

॥ श्रीः ॥

Devi Māhātmyam
Apr 2020 Discourse Series
Part - 2

By

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3OmtxWFE6>

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॥śrī sadgurucaraṇāravindābhyāṃ namaḥ ॥

॥ श्रीः ॥



śrī vimarśānandanāthaṃ satyāmbāsahitaṃ gurum |
hṛtpadmakarṇikā madhye bhāvayet sarvasiddhaye ||
śrī prakāśānandanāthaṃ vimarśāmbā sahitaṃ gurum |
hṛtpadmakarṇikā madhye bhāvayet sarvasiddhaye ||
śrī rāmānanda nāthaṃ rāmāmbā sahitaṃ gurum |
hṛtpadmakarṇikā madhye bhāvayet sarvasiddhaye ||

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Introduction

śrī gurubhyo namaḥ ||

śiva-śakti samārambhāṃ bhāsurānanda madhyamāṃ |
asmat śrī nātha paryantāṃ vande guru paramparām ||

Last week, we saw Kavacam, Argalam and Kīlakam in detail. Today I want to start again by just talking a bit about Kavacam, before moving on to the first chapter. Kavacam can be chanted independently just by itself, not just as a part of Devi Māhātmyam chanting. I explained in detail last week how Kavacam was revealed by Brahma to Mārkaṇḍeya Maḥarīṣi. Even Brahma is no exception when it comes to being confronted by problems. In fact the first chapter is about how Devi comes into play to protect Brahma. Brahma ends Devyāh Kavacam with:

prāpnoti puruṣo nityam mahāmāyā prasādataha |
labhate paramam rūpam śivena sahamodate ||
(Verse 55-56, Devyāh Kavacam)

The phrase “Mahāmāyā Prasādataha” is the clue that Brahma gives us [about Devi’s manifest Grace about to be revealed], as we enter into the first chapter.

First Chapter--Prathama Caritram

Mantric Aspects

Even the first verse in the first chapter is very beautiful. Just as Brahma ends with Mahāmāyā in the Kavacam, Mārkaṇḍeya Maḥarīṣi starts with Mahāmāyā and states that we are going to witness the prabhāvam of Mahāmāyā.

mahāmāyānu bhāvena yathā manvantarādhipaha |
sa babhūva mahābhāgaha sāvarṇistanayo ravehe ||
(Verse 3, Chapter 1)

The first chapter starts with “Sāvarṇih” and the thirteenth chapter also ends with “Sāvarṇir”. Sāvarṇih is the son of Sūrya. The whole story of Devi Māhātmyam is about how Sāvarṇih becomes the eighth Manu. To elaborate, Sāvarṇih is born as the son of Sūrya, receives the anugraha or Grace of Divine Mother Mahāmāyā, and (through Her Amazing Grace) attains ādhipatyam or Lordship over the manvantara (epoch/age of a manu or period of time). So if we were to examine who the main character of the Devi Māhātmyam is, it is Mahāmāyā. For Mahāmāyā, the māyā beejam (also Mahālakshmi beejam) “Hreem” is the beejam mantra or seed mantra.

Before we go into the chapter in depth, I would like to share an important detail [regarding mantra śāstra]:

The first chapter starts with “Mārkaṇḍeya Uvāca” and the thirteenth chapter ends with “sāvṛṇir (bhavitā) manuhu”. If you take the first letter from the beginning of the first chapter and yoke it to the last letter of the thirteenth chapter, it yields “Ma-nu-hu”--which evokes the śabda: “mantra”. The Devi Māhātmyam has been filled with mantras: Some of them will be apparent as you read them. Many of them will not be so obvious. Every śloka in the Devi Māhātmyam has a mantra, beejākṣara or nāmā yoked to it. In fact there has been so much research done on this; and various *tantra* books talk about these details elaborately.

Let us survey the various seed mantras that are contained in the Devi Māhātmyam. Let us look at the first verse of the first chapter.

sāvṛṇis-sūrya tanayo yo manuh kathyateṣṭamaha |
niśāmaya tadutpattim vistarād gadato mama II
(Verse 1, Chapter 1)

Just the first line of this verse contains/encompasses the following beeja (seed) mantras:

- aim - Mahāsarasvatī beeja-mantram
- hreem (Māyā beejam). In śākta sampradāyam, this beejam is important - it represents the Bhuvaneśvarī beejam and Mahālakṣmī beejam. As you may know, Mahālakṣmī plays the main pivotal role in the Madhyama Caritram in Devi Māhātmyam and has “hreem” as Her beejam.
- kleem - Mahākālī beeja-mantram
- śreem - Lakṣmī beeja-mantram
- eem - Kāmakalā beeja-mantram
- śroum - Nārasimha beeja-mantram
- gloum - Vārāhī beeja-mantram
- gam - MahāGaṇapati beeja-mantram
- houm - Prasāda beejam (Śiva beejam)
- aim eem ouhu - Cetanī mantra also known as “Traipura Kanda”

For example, in the first verse in “niśāmaya”, consider the syllable “ya”. Counting the 8th vyanjana / akṣara from “ya” takes us to “**ha**”. Furthermore, “sūrya tanayo” refers to sūrya, who has agni beejam (*repam*) -- hence the beeja mantra here is “**ra**”. Sāvṛṇih represents “**eem**”-kāram. If we combine “ha” “ra” and “eem”, we get “**hreem**” as the beeja mantra. The phrase “tadutpattim” evokes the origination of and growth of all mantras: hence [this *padam*] encompasses just about every mantra, its origins and its greatness. In a manner similar to how “hreem” is derived, you can extract all other beeja mantras from the above verse in the Devi Māhātmyam. [Great Seers speak of the equivalence of the “hreem” beeja mantra to the praṇava mantra “aum”].

