

THE DEMON-SLAYING DEVĪ:
A STUDY OF HER PURĀNIC MYTHS

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To the Goddess:
not for her help, but her inspiration

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ABBREVIATIONS

BP	<u>Bhāgavatapurāna</u>
DBP	<u>Devībhāgavatapurāna</u>
DM	<u>Devīmāhātmya</u>
KP	<u>Kālikāpurāna</u>
MP	<u>Matsyapurāna</u>
SP	<u>Śivapurāna</u>
SkP	<u>Skandapurāna</u>
VP	<u>Vāmanapurāna</u>
VarP.	<u>Varāhapurāna</u>

The full bibliographic data for these works is to be found at the conclusion to the thesis.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One of the more popular of Hindu deities is a goddess who figures prominently as a demon-slayer in Indian mythological texts. At Durgāpūjā, her great festival held in the fall, the images of this goddess depict her in the act of slaying the buffalo-demon Mahiṣa. In front of these images three myths telling of her demon-slaying exploits--the slayings of Madhu and Kaiṭabha, Mahiṣa and Śumbha and Niśumbha, as told in the Devīmāhātmya, are recited.

This goddess is a complex being who is known by many names: Durgā, Mahiṣāsūramardinī, Kauśikī, Ambikā and Caṇḍikā are among the most common. Some of these names are used only in particular instances or only in one of her myths, others are used more generally. However, the demon-slaying myths make it clear that it is one goddess that they are describing no matter how many names they give her. Most frequently the texts refer to her simply as Devī (Goddess).¹

The myths of the Devī are for the most part found in the purāṇas, large mythological compendiums which first appear on the

¹Therefore in this thesis I shall refer to this goddess as the demon-slaying Devī or Devī. According to Agrawala's appendix listing the names of the goddess in the Devīmāhātmya Devī is the name she is called most frequently in this text. In cases where calling the goddess Devī would be confusing, such as where other goddesses are referred to. I shall refer to the goddess by the name particular to the myth I am discussing (for example: Kauśikī in the Sumbha and Niśumbha myth).

Hindu scene approximately 400 or 500 A.D. In the purānas several versions of the demon-slaying Devī myths are to be found and it will be the task of this thesis to focus on several of these versions of the myths and to seek to set them within their larger purānic context.

Many scholars, for valid reasons, have focused upon the demon-slaying myths as being central to the goddess' mythology and cult, but they have failed to look upon these myths within the purānic context. They have instead, for reasons which are not entirely clear, focused upon the detail that the goddess is female and have interpreted her mythology from that fact. Her femaleness, they seem to assume, is what is distinctive about the Devī and femaleness, from their point of view, carries along with it a whole host of 'female characteristics'--motherliness, fertility, gentleness, etc. But the goddess of the demon-slaying Devī texts exhibits very few of these characteristics to any marked degree: she is, after all, a demon-slayer. Thus these scholars have come to believe that the blood-thirstiness which the Devī exhibits in the demon-slaying myths is somehow particularly significant and that it has to be explained in light of her being female.

During the course of my research I attempted to follow the lead of several of these scholars and found that such leads led to dead-ends, could not be proven or were just wrong. One such scholar is Lawrence Babb² who stresses the dangerous aspect of the Devī

²Lawrence A. Babb, The Divine Hierarchy: Popular Hinduism in Central India (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975).

and what he believes to be the 'taming' effect of marriage upon her.

Babb thinks that women represent a danger to the proper running of society but that this danger is somehow brought under control and tamed by marriage. This state of affairs, he believes, is reflected in mythology: 'in myth as in society, marriage or non-marriage determines the benign or malevolent character of goddesses or women. Furthermore, just as goddesses tend to be malevolent gods tend to be benevolent.

Of all the different kinds of differentiation found within the pantheon, one seems to be particularly stable, that of sex. One is essentially protective and benevolent, the other is the very embodiment of malevolence when unrestrained or unappeased....In myth and ritual these emerge in the form of sex-linked opposition, a distinction between devata and devi, between god and goddess.³

Marriage to or control by a 'benevolent' male deity transforms the goddess' malevolent tendencies.

It is as if the imposition of a basic vehicle of social order--marriage--on the relationship between god and goddess creates the possibility for the elaboration of divine attributes in accordance with basic order-producing values.⁴

Thus a goddess formerly destructive to society will now uphold it.

To illustrate his point Babb refers us to the Devīmāhātmya, one of our major texts, in which the Devī appears to be unmarried.⁵

³Babb, pp. 216-217.

⁴Babb, p. 224.

⁵The Devīmāhātmya gives us no clues in either direction. In it we are not told anything about the Devī's marital status. According to Babb this is irrelevant for "We shall see...all of the sinister goddesses are represented in contexts that tend to deny, mask or minimize their marital connections." But this is not the same as saying that she is not married at all.

In it, Babb claims, "the only discernible emotion of the goddess is anger--black, implacable and blood-thirsty."⁶ This anger, while directed against the demons and for the aid of the gods, has the potentiality for getting out of control and continuing its act of destruction until the whole universe is destroyed unless something happens to stop it.

To drive home his point Babb relates a story, unfortunately without giving a textual reference, which supposedly takes place after the events of the Devīmāhātmya.

It is said that after her defeat of the asuras Kali went on a bloody rampage, a mindless spree of killing that threatened both gods and men alike. She could not be stopped until Shiva lay in her path. She was on the point of killing him when she recoiled in horror, suddenly, realizing that she had almost killed her husband.⁷

The lesson of this story is clear: when the goddess is presented with her husband the carnage stops.

The feminine principle, then, according to Babb is essentially and fundamentally dangerous and only under male control can it be contained. Once under that control it is transmuted from wild malevolence to gentle benevolence--the feminine ideal. This is, at first sight, an attractive theory and prima facie evidence seems to support it, but with some thought, research and a careful re-reading of the texts it became untenable.

Hindu society indeed thought women to be dangerous. A glance

⁶Babb, p. 221.

⁷Babb, pp. 221-222.

at the law-books will convince one that the generally held opinion of women was low⁸ and that for the protection of society it was held that women must always be under the control of their male relatives or husbands.⁹ Babb is correct in his assumption that women were considered dangerous but he fails to tell us the real reason why this was so. The law-books are quite clear on this point as well. Since women are naturally lustful their inclination is to be indiscriminately promiscuous. Thus, if they are not carefully prevented from such behaviour they may pollute the castes by bearing half-caste offspring into their husbands' families. To Hindu society this was abhorrent, and was to be avoided at all costs,¹⁰ and is the true danger that women present. Furthermore, since the danger involves passing off an illegitimate child as the child of ones marriage it is married women who are

⁸Women do not care for beauty, nor is their attention fixed on age, (thinking), '(It is enough that) he is a man, 'they give themselves to the handsome and to the ugly.

Through their passion for men, through their natural heartlessness, they become disloyal towards their husbands however carefully they may be guarded in this (world).

Knowing their disposition, which the lord of creatures laid in them at the creation to be such, (every) man should most strenuously exert himself to guard them.

(When creating them) Manu allotted to women (a love of their) bed, (of their) seat and (of) ornament, impure desires, wrath, dishonesty, malice, and bad conduct. (The Laws of Manu, trans. Georg Bühler [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886: reprint ed., New York: Dover, 1969], IX. 14-17)

⁹By a girl, by a young woman, or even by an aged one, nothing must be done independently, even in her own house.

In childhood a female must be subject to her father, a woman must never be independent.

She must not seek to separate herself from her father, husband or sons. (Manu, V. 147-149)

¹⁰Manu, X. 5-41.

most dangerous.

The demon-slaying Devī does not fit this pattern. If we admit that she is potentially dangerous, the danger she presents is not of the order that mortal women present. She is not lustful, in fact she is quite the opposite. Although she displays herself as a beautiful seductress in order to entice the demons into battle, her intentions are not seduction but slaughter. If her nature is lustful then the opportunities for satisfying it are many. She is propositioned and proposed to many times, but she refuses, telling the demons that she has come to do battle. There is no danger that the Devī, like mortal women, will demean or disgrace herself by undesirable sexual behaviour. She is not dangerous to the dharmic-moral order of the world, for she has come to save it by slaying the demons.

Nor is Babb's statement that the Devī's only emotion in the Devīmāhātmya is anger correct. The text, as we shall see, gives her a wide range of emotions and moods. It is only appropriate that she is angry and blood-thirsty in the battle scenes: it is her function in these myths to slay. But the anger is directed only towards the demons and the text gives no hint that it will be turned against the gods or men. In fact, at the end of each battle the world returns to smiling good order: the sky becomes clear, the sun shines, the sacrifice is restored. The gods praise the Devī, mentioning her many moods, and she, promising the gods boons, simply disappears, her anger obviously dissipated once the demons are slain.

In other versions of the myths the Devī is generally assumed by the authors of the purāṇas to be married, usually to Śiva, yet her behaviour does not radically change.¹¹ She is still angry, blood-

¹¹This is the case in the YP, DBP and SP versions of the myths in which the Devī is assumed to be married to Śiva.

thirsty and implacable towards her enemies and gracious towards the gods. Whether married or unmarried it is her function in these myths to slay demons. If her character were to be gentle and benevolent she would be incapable of slaying demons. She is indeed angry and war-like, however, she is not destruction to the welfare of the world but is rather the protector of the world order.

Babb, then, seems to have misread both the text and the tradition. The actions of the Devī do not correspond to the actions and behaviour of mortal women and, furthermore, in society it is the actions of married women that present the real danger not those of unmarried women.

Finding that Babb's theory about the Devī did not work I turned to another scholar, David Shulman, who also writes upon the general topic of the Devī and her marriage.¹² A sentence suffices to explain Shulman's basic thesis: the Devī is quite likely either to murder her potential consort or to be tamed by (and married to) him. According to Shulman, then, the Devī is dangerous, but the danger she presents is to her suitors/victims not to the dharmic order.

Shulman's argument, however, depends upon the identification of the Devī's consort and her demon-victim. Such an identification can be found, Shulman claims, between the Devī's most famous victim, the buffalo-demon Mahiṣa, and Śiva, the god who is generally agreed to be her consort. This is argued from iconographic evidence.

One recalls the graceful figures from Mahabalipuram of the goddess standing on the buffalo's

¹²David Shulman, "The Murderous Bride: Tamil Versions of the Myth of Devī and the Buffalo-Demon," H of R, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1976), pp. 120-146.

head. The closest iconographic analogues to these and similar images are the well-known Tantric icons of Devī dancing on the corpse of her husband, Śiva.¹³

Then, using South Indian folk materials Shulman shows that in many instances the local goddess' consort and victim is a buffalo-god.¹⁴ He also points out that in many South Indian texts Mahiṣa and Śiva are closely identified: Mahiṣa is a devotee of Śiva and wears the god's emblem, a liṅga (phallus), around his neck,¹⁵ or is a reincarnation of the god.¹⁶

Shulman thinks that this identification of god and demon is most clearly hinted at in the Sanskrit texts by the Devī's Bride-vow stipulation: the demon proposes to the Devī but she tells him that to marry her he must first defeat her in battle. In our texts this is used as a ploy, a part of the Devī's battle plan, but as Shulman tells us "...trial by battle does indeed precede the marriage of Śiva and Devī in the myths of several Tamil shrines."¹⁷ The most famous instance of this is that of Mīnākṣī who meets Śiva on the battlefield and immediately becomes the epitome of blushing maidenhood.¹⁸ Thus in one case we find the goddess killing her suitor; in the other she is

¹³Shulman, pp. 120-121.

¹⁴Shulman, p. 129.

¹⁵Shulman, pp. 123; 125.

¹⁶Shulman, p. 127.

¹⁷Shulman, p. 122.

¹⁸Shulman, p. 140.

'tamed' by him, but the trial by battle remains constant.

Keeping the Śiva/Mahiṣa identification and the bride-vow of the Devī in mind Shulman believes that the consort of the Devī and the victim of the Devī were once one and the same.

Truly ancient material has been preserved in a more modern guise: the buffalo-god has become a demon, while his essential identity with the male consort of the goddess is affirmed.¹⁹

This seemed to suggest a fruitful line of research. Unfortunately a careful rereading of the texts available to me showed that the evidence they contained for such an interpretation was woefully thin. Very few of these texts connected Mahiṣa and Śiva and none of them even hinted at a goddess whose husband won her by defeating her in battle. Furthermore, Shulman seems to overlook the fact that representations of a god standing on an animal or other being are common to Hindu iconographic images: each god is connected to a particular animal which serves as his vāhana (vehicle). Therefore, the god standing on his vāhana would be an even more striking analogue to the Devī standing on the buffalo-demon.²⁰ Also, there is evidence to show that Śiva is not the only god upon whom the Devī stands; Viṣṇu too is used by her, on occasion, as a vāhana.²¹ These facts further obscure the supposed

¹⁹ Shulman, p. 125.

