

THE SONG OF THE GODDESS

THE DEVI GITA:
SPIRITUAL COUNSEL OF
THE GREAT GODDESS



TRANSLATED AND WITH
AN INTRODUCTION BY
C. MACKENZIE BROWN

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C. Mackenzie Brown

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In memory of Wilfred Cantwell Smith

Teacher, Counselor, Friend

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A Note on the Text

The translation presented here is essentially the same as the one appearing in my previous work, *The Devi Gita; The Song of the Goddess: A Translation, Annotation, and Commentary* (State University of New York Press, 1998). Some words or phrases have been modified for the sake of greater clarity and consistency, and fewer Sanskrit terms remain untranslated in the text. Diacritical marks in transliterating Sanskrit terms and proper names have not been used.

The major changes from the earlier presentation to this one are four. First, the translation here is formatted as one continuous text without division into sections, each with commentary and annotation. Second, all annotation has been eliminated and the extensive commentarial sections have been vastly reduced and collected together, appearing here in the synopsis of the text included in the introduction. Third, the original introductory essay on the historical and literary background of the Devi Gita has been considerably condensed and revised. And fourth, to compensate for the reduction in explanatory aids, a glossary of key terms and concepts has been added.

Other changes include elimination of the “Essential Devi Gita in Nine Verses” (a modern selection of nine verses representing the essential teachings and most powerful mantric verses of the Devi Gita), as well as the afterword on contemporary uses of the

Devi Gita. Also eliminated were the appendix giving a verse index of the epithets and names of the Goddess, and the Sanskrit text in Devanagiri characters. The original note on the translation appears here, in much reduced form, as the Translator's Note. The bibliography has been reduced to a few selected items.

All changes have been made for the sake of providing to nonspecialists a more accessible and reader-friendly English version of this important but relatively neglected text of the goddess traditions of India. Given the elliptical nature of the text's discourse, with its unexplained mythic references, technical vocabulary, and underlying philosophical and theological assumptions, a straightforward plunge directly into the text itself might prove frustrating for the uninitiated. The introduction and glossary are intended to provide an appreciation of the historical, religious, and cultural background of the Devi Gita, as well as an understanding of basic key terms and ideas, for easing the entry of the beginning student into a deeper engagement with the text.

Introduction

The Great Goddess and Her Song

The Devi Gita, or Song of the Goddess, presents a grand vision of the universe created, pervaded, and protected by a supremely powerful, all-knowing, and wholly compassionate divine female. She is Maha-Devi, the Great Goddess, wielding all power (Shakti) in the universe. Yet power is not just an attribute of the Goddess: she is power or Shakti itself. To her most devoted followers, known as Shaktas (worshippers of the supreme Shakti), she is the auspicious Mother of the World, ever anxious for the well-being of her children. Unlike the ferocious Hindu goddesses such as Kali and Durga, the World Mother of the Devi Gita is beautiful and benign, although some of her lesser manifestations may take on terrifying forms. And unlike other beneficent female divinities such as Parvati and Lakshmi, she is subject to no male consort. Subject to none, she is the Shakti of all.

This grand vision is proclaimed in the spiritual counsel of the Great Goddess to her special devotee, the Mountain King Himalaya, in the midst of an assembly of gods. While the gods, having just lost their celestial kingdoms to the demon Taraka, take refuge in the Goddess to regain their worldly fortunes, Himalaya, the model of supreme devotion,

seeks spiritual insight for its own sake. He queries the Devi about her true nature and her relation to the world, as well as the means to attain the final goal of human existence, union with the Goddess herself. Since the World Mother is anxious to satisfy the desires of all her children, she heeds the self-interested pleas of the gods, as well as the more mystical yearnings of the Mountain King. She provides both mundane pleasures and final liberation, or *bhukti* and *mukti* in traditional Hindu terms. She turns aside no one who comes to her with a devoted heart.

Her revelations to Himalaya and the gods include not only instruction in cosmology and the several disciplines of yoga, but also the gracious disclosure (*darshan*) of her own divine forms. She first appears to the gods and Himalaya in a blinding flash of light that represents the absolute or Brahman, whose nature is infinite being, pure consciousness, and everlasting bliss. As this brilliant manifestation of the infinite spirit is beyond the comprehension of mortal beings, including the gods, the Goddess soon emerges from the lustrous orb of light in the form of the beautiful and beneficent, four-armed and feminine Bhuvaneshvari, Ruler of the Universe. Her four hands, holding a noose and goad and gesturing her beneficence and assurance of safety, symbolize her eagerness to protect and to bestow worldly and spiritual gifts upon her devotees. Her third eye points to her wisdom and constant vigilance for the welfare of her children. The appearance of Bhuvaneshvari fully fits the expectations of what the compassionate World Mother should look like, and her sudden emergence soothes the disturbed minds of her devotees.

Later in the Devi Gita, while expounding on her essential unity with the universe, the Goddess manifests her more terrifying, masculine form as the world-devouring Cosmic Body known as the Viraj (the “Irradiant”) composed of the diverse regions and elements of the material realm. This horrific manifestation of the Goddess is harder to reconcile with her more benign mode as nurturing World Mother, thus causing the gods to swoon. Yet the Viraj emphasizes her total sovereignty over the world cycle in all its phases: even the destruction of the cosmos is at the pleasure of the Goddess. The disclosures of these two divine forms, Bhuvaneshvari and the Viraj, suggestive of her androgynous nature, reinforce in dramatic fashion the spiritual teachings of the Goddess.

Historical, Religious, and Literary Background of the Devi Gita

Less well known than the Bhagavad Gita (The Song of Lord Krishna) both in India and the West, the Devi Gita nonetheless serves, for certain Hindus who see ultimate reality primarily in terms of a divine and beneficent mother, as the supreme scripture, complementing and completing all others. Indeed, the Goddess herself in the Devi Gita frequently quotes from the Bhagavad Gita, as well as from other Hindu scriptures such as the Upanishads and Puranas, but with the understanding that all such passages ultimately point to her as the absolute. Thus the Goddess does not deny the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, but rather assimilates them into a new perspective. This is seen clearly, for instance, in the Devi’s proclamation of her avataric mission,

set forth in words similar to those of Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita (4.7). The Goddess declares, “Whenever there is a decline in righteousness, O Mountain, And a rising up of unrighteousness, then I assume various guises” (9.22cd–9.23ab). The various guises are the diverse forms she adopts to descend into the world to reestablish cosmic and social order. Implicit in her words is the idea that Krishna himself is merely one of these guises. Likewise, the image of the Viraj in the Devi Gita is a synthesis of the cosmic form of Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita and of Vishnu in the Bhagavata Purana.

Like the Bhagavad Gita, the Devi Gita is part of a much longer work, although frequently circulating as an independent text. The Bhagavad Gita is the counsel of Krishna to the reluctant warrior Arjuna on the verge of the great war of the Bharata clans, the subject of the lengthy Mahabharata epic. The 507 verses of the Devi Gita constitute the last ten chapters (31–40) of the seventh book of the Devi-Bhagavata Purana, around 18,000 verses long. The word *purana* means an ancient story, and the Devi-Bhagavata Purana, the chief Puranic text of the Shaktas, describes—among many other things—the ancient deeds and exploits of the Devi, from her creation of the world to her battles against demonic opponents.

The Devi Gita is part of an ongoing conversation between the sage Vyasa, legendary author of the Mahabharata, and King Janamejaya, following the narration of the story of Shiva’s wife Sati and her suicide. In his conclusion to this preceding story, Vyasa refers briefly to Sati’s rebirth on the crest of the Mountain King Himalaya. This reference is the stimulus for Janamejaya’s query about the reap-

pearance of the Goddess, and the occasion for Vyasa's recounting of her wise counsel in the *Devi Gita* itself.

While lacking the organic connections of the *Bhagavad Gita* with the dramatic events of an epic battle, the *Devi Gita* situates itself in the traditional setting of the conflict between the gods and demons, a common motif of stories recounted in the *Devi-Bhagavata Purana*. The ostensible reason for the appearance of the Goddess, then, is to console the gods defeated by the demon Taraka and to re-establish them in their proper celestial realms. Yet the actual slaying of Taraka is confined to half a verse in the conclusion of the frame story in the final chapter. The real focus of the *Devi Gita* is its devotional, philosophical, and spiritual counsel, apart from any cosmic or social crisis.

Given the specific philosophical ideas and literary works with which the *Devi Gita* is familiar, it is difficult to place this text earlier than the thirteenth century of the common era, and it may be as late as the sixteenth. In the twelve to fifteen hundred years intervening between the *Bhagavad Gita* (composed near the beginning of the common era) and the *Devi Gita*, there were three major religious and philosophical developments within the Hindu tradition whose diverse spiritual ideals and teachings have become intricately intertwined in our text.

The first was the development of devotional movements centered not on the major male deities such as Vishnu, Krishna, or Shiva, but on important goddess figures, culminating in that of the Great Goddess. This movement, generally referred to as Shaktism, crystallized around the sixth century of

the common era in the Sanskrit work known as the Devi Mahatmya (Glorification of the Goddess). This text proclaimed that all goddesses are manifestations, aspects, or energies of the one Great Goddess, who transcends all the male gods—ideas central to the Devi Gita.

In the centuries following the Devi Mahatmya, Shakta poet-theologians were busy composing songs or *gitas* of the Goddess, in imitation of the original model for all *gitas*, the Bhagavad Gita. The Shakta *gitas* appearing in the Kurma and Mahabhadgavata Puranas (approximately the eighth to twelfth centuries) extended the themes of glorification found in the Devi Mahatmya itself, but also developed the role of the Goddess beyond that of a mere demon slayer into a teacher of metaphysical and spiritual truths. The character of the Goddess becomes more complex and elaborated, the benign and horrific poles of her character manifest in the Devi Mahatmya being given rather sophisticated philosophical interpretations. In the process, these early Shakta *gitas* provide a model for the manifestation of the Devi's supreme, aniconic form as pure consciousness and her other, iconic forms. In addition, they provide the mythic setting for the appearance of the Goddess, in the birth of Gauri or Parvati as daughter of the Himalaya Mountain.

The Devi Gita is clearly indebted to such earlier Shakta *gitas* for many of its favorite themes. However, the Devi Gita introduces the Tantric goddess Bhuvaneshvari as the highest iconic form of the Devi in order to confirm her absolute superiority over all male gods, a superiority somewhat in question when she is closely associated with Gauri/Parvati, the traditional and rather subordinate wife of Shiva.

The second major development was the emergence, in the eighth or ninth centuries, of the nondualist school of Advaita Vedanta, expounded by the great philosopher and teacher Shankara. Common to all the schools of Vedanta is their acceptance of the Upanishads as the most authoritative revelation of spiritual truth. The Upanishads, thought to reveal the essential truths of the Veda (supreme wisdom), are themselves known as Vedanta, that is, the “End of the Veda,” both because they form the last part of the Vedic scriptural corpus, and because they reveal the goal or end of wisdom.

Shankara’s Advaita interprets the Upanishads as teaching the absolute oneness of ultimate reality or Brahman, with all duality, the realm of suffering, being something of an illusion produced by the mysterious power of Brahman called Maya. The infinite spirit that is Brahman is identical with the supreme Self (Atman), and all individual selves or souls (*jivas*) are simply another kind of illusion brought about by ignorance, a microcosmic counterpart to the macrocosmic power of Maya. Just as Maya produces the appearance of the manifold world by a process of reflection, illustrated by the imagined appearance of a snake in a rope dimly perceived at dusk, so ignorance produces the apparent sense of individual existence by superimposing on the one supreme Self the notions of egoism, agency, and the like. Only by knowledge can the soul penetrate the veil of ignorance, transcend the physical body and material world with their attendant miseries, and realize its own fundamental identity with Self and Brahman.

Shankara himself was uninterested in cosmological theories for their own sake, and specifically

in cosmogonic ideas, since the whole of the manifest universe is rather a delusion. Nonetheless, since understanding that illusory nature of the world is itself a key to liberation, cosmological notions have a not insignificant role in Advaita teachings. One general Advaitin model of creation uses the categories and evolutionary concepts of the Samkhyan philosophical school, with its notion of pure Spirit (*purusha*) and unconscious Nature (*prakriti*). It is from Nature that evolve the various subtle and gross elements that constitute the material realm, including the mental capacities of intellect, mind, and egoism, which though unconscious in themselves, appear conscious through reflecting the light of the Spirit. Advaita assimilates Spirit to Brahman and the evolved world to the realm of Maya/illusion, thereby preserving a nondualistic perspective. Another Advaitin model of creation, one that more readily demonstrates the nondual, immutable nature of the absolute, is that of reflection: the world, including the world-ruling Lord and individual souls, are merely reflections of the absolute in the mirrors of Maya and nescience, thereby leaving essentially untouched the transcendent oneness of Brahman.

The Devi Gita assimilates much of this nondualistic perspective in its identification of the Goddess with Brahman, and in its envisioning of the ultimate goal of life as merging back into the pure consciousness of the Goddess. In elaborating such views, the author of the Devi Gita borrowed a number of ideas and formulations from the Advaita philosopher Sureshvara (ninth century) and from such late Advaita philosophical compendia as the *Panchadashi* of Vidyaranya (thirteenth century) and the *Vedantasara* of Sadananda (fifteenth century).

Within the Devi Gita, however, there is some tension between the acosmic, illusionistic emphasis of the Advaita, and the more world-affirming stance of Shaktism. In the latter, the Goddess not only wields Maya as the creative force of the universe; she also in some sense *is* Maya. Thus Maya, while at times said to be distinct from the Goddess, is also said to be inseparable from her. Accordingly, Maya's creative role in Shaktism is often viewed in terms of a positive projecting power, not just as an obscuring cosmic delusion.

This more positive assessment of Maya and of the material world is reflected in the grand cosmotheistic vision of the Devi Gita, as in the magnificent revelation of her cosmic form as the "Irradiant" Viraj, a view consonant with many of the pantheistic (or more properly, panentheistic) passages of the Upanishads quoted by the Goddess and the sage Vyasa. The panentheism (the notion that "God-is-in-all") of the Upanishads and the cosmotheism (the notion that the "Goddess-is-the-cosmos") of the Devi Gita, while affirming that the material universe is pervaded by the absolute, do not imply that the absolute is reducible to the material universe. Thus, the Goddess is the universe, which is thus sacralized, but she is something more as well, pure and eternal consciousness.

The cosmotheistic aspects of the Devi Gita bring us to the third major religious and philosophical development: the arising of a number of movements collectively known as Tantra. These movements, beginning some centuries prior to Shankara, represent an alternative nondualistic, ritualized perspective of the universe that, like the cosmotheism of the Devi Gita, affirms the positive spiritual significance

of the material world. Tantra refers both to a worldview according to which there are interpenetrating forces at all levels of the universe—physical, verbal, mental, emotional, and spiritual—and to the ritualized psychophysical exercises and meditational practices based upon such a worldview. From this perspective, the realm of the many and of materiality is not dismissed as merely derivative, secondary, or illusory—in short, something to escape or transcend—but rather is regarded as a powerful expression of nonmaterial energies. Physical embodiment, accordingly, is seen as a prime opportunity for spiritual growth, rather than as an unfortunate predicament requiring withdrawal from, or at least indifference to, the material and sensual realm.

Such an approach to spiritual development is epitomized in the famous Tantric discipline of the Serpentine Yoga (Kundalini Yoga), which utilizes the practitioner's own body as the prime vehicle for liberation. By concentrating and directing the cosmic and liberating energies that are manifestations of the Coiled Serpent Goddess (Kundalini) within one's own physical being, guiding her through the mystical centers (chakras) of the central subtle channel lying alongside or within the spine, one leads her to ecstatic union with Shiva in the topmost mystic center at the crown of the head. This ascent of the Coiled Serpent and her union with Shiva involves the successive dissolution of the world elements represented in the different mystic or psychoenergetic centers along the spine. Such dissolution, a reversal of the process of creation, is often seen in yoga texts as the basic paradigm for liberation itself. But the Serpentine Yoga does not end with the ascent. The Coiled Serpent is brought back down to her original home

at the base of the spine, recreating a new body experienced by the practitioner as divine, infused as it now is with the ambrosial nectar obtained from the union of Shiva and Shakti (the Coiled Serpent).

While the sexual-erotic aspects of the Serpentine Yoga are transparent, they remain largely symbolic, at least in the orthoprax, Right-Handed schools of Tantra. In the Left-Handed schools, however, an antinomian attitude encourages—albeit under strict conditions of spiritual training—sexual yogic exercises between unmarried persons (often the female partner being from a low class or totally outcast), as well as the consumption of illicit substances (meat, wine, drugs). The Devi Gita rejects such behaviors as contrary to the Vedic way of life, with its proper observance of class distinctions, domestic purity, and avoidance of ritual pollution.

The Devi Gita, in expounding its vision of ultimate reality and of the spiritual disciplines by which humans may attain a share in that reality, blends together in varying proportions elements from the Shakta, Advaita, and Tantric worldviews. The disciplines presented by the Goddess encompass the three traditional yogas of Action, Knowledge, and Devotion, each firmly rooted in the Bhagavad Gita. In the Devi Gita, these paths are elaborated and updated, as it were, by assimilating the new ideals and insights of the three major developments of the intervening centuries. On occasion, the tension between these different views is apparent. Yet often they are successfully incorporated into a larger, synthetic vision that emphasizes the ultimate harmony of diverse paths and perspectives.

As the above historical survey indicates, there are few ideas in the Devi Gita that, in themselves,

are truly novel. The text is very conservative, rooting its teachings in a wide variety of established scriptural works and authoritative religious treatises. In the following synopsis, many of the major sources quoted or utilized by the Devi Gita are indicated in the appropriate places. The frequent quotation from or paraphrasing of earlier authoritative works, as seen in the Devi Gita, is in harmony with the basic Hindu presupposition that truth is not so much something to be discovered as recovered. From this perspective, the Goddess in her spiritual counsel is merely recovering and revealing truths that are somewhat obscured in other sources, setting them in the appropriate theological context of a radical Shaktism. Yet from a historical point of view, the Devi Gita, almost despite itself, is not lacking in originality of a kind. The way in which it interweaves the various traditions and motifs, ancient and contemporary, and fuses them into a new vision of the Goddess is itself a resourceful and imaginative enterprise, a creative inspiration in its own right.

Synopsis of the Devi Gita, with Reference to Major Sources

The first chapter of the Devi Gita provides the mythological setting for the spiritual counsel of the Great Goddess to her devotees. In the preceding chapter of the Devi-Bhagavata Purana, the sage Vyasa has just related the story of the suicide of Shiva's wife, Sati, with passing reference to her rebirth as a brilliant light on the crest of the Mountain King, Himalaya. The Devi Gita opens with Vyasa's disciple, King Janamejaya, inquiring about the manifestation of this

supreme lustrous power. The brilliant light is none other than the highest form of the infinite spirit, the absolute reality known as Brahman. It is also the transcendent, aniconic form of the Great Goddess herself, Mother of the World.

