

॥ श्रीः ॥

Devi Māhātmyam
Apr 2020 Discourse Series
Part - 5

By

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ShclCqdmT8>

Bhaskara Prakasha Ashram

॥śrī sadgurucaraṇāravindābhyāṃ namaḥ ॥

॥श्रीः ॥



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

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Bhaumāśvini Pārāyaṇam

śrī gurubhyo namaḥ ||
śrī māt্রে namaḥ ||
ōm namaścaṇḍikāyai |

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

Om sri satguru-caranāravindhābhyām namaha ||

The Bhaumāśvini pārāyaṇam happened very well yesterday. I also joined and chanted along. I was truly heartened and happy. If I were to ask the question, “What did Swāmigaḷ (Vimarsānanda Nāthendra Sarasvatī Swāmīgaḷ) want all his life? [or] Why did he work so hard all his life?” I got the answers to those inquiries during yesterday’s chanting.

Swāmigaḷ used to do Nitya pārāyaṇam of Devi Māhātmyam. Periya Swāmigaḷ (Prakāśānandanātha Nāthendra Sarasvatī Swāmīgaḷ) also used to chant. We just were not aware [of it] when he chanted. I used to stand around when Swāmigaḷ talked to people and used to overhear a few words. Once he was telling someone “Chanting Caṇḍī is a Nitya-karmā like doing *Sandhyā Vandanam*”. Later, when he was free on one of the days, I asked him, “Mahādevā, you are saying we should chant Caṇḍī. I see the book there [on the shelf]. But I haven’t seen you [pick it up] or heard you chanting. Can you tell me when you chant?”.

You see, Swāmigaḷ followed certain *niyama*-s in his life--he would bathe in a pond or a river every day--he believed that doing that helps with cleansing the body (*deha śuddhi*). He told me that he would start chanting when he leaves the river after the bath and in the forty-five minutes it would take him to walk back to the house, he would be done with his chanting. Yesterday we took about ~3 hours to complete the pārāyaṇam [as that’s how long it can take] -- and Swāmigaḷ used to chant in 1/4th of that time!.

In 1969, there was a judge by the name Sri. Seetharama Iyer in Mylapore--his mother used to regularly visit the āśram. She had a deep and abiding bhakti for Swāmigaḷ. She wanted to host Swāmigaḷ’s Caṇḍī pārāyaṇam during Navarātrī in her house. She expressed her desire to Swāmigaḷ and Swāmigaḷ agreed to it. Even after that conversation, it appeared that she was still hesitant about something. It turned out that her son [who was himself a great Sanskrit scholar and an exponent of Vedanta and other scriptures] also wanted to join the chanting. Because of his other commitments (like his nitya śiva pūjā) he had only fifty-five minutes to spare for the Caṇḍī pārāyaṇam -- and before he needed to leave for court. The mother wanted to do the entire pārāyaṇam in fifty-five minutes!. Swāmigaḷ [got her to open up about this and] agreed to her request. Subsequently, when we went to their house, the judge also joined the pārāyaṇam [at the juncture when the mother had said he would]. Exactly in fifty-five minutes, Swāmigaḷ told the judge that the pārāyaṇam was done! I felt it was some kind of magic (Indrajālam) and was so surprised!

So I asked Swāmigaḷ how he did it. You see, whether I did pārāyaṇam or not, I was good at always observing [everything], asking questions and storing the answers in my mind! [Then Guru answered me in this way]: “When you do pārāyaṇam [there are many ways to chant]: You can chant slowly and take your time with every phrase, [and pause naturally between phrases]--like the first kālam or first speed when you first learn music. Alternately, you can go a little faster and chant a whole line [without pausing after every phrase] --like the second and third kālam in music. Or once you start you could just take a

breath at the end of a ślokaṃ [which in many places would mean multiple lines strung together].

So what Swāmigaḷ did was to take breaths only between ślokaṃs and he did that consistently from start to end!. How is this even possible? For us, when we chant a few ślokaṃs, we gasp, and we start looking for water! Swāmigaḷ said, “Imagine that the Divine Mother Herself (*sāksāt āmbā!*) is sitting before you. If you [can believe that sincerely and] experience that bhāvam, however you want the pārāyaṇam to be done [and in whatever amount of time], Ambā! will make sure it happens that way.”

Swāmigaḷ taught everyone Caṇḍī parayanam. He had a lot of challenges in the process. I used to even ask him. “Why do you have to work so hard to teach Caṇḍī parayanam?”. He would say, “It isn't enough that I learned, chanted and benefited from the Caṇḍī. Everyone needs to benefit from it as well. Do you see? People say, they don't have anyone to teach them [the Caṇḍī the right way]. What more important work do I have than teaching them? What can give more satisfaction and fulfillment (*ātma-truṭi*) than teaching the people and seeing them chant so well! The purpose of my birth is well-served [if everyone can learn the Caṇḍī and chant it well].”

