

The Devi Mahatmyam

(Glory of the Goddess)

from the Markandeya Purana.

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This great story, in praise of the Mother, the Great Goddess, commences by telling of a sorrowful king who paces about with unseeing eyes. He represents us all as he poses the fundamental questions: 'who am I; what is the purpose of this existence,' for he has lost his apparent direction as a ruler since his kingdom has been lost.

Although he is in a forest hermitage, a refuge, he does not even notice the peaceful animals and pleasant gardens. He sees instead his lost kingdom. He remembers his wonderful war-elephant. Was anyone taking proper care of him, he wondered. He sighs to think of his subjects being ill-treated by those treacherous men who had usurped his kingdom.

The story begins prosaically enough but states that this is also an account of how this king evolved spiritually to become the legendary Manu Savarni, the presiding sage of the eighth Mantavara (a part of a cycle of creation).

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 Samadhi. 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 ruler-ship. 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 Mahamaya which binds all creatures throughout their lives. This illusion makes them believe their existence is permanent. This power is the Great Goddess, the Devi 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 Mahamaya: 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 Devi you call Mahamaya? 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 Nidra.

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

Lord Brahma, 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 Nidra, she who is highest in the heart of Vishnu. He desired her to awaken Hari and to open his eyes. The glorious lord Brahma 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 Brahma said:

‘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 Ishvari.

O Devi how can I praise you?

Wherever anything exists

an inseparable part of its soul is that which empowers.

That power is yourself.

O Devi 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 Shiva, 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 Devi! 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 Brahma to awaken Lord Vishnu so that he would slay Madhu and Kaitabha. Then, in the sight of Lord Brahma of inscrutable birth, the Devi withdrew herself from Lord Vishnu’s eyes, nose and limbs and emerged from his innermost heart and breast.

She arose to stand detached from Janardana, 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 Brahma.

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 Mahamaya, 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 Brahma. Listen, I will tell you more of her achievements.’

Chapter Two

The Rishi said:

Once upon a time, when Mahishasura 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 Mahishasura took Indra’s place as lord of the heavens.

The defeated devas, led by Brahma, approached Shiva and Vishnu. There were thirty gods including Surya, Indra, Agni, Anila, Vayu, Chandramas, Varuna and Yama. They all described in detail how the evil Maishasura 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 Brahma, 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 manifest 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 Brahma’s light came her feet and by the Sun her toes were made. The Vashus’ light became her fingers and Kubera’s light her nose. Prajapati’s light became her teeth and her three eyes came from the light of Narayana. Her womb came from Agni’s light and the two Sandhyas gave her eyebrows. Her ears came from the light of Vayu. So it was that from these lights of so many devas the auspicious Devi became visible.

Then, as they gazed at her, those gods who’d been so oppressed were suddenly filled with joy.

From his trident Pinaka, 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 Marutas presented her bow and arrows while Indra drew her bell from his elephants 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 Brahma. Surya’s rays illumined the pores of her skin. Kala, 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 fore-arms; 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 Himavan adorned her with jewels and gave her a lion to ride. Kubera, the lord of wealth gave her a chalice filled with ambrosia. 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 Devi 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 Mahishasura. Then, as the asuras all charged towards that terrifying challenge of the Devi, Mahishasura 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 Mahishasura’s armies. They were led by the generals Chikshura and Chamera with their myriads of chariots. Udagra brought his sixty thousand chariots. Mahahanu had ten million chariots. Asiloma brought fifteen million to battle. Baskala had six million. Ugra-darshana and Parivarita came with thousands of elephants and horses and ten million chariots to fight. Bidala 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 Devi in that battle.

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

They hurled nooses and clubs at her. Some attack 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 Devi 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, Ambika 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 halberks and tridents. Her ganas were filled with energy by the power of the Devi. They blew conches while some played

mrdangams and tabors. It now became a mighty martial festival.

The Devi 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 Devi.

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. Ambika 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 Devi, showered her with flowers in their gratitude.

Chapter Three

Seeing the Mother Ambika 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.

Bhadrakali, the great Devi, 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, Chamara, charged up on his elephant. He hurled his spear at Ambika who gave a disparaging hoot and struck it down lusterless. Seeing his broken spear fall Chamara 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 Chamara. They both fought fiercely as they fell from the elephant. Then the lion sprang up to the sky and came down severing Chamara's head with a blow of his paw.

