furrows. One of her four hands holds a cornucopia of flowers, sprouts, roots, and various fruits and vegetables, signifying the abundance of her physical, nurturing presence as the earth itself. Hence, her name Śākambhari, which means “bearing vegetables” or “nourishing with herbs.” Fulfilling every desire and removing every fear, she is renowned also as the hundred-eyed Śatāksī and as Durgā. Subduing the wicked and dispelling all difficulties, she is known also as Umā, Gaurī, Satī, Caṇḍī, Kalikā, and Pārvatī, all names of the Goddess associated with Śiva (MR 12–16).
Historically, Bhīmādevī was an important goddess of the Himalayan region. Her mountain shrine, as described in the seventh century CE, was a place of pilgrimage, where devotees from all over India fasted and prayed before her image, a naturally occurring likeness in dark blue stone. Her name means “the fearsome goddess.” As mentioned in the Devīmāhātmya, Bhīmādevī assumes a terrifying form in the Himalayas and kills malevolent beings for the protection of sages. She appears to be a fierce aspect of Tārā, one of the ten Mahāvidyās, who represent personifications of Śakti that reveal the knowledge of Brahman.22 The Hindu Tārā is not to be confused with the usually gentle Tārā of Tibetan Buddhism, who represents compassion.23 Instead, she is closely identified with Kālī24 and described in the Mūrtirahasya as blue, with shining teeth and tusks and plump breasts. In her four hands she holds a glittering scimitar, a small drum, a severed head, and a drinking vessel. A solitary warrior goddess who grants desires, she is also known as Kālarātri.

Finally, in order to vanquish a demon named Aruṇa, the Devī takes form as Bhrāmarī. The name, which shows a connection to bees, belongs to an incarnation that the Mūrtirahasya describes as glittering, variegated, and bejeweled, surrounded by an impregnable circle of light and holding in her hand a swarm of multicolored bees. The ānga also calls her “the great pestilence,” which is at variance with her usual Tantric connection with sexual arousal.25 Her description as either a great bee or as surrounded by a swarm of bees ties in with the common symbolism of the bee as sexual desire in Indian erotic literature.26

The Devī ends her remarkable recital with a general pledge of protection whenever demonic forces threaten. Summing up, we are struck by the atavistic nature of her predicted incarnations. These are aspects of the Goddess that hark back to very ancient times. Vindhyavāsinī connects her to fertility through the imagery of birds, whose eggs are an enduring and universal symbol of life and renewal; Śākambhari-Śatāksī, to the productive union of earth and rain; Raktadantikā, to nature’s death-dealing ferocity; Bhīmādevī, possibly to the terrifying menace of darkness; and Bhrāmarī, either to swarming pestilence or the sexual allure that spurs the generation of new life.
The Devī said:

“I shall without doubt destroy every misfortune of those who with collected mind will praise me always with these hymns.

Those who recite the destruction of Madhu and Kaiṭabhā, the killing of Mahiṣāsura, and the slaying of Śumbha and Niśumbha

with singleness of mind on the eighth, fourteenth, and ninth days of the lunar fortnight, and those who listen with devotion to this supreme poem of my glory

will have no evil befall them, nor any misfortunes arising from wrongdoing. For them there will be neither poverty nor separation from loved ones,

nor danger from enemies, robbers, or kings. Nor at any time will danger arise from weapons, fire, or flood.

Therefore this poem of my glory is to be recited by those of concentrated mind and heard always with devotion, for it is the supreme way to well-being.

May this glorification of mine put to rest all misfortunes born of pestilence, and also the three kinds of calamity.

Where it is always and rightly recited in my sanctuary, that place shall I never abandon. There my presence is abiding.

In the offering of oblations, in worship, in the fire ceremony, and in the great festival, all these deeds of mine are to be proclaimed and heard.

When offerings are made in worship, with or without proper knowledge, I shall receive them gladly and also the fire oblation performed in like manner.

At the great annual worship which is performed in the autumn season, those who hear this poem of my glory and are filled with devotion
will be freed by my grace from all afflictions and endowed with wealth, grain, and progeny. Of this there is no doubt.

Hearing of my glory, my auspicious manifestations, and my prowess in battles, they become fearless.

For those who hear my glorification, their adversaries go to utter destruction. Well-being comes to them, and their families rejoice.

For those troubled by nightmares or the ill-boding of stars, at rituals for averting evil this poem of my glory should always be heard.

It causes misfortunes and evil portents to subside, and it turns nightmares into sweet dreams.

It pacifies children overcome by seizures, and wherever discord divides, it best restores friendship.

It is unsurpassed in diminishing the might of all evildoers. Truly its recitation brings about the destruction of fiends, ghosts, and ghouls.

This entire glorification of mine draws one near to me.

As by the offerings of finest cattle, flowers, gifts, incense, perfumes, and lights, made day and night for a year; and as by the feeding of Brāhmaṇas, by oblations, by consecrated water;

and as by diverse other propitiations and offerings; so also by hearing the recital of my auspicious deeds am I pleased.

When heard, this poem of my glory removes impurities and grants freedom from disease. The relating of my births confers protection from evil spirits.

Since it recounts my deeds in battle, crushing the wicked daityas, when heard, it dispels all fear of enemies.

Praises uttered by you and the Brāhmanical seers and by Brahmā himself produce an auspicious mind.

When in a forest, or on a lonely road, or surrounded by a forest fire, when encircled by robbers in a desolate place or seized by enemies,

when stalked by lions and tigers or wild elephants in the jungle, when imprisoned or
sentenced to death by a wrathful king,

12.28 when in a wind-tossed boat on the mighty sea or assailed by hurtling weapons in the midst of battle,

12.29 when caught in dreadful straits or tormented with agony, whoever remembers these deeds of mine is freed from danger.

12.30 By my power, lions and beasts, robbers and enemies flee far away from one who remembers these deeds of mine.”

12.31 The seer said:

12.32 “Having spoken thus, the blessed Caṇḍikā, fierce in valor, vanished from the sight of the gods.

12.33 Their enemies struck down, the gods were delivered from affliction. They reclaimed their own dominions as before, and all partook of their shares in the sacrifices.

12.34 As for the daityas, after the Devī had slain in battle those two enemies of the gods—Śumbha, the afflictor of the world, terribly fierce and unequaled in prowess,

12.35 and Niśumbha, great in valor—the rest of them returned to the netherworld.

12.36 Thus, O king, does the blessed Devī, though eternal, manifest again and again for the protection of the world.

12.37 By her this universe is deluded. She herself brings forth everything. Entreated, she bestows right knowledge; propitiated, she bestows prosperity.

12.38 O king, by her all this universe is pervaded, by Mahākālī, who takes form as the great destroyer at the end of time.

12.39 At that time, she herself is the great destroyer. Existing from all eternity, she herself becomes the creation. She, the eternal one, sustains all beings.

12.40 In times of well-being she is indeed good fortune, granting prosperity in the homes of humankind. In times of privation, she exists as misfortune, bringing about ruin.

12.41 And so, praised and worshiped with flowers, incense, perfumes, and the like, she grants wealth, progeny, and a pure mind established in righteousness.”
12.1–30: Most of Chapter 12 is in the form of a phalāśruti, a conventional listing of the merits and benefits of reciting or hearing a sacred text. Here the Devī herself instructs that her māhātmya is to be recited and heard with a collected mind (12.2, 12.4, 12.7). Full, unwavering attention is essential to all forms of sādhana, including ritual worship and meditation, and must be given likewise to singing the Divine Mother’s praises. Besides attentiveness, devotion is paramount (12.4, 12.7, 12.12).

The text recommends the times and places for recitation: on certain auspicious days during the lunar month (12.4), during the great autumn festival (12.10, 12.12), and in the Devī’s sanctuary (12.9). Historically, temples to Durgā were well-established by the sixth century ce. What the text adds to our knowledge is that recitation of the Devīmāhātmya draws the divine presence to those places and renders them holy (12.9). The great autumn festival (12.10, 12.12) also was well-established by the time of the Devīmāhātmya. Either it is an ancient prototype of the modern, autumn Navarātri, or the present-day festival is its direct continuation, a harvest celebration with roots in the agricultural cycle. Of this there can be no doubt; even the yellow complexion of the Durgā images made for the occasion call to mind the golden fields of ripened wheat and rice glowing in the autumn sunlight. The description of formal pūjā, accompanied by the recitation of the Devīmāhātmya, and the sacrificial homa fire (12.10), applies to the Durgā Pūjā today as well as then. During this festival period it is highly likely that worship then, as now, took place in the temples as well as in private dwellings, for the text makes a concession to those not skilled in the arts of worship and sacrifice, saying that even acts imperfectly performed will be gladly received (12.11).

At the same time, the recitation of the text alone is as pleasing to the Devī as lavish offerings, ritual worship, and the observance of other religious duties (12.21–22). The verses, or mantras, themselves have the power to draw the reciter or hearer toward divinity (12.20), to remove impurities (12.23), and to produce an auspicious mind (12.25). The māhātmya is thus “the supreme way to well-being” (12.7).

When properly recited or heard, the Devīmāhātmya provides access to its inherent power. Even as the sacred verses draw the individualized consciousness toward the universal consciousness, the Devī’s energy proceeding through the sacred words destroys every misfortune (12.2) so that no evil will befall her devotees (12.5). Because it protects from “misfortunes arising from wrongdoing” (12.5), the Divine Mother’s power over the law of karma is a manifestation of her grace. The text confirms that her devotees “will be freed by my grace from all afflictions” (12.13), among them poverty and separation from loved ones (12.5).

The six dangers listed in verse 12.6 are of two kinds: those arising from human agency (enemies, robbers, kings, and weapons), and those arising from natural disasters (fire and flood). These are two categories within the “three kinds of calamity,” which the māhātmya is said to put to rest (12.8). The three categories are defined as adhibhautika (stemming from the actions of others in the objective world external to oneself), adhidaivika (concerning the gods or divine agency operating through material objects—the so-called “acts of God,” such as earthquakes, fires, and floods), and adhyātmika (concerning oneself, such as physical illness, mental distress, and self-inflicted suffering).
This triad affects our physical as well as our psychological well-being. In regard to the body, the recitation of the text wards off “misfortunes born of pestilence” (12.8) and childhood seizures (12.18), and it “grants freedom from disease” (12.23). Additionally, it protects against physical threats (12.6, 12.26–30), including those from natural disasters, wild animals, warfare, crime, and societal injustice. These last-mentioned verses are extraordinarily rich in material found in earlier hymn texts, and we find that verses 12.26 through 28 actually quote from those sources: the Ṛgvedic Rātrī Khila, the Durgāstotra, the Durgāstava, and Viṣṇu’s Praise of Nidrā from the Harivaṁśa. Most pervasive is the reference to forests, usually characterized in the earlier hymns as “dreary” to emphasize the dangers lurking therein. What distinguishes the concluding passage (12.26–30) from other portions of the phalaśruti is its exclusive emphasis on danger within the physical environment. Based on much older texts, which indicate that those ideas were widely attested and even standardized, this final portion of the phalaśruti proper is obviously of very ancient origin.

The verses of the phalaśruti that deal with psychological or nonphysical dangers are not found in those earlier sources. Verses 12.13 through 15, after emphasizing the positive material benefits of wealth, grain, and progeny, turn to the question of fear in general; they connect the Devī’s prowess in battle and the destruction of enemies to fearlessness, well-being, and rejoicing. The linkage of the allegorical victories, representing psychological and spiritual growth, and the resulting fearlessness recurs in verse 12.24. Concerning more specific forms of mental well-being, it is said that the recitation or hearing of the text “turns nightmares into sweet dreams” (12.17), relieves anxiety caused by the ill-boding of stars and other evil portents (12.16–17), and nullifies the influence of evil spirits (12.19, 12.23). Blaming psychological discomfort (as well as actual misfortune) on adverse astrological influences or demonic possession may seem quaint in light of modern science, which has identified other causes of anxiety or dysfunctional behavior and developed other methods of treatment; nevertheless, the power of spiritual healing has a validity that science is increasingly willing to acknowledge.

Looking outward to the societal sphere, wherever discord erupts within human relationships, recitation of the Devīmāhātmya is said to effect reconciliation (12.18). The Devīmāhātmya’s benefits thus apply to all areas of human existence and endeavor, promoting social harmony and justice, physical health and safety, and psychological and spiritual wholeness.

12.31–35: Medhas now returns once more to the scene of the gods assembled before the Devī. Having vanquished Śumbha and Niśumbha and having restored the natural order, Caṇḍikā vanishes from sight.

12.36–41: Medhas now finishes the discourse he began in the first chapter. Through the three myths, he has fulfilled the king’s wish to know everything about the Devī (1.60–62). Everything has been an elaboration of verse 1.66: “Although she is eternal, when she manifests to accomplish the purpose of the gods, she is said to be born in the world.” Now he brings the narrative full circle: “Thus, O king, does the blessed Devī, though eternal, manifest again and again for the protection of the world” (12.36). The remaining verses (12.37–41) summarize the major points that the eternal Devī takes form as the creation, sustains for a time the drama of life within a universe polarized between enchantment and terror, and then dissolves it all back into undifferentiated, self-luminous bliss.
The Granting of Boons to Suratha and the Merchant

13.1 The seer said:

13.2 “Thus have I related to you, O king, this supreme glorification of the Devī:

13.3 Such is the splendor of the Devī, by whom the world is upheld, and such is the knowledge fashioned by the blessed Viṣṇumāyā.

13.4 By her are you and this merchant and other thoughtful people deluded, just as others have been and will be deluded.

13.5 O great king, take refuge in her, the supreme sovereign. When worshiped, she truly confers enjoyment, heaven, and final liberation on humanity.”

13.6 Markāṇḍeya said:

13.7 Hearing his words, Suratha the king bowed in reverence to the illustrious seer of steadfast austerities.

13.8 Despondent over excessive attachment and the loss of his kingdom, he went at once to practice austerities, O great sage, and so did the merchant,

13.9 that they might obtain a vision of the Mother. The king and the merchant settled on a riverbank and engaged in spiritual practice, chanting the supreme hymn to the Devī.

13.10 When they had fashioned an earthen image of her on the riverbank, the two of them worshiped the Devī with flowers, incense, fire, and libations of water.

13.11 Now fasting, now restraining their senses, with minds constant in concentration, they made offerings sprinkled with the blood of their own bodies.

13.12 When they had worshiped her in this way with self-restraint for three years, Caṇḍikā, the support of the universe, was well pleased. She appeared before them and spoke.

13.13 The Devī said:
“That which you desire, O king, and you, the delight of your family, receive all that from me. Well pleased, I will grant it.”

Mārkaṇḍeya said:

Thereupon the king chose a kingdom imperishable even in another lifetime and also his own kingdom here, to be reclaimed by force from his enemies’ control.

And then the wise merchant, dispassionate in mind, chose that knowledge which severs attachment from “I” and “mine.”

The Devī said:

“In a few days, O king, you will reclaim your own kingdom.

When your enemies are slain, thenceforth it will assuredly be yours.

And after your death you will obtain another birth from the sun god Vivasvat.

Dwelling on earth, you will become the lord of the age, the manu named Sāvarṇī.

And the boon that you, O best of merchants, desire, that do I grant you. The knowledge that leads to final liberation shall be yours.”

Mārkaṇḍeya said:

When she had given each his desired boon, the Devī, lovingly praised by both of them, vanished at once.

Thus, having received the Devī’s boon, Suratha, the best of sovereigns will obtain birth from the sun god and will become the manu named Sāvarṇī, will become the manu named Sāvarṇī. Klīm OṀ.

The Devīmāhātmya of seven hundred verses is concluded.

OṀ tat sat OṀ
Chapter 13 Commentary

13.1–4: For one last time, Medhas repeats that the Devī makes possible the functioning and sustenance of the universe (13.3). She does this through the knowledge (vidyā) she creates. Here vidyā refers not to the uncreated, eternal knowledge but to relative knowledge, which consists of the modifications of the supreme, undifferentiated consciousness as effected by Mahāmāyā. Such knowledge allows human beings to experience the phenomenal universe.

13.5: Medhas enjoins the king to surrender himself to Mahāmāyā. His last words are that she confers bhoga (“enjoyment,” meaning also the experience of either pleasure or pain), svarga (“abode of light,” meaning heavenly reward), and apavarga (“completion,” meaning emancipation from bodily existence, final beatitude [→ 11.7]). In short, the sum total of experience, in the relative or the absolute state, rests in the Devī.

13.6–11: At this point Mārkaṇḍeya returns as the primary narrator and brings the framing story to an end.

When they take their leave of Medhas, the king and the merchant go off to a riverbank and engage in intensive sādhanā (13.9–11). They chant the supreme hymn to the Devī (the Rgvedic Devīsūkta) and fashion an earthen image, probably much like those still made in India for the autumn Durgā Pūjā. The other details of worship and austerities, except for the offering of human blood, also relate to modern practice. Fasting means not only restraint of physical nourishment but also of anything taken in through the senses, for in the broadest meaning, “food” includes all sensory and intellectual impressions gathered from without. Minimizing food involves not only physical asceticism but also the calming of the mind through the control of everything that stimulates it.

13.12–18: The Devī Caṇḍikā appears to the king and the merchant and offers each a boon. Although it is not stated in the text, the king realizes that running away was a cowardly act, unbefitting his status as a kṣatriya. Having failed to fulfill his duty, he asks for a second chance by reclaiming his earthly kingdom, followed by the reward of an imperishable kingdom in a future existence. He is not ready to relinquish his desires and merge with the Divine but wants to live righteously, in harmony with the dharma. The merchant Samādhī, on the other hand, realizes the folly of seeking wealth and position and of lamenting their loss. Grown wise and dispassionate, he asks for the liberating knowledge that dissolves the ego and its bondage.

13.19–29: The Devī promises that the king will fight bravely and regain his earthly kingdom. After his death, the sun god, Vivasvat, will grant him rebirth as Sāvarṇi, the manu of the eighth manvantara. And Samādhī, through knowledge, will attain samādhi, union with the Absolute. In this final scene, the Devī appears exactly as characterized in verse 11.7 of the Nārāyaṇīstuti: as the bestower of worldly enjoyment and final liberation (bhukti-muktipradāyinī).

“She who has become all things” exists from all eternity and takes form as the creation (12.39). All
that is finite exists in the infinite Śakti, who is at once the nondual reality and the kaleidoscopic
universe that is the resplendent form of the formless. The Devīmāhātmya’s all-embracing vision sees
the whole of being and becoming as one reality, for Mother is everything and everything is Mother.

ॐ tat sat ॐ.
PART III
THE AŅGAS
Around the 14th century, a set of six ancillary texts, or angas (“limbs”), became associated with the Devīmāhātmya. The first three angas—the Devyāḥ Kavacam, Argalāstotra, and Kīlakastotra—are preparatory prayers and incantations employed in the Devīmāhātmya’s ritual recitation. The remaining three—the Prādhānīka Rahasya, Vaikṛtīka Rahasya, and Mūrtirahasya—deal with cosmogony and formal worship and are optionally recited afterward. Besides these, two Vedic hymns—the Rātrisūkta and the Devīsūkta—are customarily chanted immediately before and after the text of the Devīmāhātmya itself. In recognizing the Word (vāk) as an actual manifestation of Śakti, Śākta Tantra correlates the physical universe with the divine reality from which it flows. Accordingly, the words of the Devīmāhātmya are not merely poetry (śloka), but the actual embodiment of divine power (mantra). This power Śiva himself is said to have restrained “as if with a bolt” to prevent its intentional or unwitting misuse. Formal recitation, performed according to elaborate and strictly defined ritual practices involving physical and mental preparation, affords access to that power, which may be directed toward either temporal or spiritual ends.
देव्यां कवचम्
OM. Salutations to Caṇḍikā.

Mārkaṇḍeya said:

1. OṀ. That which is the supreme secret in this world, affording every protection to humankind, which is not told to anyone—tell me that, O Grandsire.

Brahmā said:

2. There is a most hidden secret, O wise one, beneficial to all beings— the holy armor of the Devī. Hear of it, O great sage.

3. First, she is called Śailaputrī; second, Brahmacārīṇī; third, Candraghaṇṭā; fourth, Kūśmāṇḍā.

4. Fifth, she is called Skandamatā; sixth, Kātyāyanī; seventh, Kālarātri; eighth, Mahāgaurī.
5. And ninth, she is Siddhidātrī. The nine Durgās are revealed; the noble Brahmā has spoken their names.

6. When consumed by fire or surrounded by enemies in battle, when seized by fear in adversity or crisis, those who take refuge in the Devī

7. will have nothing inauspicious befall them amidst the danger of battle, nor will they know any misfortune that brings grief, suffering or dread.

8. Those who remember her always with devotion will surely win success. O supreme Devī, you protect those who remember you. Of that there is no doubt.

9. Standing upon a corpse is Cāmuṇḍā; seated on a buffalo is Vārāhī; mounted on an elephant is Aindrī; seated on Garuda is Vaiṣṇavī.

10. Nārasirhhī is great in valor; Śivadūtī is great in might. Mounted on a bull is Māheśvarī, and borne on a peacock is Kaumārī.
11. Seated upon a lotus, with lotus in hand, is Lakṣmī, the goddess beloved of Viṣṇu. And the sovereign Devī who is borne on a bull, pure white is the form she possesses.

12. Brāhmī, adorned with all her jewels, rides upon a swan. These, then, are all the Mothers, all united together,

13. arrayed in bejeweled splendor, adorned with all manner of gems: all with strands of the most excellent pearls and magic-bearing pendants,

14. with great blue sapphires and splendid rubies. Riding in chariots the goddesses appear, bristling with anger

15. and bearing conch, discus, mace, spear, plough, and club; shield, lance, and ax and noose,

16. pike, trident, and mighty bow—weapons to destroy the demons’ bodies and to dispel the devotees’ fears.

17. Indeed, for the well-being of the gods, they bear weapons in this manner. Salutations be unto you, great fierce one of mighty and awesome courage.
18. O you of great might and great resolve, annihilating fear, protect me, O Devī, who are
difficult for our enemies to behold, for you increase their dread.

19. May Aindrī guard me in the east, and Agnidevatā in the southeast; may Vārāhī defend me in
the south, and Khaḍgadhārini in the southwest.

20. May Vāruṇī protect me in the west, and Mrgavāhinī in the northwest; may Kaumārī protect
me in the north, and Śūladhārini in the northeast.

21. May Brahmāṇī guard me above, and Vaiṣṇavī below. In this way, may Cāmuṇḍā, riding
upon a corpse, guard the ten directions.

22. May Jayā stand in front of me, and Vijaya stand behind; Ajitā on my left, and Aparājīta on
my right.

23. May Dyotinī guard my topknot. May Umā abide atop my head, and Māladhan on my
forehead. May Yasasvīm guard my eyebrows.

24. May Citranetrā abide in my eyes, and Yamaghaṇṭā in my nose. May Trinettrā protect me
with her trident, and Caṇḍikā dwell between my eyebrows.

25. May Śaṅkhini abide between my eyes, and Dvāravāsinī upon my ears. May Kālika guard my cheeks, and Śaṅkarī protect within my ears.

26. And may Sugandhā protect my nostrils. May Carcikā abide on my upper lip, Amṛtābālā on my lower lip, and Sarasvatī on my tongue.

27. May Kaumārī guard my teeth, and Caṇḍikā my throat. May Citraghaṇṭā guard my uvula, and Mahāmāyā abide in my palate.

28. May Kārnāksī guard my chin, Sarvamangalā my voice, Bhadrakālī the nape of my neck, and Dhanurūdharī my spine.

29. May Nīlagrīvā abide outside my throat, and Nalakūbarī within. May Khadginī guard my shoulders, and Vajradhāriṇī my arms.

30. May Daṇḍinī guard my hands; may Ambikā abide in my fingers. May Śūleśvarī guard my nails, and Nareśvarī my abdomen.
31. May Mahādevī guard my chest, and Śokavināśinī my mind. May the Devī Lalitā abide in my heart, and Sūladhārinī in my stomach.

32. May Kāminī guard my navel, Guhyesvarī my private parts, Durgandhā my penis, and Guhyavāhinī my anus.

33. May Bhagavaṇī guard my hips, Meghavāhanā my thighs, Mahābalā my shanks, and Mādhavanāyikā my knees.

34. May Nārasimhī abide in my ankles. May Kauśikī guard my heels, SrTdharī my toes, and Pātālavāsinī the soles of my feet.

35. May Daṁśtrakarālī guard my toenails, and Įrdhvakeśinī my hair. May Kaumārī abide in my pores, and Yogīśvari protect my skin.

36. May Pārvatī guard my blood, bone-marrow, lymph, flesh, bones, and fat. May Kālarātri guard my intestines, and Mukanṭeśvarī my bile.
37. May Padmāvātī guard my lungs, and Cūdāmaṇī my phlegm. May Jvālāmukhī protect the luster of my nails, and Abhedyā dwell in all my joints.

शुक्र ब्रह्माणी मे रक्ष्यां च चुनेश्वरी तथा ।
अहह्मारं मनो बुद्धि रक्षेन्मे धर्मधारिणी || 38 ||

38. May Brahmatāni guard my semen, and Chatresvarī my shadow. May Dharmadhāriṇī protect my ego, mind, and intellect,

प्राणापानी तथा व्यानमुदानं च समानकम् ।
वज्रहस्ता च मे रक्षेन् प्राणान् कल्याणशोभना || 39 ||

and likewise my breath, elimination, digestion, nervous system, and body heat. May Vajrahastā, who sparkles with auspicious beauty, guard these, my vital forces.

रसे रूपे च गन्धे च शब्दे र्परीं च योगिनी ।
सत्यं रजस्तमेऽवै रक्ष्यारायणी सदा || 40 ||

39. May Yogini abide in taste, form, smell, sound, and touch; and may Nārāyaṇī ever guard my knowledge, action, and desire.

आयू रक्षनु वारथी धर्म रक्षनु पार्वती ।
यश: कीर्ति च लक्ष्मीं च सदा रक्षनु वैष्णवी || 41 ||

40. May Vārahī protect the span of my life; may Pārvatī protect my virtue; may Vaiṣṇavī protect always my honor, reputation, and prosperity.

गोत्रमिन्द्रणी मे रक्षनु पत्रेनु रक्षेच्छ चन्दिका ।
पुनः रक्षेन्महालक्ष्मीर्यां रक्षनु भेरवी || 42 ||

41. May Indrāṇī guard my stable, and Caṇḍikā my herds. May Mahālakṣmī protect my children, and Bhairavī, my wife.

घनेश्वरी धनं रक्षेन्य कौमारी कन्यकां तथा ।
पन्थानु सुपथा रक्षेन्मार्ग क्षेमार्कीं तथा || 43 ||

42. May Dhanesvarī guard my wealth, and Kaumarī, my virgin daughter. May Supatha guard my way, and Kṣemaṅkarī also.
44. May Mahālakṣmī dwell at my gate, and Vijayā be ever abiding. That which remains excluded and wanting for protection by this armor,

तत्सर्व रक्ष मे देवि जयन्ति पापनाथिनी।
सर्वरक्षाकरं पुण्यं कवचं सर्वदा जपेत्॥ ४५॥

45. all that protect, O Devī, who conquer and destroy all evil. At all times should one invoke this holy armor that affords all protection.

इदं रहस्यं विप्रेषं भक्त्या नव मयोदितम्।
पादबक्सं न गच्छेत् तु यदीच्छेक्षुभवातम्॥ ४६॥

46. This secret have I revealed, O wise one, by reason of your devotion. If one seeks his own well-being, he should not take a single step

कवचेनावृत्नो नित्यं यत्र यत्नं गच्छति।
तत्र तत्रार्थं अभव्यं विजयं सार्वकालिकं॥ ४७॥

47. unclothed by this armor, wherever he goes. Everywhere he will attain his ends, victorious, at all times.

निःर्भयं जाते मत्यं संग्रामेष्ट्यपराजितं।
चैत्योक्ते तु भवेत्पूज्यं कवचेनावृत्तं पुमानं॥ ४८॥

48. Whatever desire he contemplates, that will he surely obtain. That man will attain unequaled supremacy on this earth.

इदं तु देव्या कवचं देवानामपि दुर्लभभम्।
यं पठत्त्रयतो नित्यं त्रिषत्यं श्रद्धायान्वितं॥ ५०॥

49. That mortal will become fearless and unvanquished in battles. The man clad in this armor is to be worshiped in the three worlds.

देवीकल्यां भवेत्स्य चैत्योक्ते चापराजितं।
जीवेन्द्रशास्तं साग्रमपृष्ट्यविवर्जितं॥ ५१॥
This armor of the Devī is difficult for even the gods to obtain. He who recites it always at dawn, noon, and dusk, intent on devotion and possessed of faith,

attains a portion of the Divine and remains unconquered in the three worlds. He will live for a full hundred years, untouched by sudden or accidental death.

All his ailments will vanish—skin infections, eruptions, and the like—along with all manner of natural poisons and those of human artifice,

and all spells, incantations, and magical charms in the world. Those creatures that go upon the earth, move through the air, and dwell in water, be they induced by others,

self-arisen or family-born; the dākinī, the śākinī, and such: the terrible, howling dākinīs that move through the atmosphere,

the spirits that possess, fiends and apparitions, ghosts, demons, and ghouls, the undead, spirits of terror, and the like,

all those perish at the sight of him who is clad in this armor. The king will hold him in high regard, and the spreading of his glory will know no bounds.
57. Increased renown will be his, and his fame will be exalted. For this reason, the devotee should always recite the wish-fulfilling armor, Owise one.

58. Having first done this, he should recite the Caṇḍī of seven-hundred verses. Without interruption he should accomplish his recital of the Caṇḍī.

59. As long as the earth’s globe, with its mountains, forests, and groves, endures, so long will his continuity through sons and grandsons last on this earth.

60. At death this person, through Mahāmāyā’s grace, will attain the supreme, eternal state, greatly difficult for even the gods to reach.

61. He will go there, and having gone shall surely not return. He will attain the supreme state and with the Absolute will merge.
Devyāh Kavacam Commentary

To recite the Devyāh Kavacam ("Armor of the Devī"), or Kavaca, is to don its protection. The verses invoke individual Śaktis who together represent the full array of the Devī’s protective energies residing in the human body.

1–2: Mārkanaṇḍeya, assuming the role of disciple, asks Brahmā to reveal the supreme secret. The god replies that such hidden knowledge exists in the form of the Devī’s indwelling presence.

3–5: Brahmā first reveals the names of Durgā’s nine aspects. Sailapūtrī ("daughter of the mountain peak") denotes her purificatory power as the deified Gāṅgā, flowing from the Himālayas. Brahmacariṇī ("the one who moves in Brahman") denotes her dynamic power, Śakti. Candraghāṇī ("she whose bell is like the moon") emphasizes benign creativity. Kūsmāṇḍā, derived from the word for a plump gourd, represents fertility. Skandamātā is the mother of the war god, Skanda. Kātyāyanī represents the Devī’s supreme form, containing the three guṇas. Kālarātrī ("black night") indicates her power of cosmic dissolution. In total contrast, Mahāgaurī ("great shining one") signifies the dazzling light of knowledge. Finally, Siddhidātrī designates the Mother’s power to grant supreme spiritual attainment.

6–8: Listing some of the benefits of taking refuge in the Devī, this passage closely resembles the phalaśruti of the Devīmahātmya’s twelfth chapter.

9–18: The Mothers enumerated here do not correspond to the seven of the Devīmahātmya plus Śivadūtī and Cāmuṇḍā. The Kavaca names eleven.

19–22: This section invokes divine protection in the ten directions and to the reciter’s front, back, left, and right. The names of the divine energies and their meanings are: Aindrī (Indra’s Śakti), Agnidevatā ("deity of fire"), Vārāhī (the Śakti of Viṣṇu in his boar incarnation), Khaḍgadhāriṇī ("sword-wielder"), Vāruṇī (the Śakti of Vāraṇa, the Vedic god of the sea), Mṛgaḥhinī ("deer-rider"), Kaumārī (the Śakti of Kumāra, god of war), Śūladhāriṇī ("spear-bearer"), Brahmāṇī (the consort of Brahmā, embodying creative power), Vaiṣṇavī (the Śakti of Viṣṇu), Cāmuṇḍā (Kāli as the bridge of transcendental and relative consciousness), Jayā ("victory"), Vijayā ("triumph"), Ajitā ("unconquered"), and Aparājitā ("invincible").

23–38: The protective energies are invoked throughout the body, starting at the crown of the head and working downward. The topknot refers to the tuft of hair on the top of the head; in pūjā the bīja hrīm is linked to it as the protecting and invoking mantra. As written, the angas would have been recited by married males of the higher castes, and some verses refer specifically to the male body or to masculine societal roles. If the reciter is female, she is free to make the necessary alterations in the
references to male genitalia and reproductive function in verses 32 and 38. Similarly, in verses 42 and 43, a married female would change “wife” to “husband,” and a celibate monastic of either gender would substitute “devotion” for “wife,” and “disciples” for “children.”

The names of the powers usually have an obvious bearing on the body part or function specified. They are: Dyotini (“brilliant”), Umā (another name of Pārvatī, linked by some philologists to ancient Semitic or Dravidian terms for “mother”), Mālādhārī (“garland-wearer”), Yasasvinī (“renowned”), Citranetrī (“clear-eyed”), Yamaghantā (“holder of the bell of restraint”), Trinetrī (“three-eyed”), Cāṇḍikā (“violent, impetuous”), Sankhinī (“possessor of the conch”), Dvāravāsinī (“dweller at the portal”), Kālikā (“black”), Śārikārī (“causing prosperity”), Sugandhā (“fragrant”), Carcikā (referring to the repetition of a word in reciting the Veda), Amratabālā (“drop of nectar”), Sarasvatī (“flowing”), Kaumārī (“maidenly, virginal”), Citraghāntā (“clear-sounding”), Mahāmāyā (“great deluding power”), Kāmāksī (“she whose soul is love”), Sarvamarīgālī (“all-auspicious”), Bhadrakālī (“auspicious Kālī”), Dhanurdhārī (“bow-bearer”), Nīlagrīvā (“blue-necked”), Nalakārī (“swan-wearer”), Kubera (“possessor of the sword”), Vajradhārī (“bearer of the thunderbolt”), Daṇḍinī (“possessor of the staff”), Ambikā (“Mother”), Sūleśvarī (“ruler of the spear”), Naresvarī (“ruler of humankind”), Mahādevī (“Great Goddess”), Sokavīsīnī (“destroyer of anguish”), Lalitā (“playful”), Śūladhārīnī (“spear-bearer”), Kāmīnī (“goddess of love”), Guhyesvarī (“sovereign of secrets”), Durgandhā (“ill-smelling”), Guhyavāhinī (“tortoise-rider”), Bhagavatī (“blessed”), Meghavāhanā (“cloud-rider”), Mahābalā (“she of great strength”), Mādhavanāyikā (“mistress of Viṣṇu”), Nārasiṃhī (the ṣakti of Viṣṇu’s incarnation as a man-lion), Kauśikī (the Devī’s sattvic aspect, who emerged from Pārvatī’s kośa, or physical sheath), Srīdharī (“bearing splendor”), Pātālavāsinī (“the dweller below”), Damstrakarālī (“she of terrifying fangs”), Urdbhavēśinī (“she whose hair stands on end”), Kauberī (the ṣakti of Kubera, the Vedic god of wealth), Yogīśvarī (“sovereign of ascetics”), Pārvatī (Siva’s divine consort in her beneficent aspect), Kālarātri (“dark night,” referring to the Devī’s world-destroying power), Mukuteśvarī (“sovereign of the crown”), Padmāvatī (a name of Lakṣmī, associated with the lotus), Cūdāmaṇī (“crest-jewel”), Jvālāmukhī (“flame-faced”), Abheyā (“unbreakable”), Brahmāṇī (Brahmā’s consort), Chatreśvarī (“possessor of the royal parasol”), Dharmadhārīnī (upholder of righteousness).

39: The generic term for the life force is prāṇa (“breath”), but prāṇa has five functions. More specifically, the term prāṇa denotes respiration; apāna governs elimination; samāna effects digestion, the assimilation of nutrients, and the circulation of the blood; vyāna, pervading the body, governs the nervous system, speech, and conscious action; udāna regulates growth and body heat. The protective Šakti is Vajrahastā (“she who holds the thunderbolt in hand”). Similarly, three Šaktis invoked in verses 36 and 37 afford divine protection over the three bodily humors of Ayurvedic medicine: pitta (bile, of which the chief quality is heat), vāta (wind, represented in the text by the lungs), and kapha (phlegm, of which the chief quality is cold).

40: The five senses—taste, sight, smell, hearing, and touch—are protected by Yoginī. The three guṇas—sattva, rajas, and tamas—can be taken as metaphors for knowledge (jñāna), action (kriyā), and desire (icchā), relating to the universal fact that human beings think, act, and feel. The Šakti is
Nārāyaṇī, the Devī as the ultimate goal of all humanity.

41: This verse deals with life span, the conduct of life, and the rewards of living in accordance with the dharma. The three guardian powers are cited previously in the Kavaca.

42–43: Invoked to watch benevolently over the reciter’s material wealth, family, and the conduct of his life are Indrāni, Caṇḍikā, Mahālakṣmī, Bhairavī (“frightful”), Dhaneśvarī (“lady of wealth”), the previously cited Kaumārī, Supathā (“she whose path is good”), and Ksemankarl (“giver of safety”).

48–61: The concluding section, in the form of a phalaśruti, details the this-worldly and spiritual benefits of reciting the Kavaca. Verses 53 through 56 present a list of supernatural entities against which the text affords protection: the dākinī (a flesh-eating female attendant of Kālī), the śākinī (a fierce attendant of Durgā), the grahabhūta (a spirit that possesses), the piśāca (the vilest of demons, according to the Ṛgveda), the yakṣa (a harmless ghost or apparition), the gandharva (usually a celestial musician, but sometimes a malevolent, disembodied spirit), the raksasa (a demon that haunts cemeteries and harasses human beings), the brahmaraksasa (the ghost of a brāhmaṇa who led an unholy life), the vetāla (a vampire or spirit inhabiting a corpse), the kūśmāṇḍā, and the bhairava (kinds of frightening demons that accompany Śiva). Ending on a positive note, the Kavaca promises that the devotee who recites it will proceed from a position of highest honor in this world to the supreme goal of union with the Divine.
अर्गलास्तोत्रम्
ॐ नमः चांदिकाये

ॐ. Salutation to Caṇḍikā.

मार्कण्ठेय उवाच |

Mārkaṇḍeya said:

ॐ जय त्वं देवि चामुण्डे जय भूनापहारिणि |
जय सर्वनाथे देवि कालरात्रि नमोऽस्तु ने || १ ||

1. ॐ. Be victorious, O Devī Cāmuṇḍā; be victorious, destroyer of demons; be victorious, all-pervading Devī; Kālarātri, salutations be unto you!

जयन्ती मंगल काली भद्रकाली कपालिनी |
दुर्गा शिवा क्षमा धात्री स्वाहा स्वाहा नमोऽस्तु ने || २ ||

2. Victorious be the auspicious Kālī, Bhadrakālī, adorned with skulls. Gracious be Durgā, the patient upholder of earth. Svāhā, Svadhā, salutations be unto you!

मधुकैटभविष्यसि विधानः कर्दे नमः ||
रूप देहि जयं देहि यशो देहि द्रिष्यो जहि || ३ ||

3. Salutations to you who, granting a boon to Brahmā, brought Madhu and Kaiṭabha to ruin. Give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.

महिषासुरनिर्वाणं भक्तानां सुखदे नमः ||
रूप देहि जयं देहि यशो देहि द्रिष्यो जहि || ४ ||

4. Salutations to you who ordained Mahiṣāsuras destruction, O giver of happiness to your devotees. Give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.

धूम्रनेत्रवघ्ये देवि धर्मकामार्थदायिनि |
रूप देहि जयं देहि यशो देहि द्रिष्यो जहि || ५ ||

5. O Devī, slayer of Dhūmralocana, bestower of righteousness, pleasure, and wealth; give the
form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.

6. O Devī, destroyer of Raktabīja and slayer of Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa; give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.