You are aware of Gāyatrī Mantra which is given to you in actual syllables. Typically, in Śrīvidyā tantras, and śākta upaniṣads, the mantras are not usually given directly. They are hidden behind (words). For example, in the Devi atharvaśīrṣa upaniṣad, the navākṣarī and pancadaśī mantra *uddhāraṇas* are embedded. There are books like “Mantra Nigandū” [in thamizh] which lists all the mantra-deciphering rules. The key thing that I want you to remember is **even though Devi Māhātmyam appears like a story being recounted, it is embedded with so many mantras [and is therefore a mantra śāstram]. If we understand this well, we will know to safeguard the Caṇḍī or Devi Māhātmyam carefully, reverentially.** [Mantra by definition, protects]. When we learn that the Caṇḍī is full of mantras, we are filled with even more respect, bhakti and śraddhā.

The King and the Merchant

Now there are three main characters you will see from the first chapter till the end. The Devi Māhātmyam starts with Mārkaṇḍeya Ṛṣi recounting how Saavarnih became the Manvantarādhipati (ruler of the Manvantara) -- if we were to examine who receives this story, we will see the characters of King Suratha and the merchant Samādhi.

King Suratha was a just ruler of a kingdom. He treated all his citizens like his own family. During the course of this rule, he was defeated by his neighboring kingdom--the latter’s army attacked Suratha’s army and defeated King Suratha and his army--the strange thing was that the enemy’s army was a lot smaller! When King Suratha returned to his palace, he realized that his own ministers had been working against him. He learned of how the ministers had misused the funds of his treasury against him. With no other course left to him, and fearing for his own safety, Suratha leaves his palace under the pretext of going for a wild hunt in the forest. He mounts a horse and sets off by himself (leaving behind his family and courtiers), and eventually comes to the forest. All of us get influenced by “vāsanā phalam” - the effect of one’s past memories making one recollect past places and events, even when one moves to a new place. Suratha was no exception. As Suratha was wandering in the forest, he kept mulling over his past, and wondering how his wife and children were dealing with things in his absence. He even thought about how he missed his court elephant which was very faithful to him and all his citizens! Worrying is an inherent human nature. Man and his worries are never apart for long. Worry and man’s mind seem to be made for each other! Remember, there is no good versus bad worry--both good and bad worries are preoccupations of the mind.

As he is wandering around looking for a place to rest, he comes across an hermitage. The place feels very calm and serene. Ṛṣi Sumedhas, who runs that hermitage, welcomes the King and asks him to stay with him, which comforts the king. The King does stay back and watches the Ṛṣi teaching the Vedas and its angas (parts/branches) to his disciples. So who is Sumedhas? Lakshmi Tantra states that Sumedhas Ṛṣi is Vaśiṣṭha Mahārṣi himself--that the two are one and the same. Alternately, we can also think of this Ṛṣi Sumedhas as someone very much like Vashishta Mahārṣi--with vaiśiṣṭyam equivalent to Vaśiṣṭha. The words uttered by Sumedhas are nothing but truth. In another source, we hear that Sumedhas is verily a form of Lord Mahāviṣṇu. It is said, Mahāviṣṇu took this Ṛṣi form just to explain the prabhāvam of Mahāmāyā to Suratha and Samādhi. Why do I emphasize this? The words of Ṛṣi Sumedhas reflect verily the whole

Truth, satyam, āśram. What he recounts is glorious, equivalent to the vedas. Thus, you should think of the **Devi Mahatmyam as śruti, and as being equivalent to the Vedas.**

Now King Suratha is spending his days in the āśrama of Sumedhas. The story is not interesting when there is only one actor! We need at least one more person! One day, Suratha does encounter another man close to the āśramam, who appears to be very sad and in deep thought. The king, by his good nature, senses something wrong and reaches out to the other man. The name of this second man is Samādhi. He is a merchant whose own children plotted against him, to loot the merchant's wealth and turn him out of his own house. Not one of his extended families was willing to support him. He was so frustrated and left his own house. When the king learns of the plight of Samādhi, he consoles Samādhi and tells him, "Let us go to Ṛiśi Sumedhas and talk to him. I am sure he can suggest a resolution for our problems."

Thus they both reach out to Ṛiśi Sumedhas, elaborate their current woes, and ask the Ṛiśi: "What is the reason for our problems?"

Please note: All subjects are easy to learn and grasp except Philosophy! (Philosophy is one of those subjects where) you will feel like you 'got' it, but [even after studying it] it will also feel as if you don't 'get' anything. It is like trying to catch a fast-swimming fish! The Ṛiśi decides to employ a story to give Suratha and Samādhi the answers they seek. The Ṛiśi talks about a great many things before telling the story. He asks them: "Do you think Jñānam is only for humans?" He states, "From birds to insects to animals, they all have [Jñānam] intrinsically:

jñānamasti samastasya janitor viṣaya gocare ||

(Verse 47, Chapter 1)

You think that only you have problems. (When in truth) All that we experience is the work of Mahāmāyā. It is her prabhāvam that lets us do all activities--good and bad-- as well as all the acts that we engage in just in the nick of the time, acts we engage in while mentally deluded. It is not just you, but great Ṛiśi-s and evensākśāt Lord Mahāviṣṇu are not exempt from Her prabhāvam! Human beings always engage in activities with an expectation. Can we not help for the sake of helping? [We should but we don't]. But look around. The birds--at the cost of their own lives--feed their offsprings, expecting nothing in return.

