

# Devi Mahatmyam for Yogis



Swami Nirmalananda Giri  
(Abbot George Burke)

# The Devi Mahatmyam For Yogis

by

Swami Nirmalananda Giri

# Contents

Introduction

The Devi Mahatmyam For Yogis

Appendix: Soham Yoga: A Brief Introduction

Glossary

# Introduction

In India, in the Fall of every year, usually October, much of the month is devoted to the worship of the Divine Feminine, Mahashakti, the Divine Creative Power. This worship is simply called Durga Puja, the Worship of the Goddess Durga, Mahamaya. “Mahamaya” means “the great illusion” because although creation is seen as perishable, ever-changing matter, in its essence it really is Thought-Projection in the eternal and unchanging Divine Mind or Consciousness that is Brahman Itself. It is Absolute Reality seen by us as a relative, momentary appearance. And consequently, since we see and experience mostly the ever-changing energy-form of the world around us and our bodies, we live in that mirage as mirages ourself.

Obviously we need to awaken or dispel that “dream” which is really divine in essence. So we invoke the creative power, which is also the creation, as the Divine Mother with the prayerful intention that She no longer deceive us but reveal Her true Self as the Ultimate Reality that we mistakenly think is “behind” Her or “projecting” Her and separate from Her—just as we think we are separate from That Being as well. That is the purpose of our worship.

She brought us into relative existence and embodied us so we might evolve in consciousness until we realize the truth of our eternal and unchanging Self that is a part of Brahman Itself. And that evolution and awakening which is the ending of the dream of illusion and consequent delusion can only come about through Her action within and upon us.

Mahamaya is the Divine Womb and we are the embryos within Her which in time will be born from Her into Infinity as we pass from the dream of separate existence into the truth of Divine Being that transcends the realm of constant birth, death and rebirth.

This is the message of the symbolism embodied in the Devi Mahatmyam, The Glorification of the Goddess. It is the depiction of the evolution and freeing of the individual spirit-soul or atman from the Cosmic Delusion by that very Cosmic Delusion Itself. Despite the very evident symbolic character of the accounts given in this book, they may very well have actually happened in the astral cosmos in past ages.

The translation used in this commentary is that of Swami Jagadishwarananda.

# Chapter One

## The Slaying of Madhu and Kaitabha

The human being is a cosmos consisting of many elements from most subtle energies to gross atomic matter. Our wisdom and insight should prevail in our minds, enabling and inspiring us to live according to the highest spiritual principles with the aim of revealing our innate divinity and immortality. This requires total control of all aspects of our being. But instead our true Self and our intelligence become unseated and cast down so ignorance and negativity can occupy the “throne” and warp and degrade that which should elevate us. Our higher, daivic light-bearing faculties become slaves, degraded and helpless beneath the oppressive rule of the asuras, the forces of darkness. Instead of the Self, our true being, directing our life and destiny, we are deflected into bondage, into slavery and hopelessness. This is the condition of the human being that is symbolized in the Devi Mahatmyam, and these accounts of war and the ultimate victory are symbols of our application of yoga-shakti, the power of yoga which is really the power of our Self, to defeat our own ignorance and weakness and arise into the Light of the Self by conquering all that opposes this ascension into Light. The truth is, the Devi is our own atmbala—power of our Self—that must be invoked and aroused to defeat all that hinders our total freedom: liberation-moksha. This should be kept in mind when studying the Devi Mahatmyam.

1-3. Markandeya said (to his disciple Krasustuki Bhaguri): Savarni, son of Surya, is called the eighth Manu. Listen, while I describe in detail about his birth, how Savarni, illustrious son of Surya, became the lord of the (eighth) Manvantara by the grace of Mahamaya [the Divine Mother.]

4-5. In former times there was a king named Suratha, born of the Chitra dynasty, ruling over the whole world in the period of Svarochisa. He protected his subjects duly like his own children. At that time the kings, who were the destroyers of the Kolas, became his enemies.

6-7. He, the wielder of powerful weapons, fought a battle with the destroyers of the Kolas, but was defeated by them though they were a small force. Then he returned to his own city, and ruled over his own country. Then that illustrious king was attacked by those powerful enemies.

8-9. Even in his own city, the king, (now) bereft of strength, was robbed of his treasury and army by his own powerful, vicious and evil-disposed ministers. Thereafter, deprived of this sovereignty, the king left alone on horse-back for a dense forest, under the pretext of hunting.

10-11. He saw there the hermitage of Medhas—the supreme among the twice-born—inhabited by wild animals which were peaceful, and graced by the disciples of the sage. Entertained by the sage, Suratha spent some time moving about in

the hermitage of the great sage.

12-16. There then overcome with attachment, he fell into the thought, “I do not know whether the capital (which was) well guarded by my ancestors and recently deserted by me is being guarded righteously or not by my servants of evil conduct. I do not know what enjoyments my chief elephant, heroic and always elated, and now fallen into the hands of my foes, will get. Those who were my constant followers and received favor, riches and food from me, now certainly pay homage to other kings. The treasure which I gathered with great care will be squandered by those constant spendthrifts, who are addicted to improper expenditures.”

17-19. The king was continually thinking of these and other things. Near the hermitage of the Brahmana he saw a merchant, and asked him: “Ho! Who are you? What is the reason for your coming here? Wherefore do you appear as if afflicted with grief and depressed in mind?” Hearing this speech of the king, uttered in a friendly spirit, the merchant bowed respectfully and replied to the king.

20-25. The merchant said: “I am a merchant named Samadhi, born in a wealthy family. I have been cast out by my sons and wife, who are wicked through greed of wealth. My wife and sons have misappropriated my riches, and made me devoid of wealth. Cast out by my trusted kinsmen, I have come to the forest grief-stricken. Dwelling here, I do not know anything as regards good or bad of my sons, kinsmen and wife. At present is welfare or ill-luck theirs at home? How are they? Are my sons living good or evil lives?”

26-28. The king said: “Why is your mind affectionately attached to those covetous folk, your sons, wife and others, who have deprived you of your wealth?”

29-34. The merchant said: “This very thought has occurred to me, just as you have uttered it. What can I do? My mind does not become hard; it bears deep affection to those very persons who have driven me out in their greed for wealth, abandoning love for a father and attachment to one’s master and kinsmen. I do not comprehend although, I know it. O noble-hearted king, how it is that the mind is prone to love even towards worthless kinsmen. On account of them I heave heavy sighs and feel dejected. What can I do since my mind does not become hard towards those unloving ones?”

35-38. Markandeya said: Then O Brahmana, the merchant Samadhi and the noble king together approached the sage (Medhas); and after observing the etiquette worthy of him and as was proper, they sat down and conversed (with him) on some topics.

39-45. Then the king said: “Sir, I wish to ask you one thing. Be pleased to reply to it. Without the control of my intellect, my mind is afflicted with sorrow. Though I have lost the kingdom, like an ignorant man—though I know it—I have an attachment to all the paraphernalia of my kingdom. How is this, O best of sages? And this merchant has been disowned by this children, wife and servants,

and forsaken by his own people; still he is inordinately affectionate towards them. Thus both he and I, drawn by attachment towards objects whose defects we do know, are exceedingly unhappy. How this happens, then, sir, that though we are aware of it, this delusion comes? This delusion besets me as well as him, blinded as we are in respect of discrimination.”

This is a presentation of the symptoms. We are all not just familiar with them, we share in them. Over and over we are betrayed in various ways by things and people to which we are attached. We cannot let go, even though good sense tells us we should. This is because the selfish ego will neither let go of them or face the truth of our ignorance and weakness in remaining attached and even addicted to them. Most people just suffer it, and some hate the attachments and their objects, but both kinds brood on them and will not let go in their minds or hearts. They perhaps go to others for an explanation as to why this is the situation, but what they really want is a return to their previous state of attachment and trust that blinded them to the betrayal. In nearly all cases it is a matter of wanting to again possess them or be controlled by them. I know this because I have spent hours listening to the woeful tales of such people. One physician I knew was a man of brilliant intellect, but he committed suicide when his live-in girlfriend left him after having sold all his furniture and gone without even leaving a note. Such is the destructive power of moha–delusive attachment. And both the king and the merchant have it.

But they have come to a good psychological and spiritual physician.

**46-49. The Rishi said: “Sir, every being has the knowledge of objects perceivable by the senses. An object of sense reaches it in various ways. Some beings are blind by day, and others are blind by night; some beings have equal sight both by day and night. Human beings are certainly endowed with knowledge, but they are not the only beings (to be so endowed), for cattle, birds, animals and other creatures also cognize (the objects of senses).**

Objective perception which draws the observer’s mind to such a degree that his awareness is filled with the object perceived, and he loses his self-awareness, is at the heart of the human being’s attachments and miseries. That is why the Bhagavad Gita says: “Even a mind that knows the path can be dragged from the path: the senses are so unruly. Thinking about sense-objects will attach you to sense-objects; grow attached, and you become addicted; thwart your addiction, it turns to anger; be angry, and you confuse your mind; confuse your mind, you forget the lesson of experience; forget experience, you lose discrimination; lose discrimination, and you miss life’s only purpose” (2:60, 62-63). This is the chain reaction brought about by absorption in sensory experience. There are two kinds of human beings: instinctual and intellectual. The instinctual person reacts to sensory experience in a kind of unthinking, reflexive response. The intellectual person responds to his objective and analytical evaluation—even if it is virtually instantaneous—of an experience.

**50-58. “The knowledge that men have, birds and beasts too have; and what**



they have men also possess; and the rest (like eating and sleeping) is common to both of them. Look at these birds, which though they possess knowledge, and are themselves distressed by hunger are yet, because of the delusion, engaged in dropping grains into the beaks of their young ones. Human beings are, O tiger among men, attached to their children because of greed for return help. Do you not see this? Even so men are hurled into the whirlpool of attachment, the pit of delusion, through the power of Mahamaya (the Great Illusion), who makes the existence of the world possible. Marvel not at this. This Mahamaya is the Yoganidra of Vishnu, the Lord of the world. It is by her the world is deluded. Verily she, the Bhagavati, Mahamaya, forcibly drawing the minds of even the wise, throws them into delusion. She creates this entire universe, both moving and unmoving. It is she who, when propitious, becomes a boon-giver to human beings for their final liberation. She is the supreme knowledge, the cause of final liberation, and eternal; she is the cause of the bondage of transmigration and the sovereign over all lords.”

The entire range of relative existence is formed of power or energy and is fundamentally a dream—but a divine dream since it is held in the mind, the Consciousness, of Ishwara. But how does that dream exist and how is it perceived by us as sentient beings? Perhaps more pertinent is the question: How does that dream affect and even shape our individual consciousness?

It does so by the divine power we call “Mahamaya,” the “Great Illusion” the divine Creative Power. Since It is power, we also call it “Mahashakti,” the Great Power. This infinite power is the essence of the finite power of our mind. It is the great sea of energy we call Existence. She makes all sentient beings both sleep and awake. When she causes us to sleep and dream our life within relativity it is the mighty Yoganidra—evolutionary sleep within the samsara willed/projected by Vishnu, the Preserver-Perpetuator of the creation of Brahma in which we experience our individual lives. But when we come to the point where it is necessary for our development that we begin to increasingly take charge of our lives, it is this Divine Feminine that awakens and enlightens and empowers us to begin the process of the realization of our own divine Self which ends in moksha—liberation from the bondage of samsara and the constant round of births and deaths we have undergone for countless ages in countless life-forms under Her will and power.

It is the Mother that brings us into samsara and it is the Mother that delivers us from samsara. The same power that at first deludes us for the purpose of our evolution then enlightens and frees us from that necessary illusion. Just we grew in the wombs of our countless physical mothers in the span of our evolution, so we slowly grew in the Supreme Womb of the Mother in order to be “born” through Her back into our Original Being which is Her Being.

In Wagner’s mystical music-drama *Parsifal*, Amfortas suffers from a wound made many years before when the evil sorcerer Klingsor struck him with the spear that had pierced the side of Christ. Parsifal brings the spear to Amfortas and touches his wound, saying, “Only that which wounded can heal.” The spear is a symbol of the will. By that



will we have “wounded” ourselves, our consciousness, and by that will applied in yoga sadhana we can heal ourselves.

Yoga is itself part of the realm, the rulership of Mahashakti who is also the Mahayogini—the Great Yogini. The ultimate yoganidra is yoga meditation which the Devi brings to perfection in the yogi devoted to her as Bhavatarini, “the Savior of the World.” For She is the Paramavidya, the supreme wisdom-knowledge that saves all beings by delivering them from samsara, which is a part of her manifestation! She is both the Great Illusion and the Great Reality, She binds and releases, She blinds and give sight, She carries death and life in Her hands. She is all these things and at the same time is beyond them. Her mystery is beyond comprehension. As the song says, “Who knows who Mother Kali is? The Six Darshanas are powerless to reveal Her!” Over sixty years ago I attempted composing some praises of the Great Mother in English. In one of them I said: “Thou art All and Thou art Nothing: To Thy Mystery we bow!”

59-62. The king said: “Venerable sir, who is that Devi whom you call Mahamaya? How did she come into being, and what is her sphere of action, O Brahmana? What constitutes her nature? What is her form? Wherefrom did she originate? All that I wish to hear from you, O supreme among the knowers of Brahman.”

63-71. The Rishi said: She is eternal, embodied as the universe. By her all this is pervaded. Nevertheless she incarnates in manifold ways; hear it from me. When she manifests herself in order to accomplish the purposes of the devas, she is said to be born in the world, though she is eternal.

At the end of a kalpa when the universe was one ocean (with the waters of the deluge) and the adorable Lord Vishnu stretched out on Shesha and took the mystic slumber, two terrible asuras, the well-known Madhu and Kaitabha, sprung into being from the dirt of Vishnu’s ears, sought to slay Brahma. Brahma, the father of beings, was sitting in the lotus (that came out) from Vishnu’s navel. Seeing these two fierce asuras and Janardhana asleep, and with a view to awakening Hari, (Brahma) with concentrated mind extolled Yoganidra, dwelling in Hari’s eyes. The resplendent Lord Brahma extolled the incomparable Goddess of Vishnu, Yoganidra, the queen of the cosmos, the supporter of the worlds, the cause of the sustentation and dissolution alike (of the universe).

72-74. Brahma said: “You are Swaha and Swadha. You are verily the Vashatkara and embodiment of Swara. You are the nectar of immortality (amrita). O eternal and imperishable One, you are the embodiment of the threefold mantra (Om—made up of a, u and m). You are half a matra, though eternal. You are verily that which cannot be uttered specifically. You are Savitri and the supreme Mother of the devas (Aditi).

*Swaha* is the mantra used in offering oblations to gods through the yajna (fire sacrifice). For example: *Sri Krishnaya Swaha*.

*Swadha* is the mantra used in offerings for the departed.

*Vashatkara* means: “One who is known as the giver of ‘six things’—birth, existence, growth, change, downfall (decay) and death. Every living being goes through six states: jayate (is born), asti (exists), vardhate (grows), parinamate (changes), apakshiyate (decays), mriyate (dies).

*Swara* means: sound; accent; and tone—in the recitation of mantras.

*Amrita* means: “that which makes one immortal,” such as the nectar of immortality that emerged from the ocean of milk when the gods churned it.

*Matra* means the letters of the alphabet or their sounds, mode, measure; or unit. Here it means the length of time required for pronouncing a short vowel.

*Savitri* is a title of the sun and also a title of Shiva.

*Aditi* means boundless, but here it specifically means “Infinite Mother”—the source of all the forms of consciousness in the cosmos from physical upwards; and in Vedic cosmology: the mother of the gods.

The Goddess is all this and the Source of everything.

**75-77. “By you this universe is borne, by you this world is created. By you it is protected, O Devi and you always consume it at the end. O you who are (always) of the form of the whole world, at the time of creation you are of the form of the creative force, at the time of sustentation you are of the form of the protective power, and at the time of the dissolution of the world, you are of the form of the destructive power. You are the supreme knowledge as well as the great nescience, the great intellect and contemplation, as also the great delusion, the great devi as also the great asuri.**

All of relative existence is the creative manifestation-projection of the Devi, and She also withdraws it into Herself at the end of a creation cycle. She is everything and the power within everything. She creates, maintains and dissolves all things—which are Her manifestations. She alone manifests as knowledge and ignorance. She is the Omniscient Knower-Observer of Herself as all things.

*The great devi as also the great asuri.* Deva means “a shining one”—a source of light. Asura means one without light or outside the light. A deva is a god and an asura is a demon. Mahashakti is within both as their inner and outer being, because She is All. There is nothing that is not the Mother. She is not just the Mother of All, She is that All. She is the inner and outer existence of every sentient being, including you and I. How is that possible? It is Her nature, and therefore ours as well. She is the Great Mystery. And we are mysteries, too.

**78-81. “You are the primordial cause of everything, bringing into force the three qualities [gunas: sattwa, rajas and tamas]. You are the dark night of periodic dissolution. You are the great night of final dissolution, and the terrible night of delusion. You are the goddess of good fortune, the ruler, modesty, intelligence characterized by knowledge, bashfulness, nourishment, contentment, tranquility and forbearance. Armed with sword, spear, club, discus, conch, bow, arrows, slings and iron mace, you are terrible (and at the same time)**

**you are pleasing, yea more pleasing than all the pleasing things and exceedingly beautiful. You are indeed the supreme Ishwari, beyond the high and low.**

Ma Durga is the cause, the manifest, and She Herself is the three gunas: sattwa, rajas and tamas. A guna is a quality, attribute, or characteristic arising from nature—Prakriti, the Primordial Energy or Power-itself; a mode of energy behavior. As a rule, when “guna” is used it is in reference to the three qualities of Prakriti, the three modes of energy behavior that are the basic qualities of nature, and which determine the inherent characteristics of all created things. They are: 1) sattwa—purity, light, harmony; 2) rajas—activity, passion; and 3) tamas—dullness, inertia, and ignorance. These come into manifestation (“force”) at Her will, for She “becomes” them. All attributes are Hers.

The various qualities listed are attributes of the Mother that are reflected in Her offspring. She also has many armaments that reflect her innate attributes. The conch is in the list as the representative of Her power as Mahavakya, the power of speech, and Mahashabda, the Great Sound Element, especially the Power of Mantra and Mantra Chaitanya, the consciousness inherent in a mantra. Thus She is also Mahayogini, the Great Yogi, Yogeshwari.

**82-87. “And whatever or wherever a thing exists, conscient or non-conscient, whatever power all that possesses is yourself. O you who are the soul of everything, how can I extol you (more than this)? By you, even he who creates, sustains and devours the world, is put to sleep. Who is here capable of extolling you? Who is capable of praising you, who have made all of us—Vishnu, myself and Shiva—take our embodied forms? O Devi, being lauded thus, bewitch these two unassailable asuras Madhu and Kaitabha with your superior powers. Let Vishnu, the Master of the world, be quickly awakened from sleep and rouse up his nature to slay these two great asuras.”**

All things, whether conscious or unconscious, perceived or unperceived, are the Devi Herself, as is the power within them, for She is the Great Power Herself. She is the All. She is within and without all things. When She is within Vishnu as unmanifested Potential, He is said to be “asleep,” and when She externalizes and actualizes Herself, through Her He is said to be “awake,” for then he is active in directing and preserving the entire range of relative existence.

Life and death are the illusions of the Devi, the great Spell-Caster, and it is by Her “hypnosis” that Madhu and Kaitabha were engaging in their threatening deeds. Therefore Brahma asks that She arouse Vishnu to slay them by causing them to dream their destruction by Him through Her power of Maya which is Herself.

Vishnu is often depicted as sleeping on the coils of the great serpent Ananta Deva, also called Shesha, the chief of the Nagas—snake spirits, powerful semi-divine astral beings living on the earth, credited with great powers.

**88-95. The Rishi said: There, the Devi of delusion extolled thus by Brahma, the creator, in order to awaken Vishnu for the destruction of Madhu and**

Kaitabha, drew herself out from His eyes, mouth, nostrils, arms, heart and breast, and appeared in the sight of Brahma of inscrutable birth. Janardana, Lord of the universe, quitted by her, rose up from His couch on the universal ocean, and saw those two evil (asuras), Madhu and Kaitabha, of exceeding heroism and power, with eyes red in anger, endeavoring to devour Brahma. Thereupon the all-pervading Bhagavan Vishnu got up and fought with the asuras for five thousand years, using his own arms as weapons. And they, frenzied with their exceeding power, and deluded by Mahamaya, exclaimed to Vishnu, "Ask a boon from us."

Thus invoked, Devi manifested Herself as apart from Vishnu. Then He fought with those asuras "with his own arms as weapons." That is, with no intermediary whatsoever, and no external force, but with His own infinite being as Consciousness, He engaged with them directly as their own inner being and consciousness. By revealing Himself as the truth of their real being, He sought to vanquish them as the mirages they really were. But being in total delusion and egotism they exhorted Vishnu to ask a boon from them, when they were nothing in comparison to Him. Such is the insanity of the ego that loves to say, "I am God" and believes in its non-existent omniscience. This is the "antichrist," the false self, which, as Saint Paul says: "opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (II Thessalonians 2:4).

96-98. Bhagavan (Vishnu) said: "If you are satisfied with me, you must both be slain by me now. What need is there of any other boon here? My choice is this much indeed."

99-101. The Rishi said: Those two (asuras), thus bewitched (by Mahamaya), gazing then at the entire world turned into water, told Bhagavan, the lotus eyed One, "Slay us at the spot where the earth is not flooded with water."

102-104. The Rishi said: Saying "Be it so," Bhagavan (Vishnu), the great wielder of conch, discus and mace, took them on His lap and there severed their heads with His discus. Thus she (Mahamaya) herself appeared when praised by Brahma. Now listen again to the glory of this Devi which I tell you.

There is no good in the continuance of evil, but rather in its annihilation. Since only good can come from God, the destruction of evil is a consequence of divine blessing and is really divine mercy. By slaying Madhu and Kaitabha Sri Vishnu liberated them from their demonic forms. In the Bhagavad Gita Krishna says: "At the time of death he who remembers me while giving up the body attains my Being--of this there is no doubt. Moreover, whatever he fixes his mind on when he gives up the body at the end, to that he goes (that he attains). Always he becomes that (is transformed into that)" (8:5-6). Acting according to their nature they tried to avoid it by asking to be slain where there was no water, thinking that it could not be done. But Vishnu took them on His lap as He would a beloved child and severed their heads as they looked at Him. And thus He destroyed their evil and liberated their spirits. Consequently the two asuras were released and freed from their demonic condition.

When the illusory power of the Devi is withdrawn from us and we are roused from our spiritual sleep and the poison ego is dissolved in us, we too shall enjoy the boon of liberation and union with the Divine.

# Chapter Two

## Slaughter of the Armies of Mahishasura

**1-3.** The Rishi said: Of yore when Mahishasura was the lord of asuras and Indra the lord of devas, there was a war between the devas and asuras for a full hundred years. In that the army of the devas was vanquished by the valorous asuras. After conquering all the devas, Mahishasura became the lord of heaven (instead of Indra).

In the same way the human being usually lies prostrate mentally and physically, dominated by ignorance and forgetfulness of the Self, ruled by a myriad of negative and destructive ideas and impulses that have displaced and banished the truth of his only true nature: his divine Self.

**4-5.** Then the vanquished devas headed by Brahma, the lord of beings, went to the place where Shiva and Vishnu were. The devas described to them in detail, as it had happened, the story of their defeat wrought by Mahishasura.

**6-8.** “He (Mahishasura) himself has assumed the jurisdictions of Surya, Indra, Agni, Vayu, Chandra, Yama and Varuna and other (devas). Thrown out from heaven by that evil-natured Mahisha, the hosts of devas wander on the earth like mortals. All that has been done by the enemy of the devas, has been related to you both, and we have sought shelter under you both. May both of you be pleased to think out the means of his destruction.”

When the human being begins to awaken inwardly he becomes keenly aware of his domination by darkening and destroying forces that ultimately are drawing their power from him, himself. This is a terrible condition and realization. The light and power of the jivatman, his individual Self, must be roused and directed toward the Paramatman, the Supreme Self, Whose supreme Light and Power alone can banish darkness and establish the light of Self-realization within him. This Power–Mahamaya, Mahashakti, Mahavidya–alone can deliver him by Her invocation and the transmutation She will work within him for his liberation from bondage and the attainment of moksha: the total freedom from and the total banishment of all that is not divine both within him and outside in his life-sphere. Such is the perspective and determination of the awakened yogi.

**9.** Having thus heard the words of the devas, Vishnu was angry and also Shiva, and their faces became fierce with frowns.

Thus aroused, the intelligence and will of the yogi, empowered by his abhorrence of all that is false and death-bearing within him, brings about the unification of all his inner and outer faculties and powers under the direction of his illumined will which he directs into the great struggle for the casting down of his inner negativity and weakness

and the accession of his true Self in its full wisdom and strength for the battle that will end in his perfect purification, liberation and Self-realization.

10-11. Then issued forth a great light from the face of Vishnu who was full of intense anger, and from that of Brahma and Shiva too. From the bodies of Indra and other devas also sprang forth a very great light. And (all) this light united together.

12-13. The devas saw there a concentration of light like a mountain blazing excessively, pervading all the quarters with its flames. Then that unique light, produced from the bodies of all the devas, pervading the three worlds with its luster, combined into one and became a female form.

14-15. By that which was Shiva's light, her face came into being; by Yama's (light) her hair, by Vishnu's light her arms; and by Chandra's (light) her two breasts. By Indra's light her waist, by Varuna's (light) her shanks and thighs and by earth's light her hips.

16-18. By Brahma's light her feet came into being; by Surya's light her toes, by Vasus (light) her fingers, by Kubera's (light) her nose; by Prajapati's light her teeth came into being and similarly by Agni's light her three eyes were formed. The light of the two sandhyas became her eyebrows, the light of Vayu her ears; the manifestation of the lights of other devas too (contributed to the being of the) auspicious Devi.