All those words came back to me, as I was listening to you all chant yesterday. All of you chanted so well. My heart is full--I am so happy. I have only one request--do a simple pūjā [if possible with the Caṇḍī pārāyaṇam. I will come back to this].

In last week's lecture, I explained to you all how the *padam* “Caṇḍikā” appears from the Devyāh Kavacam until the very end of the Caṇḍī. In fact, after the ninth chapter, you will see more of [the *padam* Caṇḍikā and] Mother Caṇḍikā in the story. In fact, the Ṛṣi will also recount in the 12th chapter how Caṇḍikā will reappear:

dūrādeva palāyante smarata-ścaritaṃ mama|| (chapter 12, verse 30)

So Caṇḍikā is the devi that you see from the beginning till the end. Everyone else is contained within Her [all other aspects of the Divine Mother encountered in the Devi Māhātmyam are all contained in her].

The place in the text where this truth is elaborated upon, is Chapter 11--in the “Devyā Stuti” [known as the Nārāyaṇī Stuti]. I will try my best to explain the stuti when we get to it. Just today, I was thinking, “Let me look at the bhāṣyam as I wanted to understand the meaning of a phrase in greater depth [before this discourse]”. It took me four hours to [go through all of the levels of meaning behind the phrase!] So to even think that “I” am the one explaining would be ignorance on my part.

In fact Śrī Bhāskararāya Makhin says in the Guptavatī, “If you shower your krupā (compassion) on me; then, whatever you wish for me to understand and know, I will know without anyone telling me.” By “krupā”, you can also assume that the seer means “guru krupā”. [With Guru Krupā, you can even understand what is NOT being taught.] For some of us, we cannot even understand what *is* being taught! [So you can imagine being able to understand all that is stated and all that is implied and hidden!]. I pray that all of us be blessed with this anugrahaṃ of the Gurus and Ambā! [that allows us to understand everything].

A Note About Pūjā

I don't know if I will have time at the end [to elaborate about the pūjā]. Let me do so now. I will tell you again: the pūjā [procedure articulated in the Devi Māhātmyam] is very simple. If you have a picture of

Devi, use it. Otherwise, just place your Devi Māhātmyam book in the ‘Saraswati Piṭham’ in your altar and do a namaskāram to the book. If you cannot do a namaskāram physically, do it mentally.

You see, in those days (when one did not have access to so many pictures of deities), they would do pūjā to the text of the Rāmāyaṇam because the book is considered Śrī Rāmā Himself! Similarly, you can do pañcopacāram to the Devi Māhātmyam book. It is as good as doing pañcopacāram to Ambāl Herself. You may use a flower, an incense stick, a small lamp for the pūjā. If you don’t have these items, use *akṣata* (yellow rice). For neivedhyam, you can use dried fruit, nuts, aval or pohā (flattened rice), even store-bought dried food. Do not worry that you could not prepare an elaborate *kheer* or *pāyasam* (sweet rice pudding) to offer Ambāl.

Remember, whatever *you* would eat, just offer *that* to Ambāl-- and *then* eat the offering as *prasādam*. The pūjā is over. [The pūjā *bhāvana* itself is more important.] Again, the Ṛṣis have instructed us to do pūjā. In the fourth chapter of the Devi Māhātmyam, the phrase “*kusumairnandanōdbhavaiḥ*” (verse 29) is employed.

**[*evam stutā surairdivyaiḥ kusumairnandanodbhavaiḥ |
arcitā jagatām dhātrī tathā gandhānulepanaiḥ || Chapter 4, Verse 29]***

Additionally, in the thirteenth chapter, we see how the king and the merchant did the pūjā [verses 10 and 11]. So we know that pūjā is important. It can be a simple pūjā. However, when conducted with śraddhā and bhakti, the pūjā is sure to fulfill your wishes.

Caṇḍikā is Brahman

You should not have any more doubts on the *padam* (term) Caṇḍikā! The term “Caṇḍikā” and the term “Brahman” used by Vedantins mean one and the same thing [--they both indicate Supreme Consciousness]. In fact the Ṛṣi says that Consciousness can get angry. I have previously elaborated on the reason for Caṇḍikā’s anger. Let us say, you see your kid getting beaten by someone for no reason -- wouldn’t you become angry and want to take it up with that person? Similarly, Caṇḍikā becomes angry in order to protect her devotees. She has made a vow to come to our rescue--she [comes time and again to] protect all and ensure the well-being of the entire universe:

[*rakṣaṇāya ca lokānām devānāmupakāriṇī | (Chapter 4, Verse 42)*

When we safely cross hurdles/hardships that can not even be imagined, and all our wishes are fulfilled-- *that* is nothing but Her *prasādam* or boon. We should not assume that it is our smarts or intelligence that has rescued us from the perilous situation. [Know and believe sincerely that when we are safe from harm, that is Ambāl’s doing. Ambāl assumes various forms to deliver us from hardship.]