निशुम्भार्भिनाँशं श्रैलोक्यशुभं नमः।
रूप देहि जयं देहि यशो देहि द्रिष्टो जाहि॥ ६ ॥

7. Salutations, O destroyer of Niśumbha and Śumbha and cause of goodness in the three worlds; give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.

वन्दिताङ्रियुः देवि सर्वसोभायदायिनि।
रूप देहि जयं देहि यशो देहि द्रिष्टो जाहि॥ ७ ॥

8. O Devī, at whose feet we bow, bestower of all well-being; give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.

अचिन्त्यरूपचरिते सर्वशुभविनाशिनि।
रूप देहि जयं देहि यशो देहि द्रिष्टो जाहि॥ ८ ॥

9. O you of inconceivable form and deeds, destroyer of all foes; give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.

नन्देभ्यं सर्वदा भक्त्या चारणे दुरिनापहे।
रूप देहि जयं देहि यशो देहि द्रिष्टो जाहि॥ ९ ॥

10. O Aparṇā, dispelling the distress of those who bow to you always in devotion; give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.

स्तुवच्च्यो भक्तिपूर्वं त्वं चण्डिकेके व्याधिनाशिनि।
रूप देहि जयं देहि यशो देहि द्रिष्टो जाहि॥ १० ॥

11. O Caṇḍikā, destroying the disease of those who praise you with devotion; give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.

चण्डिकेस सन्तं युद्धे जयति पापनाशिनि।
रूप देहि जयं देहि यशो देहि द्रिष्टो जाहि॥ ११ ॥
12. O Caṇḍikā, ever battling, victorious destroyer of vice; give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.

देहि सौभाग्यमारोपयं देहि देवि परं सुखम्।
रूपं देहि जयं देहि यशो देहि द्विषो जहि॥ १३॥

13. Grant good fortune and health, O Devī, grant supreme happiness. Give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.

विघेरिः देशि कल्याणं विघेरिः विपुतं श्रियम्।
रूपं देहि जयं देहि यशो देहि द्विषो जहि॥ १४॥

14. O Devī, confer virtue, bestow abundant success. Give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.

विघेरिः द्विषतं नानां विघेरिः बलमूच्चकेऽः।
रूपं देहि जयं देहि यशो देहि द्विषो जहि॥ १५॥

15. Lay waste my adversaries, create immense strength in me. Give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.

सुरासुरशिरोर्तनिघुष्टचरणोऽभिके।
रूपं देहि जयं देहि यशो देहि द्विषो जहि॥ १६॥

16. O Ambikā, whose feet are polished by the crest-jewels of gods and demons; give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.

विघावनं यशस्वनं लक्ष्मीवनन्तं मां कुरू।
रूपं देहि जयं देहि यशो देहि द्विषो जहि॥ १७॥

17. Endow me with knowledge, fame, and prosperity. Give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.

देवि प्रचण्डदौर्दाधृत्यलद्धिनिषृढिनिः।
रूपं देहि जयं देहि यशो देहि द्विषो जहि॥ १८॥

18. O Devī, destroying the pride of demons with your fearsome long arm; give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.
19. **O Caṇḍikā, destroyer of the pride of raging demons; to me who am bowed down, give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.**

20. **O four-armed Devī, supreme sovereign, praised by the four-faced Brahmā; give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.**

21. **O Devī, eternal mother, praised by the dark Viṣṇu with constant devotion; give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.**

22. **O supreme sovereign, who are praised by Pārvatī’s great lord Siva; give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.**

23. **O supreme sovereign, who are worshiped with pure love by Indrāṇī’s lord; give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.**

24. **O Devī Ambikā, awakening boundless joy in your devotees; give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.**

25. **O Devī Ambikā, waking boundless joy in your devotees; give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.**
25. Grant me a wife who is pleasing and like-minded; give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.

26. O redeemer, who are the unmoving source of this difficult ocean of existence; give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.

27. Having recited this hymn, one should then recite the great hymn of seven hundred verses. Having accomplished that, he will obtain that which is most precious and difficult to attain.
The Argalāstotra (“Hymn of the Bolt”) is a series of incantations in the form of a dhāranī, a Tantric mantra that first praises a deity and then, in the imperative mode, appeals for assistance. In this case, the appeal is an invariable refrain: “Give the form, give the victory, give the glory, kill the enemies.” For its raw, incantatory insistence, my translation retains that literal wording, even though the sound is awkward and the meaning obscure. Rūpa means “beauty” as well as “form,” and what the reciter asks is that the Divine Mother reveal her indwelling presence as the beauty of Self-knowledge. Next the refrain requests the assurance of success in spiritual endeavor, in other words, victory over the deluding power of māyā. With such victory should come glory—a state of spiritual bliss—as well as the destruction of all forces hostile to the sādhaka’s efforts.

Thematically, almost every verse of this anga has its counterpart somewhere in the Devīmāhātmya, and the resemblances are self-evident. The first seven verses address the Devī by familiar names and refer specifically to the major asuras destroyed in the course of the three caritas. A few other points warrant explanation:

10: The name Aparṇā alludes to a myth in which the Devī took birth as Himavat’s daughter and practiced the austerity of complete fasting in order to win Śiva as a husband. Its literal meaning is “not even having leaves [for food].” Alternatively, Apamā (“without leaves [for clothing]”) suggests the total freedom symbolized by Kālī’s nakedness.

18: In English we speak of “the long arm of the law,” and it is tempting to regard the Sanskrit dordanḍa (“long arm,” from dos, “forearm,” and danḍa, “staff”) as a similar metaphor for the Devī’s function as the upholder of dharma.

20–23: The “four-armed Devī” no doubt refers to the unmanifest, triguṇā Mahālakṣmī, the supreme Śakti, worshiped alike by the great creator, preserver, and destroyer gods of theistic Hinduism as well as by Indra, chief of the old Vedic gods.

25: As with the Kavaca, if the reciter is a married woman or a celibate monastic, “wife” may be replaced by either “husband” or “companion.”

27: The “great hymn of seven hundred verses” is the Devīmāhātmya.
कीलकस्त्रोत्रम्
KīLAKASTOTRA

ॐ नमःश्चिंद्रकाये

OM. Salutations to Caṇḍikā.

मारकंदेय उवाच ।

Mārkaṇḍeya said:

ॐ विशुद्धङ्गानेव त्रिवेदीदिव्यचक्रुषे ।
श्रेयःप्राप्तिनिमित्ताय नमः सोमार्धवारिणे ॥ १ ॥

1. OM. To him whose body is pure knowledge, whose divine eyes are the three Vedas; to him who is the cause of attaining the supreme, salutations to [Śiva] who wears the half-moon.

सर्वमेतिृजानीयानन्तराणामपि कीर्तकम् ।
सोऽपि क्षेममवाप्रोति सतं जयत्तयircon ॥ २ ॥

2. Whoever would understand all this, the key to the verses [of the Devīmāhātmya], and is ever intent on reciting [them] shall surely succeed.

सिद्ध्यन्त्ययुच्चातनादीमि कर्माणि सक्तायन्यपि ।
एतेन स्तुवतां देवी स्तोऽस्वर्णदेन भक्ति ॥ ३ ॥

3. All actions for thwarting adversity succeed for those who sing the Devī’s praises with this multitude of verses in succession.

न मन्त्रो नौषं तत्तय न किष्ठिविधि विधते ।
विना जयेन सिद्धेनु सर्वमुच्चातनादिकम् ॥ ४ ॥

4. Without this recitation there is no spell, or medicine, or anything else that will succeed in thwarting all adversity

समग्राण्यमि सेतुस्यन्ति लोकशाङ्कामां हरेः ।
कृत्वा निमन्त्रणायाम भरस्वैवमिंद्र शुभम् ॥ ५ ॥

5. [But with recitation] all will succeed. When Hara [Śiva] created this uncertainty in the
world, he also ordained this entire auspicious [Devīmāhātmya].

6. And he made secret this very hymn to Caṇḍikā. [The reciter] reaches her through holiness in order that she may be pleased and accept his appeal.

7. Without doubt, he who meditates with full concentration on the fourteenth or eighth days of the dark lunar fortnight attains complete well-being.

8. He gives [devotion to the Devī], [and] he receives [her grace]. In no other way is she pleased. And so, Mahādeva [Śiva] secured [the Devīmāhātmya] as if with a pin.

9. Whoever constantly recites this Caṇḍī properly, with the restraint removed, surely becomes a perfected being, a divine attendant, even a celestial singer.

10. And when he goes about, no danger arises anywhere. Never is he subject to untimely death, and at death he will attain liberation.

11. Knowing [all this] and having commenced [this practice], one should perform [the recitation of the Devīmāhātmya]. Not doing so, one perishes. Knowing so, the wise devote themselves to this [which brings] complete fulfillment.
12. Beauty, charm, and whatever other auspicious qualities are seen in women, all those are by [the Devī's] grace. For that reason this auspicious [Devīmāhātmya] should be recited.

13. Even when this hymn is recited softly, its success is resounding, its fulfillment is complete. Therefore one should proceed.

14. Sovereignty, prosperity, health, the destruction of enemies, and supreme liberation are indeed by her grace; why should people not praise her?

15. One who always remembers Caṇḍikā in his heart attains his fondest desire; in his heart the Devī shall forever dwell.

16. At first Mahādeva imposed the restraint of this pin. Freed from that restraint, [the Devīmāhātmya] is to be recited by those whose minds are fixed in meditation.
The Kīlakastotra ("Hymn of the Pin") holds the bolt (argalā) in place and keeps the Devīmāhātmya’s power under lock and key, as it were, lest it should fall into the wrong hands and be misused. For that reason, its language is intentionally obscure, elliptical, and grammatically ambiguous, allowing for considerable latitude in interpretation. According to esoteric tradition, the Kīlaka’s true meaning will duly be revealed to the aspirant who is spiritually prepared to receive it.¹

What is this secret meaning? Verse 8 begins, “He gives, he receives,” followed by “in no other way is she pleased.” Only by self-surrender in complete devotion can the practitioner be receptive to the Devī’s grace. This brief dictum recalls the idea of reciprocity between the human and the Divine implied in the Devīmāhātmya (4.5; 5.50), and one can also infer from it the obstructive role of the ego in blocking the flow of grace.

“Destruction of enemies” in verse 14 should be taken in the metaphorical sense as the slaying of inner demons, the ego’s ignorance and evil tendencies that spill their poison out into the world. Related to this is “thwarting adversity” (uccāṭaṇa) in verses 3 and 4. The Sanskrit term can mean either ruining an adversary, using magic to stop another person from performing certain actions, eradicating something, or driving away a pernicious influence. Since causing harm to others is incompatible with spiritual advancement, uccāṭaṇa has to be understood here as the mental eradication of internal forces that obstruct right knowledge. Similarly, “sovereignty” in verse 14 ultimately refers to power not over others but over one’s lower self, the ego.

The person who surrenders to the Devī with complete devotion receives her protective grace in this life and liberation afterward (verse 10). Compare the Nārāyaṇīstuti’s teaching on worldly enjoyment and final liberation in the Devīmāhātmya (11.7). There is no reason not to be devoted to the Devī, who is the source of all good, declares the Kīlaka (verse 14). In the same way that the Devīmāhātmya promises that she comes to those who remember her (4.35; 5.6), the Kīlaka reveals that the Devī dwells always in the heart that remembers her. The secret, the key, is to devote heart and mind to her. As she proclaims in the Devīmāhātmya, “This entire glorification (māhātmya) of mine draws one near to me. Therefore this poem of my glory is to be recited by those of concentrated mind and heard always with devotion, for it is the supreme way to well-being” (12.20; 12.7).
रात्रिसूक्तम्
1. OṂ. The goddess Night, approaching, illumines every direction with her eyes. She has put on all her glories.

2. The immortal goddess has filled the world’s breadth, heights, and depths with her light. She drives away the darkness.

3. The approaching goddess follows upon her sister, Dawn, at whose coming the darkness likewise departs.

4. Now she is upon us: at her coming we go to rest as birds to their nest in a tree.

5. The villagers have gone to rest, and so, too, all the creatures that walk or fly, even the ravenous hawks.

6. Ward off the she-wolf and the wolf, ward off the thief, O wave of darkness, and be easy for us to pass through.
7. For now, the palpable blackness crushes down upon me. O Dawn, collect it dutifully.

8. As you would accept a precious herd of cattle, O daughter of heaven, O Night, accept this hymn, offered as if to a conqueror.
At face value, the Rātrisūkta ("Hymn to Night" [RV 10.127]) is a glorious nature poem in praise of the deified night, described as a beautiful goddess whose many eyes are the stars that illumine every quarter. Her approaching darkness causes people, animals, and birds to seek rest. But there are predators, animal and human alike, that lurk in that darkness. Against them the hymn appeals for protection and easy passage through the night until, as surely as the crushing blackness engulfs the earth like a wave, Night’s sister, Dawn (Uṣas), heralds the returning light of day.

This earliest hymn to the goddess Rātri reveals her benevolent and terrifying faces, but a later gloss appended to the Rgveda immediately after the Rātrisūkta concentrates on her auspicious, restful, and protective nature. That text, the Rātrlkhila, presents many themes found later in the Devīmāhātmya and employs the same epithets and entire verses that are markedly similar. Four times in three verses it refers to the personified Night as Durgā (RV Kh 4.2.5, 12, 13). \(^1\) In Vedic worship, Rātri was closely identified with Vāk, Sarasvatī, and Aditi, who were considered one and the same goddess, the supreme deity further identified with Durgā. \(^2\)

From a metaphysical standpoint, Rātri represents the obscuring māyā, the power that simultaneously projects the world and envelops it in spiritual darkness. Yet, as surely as night follows day, Rātri’s sister, Uṣas, heralds the approaching light. The Devī’s inseparable faces—the night of duality that deceives and the illuminating light of dawn that points toward enlightenment—represent in turn the ignorance and falsehood of ordinary human awareness, and the blissful knowledge of Brahman. \(^3\) With darkness comes fear, for what dangers may lurk there unseen? For no small reason the Devīmāhātmya calls Mahāmāyā “the terrifying night of delusion” (1.78), referring to the embodied human state. Nevertheless, we must not forget that the dark goddess merely veils her own light, for beyond ignorance and knowledge she is self-luminous consciousness. \(^4\)
देवीसूक्तम्
OM. I move through the gods of storm and light, through the gods of the heavens, through all
the gods. I uphold the lords of day and night, the sovereign of the atmosphere, the god of fire,
and the benevolent celestial guardians.

I bear the nectar of immortality. I support the creator of living beings, the protector of the
universe, and the gracious lord of prosperity. I bestow wealth on those who prepare the
sacrifices and offer the oblations with an attentive mind.

I am the sovereign in whom all the auspicious gods are united. Shining with consciousness, I
am foremost among those worthy of worship. The gods diffuse me in every direction, my
presence abiding in many places and revealed in manifold ways.

Through me alone all mortals live who see and breathe and hear what is said, not knowing
that they abide in me. Hear me as I speak the truth to you.

I myself proclaim this, which is pleasing to gods and men alike: I make mighty whomever I
wish, I make him devout and open his eyes to right understanding.
6. For the god who puts evil to flight, I draw the bow, that his arrow may strike down the hater of devotion; such is the fervor I stir within that man. Through heaven and earth I extend.

At the summit of creation, I bring forth the heavens. My creative power flows from amid the waters of the infinite ocean. Thence I spread through all the worlds and touch yonder heaven with my vastness.

7. I breathe forth like the wind, setting all the worlds in motion. So great have I become in my splendor, shining far beyond heaven and earth.
The hymnist of the Devīsūkta (RV 10.125) is Āmbhrṇī, the daughter of a Vedic sage. Inspired with the knowledge of the Self, she becomes the seer through whom the goddess Vāk proclaims her own glory. To appreciate the full import of this remarkable hymn, we must keep in mind that Vāk, Sarasvatī, and Aditi are one and the same goddess, the source of all powers of heaven and earth. The Brhaddevatā, a large work that explains the deities of the Rigvedic hymns, further identifies this supreme goddess with Durgā (BD 2.79). Reinforcing that identity, the text of the Devīmāhātmya itself specifies that when Suratha and Samādhi worshiped on the river bank, they chanted the Devīsūkta (13.9). The Devī whom the king and merchant addressed is none other than the primeval Great Goddess who spoke through Āmbhrṇī, the Rigveda’s female seer.

The Devīsūkta belongs to the most highly-developed phase of early Vedic philosophical thought, which leans increasingly toward metaphysical inquiry. Its archaic language presents a number of difficulties, not the least of them a pervasive use of ordinary words in a metaphorical sense. Because the associations for many words employed as symbols of other things are lost on us today, literal translation tends to obscure the meaning that would have been obvious to the original hearers. The foregoing translation interprets the meaning behind the metaphors. A more literal version follows below, along with explanatory comments.

1: “I go about with the Rudras, the Vasus, I with the Ādityas and also with the All-Gods. I uphold both Mitra and Vanina, I both Indra and Agni, I the Aśvins.” The verb carāmi means variously “I go,” “I move,” or “I act.” It comes from the verbal root car, which implies movement in space and time and relates to the dynamic nature of Śakti. The names of the gods occur in the instrumental case, which denotes either accompaniment or agency. It is quite possible to read this verse as either “I go about with the gods” or “I work through the gods.” Given that the speaker is the supreme Devī, it makes better sense to think of the gods as agents of her power than to consider her their mere traveling companion; it is logically consistent with the rest of the hymn to understand her as the indwelling presence that empowers the gods. The translation replaces the names of the Vedic deities, which no longer have meaningful immediacy, with their functions, because the realities of storm, sunlight, and nature’s luminosity cannot fail to communicate. The term viśvadevas is especially ambiguous, because it means either “all the gods” or, alternatively, “the All-Gods,” a particular but vaguely defined class of sky deities.

2: “I uphold the Soma to be pressed, and I [uphold] Tvastr, Pūsan, [and] Bhaga. I grant wealth to the attentive sacrificer who offers oblation, who presses [the Soma].” The juice of the sacred soma plant played a significant role in Rigvedic ritual because of its mind-altering, ecstasy-inducing properties. Offered to the gods and ingested by the priests, soma was highly prized as the nectar of immortality. Its use died out by Brāhmaṇic times, and its identity was lost, although its recently proposed identification with Amanita muscaria, the fly-agaric mushroom, is highly persuasive. In later mythology soma became connected with the moon, which was thought to be the receptacle of amṛta,
the nectar of immortality. In the metaphoric language of the Ṛgveda, soma also represents the infinite ocean of bliss and creative energy, which is identical to the Devī’s ultimate being as Ādyā Śakti. For the Devī to say in the Devīsūkta that she supports that which is her very nature is to proclaim that she is the self-existent One and the womb of all possibility. Similarly, she supports (and acts through) the deities or divine energies that fashion the forms of life, sustain them, and grant prosperity and well-being.

3: “I am the queen, who gathers treasures together, the conscious (or knowing) one, first among those worthy of worship. The gods have diffused me in many directions, being in many places and made known in various ways.” In the Ṛgveda the word vasu, generally translated here as “treasures,” has the primary meaning of “gods,” and especially the luminous sky deities. “Wealth” or “property” is another legitimate reading, but the reference to wealth in the preceding verse uses another word, draviṇa. The context of the present verse supports the reading of “gods,” among whom the Devī, the supreme consciousness, is foremost. Precisely through those gods, who are but facets of her power, is the all-pervading divine energy-consciousness spread throughout the world in many ways.

4: “Through me he eats food, who sees, who breathes, who hears what is spoken. Knowing it not, they dwell beside me. Hear me tell you that which is worthy of faith.” Here, eating is a metaphor for living, the embodied experience that entails metabolic processes, movement, perception, cognition, and all other functions of human intelligence, except for the higher awareness that the Devī is the source of them all. To become awakened to that supreme truth is the purpose of sādhana, for which righteous living is a prerequisite. Yet even those who are unaware of the divine presence are sustained by the Mother’s grace.

5: “I myself proclaim this, which is esteemed (or welcomed) by gods and men. Whomever I wish (or love), him I make mighty, him [I make] a brāhmaṇa, a seer, a man of good understanding.” The terms brāhmaṇa, seer” and man of good (or clear) understanding represent, in the broadest possible sense, people who are awakened in turn to devoutness, divine vision, and spiritual knowledge.

6: “I draw the bow for Rudra, that his arrow may strike down the hater of devotion. I rouse [the wise] man to fervor (or battle); I penetrate heaven and earth.” Rudra should be thought of as a manifestation of the Devī’s own energy, and his bow as a metaphor for right intent, shooting the arrows of thought that destroy the obstacles to the higher knowledge that connects the human to the Divine. The person roused to excited action is the awakened votary of the previous verse, and the action both pertains to and proceeds from inner states of awareness. The word battle can also be understood as a debate between sages; such rhetorical contests were common in Vedic times as a means of arriving at spiritual truth. At the end of the verse, the subject shifts abruptly to the Devī’s all-pervasiveness.

7: “At the summit of this world, I give birth to the father; my womb is in the midst of the waters, in the ocean. Thence I extend through all worlds and reach up to yonder sky with my greatness.” The father is the sky or heaven, and the Devī’s womb (yoni), sometimes translated as “origin” or “home,” is her creative power, inherent in the metaphoric waters of the ocean, which symbolizes infinite being-consciousness. From this emanates the whole of the universe, pervaded by the same divine
consciousness from which it originates. As in the Devīmāhātmya, the Divine Mother is both source and manifestation.

8: “I blow forth like the wind, resolutely commencing all worlds. Beyond heaven, beyond this earth, to such an extent have I become in my glory.” Here Vāk likens her energy to the wind, breathing forth all the forms of creation. Yet, even in her all-pervading immanence, she surpasses the limits of the wide world and the vaulted heavens, for ultimately, she is the transcendent Absolute.
प्राधानिकं रहस्यम्
The king said:

1. *OM. Blessed one, you have told me about Caṇḍikā’s manifestations. Be pleased, O knower of what is sacred, to speak of their essential nature.*

The seer said:

2. *Accepting my reverence, O twice-born, tell me everything of the Devī’s true being, and by what manner, by which ritual I am to worship.*

3. *This is the supreme secret, and it is said that it should not be divulged. But look how devoted you are! There is nothing I would not tell you, O king.*

4. *First and foremost is Mahālakṣmī, who holds the three forces of creation. She is the supreme sovereign. She is both defined by form and indefinably formless; having manifested in every way, she abides in everything.*
5. She holds a citron, mace, shield, and drinking vessel. On her head, O king, she bears a serpent, linga, and yoni.

6. Her complexion is the color of molten gold, and like molten gold, her ornaments shine. She filled the entire void with her radiant light.

7. Seeing the entire universe a void, the supreme sovereign conceived a surpassing form through her power of tamas.

8. She became a woman, shining black like collyrium, teeth glistening in her lovely mouth, her eyes wide, her waist slender,

9. her four hands adorned with sword, drinking-cup, head, and shield, her neck garlanded with strands of headless torsos and a necklace made of skulls.

10. The dark one, this fairest of women, asked Mahalakṣmī, “Mother, give me my names and deeds. Salutations to you again and again.”

11. Mahālakṣmī answered her, the dark one fairest among women, “I give you the names [you will be known by] and the actions [you will perform].
12. Mahāmāyā, Mahākālī, Mahāmārī, Ksudhā, Trsā, Nidrā, Trṣā, Ekavīrā, Kālarātri, Duratyayā—

13. these are your names, and their meanings will be revealed by your actions. Understanding your actions through them, whoever reflects on them will attain happiness.”

14. O king, when she had spoken to her thus, Mahālakṣmī, through her surpassingly pure power known as sattva, assumed another unequaled form, lustrous like the moon.

15. She became an exquisite woman, holding prayer beads and goad, vīṇā, and book. And to her Mahālakṣmī gave names:


17. Then Mahālakṣmī said to Mahākālī and Mahāsarasvatī: "Goddesses, bring forth couples, male and female, according to your own natures.”
18. Having spoken thus, Mahālakṣmī produced her own female and male couple, born of the golden womb, resplendent, and seated on a lotus.

19. The Mother called the male Brahmā, Vidhi, Virinca, Dhātr; and she called the female Srī, Padmā, Kamalā, Lakṣmī.

20. Likewise Mahākālī and Bhāratī each produced a couple. I shall tell you their forms and names.


22. He is Rudra, Sankara, Sthāṇu, Kapardī, and Trilocana. The woman is Trayī, Vidyā, Kāmadhenu, Bhāsāksarā, and Svarā.

23. [Mahā]sarasvatī brought forth a shining white female and a blue-black male, 0 king. I shall tell you their names.

24. [His are] Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, Hrṣīkeśa, Vāsudeva, Janārdana; [hers are] Umā, Gaurī, Sātī, Caṇḍī, Sundarī, Subhagā, Śivā.
25. In that way, the three young women at once assumed maleness. Those who are able to see will certainly see, but not the rest who remain uncomprehending.

26. Then, O king, Mahālakṣmī presented Trayī as a wife to Brahmā, Gaurī to Rudra, and Srī to Vāsudeva.

27. Virinca united with Svarā and created an egg. The blessed, heroic Rudra, together with Gauri, broke it open.

28. Within the egg, O king, was the primary matter, destined to evolve into all the universe, moving and unmoving, consisting of the five gross elements.

29. Keśava, together with Lakṣmī, nourished and protected it. Maheśvara, along with Gauri, dissolved all the universe.

30. O great king, Mahālakṣmī is the supreme sovereign, the true essence of all that is. She is both formless and with form, bearing various names.

31. She can be described by different names, yet by no other name [can she truly be known].
Prādhānika Rahasya Commentary

Known as Rahasyas ("secrets"), the three angas usually recited after the Devīmāhātmya form a continuation of King Suratha’s dialogue with Medhas and relate to the manifestations of Śakti. If the function of the three preliminary angas is to assure the reciter’s safe access to divine power, the purpose of the Rahasyas is to instruct in philosophy and ritual worship. These three closely related texts have been called the “earliest systematic statement of Śākta philosophy.”

The Prādhānika Rahasya ("The Secret Relating to Primary Matter," or "The Preeminent Secret") takes as its point of departure the Brahmāstuti’s phrase “differentiating into the threefold qualities of everything” (DM 1.78). In considering how the singular ultimate reality assumes the multiple forms of the phenomenal universe, the Prādhānika Rahasya first describes the differentiation of the guṇas as taking place within the Devī herself and remaining at the unmanifest (avyākṛta) stage.

Attempting to describe the indescribable, Medhas paradoxically uses vivid mythological images to refer to unmanifest states of being, beginning with a verbal portrayal of Mahālakṣmī as the supreme, formless “form” of the Devī, containing the three guṇas in perfect, non-manifesting equilibrium (verse 4). He describes the symbols of her powers held in her four hands, and on her head the coiled serpent representing the cosmic cycle of time; the linga, symbolizing absolute consciousness; and the yoni, standing for relative consciousness (verse 5).

Alone in an emptiness paradoxically filled with her own light (verse 6), Mahālakṣmī assumes a second form, made from unalloyed tāmas. Usually the word tāmas is translated in this verse as “darkness,” which makes a dramatic effect; but it should be remembered that any English word—for example, “darkness, inertia, ignorance, illusion, veiling”—describes only the visible effects of tāmas and not the pure energy in itself.

The names of the tāmasic, four-armed Mahākāli, revealed in verse 12, encompass proper names, personified qualities, and descriptive epithets. In my translation, I have retained the original Sanskrit forms as capitalized names—indeed, verse 11 announces them as names—but their meanings are significant. Mahāmāyā ("Great Illusion") is the divine power that makes the phenomenal universe cognizable to the senses. Mahākāli ("Great Darkness") signifies pure tāmas personified. Mahāmārī ("Great Destroyer") indicates a form of Durgā. The others are Kṣudhā ("Hunger"), Tṛṣā ("Thirst"), Nīdrā ("Sleep"), Tṛṣṇā ("Desire"), Ekaivī ("Foremost Heroine"), Kālarātri ("Dark Night"), Duratyayā and ("Inscrutable One").

Next, Mahālakṣmī assumes a form made of pure sattva (verse 14) and receives her names (verse 16). They are Mahāvidyā ("Great Knowledge"), Mahāvānī ("Great Sound"), Bhāratī ("Eloquence"), Vāk ("Speech"), Sarasvatī ("Flowing One"), Āryā ("Noble One"), Brāhmī (the śakti of Brahmā), Kāmadhenu ("Wish-Fulfilling Cow," a reference to the Devī’s nurturing aspect), Vedagarbhā ("Womb of the Vedas"), and Dhīśvarī ("Sovereign of Wisdom"). Three of these refer to the creative capacity of sound, speech, and language. Dhī in the final epithet signifies thought, especially of a religious nature, such as meditation or prayer, or more generally reflection, intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, or art—all functions associated with sattva.

After differentiation, each guṇa generates a polarized pair of offspring, represented as male and
female (verses 17 through 25). This polarization can be thought of as analogous, in the scientific view, to the up and down differentiation of quarks, positive and negative electrical charges, or the north and south poles of a magnet.

Again, there are the names. Mahālakṣmī’s male offspring is Brahmā, also called Vidhī (“Creator”), Virinca (etymology uncertain), and Dhātr (“Supporter”); the female is Śri (“Splendor”), Padmā (“Lotus”), Kamalā (“Lotus”) and Lakṣmī (“Good Fortune, Prosperity”). Mahākālī’s male offspring is Rudra (“Howling One”) or Śiva, also called Sankara (“Causing Prosperity, Beneficent, Auspicious”), Sthāṇu (“Standing Firmly, Motionless”), Kapardī (“He of Matted Locks”), and Trilocana (“Three-Eyed”); the female is Sarasvatī, also called Trayī (“Three [Vedas]”), Vidyā (“Knowledge”), Kāmadhenu (“Wish-Fulfilling Cow”), Bhāsāksarā (“Letters of Speech”), and Svarā (“Sound, Speech”). Mahāsarasvatī’s male offspring is Viṣṇu, whose other names include Kṛṣṇa (“Dark One”), Hṛśkeśa (“He Whose Hair Stands on End [with Joy]”), Vāsudeva (“God of Gods”), and Janārdana (“Exciting, or Agitating, Men”); the female is Umā (a name of Pārvatī), also known as Gaurī (“Shining One”), Sātī (“Your Ladyship,” a name of Durgā, sometimes described as Truth personified), Caṇḍī (“Fierce, Impetuous”), Sundarī (“Beautiful”), Subhagā (“Possessing Good Fortune, Blessed”), and Sivā (“Auspicious”).

The marriages that couple the tamasic Sarasvatī with the rajasic Brahmā, the rajasic Lakṣmī with the sattvic Viṣṇu, and the sattvic Gaurī with the tamasic Rudra signal the beginning of the guṇas’ process of interaction (verse 26), which leads to all the activity of the universe. Brahmā and Sarasvatī produce a cosmic egg, which Rudra and Gaurī break open (verse 27), releasing the pradhāna—primary, unevolved matter, which will evolve through the further and increasingly complex combining and recombining of the guṇas into the five subtle elements (tanmātras) and then into the five gross elements (mahābhūtas) of space, air, fire, water and earth. Although the concept of the physical world as consisting of five elements may seem archaic and quaint, note how scientific it truly is. Air, water, and earth represent the three states of matter—gaseous, liquid, and solid. These states are determined by temperature (fire) and can only exist within space.

Then Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī nourished and protected the creation, and Śiva and Gaurī dissolved it back into its source (verse 29). Note that Medhas relates this in the past tense, as if to say that all this happened, happens, and will happen again in a never-ending pulsation of evolution and involution. The Devī is both the ever-changing forms of existence and the formlessness of pure being (verse 30)—that is the pre-eminent secret. According to her manifestations, she is known by many names, yet no name can reveal the fullness of her true nature, which is the infinite Self (verse 31).
वैकृतिक रहस्यम्
The seer said:

1. Oṃ. The Devī, who appears manifest in three ways—as containing the three guṇas, as dark, and as brilliantly pure—is called Śarvā, Caṇḍikā, Durgā, Bhadrā, and Bhagavatī.

2. She is said to be Viṣṇu’s mystic sleep, Mahākālī, whose energy is tamas, whom Brahmā, seated on the lotus, praised that she might destroy Madhu and Kaitabha.

3. She has ten faces, ten arms, and ten feet. She is lustrous as collyrium; she shines radiantly, as if garlanded with her thirty eyes.

4. O king, even though she is of frightful appearance with glistening teeth and fangs, she is the beauty in form, the foundation of all loveliness and great splendor.

5. She bears the sword, arrow, mace, spear, discus, conch, and sling; she carries the iron club and bow and a head dripping with blood.
6. She is Viṣṇu’s deluding power, the inscrutable Mahākāli. When pleased, she brings all that is moving and unmoving under her worshiper’s control.

7. She who emerged from the bodies of all the gods as boundless light is Mahālakṣmī, who contains the three energies, and who became embodied as Mahisa’s slayer.

8. White is her face, deep blue her arms, brilliant white the orbs of her breasts, red her waist, red her feet, deep blue her arousing shanks and thighs.

9. Many-colored is her lap. Bedecked with multihued garlands and raiment, she is variously anointed and abounds in a beauty that is pure loveliness.

10. Although she has a thousand arms, she should be worshiped in eighteen-armed form. The weapons here described proceed in order from her lower right hand:

11. prayer beads, lotus, arrow, sword, thunderbolt, mace, discus, trident, ax, conch, bell, and noose,
12. spear, staff, shield, bow, drinking-vessel, and waterpot. She whose arms are adorned with these weapons, she who is seated on the lotus,

13. the sovereign who encompasses all the gods, this Mahālakṣmī is to be worshiped, O king. Doing so, one becomes the master of all the worlds and of the gods.

14. She who was born from the body of Gaurl and who embodies the sole energy of sattva is proclaimed to be [Mahā] Sarasvatī, the destroyer of the demon Śumbha.

15. In her eight arms she carries the arrow, pestle, spear, discus, conch, bell, ploughshare, and bow, O king.

16. When worshiped with devotion, she grants omniscience. She is the goddess who crushed Niśumbha and destroyed the demon Śumbha.

17. Thus, O king, the true nature of the Devī’s embodied forms has been told to you. Hear how the mother of the world is worshiped in her individual forms.

18. When Mahālakṣmī is worshiped, Mahākālī and [Mahā] Sarasvatī are to be worshiped on her right and left. At the back are the three couples:
19. Brahmā and Sarasvaṭī in the middle, Rudra and Gaurī on their right, and Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī on their left, with the three goddesses standing forward.

The eighteen-armed [Mahālakṣmī] is in the middle, the ten-faced [Mahākāli] on the left, and the eight-armed [Mahāsarasvati] on the right. [Mahā] lakṣmī is to be worshiped as the primary deity.

When this eighteen-armed form is worshiped, O king, along with the ten-faced and eight-armed forms, then on the right and left,

22. time and death should be worshiped to allay all misfortune. When the eight-armed slayer of the demon Śumbha is worshiped,

her nine Śaktis should be worshiped and also Rudra and Vināyaka. With the hymn that begins “Salutation to the Devī” [the Aparājitāstuti] one should honor Mahālakṣmī.

In the worship of the three manifestations, the verses of their respective hymns should be uttered. The eighteen-armed slayer of Mahiṣa is to be worshiped [as foremost, for]
25. she herself is proclaimed as Mahālakṣmī, Mahākāli, and [Mahā]sarasvati, the great ruler of all worlds, reigning over the virtuous and the wicked.

26. One who worships Mahisa’s slayer becomes master of the world. To Caṇḍikā, the upholder of the worlds, who is tender toward her devotees, one should offer worship

27. with oblations and the like, with adornments, with flowers perfumed with sandal paste, with whole blossoms, incense and lights, and with all manner of food offerings,

28. with blood sacrifice, flesh, and wine, O king, and with prostrations, the ritual sipping of water, and sweetly fragrant sandalwood,

29. with offerings of camphor and betel nut, all made with complete devotion. On the left side in front of the Devī, the great decapitated demon,

30. Mahiṣa, should be honored, having attained union with her who is supreme. On the right side in front, the lion, who is the whole and mighty dharma,
the Devī's mount, should be worshiped, for he sustains all that is moving and unmoving. With one-pointed mind the wise one should sing her praises,

ततः कृताङ्गलिम्भूत्वा स्तुवीति चरितारिमेः।
एकेन वा मध्यमेन नैकेनेतर्योरिहि॥ ३२ ॥

then, with folded hands, should praise her with these episodes [of the Devimāhātmya] or by the middle one alone, but not by one only of the other two

चरितार्थे तु न जयेन अपित्त्र्रक्रमापञ्जुनात्।
प्रदक्षिणानमस्कारान् कृत्वा मूर्ति कृताङ्गलिः॥ ३३ ॥

or by chanting half an episode, for that would create a weak point in the recitation. Circumambulating the deity reverently with hands folded on the head,

क्षमाप्येज्ञगदात्री मुख्मुहर्तन्त्रितः।
प्रतिश्लोकं च जुह्यात्पायसं नित्सर्पिषा॥ ३४ ॥

one should vigorously ask for forgiveness again and again from the sustainer of the world. With each verse should one make an oblation of milk, sesame, and ghee.

जुह्यात्स्तोत्रमन्नेर्वा चण्डिकायें शुभं हवि:।
भूयो नामपदेश्वरी पूजयेन्युस्माहितः॥ ३५ ॥

Or, one can make an auspicious offering to Caṇḍikā with the verses of the [Devimāhātmya's] hymns. With the mind turned inward and fully concentrated, one should worship the Devī with the “salutation verses” [the Aparājītāstuti].

प्रयत: प्राचन्ति: प्रत्य: प्रणाम्यारोप्य चात्मनि।
सुचिरं भावयेदीशाः चण्डिकां तन्मयो भवेत॥ ३६ ॥

Intent on devotion, with hands folded and head bowed in reverence, deeply collected in oneself, one should meditate on the supreme Caṇḍikā for a long while and become filled with her.

एवं य: पूजयेद्रकथा प्रत्यहं परमेश्वरीम्।
भूक्तवा भोगान्यथाकामं देवियायुज्यमाप्यायत्॥ ३७ ॥

One who daily worships the supreme sovereign in this way, having accordingly experienced
37. all enjoyment with dispassion, attains union with the Devī.

38. If one does not always worship Caṇḍikā, who is tender toward her devotees, his merits will the supreme sovereign bum to ashes.

39. Therefore, O king, worship Caṇḍikā, the great ruler of all the worlds, in the prescribed manner, and you will attain happiness.
The Vaikṛtika Rahasya ("The Secret Relating to Transformation") concentrates on the supreme Devī’s modification (vikṛti) from formlessness to perceptible form. The opening verse asserts that she who is known by such names as Durgā and Caṇḍikā, assumes three aspects: one containing all three guṇas, one expressing pure tāmas, and one expressing pure sāttva. This cosmogony reflects the text’s Vaiṣṇava Tantric stance; instead of characterizing Māhālakṣmī as the purely rajasic emanation of the Absolute, comparable to the tāmasic Māhākāli and the sāttvic Māhāsarasvatī, it presents her as triguṇā and therefore foremost of the three.

The description of the dark, ten-armed Māhākāli (verses 2 through 6), slayer of Madhu and Kaiṭabha, corresponds to that of the dhyāna that precedes the Devīmāhātmya’s first chapter. Likewise, verses 7 through 13 agree with the description of the eighteen-armed Māhālakṣmī in the dhyāna preceding the second chapter, portraying her as the goddess of boundless light, who took form in order to slay Mahiṣāsura. Note that her white, dark blue (or black), and red features symbolize the three guṇas (verse 8), and that she is variously hued (citrā), her full range of colors proceeding from the subsequent combining and recombining of the primary guṇas (verse 9). The description of the sāttvic, eight-armed Māhāsarasvatī, the slayer of Śumbha, likewise corresponds to the dhyāna that introduces the Devīmāhātmya’s third carīta at Chapter 5.