Mahāṛiśi Sumedhas goes on to explain more and the king [and the merchant] hear the phrase "Mahāmāyā" repeated very often! The king proceeds to ask the Ṛiśi:

"We understand that Mahāmāyā is the one responsible for our problems too.. [Where is she?] Can you tell us more about her? Who is She? What is her origin? What is her form? How can we reach out to Her? There is none other than you who can tell us. Please explain in detail."

tat sarvam śrotumicchāmi tvatto brahmavidām vara ||

(Verse 62, Chapter 1)

Now the ball is in the Ṛiśi's court! This is when the Ṛiśi starts narrating the story! You will understand as you read through the verses. The thing that I want you to remember is that

Mahāmāyā is the central character or heroine here. She manifests in different names in the three stories.

Prathama Caritram

At the end of Mahā-pralayam (cosmic dissolution), there are no living beings -- no activity. Lord Mahāviṣṇu is lying on the bed of Ādiśeṣa and is in Yoganidrā. [What is Yoganidrā?] For all of us, if we are awake for eight to ten hours, we typically will fall asleep. The same thing would happen, if you are also working hard physically: we will fall into deep sleep. But for the devātās, their eyelids don't move and they never fall asleep. [Yoganidrā is mystic slumber where the yogi's mind is dissolved into supreme consciousness]. So for Mahāviṣṇu, at the end of Mahāpralaya, there is no apparent real work and he is in Yoganidrā -- referred to as "Viṣṇu Māyā". After a while, from his earwax, two asuras (Madhu, Kaiṭabha) jump out and start growing very quickly. They start playing with each other and would fight amongst themselves as well. They get bored and looking around, they see Lord Brahma meditating on the top of the lotus emerging from the nābhi (navel) of Viṣṇu. [They decide they want what Brahma has]. They start troubling Brahma. Brahma wonders, "I was not doing anything to these people. I was just on my own meditating. Why did I get this problem?" If someone asks us that same question, we will not have an answer. But devās have an advantage over us-- they can see through the three kāla-s (past, present, future). Brahma quickly realizes that he cannot win against these asuras. He needs his father, Viṣṇu, to fight them -- but Viṣṇu is in Yoganidrā -- because of Mahāmāyā.

Brahma chants "Rātrī Sūktam" which starts with "Viśveśvarīm" after he realizes that Viṣṇu-Māyā is the cause of the Yoganidrā of Viṣṇu. To please her, he starts chanting the Rātrī Sūktam-- which you all are familiar with. In his commentary to the Devi Māhātmyam (known as "Guptavati") Śrī Bhāskararāya Makhin calls the Rātrī Sūktam as Kālī Sūktam.

There are quite a few Sūktams in the Devi Māhātmyam:

- Devi Sūktam ("Namo Devyai Mahā Devyai" in Chapter 5)
- Nārāyaṇī Stuti (considered Nārāyaṇī Sūktam in Chapter 11)
- Śakrādi Stuti or Indrādi Stuti (Chapter 4). Śrī Bhāskararāya also calls this "Lakṣmī Sūktam" as Mahālakṣmī is central to the Madhyama Caritram.

Rātrī Sūktam is also part of the Ṛg Veda. Again, known as Kālī Sūktam.

One thing you may wonder about: Now if Brahma needs Viṣṇu to fight the Asuras (recall that Viṣṇu is called Madhusūdana, and Kaiṭabha-hārī because He slayed the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha), shouldn't Brahma be praying to Viṣṇu? Why does Brahma pray instead to Divine Mother Yoganidrā? Lord Parameśvara, delegated four devātās for running the universe: Mother Bhavāni for Bhogam (enjoyment), Lord Viṣṇu for Puruṣārthā activities, Mother Kālī for triggering Anger and Mother Durgā for waging righteous war. Now if Viṣṇu has to fight, Viṣṇu has to be awakened from his Yogic slumber; Kālī has to be roused in him; Viṣṇu needs to be

incited to anger and to battle the twin demons Madhu-Kaiṭabha. That's why for the first chapter, we say, Mahākālī is the devātā, Brahma is the Ṛṣi and the Ṛg Veda is the svarūpam. Now you might also wonder: Why can't Kālī fight the Asuras Herself? You see in later stories, Kālī engages in the war Herself against the Asuras. But the situation with Madhu-Kaiṭabha is complex: The Asuras Madhu-Kaiṭabha are fighting with their hands-- they are wrestling. It is not appropriate for Kālī to wield a weapon here--Brahma sees that the one who would need to wrestle with the demons is indeed only Mahā Viṣṇu -- who is lying in yogic slumber here. In order for Viṣṇu to awaken, the Mahāmāyā that he is absorbed in, in the form of Yoga-Nidrā, needs to be brought out - and replaced instead with the anger of Mahākālī so that He may fight the demons. Therefore finally towards the end of the first chapter, Brahma chants “Mohayaitau..”