How do we develop such an attitude of faith [and sincerity]? Just offer namaskāram, namaskāram, namaskāram. Let that namaskāram be heartfelt and let it be full of modesty and gratitude and surrender. If you can offer four prostrations, that is good -- if you can do only one namaskāram, that is good -- if you can only offer namaskāram mentally, that is good too. See, we are doing this for our own well-being. So, why take short-cuts? [If possible, do the namaskārams].

Also, there are so many stotrams. Why is the Devī Sūktam special? Because, [as hymns go, this one

offers repeated prostrations to the Divine Mother]. And because, the phrases are so simple to learn and chant--with the repetitive phrases, if you were to just count the different *padam*-s by hand you can easily chant the hymn. You do not even need a book to chant those 23 verses [with the namaskārams]. So we must at least try and chant the verses of the Devī Sūktam. This is my request to all of you. May you all be well; may you thrive.

All of you chanted so well yesterday. Please note that it is not enough that you have learned and can chant the *śloka*-s well. Introduce them to the people around you. Teach your children, your relatives and loved ones as many of the *śloka*-s as you are able. May the learning continue on through the generations. May all be on the path of devotion to the Divine-- *bhakti-mārgam*.

This was the intent of Swāmigaḷ and this was the reason for his amazing efforts. Our Swāmigaḷ started this āśramam not in his own name, but in the name of his Gurus. If we ever want to repay Swāmigaḷ in kind, please chant the Lalitā Sahasranāmam and Devi Māhātmyam. And rather than just learn these for yourselves, if you can work to propagate the learning and knowledge of these *śāstrā*-s to others, so that an entire community may be able to chant these divine texts together--there can be no greater *bhāghyam* or blessing for you all--and no greater way of thanking Swāmigaḷ.

My heart is full. I have only this one prayer for my Gurunātha: This *dharma* must continue on forever, and eternally. Everyone must chant and benefit from our scriptures. Everyone must be happy.

Don't dwell on your hardships. Ambāḷ has already come to you. She will take care of resolving all hardships. What more important work does she have other than taking care of your hardships? [There is no doubt that] She will resolve even the most difficult and seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Sometimes I wonder, given that we are spending more time more time on these *satkāryam* during the CoronaVirus pandemic - given that we are engaging much more intensively in spiritual pursuits such as chanting the Devi Māhātmyam and other activities -- if everything, pandemic and all, isn't just the great Play of the Divine Mother - the Līlā of Ambāḷ!!

This idea too is reflected in the story later in the eleventh chapter. However, given the slightly longer preamble today, now let us get back to the [main] story.

Ninth Chapter - Niśumbha Vadham

Now let us look at the start of the ninth chapter. The King says:

[Rājovāca:]
vicitramidam ākhyātām, bhagavan bhavatā mama |
devyāscaritamāhātmyam raktabījavadhāśritam ||
(Chapter 9, Verses 1-2)

The King is struck with wonder at the tale of how Raktabīja is vanquished, and tells the Rṣi” “The story of the strange Raktabīja and how he was killed by Devi is so wonderful to hear. By the time we figured out who did what, Devi has killed him. What did Śumbha-Niśumbha do then? Pray please tell us what happens next.”

The Rṣi continues: Both the brothers Śumbha and Niśumbha are on the battlefield now. They are both valorous and strong--*ati parākrama-śālī*-s. They begin facing off with Caṇḍikā.

[Fierce fighting erupts between the asurā-brothers and Caṇḍikā and her allies. They are like two thunderclouds raining arrows on the Divine Mother, but Caṇḍikā deftly send forth her own volley of arrows and subdues the asurās' weapons. Niśumbha mounts continuous assaults on Caṇḍikā with various weapons, which Ambā counters and destroys promptly-until she finally forces Niśumbha to the ground with a volley of arrows. Niśumbha is wounded and falls to the ground.

Śumbha is enraged to see his brother on the ground and mounts a terrific assault on Devī. He stands on his chariot with magnificent weapons in his eight arms, menacing and fearsome in appearance. Caṇḍikā orders Śumbha to stop, with the devās cheering her on to victory from the astral plane. However, an enraged Śumbha lunges towards Devi with a flaming spear--Caṇḍikā destroys the spear with her arrows and proceeds to injure him with her spear. Śumbha is injured and falls to the ground, unconscious. Meanwhile Niśumbha regains consciousness and sees Śumbha on the ground.]

Immediately Niśumbha starts to engage in another violent confrontation with Devī. [He shoots arrows at Caṇḍikā, Kālī and Devī's Lion. The arrows don't even make a dent.] He then creates 10,000 hands for himself with a *cakra* (discus) on each of his 10,000 hands. He attempts to engulf and overwhelm Devi with his 10,000 discuses--intending to kill her and her ten assistants (aṣṭa-mātrkā-s, Cāmuṇḍā and Devī's Lion). But Ambal uses her *astrams* (arrows of her own) and cuts down all of Niśumbha's *cakrā*-s, blowing them to smithereens.