²⁰ F. D. K. Bosch, "Remarques sur les influences réciproques de l'iconographie et de la mythologie indiennes," Arts Asiatiques, III (1956), pp. 22-47; cited in P. Granoff, "The Udaygiri Mahiṣāsūramardini: An Analysis of the Myth," (forthcoming, East and West).

²¹ K. R. Van Kooij, Worship of the Goddess According to the Kalikāpurāna, part I (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), p. 32.

relationship between Śiva and Mahiṣa. The nagging conviction that somehow the bride-vow stipulation is significant remains, but there is no evidence in my texts with which to interpret it except as it stands, a ploy of the Devī and as a part of the formal structure of the myth.

The myths themselves, and their context--the purāṇas--then became the major focus of this study. Seen within this context the myths of the demon-slaying Devī give us a great deal of information about her character and function. Her behaviour in these myths is clearly for the purpose of preserving the cosmic order and as such does not significantly differ from the actions of the other two great purāṇic deities, Śiva and Viṣṇu.

It is also clear that the myths have a formal structure. A reading of other myths which featured other deities as demon-slayers illustrates, moreover, the demon-slaying myths as a whole possess a common structure. This thesis will analyse this structure and show that the myths of the demon-slaying Devī do not present us with a bizarre, anomolous figure but with a goddess whose mythology fits well into the larger purāṇic context in which it is found. Thus the presupposition that because the goddess is feminine she must be different from other deities should be disregarded if we are ultimately to understand her mythology and worship.

CHAPTER II

The myth cycle of the demon-slaying Devī which we shall be referring to is generally comprised of three separate myths; the slaying of Madhu and Kaiṭabha (this myth is sometimes omitted), the slaying of Maḥiṣāsura and the slaying of Sumbha and Niṣumbha. Several versions, varying in length and detail, of this myth cycle are to be found in purānic literature. We shall look at four of these versions which are told in detail in four purānas, as well as references to these stories which are included in the ritual sections on the Durgāpūjā in a fifth purāṇa. The narratives we shall be concerned with are found in the Devīmāhātmya, the Vāmanapurāna, the Śivapurāna and the Devībhāgavata-purāna. The fifth text is the Kālikāpurāna. There are also versions of the demon-slaying Devī myths found in several untranslated purānas, to which we will not refer.

If we take an overall view of the texts we find that while they all tell the same cycle of myths some include events that the others exclude. To handle the description of the contents of the myths I have devised a group of four major headings with sub-headings so that one can easily see which elements are included in each particular cycle of the myths. Although some events are repeated in more than one myth in the cycle I have decided to treat each myth separately. The headings are as follows:

- A. Frame Stories.
- B. Madhu and Kaiṭabha.

1. The creation of Madhu and Kaiṭabha.
2. The attack on Brahmā.
3. Brahmā's prayer to the Devī.
4. The appearance of the Devī.
5. The battle.
6. The boon.
7. The slaying of Madhu and Kaiṭabha.

C. Mahiṣāsura.

1. The birth of Mahiṣāsura.
2. Mahiṣa defeats the gods.
3. The appearance/creation of the Devī.
4. The arming of the Devī.
5. Mahiṣa's proposal.
6. The battle.
7. The slaying of Mahiṣa.
8. The praising of the Devī.
9. Her promise to return.

D. Śumbha and Niśumbha.

1. The defeat of the gods.
2. The appearance of the Devī.
3. Her being seen by Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa.
4. Śumbha and Niśumbha's proposal.
5. The slaying of the messenger.
6. The appearance of Kālī.
7. The slaying of Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa.
8. The appearance of the Mātṛkās.
9. The appearance of Śivādūtī.

10. The slaying of Raktabīja.
11. The slaying of Śumbha and Niśumbha.
12. The praising of the Devī.

A. Frame Story

Two of the versions of the Devī myths frame the cycle with the story of Suratha and Samādhi. These are the DM (1.1-48; 13.1-17) and the ŚP (Umāsaṃhitā, 46.13-46; 51.75-77). The DBP gives us the same story (5.32.5-33.9; 35.1-52), but not as a frame to the demon-slaying myths. The DBP version of the myths is instead framed by verses extolling the superiority of the Devī to other deities. The Devī myths in the VP can be considered anomalous in that they lack such a frame story. The events told in the other narrative texts as one block are here separated by a number of myths, most of which do not pertain to the Devī. However, before each of the Devī myths we do find related an event relative to the myths. One of these events I shall deal with under heading D2; the other I shall treat later in this section.

The story of Suratha and Samādhi is as follows:

Suratha, a great and noble king, is defeated by his enemies and returns to his city only to be deprived of his wealth and army by his powerful and corrupt ministers. He then leaves for the forest and wanders about until he reaches the āśrama (hermitage) of the great sage Medhas. The sage invites Suratha to stay at the hermitage.

One day, as Suratha is wandering about the hermitage and wondering about the welfare of his kingdom, he meets a vaiśya (merchant), Samādhi, who is in much the same plight as the king. Samādhi's greedy wife and

sons have taken his wealth and expelled him to the forest where he, too, has found refuge in Medhas' āśrama. Samādhi, like the king, is worried about the fate of those who have dispossessed him. The king and the vaiśya go to ask the sage why they continually worry about the very people who have rejected them, even though they see that such worry is wrong and futile.

The sage replies that they have been deluded by Mahāmāyā, the Great Goddess, the creator of illusion and the bestower of liberation. The king and the vaiśya immediately ask Medhas to tell them who this goddess is, how she was born and what activities she performs. In all three versions this is where the story breaks; in the DM and the SP this is the occasion for the telling of the demon-slaying Devī myths; in the DBP we are given a myth which tells of the Devī's superiority to the gods and a ritual section. The story of Suratha and Samādhi is then continued.

Desiring to gain a vision of the Devī Suratha and Samādhi perform severe tapas (penance, austerities), and offer sacrifices sprinkled with their own blood. The Devī pleased by their devotion, appears before them and grants them boons. Suratha asks for the return of his kingdom; the vaiśya asks for mokṣa (liberation). The Devī grants them these boons and disappears. This constitutes the frame story of the cycle of the myths.

In contrast, in the VP before the Mahiṣāsura episode the text tells of the Viṣṇupañjara mantra (18.25-28) which is recited by Śiva for the protection of the Devī while she battles Mahiṣa. We are told about this mantra again just before the fight begins. This is the only preface to the myths.

B. Madhu and Kaitabha

This myth is told in two of our texts as part of the myth cycle: the DM (1.48-78) and the ŚP (Umāsaṃhitā, 45.52-75).*

The events are identical in both accounts.

- B.1 The myth opens with Viṣṇu asleep on the cosmic ocean: the re-creation of the world is about to begin. Two hideous asuras
- B.2 (demons), Madhu and Kaiṭabha, are created from Viṣṇu's ear-wax. They see Brahmā, seated on the lotus which rises from Viṣṇu's
- B.3 navel and begin to attack the creator. Brahmā realizing that Viṣṇu is still asleep invokes the Devī, here called Yoganidrā (Yogic Sleep), who is dwelling within Viṣṇu, so that she will wake him.
- B.4 The Devī appears, coming out of the eyes, mouth, nostrils, arms,
- B.5 heart and breast of Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu awakens and begins a five thousand
- B.6 year battle with Madhu and Kaiṭabha. The asuras, deluded by the Devī, offer a boon to Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu requests that he be allowed to
- B.7 slay them. Seeing that the world is still completely covered with water Madhu and Kaiṭabha agree, but only if Viṣṇu can kill them on a spot uncovered by water. Viṣṇu cleverly lifts the asuras onto his lap and beheads them with his cakra (discus). Thus, by deluding the demons the Devī has enabled Viṣṇu to slay them.

C. Mahiṣāsura

This myth is one of the most popular and widely known of the Devī's adventures and it is dealt with in all of our texts: the DBP (5.2.1-19.43); the DM (2.1-4.36); the VP (18.39-21.52); and the ŚP (Umāsaṃhitā.46.1-62). In addition, the KP refers to this myth.

C.1 The DBP begins this myth by telling us that a demon Mahiṣa
DBP has gained a boon of being inviolable to all male creatures. The
VP KP tells us that this Mahiṣa was cursed to be killed by a woman.
ŚP
KP The VP, ŚP, DBP and KP tell us that Mahiṣa's father was a certain
great asura by the name of Rambha. The DBP, VP and KP give
us more detail about Rambha and the conception and birth of
Mahiṣa. We are told in the DBP and VP that Rambha, after doing
severe tapas for many years, is granted the boon of conceiving
an invincible son upon any female being he so desires. Rambha
sees a beautiful female buffalo and begets on her a powerful
son, Mahiṣa, who is capable of assuming any form at will, but
whose favourite form is that of a buffalo.

In the KP (61.138ff.) we are told that Rambha was a devotee
of Śiva. The god granted Rambha a boon that he (Śiva) would
be reborn as Rambha's son. Śiva is then born from the female
buffalo as Mahiṣa.

C.2 The DM, VP and ŚP simply relate that Mahiṣa has overthrown
DBP the gods and usurped their places. The DBP goes into much
ŚP
DM detail: it tells of messengers being sent back and forth between
VP the gods and the asuras, of war councils and spies, and describes
the battle at great length.

0 C.3 In all versions the distressed gods go to consult Śiva
DBP and Viṣṇu. On being told of the gods' plight and Mahiṣa's
ŚP victory Śiva and Viṣṇu become angry and from them blazes forth
DM a fiery splendour (tejas). This sets off a chain reaction and
VP the other gods begin to emit their tejas. In the VP we are
told that this event takes place at the āśrama of Kātyāyana,

and the sage's tejas is added to that of the gods. In all versions this tejas gathers into one large fiery ball of light and from it is formed the body of a woman--the Devī. Each of the parts of her body is made from the tejas of a particular god.

C.4
DBP
SP
DM
VP

The gods present her with weapons and gifts. The weapon each god gives is peculiar to himself: Siva gives a trident; Viṣṇu gives a cakra; Indra gives a vajra (thunderbolt) and so on. Among the gifts are a lion for her to ride from Himavat (the Himālayan Mountains) and a cup of wine from Kuvera. The gods then praise the Devī, and, pleased by their homage, she laughs and roars so that the three worlds are set trembling. The asuras hear the noise and they are frightened.

At this point our versions of the myth diverge. The SP and the DM have the battle start almost immediately. The DBP and the VP have some intermediary scenes before the start of the battle.

C.5,6
DBP

In the DBP Mahiṣa sends messengers to the place from which the sounds of laughter originated. There the messengers see the Devī casually drinking wine. They marvel at her beauty and return to Mahiṣa to tell him of this goddess and her wonderful beauty. They add to their description that she is drunk and certainly has no husband. Mahiṣa sends another messenger to the Devī bidding him to deliver a proposal of marriage. The messenger does as he is told. The Devī refuses the proposal and sends a challenge to Mahiṣa: he should go to Pātāla (hell) or fight. The messenger then tells the Devī that since she is a woman she is too delicate to fight. The Devī replies that

she is no ordinary woman, but the Highest Puruṣa (man), and the only reason that she appears as a woman is to fulfill the conditions of Mahiṣa's boon that only a woman shall kill him. She repeats the challenge and the messenger returns to Mahiṣa.

Mahiṣa, hearing of the Devī's challenge, sends yet another messenger bearing the same proposal to her. To this the Devī, apparently becoming impatient with all this talk, replies that she already has a husband and again howls her challenge.

Mahiṣa sends more messengers, Vāskola and Durmukha, who again deliver Mahiṣa's proposal. This time the Devī's only answer is to kill the messengers. This scene is repeated several times before Mahiṣa comes to face the Devī personally.

C.5 In the VP after her creation the Devī goes to the Vindhya
VP
mountains where she is seen by Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa. They go to Mahiṣa and tell him of her beauty. Mahiṣa gathers his army together and sends Dundubhi bearing a marriage proposal to the Devī. She greets Dundubhi courteously telling him that she would like to marry Mahiṣa but that a bridal price has been set on her by her family. She may only marry him who can defeat her in battle. Dundubhi returns to Mahiṣa with the Devī's reply and Mahiṣa promptly sends his army to attack her.