19. Then looking at her, who had come into being from the assembled lights of all the devas, the immortals who were oppressed by Mahishasura experienced joy.

At the presence of the Devi, our entire being becomes filled with joy, ananda, therefore She is called Anandamayi Ma, the joy-filled Mother that makes us also joy-filled by her very sight and blessing.

20-21. The bearer of Pinaka (Shiva) drawing forth a trident from his own trident presented it to her; and Vishnu bringing forth a discus out of his own discus gave her. Varuna gave her a conch, Agni a spear; and Maruta gave a bow as well as two quivers full of arrows.

22-23. Indra, lord of devas, bringing forth a thunderbolt out of (his own) thunderbolt and a bell from that of his elephant Airavata, gave them to her. Yama gave a staff from his own staff of Death and Varuna, the lord of waters, a noose; and Brahma, the lord of beings, gave a string of beads and a water-pot.

24. Surya bestowed his own rays on all the pores of her skin and Kala (Time) gave a spotless sword and a shield.

25-29. The milk-ocean gave a pure necklace, a pair of undecaying garments, a divine crest-jewel, a pair of earrings, bracelets, a brilliant half-moon (ornament), armlets on all arms, a pair of shining anklets, a unique necklace and excellent rings on all the fingers. Visvakarman gave her a very brilliant axe, weapons of various forms and also an impenetrable armor. The ocean gave her a garland of



unfading lotuses for her head and another for her breast, besides a very beautiful lotus in her hand. The (mountain) Himavat gave her a lion to ride on and various jewels.

30-33. The lord of wealth (Kubera) gave her a drinking cup, ever full of wine. Shesha, the lord of all serpents, who supports this earth, gave her a serpent-necklace bedecked with best jewels.

Honored likewise by other devas also with ornaments and weapons, she (the Devi) gave out a loud roar with a decrying laugh again and again. By her unending, exceedingly great, terrible roar the entire sky was filled, and there was great reverberation. All worlds shook, the seas trembled.

All the powers of the gods were manifested in the Devi who not only possesses those powers, but bestows them upon those who become one with her and Brahman through yoga sadhana. There is nothing that is unaffected by the Devi, for as Mahashakti, the Great Power, she is also Mahadevi, the Great Goddess and the Great Transmuter/Transformer who changes unreality into Reality, darkness into Light, death into Immortality, and the human yogi into a deva as a knower of the Self. All the wise, therefore, bow down to her exclaiming Jai Ho! Victory to Thee! as the next verses describe.

34-46. The earth quaked and all the mountains rocked. "Victory to you," exclaimed the devas in joy to her, the lion-rider. The sages, who bowed their bodies in devotion, extolled her. Seeing the three worlds agitated, the foes of the devas mobilized all their armies and rose up together with uplifted weapons. Mahishasura, exclaiming in wrath, "Ha! What is this?" rushed towards that roar, surrounded by innumerable asuras. Then he saw the Devi pervading the three worlds with her luster, making the earth bend with her footstep, scraping the sky with her diadem, shaking the nether worlds with the twang of the bowstring, and standing there pervading all the quarters around with her thousand arms. Then began a battle between that Devi and the enemies of the devas, in which the quarters of the sky were illumined by the weapons and arms hurled diversely. Mahishasura's general, a great asura named Chiksura and Chamara, attended by other (asuras) and forces comprising four parts [cavalry charioteers, elephant-soldiers and foot-soldiers] and other (asuras) fought. A great asura named Udagra with sixty thousand chariots, and Mahahanu with ten millions (of chariots) gave battle. Asiloman, another great asura, with fifteen millions (of chariots), and Baskala with six millions fought in that battle. Privarita with many thousands of elephants and horses, and surrounded by ten millions of chariots, fought in that battle. An asura named Bidala fought in that battle surrounded with five hundred crores of chariots. And other great asuras, thousands in number, surrounded with chariots, elephants and horses fought with the Devi in that battle.

*The earth quaked and all the mountains rocked.* Every atom of the yogi's being is affected by the light-power of the Devi as Sadhana-shakti.

*“Victory to you,” exclaimed the devas in joy to her, the lion-rider. “Deva” means “shining one.” All those who are of the light rejoice in the Mother’s light-bearing presence within and without them. The lion represents courage, power and strength, for such is the invincible power of the Devi, power which the yogi can experience daily within himself through constant sadhana.*

*The sages, who bowed their bodies in devotion, extolled her.* Those who joyfully bow before the Mother and whose hearts expand in Her praise are the true sages of wisdom, for She Herself is Mahavidya, the Great Wisdom of the Self.

*Seeing the three worlds agitated, the foes of the devas mobilized all their armies and rose up together with uplifted weapons.... Then began a battle between that Devi and the enemies of the devas.* Before there can be a victory there must be a battle. The yogi engages in the struggle between his own inner asuras by arousing and arming (empowering) his own devas. And he does so by the invocation, the calling into his own being, of the Goddess, who is sadhana shakti, through sadhana: the continual sounding of the divine conch, the divine sound (shabda) that is Soham.

**47-48. Mahishasura was surrounded in that battle with thousands of crores [tens of millions] of horses, elephants and chariots. Others (asuras) fought in the battle against the Devi with iron maces and javelins, with spears and clubs, with swords, axes and halberds. Some hurled spears and others nooses.**

This is serious business. Sadhana is unrelenting warfare, a fight to the death of ego and ignorance. In that warfare we clearly see the enemy—our negative impulses and attractions. It can be very daunting and requires real courage. It is not a lark, yet it is not misery, since the yogi has his eyes fixed on the goal of freedom (liberation) that is true happiness and bliss, but first the battle!

Yoga is profound, reaching to the utmost depths of the yogi. Its true nature is incomprehensible to most. Once two of my yoga students were visiting their family. A family friend was there at the same time, and when they mentioned they were students of a yogi, she asked, “Has he got you on your head yet?” thinking of the famed headstand of Hatha Yoga. They simply told her No and left it at that.

**49-58. They began to strike her with swords in order to kill her. Showering her own weapons and arms, that Devi Chandika very easily cut into pieces all those weapons and arms. Without any strain on her face, and with gods and sages extolling her, the Ishwari threw her weapons and arms at the bodies of the asuras. And the lion also which carried the Devi, shaking its mane in rage, stalked among the hosts of the asuras like a conflagration amidst the forests. The sighs which Ambika, engaged in the battle, heaved became at once her battalions by hundreds and thousands. Energized by the power of the Devi, these (battalions) fought with axes, javelins, swords, halberds, and destroyed the asuras. Of these battalions, some beat drums, some blew conches and others played on tabors in that great martial festival. Then the Devi killed hundreds of asuras with her trident, club, showers of spears, swords and the like, and threw**

down others who were stupefied by the noise of her bell; and binding others with her noose, she dragged them on the ground. Some were split into two by the sharp slashes of her sword, and others, smashed by the blows of her mace, lay down on the ground; and some severely hammered by club vomited forth blood.

*Showering her own weapons and arms, that Devi Chandika very easily cut into pieces all those weapons and arms.* The battle of yoga is difficult and painful for the ignorance-loving ego, but very easy for the spirit-self since it is freeing the imprisoned Self whose nature is freedom and peace.

*Without any strain on her face, and with gods and sages extolling her, the Ishwari threw her weapons and arms at the bodies of the asuras.* The secret is that the battle is easy and without strain when it is waged with the weapons of authentic yoga which reveal the nature and qualities of the Self. This is a tremendous relief after thousands of years of struggle and suffering in countless previous lives. As Swami Sriyukteswar said, “Remember that finding God will mean the funeral of all sorrows.” Further, when the yoga is genuine it is fully in synchronization and harmony with the Self, and therefore both natural and easy. (Though the ego and the beginning yogi’s negative habits and conditionings may wail and moan.)

Ready for gore? Here it is:

**59-61. Pierced in the breast by her trident, some fell on the ground. Pierced all over by her arrows and resembling porcupines, some of the enemies of devas gave up their lives on that field of battle. Some had their arms cut off, some their necks broken, the heads of others rolled down; some others were torn asunder in the middle of their trunks, and some great asuras fell on the ground with their legs severed.**

Now this is a happy picture, unless we consider our inner asuras to be our friends and are attached or even addicted to them. Real sadhana is effective, as we shall see.

**62. Some rendered one-armed, one-eyed, and one-legged were again cloven in two by the Devi. And others, though rendered headless, fell and rose again.**

*Some rendered one-armed, one-eyed, and one-legged were again cloven in two by the Devi.* Real sadhana does things thoroughly, as is symbolized by the Devi’s mincing of the asuras.

*And others, though rendered headless, fell and rose again.* This is an extremely valuable picture. It is not at all uncommon for people to think they are rid of some negative or painful aspect of their personality or mind, only to find it still alive and affecting them! Many times I have heard yogis say, “I thought I had gotten over [or gotten rid of] that long ago,” One said to me, “Things I thought were behind me I find are still with me.”

This happens for two reasons. 1) The sadhana was worthless, only giving a momentary cessation of trouble. 2) The problems on the surface of the mind were also in deeper layers of the mind, and these must also be recognized and eliminated as the sadhana continues. Remember: we have lived many lives and are a bundle of samskaras—impressions and habits—accumulated in those lives. So as we go inward

more and more we can be finding the same things coming before us until our spiritual housecleaning is completed. Just keep on until the end. The maxim is true even for the yogi: Plod Rhymes With God. It is important to not get upset or discouraged, for both reactions come from the ego that would like you to stop sadhana and give up and leave them intact. Don't. Keep on hacking off heads until there are none left to hack. The most effective warrior is one who engages in war with peace in his heart, confident that the battle will end in victory.

**63. Headless trunks fought with the Devi with best weapons in their hands. Some of these headless trunks danced there in the battle to the rhythm of the musical instruments.**

Gruesome, isn't it? It sounds like a joke, and it is: a joke-mirage of the ego. Do not be daunted. Keep going onward and it will end. Be aware that trivial and silly things are inside us along with serious problems. And both have to go.

**64-65. The trunks of some other great asuras, with their swords, spears and lances still in their hands, shouted at the Devi with their just-severed heads, "Stop, stop." That part of earth where the battle was fought became impassable with the asuras, elephants and horses and chariots that had been felled.**

*The trunks of some other great asuras, with their swords, spears and lances still in their hands, shouted at the Devi with their just-severed heads, "Stop, stop."* This is one of my favorite parts of the Devi Mahatmyam. The inner asuras may have their heads cut off, but the ego through their mouths yells "Stop!" The ego will do anything to make us think the dead are still alive and the conquered are still capable of harming us. It is just a trick.

I once saw a book of prayers that people really say to God in their hearts. One was: "O God, won't You please stop this awful experiment of trying to make people be like Christ?" That is the ego's prayer. Just as a snake's tail does not stop moving when touched even though the head has been cut off (until sundown, I was told when I saw this for myself as a child), so there are echoes from beheaded negative samskaras.

**66-67. The profuse blood from the asuras, elephants and horses flowed immediately like large rivers amidst that army of the asuras. As fire consumes a huge heap of straw and wood, so did Ambika destroy that vast army of asuras in no time.**

This is an intense portrayal of the war that must be waged against all that opposes or hinders the yogi's spiritual progress. There is no "compassion" here for weakness, no room for self-indulgence or letting up in the process of sadhana which by its very nature destroys the negativity nesting in our subconscious minds as well as the karmic forces accumulated through lifetimes beyond number. Just as signs in store windows proclaim a special sale by the words Everything Must Go, in the same way everything that does not foster and facilitate our sadhana must GO. And real sadhana truly does destroy these samsaric forces. In comparison to the ages and ages through which we roamed in ignorance and intentional evil, the battle is very short and quick—even if it

lasts our whole life through. The fire of tapasya burns the enemies of our Self-realization like fire burns straw and wood.

**68-69. And her carrier-lion, thundering aloud with quivering mane, prowled about in the battlefield, appearing to search out the vital breaths from the bodies of the enemies of devas. In that battlefield the battalions of the Devi fought in such a manner with the asuras that the devas in heaven, showering flowers, extolled them.**

Like the lion of the Goddess, we must continually search the inner battlefield for any inner demons that still may have “vital breaths” to stay alive. And when found they should instantly be totally eliminated by the fire-power of sadhana. When this battle is going on, the blessings of heaven, the rejoicing of that which is good and true in us, will result and encourage us to keep on to the sweet-not bitter-end.

# Chapter Three

## The Slaying of Mahishasura

1-2. The Rishi said: Then Chiksura, the great asura general, seeing that army being slain (by the Devi), advanced in anger to fight with Ambika.

3. That asura rained showers of arrows on the Devi in the battle, even as a cloud (showers) rain on the summit of Mount Meru.

4. Then the Devi, easily cutting asunder the masses of his arrows, killed his horses and their controller with her arrows.

5. Forthwith she split his bow and lofty banner, and with her arrows pierced the body of that (asura) whose bow had been cut.

Sadhana—specifically the japa and meditation of Soham—cuts off and renders ineffectual all the attacks and weapons of ignorance and evil. Horses are symbols of energy-power, and sadhana neutralizes negative energy completely. Further, sadhana overthrows the factors—including negative spirits/intelligences—which try to harm the sadhaka. The japa and meditation of Soham are powerful exorcisms of spiritual darkness both within and without the yogi.

6. His bow shattered, his chariot broken, his horses killed and his charioteer slain, the asura armed with sword and shield rushed at the Devi.

7. Swiftly he smote the lion on the head with his sharp-edged sword and struck the Devi also on her left arm.

8. O king, his sword broke into pieces as it touched her arm. Thereon his eyes turning red with anger, he grasped his pike.

9. Then the great asura flung at Bhadrakali the pike, blazing with luster, as if he was hurling the very sun from the skies.

10. Seeing that pike coming upon her, the Devi hurled her pike that shattered his pike into a hundred fragments and the great asura himself.

The forces of delusion assault both our spirit and the powers (weapons) of our spirit. They are attacking our very being, our Self, although they cannot really touch it.

Although the Devi's form of Kali is very ferocious to evil itself and frightening to evil people, She is really Bhadra: praiseworthy, pleasing, fortunate, auspicious, gracious, gentle, blessed, blessing, happy, well, and beautiful. The positive person intuitively this despite her fearsome appearance. For this reason, when someone shows up in India from "outside" a savvy Indian will take them to a Kali temple. If the Devi frightens or repels him, then they know he is not really good at heart, but an asura. This test was given to me once in Varanasi when a devotee of Anandamayi Ma took me down a narrow alley to a Kali temple where the large, black image was very terrifying, but not to me—so we became close friends and brothers in Mother Kali's family.

11. Mahishasura's very valiant general having been killed, Chamara, the afflictor of devas, mounted on an elephant, advanced.

12. He also hurled his spear at the Devi. Ambika quickly assailed it with a whoop, made it lusterless and fall to the ground.

13. Seeing his spear broken and fallen, Chamara, full of rage, flung a pike, and she split that also with her arrows.

14. Then the lion, leaping up and seating itself at the centre of the elephant's forehead, engaged itself in a hand to hand fight with that foe of the devas.

15. Fighting, the two then came down to the earth from the back of the elephant, and fought very impetuously, dealing the most terrible blows at each other.

16. Then the lion, springing up quickly to the sky, and descending, severed Chamara's head with a blow from its paw.

17. And Udagra was killed in the battle by the Devi with stones, trees and the like, and Karala also stricken down by her teeth and fists and slaps.

18. Enraged, the Devi ground Uddhata to powder with the blows of her club, and killed Baskala with a dart and destroyed Tamra and Andhaka with arrows.

19. The three-eyed [seeing with the two eyes and the third, spiritual eye] Supreme Ishwari killed Ugrasya and Ugravirya and Mahahanu also with her trident.

20. With her sword she struck down Bidala's head from his body, and dispatched both Durdhara and Durmudha to the abode of Death with her arrows.

21. As his army was thus being destroyed, Mahishasura terrified the troops of the Devi with his own buffalo form.

22. Some (he laid low) by a blow of his muzzle, some by stamping with his hooves, some by the lashes of his tail, and others by the pokes of his horns.

23. Some he laid low on the face of the earth by his impetuous speed, some by his bellowing and wheeling movement, and others by the blast of his breath.

24. Having laid low her army, Mahishasura rushed to slay the lion of the Mahadevi. This enraged Ambika.

The "army" of Mahashakti which is composed of various positive and virtuous means which can war with the inner asuras, being of relative existence and consisting of the powers and energies of the sadhaka's subtle bodies, cannot by their limited nature totally conquer the inner foe. The Devi Herself alone can do that. And does.

25. Mahishasura, great in valor, pounded the surface of the earth with his hooves in rage, tossed up the high mountains with his horns, and bellowed terribly.

26. Crushed by the velocity of his wheeling, the earth disintegrated, and lashed by his tail, the sea overflowed all around.

27. Pierced by his swaying horns, the clouds went into fragments. Cast up by the blast of his breath, mountains fell down from the sky in hundreds.

28. Seeing the great asura swollen with rage and advancing towards her,



Chandika displayed her wrath in order to slay him.

29. She flung her noose over him and bound the great asura. Thus bound in the great battle, he quitted his buffalo form.

30. Then he became a lion suddenly. While Ambika cut off the head (of his lion form), he took the appearance of a man with sword in hand.

31. Immediately then the Devi with her arrows chopped off the man together with his sword and shield. Then he became a big elephant.

32. (The elephant) tugged at her great lion with his trunk and roared loudly, but as he was dragging, the Devi cut off his trunk with her sword.

33. The great asura then resumed his buffalo shape and shook the three worlds with their movable and immovable objects.

34. Enraged thereat, Chandika, the Mother of the worlds, quaffed a divine drink again and again, and laughed, her eyes becoming red.

35. And the asura, also roared intoxicated with his strength and valor, and hurled mountains against Chandika with his horns.

36. And she with showers of arrows pulverized (those mountains) hurled at her, and spoke to him in flurried words, the color of her face accentuated with the intoxication of the divine drink.

37-38. The Devi said: "Roar, roar, O fool, for a moment while I drink this wine. When you are slain by me, the devas will soon roar in this very place."

The "wine" of the Devi is her own ananda, her own bliss which is unshakeable and which is the secret of her ultimate victory. It is not any weapon which wins the battle, it is the divine nature of the Goddess Herself.

39-40. The Rishi said: Having exclaimed thus, she jumped and landed herself on that great asura, pressed him on the neck with her foot and struck him with her spear.

41. And thereupon, caught up under her foot. Mahishasura half issued forth (in his real form) from his own (buffalo) mouth, being completely overcome by the valor of the Devi.

42. Fighting thus with his half-revealed form, the great asura was laid low by the Devi who struck off his head with her great sword.

43. Then, crying in consternation, the whole asura army perished; and all the hosts of devas were in exultation.

44. With the great sages of heaven, the devas praised the Devi. The Gandharva chiefs sang and the bebies of apsaras danced.

The buffalo is considered a symbol of tremendous anger and destructive, murderous intention as well as the ego, the source of those things. Actually all negative impulses, traits and actions are the ego in manifestation. They cannot be tamed or conquered except by the Divine Power Itself. And that power is within the yogi and is revealed and activated by his sadhana.

# Chapter Four

## Praises by Indra and Others

That Power which pervades the universe and beyond it is pervading the yogi who is a small cosmos whose causal, astral and material levels correspond to the vast, external cosmos. So in the following praises we should keep mind that they not only apply to the Cosmic Mother, they apply to Her power and presence within us as the power and presence of our own Self.

**1-2. The Rishi said: When that most valiant but evil-natured Mahishasura and the army of that foe of the devas were destroyed by the Devi, Indra and the hosts of devas uttered their words of praise, their necks and shoulders reverently bent, and bodies rendered beautiful with horripilation [hair standing on end] and exultation.**

**3. “To that Ambika who is worthy of worship by all devas and sages and pervades this world by her power and who is the embodiment of the entire powers of all the hosts of devas, we bow in devotion. May she grant us auspicious things!**

There is no other source of auspicious things than Mahadevi, for She is the source of all things! Nothing can exist in the cosmos apart from Her. This is the reason why the devotees of the Devi are the most creative people—we manifest the qualities of that which we worship. In India the supreme place of worship of the Great Mother is Bengal. Consequently the Bengalis are the best musicians, composers, writers and poets in that land.

At a crucial point in the Mahabharata war things seemed to be at a stalemate. Therefore Krishna advised Arjuna to go and worship at the shrine of the Devi at the place now called Kalkaji, a suburb of Delhi. He did so, and shortly after his return to the battlefield the war was won by the Pandavas. I have had the good fortune to visit that shrine and worship there.

**4. “May Chandika, whose incomparable greatness and power Bhagavan Vishnu, Brahma and Hara are unable to describe, bestow her mind on protecting the entire world and on destroying the fear of evil.**

Power is within us all, a portion of the divine power that is the Devi. That power must be roused up and put forth by the yogi to destroy all evil traces within him and thereby gain absolute fearlessness both outwardly and inwardly.

**5. “O Devi, we bow before you, who are yourself good fortune in the dwellings of the virtuous, and ill-fortune in those of the vicious, intelligence in the hearts of the learned, faith in the hearts of the good, and modesty in the**

hearts of the high-born. May you protect the universe!

6. “O Devi, how can we describe your inconceivable form, or your abundant surpassing valor that destroys the asuras, or your wonderful feats displayed in battles among all the hosts of gods, asuras and others?

7. “You are the origin of all the worlds! Though you are possessed of the three gunas you are not known to have any of their attendant defects! You are incomprehensible even to Vishnu, Shiva and others! You are the resort of all! This entire world is composed of an infinitesimal portion of yourself! You are verily the supreme primordial Prakriti untransformed.

8. “O Devi, you are Swaha at whose utterance the whole assemblage of gods attains satisfaction in all the sacrifices. You are the Swadha which gives satisfaction to the manes [departed souls]. Therefore you are chanted (as Swaha and Swadha in sacrifices) by people.

9. “O Devi, you are Bhagavati, the supreme Vidya which is the cause of liberation, and great inconceivable penances [tapasyas] (are the means for your realization). You (the supreme knowledge) are cultivated by sages desiring liberation, whose senses are well restrained, who are devoted to Reality, and have shed all the blemishes.

10. “You are the soul of Shabda-Brahman. You are the repository of the very pure Rig-veda and Yajus hymns, and of Samans, the recital of whose words is beautiful with the Udgitha [Om]! You are Bhagavati embodying the three Vedas. And you are the sustenance whereby life is maintained. You are the supreme destroyer of the pain of all the worlds.

11. “O Devi, you are the Intellect, by which the essence of all scriptures is comprehended. You are Durga, the boat that takes men across the difficult ocean of worldly existence, devoid of attachments. You are Shri [Lakshmi] who has invariably taken her abode in the heart of Vishnu. You are indeed Gauri who has established herself with Shiva.

12. “Gently smiling, pure, resembling the full moon’s orb, beautiful like the splendor of excellent gold was your face! Yet it was very strange that, being swayed by anger, Mahishasura suddenly struck your face when he saw it.

13. “Far stranger it is that after seeing your wrathful face, O Devi, terrible with its frowns and red in hue like the rising moon, that Mahishasura did not forthwith give up his life! For, who can live after beholding the enraged Destroyer?

14. “O Devi, be propitious. You are Supreme. If enraged, you forthwith destroy the (asura) families for the welfare (of the world). This was known the very moment when the extensive forces of Mahishasura were brought to their end.

15. “You who are always bounteous, with whom you are well pleased, those (fortunate ones) are indeed the object of esteem in the country, theirs are riches, theirs are glories, and their acts of righteousness perish not; they are indeed blessed and possessed of devoted children, servants and wives.

16. “By your grace, O Devi, the blessed individual does daily all righteous deeds with utmost care and thereby attains to heaven. Are you not, therefore O Devi, the bestower of reward in all the three worlds?

17. “When called to mind in a difficult situation, you remove fear for every person. When called to mind by those in happiness, you bestow a mind still further pious. Which goddess but you, O Dispeller of poverty, pain and fear, has an ever sympathetic heart for helping everyone?

18. ““The world attains happiness by the killing of these (foes) and though these (asuras) have committed sins to keep them long in hell, let them reach heaven by meeting death eventually at battle (with me)’—thinking thus, that you, O Devi, certainly destroy our enemies.

19. “Do you not reduce to ashes all asuras by mere sight? But you direct your weapons against them so that even the inimical ones, purified by the missiles, may attain the higher worlds. Such is your most kindly intention towards them.

20. “If the eyes of the asuras had not been put out by the terrible flashes of the mass of light issuing from your sword or by the copious luster of your spearpoint, it is because they saw also your face resembling the moon, giving out (cool) rays.

“At the time of death he who remembers me while giving up the body attains my Being—of this there is no doubt. Moreover, whatever he fixes his mind on when he gives up the body at the end, to that he goes (that he attains). Always he becomes that (is transformed into that)” (Bhagavad Gita 8:5-6). This applies to the asuras who attacked the Devi and had their eyes fixed upon Her as they died, because She is Dayamayi Ma, the Merciful Mother. The wise yogi who remembers and takes refuge in the Devi will find his evils inner and outer being transformed into the power of virtue. This is why in the great temple of Kalighat in Calcutta Ma’s devotees will put their necks in the stalls where the necks of sacrificial goats are fixed, and turn their heads to look at the image of Kali, in this way offering themselves and their very lives to Her. I have done that, too. Jai Ma!

21. “O Devi, your nature is to subdue the conduct of the wicked; this your peerless beauty is inconceivable for others; your power destroys those who have robbed the devas of their prowess, and you have thus manifested your compassion even towards the enemies.