[Niśumbha then charges at Mother Caṇḍikā with a club and with his army around him -- and Devī promptly destroys his club with her sword.] When Niśumbha then grabs his lance and lunges at Caṇḍikā, She swiftly hurls her spear at him and pierces him through the heart! From his heart's gaping wound, another mighty and valorous being emerges and shouts at Devī [and asks her to stop]. The Divine Mother Caṇḍikā laughs at this being and severs his head with her sword, thus promptly killing the second form that emerged from Niśumbha. The mighty Niśumbha lies dead!

[The sapta-mātrukā-s destroy hordes of the asurās in Niśumbha's army; while Kālī, Śivadūtī and Caṇḍikā's Lion devour many many more. Thus ends the ninth chapter.]

The Devās watching all this are so very happy and in awe of Ambāl. Now let us go to the 10th chapter.

Tenth Chapter - Śumbha Vadham

[At the start of this chapter,] Śumbha is filled with anger because his brother, who is as precious to him as his own life-breath or prāṇa (“*prāṇa-sammitam*”) has been killed. Grief-struck and enraged, Śumbha comes to the warfield and glances around. Remember at the end of the 8th chapter, half of Śumbha's army was vanquished. At the end of the 9th chapter, the rest of his army was destroyed, but for a few 'namesake' generals who remained alive here and there on the field.

Now Śumbha begins to think a bit on how this whole fight started. He is very intelligent and cunning. He says to Ambāl, “I thought you would be alone.. Didn't you say that you wanted to fight 'one-on-one' with me? and that you would marry me if I won?” [He continues, “Do not show your pride here--for though you are haughty and arrogant, you fight after all depending on the strength of others.”] “Who are all these devīs fighting on your behalf? How fair is this?”

[This is indeed rich coming from Śumbha!] He is questioning Devī on the mātrukā-gaṇās' presence!

Now, one has to wonder about the ridiculousness of Śumbha's complaint and accusation! Isn't Śumbha the one who gathered all his asurā allies across the world, ordering them to fight on his behalf? He is after all the one who sent 60,000 troops with his general to a small girl in the first instance! Even now, he claims he came only with his army - however, even his lowly minions Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa had caturanga senā-s! It is beyond incredible to hear him talk about unfairness!

But the reality is: Every one of Śumbha's allies across the world (each with his own huge armies) has been finished - one after the other.. And after his 'trump-card' Raktabīja (whom Śumbha thought invincible) is destroyed, Śumbha becomes a bit more aware and starts to realize the seriousness of the situation! And he tries to gain the upper hand by invoking the conditions of his boons!!

Note another important point here: Ambā initially was all by herself; after the Lion joined her as her vehicle, she had one ally. Subsequently, we saw the terrifying Cāmuṇḍā emerging from Ambā's eyebrows, which meant Ambā had a total of two allies; later the seven mātrukā-gaṇās came; finally, we saw the fearsome Śivadūti (Caṇḍikā-Śakti) too emerge from Ambā. Ambā now had ten allies on the battlefield compared to the multitude that Śumbha had on the field until now.

However, confronted by Śumbha in this way, Caṇḍikā unflinchingly absorbs all of these powerful amśās, including the seven mātrukā-gaṇās into herself. Every one of her allies merges into Her. Devi responds with this magnificent verse:

**ekaivā'ham jagatyatra dvitīyā kā mamāparā |
paśyaitā duṣṭa mayyeva viśantyo madvibhūṭayah ||
tatah samastāstā devyo brahmāṇīpramukhā layam |
tasyā devyās tanau jagmur ekaivāsīttadāmbikā ||
(Chapter 10, Verses 5-6)**

“I am the only One. Everything else is Māyā--anything that appears as a duality is mere delusion. All of these devīs you see are my amśās, my constituent powers. They are my Vibhūṭis--they are all various forms of me. [And now I absorb them all back into me.]”

[The above statement reflects the highest Vedanta tenet of: ‘all this indeed is Brahman’.]

In addition, even though the mātrukā devis (Brahmāṇī, Māheśvarī, Vaiṣṇavī and others) may have originated in the devās), they too merge into Devi. What this means is that Brahma, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Indra, Subrahmaṇya and other devātās all came from Devi. That is why, these mātrukās can merge back with Devi.

[This is Her Play or Līlā -- the “Mātrukā-gaṇā” phenomenon exists in the Caṇḍī to reveal the profound significance of how Caṇḍikā is indeed Brahman or Supreme Consciousness.] She is the ātman from whom all devās have emerged. In the eleventh chapter, any doubts that may still linger in your minds about who is who, who came from whom, etc. will all be resolved: There, we will see Ambā clearly extolled as the Origin and Substratum of everything.

After all the Śaktis merge back into Her, Ambā tells Śumba: “Now I am alone. Fight without fear or doubt!”