The occasion for the Devi's appearance on the craggy Mountain King is the dispossession of the gods of their celestial kingdoms by the demon Taraka. The demon can be overcome only by a future, legitimate son of Shiva. But Shiva, recently widowed by Sati's self-immolation, is pining away with no thought of remarriage. Adding to the problems of the gods is the loss of Sati's energizing power within the world. With Sati's departure, the whole world loses its prosperity and charm, for Sati is the power or Shakti of the World Mother, creating and sustaining the heavens, netherworlds, and the Earth. The gods see no resolution to their predicament until advised by Vishnu to go to the Himalaya Mountain and there seek the help of the Goddess, bestower of boons on her children. Appropriately propitiated, she finally manifests herself before the gods in the form of the blinding light that represents the absolute.

From within the light soon emerges the highest iconic form of the Devi, the beautiful and beneficent, four-armed Bhuvaneshvari, Ruler of the Universe. (The emergence of Bhuvaneshvari evokes a similar scene from the Kena Upanishad, where the beautiful and brilliant goddess Uma Haimavati appears before the god Indra. At the end of the Devi Gita, the Goddess is referred to as Haimavati). This revelation of her supreme iconic form, this granting of a vision, or *darshan*, is an act of compassionate grace on the part of the World Mother. From

a devotional perspective, it is the highest of gifts that one can obtain through loving surrender to the Goddess.

The gods, however, are not motivated by unselfish love of the Goddess alone, for they also desire to regain their wealth and position. They proceed, then, with a mixture of ecstatic devotion and self-interest, to sing the praises of the World Mother. This is the first of two important hymns to the Goddess in the *Devi Gita*, portraying her as the one power behind all goddesses, the Shakti of all, and identifying her with Brahman in its four states or quarters. She is also recognized as the one who wields the creative/deluding power of *Maya*, and as the means and goal of spiritual liberation. The first part of the hymn is based on the “*Devi Stuti*” (“Hymn to the Goddess”) found in the *Devi Upanishad*.

Following the hymn, the gods put forth their request for help against Taraka. The Devi assures them of assistance by promising to send her potency, or Shakti, known as Gauri, to be born as Himalaya’s daughter, a special act of grace to the Mountain King in view of his exemplary and steadfast devotion to her. This daughter will eventually become Shiva’s wife and provide the son required to slay Taraka.

Unlike the gods, Himalaya is motivated primarily by the desire for spiritual enlightenment, and thus he makes his own special request. He beseeches the Devi to explain her real nature and to expound the various paths of yogic discipline, devotion, and knowledge by which he may become united with her. The remainder of the *Devi Gita* focuses on the Goddess’s answers to Himalaya’s queries.

Chapters 2 and 3 present the basic cosmogonic and cosmological teachings of the Devi Gita, revealing the relationship of the Goddess to the world. Fundamental to many Hindu notions of cosmogony is the idea that creation proceeds in two general phases: first, the multiplicity of this world derives from or evolves out of a singular divine and conscious reality; and second, the original divine reality enters into that which it has evolved or manifested from itself.

Chapter 2 briefly outlines the first cosmogonic process utilizing two overlapping models of creation, one an evolutionary unfolding of primal elements based on the classical Samkhya school, and the other a reflective model that emphasizes the transcendence and immutability of the supreme reality, a model especially favored in Advaita. Common to both models is the traditional Advaitic framework of the three cosmogenic catalysts or mechanisms of the absolute: the causal, subtle and gross bodies of the supreme Self. This latter, identified as the Goddess herself in the Devi Gita, is the preexisting cause of the universe, one alone in the beginning.

According to the evolutionary model as given in the text, the Goddess brings forth out of herself the creative, projective force known as Maya, the efficient and material cause of the universe. It inheres in her, yet is separate from her as it is perceivable, thereby having the nature of nonconscious matter in distinction from her own essence as pure consciousness. The Self, united with Maya conjoined with will, knowledge, and action, acts as the causal body or primordial world seed. From this seed or unmanifest substance arise the five primal

elements (ether, air, fire, water, and earth) along with their subtle qualities (sound, touch, form, taste, and smell), to produce the cosmogenic subtle body of the Goddess, with its five sense organs, fourfold internal mental organ, five action organs, and five breaths. Further compounding of the primal elements in the fivefold generative process known as Panchikarana brings forth the gross body. In describing the unfolding of the elements, the fivefold generation, and other details of the evolutionary process, the Devi Gita follows the models and teachings of such Advaita works as Sureshvara's *Panchikarana-Varttika*, Vidyaranya's *Panchadashi*, and Sadananda's *Vedantasara*.

In the reflective model of creation, the Devi does not evolve but merely appears as a reflected image in the mirrors of Maya and nescience. The image in Maya is clear, the Goddess appearing as the world-ruling Lord; her image reflected in nescience is partially obscured, appearing as the individual soul. The Lord and the soul are the aggregated and individuated forms of the absolute, these two forms elsewhere being likened to a forest and its individual trees, or to a lake and its individual drops. The two forms suggest the basic interpenetration of the macrocosmic and microcosmic manifestations of the Goddess elaborated upon in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 describes how the Goddess enters into her own creation without being stained thereby. At the same time, she declares her identity with all cosmic and worldly entities in a grand cosmotheistic vision of the universe. Her various cosmic self-predications (for example, "I am the sun and the stars"), similar to the famous self-predications of Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, are in some tension

with the more illusionistic and acosmic passages of the text that reflect an Advaita viewpoint. The cosmotheism of this chapter harmonizes well with the Tantric perspective of the Devi Gita as a whole, a perspective that interprets the world as a real expression of divine power, and as spiritual in essence.

The climax of chapter 3 is the Goddess's manifestation of her aggregated form as the cosmic body of the universe, known as the Viraj, the "Irradiant." Revealing various macrocosmic and microcosmic correspondences, the Viraj is an awesome and dramatic demonstration of the essential unity between the Devi and the universe. The cosmic correspondences presented in the initial description of the Viraj represent a synthesis of similar accounts in the Mundaka Upanishad and the Bhagavata Purana. The correspondences resonate with cosmogonic overtones, but abruptly give way to the apocalyptic imagery evoked by the devouring, fire-spewing aspect of the Viraj, based on the terrifying image of Krishna's cosmic form in the Bhagavad Gita. Here in the Devi Gita, the gods faint away on beholding the world-crunching form of the Goddess, unable to fathom or reconcile the horrific and benevolent poles of the World Mother.

Revived by the Vedas, the gods offer a second hymn of praise to the Goddess, begging forgiveness for their faults, glorifying her transcendent greatness as the primal source of all things, and finally requesting her to withdraw her fearsome form. The major portion of the hymn is closely modeled on several verses from the Mundaka Upanishad. The Goddess grants the gods their wish, manifesting once again her benign form as the beautiful and beneficent Bhuvaneshvari.

The remaining seven chapters of the Devi Gita describe the various disciplines leading to the ultimate goal, beginning with the Yoga of Knowledge (Jnana Yoga). In chapter 4, the Devi continues her discussion—interrupted by her cosmic manifestation as the Viraj—of the genesis of individual souls through the power of ignorance and its karmic entanglements. Her focus now shifts from cosmogonic to soteriological concerns: how does the soul become bound by ignorance, so that one may learn how to undo its effects? Liberation here is conceived in part as the reversal of the process of creation. This is accomplished by means of knowledge that destroys the generative power of ignorance, thereby leading to resorption of the individual soul in the supreme—a state of liberation that is achieved while still embodied (*jivan-mukti*). The Goddess proclaims that knowledge, not action, is the antidote to ignorance.

In preparation for the practice of the Yoga of Knowledge, the Goddess counsels the seeker to continue performing sanctified actions (for example, Vedic rites) until a purity of heart and mind is attained. Only then are actions to be abandoned, and the Yoga of Knowledge commenced in earnest. After renouncing all worldly attachments and finding a qualified guru, the aspirant is to proceed through the three traditional steps of Jnana Yoga: 1) listening to scriptural passages that establish the oneness of the Self (Atman) and the absolute (Brahman); 2) reflecting on the meaning of such passages; and 3) intense meditation thereon (the Goddess refers to these stages, but without such straightforward enumeration). The final goal (sometimes considered as a fourth step) is that of absorption in or oneness with the absolute. The Goddess illustrates the pro-

cess by reference to the favorite scriptural (Upanishadic) text of Advaita, the great saying “You are That” (*Tat tvam asi*). The word *You* refers to the pure consciousness that is the essence of each individual soul, the word *That* to the pure consciousness of the absolute or Goddess.

The Devi next recapitulates the evolution of the three cosmogenic bodies (gross, subtle, and causal), suggesting that by their regressive dissolution within one’s own body, one can attain the ultimate source that is Brahman. She then recites two well-known passages from the Katha Upanishad, on the Self as incapable of being slain (also quoted in the Bhagavad Gita), and on the metaphor of the Self as owner of a chariot whose horses, like the senses, require constant control. The recitation of these passages once again illustrates the first step of Jnana Yoga: listening to the words of scripture to establish the nature of the Self and its identity with the absolute, that is, with the Goddess herself.

She concludes the chapter by describing one particular form of intense meditation that enables the practitioner to realize this identity directly, through the regressive dissolution of the cosmogenic bodies. The exercise is similar to one explained by the Advaitin Sureshvara in his *Panchikarana-Varttika*, involving meditation on the sacred syllable Om. The Goddess prescribes meditation on her own sacred syllable, *Hrim*, resorbing sequentially each of its constituent letters, correlated with the cosmogenic bodies, back into the primordial sound of the syllable itself, at which point the meditator merges into the essence of the Devi.

Chapter 5 presents an overview of the traditional Eight-Limbed Yoga based on Patanjali’s

classical *Yoga Sutras* and its Tantric elaboration in the form of the Serpentine (Kundalini) Yoga. The goal of these yogas is defined as union of the individual soul (*jiva*) and the supreme Self (Atman), and thus is the same goal as that expounded in the preceding chapter on the Yoga of Knowledge. The methods of these yogas, however, are somewhat distinct. The Eight-Limbed and Serpentine Yogas focus directly on psychophysical exercises, while the Yoga of Knowledge relies on intellectual and contemplative inquiry. Nonetheless, there is considerable overlap in their specific techniques, as in the utilization of breath control and mental concentration. In its definition of yoga above and in its subsequent account of the Eight-Limbed and Serpentine Yogas, the *Devi Gita* follows the summation of these disciplines provided in the *Sharada-Tilaka Tantra*.

The Goddess provides mostly an enumerative summary of the various parts of the yoga practices under discussion, assuming that the listener is already familiar with the details of specific techniques, or at least has access to a qualified teacher. Thus, she commences her overview by listing the six traditional obstacles to yoga practice and the eight limbs. Her explanation of the eight limbs involves further enumerations: she names the ten restraints and ten observances that constitute the first two limbs; she briefly describes the five fundamental postures of the third limb and the basic counting practices involved in breath control, the fourth limb. She then quickly summarizes the last four limbs, from sense withdrawal to final absorption, involving ever deepening levels of mental concentration that flow naturally from the breath control practices.

The Devi proceeds to explain the Serpentine Yoga, here called somewhat enigmatically Mantra Yoga. She first describes the esoteric physiology central to the yoga, starting with the subtle channels (*nadis*) that convey the life force, followed by a brief account of the Serpentine Power (the Kundalini itself that is the essence of the Goddess residing within one's body) and the psychoenergetic centers or lotuses (*chakras*) lying along the spinal column culminating in the Lotus of a Thousand Petals at the top of the skull. She then indicates the procedures for arousing and guiding the Serpentine Power from the lowest chakra at the base of the spine, penetrating through the other chakras via the central subtle channel (*sushumna*), to union with Shiva in the highest center.

This union produces an ambrosial nectar, to be offered to the Goddess in her aspect as Shakti Maya, as well as to the presiding deities of the six main psychoenergetic centers as one leads the Serpentine Power back to the lowest or base center. Thus, Kundalini Yoga does not end when the ascending process is consummated in union between Shiva and Shakti, for the descent or return of the Serpentine Power to her base home is equally significant. Implicit in the Devi's mention of the final descent is the notion that the liberation attained through the Serpentine Yoga is both transcendent and immanent. As other Tantric yoga texts make clear, the ascending process dissolves the previous (false) identity of the practitioner; the descending process creates a new identity, infused with ambrosial nectar that allows one to experience one's body, with all its physical and psychical energies, as divine.

In conclusion to this chapter, the Goddess recites various fruits of the Serpentine Yoga, recounts other methods of concentration, notes the importance of combining mantra practice with yoga, and emphasizes the necessity of obtaining instruction from a teacher rather than from books.

Chapter 6 sums up the aim of the yogic disciplines already revealed, referring to that goal by the ancient Upanishadic phrase “knowledge of Brahman” (Brahma-vidya). Such knowledge, of course, from the standpoint of the Devi Gita, is knowledge of the Goddess herself. The Devi expounds this knowledge of Brahman by quoting several verses from the Mundaka Upanishad. These verses include the famous metaphor of the seeker as an archer, using the bow of the Upanishads to send the arrow honed by meditation deep into the target of Brahman. The quoted verses also contain the famous Upanishadic passage regarding Brahman as the light beyond all lights, where the sun, moon, stars, lightnings, and fire do not shine (quoted also in the Shvetasvatara and Katha Upanishads).

The Goddess moves on to praise the person who attains Brahma-vidya, and indicates the proper recipients of such knowledge, emphasizing the qualification of sincere devotion to God and guru. She next praises the guru who teaches such knowledge, for he is greater than the biological father whose gift (the body) perishes, unlike the eternal gift of Brahma-vidya engendered by the spiritual father. Finally, to illustrate the difficulties and dangers of attaining knowledge of Brahman, the Goddess refers to the ancient story of the beheading of the sage Atharvana, who revealed the secret knowledge against the wishes of the god Indra. Fortu-

nately for Atharvana, the two divine physicians, the Ashvins, had given the sage a horse's head by which he spoke the secret Brahma-vidya, his original head being held in safekeeping. When Indra learned of the disclosure and cut off the substitute horse's head, the Ashvins restored the proper head to the sage.

Up to this point in the Devi Gita, loving surrender and devotion to the Goddess have been constant but underlying themes. In chapter 7 the Path of Devotion (Bhakti Yoga) becomes the central topic, and remains so to the end of the Goddess's counsel in chapter 10. The Goddess begins by indicating the ease of this yoga, compared to the other major disciplines of knowledge (Jnana Yoga) and action (Karma Yoga). The treatment of Bhakti Yoga in chapter 7 follows in many ways the discussion of devotion in the Kapila Gita of the Bhagavata Purana. Both accounts deal with the interrelation of devotion, knowledge, and dispassion, with the Devi Gita placing less emphasis on the need for dispassion, in accord with the text's more favorable disposition towards the spiritual possibilities of domestic life.

Both gitas also describe four grades of devotion according to the qualities (*gunas*) of nature, a classification scheme derived from the Bhagavad Gita. According to the Devi Gita, the first two grades, rooted in ignorance (*tamas*) and passion (*rajas*), are practiced by those intending harm to others and seeking their own well-being, respectively. The third grade, arising from virtue (*sattva*), the highest of the three qualities, is performed by those who surrender the fruits of their actions to the Goddess out of a sense of duty and in a spirit of loving service. Such devotion is not supreme, for it still clings to

false distinctions, but it does lead to the highest devotion beyond all the qualities.

The supreme devotion is described in quite paradoxical terms. On the one hand, it is characterized by total detachment, an absence of any sense of difference between oneself and others including the Goddess, and realization of the universality of pure consciousness. On the other hand, it is typified by a sense of oneself as a servant and the Devi as master, an eagerness to participate in pilgrimages to her sacred sites, and a zeal to perform her ritual worship without regard to cost. Especially paradoxical is the tension between the detached devotion associated with the knowledge of the unity of all being, and the ecstatic passion, accompanied by tears of joy and faltering voice, manifest in worshipping the Goddess while singing her names and dancing in enraptured self-abandonment. Again, while the supreme devotion is characterized by indifference to all forms of liberation, including mergence into the Devi, nonetheless, so the Goddess declares, the fruit of such devotion is dissolution into her essential nature. Such paradoxes reflect in many ways the long-standing tension in the Hindu tradition between the ideal of devotion, with its goal of loving service, and the ideal of knowledge, with its goal of realizing absolute oneness.

Formally, the Devi Gita resolves the tension by insisting that knowledge of the Goddess is the final goal of devotion, as well as of dispassion. Devotion without knowledge will lead to the heavenly paradise of the Goddess, the Jeweled Island, but no further. Dwelling in the Jeweled Island, however, inevitably leads to liberating knowledge of the pure consciousness that is the Goddess.

Dispassion without knowledge, incidentally, leads only to a virtuous rebirth. The Devi insists that liberating knowledge can be attained here in this world, while still living. Seeking such knowledge alone makes life worthwhile, and the attainment of knowledge completely fulfills the ultimate purpose of existence.

While chapter 7 introduces the topic of Bhakti Yoga by classifying its various grades according to the *gunas* and elaborating upon its relation to knowledge and dispassion, it only briefly mentions some of the specific practices involved in worshiping the Goddess. In chapter 8, the Devi turns her attention back to several of the activities mentioned in her discussion of the supreme form of worship, focusing especially on pilgrimage to her sacred sites, important rites, and celebration of her festivals.

While noting that she is omnipresent and thus accessible to devotees everywhere, the Goddess provides a lengthy list of over seventy sites that are especially sacred to her. These sacred sites are referred to as *sthanas*, “abodes” or “dwelling places.” These places manifest a different ambience from the sacred sites known as *tirthas* (“fords” or “crossings”) associated especially with Shiva. *Tirthas*, often situated at river crossings, furnish access to a realm beyond this world, allowing the pilgrim as it were to cross from this human realm to the divine. *Sthanas* are not crossings but seats (*pithas*) of the Goddess, her habitations in this world, located under trees, beside a pond, in caves, or at the entrance to a village. The pilgrim seeks the Goddess at such places not with the otherworldly concerns of final liberation, but with the pressing issues of this world: health, disease, prosperity, fertility, domestic well-being, birth,

and death. *Sthanas* are places of immediate access to the Devi in one or another of her myriad forms that preside over the natural processes and contingent happenings of daily life.

The lengthy list of abodes with their associated goddesses thus takes on new meaning in light of their significance for the mundane concerns of pilgrims. But these sacred sites have a further spiritual meaning for devotees of the Goddess, for they represent the physical embodiment of the various body parts of the Devi herself. Such a conception rests on an old myth concerning the dismemberment of Shiva's wife, Sati, after her suicide. The distraught Shiva carried her corpse on his shoulders as he wandered trancelike around India and, in one version of the myth, Vishnu cut off different body parts of the corpse in an attempt to relieve Shiva of his burden and bring him to his senses. Where the different parts fell to the Earth, there an abode was established, and there the supreme World Mother is ever present. While many texts make explicit the several correspondences between particular sites and specific body parts, in the *Devi Gita* only one site is thus correlated, the sacred zone of Kamakhya where the *yoni* or womb of the Goddess fell to Earth, and where she now resides each month during her menses. It is natural that the *yoni*, as the prime symbol of the Goddess's creative power, should be singled out by the *Devi Gita*, but it represents, implicitly, the idea that the whole of India constitutes the one body of the Goddess, and that the Shakta devotee lives in a sacralized world, indeed, in the lap of the Goddess herself.