Udgara was killed in the battle by the Devi using stones and trees and other missiles. And Karala she killed with her teeth, fists and palms.

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

The supreme three-eyed Goddess slew Ugrasya and Ugravirya and Mahahanu 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 Devi 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, Mahishasura rushed to attack the Devi's lion. This enraged Ambika.

Mahishasura, 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, Chandika 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 Ambika beheaded that lion Mahishasura 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 Chandika became really angry. Her eyes grew red and she laughed as she quaffed a divine drink again and again.

He was puffed up with his frenzy and strength and hurled mountains against Chandika 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, while I finish this wine. 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, Mahishasura's real form began to emerge from his buffalo mouth. Chandika 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 Devi while the gandharva chiefs sang and apsaras danced for joy.

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 Ambika 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 Chandika whose peerless majesty and strength cannot even be described by the adorable Lords Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu.

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

O Devi, 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 Alakshmi, 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 Devi, 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 Devi, your complete divinity is expressed as 'Svaha', giving satisfaction to all the gods in the sacrificial fires.
 You are also the 'Svadha' who satisfies the ancestral beings.
 Therefore people chant you as Svaha and Svadha 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 Rik and Yajur and Saman hymns, whose chanting is adorned by the OM. You are Bhagavati, 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 Durga, 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 Gauri 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 splendor of finest gold.
 It is utterly astonishing that, after seeing your beauty, Mahisha-asura struck at your face in anger!
 And how strange, O Devi, that when he saw your face grow angry with terrible frowns and rosy as the rising moon, Mahisha asura did not instantly drop dead. For who can survive the sight of the enraged Destroyer?
 O Devi! 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 Mahisha asura 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 Devi, 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 Durga! 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 Devi. 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 valor 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 Devi, 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 Devi, protect us with your spear. O Ambika, protect us with your sword, by the sound of your bell, by the twang of your bowstring! O Chandika, guard us in all four directions with your spear. O Ishvari, 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 Ambika, 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 Devi 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 Mahisha asura, 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 Ambika, as you have blessed us.'

The Rishi said:

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

So now, O King, I have told you about the Devi 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 Gauri to slay the wicked demons; Shumbha and Nishumbha, for the protection of the three worlds. I will tell you exactly what happened.

Chapter Five.

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 Surya, Chandramas, Kubera, Yama, Vayu, 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 Vishnumaya who is the illusive power of Shri Vishnu.

The Devas said: *"Salutations to the Devi, the Mahadevi. 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 Gauri, 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 Kalyani who enables us to perfect ourselves.

We bow to Lakshmi who prospers us.

We bow to Sharvarni who is the arbiter of kings.

Reverence to Durga, 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 Devi 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 Devi 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 Devi who dwells in all beings as lustre and loveliness, we bow.

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

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

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

To the all-pervading Devi 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 Ishvari 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, Parvati came to bathe in the waters of the Ganga. 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 Ambika manifested from the pores of Parvati's body she is glorified as Kausiki in the three worlds.

Then Parvati also became black and came to be known as Kalika and took her abode in the Himalaya.

Then Chanda and Munda, two servants of Shumbha and Nishumbha happened to see that Ambika (Kausiki) looking extremely beautiful. They reported to Shumbha: 'O great king there is an exceedingly beautiful woman whose queenly beauty is illuminating the Himalaya. 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 Airavat, also the fabulous tree Parijata, as well as the wonderful horse Uchhaishrava, which was Indra's. Here in the courtyard stands the gem-studded chariot drawn by swans. It was brought here from Brahma the Progenitor. Here is the treasure Mahapadma from Kubera and the unfading lotus garland Kinjalkini, the gift from the ocean. Varuna's umbrella, which showers gold, now stands in your house with the superb chariot that once belonged to Prajapati.

Lord, you have snatched Utkrantida, 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 Sugriva as his messenger to the Devi. He said: 'Go and convey my invitation to her in a gentle way so that she will be affectionate toward me.'

Going over to the lovely mountain seat of the Goddess, the messenger spoke in a sweet, soothing tone, saying: 'O Devi, 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, Airavata, I now have. With salutations the Gods have even offered me the glorious horses called Uchhaihsravas which arose at the churning of the milk ocean.'

O magnificent lady! All the other objects which belonged to the gods or gandhavas or nagas, all are now in my possession. We regard you, O Devi, 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 Durga 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 Devi! 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 Devi 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.’