C.6 The battle scenes vividly describe the Devī's fighting.
DBP
SP She fights playfully and easily and heaves hot breaths which
DM
VP turn into her ganas (horde, gang). She drinks wine and, in the VP, in the midst of battle she takes time to play the drum and flute while her ganas dance. Without any strain the Devī and

her lion slay Mahiṣa's generals and a large part of his army.

C.7
DBP
SP
DM
VP

Mahiṣa finally enters the fray. However, each of our texts describes the fight and the actual slaying of Mahiṣa in a slightly different manner.

In the SP during the course of the battle Mahiṣa changes his form from a buffalo, into a lion, an elephant and then back to a buffalo again. Finally the Devī takes a drink of wine and tells Mahiṣa that no asura can stand before her. She then stamps on his neck with her feet, pierces him with her spear and, as he weakens cuts off his head.

In the DM the events leading to the death of Mahiṣa are the same as those in the SP until the Devī steps on Mahiṣa and pierces him with her spear. At this point a man comes out of the buffalo's mouth: she then beheads the man-form of Mahiṣa. The version found in the VP does not have Mahiṣa change his shape, nor does the Devī drink wine before killing the asura. The actual slaying is as found in the DM.

The battle with Mahiṣa as depicted in the DBP is preceded with a variation of heading C.5. Mahiṣa assumes a handsome human form before approaching the Devī and then he attempts to woo her by speaking on the proper relationships between men and women. The Devī will not have any of this and she tells the asura either to keep quiet and go to Pātāla or fight. Mahiṣa tries to convince her to marry him yet another time. He tells her the sad story of Mandodarī who refused a noble suitor only to marry an unworthy one and thereby ended her life in misery. Then the Devī becomes angry and again tells

Mahiṣa to fight or leave. Her only purpose, she says, is to rid the gods of him. They begin to fight and Mahiṣa becomes in quick succession a lion, an elephant, a Śarabha (a mythical beast) and then a buffalo. The Devī drinks her wine and then pierces him with her spear. Mahiṣa rises to his feet and the Devī hurls her cakra at him slicing off his head.

Thus, the DM, ŚP and VP show the Devī trampling on Mahiṣa before she slays him. The KP has an explanation for this: the Devī has promised Mahiṣa, who apparently is a devotee of hers, that he will always be under her feet and therefore he will be worshipped whenever she receives worship.

C.8
DBP
ŚP
DM
VP

At Mahiṣa's death the world returns to its proper order and the gods praise the Devī. The DM and DBP give us the stotra that they chant. The VP and ŚP only mention that she is praised by the gods. The DM and VP tell us that the Devī promises to return to aid the gods whenever her help is needed. In the VP her vow is given as she sits at Śiva's feet. In the DM the gods request her future aid as a boon.

D. Śumbha and Niśumbha

This myth is found in the DM (5-11); the DBP (21-31); the ŚP (*Umāsaṃhitā*, (47-48); and the VP (29-30.73); it is also referred to in the KP.

D.1
DBP
ŚP
DM
VP

The asura brothers Śumbha and Niśumbha defeat the gods and usurp their roles. The DBP tells us that before the battle with the gods Śumbha and Niśumbha, having practiced tapas, have received a boon of being invincible to all male beings.

D.2
DBP
ŚP
DM
KP

The gods recall the defeat of Mahiṣa by the Devī and go to the Himālayas to ask her for aid. They invoke her with a stotra and a goddess appears before them. The DBP and ŚP do not name this goddess; the DM tells us it is Pārvatī who appears; in the KP it is Mātāṅgī, the wife of the sage Mataṅga, who has come. In all versions this goddess asks the gods whom they are praising.

In the DM and ŚP another goddess immediately appears out of the kośa (bodily sheath) of the first goddess and announces that it is she whom the gods are addressing. She then promises to kill Śumbha and Niśumbha for the gods. In the DBP, in response to the goddess' question the gods say that it is she whom they are praising. Then the second goddess appears out of the first goddess' body. In all versions this second goddess is called Kauśikī and is sometimes said to be white in colour. The first goddess then turns black and is called Kālikā. Kauśikī is the major goddess, the Devī, in this myth. In the ŚP and DM Kālikā disappears at this point and has no further important function. In the DBP Kālikā stays as the Devī's attendant and general.

D.2
VP

The VP gives us another version of the appearance of Kauśikī. It is not found as part of the Śumbha and Niśumbha myth, but the text clearly relates the two.

We are told that one day Śiva teasingly calls Pārvatī 'kālī' (black) because of her dark complexion. Pārvatī insulted by Śiva's taunt requests his permission to perform tapas so that she will be granted a boon that will rid her of her dark

colour. After many years Brahmā, pleased by her austerities, appears before Pārvatī and grants her a boon. Pārvatī asks that she be given a beautiful golden skin. Immediately she sheds her dark skin (kośa) which then becomes a dark-coloured goddess--Kauśikī. Indra appears on the scene and asks for Kauśikī as a dakṣinā fee (a fee or present given to the officiating priest of a sacrifice). Pārvatī bestows Kauśikī upon him and Indra installs the dark-hued goddess on the Vindhya mountains as the slayer of the gods' enemies.

D.3 In the ŚP and DM the Devī, sitting on her mountain peak,
 SP is seen by Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa who are servants of Śumbha and
 DM Niśumbha. They marvel at her beauty and rush off to tell their
 DBP masters of this beautiful woman. In the DBP the Devī and
 VP Kālikā go to a garden near Śumbha and Niśumbha's city. The
 Devī begins to sing thereby attracting the attention of Caṇḍa
 and Muṇḍa, who then rush to Śumbha with the news. In the VP
 Śumbha and Niśumbha find Caṇḍa, Muṇḍa and Raktabīja, who from
 fear of the Devī are hiding under water. They decide that they
 must humble the Devī--the wicked slayer of Mahiṣa--and then
 marry her off to Śumbha or Niśumbha.

D.4 Śumbha then sends Sugrīva with a proposal of marriage
 DBP to the Devī. She replies that because of a vow she has made
 SP she cannot marry anyone unless he first defeats her in battle.
 DM Sugrīva returns to Śumbha who, upon hearing the Devī's reply,
 VP sends Dhūmrālocana (in ŚP Dhūmrākṣa) with 60,000 soldiers to
 bring the Devī back to him--by force, if necessary.

D.5 Dhūmrālocana attempts to convince the Devī to marry
 DBP
 ŚP Śumbha or Niśumbha. In the DBP he delivers a long speech
 DM
 VP telling the Devī that when she speaks of battle she really is
 talking about sexual-intercourse (this is a complex allusion
 in the tradition of Indian courtly love poetry): this does
 not impress her at all. In all versions Dhūmrāloçana then
 becomes angry and rushes at the Devī. She burns him to ashes
 with her huṅkāra sound.

D.6 Śumbha then sends Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa along with a large
 DBP
 DM army into battle. Seeing the approaching army the Devī becomes
 VP angry, her face becomes black and Kālī of terrible appearance
 springs from her forehead. Kālī immediately enters the battle
 and begins to fling elephants, horses, chariots and warriors
 into her gaping mouth. Next she enters into a furious battle
 D.7 with Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa: she slays them, beheads them and brings
 DBP
 DM their heads to the Devī as a sacrificial gift. The Devī,
 VP pleased by Kālī's actions, bestows upon her the name of Cāmuṇḍā,
 because she has slain Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa.

In the VP another goddess appears in the Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa episode. Kālī springs from Kauśikī's forehead as in the DBP and DM and rushes into battle. There she is attacked by a demon called Ruru. After killing this demon Kālī rips out Ruru's entrails and binds them into her hair. One lock remains unbound and she tears it out and flings it to the ground. This lock becomes a terrifying female called Caṇḍamārī whose body is half white and half black. It is after this that Kālī slays Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa and offers them to the Devī.

D.8
DBP
DM
VP

Just before (DM) or just after (DBP, VP) the appearance of the asura named Raktabīja, who can reproduce himself from drops of his blood, on the battlefield the Devī receives reinforcements in the form of the Mātṛkās (mothers) or Śaktis.

These goddesses are the same in each of the three texts: Brāhmaṇī Vaiṣṇavī, Kaumarī, Vārāhī, Nārasimhī, Māhesvarī (Śaṅkarī) and Indrāṇī (Aindrī, Māhendrī). In the DM and DBP these śaktis emanate from the gods: in the VP they come from Kauśikī herself,

D.9
DBP
DM
VP

each emanating from a different part of her body. Then Śiva appears and another śakti leaps forth from the Devī. This śakti sends Śiva to Śumbha and Niśumbha with a challenge of battle, and thus she becomes known as Śivādūtī (she who has Śiva as a messenger).

D.10
DBP
DM
VP

The host of goddesses creates havoc among the asura army until Raktabīja enters the battle. The battlefield is soon crowded with blood-born Raktabījas and matters become very serious for the goddesses and the watching gods become terrified. The Devī sends Kālī to rectify the situation. She does so by roaming the battlefield and devouring all the blood-born asuras and sucking Raktabīja dry of his remaining blood. He is then easily slain.

The ŚP does not include the events from D.6 through D.10. Kauśikī in this text fights alone on the battlefield. The slaying of Caṇḍa, Munda and Raktabīja is merely reported with no details given.

D.11
DBP
SP
DM
VP

At this point the VP, SP and DBP repeat the marriage proposal theme. Then, in all versions, Śumbha and Niśumbha

fight the Devī and they are quickly slain. In the DBP Śumbha asks the Devī to become ugly before she fights with him for he cannot bring himself to battle with a beautiful woman. The Devī answers Śumbha's request by sending Kālikā to fight and slay him.

The DM adds other details to the slaying of Śumbha and Niśumbha. As the Devī fights Niśumbha she pierces his heart with an arrow. Another asura, begging for mercy, springs from his heart. The Devī laughs and cuts off his head. When Śumbha approaches the Devī he challenges her to single combat, claiming that she fights only with the strength of others. The Devī points out that all these other beings are merely manifestations of herself. She re-absorbs them, including the seven Mātṛkās, and stands alone before Śumbha. The Devī and Śumbha begin a terrible battle: they hurl weapons at each other and they wrestle. Finally she kills him with an arrow in his heart.

D.12
DBP
DM
SP
VP

With order restored once the demons have been slain the skies clear, the waters run freely and the winds blow softly. The gods restore the sacrifice. They chant a stotra to the Devī and the account of her exploits is declared to be auspicious.

These, then, are the myths of the demon-slaying Devī. Her major function in them is obvious: she rids the world of troublesome demons and thereby restores the proper order and running of the world. But it is also clear that she has other functions and performs other roles. In the next chapter we shall seek to answer the questions, what are these roles and how do we interpret them, and what do they have to do with

the position of the Devī as a demon-slayer? We shall also attempt to discover if the Devī is isolated in her varying roles or if there are other deities in the Hindu pantheon that perform like functions.

CHAPTER III

As can be seen from the above summary of our texts the Devī is the supreme queen of battle. But it is also clear that she is many things other than a warrior. The texts present us with a great deal of information about the Devī: we are given accounts of her various appearances, many of her names and epithets, descriptions of her incarnations and lists of beings who are produced from her and so on. What are we to make of this mass of information? By sifting through the data and discerning conflicting characteristics in these and other texts several scholars have reached the conclusion that the Devī is a being whose essential nature is ambiguous and two-faced.

Heinrich Zimmer's comments on the Devī's ambiguity, while not in reference to the demon-slaying myths, could easily be applied to our texts.

It might be said that the Goddess represents clearly enough by her feminine nature the life-bearing, life-nourishing, maternal principal; this her positive aspect hardly needs to be further emphasized. But the counter-balancing, negative aspect, her ever destructive function which takes back and swallows again the creatures brought forth requires a shock of vivid horror if it is to be duly expressed.¹

For Zimmer the Devī represents in one figure the polarities of

¹Heinrich Zimmer, Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization (Princeton, N.J.: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), p. 211.

life and is "the archetypal object of all longings and all thought."² If one understands the lesson she teaches one will "discover...something that will speak to us of a wonder beyond beauty-and-ugliness, a peace balancing the terms of life and death."³

In introducing a myth from the Skandapurāṇa Wendy O'Flaherty comments upon the ambivalence she finds in the Devī in terms of love/death.

These ambivalences of love and death are evident within the Goddess herself, who here divides herself into her two contrasting aspects--the golden erotic Gaurī and the black goddess of death, Kālī.⁴

This motif of the 'split' goddess will be seen to have great importance in our texts and we shall return to it.