The remainder of the Vaikṛtika Rahasya is concerned with formal worship through visualization, meditation, ritual offerings, and the chanting of the Devīmāhātmya, with emphasis on the special importance of the Aparājitāstuti.
मूर्तिरहस्यम्
The seer said:

ॐ नन्दा भगवती नाम या भविष्यति नन्दजा।
स्तुता या पूजिता भक्त्या वशीकर्याः जगच्छयम्। १।

1. OM. She who will be born to Nanda and named Nanda Bhagavati, when praised and worshiped with devotion, will grant mastery over the three worlds.

कनकोत्तमकाौिनि। या सुकान्तिकनकाम्भरा।
देवी कनकवर्णाभा कनकोत्तमभूषणा॥ २॥

2. Her beauty shines like the finest gold, her garments are of golden brilliance. Golden is the Devi’s splendor, and of pure gold are her adornments.

कमलाङ्क्षापाशाब्ज्ञार्लंकृतचतुर्भुजा।
इन्दिरा कमला लक्ष्मी। श्री रक्माम्बुजायना॥ ३॥

3. Lotus, goad, noose, and conch grace her four arms. She is Indirā, Kamalā, Lakṣmī, Śrī, seated on a resplendent lotus.

या रक्तदन्तिका नाम देवी प्रोक्ता मयानं।
तस्या: स्वरूपं वक्ष्यामि श्रुणृ सर्वभयापहम्॥ ४॥

4. O faultless one, the goddess of whom I now speak is called Raktadantikā. I will describe her true nature; listen, for it allays all fears.

रक्तम्बरा रक्तवर्णा रक्तस्वाज्ञभूषणा।
रक्तयुधा रक्तनेत्रा रक्तकेशातिभीषणा॥ ५॥

5. Red is her clothing, red her body, red the ornaments on all her limbs, red her weapons, red her eyes, and red her hair. Great indeed is the terror she inspires.
6. Red are her rending talons, red her teeth, and red her fangs. As a wife is loving toward her husband, the Devī loves the person who is devoted to her.

7. She is expansive like the earth, and her two breasts are like Mount Meru—full, heavy, massive, and alluring.

8. Firm and exquisite, they hold the milk of perfect bliss. With these breasts that satisfy all wants, the Devī nourishes her devotees.

9. She carries sword, drinking vessel, pestle, and plough, the Devī known as the red Cāmundā and Yogesvarī.

10. She pervades the entire world, unmoving and moving. One who worships her with devotion extends throughout the universe.

11. As a woman attends her beloved, the Devī attends one who constantly turns the mind to this wonderful hymn to Raktadantikā.
12. Śākambharī's color is blue, her eyes like a blue lotus, her navel deep, and her slender waist adorned with three folds of skin.

Śुक्रकेशसमोतुज्वरपीनघनस्तनि ।
पुष्टि शिलीमुखार्पूर्ण कमलं कमलालया ॥ १३ ॥

13. Her breasts are firm, even, and full, rounded, plump and solid. Reposing on a lotus, she holds a handful of arrows, a lotus blossom, and all manner of flowers, tender plants, roots, fruits, and vegetables in dazzling abundance, with tastes to please every palate, said to remove all fear of hunger, thirst, and death.

पुष्पपल्लबमूलादिकलाद्यं शाकसज्जयम् ।
काम्यानन्तरसैयुर्यं शुण्णमृत्युभयापहम् ॥ १४ ॥

14. The supreme sovereign bears a bow of glittering splendor. She is celebrated as Śākambharī, Śatāksī, and Durgā herself.

कारुमं च स्फरत्कान्ति बिभ्रति परमेश्वरी ।
शाकम्भरी शनाशी च सैव दुर्गा प्रकीर्तिता ॥ १५ ॥

15. Free from sorrow, subduing evil, allaying difficulty and misfortune, she is Umā, Gaurī, Satī, Caṇḍī, Kālikā, and Pārvatī.

विशोका दुष्टदमनी शमनी दुरितापदाम् ।
उमा गौरी सती चण्डी कालिका सा च पार्वती ॥ १६ ॥

16. By praising Śākambharī, contemplating her, repeating her name, worshiping her, and surrendering to her, one quickly obtains the everlasting reward of food, drink, and freedom from death.

शाकम्भरी स्तुवन्ध्यायअपनसम्पूजयत्रमन् ।
अक्षययमस्तुते शीघ्रमत्रानामृतं फलम् ॥ १७ ॥

17. Bhīmā also is colored blue, with shining fangs and teeth. A wide-eyed woman with full, round breasts,
she holds a glittering scimitar, drum, head, and drinking-vessel. She is called the solitary warrior, Kālarātri, praised as the granter of desires.

Bhrāmarī, inviolable within her encircling light, is a many-splendored goddess, anointed with various perfumes and adorned with multihued gems.

With multicolored bees in hand, she is sung of as the great pestilence. Thus, O lord of the earth, are explained the incarnations of the Devī,

of the mother of the world, of Caṇḍikā, renowned for satisfying every desire. This is the supreme secret, which you must not divulge to anyone,

this explanation of her divine embodiments that yields the desired results. Therefore, with unflagging perseverance, repeat the Devī’s name unceasingly.

By proper recitation of the verses [of the Devīmāhātmya], you will be released from your offending acts acquired over seven lifetimes, even those as heinous as the slaying of a Brāhmaṇa.
देव्या ध्यानं मया ख्यातं गुहासुंहतरं महत् ।
तस्मात्यंप्रयत्नं सर्वकामामफलप्रदम् ॥ २५ ॥

Meditation on the Devī is, I proclaim, the great secret of secrets, and if you persevere, it will grant the fulfillment of your every desire.
The Mūrtirahasya (“The Secret Relating to Forms”) elaborates on the Devī’s further earthly manifestations as foretold in Chapter 11 of the Devīmāhātmya. It describes the iconography of these five incarnations and specifies the benefits of worshiping them. Despite the often fierce characteristics ascribed to some of these forms, more important are the Devī’s maternal beneficence and salvific power, which show recurring ties to agricultural and other terrestrial themes.

The Mūrtirahasya falls into five sections, each dealing with one of the five incarnations. First is Bhagavaṭī Nandā or Vindhyavāsinī (verses 1–3, DM 11.41–42). Next comes Raktadantikā (verses 4–11, DM 11.43–45). Her name means “the redtoothed one,” and the emphasis on red, the color of blood, underscores her terrifying, rajasic fierceness, even while she is likened to the expansive, fertile earth, a reminder that the energies of nature are both destructive and beneficent. Śākambharī (verses 12–17, DM 11.46–50) is the earth itself, and her body is blue, just as the planet Earth, seen from space, appears blue. A carved seal from Harappa pictures a naked goddess with a plant issuing from her womb, and possibly this artifact, dating back perhaps four and a half millennia, illustrates Śākambharī or her prototype. Śākambharī’s abdominal furrows are clearly an agricultural allusion, and she is further described as holding a great variety of edibles brought forth from her own body. The passage identifies her, the great Earth Mother, with Durgā, Umā, Gaurī, Kālikā, and other names of the supreme Devī. Bhūmā (verses 18–19, DM 11.51–52), also blue, represents her dark aspect, with allusions to death and dissolution. And Bhrāmarī (verses 20–21, DM 11.53–55), the fifth embodiment, appears in a dazzling display of light and color. She, too, manifests as both terrible and auspicious, on the one hand being called “the great pestilence,” and on the other symbolizing sexual attraction (and therefore procreative power) through the metaphor of the bee.

Medhas’s final word to King Suratha summarizes the supreme secret: that constantly repeating Caṇḍikā’s name, reciting the Devīmāhātmya, and meditating on the Devī are the way to eternal bliss.
PART IV

THE DEVĪMĀHĀTMYA

SANSKRIT TEXT AND TRANSLITERATION
OM khaḍgam cakragadeśucāparighān sūlam bhusuṇḍīm śiraḥ śaṅkham sandadhatīm karais trinayanām sarvāṅgabhuṣāvṛtām yām hantuṁ madhukaiṭabhau jalajabhūs tuṣṭāva supte harau nīlāsmadyutim āsyapādadaśakām seve mahākālikām
प्रथमोद्यायः
मधुकैटमध्यवः

ॐ नमः शंक्तिकाये

ॐ ऐं मार्क्षणे उवाच || १ ि

OM aiṁ mārkṣaṇe yya uvāca

सावर्णिः सूर्यतनयो यो मनुः कथ्यते श्यमः || २ ि

सावर्णिः सूर्यतनयो यो मनुः कथ्यते श्यमः

निशामय तदनि विस्तराज्जनो मम || २ ि

निशामय तदनि विस्तराज्जनो मम

सावर्णिः सूर्यतनयो यो मनुः कथ्यते श्यमः

mahāmāyānubhāvena yathā manvantarādhipah

स बभुव महाभागः सावर्णिस्तनयो रवे: || ३ ि

स बभुव महाभागः सावर्णिस्तनयो रवे

mahāmāyāṇubhāvena yathā manvantarādhipah

सावर्णिः सूर्यतनयो यो मनुः कथ्यते श्यमः

sa babhūva mahābhāgah sāvarṇis tanayo raveḥ

स्वारोचिषेस्नन्तरे पूर्व चैत्रवंशास्मुद्रवः || ४ ि

स्वारोचिषेस्नन्तरे पूर्व चैत्रवंशास्मुद्रवः

सुरथो नाम राजभृत्यसमस्ते क्षितिमिण्डले || ४ ि

सुरथो नाम राजभृत्यसमस्ते क्षितिमिण्डले

svārociṣe 'ntare pūrvam caitravamśasamudbhavah

सावर्णिः सूर्यतनयो यो मनुः कथ्यते श्यमः

suratho nāma rājābhūt samaste kṣitimaṇḍale

सत्य पालयतः सम्यक् प्रजा: पुत्रानिवौर्षसान् || ५ ि

सत्य पालयतः सम्यक् प्रजा: पुत्रानिवौर्षसान्

बभुवः राज्यो भूपा: कोलाविध्यसिनस्तदा || ५ ि

बभुवः राज्यो भूपा: कोलाविध्यसिनस्तदा

tasya pālayataḥ samyak prajāḥ putrānivaurusān

तस्य तैरेन्द्रदुर्मतिप्रबलदृष्टिर्विद्युतसिमिर्जितः || ६ ि

तस्य तैरेन्द्रदुर्मतिप्रबलदृष्टिर्विद्युतसिमिर्जित

tasya tair abhavad yuddham atiprabaladaṇḍinah
nyūnair api sa tair yuddhe kolāvidhvamsibhir jituḥ

तत: स्वपुरमायात्तो निजेदेशाधिपोऽभवत् ।
आक्रान्तः स महाभागसैतनदा प्रबलारिभिः ॥ ७ ॥

tataḥ svapuram āyāto nijadesādhipo 'bhavat
ākrāntah sa mahābhāgas tais tadā prabalāribhiḥ

अमात्येवलिमिवर्द्धिबलस्य दुरात्मभि: ।
कोशो बलं चापहनं तत्रापि स्वप्ते तत: ॥ ८ ॥

amātyair balibhir duṣṭair durbalasya durātmabhiḥ
kośo balam cāpahṛtam tatrāpi svapure tataḥ

ततो मृगयायाजेन हतस्वम्य: स भूपति: ।
एकाकी हयमारुह जगाम गहनं वनमू ॥ ९ ॥

tato mṛgyāvyājena hṛtasyaṁyāḥ sa bhūpatiḥ
ekākī hayam āruhya jagāma gahanam vanam

स तत्रात्रमद्राष्ट्रीङ्गर्वयुव्ययम् मेघसः ।
प्रशान्तस्वापदाकरीण मुनिशिष्योपशोभितम् ॥ १० ॥

sa tatrāśramam adṛkṣid dvijavaryasya medhasah
prasāntaśvapadākṛṇaṁ muniśisyopasobhitam

तस्यो कण्ठित्व कालं च मुनिना तेन सत्कृत: ।
इन्द्रेषुतथ्य विचरस्तस्मिन् मुनिवराश्रमे ॥ ११ ॥

tasthau kañcit sa kālam ca muniṁ tena satkṛtaḥ
itaś cetaś ca vicaramś tasmin munivarāśrame

सोऽचिन्त्यतमदा तन्त्र ममत्वाकृष्टमानसः: ॥ १२ ॥

so 'cintayat tadā tatra mamatvākṛṣṭamānasaḥ

मत्यूर्वः पालितं पूर्वं मया हीनं पुरुं हि तत् ।
पद्धत्यैसैर्सदुवृत्तेऽधर्मेः पाल्यते न वा ॥ १३ ॥

matpūrvaiḥ pālitam pūrvam mayā hīnam puram hi tat
dadbhṛtyais tair asadvṛttair dharmataḥ pālyate na vā
न जाने स प्रधानोऽ शूरो हस्ती सदामः ।
मम वैरिवशं यातः काने भोगानुपलुह्यते ॥ १४ ॥

na jāne sa pradhāno me śūro hastī sadāmadaḥ
mama vairivaśām yātaḥ kān bhogān upalapsyate

ये ममानुगता नित्यं प्रसादधनभोजने ।
अनुवृत्तं ध्रुवं तेषव कुर्वन्यन्यमहीभुताम ॥ १५ ॥

ye mamānugatā nityam prasādadhanabhojanaṁ
anuvṛttim dhruvam te 'dyā kurvantī anyamahībhṛtām

असम्यग्यायशीलेण्य: कुर्वद्र: सतनं व्ययम् ।
संज्ञित: सोहतदुख्यन क्षयं कोशो गमिष्यति ॥ १६ ॥

asamyagvyayaśīlaiś taiḥ kurvadbhiḥ satataṁ vyayam
sañcitaḥ so 'tīdūkhena kṣayaṁ kośo gamiṣyati

एतच्चान्यन्य सततं चिन्तयामाय पार्थिवः ।
तत्र विप्राश्रमाभ्यां मैययमेंक ददर्श स: ॥ १७ ॥

etac cān ya ca satataṁ cintayāmāsa pārthivaḥ
tatra viprāśramābhyāśe vaiśyam ekaṁ dadarśa saḥ

स प्रथस्तेन कस्तं भो हेतुश्यामनेत्र कः ।
सशोक इव कस्मान्त्वं दुर्मना इव रक्ष्यसे ॥ १८ ॥

sa prśṭas tena kastvāṁ bho hetuś cāgamane 'tra kaḥ
saśoka iva kasmāt tvāṁ durmanā iva lakṣyase

इत्याकरण्य वचस्तस्य भूपते: प्रणयोदितम् ।
प्रत्युच स तं वैरयं प्रश्याववनतो नुपमः ॥ १९ ॥

ity ākarṇya vacas tasya bhūpateḥ praṇayoditam
pratyuvāca sa taṁ vaiśyāḥ praśrayāvanato nṛpam

वैरय उवाच ॥ २० ॥

vaisya uvāca
समाधिनांम् वैश्योः स्मृत्यन्तो धनिनां कुले।
पुत्रदाराजितस्य धनोऽभाद्याधुमि:॥ २१॥

समाधिर्नाम् vaisyo 'ham utpanno dhanināṁ kule
putradāraṇair nirastaś ca dhanalobhād asādhubhiḥ

विहीनश्च धनेदरे: पुत्रेरादय मेघ धनम्।
वनम्भयागो दुःखी निरस्त्वधापस्याधुमि:॥ २२॥
vihīnaś ca dhanair dāraiḥ putrair ādāya me dhanam
vanam abhyāgato duḥkhī nirastaś cāptabandhubhiḥ

सोध न वेदि पुत्राणां कुशलाकुशलात्मिकाम्।
प्रवृत्तिः स्वजनानां च दाराणां चात्र संपूर्ण:॥ २३॥
so 'ham na vedmi putraṇāṁ kuśalākuśalātmikām
pravṛttiṁ svajanānāṁ ca dārāṇāṁ cātra samsthitasaḥ

किं नु तेषां गृहे क्षेमकृषे किं नु साम्प्रतम्॥ २४॥
कथं ते किं नु सदृढ़ता दुर्वित्त: किं नु मे सृष्ट:॥ २५॥
kīṁ nu teśāṁ grhe kṣēmam akṣemam kīṁ nu sāmpratam
kathaṁ te kīṁ nu sadvṛtā durvṛtāḥ kīṁ nu me sutāḥ

राजोवच:॥ २६॥
rājovāca

यैनिरस्तो भवांहृतोः पुत्रदारादिभिधवने।॥ २७॥
तेषु किं भवत्: येहमनुभधाति मानसम्॥ २८॥
yair nirasto bhavāṁ lubeḍhaiḥ putradāradibhir dhanaiḥ
teṣu kīṁ bhavataḥ sneham anubadhnaṁ mānasam

वैश्य उवाच:॥ २९॥
vaiśya uvāca

एवमेत्यथा प्राह भवानमद्रत्रं वचः॥
किं करोमि न बधाति मम निष्टुर्तां मनः॥ ३०॥
evam etad yathā praḥ bhavāṁ asmād gataṁ vacaṁ
kiṁ karomi na badhnāti mama niṣṭhuratāṁ manah

ye: सन्नय्यै पितृप्रये धनलुभ्यैर्निर्क्रित: ।
pati: स्वजनहारं च हार्दित्षेव मे मन: ॥ ३१ ॥
yaiḥ sanyajya pitṛsneham dhanaludhair nirākṛtaḥ
patiḥ svajanahardam ca hardi teṣv eva me manah

kim etan nābhijānāmi jānann api mahāmate
yat premapraṇaṁ cittāṁ viguṇeṣv api bandhuṣu

tesāṁ kṛte me niḥśvāso daurmanasyāṁ ca jāyate
ekaromi kiṁ yan na manasteṣv aprītiṣu niṣṭhuram

mārkandey uvāca

nattṣō sahitō vipra tāṁ munīṁ samupsthitāṁ ॥ ३६ ॥
samādhīnām vṛddhōṣṭoḥ yāḥ c pārthivasatam: ॥ ३७ ॥
tatas tāṁ sahitau vipra tāṁ munīṁ samupasthitau
samādhir nāma vaiśyo 'sau sa ca pārthivasattamaḥ

kṛtvā tu tāṁ yathāyāyaṁ yathāḥ tene saṁvidmaḥ ॥
upaviṣṭo kathaḥ: kaśṭhīcchakroṁkarṇeṣvāpyārthiśvō ॥ ३८ ॥
kṛtvā tu tāṁ yathāyāyaṁ yathāḥ tene saṁvidam
upaviṣṭau kathāḥ kāśic cakratur vaiśyapārthivau

rājovāca
भगवान्तः प्रस्तुतमिच्छाम्येकं वदस्य तन् ॥ ४० ॥

dुःखय यमे मनसं स्वचिनायनतां विना ॥ ४१ ॥
bhagavaṁś tvām aham praśṭum icchāmy ekaṁ vadasva tat
duḥkhāya yan me manasaḥ svacittāyatataṁ vinā

ममत्वं गतराज्यस्य राज्याङ्गेः श्वालेष्वपि ॥ ४२ ॥

dharmam gatarājyaṁ rājyaṁīgeśv akhileśvapi
dhāmay api yathājñasya kim etan munisattama

अयं च निक्रीतः पुत्रेदिर्भृत्यैतथावज्जितः ॥ ॥

dharmasyaḥ ca saptakramas teṣu hārdī tathāpyati

ayam ca nikṛtaḥ putraṁ dāraṁ bhṛtyais tathōjhitah
svajanena ca santyaktas teṣu hārdī tathāpyati

एवमेष तथाहं च द्रावपयत्त्वं न्दुः खितो ॥ ॥

dharmasyaḥ ca dvāvapatyantaduṅkhitau

evam esa tathāhaṁ ca dvāvapatyantaduṅkhitau
dṛṣṭadoṣe 'pi visaye mamatvākrṣṭamānasau

तत्केनैतन्महाभाग यत्मोहो ज्ञानिनोरपि ॥ ॥

tat kenaitan mahābhāga yan moho jñāninor api
mamāsya ca bhavaty eṣā vivekāndhasya mūḍhatā

ऋषिरुवाच ॥ ॥

र्शर uvāca

ज्ञानमिति समस्तस्य ज्ञानोदिष्यगोचरे ॥

jñānam asti samastasya jantor viṣayagocare
viṣayās ca mahābhāga yānti caivaṁ prthak prthak
विद्वान्: प्राणिन्: केचिद्वाच्यास्तथापरं ।
केचिदिवा तथा रथौ प्राणिनसान्यहस्तः: ॥ ४८ ॥
divāndhāḥ prāṇinah kecid rātrāv andhās tathāpare
kecid divā tathā rātrau prāṇinas tulyadṛṣṭayah

ज्ञानिनो मनुजः: सत्यं किन्तु ते न हि केवलम् ।
यतो हि ज्ञानिन: सर्वं पशुपक्षिमृगादायः ॥ ४९ ॥
jñānino manujāḥ satyāṁ kintu te na hi kevalam
yato hi jñāninaḥ sarve paśupakṣimṛgādayaḥ

ज्ञानं च तन्मुख्याणाः यनेषा मृगपक्षिणाम् ।
मनुष्याणाः च यनेषा तुल्यमयन्तथोऽभो: ॥ ५० ॥
jñānam ca tan manusyaṅām yat teṣāṁ mṛgapakṣinām
manusyaṅām ca yat teṣāṁ tulyam anyat tathobhayoh

ज्ञातेपि सति परऽवैतनाः पतझांवाचचचवुषु ।
कणमोक्षाितनां मोहत्पीड्यमानानपि श्रुधाः ॥ ५१ ॥
jñāne 'pi sati paśyaitān patangān chāvacāṅcusu
kaṇamokṣād ītān mohāt pīḍyamānān api kṣudhā

मानुषा मनुज्याप्रभु साभिलाषाः चुनान् प्रति ।
लोभान्त प्रत्यपकाराय नन्वेतनाः किं न पथयिः ॥ ५२ ॥
mānuṣā manujavyāghra sābhilāsāḥ sutān prati
lobhāt pratyupakārāya nān ev ītān kīṁ na paśyasi

तथापि ममतावर्तेन मोहगतेन निपततिनः ।
महामयाप्रभावेन संसारस्थितिकारिणः ॥ ५३ ॥
tathāpi mamatāvarte mohagarte nipātitāḥ
mahāmāyāprabhāveṇa samsārasthitikāriṇā

तन्मत्र विस्मयः कायों योगनिध्रा जगत्तपे: ।
महामया हरेष्वैशाः तया सम्मोहने जगत् ॥ ५४ ॥
tan nātra vismayaḥ kāryo yoganidrā jagatpateḥ
mahāmāyā hareś caiṣā tayā sammohyate jagat

ज्ञानिनामपि चेनांसि देवी भगवती हि सा ।
बलादकृष्ण्य मोहय भमाया प्रयच्छिन्ति ॥ ५५ ॥

jñāninām api cetāmsi devī bhagavaṇi hi sā
balād ākrṣya mohāya mahāmāyā prayacchati

तया विस्रृज्यते विश्वं जगदत्चराचरम् ।
रूपा प्रयथ्रा वरदा नृणां भवति मुक्तये ॥ ५६ ॥

tayā visṛjyate viśvam jagad etac carācaram
saiṣā prasanna varadā nṛṇāṁ bhavati muktye

सा विद्या परमा मुन्नेतुभुता सनन्तनी ॥ ५७ ॥
संसारस्तहेतुत्रथ सेव सर्वेष्वेश्वरी ॥ ५८ ॥

sā vidyā paramā mukter hetubhūtā sanātanī
samārabandhahetuṣ ca saiva sarveśvareśvarī

राजोवच ॥ ५९ ॥
rājovāca

भगवनं का हि सा देवी महामायेति यां भवान् ।
ब्रजीति कथमुन्यत्रा सा कर्मस्याञ्च चिन्द्रिज ॥ ६० ॥

bhagavan kā hi sā devī mahāmāyetyi yāṁ bhavān
bravīti katham uppannā sā karmasyāś ca kīṁ dvija

यत्रभावा च सा देवी यत्त्वरूपा युद्धवा ॥ ६१ ॥
तत्वर्वः श्रोतुमिच्छामि त्वनो ब्रह्मविद्या वर ॥ ६२ ॥

yat prabhāvā ca sā devī yat svarūpā yad ubhavā
tat sarvāṁ śrotum icchāmi tvat to brahmavidāṁ vara

ऋषिरुवच ॥ ६३ ॥
ṛṣir uvāca
नित्येय सा जगन्मूर्तिस्या सर्वमिदं तत्मृ ॥ ६४ ॥
तथापि नत्यमुत्पातिन्तर्भुधा श्रृुयतां मम ॥ ६५ ॥

नित्याविना सा जगन्मूर्तिस्या तयार सर्वमिदं तत्मृ
तथापि तत समुदपति बहुधा श्रुयतामि मम

देवानां कार्यसिद्धार्थार्थविश्वास्वति सा यदा ॥
उत्पन्नति तद लोके सा नित्यावविश्वास्वति ॥ ६६ ॥

devānāṁ kāryasiddhyarthāṁ āvirbhavati sā yaddā
utpanneti tada loke sā nityāpy abhidhlyate

योगनिद्रां यदा विषुर्जग्यकार्यकिर्तने ॥
आस्तीयः शोष्मभवन्तक्षयाने भगवान् प्रभूः ॥ ६७ ॥

yoganidrāṁ yadā viṣṇur jagaty ekārṇavikṛte
āstīra seṣam abhajat kalpante bhagavān prabhuḥ

तदा ज्वालसुरी घोरो विश्वातो मधुकटभी ॥
विषुर्ज्ञकर्ममलोढ्ना हनुं ब्रह्माणमुद्यतो ॥ ६८ ॥

tadā dvāv asuraug horau vikhyātau madhukaiṭabhau
visṇukarṇamalodbhūtau hantuṁ brahmāṇam udyau

स नाभिकरलेव विष्णोः स्थितो ब्रह्म प्रजापति: ॥
हस्त्वा तावस्युरी घोरो प्रसुप्तं च जनार्दनम् ॥ ६९ ॥

sa nābhikamale viṣṇoh sthito brahmā prajāpatiḥ
dṛṣṭvā tāv asuraug cograu prasuptam ca janārdanam

तुष्टाव योगनिद्रां तामेकाग्रहदयः स्थित: ॥
विबोधनार्थय हरेरिनेत्रकृत्तनात्मयाम् ॥ ७० ॥

tuṣṭāva yoganidrāṁ tām ekāgrahṛdayaḥ sthitaḥ
vibodhanārthāya harer harinetrakrtālayām

विश्वेष्वरी जगद्धनी श्यन्तिसंहरकारिणीम् ॥
निन्द्रां भगवती विष्णोलकुलतेजसं प्रभूः ॥ ७१ ॥

viśveśvarīm jagadadhātrīm sthitisamhārakāriṇīṁ
nirām bhagavān viṣṇor atulāṁ tejasah prabhuḥ
dharmo ’vach || 72 ||
brahmavāca

tvaṁ svāhā tvam svadhā tvam hi vaśāṭkāraḥ svarātmikā
sudhā tvam aksare nitye tridhāmātrātmikā sthitā
dharmātma sthitā nityā yaunucchārayāvisheshat:

tvaya tvayaitad dhāryate viśvaṁ tvayaitat sṛjyate jagat

tvayaitat pālyate devi tvam atsy ante ca sarvadā
dharmātma sthitā nityā yaunucchārayāvisheshat:

visṛṣṭau sṛṣṭirūpā tvam sthirūpā ca pālane

mahāvaśya mahāmāyā mahāmedhā mahāsmṛtiḥ
mahāmohā ca bhavitā mahādevī mahāsurī
dharmātma sthitā nityā yaunucchārayāvisheshat:

prakṛtis tvam ca sarvasya guṇatrayavibhāvinī
cālaṃkārātrāṃkāhāraśristhā daraṇa || 78 ||
त्वं श्रीस्तम्भीश्वरी त्वं हीस्तवं बुद्धिर्बोधवत्क्षणा ।
लह्ना पुष्टिस्तथा तुष्टिस्तवं शान्ति: क्षान्तिरेव च ॥७९॥
tvam śrīs tvam īśvari tvam hrīs tvam buddhir bodhalakṣaṇā
lajjā puṣṭis tathā tuṣṭis tvam śāntiḥ kṣāntir eva ca

खड्गिनी शूलिनी घोरा गदिनी चक्रिणी तथा ।
शंकिनी चापिनी बाणभुजुण्डीपरिवारयुधा ॥८०॥
khāḍgini śūlinī ghorā gadinī cakriṇī tathā
śānkhiṇi cāpiṇī bāṇabhūṣuṇḍīparighāyudhā

सूम्या सौम्यतराशेषसौम्येभ्यस्तत्वतिसुन्दरी ।
परापराणं परमा त्वमेव परमेश्वरी ॥८१॥
saumyā saumyatarāsasasaumyebhys tv atisundari
pāparāṇāṁ paramā tvam eva parameśvari

यथा किञ्चित्कचिद्रस्तु सदस्याधिकारात्मके ।
तस्य सर्वस्य या शक्ति: सा त्वं किं स्तूयसे मया ॥८२॥
yac ca kiñcit kvacid vastu sadasadvākhilātmike
tasya sarvasya yā śaktiḥ sā tvam kiṁ stūyase mayā

यथा त्वया जगत्वर्षा जगत्यातात्मि यो जगत् ।
सोविपि निद्रावसं नीत: कस्त्वा स्तोतुमहेश्वर: ॥८३॥
yayā tvayā jagatsraṣṭā jagatpātātti yo jagat
so 'pi niḍrāvaśāṁ nītaḥ kastvāṁ stotum iheśvaraḥ

विष्णु: श्रीरघणमहीम्हान एव च ।
कारितास्ते यतोकलस्तव्यां कः स्तोतुः शाक्तिमानू भवेत् ॥८४॥
viṣṇuḥ śaṅragrahaṇam aham īśāna eva ca
kāritaṣṭe yato 'tas tvāṁ kaḥ stotum śaktimān bhavet

सा त्वमित्यथ प्रभावेः स्वेतर्देवी संस्तुता ।
मोहयेनी दुराधर्षावसुरो मधुकैटभभी ॥८५॥
sā tvam ittham prabhāvaiḥ svair udārair deśi samstutā
mohayañai durādharṣaśa v asurau madhukaiṭtabhau
prabodham ca jagatsvāmī nīyatām acyuto laghu
bodhaś ca kriyatāmasya hantum etau mahāsurau

ऋषिरुवाच ॥ ८८ ॥
ṛṣir uvāca

एवं स्तुता नदा देवी तामसी नत्र वेधसा ॥
विष्णो: प्रबोधनार्थय निहन्तुं मधुकैटभौ ॥ ८९ ॥
evarñi stutā tadā devī tāmasī tatra vedhasā
viṣṇoḥ prabodhanārthāya nihantum madhukaitabhau

नेत्रास्यनासिकाभाहुदयेश्यस्तथोरसः ॥
निर्गम्य दर्शने तस्थौ ब्रह्माणो व्यक्तजन्म: ॥ ९० ॥
netraśyanāsikābhāhuḥdayēbhyaś tathorasāḥ
nirgamya darśane tasthaū brahmaṇo 'vyaktajanmanaḥ

उनस्थौ च जग्नारथस्तया मुक्तो जनार्दन: ॥
एकाणविःहिशयनात्तत: स ददशो च नौ ॥ ९१ ॥
uttasthaū ca jagannāthas tayā mukto janārdanan
ekārṇave 'hisayanāt tataḥ sa dadṛśe ca tau

मधुकैटभौ दुरात्मानावतिवीर्यपराक्रमो ॥
क्रोधरस्क्षणावत्तं ब्रह्माण जनितोधमो ॥ ९२ ॥
madhukaitabhau durātmānāv ativīryarākramau
krodharaktekṣaṇāv atturh brahmaṇāṃ janitodyamau

समुत्थाय तत्तत्त्वायू मुयुधे भगवान् हरि: ॥
पञ्चवर्षसहस्रणि बाहुप्रहरणो विभु: ॥ ९३ ॥
samutthāya tatas tābhyaṁ yuyudhe bhagavān hariḥ
pancavarṣasahasrāṇi bāhupraharaṇo vibhuḥ
नावप्यतिबलोगन्तो महामायाविमोहितों || ९४ ||
उक्तवनो वरोऽस्यनो व्रियतामिति केशवम् || ९५ ||
tāv apyatibalonmattau mahāmāyāvimohitau
uktavantau varo 'smatto vriyatām iti keśavam

श्रीभगवानुवाच || ९६ ||
śrī bhagavān uvāca

भवेतामध मेतुष्टौ मम वध्यावभावपि || ९७ ||
किमन्येन वरेणात्र नातावद्भृतम् मम || ९८ ||
bhavetām adya me tustau mama vadhyāv ubhāv api
kim anyena vareṇātra etāvad dhi vṛtaṁ mama

ऋषिरवाच || ९९ ||
ṛṣir uvāca

विलोक्य ताभ्यां गदिदो भगवान् कमलेक्षणः || १०० ||
vaṅcitābhıyām iti tadā sarvam āpomayaṁ jagat
vilokyā tābhıyāṁ gadito bhagavān kamalekṣaṇaḥ

आवां जहि न यत्रोवरी सलिलेन परिपूर्तना || १०१ ||
āvāṁ jahi na yatrorvā salilena pariplutā

ऋषिरवाच || १०२ ||
ṛṣir uvāca

तथेन्द्रयुक्तवा भगवता शंक्रक्रियदार्मिता || १०३ ||
कृत्वा चक्रेन वै चिन्त्रेव जज्ञने शिरसी तयोः || १०३ ||
tathety uktvā bhagavatā śankhacakraṅkragadbhṛtā
kṛtvā cakreṇa vai chinne jaghane širasī tayoḥ

एवेमेषा समुद्द्वत्रा ब्रह्मणा संस्तुता स्वयम् ||
प्रभाववर्ष्या देव्यास्तु भूयः श्रुणु वदामि ने || १०५ ||
evam eṇa samutpāṇī brahmaṇaṁ saṁstutā svayam
prabhāvam asyā devyās tu bhūyah śṛṇu vadāmi te
अः अक्षस्रकपराशुः गदेशुकुलिश्यं पद्मं धनुः कुण्डिकां
द्रणं शाक्तिमसिः च चर्मं जलजं घण्टं सुरभाजनम्।
शूलं पारसुदर्शने च दधती हस्ते: प्रवालप्रभां
सेवे यैरंभवर्तिनीमिह महालक्ष्मी सरोजस्थिताम्॥

O M. akṣarasrakparaśuṃ gadeṣukuliśaṃ padmaṁ dhanuḥ kuṇḍikām
daṇḍaṃ śaktimasim ca carma jalajam ghaṇṭām surabhājanam
śūlam pāśasudarśane ca dadhatiṁ hastaiḥ pravālaprabhām
seve sairibhamardinīmiha mahālakṣmīṁ sarojasthitām
द्वितीयोध्यायः
महिषासुरसैन्यवधः

ॐ ह्रीम ् र्शि र्वाच ॥ १ ॥
OM ह्रीम ् र्शि uvāca

devasuram abhūd yuddham pūrṇam
abdaśataṁ purā mahiśe ् surāṇām adhipe devānāṁ ca purandare

नत्रासुरेऽहविर्येऽद्वैसैन्यं पराजितम् ।
जित्या च सकलानु देवानिन्द्रोऽभूमहिषासुरः ॥ ३ ॥
tatrāsurair mahāvīryair devasainyāṁ parājitam
jitvā ca sakalān devān indro ् bhūn mahiśāsuraḥ

तत: पराजिता देवा: पद्मयोपिनि प्रजापतिम् ।
पुरस्कृत्य गतास्तन्त्र यज्ञशगुश्वजिनः ॥ ४ ॥
tataḥ parājitā devāḥ padmayoniṁ prajāpatim
puraskṛtya gatās tatra yatreśaguruḍadhvajau

यथावृत्तं तयोस्तद्महिषासुरेऽचेष्टितम् ।
त्रिदाश: कथयमायुर्वकाव्यविभवविषतस्मः ॥ ५ ॥
yathāvṛttam tayos tadvan mahiśāsuraçeṣṭitam
tridaśāḥ kathayāmāsūr devābhībhavavistaram

सूर्येन्द्रग्निनिनिर्लेन्दूनां यमस्य वर्णपर्यं च ।
अन्येषां चाधिकारान्त्र स्यमेववाधितिष्ठति ॥ ६ ॥
sūryendrāgnīnirleṇḍūnāṁ yamasya vanmasya ca
anyeśām cādhikārāṁ sa svayam evādhitiṣṭhāti
स्वर्गानिराकृता: सर्व तेन देवगणा भुवि ।
विचरण्ति यथा मर्या महिषेण दुरात्मना ॥ ७ ॥
svargān nirākṛtāḥ sarve tena devagānā bhuvi
vicaranti yathā martyā mahiṣeṇa durātmanā

एन्द्र: कथितं सर्वममरारिविचिन्तितम ॥
शरणं व: प्रपन्नाः स्मो वधस्तस्य विचिन्त्यताम ॥ ८ ॥
etad vah kathitām sarvam amarārивiṣcitītam
śaraṇāṁ vaḥ prapannāḥ smo vadhastasya vicintyatām

इत्यं निशयम देवानां वचांसि मधुयुदन: ।
चकार कोपं शम्भुव्य भुक्तिकृतिलाननो ॥ ९ ॥
ithāṁ niśamya devānāṁ vacāmi madhuvādānaḥ
cakāra kopāṁ śambhuś ca bhrukūṭiṁkūṭīlānanau

ततो तिकोपपूर्णस्य चक्रिणो वदनात्तत: ।
निष्ठ्रक्राम महनेजो ब्रह्मण: ह्राङ्गस्य च ॥ १० ॥
tato 'tikopūrṇasya cakrīṇo vadanāt tataḥ
niścakrāma mahat tejo brahmaṇaḥ śaṅkarasya ca

अन्येषां चैव देवानां शाकादिनां शरीरं: ।
निर्गतं सूर्यहेजस्तयत्ययं समगच्छन ॥ ११ ॥
anyeśāṁ caiva devānāṁ śakrādinaṁ śārīrataḥ
nirgataṁ sumahat tejas tac caikyaṁ samagacchata

अतीव तेजसं कूटं ज्वलन्तिमिव पर्वतम् ।
दहशुस्ते सुरास्त्रज्ञालाव्याप्तिदिग्न्तरम् ॥ १२ ॥
atīva tejasah kūṭam jvalantam iva parvam
dadṛśus te sūrās tatra jvālāvyaḥpatadigantaram

अतुलं तत्र नतेजं: सविद्वारिरजम् ।
एकस्य तदभुवारी व्याप्तलोकक्रयं लिङ्घा ॥ १३ ॥
atulaṁ tatra tat tejāḥ sarvadevasaśārīrajam
ekaṃ sa dhāḥ nārī vyāptalokatrayaṁ tvīṣā
यद्युपचाव्यं तेजस्तेनाजायत तन्मुखम्।
याम्येन चाभवनं केशा बाहवो विष्णुतेजसः॥ १४॥

yad abhūc chāmbhavorī tejas tenājāyata tan mukham
yāmyena cābhavan keśā bāhavo viṣṇutejasā

शोभयेन स्तनयोगुंगं मध्यं चैद्रेण चाभवत्।
वारुणेन च जम्भौ नितम्बस्तेजसा भुवः॥ १५॥

saumyena stanayor yugmaṁ madhyam ca indreṇa cābhavat
vāruṇena ca jaṅghora nitambas tejasā bhuvaḥ

ब्रह्मणस्तेजसा पादी तद्वशुंयो केक्टेजसा।
वयूनां च कराद्युःऽ कौरवेण च नासिकाः॥ १६॥

brahmaṇas tejasā pādau tad aṅgulyo ʿrkejasā
vasūnāṁ ca karāṅgulyaḥ kaubereṇa ca nāsikā

तस्यास्तु दन्तः: सम्भूमः: प्राजापत्येन तेजसा।
नयनत्रितयं जलो तथा पावकेजसा॥ १७॥

tasyāstu dantāḥ sambhūtāḥ prājāpatyena tejasā
nayanatritayāṁ jajñē tathā pāvakatejasā

भुवो च सन्ध्योस्तेजः: श्रवणाविनितस्य च।
अन्येषा चैव देवानां सम्भवस्तेजसां शिवाः॥ १८॥

bhruvau ca sandhyayos tejah śravāṇāv anilasya ca
anyeśāṁ caiva devānāṁ sambhavas tejasāṁ śivā

