



DEVĪ MĀHĀTMYAM

BEHOLD THE MOTHER



The Counsellor, the Comforter, the Redeemer

DEVĪ MĀHĀTMYAM

the Glory of the Goddess from

The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna

translated by Lyndal Vercoe



DEVĪ MĀHĀTMYAM – THE GLORY OF THE GODDESS

circa 550 CE

by Sage Markandeya

from *The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna*

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Introduction

As you read this *Devī Māhātmyam*, you will feel the joy, the power and the wonder of the Divine Mother.

At its simplest level, the *Devī Māhātmyam* is the battle between good and evil. But on that battlefield, the majesty of the Mother Goddess should not be underestimated. She does not wage wars with the aid of grand armies or divine allies. She alone is the source and the strength.

In a new translation of this sacred text, Lyndal Vercoe offers a direct and devotional rendering. This is not just a description of Divine Power. It is a worship and a praise of God as the Mother of the Universe.

Say those words to yourself and feel their meaning: the Mother of the Universe.

Words are set out to describe that which is indescribable. Poetry transcends the limits of language.

Such descriptions of an all-powerful feminine God are virtually non-existent in the Christian West. And they are, surprisingly, almost as rare in the East. In world literature, the *Devī Māhātmyam* is an elusive scripture. Nestled protectively within the much larger *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna*, it is a unique and extraordinary expression of both reverence and devotion.

This is not just a historical text. This is a prayer to be read aloud. It is an epic poem, a true song of praise that should echo through the days of our lives.

Listen carefully and you will feel the spirit within.

This is a *Devī Māhātmyam* for our time.

Foreword

This book exists because of Her Holiness Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, the one who came to give this Earth its meaning.

At first I wrote for my own satisfaction and then I was enthusiastically encouraged by so many members of the Sahaja Yoga collective: creativity needs community support.

Graham Brown gave practical advice and created a printed book which was given to Shri Mataji in the USA in 2005.

Then Graham created a blog which drew the attention of Dragos Ionel and Richard Payment, who gave it a wider readership on the Web.

Richard's editorial input and design has given it polish and visual beauty so that it can become a real book with paper pages at last to be held and read without eyestrain.

Tim Bruce, in 2019, offered more creative input as he prepared to make an audio recording. He has wisely added the appropriate mantras which traditionally accompany the reading of the story. Mārkaṇḍeya always meant the poem to enlighten the listeners - who were not even readers nor scholars. Tim's reading astounded and delighted me: it has added a whole new dimension to the written text, and makes it a blessing to be enjoyed by wide audiences.

Lyndal Vercoe

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*W*hen this story is told
then both those who sing it
and those who listen with devotion
to them no trouble shall come
nor any calamities from wrong-doing,
nor poverty, nor separation from loved ones.
They shall not experience fear from enemies,
from robbers or rulers, from fire or flood or any weapon.

Therefore this poem of my majesty
must be recited and listened to
with full attention and sincere devotion,
for it is the supreme source of blessings.

ONE

You create all that exists

THAT NOBLE KING, SURATHA, had ruled over his prosperous land like a benevolent father until a conspiracy of jealous kings had attacked his kingdom and reduced it to a single city. Even there he had been undermined by treacherous ministers. He had escaped assassination, pretending he was going hunting; he had ridden away into the forest wilderness, until he found refuge in this peaceful ashram of the Rishi Medhas.

King Suratha was so full of grief. He could not rest. One day as he wandered, unseeing among the gardens and trees he discovered another man sitting by the path. This richly dressed man looked despondent.

The king asked the stranger tenderly: 'Who are you sir? I feel that you have a heavy heart. What brings you here to this quiet place?'

The merchant stood up. He bowed and thanked the king for his kind attention as he introduced himself. His name was Samādhi. They sat together and told each other of their losses. The merchant had been cruelly thrown out of his own home by a disloyal wife and greedy sons.

'But, O King, I cannot stop worrying about their welfare. I love them all, and fear for their souls, that they should have acted so wickedly.'

The King's voice was gentle and soothing:

'It seems strange, don't you feel, that you grieve and worry for these people when they have been so unfeeling towards you?'

The merchant responded. 'O King, even as you were speaking the same thought occurred to me. I wonder what binds us so deeply to our fates when we are helpless to alter these situations.'

'Since our fates have brought us here,' the King said, 'let us seek the advice of the great Rishi Medhas on the matter.'

They rose together and with purposeful steps they approached the Rishi's dwelling place.

The king and the merchant each bowed respectfully to touch the feet of the ancient sage, Medhas. He gestured invitingly. When they were seated, his kind eyes looked enquiringly and the king spoke for both of them saying:

'Beloved Teacher, I just want to know one thing: this problem obsesses my mind, but my intellect cannot resolve it; I am still obsessed about my kingdom and all the business of rulership. I know this is foolish, yet I cannot help behaving like an ignorant person. Why is this, O best of Munis?'

And here, too, is this man thrown out by his household as worthless, and yet he still feels such affection towards them.

So we are both very unhappy; our minds always drawn by self-centered thoughts to these matters, even though we see it is foolishness. How can we be so deluded and yet still aware of that? How can we both be so lacking in discrimination that we indulge in this state of despair?'

The Rishi said:

‘The understanding of all creatures is relative to their field of perception. Some are blind by day and some by night. All are limited. Mankind is certainly not any more aware than the deer, the birds or others. All creatures are compassionate beings.

O King, as you sit mourning, can't you see the birds busy feeding their young although they themselves are hungry? Just like you, they are bound to their offspring, expecting loyalty in return.

This delusion is the power of Mahāmāyā which binds all creatures throughout their lives. This illusion makes them believe their existence is permanent. This power is the Great Goddess, the Devī who actually sustains all beings, both those that move and those which do not. She even causes the contemplative sleep of Lord Vishnu at the end of the Golden Age.

She, the adorable Goddess, is truly called Mahāmāyā: the Great Illusion. By her this whole universe is created. When she is pleased, she blesses mankind and brings them to their final emancipation.

She is the knowledge supreme; she is the eternal cause of ultimate liberation, as well as the cause of the bondage of this worldly existence. Why then should you be amazed that she can hurl all creatures into delusion? She is the supreme knowledge. She is the sovereign of all Gods.’

The King said:

‘Respected sir, who is that Devī you call Mahāmāyā? How did she come into being? How was she born? What is her nature? That one who is mightier than the Gods, what form does she take? O great sage, tell me everything. I wish to hear everything about her origins.’

The Rishi said:

‘This whole universe is the embodiment of her. By her it was stretched forth and she pervades it all. She is eternal.

Listen, I will tell you of the many times she manifests to fulfill the desire of the Gods. At these times she appears to come into the world, although she is in fact eternal.

At the end of the Golden Age, when the adorable, splendid Lord Vishnu reclines on his beloved Serpent-couch, Shesha, she actually becomes his divine sleep. Therefore she is called Yoga Nidrā.

While Lord Vishnu was sleeping, two terrible asuras, the infamous Madhu and Kaitabha, hid in his ears and sprang out to kill Lord Brahmā.

Lord Brahmā, the father of all, was seated in the lotus of sleeping Vishnu’s navel; as he watched those two ferocious asuras, he prayed to Yoga Nidrā, she who is highest in the heart of Vishnu. He desired her to awaken Hari and to open his eyes.

The glorious lord Brahmā praised her as the Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer, as the Ruler of all, as the cause of sleep, and as the unequalled, adored consort of Vishnu. Thus, Lord Brahmā said:

*O you who are the invocations svāhā, svadhā and vashatkāra,
You are truly the embodiment of the very sacrifice itself.
You are the imperishable divine nectar which sustains the Gods.
Your form is eternally three measures and half a measure, continual,
uninterrupted and unchangeable.
You are the ancient Sāvitrī hymn, and the supreme Mother of the De-
vas.
By you this world is sustained. By you it is protected.
By you, it is hurled to destruction and in the end it is consumed by you.
You create all that exists. You reside in everything that exists.
You protect everything which you have brought into existence.
The whole of creation is yours: it is your whim.
You are the supreme knowledge and also the great illusion.
You are also the highest contemplation and the complete recollection.
You are the awful terror and the supreme blessing.
You are the great Devī as well as the great Asurī.
O you who are the primordial force: creating everything, you manifest
yourself as the three gunas.
You are the dark night of periodic dissolution, you are the great night of
final dissolution and you are the terrible night of delusion.
You are the Goddess of auspiciousness.
You are the ruler.*

You are joy and gladness.

You are intelligence and the highest consciousness.

You are bashfulness, prosperity, contentment, tranquility and forgiveness.

You wield the sword, club, discus, conch, bow and arrows and the iron mace.

You are the exceedingly beautiful and terrifying conqueror.

You are gentle and moonlike, as well as the precise annihilator.

Terrible and beautiful, cool and moist, transcending highest and lowest, you are indeed the supreme Īshvārī.

O Devī how can I praise you?

Wherever anything exists an inseparable part of its soul is that which empowers.

That power is yourself.

O Devī how can I praise you?

By you indeed, even he who creates and protects all the worlds,

Even he who is sovereign of all things that move,

Even he of the highest nobility, by you has been put to sleep.

Even the very forms which Shīva, Vishnu and myself assume,

Even these are your creation.

Who then can praise you who are the power of us all?

We all entreat you now, O Devī! Use your immense powers:

Bewitch these two unassailable asuras: Madhu and Kaitabha.'

Then, the Rishi said:

'This is how the Dark Goddess was praised and invoked by Lord Brahmā to awaken Lord Vishnu so that he would slay Madhu and Kaitabha.

Then, in the sight of Lord Brahmā of inscrutable birth, the Devī withdrew herself from Lord Vishnu's eyes, nose and limbs and emerged from his innermost heart and breast.

She arose to stand detached from Janārdana, the World Protector, as he lay on his ocean serpent.

So then Lord Vishnu woke up to see those two audacious asuras standing there.

He looked at those two evil, greedy asuras, their eyes all red with anger, as they boldly prepared to attack and kill Lord Brahmā.

Then adorable Lord Hari became warlike. He arose, grasped them with his immense arms and wrestled with them for a thousand years.

Although they were extremely powerful, eventually Madhu and Kaitabha became confused. Deluded as they were by Mahāmāyā, they said to the long-haired God:

'Ask a boon from us.'

To which the Lord replied:

'There is only one choice to be made. You may both be slain here by me today.'

They looked around and saw the whole world covered in water and in their delusion they asked the lotus-eyed God to slay them on a place not covered by water.

‘So be it,’ said the Lord who wields the conch, the discus and the mace.

Then he held both of them on his hip and cut off their heads with his discus. This is what happened when she, who is the self-created cause of everything, arose as she was praised and invoked by Lord Brahmā. Listen, I will tell you more of her achievements.’

TWO

the power of the Devi

THE RISHI SAID:

‘Once upon a time, when Mahishāsura was lord of the asuras and Indra was lord of the Devas, they fought a war for a hundred years until the asuras won. Then Mahishāsura took Indra’s place as lord of the heavens.

The defeated Devas, led by Brahmā, approached Shiva and Vishnu. There were thirty Gods including Sūrya, Indra, Agni, Anila, Vāyu, Chandrama, Varuna and Yama. They all described in detail how the evil Mahishāsura had thrown them out of heaven. He had taken their rightful places, forcing them to wander the Earth like mortals. The immortals asked the lords Shiva and Vishnu to protect them from the wicked conduct of their enemies.

As they heard the Devas’ story, Vishnu and Shiva became furious. Heavy frowns bent their brows. Then that anger burst forth as a great light from Brahmā, from Shiva and from all the other lords and Devas. From Vishnu and from Indra, too; from each of them a powerful light glowed. Then this great energy, which came from the assembled Gods, merged and became one extremely bright light. Like a blazing

mountain peak, that light spread across the sky illuminating the ten directions.

That combined light from the Devas manifested in the form of a woman whose splendour filled the three worlds.

The light from unconquerable Lord Shiva became her face; from the light of Yama her hair came; from Vishnu's light her arms; by Soma's light her breasts; her waist by Indra's light; by Varuna's light her legs; and by Earth her buttocks and hips.

From Brahmā's light came her feet and by the Sun her toes were made. The Vasus' lights became her fingers and Kubera's light her nose. Prajāpati's light became her teeth and her three eyes came from the light of Nārāyana. Her womb came from Agni's light and the two Sandhyas gave her eyebrows. Her ears came from the light of Vāyu. So it was that from these lights of so many Devas the auspicious Devī became visible.