Three further sites are of special interest. The celestial, nonearthly paradise of the Jeweled Island

is mentioned as the abode of Bhuvaneshvari; the lotus hearts of the wise are said to be the dwelling places of Bhuvaneshvari's sonic essence, the Hrillekha; and Kashi (Banaras, the most sacred city of Hindus in general) is said to contain all sacred sites (and by implication, all goddesses).

The Devi, after proclaiming the various sites dear to her heart, indicates the special provisions for pilgrimage, including the benefits of reciting her names. She then enumerates several rites (*vratas*) and festivals (*utsavas*) that take place according to the flow of auspicious and inauspicious moments of various intertwining cycles of time: the days of the week, the days of the lunar month, and the seasons of the year. The *vratas* involve a number of behavioral restrictions (such as fasting and vigil), as well as worship of deities. The *utsavas* are joyous celebrations intended to restore the generative powers of the universe, to maintain harmony in the cosmos and between the divine and human communities. There is no absolute distinction between the rites and festivals, as there are many elements, such as worship (*puja*), common to each. While it is assumed that many mundane purposes may be achieved by these ritual actions, the Goddess indicates that the fruit of performing these rites and celebrations in a spirit of unselfish devotion is the attainment of union with her.

Chapters 9 and 10 present a general classification of types of ritual worship, or *puja*, of the Goddess. She first distinguishes between external and internal forms of worship, and then divides the former into Vedic and Tantric kinds, a typology perhaps derived from the Shakti-*puja* chapter of the Suta Samhita. Finally, she subdivides the Vedic into

two types according to the image employed in the ritual: the cosmic or Viraj form of the Goddess, and her beautiful form as Bhuvaneshvari. Chapter 9 deals with the Vedic and internal forms of worship, and the tenth with the Tantric form.

In chapter 9, after delineating the basic types of puja, the Devi touches upon the issue of the proper qualifications of those entitled to perform the different kinds of worship. Then, following a brief account of worship of the Viraj (with its countless heads, eyes, and feet), she interrupts her description of the puja types to affirm the authority of Vedic tradition, including the Brahmin-approved *Laws of Manu*, regarding righteous action. Vedic revelation, arising from the Goddess herself, is deemed superior to all other scriptures, including the Tantras, although they may be accepted when they do not oppose the Veda. Reflected here is the Devi Gita's rejection of the more extreme, Left-Handed Tantra with its intentional transgression of orthodox social and sexual mores, while accepting eagerly enough the practices of Right-Handed Tantra, such as the Serpentine Yoga, that do not violate Vedic standards of conduct.

Included in the Goddess's digression on Vedic authority is her explanation of the means she uses to combat unrighteousness. These include the creation of the Brahmin and warrior classes; the providing of appropriate places of punishment (that is, the various hells) to reeducate evildoers; and the admonition to kings to banish such miscreants from their lands, to Brahmins not to talk to them, and to the twice-born in general (the members of the upper three classes) not to eat with the unrighteous. Most significantly of all, perhaps, is the Goddess's

proclamation, reminiscent of Krishna's avataric pronouncement in the Bhagavad Gita, that whenever there is a decline of righteousness and an uprising of unrighteousness in the world, then she assumes various guises, implying that through such guises she comes into the world to set things aright. The Devi then briefly resumes her discussion of the Viraj type of worship before turning to her second Vedic image, that of Bhuvaneshvari.

The lengthy digression on the question of Vedic authority, while reflecting the orthodox position of the author of the Devi Gita, can also be accounted for by the occurrence of a similar digression in the midst of a discussion of the Viraj form of the Goddess, appearing in the earlier Shakta gita of the Kurma Purana. The Devi Gita of the Devi-Bhagavata Purana loosely follows the Kurma's "Devi Gita" in its discussion of the Viraj, Vedic authority, and the means for combating unrighteousness, adding in, however, the notion of the Devi's avataric activity.

As for the second Vedic form of worship in the Devi Gita, the image used, although not specifically named as that of Bhuvaneshvari, is clearly identified as such by her four arms with their standard symbolic emblems and gestures. The inclusion of the Tantric goddess Bhuvaneshvari as a Vedic image attests to the fusion of Tantric and Vedic ideals in the text. The Goddess informs us that the image of Bhuvaneshvari can be worshiped in various physical media: in an actual icon, in such natural bodies as the sun and moon, in water, or a sacred diagram. It may also be worshiped as visualized in the lotus heart of the devotee. This latter signals a movement from external to internal worship. The well-defined image of Bhuvaneshvari used in the puja belongs to

the external mode, but the medium, the heart, is internal. The Suta Samhita refers to such worship as internal but with conceptual support. The Goddess warns that internal worship should not be attempted until one is sufficiently prepared through performing the external rituals.

The Goddess concludes the chapter with a quick summation of internal worship, wherein the devotee focuses on pure consciousness itself without utilizing any conceptual support or iconic form. Through such worship, the devotee realizes that only pure consciousness is real and that the world appearance outside this consciousness is false. The progression of worship from external to internal and the culminating realization of the illusory nature of the world reflects the nondualistic, Advaita emphasis of the chapter.

In chapter 10, the Devi describes the final form of Goddess worship, the Tantric, which is based upon very different assumptions about the material world than those of Advaita. Physical entities, in the Tantric perspective, are seen not as obstacles to final liberation, but as powerful tools for spiritual transformation. Material substances and physical bodies, including the devotee's own, are thus vessels awaiting the infusion of various physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual energies whereby one is able to sanctify one's own body, transforming it into the divine body of the Goddess. This difference in perspective is seen in the reversal of the progression from external to internal acts of worship. In Tantra, internal worship is seen as the necessary mental and spiritual preparation for the effective performance of the external rites.

The preliminaries for Tantric worship as explained by the Goddess involve a series of customary observances, such as rising at dawn, recalling one's guru, reciting prayers, personal cleansing, and the offering of oblations in the sacred fire. These form part of the daily routine expected of all followers of the Vedic way of life (Vedachara). In particular, they are incumbent upon even the most spiritual, self-realized Tantrics who in one sense may have transcended the need for ritual practice but who nonetheless remain committed to the daily fulfillment of such observances.

The Goddess summarizes the procedures for transforming the physical body into a divine body by various ritual manipulations, such as purification of the bodily elements and the implanting or installation of the mystical powers embedded in the letters of her sacred syllable *Hrim* along the central axis of one's body.

Of special significance is the installation within one's body of the divine seat or throne upon which to welcome the Devi. The throne symbolizes her cosmic sovereignty, and especially her lordship over all the gods, for the throne is composed of the corpses of the five major male deities of the Hindu pantheon: the bodies of Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, and Ishvara (these last two being forms of Shiva) constitute the four legs of the throne, while the corpse of Sadashiva (the "Eternal Shiva") forms its seat. These five male gods, reduced to the parts of her royal throne, not only symbolize the Devi's various cosmic functions and subservient powers, but also are seen as mere ghosts or corpses until empowered by her energy. After calling the Goddess

to take her seat upon the throne, the devotee is instructed to perform mental worship of the Devi.

The Goddess next offers instructions in preparation for external worship. The external altar and the surrounding space should be purified and protected, along with all the materials to be used in the puja. The Devi is to be summoned to the altar, using the life-infusing incantation whereby the living presence of the Goddess may enter into the image.

The central phase of the puja is the rendering of various services and offerings to the Goddess. These services and offerings (*upacharas*), many quite sensual such as foot washing, bathing, and the various gifts of food, drink, perfumes, flowers, new clothes, and entertainment, appeal to all the five senses and the mind. Included in the entertainment is the singing of the hymn of her thousand names that Himalaya had earlier composed (as told in the Kurma Purana), as well as the famous Vedic hymn, the "Devi Sukta," that begins with the words, "I, with the Rudras . . ." These offerings are modeled on the services and gifts of hospitality provided to an honored guest in one's home. Implicit in these acts is the understanding that the Goddess, like human beings, enjoys these physical and worldly pleasures, which ultimately are gifts from the Goddess herself and are meant to be shared by and with her devotees. Such sharing extends to the community at large, with the distribution of food to Brahmins, young boys and girls, and the poor, all of whom are regarded as identical with the Goddess. The ritual worship concludes with dismissal of the Devi from the external icon and leading her back into the devotee's heart.

The Goddess sings the praises of her special mantra, known as the Hrillekha (*Hrim*), with which each offering of the puja should be accompanied. She briefly enumerates the fruits of Devi-puja, including rebirth in her Jeweled Island paradise, bearing the form of the Goddess herself, and complete fulfillment. She concludes her spiritual counsel by cautioning against the indiscriminate dissemination of the Devi Gita, once again indicating its appropriate recipients, and then vanishes from sight.

The sage Vyasa, in bringing the Devi Gita to a close, briefly reverts to the frame story regarding the birth of Gauri and the slaying of Taraka, including brief reference to the birth of Lakshmi from the churning of the Ocean of Milk. Then, like the Goddess, Vyasa cautions against the indiscriminate dissemination of the secret teachings of the Devi Gita. He asks King Janamejaya if he has any further questions. Thus ends the Devi Gita, leaving the King, in the next book of the Devi-Bhagavata Purana, to query the sage about how the Goddess was worshiped in ages past.

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Translator's Note

In preparing this translation, I have consulted a number of editions of the Devi Gita, some published as parts of the Devi-Bhagavata Purana and others printed as separate and independent texts. I finally chose the Venkatesvara edition (Bombay, n.d.) of the Devi-Bhagavata Purana, the current vulgate, for my base text, as it is relatively free of typographical errors. But most important, it includes the only readily available Sanskrit commentary, that of Nilakantha the Shaiva, a Maharashtrian with Advaita inclinations probably living in the last half of the eighteenth century. I have frequently utilized Nilakantha's interpretive insights in explaining obscure or confusing terms, and am indebted to him for his numerous citations of parallel passages in older Sanskrit works. Comparison of these older passages with their often noncontextualized and elliptical presentation in the Devi Gita provided much needed framework and background for a reasonably accurate rendering of the text.

The first published English translation of the Devi Gita (as part of the Devi-Bhagavata Purana [vol. 26 of the Sacred Books of the Hindus], 1921–23), also relied heavily on Nilakantha. Indeed, the Hindu translator, Hari Prasanna Chatterji, on several occasions included parts of Nilakantha's commentary in the translation, a practice not uncommon among Indian translators at the time. For reasons of

historical accuracy, such a methodology is in itself problematic enough. And given Nilakantha's Advaitin perspective, such a procedure makes especially difficult any attempt to come to terms with those parts of the text that express a viewpoint in tension with the Advaita worldview. While I have made judicious use of Nilakantha's frequently perceptive observations, I have kept his commentary as such out of the translation.

The Sanskrit text of the Devi Gita is composed mostly of verses known as *shlokas*, consisting of four quarters of eight syllables each. The exceptions all seem to be where the author of the Devi Gita quotes from or paraphrases non-*shloka* texts such as the Upanishads. Within the *shlokas*, there are two lines, each of two quarters. The two lines of a verse tend to represent integrated semantic subunits, with many exceptions.

I have rendered all stanzas (including the non-*shloka* passages) into free verse of two lines each. The lines of the translation generally correspond quite strictly to the lines of the original text, the exceptions being made to avoid awkward word order in English, as where the grammatical subject of a verse occurs only in the second line, or in another verse entirely. Little attempt was made to follow the order of quarters within a line.

The Sanskrit style of the text is at times highly compressed and elliptical. I have expanded the translation of such elliptical passages for the sake of clarity, but without bracketing the supplied terms or phrases in order to retain a more friendly looking and readable text. Most such additions to the literal text are minor, for instance, supplying the specific referent of a pronoun.

Proper names have usually been left untranslated, and the various names of most deities normalized to the forms best known to an English audience (for example, Shankara—the god, not the teacher—has been rendered as Shiva). The major exception pertains to the Goddess, as her many names and various epithets reveal the complexity of her character and the diverse aspects of her nature. Even here, I have felt compelled to make two important exceptions. Shakti (“energy,” “power”) and Maya (“magical creative power,” “illusion,” “power of delusion”) constitute essential features of the Goddess. But they are also extremely complex and multivalent philosophical concepts that in most instances defy easy translation without gross oversimplification.

One of the most difficult interpretive challenges relates to the androcentric language of the text. While its theology is “feminine,” conceiving the absolute primarily in terms of a supreme female deity, the *Devi Gita* is hardly “feminist.” Its conception of the compassionate World Mother wholly dedicated to the well-being of her children, its luscious imagery of Bhuvaneshvari’s feminine charms bordering on the voluptuous and erotic, may suggest to contemporary readers that these are expressions of the male author’s culturally conditioned fantasies about the “ideal” woman. Especially is his sociology androcentric, as in his traditional admonition that the text of the *Devi Gita* is to be revealed only to qualified persons beginning with “an eldest son,” with no mention of any daughter.

At the same time, the devotional orientation of the text provides a degree of egalitarian mitigation. Thus, the statement about giving the text to an eldest

son, an ancient and time-honored prescription, seems largely undercut by the much greater emphasis on the necessity for true devotion on the part of the recipient. Nowhere does the author of the *Devi Gita* suggest that such devotion is restricted to males only. Among the audience receiving the wise counsel of the Goddess, in any case, is at least one female, the wife of Vishnu. One should keep in mind, however, the statement by the sage Suta at the end of the *Devi-Bhagavata Purana*: “Women and Shudras [members of the lowest class of society] should never recite this (book), under some sort of delusion. They should hear it from the mouth of a twice-born (male); that is the rule.”

Since women clearly are intended to hear the *Devi Gita*, even if only from the mouth of an upper-caste male, I have chosen to use gender-inclusive language throughout, using “person,” “one,” “all,” “human beings,” and so forth, for the various terms for “man.” In traditional androcentric texts like the *Devi Gita*, male nouns and pronouns may well be used as generic terms for humans, and thus a literal translation that retains the masculine mode may be quite misleading in our culture today, with our sensitivity to sexist language. In using gender-inclusive language, there is, of course, the danger that I will go beyond the intentions of the original, but there is often no sure way to know what those intentions were. For instance, are women to participate in the Eight-Limbed Yoga, despite the occasional reference to the specifically male anatomy of the practitioner? Given the generally sympathetic attitude of the text to Tantric views and practices, which are much more open to women than the

traditional Brahminical stance, an affirmative answer to the question seems reasonable.

Finally, there is the challenge of dealing with the androcentric aspects of English. While Sanskrit easily designates gender with its masculine and feminine inflections, and can thus readily transform a noun from one gender to another, English often lacks an opposite-gender synonym that is truly equivalent.

One relevant example is the term lord. In Sanskrit, *ishvara* and *ishvari* express the masculine and feminine forms, respectively, of a personal, divine ruling being. In English, such terms as "Female Lord," "Queen," "Lady," or "Mistress" are all rather inadequate and misleading translations for *ishvari*. For instance, a literal rendering of the epithet *Parameshvari* (*parama* ["supreme"] + *ishvari*) as "Supreme Female Ruler" immediately raises the question, Who is the supreme, and possibly superior, male ruler? Accordingly, I have translated *Parameshvari* simply as "Supreme Ruler," leaving no doubt about the unique and absolute authority of the Goddess. Similarly, I have rendered the name of the highest iconic manifestation of the Goddess, Bhuvaneshvari (*bhuvana* ["universe"] + *ishvari*) as "Ruler of the Universe." While such translations may seem to slight or ignore the gender of the Goddess, there is little danger of forgetting her female nature in the Devi Gita, given the frequent references to her as Devi (literally, goddess) and as Mother.

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Chapter 1

The Appearance of the Great Goddess before the Mountain King Himalaya and the Gods

Janamejaya spoke:

- 1.1. You said earlier that the supreme lustrous power manifested itself on the crest of Himalaya, the Mountain Lord.

This you mentioned only in passing. Now explain it to me in full detail.

- 1.2. What thoughtful person would ever tire of drinking the nectarine tales of Shakti?

Death comes even to those who drink divine ambrosia, but not to one who hears this act of hers.

Vyasa spoke:

- 1.3. You are blessed and completely fulfilled; you have been taught by those of great heart; And you are fortunate, for you possess true devotion to the Goddess.

- 1.4. Hear, O King, this ancient tale. When the body of Sati was consumed in flames, The bewildered Shiva wandered about, falling here and there motionless on the ground.

- 1.5. He was unaware of the manifest world, his mind being fully absorbed.
Regaining his self-composure, he passed the time contemplating the true form of the Goddess.
- 1.6. Meanwhile, the three-tiered universe, with all that is mobile and immobile, lost its auspicious charm
When the entire world with its oceans, continents, and mountains was bereft of energy.
- 1.7. Joy shriveled up in the heart of each and every being.
All peoples were despondent, their careworn spirits exhausted.
- 1.8. Then, ever drowning in a sea of misery, they were consumed by disease.
The planets retrogressed ominously; the fortunes of the gods declined.
- 1.9. Kings, too, suffered misfortune due to material and spiritual forces set in motion by the death of Sati.
Now at that time arose a great demon, Taraka by name.
- 1.10. The fiend became master of the three-tiered universe after procuring from Brahma this boon:
“Only a legitimate son of Shiva shall be your slayer.”
- 1.11. With his death thus fixed by Brahma, the great demon,
Realizing no lawful son of Shiva existed, roared and rejoiced.

- 1.12. And all the gods, attacked by Taraka and driven from their own homes,
Lived in a state of persistent anxiety due to the absence of any legitimate son of Shiva.

The gods thought:

- 1.13. Shiva has no wife; how shall he engender a son?
How can we prosper, deprived of good fortune?

Vyasa continued:

- 1.14. Thus afflicted with worry, all the gods journeyed to Vishnu's heaven,
Taking counsel with him in private. He then explained their proper recourse:

Vishnu spoke:

- 1.15. Why are you all so worried, for the Auspicious Goddess is a wish-fulfilling tree?
Dwelling in her Jeweled Island Paradise as Ruler of the Universe, she is ever attentive.
- 1.16. She neglects us now only because of our misbehavior.
Such chastisement by the World Mother is simply for our own instruction.
- 1.17. As a mother feels no lack of compassion whether indulging or chastening her child,
Just so the World Mother feels when overseeing our virtues and vices.
- 1.18. A son transgresses the limits of proper conduct at every step:
Who in the world forgives him except his mother?

- 1.19. Therefore go for refuge to the supreme
Mother without delay,
With sincere hearts. She will accomplish
what you want.

Vyasa continued:

- 1.20. Thus enjoining all the gods and accompa-
nied by his wife, the great Vishnu,
As chief of the gods, set forth at once with
his fellow lords.
- 1.21. He came to the great rocky crag, Himalaya,
Lord of mountains,
And all the gods commenced the prelimi-
nary acts of worship.
- 1.22. They then performed the Mother's sacrifice,
knowing well her ceremonial rites.
All the gods hastened to perform her ritual
observances, including the third-day rites, O
King.
- 1.23. Some of the gods were fully absorbed in
meditation; others were focused on her
name.
Some concentrated on her hymn, while oth-
ers were intent on reciting her names.
- 1.24. Some were devoted to chanting mantras, or
practicing severe austerities.
Some were absorbed in mental sacrifices,
and others installed mystic powers in their
bodies.
- 1.25. Unwearied, they worshiped the supreme
Shakti with the mantra known as Hrillekha.
Many years thus passed away, O Janamejaya.