One thing I will tell you: When you need something from someone, it is important at the very outset, to clearly determine and articulate what you need--as the person you seek the help from may not have a great deal of time. After propitiating the Divine Mother with her nāmās “tvam svāhā tvam svadhā”, Brahma eventually gets to the crux of his request:

**mohayaitau durādharsā vasurau madhu-kaiṭabhau
prabodham ca jagat-swāmī nīyatām-acyuto laghu ||**
(Verse 86, Chapter 1)

Tāmasī

Brahma puts forth the supplication to the Divine Mother YogaMāyā (Mahākālī) that She needs to emerge out of Viṣṇu (so that He may awaken) and then She needs to enter into the Asuras to cause mental delusion within them. Why? These Asuras have begotten a boon that they may perish in a manner of their own choosing--that is, they will not die until they choose to. Now, it is clear that these Asuras under normal circumstances are not going to ‘wish’ to die. Something out of the way has to happen for them to wish to die! Hence the minds of the demons need to be in the clutches of moha or delusion. Hence the poignant and beautiful way in which Brahma propitiates Kālī into doing the needful.

The actual story of the first chapter finishes in ten verses after Mahāviṣṇu wakes up! Mahākālī is propitiated as Tāmasī --

evam stutā tadā devī tāmasī tatra vedasā

Why is the *padam* “Tāmasī” employed? The great Yoganidrā from whose embrace Mahāviṣṇu had to be released is the power [of **inertia**] of Mahāmāyā. [Tamas is the guṇa of inertia and potentiality, and it is tamas that causes slumber. Mahāmāyā as tāmasī is the only one who can release someone from inertia]. The only person to witness how Mahākālī (tāmasī) emerges from Mahāviṣṇu is Brahma. Mahārīṣi Sumedhas explains that Kālī emerges through various orifices of Viṣṇu's body: his nostrils, his eyes, his mouth and other parts of the body. (Remember how after we sleep, we stretch our body and yawn). Brahma gets the blessed darśanam of Mahāmāyā as she emerges from Viṣṇu in the aforementioned way.

As soon as Viṣṇu awakens, Brahma tells the Asuras, that they should not fight with him, as he is

a ‘small’ person--and that the asuras must fight Viṣṇu instead. [The haughty asuras turn their attention to Viṣṇu]. And the fight between the Asuras and Viṣṇu goes on for about ~5000 years. Even the great Viṣṇu had to fight the asuras for a really long time. Now Viṣṇu wonders, “I was sleeping so well and was awakened--now I have been fighting with these two ruffians with no end in sight”. He merely thinks [about the play of events] and he sees Mahāmāyā in his Mind’s Eyes. He then meditates on the sankalpa of Mahāmāyā and Her Play. Remember Brahma has already asked Mahāmāyā to delude the asuras.

Remember, Mahāmāyā did not enter the Asuras until then. Once she enters into them, she causes mental delusion in them. Thus deluded, the Asuras who were fighting until then, announce to Viṣṇu: “You have been fighting so well for all these years--we are so happy [with you]. Ask us for anything and we shall grant it to you!”

Viṣṇu, who had been waiting for this opportune moment, responds, “Tell me the way by which I can kill you”. Once a boon has been promised, the asuras can not rescind it. They realize that they have been fooled--so they look around themselves to devise a way out of their own destruction. Seeing only water all around them -- with only Brahma, Viṣṇu, Ādiśeṣā and themselves as the players in those surroundings -- they tell Viṣṇu, “ you can only kill us where there is no water”. Viṣṇu accepts the condition, and meets it thus: He grows his own body expansively (in such a way that his thighs are not submerged under water), places the asuras on his raised thighs, and destroys the two asuras by beheading them with his Cakrāyudha. The blood and the flesh from the bodies of the asuras spills all over--this blood and flesh solidify to become the land mass on this earth. That is why the Divine Mother is known as Medinī [the Devī Bhāgavatam references this]. Children are told not to eat the mud and sand as these are supposed to represent the flesh of asuras.

So what we need to learn from this story is as follows: in this first story, Brahma meditated on Mahāmāyā as Mahākālī --and while others may not have been able to see Kālī, he was the one blessed with the darśanam of Divine Mother as Kālī.

One thing to understand from this story is, **if you believe ambālī is in any given place and pray sincerely to Her, ambālī will fulfill your wishes in exactly the same manner as you wish. Remember when Brahma chanted rātrī sūktam, the demons Madhu-Kaiṭabha were destroyed the way he wanted. It is not necessary that you need to go to a temple or a puṇyakṣetra. Meditate on the Divine Mother and be clear about what you desire: whether you wish for a job, or other desires such as wedding for your daughter, grandkids, prosperity for loved ones -- all wishes will be fulfilled.**

The devātā for the first chapter is Mahākālī. She is blue in color, and has 10 legs, 10 faces and 10 hands. The dhyāna śloka details what she holds in each of [her 10] hands. While chanting the dhyāna śloka we invoke the Mahākālī that Brahma himself propitiated. What we learn from this chapter is also that problems / troubles are common from every one. The *nivṛitti mārgam* or resolution for our troubles is dhyānam, pārayaṇam and puṇjā of the Divine Mother [conducted sincerely with full belief]. Then we need a Maharishi (or any well-wisher) to show you the right path towards the worship of the Divine Mother. The details about the right path too are shared later on in the Devi Māhātmyam.