नतः समस्तदेवानां तेजोराशिसमुद्रवाम्।
तां विलेक्यं मुदं प्रापुरमरा महिषार्दिता॥ १९॥

tataḥ samastadevānāṁ tejorāsīsamudbhaṣvām
tāṁ vilokya mudam prāpur amara mahiṣārditāḥ

ततो देवा दुस्तयोऽवानि स्वानि स्वान्यायुधानी च।
शूलं शुलाद्विनिष्कृष्णं ददो तत्स्ये पिनाकधुर्क॥ २०॥

tato devā dadus tasyai svāni svānāyudhāni ca
śulam śulād viniśkṛṣya dadau tasyai pīnakadhdrk
वर्णिनः समुप्तचरिकारः प्रजापितश्वशास्त्राः प्रजापितश्वाः दद्धो ब्रह्म कम्भ्दलम्
समस्तरोमकृपेशु निजस्मीन् दिवाकरः प्रजापितराः
कालश्च दद्धान् खड्गं तस्याश्बर्म च निर्मितम्
क्षीरोदश्यामलं हारमगे च तथाम्बेरे
चूडामणि तथा दियं कुंडले कटकानि च
अर्धचन्द्रं तथा शुभ्रं केव्यरानु सर्वबाहुषु
cुढ्माणि तथा दियं कुंडले कटकानि च
अर्धचन्द्रं तथा शुभ्रं केव्यरानु सर्वबाहुषु
नुपुरो विमलाः तदन्द्र ग्रावैयकमनुतमम्
अज्ञातायं कर्तवे समस्तायुक्तिलीपि
nūpurau vimalau tadvad graiveyakam anuttamam
विश्वकर्मा दौही तैयः परशुं चातिकिर्तिलम्।
अस्त्राण्यनेकरूपाणि तथाभेयं च दंशनम्॥ २८॥
viśvakarmā dadau tasyai paraśum cātinirmalam
astrāṇy anekarūpāṇi tathā 'bhedyam ca daṁśanam

अम्लानप्पक्षाणि मालं शिरस्यरसिः चापराम्।
अददजुतलिङ्करेण पक्षां चातिकिर्तिलम्॥ २९॥
amlānapakajāṁ mālāṁ śiras urasi cāparāṁ
adadaj jaladhis tasyai pankajām cātiśobhanam

हिमवान् वाहनं सिंहं रतनं चविधानिः।
ददावशृङ्गं सुरया पानपायं धनाधिपं॥ ॥ ३०॥
himavān vāhanam simham ratnāṁ cāvijāh ni ca
dadāv asūnyāṁ surayā pānapātram dhanādhipaḥ

श्रेष्ठं सर्वनागेशो महामणिविभूषितम्।
नागहारं दौही तैयः धने स्थः पृथिवीमीमां॥ ॥ ३१॥
śeṣaṁ ca sarvanāgēso mahāmaṇivibhūṣitam
nāgahāram dadau tasyai dhatte yaḥ prthivīmīmāṁ

अन्वेषितं युरेदेवीं भूषणं रायूष्टथा।
सम्मानिता ननादोच्छः साठहासं मुहुर्मुः॥ ॥ ३२॥
anyair api surair devī bhūsaṇair āyudhais tathā
sammānitā nanādoccaiḥ sāṭṭahāsaṁ muhur muhuh

तस्या नादेन घोरेण कृतस्मापूर्विः नभ:।
अमायतातिमहता प्रतिशद्वो महाभूता॥ ॥ ३३॥
tasyā nādena ghoreṇa kṛtstam āpūritaṁ nabhaḥ
āmāyatātimaḥatā pratiśabdō mahānabhūt

चुक्त्यु: सकलम् लोकः समुद्राश्य चक्ष्यः।
चचातु सवधा चेलु: सकलाश्य महीदरं॥ ॥ ३४॥
chukṣya: sakalam lokah: samudrāśya cakṣyaḥ
chachāt u savudha cheḷaḥ sakalāśya mahīdaraḥ
cukṣubhuh sakala lokāḥ samudraś ca cakampire
cacāla vasudhā cetuḥ sakalāś ca mahālharāḥ

जयेन्द्रय देवश्री मुदा नामचुः सिंहवाहिनीम्।
तुष्टवत्वमन्यथैवै भक्तिमार्गमर्त्य:॥ ३५॥
jayeti devās ca mudā tām ucuḥ simhavāhinim
tuṣṭuvur munayaś cainām bhaktinamrātmamūrtayaḥ

हर्षा समरं संक्षुब्यं त्रेलोक्यममराय:।
सर्वदातित्वसैन्यस्ते समुन्त्युधायुधा:॥ ३६॥
dṛṣṭavā samastāṁ sarīkṣubdham śrutām trailokyam amarārayāḥ
sannadhākhilasainyāste samuttasthur udāyudhāḥ

आः किमेदतिदिन कोधादाभाष्य महिषासुर:।
अभ्यावत नं शाब्दमवेशरुर्वः।॥ ३७॥
āḥ kim etad iti krodhād ābhāṣya mahiṣāsurah
abhyaḍhāvata taṁ śabdam ašeṣair asurair vṛtaḥ

स दर्श्य ततो देवी व्याक्तलोकत्रयं विषा।
पादाक्रान्त्या नत्तभुवं किरीतोधिखिताम्भराम।॥ ३८॥
sa dadarśa tato devīṁ vyāptalokatrayāṁ tvīṣā
pāḍākrāntyā natabhuvāṁ kirīṭollikhitāmbarāṁ

क्षोभिताशोशपातालां धनुर्ज्ञानिन:ख्वनेन नाम।
दिशो भुजसह्य्रेण समन्ताझाप्य संख्यताम।॥ ३९॥
kṣobhitāśeṣapātālāṁ dhanurjyānihsvanena tāṁ
dīśo bhujasahasreṇa samantād vyāpya samsthitām

तन: प्रववृत्ते युद्धं तया देव्या सुरविषाम।
शास्त्रात्मतेहुथया मुक्तेकार्थिपिनिदिगत्नरम।॥ ४०॥
tataḥ pravavṛte yuddham tayā devyā suradviśām
śastraśtrair bahudhā muktair ādīpitadigantarām
महिषासुरसनेनानीशिवधूराख्यो महासुरः ।
युयुधे चामरश्चायन्येश्वन्तरश्रवणान्तः ॥ ४१ ॥
mahīṣāsurasenānī śikṣurākhyo
mahāsūrah yuyudhe cāmaraś cānyaiś caturangabalānviṇṭaḥ

रथनामयुतायश्च शांभि उदग्राक्ष्यो महासुरः ।
अयुध्यतायुतानां च सहस्रेण महाहनुः ॥ ४२ ॥
rathānāmayuṭaiḥ śaḍbhīr udagrākṣyo mahāsūraḥ
ayudhyatāyutānāṁ ca sahasreṇa mahāhanuḥ

पञ्चाशांश्च नियुतेरसिलोमा महासुरः ।
अयुतानां न्तायेश्च शध्योवर्ष्कलो युयुधे रणे ॥ ४३ ॥
paṇcāśadbhīṣ ca niyutair asilomā mahāsūraḥ
ayutānāṁ śataih śaḍbhīr bāṣkalo yuyudhe raṇe

गजवाजिसहस्राघैरेनकः परिवर्तितः ।
वृन्दो रथानां कोट्या च युद्धे तस्मिन्युध्यतः ॥ ४४ ॥
gajavājīsahasraughair anekaiḥ parivāritaḥ
vṛto rathānāṁ koṭyā ca yuddhe tasminn ayudhyata

बिडालाख्यो युतानां च पञ्चाशांश्रयायुतानेः ।
युयुधे संयुगे तत्र रथानां परिवर्तितः ॥ ४५ ॥
bidālākhyo 'yuṭānāṁ ca paṇcāśadbhīṣ
athāyutaiḥ yuyudhe saṃyuge tatra rathānāṁ parivāritaḥ

अन्ये च तत्रायुतानो रथनागहयैवैवनः ।
युयुधे संयुगे देव्या सह तत्र महासुराः ॥ ४६ ॥
anye ca tatrāyutaso rathānāgahayair vṛtāḥ
yuyudhau saṃyuge devyā saha tatra mahāsūrāḥ

कोटिकोटिषासहस्रस्मृतः रथानां दन्तिनां तथा ।
हयानां च वृन्दो युद्धे तत्राभृत्तमहिषासुरः ॥ ४७ ॥
koṭikōṭīsaḥsahasras tu rathānām dantināṁ tathā
युध्यु: संयुगे देव्या खङ्गे: परशुपरिहार:। ॥ ४८ ॥

केचिच्च चिक्षिपु: शान्तः केचित् पाराशास्त्राया:। ॥ ४९ ॥

सापि देवी ततत्तानि शास्त्राण्यात्माणि चण्डिकाः। ॥ ५० ॥

अनायास्तानानां देवी स्तुवमाना गुरुर्मिभः। ॥ ५१ ॥

धो: गुरुस्तो देव्या वाहनकेसरी। ॥ ५२ ॥

नि:वासान् मुमुचे यांश्च युध्यमाना रणेदिकाः। ॥ ५३ ॥

युध्यु: परशुभिन्दिपालास्यपदिर्य:। ॥ ५४ ॥

नाश्यन्तोसुरमान्ने देवीशक्तयूपब्रह्मिनाः। ॥ ५५ ॥
yuyudhus te paraśubhir bhindipālāsipaṭṭisaiḥ
nāsayanto 'suragaṇān deśiṣaktyupabṛṃhitāḥ

अवादयन्न पद्धान् गणाः राज्ञास्तथापरे ।
मुद्रांश्च तथैवाय तर्मिन्युद्दमहोत्सवे ॥ ५५ ॥
avādayanta paṭahān gaṇāḥ śankhāms tathāpare
mṛdaṅgāṁś ca tathaivānye tasmin yuddhamahotsave

तनो देवी त्रिशुलेन गदया अच्छ्रृष्टिभिः ।
खड्गारिक्ष्ठ्य शतशो निजघान महायुरान्न ॥ ५६ ॥
tato devī triśūlena gadayā śaktivarṣṭibhiḥ
khaḍgādibhiś ca sataśo nijaghāna mahāsurān

पातयामाय चैवायान् घण्टास्वनविमोहितान् ।
असुरान् भुवि पारेण बद्ध्वा चायानकर्षयत् ॥ ५७ ॥
pātayāmāsa caivānyān ghaṇṭāsvanavimohitān
asurān bhūvi pāśena baddhvā cānyān akarṣayat

केचिद् द्विधाकृतास्तोक्ष्णे खड्गपातैस्तथापरे ।
विपोषिता निपातेन गदया भुवि शोरते ॥ ५८ ॥
kecid dvādhākṛtās ūkṣṇaiḥ khaḍgapātais tathāpare
vipoṣiṭā nipātena gadayā bhūvi serate

वेमुर्य केचिदुचिरं मुसलेन भृगुं हताः ।
केचिद्विपातिता भूमी भिरा: शुलेन वक्षसि ॥ ५९ ॥
vemuś ca kecid rudhirāṁ musalena bhṛṣam hatāḥ
ekacin nipatitā bhūmau bhinnāḥ śūlena vakṣasi

निरंतरा: शरोधिण कृता: केचिद्रणाजिरे ।
शल्यानुकारिण: प्राणामुचुस्वितदशार्दना: ॥ ६० ॥
nirantarāḥ śaraughena kṛtāḥ kecid
raṇājire śalyānukāriṇāḥ prāṇān mumucus tridaśārdanāḥ
keśāṃcid bāhavoś chinnāś chinnagrīvās tathāpare
śīraṃsi petur anyeṣām anye madhye vidāritāḥ

vicchinnajanghās tv apare petur urvyāṃ mahāsurāḥ
ekabāhvakṣicaraṇāḥ kecid devyā dvidhākṛtāḥ

chinne ‘pi cānye śirasi patitāḥ punar uttitāḥ
nanṛtus cāpare tatra yuddhe tūryalayāśritāḥ

kabandhāḥ chinnāsirasāḥ khadgaśaktiṣṭipāṇayah
tiṣṭha tiṣṭheti bhaṣanto devīm anye mahāsurāḥ

pātītai rathānāgāśvair asuraiś ca vasundharā
tagamyā sābhavat tatra yatrabhūt sa mahāraṇaḥ

śoṇiṇiṭōṇa mahānāg: sādhastra visyāvāca
madhye chaussaṃyay vāraṇāsvaṭājaṇām
śoṇitaugā mahānādyāḥ sadyas tatra visusruvāḥ
madhye cāsurasainyasya vāraṇāsuravājinām

ksaṇena tanaḥ mahāsainyam asuraṇāṃ tathāmbikā
ninye kṣayaṁ yathā vahniṣṭṛṇadārūrāmadācayam

स च सिंहो महानादमुत्युज्जन् धुनकेसरः ।
श्रीरेभ्योऽमरारीणामयूनिव विचिन्वति ॥ ६८ ॥
sa ca simho mahānādam utsṛjan dhutakesaraḥ
sarīrebhyo ‘marārīṇām asūn iva vicinvati

देव्या गणेश्व तैस्तत्र कृतं युद्धं तथासुः ॥
यथेषां तुष्टवर्द्धवा पुष्पव्रृष्टिमुचो दिवि ॥ ६९ ॥
devyā gāṇaiś ca tais tatra kṛtaṁ yuddham tathāsuraiḥ
yathaisāṁ tuṣṭuvur devāḥ puspavṛṣṭimuco divi
तृतीयोक्ष्यायः  
महाषारुवधः  

ऋषरुवधः ॥ १ ॥  
ऋषर uvāca  

निहयमानं तत्सैन्यमवलोक्य महाशुरः ।  
सेनानीशिक्षुरः कोपाध्यायो योद्मथामिबिकाम् ॥ २ ॥  

nihanyamānaṁ tat saṁyam avaloka mahāśuraḥ  
senāniś cikṣuraḥ kopād yau yuddhum athāmbikām  

स देवी शरवर्ण वर्ष समरेशुरः ।  
यथा मेरुगिरे: शृंजः तोयवर्ण नोयदः ॥ ३ ॥  

sa devīṁ śaśvarṣeṇa vavaraśa samare 'suraḥ  
yathā merugireḥ śṛṅgaṁ toyatarṣeṇa toyadaḥ  

तस्य छिन्ना ततो देवी लिल्येव शरोनकारान् ।  
जघान तुर्गान्वाणेर्यनारं चेव वा́जिनाम् ॥ ४ ॥  

tasya chitvā tato devī līlayaiva śarotkarān  
jaghāna turagān bāṇair yantāraṁ caiva vājinām  

चिच्छेद च धनुः सद्यो ध्वजं चातिसमुच्छितम् ।  
विवेयाय चेव गात्रेषु दिन्नथवान्मादुग्रे: ॥ ५ ॥  

ciccheda ca dhanuḥ sadyo dvajastam cātisamucchritam  
vivyādha caiva gātreṣu chinnadhanvānām āśugaiḥ  

स दिन्नथवान्वि विरषो हताध्यो हतसारथि: ।  
अभ्यधावत नादेवी खड्गर्मादुरेशुरः ॥ ६ ॥  

sa chinnadhanvā viratho hataśvo hatusārathiḥ  
abhyaḍhāvata tāṁ devīṁ khaḍgacarmadharo 'suraḥ
सिंहमाहत्य खड्गेन तीक्ष्णधारेण मूर्धनि ।
आजघान भुजे सये देवीमय्यनिवेगवान् ॥ ७ ॥

siṁham āhatya khaḍgena ūक्षःadhareṇa mūrdhani
ājaghāna bhuje savye devīm apyativegavān

तत्त्वाहृ खड्गो भुजं प्राय्य पफाल नृपनन्दन ।
ततो जङ्गाह शूरं स कोपादुरणलोचन: ॥ ८ ॥

tasyāḥ khadgo bhujaṁ prāpya paphāla nrpanandana
 tato jagrāha śūlaṁ sa kopād aruṇalocanah

चिक्षेप च नतस्तन्तु भद्रकाल्यां महासूरः ।
जाण्ड्यल्यानं तेजोभी रविबिभिंविवाम्बरात् ॥ ९ ॥

cikṣepa ca tatas tat tu bhad rakālyāṁ māhāsuraḥ
jājvalyamānaṁ tejobhī ravibimbam ivāmarat

हने न्यौमहावर्येन महिषपि चमुपतो ।
आजगाम गजास्त्थायमनस्त्रिदशदार्बन: ॥ १० ॥

hane nāyaṁmahāvīrye mahiṣasya champaṭo
hatē tasmin mahāvīrye mahiṣasya camupatau
ājagāma gajāṛudhaś cāmaras tridaśārdanah

सोपी श्राक्तं मुमोचाथ देव्यास्ताम्बिका दुःतम् ।
हुझारभिहतां भूमी पातयामाय निष्प्रभाम् ॥ १२ ॥

so ‘pi śaktiṁ mumocātha devyās tām ambikā drutam
hunkāṛabhihatāṁ bhūmāu pātayāmāsa niṣprabhām

भण्गाश्च निधिना िष्ट्रा क्रोधसुमिति: ।
चिक्षेप चामाः शूरं वाणैस्तदपि साच्चिन्नत् ॥ १३ ॥

bhagnāṁ śaktiṁ nipatitāṁ drṣṭvā krodhasamanvitāḥ
cikṣeṣa cāmarah śūlam bāṇais tad api sāccchinat
नन्ते सिंहसमुदायेन जङ्कम्बान्तरस्थितः ।
बाहुयुद्धेन युध्ये नेनोच्चैत्रिदशारिणा ॥ १४ ॥
tataḥ simhaḥ samputpaya gajakumbhāntarasthitaḥ
bāhuyuddhena yuyudhe tenocchais tridaśāriṇā

युध्यमानो नतत्तौ त तस्मात्रागान्महीं गतो ।
युध्यानेनितिसंख्यो प्रहारेरितिदारुणोऽ ः ॥ १५ ॥
yudhyamānau tatas tau tu tasmān nāgān mahīṁ gatau
yuyudhāte 'tisamrabdha prahāraiv atidāruṇaiḥ

ततो केगातः खमुतप्त्य निपत्य च मृगारिणा ।
करप्रहारेण शिरस्मारस्य प्रृथकः कृतमः ॥ १६ ॥
tato vegāt kham utpatya nipatya ca mṛgāriṇā
karaprahāreṇa sīraś cāmarasya praṭhak kṛtam

उदारश्च रणे देव्या शिलावुक्षादिभिहतः ।
दन्तमुष्टिनलथेव करालश्च निपानितः ॥ १७ ॥
udagraś ca raṇe devyā śilāvṛksādibhir hataḥ
dantamuṣṭitalaiś caiva karālaś ca nipātitaḥ

देवी कुऽद्धा गदापातेश्युष्णयामायाः चोद्रतः ।
बाणकल्लं भिन्दिपालेन वाणेस्त्राः तथान्धकम् ॥ १८ ॥
devī kruddhā gadaḍpātaiś cūṇayāmāsa coḍhatham
bāṣkalam bhindipālena bāṇais tāmram tathāndhakam

उग्रास्यमुगवीर्यं च तथे च महाहनुम ।
त्रिनेत्रा च त्रिशूलेन जयान परमेश्वरी ॥ १९ ॥
ugrāsyam ugrāvīryam ca tathaiva ca mahāhanum
trinetra ca triśūlena jaghāna parameśvari

विहारस्यासिना कायात पातयामास वें दशर ।
दुर्योधवर्म सर्भेश शैवर्निन्ये यमक्षयम् ॥ २० ॥
bidālasyāsinā kāyāt pātayāmāsa vai śiraḥ
durdharaṁ durmukhaṁ cobraḥ sarair ninye yamakṣayam

एवं संक्षीयमाणे तु स्वसैन्ये महिषयुरः।
माहिष्येन स्वरूपेन त्रासयामास नानू गणान्। ॥ २१ ॥
evam saṁśīyamāṇe tu svasainye mahiśāsuraḥ
māhiṣēṇa svarūpeṇa trasayāmāsa tān gaṇān

कांशिधितुङ्क्ष्रेण खुरसैपस्यथापरान्।
लाङ्कुलाह्नार्कान्यानां श्रुत्याध्यां च विदारितान्। ॥ २२ ॥
kāṁścit tuṇḍaprahāreṇa khurakṣepais tathāparān
lāṅgūlatāditāṁś cānyān śṛṅgābhyaṁ ca vidāritān

वेगेन कांशिढपरान्नातेन भ्रमणेन च।
निष्वासपवनेनाय्यान्यायामास भूतले। ॥ २३ ॥
vegena kāṁścid aparān nādena bhramaṇena ca
niḥśvāsapavanenānyān pātayāmāsa bhūtale

निपात्य प्रमथानीकमभ्यधावत सोस्युः।
सिंह हन्तु महादेव्या: कोपं चक्रे नतोस्मिका। ॥ २४ ॥
nipātya pramathānīkam abhyadhāvata so ‘suraḥ
siṁham hantuṁ mahādevyāḥ kopaṁ cakre tato ‘mbikā

सोस्युः कोपां भावाय्र्य: खुरक्षणमहीतल:।
श्रुत्याध्यां पर्वतानुवच्चिथिक्षेपं च ननाद च। ॥ २५ ॥
sōsyuḥ kopāṁ mahāvīryaḥ khurakṣunṇamahītalaḥ
śṛṅgābhyaṁ parvatāṁ uccāṁś cikṣepa ca nāṇāda ca

वेगश्रमविश्रुणं मही तस्य व्यशीर्यतं।
लाङ्कुलेनहात्माश्चिथ्याः प्रायामास सर्वत:। ॥ २६ ॥
vegabhramaṇavikṣunṇā mahī tasya vyāśīrya
lāṅgūlenāhataś cābdhiḥ plāvayāmāsa sarvataḥ

गुन्तुष्क्रुङ्क्ष्रिविभाष्यं खण्डं खण्डं ययुर्च्छन:।
श्वासानिलास: रत्नो निपेतुर्मभसोस्चल:। ॥ २७ ॥
gunṭuṣkṛuṅkṣṛṣṭivibhāṣyāḥ kuṇḍaṁ kuṇḍaṁ yuyupucha:
śvāsaśānaśāsa: ratto nipeṭurmbhaṁsochalaḥ
dhutaśrīgavibhinnāś ca khaṇḍam khaṇḍarḥ yayur ghanāḥ
śvāsānilāstāḥ śataśo nipetur nabhaso ‘calāḥ

इति क्रोधसमाध्यातमापतन्त्वं महासुरम् ।
हष्ठा सा चण्डिका कोणं दश्वाय नदाकरोत् ॥ २८ ॥

iti krodhasamādhmatam āpatantaṁ mahāsuraṁ
dṛṣṭvā sā caṇḍikā kopāṁ tad vadhāya tadākarot

सा श्रिपर्वत तस्य वै पाषां न बलवः महासुरम् ।
तन्त्राज महिषं रूपं सोपिं बद्रो महमृधे ॥ २९ ॥

sā ksiptvā tasya vai pāṣāṁ tāṁ babandha mahāsuraṁ
tatāja māhiṣāṁ rūpaṁ so ‘pi baddho mahāmṛdhe

तत्: सिंहोभवन्त्यं यावनस्तित्वमिष्ठका शिरं ।
विनिन्नति नातवं पुरुषं: खइगपाणिरहयत ॥ ३० ॥

tataḥ sirīho ‘bhavat sadyo yāvati tasyāmbikā śīrāḥ
cinati tāvat puruṣaḥ khadgapāṇir adṛṣyata

तत् एवाशु पुरुषं देवी चिच्छेद सायकः ।
तं खड्गचर्मणा सार्थं नत: सोःभूमहागजं: ॥ ३१ ॥

tata evāśu puruṣam devī ciccheda sāyakaiḥ
tāṁ khaḍgacarmanāṁ sārdham tataḥ so ‘bhūn mahāgajas

करेण च महासिंहं तं चकर्ष जगर्ज च ।
कर्षतस्तु करं देवी खड्गेन निरकृष्णात ॥ ३२ ॥

kareṇa ca mahāsīṁham tāṁ cakarṣa jagarja ca
karṣatas tu karaṁ devī khaḍgena narakṛntata

ततो महासुरो भूयो महिषं वपुरास्थितं ।
तथैव क्षोभयामास तैलोक्यं सचराचरम् ॥ ३३ ॥

tato mahāsuro bhūyo māhiṣam vapuraśthitaḥ
tathaiva kṣobhayāmāsa traitokyam sacarācaram
तत् कुः जग्नमाता चण्डिका पानमुन्नम् ।
पपो पुनः पुनःबैव जहासारणलोचना ॥ ३४ ॥
tataḥ kruddhā jagannātā caṇḍikā pānam uttamam
papau punaḥ punaś caiva jahāsāruṇalocanā

नन्दे चासुरः सोःपि बलवीर्यमदोऽदतः ।
विषणाभ्यं च किखेश पचिकां प्रति भूधरान् ॥ ३५ ॥
nanarda cāsuraḥ so ʿpi balavīramadoddhataḥ
viṣāṇābhyāṁ ca cikṣepe caṇḍikāṁ prati bhūdharān

सा च नान्य्रहितांस्तेन चूर्णयन्ती शरोत्करे ।
उवाच तं मदोऽदतमुखराणाकुलाक्षरम् ॥ ३६ ॥
sā ca tān prahitāṁs tena cūrṇayanā śarotkaraiḥ
uvāca tāṁ madoddhūtamukharāgākulākṣaram

देव्युवाच ॥ ३७ ॥
devy uvāca

गर्ज गर्ज क्षणं मूढ मधु यावत्पिबाम्यहम् ।
मया न्यष्य हनेःसैव गर्जिष्यन्ययाशु देवता: ॥ ३८ ॥
garja garja kṣaṇam mūḍha madhu yāvat pibāmy aham
mayā tvayi hate ʿtraiva garjiṣyanty āśu devatāḥ

ऋषिरुवाच ॥ ३९ ॥
ṛṣir uvāca

एवमुक्त्वा समुपत्यत्व सारुद्धा तं महायरम् ।
पादेनाक्रम्य कण्ठे च शुल्लेननमतादयतन् ॥ ४० ॥
evam uktvā samupatya sārūḍhā tam mahāsuram
pādenākramya kaṇṭhe ca śulenainam atādayat

तत् सोःपि पदक्रान्तस्तया निजमुखान्त: ।
अर्धनिष्क्रान्त एवासेद्व्या वीर्येण संवृत: ॥ ४१ ॥
tataḥ so ʿpi padākrāntas tayā nijamukhāt tataḥ
ardhaniśkrānta evāsīd devyā viryeṇa sarṇvṛtaḥ

अर्धिनिष्क्रान्त एवासी युध्यमानो महासुरः ।
तया महासिना देव्या शिरिशिवत्वा निपातितं ॥ ४२ ॥

ardhaniśkrānta evāsau yudhyamāno mahāsuraḥ
tayā mahāsinā devyā śiraśchittvā nipātitaḥ

ततो हाहाकृतं सर्व दैत्यसैन्यं ननाश तद् ।
प्रहर्षं च परं जगुं सकला देवतागणा: ॥ ४३ ॥

tato hāhākṛtam sarvam daityasainyam nanāsa tat
praharṣam ca param jagmuḥ sakalā devatāgaṇāḥ

तुष्टुवस्तान् सुर देवीं यह दिव्येम्हर्षिभि: ।
जगर्मन्धर्वपतयो ननूत्रश्चापसरोगणा: ॥ ४४ ॥

tuṣṭuvus tāṁ surā devīṁ saha divyair maharṣibhiḥ
jagur gandharvapatayo nanṛtuś cāpsarogaṇāḥ
चतुर्थंध्यायः

श्राकादिस्तुतिः

श्राकादिस्तुतिः

ऋषिरुवाच ॥ १ ॥

र्षिर uvāca

श्राकादयः सुरगणा निहेतदतिवीर्यं

तस्मिन्दुरात्मनि सुरारिबले च देव्या ॥

नां तुष्टुः प्रणतिन्मघ्निर्धरांसा

वाग्मिः प्रहर्षपुलकोद्रमचारुदेहाः ॥ २ ॥

सक्रादयाः वरम्भिनां निहेते 'तिवीर्ये

तस्मि दुरात्मनि सुरारिबले च देव्या

ताम तुष्टुः प्रणतिन्मघ्निर्धरांसा

वाग्मिः प्रहर्षपुलकोद्रमचारुदेहाः

देव्या यथा नतमिदं जगदात्माशक्त्या

निषोष्देवगणशास्त्रकिंसूमहृद्यत्याः

तामम्बिकामिखिदेवमहर्षिपूज्याः

भक्त्या नता: स्म विदधातु शुभानि सा न: ॥ ३ ॥

देव्या यथा नताम idātm jagad ātmāśaktyā

nihśeṣadevagāṇāśaktisamūhaṃūrtyā
tām ambikām akhiladevamaharṣipūjyāṃ
bhaktyā nātāḥ sma vidadhātu śubhāni sā naḥ

यस्यः प्रभावमनुवं भगवान्नन्तो

ब्रह्मा हरस्य न हि वक्तुमलं बलं च ॥

सा चण्डिकाखिलजगत्परिशालनाय

नाशाय चाशुभ्यस्य मति करोतु ॥ ४ ॥
yasyāḥ prabhāvam atulaṁ bhagavān ananto
brahmā haraś ca na hi vaktum alam balarī ca
sā caṇḍikākhalajagat paripālanāya
nāsāya caśubhabhayasya matim karotu

याश्री: स्वयं सुकृतिनां भवनेष्वलक्ष्मीः
पापात्मनां कृतविषेयं हदयेषु बुधिः
श्रद्धा सतां कुलजनप्रभवस्य लञ्जा
तां त्वां नताः सम परिपालय देवि विष्वम् ॥ ५ ॥

yā śrīḥ svayaṁ sekatāṁ bhavaneśvalakṣmīḥ
pāpātmanāṁ kṛtadhiyāṁ hṛdayeṣu buddhiḥ
śraddāḥ satāṁ kulajanaprabhavasya lajjā
tāṁ tvāṁ natāḥ sma paripālaya devi viśvam

किं वर्णयाम तव रूपमविन्यमेतत्
किञ्चनर्म्यसुरक्षयकारि भूरि ॥
किं चाहवेषु चरितानि नवानि यानि
सर्वेषु देव्यसुरदेवगणादिकेषु ॥ ६ ॥

kiṁ varṇayāma tava rūpam acintyam etat
kiṁ cātviryaṁ asurakṣayakārī bhūri
kiṁ cāhaveṣu caritāni tavāti yāni
sarveṣu devy asuradevagānādikeṣu

हेतु: समस्तजगतां त्रिमुखापि दोषे-
नेन ज्ञाते हरिहरंदिश्वयपारा ॥
सर्वांश्रयाखिलमिदं जगांश्लभूत-
मव्याकृत्व हि परमा प्रकृतिस्त्वमाद्या ॥ ७ ॥

hetuḥ samastajagatāṁ trimuṣāpi doṣair
na jñāyase hariharādibhir apyapārā
sarvāśrayākhalam idam jagad amśabhūtam
avyākṛtā hi paramā prakṛtis tvam ādyā

यस्य: समस्तस्युं तत्स्मुद्दीरणेन
तृप्तिः प्रयाति सकलेषु मवेषु देवि ॥
यस्याः समासतुराः समुद्राणः \\

tṛptiṁ prayāti sakaleṣु makheṣu devi \\
svāhāsi vai pitṛgaṇasya ca tṛptihetur \\
uccāryase tvam ata eva janaṁ svadhā ca

या मुक्तिहृतविचिन्त्यमहाव्रताः त्वं \\
ाभ्यस्ते सुनियतेन्द्रियतत्वस्यारः ।

मोक्षार्थिभिनिभिरस्तस्तसमस्तदोषे— \\
विद्यासि सा भगवती परम हि देवी ॥ ९ ॥

यां मुक्तिहृते अविचिन्त्यमहाव्रते त्वम \\
abhyasyase suniyatendriyatattvasāraṁ \\
mokṣārthibhir munibhir astasamastadōṣair \\
vidyāsi sā bhagavātī paramā hi devi

शब्दाम्बिका सुविमलर्ग्युषां निधानं—

मुद्रीवर्ष्यपदाङ्गां च साम्रामू ।

dēvī tṛayī bhagavatī bhavabhāvanā

वांतः च सर्वजगां परमार्तिहन्ती ॥ १० ॥

śabdātmikā suvimalargyauṣāṁ nidhānam \\
udgātharamyapadapāṭhavatāṁ ca sāmām \\
dēvī tṛayī bhagavatī bhavabhāvanāya \\
vārtā ca sarvajagatāṁ paramārtihantrī

मेधासि देवि विदिताखिलशास्त्रसारः \\

durgāsि दुर्गभवसागरनौरसञ्जः ।

श्री: कैटभारिश्येकृतनाधिवासा \\

gaurī त्वमेव शाशिमौलिकृतप्रतिष्ठाः ॥ ११ ॥

medhāsi devī viditākhilaśāstrārā \\
durgāsi durgabhavasāgaranaur asaṅgā \\
śrīḥ kaṭabhrāhīrdayaikākṛtādhiवāsā \\
gaurī tvam eva śaśīmaulikṛtapratishṭhā
ईश्वरसामस्मारं परिपूर्णचन्द्र–
बिभानुकारिः कनकोत्सकानितकान्तम्।
अत्यद्वृत्त प्रहतमात्रस्या तथापि
वक्त्रं विश्वक्य सहस्र महिषासुरः॥ १२॥

इश्वसाहसम अमलाम परिपूर्णचन्द्र–
bimbānuśāri kanakottmakāntikāntam
atyadbhumām prahṛtam āttaruṣā tathāpi
vaktraṁ vilokya sahasā mahiṣāsuraṇa

हष्ट्र न देवी कृपिन्ते भ्रुकुटीकरालु–
मुख्च्छाक्रेश्वरक्षणविव यथा सधः॥
प्राणान्त मुमोच महिषस्तदनीव चिरं
कैर्जीव्यतः हि कृपि स्तनकदर्शनः॥ १३॥

dṛṣṭव् तु देवी कृपिताम भ्रुकुटिकरालम्
udyacchaśāṅkasadṛśacchavī yan na sadyaḥ
prānān mumoca mahiṣas tad atīva citram
kair jīvyate hi kupitāntakadarśanena

देवी प्रसीद परम भवति भवय
सधो विनाशायसि कोपवती कुलानि।
विज्ञातमेतदधुनेव यदस्तमेतनु
नीतं बलं सुविपुलं महिषासुरस्य॥ १४॥

devi prasīda paramā bhavati bhavāya
sadyo vināśayasi kopavatā kulāni
vijñātām etad adhunaiva yad astam etan
nītaṁ balarś suvipuḷam mahiṣāsurasya

ते सम्मता जनपदेशु धनानि तेशां
तेशां यज्ञांसि न च सीदति धर्मवर्गः।।
धन्यास्तं व निभृत्तास्मजम्भृत्यदारा
येश्वं सदायदयदा भवति प्रस्त्र॥ १५॥

te sammatā janapadeṣu dhanāni teśāṁ
teśāṁ yaśāṁsi na ca sīdati dharmavargaḥ
dhanyāsta eva nibhṛtatmajabṛtyadārā
yeṣāṁ sadābhuyadayadā bhavaṁ prasannā
dharmyāṇi devi sakalāṇi sadaiva karmāṇy
atyādṛtaḥ pratidināṁ sukṛṭi karoti
svargaṁ prayāti ca tato bhavatī prasādāl-
lokatraye ’pi phaladā nanu devi tena
durūṁ śmūtā harsī bhūtimśeṣajannō:
śvastṛye: śmūtā matimśeṣajannō dadaśi

dāridryuddākhabhayahārīṇi kā tvad anyā
sarvopakārakaraṇāya sadārdracittā
ebhīṁnaṁdṛpaṇāṁ sūkhān tathānte
kurvānāṁ nāma narakaḥ viraṁ pāpam
sānugrahādṛṣṭyadīghaṁ divaṁ prayaṇu
matvānti nūnānvinaṁśvinaṁśi devi

ebhir hatair jagad upaiti sukham tathaite
kurvāntamāṁ nāma narakaṁ cēṣa pāpam
samgrāma mṛtyum adhigamya divaṁ prayāntu
matvēti nūnāṁ ahitāṁ vinīhaṁsi devi

hṛṣṭev kīṁ n bhavaṁ prakṛatōtī bhṛma

śāravāsurasarīṣṣu yatnāḥśrīṇoṇi śrāstṛm
lokaṁprayaṇuṁ rivaṁśiḥ hi śrāstṛpūna

īṁtāṁ matirbhavatī tēṣhāṁ tēśvīṁśaṁdvī
dṛṣṭaiva kim na bhavaḥ prakaroti bhasma
sarvāsurān arisū yat prahiṇoṣi śastram
lokān prayāntu ripavo 'pi hi śstrapūta
itthāṁ matir bhavati teṣāpi te 'tisādhvī
drṣṭaiva kim na bhavaḥ prakaroti bhasma
sarvāsurān arisū yat prahiṇoṣi śastram
lokān prayāntu ripavo 'pi hi śstrapūta
itthāṁ matir bhavati teṣāpi te 'tisādhvī
drṣṭaiva kim na bhavaḥ prakaroti bhasma
sarvāsurān arisū yat prahiṇoṣi śastram
lokān prayāntu ripavo 'pi hi śstrapūta
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drṣṭaiva kim na bhavaḥ prakaroti bhasma
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drṣṭaiva kim na bhavaḥ prakaroti bhasma
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drṣṭaiva kim na bhavaḥ prakaroti bhasma
sarvāsurān arisū yat prahiṇoṣi śastram
lokān prayāntu ripavo 'pi hi śstrapūta
itthāṁ matir bhavati teṣāpi te 'tisādhvī
trailokyam etad akhilaṁ ripunāśanena
trātam tvayā samaramūrdhāni te 'pi hatvā
nītā divāṁ ripugaṇā bhayam apya apāstam
asmākam unmada surāribhavam namaste

शुलेन पाहि नो देवी पाहि खड़गेन चाम्बिके।
घण्टास्वनेन नः पाहि चाप्यानिस्वनेन च। २४।।
sūlena pāhi no devi pāhi khaḍgena cāmbike
ghaṇṭāsvanena naḥ pāhi cāpajāṇissvanena ca

प्राच्यां रक्ष प्रतीच्यां च चण्डिके रक्ष दक्षिणे।
भ्रामणेनात्मशूलस्य उत्तरस्यं तथेश्वरि। २५।।
prācyāṁ rakṣa praṭīcyāṁ ca caṇḍike rakṣa dakṣine
bhrāmaṇenātmaśūlasya uttarasyāṁ tattheśvari

सौम्यानि यानि रूपाणि तैत्तिके विचरति ने।
यानि चात्यन्त्योगराणि नै रक्षास्मात्स्यात्र भुवम्। २६।।
saumyāni yāni rūpāṇi trailokyey vicaranti te
yāni cātyantaghorāṇi tair rakṣāsmāṁs tathā bhuvaṃ

खड़गशूलगदादीनि यानि चास्त्राणि नेड़म्बिके।
करपल्लवस्यकीनि तैरस्मान्त्रक्ष सर्वतः। २७।।
khaḍgaśūlagadādīnī yāni câstrāṇi te ’mbike
karapallavasaṅgīnī tair asmān rakṣa sarvataḥ

ऋषिरुवाच। २८।।
rṣir uvāca

एवं स्तुता सुरैदिव्ये: कुसुमेन्नदनोझवे।
अर्थिता जगतां धात्री तथा गन्धानुपलेपने। २९।।
evaṁ stutā surair divyaiḥ kusumair nandanodbhavaiḥ
arcitā jagatāṁ dhātrī tathā gandhānulepanaiḥ
भक्त्या समस्तेन्द्रियेर्घं पुरुषपिता।
प्राह प्रसादसुमुख्य समस्तनान प्रणातान सुरान्। ॥ ३० ॥
bhaktyā samastais tridaśair divyair dhūpaiḥ sudhūpitā
prāha prasādasumukhā samastān praṇatān surān