- 1.26. Suddenly, on the ninth lunar day in the month of Chaitra, on a Friday,
That lustrous power revealed in scripture appeared before the gods.
- 1.27. Praised on all sides by the four Vedas incarnate,
It blazed like ten million suns, yet soothed like ten million moons.
- 1.28. Flashing like ten million streaks of lightning tinged with red, that supreme lustrous power
Shone forth unencompassed above, across, and in the middle.
- 1.29. Without beginning or end, it had no body, no hands, no other limbs,
Nor did it have a woman's form, a man's form, nor the two combined.
- 1.30. The dazzling brilliance blinded the eyes of the gods, O King.
When again their vision returned, the gods beheld
- 1.31. That light appearing now in the form of a woman, charming and delightful.
She was exceedingly beautiful of limb, a maiden in the freshness of youth.
- 1.32. Her full, upraised breasts put to shame the swelling buds of the lotus.
Her girdle and anklets jingled with clusters of tinkling bells.
- 1.33. She was adorned with a necklace, armlets, and bracelets of gold,
Her throat resplendent with a chain of price-less gems.

- 1.34. The locks on her cheeks shimmered like black bees swarming on delicate Ketaka blooms.

An exquisite line of down on her midriff enhanced the charm of her shapely hips.

- 1.35. She was chewing spiced betel mixed with bits of mint camphor.

Pendant earrings of shining gold graced her lotus face.

- 1.36. Above long eyebrows her forehead shone with an image of the crescent moon.

Her eyes were red lotus petals, her nose dignified, her lips like nectar.

- 1.37. Her teeth resembled buds of white jasmine; a string of pearls adorned her neck.

Her crescent-shaped crown sparkled with jewels; she was bedecked with ornaments shining like new moons.

- 1.38. A garland of jasmine flowers brightened her luxuriant hair.

Her forehead sported a saffron dot, while her three eyes reflected her playful mood.

- 1.39. Three-eyed and four-armed, she held a noose and goad while gesturing her beneficence and assurance of safety.

She was dressed in red and appeared lustrous like blooms of the pomegranate.

- 1.40. Richly adorned in garments all suited for love, she was worshiped by all the gods.

Satisfying all desires, she is the Mother of all, the Deluder of all.

- 1.41. The Mother's kindly face, so gracious, displayed a tender smile on the lotus mouth.
This embodiment of unfeigned compassion the gods beheld in their presence.
- 1.42. Seeing her, the embodiment of compassion, the entire host of gods bowed low,
Unable to speak, choking on tears in silence.
- 1.43. Struggling to regain their composure, their necks bending in devotion,
Their eyes brimming with tears of loving joy, they glorified the World Mother with hymns.

The gods spoke:

- 1.44. Hail to the Goddess, to the Great Goddess; to the Auspicious One always hail!
Hail to Nature, to the Propitious One; we humble ourselves attentively before her.
- 1.45. To her, the color of fire, blazing like the sun with ascetic power, and who is worshiped for attaining the fruits of action,
To her, the Goddess Durga, I go for refuge. Hail to that raft of swift crossing.
- 1.46. The gods created the Goddess Speech, whom animals of all sorts speak.
This Speech is pleasing to us, this cow yielding food and strength. She is well praised; may she come to us.
- 1.47. To Kalaratri praised by Brahma, to Vaishnavi, to the Mother of Skanda,
To Sarasvati, to Aditi, the Daughter of Daksha, we bow, to the pure Auspicious One.

- 1.48. We know you as Mahalakshmi, we meditate
on you as the Shakti of all.
May the Goddess inspire that knowledge and
meditation of ours.
- 1.49. Hail to her in the form of the Cosmic Body;
hail to her in the form of the Cosmic Soul;
Hail to her in the Unmanifest State; hail to
her in the form of the glorious Brahman.
- 1.50. Through her power of ignorance, she shows
herself as the world, like a rope appearing as
a serpent, wreath, and the like.
Through her power of knowledge, she dis-
solves the world back into herself. We glo-
rify her, Ruler of the Universe.
- 1.51. We glorify her whose essence is pure con-
sciousness, represented by the word *Tat*,
And whose nature is undiminished bliss. It
is she to whom the Vedas refer as their goal.
- 1.52. Transcending the five sheaths, witness of the
three states of consciousness,
She is also in essence the individual soul,
represented by the word *Tvam*.
- 1.53. Hail to her in the form of the syllable Om;
hail to her embodied in the syllable Hrim.
To her composed of manifold mantras, that is
to you the compassionate Goddess, hail! Hail!

Vyasa continued:

- 1.54. Thus praised by the gods, she who dwells in
the Jeweled Island then
Answered in the sweet, joyous tones of the
cuckoo.

The blessed Goddess spoke:

- 1.55. O wise gods, explain the reason that brings you together here.

I am ever the bestower of boons, a wish-yielding tree to devotees.

- 1.56. You shine with devotion, so why are you anxious when I stand nearby?

I rescue my devotees from the troubled ocean of samsara.

- 1.57. Know this promise of mine to be sincere, O best of gods.

Vyasa continued:

Hearing these words infused with loving joy, the gods were satisfied in their hearts.

- 1.58. Freed from fear, the immortals described their own ordeal, O King.

The gods spoke:

Nothing here in the three worlds is unknown to you,

- 1.59. Who are omniscient, the incarnate witness of all, O Supreme Ruler.

The demon chief Taraka torments us day and night.

- 1.60. His death shall come only at the hands of Shiva's son—so has Brahma arranged, O Auspicious One.

But as you know, Great Ruler, Shiva has no wife.

- 1.61. What can ignorant beings reveal to one who is omniscient?

Such is our situation in brief; you can infer the rest, O Mother.

- 1.62. May we always show unswerving devotion to your lotus feet;

This is our foremost wish. We also pray that you will assume a body.

Vyasa continued:

- 1.63. The Supreme Ruler listened to these words of theirs and gave reply.

The Goddess spoke:

My potency who is Gauri will be born to Himalaya.

- 1.64. She will be given in marriage to Shiva and will furnish what you need.

You shall be devoted to my lotus feet due to your earnest desire.

- 1.65. Himalaya, moved by intense devotion, truly worships me in his heart.

Thus I consider it a pleasure to take birth in his house.

Vyasa spoke:

- 1.66. Hearing her exceedingly kind words, Himalaya on his part

Replied to the Great Sovereign Queen, his eyes and throat congested with tears.

Himalaya spoke:

- 1.67. You greatly ennoble whomever you wish to favor,

For who am I, so dull and motionless, compared to you who embody infinite being and consciousness?

- 1.68. That I should become your father in the course of hundreds of births is astonishing, O Faultless One,

Even with all the merits gained by performing horse sacrifices and other religious penances.

- 1.69. Now I shall be renowned, for all the world will think: “The World Mother has become the daughter

Of that Himalaya, wonder of wonders! How blessed and fortunate is he!

- 1.70. She whose womb contains tens of millions of worlds

Has been born as his daughter—who on earth is his equal?”

- 1.71. I know not what heavenly realm has been prepared for my ancestors

To rest in, so blessed are they to have one such as myself born in their family.

- 1.72. As you have already granted me one favor through your loving compassion,

Would you also please describe for me your true nature as explained in all the Upanishads.

- 1.73. And further describe the paths of both yoga and knowledge combined with devotion, as approved by scripture.

Explain these, Supreme Ruler, so that I may become one with you.

Vyasa spoke:

- 1.74 Hearing these words of Himalaya, and with
her lotus face kindly disposed,
The Mother undertook to reveal the mystic
teachings hidden in scripture.

Chapter 2

The Goddess as the Supreme Cause of Creation

The Goddess spoke:

2.1. May all the gods attend to what I have to say.

By merely hearing these words of mine, one attains my essential nature.

2.2. I alone existed in the beginning; there was nothing else at all, O Mountain King.

My true Self is known as pure consciousness, the highest intelligence, the one supreme Brahman.

2.3. It is beyond reason, indescribable, incomparable, incorruptible.

From out of itself evolves a certain power renowned as Maya.

2.4. Neither real nor unreal is this Maya, nor is it both, for that would be incongruous.

Lacking such characteristics, this indefinite entity has always subsisted.

2.5. As heat inheres in fire, as brilliance in the sun,

As cool light in the moon, just so this Maya inheres firmly in me.

- 2.6. Into that Maya the actions of souls, the souls themselves, and the ages eventually
Dissolve without distinctions, as worldly concerns disappear in deep sleep.
- 2.7. By uniting with this inherent power of mine,
I become the cosmic seed.
By obscuring me, its own basis, this power is prone to defects.
- 2.8. Through its association with consciousness,
Maya is called the efficient cause of the world.
Through its evolution into the visible realm,
it is said to be the material cause.
- 2.9. Some call this Maya the power of austerity;
others call it darkness; still others, dullness,
Or knowledge, illusion, matter, nature, energy,
or the unborn.
- 2.10. Those versed in Shaiva works call it intelligence,
While the Vedantins call it ignorance.
- 2.11. Such are its various names found in the Vedic
and other sacred texts.
Since Maya is something we can perceive, it
has the nature of nonconscious matter; since
knowledge destroys it, it is not truly existent.
- 2.12. Consciousness is not something we can perceive;
what we perceive is indeed nonconscious.
Consciousness is self-luminous; nothing else
illuminates it.
- 2.13. It does not even illuminate itself, for that
would lead to the fallacy of infinite regress.

As an agent and the object acted upon are distinct entities, so consciousness itself, like a lamp,

2.14. While shining brightly, illuminates what is other than itself. Know this, O Mountain, For thus have I demonstrated that consciousness, belonging to my own nature, is eternal.

2.15. The visible world appears and disappears constantly in the various states of waking, dream, and deep sleep.

Pure consciousness never experiences such fluctuation.

2.16. Even if this consciousness itself became an object of perception, then the witness

Of that perception would abide as the real pure consciousness, as before.

2.17. And so those versed in religious treatises regarding the real declare consciousness to be eternal.

Its nature is bliss, for it is the object of supreme love.

2.18. The feeling, "Let me not cease to be; let me exist forever," is rooted in love for the Self.

Certainly there is no actual relation between me and all else, since all else is false.

2.19. Therefore I am regarded truly as an undivided whole.

And that consciousness is not an attribute of the Self, for then the Self would be like an object.

- 2.20. In consciousness no possible trace of the object state can be found.
And so consciousness also has no attributes: consciousness is not a quality separable from consciousness itself.
- 2.21. Therefore the Self in essence is consciousness, and bliss as well, always.
It is the real and complete, beyond all relation, and free from the illusion of duality.
- 2.22. This Self, however, by its own power of Maya conjoined with desires, actions, and the like,
Through the influence of prior experience ripening in time in accord with the law of karma,
- 2.23. And by confounding the primal elements, being desirous to create, begins to bring forth.
The resulting creation, devoid of intelligence, will be further described to you, O Mountain King.
- 2.24. This extraordinary form of mine which I have mentioned
Is unevolved and unmanifest, yet becomes segmented through the power of Maya.
- 2.25. All the religious treatises declare it to be the cause of all causes,
The primal substance behind the elements, and as having the form of being, consciousness, bliss.
- 2.26. It is the condensation of all karma; it is the seat of will, knowledge, and action;
It is expressed in the mantra Hrim; it is the primal principle—so it is said.

- 2.27. Out of that primal substance arose ether, endowed with the subtle quality of sound.
Then arose air, characterized by the quality of touch, followed by fire, characterized by visible form.
- 2.28. Next arose water, characterized by taste; then earth, characterized by smell.
Ether has the single quality of sound; air is endowed with touch and sound.
- 2.29. Fire has the qualities of sound, touch, and visible form, according to the wise;
Water has the four qualities of sound, touch, visible form, and taste, so they say.
- 2.30. Earth has the five qualities of sound, touch, visible form, taste, and smell.
From those subtle elements came into being the great cosmic thread which is called the Subtle Body.
- 2.31. It is proclaimed as all-pervading; this is the Subtle Body of the Self.
The Unmanifest is the Causal Body, which I mentioned earlier.
- 2.32. In that lies the world seed, from which evolves the Subtle Body.
From that, by the process of fivefold generation, the gross elements,
- 2.33. Five in number, arise. I shall now describe this process.
Each of those elements previously mentioned shall be divided in half.
- 2.34. One half-part of each element shall be divided into four, O Mountain.

By joining the undivided half of each element with one of the quartered fractions from each of the other four, each element becomes fivefold.

- 2.35. And they produce the Cosmic Body, or Gross Body, of the Self.

From the aspects of lucidity residing in the five elements arise hearing and the other

- 2.36. Organs of sense, each from a single element, O King. But from the lucid aspects of all the elements mixed together

Arises the internal organ, single, yet fourfold by reason of its different functions.

- 2.37. When it wills or wavers, it is known as mind. When it knows decisively without doubts, it is called intellect.

- 2.38. When it remembers, it is known as recollection. When it functions to assert the sense of I, it becomes the principle of egoism.

- 2.39. From the active aspects of the elements arise in order the organs of action,

Each from a single element; but from the active aspects of all the elements mixed together comes the fivefold breath.

- 2.40. The upward breath resides in the heart, the downward breath in the bowels, the middle breath in the navel,

The ascending breath in the throat, and the diffused breath throughout the body.

- 2.41. The five organs of knowledge, the five organs of action,

And the five breaths, along with the mind accompanied by the intellect,

- 2.42. These constitute the Subtle Body, that is, my own rarefied form.

Therein is the principle called Nature, O King. It is twofold according to tradition.

- 2.43. One aspect, characterized by lucidity, is Maya; the other aspect, mixed with all the qualities of Nature, is nescience.

That aspect which clearly reflects its own substrate is known as Maya.

- 2.44. In that Maya appears the reflected image of the universal ruler.

He is called the supreme Lord; he is aware of his own substrate.

- 2.45. He is all-knowing and all-doing, the cause of all kindness.

But in nescience, the reflected image is partially obscured, O Mountain King.

- 2.46. It is then known as the individual soul, and as the abode of all suffering.

Now these two here, the Lord and the soul, are said to have three bodies through the power of nescience.

- 2.47. By identifying themselves with the three bodies, they also come to have three names.

The soul as the Causal Body is named the Intelligent; as the Subtle Body, the Brilliant;

- 2.48. And as the Gross Body, the All; thus are its three divisions known.

In like manner the Lord is known by the terms the Lord, the Cosmic Soul, and the Cosmic Body.

- 2.49. The soul is regarded as the individuated form, the Lord as the aggregated.

That universal Lord himself, through his desire to favor the soul,

- 2.50. Creates the manifold world anew, with its store of various enjoyments.

The Lord is ever sent forth by my power, having been conceived in me, O King.

Chapter 3

The Goddess Reveals Her Cosmic Body (The Viraj)

The Goddess spoke:

- 3.1. I imagine into being the whole world, moving and unmoving, through the power of my Maya,
Yet that same Maya is not separate from me; this is the highest truth.
- 3.2. From the practical point of view, Maya is regarded as self-evident.
In reality, however, it does not exist—only the supreme exists, in an absolute sense.
- 3.3. I, as Maya, create the whole world and then enter within it,
Accompanied by ignorance, actions, and the like, and preceded by the vital breath, O Mountain.
- 3.4. How else could souls be reborn into future lives?
They take on various births in accord with modifications of Maya.
- 3.5. Modified by apparent limitations, I become differentiated into parts, like space in different jars.

The sun constantly illumines all objects how-
ever high or low,

- 3.6. Yet is not thereby stained; just so am I never
stained by faults.

Ordinary people superimpose on me the ac-
tive agency of the intellect and the like:

- 3.7. “The Self is acting,” say the bewildered, not
the wise.

Modifications of ignorance and modifications
of Maya

- 3.8. Divide the soul and the Lord into parts, re-
spectively; it is all contrived by Maya.

The contrived separation of the space within
jars from space in general

- 3.9. Is like the contrived division between the
individual soul and the supreme soul.

Just as the multiple manifestations of the soul
are due to ignorance, not to the soul’s inher-
ent nature,

- 3.10. Just so are the multiple manifestations of the
Lord due to Maya, not to his innate essence.

Creating divisions through the imagined dis-
tinctions of various bodies with all their
senses,

- 3.11. Ignorance is the cause of the differentiation
of souls; no other cause is revealed.

Creating divisions through the imagined distinc-
tions of the material qualities, O Mountain,

- 3.12. Maya is the cause of the differentiation of
the supreme Lord into parts, and nothing
else.

In me this whole world is woven in all directions, O Mountain.

- 3.13. I am the Lord and the Cosmic Soul; I am myself the Cosmic Body.

I am Brahma, Vishnu, and Rudra, as well as Gauri, Brahmi, and Vaishnavi.

- 3.14. I am the sun and the stars, and I am the Lord of the stars.

I am the various species of beasts and birds; I am also the outcaste and thief.

- 3.15. I am the evildoer and the wicked deed; I am the righteous person and the virtuous deed.

I am certainly female and male, and asexual as well.

- 3.16. And whatever thing, anywhere, you see or hear,

That entire thing I pervade, ever abiding inside it and outside.

- 3.17. There is nothing at all, moving or unmoving, that is devoid of me;

For if it were, it would be a nonentity, like the son of a barren woman.

- 3.18. Just as a single rope may appear variously as a serpent or wreath,

So also I may appear in the form of the Lord and the like; there is no doubt in this matter.

- 3.19. The world cannot appear without an underlying basis.

Accordingly, the world comes to be only through my own being and in no other way.

Himalaya said:

- 3.20. Ruler of the Gods, since you have mentioned
your aggregated cosmic form,
I yearn to see it, O Goddess, if you would
favor me.

Vyasa said:

- 3.21. Hearing his request, all the gods including
Vishnu
Rejoiced with gladdened hearts, praising
Himalaya's words.
- 3.22. Then the Auspicious Goddess, who is a wish-
granting cow to her devotees, knowing the
minds of the gods,
Revealed her own cosmic form, satisfying the
desire of her devotees.
- 3.23. They beheld that Cosmic Body of the Great
Goddess, that form beyond all other forms.
The sky is its head, the moon and sun its
eyes.
- 3.24. The cardinal directions are its ears, the Vedas
its speech, the wind its breath, so it is pro-
claimed;
The universe is its heart, they say; the earth
its loins, so it is thought.
- 3.25. The atmosphere is its navel, the stellar sphere
its breast;
The world known as Maharloka is the neck,
Janarloka its face, so it is thought.
- 3.26. Taparloka is the forehead, situated beneath
Satyaloka.

Indra and the gods are its arms, sound is the hearing of this Great Ruler.

- 3.27. The twin Ashvins are its nostrils, scent its smelling, so think the wise.
Fire is proclaimed as its mouth, day and night as its two eyelids.
- 3.28. The abode of Brahma is the play of its eyebrows; the waters are proclaimed as its palate.
Taste is proclaimed as its tongue, the God of Death as its fangs.
- 3.29. The various affections are its teeth; Maya is proclaimed as its laughter.
Creation is its casting of sidelong glances; modesty is the upper lip of this Great Ruler.
- 3.30. Greed is its lower lip, the way of unrighteousness its back.
And Prajapati, the creator on earth, is its penis.
- 3.31. The ocean is the belly, the mountains the bones of the Goddess, the Great Ruler.
The rivers are proclaimed as her arteries, trees as her hair.
- 3.32. Childhood, youth, and old age are her excellent gaits;
Clouds are her hair, the two twilights the garments of the Lord.
- 3.33. O King, the moon is the mind of the holy World Mother,
Vishnu is her power of discernment, and Shiva is the seat of her thoughts and feelings, so it is thought.