**aham vibhūṭyā bahubhiriha rūpairyadāsthītā |
tatsamhrutam mayaikaiva tiṣṭhāmyajau sthiro bhava || (Chapter 10, Verse 8)**

The climactic battle between Śumbha and Devi begins. Śumbha uses all his astrams and Devi retorts back with her own weapons. She matches every one of Śumbha's powerful weapons with an equally potent missile aimed to neutralize Śumbha's force.

Did you know that Śumbha possesses eight hands? I have also wondered why. Remember, Devi in this third caritram has eight hands. The enemy is equally powerful. Devi's opponent is equally matched in might with her, so as to fulfill the condition of the boons begotten by Śumbha. One by one, the Divine Mother subdues and destroys all of Śumbha's weapons, until there comes a stage where Śumbha finds himself weaponless. Śumbha suddenly lunges towards the little Caṇḍikā, grabs her, and jumps into the ether or ākāśa! The fight continues in space!

The *padam* employed by the Ṛṣi to describe the Devi's status here is: “*nirādhārā*”. Now you may question how this is possible! How can Ambā be without support? The real meaning here is: While Ambā appears to be support-less, but She does not need support, since Ambā is herself the ether and space! Ambā is all elements and all phenomena--hence the *ākāśā* element itself is Ambā's *ādhāram* or construct.

Everyone who is watching is just dazzled and amazed at seeing Ambā face off with Śumbha in the sky. In the sky, the asura king and Caṇḍikā combat “hand to hand”, much to the astonishment of the sages and devās. [Ambā levels the playing field for Śumbha and fights with her bare hands!] At one point, Śumbha hits Devi with his fist. The blow does not hurt Ambā. Ambā strikes back directly at the asurā's chest with her palm, snatches him up, swings him around, and flings him to the earth!! Śumbhāsura is still alive when his body hits the ground - he gets up immediately ready to pounce on Devi. At this juncture, Ambā thrusts her spear through Śumbha's chest and throws the asura to the ground. Pierced through and through by the Devi's spear, his life-breath gone, Śumbha falls to the ground--shaking all the earth together with its islands, oceans and mountains!

cālayan sakalām pṛthvīm, sābdhi-dvīpām-saparvatām || (Chapter 10, Verse 27)

Remember: Devi had to engage this battle all on her own--She had to fight Śumbha one-on-one. If Śumbha used āgneya astram (fire missile), she had to use the equally powerful varuṇāstram (water missile) to neutralize the fire, and so one and so forth. Śumbha also continually tried his best, and even tried to defeat Caṇḍikā using hand-to-hand combat, but he was no match for Caṇḍikā. But because he was defeated and killed by the Divine Mother, Śumbha too attains liberation or Mokṣā.

There had been an abundance of bad omens in nature when Śumbha was alive. You see, there were plenty of “*durnimittam*” as a result of the *adharma* that prevailed during Śumbha's reign.

Once Śumbha was slain, the whole Universe became calm; regaining its natural order. The sky cleared. Rivers started flowing along their courses again. The flaming clouds that portended evil now cleared.

utpātameghāḥ sōlkā ye, prāgāsamste śamaṁ yayuḥ | (Chapter 10, Verse 29)

All the devās who watched the destruction of Śumbha were overjoyed. [The celestial musicians sang sweetly and the nymphs danced joyously]. During Śumbha's rule, no matter what direction one would look out in, nothing was in harmony. There was a great imbalance in nature. With Śumbha vanquished, equilibrium was restored in the universe. All of the living beings experienced a calmness once again. Air started to flow normally. Agni or Fire regained its lost lustre and could burn brightly without smoke. Āhutīs (items offered in sacred oblations) had lustre once more. The sacred fires glowed peacefully. All the unsettling sounds in all the directions faded away. The Sun blazed brightly in the sky.

This description will give you an idea of how things were during the *adharmic* rule by Śumbha. [*Adharma* results in the destruction of equilibrium in Nature, leading to the destruction of Nature itself]. After Ambikā defeated Śumbha-Niśumbha once and for all, all of the devās were extremely happy with her. Why were they so happy? Let us examine the reasons. The devās could not vanquish Śumbha given the exceptional boons he had won through penance. In fact Śumbha was extremely proud of the fact that he was invincible and could not be defeated by the devās. So arrogant was Śumbha that he proclaimed that Indra himself had offered up [Indra's] magnificent horse Uccaiśravas to Śumbha; furthermore, Śumbhāsūrā boasted that the celestial horse took Śumbha's orders, and offered prostrations to Śumbha! Indra's heavenly, wish-fulfilling tree Kalpavrikśa (also called *Pārijāta taru*) now grew in the palace of Śumbha. All of the best and choicest of possessions (previously owned and enjoyed by the devās and by the entire world) were now in the possession of Śumbha. Can you imagine the pathetic and miserable status of the devās!