Then, as they gazed at her, those Gods who had been so oppressed were suddenly filled with joy.

From his trident Pināka, Lord Shiva then drew forth and presented her trident. Lord Krishna gave her a discus which he brought forth from his own discus. Varuna presented a conch and Agni gave a spear. Indra gave a thunderbolt drawn from his own thunderbolt. The Mārutas presented her bow and arrows, while Indra drew her bell from his elephant's bell. From his staff Lord Yama drew her staff. The lord of the Oceans gave her a noose. Her necklace and water pot came from Lord Brahmā. Sūrya's rays illumined the pores of her skin. Kāla, the lord of time, bestowed a pure shield and a shining sword. The Milk Ocean brought her a necklace of finest pearl; two everlasting robes; a glorious jewelled crown and earrings; bracelets for her upper arms and forearms; pure anklets and a fabulous necklace.

Jewelled rings covered all her fingers and a crescent moon adorned her hair. Vishvakarma gave her many missiles, a pure axe and impenetrable armour. From the Ocean came garlands of unfading lotus flowers to adorn her head and breast and a lotus to carry in her hand.

The mountain Himavat adorned her with jewels and gave her a lion to ride. Kubera, the lord of wealth gave her a divine cup filled with ambrosia which never can be emptied. Her jewelled serpent necklace was given her by Shesha, the lord of serpents, who balances the three worlds. The other Gods also adorned her and gave more armaments.

Then the Devī laughed again and again: such long, high, terrifying peals of laughter, so loud, so unrestrained, that it caused the earth and sky and all of the waters to tremble. Every part of the world and its oceans shook with agitation at that roaring sound. The Gods were filled with gladness and they shouted: 'Victory to her, the Lion-rider.' All the sages also praised her, bowing in devotion.

Alarmed at such total commotion in the three worlds, all the wicked asuras rushed out brandishing their weapons.

'Hah! What is this?' shouted the enraged Mahishāsura. Then, as the asuras all charged towards that terrifying challenge of the Devī, Mahishāsura saw her standing there, her splendour pervading the three worlds; her footsteps causing the Earth to bend; her crown engraving its mark on the heavens.

The twang of her bowstring agitated all of the corners of hell. Her thousand arms filled the four quarters. She is all-pervading.

Thus she commenced her battle with those enemies of the Gods. Swords and daggers clashed and whirled. So many missiles were discharged the whole sky was ablaze.

There were four great divisions of Mahishāsura's armies. They were led by the generals Chikshura and Chāmara with their myriads of chariots. Udagra brought his sixty thousand chariots. Mahāhanu had ten million chariots. Asilomā brought fifteen million to battle. Bāshkala had six million. Ugra-darshana and Parivārīta came with thousands of elephants and horses and ten million chariots to fight. Bidāla also fought surrounded by five hundred crores of chariots. And many, many more asuras came with tusked elephants and fiery steeds to fight with the Devī in that battle.

Then, Mahishāsura, surrounded by thousands of crores of horses, chariots and elephants, using javelins and cleavers, staves and maces and spears, commenced to battle with the Devī.

They hurled nooses and clubs at her. Some attacked her with swords. But she easily snared their arrows and missiles with her noose; extending her many arms she playfully amused herself. With her sword and discus she severed their weapons effortlessly while she showered them with arrows.

All the Gods and Sages watched and sang her praises as the weapons of the Devī pierced the bodies of asuras, sending them crazy with pain.

She rode her angry lion. He shook his mane as he stalked among the armies of asuras. They fell like trees in a forest fire.

Delighted, Ambikā loosed sighs of satisfaction in the battle. Each breath instantly created hundreds and thousands of ganas who arose to join her in the battle wreaking destruction on the enemy with their axes and halberds and tridents.

Her ganas were filled with energy by the power of the Devī. They blew conches while some played mridangams and tabors. It now became a mighty martial festival.

The Devī killed asuras by the hundreds with showers of spears, as well as with her trident, her club and her sword. Hundreds more were thrown down, stunned by the sound of her bell. Some were bound by her noose and dragged to the ground. Some she split into two with her sword. Some lay on the ground crushed by her mace. Her club hammered others so severely they vomited blood. Some fell to the ground pierced in the breast by her trident.

Her arrows fell like torrents on those enemies of the Devas. In such dense masses they were quickly slaughtered, quickly cut to pieces. The arms of some were severed, necks were broken. Some were torn in half. Heads rolled on the ground.

Some great asuras fell as their legs were cut off. Others were cut clean down the middle by her sword. Some fell and rose again, headless trunks, still fighting, swords in hand, dancing to the rhythm of the drums and trumpets.

Then some asuras shouted: 'Stop! Stop!' at the Devī.

Soon the earth was thickly covered with an impassable tangle: a mass of elephants, horses, asuras and broken chariots. Rivers of blood flowed among them. Ambikā destroyed the whole army as quickly as fire destroys wood and straw. Her lion roared as he stalked among them, shaking his mane and seeking the few still breathing. And the Devas, watching the triumph of the Devī, showered her with flowers in their gratitude.

THREE

the supreme Goddess

SEEING THE MOTHER AMBIKĀ slay that whole army, the enraged asura general, Chikshura, advanced. He rained arrows on her like clouds of rain on Mount Meru. She cut his masses of arrows easily with her own arrows, killed his horses and charioteer, split his bow and his tall banner and pierced his limbs even as they held his shattered bow. He snatched up his sword and shield and rushed at her, striking the lion on the head and slashing at her left arm.

O King! That sword disintegrated when it touched her arm. So he grasped his pike, red-eyed with rage, he flung it at her.

Bhadrakālī, the great Devī, saw that pike coming at her like a blazing comet. She hurled her pike and shattered his to fragments and the demon with it.

When that mighty general was slain, another general, Chāmara, charged up on his elephant. He hurled his spear at Ambikā who gave a disparaging hoot and struck it down lustreless. Seeing his broken spear fall, Chāmara angrily flung a pike at her.

She split it with arrows. Then the lion leapt onto the forehead of the elephant and attacked that Demon Chāmara. They both fought fierce-

ly as they fell from the elephant. Then the lion sprang up to the sky and came down severing Chāmara's head with a blow of his paw.

Udagra was killed in the battle by the Devī using stones and trees and other missiles. And Karāla she killed with her teeth, fists and palms.

And the angry Goddess ground Uddhata to powder with blows of her club. Bāshkala she killed with a dart and Tāmra and Andhaka with arrows.

The supreme three-eyed Goddess slew Ugrāsyā and Ugravīrya and Mahāhanu all with her trident. With her sword she struck Vidala's head clean down from his body. Durdhara and Durmukha she sent to Yama's abode with her arrows.

Now, as his army was being utterly destroyed, the asura Mahisha assumed his buffalo form and attacked the troops of the Devī terrifying them. Some he attacked with blows of his muzzle. Others he stamped with his hooves. Some were lashed by his tail and some slashed by his horns. Some he laid low on the face of the Earth by the impetuous rush of his onslaught. Some were blasted by his breath or his bellowing or his wheeling career. Having laid low her army, Mahishāsura rushed to attack the Devī's lion. This enraged Ambikā.

Mahishāsura, was fearless. He pounded the surface of the Earth with his hooves. In his rage he tossed the mountains aloft with his horns and he bellowed. Crushed by his impetuous wheeling, the Earth crumbled to pieces. The sea, lashed by his tail, overflowed in every direction. Clouds, pierced by his swaying horns were rent to fragments; hundreds of mountains rained down from the sky, cast up by the blast of his breath.

Seeing the great asura swollen with rage as he rushed on, Chandikā let loose her fury in order to slay him. She flung her noose and bound

him fast. Then as he was bound, he suddenly stopped being a buffalo and became a lion.

While Ambikā beheaded that lion, Mahishāsura emerged as a man with a sword. Swiftly, her arrows pierced the man and his sword and his shield.

Then he changed into a huge elephant and roared as he grabbed her lion with his trunk. But, as he pulled, she severed that trunk with her sword. Again, he became a buffalo, shaking everything in the three worlds.

The Mother Chandikā became really angry. Her eyes grew red and she laughed as she quaffed her divine drink again and again.

He was puffed up with his frenzy and strength and hurled mountains against Chandikā with his horns as he roared. With showers of arrows she shivered those mountains to atoms, her face flushed as she drank, tersely saying:

‘Roar, roar on for a brief moment, O you fool, until I finish my nectar. Soon the Gods will be roaring right here when you are slain by me!’

The Rishi said:

As she spoke, she leapt up and landed on that asura, pinning him down by her foot on his neck, she speared him. Caught by her foot, Mahishāsura’s real form began to emerge from his buffalo mouth. Chandikā then struck off his head with her great sword. Then all his demonic army was destroyed, wailing with fear, while the Gods rose up in joyous exaltation.

The Gods and rishis praised the Devī while the Gandharva chiefs sang and Apsaras danced for joy.

FOUR

peerless majesty

THE RISHI SAID:

When that ferocious, evil army had been destroyed by the Goddess, Indra and the host of Devas bowed reverently, their bodies glowed; their hair bristled with excitement as they praised her:

'We bow to the Goddess Ambikā whose body expresses the collective power of the hosts of Gods.

To her who evolved the whole world by her power, she who is all-pervading, may she bless us with auspiciousness.

She is Chandikā whose peerless majesty and strength cannot even be described by the adorable Lords Brahmā, Shiva and Vishnu.

May she protect the entire cosmos and turn her mind to the destruction of grief and fear.

O Devī, we bow to you who abide in the houses of virtuous people in the form of Shri: the Goddess of prosperity.

In the houses of the wicked you are the Goddess Alakshmī, causing destitution.

You are intelligence in the hearts of the wise, faith in the hearts of the true, and modesty in noble souls. O Goddess, protect the universe!

O Devī, your form transcends the mind. How can we describe you? How can we speak of your great might in destroying demons? How can we tell of your skill in the battles when you overwhelmed the enemies of the Gods?

You are the cause of all the worlds. The three gunas have their origin in you but you have none of their defects. Even Shiva, Vishnu and others cannot comprehend you. All beings come to you for refuge. This whole world is formed from an infinitesimal portion of yourself. Verily you are the sublime primordial Nature, which can never change.

O Devī, your complete divinity is expressed as 'Svāhā', giving satisfaction to all the Gods in the sacrificial fires.

You are also the 'Svadhā' who satisfies the ancestral beings.

Therefore people chant you as Svāhā and Svadhā in ceremonies.

You are the one who gives final liberation by performing great and inconceivable penances.

You are the power which enables seers desiring moksha to restrain their senses and be cleansed of impurities.

You are the soul of sound. You are the vessel which contains the pure Rig and Yajur and Sāma hymns, whose chanting is adorned by the OM. You are Bhagavatī, the adorable one, embodying the Vedas.

You are the sustenance of all living things.

You are the supreme destroyer of the suffering of all the worlds.

You are wisdom by which the essence of the scriptures may be understood.

You are Durgā, the boat that takes mankind across the ocean of worldly illusion.

You have no desires.

You are Shri who abides in the heart of Vishnu, the enemy of the Demon Kaitabha.

You are Gaurī, the giver of light and truth who has fixed her dwelling in Shiva who wears the moon on his forehead.

Your lovely face was gently smiling, pure, like the rays of the full moon, beautiful, like the splendour of finest gold.

It is utterly astonishing that, after seeing your beauty, Mahishāsura struck at your face in anger!

And how strange, O Devī, that when he saw your face grow angry with terrible frowns and rosy as the rising moon, Mahishāsura did not instantly drop dead. For who can survive the sight of the enraged Destroyer?

O Devī! Be pleased with us! You are the supreme Mother of all life.

When angered you instantly destroy the asura families for the welfare of the world. We saw this when the vast army of Mahishāsura was brought to its end.

You always prosper those who are pleasing to you, they are esteemed by others, they become prosperous and famous and their good deeds never cease, their households are extensive, contented and loving.

By your grace, O Devī, the blessed ones daily perform righteous actions with devotion and by this they attain heaven.

O Goddess! You are definitely the only giver of the fruits of action in the three worlds.

O Durgā! When you are called to mind in difficult times you remove terror from all creatures. When remembered by the self-aware you bestow deeper enlightenment. Who beside you dares to dispel poverty, grief and fear? Who else is always kind-hearted to everyone?