Lawrence Babb tries to make a clear distinction between 'benign' goddesses and 'fierce' goddesses, claiming that this depends on whether they are married or not: yet he too sees the Devī as ultimately two-faced. "This is perhaps the central mystery of Devi--that the goddess is at once Kali (the destroyer) and Lakshmi (the bestower of wealth and happiness), and even Mata (the mother)."⁵ While there are problems with Babb's interpretation of the Devīmāhātmya it is clear that he sees the Devī's underlying essence as ambiguous, as

²Zimmer, p. 215.

³Zimmer, p. 216.

⁴Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, Hindu Myths (Penguin Books, 1975), p. 252.

⁵Babb, p. 221.

both fierce and benign.⁶

In a paper on the Devīmāhātmya David Kinsley is clear as to what he sees as the Devī's ambiguous nature, claiming that it is based on the very ambiguity of life itself: life must be taken so that life can be created.

The ambiguity of the terrible mother is the ambiguity inherent in the view of the world as a biocosm, of any organism that sustains itself on the lives of other organisms, that must nourish itself on death. The wild, fierce, blood thirsty forms of the Mahādevī are a dramatic and consistent reminder of this fundamental truth.⁷

These scholars, then, have sought to make sense of the Devī by interpreting her underlying and essential nature as ambiguous and two-faced. They may use different terminology or have differing conceptions of which dualities the Devī represents, but they are all agreed that this ambiguity cannot be resolved. Our texts present us with ample evidence for this kind of an interpretation.

Even a cursory reading of the texts presents us with the most obvious of the contrasting characteristics in the figure of the Devī. She is beautiful, yet she is a deadly killer and the beings who spring from her are dark and ugly. Two of her most common names, out of a plethora of names and epithets are Caṇḍikā (the fierce one) and Ambikā (mother, good woman).

The stotras (prayers) in our texts which are addressed to the

⁶Babb sees the Devī in the Devīmāhātmya as being only fierce, blood-thirsty and angry.

⁷David Kinsley, "Our Mother Who Art in Heaven: The Portrait of the Divine in the Devī-māhātmya" (unpublished paper), p. 68.

Devī, much more than the narrative portions (which are concerned primarily with the Devī as demon-slayer) refer explicitly to her various, often conflicting characteristics. Brahmā refers to her forms as being both terrible and benign,⁸ the gods say that she is ill-fortune and good fortune⁹ and that she takes the form of a milking maid as well as having a terrible form.¹⁰ The last stotra in the DM lists every contrasting characteristic imaginable: motherly, auspicious, abode of good qualities, of terrible form, kindly, formidable, besmirched with blood and so on.¹¹ Thus the Devī encompasses within herself all that is benign and all that is fierce.

The lists of the Devī's incarnations also provide us with some of her conflicting roles and functions. The greater part of these incarnations, described in the VP, DM and ŚP,¹² are demon-slayers and fierce. One such incarnation is thus described by the Devī herself:

And again becoming incarnate in a very terrible form on this earth, I will slay the Asuras who are the descendants of Vipra-chitta. When I shall devour those fierce and great Asuras called Vaipra-chitta, my teeth shall become red like the flowers of the pomegranate. Thenceforth the gods in heaven and mortal men on this earth praising me shall always refer

⁸DM 1.61-62.

⁹DM 4.4.

¹⁰ŚP Umāsaṃhitā, 47.8

¹¹DM 11.2-35.

¹²SP Umāsaṃhitā, 50.46-49, DM 11.38-50, VP. 30.67-71.

to me as the Red-toothed One.¹³

In the following verses the Devī describes one of her benign incarnations:

And again when rain and water shall fail for a hundred years, propitiated by the Munis I shall be born on the earth but not from a womb. At that time, O gods, I shall support the whole world with life sustaining vegetables, born out of my own body, until the rains set in again. Then I shall be famed on earth as Śākambharī.¹⁴

here she is a goddess of vegetation and a nurturer of men. The ŚP mentions yet another compassionate incarnation of the Devī-- Śatākṣī--"who cried for nine days on seeing her people scorched and distressed."¹⁵ The ŚP also makes it quite clear that these goddesses are one: "the goddess Śatākṣī, Śākambharī and Durgā are identical."¹⁶ Thus we must consider the fierce goddesses and the motherly goddesses to be aspects of one goddess--the Mahādevī.

As well as these explicit references to the Devī's various moods we also find them mytho-poetically expressed in our texts. This is found in the multiplicity of goddesses, primarily in the Śumbha and Niśumbha myth, who are 'splits' or 'splinterings' of an original goddess. Most of these 'splits' are, to be sure, fierce, but their basis, Pārvatī, is unwarlike and generally benign.

¹³DM 11.40-42.

¹⁴DM 11.43,45.

¹⁵ŚP Umāsaṃhitā, 50.52.

¹⁶ŚP Umāsaṃhitā, 50.51.

The appearance of the demon-slaying Devī before the battle with Śumbha and Niśumbha is particularly dramatic in illustrating the benign and fierce sides of the Devī's nature. As we have seen above, in four of our texts¹⁷ as the gods, invoking the Devī, chant their stotra a beautiful goddess, who most of our texts name Pārvatī, appears and asks, "Who is being praised by you here?"¹⁸ Obviously she has no idea why the gods have gathered together. At his point another goddess springs from Pārvatī and she is known as Kauśikī for she has come from Pārvatī's kośa. Kauśikī knows quite well why the gods have assembled and she is prepared to do battle.

This hymn is being addressed to me by the assembled gods vanquished by the Asura Śumbha and routed in battle by Niśumbha.¹⁹

Then something interesting happens. The DM tells us:

After she (Kauśikī) had come out, Pārvatī herself became of dark form, and therefore was known as Kālikā with her seat on Mount Himālaya.²⁰

This is rather confusing for two verses later we are told that it is Kauśikī who sits on Mount Himālaya:²¹ the goddess Kālikā disappears from the text.

¹⁷ SP Umāsaṃhitā, 47.3-10, DBP 5.22.25-42, DM 5.7-36, KP 63.55-60; 71-72.

¹⁸ DM 5.38.

¹⁹ DM 5.39.

²⁰ DM 5.41.

²¹ DM 5.43.

The version of this split of goddesses given in the DBP sheds light on this event. In the DBP Kālikā is taken along to battle by Kauśikī as a sort of aide-de-camp.²² Thus the mention of Kālikā in the DM can be seen as an incomplete reference to the events as given in the DBP.²³ The question we must ask is why otherwise would the author of the DM make reference to Kālikā? His telling of the story makes perfect, even better, sense without it. For as we have the myth, in all of our versions, it makes no difference whether it is initially one or two goddesses who go off to fight.

The SkP and the VP also have a split of goddesses which involves a change of colour before the battle with Śumbha and Niśumbha.²⁴ Pārvatī was insulted when Śiva called her kālī (Black One). So, determined to lose her dark skin she practiced tapas until Brahmā granted her a boon of a golden skin. Pārvatī then shed her dark kośa and out of it was formed Kauśikī "whose skin was the colour of a dark-blue lotus."²⁵ This Kauśikī is then sent to kill the āsura brothers Śumbha and Niśumbha.

Thus we have two version of Pārvatī's fate after the appearance of the demon-slaying Kauśikī: in version one Pārvatī becomes dark-

²²DBP 5.23.8-30

²³This would be an even more definite assumption if Phyllis Granoff is correct in her theory of the different stages of the myth in which the DM is later than the DBP. This is not, however, meant to suggest the dates of the purānas; ref. Phyllis Granoff, pp. 16-17.

²⁴VP 28.8-28; Wendy O'Flaherty, Hindu Myths, pp. 258-259.

²⁵O'Flaherty, p. 259.

skinned and is known thereafter as Kālikā, in version two Pārvatī loses her dark colour and then returns to her husband. Perhaps, then, version one is a way of referring to Pārvatī's original dark colour. But this does not explain why the motif of a split goddess and its attendant colour change is important to the myth-makers.

It can be argued, as it is by Wendy O'Flaherty, that the goddess has divided into her two aspects, into her light and dark roles.²⁶

This is a reasonable answer for it is to be noted that Pārvatī, the mountain-born wife of Śiva, who is generally considered to be a benign, motherly goddess is being disassociated from the subsequent battle either by becoming the dark ugly Kālikā or by returning to her husband. Thus we are left with a dark (in function if not skin colour, for we are not told in version one what colour Kauśikī is) warrior goddess, or two warrior goddesses who will fight the asura.

This original division is only the first of such splits. In the Śumbha and Niśumbha myth a number of other goddesses appear from, or are closely identified with, the Devī. These goddesses, all fierce, warlike and bloody emerge in the heat of battle. The first of these, Kālī--black and hideous--seems almost to be a personification of the Devī's wrath: Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa have prepared to attack the Devī.

Thereupon the Goddess was thrown into great
rage against those foes and in anger her countenance
became as dark as ink.

²⁶O'Flaherty, p. 252.

From her broad forehead of curved eye-brows suddenly sprang forth Kālī of terrible countenance.²⁷

Kālī immediately pounced upon the battle-field and began to fling asuras into her all-devouring mouth. She then slew Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa and offered their heads to the Devī as a sacrifice. The Devī then bestowed upon Kālī the name Cāmuṇḍā in honour of the event.²⁸ Thus Kauśikī who is beautiful produces from herself a hideous goddess.

As we have already noted, the VP has yet another goddess appearing in this scene. In this text Kālī after she had killed most of the asura army, was attacked by a demon called Ruru. After she slew him she ripped out his entrails and bound them in her hair. One lock remained unbound and she tore it out and flung it on the ground. This lock became a terrifying female called Caṇḍamārī whose body was half white and half black.²⁹ Kālī then killed Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa.

In this episode, which is not found in our other versions of the Devī myths, we have a string of goddesses emerging: Kauśikī = Kālī = Caṇḍamārī. If we begin the list with Pārvatī we find that each goddess appears in more gory circumstances than the last. Kauśikī appears before the battle begins and off the battle-field, Kālī appears on the battle-field, but before Kauśikī is attacked, Caṇḍamārī, whose physical description is the most startling, appears

²⁷DM 7.4-5, also see DBP 5. 26.31-61, VP. 29.49-51.

²⁸VP 29.85; DM 7.25; DBP 5. 26.62-65.

²⁹VP. 29.63-67. I am indebted to Phyllis Granoff for this rendering of the Caṇḍamārī episode. ref. Granoff, p. 8. The translation I am otherwise using is in this instance hopelessly garbled.

right in the midst of battle. Caṇḍamāri's half white and half black colouring is striking in pointing out the light and dark aspects of the Devī's character. For if we assume that she does contain both light (benign) and dark (fierce) characteristics then the final goddess (Caṇḍamāri) in this list indicates the two-sidedness of the Devī. Although Caṇḍamāri appears in a particularly terrifying manner her partial whiteness dramatically illustrates both aspects of the great goddess from whom she ultimately originated.

Yet another group of goddesses comes forth to aid the Devī in battle. These are the śaktis of the gods, the Mātrkās or mothers, and the Devī's own śakti³⁰ who is called Śivādūtī because the first act she performs is to send Śiva to the asura camp as a messenger.³¹ The arrival on the scene of these goddesses is variously described.³² In the DM the śaktis, we are told, come directly from the bodies of the gods Brahmā, Śiva, Kārtikeya, Viṣṇu (who, with his avatāras, claims three śaktis) and Indra.³³ The DBP merely tells us that the gods sent their wives to aid the Devī.³⁴ The VP has these śaktis come directly from various parts of the Devī's body. In any case they possess the characteristics of the gods whose names they bear.³⁵

³⁰DM 9.12-22, VP. 30.3-9, DBP 5. 28.13-33.

³¹DM 8.23, VP 30.3-9, DBP 5. 28.45-63.

³²DM 8.14-20, VP 30.3-9, DBP 5.28.13-33.

³³DM 8.11-12.

³⁴DBP 5. 28.13-33.

³⁵VP 30.3-9.

The VP alone stresses that these śaktis are parts of the Devī. This idea is further strengthened in the DM. When Śumbha, his brother, generals and army slain finally faces the Devī on the battle-field he accuses her of fighting with the strength of others. To this the Devī replies:

I am all alone in the world here, what other
is there besides me, O you wild one, see that
these goddesses are my own powers entering into
myself!
Then all those Mātṛikās, Brahmanī and others
became absorbed in the body of the Goddess.
Thereupon Ambikā alone remained.³⁶

Alone, then, the Devī fights and slays Śumbha. The absorbing of the śaktis into the Devī happens in none of our other texts and this incident is interesting for in the DM the śaktis were originally produced from the gods.