The term typically used to describe the choicest and best items in the world is: *ratnam*. Śumbha's minions actually addressed Ambā as '*stree ratnam*' or a '*jewel among women*'. And let us not forget, that they exhorted their regent Śumbha to acquire Ambā and own her (as they would own possessions or a trophy). Although Śumbha possessed all the best of the best in terms of wealth, trophies, luxury, and status in all the worlds--and even though he was mighty and valorous and intelligent--a divine young girl was able to defeat Śumbha's entire asura army, vanquish all the *daiṭyas* and secure victory for the *devās*. The devās are extremely elated and happy with Ambā. (And that is how the eleventh chapter starts).

[It is interesting to note that (in the ninth chapter)] Niśumbha falls unconscious first; seeing his brother lie on the ground, Śumbha is enraged and lunges at Devi; then Śumbha falls unconscious and Niśumbha wakes up. Niśumbha becomes enraged seeing Śumbha on the ground, and attacks Devi. [Then when Niśumbha is fatally wounded, there is another form that emerges from him! Finally when Niśumbha is dead, Śumbha wakes up and sees his brother lying lifeless--and is beside himself with grief and anger! Śumbha engages in the climactic battle with the Devi--only to be destroyed himself.] This prolonged back and forth between Śumbha and Niśumbha is significant. There are many many more special details in the 9th and 10th chapters--if time were to permit it, I will share those details with you [and all the significance of the details] elaborately on another day. There are just so many things to talk about, contemplate and understand about those two chapters. However, today I am eager to expound on the special details of the eleventh chapter for you all.

Eleventh Chapter - Nārāyaṇī Stuti

Even the beginning of the eleventh chapter is so beautiful!

Ṛṣiruvāca:
devyā hate tatra mahāsurendre -- sendrāḥ surā vahnipurōgamās tām |
(Chapter 11, Verses 1-2)

Never - anywhere else - have I seen logic or common sense [employed in the narrative] as I have seen in the Devi Māhātmyam. Let me explain what I mean by this with an example. Let's assume I need help and I've sought the help from a specific person. When would I normally give thanks to this person? Only after the help I've sought has been completely rendered by the person helping--in a very satisfactory manner--will I be inclined to thank them. Isn't it? Only then will the expression of thanks on my part be sincere and whole-hearted.

Let us say that the help was rendered inadequately or carried out with only half the effort -- and therefore the work was not completed satisfactorily. Then I will probably say: “Well, some things went the way it should; and it appears you also did the best you could; however, the work has not been completed--it is only half-done. Anyway, thank you for your help.” For instance, if you were asking an influential person for a job as a manager, but that person was only able to secure a clerical position for you--in this case, your expression of gratitude also would be reflective of some of your disappointment--which then would likely be reflected in both your voice and face.

Here in the Māhātmyam [the devās are beyond elated at the Devī having defeated Śumbha]. Led by *agni* or the fire-God, the devās begin offering namaskārams to Ambāḥ while extolling her greatness, with amazingly joyous bearing:

kātyāyanīm tuṣṭuvuriṣṭa lābhād--vikāśi vaktrābja vikāśitāśāh ||
(Chapter 11, verse 2)

The thing to note here is: all of the devās’ faces appear extremely joyous and bright! Their countenances are lustrous, and reflect their elation. They appear immensely pleased--as pleased as if they themselves fought the war and vanquished the enemy! Normally the person who fights would be extremely tired--but here, the devās had just been spectators throughout the conflict between Ambā and Śumbha-Niśumbha. They did not actually fight. Yet they felt as elated as if they had fought the asurās themselves!!

I really like the way [the Ṛṣi describes the scene]:

kātyāyanīm tuṣṭuvuriṣṭa lābhāt

The *padam* “*iṣṭa lābhāt*” means: “Whatever *abhīṣṭam* the devās wished for, they were granted those.” [As a result, the devās’ countenances shone with great lustre].

What can one glean from this? [Simply this:] Whatever you ask Ambāḥ for, you will get that. If a child were to ask for something, the child would get what she asked for. What we wish for, we would get.. [as Ambā fulfills all wishes].

Then, the devās extoll and praise the Divine Mother’s glory elaborately:

devi prapannārtihare prasīda--prasīda mātara jagatō'khilasya |
prasīda viśveśvari pāhi viśvaṁ--tvamīśvarī devi carā carasya ||
(Chapter 11, Verse 3)

The devās utter the *padam* “*prasīda*” three times. One may ask why they repeat this *padam* over and over? “*Prasīda*” means to bless or to bestow Grace (*anugraha*). This blessing does not refer to what Ambāḥ has already bestowed to the devās, but is a reference to Her Grace for the devās in the future. Thus the devās pray in this way: “Please bless us Mother, so that we do not face [situations similar to the] hardship and peril [we faced with Śumbha-Niśumbha].”

The devās begin their prayer with a direct supplication for protection--they ask this of the Divine Mother without guilt or reservation. They ask this sincerely with a truthful mind, and with all their heart.