Now the symbolism expands and we are going to get a picture of the working of the Divine Shakti within the individual—especially through the Shabda, the divine sound of the mantra the yogi generates by repetition (japa) both outside and within meditation.

A great deal has been written on mantra japa and its effect and power, but the following passages from *Japa* by M. P. Pandit give the essence.

“Of sacrifices I am japa,” declares Lord Sri Krishna to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita (10.25).

“What is japa? What is its rationale? What is its process? Japa is the repetition of a mantra, a potent syllable or syllables, a word or a combination of

words, done with the object of realizing the truth embodied in the mantra—say, the attainment of God in any or many of His aspects. In either case the mantra which is chosen for japa has the necessary power within it, and by constant repetition under proper conditions the power can be evoked into operation to effectuate the purpose. The vibrations set up each time the mantra is repeated go to create, in the subtler atmosphere, the conditions that induce the fulfillment of the object in view. The mantra has the potency to stamp and mould the consciousness which repeats it into the nature of the Divinity for which the Name stands and prepare it for the reception of the gathering Revelation of the Godhead.

“At the basis of the science of japa is the ancient perception of sages all over the world that creation proceeds from sound. The universe has issued out of Nada Brahman—Brahman as Sound. Each sound has a form, a subtle form which may not be visible to the physical eye. Equally each form in the creation has its own sound-equivalent, the sound which preceded its formation on the subtler planes of existence. When this particular sound is reproduced—even in its transcription on the human level in terms of our speech—*vaikhari* as it is called—it sets in current the very vibrations which brought and therefore can bring that entity into being. Thus the Rishis perceived the sound-bodies of the devatas, deities, in their spiritual vision and [clair]audience and they instituted them as mantras, as terms of call to the respective deities. When a mantra is uttered effectively it sets in motion vibrations that evoke the corresponding deity into the atmosphere where it is uttered. This in brief is the principle underlying the mantra and Japa Yoga. That sound has form is a truth which is being confirmed today by science starting from the opposite end.

“Now this perception of the inherent power of sound, *shabda*, was applied with remarkable success by Indian adepts in yoga who have reduced their knowledge and experience to an exact science. The tradition continues to this day and is kept alive by its votaries.

“...When repeated for a long time, the mantra goes on creating vibrations which press upon the layers of the inner consciousness till one day there comes a sudden opening and the Truth ensouled in the Mantra reveals itself.”

The foregoing is extremely vital to the spiritual progress of the yogi. The Devi praised in the *Devi Mahatmayam* is both Mahashabda, Divine Sound, and Mahashakti, Divine Power. She is both Mantric Sound and Mantric Power, and is invincible. So in the following verses that describe the battle and victory of the Devi we are given a picture of the purpose, power and effect of the mantra that is used in the yogi's sadhana for purification, correction and restoration of the yogi's consciousness to its original divine state as a jivatman within the Paramatman.

(To learn the original form of mantra yoga, the yoga of the ancient Nath Yogis of India, see the Appendix: Soham Yoga: A Brief Introduction.)

Because the Soham mantra is so important, my comments will be in the context of Soham Yoga sadhana. So everything I say about “mantra” or “the mantra” will be about

the mantra “Soham” specifically.

**22. “What is your prowess to be compared to? Where can one find this beauty (of yours) most charming, (yet) striking fear in enemies? Compassion in heart and relentlessness in battle are seen, O Devi, O Bestower of boons [desired benefits], only in you in all the three worlds!**

The power of mantra is truly inconceivable because the mantra is the embodiment of the divine consciousness and power of the infinite Paramatman, the absolute Reality. In the yogi’s endeavor to purify and enlighten himself the mantra will be a powerful, even relentless, tool that cannot fail to conquer ignorance and evil when applied continually through japa and meditation. It will also bestow great benefits on all levels of the questing yogi. Therefore it is supreme in the yogi’s sadhana.

**23. “Through the destruction of the enemies all these three worlds have been saved by you. Having killed them in the battle-front, you have led even those hosts of enemies to heaven, and you have dispelled our fear from the frenzied enemies of the devas. Salutation to you!**

*Through the destruction of the enemies all these three worlds have been saved by you.* Many of the inner opponents of the yogi’s endeavor to reach higher consciousness simply dissolve when confronted and “touched” by the mantra. This is no exaggeration; practice will reveal its truth. Continued japa is the solution to dissolve the persistent opposition eventually. The diligent yogi will find that mantra and miracle are virtual synonyms.

The three worlds of the yogi where he must be victorious are his physical, astral and causal bodies which comprise his own personal universe. All three realms must be cleansed of the “demons” by Mahashakti in the form of the mantra. This is why the master yogi, Sri Gajanana Maharaj, said: “Soham is the sole savior.” (See *Light of Soham* and *The Inspired Wisdom of Sri Gajanana Maharaj*.)

*Having killed them in the battle-front, you have led even those hosts of enemies to heaven. And you have dispelled our fear from the frenzied enemies of the devas. Salutation to you!* Everything that exists is part of the Divine Life, therefore nothing is destroyed, only transmuted into another form. By the power of the mantra the energies of the inner enemies are transformed–repolarized–into positive energies and become the yogi’s friends and fellow combatants in his inner battle.

**24. “O Devi, protect us with your spear. O Ambika, protect us with your sword, protect us by the sound of your bell and by the twang of your bow-string.**

These various weapons are the aspects and powers of the mantra itself. The sound of the bell and the twang of the bow-string especially indicate the power of sound to effect the transmutation of the yogi’s entire being which is at first the field of battle but ultimately the field of victory.

**25. “O Chandika, guard us in the east, in the west, in the north and in the**

**south by the brandishing of your spear. O Ishwari!**

By his wielding of the divine mantra it becomes the guardian and protector of all the aspects of the yogi's very existence.

**26. "Protect us and the earth with those lovely forms of yours moving about in the three worlds, as also with your exceedingly terrible forms."**

Everything in relativity has a positive or negative polarity or a mixture of the two, and are experienced accordingly. These are the "lovely" and "terrible" forms of the Devi. The mantra is a life-saver to all the positive aspects of our being and a death-bringer to all the negative aspects of our being. But, as has already been seen in the lifting up of the demons to "heaven," that which is negative really becomes positive by the touch or action of the mantra. The "destruction" of evil is really its repolarization and transmutation into good. Naturally we think of it as banished or dissolved, but really it is corrected and healed. However, when dealing with external negative intelligences, embodied or disembodied, or negative energies, the mantra may repel or drive them away from us. The mantra is divine intelligence as well as divine power.

**27. "O Ambika, protect us on every side with your sword, spear and club and whatever other weapons your sprout-like (soft) hand has touched."**

A few decades ago we were bombarded by claims of "wholistic health" remedies and practices. It was mostly baseless (but profitable) hype. For generations before that "cure-alls" of all sorts were peddled up and down the land. That, too, was mostly hype. But there is one thing that is wholistic—all embracing—and can heal and correct all spiritual ills. And that is the divine power (shakti) of mantra, the sound-form of divine consciousness. It will eliminate darkness and evoke the light from within the yogi's own Self. When I read the previously-cited *Japa* I knew from the depths of my being that it was absolutely true: mantra was the key to liberation. There are many things that assist us in our spiritual search, but shabda is the one thing that brings us Self-realization. But first it has to do a lot of the changing and house-cleaning that is symbolized in the war of the Devi with the demons.

**28-30. The Rishi said: Thus the supporter of the worlds was praised by the devas, worshipped with celestial flowers that blossomed in Nandana [the Heaven of Joy] and with perfumes and unguents; and with devotion all of them offered her heavenly incense. Benignly serene in countenance she spoke to all obeisant devas.**

**31-32. The Devi said: "Choose all of you, O devas, whatever you desire of me. (Gratified immensely with these hymns, I grant it with great pleasure)."**

**33-34. The devas said: "Since our enemy, this Mahishasura, has been slain by Bhagavati (i.e., you) everything has been accomplished, and nothing remains to be done.**

**35. "Still if a boon is to be granted to us by you, O Maheshwari [the consort of Maheshwara: Shiva], whenever we think of you again, destroy our direst**



calamities.

36-37. “O Mother of immaculate countenance, whatever mortal shall praise you with these hymns, may you, who have become gracious towards us, be so to him also for the plenitude of wealth, wife, and other fortunes together with riches, prosperity and life, O Ambika!”

38-39. The Rishi said: O King, being thus propitiated by the devas for the sake of the world and for their own sake, Bhadrakali said, “Be it so,” and vanished from their sight.

40. Thus have I narrated, O King, how the Devi who desires the good of all the three worlds made her appearance of yore out of the bodies of the devas.

41-42. And again how, as a benefactress of the devas, she appeared in the form of Gauri for the slaying of wicked asuras as well as Shumbha and Nishumbha, and for the protection of worlds, listen as I relate it. I shall tell it to you as it happened.

# Chapter Five

## Devi's Conversation With the Messenger

1-2. The Rishi said: Of yore Indra's (sovereignty) over the three worlds and his portions of the sacrifices were taken away by the asuras, Shumbha and Nishumbha, by force of their pride and strength.

3. The two, themselves, took over likewise, the offices of the sun, the moon, Kubera, Yama, and Varuna.

4. They themselves exercised Vayu's authority and Agni's duty. Deprived of their lordships and sovereignties, the devas were defeated.

5. Deprived of their functions and expelled by these two great asuras, all the devas thought of the invincible Devi.

6. "She had granted us the boon, 'Whenever in calamities you think of me, that very moment I will put an end to all your worst calamities.'"

7. Resolving thus, the devas went to Himavat, lord of the mountains, and there extolled the Devi, who is the illusive power of Vishnu.

In this section we again see symbolized the plight of the individual person whose higher faculties have become unseated and subjected to the powers of ignorance and egotism and the evil karmas produced by them in the person's outer and inner life. Once more, sadhana will be the answer, for it is the power of mantra that liberates from all bondage and restores the yogi and all aspects of his being to the state of enlightenment which he lost when he fell into the dire ocean of constant birth and death. Here, then, is another depiction of the power and effect of mantra when wielded by the yogi.

8-9. The devas said: "Salutation to the Devi, to the Mahadevi [Great Goddess]. Salutation always to her who is ever auspicious. Salutation to her who is the primordial cause and the sustaining power. With attention, we have made obeisance to her.

In the Bible we read: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1:). This opening verse of the Gospel of Saint John was not original with him. Actually, he was citing a verse of the Yajur Veda that Jesus had learned in India (see *The Christ of India*) and had repeated to him: *Prajapati vai idam agra asit. Tasya vak dvitiya asit. Vag vai paramam Brahman*. "In the beginning was Prajapati, with whom was the word (vak). And the word was verily the supreme Brahman" (Krishna Yajurveda, Kathaka Samhita, 12.5, 27.1, 42.1). The Devi is therefore "the primordial cause and the sustaining power," and so also is the mantra which itself existed eternally within the depths of the Absolute Being and is relayed through the Divine Shabda, the Devi Herself. The mantra produces and sustains in the yogi the consciousness which in time is revealed as his own Self.

**10. “Salutation to her who is terrible, to her who is eternal. Salutation to Gauri, the supporter (of the Universe). Salutation always to her who is of the form of the moon and moonlight and happiness itself.**

The qualities of the mantra—and therefore qualities of the japa of the mantra—are very meaningful.

*Terrible.* The mantra is terrifying to negative forces and intelligences. They will usually not go near a place or a person where japa of sacred mantras are being recited either silently or vocally. Here are three interesting examples.

A renowned saint of India was invited to a place where the singing (kirtan) of the Ram mantra—Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram—was going on continuously for long time. (This is known as akhanda, continuous, kirtan.) A woman who was possessed by an evil spirit was brought there and put nearby. After some time she got up and ran away, and several people ran after her. At one point she fell down, and when they caught up with her the spirit possessing her said through her mouth: “I can’t stand that singing and the presence of that holy man. I am leaving!” And when they brought the woman back to the kirtan she sat there calmly and sang the Holy Name along with the others. So the mantra has genuine exorcistic powers.

I was once present at an akhanda kirtan in India. After a while I saw several types of spirits coming to within some distance from the kirtan, and realized that they were drawn to the vibrations that could release them from their condition as earthbound spirits. Some were quiet, but others were agitated and obviously torn between being drawn by the spiritual vibrations that could release them and their discomfort at the sacred spiritual force being generated. Those who came near (others stayed far away) would suddenly just vanish, and I realized they were released and lifted to a higher spiritual plane.

The third example was experienced by me in motion picture theaters. When some other yogis and I went to a theater we would sit in the midst of the other viewers. After a bit one or two people would move away to some distance. Then a few more. And twenty or thirty minutes later there would be an empty space for about fifteen or twenty feet all around us.

It is a sad but true fact that many people are obsessed to some degree by negative spirits, and those spirits agitate them and make them go away from wherever there are high vibrations. Fully possessed people will sometimes go away to a distance and then start shouting insults, threats and foul language at the yogis.

*Eternal.* Eternity is not time without end, it is beyond time, beyond beginning and ending. That which is eternal transcends time and space. And so does a liberating mantra. Therefore it can transport the consciousness of the yogi into eternity even when his body is here in the realm of time and space. One of the traits of a spiritually advanced person is the sense of the observer that he is both here and not here, and is mostly There. Anandamayi Ma was a striking example of this characteristic. Ma was with us, but Ma was also immeasurably far from us and this world. This caused some people to think that Ma was abstracted and indifferent, but that was a mistake. She was

absolutely simultaneously here and There. It was the same with Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh, but he was so loving and attentive to everyone that he was experienced as very much here—but he, too, was mostly There. I only observed this in them, but I am sure Sri Ramana Maharshi was the same, for his disciples often said that Anandamayi Ma was “Bhagavan in a woman’s form.”

*Supporter.* The universal Shakti is the basis, the foundation of all that is manifested, and it keeps those things in manifestation and fosters their manifest presence here. And so does the mantra. It is the beginning, the middle and the end of our sadhana. By it the yogi accomplishes all things. But practice is needed. Within a mantra there is both shakti and chaitanya—power and consciousness. By these Self-realization is reached through the mantra.

*Of the form of the moon and moonlight.* The moon is considered a cooling, soothing force, and so is its light. But the moon has no light of its own, it reflects the light of the sun. So moonlight is really sunlight. In the same way, though the mantra appears to be a series of sounds which exists only by being spoken, in its essence it is infinity and eternity itself, and can transmute the yogi into that same infinity and eternity. Such is the power of the Devi within the mantra. All the forms of the Devi are the forms of the mantra, and all the powers of the Devi are the powers of the mantra. No wonder Krishna said: “I am japa” (Bhagavad Gita 10.25).

*Happiness itself.* The Sanskrit word translated “happiness” is *sukha*, which means happiness, ease, joy, happy, pleasure, pleasant and agreeable. All these states the yogi establishes in himself through the japa and meditation of the mantra.

**11. “We bow to her who is welfare; we make salutations to her who is prosperity and success. Salutation to the consort of Shiva who is herself good fortune as well as misfortune.**

*Welfare.* Welfare means “faring well”—living life in contentment and well-being. Certainly this is the blessing of the Great Devi, for it comes from the harmony which Her presence bestows. And with the mantra it is the same. It brings about our true, natural state of being and consciousness, puts us in harmony with our inner and outer self and the inner and outer worlds as well. The mantra brings about the essential divine order, which in turn produces in us and in our life from moment to moment the peace of being what we truly are: the divine Self.

*Prosperity.* The Devi bestows on us all that we need, and so does Her shakti and chaitanya embodied in the mantra. The yogi’s life is primarily an inner life, but he also lives in the outer world. And Ma gives him riches in both.

*Success.* The Devi gives us the awakening of intelligence by which we can live and order our life, and the power—especially of will—by which we can accomplish whatever our mind and will, illuminated by the mantra, is set by us to achieve or gain.

*The consort of Shiva.* The blessed truth is that Shakti and Shiva are inseparable because they are One. Therefore, the grace of the Devi, especially in the mantra, makes us one with Her and consequently with Shiva in perfect unity/union.

*Good Fortune/Misfortune.* Ma is Mahashakti, the Great Power, and karma is itself the

power that shapes our lives in each incarnation. The Devi Herself is the force we call good and bad karma. Therefore she is both Fortune and Misfortune, Happiness and Misery, Life and Death, Knowledge and Ignorance. We saw in the very first section that Ma puts to sleep and wakes us up.

The Mother is Herself good fortune and abundant blessing and perfect happiness and contentment. She is the Pleasant and the Unpleasant—both of which are necessary for our karmic purification and evolution. She gives her own Being to us through the japa and meditation of the mantra, so everything She is, we become.

**12. “Salutations always to Durga who takes one across in difficulties, who is essence, who is the authority of everything; who is knowledge of discrimination and who is blue-black as also smoke-like in complexion.**

Because of our presently extremely limited nature in all its aspects, it is the Mother who accompanies and takes us through life with all its difficulties. And so does the mantra through the stability and peace in which it establishes our consciousness. Ma is the inmost reality and the rightness of being, and in time we find that the mantra is also our reality and rightness. She imparts Herself in the form of the knowledge and discrimination—vairagya (non-attachment) and viveka (understanding of what is real and what is unreal)—which safeguard and guide us to liberation.

**13. “We prostrate before her who is at once most gentle and most terrible; we salute her again and again. Salutation to her who is the support of the world. Salutation to the Devi who is the form of volition [the power of will].**

Toward the good the Devi is gentle and merciful, but toward the evil she is inimical, a powerful enemy intent on their destruction. The mantra is just the same. Its repetition strengthens the good in us and its repetition weakens and ultimately destroys/dissolves our inner negativity and ignorance, revealing the light of our divine Self. The mantra will in this way be seen by the sadhaka as the support of his spiritual life and development. Perhaps even more important, the Devi in her mantric form increases and directs the sadhaka’s will which enables him to maintain and strengthen his sadhana to slay all that opposes the revelation of the divine Self.

**14-16. “Salutations again and again to the Devi who in all beings is called Vishnumaya.**

Here again we are reminded that the Devi is the illusory form of Lord Vishnu which makes the universe appear as real. And she is at the same time the Light of Lord Vishnu which reveals that unreality and leads us to knowledge of the Real. It is all according to how we understand and relate to Her.

**17-19. “Salutations again and again to the Devi who abides in all beings as consciousness.**

The first point here is awesome: the Devi dwells in all beings as consciousness. *She dwells in all beings.* She is shakti—energy/power, but she is also consciousness. When

consciousness is unmoving we call it spirit, and when consciousness moves, we call it matter. It is only our experience that produces the idea that the One has become two. Although at the time of creation there appears to be a duality/distinction between Consciousness and Energy, they are at all times one and the same. So the Devi is within all beings as consciousness—as their true Self. So although there is indeed a duality of Creator and Creation, simultaneously they are always a Unity. Maya makes us see only duality, but Mahamaya reveals the Unity to us since She is essentially The One Reality. This is not word-juggling, it is simply a statement of The Way Things Are. Those who would comprehend Sanatana Dharma and its view of life and things must be able to think in two directions at once. But only the mind of the yogi is really capable of this.

**20-22. “Salutations again and again to the Devi who abides in all beings in the form of intelligence.**

This is why Yogananda said that stupid people cannot find and know God. The yogi need not be an intellectual or a super genius, but he must be both intelligent and aware—for awareness, keen perception, is part of intelligence.

**23-25. “Salutations again and again to the Devi who abides in all beings in the form of sleep.**

Sleep has two forms: dream and dreamless sleep. The dream state is sensory and very like the awake state, and the dreamless state is totally without any sensory or tactile sensation whatsoever but is deep awareness beyond the body, mind and senses. Neither manas, the sensory mind, or the buddhi, the intellectual-conceptual mind, function there. Unbroken awareness of awareness itself is the state of the Self. The Devi abides within us in the form of both states. They are both sleep, but dream is recollection of the external, conditioned world and dreamlessness is awareness of the consciousness that is the Self.

**26-28. “Salutations again and again to the Devi who abides in all beings in the form of hunger.**

This seems strange, but it is not. Many of our most vital needs are signaled to us by bodily sensation. If we do not eat we die, so the feeling of hunger is no small factor in our life. And there is not just physical hunger but psychological and spiritual hunger. Hunger is awareness of a lack and the urge to attain or assimilate something to fill up that lack. It is an urge to become more than what we are at present, even if it is a purely material goal. Hunger, then, is an instinct for survival and well-being. In the highest sense it is the urge to realize the Self and transcend the realm of constant birth and death—the primary purpose of our entry into relative existence. So it is the Devi who motivates us to seek out and incorporate into our mind and life that which will move us further along the path of our personal evolution and eventual liberation.

**29-31. “Salutations again and again to the Devi who abides in all beings in**

**the form of reflection.**

Part of intelligence is seeing and reflecting on what is seen. “Look before you leap” is an exhortation to *chhaya*–reflection and pondering on a possible course of action or inaction. It is being cool-headed and circumspect in our life, determining the value or valuelessness, the merit or demerit, of some thing or some course of action. It is intelligent objectivity, the power to see the nature of what we perceive. It also is a contemplative state of mind and objectivity. It presupposes a calm and steady mind. The very presence of the Devi in our mind produces this valuable quality. It is She who opens our perceptions and enables us to comprehend them fully and react to them correctly for our spiritual and material benefit and welfare. In this way she protects us also from wrong or detrimental or worthless conduct.

**32-34. “Salutations again and again to the Devi who abides in all beings in the form of power [shakti].**

All the power or energy that exists is the Devi. Since the cosmos is vibrating matter, it is the body and the presence of the Devi Herself. And so is our body. The ability to move our hand, to open and close our eyes—to do anything objectively—is the Devi manifesting in us.

**35-37. “Salutations again and again to the Devi who abides in all beings in the form of thirst [trishna].**

Thirst, like hunger, is an urge to take into ourselves something that is presently lacking in us. Ma Durga causes the thirst for truth, wisdom and Self-realization to rise in us. She causes us to desire and even crave for these things, she gives the knowledge and power to strive for them, and she bestows them on us Herself—for they are Her. Without the inner action of the Devi we cannot even aspire to something, and it is Her power, Her own self, by which we attain what we desire. She is in all things our beginning, our middle and our end.

**38-40. “Salutations again and again to the Devi who abides in all beings in the form of forgiveness [kshanti].**

Kshanti means patience, forbearance, forgiveness and endurance. This is not unthinking passivity, but a positive perspective and reaction to those things that are unpleasant and often unjust. These are the qualities of the righteous person, and especially of a yogi. As I say, it is not unthinking passivity, a mere non-reaction. Rather it is profoundly active, for to forgive wrongs takes an act of will. Knowledge of karma also shows us that wrongs done to us are the reaction of our own unjust words and deeds in the past, our own actions coming back to us. And certainly it does sometimes involve a “grin and bear it” policy—as least “bear it” if it is impossible to grin! Non-violence is not passivity but the highest action: restraint of our lower, egoic, delusive nature that demands “justice” and retaliation and even vengeance.

**41-43. “Salutations again and again to the Devi who abides in all beings in**



**the form of all species [jati].**

Jati means both birth and species. This applies to us since we have passed through many births in the forms of many species to reach the human form in which we have also been born many times. So it is Ma Durga as the evolutionary power who has both urged and led us upward through countless forms of life, evolving in each one, until now we are ready to learn that She has brought all this about, and will continue fostering us through higher and higher forms until, established in the Self, we return from whence we came: to Brahman, the Paramatman.

**44-46. “Salutations again and again to the Devi who abides in all beings in the form of modesty [lajja].**

Lajja is modesty, humility, shyness, reticence and a positive sense of shame. This is a noble quality usually lacking in people—except in India where I found it quite common in both men and women. It is a beautiful characteristic, indeed. The Devi possesses these qualities, which is why She veils herself by the entire range of relative existence. Only those who look deeper into life and existence will find Her there as the essence of life and existence. It is a wonderful thing if this characteristic arises in us spontaneously, but if it does not then we should consciously cultivate it.

**47-49. “Salutations again and again to the Devi who abides in all beings in the form of peace [shanti].**

Shanti is peace, calm, tranquility and contentment—all qualities of the Self and the skillful yogi.

**50-52. “Salutations again and again to the Devi who abides in all beings in the form of faith [shraddha].**

Shraddha is primarily faith, but it is also confidence or assurance that arises from personal experience. Saint Paul wrote: “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). It arises from spiritual intuition cultivated through sadhana. Where there is true faith, there is the Devi Herself in the hearts of the faithful, believing devotee. Ma awakens us to the unseen realities within and outside us.

**53-55. “Salutations again and again to the Devi who abides in all beings in the form of loveliness [kanti].**

Kanti means all qualities of beauty and splendor. Whenever we are in awe at the beauties of nature on earth and throughout the universe, it is the beauty of the Devi we are seeing in the reflection of creation. The yogi can have a much greater appreciation of earthly beauty because he knows it is the Mother Herself he is seeing. And that beauty is only a hint of Her divine glory. Sadhana opens our consciousness and expands our ability to perceive and comprehend. And the sadhana mantra is the power that brings about this expansion. So the glory of the Devi is both within and without the yogi. And She alone reveals Her glory to us.

**56-58. “Salutations again and again to the Devi who abides in all beings in the form of good fortune [lakshmi].**

Lakshmi is good fortune, auspiciousness, wealth and prosperity, and also the goddess of good fortune, the consort of Vishnu, who embodies and bestows these things.

**59-61. “Salutations again and again to the Devi who abides in all beings in the form of mental-intellectual activity [vritti].**

Vritti is the power of thought—a mental modification; mental whirlpool; a ripple in the chitta (mind substance). It is both cause and effect. Since it is the power of reason and reflection that marks out the human being from other sentient life, it is the major power or faculty that we have—which we augment by yoga sadhana. It includes both our perception and our reasoning about that perception, so it is the cardinal trait and power of the human being and the worthy yogi. Mantra controls, develops and perfects the power of vritti and enables us to pass from humanity to divinity in a practical and functional manner.