- 3.34. Horses and all the various species abide in the hips and loins of the Lord;
The great lower worlds such as Atala are situated below her buttocks.
- 3.35. Such was the massive form that the best of gods beheld,
With its thousands of blazing rays, licking with its tongue,
- 3.36. Producing horrible crunching sounds with its teeth, spewing fire from its eyes,
Holding various weapons, heroic in stature, making mush of Brahmins and warriors for its food.
- 3.37. It had a thousand heads and eyes, and a thousand feet as well,
Resembling millions of suns, radiant like millions of lightning streaks.
- 3.38. That fearful, horrific form, terrifying to heart and eye,
All the gods beheld and wailed, "Woe unto us, woe!"
- 3.39. With trembling hearts, they swooned helplessly.
Even the thought, "This is the World Mother," escaped them.
- 3.40. Then the Vedas, stationed on the four sides of the Great Ruling Goddess,
With much effort awakened the unconscious gods from their swoon.
- 3.41. Then the gods, regaining their senses, received the supreme Vedic revelation.

Tears of loving joy filled the eyes of these immortals, while their throats tightened.

- 3.42. They began to offer praise, even as their voices faltered through the tears.

The gods spoke:

Forgive our faults, O Mother; protect us who are wretched, as we are born of you.

- 3.43. Remove your anger, O Ruler of the Gods; we have seen this form of yours and are frightened.

How can we poor immortals here offer adequate praise to you?

- 3.44. The extent of your power is unknown even to yourself.

How can it be comprehended by us who are born afterward?

- 3.45. Hail to you, Ruler of the Universe; hail to you, composed of the syllable Om.

Hail to you, established in the whole of Vedanta, embodied in the syllable Hrim.

- 3.46. To the source from which fire has arisen, to the source of the sun and moon,

To the source of all plants, to that Self of all, hail!

- 3.47. And to the source from which the gods are born, as well as other celestial beings and birds,

And animals and men, to that Self of all, hail!

- 3.48. The in-breath and out-breath, rice and barley, asceticism, faith, and truth,

Self-restraint and sacred law, to the source
of all these, hail! Hail!

3.49. To the source of the seven breaths and
flames, and of the seven fuel sticks,
And of the seven oblations and worlds, to
that Self of all, hail!

3.50. To the source from which issue the oceans,
mountains, and rivers,
To the source of all plants and their sap,
hail! Hail!

3.51. To the source from which arise the sacrifice,
the consecration, the sacrificial post, and the
gifts,
The verses, chants, and formulas, to that Self
of all, hail!

3.52. Hail from in front and behind, hail to you
on both sides;
From below, from above, from the four di-
rections, to you in the greatest degree, O
Mother, hail! Hail!

3.53. Withdraw, O Ruler of the Gods, this extraor-
dinary form;
Show us simply that exceedingly beautiful
form of yours.

Vyasa said:

3.54. Seeing the gods so frightened, the World
Mother, an ocean of compassion,
Withdrew her horrific form and revealed her
beautiful aspect:

3.55. She held a noose and goad while gesturing
her beneficence and assurance of safety;
delicate was she in all her limbs.

Her eyes overflowed with compassion as her
lotus face gently smiled.

- 3.56. When the gods beheld that beautiful form,
their fears dissolved
And their minds attained peace; inarticulate
from joy, they bowed down in silence.

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Chapter 4

Instruction in the Yoga of Knowledge

The Goddess spoke:

- 4.1. How distant you are, so humble, from this form of mine, so magnificent!
Yet out of affection for my devotees, I have displayed such a form.
- 4.2. Not by study of the Vedas, nor by yoga, charity, austerity, or sacrifice
Can you see this form in any way, without my favor.
- 4.3. Listen, O King, let us return to the original subject regarding the supreme Self and how it becomes the individual soul.
By combining with apparent limitations, the Self seemingly assumes the role of an active agent and so on.
- 4.4. The soul performs diverse acts, the single cause of virtue and vice.
Thereby it attains birth in various wombs and experiences happiness and sorrow.
- 4.5. Again, under their determining influence, ever intent on new actions of various sorts, It attains new bodies of various kinds and experiences further happiness and sorrow.

- 4.6. Like a water wheel, this cycling never ceases.
Ignorance alone is its root; from that springs
desire, from that actions.
- 4.7. Therefore a person should ever strive for the
destruction of ignorance,
For one's birth is fruitful when ignorance is
destroyed.
- 4.8. One thereby attains the ends of human ex-
istence and the state of being liberated while
living.
Wisdom alone is competent for the destruc-
tion of ignorance.
- 4.9. Action, born of ignorance, is incompetent to
destroy ignorance, since the two are not
opposed, O Mountain.
Rather, the hope that ignorance can be de-
stroyed by action is futile.
- 4.10. Useless are actions with their fruits, which
humans crave again and again.
From that arises passion, from that evil, from
that great calamity.
- 4.11. Therefore a person should acquire knowl-
edge with all-out effort.
Yet scripture itself seems to enjoin the ne-
cessity of action, as when it mentions: "Ever
performing actions here . . ."
- 4.12. But scripture also states: "From knowledge
indeed comes emancipation." Thus some
conclude that the two should be conjoined:
Action should be a complement of knowl-
edge, as its benefactor.

- 4.13. Others say that this is impossible, due to their opposition.
The knot of the heart is loosened through knowledge; when the knot is tight, action arises.
- 4.14. Coexistence of the two together is thus impossible, due to their opposition,
Just as darkness and light cannot appear simultaneously.
- 4.15. Therefore, high-minded one, all Vedic actions
Reach their end when the heart is purified;
perform them with diligence
- 4.16. Until tranquillity, restraint, patience, dispassion, and goodness arise.
Up to this point actions are fitting, but no further.
- 4.17. And then renouncing worldly attachments,
being self-restrained, one should resort to a guru
Well-versed in the Veda and absorbed in
Brahman, approaching with true devotion.
- 4.18. One should listen to the Upanishads daily
and with attention,
Reflecting constantly on the meaning of such
great sayings as “You are That.”
- 4.19. The great saying, “You are That,” indicates
the oneness of the soul and Brahman.
When the identity is realized, one goes beyond
fear and assumes my essential nature.
- 4.20. First one should comprehend the meaning
of the individual words, then the meaning
of the sentence as a whole.

Now the word *That* refers to I myself, O Mountain; this is well proclaimed,

- 4.21. While the word *You* refers certainly to the individual soul.

The identity of the two is indicated by the word *are*, so say the wise.

- 4.22. Due to the opposed nature of the two expressed referents, their identity may not seem possible.

Thus one must adopt the secondary meaning of the terms *That* and *You*, as fixed in scripture.

- 4.23. Just pure consciousness is the secondary meaning implied by both terms: their essential oneness is thereby established.

Realizing their oneness by disregarding their non-essential differences, one transcends duality.

- 4.24. In the same manner, the sentence “This is that Devadatta” uses the secondary meanings, so it is taught.

When freed from the three bodies beginning with the Gross, a person becomes absorbed in Brahman.

- 4.25. The Gross Body arises from the fivefold compounded gross elements.

It experiences the fruit of all its actions and is subject to old age and disease.

- 4.26. In truth it is false, yet it appears real, being full of Maya.

This is the gross limiting condition of my own Self, O Mountain King.

- 4.27. The union of the organs of knowledge and action, conjoined with the five breaths
And fused with the mind and intellect, produces the Subtle Body; this the wise discern.
- 4.28. Arising from the uncompounded elements, this Subtle Body of the Self
Is my second limiting condition, experiencing pleasure and pain.
- 4.29. Without beginning and indefinable, ignorance is the third limiting condition;
It is that Body of the Self which appears as Causal in nature, O Mountain Lord.
- 4.30. When these limiting conditions are dissolved, the Self alone remains.
The five sheaths ever reside within the three bodies.
- 4.31. When the five sheaths are discarded, one attains the root that is Brahman,
Described by such sayings as “Not this, not that,” indicating my own essential form.
- 4.32. That Self is never born nor does it die; it did not come into existence, for nothing real comes into existence from nothing.
It is unborn, eternal, everlasting, ancient. It is not slain when the body is slain.
- 4.33. If the slayer believes “I slay,” if the slain believes “I am slain,”
Then neither understands that the Self does not slay and cannot be slain.

- 4.34. Smaller than an atom, greater than the greatest is the Self dwelling in the heart of each being.
 One who is free of desires, who is beyond sorrow, sees that Self and its greatness through the grace of the creator.
- 4.35. Know the Self as the owner of a chariot, and the body as the chariot;
 Know the intellect as the driver, and the mind as the reins.
- 4.36. The senses are the horses, they say, the objects of sense their fields of forage.
 The Self, united with the senses and mind, is an enjoyer, so say the wise.
- 4.37. Whoever, on the one hand, lacks knowledge becomes mindless and ever impure;
 That person does not attain the highest goal but continues in samsara.
- 4.38. Whoever, on the other hand, has understanding becomes mindful and ever pure;
 That person attains the highest goal, from which there is no return.
- 4.39. That person who uses understanding as the driver and who controls the reins of the mind,
 Arrives at the end of the journey, which is my own supreme state.
- 4.40. Thus through hearing about, reflecting upon, and ascertaining the Self by the Self,
 One should also, through intense meditation, realize that I am in essence the Self.

- 4.41. Before attaining the final absorption, one should contemplate within one's self the triad of letters
 Known as the sacred syllable of the Goddess, for the sake of meditating on the two meanings of the mantra.
- 4.42. The letter *h* is the Gross Body, the letter *r* the Subtle Body,
 The letter *i* the Causal Body. The whole sound *hrim* is I myself as the Transcendent Fourth.
- 4.43. In this manner, recognizing sequentially the triadic elements of the seed mantra contained within the comprehensive whole,
 The wise person should reflect on the identity of the whole and the parts.
- 4.44. Prior to the moment of total absorption, while concentrating earnestly in the above manner,
 With the eyes closed, one should then meditate upon me, the Goddess, Ruler of the Universe.
- 4.45. One should equalize the inhalations and exhalations flowing through the nose,
 Being unaffected by sensual desires, without faults, free from jealousy.
- 4.46. With sincere devotion, within the silent void of the heart,
 One should dissolve the "All-pervading" gross aspect of the Self that is the letter *h* into the letter *r*.

- 4.47. One should dissolve the “Luminous” subtle aspect of the spirit that is the letter *r* into the letter *i*.

One should dissolve the “Intelligent” causal aspect of the Self that is the letter *i* into the sound *hrim*.

- 4.48. It transcends the distinction of “name” and “named,” beyond all dualities.

It is whole, infinite being, consciousness, and bliss. One should meditate on that reality within the flaming light of consciousness.

- 4.49. By this meditation, O King, the noble person will perceive me directly

And then merge into my own essence, since we two are one.

- 4.50. By practicing this yoga, one realizes me as the supreme Self.

In that instant, ignorance and its effects all perish.

Chapter 5

Instruction in the Eight-Limbed/ Serpentine Yoga

Himalaya spoke:

- 5.1. O Great Queen, describe that yoga with all its limbs which bestows supreme understanding, So that by practicing it, I may become fit to see the truth.

The Goddess spoke:

- 5.2. The goal of yoga is not found in the heavens, nor on earth, nor in the underworld, But in the union of the individual soul and the supreme Self; thus do skilled adepts define yoga.
- 5.3. Impeding the practice of yoga are the obstacles, said to be six, O Faultless One. They are designated as desire and anger, greed and delusion, arrogance and jealousy.
- 5.4. Adept yogis use the limbs of yoga to break through these obstacles and to reach the goal of union. Restraint and observance, followed by posture, breath control,
- 5.5. Withdrawing the senses, concentration, meditation, and finally absorption—

These, they say, are the eight limbs practiced by adepts in pursuing yoga.

- 5.6. Noninjury, truthfulness, nonstealing, abstinence, compassion, humility,

Patience, steadiness, moderation in eating, and purity, these are the ten restraints.

- 5.7. Austerity, contentment, faith, charity, worshipping the deity,

Listening to established truth, shame, understanding, recitation, and sacrifice,

- 5.8. These I proclaim as the ten observances, Chief of Mountains.

The Lotus Posture, the Happiness Posture, the Auspiciousness Posture, as well as the Diamond Posture,

- 5.9. And the Hero Posture, these in order are renowned as the five basic modes of sitting.

Duly placing the pure soles of the feet upon the thighs,

- 5.10. One should catch hold of the big toes with one's hands crossed behind the back—

Such is the famous Lotus Posture, beloved by yogis.

- 5.11. Duly putting the pure soles of the feet between the thighs and knees,

The yogi should sit with body straight—such is deemed the Happiness Posture.

- 5.12. Placing the heels firmly on either side of the perineum,

One should use the hands to hold tight the heels of the feet beneath the genitals—

- 5.13. Such is the famous Auspiciousness Posture, well honored by yogis.
Placing the feet alongside the outer thighs, with fingers cupping the knees,
- 5.14. One should firmly fix the hands—such is the unsurpassed Diamond Posture.
Putting one foot under the opposite thigh and the other foot upon the remaining thigh,
- 5.15. The yogi should sit with body straight—such is the Hero Posture.
Drawing in the breath through the left artery for sixteen counts,
- 5.16. The yogi should hold it fully for sixty-four counts, Restraining it duly in the central artery; then slowly, for thirty-two counts,
- 5.17. The excellent knower of yoga should exhale through the right artery—
This is breath control, so say those versed in the treatises on yoga.
- 5.18. Again and again, in proper order, one should manipulate the breath.
Gradually, as is suitable, one should increase the count from twelve up to sixteen.
- 5.19. When breath control is accompanied by mantric repetition and meditations, the wise regard it as having a matrix.
When breath control is not so accompanied, they regard it as without a matrix.
- 5.20. Through repeated practice, one progresses from the lowest level of accomplishment when a person's body begins to perspire,

Through the middle level when the body trembles, to the highest level when one levitates—so it is taught.

- 5.21. One should strive constantly until one attains the fruits of the highest level.

The senses are wont to feed freely upon the objects of sense.

- 5.22. Seizing them back from those objects by force is called withdrawal of the senses.

On the toes, ankles, knees, thighs, anus, sexual organ, navel,

- 5.23. On the heart, neck, throat, soft palate, and nose,

Between the brows, on the head, on the forehead, and on the crown of the head, as prescribed,

- 5.24. Concentrating the vital breath on these points is called concentration.

Composing the mind and abiding inwardly in pure consciousness

- 5.25. While meditating on one's chosen deity within the Self is called meditation.

Ever realizing the identity of the individual Self and the supreme Self

- 5.26. Is absorption, sages avow. The nature of the eight limbs has thus been described.

Now I shall tell you about the excellent Mantra Yoga.

- 5.27. The body is the cosmos, composed of the five elements, so it is said, O Mountain.

It embodies the unity of the soul and Brahman, conjoined with the lustrous essence of the moon, sun, and fire.

- 5.28. There are reckoned to be thirty-five million subtle arteries in the body.

Among these, ten are considered major and three are of special significance.

- 5.29. The principal one inside the spinal column embodies the moon, sun, and fire.

The “Channel of Comfort” runs on the left side and shines white, embodying the moon;

- 5.30. This artery appears as Shakti herself visibly manifest, embodying the divine ambrosia.

The one on the right side is the “Tawny-Red Channel,” male in essence, embodying the sun.

- 5.31. Composed of all brilliant light is the “Most Gracious Channel,” embodying fire;

In its middle is the “Beautiful, Variegated Channel,” characterized by will, knowledge, and action.

- 5.32. Inside is the “Self-Existent Emblem,” shining like ten million suns.

Above that is the seed mantra of Maya, which begins with the letters *h* and *r*, and concludes with the nasal *m*.

- 5.33. Above that is the Coiled Serpent appearing like a flame, blood-red in color.

She is said to be the very essence of the Goddess, expanding with rapturous passion, O Mountain Chief.

- 5.34. Outside her is the golden, four-petaled lotus adorned with the letters *v* to *s*.
One should thus visualize this lotus, resembling molten gold.
- 5.35. Above that is the six-petaled lotus, resembling fire and radiant like a diamond,
Adorned with the six letters *b* to *l*; this is the excellent “Own Abode Center.”
- 5.36. The lowest, root center supports all six lotuses, and thus is known as the “Root Support Center.”
Regarding the “Own Abode Center,” it is so known since it is the “own abode” of the “Supreme Emblem.”
- 5.37. Above that is the brightly shining “Jewel-Filled Center” in the area of the navel.
It is brilliant like a cloud, like a flash of lightning, composed of great luster.
- 5.38. This lotus shines like a jewel, so it is called the “Jeweled Lotus.”
It is endowed with ten petals, adorned with the letters from *d* to *ph*.
- 5.39. Vishnu resides on this lotus, so that here one is able to attain a vision of Vishnu.
Above that is the lotus of the “Unstruck Sound,” shining like the stars and sun.
- 5.40. Its petals are adorned with the letters from *k* to *th*.
In its midst is the “Emblem of Bana” shining like ten thousand suns.

- 5.41. This center is composed of Brahman in the form of sound; therein that sound, though unstruck, is perceived.
Thus sages call it the lotus of the “Unstruck Sound.”
- 5.42. It is the seat of bliss, wherein dwells the Supreme Person.
Above that is the sixteen-petaled lotus known as the “Unstained.”
- 5.43. Conjoined with the sixteen vowels, it is smoke-colored and highly effulgent.
Since the soul here attains purity by seeing the Supreme Self,
- 5.44. It is known as the “Unstained Lotus.” It is also known as ethereal and exceedingly marvelous.
Above that is the “Command Center,” wherein dwells the supreme Self.
- 5.45. Commands are received there; thus it is called the “Command Center.”
This lotus is two-petaled, adorned with the letters *h* and *ksh*, and very charming.
- 5.46. Above that is the “Kailasa Center,” and above that the “Blockade Center.”
Thus I have described the supporting centers to you, who are of firm resolve.
- 5.47. Above them, it is said, is the seat of the primal point with its Lotus of a Thousand Petals.
And so the entire, unexcelled pathway of yoga has been disclosed.

- 5.48. First, breathing in with yogic control, one should bring the mind to focus on the Root Support.

There between the anus and the genitals resides the Shakti known as the Coiled Serpent. Compressing her, one should awaken her.

- 5.49. Then one should lead her to the highest center of the primal point by piercing the mystic emblems in order.

One should visualize there that supreme Shakti as united with Shiva.

- 5.50. In that union is produced an ambrosial nectar resembling molten red lac,

Which should be given as a drink to the Shakti Maya, who grants success in yoga.

- 5.51. Satisfying the presiding deities of the six centers by offering them that descending stream of nectar,

A wise person will then lead her back by the same path to the Root Support Center.