The VarP gives us an interesting twist to the production of the Devī's helpmates. Here the Devī is called Vaiṣṇavī, the śakti of Viṣṇu. For some reason she was performing tapas on Mount Mandara and at one point she lost concentration and from her mind were born several beautiful female deities who became her attendants. When later she was seen and lusted after by Mahiṣa these mind-born attendants assisted her in the battle against the asuras.³⁷ When the myth-maker of the VarP provided the Devī with these helpers he undoubtedly had the warlike śaktis in mind for they, like the śaktis, became the

³⁶DM 10.3-4.

³⁷Gopinatha Rao, Elements of Hindu Iconography, V. 1, pt. 2, 2nd ed. (New York: Paragon Reprint Corp.), 1968, pp. 348-349.

Devī's battlemates. It is also significant that these attendants are produced out of a loss of mental control, for this suggests that they are themselves essentially uncontrolled beings; as uncontrolled and blood-thirsty on the battle-field as the śaktis in our other texts.

These śaktis, or Mātrikās, wild and bloody without exception, appearing like the Devī for the specific purpose of doing battle, have a long history of bloodshed and terror and are connected with battle, ill-fortune and the destruction of children.³⁸ They seem to represent a truly malevolent strand in the Devī's nature, but one that is barely touched upon in our texts. In our myths they have become almost respectable: by the time of the purānas, they have been connected to well-known brāhmanic gods and pressed into the function of helping preserve the dharmic order by slaying asuras. But their curious name (for such warlike and blood-thirsty beings) suggests a startling two-faced, light/dark nature, and since the Mātrikās are parts of the Devī that two-sidedness is part of her as well.

Thus it is easy to find evidence, in our texts, that the Devī has conflicting characteristics and that the various roles she plays are appropriate to those characteristics. Sometimes we are given lists of these and sometimes they are mytho-poetically expressed by the many goddesses who emerge from an original goddess. Underlying the 'split' goddess theme also seems to be the gathering of many goddesses into the figure of the Devī. As S. B. DasGupta states in his discussion of the Devīmāhātmya:

³⁸Kinsley, pp. 41-46.

This Durgā or rather the Devī of the Purāṇic period has assimilated within her all the then prevalent mother goddesses of India, most of whom...were indigenous local goddesses.... In some texts there is an attempt at enumerating the thousand names of the goddess. Even a cursory glance at these lists will convince one that some of these names represent the different attributes of the goddess, while others point to the fact that they are local goddesses later on generalized and merged in one great mother goddess. 39

Our texts, then may be telling us that the one goddess subsumes in her nature a number of other goddesses who come to be considered as parts of the same figure.

We have ascertained that the Devī is indeed a two-sided figure, but we must now answer whether this ambiguity can be resolved. We believe that it can be if we look at the primary function of the Devī. Along with this we shall also refer to other deities who perform the same function.

In the stotras addressed to the Devī by the gods her primary function is clear: they are addressing her as the supreme ruler of the universe, the only being powerful enough to defeat the asuras. In the SP she is called "the cause of the creation, sustenance and annihilation of the world."⁴⁰ In the DM the gods call the Devī she "who is essential" and "who works all things,"⁴¹ "the support of the

³⁹ Shashi Bhushan DasBupta, Aspects of Indian Religious Thought (Calcutta: A Mukherjee and Co. Private Ltd.), 1957, pp. 86-87.

⁴⁰ SP Umāsaṃhitā 47.4.

⁴¹ DM 5.10.

World,"⁴² "mother of the whole world"⁴³ and other such epithets.

In the DBP the gods state: "This universe has been created by Thee; Thou art, therefore, its Mother."⁴⁴ These are only a few instances in which references are made to the Devī as supreme ruler of the cosmos.

As the ruler of the universe it is the Devī's function to see to its proper running and to make sure that the dharmic order is maintained. All the roles and functions assigned to the Devī in our texts have been pressed into serving this major function. Her motherly benign characteristics are appropriate to her creative and sustaining functions. Her fierce characteristics are appropriate to her function as demon-slayer. It is as the demon-slayer that she restores the world to its proper order: "When that evil natured Asura was slain, the world became happy and regained perfect well-being, and the sky became clear."⁴⁵

Furthermore, the hints we are given of the Devī's destructive all-devouring nature, represented by Kālī and the Mātṛkās, are also appropriate to the ruler of the world. For in the Hindu world view the destruction of the worlds is a complimentary act to those of creation and preservation. Creation, preservation and destruction are all parts of the never-ending process of samsāra, the countless rounds of existence. It is, then, the function of the cosmic overlord

⁴²DM 4.27.

⁴³DM 11.2.

⁴⁴DBP 5.19.2-33.

⁴⁵DM 10.24.

to see to the carrying out of all three and it can clearly be seen that the Devī is considered to perform these very duties. The gods address her as: "O eternal Goddess who constitutest the energy/Of creation, permanence and destruction."⁴⁶

Thus the seemingly ambiguous character of the Devī is resolved if we regard her as the supreme ruler of the cosmos. This does not deny her conflicting characteristics but unifies them by seeing them as all serving one end.

The Devī, in her role as ruler of the universe, has two male counterparts in purāṇic literature--the great gods Śiva and Viṣṇu. We find that the terms used to praise these gods are almost the same as those used in the stotras to the Devī. In the Viṣṇupurāṇa Viṣṇu is addressed in these words:

Glory to the supreme Viṣṇu, the cause of the creation, existence and end of this world; who is the root of the world, and who consists of the world.⁴⁷

And in the ŚP this is said of Śiva:

The universe is created by him indulging in wonderful activities. At the time of dissolution this gets dissolved in him. The living beings are under his control.⁴⁸

Thus, just as Śiva and Viṣṇu are to their respective devotees so is the Devī to hers; the supreme cause, the underlying essence, the

⁴⁶DM 11.10.

⁴⁷ViṣṇuP. I 2., (p. 7).

⁴⁸SP Vayavīyasamhitā, 3.22-23.

destroyer--the Cosmic Overlord.

The final question remains whether as cosmic overlords Siva and Viṣṇu, like the Devī, also possess benign and malevolent characteristics which can be considered essential to their nature and function as supreme deities. The answer is definitely in the affirmative.

In purānic lore Viṣṇu is usually thought of as the preserver (Siva is the destroyer, Brahmā is the creator): he is generally gracious and benign. Yet he possesses a fierce and blood-thirsty side. It is in his avatāras (incarnations) that these two aspects are most clearly displayed. Narasiṃha, the man-lion, for example is extremely fierce and blood-thirsty: he slays Hiranyakaśipu by ripping out the demon's entrails with his lion's claws. In describing one of the icons of Narasiṃha T. A. Gopinatha Rao tells us:

On the left thigh thereof Hiranyakaśipu should be stretched out with the belly being ripped open by two of the hands of Narasiṃha. One of the right hands...has to carry a sword. One of the left hands...should be shown as lifted up for administering a blow to the demon. The legs of the asura are to be taken hold of by a right hand, and two other hands...should be lifted up to the ears of the image and beholding the drawn out entrails of Hiranyakaśipu in the form of a garland: 49

There is a story told of Narasiṃha which reminds us of the one told by Babb about Kālī (see Introduction p. 4) that emphasizes the man-lion's fierce nature.

Even after the destruction of the asura Viṣṇu did not abate his terrific attitude, which was causing damage to the inhabitants of the world.

⁴⁹Rao, V. 1, pt. 1, pp. 152-153.

They approached Śiva for succour and Śiva promised them his help. He at once assumed the form of a śarabha...making dreadful noise the Sarabha approached Viṣṇu and tore him up...Viṣṇu came to his proper senses and retired...⁵⁰

Thus Viṣṇu too needs to be 'tamed' and brought under control.

Another of Viṣṇu's avatāras, Paraśurāma (Rāma with an axe) was born to rid the earth of excess kṣatriyas (the warrior caste), something he did with a vengeance.⁵¹ A story in the Mahābhārata also credits him with the slaying of his mother. Paraśurāma's father discovered his wife to have lustful thoughts and ordered successively each one of his sons to kill her. The first four refused and were cursed. Paraśurāma on being ordered to slay his mother immediately beheaded her with his axe.⁵²

Other incarnations of Viṣṇu are benign and/or pacific. Rāma, the hero of the Rāmāyana, is considered to be the ideal king, and the model of righteousness. Nara and Nārāyana, minor incarnations of Viṣṇu, and two great sages, were renowned for their greatness and piety and dwelt in spiritual peace. When challenged by a haughty king they rendered him powerless not by weapons but by a handful of grass.⁵³ These are only some examples of the two-sidedness of Viṣṇu's nature.

Śiva too possesses fierce and benign aspects and is "represented

⁵⁰ Rao, V. 2, pt. 1, p. 172.

⁵¹ Rao, V. 1, pt. 1, pp. 181-182.

⁵² Rao, V. 1, pt. 1, p. 185.

⁵³ Rao, V. 1, pt. 1, pp. 273-274.

in sculpture either as a terrific, destructive deity or a pacific, boon-conferrer."⁵⁴ The fierce aspects are called saṃharamūrti (destructive) and the benign anugrahamūrti (boon-giving) and dakṣiṇāmūrti (yogic, musical and philosophic). Another classification, nṛttamūrti (dancing) contains both benign and fierce aspects.

The fierce aspects include such figures as Kāmāntakamūrti, the destroyer of Kāma, the god of love. In the myth that goes with this aspect Kāma is sent by the gods to rouse Śiva from his yogic trance in order that he will notice Pārvatī whom the gods wish him to marry. Distrubed by Kāma Śiva sent forth fire from his third eye and reduced the love god to ashes.

Other fierce aspects of Śiva include: Tripurāntakamūrti, Śiva as the destroyer of the triple city of the demons; Śarabheśamūrti, the subduer of Narasiṃha; Brahmāsiraschedakamūrti, the one who cut off Brahmā's fifth head; and Gagāsurasamharamūrti, the slayer of the elephant-demon.

An interesting fierce form of Śiva is Bhairava.

Bhairava is so called because he protects the universe (bharana) and because he is terrific (bhīshana). He is also known as Kālabhairava for even Kāla (the god of death) trembles before him; Amarddaka because he kills bad persons (marddana) and Pāpabhakshana because he swallow the sins of his bhaktas or devotees.⁵⁵

Thus Bhairava, who is a terrible aspect of Śiva seems to be fierce towards evil persons and things and benign towards his wor-

⁵⁴ Rao, V. 2, pt. 1, p. 145.

⁵⁵ Rao, V. 2, pt. 1, pp. 176-177.

shippers as is fitting of a deity who is the protector of the universe.

The description Rao gives of Bhairava is certainly terrifying.

Bhairava should have a flabby belly, round yellow eyes, side-tusks and wide nostrils, and should be wearing a garland of skulls. He should be also adorned with snakes as ornaments...he should have several arms carrying several weapons. He should be represented as frightening Pārvatī with a snake.⁵⁶

Even Śiva's boon-conferring forms, while benign towards the devotee who is receiving the boon, seem to sometimes include violent acts. The anugrahamūrtis include Caṇḍeśanugrahamūrti. In the story that goes with this form a young devotee of Śiva, Vicarasarman, while engaged in worshipping Śiva cuts off his father's leg because the father kicked the mound of sand in the form of a līṅga to which the boy was addressing his devotion. Pleased Śiva appears and makes the boy the chief of his gaṇas and the steward of his household. Śiva also bestows the name Caṇḍeśa upon the boy.⁵⁷

Other boon-conferring forms include Viṣṇvanugrahamūrti, the giving of the cakra to Viṣṇu in return for Viṣṇu's devotion to Śiva; Nandisanugrahamūrti, Śiva's adoption of Nandi (his vāhana); Vighneśvaranugrahamūrti, the blessing of Gaṇeśa; and Kirātārjunamūrti, the giving of the pāśupatāstra weapon to Arjuna, one of the heroes of the Mahābhārata.

Another benign form Śiva Dakṣiṇāmūrti, is thus described by Rao:

This aspect of Śiva is always invoked by

⁵⁶Rao, V. 2, pt. 1, p. 177.

⁵⁷Rao, V. 2, pt. 1, pp. 205-207.

students of science and arts...this aspect of Siva...is...remarkable for its peacefulness...⁵⁸

It includes four aspects; Śiva as teacher of yoga, of the vīnā (a stringed instrument), of jñāna (knowledge), and of the śāstras.⁵⁹

Thus Śiva and Viṣṇu have many forms which encompass many moods and characteristics. As we have stated above it is fitting that a supreme deity possess many forms and natures for each of these is proper for the various roles that a ruler of the universe must play: creation, sustenance and destruction, moreover these three roles are unified under the over-arching role of Cosmic Overlord.