**62-64. “Salutations again and again to the Devi who abides in all beings in the form of memory [smriti].**

Smriti is defined as memory and recollection. Without memory we would just be instinctive and instinctual animals. Reason is the use of what we learn and experience, but if we had no memory, that would be impossible. We would be functionally inert, hardly alive. This is especially true for the yogi, for the mantra illumines what we experience and remember. The sadhaka comes to understand that in one aspect of the sadhana mantra it is an “eye,” a focus of perception, that enables us to see (perceive) and evaluate what we see. It also awakens the awareness of the Self which is buried and forgotten in each one of us. Such is the mantra that is the Devi Herself.

**65-67. “Salutations again and again to the Devi who abides in all beings in the form of compassion [daya].**

Considering the ferocity of the Devi in Her war with the demons and Her obvious delight in killing them, we might forget that She is Herself mercy and compassion. But not toward evil: She destroys evil to save and protect the good. As I explained before, the Devi, especially in Her form of Kali, is considered by Her devotees as a kind of spiritual test. To the good She is intuited as being good and merciful, even though She appears as terrible and awesome—which terrifies the evil who identify and cling to their evil. For Her purpose is to destroy that evil which is within them. To the good She is their liberator and benefactor in the form of the Sadhana Shakti that is embodied in the mantra.

In the Anandamayi Ashram of Ranchi, Bihar, the Kali temple has a remarkable image made according to a vision seen by Sri Anandamayi Ma. She is dark blue, rather than black, and very beautiful and expressive of the bliss-nature of Kali, who is called

Anandamayi Ma. Ma Anandamayi often said that people should meditate as much as possible in front of this image, and I found that sitting there transformed my meditation: everything went exactly right.

I first saw Her one evening when some friends took me to the ashram for the evening arati—a ceremony of worship in which lights, incense, camphor, and other offerings representing the five elements and the five senses—the totality of the human being—are waved before an image or symbol of the Divine.

As soon as the priest began ringing the handbell and waving the lights before the image, She turned a darker blue and her eyes began to sparkle. I could feel Her as an inexorable force streaming toward me whose intention was to cut off my head! I realized that it was my ego She wanted to eliminate, but it still was as awesome and as unsettling as seeing the eruption of a volcano.

It was my blood that Kali Ma wanted! Not to kill me physically, but to bring me to life through the death of all that was not Her or me. For that I needed to be rid of the earthly life of ignorance and ego and infused with the heavenly life of Spirit. It was glorious and terrifying, but I stood still and willed with all my heart that Ma would have Her way with me.

At the end of the ceremony we bowed down and then sang the Mother's praises. Before leaving I went up to the grill before the shrine and prayed to Kali Ma to break the jar of my ego and ignorance and bring me to life. That is the mercy we all need. That is the real mystery of Kali.

The mantra is the working of the Devi in our japa and meditation—including any necessary catharsis. It does the needful.

**68-70. “Salutations again and again to the Devi who abides in all beings in the form of contentment [tushti].**

Tushti means contentment and satisfaction—complete fulfillment. There is no such thing outside of the Divine Life Itself which is the Mother. In Her we are complete, for She is The All. We will find this ourselves through the sadhana of mantra japa and meditation.

**71-73. “Salutations again and again to the Devi who abides in all beings in the form of mother [matri].**

All mothers are reflections of the Primal Mother, the Adi Matri—the First Mother. Wherever we see true motherhood there we are seeing the Devi Herself in relative manifestation. Many songs and poems have been written about Mother throughout the world, and beloved women are often called “mother.” The sentiment is embodied in the song:

“M” is for the million things she gave me,  
“O” means only that she’s growing old.  
“T” is for the tears she shed to save me,  
“H” is for her heart of purest gold.

“E” is for her eyes with love-light shining,  
“R” means right and right she’ll always be.  
Put them all together they spell MOTHER,  
A word that means the world to me.

It is a sad fact that many children do not have a mother in the full sense such as this song expresses. But they can find in the Devi their true Mother that has been with them always and always will be.

The mantra is our mother since it brings forth—gives birth to—our enlightenment.

**74-76. “Salutations again and again to the Devi who abides in all beings in the form of error [bhranti].**

Bhranti means wandering; confusion; mistake; false idea or impression; wrong notion; a delusion. Because Ma is everything She embodies the opposites, the dwandwas, such as pleasure and pain, hot and cold, light and darkness, gain and loss, victory and defeat, attraction and aversion, happiness and sorrow, birth and death. Therefore She is both right knowledge and perception, and error: wrong knowledge and perception.

Even an idea is composed of vibration/energy or shakti. Whether an idea is right or wrong, positive or negative, it is a form of shakti and therefore an embodiment of Mahashakti, the Devi. For this reason it is essential to take refuge in the Mother and ask Her to stop deluding us and bring us to true knowledge. For She is both Vidya Maya, the power of knowledge and Avidya Maya, the power of ignorance—since both wisdom and ignorance are states outside the Self and therefore ultimately unreal. So are bondage and liberation: the Self is never truly bound and therefore is never liberated in the active sense, though liberation is its eternal state of being. We dream bondage and we dream liberation. Devi is the Dreamweaver. Only the yogi will ever comprehend this through his diligent application of the mantra-mother.

**77. “Salutations again and again to the all-pervading Devi who constantly presides over the senses of all beings and (governs) all the elements.**

The Devi is always the Source and the Maintainer of relative existence. She never ceases to be the guide and ruler of all things from the highest to the lowest. The mantra is the same in relation to sadhana.

**78-80. “Salutations again and again to her who, pervading the entire world, abides in the form of consciousness [chit].**

Consciousness—chit—is the spirit, the purusha. Purusha means “person” in the sense of a conscious spirit. Both God and the individual spirits are purushas—that is their true, fundamental nature. And that consciousness is everywhere, pervading the entire range of relative existence. This is true of the sadhana mantra: it is pure consciousness—divine consciousness—in the form of sound. The mantra transforms everything. The Sanskrit word “mantra” is derived from *manat trayate*, “that which

when thought carries one over” from finite to infinite consciousness. It is a transforming, transmuting thought that never fails in its effects when applied correctly and for the necessary time. It is the yogi’s life.

**81. “Invoked of yore by the devas for the sake of their desired object, and adored by the lord of the devas every day, may she, the Ishwari, the source of all good, accomplish for us all auspicious things and put an end to our calamities!**

The Devi is our ever-present deliverer and transformer, the source of all good. She alone accomplishes our spiritual aspirations and delivers us from all misfortune and mishap. And this is true of the sadhana mantra, as the yogi will experience through diligent application.

**82. “And who is now again, revered by us, devas, tormented by arrogant asuras and who, called to mind by us obeisant with devotion, destroys this very moment all our calamities.”**

Troubled by negative forces inside and outside, we will be freed from them by calling the Devi to mind and keeping Her mantric form ever in our consciousness.

Now we come to a lengthy narrative preparing us for the next exposition of the Goddess’s absolute power in conquering evil and delivering Her sharanagatis—those who take refuge (sharanam) in Her.

**83-84. The Rishi said: O Prince, while the devas were thus engaged in praises and (other acts of adoration), Parvati came there to bathe in the waters of the Ganga.**

**85. She, the lovely-browed, said to those devas, “Who is praised by you here?” An auspicious goddess, sprung forth from her physical sheath, gave the reply:**

**86. “This hymn is addressed to me by the assembled devas set at naught by the asura Shumbha and routed in battle by Nishumbha.”**

**87. Because that Ambika came out of Parvati’s physical sheath (kosha), she is glorified as Kaushiki in all the worlds.**

**88. After she had issued forth, Parvati became dark and was called Kalika and was stationed on mount Himalaya.**

**89. Then, Chanda, and Munda, two servants of Shumbha and Nishumbha, saw that Ambika (Kausiki) bearing a surpassingly charming form.**

**90. They both told Shumbha: “O King, a certain woman, most surpassingly beautiful, dwells there shedding luster on mount Himalaya.**

**91. “Such supreme beauty was never seen by any one anywhere. Ascertain who that Goddess is and take possession of her, O Lord of the asuras!**

Such is the nature of the demonic ego: it desires to possess and control all that appeals to it.

92. "A gem among women, of exquisitely beautiful limbs, illuminating the quarters with her luster there she is, O Lord of the daityas. You should see her.

93. "O Lord, whatever jewels, precious stones, elephants, horses and others there are in the three worlds, they are all now in your house.

94. "Airavata, gem among elephants, has been brought away from Indra and so also this Parijata tree and the horse Uchchaishravas.

95. "Here stands in your courtyard the wonderful chariot yoked with swans, a wonderful gem (of its class). It has been brought here from Brahma to whom it originally belonged.

96. "Here is the treasure named Mahapadma brought from the lord of wealth. And the ocean gave a garland named Kinjalkini made of unfading lotus flowers.

97. "In your house stands the gold-showering umbrella of Varuna. And here is the excellent chariot that was formerly Prajapati's.

98. "By you, O Lord, Death's shakti weapon named Utkrantida has been carried off. The noose of the ocean-king is among your brother's possessions.

The Utkrantida is the missile of Yama, the God of Death, by which he gives exit (utkranti) from the body to all creatures.

99. "Nishumbha has every kind of gem produced in the sea. Fire [Agni] also gave you two garments which are purified by fire.

100. "Thus, O Lord of asuras, all gems have been brought by you. Why then is this beautiful jewel of a woman not seized by you?"

101-102. The Rishi said: On hearing these words of Chanda and Munda, Shumbha sent the great asura Sugriva as messenger to the Devi.

103. He said: "Go and tell her thus in my words and do the thing in such a manner that she may quickly come to me in love."

104. He went to the very beautiful spot on the mountain where the Devi was staying and spoke to her in fine and sweet words.

105-106. The messenger said: "O Devi, Shumbha, lord of asuras, is the supreme sovereign of the three worlds. Sent by him as messenger, I have come here to your presence.

107. "Hearken to what has been said by him whose command is never resisted among the devas and who has vanquished all the foes of the asuras:

108. "(He says), 'All the three worlds are mine and the devas are obedient to me. I enjoy all their shares in sacrifices separately.

109-110. 'All the choicest gems in the three worlds are in my possession; and so is the gem of elephants, (Airavata) the vehicle of the king of devas, has been carried away by me. The devas themselves offered to me with salutations that gem of horses named Uchchaishravas which arose at the churning of the milk-ocean.

111. 'O beautiful lady, whatever other rare objects there existed among the devas, the gandharvas and nagas, those are now with me.

112. 'We look upon you, O Devi, as the jewel of womankind in the world. You

who are such, come to us, since we are the enjoyers of the best objects.

113. 'Take to me or to my younger brother Nishumbha of great prowess, O unsteady-eyed lady, for you are in truth a jewel.

114. 'Wealth, great and beyond compare, you will get by marrying me. Think over this in your mind, and become my wife.'"

115-116. The Rishi said: Thus told, Durga the adorable and auspicious, by whom this universe is supported, then became majestic and smiling within herself spoke.

117-118. The Devi said: "You have spoken truth; nothing false has been uttered by you in this matter. Shumbha is indeed the sovereign of the three worlds and likewise is also Nishumbha.

119. "But in this matter, how can that which has been promised be made false? Hear what promise I had made already out of foolishness.

120. "'He who conquers me in battle, removes my pride and is my match is strength in the world shall be my husband.'

121. "So let Shumbha come here then, or Nishumbha the great asura. Vanquishing me let him readily take my hand in marriage. Why delay?"

122. The messenger said: "O Devi, you are haughty. Talk not so before me. Which man in the three worlds will stand before Shumbha and Nishumbha?

124. "All the devas verily cannot stand face to face with even the other asuras in battle. Why mention you, O Devi, a single woman?

125. "Indra and all other devas could not stand in battle against Shumbha and other demons, how will you, a woman, face them?

126. "On my word itself, you go to Shumbha and Nishumbha. Let it not be that you go to them with your dignity lost by being dragged by your hair."

127-128. The Devi said: "Yes, it is true that Shumbha is strong and Nishumbha is exceedingly heroic! What can I do since there stands my ill-considered vow taken long ago?

129. "So you go back, and tell the lord of asuras carefully all this that I have said; let him do whatever he considers proper."

The Devi is preparing the way for the destruction of the evil ones who foolishly do not know Her true nature and believe they can own and dominate Her.

# Chapter Six

## The Slaying of Dhumralochana

1-2. The Rishi said: The messenger, filled with indignation on hearing the words of the Devi, returned and related them in detail to the king of the daityas.

3-4. Then the asura monarch, enraged on hearing that report from his messenger, told Dhumralochana, a chieftain of the daityas: “O Dhumralochana, hasten together with your army and fetch here by force that shrew, distressed when dragged by her hair.

5. “Or if any one else stands up as her savior, let him be slain, be he a god, a yaksha or a gandharva.”

6-7. The Rishi said: Then the asura Dhuralocana, commanded thus by Shumbha, went forth quickly, accompanied by sixty thousand asuras.

8. On seeing the Devi stationed on the snowy mountain, he asked her aloud, “Come to the presence of Shumbha and Nishumbha.

9. “If you will not go to my lord with pleasure now, here I take you by force, distressed when dragged by your hair.”

10-11. The Devi said: “You are sent by the lord of the asuras, mighty yourself and accompanied by an army. If you thus take me by force, then what can I do to you?”

Many are fooled by the appearance of the Devi in Her manifestations and think She is something to be trifled with and possessed by them. Both the immortal and the mortal (human) demons think they are the master of all and that everything in the realm of the Devi is theirs for the taking. In the sixteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita Krishna describes them as saying: “Today this has been acquired by me. This I shall also obtain. This is mine, and this gain also shall be mine. That enemy has been slain by me, and I shall slay others, too, for I am the Lord, I am the enjoyer, I am successful, powerful, and happy” (16:13-14).

12-13. The Rishi said: Thus told, the asura Dhumralochana rushed towards her and thereupon Ambika reduced him to ashes with a mere heave of the sound “hum.”

Well, that was that! Effortlessly the Devi neutralizes any opponent, for only good really exists since it is the fundamental character of the Creator and the creation.

Hum is the bija mantra of the Vishuddha chakra at the throat area, and is the monosyllable embodying the very power of Vak, of speech. Vak is not mere sound, but intelligent speech produced by the conscious will of the speaker, and is a mighty power even on the elementary levels of ordinary existence and life. Here the tremendous power of mantra is portrayed. Whatever mantra vanquishes—including negative karmas—is reduced to ashes from which no form can ever arise in the future. It is full



mastery and produces total annihilation of darkness and negativity. Once again the divine power of the sadhana mantra is being demonstrated for our understanding. “The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (Proverbs 18:10). Mantra is the heart and power of sadhana. Therefore the Devi is Herself Mahayogini, the Great Yogini.

14. Then the great army of asuras became enraged and showered on Ambika sharp arrows, javelins, and axes.

15. Then the lion, vehicle of the Devi, shaking its mane in anger, and making the most terrific roar, fell on the army of the asuras.

16. Some asuras it slaughtered with a blow of its fore paw, others with its mouth, and other great asuras, by treading over with its hind legs.

17. The lion, with its claws, tore out the hearts of some and severed heads with a blow of the paw.

18. And it severed arms and heads from others, and shaking its mane drank the blood from the hearts of others.

19. In a moment all that army was destroyed by that high-spirited and exceedingly enraged lion who bore the Devi.

The vehicle of the Devi, the mantric sound-vibration itself, vanquishes all evil that opposes and would prevent our Self-realization. Then the consciousness that is at the heart of the mantra liberates the jiva, the Self, and brings about its perfect liberation. This is the great victory of the Mother.

20-21. When Shumbha, the lord of asuras, heard that the asura Dhumralochana was slain by the Devi and all his army was destroyed by the lion of the Devi, he was infuriated; his lip quivered and he commanded the two mighty asuras Chanda and Munda:

22-23. “O Chanda, O Munda, go there with large forces, and bring her here speedily, dragging her by her hair or binding her. But if you have any doubt about doing that, then let the asuras strike (her) in the fight with all their weapons.

24. “When that shrew is wounded and her lion stricken down, seize that Ambika, bind and bring her quickly.”

# Chapter Seven

## The Slaying of Chanda and Munda

**1-2. The Rishi said: Then at his command the asuras, fully armed, and with Chanda and Munda at their head, marched in fourfold array.**

**3. They saw the Devi, smiling gently, seated upon the lion on a huge golden peak of the great mountain.**

The Devi by Her very nature is gentle and kind, seated upon the lion, upon the golden light of prajna: consciousness that bears insight and wisdom within itself. As the Aitareya Upanishad says: “Brahman is Consciousness.” It is not simple awareness, but intelligent perception which is itself knowledge and understanding: “knowledge of God which is nearer than knowing, open vision direct and instant... only made plain to the eye of the mystic” (Bhagavad Gita 9:1-2). This tranquility and clarity is the essence of the Devi, and it is our essence as well. It is only when we step outside this natural state that troubles develop. Then the Devi needs to manifest as outward movement, as energy-power (kriya shakti) for the suppression of ignorance and evil and the restoration of wisdom and clarity—the traits of the Self. Its highest form is sadhana shakti, the power generated and fostered by mantra yoga.

**4. On seeing her, some of them excited themselves and made an effort to capture her, and others approached her, with their bows bent and swords drawn.**

See the reactions of demons to the Divine Power: they hate it. Some try to disarm or neutralize it and others attack it. There are demonic people who react like this whenever they encounter divine wisdom and strength. They are like the demons we read about before who kept shouting “Stop, stop!” at the Devi, even when their heads were cut off.

As a yogi you will meet these people. Sometimes they just intuit you are not “one of them” and therefore in opposition to them, even though you are really indifferent to them. You make them restless and unsettled. At other times someone “tells on” you and says: “He/She believes in Hindu religion and does yoga.” They they sit back and wait for you to be hassled and even insulted by the bigots present. And they will enjoy it.

What do you do? You agree that you do believe in Sanatana Dharma and you do practice yoga meditation. And stop right there. Do not let them manipulate you into a confrontational situation. Just reply with few words when they try to engineer you into providing entertainment for them. Just refuse. Let them know by your calm and composure that they cannot annoy you or force you to provide a show for them. If need be, quietly go away. But never cooperate or make the mistake of thinking just a few words will satisfy them. On occasion the Bible Believers will howl like dogs hit with a brick and begin denunciation and threats of hell-fire, but let them know you think it is

all baseless nonsense by refusing to respond. As I say, sometimes you have to quietly leave. Let them know that their ignorance and evil, on a scale of one to ten, rates as zero to you.

Here is what Sri Ramakrishna had to say.

A man living in society should make a show of tamas to protect himself from evil-minded people. But he should not harm anybody in anticipation of harm likely to be done him.

Listen to a story. Some cowherd boys used to tend their cows in a meadow where a terrible poisonous snake lived. Everyone was on the alert for fear of it. One day a brahmachari was going along the meadow. The boys ran to him and said: 'Revered sir, please don't go that way. A venomous snake lives over there.' 'What of it, my good children?' said the brahmachari. 'I am not afraid of the snake. I know some mantras [to neutralize cobra venom.]' So saying, he continued on his way along the meadow. But the cowherd boys, being afraid, did not accompany him.

In the mean time the snake moved swiftly toward him with upraised hood. As soon as it came near, he recited a mantra, and the snake lay at his feet like an earthworm. The brahmachari said: 'Look here. Why do you go about doing harm? Come, I will give you a holy word. By repeating it you will learn to love God. Ultimately you will realize Him and so get rid of your violent nature.' Saying this, he taught the snake a holy word and initiated him into spiritual life.

The snake bowed before the teacher and said, 'Revered sir, how shall I practice spiritual discipline?' 'Repeat that sacred word', said the teacher, 'and do no harm to anybody'. As he was about to depart, the brahmachari said, 'I shall see you again.'

Some days passed and the cowherd boys noticed that the snake would not bite. They threw stones at it. Still it showed no anger; it behaved as if it were an earthworm. One day one of the boys came close to it, caught it by the tail, and, whirling it round and round, dashed it again and again on the ground and threw it away. The snake vomited blood and became unconscious. It was stunned. It could not move. So, thinking it dead, the boys went their way.

"Late at night the snake regained consciousness. Slowly and with great difficulty it dragged itself into its hole; its bones were broken and it could scarcely move. Many days passed. The snake became a mere skeleton covered with a skin. Now and then, at night, it would come out in search of food. For fear of the boys it would not leave its hole during the day-time. Since receiving the sacred word from the teacher, it had given up doing harm to others. It maintained its life on dirt, leaves, or the fruit that dropped from the trees.

About a year later the brahmachari came that way again and asked after the snake. The cowherd boys told him that it was dead. But he couldn't believe them. He knew that the snake would not die before attaining the fruit of the holy word with which it had been initiated. He found his way to the place and, searching here

and there, called it by the name he had given it. Hearing the teacher's voice, it came out of its hole and bowed before him with great reverence.

'How are you?' asked the brahmachari. 'I am well, sir', replied the snake. 'But', the teacher asked, 'why are you so thin?' The snake replied: 'Revered sir, you ordered me not to harm anybody. So I have been living only on leaves and fruit. Perhaps that has made me thinner.'

The snake had developed the quality of sattwa; it could not be angry with anyone. It had totally forgotten that the cowherd boys had almost killed it.

The brahmachari said: 'It can't be mere want of food that has reduced you to this state. There must be some other reason. Think a little.'

Then the snake remembered that the boys had dashed it against the ground. It said: 'Yes, revered sir, now I remember. The boys one day dashed me violently against the ground. They are ignorant, after all. They didn't realize what a great change had come over my mind. How could they know I wouldn't bite or harm anyone?'

The brahmachari exclaimed: 'What a shame! You are such a fool! You don't know how to protect yourself. I asked you not to bite, but I didn't forbid you to hiss. Why didn't you scare them by hissing?'

So you must hiss at wicked people. You must frighten them lest they should do you harm. But never inject your venom into them. One must not injure others.

As Sri Ramakrishna also said: Be a devotee, but why a fool?

5. Thereupon Ambika became terribly angry with those foes, and in her anger her countenance then became dark as ink.

6. Out from the surface of her forehead, fierce with frown, issued suddenly Kali of terrible countenance, armed with a sword and noose.

7-9. Bearing the strange skull-topped staff, decorated with a garland of skulls, clad in a tiger's skin, very appalling owing to her emaciated flesh, with gaping mouth, fearful with her tongue lolling out, having deep-sunk reddish eyes and filling the regions of the sky with her roars, and impetuously falling upon and slaughtering the great asuras in that army, she devoured those hosts of the foes of the devas.

10. Snatching the elephants with one hand she flung them into her mouth together with their rear men and drivers and their warrior-riders and bells.

11. Taking likewise into her mouth the cavalry with the horses, and chariot with its driver, she ground them most frightfully with her teeth.

12. She seized one by the hair and another by the neck; one she crushed by the weight of the foot, and another of her body.

13. And she caught with her mouth the weapons and the great arms shot by those asuras and crunched them up with her teeth in her fury.

14. She destroyed all that host of mighty and evil-natured asuras, devoured some, and battered others.

**15. Some were killed with her word, some were beaten with her skull-topped staff, and other asuras met their death being ground with the edge of her teeth.**

**16. On seeing all the hosts of asuras laid low in a moment, Chanda rushed against that Kali, who was exceedingly terrible.**

I love these descriptions of the ferocious Goddess and Her annihilation of the demons! No wonder demons—even those in human form—tremble upon seeing her images and turn their faces away and express disgust. This reaction tells you the real nature of those people, even though they pretend to be religious and even yogis.

This picture is a good portrayal of the divine mantra battling and vanquishing the yogi's inner negativity. It will work. But those who love their ignorance and evil will try to find any excuse to not invoke the mantra in japa and meditation, but will find substitutes such as "sitting in the Silence" that will leave their evil undisturbed. As Saint Paul advised: "From such turn away" (II Timothy 3:5) and then go their way as you go your way.

**17. The great asura (Chanda) with very terrible showers of arrows, and Munda with discuses hurled in thousands covered that terrible-eyed (Devi).**

Sometimes in the spiritual conflict the weapons of the enemy seem to blot out the very sight of the divine presence and the mantra that embodies it, so heavy is the bombardment of evil.

**18. Those numerous discuses, disappearing into her mouth, looked like numerous solar orbs disappearing into the midst of a cloud.**

But the mantra, the embodiment of the Devi Herself in sound-form, swallows and digests them and becomes even more empowered. Never fear!

**19. Thereat Kali, who was roaring frightfully, whose fearful teeth were gleaming within her dreadful mouth, laughed terribly with exceeding fury.**

This is how the Devi and the mantra appear to the demons and terrifies them. But the wise yogi knows that toward him She is boundless love and mercy.

**20. Then the Devi, mounting upon her great lion, rushed at Chanda, and seizing him by his hair, severed his head with her sword.**

By the sound-power of the mantra the heads of the inner demons are severed and tossed aside as nothing!

**20. Seeing Chanda laid low, Munda also rushed at her. She felled him also the ground, striking him with her sword in her fury.**

When you wield the mantra in japa and meditation, be aware that this cosmic power is with you in every breath. You cannot be defeated.

**22. Seeing the most valiant Chanda and Munda laid low, the remaining army there became panicky and fled in all directions.**

23. And Kali, holding the heads of Chanda and Munda in her hands, approached Chandika and said, her words mingled with very loud laughter.

24. “Here have I brought you the heads of Chanda and Munda as two great animal offerings in this sacrifice of battle; Shumbha and Nishumbha, you shall yourself slay.”

25-27. The Rishi said: Thereupon seeing those asuras, Chanda and Munda brought to her, the auspicious Chandika said to Kali these playful words: “Because you have brought me both Chanda and Munda, you O Devi, shall be famed in the world by the name Chamunda.”