- 5.52. It is certain that by such spiritual practice performed daily,

All mantras previously uttered incorrectly will become effective, without fail.

- 5.53. One is freed from the bondage of worldly existence with its miseries of old age, death, and the like.

Just such qualities as belong to me, the divine World Mother,

- 5.54. Those very qualities will inhere in the accomplished adept, without fail.

Thus have I recounted the excellent practice of concentrating the breath, my child.

- 5.55. Now listen attentively to me regarding another concentration practice.

Fixing the mind upon me as the Goddess transcending all space and time,

- 5.56. One quickly merges with me through realizing the oneness of the soul and Brahman. But if the mind is impure, one will not succeed at once.

- 5.57. Then the yogi should practice the Limb-by-Limb Meditation:

On my charming limbs, on my hands, feet, and so on, O Mountain,

- 5.58. The adept well versed in mantras should focus the mind, mastering each member one by one. With the mind thus purified, the yogi should concentrate upon my whole form.

- 5.59. Until the mind dissolves into me, the Goddess who is divine consciousness, O Mountain, The well-versed adept should continue reciting the approved mantra accompanied by sacrificial offerings.

- 5.60. Through yoga accompanied by mantra practice, one becomes fit to realize all that is to be known.

Mantra without yoga is ineffective; yoga without mantra is also ineffective.

- 5.61. Integrating the two leads to realization of Brahman.

As a jar in a darkened house may be seen with a lamp,

- 5.62. So may the Self concealed by Maya become evident, through the mantra.
Now I have explained the whole practice of yoga with its limbs.
- 5.63. This can be learned only from a teacher's instruction and not from millions of books.

Chapter 6

The Goal of the Yogas: Knowledge of Brahman

The Goddess spoke:

- 6.1. Cultivating the yogas just described, one should meditate on me as the true form of Brahman
With sincere devotion, assuming the proper posture, O King.
- 6.2. It is manifest, well-fixed, pervading the hearts of beings, indeed; it is the great foundation.
Thereupon all that moves, breathes, and blinks is established.
- 6.3. Know that as existent and nonexistent, as the most desirable, as supreme, as beyond the understanding of humankind.
What is luminous, what is smaller than the small, in which the worlds and their inhabitants are rooted,
- 6.4. That is this imperishable Brahman; it is the life principle, speech, and mind.
This is the real, the immortal; know, good sir, that this is what you are to pierce.
- 6.5. Taking the great weapon of the Upanishads as the bow, nocked with the arrow honed by meditation,

Drawing it with a mind absorbed in contemplating that Brahman, know, good sir, that imperishable reality is the target.

- 6.6. The syllable Om is the bow, while the Self is the arrow; Brahman is named as the target. It will be pierced by one who concentrates. One will merge into it, like the arrow.
- 6.7. In it are woven the sky, earth, and atmosphere, as well as the mind along with all the breaths;
Know it alone as the one Self; let go of other notions, as this is the bridge to immortality.
- 6.8. Where the subtle channels of the body come together, like the spokes in the nave of a wheel,
There this Self circulates within, manifesting in diverse modes.
- 6.9. Meditate on Om as the Self; may you fare well in crossing to the far shore beyond darkness.
Within the space in the bright city of Brahman, the Self is established.
- 6.10. Infused by the mind, directing the breaths and body, it abides in material form, taking charge of the heart.
By their understanding the wise recognize this blissful immortal, which shines brightly.
- 6.11. The knot of the heart is untied, all doubts are removed,
And the binding effects of one's deeds pass away when that Self is seen, both the higher and the lower.

- 6.12. In the highest golden sheath resides the unstained, indivisible Brahman.
It is radiant, the light of lights; that is what Self-knowers know.
- 6.13. The sun shines not there, nor the moon and stars, nor do these lightnings shine, much less this fire.
All things shine only after it shines; by its light all this world becomes visible.
- 6.14. Just this Brahman is immortal; in front is Brahman, behind is Brahman, on the right and the left;
It extends above and below. The whole universe is just this Brahman, the greatest.
- 6.15. Whoever realizes Brahman as such is the highest of humans, wholly fulfilled.
Merged in Brahman and serene, that one neither grieves nor desires.
- 6.16. Fear surely arises from another, O King; in the absence of another, one does not fear.
I am not separate from anyone, nor is anyone separate from me.
- 6.17. I, indeed, am that person, and that person truly is I; regard this as certain, O Mountain.
One sees me wherever one finds a person who knows me.
- 6.18. I do not abide in any sacred site, not even in Shiva's mountain abode nor in Vishnu's heaven;
Yet I dwell in the midst of the lotus heart of one who knows me.

- 6.19. Worshiping just once a person who knows me gives the same fruit as worshipping me millions of times.
One's family is purified, one's mother is completely fulfilled,
- 6.20. And the whole earth is blessed when one's heart dissolves into pure consciousness.
The knowledge of Brahman that you inquired about, Best of Mountains,
- 6.21. I have described fully; there is nothing more to say.
This teaching, to an eldest son filled with devotion and of good character,
- 6.22. And to a disciple of proper disposition, is to be revealed, but not to anyone else at all.
For one who is supremely devoted to God, and to the guru as to God,
- 6.23. For such a noble soul these matters just described become clear.
One who teaches this knowledge is indeed the supreme Lord,
- 6.24. Whose generosity the disciple can never repay.
Greater even than the father, it is said, is the bestower of birth through spiritual knowledge,
- 6.25. For the birth engendered by the father perishes, but never what is engendered by the teacher.
"Do no injury to the teacher," so says a sacred precept, O Mountain.

- 6.26. Thus, the religious law concludes that the guru bestowing spiritual knowledge is supreme.
When Shiva is provoked, the guru can save; when the guru is provoked, Shiva cannot save.
- 6.27. Therefore, O Mountain, one should please the holy guru with all one's effort.
Dedicating all one does with body, mind, and speech to the guru, one should remain thus focused.
- 6.28. Otherwise, one becomes ungrateful, and there is no expiation for ingratitude.
Indra revealed this knowledge to Atharvana, threatening to decapitate him.
- 6.29. When Atharvana revealed it to the two Ashvins, Indra cut off his head.
Seeing his horse head destroyed, the two Ashvins, excellent, divine physicians,
- 6.30. Restored the sage's original head once again.
Thus is the knowledge of Brahman difficult to attain, Mountain Chief.
- 6.31. One who attains it is blessed and completely fulfilled, O Mountain.

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Chapter 7

Instruction in the Yoga of Devotion

Himalaya spoke:

- 7.1. Describe the path of devotion that focuses on you, O Mother. By such devotion, supreme knowledge easily
Develops in the ordinary person filled with passions.

The Goddess spoke:

- 7.2. There are three well-known paths of mine leading to liberation, Mountain King:
The Yoga of Action, the Yoga of Knowledge, and the Yoga of Devotion, my good sir.
- 7.3. Of these three the latter is the easiest to practice in all respects,
Appealing naturally to the heart without distressing the body or mind.
- 7.4. Devotion as practiced by human beings is of three kinds, in accord with the qualities of Nature.
A person who intends harm to others while engaging in deceit,
- 7.5. And who is spiteful and irascible, practices devotion characterized by ignorance.

- One who intends no harm to others, being concerned simply with personal well-being,
- 7.6. Who is ever lustful, seeking fame and seizing pleasures,
Who worships me intently for the sake of obtaining this or that fruit,
- 7.7. Who foolishly assumes false distinctions, thinking that I am other than one's own being,
Such a person practices devotion characterized by passionate yearning, O Mountain Chief.
- 7.8. One who offers all karmic fruits to me, the Supreme Ruler, in order to be cleansed of evil,
Who thinks, "I must carry out those acts enjoined by the Veda, without faltering,"
- 7.9. Who is thus convinced but who still clings to false distinctions,
Who performs all work out of a sense of love, such a person practices devotion characterized by virtue, O Mountain.
- 7.10. This latter, though still clinging to false distinctions, leads to the highest devotion.
But the two former kinds of devotion do not lead to the highest, so it is understood.
- 7.11. Now be attentive while I explain the highest kind of devotion.
One who constantly listens to my virtues and recites my names,
- 7.12. Who is firmly intent on me, a treasury of auspicious qualities,

- Whose concentration is ever steady like a continuous flow of oil,
- 7.13. Who has no ulterior motive at all in these actions,
 Having no desire for liberation in any form—
 whether living in my presence, sharing my powers, merging into me, or dwelling in my heaven—
- 7.14. Who knows absolutely nothing better than serving me,
 Cherishing the notion of servant and master and thus not aspiring even for liberation,
- 7.15. Who enthusiastically thinks of me alone with supreme affection,
 Knowing me truly as never separate from oneself, not acknowledging any difference,
- 7.16. Who thinks of beings as embodiments of myself,
 Loving other selves as one's own Self,
- 7.17. Who makes no false distinctions, realizing the universality of pure consciousness,
 My omnipresent essence manifested in all beings everywhere at all times,
- 7.18. Who honors and respects even the lowest outcaste, O Lord,
 Discarding any sense of difference and thus wishing harm to no one,
- 7.19. Who is eager to see my sacred sites and to see my devotees,
 And is eager to listen to scriptures that describe the mantras and rites used in worshipping me, O Ruler,

- 7.20. Whose heart is overwhelmed with love for me, whose body ever thrills with joy,
Whose eyes are filled with tears of love, and whose voice falters,
- 7.21. Who, with such enraptured feelings, O Mountain Chief, worships
Me as ruler, womb of the world, and cause of all causes,
- 7.22. Who performs my splendrous rites, both the regular and the occasional,
Always with devotion and without miserly regard for cost,
- 7.23. Who longs to see my festivals and to participate in them,
Ever impelled by such desires arising spontaneously, O Mountain,
- 7.24. Who sings on high my names while dancing,
Unselfconscious and forgetful of the body,
- 7.25. Who accepts the fruits of past karma as what must be,
Unconcerned with thoughts of preserving the body,
- 7.26. Such a person practices devotion deemed supreme,
In which there is no thought of anything except me, the Goddess.
- 7.27. The person in whom such supreme devotion truly arises, O Mountain,
Then dissolves into my essential nature of pure consciousness.

- 7.28. Knowledge is proclaimed as the final goal of devotion,
 And of dispassion as well, for both devotion and dispassion are fulfilled when knowledge arises.
- 7.29. Even when devotion is fully accomplished, O Mountain, if one's past karmic influences are not favorable,
 A person may fail to realize knowledge of me and so will depart to the Jeweled Island.
- 7.30. Going there, that person encounters enjoyments of all kinds, though remaining indifferent,
 And in the end attains complete knowledge of my essence that is pure consciousness, O Mountain.
- 7.31. Thereby the person is forever liberated; liberation arises from knowledge and from nothing else.
 One who attains knowledge here in this world, realizing the inner Self abiding in the heart,
- 7.32. Who is absorbed in my pure consciousness, loses not the vital breaths.
 Being Brahman, the person who knows Brahman attains Brahman.
- 7.33. An object may vanish through ignorance, like gold forgotten on one's neck;
 Through knowledge that destroys the ignorance, one may recover the desired object.

- 7.34. My essence is different from the known and the unknown, O Highest Mountain.
As in a mirror, so is that essence reflected clearly within the embodied Self; as in water, so is it reflected indistinctly in the world of ancestors.
- 7.35. Just as the distinction between shadow and light is clear, just so
Is the knowledge, dispersing any sense of duality, that arises in my world.
- 7.36. One who is dispassionate at death but who lacks knowledge
Will ever dwell in the world of the creator god Brahma for an entire eon.
- 7.37. That person will be reborn in a virtuous and dignified family,
And after practicing spiritual discipline, will thereby attain knowledge.
- 7.38. In the course of many births does knowledge arise, O King, not in one;
Therefore with total commitment seek to acquire knowledge.
- 7.39. Otherwise, it is a great loss, as this human birth is hard to attain.
Even if one is born a Brahmin, access to the Vedas is hard to gain.
- 7.40. Realizing the six virtues beginning with tranquillity, achieving success in yoga as well,
And finding an excellent teacher, all these are hard to attain in life,

- 7.41. As are keen senses and sanctification of the body.
By the merit gained in several births, one comes to desire liberation.
- 7.42. Even after attaining the fruits of spiritual discipline, the person who
Does not strive after knowledge squanders the opportunity provided by birth.
- 7.43. Therefore, O King, one should strive for knowledge with all one's strength;
Then one surely obtains the fruits of the horse sacrifice at every moment.
- 7.44. Like clarified butter hidden in milk, knowledge dwells in every being;
One should stir continuously, using the mind as the churning stick.
- 7.45. Attaining knowledge, one is wholly fulfilled—this is the purport of the Veda.
I have described everything in brief; what more do you wish to hear?

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Chapter 8

Further Instruction in the Yoga of Devotion: The Sacred Sites, Rites, and Festivals of the Goddess

Himalaya spoke:

- 8.1. O Ruler of the Gods, what sacred dwelling places here on earth should one see?
Which ones are preeminent, purifying, and most pleasing to the Goddess?
- 8.2. What rites provide satisfaction, and also what festivals?
Tell me all about these matters, Mother, whereby a person becomes completely fulfilled.

The Goddess spoke:

- 8.3. Every site is my dwelling place and worth seeing, all moments are fit for observing rites, And festivals may be held on any occasion, for I pervade all times and places.
- 8.4. Yet loving my devotees as I do, I shall be more specific.
Listen attentively to my words, Mountain King.
- 8.5. Kolapuram is a great dwelling place, where Lakshmi ever lives.

Matripuram is a second prime abode, where Renuka resides.

- 8.6. Tulajapuram is a third, Saptashringa yet another.

Hingula is a great dwelling place, and so is Jvalamukhi.

- 8.7. There is the prime dwelling place of Shakambhari, and the excellent dwelling place of Bhramari.

There is Shri Raktadantika's dwelling place, and Durga's is yet another.

- 8.8. The dwelling place of Vindhychalanivasini is most excellent.

There is Annapurna's great dwelling place, and the unsurpassed Kanchipuram.

- 8.9. There is Bhimadevi's prime dwelling place, and Vimala's dwelling place as well,

And the great dwelling place of Shri Chandrala, and Kaushiki's dwelling place too.

- 8.10. There is Nilamba's prime dwelling place on the summit of Mt. Nila,

As well as Jambunadeshvari's dwelling place, and the beautiful Shrinagara.

- 8.11. Guhyakali's great dwelling place is established in Nepal,

While Minakshi's supreme dwelling place is in Chidambaram, so it is proclaimed.

- 8.12. Sundari resides in the great dwelling place of Vedaranya.

The Supreme Shakti has established her great dwelling place at Ekambaram.

- 8.13. Mahalasa is a prime dwelling place, and that of Yogeshvari is yet another.
And there is Nilasarasvati's dwelling place, famous among the Chinese.
- 8.14. Bagala's dwelling place in Vaidyanatha is considered most excellent.
The Jeweled Island is my abode, where I dwell as the auspicious and glorious Bhuvaneshvari, as tradition affirms.
- 8.15. The sacred zone of the Goddess's womb at Kamakhya is the site of the auspicious Tripurabhairavi.
It is the best of hallowed places in this earthly realm, and here Mahamaya dwells.
- 8.16. There is no better dwelling place on earth than here,
Where every month the Goddess herself resides during her menses.
- 8.17. All the deities of that place have assumed the form of mountains.
Even the great deities dwell within those mountains.
- 8.18. The whole earth there is the very essence of the Goddess, so think the wise.
There is no better dwelling place than this sacred zone of the womb at Kamakhya.
- 8.19. And Gayatri's prime dwelling place is the auspicious Pushkara, so it is proclaimed.
In Amaresha dwells Chandika; in Prabhasa is Pushkarekshini.
- 8.20. In the great dwelling place Naimisha is the Devi Lingadharini.

- Puruhuta is in Puskaraksha, just as Rati is in Ashadhi.
- 8.21. In the great dwelling place Chandamundi is Dandini Parameshvari.
In Bharabhuti dwells Bhuti, in Nakula Nakuleshvari.
- 8.22. Chandrika is in Harishchandra, in Shrigiri is Shankari, according to tradition.
In Japyeshvara is Trishula; Sukshma is in Amratakeshvara.
- 8.23. Shankari is in Mahakala, Sharvani in the place named Madhyama.
In the hallowed site called Kedara is the Devi Margadayini.
- 8.24. In a place called Bhairava is Bhairavi; in Gaya is Mangala, according to tradition.
Sthanupriya is in Kurukshetra, and Svayambhuvi in Nakula.
- 8.25. In Kanakhala dwells Ugra, Vishvesha in Vimaleshvara.
In Attahasa is Mahananda; in Mahendra is Mahantaka.
- 8.26. In Bhima, Bhimeshvari is proclaimed to be; in the dwelling place called Vastrapatha, Bhavani Shankari is proclaimed, while Rudrani is in Ardhakotika.
- 8.27. In Avimukta dwells Vishalakshi, Mahabhaga in Mahalaya.
In Gokarna dwells Bhadrakarni; Bhadra dwells in Bhadrakarnaka.

- 8.28. Utpalakshi is in Suvarnaksha, Sthanvisha in a place called Sthanu.
In Kamalalaya is Kamala; Prachanda is in Chagalandaka.
- 8.29. At Kurandala dwells Trisandhya; at Makota, Mukuteshvari.
In Mandalesha dwells Shandaki, and Kali at Kalanjara.
- 8.30. In Shankukarna, Dhvani is proclaimed; Sthula dwells in Sthulakeshvara.
In the lotus hearts of the wise dwells Hrillekha, the Parameshvari.
- 8.31. These places proclaimed above are most dear to the Goddess.
First one should listen to the particular virtues of these various sacred sites, Highest Mountain.
- 8.32. Afterward one should worship the Goddess in the prescribed manner.
Alternatively, Highest Mountain, since all sacred sites exist in Kashi,
- 8.33. One may wish to live there always, ever absorbed in serving the Goddess.
By seeing those dwelling places, by reciting the names of the Goddess without pause,
- 8.34. By meditating on her lotus feet, one becomes freed from bondage.
Whoever, arising at dawn, should recite these names of the Goddess,
- 8.35. Burns to ashes all sins instantly, in that very moment, O Mountain.

At the time of offerings to the dead, one should recite these holy names in the presence of Brahmins;

- 8.36. All one's ancestors will be freed and go to the highest state.

Now I shall describe the rites to you, who are of firm resolve.

- 8.37. Both women and men should perform them with diligence.

The third-day observance called the Rite of Infinite Blessings, along with the Rite of Happiness and Prosperity,

- 8.38. And also the rite named the Bestower of Refreshing Bliss, should all be done on the third lunar day.

Then there is the Friday Rite, the Dark Fourteenth Rite,

- 8.39. The Tuesday Rite, and the Evening Rite as well.

In this rite, the god Mahadeva places the Goddess on her seat

- 8.40. And dances before her, together with the other gods at the beginning of the night.

In this rite, a person should fast at dusk, and during the evening should worship the Auspicious Goddess.

- 8.41. It should be observed once each fortnight, and is pleasing to the Goddess.

There is also the Monday Rite, especially dear to me, O Mountain.