So far the king and the merchant have not received the answers to *all* of their questions. What is Her Rūpam? The Rātrī sūktam answered questions to some extent, in that it spoke about the nature of Mahāmāyā. That is about it. What about the questions about Her Prabhāvam? What about Her Caritram?

The Ṛiṣi offers a glimpse of the answers to these questions at the end of the first chapter. He offers: “I’ve given you a small story about Her so far -- but (in the next chapter) I will expound in detail the prabhāvam of Mahāmāyā:

evameṣā samutpannā brahmaṇā samstutā svayam |
prabhāvamasyā devyāstu bhūyas śruṇu vadāmi te || Aim Om II
(Verse 104, Chapter 1)

In the first chapter, the kind of help that ambāl rendered was subtle, silent: [as an analogy], let us say you need some 10 Rupees. You ask someone, who then deposits the money into your account silently, without anyone’s knowledge. The help is rendered without anyone knowing, [but it is powerful nevertheless]. This is the nature of Tāmasī. [This is akin to the power in the yogic slumber which will recharge and replenish us].

Whereas in the second chapter, there is a different analogy and different upakāram or help rendered by ambāl: [Now imagine] You need help, but you go about it differently. You ask someone for help, but you offer your own capital and effort before the helper renders the help. You also contribute what you have, so it is the collective contribution that results in the help”. [In the same way that] my savings have to be offered [in this second example], all devātās combine all their śaktis into a form of ambāl who then fights the asuras on their behalf. Note that our own actions are required here. Here not that much intelligence in the way of scheming is needed here [but great action is required].

[Whereas in the first chapter we experience the Divine Mother as the Potential and Veiling Grace, in the Madhyama Caritam we see her in full Activity].

But in the third Caritram (starting from the fifth chapter), the asuras are more scheming and more intelligent--therefore, more intelligence and cunning is needed to thwart them. So each of the stories takes on a different flow; and every one of them is so beautiful in its own right. We see that ambāl helps in different ways but always helps: She is “devānām upakāriṇī” as the Ṛiṣi extolls.

Second Chapter--Madhyama Caritram

The second chapter is also the start of the madhyama caritram. Hreem is the beeja mantram for this caritram; and Mahālakṣmī is the devātā. Just as human beings have ego, so do devātās. The 33 crores of devās and asuras did get into periodic fights. However this time around, the devās and asuras were engaged in a long battle. This fight, you will not believe, has been going on for 100 years! Imagine a hundred years! There was no room for doubt about whether the devās really needed help. All the śaktis and weapons of the devās were employed; but who won at the end? It was Mahiśāsura!!

We must remember that even asuras are born in the same vein as devās, as an amśa of the latter. And asuras (you may be surprised to learn), derive their śakti from the Divine Mother too! In the first chapter of the Devi Mahātmyam, the 77th verse includes the *padam* “Mahāsuri” as a nāmā of the Divine Mother! “Mahāsuri” means one who confers the great power and prowess to all the most fierce and renowned asuras such as Rāvaṇa, Kumbhakarna, Mahiśāsura, Hiraṇyakaśipu and others. It is only Ambāl’s Grace that gives them all their power. Mahiśāsura has rudrāmśa [and he too gets his power from the Divine Mother like everything that exists].

In the first chapter of the Devi Māhātmyam, the Divine Mother emerges on Her own. The last śloka therein says: “samstutā svayam”. However, there is no svārasya or engagement of the mind for people if this happens: [one needs a different sort of story where there is more excitement--hence the madhyama caritram].

So after suffering defeat and humiliation at the hands of Mahiśāsura and his asura hordes, the devās meet in a *mahānāḍu* (thamizh word meaning “Security Council-type Meeting”) where they speak freely. The devās are bewildered and are bereft of ideas on how to deal with Mahiśa. They decide they will be led by Brahma, and that they will collectively approach Mahāviṣṇu and Maheśvara for their counsel and help. The devās are literally homeless and starving at this point.

Mahiśāsura has literally taken the throne from Indra, and have sent the devās scuttling out of devāloka. So devās don’t have a place to stay, and they are starving because they have nothing to eat. You might wonder why? The main food or sustenance for the devās comes from the yagñas that human beings conduct, and from the offerings that are offered to the devās in the yagñas. When you chant, “Indrāya svāhā”, the offering goes to Indra and so on. But with Mahiśāsura taking those offerings for himself, and no yajnas happening, and no pujas being offered to the devās anymore, the devās have no sustenance-- and are therefore starving. Just as it is said that the devās don't sleep, they also do not experience death as they are immortal. However, without purpose, bereft of sustenance and strength, they are enduring hardship like mortals in bhūloka.

[svargānnirākrutās-sarve tena devā gaṇā bhuvī |](#)
[vicaranti yathā martyā mahiṣeṇa durātmanā || \(verse 7, chapter 2\)](#)

Led by Brahma, the devās take their case to Viṣṇu and Maheśvara, pleading to them to deliver an end to their endless sufferings at the hands of Mahishasura. When you are a parent, and your kids come home injured from a local street fight, your first instinct is to be angry and to want to fight whoever hurt your child. Viṣṇu and Maheśvara also feel the same way - [with the devās coming to them and evoking them along the vein of “jagatah pitarau vande”, the divine duo have the bhāvam of the universal parents]. They furrow their eyebrows [and contort their faces] in great consternation and anger, as a reaction to the plight of the devās. A great Tejas (radiance) emerges from the furrowed brows of Śankara and Viṣṇu. The powerful duo then ask all the 33 crore devās assembled to also contribute their strengths towards this effulgence. All the thirty three crore devātās then conjoin their śaktis with the Tejas from the Trinity--the combined kānti and tejas of the assembly of devās results in an awesome agni jvālā or gigantic flame, measuring a 1000 yojanās -- this flame of light assumes a female form. The Ṛṣi’s description goes: “This

female form filled and transcended all the three worlds or lokās. While the crown on Her head pierced the skies, Her feet pierced the underground or pātāḷa lokā - Her expansive form filled all three lokas.”