Chamunda is formed of the names Chanda and Munda, implying that the evil powers of the two demons were assimilated into Kali and transformed into holy power. This symbolizes that in meditation negativity is not banished or dissolved through being destroyed but by being transmuted by the Devi in the form of the mantra into divine power for your upliftment. The diligent yogi who continually invokes the mantra transmutes his entire being into Divine Light. That is why, in speaking of the state of Self-realization, Anandamayi Ma said: “Nothing is lost there.” Everything becomes the Self—which it already is.

# Chapter Eight

## The Slaying of Raktabija

1-3. The Rishi said: After the daitya Chanda was slain and Munda was laid low, and many of the battalions were destroyed, the lord of the asuras, powerful Shumbha, with mind overcome by anger, commanded then the mobilization of all the daitya hosts:

4. “Now let the eighty-six asuras—upraising their weapons—with all their forces, and the eighty-four Kambus [members of the Kambu family], surrounded by their own forces, go out.

5. “Let the fifty asura families of Kotiviryas and the hundred [asura] families of Dhaumras go forth at my command.

6. “Let the asura [families, the] Kalakas, Daurhrdas, the Mauryas and the Kalakeyas hasten at my command and march forth ready for battle.”

7. After issuing these orders, Shumbha, the lord of the asuras and a ferocious ruler, went forth, attended by many thousands of large forces.

8. Seeing that most terrible army coming, Chandika filled the space between the earth and the sky with the twang of her bow-string.

9. Thereon her lion made an exceedingly loud roar, O King, and Ambika magnified those roars with the clanging of her bell.

10. Kali, expanding her mouth wide and filling the quarters with the sound (Hum) overwhelmed the noises of her bow-string, lion and bell by her terrific roars.

The immediate response of both Durga and Kali to the assault of the demons was sound, for sound is the root and basis of everything. For the yogi, the solution is the same: sounding the mantra continually through its japa and meditation. Can it be that simple? Can it be that easy? In the BBC series, *The Long Search*, Ronald Eyre was told about the process of meditation by a Japanese roshi. When Eyre commented that it seemed too simple and easy, the roshi just smiled and said: “Try it.”

In principle, mantra sadhana is very simple and easy, but because of the tangled nature of the human mind loaded and distracted by karmas and samskaras from millions of previous births—mostly subhuman—what is really simple and easy becomes complex and difficult because of the negative asuric—demonic resistance and avoidance of the lower mind. The lower mind can be like a cornered rat baring its teeth in hostility and rebellion. The solution is to Just Do It, for mechanically speaking it is marvelously and wondrously simple and easy! It all depends on who is control: you or the force of your conditionings. You must decide. No one else can.

11. On hearing that roar the enraged asura battalions surrounded the lion, the Devi (Chandika) and Kali on all the four sides.

There is no getting around it. All force or energy is fundamentally conscious because it is consciousness itself, from which all things, including matter, are formed. Therefore whenever sadhana is applied by the yogi, everything within his makeup, both negative and positive, responds or reacts with some degree of intelligence—with a kind of life of its own. So when the mantric vibrations pervade the yogi's entire being through his practice, everything negative and everything positive within him respond in reaction. So devas and asuras will both arise and do battle. But in time, as the sole force of the mantra become dominant in them all, the Devi in the form of the mantra wins out. But until then, the battle can be daunting and chancey.

**12-13. At this moment, O King, in order to annihilate the enemies of the devas and for the well-being of the supreme devas, there issued forth, endowed with exceeding vigor and strength, Shaktis [the embodied forms of the power of the respective devas] from the bodies of Brahma, Shiva, Guha [Kumara/Kartikaya], Vishnu and Indra, and with the form of those devas went to Chandika.**

**14. Whatever was the form of each deva, whatever his ornaments and vehicle, in that very form his shakti advanced to fight with the asuras.**

**15. In a heavenly chariot drawn by swans advanced Brahma's shakti carrying a rosary and kamandalu. She is called Brahmani.**

**16. Maheshwari arrived, seated on a bull, holding a fine trident, wearing bracelets of great snakes and adorned with a digit of the moon.**

**17. Ambika Kaumari, in the form of Guha, holding a spear in hand riding on a fine peacock, advanced to attack the asuras.**

**18. Likewise the Shakti of Vishnu came, seated upon Garuda, holding conch, club, bow and sword in hand.**

**19. The Shakti of Hari, who assumed the incomparable form of a sacrificial boar, she also advanced there in a boar-like form.**

**20. Narasinghi arrived there, assuming a body like that of a Narasingha, bringing down the constellations by the toss of her mane.**

**21. Likewise the thousand-eyed Aindri, holding a thunderbolt in hand and riding on the lord of elephants arrived just like Shakra (Indra).**

The entire being of the yogi manifests in virtually infinite forms corresponding to his vast array of faculties and powers, most of which are unknown and undreamed of by the yogi himself and humanity in general. But the mantra can evoke them all, for it is the essence of them and the yogi. Awakened by the mantra, all aspects of the yogi manifest in their subtle energy-forms and join together for the purification and enlightenment of the yogi.

**22. Then Shiva, surrounded by those shaktis of the devas, said to Chandika, "Let the asuras be killed forthwith by you for my gratification."**

Banishing or conquering the demons within is not enough, for they can return. Total annihilation alone can bring peace and fulfillment to the yogi. And only the Devi



in the form of the mantra can effect this result.

23. Thereupon from the body of Devi issued forth the Shakti of Chandika, most terrific, exceedingly fierce and yelling like a hundred jackals.

24. And that invincible (Shakti) told Shiva, of dark-colored matted locks, “Go, my lord, as ambassador to the presence of Shumbha and Nishumbha.

25. “Tell the two haughty asuras, Shumbha and Nishumbha, and the other asuras assembled there for battle:

26. “Let Indra obtain the three worlds and let the devas enjoy the sacrificial oblations. You go to the nether world, if you wish to live.

27. “But if through pride of strength you are anxious for battle, come on then. Let my jackals be satiated with your flesh.”

This is the only peace plan acceptable to the insightful yogi.

28. Because that Devi appointed Shiva himself as ambassador, thenceforth she became renowned in this world as Shiva-duti [She Who Sends Shiva].

Though the mantra is sound, yet it invokes and arouses the principle of consciousness in the yogi, and this awakening is Self-realization itself.

29. Those great asuras, on their part, hearing the words of the Devi communicated by Shiva, were filled with indignation and went where Katyayani [Chandika] stood.

30. Then in the very beginning, the enraged foes of the devas poured in front on the Devi showers of arrows, javelins and swords.

31. And lightly, with the huge arrows shot from her full-drawn bow, she clove those arrows, spears, darts and axes hurled by them.

The mantra by its divine power virtually effortlessly neutralizes the opposition of negativity. The yogi need never fear “evil” for it dissolves when confronted with the divine light and power of the sadhana mantra. He may always be at peace, confident in the mantra’s invincible workings within him.

32. Then in front of him (Shumbha) stalked Kali, piercing the enemies to pieces with her spear and crushing them with her skull-topped staff.

33. And Brahmani, wherever she moved, made the enemies bereft of valor and prowess by sprinkling on them the water from her Kamandalu.

34. Maheshwari slew the daityas with her trident, Vaisnavi with her discus and the very wrathful Kaumari with her javelin.

35. Torn to pieces by the thunderbolt which come down upon them, hurled by Aindri, daityas and danavas fell on the earth in hundreds, streams of blood flowing out of them.

36. Shattered by the boar-formed goddess (Varahi) with blows of her snout, wounded in their chests by the point of her tusks and torn by her discus, (the asuras) fell down.

37. Narasinghi, filling all the quarters and the sky with her roars, roamed about in the battle, devouring other great asuras torn by her claws.

38. Dazed by the violent laughter of Shivaduti, the asuras fell down on the earth; she then devoured them who had fallen down.

This is an amazing thing: when the demonic energies are conquered within us by the mantra, those energies are assimilated into our subtle energy bodies, making them purified and empowered. The formerly demonic energies are annihilated, yet at the same time are resurrected in us in their original divine nature as atmbala–soul-force. It is all a matter of transformation-transfiguration.

39. Seeing the enraged band of Matris [Mothers] crushing the great asuras thus by various means, the troops of the enemies of the devas took to their heels.

40. Seeing the asuras harassed by the band of Matris and fleeing, the great asura Raktabija strode forward to fight in wrath.

40. Whenever from his body there fell to the ground a drop of blood, at that moment rose up from the earth an asura of his stature.

42. The great asura fought with Indra's shakti with club in his hand; then Aindri also struck Raktabija with her thunderbolt.

43. Blood flowed quickly and profusely from him who was wounded by the thunderbolt. From the blood rose up (fresh) combatants of his form and valor.

44. As many drops of blood fell from his body, so many persons came into being, with his courage, strength and valor.

45. And those persons also sprung up from his blood fought there with the Matris in a more dreadful manner, hurling very formidable weapons.

46. And again when his head was wounded by the fall of her thunder-bolt, his blood flowed and therefrom were born persons in thousands.

47. Vaisnavi struck him with her discus in the battle, Aindri beat that lord of asuras with her club.

48. The world was pervaded by thousands of great asuras who were of his stature and who rose up from the blood that flowed from him when cloven by the discus of Vaisnavi.

49. Kaumari struck the great asura Raktabija with her spear, Varahi with her sword, and Maheshwari with her trident.

50. And Raktabija, that great asura also, filled with wrath, struck every one of the Matris severally with his club.

50. From the stream of blood which fell on the earth from him when he received multiple wounds by the spears, darts and other weapons, hundreds of asuras came into being.

52. And those asuras that were born from the blood of Raktabija pervaded the whole world; the devas got intensely alarmed at this.

The sadhaka often feels that for every negative impulse or trait he perceives there seem to be a dozen more that arise in his battle against them. This is pretty daunting.

But such an overwhelming experience really means that victory is approaching, just as it often gets darker just before dawn. What is needed is a change in tactics: assimilate more! Recognize the enemy as really your own inner powers turned against you through negative polarization. Reach out and embrace and “swallow” them and they will be no more enemies, but your inner strength. For the mantra “digests” them and makes you stronger in their strength. This is the amazing transmuting power of the mantra.

53-54. Seeing the devas dejected, Chandika laughed and said to Kali, “O Chamunda, open out your mouth wide; with this mouth quickly take in the drops of blood generated by the blow of my weapon and (also) the great asuras born of the drops of blood of Raktabija.

55. “Roam about in the battle-field, devouring the great asuras that spring from him. So shall this daitya, with his blood emptied, perish.

56. “As you go on devouring these, other fierce (asuras) will not be born.” Having enjoined her thus, the Devi next smote him (Raktabija) with her dart.

57. Then Kali drank Raktabija’s blood with her mouth. Then and there he struck Chandika with his club.

58-60. The blow of his club caused her not even the slightest pain. And from his stricken body wherever blood flowed copiously, there Chamunda swallowed it with her mouth. Then Chamunda devoured those great asuras who sprang up from the flow of blood in her mouth, and drank his (Raktabija’s) blood.

61. The Devi (Kausiki) smote Raktabija with her dart, thunderbolt, arrows, swords, and spears, when Chamunda went on drinking his blood.

62. Stricken with a multitude of weapons and bloodless, the great asura (Raktabija) fell on the ground, O King.

63. Thereupon the devas attained great joy, O King. The band of Matris who sprang from them danced, being intoxicated with blood.

What a change has taken place! And all through the mantra when applied by the will and intention of the yogi.

# Chapter Nine

## The Slaying of Nishumbha

1-2. The king (Suratha) said: “Wonderful is this that you, adorable sir, have related to me about the greatness of the Devi’s act in slaying Raktabija.

3. “I wish to hear further what the very irate Shumbha and Nishumbha did after Raktabija was killed.”

4-5. The Rishi said: After Raktabija was slain and other asuras were killed in the fight, the asura Shumbha and Nishumbha gave way to unbounded wrath.

6. Enraged on seeing his great army slaughtered, Nishumbha then rushed forward with the chief forces of the asuras.

7. In front of him behind him and on both sides of him, great asuras, enraged and biting their lips, advanced to slay the Devi.

8. Shumbha also, mighty in valor, went forward, surrounded, with his own troops to slay Chandika in his rage, after fighting with the Matris.

First Shumbha fought with the Matris, the “assistants” of the Devi, and then attacked her. The inner warfare goes in stages, from lesser to greater. First the sadhaka proves that he is serious about purifying and transmuting his entire (relative) being by eliminating the obvious enemies of his Self-realization in his outer environment by observing yama and niyama, strict vegetarian diet and purity (shaucha) in his conduct and environment, and in diligent spiritual study of the texts of Sanatana Dharma—not just once, but for the rest of his life, especially the Bhagavad Gita. Then he is ready for the transforming process of yoga sadhana, the struggle and victory of the mantric form in the Devi in his japa and meditation. And he goes forward, never looking back nor to the right nor to the left—ever onward. He does not decrease his disciplines and observances, he increases them, for he knows that “the road winds uphill all the way, yes, to the very end.”

## Travel Song

Know you the journey that I take?  
Know you the voyage that I make?  
The joy of it – one’s heart could break.

No jot of time have I to spare,  
Nor will to loiter anywhere,  
So eager am I to be there

For that the way is hard and long,  
For that gray fears upon it throng,

I set my journey to the song.

And it grows wondrous happy so  
Singing I hurry on for-oh!  
It is to God, to God I go.

Sister Maddaleva

Now let's enjoy the description of the victory of the Devi-mantra over evil.

9. Then commenced severe combat between the Devi on one side and on the other, Shumbha and Nishumbha who, like two thunder-clouds, rained a most tempestuous shower of arrows on her.

10. Chandika with numerous arrows quickly split the arrows shot by the two asuras and smote the two lords of asuras on their limbs with her mass of weapons.

10. Nishumbha, grasping a sharp sword and a shining shield, struck the lion, the great carrier of the Devi on the head.

12. When her carrier was struck, the Devi quickly cut Nishumbha's superb sword with a sharp-edged arrow and also his shield on which eight moons were figured.

13. When his shield was slit and his sword too broken, the asura hurled his spear; and that missile also, as it advanced towards her, was split into two by her discus.

14. Then the danava Nishumbha, swelling with wrath, seized a dart; and that also, as it came, the Devi powdered with a blow of her fist.

15. Then brandishing his club, he flung it against Chandika; cleft by the trident of the Devi, it also turned to ashes.

16. Then the Devi assailed with a flood of arrows the heroic danava advancing with battle-axe in hand, and laid him low on the ground.

17. When his brother Nishumbha of terrific prowess fell to the ground, (Shumbha) got infuriated in the extreme, and strode forward to slay Ambika.

18. Standing in his chariot and grasping excellent weapons in his long and incomparable eight arms, he shone by pervading the entire sky.

19. Seeing him approaching, the Devi blew her conch, and made a twang of her bow-string, which was unbearable in the extreme.

20. And (the Devi) filled all directions with the ringing of her bell, which destroys the strength of all the daitya hosts.

20. The lion filled the heaven, the earth and the ten quarters of the sky with loud roars, which made the elephants give up their violent rut.

22. Then Kali, springing upwards in the sky, (came down) and struck the earth with both her hands; by its noise all the previous sounds were drowned.

Everything is vibrating energy, including all our inner bodies. By the invincible and all-pervading sound of the mantra the demons are vanquished—dead before the battle is

begun. The yogi should never be afraid and never doubt. God(dess) is without and within him in the form of the mantra. Its sound and action will drown all competition or opposition. He need never fear as long as he goes forward in the battle.

There is a Civil War story about a little boy that became the drummer for a military company. Once, when the battle seemed to be going against them, the commander told him to beat the retreat on his drum. "I don't know how," he replied, "but I can sure beat a good charge ahead." So he did, and the battle was won. We should be the same.

**23. Shivaduti made a loud ominous peal of laughter. The asuras were frightened by those sounds, and Shumbha flew into an utmost rage.**

**24. As Ambika said, "O evil-natured one, stop, stop," the devas stationed in the sky cheered her with the words, "Be victorious."**

If our devas, our higher faculties, are stationed in the sky of our consciousness by being established there by our sadhana, they shall cheer on the progress of the mantra to victory.

In the first chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, just before the battle began, Krishna and Arjuna, and all those assembled on their side for battle, blew on their conches. And "throughout the sky and the earth resounded the terrific noise which rent asunder the hearts" of their opponents. Such is the power and the effect of the mantra.

**25. The spear, flaming most terribly and shining like a mass of fire, which Shumbha approaching hurled was, as it was coming along, put out by a great firebrand (from the Devi).**

So you really do fight fire with fire! The root of everything is consciousness—consciousness that is vibrating. Therefore vibration and consciousness are inseparable, and the rishis of India perceived that sound (shabda) is the root vibration of all things, including states of consciousness. Divine vibration is the means to divine consciousness. This is the basis of an entire book: *Soham Yoga: The Yoga of the Self*. The whole lila of the Devi Mahatmyam is a portrayal of the purifying and transformative power of the Soham Mantra.

**26. The interspace between the three worlds was pervaded by Shumbha's lion-like roar, but the dreadful thunder-clap (of the Devi) smothered that, O King.**

Just as there is attack and counter-attack, there is vibration and counter-vibration, consciousness and counter-consciousness. This is the basis of mantra yoga. The negative vibration of Shumbha was smothered—extinguished—by the sound of the divine mantra. Therefore it had no effect whatsoever. The yogi knows by experience the power of the mantra to accomplish all good and vanquish all evil.

**27. The Devi split the arrows shot by Shumbha, and Shumbha also split the arrows discharged by her, (each with her and his) sharp arrows in hundreds and thousands.**

28. Then Chandika became angry and smote him with a trident. Wounded therewith, he fainted and fell to the ground.

For a while they appeared evenly matched, but the trident, which symbolizes mastery of the threefold nature of the sadhaka, changed the tide of battle. So does the mantra. It annihilates evil and its power. Its power extends throughout the physical, astral and causal bodies of the sadhaka, making him invincible.

29. Then Nishumbha, regaining consciousness seized his bow and struck with arrows the Devi (Chandika) and Kali and the lion.

30. And the danuja-lord, the son of Diti, putting forth a myriad arms, covered Chandika with a myriad [of] discuses.

30. Then Bhagavati Durga, the destroyer of difficulties and afflictions, became angry and split those discuses and those arrows with her own arrows.

The Devi simply shrugged off the effects of the demons' attack. Such is the power of the mantra. It involves no great effort or struggle. It arises in the sadhaka's consciousness, and by it he dispels the mirage of the demons' ploys.

32. Thereupon Nishumbha, surrounded by the daitya host, swiftly seizing his club, rushed at Chandika to slay her.

33. As he was just rushing at her, Chandika clove his club with her sharp-edged sword; and he took hold of a dart.

34. As Nishumbha, the afflictor of the devas, was advancing with the dart in hand, Chandika pierced him in the heart with a swiftly hurled dart.

35. From his (Nishumbha's) heart that was pierced by the dart, issued forth another person of great strength and valor, exclaiming (at the Devi) "Stop!"

36. Then the Devi, laughing aloud, severed the head of him who issued forth with her sword. Thereupon he fell to the ground.

The mantra has the power to peel off the layers and reveal what is beneath. So the yogi will discover a lot about himself that he never suspected, and this is necessary. But no matter what kind of negativity is revealed, the mantra dissolves it effortlessly. However, the mantra must not be put aside. Rather, it must be constant, day and night. Then victory is inevitable.

37. The lion then devoured those asuras whose necks he had crushed with his fierce teeth, and Kali and Shivaduti devoured others.

38. Some great asuras perished, being pierced through by the spear of Kaumari. Others were repulsed by (sprinkling of) the water purified by the incantation of Brahmani.

39. Others fell, pierced by a trident wielded by Maheshwari; some were powdered on the ground by the blows from the snout of Varahi.

40. Some danavas were cut to pieces by the discus of Vaisnavi, and others again by the thunderbolt discharged from the palm of Aindri.

40. Some asuras perished, some fled from the great battle, and others were

**devoured by Kali, Shivaduti and the lion.**

Some negativity is dissolved, some is driven away never to return, and some is assimilated by the yogi in a divine alchemy that makes him stronger. Such is the glory of the mantra.



# Chapter Ten

## The Slaying of Shumbha

**1-3. The Rishi said: Seeing his brother Nishumbha slain, who was dear to him as his life, and his army being slaughtered, Shumbha angrily said, “O Durga who are puffed up with pride of strength, do not show your pride (here). Though you are exceedingly haughty, you fight, resorting to the strength of others.”**

In the book of Revelation (12:10) Satan, the power of cosmic evil, is called “the accuser,” for this is the way of evil: to accuse and denounce. And this is the ploy aimed at the Devi.

**4-5. The Devi said: “I am all alone in the world here. Who else is there besides me? See, O vile one, these Goddesses, who are but my own powers, entering into my own self!”**

**6. Then all those goddesses, Brahmani and the rest, were absorbed in the body of the Devi. Ambika alone then remained.**

The entire range of relative existence is the joyful sport (lila) of the Goddess, and those with spiritual sight see it to be true. All have come from the One and all eventually return to the One. This is Perfection.

**7-8. The Devi said: “The numerous forms which I projected by my power here—those have been withdrawn by me, and (now) I stand alone. Be steadfast in combat.”**

Everything has come from the Infinite and everything shall return to the Infinite. This is what we mean by the term Yogamaya. It is Reality in the form of a dream that itself is temporarily manifested Reality. The mantra is the essential being of the Devi. When that becomes the weapon, the force, of the yogi’s sadhana, then the inner battle can commence and end in victory for the yogi through his sadhana shakti embodied in the mantra. Steady practice is the essence of it all.

**9-10. The Rishi said: Then began a dreadful battle between them both, the Devi and Shumbha, while all the devas and asuras looked on.**

**10. With showers of arrows, with sharp weapons and frightful missiles, both engaged again in a combat that frightened all the worlds.**

All aspects of the yogi’s makeup are involved and affected by the battle, but it is more amazing and incredible to his inner sight than it is frightening. But it is awesome. And unexpected. Be prepared.

**12. Then the lord of daityas broke the divine missiles, which Ambika discharged in hundreds, with (weapons) that repulsed them.**

13. With fierce shout of Hum and the like, the Parameshwari playfully broke the excellent missiles that he discharged.

14. Then the asura covered the Devi with hundreds of arrows, and the Devi in wrath split his bow with her arrows.

15. And when the bow was broken the lord of the daityas took up his spear. The Devi split that (spear) also in his hand, with a discus.

16. Next the supreme monarch of the daityas, taking his sword bright like the sun and shining shield bearing the images of a hundred moons, rushed at the Devi at that moment.

17. Just as he was rushing forward, Chandika split his sword with sharp arrows shot from her bow, as also his shield, spotless like the solar rays.

18. With his steeds slain, with his bow broken, without a charioteer, the daitya then grasped his terrible mace, being ready to kill Ambika.

19. With her sharp arrows, she split the mace of Shumbha, who was rushing at her. Even then, raising his fist, he rushed swiftly at her.

20. The daitya-lord brought his fist down on the heart of the Devi, and the Devi also with her palm smote him on his chest.

20. The daitya-king, wounded by the blow of her palm fell on the earth, but immediately he rose up again.

All this is symbolic, but nonetheless real. The yogi will find it to be so. As Bette Davis says in *All About Eve*, "Fasten your seatbelts. It's going to be a bumpy ride." Guaranteed.

22. Seizing the Devi, he sprang up and jumped into the sky. There also Chandika fought with him without any support.

23. Then the daitya (Shumbha) and Chandika fought, as never before, with each other in the sky in a close combat, causing wonder to the siddhas and sages.

24. Ambika then, after carrying on a close fight with him for a very long time, lifted him up, whirled him around, and flung him down on the earth.

25. Flung thus, the evil-natured (Shumbha) reaching the earth and raising his fist, hastily rushed forward desiring to kill Chandika.

26. Then the Devi, seeing that lord of all the daitya-folk approaching her, felled him down on the earth, piercing him in the chest with her spear.

27. Pierced by the pointed dart of the Devi he fell on the ground lifeless, shaking the entire earth with its seas, islands and mountains.

28. When that evil-natured (asura) was slain, the universe became happy and regained perfect peace, and the sky grew clear.

29. Flaming portent-clouds that were in evidence before became tranquil, and the rivers kept within their courses when (Shumbha) was thus stricken down.

30. When he had been slain, the minds of all the hosts of devas became overjoyed, and the Gandharvas [divine musicians] sang sweetly.

31-32. Others sounded (their instruments), and the bevy of apsaras danced; likewise favorable winds blew; the sun became very brilliant; the sacred fires

**blazed peacefully and tranquil became the strange sounds that had risen in different quarters.**

There are many encounters in battle over time, but one day the final battle takes place and the struggle is over. See the result as described in the Bhagavad Gita:

“To obey the Atman is his peaceful joy; sorrow melts into that clear peace: his quiet mind is soon established in peace.

“Water flows continually into the ocean but the ocean is never disturbed: desire flows into the mind of the seer but he is never disturbed. The seer knows peace: the man who stirs up his own lusts can never know peace.

“He knows peace who has forgotten desire. He lives without craving: free from ego, free from pride.

“This is the state of enlightenment in Brahman: a man does not fall back from it into delusion. Even at the moment of death he is alive in that enlightenment: Brahman and he are one” (2:65, 70-72).

Such is the victory of the Devi and the mantra.

# Chapter Eleven

## Hymn to Narayani

1-2. The Rishi said: When the great lord of asuras was slain there by the Devi, Indra and the other devas led by Agni, with their object fulfilled and their cheerful faces illumining the quarters, praised Katyayani:

3. “O Devi, you who remove the sufferings of your suppliants, be gracious. Be propitious, O Mother of the whole world. Be gracious, O Mother of the universe. Protect the universe. You are, O Devi, the ruler of all that is moving and unmoving.