You destroy the unrighteous to bring happiness to the world, O Devī. And although their wickedness could keep the asuras in hell for ages, yet you think of their welfare by killing them in battle that they may reach heaven.

You kill the enemies of the Gods with weapons rather than burning them to ashes with your gaze. By your weapons' touch, even the wickedest may be purified and ascend, such kindness you show them.

Only by watching your face which resembles the cooling light of the moon, only this protected the eyes of the asuras from the piercing flash of your sword or spear point.

O Goddess, your disposition subdues the conduct of the wicked.

This beautiful nature of yours is incomparable and beyond thought.

Your supreme power destroys those who challenged the valour of the Gods. Yet you have shown such compassion even to those enemies.

Your prowess is beyond compare. Where else can be found such beauty which strikes terror in the enemies?

In all the three worlds, only in you are found such a compassionate heart and invincible battle skill, O Devī, bestower of boons.

You have saved the three worlds by destroying the enemies. Killing them in battle you have led them to heaven. You have vanquished our fear of the frenzied demons. We bow in reverence to you.

O Great Devī, protect us with your spear. O Ambikā, protect us with your sword, by the sound of your bell, by the twang of your bowstring!

O Chandikā, guard us in all four directions with your spear. O Īshvārī, protect us and this Earth with those kindly gentle forms as well as with those extremely terrifying forms with which you move about in the three worlds. O Ambikā, guard us on every side with your sword, spear, mace and whatever weapons your tender hands hold.'

The Rishi said:

This praise was offered to the supporter of the worlds as they worshipped her with offerings of celestial flowers from Nandana and with perfumes and precious ointment, and all of them offered heavenly incense with deep devotion.

Smiling sweetly, the Devī spoke to the prostrate Gods: 'Your hymns of praise are so beautiful; whatever you may ask I will be pleased to do.'

The Gods said: 'O Great Goddess! Since you have slain our enemy Mahishāsura, nothing remains to be done. Yet we pray that whenever we think of you, you will remove our difficulties at that time.

O Mother of purest countenance, any mortal who praises you with these hymns, may you bless him with prosperity, O Ambikā, as you have blessed us.'

The Rishi said:

O King, after the Gods appealed to her for the sake of the World and themselves, Bhadrakālī replied: 'So it will be,' and vanished.

So now, O King, I have told you about the Devī who desires the prosperity of the three worlds, how she manifest from the bodies of the Gods long, long ago. Listen again. I will tell you how she came as

Gaurī to slay the wicked demons, Shumbha and Nishumbha, for the protection of the three worlds.

I will tell you exactly what happened.

FIVE

we surrender in devotion

THE RISHI SAID:

Once upon a time, two asuras, Shumbha and Nishumbha, assumed leadership of the three worlds. They took the offerings intended for Indra and arrogated to themselves the roles of Sūrya, Chandrama, Kubera, Yama, Vāyu, Varuna and Agni.

Expelled from their rightful place and authority, the Devas all thought of the invincible Goddess and her promise: ‘Whenever in distress you call me to mind I will end those calamities at that very instant.’

So the Gods went to that lord of mountains, Himavat, and began to recite hymns of praise to Shri Vishnumāyā who is the illusive power of Shri Vishnu.

The Devas said:

‘Salutations to the Devī, the Mahādevī. Salutations to the eternal auspicious one, to that one who is the Primordial Cause, she who is the sustaining power, we utterly surrender to her.

We bow and surrender to Raudra who is ferocious and who, as Gaurī, is the support of the universe.

We surrender to that one who is tender as the moonlight, who bestows happiness, we reverence her continually.

We bow to Kalyānī who enables us to perfect ourselves.

We bow to Lakshmi who prospers us.

We bow to Sharvani who is the arbiter of kings.

Reverence to Durgā, we surrender to her who is inaccessible and who enables us to cross the ocean of illusion,

We bow to her who is the foundation of the world, who is the awareness and discrimination, to her whose complexion is blue-black like smoke.

We surrender and bow again and again to that Goddess who is most gentle and most terrible, to her who destroys the enemies of truth to preserve the world order.

To the Goddess who is proclaimed as the illusive power of Lord Vishnu, which exists in all beings, we bow again and again.

We bow to the Devī who abides in all beings in the form of consciousness, we bow and surrender to her.

We bow and surrender to her who is intelligence,

To her who is sleep,

To her who is hunger,

To her who is reflection, shadow, in all beings.

We bow to her who is the strength, the energy, the power in all beings.

We bow to her who is desire, who is thirst.

We bow to her who is forgiveness and patience.

We bow to her who is the particular genus, or class, or species of all beings.

We bow to the Devī who is modesty in all beings.

We bow to her who is peace, who is tranquility in all beings.

To her who is faith, we bow.

To that Devī who dwells in all beings as lustre and loveliness, we bow.

We bow to the Devī who dwells in all beings as good fortune.

We bow to the Devī who dwells in all beings as activity.

To her who dwells in all beings as memory, we bow.

To her who dwells in all beings as kindness, as mercy, as compassion, we bow.

We bow to her who is satisfaction, the contentment in all beings.

We bow to the Devī who resides in all beings as Mother.

We bow to that Devī who abides in all beings as delusion and error.

To the all-pervading Devī who protects the sense organs in all creatures and rules all creatures continually, we surrender, bowing again and again.

All reverence to her. She alone pervades the entire world as consciousness. We prostrate ourselves again and again.

As in olden times when invoked by the Gods to fulfill their desires, that one who is adored every day by the Lord of the Gods, may she, that Īshvari who is the source of auspiciousness, accomplish our deliverance.

We the Devas who are tormented now by asuras, we bow to that one who instantly destroys calamities, to her we surrender ourselves in devotion.

The Rishi said:

O King, while the Gods were praising and worshipping her, Pārvatī came to bathe in the waters of the Gangā. The Goddess with beautifully arched eyebrows asked: ‘Whose praise is being hymned here?’

Then an auspicious Goddess sprang forth from the treasure-house of her body and replied: ‘For me this hymn is uttered by the assembly of Gods who have been defeated in war and exiled by Shumbha and Nishumbha.’

As Ambikā manifested from the pores of Pārvatī’s body, she is glorified as Kaushikī in the three worlds.

Then Pārvatī also became black and came to be known as Kālikā and took her abode in the Himālaya.

Then Chanda and Munda, two servants of Shumbha and Nishumbha happened to see that Ambikā (Kaushikī) looking extremely beautiful. They reported to Shumbha: ‘O great King, there is an exceedingly beautiful woman whose queenly beauty is illuminating the Himālaya. No one has ever seen such sublime loveliness anywhere. Find out who that Goddess is and take possession of her, O Lord of Asuras. She is a gem among women, with exquisitely beautiful limbs which illuminate the four directions with their lustre. There she stands, O King of Demons. You deserve to see her.

Lord! Whatever precious stones, jewels, elephants, horses and so on are in the three worlds, all now decorate your house. O King, you have obtained the precious elephant Airāvata, also the fabulous tree Pārijāta, as well as the wonderful horse Uchchaishravas, which was Indra’s. Here in the courtyard stands the gem-studded chariot drawn by swans. It was brought here from Brahmā the Progenitor. Here is the treasure Mahāpadma from Kubera and the unfading lotus garland

Kinjalkinī, the gift from the ocean. Varuna's umbrella, which showers gold, now stands in your house with the superb chariot that once belonged to Prajāpati.

Lord, you have snatched Utkāntidā, the missile of Yama by which he gives exit to all creatures. Your brother now possesses the noose of the Ocean King. Nishumbha also has all the gems from the ocean while you have the two fire-proof garments from Agni.

O Demon King, as all these gems have been given you, why not also seize this jewel among women?'

The Rishi said:

After listening to all this from Chanda and Munda, Shumbha sent out the mighty Demon Sugrīva as his messenger to the Devī. He said: 'Go and convey my invitation to her in a gentle way so that she will be affectionate towards me.'

Going over to the lovely mountain seat of the Goddess, the messenger spoke in a sweet, soothing tone, saying: 'O Devī, I am the messenger of Shumbha, lord of the demons and sovereign of the three worlds. He has vanquished all his foes among asuras and even the Gods were unable to resist him. He sent me here to your presence. Listen to what he says, his message is this: 'All the three worlds are mine. Even the Gods obey me. I eat all the offerings which once were theirs. All the finest jewels of the three worlds are now mine. Even Indra's elephant, Airāvata, I now have. With salutations the Gods have even offered me the glorious horses called Ucchaishrava which arose at the churning of the milk ocean.

O magnificent lady! All the other objects which belonged to the Gods or Gandharvas or Nāgas, all are now in my possession. We regard

you, O Devī, as the jewel among womankind. Therefore, come to us, we who are the connoisseurs of gems. Come to me or to my powerful younger brother Nishumbha, O Lady of the quick side-glances, you are indeed a sparkling jewel. By marrying me, you will gain incomparable wealth. Think of the advantage and become my wife.'

The Rishi said:

When this was said, the adorable Goddess Durgā who sustains and protects the universe smiled thoughtfully and said:

'What you say is true, no doubt. Shumbha is indeed sovereign of the three worlds together with Nishumbha. But how may I nullify my former vow? Please listen to this vow I once made in ignorance: I once declared I would only marry one who could be my equal in strength, one who could defeat me in battle and remove my pride, only he could be my husband.

So let Shumbha come here, or Nishumbha the great asura, let him vanquish me without delay and gently take my hand in marriage.'

The messenger said: 'O Devī! This is arrogance! Do not talk this way to me! Name a single God from the three worlds who is capable of standing against Shumbha and Nishumbha! In fact all the Gods were unable to face even the other asuras in battle. So how could you, a single woman, do this on your own? If Indra and all the other Godheads united could not defeat Shumbha, how will you, a woman, dare to face him? It would be better that you heed my message and go to Shumbha and Nishumbha yourself. Otherwise you will suffer the humiliation of being dragged there by the hair.'

The Devī said:

‘It is true. Shumbha is strong. Nishumbha is very heroic. But what can I do? In my ignorance I made my vow earlier. You go back to the asura lord and tell him politely what I have said, then he may do whatever he pleases.’

SIX

the lion rose in anger

THE RISHI SAID:

The messenger heard the Devī's words with growing anger. He returned to the Demon King and reported them in detail. Then Shumbha in turn was angered. He summoned Dhūmrалоchana, one of his generals: 'O Dhūmrалоchana! Go with your troops and fetch her here immediately dragging her by the hair. Anyone who tries to rescue her is to be killed at once even if he is a God or a yaksha or only a gandharva!'

The Rishi said:

At this command Dhūmrалоchana immediately responded with his sixty thousand troops. Seeing the Devī seated on the snowy mountain, he shouted: 'Come at once to Shumbha and Nishumbha's presence! If you won't come sweetly I will take you by the hair and force you to come.'

The Goddess replied: 'But you are so strong, surrounded by your mighty army and protected by the lord of demons, why threaten me? What harm do you fear? What can I possibly do?'

The Rishi said:

Thus challenged, the Asura Dhūmrалоchana rushed at her. Then Ambikā reduced him to ashes just by saying 'Hum.'

This outraged the demon troops. They released showers of arrows, javelins and axes on Ambikā.

The lion, vehicle of the Goddess, rose in anger and shook his mane. He roared violently as he fell upon the army of wicked asuras. Some he slaughtered with blows from the forepaw, some with his jaws and others by his hind legs. He disemboweled some with his claws and beheaded others with a cuff of his forepaws.

He severed heads and arms from some and shook his mane as he drank the blood of others.

In an instant that whole army was destroyed by that high-spirited lion that bears the Devī. He was exceedingly angry.

When Shumbha the asura lord heard that Dhūmrалоchana was slain by the Devī and all his army slaughtered by her lion, he was furious. His lower lip quivered as he ordered two mighty asuras, Chanda and Munda: 'Ho Chanda! Ho Munda! Take multitudes of troops. Go and capture her. Bring her at once by the hair or bind her. Failing that, let the troops strike her with their weapons. Kill the lion and seize that Ambikā. When she is wounded, bind her and bring her straight here!'

SEVEN

serenely composed

THE RISHI SAID:

Then, as commanded, the Asuras Chanda and Munda marched forth with their army, all four battalions with weapons raised and ready. Soon, at the peak of the golden mountain, they saw the Devī, serenely composed, mounted on her lion. She smiled as she saw them approaching. At the sight of her, some rushed to capture her while others flourished their swords or bent their bows. At this Ambikā grew furious and in her anger her face became dark as ink.