As well, like the Devī, Śiva and Viṣṇu are notable demon-slayers. For example Śiva slays Jalandhara and Andhaka and Viṣṇu as Narasiṃha slays Hiranyakaśipu (mentioned above). As Kṛṣṇa he slays Kāṃsa, to name but a few. It is in the nature of demons, as first cousins to the gods, periodically to attempt to usurp the roles of the gods and thereby upset the dharmic order. It is then the duty of the supreme deity to rid the world of these usurpers and restore order.

In conclusion, it can be seen that although the Devī clearly has a 'split personality' in that she is both benign and malignant, this division of her nature is not something peculiar to her alone. Śiva and Viṣṇu likewise have dual tendencies, pacific and fierce. Moreover, all three, Śiva, Viṣṇu and the Devī are equally depicted as demon-slayers in the purāṇic myths. We have sought to understand

⁵⁸ Rao, V. 2, pt. 1, p. 273.

⁵⁹ Rao, V. 2, pt. 1, p. 273.

this complex essence of the Hindu deity in relation to the three functions of major gods, male or female, in India--creation, sustenance and destruction.

It remains now to be seen whether the Devī as the ruler of the cosmos and demon-slayer is in any fundamental way different from Viṣṇu or Śiva in the same roles. To do this we shall examine various demon-slaying myths in which Śiva and Viṣṇu are the main actors. We shall attempt to conclude whether or not demon-slayers and their myths in the purāṇas share any common features. Is there an overall pattern of the demon-slaying myth which myths of all three major gods exemplify and does the Devī in her demon-slaying role thus belong within a larger pattern in Hindu lore?

CHAPTER IV

As we have stated above the demon-slaying Devī is only one of a number of notable demon-slayers to be found in Hindu mythology. This chapter will set out to discover if these demon-slaying myths have a common structure and, if there is, whether the myths of the Devī fit into this structure. We have chosen four other myths in which the central theme is the slaying of a being destructive to the order of the universe: the slaying of Tāraka by Skanda, Hiraṇyakaśipu by Narasiṃha and Andhaka and Jalandhara by Śiva. Again, as in the Devī myths, we shall use the sources which are easily available and in translation. Furthermore, we shall use only those versions which are told in detail: these myths are mentioned only in passing in the other purānas which were consulted.

The first myth we shall consider is the slaying of Tāraka by Skanda as found in the Matsyapurāna¹ and the Śivapurāna.²

In both these versions the demon Tāraka performs severe tapas until the heat produced by his penance upsets the universe. Brahmā appears before Tāraka in order to grant him a boon. At this point the accounts diverge. In the MP Tāraka asks to be made immortal. On being told that this is impossible he then requests that he be

¹MP 148-160.

²SP, Rudrasaṃhitā. 3.15-4.10.

killed only by a seven-day-old baby. Brahmā grants this request. In the ŚP Tāraka requests two boons--that no man in the universe be equal to him in strength and that only if a son of Śiva becomes the commander of an army will he be slain. These boons are granted.

Tāraka then becomes the chief of the asuras and decides to wage war upon the gods. Tāraka defeats the gods: the MP describes the battle at length. The distressed gods then go to Brahmā who tells them to be patient for the demon Tāraka will be slain by a son of Śiva who is not yet born.

At this point the events leading up to the birth of Skanda are related. These events constitute another entire cycle of myths which deals with problems not directly involved with the demon-slaying myth. However, for our purposes the major importance of this myth cycle is that it leads to the birth of Skanda. It includes the birth of Pārvatī, the attempts of the gods and Pārvatī to arouse Śiva out of his yogic trance (no easy task) and the eventual marriage ceremony.

After their marriage Śiva and Pārvatī engage in a long session of sexual dalliance and the gods, concerned about the birth, or rather, the non-birth of their champion again take a hand in the matter. They go to visit the divine couple and disturb them at their love-play. While answering the door Śiva spills his semen and it begins a bizarre journey, first being swallowed by Agni who, because of his function as the bearer of sacrifices to the gods, then impregnates the gods. The gods, unable to bear the fiery semen of Śiva vomit it and the semen goes through several more transformations and beings until it finally produces Skanda.

Skanda at last, in the MP at seven days old, is made general

of the gods' army and is presented with gifts and weapons. Then the war between the gods and the asuras begins. The gods, with Skanda at their head, march on Tāraka who witnesses a great number of inauspicious omens. In the MP, then, Skanda confronts Tāraka who scoffs at the child leading the gods. Skanda tells Tāraka that he is a fool and quickly slays him. In the ŚP the battle between various gods and demons is described at length. After defeating many of the gods Tāraka finally fights Skanda: Skanda slays the demon-king with his spear.

After Tāraka is slain the world returns to happiness, the gods praise Skanda, flowers fall from heaven, the Gandharvas sing and the Apsaras dance.

The second myth we shall consider is the slaying of Hiranyakaśipu by Narasiṃha as found in the Matsyapurāṇa³ and the Bhāgavatapurāṇa.⁴

Hiranyakaśipu performs tapas, upsetting the gods with its severity. Pleased by the asura's austerities Brahmā offers him a boon. Hiranyakaśipu requests that he not be killed by any creatures created by Brahmā, by men or by animals, by day or by night, by wet things or by dry things, on the earth or in the sky. He is granted this boon and then proceeds to harass the gods. He conquers the universe and usurps the places of the gods.

The distressed gods petition Viṣṇu who promises to rid them of the demon-chief. In the BP we are given the information that

³MP 161-163.

⁴BP 7.2-10.

Viṣṇu will slay Hiranyakaśipu when the demon mistreats his son Prahlāda. Then the BP tells of Prahlāda's devotion to Viṣṇu and of Hiranyakaśipu's attempts to dissuade Prahlāda from this devotion. When this fails he attempts to kill the boy.

Viṣṇu, in both versions, takes the form of Narasiṃha (the man-lion) and appears at Hiranyakaśipu's court. In the BP we are told that Narasiṃha appears out of a pillar after Hiranyakaśipu, scoffing at his son's insistence that Viṣṇu is everywhere, asks why Viṣṇu does not appear out of the pillar.

In either version Hiranyakaśipu then attacks Narasiṃha and a terrible battle ensues. Finally the demon chieftain is killed by Narasiṃha who uses his claws to rip Hiranyakaśipu to pieces. The BP adds the detail that Narasiṃha tears out Hiranyakaśipu's entrails and drapes them around himself as a garland.

The gods then praise Narasiṃha, showering him with flowers, the Gandharvas sing, the Apsaras dance and order is restored.

The third myth is that of the transformation of Andhaka by Śiva as found in the Vāmanapurāna⁵ and the Śivapurāna.⁶ In this myth the demon is not slain, but is purified of his demonic nature and made the leader of Śiva's ganas.

Andhaka was accidentally created when Pārvatī playfully covered Śiva's eyes with her hands. The VP tells us that the demon was produced out of the ensuing darkness. In the ŚP the mixture of the

⁵VP 9-10; 37.1-17; 42-44.

⁶SP Rudrasaṃhitā. 5.15-25.

sweat of Pārvatī's hands and the heat of Śiva's third eye engendered this frightful being. In both cases Andhaka is born blind. Śiva then gives Andhaka to Hiraṇyākṣa to raise as his adopted son.

In the ŚP, in order to gain eyesight, Andhaka performs severe tapas. This tapas frightens the gods who send Brahmā to offer Andhaka a boon. Andhaka asks for eyesight and for freedom from death by gods, daityas, gandharvas, yakṣās, serpents, humans, Viṣṇu or Śiva. Brahmā replies that Andhaka must request some form or cause of death. Andhaka then replies that when he desires the best woman in the world then let him be killed. By virtue of these boons Andhaka becomes the chief of the asuras.

In the VP we are told that Andhaka gains eyesight before he becomes the chief of the asuras, but we are not told how this was effected. After his installment as king of the demons Andhaka performs tapas to propitiate Śiva and gains the boon of being invulnerable to all manner of beings, fire and water. In both versions Andhaka then defeats the gods and brings the entire universe under his control.

In the VP Andhaka then sees Pārvatī and he attacks Nandi who is protecting her. Nandi is defeated by Andhaka and out of fear Pārvatī multiplies herself into a hundred forms who then manage to beat off the demon. Andhaka retreats only to brood over Pārvatī. In the ŚP Andhaka's ministers see Pārvatī and Śiva. They rush back to Andhaka to tell him of this beautiful woman who is obviously the wife of an ascetic.

At this point the two versions come together again. Andhaka sends a messenger to tell Śiva that he should give up his wife, for why does an ascetic need a young and beautiful woman. In the VP

Śiva says that his wife can choose whom she pleases; Pārvatī offers herself to the victor of a fight. In the ŚP Śiva offers Pārvatī to Andhaka if he has the power to take her in battle.

In the ŚP Andhaka then grabs his sword and rushes off to take Pārvatī, but he is stopped by Vīraka (Nandi) who is Śiva's doorkeeper. Śiva retires to a forest to perform tapas in order to gain the strength to kill his enemy and leaves Pārvatī in a cave, protected by Vīraka. Andhaka attacks Vīraka there and the gods take female forms so that they can enter Pārvatī's cave and defend her from the demon. At this point Śiva reappears.

In both versions a fierce battle takes place. In the ŚP, during the course of the battle Andhaka's blood reproduces into other Andhakas. Viṣṇu takes the form of a hideous female who devours the army of the asuras and drinks their blood. In the VP Śukra, the priest of the demons, revives the slain demons. Śiva, then, swallows Śukra and Andhaka's army is re-slain. Andhaka, alone, faces Śiva and tells Śiva that Śiva fights only with the help of others. Śiva absorbs the gods and pramathas and the battle between the god and the demon begins. Andhaka wounds Śiva and from the god's blood are born Bhairavas (fierce forms of Śiva). Śiva wounds Andhaka and the demon's blood submerges Śiva up to his neck. From the sweat on Śiva's forehead a girl, dripping with blood, is formed; from the god's sweat which falls on the ground a boy is created. These beings drink Andhaka's blood. Andhaka is then purified by the fire from Śiva's third eye and he recognizes Śiva as his lord. He chants a stotra to the god and pleased by this Śiva offers any boon to Andhaka except Pārvatī. The asura asks to be freed from his demonical nature. Śiva agrees,

renames him Bṛngin and appoints him the chief of his ganas.

In the ŚP Andhaka is pierced by Śiva's trident and staked on it; he is tortured by the sun and the rain. Andhaka does not die, but eulogises Śiva. Śiva is pleased and offers Andhaka the position of the leader of the ganas.

Then, in both versions, the world is restored to order and the gods praise Śiva.

The fourth demon-slaying myth we shall look at is the slaying of Jalandhara by Śiva as found in the Śivapurāna.⁷

Indra and Bṛhaspati meet Śiva, who is in disguise, and Indra ignores Śiva thinking him beneath his notice. On being insulted by Indra Śiva sends forth a blaze of fire from his third eye. Bṛhaspati intervenes and instead of killing Indra Śiva discharges the fire into the ocean where it forms itself into a boy. The god of the ocean adopts the child. The crying of the boy upsets the gods who send Brahmā to read the child's horoscope. Brahmā names the child Jalandhara and predicts that he will become the lord of the asuras and only Śiva will be able to slay him. The Ocean raises the child and when he is grown marries him to the asura-maiden Vṛndā.

One day Jalandhara hears of the churning of the ocean for amṛta (nectar). He becomes angry at the robbing of his adoptive father and decides to fight the gods whom he defeats. Jalandhara then usurps the places of the gods, confiscates all their treasures and makes himself king of the three worlds.

The distressed gods pray to Śiva who then sends the ṛṣi (sage)

⁷SP Rudrasaṃhitā, 5.15-25.

Nārada to them. Hearing of the gods' problems Nārada promises to see what he can do for them. After leaving the gods Nārada goes to Jalandhara's assembly chamber. He then convinces Jalandhara that since the demon now possesses all the treasure of the gods it is only fitting that he should have Pārvatī as well. Instantly Jalandhara is consumed by lust for Pārvatī and he sends Rāhu, one of his generals, to Śiva demanding that the god surrender his wife.

In anger Śiva produces a terrible being from his forehead which immediately pounces upon Rāhu. The demon begs for his life, crying out that he is a brāhmana. Śiva orders his gana to release Rāhu. The gana then complains that he is hungry and Śiva tells him to eat his own arms and legs. The being eats his body, leaving only his head, and Śiva makes him his door-keeper.