4. “You are the sole substratum of the world, because you subsist in the form of the earth. By you, who exist in the shape of water, all this (universe) is gratified, O Devi of inviolable valor!

5. “You are the power of Vishnu, and have endless valor. You are the primeval maya, which is the source of the universe; by you all this (universe) has been thrown into an illusion. O Devi. If you become gracious, you become the cause of final emancipation in this world.

6. “All ways of knowledge are your aspects O Devi; so are all women in the world, endowed with various attributes. By you alone, the Mother, this world is filled. What praise can there be for you who are of the nature of primary and secondary expression regarding (objects) worthy of praise?

7. “When you have been lauded as the embodiment of all beings, the Devi (the effulgent one), and bestower of enjoyment and liberation, what words, however excellent, can praise you?

8. “Salutation be to you, O Devi Narayani, O you who abide as intelligence in the hearts of all creatures, and bestow heaven and liberation.

9. “Salutation be to you, O Narayani, O you who, in the form of minutes, moments and other divisions of time, bring about change in things, and have (thus ) the power to destroy the universe.

10. “Salutation be to you O Narayani, O you who are the good of all good, O auspicious Devi, who accomplish every object, the giver of refuge, O three eyed Gauri!

11. “Salutation be to you, O Narayani, you who have the power of creation, maintenance and destruction and are eternal. You are the substratum and embodiment of the three gunas.

12. “Salutation be to you, O Narayani, O you who are intent on saving the dejected and distressed that take refuge in you, O Devi, who removes the sufferings of all!

13. “Salutation be to you, O Narayani, O you who ride in the heavenly chariot yoked with swans and assume, O Devi, the form of Brahmani, who sprinkles

water with Kusha grass.

14. “Salutation be to you, O Narayani, O you who bear the trident, the moon and the serpent, and ride a big bull, and have the form of Maheshwari.

15. “Salutation be to you, O Narayani, O you who are attended by peacock and cock, and bear a great spear. O you, who are sinless and take the form of Kaumari [the shakti of Kaumari–Subramanya].

16. “Salutation be to you, O Narayani, O you who hold the great weapons of conch, discus, club and bow, and take the form of Vaisnavi [the consort of Vishnu], be gracious.

17. “Salutation be to you, O Narayani, O you who grasp a huge formidable discus, and uplift the earth with thy tusk, O auspicious Devi, who has a boar-like form [the shakti of Vishnu in his boar–Varaha–incarnation].

18. “Salutation be to you, O Narayani, O you who, in the fierce form of a man-lion [shakti of Vishnu in his fourth incarnation as a man-lion–Narsingha], put forth your efforts to slay the daityas, O you who possess the benevolence of saving the three worlds.

19. “Salutation be to you, O Narayani, you who have a diadem and a great thunderbolt, are dazzling with a thousand eyes, and took away the life of Vritra, O Aindri [consort of Indra, the slayer of the demon Vritra]!

20. “Salutation be to you, O Narayani, O you who in the form of Shivaduti slew the mighty hosts of daityas, O you of terrible form and tremendous noise.

21. “Salutation be to you, O Narayani, O you who have a terrible face with tusks, and who are adorned with a garland of heads, Chamunda, O slayer of Munda!

22. “Salutation be to you, O Narayani, O you who are good fortune, modesty, great wisdom, faith, nourishment and Swadha. O you who are immovable, O you, great Night and the great Illusion.

23. “Salutation be to you, O Narayani, O you who are intelligence and Saraswati, O best one, prosperity, consort of Vishnu, Dark One, Destiny, be propitious.

24. “O Queen of all, you who exist in the form of all, and possess every might, save us from error, O Devi. Salutation be to you, Devi Durga!

25. “May this benign countenance of yours adorned with three eyes, protect us from all fears. Salutation be to you, O Katyayani!

26. “Terrible with flames, exceedingly sharp destroyer of all the asuras, may your trident guard us from fear. Salutation be to you, O Bhadrakali!

27. “May your bell that fills the world with its sound, and destroys the prowess of the daityas, guard us, O Devi, as a mother protects her children, from all evils.

28. “May your sword, smeared with the mire-like blood and fat of asuras, and gleaming with rays, be for our welfare, O Chandika, we bow to you.

29. “When pleased, you destroy all illness but when wrathful you (frustrate) all the desires longed for. No calamity befalls men who have sought you. Those

who have sought you become verily a refuge to others.

30. "This slaughter that you, O Devi, multiplying your own form into many, have now wrought on the great asuras who hate righteousness, O Ambika, which other can do that work?

31. "Who is there except you in the sciences, in the scriptures, and in the Vedic sayings the light the lamp of discrimination? (Still) you cause this universe to whirl about again and again within the dense darkness of the depths of attachment.

32. "Where rakshasas and snakes of virulent poison (are), where foes and hosts of robbers (exist), where forest conflagrations (occur), there and in the mid-sea, you stand and save world.

33. "O Queen of the universe, you protect the universe. As the Self of the universe, you support the universe. You are the (goddess) worthy to be adored by the Lord of the universe. Those who bow in devotion to you themselves become the refuge of the universe.

34. "O Devi, be gracious and protect us always from the fear of foes, as you have done just now by the slaughter of asuras. And destroy quickly the sins of all worlds and the great calamities which have sprung from the maturing of evil portents.

35. "O Devi you who remove the afflictions of the universe, be gracious to us who have bowed to you. O you worthy of adoration by the dwellers of the three worlds, be boon-giver to the worlds."

36-37. The Devi said: "O Devas, I am prepared to bestow a boon. Choose whatever boon you desire in your mind, for the welfare of the world. I shall grant it."

38-39. The devas said: "O Queen of all, in this same manner, you must destroy all our enemies and all the afflictions of three worlds.

40-41. The Devi said: "When the twenty-eighth yuga has arrived during the period of Vaisvswata Manu, two other great asuras, Shumbha and Nishumbha will be born.

42. "Then born from the womb of Yashoda, in the home of cowherd Nanda, and dwelling on the Vindhya mountains, I will destroy them both.

43. "And again having incarnated in a very terrible form on the earth, I shall slay the danavas, who are the descendants of Viprachitta.

44. "When I shall devour the fierce and great asuras descended from Viprachitta, my teeth shall become red like the flower of pomegranate.

45. "Therefore the devas in heaven and men on the earth, when praising me, shall always speak of me as the 'Red-toothed.'

46. "And again when rain shall fail for a period of hundred years, propitiated by the munis I shall be born on the drought-ridden earth, but without being born in a womb.

47. "Then I shall behold the munis with a hundred eyes and so mankind shall glorify me as the 'Hundred-eyed.'

48. “At that time, O devas, I shall maintain the whole world with life-sustaining greens, born out of my own (cosmic) body, till rains come.

49. “Then I shall be famed on the earth as Shakambhari. At that very period I shall slay the great asura named Durgama.

50-53. “Thereby I shall have the celebrated name of Durga Devi. And again, assuming a terrible form on the mountain Himalaya, I shall destroy the rakshasas for the protection of the munis. Then all the munis, bowing their bodies reverently, shall praise me, and thereby I shall have the celebrated name of Bhimadevi. When the (asura) named Aruna shall work great havoc in the three worlds, having taken a (collective) bee-form, consisting of innumerable bees, I shall slay the great asura for the good of the world.

54-55. “And then people shall laud me every where as Bhramari. Thus whenever trouble arises due to the advent of the danavas, I shall incarnate and destroy the foes.”

These praises can be applied to the Devi Herself and to the sadhana mantra, either literally or symbolically.

# Chapter Twelve

## Eulogy of the Merits of the Devi Mahatmyam

1-2. The Devi said: And whoever with a concentrated mind shall pray to me constantly with these, hymns, I shall without doubt put an end to every trouble of his.

3. And those who shall sing (the story of) the destruction of Madhu and Kaitabha, the slaughter of Shumbha and Nishumbha likewise,

4-5. And those also who shall listen with devotion to this sublime poem on my greatness on the eighth, the fourteenth and on the ninth days of the lunar fortnight with concentrated mind, to them nothing wrong shall happen, nor misfortunes that arise from wrongdoings nor poverty and never separation from beloved ones.

6. He shall not experience fear from enemies, or from robbers and kings, or from weapon, fire and flood.

7. Hence this poem of my greatness must be chanted by men of concentrated minds and listened to always with devotion; for it is the supreme course of well-being.

8. May this poem of my glories quell all sufferings due to epidemics like smallpox as also the threefold natural calamities.

9. The place of my sanctuary is where this poem is duly chanted every day. I will never forsake it, and there my presence is certain.

10. When sacrifice is offered, during worship, in the fire-ceremony, and on great festive occasions, this entire poem on my acts must be chanted and listened to.

11. I will accept with love the sacrifice and worship that are made and the fire-offering that is offered likewise, whether they are done with due knowledge (of sacrifice) or not.

12-13. During the autumnal season, when the great annual worship is performed, the man hearing this glorification of mine with devotion shall certainly, through my grace, be delivered without doubt from all troubles and be blessed with riches, grains and children.

14. Hearing this glorification and the auspicious appearances of mine, and my feats of prowess in battles, a man becomes fearless.

15. Enemies perish, welfare accrues and the family rejoices for those who listen to this glorification of mine.

16. Let one listen to this glorification of mine everywhere, at a propitiatory ceremony, on seeing a bad dream, and when there is the great evil influence of



planets.

17. (By that means) evil portents subside, as also the unfavorable influence of planets, and the bad dream seen by men turns into a good dream.

18. It creates peacefulness in children possessed by the seizures of children (*i.e.*, evil spirits), and it is the best promoter of friendship among men where there occurs a split in their relationships.

19. It destroys most effectively the power of all men of evil ways. Verily demons, goblins, and ogres are destroyed by its mere chanting.

20-30. This entire glorification of mine draws (a devotee) very near to me. And the satisfaction I shall derive by being worshipped day and night for a whole year with offerings of finest cattle, flowers, arghya and incenses, and by perfumes and lamps, by feeding Brahmanas, by oblations, by sprinkling (consecrated) water, and by various other offerings and gifts, the same satisfaction you shall give me by listening but once to this holy story of mine. The chanting and hearing of the story of my manifestations removes sins, grants perfect health and protects one from evil spirits; and when my martial exploit in the form of the slaughter of the wicked daityas is listened to, men will have no fear from enemies. And the hymns uttered by you, and those by the divine sages, and those by Brahma bestow a pious mind. He who is (lost) on a lonesome spot in a forest, or is surrounded by forest fire, or who is surrounded by robbers in a desolate spot, or who is captured by enemies, or who is pursued by a lion, or tiger, or by wild elephants in a forest, or who, under the orders of a wrathful king, is sentenced to death, or has been imprisoned, or who is tossed about in his boat by a tempest in the vast sea, or who is in the most terrible battle under shower of weapons, or who is amidst all kinds of dreadful troubles, or who is afflicted with pain—such a man on remembering this story of mine is saved from his strait. Through my power, lions etc., robbers and enemies, flee to a [safe] distance from him who remembers this story of mine.

31-32. The Rishi said: Having spoken thus the adorable Chandika, fierce in prowess, vanished on that very spot even as the devas were gazing on.

33. Their foes having been killed, all the devas also were delivered from fear; all of them resumed their own duties as before and participated in their shares of sacrifices.

34-35. When the exceedingly valorous Shumbha the most fierce foe of the devas, and the afflicter of the world, as well as the great, fierce Nishumbha who was unparalleled in prowess, had been slain by the Devi in battle, the remaining daityas entered Patala Loka.

36. Thus O King, the adorable Devi, although eternal, incarnating again and again, protects the world.

37. By her this universe is deluded, and it is she who creates this universe. And when entreated, she bestows supreme knowledge, and when propitiated, she bestows prosperity.

38. O King, by her, the Mahakali, who takes the form of the great destroyer at

the end of time, all this cosmic sphere is pervaded.

39. She indeed takes the form of the great destroyer at the (proper) time. She, the unborn, indeed becomes this creation (at the appropriate time for re-creation), She herself, the eternal Being, sustains the beings at (another) time.

40. In times of prosperity, she indeed is Lakshmi, who bestows prosperity in the homes of men; and in times of misfortune, she herself becomes the goddess of misfortune, and brings about ruin.

40. When praised and worshipped with flowers, incense, perfumes, etc., she bestows wealth, sons, and a mind bent on righteousness and a prosperous life.

Countless centuries have revealed the truth of these statements. I have personally experienced their reality. The recitation of these verses can completely clear and uplift the psychic atmosphere of a place. Reciting these verses in Sanskrit is the most effective, but reciting the English translation is very effective, also. You can experiment for yourself.

## Sri Durgayai Namah!

# Glossary

**Aditi:** Boundless; unbounded; “Infinite Mother”—the source of all the cosmic forms of consciousness from physical upwards; in Vedic cosmology: the mother of the gods.

**Agni:** Fire; Vedic god of fire.

**Aindri:** The shakti of Indra.

**Airavata:** The white elephant of Indra that was produced by the churning of the ocean.

**Amrita:** That which makes one immortal. The nectar of immortality that emerged from the ocean of milk when the gods churned it.

**Amba:** Mother. It is also one of the more popular names of Durga.

**Ambika:** Mother; a title of Parvati; literally “good woman.”

**Ananda:** Bliss; happiness; joy. A fundamental attribute of Brahman, which is Satchidananda: Existence, Consciousness, Bliss.

**Ananta(m):** Infinite; without end; endless; a name of Shesha, the chief of the Nagas, whose coils encircle the earth and who symbolizes eternity, and upon whom Vishnu reclines.

**Apsara:** A celestial damsel, nymph, and dancer.

**Asura:** Demon; evil being (a-sura: without the light).

**Asuric:** Of demonic character.

**Atma:** See Atman.

**Atmabala:** Soul-force.

**Atman:** The individual spirit or Self that is one with Brahman; the essential being, nature or identity of each sentient being.

**Avidya:** Ignorance; nescience; unknowing; literally: “to know not.” A Sakti or illusive power in Brahman which is sometimes regarded as one with Maya and sometimes as different from it. It forms the condition of the individual soul and is otherwise called Ajnana or Asuddha-maya. It forms the Karana Sharira of the Jiva. It is Malina or impure Sattwa. Also called ajnana.

**Avidyamaya:** Maya, or illusion causing duality, has two aspects, namely, avidyamaya and vidyamaya. Avidyamaya, or the “maya of ignorance,” consisting of anger, passion, and so on, entangles one in worldliness. Vidyamaya, or the “maya of knowledge,” consisting of kindness, purity, unselfishness, and so on, leads one to liberation. Both belong to the relative world. See Maya.

**Bhagavati:** Goddess; the feminine form of Bhagavan.

**Bhadra:** Praiseworthy; pleasing; fortunate; auspicious; gracious; gentle; blessed; blessing; happy; well; beautiful.

**Bhadrakali:** Kali as the embodiment of all the traits of Bhadra.

**Bhagavan:** The Lord; the One endowed with the attributes: infinite dominion, infinite might, infinite glory, infinite splendor, infinite wisdom and infinite renunciation; the Personal God.

**Bhavatarini:** “Savior of the World (or Universe);” a title of the Divine Mother, especially Kali.

**Bhranti:** Wandering; confusion; mistake; false idea or impression; wrong notion; delusion.

**Brahma:** The Creator (Prajapati) of the three worlds of men, angels, and archangels (Bhur, Bhuwah, and Swah); the first of the created beings; Hiranyagarbha or cosmic intelligence.

**Brahman:** The Absolute Reality; the Truth proclaimed in the Upanishads; the Supreme Reality that is one and indivisible, infinite, and eternal; all-pervading, changeless Existence; Existence-knowledge-bliss Absolute (Satchidananda); Absolute Consciousness; it is not only all-powerful but all-power itself; not only all-knowing and blissful but all-knowledge and all-bliss itself.

**Brahmani:** A Brahmin woman; the shakti of Brahma.

**Bhramari:** “Like a bee;” the goddess of bees and stinging insects.

**Chaitanya:** Consciousness; intelligence; awareness; the consciousness that knows itself and knows others; Pure Consciousness.

**Chamunda:** A name of Kali, given to Her by Durga because She slew the two mighty demon Chanda.

**Chandi/Chandika:** A manifestation of Durga; Chandi is invincible in battle against demonic forces; see Devi Mahatmyam.

**Chandra:** Presiding deity of the moon or the astral lunar world (loka).

**Chit:** Consciousness (that is spirit or purusha); “to perceive, observe, think, be aware, know;” pure unitary Consciousness. The principle of universal intelligence or consciousness.

**Chit-jyoti:** The Light of Consciousness; the Illumination that is the Self.

**Chitshakti:** Power of consciousness or intelligence.

**Chitswarupa:** Of the very form of pure intelligence or consciousness.

**Chitta:** The subtle energy that is the substance of the mind, and therefore the mind itself; mind in all its aspects; the field of the mind; the field of consciousness; consciousness itself; the subconscious mind.

**Crore:** Ten million.

**Daitya(s):** Demon; slave; a class of mighty beings in whom the diabolical quality predominates; the demons of the Puranas; giant; titan; demons who constantly war with the gods. Sometimes races or nationalities who acted contrary to dharma and fought against the arya were also called demons—daityas or asuras.

**Daivi(c):** Same as Divya; divine.

**Danava:** A class of demons. The danavas are a mythological race of asuras, the half-brothers to the devas and daityas that are found in a range of Hindu texts. The danavas are a part of a larger group of the asuras, and are typically portrayed as opposed to the Hindu deities. However, historically, their role in Hinduism is varied and at times, the distinction between the danavas and Hindu deities is complex and they are difficult to distinguish from one another.

**Danuja:** A demon.

**Darshana:** “Seeing” in the sense of a viewpoint or system of thought. The Sad-darshanas are the six orthodox systems of Indian philosophy: Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Sankhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, and Vedanta.

**Daya:** Mercy; compassion; grace; empathy.

**Deva:** “A shining one,” a god—greater or lesser in the evolutionary hierarchy; a semi-divine or celestial being with great powers, and therefore a “god.” Sometimes called a demi-god. Devas are the demigods presiding over various powers of material and psychic nature. In many instances “devas” refer to the powers of the senses or the sense organs themselves.

**Devi:** Goddess; the Supreme Shakti (Divine Power) or Divine Mother, or a demigoddess.

**Devi Mahatmyam:** The account of the manifestation of Durga from the combined power (shakti) of the gods so that she could overcome all enemies in battle. It tells of her glories and victories over the demonic forces. It is part of the Markandeya Purana.

**Diti:** Mother of all the demons or daityas.

**Divya:** Divine; divine nature; heavenly; celestial; sacred; luminous; supernatural.

**Durga (Durga Devi):** “Incomprehensible One;” “Difficult to reach;” the Universal Mother; she rides a lion (or tiger) and carries a weapon in each of her eight arms symbolizing the powers of the Self against ignorance and evil. She is invoked against all forms of evil—physical and metaphysical. She is considered the consort, the shakti, of Shiva.

**Durgama:** An asura king, a great foe of Indra. He was slain by the goddess Durga.

**Dwandwa(s):** The pairs of opposites inherent in nature (prakriti) such as pleasure and pain, hot and cold, light and darkness, gain and loss, victory and defeat, attraction and aversion, happiness and sorrow, birth and death.

**Gandharva:** A demigod—a celestial musician and singer.

**Ganga:** See Ganges.

**Ganges (Ganga):** The sacred river—believed to be of divine origin—that flows from high up in the Himalayas, through the plains of Northern India, and empties into the Bay of Bengal. Hindus consider that bathing in the Ganges profoundly purifies both body and mind.

**Garuda:** A great being who can assume bird form, and therefore considered the king of birds. Often depicted as an eagle, he is the vehicle of Vishnu.

**Gauri:** “The Golden One.” A title of the Divine Mother, consort of Shiva.

**Guha:** See Karitkeya.

**Guna:** Quality, attribute, or characteristic arising from nature (Prakriti) itself; a mode of energy behavior. As a rule, when “guna” is used it is in reference to the three qualities of Prakriti, the three modes of energy behavior that are the basic qualities of nature, and which determine the inherent characteristics of all created things. They are: 1) sattwa—purity, light, harmony; 2) rajas—activity, passion; and 3) tamas—dullness, inertia, and ignorance.

**Hari:** Vishnu; “thief” in the sense of stealer of hearts.

**Himalaya:** The range of mountains across the northern border of India; the king of

the Himalayan region, the father of Parvati.

**Himavat:** A mountain in the Himalayas; King Himavat, the father of Parvati.

**Indra:** King of the lesser “gods” (demigods); the ruler of heaven (Surendra Loka); the rain-god.

**Ishwara:** “God” or “Lord” in the sense of the Supreme Power, Ruler, Master or Controller of the cosmos. “Ishwara” implies the powers of omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience.

**Ishwari:** The Divine Cosmic Mother; the feminine form of Ishwara.

**Japa:** Repetition of a mantra.

**Janardana:** Agitator of men (properly an epithet of Vishnu)—a title of Krishna.

**Jati:** Birth; species; class; classification; creation; kinsman; relative; community; race; caste; lineage.

**Jivatma/Jivatman:** Individual spirit; individual consciousness.

**Kala:** Time; death (or Yama); fate; black.

**Kali:** “The Black One;” the black-skinned goddess who emerged from the body of Goddess Durga to defeat the demons that were attacking her. She wears a garland of skulls (or severed heads) around her neck and a skirt of severed arms—both symbolizing the sense of egotism. In one hand she wields the sword of spiritual wisdom (prajna) and in the other carries a severed head (ego). Despite her fearsome appearance, her two other hands are held in the gestures (mudras) that indicate: “Fear not” and “Draw near.”

**Kalika:** Blackness or black color. See Kali.

**Kalpa:** A Day of Brahma—4,320,000,000 years. It alternates with a Night of Brahma of the same length. He lives hundred such years. Brahma’s life is known as Para, being of a longer duration than the life of any other being, and a half of it is called Parardha. He has now completed the first Parardha and is in the first day of the second Parardha. This day or Kalpa is known as Svetavarahakalpa. In the Day of Brahma creation is manifest and in the Night of Brahma is it resolved into its causal state.

**Kamandalu:** A water vessel carried by a traveling sannyasi; usually made of a gourd or coconut shell, it may also be earthenware. The kamandalu and staff (danda) are considered the insignia of the sannyasi along with gerua clothing.

**Kanta:** Beloved, liked, loved desired, lovely, beautiful, dear.

**Kanti:** Desire, wish, loveliness, beauty, splendor, brilliance, effulgence, female beauty, personal embellishment, brightness.

**Kartika; Kartikeya:** The god of war, the son of Shiva and Parvati, known as Subramanya or Skanda in South India.

**Katyayani:** A form of Goddess Durga.

**Kaumari:** See Kumari.

**Kaushiki:** A title of Amibika because She came out of Parvati’s body.

**Kirtan(a):** Singing the names and praises of God; devotional chanting.

**Kosha:** Sheath; bag; scabbard; a sheath enclosing the soul; body. There are five such concentric sheaths or bodies: the sheaths of bliss, intellect, mind, life-force and the physical body—the anandamaya, jnanamaya, manomaya, pranamaya and annamaya

bodies respectively.

**Krishna:** An avatar born in India about three thousand years ago, Whose teachings to His disciple Arjuna on the eve of the Great India (Mahabharata) War comprise the Bhagavad Gita.

**Kriya:** Purificatory action, practice, exercise, or rite; action; activity; movement; function; skill. Kriyas purify the body and nervous system as well as the subtle bodies to enable the yogi to reach and hold on to higher levels of consciousness and being.

**Kriya Shakti:** The power or faculty of action.

**Kshanti:** Patience; forbearance; forgiveness; endurance.

**Kubera:** The god of wealth.

**Kumar(a):** Child; boy; youth; prince; son; a title of Kartikeya (Subramanya); a male virgin.

**Kumari:** Young maiden, a female virgin; a formal title of address for an unmarried woman.

**Kusha:** One of the varieties of sacred grass (darbha) used in many religious rites, including the sprinkling of water. Because of its insulating qualities, both physical and metaphysical, it is recommended as a seat (asana) for meditation, and as mats for sleeping (it keeps the sleeper on a cold surface warm).

**Lajja:** Modesty; humility; shyness; reticence; shame.

**Lakshmi:** Good fortune; auspiciousness; wealth and prosperity; the consort of Vishnu who bestows all these things.

**Lila:** Play; sport; divine play; the cosmic play. The concept that creation is a play of the divine, existing for no other reason than for the mere joy of it. The life of an avatar is often spoken of as lila.

**Mahakali:** See Kali.

**Mahamaya:** “Great illusion;” divine Power operating as identified with the Supreme Lord. A title of Shakti, the Goddess.

**Mahashakti:** The Great Power; the divine creative energy.

**Maheshwari:** The consort of Shiva–Maheshwara.

**Manes:** The spirits of the dead, regarded as minor supernatural powers; the benevolent spirits of the dead, especially of dead ancestors, regarded as family deities and protectors.

**Mantra:** Sacred syllable or word or set of words through the repetition and reflection of which one attains perfection or realization of the Self. Literally, “a transforming thought” (*manat trayate*–“that which carries over”). A mantra, then is a sound formula that transforms the consciousness.

**Mantra Yoga:** The Yoga of the Divine Word; the science of sound; the path to divine union through repetition of a mantra—a sound formula that transforms the consciousness.

**Manu:** The controller of time, the cycle of the yugas.

**Manvantara:** An age of Manu. Within a cosmic age (kalpa) there are fourteen manvantaras: Svayambhuva, Svarochisa, Uttama, Tamasa, Raivata, Caksusa, Vaivasvata, Savarni, Daksha-savarni, Brahma-savarni, Dharma-savarni, Rudra-savarni, Deva-

savarni, and Indra-savarni.