From the fierce frown of her forehead, suddenly, the Goddess Kālī emerged holding a sword and a noose. She was truly terrifying. She had a strange staff with a skull on top. Her garland was made of skulls; her clothing of tiger skins and she was appallingly emaciated with a huge mouth and great tongue lolling out. Her eyes were deep sunk and reddened. She filled the sky with her roars.

Falling impetuously on the asura army she devoured those hosts of foes. With one hand she snatched up elephants; drivers; rear-men and warriors, bells and all, and flung them into her mouth. In the same way, she threw soldiers; horses; chariots and drivers into her mouth

and ground them horribly with her teeth. One she seized by the hair, another by the neck. One was killed by the weight of her foot and another crushed against her body.

They hurled weapons at her. She caught these in her mouth and furiously crunched them with her teeth. In this way she destroyed that whole host of evil-natured asuras. They were beaten and crushed. Many were killed by her sword. Some she beat with her Khātvanga – her skull-topped staff. Others met their death, ground by the edge of her teeth.

Seeing the whole demon army destroyed in a trice by that appalling, terrible Kālī, Chanda rushed at her while Munda gave cover with showers of arrows and discuses all over that Goddess with the terrible eyes. Then those discuses entered her mouth like so many suns consumed by cloud.

At this the Goddess Kālī roared frightfully. In her dreadful mouth, so difficult to look at, ferocious teeth gleamed. She laughed in terrible rage. Then, mounting her great lion, she rushed at Chanda, seized him by his hair as she uttered the frightful ‘Hum’ and severed his head with her sword.

Seeing Chanda brought down, Munda also rushed at her. She felled him with her scimitar in fury.

Then the remainder of the army fled in panic, scattering in all directions at the sight of mighty Chanda and Munda destroyed.

Carrying the heads of the slain Chanda and Munda, Kālī approached Chandikā and laughed as she said with passion:

‘Here I bring you two great beasts in the battle sacrifice. You yourself shall now kill Shumbha and Nishumbha.’

The Rishi said:

Then lovely Chandikā looked at the two mighty demons' heads and joked: 'Since you have now brought Chanda and Munda you will become famous in all the world as 'Chamundā.'

EIGHT

the Gods were filled with joy

THE RISHI SAID:

After the Daitya Chanda was slain and Munda was felled and so many battalions destroyed, then the Demon King, the mighty Shumbha, his mind overcome with anger, commanded the marshalling of his entire army of demons.

‘Let the eighty-six companies of troops march forth with weapons at the ready and the eighty-four Kambus march with their elephant forces. Let the fifty bravest asura clans go forth. Let the hundred families of Dhaumras go forth at my command. Let the Kālakas, the Daurhridas, the Mauryas and the Kālakeyas march out at my order, equipped for battle.’

After issuing orders, the ferocious Demon King Shumbha marched out with his thousands of forces.

Then Chandikā saw that terrible army advance. She twanged her bowstring. The sound vibrated all the space between Earth and Heaven.

Then, O King, the lion gave a mighty roar and Ambikā magnified those roars by clanging her bell. Kālī opened wide her terrible mouth

and filled the quarters with the sound 'Hum.' She overwhelmed the noises of the bowstring, the lion and the bell. The angry demon army heard that tremendous sound from all directions. They encircled those Goddesses, Chandikā and Kālī, and the lion.

O King! Then, the Shaktis of all the Gods, of Indra, Brahmā, Īsha, Vishnu and Karttikeya, all came out in their true forms to join the Goddess Chandikā in destroying the enemies of the Gods. They came with the same weapons and vehicles as the Gods from whom they had emerged.

Brahmā's Shakti, called Brahmānī, came in her chariot drawn by swans. She carries a rosary and a water-pot. Māheshvarī came riding an ox, holding her trident. She wears bracelets of great serpents and a crescent moon adorns her forehead. Ambikā-Kaumārī rides on a peacock. She carries a spear to slay demons. Vaishnavī rides on Garuda. She carries her conch, discus, mace, bow and sword. Shri Hari's Shakti advanced in the form of a boar. She is Vārāhī. Likewise, Nārasimhī came, in lionform, like Nārasimha, scattering constellations of stars with a toss of her mane. Then the thousand-eyed Indrānī came, seated on the king of elephants, wielding her thunderbolt weapon.

Then Lord Shiva, surrounded by all these Shaktis, requested Chandikā to slay the demons to please him: 'O Chandikā, delight me by slaying these demons at once.'

Immediately, the energy of Chandikā emerged from her body in the form of a ferocious, very powerful Shakti, making a noise like a hundred jackals.

This invincible Goddess, Aparajitā, said to Shiva of the dark matted locks: 'Go, my Lord, as my ambassador to Shumbha and Nishumbha. Tell those two excessively proud demons, and all the others assembled for war, that they must restore Indra as sovereign of the three worlds

so that the Gods may again eat the fruit of sacrificial offerings. Say to them: 'If you wish to continue living you must go back to hell. But, if you are still arrogant about your strength, and you still want to fight, then come on. Let my jackals feast their fill on your flesh.' As she appointed Lord Shiva himself as messenger, she became known as Shivadūtī after that.

The demons were so furious when Lord Shiva, the Lord of Destruction, told them her message that they at once marched to where Kātyāyanī stood. Enraged, they showered volleys of arrows, javelins and other weapons on the Goddess. She raised her huge bow and easily cut through their missiles of arrows, spears, darts and axes.

Then Kālī, roaming in the forefront of the battle, tore them with her pike and crushed with her skull-topped staff as she stalked about. Brahmānī sprinkled water from her Kamandalu and drained the enemies' vigor. Māheshvarī slew those daityas with her trident; Vaishnavī with her discus; Kaumārī with her javelin.

Aindrī hurled her thunderbolt down on them, tearing daityas and dānavas to pieces. They fell to Earth in hundreds, pouring streams of blood.

The boar-headed Goddess Vārāhī shattered the enemy with blows of her snout. She wounded many, tearing their breast with her tusks. Other asuras were felled by her discus.

Nārasimhī the lion-headed Goddess, roamed through the battle, filling the sky with her roars. She tore the asuras with her claws and devoured them.

Many asuras, dazed by the fierce, loud laughter of Shivadūtī, fell down and were eaten by her. The combined power of the angry Mothers was so terrible to behold that the demon army fled in disorder.

Then, the great and furious Raktabīja, seeing the rout of his troops, strode into battle. Whenever a drop of his blood fell, another demon exactly like him appeared on the Earth. With his mace he fought against the Shakti of Indra, while Aindrī fought him with her thunderbolt. Hit by the thunderbolt, his blood gushed out. Immediately fresh combatants just like him sprang up beside him. However many drops of blood that fell, so many persons of his strength and courage came into being. These ferocious warriors hurled dreadful weapons at the Mothers. Again and again the thunderbolt struck his head and the blood that flowed brought forth thousands of Raktabīja.

Vaishnavī struck with her discus and Aindrī beat him with her mace. Each cut of Vaishnavī's discus produced thousands of great demons. The world became full of them. Kaumārī struck with her spear, Vārāhī with her sword, Māheshvarī with her trident. And that great Demon Raktabīja, full of anger, struck each of the Mothers with his club. But the streams of blood pouring from him where he was hit by the spears, swords and clubs only brought countless hundreds more like him into being. The whole world became covered in demons. The Gods all were terrified.

Chandikā laughed to see this and said: 'Quick, Kālī, open your mouth wide and catch the blood and the demons coming from this great asura. Roam the battlefield and devour these fresh demons. When his blood drains he will meet his doom. As you quickly eat these the anger will be gone and no more demons will be born.'

Then Chandikā struck him with her pike. Kālī caught his blood in her mouth. He struck Chandikā with his club but it caused her no pain. Blood flowed from his many wounds and Kālī caught it all in her mouth. She also devoured the asuras who sprang from that blood.

The Goddess hit him with all her weapons; dart, thunderbolt, arrows, sword and spears and Chamundā drank all the blood.

And so it was, O King, that finally he fell on the Earth, stricken by a multitude of weapons and bloodless. Then the Gods were filled with joy and the Mothers, filled with blood, danced ecstatically.

NINE

the destroyer of all difficulties

THE KING SAID:

The story you have just related about the Devī slaying Raktabīja was wonderful. Now I want to hear about Shumbha and Nishumbha – how did they react to the death of Raktabīja?

The Rishi said:

After Raktabīja was slain and the other demons had been killed, Shumbha and Nishumbha were filled with rage. Having seen his great soldiers killed, the Asura Nishumbha rushed forward with his battalion. Surrounding and following him, the army of asuras came angrily biting their lips as they advanced to slay the Goddess. And Shumbha, full of rage after fighting the Mothers, also advanced surrounded by his troops.

The desperate combat between the Goddess and Shumbha and Nishumbha looked like two thunderclouds raining violent showers of arrows on her. Chandikā cut through those arrows with her own shower of arrows and wounded both Demon Kings' limbs with her weapons.

Nishumbha grasped a sharp scimitar and glittering shield. He struck the head of the lion, that noble beast that carried the Goddess.

When her lion was struck, the Devī quickly split his sword with a sharp arrow and destroyed his lovely shield which had been decorated with eight moons. With his shield broken and sword split, Nishumbha hurled his spear which she split with her discus as it approached.

Then Nishumbha, blazing with anger, grabbed his dart. This also she smashed with her fist. He flung his club. She shivered it to ashes with her trident. Then, as the demon advanced, battle-axe in hand, she felled him to the ground with a multitude of arrows. Seeing his mighty brother Nishumbha felled by the Goddess, Shumbha was outraged. He strode forward to kill the Mother Ambikā. As he stood on his chariot, his eight arms upraised with splendid weapons, he seemed to fill the entire sky. The Devī watched his approach and blew her conch. She twanged her bowstring making an unbearable sound. She filled all directions with the ringing of her bell which unnerved the demon hosts. The lion gave a roar which penetrated the ten regions of the sky and destroyed the pride of the demon's elephants.

Then Kālī sprang into the sky and came down, slapping the earth with both hands. This boom drowned all of those other sounds.

Shivadūtī gave an ominous loud laugh. The demons trembled and Shumbha flew into a terrible rage. Ambikā said: 'Stand still, evil one.'

The Devas all shouted: 'Victory to you.'

Shumbha came on hurling his flaming spear, terrible, like a mountain of fire. She extinguished this with her meteor.

O King! The terrible roar of the lion filled the inter-space between the three worlds. But the dreadful thunderclaps of the Devī smothered even that!

The Devī and the demon each split the hundreds of fiery arrows of the other. Then Chandikā grew angry and hit him with her trident. He fell to the ground in a faint. Then Nishumbha recovered his senses and grasped a bow. He struck the Devī and Kālī and the lion with his arrows. That Danuja Lord, the son of Diti, extended his ten thousand arms and covered Chandikā with a myriad of discuses.

Then the great Goddess Durgā, destroyer of all difficulties, became angry and split those discuses and arrows with her own arrows. Nishumbha then took up his mace and, surrounded by his army, rushed at Chandikā to kill her. Even as he came she clove his club with a sharp sword. He grabbed a pike. As Nishumbha came at her with his dart she pierced him in the heart with her swift pike. From his pierced heart another valiant warrior emerged saying: 'Stop!'

Laughing vigorously, the Devī cut off his head as he was speaking. He fell down dead. The lion then devoured the asuras whose necks he had crushed. Kālī and Shivadūti devoured others.

Many great asuras were killed by Kaumārī with her spear. Others were frightened away by Brahmānī sprinkling vibrated water.

Some were felled by Māheshvarī with her trident. Others were smashed by the snout of Vārāhī. Some were cut to pieces by her discus. Aindrī killed some with the thunderbolt from her palms. Some did away with themselves, some fled the battlefield. Others were eaten by Kālī, Shivadūti and the lion.

TEN

alone on the battlefield

THE RISHI SAID:

As Shumbha saw his brother Nishumbha, dear to him as life itself, now dead and his army slaughtered, he spoke angrily: 'O Durgā! You have become arrogant, proud of your success! Don't boast here. There is no reason to look so haughty. You depend on these others for your strength!'

The Devī said: 'O vile creature! I am all alone in the world of movement. Who else is there beside me? These Goddesses are manifestations of my powers. See! They dwell within me alone!'

Then Brahmānī and all the others were absorbed into her Ambikā was all alone.