Rāhu returns to Jalandhara with the story of his visit to Śiva. Jalandhara becomes angry and summons his army which marches off to do battle. The war between Śiva's gaṇas and the asuras begins. The gaṇas slay many demons, but they are revived by their priest, Bhargava, and the gaṇas become terrified. Śiva then creates a terrible female who comes out of his mouth. She roams the battlefield, devours demons, thrusts Bhargava up her vagina and then disappears.

Finally Śiva enters the battle and Jalandhara decides upon a ruse to distract the god. He creates Gandharvas and Apsaras who dance and sing. Śiva is transfixed by the sight of the beautiful Apsaras and Jalandhara is then able to slip off the battle-field unnoticed by the god. He disguises himself as Śiva and goes to Pārvatī. She sees through the disguise and immediately disappears. She then summons Viṣṇu and sends him to seduce Jalandhara's wife. This he

does successfully by taking the form of Jalandhara. When Vr̥ndā discovers that she has been betrayed and disgraced she curses Viṣṇu and burns herself up. Her tejas then enters Pārvatī.

Finding Pārvatī gone, Jalandhara returns to the battlefield. Śiva's enchantment is then broken and the god and the asura begin to fight. Finally Śiva creates an enormous cakra in the ocean and challenges Jalandhara to lift it. The demon angrily boasts of his achievements. Śiva then hurls the cakra at Jalandhara and kills him. The demon's tejas merges with the god.

The gods praise Śiva, flowers fall from heaven, Gandharvas sing, Apsaras dance and the world returns to order.

If we analyse these demon-slaying myths we shall see that they possess a common structure,⁸ which can be broken down into a list of seven points or elements.

1. A demon does tapas and gains a boon; the boon which is granted seems to guarantee virtual immortality.
2. The demon defeats the gods and sets himself up as king of the universe.
3. The gods plan their revenge; to do this they either create a special being who will conform to the conditions of the boon so

⁸The stories of Rāma's slaying of Rāvana and Kṛṣṇa's slaying of Kaṃsa, although lost in a welter of detail and sub-plots, are also demon-slaying myths, transposed from the realm of heaven to the realm of men, which conform to the general structure of this kind of myth. Both Kaṃsa and Rāvana are considered evil usurpers and transgressors of the dharmic order. Heroes (Rāma and Kṛṣṇa) are created specially to slay them. Both heroes are born under peculiar circumstances indicating their special status and powers. Both villains offer provocation: the attempts to murder Kṛṣṇa and the kidnapping of Sitā, Rāma's wife and when they are slain the world is relieved of a burden.

that the demon can be slain and/or the gods petition the supreme deity who promises to destroy the demon.

4. Just before the battle the demon gives further provocation, often seen as the direct excuse for the battle.

5. The battle. This often includes the creation of beings, generally from the major demon-slayer, to overcome special problems that arise during the course of the battle.

6. The demon is slain or rendered harmless and his army is scattered.

7. The demon-slayer is praised and the gods regain their rightful places.

A chart demonstrates this striking similarity of structure.

(See Figure 1)

FIGURE 1				
	<u>TĀRAKA</u>	<u>HIRANYAKĀŚIPU</u>	<u>ANDHAKA</u>	<u>JALANDHARA</u>
1. Boon/ <u>Tapas</u>	yes	yes	yes	yes
2. Defeat of Gods	yes	yes	yes	yes
3. Gods Plan Revenge	yes	yes	yes	yes
4. Provocation	yes	yes	yes	yes
5. Battle	yes: no problems	yes: no problems	yes: problems	yes: problems
6. The Demon's Death	yes	yes	yes	yes
7. Restoration of Order	yes	yes	yes	yes

As one analyses these demon-slaying myths it becomes clear that this structure is formal and possesses an internal logic of its own. It is as if both sides, the gods and the demons, are playing an eternal game in which the names and the faces may change but the action remains the same and in which each move is plotted even before the game begins. The myth is there, all one has to do is supply the deity and demon of one's choice.

Let us now look more closely at each of the seven elements of structure of the demon-slaying myth, pointing out the function of each step in the advancement of the action of the myths.

In the first element the first move is made by the demon-king-- he goes to practice tapas. His motivation for this act is sometimes explicitly expressed as being the desire to defeat the gods and to set himself up as ruler of the universe. This is given its simplest expression in the SP version of the Tāraka myth.

...That demon possessing great power of illusion and capable of deluding even experts in the magical art, thought of performing penance in order to conquer all the gods. 9

The version of the Tāraka myth in the MP adds more detail to Tāraka's decision and, incidently, is the only one of our myths which gives us a general reason for this eternal battle between the gods and the asuras.

Tarakasura said: - 'Hearken, O valient Asuras! Everyone should direct his intelligence to his well being. Danavas! all the Devas are the annihilators of our race. They are our ancient enemies. Our family religion is, therefore,

to establish firmly our eternal enmity with them. Today we shall certainly make a move to check the advance of the Devas and conquer them by the strength of our arms. But I do not consider it proper to fight with the Devas without practising austerities, I shall, therefore, first practice severe austerities; then we will conquer the Devas and enjoy the three worlds.¹⁰

In the BP Hiranyakaśipu's reason for wishing to defeat the gods is personal--his brother Hiranyākṣa was slain by Viṣṇu and he wishes revenge.¹¹ But before he goes off to do his tapas Hiranyakaśipu directs his people to harass and annoy all brāhmaṇas and ksatriyas and to destroy all religious rituals and objects.¹²

Andhaka, in the ŚP, performs his tapas in order to gain eyesight so that he will be capable of ruling the asuras, and while boons are being offered he asks for immortality.¹³ We are given no reason for the tapas of Hiranyakaśipu in the MP and Andhaka in the VP. However, we can assume, because of the nature of their boons, that they too wish to defeat the gods.

Jalandhara in the ŚP does not undertake any austerities. However, the events that take place shortly after his creation perform the same function as the tapas/boon events in the other demon-slaying myths. The crying of the child on the ocean upsets the earth and

¹⁰MP 148.1-7.

¹¹BP 7.2.6-13.

¹²BP 7.2.6-13.

¹³ŚP Rudrasaṃhitā 5.44.4-12.

the gods send Brahmā to discover the source of this disturbance;¹⁴
in the other myths the severe austerities of the demon-king upset the
world and the gods send someone, usually Brahmā, to stop the austerities
and thereby put an end to the disturbance.¹⁵

This brings us to the boons themselves and the function they
play in the furthering of the events of the myths. The granting of
the boon is clearly a stop-gap attempt at alleviating the problems
that the tapas of the demon has created. The gods have been disturbed
and therefore the cause of the disturbance must be removed. The boon
ameliorates the immediate problem--the heat generated by the tapas--
but ultimately it creates more upheavals for the gods. By virtue
of the boon the demons are able to defeat the gods and again, and more
seriously, upset the proper running of the universe.

The conditions of the boons are of great importance. The boon
functions in setting the stage for the succeeding steps, introducing
the agent of destruction. Except for the Andhaka myth in the VP¹⁶
the boon corresponds to the agent by which the demon is slain or trans-
formed. Tāraka asks to be slain only by a son of Śiva,¹⁷ or by a
seven-day-old child:¹⁸ he is slain by Skanda who in each case fills
these conditions. Hiranyakaśipu's boon seems to cover all possibilities,¹⁹

¹⁴SP Rudrasaṃhitā 4.14.4-13.

¹⁵It should be noted that tapas is morally neutral.

¹⁶VP 9.5.

¹⁷SP Rudrasaṃhitā 3.15.41.

¹⁸MP 148.17-24.

¹⁹MP 161.11-15; BP 7.3.32-38.

yet he is slain by Narasiṃha whose appearance is not specified in the boon. Andhaka asks that he only be slain when he desires Pārvatī,²⁰ when he does so he is vulnerable to Śiva. Jalandhara's horoscope, which takes the place of the boon, indicates that only Śiva will be able to kill him.²¹

Implicit in each of these boons is the demon's belief that the conditions which could bring about his defeat will never occur--that he has, in effect, gained immortality (in some cases the original request) along with the power to defeat the gods. The situation is fraught with irony. The demon has gained from his enemies the power to defeat them, but he does not realize that he has, by the very conditions of his boon, which he has himself chosen, given the gods a wedge into what he assumes is his impregnable door. The stage has been irrevocably set and the sides have been drawn.

In the second element of the myth the demons proceed to defeat the gods. The battle is described at length in some of the myths, in others it is merely mentioned in passing. The importance of this battle lies not in its details, but in the fact that it does happen and that the demons win.

The third element is a crucial one. In it the gods plan revenge-- they must create a being which will enable them to wage war successfully on the demons or they must enlist the aid of the deity who is able to slay the demon-king. It is to be noted that in every case in which a being is created the conditions of the boon are met.

²⁰SP Rudrasaṃhitā 5.44.15-16.

²¹SP Rudrasaṃhitā 5.14.28.

In the Tāraka and Hiraṇyakaśipu myths a special being is created to slay the demon-chief; Skanda, in the case of Tāraka, Narasiṃha in the case of Hiraṇyakaśipu. The details and complexity of their creations, however, differ.

To slay Hiraṇyakaśipu Viṣṇu simply takes the form of Narasiṃha. The creation of Skanda is a lengthier process. It involves the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī, the obtaining of Śiva's semen by the gods and the travels of the semen through a number of beings before the child is born. Although Skanda is technically Śiva's child, he is in actuality the product of more than the usual number of parents, thus suggesting that he is more powerful than a child produced in the ordinary manner and stronger than any of the beings who play a part in his creation.

In the Andhaka and Jalandhara myths no special being is created, however the conditions of the boon/horoscope are met by alerting Śiva, who is destined to kill these demons, and the army of the gods is prepared for battle. Thus, in step three, preparations for the defeat of the demons are made; the being who will kill the demon-chief is called to battle.

The fourth element of the structure of the demon-slaying myth, the provocation of the demon-slayer, is essential for either of two reasons. When the creation of a special being is lacking, it is necessary to complete the fulfillment of the conditions of the boon by provoking the predestined slayer into action. In these cases where both the special being and the provocation occur the fourth element serves the purpose of the immediate cause of battle. In cases in which direct provocation is lacking the previously established

enmity between the gods and the demons can be considered sufficient cause for battle.

Examples of the fourth elements in myths where there are no specially created beings are in the Jalandhara and Andhaka myths.

Śiva in the Jalandhara and Andhaka myths is the predestined slayer of these demons. The gods may call upon him to aid them in destroying their enemies but first Śiva must be made angry enough to attack the demons. In both myths it is the demon-king's desire to possess Pārvatī which rouses Śiva. In this way the conditions of the boon/horoscope are met.

In the case of Hiranyakaśipu in the BP there is present both the special being and the provocation elements, both of these are necessary for Viṣṇu to slay the demon. The man-lion fulfils the conditions of the boon, but the harrassment of Prahlāda enrages Viṣṇu and provides the chink in Hiranyakaśipu's moral armour. Once the demon has transgressed the dictates of dharma then he will be vulnerable to Viṣṇu.

I have come to know all about the oppression of this vilest of 'Daityas... Though the Daitya King Hiranyakasipu has been made powerful by boons, yet I will slay him when he will persecute his own son, the high-souled peace loving and foeless Prahlada. 22

In the MP this provocation does not take place. Viṣṇu has been made sufficiently angry by Hiranyakaśipu's usurpation of the gods' places.

Similarly in the MP both the special being and provocation are

present. Tāraka taunts Skanda by telling the child to go play with his toys.²³ This gives Skanda the opportunity to tell the asura that he has mistaken his foe and then Skanda rapidly slays Tāraka. In the ŚP version of this myth no such taunting takes place. In summary step four, then, brings the opposing armies face to face with each other and the battle commences.

The fifth element is the description of the battle. There seems to be two possible kinds of battle--one without problems, the other with problems. The first kind, without complications, is represented by the Tāraka and Hiranyakaśipu myths. The second kind, with complications, is represented by the Andhaka and Jaladhara myths in which the demons possess magical resurrective powers. This causes grave problems for the gods and requires the creation of a being other than the major demon-slayer for its resolution.

In the ŚP Andhaka, when wounded, reproduces himself with drops of his blood: Viṣṇu takes the form of a hideous woman in order to drink the demon's blood²⁴ and thus solves the problem. In the VP version of the Andhaka myth the priest of the asuras has the power to revive the slain demons: Śiva solves the problem by swallowing the priest.²⁵ Later in the same battle Śiva creates a boy and a girl to drink Andhaka's blood which is engulfing the god.²⁶ In the

²³MP 160.4-5.