देव्युवाच ॥ ३१ ॥
devy uvāca

व्रियतां जिद्या: सर्वं यद्यस्मनोधमिवाविश्चितम्।
ददाम्यहमनिजीत्या स्तवैरेभं सुपूजिता। ॥ ३२ ॥
vriyatām tridaśāḥ sarve yad asmatto 'bhivānchitam
dadāmy aham atiprītyā stavair ebhiḥ supūjitā

देवा ऊचः ॥ ३३ ॥
devā ucuḥ

भगवत्या कृतं सर्वं न किंचिदवशिष्यते।
यदयं निहतं: शत्रुरस्माकं महिषासुर:। ॥ ३४ ॥
bhagavatā kṛtam sarvam na kiñcid avasiṣyate
yad ayaṁ nihataṁ satrur asmākam mahiṣāsuraḥ

यदि चापि वरो देयस्यवाईस्माकं महेश्वरि।
संस्मृता संस्मृता त्वं नो हिन्सेतः: परस्मापदः। ॥ ३५ ॥
yadi cāpī varo deyas tvayaṁ 'smākam maheśvari
sāṃsṛṭā sāṃsṛṭā tvam no himsetaṁ paramāpadaḥ

यथ्य मत्यं: स्तवैरेभिस्त्वा स्नोष्यत्यमल्लनने।
तत्स्य विनन्त्रिदिविभेध्नदारादिस्म्यदाम॥ ३६ ॥
yāś ca martyāḥ stavair ebhis tvāṁ stōṣaty amalānane
tasya vittardhivibhavair dhanadārādisampadām

वृद्धयेःस्मतप्रसन्ना त्वं भवेशा: सर्वदामिके। ॥ ३७ ॥
vṛddhaye 'smat prasannā tvam bhavethāḥ sarvadāmike
ॠषिरुवाच ॥ ३८ ॥

र्षिर uvāca

इति प्रसादिता देवैर्जगतोऽर्थे तथात्मनः।
तथेत्युक्त्वा भद्रकाली बभूवान्तर्हितानुप ॥ ३९ ॥

iti prasāditā de vair jagato 'rthe tathātmanaḥ
tathety uktvā bhadrakālī babhuvāntarhitā nṛpa

इत्येतन्तक्षितं भूप सम्भुता सा यथा पुरा ॥
देवी देवशारीरभ्यो जगन्त्यहिन्नेषिणि ॥ ४० ॥

ity etat kathitaṁ bhūpa sambhūtā sā yathā purā
devī devaśarīrebhyo jagattrayahitaiśiṇī

पुनः गौरीदेहात्सा समुद्रता यथाभवत् ॥
वधाय दुष्टदेत्यानात्तथा श्रुभनिनिश्चयोऽः ॥ ४१ ॥

punaś ca gaurīdehāt sā samudbhūtā yathābhavat
vadhaya duṣṭadaityānām tathā ṣumbhaniṣumbhayoh

रक्षणाय च लोकानां देवानामुपकारिणी ॥
तच्छृणूष्य मयाख्यातां यथावन्तकथायामि नेत ॥ ४२ ॥

rakṣanāya ca lokānāṁ devānāṁ upakāriṇī
tac chṛṇuṣva mayākhyātaṁ yathāvat kathayaṁi te
Om ghanṭāśūlahalāni śankhamusale cakram dhanuḥ śayakam hastabhair dadhāūm
ghanantavilasacchātāmśutulyaprabhām gaurīdehasamudbhavām trijagatāmādharabhūtām
mahā-pūrvām atra sarasvatīm anubhaje ūŚumbhādaityārdinīm
पञ्चमोऽध्यायः
देव्या दूतसंवादः

ॐ कृं ऋषिश्वरः \| १ \| ।
OM kām ṛṣīr uvāca

पुरा श्रुत्तिःश्रुभायमसुरार्यां श्रवीपते: \| २ \| ।
purā śumbhanisumbhābhyyām asurābhyyāṁ sacīpateḥ
trailokyaṁ yajñabhāgāś ca hṛtā madabalaśrayāt

नावेव सूर्यान्तः दशदधिकारं तथैन्द्रयम् \| ३ \| ।
कौबेरमथ याम्य च चक्राते वर्णस्य च \| ४ \| ।
tāv eva sūryatāṁ tadvad adhikāraṁ tathaindavam
kauberam atha yāmyarṁ ca cakrāte varuṇasya ca

नावेव पवनां च चक्रतुर्वतिनिकर्म च \| ५ \| ।
तनो देवा विनिधृता ब्रह्मार्ज्या: पराजिता: \| ६ \| ।
tāv eva pavanarddhiṁ ca cakratur vahnikarma ca
tato devā vinirdhūtā bhraṣṭarājyāḥ parājītāḥ

हनाधिकारस्विद्धास्ताथ्यं सर्वे निराकृता: \| ७ \| ।
महासुरार्यां तां देवी संस्मरत्यपराजिैताम् \| ८ \| ।
hṛtādhikārāṁ tridaśas tābhyāṁ sarve nirākṛtāḥ
mahāsūrabhyāṁ tāṁ devīṁ saṁsmaranty aparājītāṁ

तयास्माकं वरो दनो यथापत्य सम्भाचितः \| ९ \| ।
भवतां नाशयिष्यामि तन्मात्रात्मपापदः \| १० \| ।
tayāsmākaṁ varo datto yathāpatsu smṛtākhitāḥ
bhavatāṁ nāśayisyāmi tatkṣaṇat paramāpadaḥ
iti kṛtvā matim devā himavantarī nageśvaram
jagmuśa tatra tato devīm viṣṇumāyām pratuṣṭuvaḥ

deva ॐ: ॥ ८ ॥
deva ucuḥ

नमो देव्ये महादेव्येशिवाय सततं नम: ॥
नम: प्रकृत्ये भद्राये नियता: प्रणता: स्यं ताम् ॥ ९ ॥
namo devyai mahādevyai śivāyai satatāṁ namaḥ
namah prakṛtyai bhadrāyai niyatāḥ praṇataḥ sma tāṁ

रूपाये नमो नित्याये गोर्येय धात्रेय नमो नम: ॥
ज्योत्सनाये चेन्दुरुपिण्ये सुखाये सततं नम: ॥ १० ॥
raudrāyai namo nityāyai gauryai dhātryai namo namaḥ
jyotṣnāyai cendurūpiṇyai sukhāyai satatāṁ namaḥ

कल्याण्ये प्रणताय बुद्धे सिद्धे कुर्मो नमो नमः ॥
नैरृत्ये भूभूताय लक्ष्मे शर्वाये ते नमो नमः ॥ ११ ॥
kalyāṇyai praṇataḥ buddhyai siddhyai kurmo namo namaḥ
nairṛtyai bhūbhṛtām lakṣmyai šarvanyai te namo namaḥ

दुर्गाये दुर्गपाराये साराये सर्वकारिण्ये ॥
ख्यात्ये नथेय क्रृष्णाये धूम्राये सततं नम: ॥ १२ ॥
durgāyai durgapārāyai sārayai sarvakāriṇyai
khṛṣṇyai tathaiva kṛṣṇāyai dhūmrāyai satatam namaḥ

अतिषोप्यारिरोदाये नतास्तस्तेय नमो नमः ॥
नमो जगप्रतिष्ठाये देव्ये कृत्ये नमो नम: ॥ १३ ॥
atisaumyātiraudrāyai natās taśyai namo namaḥ
namo jagatpratisthāyai devyai kṛtyai namo namaḥ
या देवी सर्वभूतेशु विष्णुमायेति शब्दिता ।
नमस्तर्यः नमस्तर्यः नमस्तर्यः नमो । १४-१६ ॥
yā devī sarvabhūteṣu viṣṇumāyeti śabdītā
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namaḥ

या देवी सर्वभूतेशु चेतनेत्यभिधियते ।
नमस्तर्यः नमस्तर्यः नमस्तर्यः नमो । १७-१९ ॥
yā devī sarvabhūteṣu cetanety abhidhīyate
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namaḥ

या देवी सर्वभूतेशु बुद्धिरुपेण संस्थिता ।
नमस्तर्यः नमस्तर्यः नमस्तर्यः नमो । २०-२२ ॥
yā devī sarvabhūteṣu buddhirūpeṇa sāṁsthitā
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namaḥ

या देवी सर्वभूतेशु निद्रारुपेण संस्थिता ।
नमस्तर्यः नमस्तर्यः नमस्तर्यः नमो । २३-२५ ॥
yā devī sarvabhūteṣu nidrārūpeṇa sāṁsthitā
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namaḥ

या देवी सर्वभूतेशु क्षुद्रारुपेण संस्थिता ।
नमस्तर्यः नमस्तर्यः नमस्तर्यः नमो । २६-२८ ॥
yā devī sarvabhūteṣu kṣudhārūpeṇa sāṁsthitā
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namaḥ

या देवी सर्वभूतेशु चायारुपेण संस्थिता ।
नमस्तर्यः नमस्तर्यः नमस्तर्यः नमो । २९-३१ ॥
yā devī sarvabhūteṣu chāyārūpeṇa sāṁsthitā
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namaḥ

या देवी सर्वभूतेशु शक्तिरुपेण संस्थिता ।
नमस्तर्यः नमस्तर्यः नमस्तर्यः नमो । ३२-३४ ॥
yā devī sarvabhūteṣu śaktirūpeṇa sāṁsthitā
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namaḥ
या देवी सर्वभूतेषु तृणारुपेण संस्थिता।
नमस्तर्थै नमस्तर्थै नमस्तर्थै नमो नम। ॥ ३५-३७ ॥
yā devi sarvabhūteṣu tṛṇārūpeṇa saṁsthita
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namah

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु क्षानिरुपेण संस्थिता।
नमस्तर्थै नमस्तर्थै नमस्तर्थै नमो नम। ॥ ३८-४० ॥
yā devi sarvabhūteṣu kṣāntirūpeṇa saṁsthita
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namah

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु जातिरुपेण संस्थिता।
नमस्तर्थै नमस्तर्थै नमस्तर्थै नमो नम। ॥ ४१-४३ ॥
yā devi sarvabhūteṣu jātirūpeṇa saṁsthita
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namah

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु लज्जारुपेण संस्थिता।
नमस्तर्थै नमस्तर्थै नमस्तर्थै नमो नम। ॥ ४४-४६ ॥
yā devi sarvabhūteṣu lajjarūpeṇa saṁsthita
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namah

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु शायानिरुपेण संस्थिता।
नमस्तर्थै नमस्तर्थै नमस्तर्थै नमो नम। ॥ ४७-४९ ॥
yā devi sarvabhūteṣu śāyānirūpeṇa saṁsthita
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namah

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु श्रद्धारुपेण संस्थिता।
नमस्तर्थै नमस्तर्थै नमस्तर्थै नमो नम। ॥ ५०-५२ ॥
yā devi sarvabhūteṣu śraddhārūpeṇa saṁsthita
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namah

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु कान्तिरुपेण संस्थिता।
नमस्तर्थै नमस्तर्थै नमस्तर्थै नमो नम। ॥ ५३-५५ ॥
yā devi sarvabhūteṣu kāntirūpeṇa saṁsthita
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namah
या देवी सर्वभूतेशु लक्ष्मीरूपेण सांस्थिता ।
नमस्तर्यै नमस्तर्यै नमस्तर्यै नमो नमः ॥ ५६-५८ ॥
yā devī sarvabhūteṣu lakṣmīrūpeṇa saṁśthitā
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namaḥ

या देवी सर्वभूतेशु वृत्तिरूपेण सांस्थिता ।
नमस्तर्यै नमस्तर्यै नमस्तर्यै नमो नमः ॥ ५९-६१ ॥
yā devī sarvabhūteṣu vṛttirūpeṇa saṁśthitā
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namaḥ

या देवी सर्वभूतेशु स्मृतिरूपेण सांस्थिता ।
नमस्तर्यै नमस्तर्यै नमस्तर्यै नमो नमः ॥ ६२-६४ ॥
yā devī sarvabhūteṣu smṛtirūpeṇa saṁśthitā
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namaḥ

या देवी सर्वभूतेशु दयारूपेण सांस्थिता ।
नमस्तर्यै नमस्तर्यै नमस्तर्यै नमो नमः ॥ ६५-६७ ॥
yā devī sarvabhūteṣu dayārūpeṇa saṁśthitā
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namaḥ

या देवी सर्वभूतेशु तुष्टिरूपेण सांस्थिता ।
नमस्तर्यै नमस्तर्यै नमस्तर्यै नमो नमः ॥ ६८-६० ॥
yā devī sarvabhūteṣu tuṣṭirūpeṇa saṁśthitā
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namaḥ

या देवी सर्वभूतेशु मातृरूपेण सांस्थिता ।
नमस्तर्यै नमस्तर्यै नमस्तर्यै नमो नमः ॥ ६१-६३ ॥
yā devī sarvabhūteṣu mātrirūpeṇa saṁśthitā
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namaḥ

या देवी सर्वभूतेशु भ्रान्तिरूपेण सांस्थिता ।
नमस्तर्यै नमस्तर्यै नमस्तर्यै नमो नमः ॥ ६४-६६ ॥
yā devī sarvabhūteṣu bhāntirūpeṇa saṁśthitā
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namaḥ
इन्द्रियाणामधिष्ठात्री भूताना चाकिलेशु या।
भूतेशु सन्तं तर्ये व्यापनिदेवै नमो नमः ॥ ७७ ॥
indriyāṇāṁ adhiṣṭhātṛi bhūtānāṁ cākhileṣu yā
bhūteṣu satataṁ tasyai vyāptidevyai namo namaḥ

चित्तरूपेण या कृत्यमेतद्वाय्यस्थिता जगत् ॥
नमस्तर्ये नमस्तर्ये नमस्तर्ये नमो नमः ॥ ७८-७० ॥
citrūpeṇa yā kṛtsnam etad vyāpya sthitā jagat
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namaḥ

स्तुता चुरः पूर्वमभीष्टसंश्रययः
तथा सुरेन्द्रेण दिनेषु सेविता ॥
करोतु सा न: शुभेनुरस्वरी
शुभानि भद्राण्यभिहिन्तु चापद: ॥ ८१ ॥
stūtā suraiḥ pūrvaṁ abhiṣṭasamarśrayat tathā surendreṇa dineṣu sevītā
karoṣu sā naḥ śubhahetur īśvarī śubhāni bhadṛāṇy abhihantu cāpadaḥ

या साम्प्रतं चोड्हन्देवत्यतापिते—
रस्माभिरिशा च सुरेन्द्रमस्यते ॥
या च स्त्रृता तत्क्षणमेव हनि न:
सर्वापदो भक्तिविन्दमूर्तिमि: ॥ ८२ ॥
yā sāmpratāṁ coddhatadaitiyatāpitair asmābhīr īśā ca surair namasyate
yā ca smṛtā tat kṣaṇam eva hanti naḥ sarvāpado bhaktivinamramūrtibhiḥ

ऋषिरुवः ॥ ८३ ॥
ṛṣir uvāca

एवं स्तवादियुञ्जनां देवानां तत्र पार्वती ॥
स्नातमभ्याययो तोये जाह्नवया नृपनन्दन ॥ ८४ ॥
evaiṁ stavādiyuktāṁ devānāṁ tatra pārvatī
snātum abhyāyayau toye jāhnavyā nṛpanandana
sābravīt tān surān subhrūr bhavadbhīḥ stūyate ’tra kā 
śārīrakośataś cāsyāḥ samudbhūtā ’bravic chivā

śāstraṁ mamaitat kriyate śumbhadaišyanirākṛtaiḥ 
devaiḥ sāmetaiḥ samare niśumbhena parājitaiḥ

śārīrakośād yat tasyāḥ pārvatyā niḥśṛtāmbikā 
kausikīti samasteṣu tato lokeṣu giyate

tasyāṁ vinirgatayāṁ tu kṛṣṇābhūt sāpi pārvatī 
kāliketi sāmākhyaṭā himācalakṛtāśrayā

tānośmīkāḥ parāṃ rūpani bhirāṅkāṁ sumanoharam 
ddarṣa caṇḍo munḍaṣ ca bhṛtyau śumbhāniśumbhayoh

tābhyaṁ śumbhayā caṅkhyaṭā sātiva sumanoharā 
kāpyaste strī mahārāja bhāsayantī himācalaṁ

naiva tādṛk kvacīd rūpaṁ dṛṣṭaṁ kenacid uttamaṁ
jñāyatāṁ kāpy asau devī grhyatāṁ cāsureśvara

स्त्रीरत्नतमिति चार्वज्ञी योतयन्ति दिशासत्वेना ॥ ९२ ॥

snīratnam aticārvaṁī dyotayanī diśas tvīśā
dā tu tiṣṭhati dāityendra tāṁ bhavān draṣṭum arhati

यानि रत्नां मणयो गजाश्वादीनि वै प्रभो ॥

yānī ratnāni manayo gājāśvādīni vai prabho

ऐरावतः समानीतो गजरत्रं पुरुन्दरात् ॥

ऐरावतः समानीतो गजरत्रं पुरुन्दरात् ॥ ९४ ॥

पारिज्ञाततस्त्रियां तथैवोच्छेष्वरवा हयः ॥ ९५ ॥

airāvataḥ samānīto gajarataṁ purandarāt
pārijātaṁ ca saṁtāṁ tathāvoccaiḥśravā hayaḥ

विमानं हंससंयुक्ततमिति तेसः ॥

विमानं हंससंयुक्ततमिति तेसः ॥ ९६ ॥

निधिरेष महापद्म: समानीतो धनेश्वरात् ॥

निधिरेष महापद्म: समानीतो धनेश्वरात् ॥ ९७ ॥

किंजलिकिनी ददो चाविशिर्मालाम्ब्लामप्रज्ञानं ॥

किंजलिकिनी ददो चाविशिर्मालाम्ब्लामप्रज्ञानं ॥ ९८ ॥

निद्हिर एताम महापद्म: समानीतो धनेश्वरात्

निद्हिर एताम महापद्म: समानीतो धनेश्वरात्

द्वानं ते वारुणं गेहे काव्यन्यावि तिष्ठति ॥

द्वानं ते वारुणं गेहे काव्यन्यावि तिष्ठति ॥ ९९ ॥

तथास्य स्यन्दनवरो य: पुरासीत्रज्ञापने ॥

तथास्य स्यन्दनवरो य: पुरासीत्रज्ञापने ॥ ९७ ॥

चत्रामि ते वारुणं गेहे कान्चनसर्वं तिष्ठति

चत्रामि ते वारुणं गेहे कान्चनसर्वं तिष्ठति

मृत्योरुत्कान्तिदा नाम शक्कीर्ष त्यथा हना ॥

मृत्योरुत्कान्तिदा नाम शक्कीर्ष त्यथा हना ॥ ९८ ॥

पारो: सलिलराजस्य भ्रातुस्तव परिग्रहे ॥
मṛtyor utkrāntidā nāma śaktir Iśa tvayā hṛtā
pāśaḥ salilarājasya bhrātus tava parigrahe

निशुम्भस्याभिजाताय समस्ता रद्रजातयः ॥
वत्तिन्यापि ददो तुभ्यमश्रिताचे च वासयी ॥ ९९ ॥
niśumbhasyābdhijātāś ca samastā ratnajātayāḥ
vahniś cāpi dadau tubhyam agniśauce ca vāsasī
eवेद्येद्र रद्रानि समस्तान्याहतानि ते ।
स्त्रीरत्नेषा कल्याणी त्वया कस्मात्र गृहते ॥ १०० ॥
evam daityendra ratnāni samastany āhṛtāni te
strīratnam eṣā kalyāṇī tvayā kasmān na gṛhyate

ऋषिरुवाच ॥ १०१ ॥
ṛṣir uvāca

निशाम्येति वचः श्रुम्भः स तदा चण्डमुण्डयोः ॥
प्रेषयामास सुग्रीवं दूनं देव्या महायुरम् ॥ १०२ ॥
niśamyeti vacaḥ śumbhaḥ sa tadā caṇḍamuṇḍayoh
preṣayāmāsa sugrīvaṁ dūtāṁ devyā mahāsuram
dति चेति च वक्तव्या सा गत्या वचनान्मम ।
यथा चाभ्येति सम्प्रणिया तथा कार्यत्वया लघु ॥ १०३ ॥
iti ceti ca vaktavyā sa gatyā vacanān mama
yathā cābhhyeti samprītyā tathā kāryam tvayā laghu

स तत्र गत्या यग्रास्ते शैलोदेशोनिशोभने ।
सा देवी तां न्तः प्राह इलण्ण मधुरया गिरा ॥ १०४ ॥
sa tatra gatyā yatāste śailoddēse 'tiśobhane
sā devi tāṁ tataḥ prāha śalakṣṇam madhuryā girā
dून उवाच ॥ १०५ ॥
dūta uvāca
devi daityesvaraḥ śumbhas trailokyam parameśvaraḥ
duto 'ham preṣitas tena tvat sakāśam ihāgataḥ
duṇoḥ praśitstena tvaṁ kāśikam āhāmasah

अव्याहताः सर्वसु यः सदा देवयोनिषु ।
निजित्तखिलदेन्त्यारि: स यदाह शृणुष्य तन्तः ॥ १०७ ॥
avyāhatājñāḥ sarvāsu yah sadā devayoniṣu
nirjitākhitadātyāriḥ sa yadāha śṛṇuṣvā tat

मम चैलोक्यमिश्रतं मम देवा व्यानुऽगः: ।
यज्ञभागानं सर्वानुपाश्रामि पुर्वक पुर्वक ॥ १०८ ॥
mama trailokyam akhilam mama devā vaśānugāḥ
yajñabhāgān aham sarvān upāśnāmi pṛthak pṛthak

चैलोक्ये वरस्तानि मम वरयांस्योशत: ।
तथैव गजरंति च हतं देवेन्द्रवाहनम् ॥ १०९ ॥
trailokyam vararatnāni mama vaśyāny aśeṣataḥ
tathaiva gajaratnām ca hṛtaṁ devendravāhanam

क्षीरोदमथनोऽदत्तमश्वरतं ममामरेः ।
उच्चे:श्रवस्यं न्तयाणिपत्य समर्पितम ॥ ११० ॥
kṣīrodamathanodbhūtam aśvaratnāṁ mamāmaraiḥ
uccaihśravasasarṣaṁjñam tat praṇipatya samarpitam

यानि चाचाणि देवेषु गन्धर्वशृणुरेषु च ।
रामभूतानि भूतानि तानि मयेव शोभने ॥ १११ ॥
yāni caṇyāni devesu gandharvesūrāgeṣu ca
ratanabhūtāni bhūtāni tāni mayy eva Šobhane

स्त्रीरत्नभूताः त्यां देवि लोके मन्याहस्वयम् ।
या त्वमन्यामुपागचछ यतो रक्षाजो वयम् ॥ ११२ ॥
strīrnatbhūtām tvāṁ devi loke manyāmahe vayam

strīrnatbhūtām tvāṁ devi loke manyāmahe vayam
sā tvam āsmān upāgacca yato ratnabhujo vayam

मां वा ममानुजं वापि निषुम्भमुरुविक्रमम् ।
भज त्वं चच्चलापांजि रतमभूतासि वै यतः ॥ ११३ ॥
mām vā mamānujam vāpi niṣumbham uruvikramam
bhaja tvaṃ cañcalāpāṅgi ratabhūtasi vai yataḥ

परस्मेवयमतुलं प्राप्यसे मत्परिग्रहात् ।
एनदुब्रुख्या समालोच्य मत्परिग्रहातं व्रज ॥ ११४ ॥
paramaiśvāryam atulam prāpsyase matparigrahāt
etad buddhā samālocya matparigrahātāṁ vraja

ऋषिरुवाच ॥ ११५ ॥
rśir uvāca

इत्युक्ता सा तदा देवी गम्भीरान्तःस्मिता जगो ।
दुर्गा भगवती भद्रा ययेदं धारयन्ते जगन् ॥ ११६ ॥
ity uktā sā tadā devī gambhīrāntahsmitā jagau
durgā bhagavatī bhadrā yayedaṁ dhāryate jagat

देवयुवाच ॥ ११७ ॥
devy uvāca

सत्यमुक्तं त्वया नात्र मिथ्या किंजित्त्वयोदितम् ।
त्रेलोकयाधिपतिः श्रुत्वो निषुम्भश्चापि नायशः ॥ ११८ ॥
satyam uktam tvayā nātra mithyā kiṁcit tvayoditam
trailokyādhipatiḥ śumbho niṣumbhaś cāpi tādṛśaḥ

कि स्त्रयूत्तमलयुद्धिन्त्वाध्यायतिज्ञा या कृत्त अपूरा ॥ ११९ ॥
kiṁ tvatra yat pariṣṭātam mithyā tat kriyate katham
śrūyatāṁ alpabuddhitvāt pratijñā yā kṛtā purā
यो मां जयति संग्रामे यो मे दर्प व्यपोहति ।
यो मे प्रतिबलो लोके स मे भरत्र भविष्यति ॥ १२० ॥
yo māṁ jayati saṅgrāme yo me darpaṁ vyapohati
yo me pratibaio loke sa me bhartā bhaviṣyati

तदगच्छतु शुभ्मोद्वत्र निशुभो वा महायुरः ।
मा जित्वा किं चिरेणात्र पाणि गृह्यातु मे लघु ॥ १२१ ॥
tadāgacchatu śumbho 'tra niśumbho vā mahāsuraḥ
māṁ jītvā kim cireṇātra pāṇīm gṛhṇātu me laghu

दूत उवाच ॥ १२२ ॥
dūta uvāca

अवलिप्तासि मैवं तन्य देवि ब्रूहि ममायतः ।
तैलोक्ये कः पुमारितेण्द्रे शुभ्मनिशुभ्योः ॥ १२३ ॥
avaliptāsi maivam tvam devi brūhi mamāgrataḥ
trailokye kaḥ pumāṁs tiṣṭhed agre śumbhaniśumbhayoh

अन्येषामयं देय्यानन्त सर्वं देवा न वै युधि ।
तिष्ठन्ति सम्मुखे देवि किं पुनं स्त्री त्वभक्तिः ॥ १२४ ॥
anyeśām api daitvānāṁ sarve devā na vai yudhi
tiṣṭhanti sammukhe devi kim punah strī tvam ekikā

इन्द्राधा: सकलवा देवास्तस्ययुग्मान्त न संयुगे ।
शुभ्मादीनां कथं तेषां स्त्री प्रयास्यसि सम्मुखम् ॥ १२५ ॥
indrādyāḥ sakalā devās tasthur yeśāṁ na samyuge
śumbhādīnāṁ kathāṁ teṣāṁ strī prayāsyasi sammukham

सा तन्य गच्छ मयैवोक्ता पार्श्वं शुभ्मनिशुभ्योः ।
केशाकर्षणानिर्धूतगोरवा मा गमिष्यसि ॥ १२६ ॥
sā tvāṁ gaccha mayaivokta pārśvarī śumbhaniśumbhayoh
keśākarṣaṇanirdhūtagauravā mā gamiṣyasi

देव्यवाच ॥ १२७ ॥
devy uvāca

एवमेनन्दु बली श्रुभो निगुष्मश्यानविवर्यवान्।
किं करोमि प्रतिज्ञा मे यदनालोचिता पुरा॥ १२८॥
evam etad balī śumbho niśumbhaś cātivīryavān
kim karomi pratijñā me yad anālocitā purā

स त्वं गच्छ मयोक्तं ते यदेतत्स्वविमाहतः।
तदाच्यक्ष्यायुरेन्द्राय स च युक्तं करोतु यत॥ १२९॥
sa tvam gaccha mayoktaṁ te yad etat sarvam ādṛtah
tad ācakṣvāsurendrya sa ca yuktaṁ karotu yat
र्षिर uvāca

इत्याकरण्य वचो देव्या: स दूरतोमर्ष्पूरितं।
समाच्छेद समागम्य देव्यराजाय विस्तरात्॥ २ ॥

ित्य दूरतश तत्त्त्वाकरण्यासुरराद् नतः।
सक्रोध: प्राह देव्यानामधिपं धृमलोचनम्॥ ३ ॥

तस्य दूतस्य तद्भक्षमाकरण्यासुरराद् नतः।
तस्य दूतस्य तद्भक्षमाकरण्यासुरराद् नतः।

तस्य दूतस्य तद्भक्षमाकरण्यासुरराद् नतः।

तस्य दूतस्य तद्भक्षमाकरण्यासुरराद् नतः।

तस्य दूतस्य तद्भक्षमाकरण्यासुरराद् नतः।

हेधृमलोचनायु तन्त्वसैन्यपरिवारितः।

नामानय बलाहुष्टां वेशाकर्षणविव्वत्वम्॥ ४ ॥

हेघृमलोचनायु तन्त्वसैन्यपरिवारितः।

हेघृमलोचनायु तन्त्वसैन्यपरिवारितः।

तत्वपरिवारित: कश्चिद्यदित्वोतिष्ठते॥

स हन्तव्योसमरो वापि यक्षो गम्भर्ये एव वा॥ ५ ॥

तत्तपरिवारित: कश्चिद्यदित्वोतिष्ठते॥

अधिनितः ॥ ६ ॥

र्षिर uvāca

तेनाज्ञपतस्तम् शीघ्रं स देव्यो धृमलोचनः।
वृत्त: षष्ठ्या सहस्राणामयुराणं दुनं ययाः॥ ७ ॥

तेनाज्ञनपतस्तम् शीघ्रं स देव्यो धृमलोचनः।
vṛtah saṣṭyā sahasrāṇām asurāṇām drutaṁ yayau

स हृद्ध्रा तां तनो देवी तुहिनाचलस्येस्थिनाम।
जगादौचे प्रयाहिति मूलं शुभ्निशुभ्यो। ॥ ८ ॥

sa dṛṣṭvā tāṁ tato devīṁ tuhinācalasāṁsthitāṁ
gagadoccaiḥ prayāhiti mūlaṁ śumbhaniśumbhayoh

न चत्त्रीयत्व भवति मद्यामपैष्यति।
तनो बलान्यापेयेष केशाकर्षणविस्त्वलाम। ॥ ९ ॥

na cet prītyādyā bhavaṁ madbhartāram upaiṣyati
tato balāṁ nayāmy eṣa keśākaraśaṇaivihvalām

देव्यवाच ॥ १० ॥
devy uvāca

देव्येश्वरे न प्रहितो बलवान्वलसंवृतं।
बलान्यासिं मामेव तत् कि ते करोम्यहम् ॥ ११ ॥

daiyaśvareṇa prahito balavān balasamvṛtaḥ
balāṁ nayāsi mām evaṁ tataḥ kiṁ te karomy aham

ऋषिरवाच ॥ १२ ॥
ṛṣiṛ uvāca

इत्युतः सोधव्यावत्नामसुरो धृपलेचनः।
हुङ्गारेन्त भस्म या चकाराम्बिका तत्। ॥ १३ ॥

ity uktaḥ so 'bhyaḍhāvat tāṁ asuro dhūmrarocanaḥ
hunḥkāreṇaiva tāṁ bhasma sā cakārāmbikā tataḥ

अथ कुद्र्दं महायैन्यमयुराणां तथामिकाम्।
वर्षं सायकैतीस्त्रिक्षोऽस्त्र शक्तिपरक्षवधे। ॥ १४ ॥

atha kruddhaṁ mahāsainyam asurāṇāṁ tathāmbikām
vavarṣa sāyakais tūkṣṇais tathā śaktiparaśvadhaiḥ
नतो ध्रुतस्तः कोपात्क्रुत्वा नादं सुमेखरवम् ॥
पपतासुरसेनायां सिंहो देव्या: स्वाहनः ॥ १५ ॥
tato dhutaśaṭaḥ kopāt kṛtvā nādaṁ subhairavam
papātasurasenāyāṁ simho devyaḥ svavāhanaḥ

कांशित्कप्रप्रहरेण दैत्यानायेन चापरान् ॥
आक्रान्त्या चाघरेणायणां से जघान महासुरान् ॥ १६ ॥
kāṁścit karaprahāreṇa daityaṁ āsyena cāparān
ākrāntyā cādhareṇāṇyān sa jaghāna mahāsurān

केशाचित्त्यायामास नखे: कोष्ठानि केसरीः ॥
तथा ततप्रहरेण शिरांसि कृतवान्यथकः ॥ १७ ॥
kesāṅcit pāṭayāmāsa nakhaiḥ koṣṭhāni kesarī
tathā talaprahāreṇa śirāmsi kṛtvān pṛthak

विचित्रवाहुशिरसं: कृतस्तेन तथापरे ॥
पपी च रथिरं कोष्ठाद्येषां धुतकेसर: ॥ १८ ॥
vicchinnabāhuśirasāḥ kṛtās tena tathāpare
papau ca rudhiraṁ koṣṭhād anyeṣām dhutakesaraḥ

क्षणेन नद्वृबलं सर्वं क्षयं नीतं महात्मनं ॥
तेन केसरिणा देव्या वाहनेनातिकोपिना ॥ १९ ॥
kṣanena tad balam sarvan kṣayam nītam mahātmanā
tena kesariṇā devyā vāhanenatikopina

श्रुत्या तमसुरं देव्या निहतं धुंम्रलोचनम् ॥
बलं च क्षयितं कृत्तं देवीकेसरिणा ततः ॥ २० ॥
śrutvā tam asuram devyā nihatarṁ dhūmralocanam
balam ca kṣayitam kṛtsnam devikesariṇā tataḥ

चुकोप दैत्याधिपति： ग्रुम्भः प्रस्फुरिताधरः ॥
आज्ञायायामास च मो चण्डमुण्डान महासुरोऽ ॥ २१ ॥
cukopa daityaadhaptiḥ sumbhaḥ prasphuritādharah
अज्ञापयामासा का ताव चन्द्रमुँडाव्य महासुराव

हे चन्द्र हे मुँड वल्लेर्युः परिवारितो ।
तत्र गच्छन् गत्वा च सा समानीयतां लघु ॥ २२ ॥

हे चन्द्र हे मुँड बलाइः बालाईः परिवरिति तत्र गच्छताम गतवा च सा समानियताम लघु

केशवकृष्ण बद्धवा वा यदि वः संशयों युधिः ।
तदाशोष्युध्यः सर्वरसुरविनिहन्यताम् ॥ २३ ॥

केशवकृष्ण बद्धवा वा यदि वः सामस्यो युधिः
तदाशोष्युध्यः सर्वरसुरविनिहन्यताम्

तस्यां हतायां दुष्टायां सिंहे च विनिपातते।
शीघ्रमागम्यतां बद्धवा गृहीतवा नामथांबिकाम् ॥ २४ ॥

तस्यां हतायां दुष्टायां सिंहे च विनिपातते
शीघ्रम अगम्यताम बद्धवा ग्रहितवा ताम अथांबिकाम
रशिर uvāca

आजपतंते नतो देयताध्वंक्रमन्दपुरोगमं।
चतुर्भबलोपेता ययुपुदयनायधा। ॥ २ ॥

अजनपतेयस्तो दैत्याध्वं ज्ञानम्मपुरोगमहं
चतुर्राङ्गबलोपेता ययुर अभयुदायुधः

दह्नुर्वते नतो देवीमाश्र्यां व्यवस्थिताम्।
सिंहस्योपरि शैलेन्द्रशृंगे महति काञ्चने। ॥ ३ ॥

dadṛśus te tato devīm iśaddhāsāṁ vyavasthitāṁ
simhasyopari Sailendraśṛṅge mahati kāṅcane

ते हृष्टा तां समाधातुधान्मव्यकुक्तस्वतः।
आकृष्ट्वचापापिरस्पाकरस्मान्ये तन्त्रमीपगः। ॥ ४ ॥

tē drṣṭvā tame samādātim udyan ančakur udyatāṁ
ākṛṣṭa cāpābdharāṁ tathānte tām pāmāṅgāṁ

तत: कोप चकारोच्छेरमिका तानरीप्रति।
कोपेन चास्या वदन ग्रीवर्णमभूतदा। ॥ ५ ॥

tataḥ kopāṁ cakāroccair ambikā tāṁ anṛṁ prati
kopena cāsyā vadanaṁ maśīvarṇam abhūt tadā

प्रुक्तिकृतिगतस्या तालाटफलकारद्वितम्।
काली करालवदना विनिश्चान्तासिपाशिनी। ॥ ६ ॥

bhrukuṭi kūṭīlāt tasyā lalāṭaphalakād drutam
kāli karālavadanaṁ viniśkṛntāsīpāśinī
विचित्रख्टाङ्गदरार नरामलाविभूषणाः।
द्वीपिचर्मपरिधानाः शुष्कमांसातिमेवाः।
vicitrakahśvāṅgadharā naramālavibhūṣanā
dvīpicarmaparīdhānā śuṣkamāṁsatibhairavā

अतिविस्तारवदना जित्वालतनभीषणाः।
निम्नशालकनयना नादापूरितिदिशुखाः।
 ativistāravadanā jihvālalanabhīṣanā
nimagnāraktanayanā nāḍāpūritadīrmukhā

सा वेगनाभिपितिना घातनन्ती महासुराः।
सैन्ये तत्र चुरारीनामभक्ष्यन् तद्वर्जनः।
sā vegenābhipatiḍā ghatayanū mahāsurān
sainye tatra surāriṇām abhakṣayata tad balam

पार्श्वग्रहान्द्रश्राहियोधघण्टासमन्विताः।
स्मादायेकहस्तन मुखे चिक्षेप वारणाः।
pāṛṣṇigrāhahānkusagrāhiyodhaghaṅṭāsamanvitān
samādāyaikahastena muke cikṣepa vāraṇān

तथेव योधं तुर्जु रथं सारथिना सह।
निक्षिप्य वक्रे्द्वनैस्थर्ब्यत्तन्तिभैःर्मवः।
tathaiva yodhaṁ turagai rathaṁ sārathinā saha
nikṣipya vakte daśanais carvayaty atibhairavam

एकं जग्गह केशः प्रीवायाथ चापरम्।
पादेनाक्रम्य चैवान्यभरसान्यमपोथ्यन्त्।
ekaṁ jagrāha keśeṣu grivāyāṁ atha cāparam
pādenākramya caivānyam urasānyam apothayat

तैऽुक्तःमानि च शस्त्राणि महास्त्राणि तथा।
मुखेन जग्गह रुषाद्वनैमभितिलिपि।
tair muktāni ca śastrāṇā mahāstrāṇi tathāsuraiḥ
मुख्ना तद्वर्तं सर्वम् सुयाणां दुरातिनाम्।
ममर्दिभक्ष्यवचन्यान्याश्चार्यावतायतः॥ १४॥
बलिनांत दलम सर्वम् असुराणां दुरातिनामं
ममर्दिभक्ष्यवचन्यान्याश्चार्यावतायतः॥ १४॥
असिना निहतः केचिन्त्केचित्कंतातिती।
जमुक्वर्नाशमं शुरवं दत्ताग्रंहितावस्था॥ १५॥
असिना निहताः केचिन्त्केचित्कंतातिती।
जग्मुरविनाशमं शुरवं दत्ताग्रंहितावस्था॥ १५॥
क्षणेन तद्वर्तं सर्वम् सुयाणां निपाततमः।
हष्ट्रा चण्डोभिद्रावतां कालीमतिभीषणम्॥ १६॥
क्षणेन तद्वर्तं सर्वम् सुयाणां निपाततमः।
हष्ट्रा चण्डोभिद्रावतां कालीमतिभीषणम्॥ १६॥
शरवर्षमेवभिमौर्षीमाक्षी तां महासुरः।
चादयामास क्रेण्य मुण्डः क्षिप्ते सह्यर्षा॥ १७॥
शरवर्षाय सर्वभिमौर्षीमाक्षी महासुरः।
चादयामास क्रेण्य मुण्डः क्षिप्ते सह्यर्षा॥ १७॥
तानि क्रक्रयनेकानी विशामानानि तनुष्कम।
वभुयथार्किब्रिम्भानि सुग्हूः घनोदरम्॥ १८॥
तानि क्रक्रयनेकानी विशामानानि तनुष्कम।
वभुयथार्किब्रिम्भानि सुग्हूः घनोदरम्॥ १८॥
तनो जहासातिरुत्सा भीमं भैरवनादिनी।
काली करालवक्रान्तन्तर्दिशार्ज्ञ्ज्वलः॥ १९॥
तनो जहासातिरुत्सा भीमं भैरवनादिनी।
काली करालवक्रान्तन्तर्दिशार्ज्ञ्ज्वलः॥ १९॥
उत्थाय च महासिंहं देवी चण्डमधावत्।
गृहीत्वा चार्यं केशोषु शिरस्तेर्नसिन्नाच्छिनन्त॥ २०॥
uttāya ca mahāsimhaṁ devī caṇḍam adhāvata
gṛhītvā cāsyā keśeṣu śiras tenāsinācchinat