The Devī said: 'All these forms projected here are my attributes. I have now withdrawn them. I stand alone on the battlefield.

So come on! Let's fight!'

The Rishi said:

Then, while Devas and asuras watched, a dreadful battle between the Devī and Shumbha began. They fought without quarter, hurling deadly missiles and showering arrows in a fight which frightened all the worlds. The demon lord broke the divine weapons which the Devī hurled in hundreds. The mighty weapons he employed she, Parameshwarī, easily smashed with a forceful sound of ‘Hum.’

Then the demon covered the Devī with hundreds of arrows. In her wrath she split his bow with her arrows. His bow broken, he used a pike. That too she cut with her discus as he still held it. Then he, the supreme lord of the demons, took up his sword and his brilliant shield adorned with a hundred moons. He charged.

Chandikā split his sword as he came. Her arrows also pierced his bright shield. His steeds were slain, his charioteer gone. The Daitya grasped his fearsome mace, ready to kill Ambikā. Her arrows split the mace. Shumbha raised his fist and rushed at her. He struck at her heart. She hit his chest with her open palm. He fell, wounded, to the earth. Immediately he rose again and seized her as he flew into the sky. Chandikā fought him there, unsupported.

The Siddhas and Munis watched the fight with shock and dismay. Such fierce close combat had never been seen before. After a long time Ambikā lifted him up. She whirled him around, and then she threw him down to earth.

Then that evil asura, Shumbha, raised his fist and rushed at her for the kill. This time the Devī met him with a dart which pierced his chest. He fell lifeless to the ground, shaking the entire Earth and its oceans, mountains and islands. At the death of the wicked demon the whole world rejoiced. The sky cleared. Peace was restored. The clouds and

meteors, which had foretold danger, now were gone. The rivers flowed in their courses again when Shumbha was destroyed.

The hearts of the Gods were filled with joy. The gandharvas resumed their songs. Others played instruments. Nymphs danced, gentle breezes blew, the sun glowed, and sacred fires blazed peacefully. All disturbing sounds were silenced everywhere.

ELEVEN

protect us always

THE RISHI SAID:

When the great demon was killed by the Devī, all the Gods, led by Agni, sang the praise of Kātyāyanī. Their shining faces filled the universe with radiant light:

'O Devī, you who remove the sufferings of your devotees, be pleased with us.

O Mother of all the world, be gracious.

O Queen of the universe, protect the universe.

O Devī, you rule everything that moves and everything that is immovable.

You alone are the foundation of everything. You stand in the form of the Earth. All this universe gets satisfaction from you in the form of water.

You have limitless courage. You are the Vishnu Shakti. You are the ultimate power of Māyā, the seed-source of the universe.

By your power, all this universe has been thrown into illusion, O Devī, if you become pleased you become the cause of liberation of all Creation.

All sciences are part of you. The feminine power of all women is from you.

By you alone, O Great Mother, by you alone this world is filled.

How can we sing your praise when you are beyond praise? All the sublime words are deficient.

O Devī, you are the power which resides in all beings to give them Self-realization, to give the bliss of moksha. How then can we find words to describe your glory?

You dwell as intelligence in every heart to bestow heaven and the ultimate freedom. O Nārāyanī, we bow to you!

We bow to you, O Nārāyanī, who, in the form of minutes and other divisions of time, brings about change in all things and, ultimately, the destruction of the universe.

O three-eyed Devī, giver of auspiciousness and prosperity, O Nārāyanī, you are our only refuge, we surrender to you.

We bow to you, O Nārāyanī. You are the power of creation, sustentation and destruction, eternally. You are the cause of the three Gunas and also beyond them. You are the supreme path of salvation.

You give refuge to the dejected and distressed. You also absorb all that distresses your devotees. O Nārāyanī, we bow to you.

You, who ride in the heavenly chariot drawn by swans, when you take the form of Brahmānī, you sprinkle water steeped in Kusha grass.

O Nārāyanī, we bow to you.

We bow to you O Nārāyanī, you who have the form of Māheshvarī when, holding your trident, you ride the great bull. You are adorned with the moon and a serpent.

O you who are sinless, you take the form of Kaumārī, wielding great power in your spear, accompanied by cocks and peacocks. O Nārāyanī, we bow to you.

O you who, in the form of Vaishnavī, hold the great conch, discus, mace and bow, be pleased with us, O Nārāyanī.

We bow to you, O Nārāyanī, when in the form of Vārāhī, you grasp the huge discus and support the Earth on your tusks.

In the fierce form of Nārasimha, you protect the three worlds, killing the demons. O Nārāyanī, we bow to you.

As Aindrī, you hold the thunderbolt. Crowned with a diadem, dazzling with your thousand eyes you took Vritra's life.

O Nārāyanī, we bow, we bow to you who slew the mighty hosts of daityas when you became Shivadūtī of terrible appearance and roaring voice.

In your form as Chāmundā with the garland of skulls, with your wide mouth and fearsome teeth, you killed the Demon Munda. O Nārāyanī, we bow to you.

O Nārāyanī, reverence to you, you are nourishment, modesty, prosperity, wisdom, faith.

You are the sweet libation and the sacrificial ladle.

You are the great night, the great illusion, we bow to you.

We bow to you, O Nārāyanī; you are Sarasvatī the source of understanding, beautiful, dark-bodied, and intuitive. Be pleased with us.

O Queen of all, you reside in every being. You are the power that enlivens every being.

*In the form of Durgā you cross the sea of terrible calamities to rescue us.
We bow to you.*

*May this benevolent face of yours, adorned with three eyes, protect us
from all terror. O Kātyāyanī, we bow to you.*

*The slicing edge of your flame-forged trident kills all demons. It guards
us from fear. O Bhadrakālī we bow to you.*

*O Devī! That bell of yours fills the world with its ringing. It destroys the
vigor of the demon hosts. May it save us from error, like a mother's voice.*

*O Chandikā! That sword you wield in your bright hands has brought
our salvation, smeared as it was with the fat and blood of the demons We
bow to you.*

When pleased you destroy all disease.

When angry you frustrate impure desires.

*Those who seek you are always protected. Indeed, others seek refuge in
them.*

*O Ambikā, you manifest your many forms as you worked this great
slaughter. What other Goddess is capable of this?*

*You are the light which reveals the wisdom of the Vedas, of the sciences
and of the ancient sayings. But in the dark pit of the selfish mind you cause
the universe to reel terribly.*

*Wherever rākshasas dwell, and virulent, poisonous snakes exist; where
enemies and hosts of robbers are, there you stand, even in volcanoes under
water, there you stand to protect the world.*

*O Queen of the universe, you protect and hold the universe. You are
the very Self of the universe. You are the Goddess adored by the Lord of the*

universe. Those who submit to you in devotion also become themselves the refuge of the universe.

O Goddess! Be gracious and protect us always as you have done just now by this slaughter of asuras. Destroy the sins of all the worlds, protect us from the calamities which spring from the maturing of evil conditions.

We surrender before you, be gracious O Goddess. You alone can remove the agony of the world. You are the one to be worshipped by the three worlds. Please bestow boons to the worlds.'

The Devī said:

'O Devas, I am ready; ask a boon; whatever you wish for the world, I will grant it.'

The Devas said:

'O Queen of all, as you have now destroyed our enemies, we pray you, please destroy all the troubles of the three worlds.'

The Devī said:

'When the twenty-eighth age has arrived, during the period of Vaivasvata's Manvantara, the Demons Shumbha and Nishimbha will be born as two different demons. Then I shall come out of the womb of Yashoda, in the house of Nanda-gopa, dwelling in the Vindhya Mountain, I will destroy the demons.

I shall incarnate again on Earth in a ferocious form to slay the dānavas who descend from the Viprachitti Demon. And when I chew those

fierce asuras, my teeth will become red as pomegranate flowers. Therefore the Gods in heaven and the men on Earth shall praise me as Raktadantikā when they pray.

And again, when a hundred year drought will occur I will come, mind-borne on the prayers of the saints. I shall not be born of a womb, but will behold the Munis with a hundred eyes. Then mankind shall praise me as Shatākshī, the Hundred-eyed, and I shall nourish the world with life-sustaining foliage which shall grow from my cosmic body, until the rains set in. I shall be known then as Shākambharī and shall slay the great demon called Durgama.

Then I shall be known as the Goddess Durgā, when I again assume that terrible form on the mountain Himālaya, and shall eat the rākshasas for the sake of the devoted Munis. They shall bow and humbly praise me as Durgā-devī.

When the Demon Aruna shall create havoc in the three worlds, I will be known as Bhīmā-devī. In my bee-like form as a swarm I shall slay that asura.

Then everywhere people will praise me as Bhrāmarī whenever demons disturb them and I will incarnate and kill their enemies.

TWELVE

I will quiet every trouble

THE GODDESS SAID:

And whoever, with full attention, regularly praises me with these hymns, I will quiet every trouble for him.

And when this story is told of the slaying of Madhu and Kaitabha, of the destruction of Mahishāsura, and the slaughter of Shumbha and Nishumbha, then both those who sing it and those who listen with devotion to this story of my sublime majesty on the eighth, ninth and fourteenth days of the lunar fortnight, to them no trouble shall come nor any calamities from wrong-doing, nor poverty, nor separation from loved ones. They shall not experience fear from enemies, from robbers or rulers, from fire or flood or any weapon.

Therefore this poem of my majesty must be recited and listened to with full attention and sincere devotion, for it is the supreme source of blessings.

May this poem of my glories now quell all epidemics and calamities of mind, body and spirit.

The place of my sanctuary, where this poem is chanted constantly, will always be my dwelling place. I will never forsake that place.

On all occasions of auspicious worship, when offerings are made to the Earth, and at the fire ceremony, all this story of my actions must be told and heard. I will accept with kindness the offerings made on these occasions both by the people who know the protocols and by those who do not know but who are sincere devotees.

During the annual, autumn ceremony when my worship is performed, anyone who listens with faith to this poem of my majesty, will be delivered by my grace from any troubles and be blessed with children, riches and sustenance.

Listening to my glorification brings blessings of fearlessness and heroic deeds. Enemies are vanquished and prosperity accrues. Families are joyful.

On every occasion whether at peaceful ceremony or at times when the planets foretell misfortune or to dispel nightmares, this poem may be chanted, and then those difficulties are dispelled. It produces peace in children who have become disturbed and heals rifts between people when friendships are split. It absolutely weakens all evil-doers. Devils, ghosts and demons are destroyed by its chanting.

This complete praise of me brings the devotee very close to me.

And by offerings of animals, flowers, welcoming drinks, incenses and lamps, by feeding wise men, by fire ceremonies, by daily sprinkling holy water and all other offerings – the blessings which come from all these will come to my devotee who only listens once to this recitation with love for me. They will have perfect health and protection.

This celebration of my manifestations and description of my battles frees men from foes and from fear itself.

And these hymns composed by Rishis and the praise composed by Brahmā himself bestow pure thoughts.

Anyone caught in a forest fire or in a lonely place or in water or endangered by robbers or wild animals or imprisoned or tossed in a tempest at sea or surrounded in battle by terrible weapons, if they remember this story of my power their troubles will vanish.

The Rishi said:

As the beloved Chandikā finished speaking, she vanished from the sight of the adoring Gods. Then the Gods, now free of fear, were able to resume their proper roles and enjoy their share of the offerings. Since the fierce Demons Shumbha and Nishumbha were now destroyed all other demons fled back to hell. Thus, O King, the adorable Devī, although she is eternal, incarnates again and again to safeguard the world. By her this whole universe is put under delusion and it is she who creates it all, when entreated she bestows pure knowledge, when gratified, she grants prosperity.

O King! By her, by Mahākālī who is the great destroying Goddess at the end of time, by her the whole cosmos is pervaded.

At the proper time she is indeed Mahā Mārī, the great destroyer. She is also the unborn who becomes this Creation when it is time for renewed creation. She is the eternal being who sustains created beings at the time of stability.

She is Lakshmī at the time of prosperity, bestowing blessings in the homes of mankind. When she is absent, she is Alakshmī, the cause of destitution in times of misfortune.

When praised and worshipped with flowers and incense, she bestows children and complete consciousness.

THIRTEEN

supreme knowledge

The Rishi said:

O King! I have told you this sublime poem of the Devī Māhātmyam. The Goddess maintains and supports the world by her majestic power.

She is the illusive power of the adorable Lord Vishnu and by her alone is knowledge attained.