See the beauty as soon as ambā takes this āvirbhāvam or divine manifestation: [Let us look at an analogy:] Even if you have the best lawyer for your case, someone who stays with you every step of the way--in order for you to win the case, you will have to undertake quite a bit of effort yourself: you must ensure that the lawyer has all the details, all the information to present his cases. So, if we need success in a job, it requires a great deal of effort on our part.

Similarly if you ask, what do the devās do? The flame of fire has to be conferred anthropomorphic parts to come into existence as a manifest form. Let us review the steps involved in prāṇa pratiṣṭha while we conduct our puja: [In the prāṇa pratisthā tantric ritual, we take all the prāṇā-s inside us and posit them into the deity that we invoke and install in our heart center.] [prāṇā-īha-prāṇāha.. jīva-īha-sthitaha...sarvendriyāṇi... vāṅg-manas-cakśuhu-srotra-jihvāghrāṇaprāṇāha ihaivāgatya.](#)

In this same way, every devātā gives the Divine Mother the various constituent parts of her whole form [i.e., They conjoin their own prāṇā into the manifest form of ambā]:

- Rudra gives his amśa as ambā's Face
- Yama gives his amśa as ambā's Hair (ambā's hair is so beautifully black)
- Viṣṇu gives his amśa as ambā's 18 Arms and the constituent parts of her arms (the Ṛiśi says here that ambā has 18 hands but later on in the Rahasya Trayam, the Ṛiśi asserts that ambā has thousands of hands). The hands of the Divine Mother are also blue in color like those of Viṣṇu.
- Candra (the Moon) gives his amśa as ambā's Breasts
- Indra gives his amśa as ambā's midriff (middle portion of her body) comprising the Chest down to her Waist
- Varuṇa gives his amśa as ambā's Knees, Thighs, Lower Limbs, Ankles
- Prithvī gives her amśa as ambā's back side (nitamba sthānam) and buttocks
- Brahma gives his amśa as ambā's Feet
- Surya gives his amśa as ambā's Toes
- Aṣṭa Vasus give their amśas as ambā's Fingers,
- Kubera gives his amśa as ambā's Nose,
- Sandhyā devātās give their amśa as ambā's Brows
- Vayu gives his amśa as ambā's Ears.

In this way, all the devātās contribute their amśas (and become conjoined to) different parts of the Divine Mother's body.

They also give their armaments and accessories to ambā:

- Śiva gives ambā the trisūla (trident)
[please note that Śiva gives this trident from his own trident: [śūlam śūlādviniṣkruṣya dadau tasyai pinākadhrīk | verse 20 chapter 2](#)]
- Viṣṇu gives ambā the cakrāyudha (discus)

[please note that Viṣṇu gives this cakram from his own sudarśana cakram: [cakram ca dattavān kruṣṇaha samutpādyā svacakrataha || verse 20 chapter 2](#)]

-Indra gives ambā the ghaṇṭā (from the bell on his elephant airāvata) & also gives the vajrāyudha (from his own lightning bolt)

-Varuṇa gives ambā the pāśa (noose) & shankham (conch shell)

-Brahma gives ambā the kamaṇḍalu (pot of water)

-Prajapati gives ambā the sphaṭikākṣamālā (rosary of crystal beads)

-Agni gives ambā his own śakti (awesome fire power)

-Vāyu gives ambā a bow & quiver of arrows

-Kāladevā gives ambā a sword & a shield (kāladevā is different from Yama)

[-Yama gives ambā a daṇḍa (stick) from his own kāla-daṇḍa]

-Sūrya fills ambā's skin and hair follicles with his effulgent aura and radiance

-Samudra-rāja (the King of the Ocean) gives ambā a pearl garland, 2 lotus garlands (that will never fade or age), 1 lotus flower for the hand to be used as an armament & 2 vastrams (clothing)

-Viśvakarma gives ambā the cūḍāmaṇi (crest jewel to protect and adorn the crown of the head) & other jewelry including earrings, bracelets, armlets, rings, anklets, and hair ornaments); and also a spear & armor for additional protection-so that no weaponry of the asuras may touch her; in addition he gives her paraśu (the axe)

-Himavān (the Mountain King) gives ambā the lion as her vehicle (mount) & also many gemstones and diamonds

-Kubera gives ambā a pānapātram (a pot filled with sweet nectar) - this is referenced in a very important passage in the 3rd chapter: [garja garja kṣaṇam mūḍha madhu yāvatpibāmyaham | verse 37, chapter 3](#)

-Ādiśeṣa gives ambā nāga hāram (garland made of gemstones adorning the crest of snakes)

When you do pārayāṇam of the madhyama caritram, you will come to see how the devās give their various gifts to ambā.