Chapter Six

The Rishi said:

The messenger heard the Devi’s words with growing anger. He returned to the Demon King and reported them in detail. Then Shumbha in turn was angered. He summoned Dhumralochana, one of his generals: ‘O Dhumralochana! 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 Dhumralochana immediately responded with his sixty thousand troops. Seeing the Devi 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 replies: ‘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 Dhumralochana rushed at her. Then Ambika reduced him to ashes just by saying ‘Hum’

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

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 fore-paw, 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 Devi. He was exceedingly angry.

When Shumbha the asura lord heard that Dhumralochana was slain by the Devi 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 Ambika. When she is wounded, bind her and bring her straight here!’

Chapter Seven

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 Devi, 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 Ambika grew furious and in her anger her face became dark as ink.

From the fierce frown of her forehead, suddenly, the Goddess Kali 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 throws 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 Khatvanga – 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 Kali, 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 Kali 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, Kali approached Chandika 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 Chandika 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 ‘Chamunda’.’

Chapter Eight

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 Kalakas, the Daurhritas, the Mauryas and the Kalakeyas march out at my order, equipped for battle.’

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

Then Chandika 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 Ambika magnified those roars by clanging her bell. Kali 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, Chandika and Kali and the lion.

O King! Then, the shaktis of all the gods, of Indra, Brahma, Isha, Vishnu and Kartikeya, all came out in their true forms to join the Goddess Chandika in destroying the enemies of the gods. They came with the same weapons and vehicles as the gods from whom they had emerged.

Brahma’s shakti, called Brahmani, came in her chariot drawn by swans. She carries a rosary and a water-pot. Maheshvari came riding an ox, holding her trident. She wears bracelets of great serpents and a crescent moon adorns her forehead. Ambika-Kaumari rides on a peacock. She carries a spear to slay demons. Vaishnavi rides on Garuda. She carries her conch, discus, mace, bow and sword. Sri Hari’s shakti advanced in the form of a boar. She is Varahi. Likewise, Narasimhi came, in lion-form, like Narasimha, scattering constellations of stars with a toss of her mane. Then the thousand-eyed Indrani came, seated on the king of elephants, wielding her thunderbolt weapon.

Then Lord Shiva, surrounded by all these shaktis, requested Chandika to slay the demons to please him: ‘O Chandika, delight me by slaying these demons at once.’

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

This invincible goddess, Aparjita, 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 Shivaduti 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 Katyayani 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 Kali roaming in the forefront of the battle, tore them with her pike and crushed with her skull-topped staff as she stalked about. Brahmani sprinkled water from her Kamandalu and drained the enemies' vigor. Maheshvari slew those daityas with her trident; Vaishnavi with her discus; Kaumari with her javelin.

Aindri hurled her thunderbolt down on them, tearing daityas and danavas to pieces. They fell to earth in hundreds, pouring streams of blood.

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

Narasimhi 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 Shivaduti, 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 Raktabija, 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 Aindri 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 Raktabijas.

Vaishnavi struck with her discus and Aindri beat him with her mace. Each cut of Vaishnavi's discus produced thousands of great demons. The world became full of them. Kaumari struck with her spear, Varahi with her sword, Maheshvari with her trident. And that great demon Raktabija, 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.

Chandika laughed to see this and said: 'Quick, Kali, 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 Chandika struck him with her pike. Kali caught his blood in her mouth. He struck Chandika with his club but it caused her no pain. Blood flowed from his many wounds and Kali 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 Chamunda 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.

Chapter Nine

The king said:

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

The Rishi said:

After Raktabija 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. Chandika 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 steed was struck the Devi 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 Ambika. As he stood on his chariot, his eight arms upraised with splendid weapons, he seemed to fill the entire sky. The Devi 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 un-nerfed 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 Kali sprang into the sky and came down, slapping the earth with both hands. This boom drowned all of those other sounds.

Shivaduti gave an ominous loud laugh. The demons trembled and Shumbha flew into a terrible rage.

Ambika 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 Devi smothered even that!

The Devi and the demon each split the hundreds of fiery arrows of the other. Then Chandika 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 Devi and Kali and the lion with his arrows. That danuja lord, the son of Diti, extended his ten thousand arms and covered Chandika with a myriad of discuses.