By her power you and this merchant and other discriminating men are deluded. They have been deluded in the past and will become deluded.

O King! Go to her for refuge, she is the supreme ruler. She is the one who when worshipped bestows enjoyment and heaven and final liberation.

Mārkaṇḍeya said to his disciple Bhāguri:

O Great Sage, the King Suratha, who had been so despondent because of his great attachment to his lost kingdom, and the merchant, both bowed reverently before the great Rishi who was famous for his austerity and they immediately prepared to follow his example. They

settled on the bank of a river and began to practise penances, reciting the Devī Sūkta in order to evoke Ambā. They made a clay image of the Devī on the sands of the river and worshipped her with flowers and incense, with fire and water. They ate sparingly and sometimes fasted. Always keeping their attention on her, they offered sacrifices sprinkled with their own blood. After three years of this continual worship, Chandikā, the support of the world, was pleased with them and manifested in person to speak with them.

The Devī said:

‘Whatever you ask O King, and you also, the delight of your family, receive all that from me. I am well pleased and bestow every blessing on you both.’

Mārkaṇḍeya said:

The king chose a kingdom which would never perish, and in this life his own kingdom where his enemies would be vanquished.

Then the wise merchant, whose mind had become detached from the world, chose that knowledge which removes attachment of ‘mine’ and ‘I’.

The Devī said:

‘O King, after slaying your foes you shall regain your kingdom in a few days and it shall last as long as you live. And when you die you shall be given another birth from the Deva Vivasvāt, the Sun, and shall be a Manu on the Earth, called ‘Sāvarni.’ And, O best of merchants, I grant

you the boon you have desired of me. Supreme knowledge shall be yours: your Self-realization.'

Mārkaṇḍeya said:

Having thus granted them both the boon that each desired, the Devī vanished while they were singing her praise. Suratha was then reborn as the son of Sūrya and Savarnā. Thus he became Sāvarni the eighth Manu.



Durgā Nām'avalī

Atha Durgā-dvātryaṁshan-nāma-mālā

The Thirty-two Names of Shri Durga Mata

Aum twameva sākshāt Shrī Durgā Mātā sākshāt
Shrī Ādi Shakti Mātājī Shrī Nirmalā Devyai namo namah

O Divine Mother, You are verily Shri Durga. Salutations to You!

Durgā	You are...	The remover of all difficulties and evil
Durg'ārti-shamanī		The one who pacifies all evil
Durga-āpad-vinivārin		The destroyer of the worst evil
Durgama-chhedinī		The one who cuts down all difficulties and evil
Durga-sādhinī		The one who performs all types of disciplines to expel evil
Durga-nāshinī		The destroyer of difficulties and evil
Durgat'oddhārinī		The one who delivers us from evil and helps us to ascend
Durga-nihantrī		The one who completely destroys all difficulties and evil
Durgam'āpahā		The one who wards off evil
Durgama-gñyānadā		The bestower of knowledge most difficult to attain

Durga-daitya-loka-davānalā ...	The one who destroys by fire-storm the kingdom of evil
Durgamā	The one who gauges and limits evil
Durgam'ālokā	The one whose lustrous form is difficult to perceive
Durgam'ātma-swarūpinī	The one whose inner soul is unfathomable
Durga-mārga-pradā	The bestower of the most difficult path (to God-realisation)
Durgama-vidyā	The one who is in the form of unattainable knowledge
Durgam'āshritā	The refuge from all evil
Durgama-gñyāna-saṁsthānā .	The abode of the knowledge most difficult to attain
Durgama-dhyāna-bhāsinī	The one who enlightens through meditation that is difficult to attain
Durgamohā	The one who deludes evil
Durgamagā	The unapproachable mountainous form
Durgam'ārtha-swarūpinī	The one whose essence and form is difficult to attain
Durgam'āsura-saṁhantri	The destroyer of the most formidable evil
Durgam'āyudha-dhārīnī	The wielder of weapons against evil
Durgam'āṅgī	The one who is difficult to approach in the physical body
Durgamatā	The one who is difficult to meditate upon and perceive
Durgamyā	The one who is difficult to gain or accomplish
Durgam'eshwarī	The supreme Goddess who is difficult to attain
Durga-bhīmā	The one who terrifies evil

Durga-bhāmā	The beautiful young woman who is angry and wrathful towards evil
Durgabhā	The one who illumines the darkness of evil
Durga-dārinī	The one who sustains the difficult narrow path

The garland of the thirty-two names of Shri Durga (which are translated above and taken from the Durga Saptashati) is given here with the names in their original shloka form. They are considered to be most effective for the worst difficulties and problems.

Atha Durgā-dvātryaṁshan-nāma-mālā

Durgā Durg'ārti-shamanī Durg'āpad-vinivārinī

Durgama-chhedinī Durga-sādhinī Durga-nāshinī

Durgat'oddhārinī Durga-nihantrī Durgam'āpahā

Durgama-gñyānadā Durga-daitya-loka-davānalā

Durgamā Durgam'ālokā Durgam'ātma-swarūpinī

Durga-mārga-pradā Durgama-vidyā Durgam'āshritā

Durgama-gñyāna-saṁsthānā Durgama-dhyāna-bhāsinī

Durgamohā Durgamagā Durgam'ārtha-swarūpinī

Durgam'āsura-saṁhantri Durgam'āyudha-dhārinī

Durgam'āṅgī Durgamatā Durgamyā Durgam'eshwarī

Durga-bhīmā Durga-bhāmā Durgabhā Durga-dārinī

Nām'āvalim'imām yastu Durgāyā mama mānavah

Shri Durga says: Any human being who recites this garland of My names

Pathet sarva bhayān mukto bhavishyati na saṁshayah

Will no doubt be free from all types of fear, danger and evil.

Sākshāt Shrī Ādi Shakti Mātājī

Shrī Nirmalā Devyai namo namah

Shrī Siddha-Kunjikā-stotram

The Key to Enlightenment

Atha Siddha-kunjikā-stotram

Here begins the Siddha Kunjika stotram.

Shiv'ovācha

Thus spoke Shri Shiva:

- 1 Shṛunu Devī pravakshyāmi, Kunjikā-stotram-uttamam
O Goddess Parvati, please listen to that most enlightened prayer called Kunjika,

Yena mantra-prabhāvena, Chandī-jāpah shubho bhavet
that renders the tremendous power of the Devī Māhātmyam even more auspicious.

- 2 Na Kavacham n'ārgalā-stotram, Kīlakam na Rahasyakam
Without enlightenment there is no use reciting the Devi Kavach, the Kilakam, the Rahasyakam,

Na Sūktam n'āpi dhyānam cha na nyāso na cha v'ārchanam
the Devi Suktam, the Dhyanam, the Nyasam, nor any other form of worship.

- 3 Kunjikā-pāthā-mātreṇa, Durgā-pātha-phalam labhet
Only by reciting the Kunjika, one would enjoy the blessings of the whole Durga Sapta-shati.

Ati guhya-taram Devī, Devānām'api durlabham
O Goddess, this is a great secret hidden even from the gods.

- 4 Gopanīyam prayatnena, svay'oniriva Pārvatī
*O Goddess Parvati, please protect that most profound
and inner-most secret,*

Māranam mohanam vashyam, stambhan'ochhātan'adikam
*since by reciting this most excellent Kunjika prayer,
negativity would be completely destroyed,
auspiciousness would be attracted to you,*

Pātha-mātreṇa saṅśidhyet, Kunjikā-stotram-uttamam
*you would achieve mastery over all things,
you would become steadfast,
and negativity would be yanked out from the root.*

- 5 Atha mantrah
Here begin the mantras:

Aum Aīm Hṛīm Klīm Chāmudāyai vicche
Aum Glaum Hum Klīm Jūm Sah
Jvālaya Jvālaya jvala jvala Prajvala Prajvala
Please enlighten, enlighten! Shine, shine! Brighter, brighter still!

Aīm Hṛīm Klīm Chāmudāyai vicche
Jvala Ham Sam Lam Ksham Phat svāhā

Iti mantrah
These are the mantras.

- 6 Namaste Rudra-rūpinyai, namaste Madhu-mardini
*Salutations to You in the form of Rudra, the destroyer;
Salutations to You, the killer of Madhu;*

namah Kaitabha-hāriṇyai, namaste Mahish'ārdini
*Salutations to You, the killer of Kaitabha;
Salutations to You, the killer of Mahisha;*

- 7 Namaste Shumbha-hantryai cha Nishumbh'āsura -ghātini
*Salutations to You, the killer of Shumbha;
Salutations to You, the killer of the asura Nishumbha.*

Jāgratam hi Mahādevī, japam siddham kurushwa me
*When awakened, O Great Goddess,
please give success to my recitation.*

- 8 Aīñkārī sṛushti-rūpāyai, Hṛīñkārī Pratipālīkā
*You are in the form of Aim (Mahakali),
 You are in the form of the created universe (Mahasaraswati),
 You are in the form Hrim (Mahalakshmi),
 You are the sustainer of all things.*
- Klīñkārī Kāma-rūpinyai, Bīja-rupe namo'stute
*You are in the form of Klim, You are in the form of pure desire,
 You are in the form of the seed. Salutations to You!*
- 9 Chāmundā Chandā-ghātī cha Yaikārī Varadāyini
*O Chamunda, You are the destroyer of Chanda,
 You are in the form of Yai and the giver of all boons.*
- Vicche chā'bhayadā nityam, namaste Mantra-rūpini
*Through the sound Vicche, You give us fearlessness.
 Eternal salutations to You, who is in the form of mantra.*
- 10 Dhām Dhīm Dhūm Dhūrjatehe Patnī
You are the consort of the Lord with the matted locks (Shri Shiva),
- Vām Vīm Vūm Vāg'adh'īshwarī
You are the Goddess who sustains speech,
- Krām Krīm Krūm Kālikā Devi
You are the Goddess Kalika, who is black,
- Shām Shīm Shūm me shūbham kuru
Please give me auspiciousness.
- 11 Hum Hum Humkāra-rūpinyai
*You are in the form of the Humkara,
 the sound with which the Goddess destroys;*
- Jam Jam Jam Jambha-nādinī
whose sound is like the thunderbolt,
- Bhrām Bhrīm Bhrūm Bhairavī Bhadre
the auspicious shakti of Bhairava, the terrible one;
- Bhavānyai te namo namah
*the ruler of all that has become.
 Salutations to You again and again!*

- 12 Am Kam Cham Tam Tam Pam Yam Sham
Vīm Dum Aīm Vīm Ham Ksham Dhijāgram Dhijāgram
May these sounds grant Self-realisation.

Trotaya Trotaya Dīptam kuru kuru svāhā
Please enlighten us, enlighten us; and may we dissolve.

- 13 Pām Pīm Pūm Pārvatī Pūrnā
Salutations to You, the complete Parvati.

Khām Khīm Khūm Khecharī tathā
You are the Khechari state that makes the vibrations flow.

- 14 Sām Sīm Sūm Sapta-shatī Devyā
*You are the Goddess of the Durga Sapta-shati,
the ten thousand verses in praise of Shri Durga.*

Mantra-siddhim kurushwa me
Please give fulfillment to our mantras.

- 15 Idam tu Kunjikā-stotram, mantra-jāgarti-hetave
*This is the Kunjika prayer,
the divine prayer that gives complete enlightenment
and awakens the power of mantras.*

abhakte n'aeva dāta-vyam, gopitam raksha Pārvatī
*O Goddess Parvati, please protect this most powerful of secrets
and never give it to those who are not true devotees.*

yastu Kunjikayā Devi, hīnam Sapta-shatīm pathet
*Those who would recite the Durga Sapta-shati
without this prayer of Shri Kunjika,*

na tasya jāyate sidhir-aranye rodanam yathā
would no more gain enlightenment, than by wailing in the forest.

- 16 Iti Shrī-rudrayāmale Gaurī-tantre
*Thus the Kunjika prayer,
which forms part of the Rudrayamala and the Gauri-tantra,*

Shiva-Pārvatī-soaṅvade
which was recited by Shri Shiva to please Goddess Parvati,

Kunjikā-stotram sampūrnā
reaches its fulfilment.

Aum tat sat
Amen. That is the absolute truth.