अथ मुनोऽभ्याधावतां हस्त्रः चण्डः निपातितम् || २१ ||
तम्यपत्यद्रूमो सा ख्रियामिहतं रुषा ||

atha muṇḍo 'bhyaadhāvat tāṁ dṛṣṭvā caṇḍam nipātitam
tam apyapātayad bhūmau sā khaḍgābhihataṁ ruṣā

हनशोष तत् सैन्यं हस्त्रः चण्डः निपातितम् || २२ ||
मुन्दं च सुमहावीर्य दिशो भेजे भयातुम्

hataśeṣam tataḥ sainyāṁ dṛṣṭvā caṇḍam nipātitam
muṇḍaṁ ca sumahāvīryaṁ diśo bheje bhayāturam

शिरश्चण्डस्य काली च गृहीत्वा मुन्दमेव च || २३ ||
प्राह प्रचण्डान्त्रश्चमश्चम्र्येत्य चण्डिकाम्

śirāś caṇḍasya kālī ca gṛhītvā muṇḍam eva ca
prāha pracaṇḍāntṛahasyabhyeta caṇḍikām

मया तवारोपहतो चण्डमुण्डो महापशुः
युद्धये स्वयं श्रुम्भ निश्रुम्भं च हनिष्यसि

mayā tavāropahṛtatu caṇḍamuṇḍau mahāpaśū
yuddhayajñe svayam śumbhāṁ niśumbhāṁ ca haniṣyasi

ऋषिरुवाच || २५ ||
ṛṣir uvāca

तावानीतो ततो हस्त्रः चण्डमुण्डो महासुरोः
उवाच काली काल्याणी ललितं चण्डिका वचः || २६ ||
tāv ānītāu tato dṛṣṭvā caṇḍamuṇḍau mahāsuraṁ
uvāca kālīṁ kalyāṇī lañītam caṇḍikā vacāḥ

यस्माच्चण्डं च मुण्डं च गृहीत्वा त्यमुपागता
चामुण्डेन्त्री ततो लोके ख्याता देवि भविष्यसि || २७ ||
yasmāc caṇḍaṁ ca muṇḍaṁ ca gṛhītvā tvam upāgatā
cāmuṇḍeti tato loke khyātā devi bhaviṣyasi
ऋषिर उवाच

रश्मि करते देवते मुण्डे च विनिपातते।
बहुरुप्य च सौन्येषु क्षयिन्तिक्षयुरेश्वरः।

तत: कोपपराधीनेच्छतः श्रुम्भः प्रतापवान्।
उद्योगं सर्वसैन्यानं दैत्यनामादिदेश ह।

अध सर्वबलेदेत्या: षडशीतिनः दयायुधः।
कम्बूनां चतुरशीतिनिर्मियानं स्वनिर्पृहितः।

अद्य सर्वबलेदेत्या: पञ्चशक्तिपाराशः।
कोटिविराणि पञ्चवाहिसंयुक्तं कुलानि वै।

शतं कुलानि धौग्राण्यं निर्मित्वं ममाज्या।
कृत्विकयोगा पञ्चशक्तिपाराशः।

कालका दौर्द्वा मौर्याः कालकेयस्तथासुरः।
युध्याय सयं निर्मायनं आज्ञया त्वरिता मम।

कालका दौर्द्वा मौर्याः कालकेयास्तथासुरः।
युध्याय सयं निर्मायनं आज्ञया त्वरिता मम।
ity ājñāpyāṣūrapatiḥ  śumbho bhairavaśāsanaḥ
nirjāgāma mahāsainyasahasrair bahubhir vṛtaḥ

आयानं चण्डिका द्रष्ट्रा तत्यैवयमतिभीषणम् ।

Jyārvaṇe: पूर्यामाय धरणीगगनान्तरम् ॥ ८ ॥

āyāntam caṇḍikā drṣṭvā tat sainyam atibhiṣaṇam
jyāsvanaiḥ pūrayāmāsa dharaṇīgaganāntaram

ततः सिंहो महानामतीव कृतवानृप ।

घण्टावनेन तानादानिम्भिका चोप्रौंहयत् ॥ ९ ॥

tataḥ sīrṇho mahānādam atīva kṛtavān nṛpa
ghanṭāsvanena tān nādān ambikā copabṛṁhayat

घनुर्यसिंहघण्टानं नादापूरितिदिक्षुखा ।

निनादर्मिष्णो: काली जिग्ये विस्तारितानना ॥ १० ॥

dhanurjyāśimhāghanṭānāṁ nādāpūritadīṁmukhā
ninādair bhūṣanaiḥ kālī jigyē vistāritānanā
tāṁ ninaḍmupṣṭrya dēṇyāṇeṇyāṭhantirdiśaṁ
dēvi sīṁhasāna kālī saroṣaiḥ parivāritisāḥ
etasminn antare bhūpa vināśāya suradviṣām
bhavāyāmarasimhānāṁ ativīryabalānvitaṁ

ब्रह्मेशुभगुविशण्यानं तथेन्द्रस्य च शक्यः ।

शरीरेऽयो विनिश्चयं तद्रूपित्रणिदिकां ययुः ॥ १३ ॥

brahmeṣaṅgahoviṣṇuṇāṁ tathendrasya ca śaktayaḥ
śārīreṇabhya viniṣṭhramya tadrūpaśa caṇḍikāṁ yayuḥ
yasya devasya yadṛṣṭaṁ yathā bhūṣaṇavāhanam
tad vada eva hi taciṣṭhir asurāṇaṁ yoddhum āyayau

हंसयुक्तविमानाग्रे साक्ष्यसूक्ष्मकम्पदलुः
आयाता ब्रह्मण: शक्तिभ्राणि सामिस्विनये

हरिसयुक्तविमानाग्रे साक्ष्यसूक्ष्मकम्पदलुः
आयाता ब्रह्मण: शक्तिभ्राणि सामिस्विनये

महेश्वरी वृषासुदा त्रिशूलवर्धारिणी
महाहिवलया प्राप्ता चत्ररेखाविभूषणा

महेश्वरी वृषासुदा त्रिशूलवर्धारिणी
महाहिवलया प्राप्ता चत्ररेखाविभूषणा

कौमारी शक्तिहर्षा च मयूरवर्धाना
योद्धमयाययो देत्यानम्बिका गुहरुपिणी

कौमारी शक्तिहर्षा च मयूरवर्धाना
योद्धमयाययो देत्यानम्बिका गुहरुपिणी

तथेव वैश्णवी शक्तिरुटापरि संस्थिता
शक्तिचक्रगदाशाङ्खोगहुःशुपाययो

तथेव वैश्णवी शक्तिरुटापरि संस्थिता
शक्तिचक्रगदाशाङ्खोगहुःशुपाययो

यज्ञवाराहमनुर्लः रूपं या बिभ्रतो हरः
शक्तिः साम्याययो तत्र वाराही बिभ्रती तनुम

यज्ञवाराहमनुर्लः रूपं या बिभ्रतो हरः
शक्तिः साम्याययो तत्र वाराही बिभ्रती तनुम

नारसिंही नृसिंहस्य बिभ्रती सहरां चपुः
प्राप्ता तत्र सताक्षेपक्षिपनक्रत्रसंहिति

नारसिंही नृसिंहस्य बिभ्रती सहरां चपुः
प्राप्ता तत्र सताक्षेपक्षिपनक्रत्रसंहिति
वज्रहस्तः तथैवैन्द्र गजराजोपरि स्थिता।
प्राप्ता सह्रुयनयना यथा शक्रस्तथैव सा॥ २१॥
vajrahastā tathaivaindṛ gajarājopari sthītā
prāptā sahasranayanā yathā śakrastathaiva sā
tat: pārahūntastābhīrēśāno devaśaktiḥ।
हन्यनामसुरा: शीघ्र मम प्रीत्याह चण्डिकाम्॥ २२॥
tataḥ parivṛtas tābhīr īśāno devaśaktibhiḥ
hanyantām asuraḥ īśhram mama prītyāha caṇḍikām
tatō deviśarīrāt tu viniśkrāntātibhiṣanā
cāṇḍikāśaktir atyugrā śivāśataninādindī
sā chaḥ dhūmnajātīmāśānaṃpāraṇātīta।
दूतस्तवं गच्छ भगवन्यापि शुभ्यनिशुभ्योऽ॥ २४॥
sā cāhā dhūmnajaṭilam īśānam aparājīta
duṭas tvāṃ gaccha bhagavan pārśvaṃ śumbhāniśumbhayoḥ
brūhi śuṣṭ्म् niśuṣṭ्मच दानवाविनिगविनषोऽ।
ये चान्ये दानवास्त्रय युह्याय समुपस्थिता:॥ २५॥
brūhi śumbhāṃ niśumbhāṃ ca dānaṇv atigavitu
yey cānaye dānāvās tatra yuddhāya samupasthitāḥ
treṇākhyamindri tumbhanta devote: santu hāvirmuṇja॥
यूयं प्रयात पानां यदि जीवितुमिच्छथ॥ २६॥
trailoyam indro labhatāṁ devāḥ santu havirbhujāḥ
yūyam prayāta pātālam yadi jīvitum icchatha
balāvalepād atha ced bhavanto yuddhāṅkṣiṇāḥ॥ २७॥
tadāgacchata tṛpyantu macchivāḥ piṣitena vaḥ

yatō niyukto dautyena tāyā devyā śivaḥ svayam śivadūtīti loke ’smiṁs tataḥ sā khyātimāgatā
tadāpi śrutvā vaco devyāḥ sarvākhyātāṁ mahāsurāḥ amarśāpūritā jagmur yataḥ kātyāyanī sthitā
tat: pṛthramēvāgre śarvākṣṣṭiptividhitīṁ: || 28 ||
vārṣṭṛnāmāryāṁ dēvīmāraṛya: || 29 ||
tataḥ prathamam evāgre śaraśaktṛṣṭivrṣṭibhiḥ vavarṣur uddhatāmarśās tāṁ devīṁ amarārayaḥ
sā ca tān prahitaṁ bāṇāṁ chūlaśaktiparaśvadhān ciccheda līlayādhamatadhanurmuktaṁ mahēṣubhiḥ
tasyāgratas tathā kālī śūlapatavidāritān khaṭvāṅgapothitāṁs cārīn kurvati vyacarat tadā
kamāṇḍuḷaḷajākṣepihantaviṁśaḥ hatojas: || 30 ||
bhāṣāni chaṅkṛṇaḥ līṭaḥ śr̥vitaṁ yena śmāyanti || 31 ||
kamāṇḍuḷalajākṣepahatavīryāṁ hataujasaḥ brahmāṇī cākaroc chatrān yena yena sma dhāvati
mahēṁvī śrīśūleṇa tatha chaṅkṛṇa ṛṣeṇāṁ|| 32 ||
dēṇyaἀjīdānam kāmārc̺a tathā śr̥kṣyātikopana || 33 ||
mahesvari trisule na tathā cakreṇa vaiṣṇavi

daityanā jaghāna kaumāri tathā śaktyātikopanā

पौरोहित्यां श्रृंगारप्रवर्षिण: || ३५ ||

aindri kuliśapātena śataśo daityadānaḥ
petur vidārītāḥ prthivyāṁ rudhiraughapravarśīṇaḥ

तुंढप्रहारविध्वस्ता दंप्तग्रस्तनवक्ष्यसः ||
वाराहमूर्त्या न्यपत्तंश्रेण च विदारिता: || ३६ ||
tuṇḍaprahāravidhvastā daṁśtrāgrakṣatavakṣasah
vārāhamūrtṣa nyapataṁś cakreṇa ca vidārītāḥ

नखैविदारितांश्यान्यान् भक्षयन्नी महायुरान् ||
नारसिंही चचाराजी नादापूणिंदिग्मवरा || ३७ ||
nakhaivīdārītaṁś cānyān bhaksayanā mahāsurān
nārasimhī cacārājāu nādāpūrṇadīgmbāra

चण्डालहासैरसुरा: शिवदृष्टिभद्रुपिता: ||
पेतु: पृथ्वियां पतिनास्तंश्रेणायात्सा तदा || ३८ ||
candāṭṭahāsair asuraḥ śivadūty abhidūṣitāḥ
petul prthivyāṁ patiṅāms īmīś caḥkādātha sā tada

इति मातृगणं कुट泛 मर्दानं महायुरान् ||
हस्त्रामयायेविरविध्वेषतःगुरदवारिसैनिका: || ३९ ||
iti māṭraṅgāṁ kruddhāṁ nardayaṇāṁ mahāsurān
dṛṣṭvābhupāyahair vividhair nesur devārīsainikāḥ

पलायनपराक्ष्ता दैत्यान्मातृगणार्दितान् ||
योद्ध्मयायो कुट्टों रक्तबीजो महायुरः || ४० ||
palāyanaparān dṛṣṭvā daityaṁ māṭraṅgārditāṁ
yoddhum abyāyayau kruddho raktabījo mahāsurah
रक्तबिन्दुर्यादा भूमी पतन्त्रय्य शरीरतः
समुपति मेदिन्यां तत्प्राणांसदायुः

raktabindur yadā bhūmau pataty asya śārīrataḥ
samutpatati medinyāṁ tatpramāṇas tadāsuraḥ

युयुधे स गदापाणिरिन्द्रशक्तया महायुः
तत्र्येन्द्री स्वव्रजेन रक्तवीमातदयत्

yuyudhe sa gadāpāṇir indraśaktyā mahāsuraḥ
tataś caindī svavajreṇa raktabijam aṭādayat

कुलिशोनाहतस्याशु भु सुराव शोणितम्
समुनस्थुतनो योधास्त्रपास्तत्यराक्रमा

kuliśenāhatasyāśu bahu susrāva śoṇitam
samuttasthus tato yodhās tadrūpās tatparākramāḥ

यावन्तः पतितास्य शरीराद्रकबिन्दवः
तावन्तः पुरुषा जानास्त्रीयविलविक्रमः

yāvantaḥ patitās tasya śārīrād raktabindavaḥ
tāvantaḥ puruṣā jātās tadviryalavikramāḥ

तेन चापि युयुधस्त्र गुरुषा रक्तस्मभवः
सम मात्सरर्यर्गशत्सपातानिनिषणम्

te cāpi yuyudhus tatra puruṣā raktasambhavāḥ
samaṁ māṭrbhir atyugraśtrapātātibhūṣāṇaṁ

पुनः वज्रपातेन क्षतमस्तः शिरो यदा
ववाह रक्तं पुरुषास्त्रो जातः सहस्रः

puṇaś ca vajrapātena kṣatam asya siro yadā
evāha raktaṁ puruṣās tato jātāḥ sahasraśaḥ

वैश्णवी समरे चैनं चक्रेणाभिजयत्यहि
गद्ध्य नायामास ऐन्त्री तमसुरूस्वरसः

vaiśṇavī samare caināṁ cakreṇābhijaghāna ha
gadayā tāḍayāṁśa aindrī tam asureśvaram

वैष्णवीचक्रभिन्नस्य सुधिरश्रावसस्मये: ।
सहस्रशो जगद्व्यापत्त नत्प्राणीःहसुरे: ॥ ४८ ॥

vaiṣṇavicakrabhinnasya rudhirāsrazarvasambhavaiḥ
sahasraśo jagad vyāptaṁ tatpramāṇair mahāsuraiḥ

शक्त्या जधान कौमारी वाराही च तथासिना ।
महेश्वरी त्रिशूलेन रक्तवीजं महासुरम् ॥ ४९ ॥

śaktyā jaghāṇa kaumārī vārāhī ca tathāsinā
māheśvarī triśūlena raktabījanī mahāsuram

स च चापि गदया देत्यः सर्वा एवाहनत् प्रथक् ।
मातृ: कोपसामाविष्टो रक्तवीजो महासुर: ॥ ५० ॥

sa cāpi gadayā daityaḥ sarvā evāhanat prthak
mātṛḥ kopasamāviṣṭo raktabījo mahāsuraḥ

तस्याहतस्य बुध्या शक्तिशूलादिभिभुविः ।
पपात यो वै रक्तोवस्तेनासङ्खतशोसुरस: ॥ ५१ ॥

tasyāhatasya bahudhā śaktiśūlādibhir bhuvi
papāta yo vai raktausahas tenāsaṁ chataśo 'surāḥ

तैथ्यायुरसृक्षसम्भृतयें सकलं जगत् ।
व्याप्तायायीन्नो देवा भयमाजगमुर्तमम् ॥ ५२ ॥

taiś cāsurārṣkṣambhūtair asuraiḥ sakalam jagat
vyāptam āsīt tato devā bhayam ājagmur uttamam

तान् विष्णान् सुरान् दक्षा चण्डिका प्राहस्नवरा ।
उवाच कालीं चामुण्डे विस्तीर्ण वदन कुरु ॥ ५३ ॥

tān viṣṇānān surān dṛṣṭvā canḍikā prāhasat tvarā
uvāca kālim cāmuṇḍe viśūrṇaṁ vadanam kuru

मच्छस्त्रपतिसम्भृतान् रक्तविन्द्रमहासुरान् ।
रक्तविन्द्रोऽतीच्छ त्वं वक्रेणानेन वेगिता ॥ ५४ ॥
macchastrātasambhūtān raktabindūn mahāsurān
raktabindoḥ pratīccha tvam vaktreṇānena vegitā
dhā

भक्षयन्ती चर रणे तदुत्त्यन्तमहायुरान् ॥
एवमेष क्रयं दैत्यं श्रीगरणेन गमिष्यति ॥ ५५ ॥
bhakṣayanī cara rāne tadutpannān mahāsuraṇ
evam eṣa kṣayam daityah kṣīnarakto gamiṣyati

भक्षयमाणात्वया चोग्रा न चोत्यत्यन्तिन्ति चापरे ॥
इत्युक्त्वा नातं ततो देवी शुलेनाभिजयान तम् ॥ ५६ ॥
bhakṣyamāṇās tavyā cogā na cotpatsyanti cāpare
ity uktvā tāṁ tato devi śūlenābhijaghāna tam

मुखेन काली जग्गहे रक्तबीजयं शोणितम् ॥
तनोस्यावजयानाथ गदया तत्र चण्डकाम् ॥ ५७ ॥
mukhena kālī jagṛhe raktabījasya śoṇitam
tato 'sāvājaghānātha gadayā tatra caṇḍikām

न चास्या वेदनां चक्रे गदापातोऽल्यिकामपि ॥
तस्याहतत्स्यं देहानु बहु सुश्रव शोणितम् ॥ ५८ ॥
na cāsyā vedanāṁ cakre gadaḍāto 'lpiṃ api
tasyāhatasya dehā tu bahu susrāva śoṇitam

यतस्तत्तस्तद्वक्रेण चामुण्डा सम्प्रतीच्छति ॥
पुर्खे समुद्रः येलन्या रक्तपातान्महायुरः ॥ ५९ ॥
yatas tatās tad vaktreṇa caṁṇḍā sampratīcchati
mukhe samudgatā ye 'syā raktapātān mahāsarāḥ

नांश्यखादाथ चामुण्डा पपो तस्य च शोणितम् ॥ ६० ॥
tāṁś cakhādātha caṁṇḍā papau tasya ca śoṇitam

देवी शुलेन वज्रेण बाणपरिभिर्क्रिष्टिभि: ॥
जधान रक्तबीजं तं चामुण्डापीतशोणितम् ॥ ६१ ॥
devī śūlena vajreṇa bāṇair asibhir rṣṭībhiḥ
jaghāna raktabījaṁ taṁ cāmuṇḍāpītaśoṇitam

स पपात महीपृष्ठे शास्त्रसईसमाहतः ।
नीर्नक्रश्च महीपाल रक्तबीजो महायुरः ॥ ६२ ॥

sa papāta mahīpṛṣṭhe śastrasamīghasamāhataḥ
niraktaś ca mahīpāla raktabijo mahāsuraḥ

tatāṁ harṣam utam avāpas tridaśā nṛpa
teṣāṁ mātrgaṇo jāto nanartāṣrūddadhahāḥ
नवमोद्घायः
निशुम्भवधः

राजोवाच । १ ।
rājovāca

विचित्रमिदमाख्यातं भगवन् भवता मम ।
देव्याध्येयितमहात्म्यं रक्तबीजवधाश्रितम् ॥ २ ॥
vicitram idam ākhyātaṁ bhagavan bhavatā mama
devyāś caritamāhātmyaṁ raktābijavadhāśritam

भूयश्रेष्ठायामहं श्रीतुं रक्तबीजे निपातिते ।
चकः शुम्भो यत्कर्म निशुम्भथातिकोपः ॥ ३ ॥
bhūyaś cecchāmy aham śrotūṁ raktābīje nipātite
cakāra śumbho yatkarma niśumbhaś cātipanaḥ

ऋषिवाच ॥ ४ ॥
ṛṣir uvāca

चकः कोपमतुलं रक्तबीजे निपातिते ।
शुम्भसुरो निशुम्भथ्य हतेष्वन्येषु चाहवे ॥ ५ ॥
cakāra kopām atulāṁ raktābīje nipātite
śumbhāsuro niśumbhaś ca hateṣv anyeṣu cāhāve

हन्यमानं महासेवं विलोक्यार्थमुद्धहन् ।
अथ्याध्यान्त्रिशुम्भोस्थ मुख्यायासरसेनया ॥ ६ ॥
hanyamānaṁ mahāsainyāṁ vilokyāmarṣam udvahan
abhyaḍhāvan nisumbho 'tha mukhyāśurasenayaḥ

तर्यामितरस्था पृष्ठे पार्श्वयोश्य महासुरः ।
सन्दिप्पिष्टपुर्ते कुः हन्तं देवीपाययः ॥ ७ ॥
		naṭyāmāntreṣṭaḥ pūṣṭe paśāryōṣṭha mahāsuraḥ
sandhipśīṣṭapaṇaḥ kuṭaḥ hantam devīmūrapaṇaḥ
तस्याग्रतास तथाप्रस्तेप पार्श्वयोस कामहासुराः
सांद्याच्छायापुत्राः क्रुद्धां हन्तुम देविं दुपाययुः

आजगाम महावीरः गुम्भोपि स्ववलेवृतः.
निहन्तं चण्डकां कोपाकृत्या युद्धं तु मात्रभिः ॥ ८ ॥

ाजगामा महाविरयाः सुंभो ’पि स्वाबालय वर्ताः
nihantum caṇḍikāṁ kopāt kṛtvā yuddham tu mātrbhiḥ

ततो युद्धतेवासीवेवा श्रम्मनिशुम्भयोः.
शर्वर्षमतीवोऽयं मैघयोरिव वर्षनोः ॥ ९ ॥
tato yuddham aśvāśिद देव्या सुंभानिः सुंभयोः
śaravṛsaṁ aśvagraṁ meghyor iva varṣatoḥ

चिच्छेदापररशंस्त्वमां चण्डका स्वशरोन्तकः.
ताइयामास चाइपश दर्शौतिर्युरेश्वरः ॥ १० ॥
cicchedāstāṁ charāṁs tābhyāṁ caṇḍikā svaśarotkaraiḥ
tādayāmāsa cāngeśu śastraugarśa asureśvaraḥ

निशुम्भो निशितं ख्र्णं चर्मं चादय शुपभम्.
अताधयनमृत्ति सिंहं देव्या वाहमतुमनम् ॥ ११ ॥
niśumbho niśītāṁ khaḍgaṇi carma cādāya suprabham
atādayan mūrdhṇi simham devyā vāhanam uttamam

नादिवे वाहने देवी श्रुपप्रेणासिमुनम्.
निशुम्भाया चिच्छेदं चर्मं चाप्यष्टचन्द्रकम् ॥ १२ ॥
nādite vāhane devī kṣurapreṇāsim uttamam
niśumbhāyaśu ciccheda carma cāpyaṣṭacandrakam

खिच्रे चर्मणि ख्र्णे च शक्तिं चिक्षेप सोसयुः.
नाप्रय्यास्त्र द्विधा चक्रे चक्रेप्राभिमुखागतम् ॥ १३ ॥
chinne carmaṇi khaḍge ca śaktim cikṣēpa so ’suraḥ
tāṁ apy asya dvidha cakre cakreṇābhimukhāgatām
कोपाध्यातो निशुभोस्थ शूलं जग्राहं दानवः ।
आयानं मुष्टिपातेन देवी तच्चाय्यचूर्ण्यत ॥ १४ ॥
kopādhmaṁ niśumbho 'tha śūlam jagrāha dānavaḥ
āyāntāṁ muṣṭipātena devī tac cāpy acūrṇayat

आध्याथ्याथ गदां सोपि चिक्षेप चण्डिकां प्रति ।
सापि देव्या त्रिशूलेन भिन्ना भस्मत्वागता ॥ १५ ॥
āvidhyātha gadāṁ so 'pi cikṣepa caṇḍikāṁ prati
sāpi devyā triśūlena bhinnā bhasmatvam āgatā

ततः परशुरस्तं तमायानं दैत्यपुज्ववः ।
आहत्य देवी बाणौंचर्यायात् भूतले ॥ १६ ॥
tataḥ paraśuhastāṁ tam āyāntāṁ daityapuṅgavam
āhatya devī bāṇaughair apātayata bhūtale

तस्मिनिपतिते भूमी निशुभे भीमविक्रमे ।
भ्रात्यनीव संक्रृतः प्रययो हनुमम्बिकाम ॥ १७ ॥
tasmin nipātīte bhūmau niśumbhe bhīmavikrame
bhrātary atīva samkruddhāḥ prayayau hantum ambikām

सरस्थानस्थात्यच्चैग्राहीतपरमायायुः ।
भुजेश्वत्तमितुलेव्याग्याशोष बभमी नभः ॥ १८ ॥
sa rathasthas tathāty ucchair grhītāparamāyudhaiḥ
bhujaṁ aśṭābhir atulair vyāpyāśeṣarām babhau nabhaṁ

तमायानं समातोक्य देवी शाक्षमवादयतः ।
ज्याशब्दं चापि धनुषश्चकारातीव दुःसहम् ॥ १९ ॥
tam āyāntāṁ samālokye devī śākham avādayat
jyāśabdarām cāpi dhanuṣaś cakārāti va duḥsaham

पूर्यामास ककुभो निजघण्टस्वनेन च ।
समस्तदैत्यस्यानां तेजोवधविधायिना ॥ २० ॥
pūrayāmaṁ sakubho nijaghaṇṭāsvanena ca
samastadāityasainyānāṁ tejovadhavidhāyinā

तत: सिंहो महानादैस्त्याजितेभमहामयेि: || २१ ||
पूरयामास गगनं गां तथोपदिशे दज ||
tataḥ sīṁho mahānādaṁ tyājitēbhamaḥāmadaiḥ
pūryāmāsa gaganaṁ gāṁ tathopadīṣo daśa

तत: काली समुत्पत्य गगनं ऋषामनादयत् || २२ ||
कराभ्या तत्थिनादन प्राक्ष्यनास्ते तिरोहिता: ||
tataḥ kālī samutpatya gaganaṁ kṣmām atādayat
kārabhyāṁ tan nīnādenā prāksvanāste tirohitāḥ

अद्वाहासमविवं शिवदृत्ती चकार ह।
ते: शाब्द्यसरस्त्रेः सुम्भ: कोष्प परं ययौ || २३ ||
atṭāṭṭhayāsam aśivam śivadūṭi cākāra ha
taiḥ śabdair asurāḥ tresuḥ śumbhāḥ kopaṁ paraṁ yayau

दुरान्तस्तिथि तिष्ठति व्याजहाराम्बिका यदा।
तदा जयेन्त्यमिहिति देवैराकाशायथिनेऽ || २४ ||
durātmams tiṣṭha tiṣṭheti vyājahārāmbrigā yadā
tadā jayety abhihitam devair ākāśasaṁsthitaiḥ

शुम्भेनागत्या या शक्तिर्मुक्ता ज्योतिर्योगिष्णा।
आयानी वल्लिकृताभा सा निरस्ता महोलक्या || २५ ||
śumbhenāgatya yā śaktir muktā jvālātibhiṣanā
āyānti vahnikūṭabhā sā nirastā maholkāya

सिंहनादेन शुम्भस्य व्याप्तं लोकत्रयान्तरम्।
निर्घातनिःवनो घोरो जितवानवनीपते || २६ ||
sīṁhanādeṇa śumbhasya vyāpatṁ lokatrayāntaram
nirghātaniḥsvanō ghorō jītavān avanīpate

शुम्भमुक्ताक्ष्तरादेवी शुम्भस्तत्रिहिताचुरान।
चिंधेके द्वस्तरूपे: शान्तशोभथ सहस्रश् || २७ ||

शुम्भमुक्ताक्ष्तरादेवी शुम्भस्तत्रिहिताचुरान।
चिंधेके द्वस्तरूपे: शान्तशोभथ सहस्रश् || २७ ||
śumbhamuktāṁ charāṁ devī śumbhaś tatprahitān charāṁ
ciccheda svaśarair ugraiḥ śataśo 'tha sahasraśaḥ

ततः सा चण्डिका कुद्रा श्रुतेनाभिज्ञान तयः।
सय तदाभिन्तो भूमो मूर्छिन्तो निपपत ह ॥ २८ ॥
tataḥ sā caṇḍikā kruddhā śūlenābhijagāhāna tam
sa tadābhihato bhūmau mūrcchito nipapāta ha

ततो निशुभः सम्प्राय चेतनामात्तकार्मकः।
आज्ञान शरीदेवी काली केसरिणि तथा ॥ २९ ॥
tato niśumbhaḥ samprāpya cetanāṁ āttakārmukaḥ
ājagāhāna śarair devīm kālīṁ kesariṇāṁ tathā

पुनः कृत्या बाहुनामयुनं दनुजेश्वरः।
चक्रायुधेन दितिजस्वादयामयास चण्डिकाम् ॥ ३० ॥
punaś ca kṛtvā bāhunāṁ ayutaṁ daṇujeśvaraḥ
cakrāyudhena ditijaś chādayāmāsa caṇḍikām

ततो भगवती कुद्रा दुर्गा दुर्गार्तिनाशिनी।
चिच्छेद तानि चक्राणि स्वर्णेऽसायकांश्च तान् ॥ ३१ ॥
tato bhagavatī kruddhā durgā durgārtināśiṇī
ciccheda tāni cakrāṇi svaśaraiḥ sāyakahms ca tān

ततो निशुभो वेगेन गदामादय चण्डिकाम्।
अभ्यावास वै हन्तुं दैत्यसेनासामावृतः। ॥ ३२ ॥
tato niśumbho vegena gadāṁ ādāya caṇḍikām
abhyadhāvata vai hantuṁ daityasenaśamāvṛtah

तस्यापततं एवाशु गदां चिच्छेद चण्डिका।
खड्गेन शिन्धारोऽस स च शूद्यं समास्ते ॥ ३३ ॥
tasyāpatata evāśu gadāṁ ciccheda caṇḍikā
khaḍgena śītadhāreneṣa sa ca śūlaṁ samādade
शुल्हस्तं समायानं निन्दुभभममर्दनम् ।
ह्रदि विव्यधान शुल्लेन वेगाविद्धन चण्डिका ॥ ३४ ॥
शुल्लाहस्तम् समायांतम् निशुम्भम अमरार्दनम्
ह्रदि विव्याद्धा शुलेन वेगाविद्धन चण्डिका

भिन्नस्य तस्य शुल्लेन ह्रदयाणियः सुनितोऽपरः ।
महाबलो महावीर्यस्तिलिपि पुरुषो वदन् ॥ ३५ ॥
भिन्नस्या तस्या शुलेन ह्रदयान्तमैल्चत्र चरा
महाबलो महाविर्यस्तिलिपि पुरुषो वदन

तस्य निष्क्रामतो देवी प्रहस्य स्वनवतनः ।
शिरश्चिभडेद खण्डेन तनोऽसावपत्त्वव ॥ ३६ ॥
तस्या निश्रक्रमतो देवी प्रहस्य स्वनवतन तताः
शिरश्चिभडेद खण्डेन तनोऽसावपत्त्वव

ततः सिन्धुश्चिखादोग्रंत्रस्त्राक्वणि शिरोधरान् ।
असुरांस्त्रांस्तः काली शिभूती तथापरान ॥ ३७ ॥
तताः सिन्धुश्चिखादोग्रंत्रस्त्राक्वणि शिरोधरान
ासुरांस्त्रांस्तः काली शिभूती तथापरान

कौमारीशक्तिनिन्धित्वा: केचिच्छुर्महासुरः ।
ब्रह्माणिमन्त्रपुनोत्तर नोपिनान्ये निराकृता: ॥ ३८ ॥
कौमारीशक्तिनिन्धित्वा: केचिच्छुर्महासुरः
ब्रह्माणिमन्त्रपुनोत्तर नोपिनान्ये निराकृताः

माहेश्वरीशुल्लेन भिन्नः पेनुस्तथापरे ।
वाराहितुपुन्द्रयतने केचिच्छुर्मिकृता भूवि ॥ ३९ ॥
माहेश्वरीशुल्लेन भिन्नः पेनुस्तथापरे
वाराहितुपुन्द्रयतने केचिच्छुर्मिकृताः

खण्डं खण्डं च चक्रेण वैष्णव्या दानवः कृता: ।
वज्रेण चन्द्रीहरस्ताग्रविमुक्तने तथापरे ॥ ४० ॥
खण्डं खण्डं च चक्रेण वैष्णव्या दानवः कृताः
वज्रेण चन्द्रीहरस्ताग्रविमुक्तने तथापरे

क्षणं क्षणं च कक्ष्रेण वैष्णव्या दानवः कृताः
वज्रेण चन्द्रीहरस्ताग्रविमुक्तने तथापरे
vajreṇa caindrīhastāgravimuktena tathāpare

केचिद्विनेशुर्यरः केचिन्नस्ता महाहवात्
भक्षिताश्चापरे कालीशिवदूतैमृगाधिपः ॥ ४१ ॥

kecid vineṣur asurāḥ kecin naṣṭā mahāhavāt
bhakṣitāś cāpare kāliśivadūṭimṛgādhipaiḥ
र्षीर uvāca

निषुभ्म निहतं हस्तं भ्रातं प्राणसमितम्।
हन्यमानं बलं चैव शुम्भं कुशलोऽववद्धच। ॥ २ ॥
niśumbham nihataṁ drṣṭvā bhrātaram prāṇasammitam
hanyamānaṁ balam caiva śumbhah kiuddho 'bravld vacah

बलावणुपदुष्टे त्वं मा दुर्गे गर्भमावह।
अन्यायां बलमाश्रित्य युद्धसे यातिमानिनी। ॥ ३ ॥
balāvalepaduṣṭe tvam mā durge garvam āvaha
anyāsāṁ balam āśṛitya yuddhyase yātimānini

देव्यवाच ॥ ४ ॥
devy uvāca

एकैवां जगत्यत्र द्वितीया का ममापरा।
पर्यैता दुष्टं मय्येव विश्वन्त्यो मद्ध्र्म्मत:। ॥ ५ ॥
ekavihām jagaty atra dvitīyā kā mamāparā
pasyaite duṣṭa mayy eva viśantyo madvibhūtayah

नत: समस्तास्ता देव्यो ब्रह्माणिप्रमुखा लयम्।
तत्स्य देव्यास्तती जगमुरेकवासीनदाम्बिका। ॥ ६ ॥
tataḥ samastās tā devyo brahmāṇipramukhā layam
tasyā devyās tanau jagmur ekaivāsīt tadāmbikā

देव्यवाच ॥ ७ ॥
devy uvāca
अहं विभूत्या बहुभिर्ति रूपैर्यादस्तिनां ।
तत्संहतं मयैकव तिष्ठायाजी स्थिरो भव ॥ ८ ॥
ahaṁ vibhūtyā bahubhir iha rūpair yadāsthitaṁ
tat samhiṁtam mayaikaiva tiṣṭhāmy ājau sthiro bhava

ऋषिरुवाच ॥ ९ ॥
ṛṣir uvāca

नतः प्रववृत्ते युद्ध देव्या श्रमस्य चोभयोः ।
पश्यतां सर्वदिवानामसुराणां च दारुणम् ॥ १० ॥
tatah pravavṛte yuddham devyāḥ śumbhasya cobhayoḥ
pasyatāṁ sarvadevānāṁ asurāṇāṁ ca dāruṇam

शार्वर्षेन शिनेषो शत्रुस्तथास्त्रेत्रेव दारुणेः ।
तयोयुद्धमभूत्वयः सर्वलोकभयंज्रस्तः ॥ ११ ॥
śaravarśaiḥ śitaiḥ śastrais tathāstraiś caiva dāruṇaiḥ
tayor yuddham abhūḥ bhūyaiḥ sarvalokabhayaṅkaram

दिव्यान्यस्त्राणि शतशो मुमुचे यान्यथापिभिः
बभव्य तानि दैत्येन्द्रस्तत्रतीधातनतृति: ॥ १२ ॥
divyāny astrāṇi śataśo mumuce yāny athāmbikā
babhaṅja tāni daityendras tatprāgaḥ tatkartṛbhīḥ

मुक्तानि तेन चाष्टाणि दिव्यानि परमेश्वरी
बभव्य लीलयोग्रहुष्क्रोच्चारणादिभि: ॥ १३ ॥
muktāni tena cāstrāṇi divyāni parameśvari
babhaṅja līlayaivograhunākāroccāraṇādibhiḥ

नतः शरासन्तेत्वीमाच्छादयत सोऽसुरः ॥
सापि तत्कपिता देवी धनुश्चिच्छेद चेष्टिभि: ॥ १४ ॥
tataḥ śaraśatair devīm ācchādayata so ’suraḥ
sāpi tatikutī devi dhanuś ciccheda ceṣṭubhiḥ
chinne dhanuṣi daityendras tathā śaktim athādade
ciccheda devī cakreṇa tām apy asya kare sthitām

नत: खाडगुपादाय शतचन्द्रं च भानमतः।
अभ्यधावनदा देवी दैत्यानामधिपेश्वरः॥ १६॥
tataḥ khaḍgam upādāya śatacandram ca bhānumat
abhyaḍhāvat tadā devīṁ daityānāṁ adhipesvaraḥ

तस्यापततं एवाशु खड़ं चिच्छेद चण्डिका।
धनुर्मुक्ते शिरे चार्ककरामलम्॥ १७॥
tasyāpatata evāśu khaḍgair ciccheda caṇḍikā
dhanurmuktaiḥ śitair bāṇaisiṁ carma cārkakaramalam

हनास्वे स तदा दैत्यहिंद्रभन्वा विसारथि:।
जग्राह मुद्द्रं घोरमधिकानणिधनोधतः॥ १८॥
hatāśvah sa tadā daityaś chinnadhanvā visārathiḥ
jagṛāha mudgaram ghoram ambikānidhanodyataḥ

चिच्छेदापतततस्तस्य मुद्रं निशिते: शरे:।
तथापि सोः भूषधावनां वृष्टिमुद्मय वेगवान्॥ १९॥
cicchedāpatatas tasya mudgaram niśitaiḥ śaraiḥ
tathāpi so 'bhyadhāvat tāṁ muṣṭim utyamya vegavān

स मुष्टिं पातयामास ह्रदये दैत्यपुक्षः।
देव्यासं चापि सा देवी तलेनोरस्यतावदयत्॥ २०॥
sa muṣṭim pātayāmāsa hṛdaye daityapuṅgavah
devyās tāṁ cāpi sa devī talenorasy atādayat