Then the great Goddess Durga, 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 Chandika 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 Devi cut off his head as he was speaking. He fell down dead. The lion then devoured the asuras whose necks he had crushed. Kali and Shivaduti devoured others. Many great asuras were killed by Kaumari with her spear. Others were frightened away by Brahmani sprinkling vibrated water. Some were felled by Maheshvari with her trident. Others were smashed by the snout of Varahi. Some were cut to pieces by her discus. Aindri killed some with the thunderbolt from her palms. Some did away with themselves, some fled the battlefield. Others were eaten by Kali, Shivaduti and the lion.

Chapter Ten

The Rishi said:

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

Some were felled by Maheshvari with her trident.

Others were smashed by the snout of Varahi. Some were cut to pieces by her discus. Aindri killed some with the thunderbolt from her palms. Some did away with themselves, some fled the battlefield.

Others were eaten by Kali, Shivaduti and the lion.

Chapter Ten

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 Durga! 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 Devi 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 Brahmani and all the others were absorbed into her body. Ambika was all alone.

The Devi 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 Devi 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 Devi hurled in hundreds. The mighty weapons he employed she, Parameshwari, easily smashed with a forceful sound of 'Hum.'

Then the Demon covered the Devi 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. Chandika 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 Ambika. 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. Chandika 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 Ambika 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 Devi 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.

Chapter Eleven

The Rishi said:

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

*'O Devi, 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 Devi 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 Maya, the seed-source of the universe.
By your power all this universe has been thrown into illusion, O Devi, 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 Devi, 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 Narayani, we bow to you!
We bow to you O Narayani, 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 Devi, giver of auspiciousness and prosperity, O Narayani, you are our only refuge, we surrender to you.
We bow to you O Narayani. 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 Narayani, we bow to you.
You, who ride in the heavenly chariot drawn by swans, when you take the form of Brahmani, you*

sprinkle water steeped in Kusha grass. O Narayani, we bow to you.

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

O you who are sin-less, you take the form of Kaumari, wielding great power in your spear, accompanied by cocks and peacocks. O Narayani, we bow to you.

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

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

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

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

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

In your form as Chamunda with the garland of skulls, with your wide mouth and fearsome teeth, you killed the demon Munda. O Narayani, we bow to you.

O Narayani, 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 Narayani, you are Sarasvati 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 Durga 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 Katyayani we bow to you.

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

O Devi! 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 Candika! 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 Ambika, 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 rakshasas dwell, and virulent, poisonous nagas, where devils dwell and venomous 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 Devi 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 Devi said:

'When the twenty-eighth Age has arrived, during the period of Vaivasvata Manu-antara, 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 danavas 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 Raktadantika 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 Shatakshi, 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 Shambhari and shall slay the great demon called Durgama.

Then I shall be known as the goddess Durga, when I again assume that terrible form on the mountain Himalaya, and shall eat the rakshasas for the sake of the devoted munis. They shall bow and humbly praise me as Durga-devi.

When the demon Aruna shall create havoc in the three worlds I will be known as Bhima-devi in my bee-like form as a swarm I shall slay that asura.

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

Chapter Twelve

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 the asura Mahisha, 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 evildoers. 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 Brahma 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 Chandika 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 Devi, 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 Mahakali 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 Maha Mari 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 Laxmi at the time of prosperity, bestowing blessings in the homes of mankind. When she is absent, she is Alaxmi, the cause of destitution in times of misfortune.

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

Chapter Thirteen

The Rishi said:

O King! I have told you this sublime poem of the Devi Mahatmya. 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.

Markandeya said to his disciple Bhaguri:

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 practice penances, reciting the Devi Sukta in order to evoke Amba. They made a clay image of the Devi 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, Chandika, the support of the world, was pleased with them and manifest in person to speak with them.

The Devi 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.'

Markandeya 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 Devi 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 Vivasvat, (the Sun), and shall be a Manu on the earth, called 'Savarni.' And, O best of merchants, I grant you the boon you have desired of me. Supreme knowledge shall be yours: your self – realization.'

Markandeya said:

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

OM tvameva sakshat, Shri Mahalakshmi, Mahasarasvati, Mahakali Trigunat Mika Kundalini sakshat, Shri Adi Shakti Mataji, Shri Nirmala Devi, namoh namah.

OM tvameva sakshat, Shri Kalki sakshat, Shri Adi Shakti Mataji Shri Nirmala Devi namoh namah.

OM tvameva sakshat Shri Kalki sakshat, Shri Sahasrara Svamini, Moksha Pradayini sakshat, Shri Nirmala Devi, namoh namah.