- 8.42. In this rite, one should take food at night after worshipping the Goddess.
And there are the two celebrations of the Rite of Nine Nights, highly pleasing to me.
- 8.43. Likewise, O Lord, there are other rites, both regular and occasional.
Whoever performs these rites unselfishly, just to please me,
- 8.44. Attains union with me. Such a person is devoted to me, is dear to me.
One should also celebrate prominent festivals such as the Swing Festival, O Lord.
- 8.45. One should perform both the Going-to-Sleep Festival and the Waking-up Festival.
And one should perform my Chariot Festival, and the Jasmine Festival,
- 8.46. And likewise the pleasing Festival of the Thread Offering in the month of Shravana.
So indeed should my devotee always perform the other great festivals.
- 8.47. One should gladly feed my devotees, and also well-dressed
Maidens and young boys, regarding them as none other than me.
- 8.48. Without miserly regard for cost, one should worship them with flowers and the like.
Whoever carries out all these acts every year, tirelessly and with devotion,
- 8.49. Is blessed and completely fulfilled. Such a person is truly worthy of my favor.

All this that is pleasing to me I have related
in brief.

- 8.50. Never impart these instructions to one who
is not a disciple or devotee.

Chapter 9

Vedic and Internal Forms of Goddess Worship

Himalaya spoke:

- 9.1. O Goddess of the Gods, Great Ruler, Ocean of Compassion, Mother,
Proclaim now in detail the proper manner of your worship.

The Goddess spoke:

- 9.2. I shall explain the manner of worship, O King, that pleases the Mother.
Listen with great reverence, Best of Mountains.
- 9.3. My worship is of two kinds: external and internal;
The external also is said to be of two kinds: Vedic and Tantric.
- 9.4. Vedic worship is also of two kinds, according to the type of image used, O Mountain.
Vedic ritual is to be performed by those initiated into the Vedas.
- 9.5. Tantric ritual should be embraced by those initiated into Tantric lore.
One who knows not this mystery regarding worship and who thus acts in a contrary manner,

- 9.6. Such a person behaves foolishly and falls into utter misery.
I shall now describe the first kind of Vedic worship mentioned above.
- 9.7. With your own eyes, O Mountain, you have already seen that supreme form of mine,
So grand with its countless heads and eyes,
its countless feet,
- 9.8. Omnipotent, the impeller behind all action,
that form beyond all other forms.
One should constantly worship it, bow to it,
contemplate and remember it.
- 9.9. Such is that form of mine belonging to the first type of worship, O Mountain.
Being calm and mentally composed, without arrogance or pride,
- 9.10. You should become fully focused on that image, adoring it, taking refuge in it alone.
Behold it in your mind, invoke it, and contemplate it at all times.
- 9.11. With undistracted devotion and joy, inclining your heart toward me in love,
You should worship with sacrificial rites, and satisfy me completely with austerities and gifts.
- 9.12. In this way, through my grace, you shall be freed from the bonds of worldly existence.
Those who are fully focused on me, their hearts bound to me, are deemed the best of devotees.

- 9.13. I promise to rescue them quickly from this worldly existence.
Through meditation accompanied by action, or through knowledge accompanied by devotion,
- 9.14. One can always reach me, O King, but never through actions by themselves.
From righteous action arises devotion; from devotion arises supreme knowledge.
- 9.15. Vedic revelation and sacred law are recognized sources of righteous action.
Other religious works, it is said, propound merely a reflection of righteous action.
- 9.16. From me, omniscient and omnipotent, the Veda has arisen.
Since ignorance is absent in me, Vedic revelation lacks nothing in authority.
- 9.17. The works of sacred law issue forth from Vedic revelation, comprehending its meaning.
Thus sacred law like Manu's, as well as Vedic revelation, is regarded as authoritative.
- 9.18. In some places on occasion, it is implied that the Tantras constitute another authority.
While the Tantras speak of righteous action, they do so only in part and thus are not relied upon by those initiated into the Vedas.
- 9.19. The teachings of other authors are rooted in ignorance.
Due to the corrupting defect of ignorance, their statements lack authority.

- 9.20. Therefore, one who desires liberation should depend entirely on the Veda with regard to righteous action.
For just as a king's command in the world is never ignored,
- 9.21. So my own command in the form of Vedic revelation, proclaimed by me, the Universal Ruler, can hardly be shunned by humans.
For the safeguarding of my command, the Brahmin and warrior classes
- 9.22. I have created. Thus, one should regard my command embodied in Vedic revelation as the secret of good conduct.
Whenever there is a decline in righteousness, O Mountain,
- 9.23. And a rising up of unrighteousness, then I assume various guises.
And related to this are the different fortunes of the gods and the demons, O King.
- 9.24. For the sake of teaching those who do not act righteously, I have at all times
Provided hells, terrifying to anyone who hears about them.
- 9.25. Those who abandon Vedic righteousness to follow another path,
Such unrighteous persons a king should banish from his lands.
- 9.26. Brahmins should not talk with them; the twice-born should not sit with them at meals.
The various other religious treatises in this world

- 9.27. Which are opposed to Vedic revelation and sacred law are entirely based on error.
The scriptures of the Vamas, Kapalakas, Kaulakas, and Bhairavas
- 9.28. Were composed by Shiva for the sake of delusion, and for no other reason.
Due to the curses of Daksha, Bhrigu, and Dadhicha,
- 9.29. The most excellent of Brahmins were scorched and excluded from the Vedic path.
For the sake of rescuing them step by step, at all times,
- 9.30. The Shaiva and Vaishnava, the Saura as well as the Shakta,
And the Ganapatya scriptures were composed by Shiva.
- 9.31. In these, there are occasional passages not opposed to the Veda.
There is no fault whatsoever in Veda initiates accepting these.
- 9.32. A Brahmin by all means is not entitled to scriptures having different aims from the Veda;
One who is not entitled to the Veda may be entitled to those other scriptures.
- 9.33. Therefore with wholehearted effort a Veda initiate should adhere to the Veda.
Knowledge assisted by righteous action will reveal the supreme Brahman.
- 9.34. Abandoning all desires, taking refuge in me alone,

- Showing kindness to all beings, leaving behind anger and self-conceit,
- 9.35. Giving their hearts to me, devoting their life energies to me, delighting in accounts of my sacred places,
Thus should renouncers, forest dwellers, householders, and students
- 9.36. Always, with devotion, practice that yoga focused on my cosmic majesty.
The mental darkness sprung from ignorance of those who are always so absorbed,
- 9.37. I shall disperse with the sunlight of knowledge, without a doubt.
Such, then, is the first form of Vedic worship, O Mountain,
- 9.38. Described briefly in its essence. Hear now the second type.
Either in an icon, on prepared ground, in the orb of the sun or moon,
- 9.39. In water, in a stone known as the “Emblem of Bana,” on a sacred diagram, on a cloth,
Or also in the auspicious lotus of one’s own heart, one should meditate on the supreme Goddess.
- 9.40. She is endowed with fine qualities, filled with compassion, youthful, red like the dawn,
The quintessence of beauty, lovely in every limb.
- 9.41. She is filled with the sentiment of passion and is ever distressed by the sorrows of her devotees;

Disposed to kindness, she is the Mother bearing a crescent moon in her locks.

- 9.42. She holds a noose and goad while gesturing her beneficence and assurance of safety; she is bliss incarnate.

One should worship her with such offerings as one can afford.

- 9.43. Until one is prepared for internal worship, A person should continue to perform this external worship; only when prepared should one abandon it.

- 9.44. Internal worship, according to tradition, comprises dissolution into pure consciousness.

Pure consciousness alone, devoid of finitude, is my supreme form.

- 9.45. Thus, focus your awareness on my form that is pure consciousness, without using any conceptual support.

What appears outside this pure consciousness as the world, composed of illusion, is false.

- 9.46. Thus, to dispel the world appearance, upon the supreme witness in the form of the Self, One should meditate without doubts and with a heart disciplined through yoga.

- 9.47. Now, then, I shall describe at length the final type of external worship.

Listen with an attentive mind, Best of Mountains.

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Chapter 10

The Tantric Form of Goddess Worship and the Disappearance of the Great Goddess

The Goddess spoke:

- 10.1. Rising at dawn, one should call to mind the
radiant lotus on the top of the head,
Shining like camphor. On that lotus one
should recollect the form of one's own
blessed guru,
- 10.2. Kindly disposed, adorned with shining orna-
ments, conjoined with his consort.
The wise person will bow to them, and then
calling to mind the Coiled Serpent God-
dess, will reflect:
- 10.3. "She shines brilliantly in her ascent; she
appears like nectar in her descent;
I take refuge in that woman who wanders
along the middle channel in the form of
bliss."
- 10.4. Meditating in this manner, focusing on my
form as infinite being, consciousness, and
bliss that dwells in the internal flame,
One should meditate on me. Next one
should complete all those rites beginning
with personal cleansing.

- 10.5. The best of Brahmins should then offer oblations into the sacred fire in order to please me.

After the fire offering one should take a firm seat and resolve to complete the worship ceremony.

- 10.6. First one should purify the material elements within oneself. Then install upon the body the maternal powers embedded in the alphabet.

One should always install next the maternal powers embedded in the Hrillekha mantra.

- 10.7. Fix the letter *h* in the Root Support Center, the letter *r* in the heart,

The letter *i* between the brows, and install the entire syllable *Hrim* on the top of the head.

- 10.8. One should then finish all other mystic installations, which will be empowered by this mantra.

One should further visualize within the body my sacred throne with its legs consisting of righteousness and the like.

- 10.9. The wise person should then meditate upon the Great Goddess, visualizing me in the breath-expanded

Lotus of the heart, on my sacred resting place that is the seat of the five corpses:

- 10.10. Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Ishvara, and Sadashiva.

These five great corpses reside under my feet.

10.11. They have the nature of the five elements, and also the nature of the five states of consciousness.

But I, in the form of unmanifest consciousness, transcend them altogether.

10.12. Thus they have come to constitute my throne forever, according to the Tantras of Shakti.

After completing the above meditations, one should worship me with mental offerings and practice recitation.

10.13. One should surrender the fruits of this recitation to me, the blessed Goddess. Then one should prepare the general water offering.

Setting out next the sprinkling vessel and purifying the materials for worship

10.14. With that water while intoning the protective missile mantra, the worshiper

Should secure at once the surrounding space.
Then bowing to the teacher

10.15. And receiving the latter's consent, one should focus on the external altar.

Recalling that divine and pleasing form of mine visualized in the heart,

10.16. One should then summon me to that altar, using the life-infusing incantation.

A seat, an invitation, a respect offering, water for washing the feet, and for rinsing the mouth,

10.17. A bath, a set of clothes, ornaments of all kinds,

- Perfume, and flowers, all these as is proper one should present to the Goddess, inspired by one's own devotion.
- 10.18. One should duly perform the worship of the protective deities abiding in the sacred diagram;
If unable to worship them every day, one should set aside Friday to do so.
- 10.19. One should regard the attendant deities as manifesting the splendor of the chief goddess;
And one should consider the whole universe, including the nether regions, as pervaded by her splendor.
- 10.20. Again, one should worship the chief goddess accompanied by her surrounding deities
With perfumes, fragrances and the like, including sweet-scented flowers,
- 10.21. As well as with food and refreshing water, along with spiced betel and various gifts.
Then one should please me by reciting the hymn of my thousand names that you composed.
- 10.22. Recite my protective mantra and my hymn beginning "I, with the Rudras . . . ," O Lord,
Along with the mantras from the Hrillekha Upanishad, otherwise known as the Devi-Atharva-Shiras.
- 10.23. With those great mystic spells and great mantras one should please me again and again.

The person whose heart overflows with ecstatic love should seek absolution from the World Mother.

- 10.24. Trembling with thrills of joy in all limbs, speechless, with eyes flooded by tears,

One should please me again and again with the tumultuous sounds of dancing, singing, and other celebrations.

- 10.25. In the whole of the Vedas and in all the Puranas

I am truly proclaimed; thus by reciting these one will please me.

- 10.26. One should offer to me daily all possessions, including the body.

Next one should perform the daily fire offering. And then to Brahmins, to well-dressed virgins,

- 10.27. To young boys, to the poor and others, one should give food with the conviction that they are none other than the Goddess.

One should bow down and then bid her farewell, leading her back again into one's heart.

- 10.28. One should perform the whole of my worship with the Hrillekha mantra, O you of firm resolve.

The Hrillekha is regarded as the supreme director of all mantras.

- 10.29. I am ever reflected in the Hrillekha as in a mirror.

Therefore, whatever one gives while reciting the Hrillekha is offered with all mantras.

- 10.30. After honoring one's teacher with ornaments and the like, one will attain complete fulfillment.
Whoever in such manner worships the Goddess, the auspicious, world-charming beauty,
- 10.31. For that person nothing is difficult to attain anytime, anywhere.
Upon leaving the body, that one most certainly will go to my Jeweled Island.
- 10.32. Such a person may be recognized as bearing the form of the Goddess herself. The gods constantly bow before that one.
Thus, O King, I have narrated to you the procedures of worship for the Great Goddess.
- 10.33. Consider all this in detail. And in accord with your qualifications,
Perform my worship. Thereby you will be wholly fulfilled.
- 10.34. One should never utter the teachings of my Song to one who is not a disciple;
Nor should it be given to one who lacks devotion, or is deceitful and wicked-hearted.
- 10.35. Displaying this publicly is like exposing the breasts of a mother.
Therefore by all means this is to be diligently guarded always.
- 10.36. It may be given to an ardent disciple and to an eldest son,
If they are well behaved, properly dressed, and devoted to the Goddess.

- 10.37. At the time of offerings to the dead, one should recite this in the presence of Brahmins;
All one's ancestors will be satisfied and go to the supreme abode.

Vyasa spoke:

- 10.38. The glorious one finished her speech and then vanished from sight,
While all the gods rejoiced for having seen the Goddess.
- 10.39. Later she was born to Himalaya as the goddess Haimavati,
Who would be renowned as Gauri. She was given in marriage to Shiva.
- 10.40. Afterward Skanda was born, who slew Taraka.
Earlier, during the churning of the ocean, precious jewels arose, O King.
- 10.41. On that occasion the gods, eager to gain prosperity in the form of Lakshmi, praised the Goddess.
Then, to favor the gods, Lakshmi herself came forth.
- 10.42. The gods gave her in marriage to Vishnu, who thereby attained peace of mind.
Thus I have recounted to you, O King, this sublime glorification of the Goddess,
- 10.43. Dealing with the births of Gauri and Lakshmi, and granting all desires.
Do not reveal this secret mystery that I have narrated to just anyone, anywhere.

10.44. Diligently guard the secret mystery of this Song.

I have briefly answered all your questions,
Faultless One.

10.45. This account is purifying, sanctifying, and divine.

What further do you wish to hear?

Glossary

The following key terms, most of them common to the Hindu tradition as a whole, are defined primarily according to their usage in the Devi Gita. The English key words are often used to translate more than one Sanskrit term. The Sanskrit words given in parentheses represent the standard technical terms most commonly used in the text for the general idea being defined.

ABSORPTION (*samadhi*): intense mental concentration; the fourth and culminating phase of the Yoga of Knowledge, and likewise the eighth and final step of the Eight-Limbed Yoga. It refers both to mental absorption in the object of one's meditation, as well as dissolution into or union with the absolute.

ACTION (*karma*): work, deed, performance of rites; also, the consequences of such actions or karmic fruit, carried from one life into the next. Action rooted in ignorance and desire binds the soul to the cycle of death and rebirth. Action cannot destroy ignorance, but prescribed actions, such as duty and sacred rites, performed in a spirit of detachment and loving service, may lead to wisdom, which alone can destroy ignorance. Wisdom is the realization, in part,

that the soul is not the agent of action, since the soul as pure spirit is ever nonacting.

BODIES, THE THREE COSMOGENIC: the Causal Body (*karana-deha*), also referred to as the Unmanifest (*avyakrita*), the Subtle Body (*sukshma-deha*) or World Soul (*sutratman*), and the Gross Body (*sthula-deha*) or Cosmic Body (*viraj*). These three bodies of the Goddess are her cosmic catalysts and mechanisms for evolving the universe in progressive fashion from the most subtle and unmanifest forms of matter/energy to the most material or gross. She also displays the last of these bodies, the rather fearsome Gross Body or Viraj, to her devotees, illustrating her essential identity with the physical universe. There are three corresponding microcosmic bodies within each individual, and the regressive resorption of the three back into their source in pure consciousness constitutes a reversal of creation within one's own body that is tantamount to final liberation.

BRAHMAN: the absolute; infinite spirit; ultimate reality. It is characterized on the one hand as ineffable, neither this nor that (*neti neti*). On the other, it is described as infinite being (*sat*), consciousness (*cit*), and bliss (*ananda*). It is identical with the supreme Self (Atman) and with the Great Goddess. It is sometimes said to consist of four quarters, correlated with the four states of consciousness (waking, dreaming, deep sleep, and the fourth state beyond), as well as with the four stages of creation associated with the three cosmogenic bodies (Causal, Subtle,

and Gross) and the transcendent source beyond the three. Realization of one's identity with Brahman is the final goal of the Yoga of Knowledge.

BRAHMIN (*brahmana*): a member of the highest, priestly class; one of the three twice-born classes, along with warriors and merchants/farmers. Brahmins are the arbiters of the spiritual ideals and moral values for society at large and thus should act as models of righteous behavior. They are to be especially honored at religious ceremonies.

COILED SERPENT (*kundalini*): the manifestation of the Goddess within one's own body, according to the Serpentine Yoga. The Coiled Serpent normally lies sleeping in the lowest psychoenergetic center at the base of the spine. In the practice of the Serpentine Yoga, the Coiled Serpent is aroused through breath control and concentration, and caused to ascend through the central mystic channel to the crown of the head, where she unites with Shiva. She is then led back down to her resting place in the base center, infusing the body of the yoga practitioner with her spiritual, mental, and material energies, thereby transforming the physical body into a fully divine being identical with the Goddess herself.

CONSCIOUSNESS, PURE (*caitanya, cit, samvit*): pure awareness without an object or any sense of distinction between self and other. Such nondual consciousness characterizes Brahman

and is the essential or highest nature of the Goddess. It is the true reality from which all material reality derives or evolves. Attainment of this pure consciousness is the supreme goal of life.

DEVOTION (*bhakti*): loving surrender to and taking refuge in a personal deity, in this case, the Goddess. The Devi Gita describes four grades of devotion, according to the qualities (*gunas*) of Nature inherent in each. When the quality of ignorance predominates, devotion is motivated by the desire to deceive and harm others. When passion predominates, personal gain is the prime consideration. When virtue predominates, selfless service is the motivating force. When devotion is devoid of all the qualities, it is supreme, and no sense of distinction between self and others, or between oneself and the Goddess, remains. This supreme devotion is characterized somewhat paradoxically as both detached in its awareness of the unity of all being, and as ecstatic in its passionate rendering of loving service to the Goddess.

DUALITY (*dvaita*): the derivative realm of this world, as opposed to the nondual source of the universe that is Brahman. In the Advaita school, the realm of duality, dominated as it is by the subject/object dichotomy, is generally perceived as illusory or false. Duality is thus regarded as a mere reflection and fragmentation of the ultimate that is “one alone without a second.” Such a perspective, found in several passages of the text, is in tension with the more cosmo-

theistic, world-affirming Tantric viewpoint that pervades much of the Devi Gita.