They do so, because [as described in the *padam*] “[devi carā carasya](#)” above, SHE is the Whole Universe. Ambāḷ and this Jagat (universe) are not different. They are one and the same. All manifestations are Hers. SHE is everything. SHE pervades everything. Hence the devās pray in this way: “Mother, Viśveśvarī, You are the Īśvari (the Sovereign) to this whole world. Please protect us. Please bless us. Please bestow your Grace on us.”

From the beginning of the above verse 3 (“[devi prapannārthihare prasīda](#)”) until the end of verse 39 (“[asmad vairi-vināśanam](#)”):

**[sarvābādhā praśamanam, trailōkyasyākhileśvari |
evameva tvayākāryam, asmad vairi vināśanam || (Chapter 11, verse 39)]**

these 37 ślokās form the celebrated hymn called Nārāyaṇī Sūktam.

Remember how the Rātrī Sūktam starts:

**viśveśvarīm jagaddhātrīm sthiti saṁhāra kārīṇīm |
nidrām bhagavatīm viṣṇō ratulām tejasaḥ prabhuḥ ||
(Rātrī Sūktam, Verse 1)**

[The beginning phrase of the Rātrī Sūktam] carries the same meaning as the phrase “[prasīda viśveśvari pāhi viśvam](#)” in the Nārāyaṇī Sūktam: “You are the Īśvarī to the three worlds, and you hold up / support this world with your two hands!”

Ambāḷ nourishes and protects this world with her hands in the same way that a mother holds, feeds, protects and nourishes her newborn baby in her hands!

After Rātrī Sūktam, next we see in the Devī Sūktam (or Aparājitā Stuti in Chapter 5):

**namō devyai, mahādevyai, śivāyai satatam namaḥ |
namaḥ prakṛtyai bhadrayai, niyatāḥ praṇatāḥ smatām ||
(Chapter 5, Verse 9)**

[In Devī Sūktam] the devās repeatedly offer namaskārams to Ambāḷ. The praise is secondary to their namaskārams-- whatever they see, whatever they experience, they offer prostrations to Her. They see Her in every form, and they can not get enough of offering her their namaskārams!

**yādevī sarva bhūteṣu, mātr rūpeṇa samsthitā |
namastasyai namastasyai namastasyai namōnamaḥ ||
(Chapter 5, Verses 71-73)**

There are only 2 verses of praise that the devās offer to Ambā at the end of the Devī Sūktam--the rest of the verses are all namaskārams. While extolling the Divine Mother at the end of Devī Sūktam, the devās say with great faith: if one offers prostrations to you in total surrender, then all their hardship will be resolved that instant! They chant:

**Yā ca smrutā tatkṣaṇameva hanti nah |
Sarvāpado bhaktivinamramūrtibhiḥ || (Chapter 5, Verse 82)**

In that instant, all the problems [of your devotees] are removed. The devās are very confident of this. They offer their namaskārams with the utmost faith in Ambā's Grace.

This faith is why the Divine Mother apparates in front of them in the very next instant.

That is to say, Ambā's Grace is like a mirror: Ambā reflects the intention of the seeker. If the seeker is sincere in his or her faith and surrenders to the Mother, then their intent is reflected multi-fold through Ambā's Grace. If the seeker has some hidden agendas and is insincere in his surrender, he will see this too reflected in the result.

Remember, Ambā's Grace is a "Plus One" (+ 1) phenomenon! The Divine Mother will give more than what we seek, if only our faith in Her is sincere. Hence my repeated requests and earnest counsel to you all: Please just offer her your namaskārams with full devotion. You need not necessarily have to ask her what you want, as She knows to keep you away from danger. She knows what you need; and what you desire.

[Your prayer should be:] Oh Mother, please do whatever pleases you. I can only offer you my namaskārams. I am incapable of even articulating what my problems and difficulties are.

Saying so, just offer your namaskārams. You need not speak about your problems out loud. Will Ambā not know what your problems are? If the whole world is HERS, then are we not a part of that world? Wouldn't She know what we need? So why do we even have to say what our problems are? In Devī Sūktam, the devās do not articulate the exact nature of the problems faced by them.

**stutā suraiḥ pūrvam-abhiṣṭa saṁśrayāt--tathā surendreṇa dineṣu sevītā |
karōtu sā naḥ śubhahetur-īśvarī--śubhāni bhadrāṇyabhiantu cāpadaḥ||
(Chapter 5, Verse 81)**

The phrase "dineṣu sevītā" means: we offer our namaskārams to you daily [and always]. You please help us by removing our problems. We are very sure you will remove the problems. In fact, they do not even ask this of her - they assert with confidence that Ambā resolves all their hardship. That was in Chapter 5.