तत्रप्रहारामिहनो निपपात महीनत्ते।
स दैत्यराजः सहसा पुनरेव तथोत्थितः॥ २१॥
talaprahārābhīhato nipapāta mahītale
sa dāityarājāḥ sahasā punareva tathotthitaḥ

उत्पत्यः च प्रमुख्याचार्यवीन्यं गतान्माधित्यः।
तत्रापि सा निराधारा युयुधितः तेन चन्दिका॥ २२॥

upatya ca pragṛhyoccair devīṁ gaganam āsthitaḥ
tatrāpi sā nirādhārā yuyudhe tena caṇḍikā

नियुद्धं खे तदा देत्यश्चन्दिका च परस्परम्।
चक्रतुः प्रथमं सिद्धमुनिविसयकारकम्॥ २३॥

niyuddhaṁ khe tadā dāityaś caṇḍikā ca parasparam
cakraṭuh prathamaṁ siddhamunivismayakāram

ततो नियुद्धं सूचिं कृतवा तेनाम्बिका सह।
उत्ययत्य भ्रामयामास चिक्षेप धरणीनेत्रले॥ २४॥

tato niyuddhaṁ suciṁ kṛtvā tenāmbikā saha
tuṣṭya bhṛmāyāmāsa cikṣeṇa dharaṇītale

स क्षिप्तो धरणी प्रायः मुष्टिमुद्धयं वेगतः।
अभ्यधावतं दुष्टात्मा चन्दिकानिधनेच्छया॥ २५॥

sa kṣipto dharaṇīṁ prāpya muṣṭīṁ udyamya vegataḥ
cabrhadāvatā duṣṭātmā caṇḍikānidarhanecchāya

तमायानं ततो देवी सर्वदेश्वनेश्वरम्।
जगत्यां पातयामास भित्वा शूरेन वक्षसि॥ २६॥

tam āyāntaṁ tato devī sarvadāityajāneśvaram
jagaty āṁ pātayāmāsa bhītvā śūlena vakṣasi

स गनास्: पपातोव्या देवी शूलाग्रविश्वतः।
चालयनं सकलं पृथ्वीं साध्विधीपं सपर्वनाम्॥ २७॥

sa gatāsuh papātorvyaṁ devī śūlāgraśviṣataḥ
cālayan sakalāṁ prthvīṁ sābdhidvīpaṁ saparvatāṁ

तत्: प्रस्त्रमेधिर तते तर्मिन् दुरात्मनि।
जगत्याश्यमनीवाप निर्मितं चाभववनम्॥ २८॥
tataḥ prasannam akhilaṁ hate tasmin durātmani
jagat svāsthyam aūvāpa nirmalam cābhavan nabhaḥ

उत्पातमेघः सोऽका ये प्रागासंस्ते श्रमं ययुः ।
सरितो मार्गवाहिन्यस्तथासंस्तन्त्र पाविते ॥ २९ ॥
utpātameghāḥ solkā ye prāgāsāṁs te śamaṁ yayuḥ
sarito mārgavāhīnas tathāsāṁs tatra pāvite

ततो देवगणः सर्वं हर्षिर्निर्भरमानसाः ।
बभूरिन्हते तरिन् गन्धर्वं ललितं जगुः ॥ ३० ॥
tato devagaṇāḥ sarve harṣanirbharamānasāḥ
babhūvur nihaṁ tasmin gandharvā lalitaṁ jaguḥ

अवादयस्तथैवान्ये ननुत्थ्याप्यस्यरोगणः ।
ववुः पुण्यास्तथा वाना: सुप्रभोःशूदिवाकरः ॥ ३१ ॥
avādayaṁs tathāvāne nanṛtus cāpsaroṇaṁ
vavuḥ puṇyās tathā vātāḥ suprabho 'bhūd divākaraḥ

जज्वलुङ्ख्यः शान्तः शान्तदिज्ञीजनितस्यवः ॥ ३२ ॥
jajvaluḥ cāgnayaḥ sāntaḥ sāntadigjanitasvanāḥ
एकादशोध्यायः
नारायणीस्तुतिः

ऋषिरुवाच ॥ १ ॥

रशिर uvāca

देव्या हते तत्र महायुरेन्द्रे
सेन्द्रा: युरा वत्तिपुरोगमास्ताम् ॥
कान्त्यायनी तुष्टुरेनिष्टलाभा-
द्विकासिकस्म्रवाजविकासिनाशा: ॥ २ ॥

devyā hate tatra mahāsurendre sendrāḥ surā vahnipurogamās tāṁ
kātyāyanīṁ tuṣṭuvur iṣṭalābhād vikāsimārahjavikāsitāśāḥ

देवि प्रपन्नप्रतिहे प्रसिद
प्रसिद मातर्घगतोधिलस्य ॥
प्रसिद विश्वेश्वरिः पाहि विश्वं
त्वमीश्वरी देवि चराचरस्य ॥ ३ ॥

devi prapannārtihare prasīda prasīda mātar jagato ’khilasya
prasīda viśveśvari pāhi viśvam tvam īśvarī devi carācarasya

आधारभूता जगतस्त्वपेका
महीस्वस्थपेण यतः स्थितासि ॥
अपां स्वस्थपरित्यागत-
दापायने कृत्यन्नमलवियर्ये ॥ ४ ॥

ādhārabhūtā jagatas tvam ekā mahīsvarūpeṇa yataḥ stithāsi
apāṁ svarūpaṁśhitayā tvayaitad āpyāyate kṛtsnam alaṁghyavīrye
त्वं वैण्णवी शक्तिरनन्दनीया
विश्वस्य बीजं परमसि माया ।
सम्मोहिन्ति देवि समस्तमेनः
त्वं वै प्रसन्ना भुवि मुक्तिहेतुः ॥ ५ ॥

tvam vaiśnavi śaktir anantavīryā viśvasya bijam paramāsi māyā
sammohitam devi samastam etat tvam vai prasannā bhuvi muktihetuḥ

विद्या: समस्तास्तव देवि भेदः:
स्त्रियः समस्ता: सकला जगत्यु ।
त्ययंक्या पूर्वितमब्यैतन्तु
का ते स्तुति: स्तव्यपरापरोक्ति: ॥ ६ ॥

vidyāḥ samastāḥ tava devi bhedāḥ striyah samastāḥ sakalā jagatsu
tvayaikāya pūritam ambayaitat kā te stutīḥ stavyaparapa roktiḥ

सर्वभूता यदा देवी भुक्तिमुक्तिप्रदायिनी ।
त्वं स्तुता स्तुतये का वा भवन्तु परमोक्यः ॥ ७ ॥
sarvabhūtā yadā devī bhuktimuktipradāyini
tvam stutā stutaye kā vā bhavantu paramoktayāḥ

सर्वस्य बुद्धिरुपेण जनस्य हृदि संस्थिते ।
स्वर्गाभिवद्धिद देवि नारायणि नमोस्तुतः ते ॥ ८ ॥
sarvasya buddhirūpeṇa janasya hṛdi saṁsthite
svargāpavargade devi nārāyaṇī namo 'stu te

कलाकृष्टिरुपेण परिणामप्रदायिनी ।
विश्वस्योपरतौ शक्ते नारायणि नमोस्तुतः ते ॥ ९ ॥
kalākāṣṭhādirūpeṇa pariṇāmapradāyini
viśvasyoparatau sakte nārāyaṇī namo 'stu te

सर्वमङ्गलमाङ्गले शिवे सर्वार्थसाधिके ।
शारण्ये चयम्बके गोरि नारायणि नमोस्तुतः ते ॥ १० ॥
sarvamāṅgalamāṅgalye śive sarvārthasādhike

kalākāṣṭhādirūpeṇa pariṇāmapradāyini
viśvasyoparatau sakte nārāyaṇī namo 'stu te
saraṇye tryambake gauri nārāyaṇi namo 'stu te

सुचिष्ठितितिविनाशानं शक्तिभूते सनातनिं।
गुणात्मके गुणमये नारायणिनि नमोऽस्तु ने || ११ ||
sṛṣṭisthiti vināśānāṁ śaktibhūte sanātani
guṇāsraye guṇamaye nārāyaṇi namo 'stu te

शारणागतस्दीनार्तपरित्राणपरायणो।
सर्वस्यार्तिज्ञे देवी नारायणिनि नमोऽस्तु ने || १२ ||
śaraṇāgatadinārtaparitrāṇaparāyaṇe
sarvasvarthihare devi nārāyaṇi namo 'stu te

हंसयुक्तविमानस्ये ब्रह्माणीरूपद्वारिंग।
कौशाम्भवकृशिरेके देवी नारायणिनि नमोऽस्तु ने || १३ ||
haṁsayuktavimānāsthe brahmāṇirūpadhārini
kauśāmbhaḥkṣarikē devi nārāyaṇi namo 'stu te

त्रिसुलचन्द्रधिहिरे महावृष्णधवाहिनि।
माहेश्वरस्वरूपेण नारायणिनि नमोऽस्तु ने || १४ ||
trisūlacandrāhidhare mahāvṛṣabhavāhini
māheśvarisvarūpeṇa nārāyaṇi namo 'stu te

मयूरकुक्कटवृत्ते महाशक्तिधरेः सनम।
कौमारिरूपसंस्थाने नारायणिनि नमोऽस्तु ने || १५ ||
mayūrakukkutavṛte mahāśaktidhare 'naghe
kaumārīrūpasamsthāne nārāyaṇi namo 'stu te

शाश्चक्रसदाश्रिंगृहीतपरमायुधे।
प्रसीद वैष्णवरूपे नारायणिनि नमोऽस्तु ने || १६ ||
śaṅkhacragadāśārīrīgṛhītaparamāyudhe
prasīda vaiṣṇavīrūpe nārāyaṇi namo 'stu te

गृहीतोगमहाक्रेकं दंश्रोऽहनवसुन्धरे।
वराहरूपिणि शिवे नारायणिनि नमोऽस्तु ने || १७ ||
ग्रहित्रोग्रेण न हन्तु दैत्यानू कृतोधमेऽ।
चैलोक्यात्राः सहिन्ते नारायणिः नमोऽस्तु ते ॥ १८ ॥

न्रसिंहप्रेणोग्रेण हंतु मदित्याणू क्रित्योद्यमे
त्रायलोक्यात्राः सहिन्ते नारायणिः नमोऽस्तु ते ॥ १८ ॥

किरीटिनि महावजे सहस्रनयोज्जवले इंत्रप्राणङ्गे चैन्द्रि नारायणिः नमोऽस्तु तेः ॥ १९ ॥

किरीतिनि महावज्रे सहस्रनयोज्जवले इत्रप्राणङ्गे चैन्द्रि नारायणि नमोऽस्तु तेः ॥ १९ ॥

शिवदुर्गेण हतं दैत्यमहावले।
घोररुपे महारावे नारायणिः नमोऽस्तु ते ॥ २० ॥

Śivadūṭiśvarupeṇa hata daityamahābale
ghorarupe mahārāve nārāyaṇī namo 'stu te ॥ २० ॥

दंश्त्राकरालवदने शिरोमालाविभूषणे।
चामुण्डे मुण्डमथने नारायणिः नमोऽस्तु ते ॥ २१ ॥

daṁśṭrākalavadane śironālāvibhūṣaṇe
cāmuṇḍe muṇḍamathane nārāyaṇi namo 'stu te ॥ २१ ॥

लक्ष्मी लृजे महाविधे श्रद्ध पुष्टि स्वधे धृवे।
महारात्रि महामाये नारायणिः नमोऽस्तु ते ॥ २२ ॥

lakṣmi lajje mahāvidye śraddhe puṣṭi svadhe dhruve
mahārātri mahāmāye nārāyaṇi namo 'stu te ॥ २२ ॥

मेदे सरस्वति वरे भूति बाल्रवि नामसि।
नियते त्वं प्रसीदेशे नारायणि नमोऽस्तु ते ॥ २३ ॥

mede sarasvati vare bhūti bālhravi tāmasi
niyate tvaṁ prasīdeśe nārāyaṇi namo 'stu te ॥ २३ ॥
सर्वस्वरूपे सर्वेषो सर्वशक्तिसमन्वयं।
भयेम्यस्त्राहि नो देवि दुर्गा देवि नमोऽस्तु ते। ॥ २४ ॥
sarvasvarūpe sarveṣe sarvaśaktisamanvite
bhayebhayas trāhi no devi durge devi namo 'stu te

एतन्ते वदनं सौम्यं लोचनं त्रयं भृणितं।
पातु न: सर्वभूतेयय: कात्यायनि नमोऽस्तु ते। ॥ २५ ॥
etat te vadamāṁ saumyāṁ locanatrayabhūṣitam
pātu naḥ sarvabhūtebhyaḥ kātyāyani namo 'stu te

ज्वालाकरारलमन्त्रयुग्रमोहसुरसूदनम्।
त्रिशृङ्ग पातु नो भीतेभ्रकलितिन्मोऽस्तु ते। ॥ २६ ॥
jvālākarālam atyugram aśeṣāsurasūdanam
triśūlam pātu no bhler bhadrakāli namo 'stu te

हिनस्ति दैत्येजांसि व्यनेनापूर्य या जगत्।
सा घण्टा पातु नो देवि पापेयो न: सुतानिव। ॥ २७ ॥
hinasti daityatejāṁsi svanenāpūrya yā jagat
śā ghaṇṭā pātu no devi pāpebhyo naḥ sutān iva

अयुरायुग्माप्पश्रीचरितस्ते करोज्ज्वलः।
शुभाय खड़गो भवतु चण्डिकेत्वा नता वयम्। ॥ २८ ॥
asurāyugmāpañkacarctas te karojjvalaḥ
śubhāya khāḍgo bhavatu caṇḍike tvāṁ natā vayam

रोगानशेषाणपरंसि तुष्टा
रुष्टं तु कामान् सकलानभीष्टान्।
त्वामाश्रितानां न विपन्नराणां
त्वामाश्रिता द्याध्ययतां प्रयान्ति। ॥ २९ ॥
rogān aśesān apahaṁsi tuṣṭā rūṣṭā tu kāmān sakalān abhīṣṭān
tvām āśritāṁ na vipannaraṇāṁ tvām āśritā hy āśrayatāṁ prayānti
etat kṛtam yat kadanam tvayādyā dharmadvēṣam devi mahāsurāṁām
rūpair anekair bahudhātmūrtim kṛtvāmbike tat prakaroti kānyā

vidyāsu śāstreṣu vivekadeśv ādyeṣu vākṣyeṣu ca kā tvad anyā
mamatvagartem 'timahāndhakāre vibhrāmayaty etad aūva viśvam

rakṣāsī yatrogriśās ca nāgā yatāraryo dasyubalāṇi yatra
dāvānalo yatra tathābhidhimadhye tatra sthitā tvam paripāsi viśvam

viśvēśvara tvam paripāsi viśvam
dhārayasīti viśvam
dhārayā bhavati bhavānī
dhāraya ye tvai bhaktināmaraḥ

viśveśvari tvam paripāsi viśvaṁ viśvātmikā dhārayasīti viśvam
dhārayābhavaṁ bhavanti viśvāśrayā ye tvayi bhaktinamrāḥ
देवि प्रसीद परिपाल्य नोकरिभोते- 
नित्यं यथायुरवधादधुनैव सद्यः ।
पापानि सर्वजगतां प्रश्मं नयाशु 
उत्पातपाकजनितांश्च महोपसर्गान् ॥ ३४ ॥

devi prasīda paripālaya no 'ribhīter nityam yathāsuravadhād adhunaiva sadyaḥ 
pāpāni sarvajagatāṁ praśmaṁ nayāśu utpātapākajanitāṁś ca mahopasargān

प्रणतानां प्रसीद्य त्वं देवि विश्वार्तिहारिणि ।
चैलोक्यवासिनामैहे लोकानां वरदा भव ॥ ३५ ॥

pranatānāṁ prasīda tvāṁ devi viśvārthāriṇi 
trailokyavāsināṁ īdye lokānāṁ varadā bhava

देव्यवाच ॥ ३६ ॥

devy uvāca

वरदाः सुरगणा वरं यन्मसेच्छस्थ ।
तं वृण्णभं प्रयत्थामि जगतामपकारकम् ॥ ३७ ॥

varadāḥaṁ suragaṇā varaṁ yan manaseccatha 
taṁ vṛṇudhvaṁ prayacchāmi jagatāṁ upakārakam

देवा उच् ॥ ३८ ॥
devā ācūḥ

सर्वादाधप्रश्नमं चैलोक्यस्याखिलेवर्ति ।
एवमेव त्या कार्यमस्मद्विरिविनाशनम् ॥ ३९ ॥

sarvābhādha-praśamanāṁ trailokyasyākhileśvāṁ 
evam eva tvayā kāryam asmdvairvināśanam

देव्यवाच ॥ ४० ॥
devy uvāca

वैवेक्षनेवन्तरे प्राप्ते अष्टाविनिश्चितं युगे ।
शुभ्यो निशुभश्चैववान्यावुत्पत्त्येन महासुरोऽ ॥ ४१ ॥
vaivasyate ‘ntare prāpte aṣṭāvimśatime yuge
śumbho niśumbhaś caivanyāv utpatsyete mahāsurau

नन्दगोपुर्णे जाता यशोदार्गर्भसम्भवा ।
ततस्तो नाशधिप्यामि विन्ध्याचलनिवासिनी ॥ ४२ ॥
nandagopagṛhe jātā yaśodāgarbhasambhavā
tatas tau nāśayiṣyāmi vindhyācalanivāsinī

पुनर्वसनिरूपेण पृथिवीतले ।
अवतीर्थ हनिष्यामि वैप्रचिन्तांतु दानवान् ॥ ४३ ॥
punar apy atiraudreṇā rūpeṇa pṛthivītale
avatūrya haniṣyāmi vaipracittāṁ tu dānavān

भक्षयन्याध्य नानुग्रान् वैप्रचिनान् महासुरान् ।
रक्तादन्ता भविष्यति दादिमीकुमोपमा: ॥ ४४ ॥
bhakṣayantyās ca tān ugrān vaipracitān mahāsurān
raktā dantā bhaviṣyanti dādīmikusumopamāḥ

ततो मां देवता: स्वर्ग मर्यादोके च मानवा: ।
स्तुवन्तो व्याहरिष्यानि सततं रक्तदन्तिकाम् ॥ ४५ ॥
tato māṁ devatāḥ svarge martyrake ca mānavāḥ
stuvanto vyāharsiṣyanti satatāṁ raktadantikāṁ

भूयश्च शतवार्षिक्यामनावृष्ट्यामनमभस्यि ।
मुनिभिः संस्तुता भूमी सम्भविष्याम्योनिजा ॥ ४६ ॥
bhūyas ca satavārśikyām anāvṛṣṭyām anambhasi
munibhiḥ samstutā bhūmau sambhaviṣyāmy ayonijā
tat: śatena netāṇāṁ nirikṣiṣyāmi yamunīn

कीर्तिरिष्यन्ति मनुजा: शताश्रीमिति मां तत: ॥ ४७ ॥
kīrtayeṣyanti manujāḥ śatāksīṁ iti māṁ tataḥ

tataḥ śatena netāṇāṁ nirikṣiṣyāmi yan munīn
kīrtayeṣyanti manujāḥ śatāksīṁ iti māṁ tataḥ
ततो हमाखिलं लोकमातदेहसमुद्रवेः।
भविष्यमिः सुरा: शाकेरावृत्ते: प्राणधारके।।

ततो हमाखिलं लोकमातदेहसमुद्रवेः।
भविष्यमिः सुरा: शाकेरावृत्ते: प्राणधारके।।

तत्रैव च वर्धिष्यामि दुःर्माध्यं महासुरमः।
दुःर्माधि विख्यातं नमे नाम भविष्यति।।

तत्रैव च वर्धिष्यामि दुःर्माध्यं महासुरमः।
दुःर्माधि विख्यातं नमे नाम भविष्यति।।

पुनः यदा भीमं रूपं कृत्वा हिमाचले।
रक्षासि क्षययस्यामि मुनीनं ज्ञानकारणान्।।

पुनः यदा भीमं रूपं कृत्वा हिमाचले।
रक्षासि क्षययस्यामि मुनीनं ज्ञानकारणान्।।

तदा मां मुनयं सर्वेन्तहस्यन्यानमूर्तियं।
भीमादिवीति विख्यातं नमे नाम भविष्यति।।

तदा मां मुनयं सर्वेन्तहस्यन्यानमूर्तियं।
भीमादिवीति विख्यातं नमे नाम भविष्यति।।

यदारणास्यस्त्रेलोक्ये महाबाध्यं करिष्यति।
तदां भ्रामरं रूपं कृत्वा ज्ञेयपदमं पदम।।

यदारणास्यस्त्रेलोक्ये महाबाध्यं करिष्यति।
तदां भ्रामरं रूपं ज्ञेयपदमं पदम।।

त्रेलोक्यस्य हितार्थाय वर्धिष्यामि महासुरमः।
भ्रामरिति च मां लोकास्तदा स्तोष्यन्ति सर्वतः।।

त्रेलोक्यस्य हितार्थाय वर्धिष्यामि महासुरमः।
भ्रामरिति च मां लोकास्तदा स्तोष्यन्ति सर्वतः।।
ित्थं यदा यदा बाधा दानवोत्था भविष्यति।
तदा तदावनीयांह करिष्याम्यरितिसंक्षयम्॥ ५५॥

ittham yada yadā bādha dānavotthā bhaviṣyati
tadā tadāvatīryāhaṁ kariṣyāmy arisakṣayam
द्वादशोश्च्यायः
फलस्तुतिः

devy uvāca

एभि: स्तव्येथ भा नित्यं स्तोष्यते यः समाहितः।
तस्याः सकलं वाधां नाशयिष्याम्यसंस्तवेयम्।

ebhiḥ stavaiś ca māṁ nityam stōṣyate yah samāhitah
tasyāhāṁ sakalāṁ bādhāṁ nāsayisyāmy asaṁśayam

madhukaiṭhbanāśam ca maḥiṣāsuraghātanam
kīrtaiṣyanti ye tadvad vadhāṁ śumbhāniśumbhayoh

अष्टम्यां च चतुर्दश्यां नवम्यां चैकचेतसः।
श्रोष्यन्ति चैव ये भक्त्या मम माहात्म्यमुननम्।

aṣṭamāṁ ca caturdaśyāṁ navamāṁ caikacetasah
śroṣyanti caiva ye bhaktyā mama māhātmyam uttamaṁ

न तेषां दुःस्तृतं किच्चिदुष्क्रृतोत्थथा न चापदः।
भविष्यति न दारिद्र्यं न चैवेष्टवियोजनम्।

na teṣāṁ duṣkṛtaṁ kiṃcid duṣkṛtottthā na cāpadaḥ
bhaviṣyatī na daraḍraṁ na caiveṣṭaviyojanam

शत्रुतो न भयं तस्य दश्यतो वा न राजयः।
न शास्त्रानिवतौप्योपत्तदाचित्याम्भविष्यति।

śatruto na bhayaṁ tasya dasyuto vā na rājataḥ
na śastrānalatoyauguḥ tado ṣadacit sambhaviṣyati
तस्मां नमांत माहात्मयां पाथतव्यं समाहितं।
श्रोतव्यं च सदा भक्त्या परं स्वरुप्यं हि नत्।

उपसर्गानेशांस्तु महामारीसमुद्रवान्।
तथा त्रिविधमुन्यां माहात्म्यं शमेन्मम॥८॥

यशेष्टत्तप्ये सम्प्रदनित्यमायतने पम्।
सदान न तद्रिमोक्ष्यामं सानिध्यं तत्र मे स्थितम्॥९॥

यत्राइति पाथ्याते समायं नित्यम् ायताने मामां
सदाय न तदं भिक्ष्यामं सानिध्यं तत्र मेस्थितां

बलिप्रदाने पूजायामश्रिकायेँ महोत्सवेः।
सर्वं ममैतचरितमुच्छायं श्राव्येशे च॥१०॥

बलिप्रदाने पुजायाम अग्निकार्ये महोत्सवे
सर्वं ममैतचरितमुच्छार्यं श्राव्यांे च॥१०॥

जानताजानताः वापि बलिपूजां तथा कृताम्।
प्रतीचिष्यायां प्रीत्या वाहिनोंम तथा कृताम्॥११॥

जनताजनताः वापि बलिपूजां तथा कृताम्
प्रतीचिष्यायां प्रीत्या वाहिनोंम तथा कृताम्॥११॥

शरत्कारे महापूजा क्रियाते या च वार्षिकी।
तस्यां ममैतनमाहात्म्यं श्रुत्वा भक्तिसमन्वितं॥१२॥

शरत्काये महापूजायां क्रियाते याच वार्षिकी
तस्यां ममैतनमाहात्म्यं श्रुत्वा भक्तिसमन्वितं॥१२॥

सर्वाधाविनिर्मितं धनधार्यसुतान्वितं।
मनुष्यो मन्त्रसादेन भविष्यति न संशयः॥१३॥

सर्वाधाविनिर्मितं धनधार्यसुतान्वितं।
मनुष्यो मन्त्रसादेन भविष्यति न संशयः॥१३॥
manuṣyo matprasādena bhaviṣyati na saṁśayaḥ

श्रुत्या ममैतनङ्गहस्यं तथा चोपपद्यं शुभः।
पराक्रमं च युद्धेश्व जायते निर्भयः पुमान् || १४ ||
śrutvā mamaitan māhātmyam tathā cotpattayaḥ śubhāḥ
parākramaṁ ca yuddheṣu jāyate nirbhayaḥ pumān

रिपवः संक्षयं यान्ति कल्याणं चोपपद्यते।
नन्दते च कुलं पुंसा माहात्म्यं मम शृण्वताम || १५ ||
ripavaḥ samkṣayaṁ yānti kalyāṇam copapadyate
nandate ca kularh puṁśāṁ māhātmyam mama śṛṇvatām

शान्तिकर्मणि सर्वत्र तथा दुःखपद्याये।
ग्रहीपाशु चोपपद्यस्य माहात्म्यं शृण्वताम || १६ ||
śāntikarmaṇi sarvatra tathā duḥsvapnadaṛśane
grahapiḍāsu cograsu māhātmyam śṛṇuyān mama

उपसर्गा: शां यान्ति ग्रहीपाश्व दारुणा।
दुःखपद्यपुनर्विश्वस्य सुवर्णप्रपुष्यते। || १७ ||
upasargaḥ śaṁyāṁ yānti grahapiḍāś ca dāruṇāḥ
duḥsvapnāṁ ca nṛbhir dṛṣṭam susvapnam upajāyate

बालग्रहाभिभूतानां बालानां शान्तिकारकम्।
सस्तहभेदे च नृणा मैत्रीकरणमुक्तम || १८ ||
bālagrahābhībhūtānāṁ bālānāṁ śāntikārakaṁ
saṁghātabhede ca nṛṇāṁ maitrikaraṇam uttamam

dur्वृत्तनामोषषणां बलहानिकरं पर्यं।
रक्षोभूतपिशाचार्यां पठनादेव नाशनम् || १९ ||
durvaṛṭtanaṁ aṣeṣāṁ balahānikaraṁ paraṁ
rakṣobhūtapiśācānāṁ paṭhanād eva nāśanam

सर्वं ममैतनङ्गहस्यं मम सम्भविकारकम् || २० ||
sarvaṁ mamaitan māhātmyam mama saṁnīdhikārakaṁ
paśupuṣṇaṃ gandhīpiṣṭaṃ ca
viṣṇaṃ bhojanaṃ ca
prokṣaṇīyair ahamiṣam

�न्येत्थ विविधेऽगेः प्रदानेवत्स्यरेण या ।
प्रतिमें क्रियते सामिन्यकृत्यचरिते श्रुते ॥ २२ ॥

anyaiś ca vividhair bhogaiḥ pradānair vatsareṇa yā
prītir me kriyate sāsmin sakṛt sucarite śrute

श्रुतं हरति पापानि तथारोग्यं प्रयच्छति ।
रक्षां करोति भूतेऽयो जनमां कैर्तनं मम ॥ २३ ॥

śrutaṁ harati pāpāni tathārogaṁ prayacchati
rakṣāṁ karoti bhūtebhyo jaṁmanaṁ kārtanaṁ mama

युद्धेऽचरितं यन्मेऽदुष्टदेवनिबर्ष्टिम् ।
तस्मिन् चरितं वैरिकृतं भयं पुंशां न जायते ॥ २४ ॥

yuddheṣu caritāṁ yanme duṣṭadāityanibarhaṇam
tasmiṁ chrute vairikṛtaṁ bhayaṁ puṁsāṁ na jáyate

युष्माशि: स्तुतयो याथः याथः ब्रह्मसिंहिमः कृतः ।
ब्रह्मणा च कृतासनातु प्रयच्छति शुभाः मतिम् ॥ २५ ॥

yuṣmābhiḥ stutayo yāś ca yāś ca brahmārṣibhiḥ kṛtāḥ
brahmaṁ ca kṛtās tās tu prayacchanti śubhāṁ matim

अरण्ये प्रान्तरे वापि दावाग्रिपिरिवारितः ।
दश्युभिवा वृत्तं शून्ये गृहिनो वापि श्रत्रुभि: ॥ २६ ॥

araṇye prāntare vāpi dāvāgrīparivāritaḥ
dasyubhir vā vrtaḥ śūnaye grhito vāpi śatrubhiḥ

सिंहव्याध्रानुयातो वा वने वा वनहस्तिमिः ।
राजा कुшение चाष्टानो वध्यो बस्थगतोऽपि वा ॥ २७ ॥

simhavyāghrāṇuyāto vā vane vā vanahastibhiḥ
rājñā kruddhena cañnapto vadhya bandhagato 'pi vā

आयूर्णितो वा वातेन स्थितः पोते महाणविः

पतन्त्युः चापि शस्त्रेषु संग्रामे भूरादारणे ॥ २८ ॥

āghūṛṇīto vā vātena sthitaḥ pote mahārṇave
patatsu cāpi śāstreṣu saṁgrāme bhrṣadāruṇe

सर्वाबाधाः घोरासु वेदनाभ्यार्दिनोऽपि वा ।

स्मरनमैत्रच्छिरितं नरो मुच्छेत सइटात् ॥ २९ ॥

sarvābādhāsū ghorāsa vedaṇābhyaardito 'pi vā
samaran mamaitac caritam naro mucyeta saṁkaṭāt

मम प्रभावावित्सिंहाधा दर्श्यो वैरिनस्तथा ।

ढूरादेव पलायनं स्मरत्थरितं मम ॥ ३० ॥

mama prabhāvāt simhādyā dasyavō vairiṇās tathā
dūrād eva palāyante smarataś caritam mama

ऋषिरुवाच ॥ ३१ ॥

ṛṣir uvāca

इत्युक्तया सा भगवती चण्डिका चण्डविक्रमा ।

पश्यतामेव देवानां तत्रैवान्तरधीयत ॥ ३२ ॥

ity uktvā sā bhagavatī caṇḍikā caṇḍavikramā
paśyatām eva devānāṁ tatraivāntaradhīyata

तेषपि देवा निरारंजः स्वाधिकारान्यथा पुरा ।

यज्ञभागभुजः सर्वे चक्रविनिहतारयः ॥ ३३ ॥

te 'pi devā nirātaṅkāḥ svādhikārān yathā purā
yajñabhāgabhujāḥ sarve cakru vinihatārayah

दैत्याश्रये देव्या निहते शुभे देवरिपौ युधि ।

जगद्विध्वंसिनि तत्मिन्न महोग्रेसनुलिप्क्रमे ॥ ३४ ॥

daitāś ca devyā nihate śumbhe devaripau yudhi
jagadvidhvaṁsini tasmān mahogre 'tulavikrame
निशुभे च महावीरे शेषाः पातालमाययुः॥ ३५॥

niśumbhe ca mahāvīrye śeṣāḥ pātālam āyayuḥ

एवं भगवती देवी सा नित्यापि पुनः पुनः।
सम्भूय कुरुने भूप स्त्र्यागतं परिपालनम्॥ ३६॥
evam bhagavatī devī sa nityāpi punah punah
sambhūya kurute bhūpa jagataḥ paripālanam

तयैंतमोहाने विश्वं सैव विश्वं प्रसूयते।
या याचिना च विज्ञानं तुष्टं ऋद्धि प्रयच्छिति॥ ३७॥
tayaitan mohyate viśvarṁ saiva viśvarṁ prasūyate
sā yāicitā ca vijnānaṁ tuṣṭā ṛddhim prayacchati

व्यापं तयैंतत्सकलं ब्रह्माण्डं मनुजेश्वर।
महाकाल्या महाकाले महामारीस्वरुपया॥ ३८॥
vyāptaṁ tayaitat sakalam brahmaṇḍam manujesvarā
mahākālyā mahākāle mahāmairīsvarūpayā

सैव काले महामारी सैव यृष्टिभवत्यज।
स्थितिः करोति भूतानां सैव काले सनातनी॥ ३९॥
saiva kāle mahāmārī saiva srṣṭīr bhavaty ajā
sthitim karoti bhūtānāṁ saiva kāle sanātani

भवकाले नृणा छेव लक्ष्मीवृद्धिप्रदा गृहे।
सैवाभवे तथालक्ष्मीर्विनाशायोपजायते॥ ४०॥
bhavakāle nṛṣām saiva laksṇāṁ vṛddhipradā gṛhe
saivābhāve tathālaksṇāṁ vināśāyopajāyate

स्तुता समपूजिता पुष्पेश्वरं पद्मादिपिभस्ता।
ददाति विने पुत्रांश्य मनि धर्मं गतिं शुभाम॥ ४१॥
stutā sampūjitā puṣpair dhūpagandhādibhis tathā
dadāti vitarāṁ putrāṁś ca matim dharme gatim śubhām
ऋषिर uvāca
एतते कथितं भूप देवीमाहात्म्यमुत्तमम् II २ II
etat te kathitam bhūpa devīmāhātmyam uttamam
एवमप्रभावा सा देवी ययेंद धार्त्ते जगत् II विद्या तथैव क्रियते भगवद्विष्णुमायया II ३ II
evamprabhāvā sā devī yayedaṁ dhāryate jagat vidyā tathaiva kriyate bhagavadviṣṇumāyayā
tया त्वमेष वैष्णव तथैवाय विवेचिनः I
tayā tvam eṣa vaisyaḥ ca tathāvāṁy vivekinaḥ momhante mohitaḥ caiva moham eṣyanti cāpare
तामुपैहि महाराज शरणं परमेष्वरीम् I
tāṁ upaiḥ mahāraja śaraṇam paramesvārīṁ ārādhitaḥ saiva nṛnāṁ bhogasvargāpavargadā
मार्कण्डेय उवाच II ६ II
mārkaṇḍeya uvāca
इति तस्य वचः श्रुत्वा सुरथः स नराधिष्पः I
iti tasya vacah śrutvā surathāḥ sa narādhipaḥ
प्रणिपत्य महाभागं तमृषिः संहितनवत्तम् II ७ II
praṇipatyā mahābhāgaṁ tam ṛṣim saṁśitavratam
निर्विन्नो 'तिममत्वेन राज्यापहरणेन च।
जगाम सद्यस्तपसे स च वैश्यो महामुने॥ ८॥
nirvīṇo 'timamatvena rājyāpaharaṇena ca
jagāma sadyas tapase sa ca vaisyō mahāmune

सन्दर्शनार्थमम्मया नदीपुलिनसंस्थितः।
स च वेदयस्तपस्तपेपे देवीयुक्तं परं जपन्॥ ९॥
sandarśanārtham ambāyā nadīpulinasaṁsthitah
sa ca vaisyas tapas tepe deviśūktam paramjapan

तो तत्मिन् पुलिने देव्याः कृत्वा मूर्ति महीमयीम्।
अर्हण्या चक्रतुस्त्रयः पुष्पधूपाघिर्नपणेः॥ १०॥
tau tasmin puline devyāḥ kṛtvā mūrtim mahīmayīm
arhaṇāṁ cakrus tasyāḥ puśpadhūpaṁgnitarpanaiḥ

निराहारो यताहारो तन्मनस्को समाहितो।
ददत्तस्तो बलिङ् चैव निजगात्रासुक्षितम्॥ ११॥
nirāhārau yatāhārau tanmanaskau samāhitau
dadatus tau baliṁ caiva nijgātṛaśuṅgkṣitam

एवं समाराधयनोस्त्रिमिर्ष्यतात्मनोः।
परितुष्टा जगद्धार्ती प्रत्यक्ष प्राह चण्डिका॥ १२॥
evāṁ samārādhatatos tribhir varṣair yatātmanoḥ
parituṣṭā jagaddhātṛi prayakṣaṁ prāha caṇḍikā
devyāvach॥ १३॥
devy uvāca

यत्प्राथ्यते त्वया भूप त्वया च कुलनन्दन॥ १४॥
मनस्तप्रायत्यतां सर्व परितुष्टा ददामि तनु॥ १५॥
yat prārthyaṃ tvayā bhūpa tvayā ca kulanandana
mat tas tat prāpyatāṁ sarvaṁ parituṣṭā dadāmī tat

मार्कण्डेय उवाच॥ १६॥
mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

तनो वथे नृपो राज्यमविभ्रंश्यन्यजन्मनि ।
अत्र चैव निजं राज्यं हतशातुवलं बलान् ॥ १७ ॥
tato vatre nṛpo rājyaṃ avibhraṁśyanyajanmani
atra caiva nijaṃ rājyaṃ hataśatrubalam balāt

सो पि वैक्यस्ततो ज्ञानं वथे निर्विन्मानमायः ।
ममेन्द्रहमिनि प्राइः सझविच्युतिकारकम् ॥ १८ ॥
so ’pi vaisyas tato jñānam vatre nirvinṇamānasah
mametyaham iti prājñah saṅgavicyutikārakam

deivyuvāca ॥ १९ ॥
devy uvāca

स्वल्पेनहोभिन्नपते स्वराज्यं प्राप्त्यते भवान् ॥ २० ॥
हत्वा रिपूनखलिन्तं तव तत्र भविष्यनि ॥ २१ ॥
svalpair ahobhir nṛpate svarājyaṃ prāpsyate bhavān
hatvā ripūn askhalitam tava tatra bhaviṣyati

मृत्युः भूयः समप्रायः जन्म देवाविलिव्यतः ॥ २२ ॥
सारवर्णिको नाम मनुर्भवान्मुवि भविष्यनि ॥ २३ ॥
mṛtaś ca bhūyaḥ samprāpya janma devaḥ vivasvataḥ
sāvarṇiko nāma manur bhavān bhuvi bhaviṣyati

वैश्वर्यन्त्या यथैं यथैं वरोस्मत्तोभिवाच्छितः ॥ २४ ॥
तं प्रयोध्यामि संसिद्धैं तव ज्ञानं भविष्यनि ॥ २५ ॥
vaiśyavarya tvayā yaś ca varo 'smatto 'bhivāṁchitaḥ
tam prayacchāmi saṁsiddhyai tava jñānam bhaviṣyati

मार्कण्डेय सुवाच ॥ २६ ॥
mārkaṇḍeya uvāca
इति दत्वा तयोर्द्वी यथाभिलुभितं वरम् ॥
बभृवानान्तहिता सदो भक्त्या नाभ्यामभिष्टुता ॥ २७ ॥

iti datvā tayor devī yathābhilaśitaṁ varam
babhūvāntarhitā sadyo bhaktyā tābhīyām abhiṣṭutā

एवं देव्या वरं लुह्वा सुरथः क्षत्रियर्षभः ॥
सूर्याज्ञम समासाध सावर्णिभविना मनुः ॥ २८ ॥

evaṁ devyā varam labdhvā surathaḥ kṣatriyarṣabhaḥ
sūryāj janma samāsādyā sāvarṇir bhavitā manuḥ

सावर्णिभविना मनुः कृं ओम् ॥ २९ ॥
sāvarṇir bhavitā manuḥ klīṁ Oṁ

श्रीसप्तशतीश्वीमहात्म्यं समाप्तम्
srīsaptaśatīdevīmāhātmyāṁ samāptam

ओं नन्दों ओम् ॥
Oṁ tat sat Oṁ
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5. Agrawala, Goddesses, p. 27.
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18. Agrawala, Goddesses, p. 93.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
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4. Ibid.
17. Cobum, *Devī-Māhātmya*, p. 120.
Cobum, *Devī-Māhātmya*, p. 222.
22 Cobum, *Devī-Māhātmya*, p. 249.
23 *Cobum, Devī-Māhātmya*, p. 120 n. 19.
27 Cobum, *Devī-Māhātmya*, p. 221.
34 Kinsley, “Kālī,” p. 78.
35 Cobum, *Devī-Māhātmya*, p. 111.
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38 Cobum, *Devī-Māhātmya*, p. 325.
40 Cobum, *Devī-Māhātmya*, p. 325.
43 Ibid.
47 Cobum, *Encountering the Goddess*, p. 100.
50 Cobum, *Encountering the Goddess*, p. 106.
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**PART II: COMMENTARY NOTES**

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**Chapter 2**


**Chapter 3**

1. Prithvi Kumar Agrawala, *Goddesses in Ancient India* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1984), p. 120.