EIGHT-LIMBED YOGA (*ashtanga-yoga*): the ancient system of psychophysical experimentation derived from Patanjali's classical Yoga Sutras. Its goal, as defined in the Devi Gita, is identical with that of the Yoga of Knowledge, namely union of the individual soul (*jiva*) and the supreme Self (Atman). The Eight-Limbed Yoga provides many of the physical and mental techniques for meditation, such as suitable posture, breath control and concentration, used by other yogas. With its emphasis on manipulation of material and mental energies within the body, the Eight-Limbed Yoga naturally extends to the psychophysical techniques elaborated in the Serpentine Yoga, with which it is closely allied.

FIVE SHEATHS (*pancha-kosha*): the five interesting envelopes that surround and obscure the true Self lying at their core. The five are, from the outside in, the food sheath (*anna-maya-kosha*), the breath sheath (*prana-maya-kosha*), the mind sheath (*mano-maya-kosha*), the intelligence sheath (*vijñana-maya-kosha*), and the bliss sheath (*ananda-maya-kosha*). The five sheaths reside within, that is, are distributed among the three cosmogenic bodies, and the regressive dissolution of these three bodies is thus tantamount to discarding the five sheaths, which is the attainment of Brahman.

FORMS, ICONIC AND ANICONIC (*murti, rupa*): the various modes of presentation of the

Goddess to her devotees. The revelation (*darshana*) of these forms is an act of grace on the part of the Devi, due solely to her compassion without regard for any merits of her devotees beyond their love for her. The highest revelatory mode, the aniconic form that is beyond all forms, is that of pure consciousness, represented dramatically in the text as a brilliant orb of light. The two major iconic forms of the Goddess are that of the terrifying Cosmic Body or Viraj, and the wholly beneficent and beautiful Bhuvaneshvari, endowed with four arms gesturing her various protective and auspicious powers. These three forms, especially the two iconic, also serve as objects of visualization in meditation and worship.

GURU: spiritual teacher qualified by extensive knowledge of the Vedas and endowed with experiential knowledge of Brahman. Such a teacher is a prerequisite for the pursuit of spiritual disciplines, for only from the mouth of a qualified teacher, not from books, can one receive the necessary guidance. The disciple must submit him- or herself with total dedication of body and mind to serving such a teacher, for the gift of the guru, eternal knowledge of Brahman which constitutes spiritual rebirth, is far greater than the gift of birth from one's biological father, which perishes.

HRILLEKHA: name of the seed mantra (the sonic essence of a deity in one syllable) of Bhuvaneshvari. Literally it means a "mark" or "scratch" (*lekha*) on the "heart" (*hrid*, which

becomes *hril-* before the letter *l*). It thus comes to mean “anxiety” or “desire,” and may be thought of as the audible essence and sign of Bhuvaneshvari’s heart in her anxious desire to care for her devotees. Alternatively, it may be regarded as the supreme power of life, in the form of the sonic manifestation of the Goddess, who keeps watch in the furrow of one’s heart. The specific seed mantra so designated is Hrim (see next entry).

HRIM: the seed mantra or sacred syllable of Bhuvaneshvari, manifesting in sonic form the essential creative and liberating powers of the Goddess. It is to be constantly recited in the performance of the rituals of Goddess worship, evoking her presence and powers. It is a Shakta counterpart to the Vedic syllable Om. Like Om (Aum), Hrim is frequently meditated upon in its constituent parts, which are correlated with various triadic and quadratic entities and states, such as the cosmogenic bodies and states of consciousness. The regressive dissolution of the letters of the syllable, in meditation, constitutes a reversal of the cosmogonic process on an individual level. Such reversal culminates in mergence back into the primal sound of the mantra itself, and thus reunification with the Goddess.

IGNORANCE: the power of nescience or delusion that has both cosmogonic and soteriological significance. Closely associated with the projective power of Maya, ignorance is the cosmogonic force responsible for the appearance

of the world, like the appearance, through superimposition, of a snake in a rope seen indistinctly at dusk. It is the cause for the apparent differentiation of souls, and for the false superimposition upon the nonacting soul of a sense of agency. Ignorance is the root cause of desire from which actions spring that bind the soul. Ignorance can be destroyed by knowledge alone, not by action, since the soul in reality is ever Brahman, and thus is not something to be achieved by action. It can only be realized in knowledge of the ultimate identity of the soul and the absolute. Like Maya, ignorance is without beginning and indefinable, yet it has an end, in knowledge.

KNOWLEDGE OF BRAHMAN (*brahma-vidya*): in general, the liberating knowledge of the ultimate identity of the individual soul and the absolute, or Brahman. Attainment of such is the spiritual goal of the ancient Upanishads. In the Kena Upanishad, Brahman is made known by the Goddess Uma Haimavati, who comes to be identified with *brahma-vidya*, the knowledge revealing Brahman. In the Devi Gita, the Goddess, identified with Haimavati, is regarded not just as the knowledge revealing Brahman, but also as that which is revealed, namely Brahman itself.

LIBERATION (*moksha, mukti*): negatively, escape from the sorrows of *samsara*, the cycle of death and rebirth permeated by suffering; positively, union with ultimate reality and realization of the bliss of pure consciousness. A common

synonym for “liberation” in the text is “being completely fulfilled” (*krita-kriya*, literally, “having done all that is to be done”). The Devi Gita refers to a number of forms of liberation developed in the theistic schools, which are partly in tension with the classical definition given above. These theistic forms include living in the presence of the supreme deity, dwelling in her celestial paradise, sharing her powers, assuming her form, and merging into her—this last form being closest to the classical, while the others presuppose some kind of distinction between the devotee and the beloved deity. The ideal devotee is supposedly indifferent to all such forms of liberation, desiring only to serve the Goddess, even though such service will inevitably result in merger with her. The Devi Gita insists that liberation is something to be attained while still living in embodied form (*jivan-mukti*).

MANTRA: sacred sounds and syllables, often with no semantic meaning, but resonating with the mystical powers of the deities with whom they are associated. Indeed, the mantra is supposed to be the sonic embodiment or manifestation of the deity. The efficacy of the mantra depends in part on its being imparted to a disciple directly from a guru, who unlocks the potential energy of the mantra for a qualified disciple. The mantra, further, must be kept secret, to prevent its misuse by others. Seed mantras, one syllable sounds like *Hrim*, are powerful concentrations of the sonic essence of a deity. The individual letters of such seed

mantras, and even all the letters of the alphabet, in their aspect as “Maternal Powers” representing the various physical, mental, and spiritual energies of the Goddess, may be ritually implanted or installed on the several body parts of the yogic practitioner, thereby transforming the body into the divine body of the Goddess herself.

MANTRA YOGA: the rather enigmatic designation by the Devi Gita for the Serpentine Yoga. In general, Mantra Yoga involves the repetition of sacred syllables in the performance of various rites and yogic practices. Perhaps the presence of the letters of the alphabet in the several psychoenergetic centers of the esoteric physiology of the Serpentine Yoga, which constitute the “Mantra Body” of the Coiled Serpent Goddess herself, accounts for the designation.

MAYA: the creative and deluding power of the Goddess that is neither real (since it is not eternal, being ended by knowledge), nor unreal (as it has effective power, unlike the wholly illusory son of a barren woman, to use a favorite Advaita metaphor). Maya is regarded as both the efficient and material cause of universe. The emphasis on Maya’s projective, creating power in Shakta circles de-emphasizes the strong, illusionistic associations that Maya carries in Advaita thought. In the Devi Gita, the Goddess unites with Maya, which she creates out of herself, to become the world seed. Maya is said to be inseparable from her, like heat in fire. Yet in a nod to the Advaita, Maya is also

said to be distinct from the Goddess, as it is perceivable and thus nonconscious, in contrast to the pure consciousness that is the Devi. Also, in accord with the Advaita, Maya is said to be the substrate of the universe, like a mirror in which the Goddess is reflected clearly as the ruling Lord of the universe. Nescience plays a parallel, microcosmic role to Maya, reflecting the Goddess obscurely as the individual soul. Maya is distinguished from nescience in the Devi Gita as being characterized by the quality of nature known as lucidity, while nescience is characterized by all the three qualities of nature (lucidity, passion, and darkness) mixed together.

OFFERING (*upachara*): the services and gifts proffered to a deity during worship (*puja*). The offerings are usually performed literally and physically, but may also be done internally or mentally. Standard lists of offerings include sixteen items, such as foot washing, bathing, serving of food and drink, clothing, perfume, flowers, and entertainment such as singing hymns or reciting the names of the deity. These offerings are modeled upon the acts of hospitality shown to any honored guest who comes to one's home. Accordingly, at the start of worship, the deity is invited into the devotee's house to take up temporary residence in the icon being used in the ritual, offered a seat on the altar, and verbally welcomed. These welcoming acts are often included in the *upacharas*. At the end of the worship, the deity is respectfully dismissed.

OM (AUM): the sacred Vedic seed mantra or syllable of Brahman. Its constituent parts (a-u-m-silence) are correlated in the Mandukya Upanishad with the four quarters or states of consciousness of Brahman. In the Devi Gita, Om is said to be a mantric form of the Goddess, who is also embodied in the syllable *Hrim* (see entry above).

QUALITIES OF NATURE (*gunas* of *prakriti*): the three forces or energies of the material principle (*prakriti* or Nature), whose various manifestations and interactions are responsible for the evolution of the universe, including both physical and mental elements. The three are the lucid or virtuous (*sattva*), the passionate, yearning, or active (*rajas*), and the slothful, dull, or ignorant (*tamas*). Their interactions account for all activity and change in the universe, in contrast to the pure spirit (*purusha*), identified with Brahman or the Self, that alone is conscious, is inactive, and a witness to the transformations of Nature. The mental aspects of Nature, such as egoism, mind, and intellect, are regarded as only seemingly aware, being in reality only inert media that reflect the light of pure consciousness. The three qualities are often used to classify various triadic and quadratic sets (the fourth being correlated with the transcendence of all the qualities), such as the four types of devotion in the Devi Gita.

RIGHTEOUSNESS (*dharma*): proper conduct as prescribed by the Veda and such manuals of sacred law as Manu's; the duty incumbent upon

those initiated into Vedic knowledge, including followers of the orthoprax, Right-Handed Tantric path. Proper conduct involves a daily routine of personal cleansing, physical and mental, as well as certain obligatory acts of worship. According to the Devi Gita, a decline of righteousness in the world is the trigger for the Goddess's avataric missions to reestablish order on the Earth and in the universe at large.

SELF (Atman): the true nature of the Goddess consisting of pure consciousness, identical with Brahman. The individual soul is a refraction or fragmented reflection of the Self in the obscuring medium of nescience (*avidya*). The identity of the individual soul and the Self is indicated by the great saying of the Upanishads, "You are That" (*tat tvam asi*). As the Goddess explains, "That" is she herself, whose essence as pure consciousness is identical with the essence of the "You," the individual soul. The Self is eternal, ever unchanging, and thus nonacting. Its nature is bliss. The desire for immortality on the part of the individual soul is ultimately rooted in love of the Self.

SERPENTINE YOGA (*kundalini-yoga*): a psycho-physical, experimental yoga developed in Tantric circles as an extension or elaboration of the classical Eight-Limbed Yoga of Patanjali. It presupposes an esoteric physiology of subtle energy channels throughout the body, and various psychoenergetic centers (*chakras*) or lotuses situated along the central channel parallel to or within the spinal column. The Coiled

Serpent (*kundalini*), the manifestation of the Goddess within one's own body, lies sleeping at the base of the spine in the lowest center, until awakened through breath control exercises and mental concentration. She is then led up the central channel, through each of the chakras, to unite with Shiva at the crown of the head, before being brought back down to the base center. Identical in aim to the Yoga of Knowledge, according to the Devi Gita, the Serpentine Yoga nonetheless seems to go beyond the path of knowledge in its final resanctification of the body and the world. Such resanctification is symbolized by the descending journey of the Coiled Serpent, during which she infuses the divine ambrosia produced in union with Shiva throughout the practitioner's whole being, thereby recreating the old body as a new, physico-spiritual entity identical with the Goddess.

SHAKTI: power, energy; the absolute power of the universe, identical with rather than an attribute of the Goddess. *Shakti* as a name of the Goddess represents the supreme cosmic energy, creating, maintaining, and ultimately destroying the universe, only to recreate worlds anew. In the Devi Gita, Shakti is not the possession of a male deity, as she is the consort of none, but the energy of all.

SOUL, INDIVIDUAL (*jiva*): a fragmented refraction of the Self (Atman), with which it is ultimately identical. The soul appears separate and distinct from others, including the Goddess,

through the obscuring power of Maya. It is the individuated form of the infinite spirit, reflecting the obscured image of the Goddess in the mirror of nescience (*avidya*). In this context, the soul contrasts with the Lord of the universe who comprehends all souls, and is the aggregated form of the infinite spirit, reflecting the clear image of the Goddess in the mirror of Maya. Understanding how the soul came to be deluded through nescience is one of the first steps in attaining the liberating knowledge of Brahman.

STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS (*avastha*): pure consciousness and its manifestations in various states of individuated awareness, including waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. These three states, plus pure consciousness, are considered in the Upanishads to be the four quarters of Brahman, and are correlated with other triadic and quadratic sets, such as the three cosmogenic bodies and their infinite source. Later schools of philosophy expanded the number of the states of consciousness to five or more, but always preserving a transcendental state of pure consciousness beyond all the others. In the Devi Gita, the Goddess is identified with the four quarters of Brahman and thus with the four basic states of consciousness. She is also regarded as the constant witness of the ever fluctuating, lesser states of consciousness.

TANTRA: a particular world view in which reality is perceived as an interpenetrating set of physical, verbal, mental, psychological, and spiritual

elements and forces, and a general assemblage of ritualized spiritual practices based on that view. Its attitude toward the material world differs from the more illusionistic Advaita standpoint, in seeing the body and physical entities not as obstacles or delusions to be transcended, but as vessels waiting to be filled with divine energy to aid in the process of spiritual transformation. There is no clear division between Vedic and Tantric practices, as each today has assimilated innumerable elements from the other. However, the rituals and meditations associated with the Serpentine Yoga are generally regarded as of Tantric provenance, despite many overlaps. While there has been considerable tension at times between Vedic and Tantric authorities, many orthoprax followers of the Vedic way of life view Tantra as simply an extension of the Vedic path. Such a perspective is generally that of the Devi Gita, which accepts those parts of the Tantric texts that accord with Vedic prescriptions, rejecting only the antinomian prescriptions of the Left-Handed Tantras.

UPANISHADS: the final part of the Veda (and thus also called the “End of the Veda,” or “Vedanta”); revealed knowledge describing the nature of Brahman and its relationship to the Self (Atman) and the individual soul (*jiva*). The Upanishads are famous for their great sayings, such as “You are That,” affirming the ultimate unity of the soul and Self. Listening to and reflecting upon such passages are integral steps in the practice of the Yoga of Knowledge. The Goddess in the Devi Gita recites numerous verses from various

Upanishads, especially from the Katha and Mundaka, interpreting them as teaching the identity of herself and Brahman.

VEDA: supreme knowledge; the highest and eternal revelation known as *shruti*, “what is heard” by the ancient sages of the past. Veda is mantric in nature, the sounds of its words and verses representing the sacred sonic manifestations of the divine. Veda is also sacred wisdom revealing the nature of the cosmos, its underlying essence, and the path to human liberation. In the Devi Gita it is regarded as arising from the Goddess herself, and thus as infallible. It is embodied in the oral texts known as the four Vedas, which thus command all spiritual and worldly authority. The term extends in certain contexts to the Upanishads, also known as the Vedanta, or “End of the Veda.” The Vedas are said to proclaim the Goddess as their final end. Other texts, such as the Tantras, are accepted only where they do not oppose the Vedas.

WORSHIP (*pūja*): ritual acts performed mentally and/or physically in loving service of the Goddess. Such acts are a general part of the Yoga of Devotion, and are integral elements in observing vows (*vratas*) and celebrating the festivals (*utsavas*) of the Goddess. The Devi Gita distinguishes two general types of worship: internal (for example, the offering of mental flowers to a mental image of the Goddess in one’s lotus heart) and external. The external is further divided into Vedic and Tantric, the latter focusing on the Goddess as enthroned on

her seat composed of the corpses of the major male deities of the Hindu pantheon. The Vedic is also subdivided according to the image used: that of the cosmic Viraj, or of the beautiful, four-armed Bhuvaneshvari. Central to *puja* are the offerings and services provided to the Goddess (see Offerings above).

YOGA: a general term both for spiritual discipline and for the goal of such discipline, union with ultimate reality. (See also specific yogas.)

YOGA OF ACTION (*karma-yoga*): the yoga of disciplined action, or action performed without attachment to the fruits. It is one of the three major traditional spiritual paths, along with the yogas of devotion and knowledge, and is usually subordinated to and assimilated into one of the other two. In the Devi Gita, it is most prominently represented by Kriya Yoga, the path of ritual action. The performance of rites in a spirit of detached but loving service to the Goddess is an integral element of the Yoga of Devotion.

YOGA OF DEVOTION (*bhakti-yoga*): the easiest of the three traditional paths, according to the Goddess, perhaps because the ideal of divine grace is an integral part of this yoga. For instance, it is through, and only through the affection of the Goddess for her devotees, that she reveals her various forms such as the Viraj and Bhuvaneshvari. This yoga is appropriate even for those who have not mastered dispassion, requiring only that a person take

refuge in the Goddess with an attitude of complete and total surrender—albeit not always an easy step given the egoistic and willful impulses of the individual psyche. The Yoga of Devotion, according to the formal pronouncement of the Devi Gita, is not an end in itself, but is the means to supreme knowledge. Nonetheless, from a more experiential perspective, the path of devotion as herein expounded, with its heavy emphasis on the ritual worship of the Goddess, may well play a greater role in the actual lives of the majority of Devi's followers.

YOGA OF KNOWLEDGE (*jnana-yoga*): the path to realization of pure consciousness and of the essential unity between the soul or Self and Brahman. It is one of the three major traditional yogas, requiring a number of preliminary mental and moral qualifications for the aspirant. These include tranquillity, restraint, patience, dispassion, and virtue. Knowledge is said to be the supreme end of devotion. While the path of devotion leads, ultimately, to the Jeweled Island paradise of the Goddess, but no further without knowledge, the path of knowledge can lead to the ultimate realization of pure consciousness even here on Earth. The path of knowledge consists of three main stages: 1) listening to the teachings of scripture that demonstrate the unity of the soul and Brahman; 2) reflecting on the meaning of such texts; and 3) intensive meditation thereon.

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Selected Bibliography

Readers wishing to pursue more in-depth study of individual passages of the Devi Gita and its cultural and religious background may consult my work *The Devi Gita; The Song of the Goddess: A Translation, Annotation, and Commentary* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998). For analysis of the Devi-Bhagavata Purana in which the Devi Gita is historically and textually rooted, see my work *The Triumph of the Goddess: The Canonical Models and Theological Visions of the Devi-Bhagavata Purana* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990). For more general historical, mythological, ritual, and theological background on the Indian Goddess and her worship, I recommend the following scholarly works.

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