You may ask: why does ambā need all this? [The answer is: It is literally to fill the devās with joy and confidence.]

Seeing Devi [so brilliantly and glowingly endowed with the effulgence of all the devās and sporting all the armaments gifted by the devās], the devās are filled with joy, and able to visualize the end of Mahiśāsura! They already feel they have defeated Mahiśāsura -- so great is their confidence the minute they are blessed with the sight of Devi!!!! The Mahariṣi says: [tuṣṭuvurmunayascainām bhaktinamrātmamūrtayaha \(verse 35, chapter 2\)](#)

Ambā also belts out a roaring sound, that causes tremors in the three worlds! All the oceans churn in this sound! The grounds in all three lokas tremble! Ambā does this to announce to Mahiśāsura that She has arrived!! The roar, mixed with the great uproar (*jaya ghoṣam*) of the happy devās, promptly reaches the ears of Mahiśāsura! After all, this was the purpose of ambā's roar!

[Hearing this roar, Mahiśāsura is incensed.] In response, the army of Mahiśāsura gathers, ready to fight ambā. Mahiśāsura's army has four parts (caturanga sena): it was comprised of elephants, horses, chariots and foot-soldiers or infantry. His chief general and commander-in-chief is called Cikśura-asura, and his assistant is known as Cāmara. Mahiśāsura's army statistics are staggering:

Udagra, who reports to Cāmara, is in charge of a battalion made up of 60,000 chariots! Another captain Bāskala is in charge of a battalion of 60 Lakh chariots. Biḍāla is in charge of 500 crore rathas! So you can imagine the sizes of the other wings of Mahiśāsura’s army. Parivārīta is in charge of the elephant and equestrian segments of the army with innumerable elephants and horses. All these have to be defeated. An army this ginormous pitted against one person!! The devās are mere spectators here!

Now on the first day of the battle, the Divine Mother takes deep breaths in and out. Please note: each molecule of ambā’s breath is a devī-gaṇa. [She generates her divine gaṇas simply by breathing] and using these gaṇas, She decimates the entire aforementioned army with all its constituents parts, with the exception of Mahiśāsura and a few of his important generals].

The blood of the asuras runs through the battle grounds as a great river (mahānadhi) would.

From this amazing account, you can begin to understand why the devās extoll ambā in the fourth chapter in such an exalted way:

[yasyāḥ prabhāvamatulam bhagavānananto - brahmā harasca na hi vaktumalam balam ca |](#)

The above śloka states: How to describe Her Glory? For it is very difficult to (explain) do justice to Her glorious prabhāvam: neither Brahma nor Viṣṇu nor Maheśvara can extoll Her Prabhāvam completely.

Look at how She destroyed Mahiśā’s sainyaṃ (army) effortlessly.

Ambā’s Glory can be seen more completely in the next section, where She dispenses with all the generals of Mahiśāsura one by one.

The Divine Mother faces off with all the generals of Mahiśāsura: Cikśura, Cāmara, Udagra, Karāḷa, Uddhata, Bāskala, Tāmra, Andhaka, Ugrāsya, Ugravīrya, Mahāhanu, Biḍāla, Durdhara, Durmukha.. She decimates them all. None of their techniques work against her; all their armaments are useless against Her. In fact the Ṛṣi says, She disposes of them, very playfully (as if she were engaged in a game): “leelayaiva śarotkarān” (verse 4, chapter 3)

Imagine, 2 year-old or 3 year-old children engaging in a fight with their parent. While the children may be mad, and may thrash around and throw things at the parent, the parent will be engaged only playfully with the children.. . That is how ambā engages with these demons!

Seeing all his generals destroyed, Mahiśāsura is left all by himself. At this point, he assumes the form of a huge buffalo and wreaks havoc. As he races towards ambā with his horns out, he hurls mountains at her--so physically powerful is Mahiśā that every stomp of his hoof brings down the earth all around! Ambā takes him on, and subdues him--at the point at which she subdues the buffalo, Mahiśā transforms himself into a lion--no sooner than the Divine Mother subdues the lion, the lion changes into a man--in this way, Mahiśā changes his form time and again: from lion to man, from man to elephant, until finally he turns from the elephant into a buffalo again! The Divine Mother’s vehicle, the divine lion pins down Mahiśā the buffalo under ambā’s feet; ambā pushes down on the buffalo’s spine and pierces his side with her spear--at the moment when

ambā beheads the buffalo, Mahiṣā emerges from the buffalo as a man again! So when Mahiṣā is half-buffalo and half-human, right in the middle of his transformation, ambā uses her spear to pierce the asura and destroy him for good [ambā pierces him with the spear to give him piercing insight and beheads him with her sword].

People ask me: Why is the 2nd chapter hard to chant? It is so, perhaps because there are so many asurās in the second and third chapters, and because ambā is facing off with so many asurās here! [Let us do a review.] We saw ambā’s origin (utpatti); then we saw the śaktis and gifts conferred to ambā by the devās: their amśam-s, their āyudham-s, their alankāram-s. Then, we saw how ambā destroyed the sena or army of Mahiṣāsura; how She destroyed Mahiṣā’s generals; then finally, how She destroyed Mahiṣāsura himself -- not one asura is left standing in this caritram-- all demonic forces are vanquished! Thus end the 2nd and 3rd chapters of the Devi Māhātmyam.