**Chapter 4**
Chapter 5

1 Cobum, Devī-Māhātmya, p. 222.
2 Cobum, Devī-Māhātmya, p. 239.
3 Cynthia Ann Humes, “Vindhyavāsinī: Local Goddess Yet Great Goddess,” in Devī: Goddesses of India, Hawley and Wulff, eds., p. 68.
4 Cobum, Devī-Māhātmya, p. 232.
6 Cobum, Devī-Māhātmya, p. 196.
8 Menon, Thousand Names, p. 159.
9 Cobum, Devī-Māhātmya, pp. 197–198.
10 Brown, The Devī-Gūṭā, p. 4.
11 Brown, The Devī-Gūṭā, p. 86.
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Chapter 7
1 Gupta, Gospel of Śri Ramakrishna, p. 135.
2 Cobum, Devī-Māhātmya, pp. 135–136.
4 Cobum, Encountering the Goddess, pp. 136–137.

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3 Ibid.
4 Harshananda, Hindu Gods and Goddesses, p. 63.
5 Harshananda, Hindu Gods and Goddesses, p. 81.
6 Cobum, Devī-Māhātmya, pp. 132–133.
7 Cobum, Devī-Māhātmya, p. 186.
8 Cobum, Devī-Māhātmya, p. 325.
9 Cobum, Devī-Māhātmya, p. 232.

Chapter 9
1 Cobum, Encountering the Goddess, pp. 102–103.
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Chapter 11
1 Harshananda, Hindu Gods and Goddesses, p. 124.
3 Agrawala, Goddesses, pp. 62–63.
7 Powell, Windows into the Infinite, p. 334.
8 Woodroffe, Shakti and Shakta, p. 138.
9 Woodroffe, Shakti and Shakta, p. 171.
10 Mookerjee, Ritual Art of India, p. 37.
11 Cobum, Devī-Māhātmya, p. 107.
12 Cobum, Devī-Māhātmya, p. 264.
14 Kinsley, Hindu Goddesses, pp. 67, 188.
15 Woodroffe, Shakti and Shakta, p. 34.
16 Woodroffe, Shakti and Shakta, p. 39.
18 Agrawala, Goddesses, p. 89.
19 Cobum, Encountering the Goddess, p. 139.
24 Kinsley, Hindu Goddesses, p. 162.
25 Kinsley, Hindu Goddesses, p. 239 n. 23.
26 Kinsley, Hindu Goddesses, p. 143.

Chapter 12
1 Cobum, Devī-Māhātmya, p. 120.

PART III: THE AṆGAS

Devyāh Kavacam
1 Swami Sarvadevananda, personal interview, August 7, 1999.
2 Swami Satprakashananda, The Universe, God and God-Realization: From the Viewpoint of
**Argalāstotra**

**Kllakastotra**

**Rātrisūkta**
4. Ibid.

**Devīsūkta**

**Prādhānika Rahasya**

**Mūrtirahasya**
GLOSSARY

adharma—unrighteousness; absence of virtue; that which reverses or is contrary to the divinely established order; the opposite of → dharma.*

Aditi—one of the most ancient goddesses of the → Rgveda. Her name, meaning “boundless” or “undivided,” characterizes her as infinite consciousness and freedom and the inexhaustible source of the universe.

Advaita—nondualism; the philosophical view that ultimate reality is an infinite and undifferentiated unity, that God, soul, and the universe are one.

Advaita Vedānta—the school of → Vedānta developed by → Śaṅkarācārya, who taught that → Brahma alone is real, and that the world, although experienced as real because of → mâyā, is only an appearance. Advaita Vedānta views → ātman (the Self) and Brahma (the unity underlying all manifold appearance) as one.

Ādyā Śakti—the supreme reality according to → Śākta doctrine, corresponding to → Brahma; divine consciousness seen as the primal power.

Agni—the Vedic god of fire, who acts as the mediator between humans and the gods by conveying sacrifices through his sacred fire.

Ahaṁkāra—literally “I-maker”; the ego, the consciousness of being a unique and separate entity which claims perceptions, emotions, and acts of will as its own.

Aindrī—the → Śakti of → Indra; one of the → Saptamātṛkās. The Devīmāhātmya employs this name for Indra’s feminine counterpart instead of the usual name, Indrāni, to emphasize the → Śākta understanding of goddess-as-power rather than goddess-as-consort.

Alakṣmī—misfortune personified as a goddess; the mirror-image of → Laksāmī.

Ambikā—an affectionate name for the → Devī, frequently employed in the Devīmāhātmya and meaning “Mother.”

Āmbhrṇī—the female seer of the → Rgveda through whom the Devī → Vāk proclaims her own glory in the → Devīsūkta.

Aṅgā—“limb”; one of six texts (→ Kavaca, Argalāstotra, Klākastotra, Prādhānīkā Rahasya, Vaikṛtīkā Rahasya, Mūrtirahasya) appended to the Devīmāhātmya around the 14th century for ritual and exegetic purposes.

Anuṣṭubh—the classic meter of Sanskrit epic and narrative poetry; the primary meter of the Devīmāhātmya. A verse (→ śloka) consists of four quarter-verses (→ pāda) of eight syllables each.

Aparājitāstuti (“Hymn to the Invincible Devī”); the third hymn of the Devīmāhātmya (5.9–82), which praises the Devī’s immanence as consciousness abiding in various forms in all beings.

Argalāstotra (“Hymn of the Bolt”): the Devīmāhātmya’s second → aṅga, consisting of a series of invocations requesting the Devī’s assurance that ritual recitation will bring success.

Ārya—noble; the name applied to groups of Indo-European-speaking tribes who began entering India around 4500 BCE. Their dialects evolved into the Vedic, later Sanskrit, language. Some current scholars, especially in India, reject this ethnic definition and propose instead that the term designates the moral nobility of people whose lives exemplified the teachings of the → Vedas.

Asura—a demon. In Hindu mythology, the battle between good and evil is often expressed as an allegorical war between gods and demons, who symbolize the divine and evil tendencies within human consciousness.

Ātman—the true Self, identical with → Brahma, as distinct from the finite self or ego (→ ahaṁkāra).

Avatāra—“descent”; the earthly manifestation or incarnation of a deity.

Āvaraṇa—concealment; the veiling power of ignorance (→ avidyā) to conceal the boundless unity of the Absolute.

Avidyā—ignorance, nescience. Avidyā is individual or cosmic ignorance, the non-knowing of → Brahma, or the inability to distinguish between the real and the unreal. Cosmic ignorance is also called → māyā.

Avidyāmāyā—the aspect of → māyā that binds one to worldly existence. It produces entangling passions such as anger and greed. Māyā’s other aspect, → vidyāmāyā, produces qualities such as kindness, purity, and selflessness, which lead to liberation. Both forms of māyā belong to the relative, phenomenal world.

Bhadraṅkāli—“the propitious Kāli”; an aspect of the Divine Mother associated with the blessing of the household.

Bhagavadgītā— (“The Song of God”); a sacred text forming eighteen chapters (700 verses) of the sixth book of the → Mahābhārata and containing the teachings of Śrī → Kṛṣṇa to his disciple Arjuna on Self-realization through the paths of knowledge (→ jñāna), devotion (→ bhakti), selfless action, and meditation.

Bhagavati—“the blessed one”; a name of the Divine Mother.

Bhakti—devotion; love for one’s chosen ideal of the divine, usually in the personalized form of a particular god or goddess.

Bhāskararāya—author of the → Guptavatī, the most important commentary on the Devīmāhātmya. Writing from the → Śākta perspective, Bhāskararāya (fl. late 17th to mid-18th century) understood the Devī as the supreme, nondual reality (→ advaita) and the
manifest universe as her actual transformation (→ pariṇāma).

Bhīmadevī—a particularly terrible, but protective, form of the Devi, described in DM 11.51–52 and MR 18–19.

Bhrāmāri—the Devī in her bee-like form, described in DM 11.53–54 and MR 20–21.

bhukti—worldly enjoyment or, more broadly, worldly experience.

bīja—seed”; a nonlexical, mystical symbol vibrating with the concentrated power of a particular deity or divine energy. In Tantric Hinduism, the bīja is the essential component of any → mantra.

bindu—concentrated → Śakti as the point of potentiality from which the material universe emanates at the time of creation and into which it collapses at the time of cosmic dissolution.

Brahmā—the creator god. He is the first in a triad (→ Trimūrti) with → Viṣṇu, the preserver, and → Śiva, the destroyer.

Brahman—the Absolute beyond all attributes, which is the immutable substratum of phenomenal existence; the impersonal ultimate reality transcending time and space.

brāhmaṇā—a member of the highest Hindu caste, which comprises priests and custodians of sacred knowledge. In the Devīmāhātmya, the seer → Medhas represents this caste.

Brāhmaṇī—a sacred text forming part of the → Vedas and primarily concerned with ritual practices and rules of conduct.

Brahmāṇī—→ Śakti of → Brahmag. in the Devīmāhātmya, she is one of the → Sapatamātrkās.

Brahmāstuti (“Brahmā’s Hymn”); the first hymn of the Devīmāhātmya (1.73–87), addressed to the Devī’s tamasic aspect, → Mahākāli, and concerned primarily with cosmogony.

buddhi—intelligence, determination; the intellectual faculty that categorizes and interprets sensory data and is responsible for reason and will. According to → Advaita Vedānta, buddhi is not conscious but merely reflects the consciousness of the ātman; in distinction, the Śākta philosophy considers buddhi a finite form of the infinite consciousness, veiled and limited by → māyā.

Cāmuṇḍā—a particularly terrible form of → Kāli, who slew the demons Cāṇḍa and Mūḍha (DM 7.6–27) and Raktabīja (DM 8.40–62). She represents the power of concentrated awareness and the awakening of spiritual consciousness.

Cāṇḍa—together with Muṇḍa, one of Śumbha’s flattering, scheming servants in the Devīmāhātmya’s fifth through seventh chapters.

Cāṇḍī—I. an alternate title of the Devīmāhātmya, common in Bengal. 2. a name of the Divine Mother, also → Caṇḍikā.

Caṇḍikā—“the violent, impetuous one”; after the name Devī itself, the Devīmāhātmya’s most frequently employed name for the Divine Mother.

Candra—the Vedic god of the moon.

carita—one of the three divisions or episodes of the Devīmāhātmya, consisting of Chapter 1, Chapters 2–4, and Chapters 5–13. Literally, the term means “acts, deeds, behavior.”

daiya—a demon, said to be the son of → Diti. In the Devīmāhātmya, the term is used interchangeably with → asura and → dānava.

dānava—a demon (→ asura, daiya).

deva—a god.

Devī—the supreme Goddess, who manifests in many forms and is known by many names. Among her principal forms are → Durgā, → Pārvatī, and → Kāli.

Devīsūkta—an important hymn of the → Rgveda (RV 10.125) in which the Devī extols her own greatness. This hymn of eight verses is regarded by many Indian scholars as the source from which the entire Devīmāhātmya developed.

dharma—righteousness, virtue, morality; religious duty; truth; the order by which the universe is upheld.

Dhūmralocana—the thuggish demon chieftain sent by Śumbha to abduct the Devī, who instead is slain by her (DM 6.1–13).

dhyāna—1. meditation, the state in which the mind is fixed on its object, like the unbroken flow of oil from one vessel into another. 2. one of three texts that introduce each of the Devīmāhātmya’s three → caritas, immediately preceding Chapters 1, 2, and 5.

Diti—the ancient earth goddess and mother of the → daiyas. She represents the opposite of → Aditi.

Durgā—the primary deity of the Devīmāhātmya. Usually represented as ten-armed and riding upon a lion, Durgā is at once the warrior goddess who destroys evil, the fiercely protective yet infinitely compassionate mother, and the bestower of unconditional, all-redeeming grace.

Durgāstava—an early hymn to Durgā, found in MBh 4.5, important for containing numerous divine epithets and themes found later in the Devīmāhātmya.

Durgāstotra—a second hymn to Durgā, found in MBh 6.22 immediately before the → Bhagavadgītā. Recited by Arjuna on Kṛṣṇa’s instruction for the sake of assuring victory in battle, the hymn contains themes and traditions that reappear throughout the Devīmāhātmya.

Garūḍa—the mythical half-man, half-bird that is the → vāhana of → Viṣṇu.

Gaurī—“the shining one, the white one”; a name of the Divine Mother.

guṇa—one of the three basic forces operative in the universe (→ sattva, rajas, tamas).

Guptavāt (“Confirming What Is Hidden”); the title of one of the most important commentaries on the Devīmāhātmya, written around 1741 by the great Tantric authority → Bhāskararāya.

Harivaṃśa—a later supplement to the → Mahābhārata, datable in part to as early as the second century BCE.
Ichā—the initial divine will to create, cooperative with → jiyanā, the knowledge, and → kriyā, the action for doing so.

Indra—the supreme Vedic god; the lord of the atmosphere, revered as the giver of life-sustaining rain and feared as the all-powerful god of storms.

Īśvara—“Lord, Ruler, Sovereign”; the personal but formless God (→ sāguṇa Brahman) that is the human mind’s highest possible understanding of the impersonal Absolute. According to → Vedānta, Īśvara is → Brahman united with → māyā and acts as the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the universe.

Īśvarī—(female) Sovereign. The term is often compounded, as in Parameśvarī (“Supreme Sovereign”), Māheśvarī (“Great Sovereign,” the śakti of Śiva), Viśveśvarī (“Ruler of the Universe”)—frequently employed epithets of the Devī.

Jagat—that which moves”; the world.

Japa—repetition of a divine name or → mantra.

Jiyanā—knowledge; the direct experience of the transcendental Absolute.

Kaiṭābha—together with → Madhu, one of the two stupid, brutal demons of the Devīmāhātmya’s first chapter.

Kāla—the Vedic god of time; time personified as the universal destroyer.

Kālātṛi—“dark night”; in Purāṇic cosmology, a period of cosmic nonmanifestation, lasting 4,320,000,000 human years, during which the universe remains in a state of potentiality. It alternates with an equally long period of cosmic manifestation, known as a day of Brahmā.

Kālātṛi—the Divine Mother characterized as a solitary warrior and fulfiller of desires (MR 19).

Kāli—one of the most powerful and complex aspects of the Devī, representing primal energy or the dynamic aspect of ultimate reality. Often associated with the terrifying power of death and the relentlessness of all-devouring time, Kāli is also adored by her devotees as a loving mother.

Kālikā—another name of → Kāli.

Kalyāṇi—an aspect of the Devī signifying auspiciousness and beauty.

Karma—any mental or physical act or the collective consequences of one’s actions in the present and previous lives. Determining an individual’s character and experience of joy and sorrow, karma operates as the law of cause and effect in the continuing cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.

Kātāyanī—a name of the Divine Mother, associating her with the Kātyāyas, a venerated clan of Vedic sages.

Kauśikī—an aspect of the Divine Mother, so named because she emerged from the body (kośa) of → Pārvatī (DM 5.85–87).

Kavaca—the first → aṅga associated with the Devīmāhātmya, more correctly called the Devyāḥ Kavacam (“Armor of the Devī”). It serves to invoke her protective energy throughout the body in preparation for the ritual recitation of the Devīmāhātmya.

Kīlavastotra—(“Hymn of the Pin”); the Devīmāhātmya’s third → aṅga, intended to remove the restraint put upon the text by Śiva and grant access to its full power.

Kriyā—the divine action by which the universe is created, following upon → ichā (divine will) and → jiyanā (divine knowledge).

Krṣṇa—an → avatāra of → Viṣṇu and one of the most widely worshiped aspects of God in Hinduism. The → Bhagavadgītā contains his teachings to his disciple Arjuna.

Kṣatriya—member of the royal or warrior caste, represented in the Devīmāhātmya by → Suratha.

Kubera—the Vedic god of wealth.

Lakṣmī—good fortune, prosperity, happiness, wealth, success, beauty, splendor.

Lakṣmi—an auspicious aspect of the Divine Mother as the goddess of prosperity and good fortune; the consort of → Viṣṇu.

Lilā—the divine play by which the supreme deity creates the universe. The concept of lilā implies the freedom, joy, and inexhaustible creativity that pervade and direct the cosmic drama of the universe, for which the deity is pure sport.

Madhu—together with → Kaiṭābha, one of the two foolish demons of the Devīmāhātmya’s first chapter.

Mahābhārata—the immense Hindu epic (and world’s longest epic poem), comprising well over 100,000 verses and containing the → Bhagavadgītā. Ascribed to the sage Vyāsa, the Mahābhārata in fact took shape between the fifth century BCE and the second century CE. Divided into eighteen books, it is a vast and well-loved repository of spiritual knowledge, moral instruction, and cultural tradition.

Mahākāli—a powerful, cosmic aspect of the Divine Mother (→ vyaṣṭi) as the pure energy of → tāmas; the presiding deity of the Devīmāhātmya’s first → carita.

Mahālakṣmī—1. a powerful, cosmic aspect of the Divine Mother (→ vyaṣṭi) as the pure energy of → rajas; the presiding deity of the Devīmāhātmya’s second → carita. 2. According to → Viṣṇu Vaishnava Tantric usage, the supreme (→ samaṣṭi, trīguṇa) form of the Devī.

Mahāmāyā—the Divine Mother’s deluding power, which causes the unitary, infinite consciousness to appear as the seemingly real, phenomenal universe.

Mahārasvāti—a powerful, cosmic aspect of the Divine Mother (→ vyaṣṭi) as the pure energy of → sattva; the presiding deity of the Devīmāhātmya’s third → carita.
Māhāmya—a literary composition extolling the majesty or exalted state of a deity, holy place, or object worthy of veneration.

Māheśvarī—the → śakti of Maheśvara (Śiva); one of the → Saptamātrkās.

Mahāśāsura—the primary demon of the Devāmāhātmya’s second → carita; depicted as a buffalo that creates chaos on a cosmic scale, he is slain by → Durgā.

Mahāśāsuramardini—“the crusher of the buffalo demon”; a name of → Durgā.

mamātā, mamatava—“I-ness”; the sense of attachment that attends upon the ego.

manas—“mind,” specifically, the mental organ that acts as a receptor of sensory data. According to → Sāmkhya philosophy, manas, → ahamkāra, and → buddhi constitute the antahkaraṇa (“inner instrument”).

mantra—a syllable, series of syllables, or a verse that embodies divine power, used in ritual and meditation; a name of a god or goddess, repeated as a form of spiritual practice designed to merge the individual’s consciousness with the chosen deity.

manu—in mythology, a semi-divine progenitor of humanity and ruler over the earth for a period known as a → manvantara.

Manusmṛti—the Laws of Manu, a Sanskrit legal text dealing with the nature of good and evil, a woman’s role in society, dietary regulations, political conduct, caste, → karma, and aspects of criminal, civil, and domestic law.

manvantara—in Purānic cosmology, a world-age. Fourteen manvantaras constitute a day of Brahmā (4,320,000,000 human years) or period of cosmic manifestation. Each manvantara is ruled by a particular → manu: the framing story of the Devāmāhātmya is set in the second manvantara (that of Svarocisa), the present age is the seventh manvantara (that of Vaivasvata) and the eighth will be ruled by King → Suratha, reborn as the manu Sāvarṇi (13.22–23, 28–29).

Mārkandeyapurāṇa—an early → Purāṇa containing the teachings of the sage Mārkaṇḍeya on the history of the world during past and future → manvantaras. Chapters 81–93 constitute the Devāmāhātmya.

mātrgna—“band of mothers”; another name for → the Saptamātrkās.

māyā—the veiling or deluding power of the Absolute, responsible for the appearance of the relative, phenomenal universe. The → Vedānta philosophy pairs the terms → Brahmā and māyā to denote the Absolute and its inseparable power; with shades of philosophical difference, Sāmkhya calls these puruṣa and → prakṛti, and Śaṅkta doctrine calls them → Śiva and → Śakti.

Medhas—the sage in the Devāmāhātmya, who as the teacher to → Suratha and → Samādhī, relates the three tales of the Devi’s battles with the demons.

moha—delusion; the finitization of consciousness that causes one to take appearance for reality.

mukti—release; final liberation from the limitations of body, mind, and worldly bondage through knowledge of the ultimate reality, or union with the Divine.

Mūndā—one of Śumbha’s two demon servants (→ Caṇḍa) in the Devāmāhātmya’s fifth through seventh chapters.

Mūrtirahasya—(“The Secret Relating to Forms”); the sixth of the Devāmāhātmya’s → aṅgas, which elaborates upon the Devi’s predicted manifestations in DM 11.40–55.

Nānda—the cowherd into whose family the Devi was born as → Vindhyaśāni, and who became the foster father of → Kṛṣṇa.

Nārāsinhī—the śakti of Nārāsinhī, the man-lion incarnation of → Viṣṇu; one of the → Saptamātrkās.

Nārāyanī—the śakti of → Viṣṇu, who is also known as Nārāyaṇī.

Nārāyanīstuti—(“Hymn to Nārāyaṇī”); the fourth hymn of the Devāmāhātmya (11.3–35), which presents a comprehensive summation of → Śaṅkta theology. Emphasizing the Devi’s motherhood, sovereignty, and protective intervention in human affairs, the hymn praises her various aspects, including the → Saptamātrkās.

Navarātri—the great autumn festival in honor of → Durgā and her victory over evil. (A spring Navarātri similarly commemorates Rāma’s defeat of the demon Rāvaṇa.)

Navārātramantra—a Tantric mantra of great importance in the worship of the Devi. According to the commentator → Bhāskarārya, it is an appeal for her to undo the knot of ignorance that precludes the individual’s knowledge of oneness with the Absolute.

nirguṇa—without qualities, in distinction to → sūkṣma, with qualities.

nirguṇa Brahmān—the impersonal Absolute, which transcends time and space and is beyond all thought; the supreme reality.

nirṛti—an abstract, but nevertheless dreaded, Vedic goddess whose name means “decay” and who personifies adversity, calamity, disease, and death.

Nīrvāṇa—extinction of the individual self; enlightenment; transcendental bliss.

Nīśumbha—the younger brother of → Śumbha and one of the two main demons of the Devāmāhātmya’s third → carita. He represents the ego’s sense of attachment.

nitya—eternal. The term carries the connotation of permanence and immutability.

OM—the → bīja or sound-symbol of → Brahmā. Representing both the impersonal Absolute (→ nirguṇa Brahmā) and the personal divinity (→ Īśvara, sākṣam Brahmā), OM is the creative Word which produces all manifestation.

pāda—in Sanskrit prosody, a quarter-verse or half-line of poetry.

pārāśārīthka—according to → Advaita Vedānta, the category of the absolutely real, which is the changeless → Brahmā.

parināma—transformation, change. Parināmavāda is the doctrine, accepted by the adherents of → Śaṅkta philosophy, that the phenomenal universe is an actual transformation of divinity and not a mere appearance (→ vivarta). It teaches that the effect exists
the Divine Mother who creates, sustains, and dissolves the universe.

Ś (universal redemption through her unconditional love.Ś

S (MR 12–17).

Brahman.

order, such as the passage of the seasons

metaphysical inquiry. Customarily, Western scholars date the

Composed in archaic Sanskrit, probably over hundreds of years, most of the hymns address deities who are personifications of natural

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identified with → Rudra

Sanskrit texts.

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“Hymn to Night”); an ancient hymn of the → Ṛgveda (RV 10.127), praising the deified night as the goddess Rātrī. Underlying its exquisite natural imagery is the implication that she is the substratum and mother of creation.

Ṛgveda—the oldest and largest of the four → Vedas, its → satr̥ṣiḥiti portion containing 1,028 hymns in ten books (maṇḍatas). Composed in archaic Sanskrit, probably over hundreds of years, most of the hymns address deities who are personifications of natural forces, but the texts can be interpreted as allegories conveying deeper knowledge. Some of the later hymns rise to rarefied heights of metaphysical inquiry. Customarily, Western scholars date the Ṛgveda Satr̥ṣiḥiti to 1500–1200 BCE, but recent research, combined with internal evidence from the texts, supports the traditional Hindu claim of far greater antiquity.

Ṛta—truth, law, order; the eternal principle of cosmic and moral order at work in the universe, also linked in the → Vedas with natural order, such as the passage of the seasons (ṛtu). Ṛta anticipates the doctrine of → karma and generally is replaced by → dharma in later Sanskrit texts.

Rudra—a Vedic storm god, associated with agricultural fertility but more often with destruction. In post-Vedic times he became
deidentified with → Śiva.

saccidānanda—being-consciousness-bliss (sat-cit-ānanda); a threefold epithet attempting to describe the unitary, indescribable → Brahman.

sādhanā—spiritual practice; in Tantra, a prescribed path leading to liberation (→ muktī) through worship (→ pūjā), → mantra repetition (→ japa), and meditation (→ dhyāna).

saguṇa—with qualities, the opposite of → nirguṇa.

saguṇa Brahman—the Absolute associated with → māyā and personified as → Īśvara.

Śāiva—referring to the theistic tradition that regards → Śiva as the supreme being. The Śāiva tradition may be non-Vedic in origin, and it tends to be more ascetic and oriented toward → jñāna than the → Vaśřnaṇa.

Śākambhari—a nurturing manifestation of the Devī as the earth itself, described in the Devīmāhātmya (11.46–50) and Mūrtirāhasya (MR 12–17).

Śakrādīstuti— (“Praise by Indra and the Other Gods”); the second hymn of the Devīmāhātmya (4.3–27). Elloquent and philosophically profound, it views the Devī as the ultimate reality, the creator, the fierce defender of → dharma, and the Divine Mother who grants universal redemption through her unconditional love.

Śākta—1. referring to the tradition that centers on the worship of → Śakti, the supreme power and ultimate reality, conceptualized as the Divine Mother who creates, sustains, and dissolves the universe. Śākta religion originated in pre- and non-Vedic goddess cults and
eventually became assimilated to the Vedic tradition. 2. an adherent of the Śākta religion.

Śakti—1. power, energy, ability. 2. the individual power of a god, usually represented as his female counterpart. 3. a spear.

Śakti—the supreme being according to the → Śakti tradition; consciousness in its dynamic, creative aspect, in distinction to → Śiva, its static aspect as the ground of existence. The two, seemingly different, are ultimately nondifferent aspects of the indivisible ultimate unity, the transcendent → Ādyā Śakti. Śakti assumes all the forms in the universe and is worshiped devotionally as the Divine Mother in many manifestations, among them → Kāli and → Durgā.

Samādhi—total absorption in the object of meditation. The highest samādhi, called nirvāṇa, is the transcendental consciousness or identity with the impersonal Absolute.

Samādhi—the dispossessed merchant in the Devīmāhātmya, so named because his dispassion to the world leads him, through the Divine Mother’s grace, to → samādhi and liberation.

Samaṭī—aggregate; the samaṭī form of the Devī is her supreme aspect from which the three → vyaṣṭi or → guṇa forms proceed.

Sāmhitā—“collection”; the initial portion of each of the four → Vedas, consisting of hymns to the deities.

Śāmkhya—one of India’s greatest philosophers and saints and the primary exponent of → Advaita Vedānta. In addition to important devotional hymns, Śāmkhya (788–820), or simply Śamkara, composed numerous philosophical works and commentaries representing the pinnacle of nondualistic thought.

Śāmkhya—one of six orthodox schools of Hindu philosophy, attributed to the sage Kapila and dating to before 500 BCE. Śāmkhya is dualistic, teaching that the universe comes into being through the union of purusa (conscious spirit) and Prācti (unconscious, primordial matter), which are two eternal principles.

Samāsāra—the ever-repeating cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, perpetuated by → karma.

Saṁskāra—an impression created in an individual’s consciousness by a thought or action in the present or a previous life, collectively forming one’s character

Saptamātrkās—“Seven Little Mothers”; individualized, generally fierce manifestations of the Devī’s power (→ Śakti), whom the Devīmāhātmya identifies as → Brahmāni → Māheśvarī → Kaumārī → Vaiṣṇavī → Vārāhi → Nārasīṁhī, and → Aindrī.

Sarasvatī—an auspicious form of the Divine Mother as the goddess of knowledge and creativity and the consort of → Brahmā. Originally a deified river, Sarasvatī is one of the most ancient Hindu goddesses, understood on a deeper level as the flow of consciousness itself. In early times she became identified with → Vāk.

Śarvāṇi—the Devī as → Śiva’s consort in her destructive aspect, presiding over cosmic dissolution.

Śatākṣi—“hundred-eyed”; a manifestation of the Devī also called → Śākambhari (DM 11.46–50 and MR 12–17).

Sattva—one of the three → guṇas or basic energies of the universe; the Devī’s revealing power. Sattva is re pose, manifesting as light, calmness, purity, goodness, and wisdom. It is symbolized by the color white.

Śāvitrī—the wife of Brahmā, considered the mother of the Vedas.

Seṣa—the seven-headed serpent upon whom → Viṣṇu rests on the primordial ocean during periods of cosmic nonmanifestation.

Śiva—God in his aspect as destroyer, the third member of the → Trimūrti. For the → Śaivas, he is the supreme reality, the Great God (Mahādeva) who embodies compassion and renunciation and grants the liberating knowledge of the individual’s identity with the Absolute. For the → Śāktas, Śiva is the static ground of all being, inseparable and ultimately nondifferent from → Śakti, the dynamic creative energy.

Śivadūti—“she whose messenger is Śiva”; the Devī’s own fierce → Śakti, so named because she sent → Śiva as her messenger to → Śumbha and → Niśumbha (DM 8.22–28).

Skanda—the son of → Śiva and god of war, also known as Kārttikeya and Kumāra, the latter characterized as a chaste youth.

Śloka—a stanza of Sanskrit poetry; the name of the epic meter, also called → anuṣṭubh.

Śṛaddhā—faith. In the Hindu understanding, Śṛaddhā does not mean unquestioning acceptance but implies trust, expectation, and a reciprocity between the human and the Divine.

Śṛaddhā—faith (→ Śṛaddhā) personified as a goddess.

Śrī—1. light, luster, radiance, splendor, glory, beauty, prosperity, good fortune, auspiciousness. 2. a quality of inner radiance or splendor attributed to a god or goddess in the → Rgveda.

Śrī—the quality of → Śrī personified as a goddess, later identified with → Lakṣmī.

Śrī Durgāsaptasātīi (“Seven Hundred Verses to Śrī Durgā”); an alternate title of the Devīmāhātmya.

Śrīṣūkta—an important hymn appended to the → Rgveda in late Vedic times and the earliest known text to celebrate Vedic → Śrī and non-Vedic → Lakṣmī as one and the same goddess.

Sugrīva—Śumbha’s messenger, who delivered a proposal of marriage to the Devī (DM 5.102–129).

Śumbha—the central demon of the Devīmāhātmya’s third → carita, symbolizing the human ego; the older brother of → Niśumbha, who represents attachment.

Suratha—the deposed king who, together with the merchant → Samādhi, becomes a disciple of the seer → Medhas and receives his teachings.

Sūrya—the Vedic sun god, who is extremely brilliant and rides across the sky in a chariot drawn by seven horses. His light, shining like a
jewel in the sky, produces the day and energizes all living beings.

*sūtra*—“thread”; an aphorism or set of aphorisms that contains philosophical teaching in compressed form and requires elaboration to make it comprehensible. The six schools of Hindu philosophy originally transmitted their teachings in *sūtra* form, an example being the → Yogasūtra of → Patanjali.

svadhā—a → mantra uttered when an oblation to departed ancestors is poured into the sacrificial fire, sometimes personified as the goddess Svadhā.

svāhā—a → mantra uttered when an oblation to the gods is poured into the sacrificial fire, sometimes personified as the goddess Svāhā.

tamas—one of the three → guṇas or basic energies of the universe; the Devī’s concealing power. Tamas is inertia, manifesting as darkness, heaviness, dullness, ignorance, error, and negativity. It is symbolized by the color black.

**Tantra**—1. the non-Vedic, often esoteric, element of Hindu tradition, which centers on divine power, usually seen as feminine (→ Śakti, Śāktaka), and prescribes spiritual practices (→ sādhanā) and ritual as the means to liberation. 2. any of a group of sacred texts that transmit such teaching, cast in the form of a dialogue between → Śiva and the → Devī.

tejas—fiery brilliance; in the Devimāhātmya, the Divine Mother’s own radiance that emerged from the bodies of the gods and united in the form of Durgā (2.9–19).

triguṇa—characterized by the three → guṇas: sattva, rajas, and tamas.

Trimūrti—the representation of → Īśvara as three gods in one, → Brahmā symbolizing rajas or creative passion, → Viṣṇu symbolizing sattva or sustaining goodness, and → Śiva symbolizing tamas or the energy of cosmic dissolution. With Brahmā’s diminished importance in post-Vedic theism, the threefold activity was ascribed entirely to → Viṣṇu, → Śiva or the → Devī by their respective devotees.

upādhi—limiting adjunct, association, attribute; a term employed by → Vedānta to denote any object, quality, or circumstance from which the ego forms a sense of personal identity.

Upaniṣad—a text belonging to the final, philosophical portion of the → Vedas. Recording the spiritual truths revealed to sages in ancient times through the direct experience of transcendental consciousness, the Upaniṣads proclaim the identity of → Ātman (the Self) and → Brahmā (ultimate reality). The principal Upaniṣads are the Īśa, Kena, Kaṭha, Praśna, Māṇḍukya, Māṇḍūkya, Brhadāranyaka, Aitareya, Taittirīya, Kauṭītakī, and Śvetāsvatara. They date to before 400 BCE, and the earliest are of great antiquity.

vāk—speech, voice, language; the primal creative force or Word, roughly analogous to the ancient Greek and early Christian Logos.

Vāk—the Vedic goddess of creative speech, later identified with → Sarasvatī and → Durgā. In the Rgveda, she lauds herself in a first-person hymn, the → Deviśūktā.

vāhana—the mount or vehicle of a deity, revealing an aspect of that god or goddess’s power. For example, → Durgā rides upon a lion, symbolizing → dharma.

Vaiṣṇavism—referring to the theistic tradition that regards → Viṣṇu as the supreme being and centers its worship primarily on his incarnations as Rāma and → Kṛṣṇa.

Vaiṣṇavī—the → śakti of → Viṣṇu; one of the → Saptamātrīkās.

vaiṣya—a member of the mercantile and agricultural caste, represented in the Devimāhātmya by the merchant → Samādhi.

Vārāhī—the → śakti of Varāha or → Viṣṇu in his boar incarnation; one of the Saptamātrīkās.

Varuṇa—one of the oldest Vedic gods, personifying the all-encompassing firmament. Often associated with clouds, water, and the ocean, Varuṇa presides over the starry night, watching humanity with a thousand eyes. His function as the lord of → rta is to preserve cosmic and moral order.

Vasus—a group of eight Vedic gods who serve → Indra and personify the waters, the Pole Star, the moon, the earth, wind, fire, light, and dawn.

Vāyu—the Vedic god of the wind, who rides in a chariot driven by → Indra.

Vedas—the most ancient and authoritative Hindu texts and probably the world’s oldest sacred literature. There are four Vedas: Rk (→ Rgveda), Sāma, Yajus and Atharva. Each consists of four divisions: → Saṁhitā (collected hymns), Brāhmaṇas (texts concerned primarily with ritual), Āraṇyakas (reinterpretations of external ritual as internal spiritual practice), and → Upaniṣads (the philosophical essence of the Vedas).

Vedānta—one of the six orthodox schools of Hindu philosophy, systematized from the teachings of the → Upaniṣads and codified in the Vedāntasūtra (Brahamasūtra) of Bādarāyana, dated to between the fifth and first centuries BCE. Subsequently, distinct branches of Vedānta developed, including the strictly nondual → Advaita Vedānta of → Śaṅkarācārya.

vidyā—knowledge; a term often used interchangeably with → jñāna.

vidyāmāyā—that aspect of → māyā that leads toward knowledge and liberation, as opposed to → avidyāmāyā, which produces the bondage of ego-consciousness.

Vikṛti—change, alteration, modification; the transformation by which the formless, unitary consciousness manifests as the multiple forms
Vikṣepa—the power by which māyā or avidyā projects the manifold experience of the universe, often mentioned in connection with āvaraṇa.

Vindhyavāsinī—“dweller in the Vindhya [Mountains]”; an aspect of the Devī, identified with Mahāmāyā, who figures in the birth narrative of Śrī → Kṛṣṇa, in the Devimāhātmya (11.41–42) and in the Mūrtirahasya (MR 1–3).

Viṣṇu—God in his aspect as preserver, the second member of the → Trimūrti. For members of the → Vaiṣṇava devotional sect, he is the supreme god, who incarnates in every age as the guardian of dharma to deliver humanity from ignorance and evil.

Viṣnumāyī—an epithet of the Devī expressing her nature as the supreme being’s inscrutable power.

viśva—“all”; a word used to signify the universe.

Viśvakarman—a Vedic god and aspect of Brahmā as architect of the world. His name means “maker of all [this universe],” and he is represented as four-headed, holding prayer beads, book, the sacred kusa grass, and ascetic’s waterpot in his four hands, and riding upon a swan.

vivarta—appearance, apparent change. Vivartavāda is the doctrine, advanced by Śaṅkarācārya, that the phenomenal universe is only an apparent superimposition (adhyāsa) on the changeless reality of → Brahman. This view contrasts with the doctrine of → pariṇāma, favored by → Śākta philosophy, which regards the universe as an actual transformation of divine consciousness and therefore another aspect of reality.

Vṛtra—a demon in the → Rgveda who withheld life-giving water from the earth until his strongholds, the clouds, were breached by → Indra, whose thunderbolt released the rain. The Devimāhātmya attributes Vṛtra’s defeat to Indra’s → Śakti, → Aindrī (11.19).

vṛtti—activity, movement; more specifically, a modification or wave in the mind through which knowledge of the objective world becomes possible. Vṛttis can be positive thoughts that lead toward truth, or restless, distracting, and negative thoughts that deepen ignorance and bondage. According to → Patañjali, one should strive consciously to replace negative vṛttis with positive ones and then go beyond either to the attainment of unmodified, transcendental consciousness.

vyaṣṭi—the specific individuality of the Devī’s three cosmic → guṇa aspects, personified as → Mahākāli, → Mahākāśmī and → Mahāsarasvatī. The vyaṣṭīs proceed from the supreme Devī’s undifferentiated → samaṣṭi form.

vyāvahārika—empirical; the term used by → Śaṅkarācārya to denote the world of our experience, which is neither absolutely real (→ pāramārthika) nor wholly illusory (→ prātibhāsika).

Yama—the Vedic god of death, whose name literally means “restraint.”

Yaśdā—the wife of the cowherd Nanda, → Kṛṣṇa’s foster mother, and the earthly mother of → Vindhyavāsinī.

Yoganidrā—the Devī personified as the mystic sleep of → Viṣṇu during periods of universal dissolution.

Yogasūra—the classic text on the science of meditation, attributed to → Patañjali.


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DEVADATTA KĀLĪ (DAVID NELSON) is an initiate of Swami Prabhavananda, who was also the spiritual guru of Christopher Isherwood and Aldous Huxley. He currently serves on a panel of editors for Vedanta Press in connection with a forthcoming annotated edition of the Prabhavananda-Isherwood translation of the Bhagavad-Gītā. Additionally, he lectures at temples, ashrams, schools, and religious conferences throughout California and is committed to social service as a volunteer helping the homeless and people with HIV/AIDS.