**Markandeya:** A sage of ancient India.

**Maruta:** The god of wind.

**Matra:** Letters of the alphabet or their sounds; mode; measure; unit; prosodial instant—the length of time required for pronouncing a short vowel.

**Matri:** Mother; mother as a term of respect or endearment; epithet of the Divine Mother in Her various forms.

**Matris:** Mothers; specifically the Creator Mothers who made the material creation and the sentient beings within it.

**Maya:** The illusive power of Brahman; the veiling and the projecting power of the universe, the power of Cosmic Illusion. “The Measurer”—a reference to the two delusive “measures,” Time and Space.

**Moha:** Delusion—in relation to something, usually producing delusive attachment or infatuation based on a completely false perception and evaluation of the object.

**Moksha:** Release; liberation; the term is particularly applied to the liberation from the bondage of karma and the wheel of birth and death; Absolute Experience.

**Muni:** “Silent one” (one observing the vow of silence—mauna); sage; ascetic.

**Naga (1):** Snake; naked; one order of sadhus who are nude.

**Naga (2):** A snake spirit—a powerful semi-divine astral being living on the earth, credited with great powers, especially of healing and prediction of the future. They can take the form of cobras or human beings, or sometimes as snakes with human faces or upper bodies. They are believed to guard treasures in the earth. They are often associated with rivers, lakes and wells, but also dwell in forests. Their worship can bestow psychic powers, including supernatural knowledge and the ability to influence or control others.

**Nanda:** The cowherd “father” of Krishna.

**Narasingha (Narasimha):** The fourth avatara of Vishnu in the form of a man with the head of a lion.

**Narasinghi:** The female form or counterpart of Narasingha.

**Narayana:** A proper name of God—specifically of Vishnu. The term by etymology means a Being that supports all things, that is reached by them and that helps them to do so; also one who pervades all things. He Who dwells in man. Literally: “God in humanity.” Sadhus often address one another as Narayana and greet one another: “Namo Narayanaya”—I salute Narayana [in you].

**Narayani:** See Lakshmi.

**Nishumbha:** A demon slain by Durga.

**Paramatman:** The Supreme Self, God. The Universal Soul (Parampurusha) and Lord of the Divine Mother or Kundalini Shakti.

**Parambrahma/Parambrahman:** The Supreme Absolute; the transcendental Reality.

**Parameshwari:** The feminine counterpart or aspect of Ishwara.

**Parampurusha:** The Supreme Spirit; Supreme Person.

**Parijata:** Jasmine; fragrance.

**Parvati:** “Daughter of the Mountain;” the daughter of King Himalaya; the consort



of Shiva; an incarnation of the Divine Mother.

**Patala Loka:** Nether world; hell. In ancient Sanskrit texts the Western Hemisphere is called Patal Desh, the Underworld.

**Pinaka:** The bow, staff or trident of Lord Shiva (who is therefore called Pinakin–Bearer of the bow, staff or trident).

**Pishacha:** A vampiristic spirit or demon, sometimes called “a blood drinker,” though it really depletes its victims of prana, the life force.

**Prajapati:** Progenitor; the Creator; a title of Brahma the Creator.

**Prajna:** Consciousness; awareness; wisdom; intelligence.

**Prajñanam Brahma:** “Consciousness is Brahman.” The Mahavakya (Great Saying) of the Aitareya Upanishad.

**Prajnatma:** The intelligent self; the conscious internal self.

**Prakriti:** Causal matter; the fundamental power (shakti) of God from which the entire cosmos is formed; the root base of all elements; undifferentiated matter; the material cause of the world. Also known as Pradhana. Prakriti can also mean the entire range of vibratory existence (energy).

**Puja:** Worship; ceremonial (ritual) worship; adoration; honor. Usually involving the image of a deity.

**Rajas:** Activity, passion, desire for an object or goal.

**Rakshasa:** Cannibal demons or goblins, enemies of the gods. Meat-eating human beings are classed as rakshasas.

**Ram:** A title of Brahman the Absolute. Though sometimes used as a contraction of the name of Rama, many yogis insist that it is properly applied to Brahman alone and employ it as a mantra in repetition and meditation to reveal the Absolute. Interestingly, Ram (Rahm) is also a title of God in Hebrew.

**Rama:** An incarnation of God–the king of ancient Ayodhya in north-central India. His life is recorded in the ancient epic Ramayana.

**Rama Nama:** The name of Rama–both of the Absolute Brahman and of the incarnation, Rama of Ayodhya–used in devotional singing, japa and meditation.

**Rishi:** Sage; seer of the Truth.

**Sad-darshanas:** The six orthodox systems of Indian philosophy: Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Sankhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, and Vedanta.

**Sadhaka:** One who practices spiritual discipline–sadhana–particularly meditation.

**Sadhana:** Spiritual practice.

**Sadhana Shakti:** Both the power to successfully engage in sadhana, the the power that accrues within the sadhaka from his practice of sadhana.

**Samsara:** Life through repeated births and deaths; the wheel of birth and death; the process of earthly life.

**Samsara chakra:** The wheel of birth and death.

**Samsari:** The transmigrating soul.

**Samsaric:** Having to do with samsara; involved with samsara; partaking of the traits or qualities of samsara.

**Samsarin:** One who is subject to samsara–repeated births and deaths–and who is

deluded by its appearances, immersed in ignorance.

**Samskara:** Impression in the mind, either conscious or subconscious, produced by action or experience in this or previous lives; propensities of the mental residue of impressions; subliminal activators; prenatal tendency.

**Sandhya:** A ritual done at the “junctions” (sandhyas) of the day–dawn, noon, and sunset–during which the Savitri Gayatri is repeated.

**Saraswati:** The goddess of speech, wisdom, learning and the arts–particularly music.

**Sattwa:** Light; purity; harmony, goodness, reality.

**Shabda:** Sound; word.

**Shabda Brahman:** Sound-God; Brahman in the Form of Sound; Soham; the Vedas.

**Shakambhari (or Shatakshi):** The goddess of nourishment. She is regarded to be an incarnation of Mahadevi, and identified with both Lakshmi and Durga.

**Shakra:** Indra.

**Shakti:** Power; energy; force; the Divine Power of becoming; the apparent dynamic aspect of Eternal Being; the Absolute Power or Cosmic Energy; the Divine Feminine.

**Sharanagati:** One who has taken refuge or shelter, or sought protection.

**Sharanam:** Refuge; protection, shelter.

**Shesha:** The endless; the infinite; a symbol of eternity. The name of the snake (naga) upon which Vishnu reclines.

**Shesha Narayana:** The form of Vishnu reclining upon Shesha, the infinite (endless) snake (naga).

**Shiva:** A name of God meaning “One Who is all Bliss and the giver of happiness to all.” Although classically applied to the Absolute Brahman, Shiva can also refer to God (Ishwara) in His aspect of Dissolver and Liberator (often mistakenly thought of as “destroyer”).

**Shivaduti:** A title of the Goddess, meaning “She Who Sends Shiva,” a reference to the Devi Mahatmyam or Chandi.

**Shri:** See Lakshmi.

**Shumbha:** A demon slain by Durga.

**Siddha:** A perfected–liberated–being, an adept, a seer, a perfect yogi.

**Smriti:** Memory; recollection; “that which is remembered;” code of law. In this latter sense, Smriti is used to designate all scriptures except the Vedas and Upanishads (which are considered of greater authority: Shruti).

**Soham:** “That am I;” the ultimate Atma mantra, the mantra of the Self; the Ajapa Gayatri formula of meditation in which “So” is intoned mentally during natural inhalation and “Ham” is intoned mentally during natural exhalation. Soham is pronounced “Sohum,” as the short “a” in Sanskrit is pronounced like the American “u” in “up.”

**Soham Asmi:** “I Am Soham;” realization of the Self as Soham.

**Soham Bhava:** The state of being and awareness: “THAT I am.” Gorakhnath says that So’ham Bhava includes total Self-comprehension (ahamta), total Self-mastery (akhanda aishwarya), unbroken awareness of the unity of the Self (swatmata),

awareness of the unity of the Self with all phenomenal existence—as the Self (vishwanubhava), knowledge of all within and without the Self—united in the Self (sarvajñatwa).

**Soham Sadhana:** The practice of Soham Yoga.

**Soham Yoga:** The practice of the japa (repetition) of and meditation on the mantra Soham. See the books *Soham Yoga: The Yoga Of The Self* and *Light of Soham*.

**Sri:** See Lakshmi.

**Subramanya:** The god of war and son of Shiva and Parvati; Skanda.

**Sukha:** Happiness; ease; joy; happy; pleasure; pleasant; agreeable.

**Surya:** The sun; the presiding deity of the sun, sometimes identified with Vishnu (Surya-Narayana) or the Absolute Brahman.

**Swadha:** The equivalent of Swaha, used in offerings for the departed.

**Swaha:** An oblation or offering made to gods; an exclamation used in offering oblations to gods.

**Swara:** Sound; accent; tone.

**Tamas:** Dullness, darkness, inertia, folly, and ignorance.

**Tapasya:** Austerity; practical (i.e., result-producing) spiritual discipline; spiritual force. Literally it means the generation of heat or energy, but is always used in a symbolic manner, referring to spiritual practice and its effect, especially the roasting of karmic seeds, the burning up of karma.

**Trishna:** Thirst; craving; desire.

**Tushti:** Contentment; satisfaction.

**Uchchaishravas:** The name of Indra's horse (or the horse of the Sun god, Surya), that was born of the amrita that was churned from the ocean by the gods. The name means "high-sounding" and refers to the power of mantra.

**Udgitha:** The Pranava, Om, when it is sung aloud in Vedic recitation.

**Utkrantida:** The missile of Yama by which he gives exit (utkranti) from the body to all creatures.

**Vairagya:** Non-attachment; detachment; dispassion; absence of desire; disinterest; or indifference. Indifference towards and disgust for all worldly things and enjoyments.

**Vaishnavi:** The feminine equivalent, the shakti or divine power of Vishnu.

**Vak:** Speech.

**Vakya:** That which is denoted by speech.

**Varaha:** The third incarnation of Vishnu as a boar.

**Varahi:** The feminine equivalent, form or shakti of Varaha.

**Varuna:** A Vedic deity considered the sustainer of the universe and also the presiding deity of the oceans and water. Often identified with the conscience.

**Vashatkara:** One who is known as the giver of "six things"—birth, existence, growth, change, downfall (decay) and death. Va means "this." Shat means six. Kara means "one who is known as." Every living being goes through six states: jayate (is born), asti (exists), vardhate (grows), parinamate (changes), apakshiyate (decays), mriyate (dies). The lord alone is the one who gives these six to all beings.

**Vayu:** The Vedic god of the wind; air; vital breath; prana.

**Vedas:** The oldest scriptures of India, considered the oldest scriptures of the world, that were revealed in meditation to the Vedic Rishis (seers). Although in modern times there are said to be four Vedas (Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Atharva), in the upanishads only three are listed (Rig, Sama, and Yajur). In actuality, there is only one Veda: the Rig Veda. The Sama Veda is only a collection of Rig Veda hymns that are marked (pointed) for singing. The Yajur Veda is a small book giving directions on just one form of Vedic sacrifice. The Atharva Veda is only a collection of theurgical mantras to be recited for the cure of various afflictions or to be recited over the herbs to be taken as medicine for those afflictions.

**Vidya:** Knowledge; both spiritual knowledge and mundane knowledge.

**Viprachitta:** A king of the Danavas (see definition above) who became an enemy of Indra who had killed Viprachitta's brother Puloman.

**Vishnu:** "The all-pervading;" God as the Preserver.

**Vishnumaya:** Illusion wielded by the Supreme Lord so that the unreal seems real; the illusory form of Lord Vishnu usually conceived of as a female deity which makes the universe appear as real.

**Visvakarman:** Creator of all things; the architect of the gods; a title of the sun.

**Vivaswat:** Shining forth; diffusing light; a title of the Sun, Surya.

**Vritra (1):** One who hates the light and burrows into the dark; a symbolic term used in the Vedas for those of low and bound consciousness who are the opposite of the Aryans.

**Vritra (2):** A demon (asura) especially inimical to Indra who was slain by Aindri, the consort-shakti of Indra.

**Vritti:** Thought-wave; mental modification; mental whirlpool; a ripple in the chitta (mind substance).

**Yajna/Yajanam:** Sacrifice; offering; sacrificial ceremony; a ritual sacrifice; usually the fire sacrifice known as agnihotra or havan.

**Yajur Veda:** See Vedas.

**Yaksha:** A semidivine beings whose king is Kubera, the lord of wealth.

**Yama:** Yamaraja; the Lord of Death, controller of who dies and what happens to them after death.

**Yashoda:** The foster-mother of Krishna in Brindaban where Krishna was taken by his father Vasudeva on the night of his birth for his protection from his mother Devaki's brother, Kansa, the king of Mathura. His foster-father was Nanda.

**Yoga Nidra/Yoganidra:** A state of half-contemplation and half-sleep; light yogic sleep when the individual retains slight awareness; state between sleep and wakefulness.

**Yogamaya:** The power of Maya, of divine illusion. It is Maya in operation, the operation/movement rising from the presence (union-yoga) of God (Ishwara) within it, and therefore possessing delusive power.

**Yogashakti:** The power of yoga—both the power by which we practice yoga and the power which accrues within us from that practice.

**Yogeshwari:** Durga, the multiform consort of Shiva, and Herself the Supreme Yogi,

the Goddess and Ruler-Leader of all yogis.

**Yogini:** A female practitioner of yoga.

**Yuga:** Age or cycle; aeon; world era. Hindus believe that there are four yugas: the Golden Age (Satya or Krita Yuga), the Silver age (Treta Yuga), The Bronze Age (Dwapara Yuga), and the Iron Age (Kali Yuga). Satya Yuga is four times as long as the Kali Yuga; Treta Yuga is three times as long; and Dwapara Yuga is twice as long. In the Satya Yuga the majority of humans use the total potential—four-fourths—of their minds; in the Treta Yuga, three-fourths; in the Dwapara Yuga, one half; and in the Kali Yuga, one fourth. (In each Yuga there are those who are using either more or less of their minds than the general populace.) The Yugas move in a perpetual circle: Ascending Kali Yuga, ascending Dwapara Yuga, ascending Treta Yuga, ascending Satya Yuga, descending Satya Yuga, descending Treta Yuga, descending Dwapara Yuga, and descending Kali Yuga—over and over. Furthermore, there are yuga cycles within yuga cycles. For example, there are yuga cycles that affect the entire cosmos, and smaller yuga cycles within those greater cycles that affect a solar system. The cosmic yuga cycle takes 8,640,000,000 years, whereas the solar yuga cycle only takes 24,000 years. At the present time our solar system is in the ascending Dwapara Yuga, but the cosmos is in the descending Kali Yuga. Consequently, the more the general mind of humanity develops, the more good can be accomplished by the positive, and the more evil can be accomplished by the negative. Therefore we have more contrasts and polarization in contemporary life than previously before 1900.

# Appendix

## Soham Yoga: A Brief Introduction

Swami Nirmalananda Giri (Abbot George Burke)

### Soham

Soham means: I Am That. It is the natural vibration of the Self, which occurs spontaneously with each incoming and outgoing breath. By becoming aware of it on the conscious level by mentally repeating it in time with the breath (*So* when inhaling and *Ham* when exhaling), a yogi experiences the identity between his individual Self and the Supreme Self. Soham, then, will reveal our inner being. By meditating on Soham we discover our Self within which Soham has existed forever. The simple intonation of Soham in time with the breath will do everything in the unfolding of the yogi's spiritual consciousness.

The practice is very simple, and the results very profound. Truly wondrous is the fact that Soham Yoga can go on all the time, not just during meditation, if we apply ourselves to it. The whole life can become a continuous stream of liberating sadhana.

The important thing about Soham Yoga is that it really works. It only takes perseverance.

Repeating Soham in a constant flow with the breath turns the mind inward and produces spiritual awareness in an ever-increasing degree. So whenever we intone Soham in time with the breath, we align and link our consciousness with its origin: both our spirit and Divine Spirit.

For the repetition of Soham to produce its effect it must be pronounced correctly. Soham is pronounced like our English words *So* and *Hum*. The short *a* in Sanskrit is pronounced like the *u* in *up* or *hunt*, so we say "hum" even though we write it as "ham."

It is most important to pronounce the *O* correctly. It should be pronounced like the long *o* in the Italian or common American manner—as in *home* and *lone*. In England, Canada, and parts of the American South, the long *o* is sometimes pronounced as a diphthong, like two vowels jammed together: either like "*ay-oh*" or "*eh-oh*." This is not the correct manner of pronouncing the *O*, which should be a single, pure vowel sound.

The same is true of the *U* in *ham* (*hum*). As already pointed out, it is pronounced like the *u* in *up* or *hunt*—not like the *u* in *truth* or *push*, as is done in parts of Great Britain.

A mantra is most effective if it is mentally intoned—that is, mentally "sung"—on a single note. (The pitch does not matter—whatever is spontaneous and natural.) This makes the repetition stronger and of deeper effect, because intoning unifies the mind and naturally concentrates it.

## The Practice of Soham Yoga Meditation

1) Sit upright, comfortable and relaxed, with your hands on your knees or thighs or resting, one on the other, in your lap.

2) Turn your eyes slightly downward and close them gently. This removes visual distractions and reduces your brain-wave activity by about seventy-five percent, thus helping to calm the mind. During meditation your eyes may move upward and downward naturally of their own accord. This is as it should be when it happens spontaneously. But start out with them turned slightly downward without any strain.

3) Be aware of your breath naturally (automatically) flowing in and out. Your mouth should be closed so that all breathing is done through the nose. This also aids in quieting the mind. Though your mouth is closed, the jaw muscles should be relaxed so the upper and lower teeth are not clenched or touching one another, but parted. Breathe naturally, spontaneously. Your breathing should always be easeful and natural, not deliberate or artificial.

4) Then in a very quiet and gentle manner begin *mentally* intoning Soham in time with your breathing. (Remember: Soham is pronounced like our English words *So* and *Hum*.)

Intone *Soooooo*, prolonging a single intonation throughout each inhalation, and *Huuuuuuuu*, prolonging a single intonation throughout each exhalation, “singing” the syllables on a single note.

There is no need to pull or push the mind. Let your relaxed attention sink into and get absorbed in the mental sound of your inner intonings of Soham.

Fit the intonations to the breath—not the breath to the intonations. If the breath is short, then the intonation should be short. If the breath is long, then the intonation should be long. It does not matter if the inhalations and exhalations are not of equal length. Whatever is natural and spontaneous is what is right.

Your intonation of *Soooooo* should begin when your inhalation begins, and *Huuuuuuuu* should begin when your exhalation begins. In this way your intonations should be virtually continuous: *SooooooHuuuuuuuuSooooooHuuuuuuuuSooooooHuuuuuuuu*.

Do not torture yourself about this—basically continuous is good enough.

5) For the rest of your meditation time keep on intoning Soham in time with your breath, calmly listening to the mental sound.

6) In Soham meditation we do not deliberately concentrate on any particular point of the body such as the third eye, as we want the subtle energies of Soham to be free to manifest themselves as is best at the moment. However, as you meditate, you may become aware of one or more areas of your brain or body at different times. This is all right when such sensations come and go spontaneously, but keep centered on your intonations of Soham in time with your breath.

7) In time your inner mental intonations of Soham may change to a more mellow or softer form, even to an inner whispering that is almost silent, but the syllables are always fully present and effective. Your intonations may even become silent, like a soundless mouthing of Soham or just the thought or movement of Soham, yet you will still be intoning Soham in your intention. And of this be sure: *Soham never ceases*. Never.

You may find that your intonations of Soham move back and forth from more objective to more subtle and back to more objective. Just intone in the manner that is natural at the moment.

8) In the same way you will find that your breath will also become more subtle and refined, and slow down. Sometimes the breath may not be perceived as movement of the lungs, but just as the subtle pranic energy movement which causes the physical breath. Your breath can even become so light that it seems as though you are not breathing at all, just *thinking* the breath (or almost so).

9) Thoughts, impressions, memories, inner sensations, and suchlike may also arise during meditation. Be calmly aware of all these things in a detached and objective manner, but keep your attention centered in your intonations of Soham in time with your breath. Do not let your attention become centered on or caught up in any inner or outer phenomena. Be calmly aware of all these things in a detached and objective manner. They are part of the transforming work of Soham, and are perfectly all right, but keep your attention centered in your intonations of Soham in time with your breath. Even though something feels very right or good when it occurs, it should not be forced or hung on to. The sum and substance of it all is this: It is not the experience we are after, but the effect. Also, since we are all different, no one can say exactly what a person's experiences in meditation are going to be like.

10) If you find yourself getting restless, distracted, fuzzy, anxious or tense in any degree, just take a deep breath and let it out fully, feeling that you are releasing and breathing out all tensions, and continue as before.

11) Remember: Soham Yoga meditation basically consists of four things: a) sitting with the eyes closed; b) being aware of our breath as it moves in and out, and c) mentally intoning Soham in time with the breath and d) listening to those mental intonations: all in a relaxed and easeful manner, without strain.

Breath and sound are the two major spiritual powers possessed by us, so they are combined for Soham Yoga practice. It is very natural to intone Soham in time with the breathing. The way is simple and easy.

12) At the end of your meditation time, keep on intoning Soham in time with your breath as you go about your various activities, listening to the inner mantric sound, just as in meditation. One of the cardinal virtues of Soham sadhana is its capacity to be practiced throughout the day. The *Yoga Rasyanam* in verse 303. says: "Before and after the regular [meditation] practice, the repetition of Soham should be continuously done [in time with the breath] while walking, sitting or even sleeping.... This leads to ultimate success."

Can it be that simple and easy? Yes, because it goes directly to the root of our bondage which is a single—and therefore simple—thing: loss of awareness. Soham is the seed (bija) mantra of nirvanic consciousness. You take a seed, put it in the soil, water it and the sun does the rest. You plant the seed of Soham in your inner consciousness through japa and meditation and both your Self and the Supreme Self do the rest. By intentionally intoning *So* and *Ham* with the breath we are linking the conscious with superconscious mind, bringing the superconscious onto the conscious level and



merging them until they become one. It is divinely simple!

### **An exception**

In point 6. of the Soham Meditation instructions I said that “we do not deliberately concentrate on any particular point of the body such as the third eye, as we want the subtle energies of Soham to be free to manifest themselves as is best at the moment.” There is an exception to that. On occasion, such as at the very beginning of meditation or when during the rest of the day you find your attention drifting from the breath and Soham, it can be helpful to make yourself very gently (lest you give yourself a headache from tension) aware of your entire brain (Sahasrara) area, feeling that the breath and Soham intonations are taking place there.



A short time of this awareness (which can arise spontaneously as well) is sufficient, because correct practice will result in Sahasrara awareness naturally

There is an entire book on the subject of Soham Yoga entitled: *Soham Yoga: The Yoga of the Self*, which we recommend you read.

## About the Author

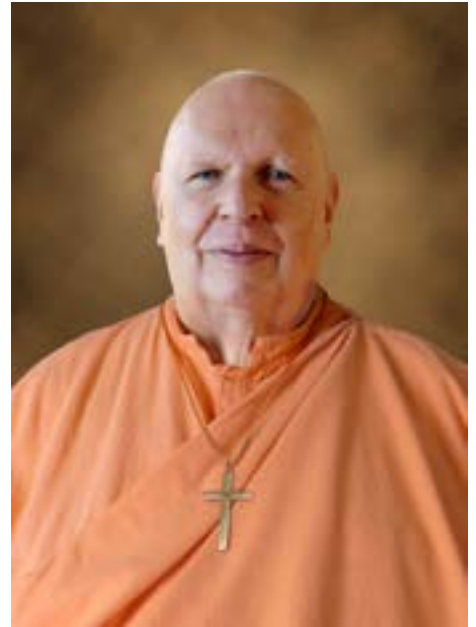
**Swami Nirmalananda Giri** (Abbot George Burke) is the founder and director of the Light of the Spirit Monastery (Atma Jyoti Ashram) in Cedar Crest, New Mexico, USA.

In his many pilgrimages to India, he had the opportunity of meeting some of India's greatest spiritual figures, including Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh and Anandamayi Ma. During his first trip to India he was made a member of the ancient Swami Order by Swami Vidyananda Giri, a direct disciple of Paramhansa Yogananda, who had himself been given sannyas by the Shankaracharya of Puri, Jagadguru Bharati Krishna Tirtha.

In the United States he also encountered various Christian saints, including Saint John Maximovich of San Francisco and Saint Philaret Voznesensky of New York.

For many years Abbot George has researched the identity of Jesus Christ and his teachings with India and Sanatana Dharma, including Yoga. It is his conclusion that Jesus lived in India for most of his life, and was a yogi and Sanatana Dharma missionary to the West. After his resurrection he returned to India and lived the rest of his life in the Himalayas.

He has written extensively on these and other topics, many of which are posted at [OCOY.org](http://OCOY.org).



## Atma Jyoti Ashram (Light of the Spirit Monastery)

**Atma Jyoti Ashram** is an esoteric Christian monastic community for those men who seek direct experience of the Spirit through meditation, sacramental worship, discipline and dedicated communal life, emphasizing the inner reality of “Christ in you the hope of glory,” as taught by the illumined mystics of East and West.