The Conclusion of the Fourth Chapter (Śakrādi Stuti or Indrādi Stuti)

The fourth chapter starts with the devās extolling Devi’s Glory after She vanquishes Mahiṣāsura [in the Indrādi Stuti, also known as Śakrādi Stuti].

Already, you are learning the meanings of these verses in your classes. Therefore, I do not wish to repeat the meanings again. The thing for you to remember is: it is *not* enough for you to just chant the ślokams. My favorite śloka is the [23rd verse in chapter 4](#):

[neetādivam ripugaṇā bhayamapyapāstam |](#)
[asmākam unmada surāribhavam namaste ||](#)

In this last verse of this Devi Stuti, the devās show us the way: after chanting Her prabhāvam, and extolling Her in various ways, they offer a namaskāram to her. We need to take our cue from the devās and do namaskāram to Her here. We need to engage in this activity physically, to invoke the attention of the Divine Mother wholly. [This physical act represents total surrender and sublation to the Divine Mother]. After doing the namaskāram, you may right away chant: [sūlena pāhino devi pāhi khaḍgena cāmbike](#). When we pray to ambā, we are beseeching Her to protect us: “Mother, it is not necessary for you to protect us--perhaps your weapons can protect us. (You see Her rūpam in the madhyama caritam as an effulgent and beautiful form. However, this form is not necessary). Mother, no matter what form you choose to take on, please protect us. Please take the appropriate forms to rid us of specific troubles or obstacles; all we ask is that you protect us wholly, completely”.

We say: “[rakśa sarvataha](#)”, which means, “protect us anywhere, and always” -- every day, every minute, and always.

[evam stutā surairdivyaih kusumairnandanodbhavaihi |](#)
[arcitā jagatām dhātrī tathā gandhānulepanaihi || \(verse 29, chapter 4\)](#)

You may offer a fragrant flower to the Divine Mother after chanting this verse and the verses that follow. Your pooja is then over. I say this because “arcitā jagatām dhātrī” is where the devās perform panca-upacāram to ambā. If you don’t have the materials - lamp, sandalwood etc. to offer panca-upacāram, just offer a namaskāram to Her with hands folded in namaskāra mudrā--

this mudrā is equivalent to the panca-upacārams.

arcitā jagatām dhātrī tathā gandhānulepanaihi ||
bhaktyā samastair tridaśairdivyairdhūpaih sudhūpitā |

Even the constraints relative to offering her upcārams are taken in to account and everything is simplified for us.

[prāha prasāda sumukhī samastān praṇatān surān ||] (verse 30, chapter 4)

Ambā is abundantly pleased with the stuti and asks the devās what they need. They respond in this way: “We have nothing more to ask for ([na kincidavaśiṣyate](#)). You have defeated our enemy Mahiśāsura. You have fulfilled all our wishes. However, since you are asking us to ask you for a boon, we pray to you that we never get into any dangerous situations. However, even if we are confronted with dangerous situations or obstacles at some other time, please come to our complete rescue the very second we think of You and rid us of the danger. Sometimes, we may not even be able to propitiate you with stotrams. I may only be able to think of you. But there may be times when I may not be able to even think of you. But please protect us even then! “[samsmrita-āsamsmritā tvam no himsethāh paramāpadaha](#)” refers to this. We ask this not just for us, Devi. Please grant this blessing not just for us but for all of humanity. Please bless the human beings ALWAYS”:

tasya vittardhivibhavairdhanadārādī sampadām | (verse 36, chapter 4)
vruddh Hayesmatprasannātvam bhavethāh sarvadāmbike || (verse 37, chapter 4)

Remember, we are all not even in the (above) divine scene, but the devās are beseeching the Divine Mother on our behalf. Note the *padam* “[sarvadāmbike](#)” means, “always and everywhere, Mother”. Ambā responds with no hesitations: She blesses, “So be it”. Such is her unbounded compassion or karuṇā. After bestowing this boon to the devās, She simply disappears from their sight. [Remember after the purpose of the avatāram and anugraham are completed, the devatā disappears]. So She blesses the devās and disappears.

Recall that the devās had said, “if we encounter troubles again, please protect us then.” Therefore, to rescue the devās from śumbha-niśumbha, and to do loka samrakṣaṇam (to protect the whole world), ambā returns in other forms. At the close of this madhyama caritram, the Ṛiṣi continues and recounts to Suratha and Samādhi: “Let me tell you the story of ambā when she originated from the body of Gowrī, to protect the world and to kill Śumbha/Niśumbha”.

vadhāya duṣṭadaityānām tathā śumbhaniśumbhayoḥ |
rakṣaṇāya ca lokānām devānām upakāriṇī ||

To answer the question that the king and merchant posed earlier: How did ambā manifest Herself? We see that in madhyama caritam all the devās come together and create ambā from the most effulgent parts of themselves. In the next chapter, her utpatti or origin is different. She emerges on her own. We will encounter that story during next week, when I take you through the Uttara Caritam.

Sarve Janah Sukhino Bhavantu | (May All Beings Be Happy)
May you all be happy and well. I wish for all of you, to have your wishes fulfilled right away.

Ambā gives the following assurance: Who-so-ever listens to or chants the first and second caritram from the Devi Māhātmyam, will find that all their troubles have run far away. All auspicious events will find you, and unfold around you. May you all be joyous always.

Śrī Gurubhyo Namaha | Śrī Mātre Namaha ||

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