²⁴SP Rudrasaṃhitā 5.46.33-36.

²⁵VP 43.1-27.

²⁶VP 44.41-42.

Jalandhara myth, as in the Andhaka story, the priest of the asuras restores the slain demons to life. From Śiva's mouth comes a terrible female called a Kṛtyā²⁷ who thrusts the priest up her vagina.²⁸

In these strange events we find that the situation seems to be the reverse of what happens in the normal everyday world. Male beings give birth and usually it is female beings who swallow the living-- the opposite of birth. This is most dramatically illustrated in the Jalandhara myth's version of these events (see above). But the swallowing motif is not the exclusive property of female beings; it is Śiva himself who swallow Śukra, the demons' priest. It is interesting to note that only in this case is the swallowed one reborn-- from Śiva's phallus.²⁹

In any case, all the gods' problems are eventually overcome and the sixth element invariably occurs. the demon-king is slain or as in the case of Andhaka, transformed so that he no longer presents any problem to the gods. Once this happens the seventh element immediately follows--the world is restored to order.

Now that we have analysed the structure of these demon-slaying myths it is our task to return to the myths of the demon-slaying Devī. A chart using each version of the Devī myths we described in chapter two will show that her myths do follow the same structure.

²⁷ According to Monier-Williams this is a kind of female evil spirit or sorceress.

²⁸ SP Rudrasaṃhitā 5.20.49-55.

²⁹ VP 43.27-42.

We shall not include the events in the KP as this purāna does not contain a continuous narrative.³⁰ (See figure two)

The first element of the structure is found only in the DBP version of the myths. In this text Mahiṣa and Śumbha and Niśumbha perform severe tapas in order to receive boons.³¹ In each case Brahmā appears and the demons ask for immortality. On being told that this is impossible the demons then ask to be invincible to all male beings.³² Mahiṣa and Śumbha and Niśumbha believe that no female being would be powerful enough to kill them. Thus like the demons in the other demon-slaying myths they feel that they have acquired immortality. And like the other demon-kings they have given the gods the means to defeat them.

The other versions of the myths do not include this element of the structure, but it is to be noted that this omission in no way alters the following elements of the myths. It seems probable, therefore, that the first element was not originally an essential part of the structure of the demon-slaying myth: if one removed the first element from any of the myths previously discussed the myth would still maintain its coherence. It seems, then, that the only purpose of the first element is to explain why the demons are slain by a being who seems bizarre or incongruous (a son of Śiva,

³⁰We shall not include the Madhu and Kaiṭabha myth for while it is a demon-slaying myth it more properly features Viṣṇu as the major demon-slayer.

³¹DBP 5.2.3-7; 21.9-20.

³²DBP 5.2.8-13; 21.9-27.

FIGURE 2

	DM		S&N**	DBP		VP		SP	
	M*	S&N**		M	S&N	M	S&N	M	S&N
1. <u>Boon/Tapas</u>	no	no	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	no
2. Defeat of Gods	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
3. Gods Plan Revenge	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
4. Provocation	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
5. Battle	yes: no problems	yes: no problems	yes: no problems	yes: no problems	yes: no problems	yes: no problems	yes: no problems	yes: no problems	yes: no problems
6. The Demon's Death	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
7. Restoration of Order	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

*Mahiṣa

**Sumbha and Niṣumbha

a woman, a man-lion) or under such dramatic circumstances (an attempt to seduce Pārvatī).

In the second element of the Devī myths, as in the other demon-slaying myths, the gods are defeated by the demons. The demons set themselves up as the rulers of the universe forcing the gods out of their heavens and places.

In the third element of the Devī myths the gods plan their revenge just as in the other demon-slaying myths. For the slaying of Mahiṣa a special being is created, the goddess, who in the DBP answers the conditions of the boon. In all versions of the myth the gods create the Devī by pooling their tejas and from this mass of light the slayer of Mahiṣa is formed.³³ This suggests that the combined power (tejas) of the gods, in the form of the Devī, is infinitely stronger than each individual god and more powerful than all the gods fighting together: the whole is greater than the sum total of the parts.

For the battle against Śumbha and Niśumbha the third element seems to combine both aspects of this step: the special being and the complaint to the major deity aspects of this step. In each of the versions of the myth, except the VP, the gods chant a stotra to the Devī. First Pārvatī appears and upon her asking why the gods have gathered Kauśikī leaps from Pārvatī's kośa and tells the gods that she is ready to fight.³⁴ In the VP version of this myth Pārvatī

³³ DBP 5.8.33-46; DM 2.8-17; ŚP Umāsaṃhitā 46.10-18; VP 19.6-13.

³⁴ DBP 5.22.43-23.7; DM 5.37-40, ŚP Umāsaṃhitā 47.11-16.

performs tapas in order to rid herself of her dark skin. When she is granted her boon the dark skin that she sheds becomes Kauśikī who is told to be the slayer of the gods' enemies.³⁵ Thus, in the demon-slaying Devī myths the gods have assured their revenge by producing and/or producing and petitioning the Devī, the only being capable of slaying the demons.

The fourth element of the myth, the provocation of the demon-slayer is, in the Devī myths, represented by the marriage proposals of the demon-kings which are made to the Devī just before the battles. This is found in each version of the Śumbha and Niśumbha myth,³⁶ and in the DBP and VP versions of the Mahiṣa myth.³⁷ In these instances the going back and forth of messengers between the Devī and the demon camp bearing the demons' proposals and the Devī's refusals or bride-vow stipulations (she will marry only if she is defeated in battle) and her eventual slayings of the messengers serve to heighten the anger of both sides. The Devī becomes angrier at each renewed proposal and the demon-king becomes more incensed at each refusal, evasion or slaying of his generals. In cases where no marriage proposal occurs the already existing enmity between the gods and the demons serves as sufficient provocation for battle.

In the fifth element the demon-slaying Devī myths contain both the battle without problems and the battle with problems motifs.

³⁵VP 28.6-28.

³⁶DBP 5.23.38-66; DM 5.54-76; ŚP Umāsamhitā 49.32-41; VP 29.29-36.

³⁷DBP 5.9.56-10.27; VP 20.21-34.

The Śumbha and Niśumbha myth in the DBP, DM and VP represent the second type of battle. The complication the demons present is exactly the same as that given in the other demon-slaying myths which contain this motif; the solution to the problem is also the same. The demon Raktabīja when wounded is able to reproduce himself with drops of his own blood. This causes a serious set back to the Devī's army: Kālī who was originally produced from the Devī is sent in to drink the demon's blood and thereby solves the problem.³⁸ Thus as in the other demon-slaying myths which contain the battle with problems motif the demons possess magical powers of resurrection and this complication is alleviated by a being who swallows the cause of the problem. We should also note that in the Devī myths the strange reversal we commented on above also occurs: a male being gives birth and a female being swallows the living.

As in the other demon-slaying myths, the sixth element, the slaying of the demon-king by the Devī eventually and invariably occurs. Upon this event the restoration of the world's order, the seventh element, follows immediately.

Thus we can sum up by saying that all the demon-slaying myths which we have examined possess the same structure. This structure gives us a number of moves with each set of these moves presenting a problem and an answer to that problem: the demons upset the gods and the gods respond by removing the cause of the disturbance. It should be noted that the demons always make the first move in each

³⁸DM 8.42-61; DBP 5.29.1-47; VP 30.26-30.

of the myths.³⁹ The gods are always placed in the role of the defenders of the dharmic order.

The myths of the demon-slaying Devī fit squarely into this general structure. Like the other demon-slayers she is called upon to defend the places of the gods and the running of the universe. Just as we have seen in the previous chapter that all the facets of the Devī's personality have been pressed into serving the functioning of the cosmos, as is the case with Śiva and Viṣṇu as well, so in her role as demon-slayer she does not functionally differ from other demon-slayers.

The myths of the demon-slaying Devī do not highlight her distinctiveness but rather fit her in with and make her conform to the broader mythological context of the purāṇas. To discover, then, the distinctiveness of the Devī one would have to sift through the entire corpus of her mythology to see what does not fit into the broad structure of Hindu myths. But no study of the demon-slaying Devī can afford to ignore the structuring of her mythology and its relationship to the mythology of the other great Hindu gods.

³⁹ In some versions of our myths, however, the demons place the blame on the gods; they claim that their attacks are revenge for some wrong that the gods have done to them. Hiranyakaśipu in the BP wishes vengeance on Viṣṇu who has killed the demon's brother Hiranyākṣa. Jalandhara wishes to revenge the robbing of his adoptive father's treasures which were taken by the gods at the churning of the ocean. Kauśikī in the VP is attacked by the demons who wish to revenge the death of Mahiṣa.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

To conclude it would be useful to comment upon both what this study has not done as well as what it has attempted to do. It is, out of choice and necessity, a limited study of several versions of one myth cycle within the context of purāṇic literature. It has not gone out of this cycle and context to address itself to broader and more speculative questions.

The first point to which we gave our attention was the question of the Devī's ambiguity which many scholars have seen as her essential characteristic. As we have seen the texts present us with a great number of the Devī's moods and characteristics and many of these do seem to conflict with one another. However when we looked at the Devī's role as mistress of the universe we found that the seeming conflicts in her nature were resolved: all these different aspects are pressed into serving her function as creator, preserver and destroyer of the cosmos. We also discovered that in this role the Devī performs much the same functions as Śiva and Viṣṇu when they are portrayed as supreme deity. Like the Devī Śiva and Viṣṇu display both fierce and benign characteristics and thus the Devī as mistress of the universe is no more or less ambiguous than they.

Secondly we looked at the Devī as demon-slayer--her primary function in our myths. To do this we also examined a number of other demon-slayers well-known in purāṇic literature. In doing

so we discovered that demon-slaying myths possess a common and formal structure consisting of seven steps. Thus demon-slayers do the same things in much the same way and the Devī is no exception to this general pattern.

Therefore this thesis has shown that the myths of the demon-slaying Devī portray a goddess who fits squarely into the tradition from which she comes. Taken out of that context the demon-slaying Devī is a bizarre, exotic and bewildering figure. Seen within it her myths are coherent and a part of a larger scheme; and the Devī herself is found to exhibit behaviour similar to that of the other great purāṇic gods, Śiva and Viṣṇu. Although each surely possesses his own specific personality, the Devī, Śiva and Viṣṇu clearly belong to the same class of beings--purāṇic deities.

We have now come to the questions which this thesis did not attempt to answer. These are concerned with the problem of the Devī's distinctiveness. In light of the discoveries mentioned above what, if anything, is unique about the Devī? Along with this is the question of the type of vision of divinity that the Devī offers her worshippers. Why do they worship her at all if she is virtually indistinguishable in her actions and functions from the other great Indian deities?

These questions, I discovered, are difficult to answer from the myths used in this study. I suspect that the brāhmanic editors of the texts have all too well done their task of bringing into the fold of the greater tradition originally non-sanskritic deities such as the Devī. They have left few hints which would allow us to answer my questions.

For further research into the character and make-up of the Devī several avenues of approach suggest themselves. One might do research into the various goddesses who are said to be parts of or identical to the Devī. These goddesses include Kālī and Pārvatī. Especially important in this respect would be the 'splits' that the goddess undergoes in the Śumbha and Niśumbha myth. Equally interesting are the important goddesses such as Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī who are conspicuously missing from the lists of goddesses identified with the goddess. Their exclusion, I feel, must have been deliberate. If it could be discovered why certain goddesses are included and others excluded one may come close to knowing the kind of character the authors of the myths wished to give the Devī.

One might also do further research into the suitor's test which the Devī sets for the demons. As David Shulman has demonstrated this poses intriguing questions: Why is the Devī such a desirable marriage partner? Is her proposed suitor's test merely a ploy used to weaken the demons? If she simply refuses the demons' proposals, as she does in some versions of the myths, the results are the same--the demons attack her. Suitor's tests are a common motif in folk-literature. Although the test is usually some difficult task such as obtaining a far-off magical object stories in which the suitor must defeat in some battle or contest his desired bride are not unknown. Perhaps a study of these folk materials would elucidate the question of the Devī's suitor's test.

Finally, there is a great deal of material concerning the Devī which I have not used. This includes ritual texts, various purānas and upapurānas which are addressed mainly to the Devī,

untranslated demon-slaying Devī myths and non-purānic materials.
A study of these texts would surely be helpful in furthering our
understanding of the Devī's nature and significance.

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