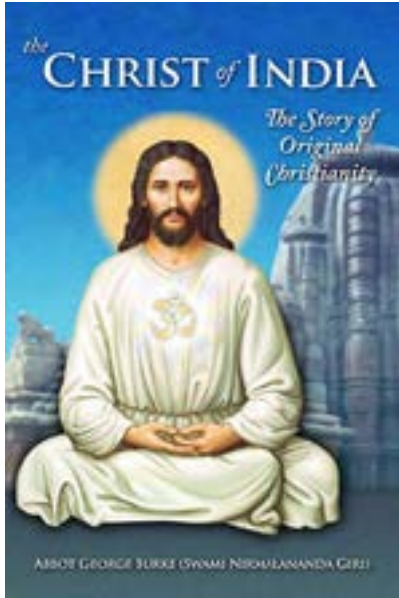
The public outreach of the monastery is through its website, [OCOY.org](http://OCOY.org) (Original Christianity and Original Yoga). There you will find many articles on Original Christianity and Original Yoga, including *Esoteric Christian Beliefs*, *Foundations of Yoga* and *How to Be a Yogi* are practical guides for anyone seriously interested in living the Yoga Life.

You will also discover many other articles on leading an effective spiritual life, including *The Yoga of the Sacraments* and *Spiritual Benefits of a Vegetarian Diet*, as well as the “Dharma for Awakening” series—in-depth commentaries on these spiritual classics: the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, the Dhammapada, and the Tao Teh King.

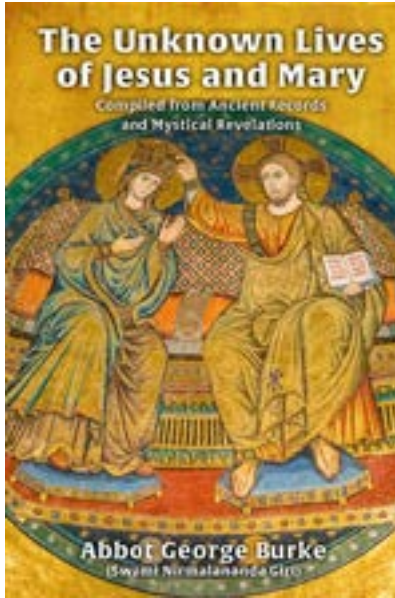
You can listen to podcasts by Abbot George on meditation, the Yoga Life, and remarkable spiritual people he has met in India and elsewhere, at <http://ocoy.org/podcasts/>

Sign up for our newsletter at <https://ocoy.org/signup>

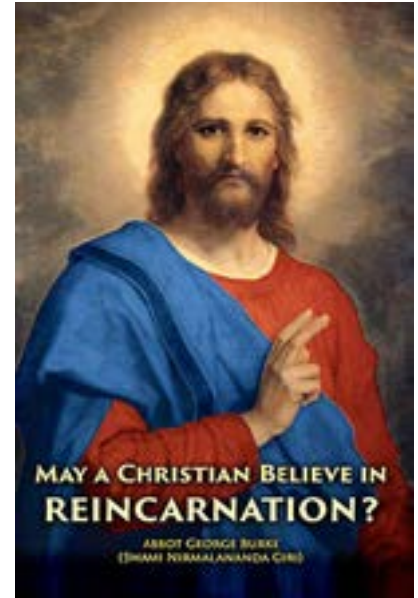
## More Books from Light of the Spirit Press



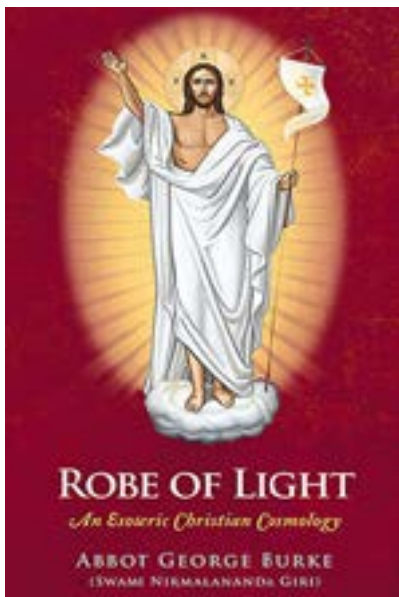
- Read the book [online for free](#).
- Download a [free PDF](#) from our [E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your [favorite online book store](#).



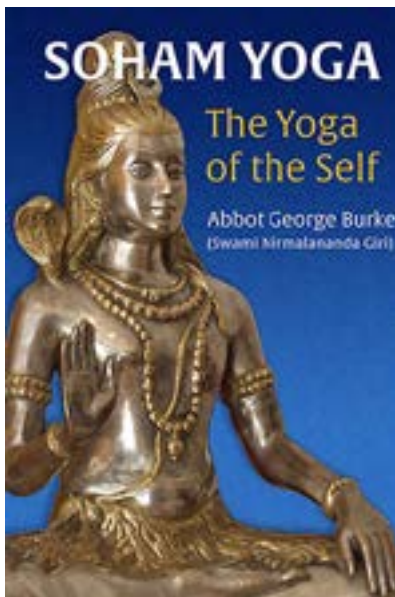
- Read the book [online for free](#).
- Download a [free PDF](#) from our [E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your [favorite online book store](#).



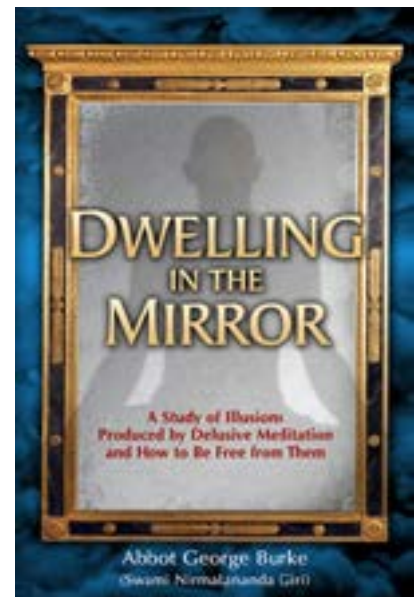
- Read the book [online for free](#).
- Download a [free PDF](#) from our [E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your [favorite online book store](#).



- Read the book [online for free](#).
- Download a [free PDF](#) from our [E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your [favorite online book store](#).

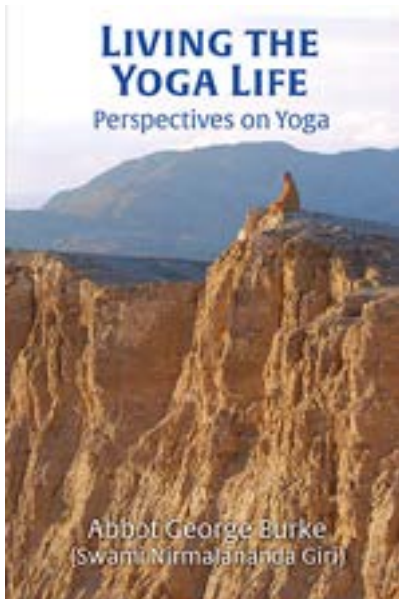


- Read the book [online for free](#).
- Download a [free PDF](#) from our [E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your [favorite online book store](#).

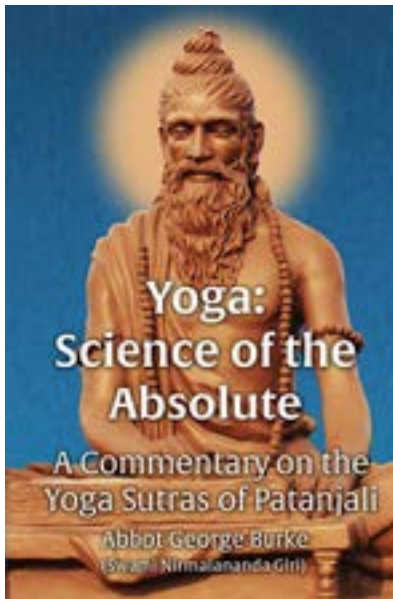


- Read the book [online for free](#).
- Download a [free PDF](#) from our [E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your [favorite online book store](#).

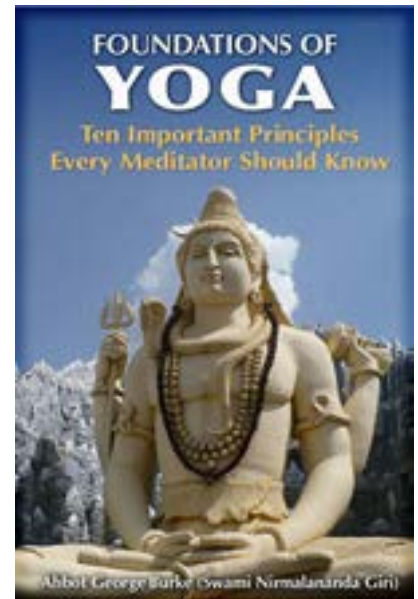




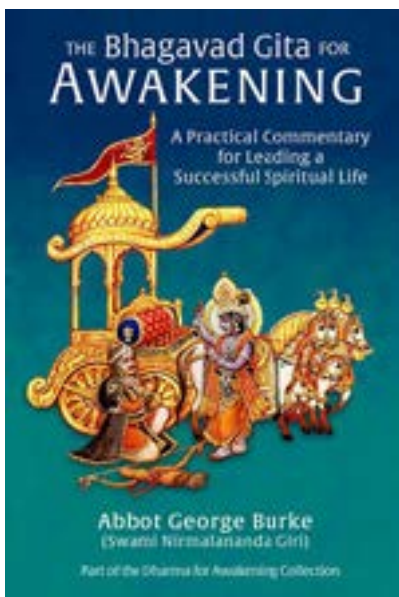
- Read the book online for free.
- Download a [free PDF from our E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your favorite online book store.



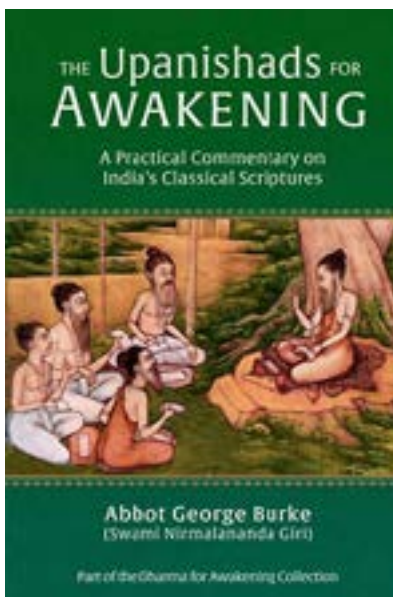
- Read the book online for free.
- Download a [free PDF from our E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your favorite online book store.



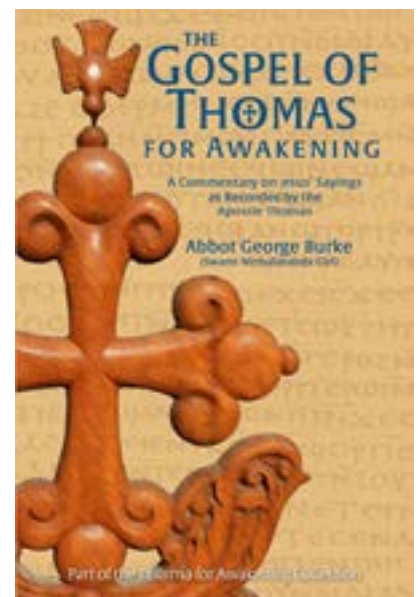
- Read the book [online for free](#).
- Download a [free PDF from our E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your favorite online book store.



- Read the book [online for free](#).
- Download a [free PDF from our E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your favorite online book store.

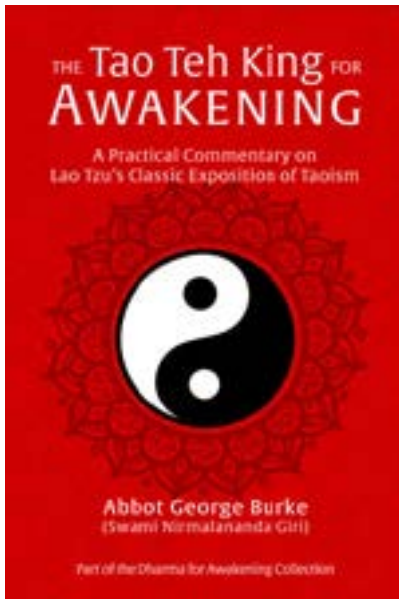


- Read the book [online for free](#).
- Download a [free PDF from our E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your favorite online book store.

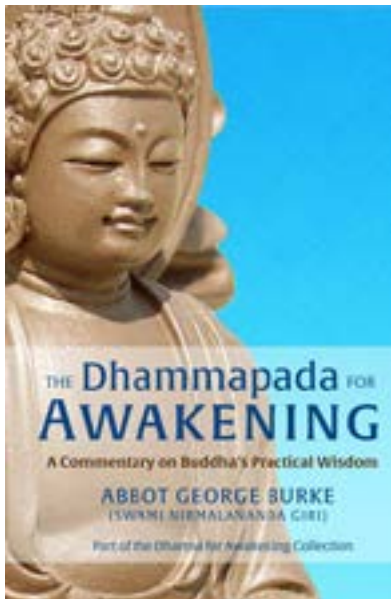


- Read the book [online for free](#).
- Download a [free PDF from our E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your favorite online book store.

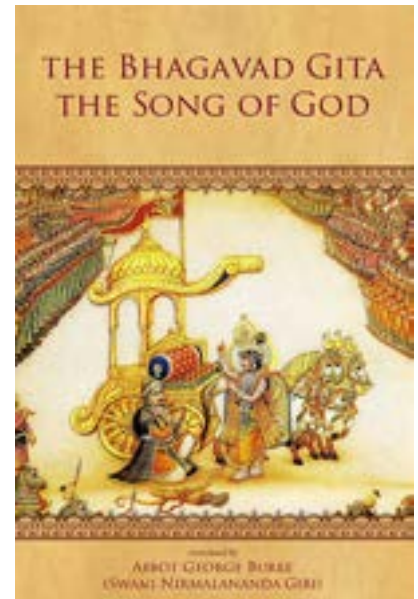
**Satsang with the Abbot:** "This is yet another very insightful, thought-provoking and well-founded book by Abbot George, which covers an extremely wide range of topics... a work worthy of reflective study!" –Br. Julian-Ozana



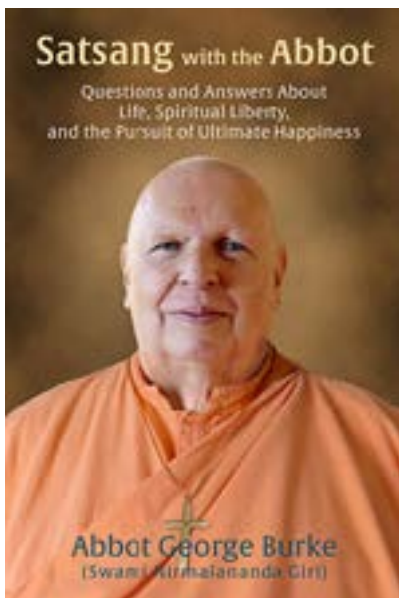
- Read the book online for free.
- Download a [free PDF](#) from our [E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your favorite online book store.



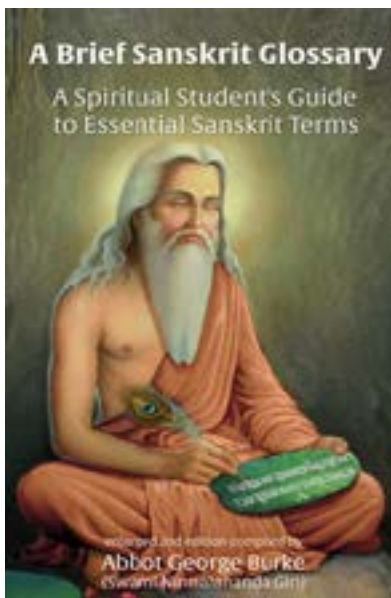
- Read the book online for free.
- Download a [free PDF](#) from our [E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your favorite online book store.



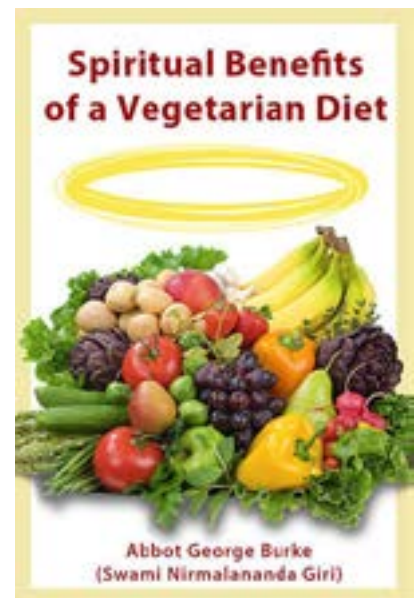
- Read the book online for free.
- Download a [free PDF](#) from our [E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your favorite online book store.



- Read the book online for free. **Coming Soon!**
- Download a [free PDF](#) from our [E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your favorite online book store.

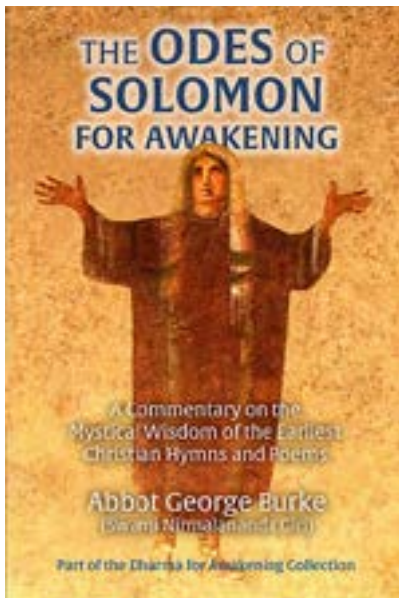


- Read the book [online for free](#).
- Download a [free PDF](#) from our [E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your favorite online book store.

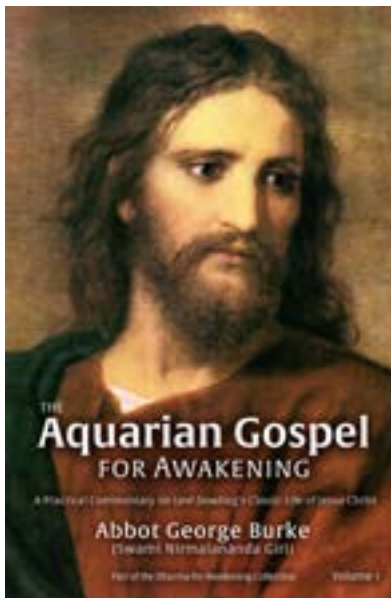


- Read the book [online for free](#).
- Download a [free PDF](#) from our [E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your favorite online book store.

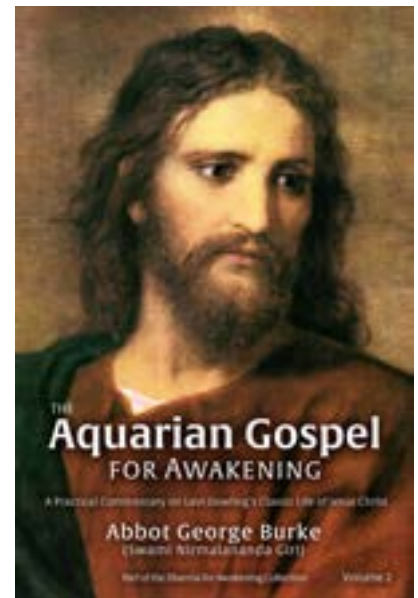




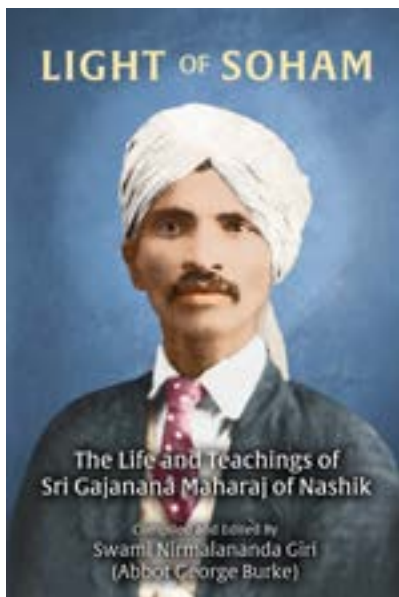
- Read the book [online for free](#).
- Download a [free PDF](#) from our [E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your favorite online book store.



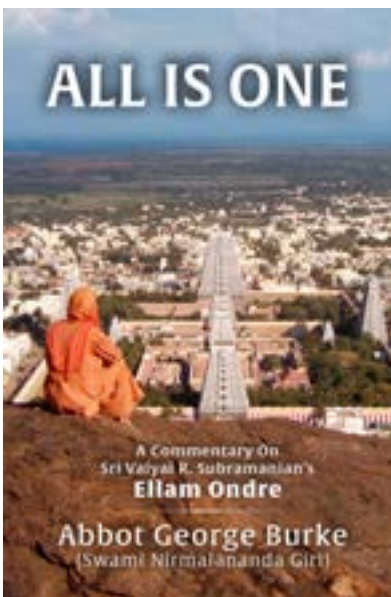
- Read the book [online for free](#).
- Download a [free PDF](#) from our [E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your favorite online book store.



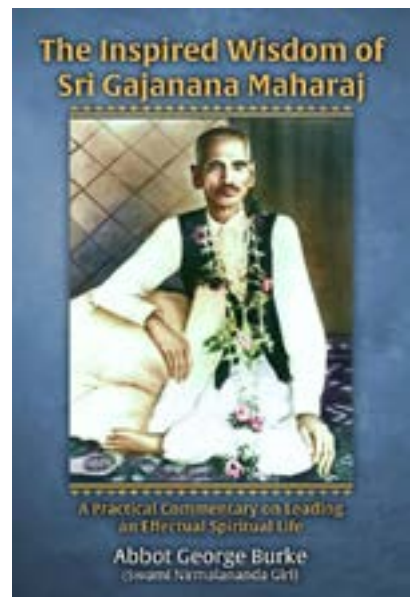
- Read the book [online for free](#).
- Download a [free PDF](#) from our [E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your favorite online book store.



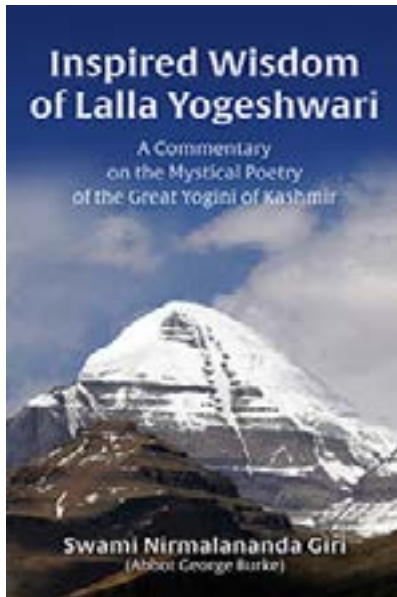
- Read the book [online for free](#).
- Download a [free PDF](#) from our [E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your favorite online book store.



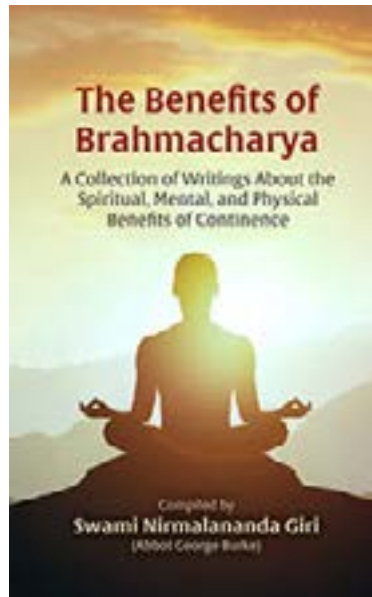
- Read the book [online for free](#).
- Download a [free PDF](#) from our [E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your favorite online book store.



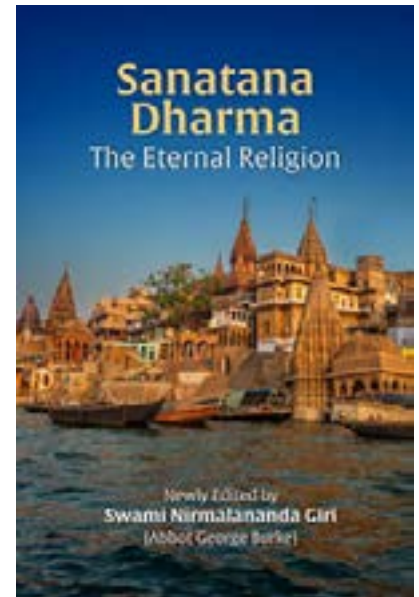
- Read the book [online for free](#).
- Download a [free PDF](#) from our [E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon worldwide](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your favorite online book store.



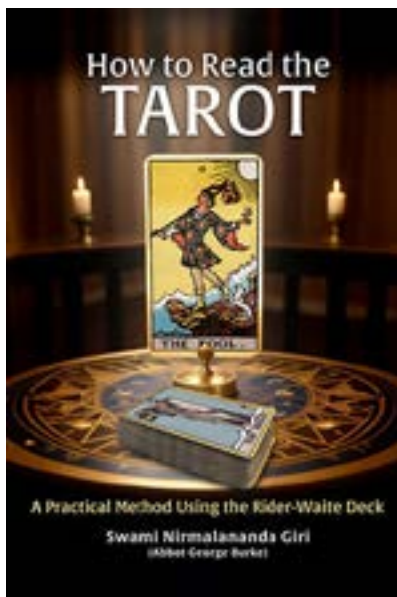
- Read the book online for free soon.
- Download a [free PDF from our E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your [favorite online bookstore](#).



- Read the book online for free soon.
- Download a [free PDF from our E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon](#).
- Purchase the ebook from your [favorite online bookstore](#).



- Download a [free PDF from our E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon](#).



- Download a [free PDF from our E-Library](#).
- Buy the paperback or ebook from [Amazon and other online bookstores](#).