Sākshāt Shrī Ādi Shakti Mātājī
Shrī Nirmalā Devyai namo namah

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The *Shri Siddha-Kunjika-stotram* or *The Key to Enlightenment* (also known as *The Key to the Durga Sapta-shati*, the ten thousand verses in praise of Shri Durga), is traditionally read before havan and is full of the power of Goddess Durga. It is said to be as powerful as the whole *Devī Māhātmyam* and *Sapta-shati* combined. A video recording of the Shri Mahakali Puja in Lonavala, India, on 19 December 1982, shows *The Shri Siddha-Kunjika-stotram* being recited before Shri Mataji.



Devī Sūktam

Aparajīta hymn from the Devī Māhātmyam

Namo Devyai Mahādevyai

The gods said: Salutations to the Devi, to the Great Goddess.

Shivāyai satatam namah

Salutations always to Her who is ever auspicious.

Namah Prakṛtyai Bhadrāyai

*Salutations to Her who is the primordial cause
and the sustaining power.*

Niyatāhā pranatāhā-smatām

*With complete reverence and full attention,
we make obeisance to Her.*

Raudrāyai namo Nityāyai

Salutations to Her who is terrible, to Her who is eternal.

Gauryai Dhātryai namo namah

Salutations to Shri Gauri, the supporter (of the universe).

Jyotsnāyai cheindu-rūpinyai

*Salutations always to Her who is
of the form of the moon, moonlight,*

Sukhāyai satatam namah

and happiness itself

Kalyānyai pranatām Vṛuddhyai

We bow to Her who is welfare.

Siddhyai Kūrmyai namo namah

Salutations to Her who is prosperity and success.

Naiṛutyai bhūbhṛtām Lakshmyai

Salutations to the consort of Shri Shiva

who is Herself the good fortune,

Sharvānyai te namo namah

As well as misfortune of beings.

Durgāyai Durgā-pārāyai

Salutations always to Shri Durga

who takes one across in difficulties,

Sārāyai Sarvakāriṇyai

Who is the author of everything,

Khyātyai tathaeva Kṛishnāyai

Who is the knowledge of discrimination; and who is blue-black,

Dhūmrāyai satatam namah

As also smoke-like in complexion.

Atisaumy'āti-Raudrāyai

We prostrate before Her

who is at once most gentle and most terrible.

Natāstasyai namo namah

We salute Her again and again.

Namo Jagat-pratishthāyai

Salutations to Her who is the support of the world.

Devyai Kṛutyai namo namah

Salutations to the Devi who is in the form of the will.

Yā Devī sarva bhūteshu Vishnumāy'eti shabditā

Salutations again and again to the Devi

who in all beings is called Vishnumaya (illusion of Vishnu).

Namas Tasyai namas Tasyai namas Tasyai namo namah

Yā Devī sarva bhūteshu Chetan'ety'abhidhīyate

Salutations again and again to the Devi

who abides in all beings as consciousness.

Namas Tasyai namas Tasyai namas Tasyai namo namah

Yā Devī sarva bhūteshu Buddhi rūpena saṁsthitā

Salutations again and again to the Devi

who abides in all beings as intelligence.

Namas Tasyai namas Tasyai namas Tasyai namo namah

Yā Devī sarva bhūteshu rūpena saon̄sthitā
Namās Tasyai namās Tasyai namās Tasyai namo namah

Nidrā	Sleep
Kshudhā	Hunger
Chhāyā	Reflection
Shakti	Cosmic energy
Trushnā	Thirst
Kshānti	Patience
Jāti	Inner quality
Lajjā	Modesty
Shānti	Peace
Shraddhā	Faith
Kānti	Charm
Lakshmī	Wealth
Vṛutti	Temperament
Smṛuti	Memory
Dayā	Compassion
Tushti	Fulfillment, satisfaction
Mātrū	Divine Mother
Bhrānti	Confusion

Indriyānām-ādhisthātṛī

To the all-pervading Devi,

Bhūtānām chākhīleshu Yā

Who constantly presides over the senses of all beings,

Bhūteshu satatam Tasyai

and governs all the elements,

Vyāpti Devyai namo namaha

Salutations.

Chiti rūpena Yā kṛtsnam-

Salutations to Her who abides in the form of consciousness,

Etad Vyāpya sthitā jagat

and pervades this entire world,

Namās Tasyai Namās Tasyai

Namās Tasyai namo namah

Salutations again and again!

Stutā Suraihi pūrvam-abhishta-saon̄shrayat-

Invoked of yore by the Devas for the sake of their good wishes,

Tathā Surendrena dīneshu sevītā

and adored by the lord of the Devas every day,

Karotu Sā nah Shubha-hetur-Īshwarī

May She, the Ishwari, the source of all good,

Shubhāni bhadrānya-abhīhantu ch'āpadah

Auspicious things, put an end to our calamities!

Yā sāmpratam choddhata daitya tāpitair

We Devas, tormented by arrogant asuras,

Asmābhir-Īshā cha Surair-namasyate

Again give reverence and salutations to Her,

Yā cha smṛuta tat-kshana-meva hanti nah

Who, called to mind by us obeisant with devotion,

Sarv'āpado bhakti-vinamra mūrtibhihi

Destroys this very moment all our calamities.

Sākshāt Shri Shakti Mātāji

Shri Nirmalā Devyai namo namah

The Devi Suktam is performed on the second night of Navaratri.



The Kavach of the Devi

Shrī-Chandī-Kavacham

Our guru is the Great Mother. All Her shakti and yogini aspects are available for Her children. By reading the Kavach of the Devi, we mobilise these powers to purify and enlighten our koshas (our mental, emotional and physical bodies). Thus, by the power of the Guru-mata, the Atma becomes the guru of the body. May the wisdom and compassion of our sat-guru flow through us and reach the four quarters of the Earth!

Atha Shrī-Chandī-Kavacham

Here begins the Chandī Kavach:

Aum Shrī Ganeshāya namah, Shrī-Saraswatyai namah

Aum. Salutations to Shri Ganesha. Salutations to Shri Saraswati.

Shrī-Gurubhyo namah, Shrī-Kula-devatāyai namah

Salutations to Shri Guru. Salutations to the deity worshipped in the family (that is Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi).

Avighnam astu, Aum Nārāyanāya namah

May there be no obstacles. Amen, salutations to Shri Narayana.

Aum Nara-nar'ottamāya namah

Aum Saraswatī Devyai namah

Shrī Vedavyāsāya namah

Amen, salutations to Shri Vishnu. Amen, salutations to Goddess Saraswati. Salutations to Sage Vyasa.

Atha Devyāh Kavacham

Here begins the main part of the Devi Kavach:

Asya Shrī-Chandī-kavachasya Brahmā ṛishih

The presiding sage of Shri Chandi-Kavach is Brahma,

Anushtup chhandah, Chāmundā devatā

The metre is Anushtubh. The presiding deity is Chamunda.

Aṅga-nyās'okta-mātarō-bījam, Digbandha-devatās-tattwam

The main seed is Anga-nyasokta Matar. The principle is Digbandha-devata.

Shrī-Jagadambā-prīty'arthe

Sapta-Shatī pāth'āngatvena jape viniyogah

It is recited as part of the Sapta-shati (seven hundred verses in praise of Shri Durga) to please Shri Jagadamba.

Aum namash-Chandikāyai

Amen. Obeisance to Chandika.

Mārkandeya uvācha

Thus spoke Markandeya:

1 Aum yad-guhyam paramam loke
sarva-rakshā-karam nṛinām

Amen. O Brahmadeva, please tell me that which is very secret and has not been told to anybody,

Yan-na kasya-chid'ākhyātam tanme, brūhi Pitāmaha

and which protects all beings in this world, in every way.

Brahm'ovācha

Brahmadeva said:

2 Asti Guhya-tamam vipra, sarva-bhūt'opa-kārakam

O Brahmin! That which is most secret, auspicious and benevolent to all beings

Devy'āstu kavacham punyam, tach-chhṛinushwa Mahāmune

Is the Kavach of the Devi. Please listen to that, O great sage.

3 Prathamam Shaila-putrī cha, dvitīyam Brahma-chārini

First, Shaila-putri (the daughter of the mountain), second, Brahma-charini (the one who observes the state of celibacy),

Tṛitīyam Chandra-ghant'etī, Kūshmānd'eti chatur-thakam

Third, Chandra-ghanta (adorned with the moon as Her bell), fourth, Kushmanda (the one whose void contains the universe),

- 4 Panchamam Skanda-māt'eti, shashtham Kātyāyan'īti cha
*Fifth, Skanda-mata (the mother of Karttikeya), Sixth, Katyayani
 (the foster daughter of Sage Katyayana),*
- Saptamam Kāla-rātr'īti, Mahā-gaur'īti ch'āshtamam
*Seventh, Kala-ratri (the dark night of dissolution), eighth, Maha-gauri
 (the Adi Kundalini),*
- 5 Navamam Siddhi-dātrī cha, nava Durgāh pra-kīrtitāh
*Ninth, Siddhi-datri (the bestower of special divine powers). Durga is known
 by these nine names,*
- Uktāny'etāni nāmāni, Brahman'aiva Mah'ātmanā
As told by the great soul Brahmadeva Himself.
- 6 Agninā dahya-mān'astu, shatru-madhye gato rane
Those who are engulfed by fire or surrounded by enemies on the battlefield,
- Vishame durgame ch'aiva, bhayārtāh sharanam gatāh
Or being at an impassable place or frightened, if they surrender (to Durga),
- 7 Na teshām jāyate, kinchid-ashubham rana-saṅkate
They will never suffer any misery or misfortune, even at time of war.
- N'āpadam tasya pashyāmi, Shoka-duhkha-bhayam na hi
They will face no calamity, grief, sorrow or fear.
- 8 Yaistu bhaktyā smṛitā nūnam, teshām vṛiddih prajāyate
Those who remember You with great devotion indeed have prosperity.
- Ye twām smaranti Deveshi, rakashase tān-na saṁshayah
Undoubtedly, O supreme Goddess, You protect those who remember You.
- 9 Preta-saṁsthā tu Chāmundā, Vārāhī mahish'āsanā
The goddess Chamunda sits on a corpse, Varahi rides on a buffalo,
- Aindrī gaja-samārūdhā, Vaishnavī Garud'āsanā
Aindri is mounted on an elephant and Vaishnavi on a condor (Garuda),
- 10 Māh'eshwarī vṛish'ārūdhā, Kaumārī shikhi-vāhanā
Maheshwari is riding on a bull, the vehicle of Kaumari is a peacock,
- Lakshmīh padm'āsanā Devī, padma-hastā Hari-priyā
*Lakshmi (the beloved of Shri Vishnu), is seated on a lotus and is also holding
 a lotus in her hand.*
- 11 Shweta-rūpa-dharā Devī, Īshwarī vṛisha-vāhanā
The goddess Ishwari, of white complexion, is riding on a bull,

- Brahmī haṁsa-samārūdhā, sarv'ābharana-bhūshitā
Brahmi, who is bedecked with all ornaments, is seated on a swan.
- 12 Ity'etā Mātarah sarvāh, sarva-yoga-sam-anvitāh
All the mother goddesses are endowed with yoga
- Nānā-bharana-shobhā-dhyā, nānā-ratn'opa-shobhitāh
and are adorned with different ornaments and jewels.
- 13 Dṛishyante ratham-ārudhā, Devyah krodha-samā-kulāh
All the goddesses are seen mounted in chariots and are full of anger.
- Shaṅkham chakram gadām shaktim,
halam cha musal'āyudham
They are wielding conch, discus, mace, plough, club, shield, javelin,
- 14 Khetakam tomaram chaiva, parashum-pāsham-eva cha
Axe, noose, barbed dart, halter, whip,
- Kunt'āyudham trishulam cha, shārṅgam-āyudham-uttamam
Trident, spear, and bow and arrows.
- 15 Daityānām deha-nāshāya, bhakt'ānāma-abhayāya cha
*These goddesses are wielding their weapons constantly, to destroy
the bodies of demons,*
- Dhārayanty'āyudhān'ittham, Devānām cha hitāya vai
For the protection of devotees and for the benevolence of the gods.
- 16 Namaste'stu Mahāraudre, Mahāghora-parākrame
Salutations to You, O Goddess of very dreadful appearance, of frightening valour,
- Mahābale Mahotsāhe, Mahābhaya-vināshini
Of tremendous strength and energy, the destroyer of the worst of fears.
- 17 Trāhi mām Devī dush-prekshye, shatrūnām bhaya-varadhini
*O Devi, it is difficult to have even a glance at You. You increase the fears
of Your enemies, please protect me.*
- Prāchyām rakshatu mām-Aindrī, Āgneyyām-Agni devatā
*May the goddess Aindri protect me from the east, Agni devata (goddess of fire)
from the south-east,*
- 18 Dakshine'vatu Vārāhī, Nairityām Khadga-dhārinī
*Varahi (the shakti of Vishnu in the form of the boar) from the south,
Kadga-dharini (the wielder of sword) from the south-west,*
- Prātichyām Varunī rakshed, Vāya-vyām Mṛiga-vāhinī
*Varuni (the shakti of Varuna the rain god) from the west, Mṛiga-vahini
(whose vehicle is the deer) protect me from the north-west.*

- 19 **Udīchyām pātu Kaumārī, Aishānyām Shūla-dhārīnī**
May the goddess Kaumari (the eternal virgin, the shakti of Karttikeya) protect me from the north and the goddess Shula-dharini from the north-east,
- Ūrdhvam Brahmāni me rakshed'adhastād-Vaishnavī tathā**
Brahmani (the shakti of Brahma) from above and Vaishnavi (shakti of Vishnu) from below, protect me.
- 20 **Evam dasha disho rakshyech-Chāmundā Shava-vāhanā**
O Goddess Chamunda, who sits on a corpse, please protect me from all the ten directions.
- Jayā me chāgratah pātu, Vijayā pātu p̄rishthatah**
May the goddess Jaya protect me from the front and Vijaya from the rear,
- 21 **Ajitā vāma-pārshve tu, dakshine ch'āparājītā**
Ajita from the left and Aparajita from the right.
- Shikhām me Dyotinī rakshed, Umā mūrdhni vyava-sthitā**
May the goddess Dyotini protect the top-knot and may Uma cover my head and protect it.
- 22 **Mālādhārī lalāte cha, bhṛivau rakshed-Yashasvinī**
May I be protected, by Maladhari on the forehead, Yashasvini on the eye-brows,
- Trinetṛā cha bhṛivor-madhye-Yamaghantā cha nāsike**
Trineta on the hamsa, Yamaghanta on the inner part of the nose,
- 23 **Shāṅkhinī chakshushor-madhye, shrotrayor Dwāra-vāsīnī**
Shankhini on both the eyes, Dwara-vasini on the ears.
- Kapolau Kālikā rakshet-karnamūle tu Shāṅkarī**
May Kalika protect my cheeks and Shankari the roots of the ears.
- 24 **Nāsikāyām Sugandhā cha, uttar'oshthe cha Charchikā**
May I be protected by Sugandha on the nose; Charchika, the upper lip;
- Adhare ch'āmṛuta-kalā, jīhvāyām cha Saraswatī**
Amruta-kala, the lower lip; Saraswati, the tongue;
- 25 **Dantān-rakshatu Kaumārī, kantha-deshe tu Chandikā**
Kaumari, the teeth; Chandika, the throat;
- Ghantikām Chitra-ghantā cha, Mahāmāyā cha tāluke**
Chitra-ghanta, the sound-box; Mahamaya, the crown of the head;
- 26 **Kāmākshī chibukam rakshed, vācham me Sarva-maṅgalā**
Kamakshi, the chin; Sarva-mangala, speech;

- Grīvāyām Bhadrakālī cha, pṛishtha-vamśhe Dhanur-dharī
Bhadrakali, the neck; Dhanur-dhari, the spine.
- 27 Nīla-grīvā bahih-kanthe, nalikām Nalakūbarī
May Nilagriva protect the outer part of my throat and Nalakubari the windpipe.
- Skandhayoh khadginī rakshed, bāhū me Vajra-dhārinī
May Khadgini protect my shoulders and Vajra-dharini protect my arms.
- 28 Hastayor-Dandinī rakshed-Ambikā ch'āṅgu-līshu cha
May Devi Dandini protect both my hands; Ambika, the fingers;
- Nakhān Chhūleshwarī rakshet-kukshau rakshet-Kuleshwarī
Shuleshwari, my nails; and may Kuleshwari protect my belly.
- 29 Stanau rakshen-Mahādevī, manah Shoka-vināshinī
May I be protected by Mahadevi, the breast; Shoka-vinashini, the mind;
- Hṛidaye Lalitā Devī, udare Shūla-dhārinī
Lalita Devi, the heart; Shula-dharini, the stomach;
- 30 Nābhau cha Kāminī rakshed, guhyam Guhy'eshwarī tathā
Kamini, the nabhi; Guhyeshwari, the hidden parts;
- Pūtanā-kāmikā medhram, gude Mahisha-vāhinī
Putana-kamika, the reproductive organs; Mahisha-vahini, the rectum.
- 31 Katyām Bhagavatī rakshej-jānunī Vindhya-vāsinī
May the goddess Bhagavati protect my waist; Vindhya-vasini, the knees;
- Jānghe Mahābalā rakshet-sarvakāma pradāyinī
The wish-fulfilling Mahabala protect my thighs.
- 32 Gulphayor-Nārasimhī cha, pāda-pṛishthe tu Taijasī
May Narasimhi protect my ankles, may Taijasi protect my feet,
- Pād'āṅgulīshu Shrī rakshet-pād'ādhas-Talavāsinī
Shri Devi protect my toes, may Talavasini protect the soles of my feet.
- 33 Nakhan-Damśhtrā-karālī cha, keshān-chaiv'Ordhva-keshinī
May Damshttra-karali protect my nails; Urdhva-keshini, the hair;
- Roma-kūpeshu Kauberī, tvacham Vāg-īshwarī tathā
Kauberi, the pores; Vag-ishwari, the skin.
- 34 Rakta-majjā-vasā-māmsāny'asthi-medamsi Pārvatī
May the goddess Parvati protect blood, marrow of the bones, fat and bone;

- Antrāni kāla-rātrish-cha, pittam cha Mukuteshwari
Kala-ratri, the intestines; Mukuteshwari, bile (and liver).
- 35 Padmāvatī padmakoshe, kaphe Chūdā-mani-stathā
May Padmavati protect the chakras; Chuda-mani, phlegm (or lungs);
- Jwālā-mukhī nakha-jwālām-Abhedya sarva-sandhishu
Jwala-mukhi, lustre of the nails; and Abhedya, all the joints;
- 36 Shukram Brahmānī me rakshet-chhāyām
Chhatreshwari tathā
Brahmani, semen; Chhatreshwari, the shadow of my body;
- Ahamkāram mano buddhim, rakshen-me Dharma-dhārinī
Dharma-dharini, ego, superego and intellect (Buddhi);
- 37 Prānā-pānau tathā vyānam-udānam cha samāna-kam
Vajra-hasta, the five vital breaths (prana, apana, vyana, udana, samana);
- Vajra-hastā cha me rakshet-prānam Kalyāna-shobhanā
Kalyana-shobhana, Prana (the life force).
- 38 Rase rūpe cha gandhe cha, shabde sparshe cha Yoginī
May Yogini protect the sense organs (that is the faculties of tasting, seeing, smelling, hearing and touching),
- Sattvam rajas-tamas-chaiva, rakshen-Nārāyanī sadā
May Narayani protect sattva, rajas and tamo gunas.
- 39 Āyū rakshatu Vārāhī, dharmam rakshatu Vaishnavī
Varahi, life; Vaishnavi, dharma;
- Yashah kīrtim cha Lakshmīn-cha, dhanam Vidyām cha Chakrinī
Lakshmi, success and fame; Chakrini, wealth and knowledge;
- 40 Gotram-Indrāni me rakshet-pashūn-me raksha Chandike
Indrani, relatives (lineage); Chandika, cattle (sustenance);
- Putrān-rakshen-Mahālakshmīr-bhāryām rakshatu Bhairavī
Mahalakshmi, children; and Bhairavi, spouse.
- 41 Panthānam Supathā rakshen-mārgam Kshema-karī tathā
May Supatha protect my journey and Kshema-kari my way.
- Rājadwāre Mahālakshmīr-Vijayā sarvatah sthitā
May Mahalakshmi protect me in the king's courts (all official places) and Vijaya everywhere.

- 42 **Rakshā-hīnam tu yat-sthānam, varjītam kavachena tu**
O Goddess Jayanti, any place that has not been mentioned in the Kavach and has thus remained unprotected,
- Tat-sarvam raksha me Devī, Jayantī pāpa-nāshinī**
May that be protected by You, the destroyer of sins.
- 43 **Padam'ekam na gachhettu, yadīchhe-chhubham'ātmanah**
One should invariably cover oneself with this Kavach wherever one goes
- Kavachen'āvṛito nityam, yatra-yatr'aiva gachhati**
and should not walk even a step without it, if one desires auspiciousness.
- 44 **Tatra tatrārtha-lābhash-cha, Vijayah sarva-kāmikah**
Then one is successful everywhere, in all things.
- Yam yam chintayate kāmam, tam tam prāpnoti nishchitam**
All one's desires are surely fulfilled,
- Param'aish-varyam-atulam, prāpsyate bhūtale pumān**
and that person enjoys great prosperity on the Earth.
- 45 **Nirbhayo jāyate martyah, saṅgrām'eshv'aparājītah**
The person who covers themselves with the Kavach becomes fearless, is never defeated in battle,
- Trailokye tu bhavet-pūjyah, kavachen'āvṛītah pumān**
and becomes worthy of being worshipped in the three worlds.
- 46 **Idam tu Devyāh kavacham, Devānām'api dur-labham**
This Devi Kavach is inaccessible even to the gods.
- Yah pathet-prayato nityam, trisandhyam shraddhay'ānvītah**
One who reads with faith every day thrice (morning, afternoon and evening),
- 47 **Daivī kalā bhavet-tasya, trailok-yeshv'aparājītah**
Receives the divine arts (the shaktis), is undefeated in the three worlds,
- Jīved-varsha-shatam, sāgram-apa-mṛityu-vivar-jītah**
Lives for a hundred years and is free from accidental death.
- 48 **Nashyanti vyādhayah sarve, lūtā-visphotak'ādayah**
All diseases (such as boils, scars, etc.) are destroyed.
- Sthā-varam jaṅga-mam ch'aiva, kṛitri-mam ch'āpi yad-visham**
Moveable (scorpions and snakes) and immovable (other) poisons cannot affect them.
- 49 **Ābhi-chārāni sarvāni, mantra-yantrāni bhūtale**
All those who cast magical spells by mantras or yantras, on others for evil purposes,

- Bhū-charāh khe-charāsh-ch'aiva jala-jāsh ch'opadeshikāh
All negative forces active in water or in the air,
- 50 Sahajā kulajā mālā, dākinī shākinī tathā
All kinds of bhoots roaming about the Earth,
- Antariksha-charā ghorā dākinyashcha mahā-balāh
All those who mesmerise others,
- 51 Graha-bhūta-pishāchāsh-cha, yaksha-gandharva-rākshasāh
All yakshas and gandharvas, all negative entities,
- Brahma-rākshasa-vetālāh, kūshmāndā bhairav'ādayah
All demons and evil forces,
- 52 Nashyanti darshanāt-tasya, kavache hrīdi samsthite
Are destroyed just by the sight of the person having the Kavach in their heart.
- Mānonnatir-bhaved rāgñyas tejo-vṛiddhi-karam param
Whoever reads the Kavach with devotion, their dignity and prosperity increases.
- 53 Yashas-āvardhate so'pi, kīrti-mandita-bhūtale
That person receives more and more respect and prowess.
- Japet-Sapta-shatīm Chandīm, kṛitvā tu kavacham purā
*On the Earth, they rise in prosperity and fame by reading the Kavach
and the Sapta-shati (seven hundred verses in praise of Shri Durga),*
- 54 Yāvad-bhū-mandalam dhatte-sashaila-vana-kānanam
and by meditating on Shri Chandi. Their progeny will thrive,
- Tāvat-tishthati medinyām, santatih putra-pautrikī
as long as the Earth is rich with mountains and forests.
- 55 Dehānte paramam sthānam, yat-surair-api durlabham
By the grace of Mahamaya, they will attain the highest state,
- Prāpnoti purūsho nityam, Mahāmāyā-prasādatah
Which is extremely difficult even for the gods,
- 56 Labhate paramam rūpam, Shivena saha modate, Aum
and is eternally blissful in the company of Lord Shiva, Aum.
- Iti Devyāh Kavacham sampūrnā
Thus the Devi Kavach reaches its fulfilment.

Sākshāt Shri Ādi Shakti Mātāji
Shri Nirmalā Devyai namo namah

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