Similarly again in Chapter 11:

**devi prapannārthihare prasīda--prasīda mātār jagatō'khilasya |
(Chapter 11, Verse 2)**

Here the word “**mātaḥ**” is very important. [Note the resonance with “**yā devī sarva bhūteṣu mātr rūpeṇa samsthitā**” in the Devī Sūktam (chapter 5)]. The devās say in the eleventh chapter: “Oh Mother, after you vanquished Mahiśāsura, you came back again to defeat Śumbha. Just to fight Śumbha in this battle [and secure victory for the devās] you even made yourself angry. You employed all those mighty weapons and took great pains only to help us. All we want now is for you to become calm and be at peace, and for you to become happy. You bless us now.”

The reason the devās are asking this of Ambā is because She is the Universal Mother (whose duty it is to provide for the whole universe). If the mother of a child becomes very angry, [and remains angry], then who will take care of the baby? (If the mother is stressed and agitated while working, who will take care of the child? The child will have to be dependent on another caretaker. However will the caretaker be able to feed the baby as well as the mom? This is something that only a Mother can do. Caretakers can only offer a feeding bottle and rock the baby to become calm and pacify the hunger.) [They can not take the place of the Mother.]

The *padam* “**prasīda**” is used repeatedly. The devās know that Ambā became angry only to defeat the evil asuras who oppressed the devās. Now they beseech Ambā to calm down and become happy and peaceful once again--as [they imagine that] only when Ambā is peaceful and happy, will She be able to attend to the needs of every child in this world. The *padam* “**mātar jagatō'khalasya**” means that She is the Mother of this entire Universe. If that is the case, is She not the Mother of each and every one of us? “Please take care of me. I am like a newborn infant in this world. I do not know anything. It is not that I made a mistake on purpose. I erred on account of my great ignorance--and I know that I experience pain now as a result of my own error. However You are the kindest Mother, and I am but a truant child of yours. कुपुत्रो जायेत क्वचिदपि कुमाता न भवति --”kupuṭro jāyeta kvacidapi kumātā na bhavati” -- so the *subhāṣitam* goes. Shouldn't you protect me as my mother? Hence, Ambā, *prasīda, prasīda, prasīda*.

The devās then continue describing Ambā's pervasiveness -- She pervades every part of this world and is the sustainer of the world. She is in the water. Without water there can be no life--no flora or fauna. She is Viṣṇu. She is Rudra. She is Brahma. [Ambā is] the creator, sustainer and destroyer of this world. Not only that, “Mother, you are the one who brings *sammohanam* to this world”.

sammōhitāṁ devisamasta metat-tvaṁ vai prasannā bhuvī muktihetuḥ |
(Chapter 11- Verse 5)

The devās continue on to ask Ambā: We seek liberation (Mokṣa). And You are the only one who can grant Mukti. Please grant me liberation. I might falter and make mistakes aplenty. I might not focus and concentrate in order to attain your abode. However, why is this so? Why are you not seated in my mind and making my mind more disciplined? Don't you have power to do that? You know that I am suffering as a result of my ignorance and the resultant mistakes. However I am done with all the suffering and pain. I plead with you to help me. Please lead me to the righteous path--*sanmārgam*. That too is only up to you.

Then the devās say:

vidyāḥ samastāstava devi bhedāḥ -- striyaḥ samastāḥ sakalā jagatsu ||
(Chapter 11 - Verse 5)

What does “**vidyāḥ**” mean?

“Vidyāḥ” encompasses:

1. All the 4 Vedas:

- Ṛg-veda
- Yajur-veda
- Sāma-veda
- Atharva-veda

[The Vedās are further divided into 4 parts - Mantra-Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇās, Āraṇyakās & Upanishads.

2. There are more than 200 known Upanishads.]

3. Vedāṅgas (six auxiliary disciplines connected to the study of each of the vedās):

- śikṣā,
- kalpa,
- vyākaraṇa,
- chandas,
- jyotiṣa,
- nirukta.

4. The Six Śāstrās (shad-darśanās or world views/philosophies)--namely:

- Mimāmsa Śāstra
- Nyāya Śāstra
- Sāṅkhya Śāstra
- Vaiśeṣika Śāstra
- Yoga Śāstra
- Vedānta Śāstra

5. Itihāsās, which include the Mahābhārata, the Rāmāyaṇa, and sometimes the Purāṇās (there are 18 Mahā-purāṇās and 18 upa-purāṇās).

6. Upavedās, which include: āyurveda (pertaining to health and sustaining life), gandharva-veda (pertaining to music), dhanurveda (pertaining to archery), sthapatya-veda (pertaining to architecture).

All of the above comprise the notion of “Vidyāḥ” or (scholarly) learning.

We can see from the above list that we have so much to study and so much to master. Is it even humanly possible to learn/understand all of the above texts and acquire the knowledge contained therein in one lifetime?!

Yet, all of these are [the Divine Mother’s] *svarūpās* or manifestations.

Similarly, the *padam* “**striyaḥ samastāḥ sakalā jagatsu**” can be understood in this way:

The word “**sakalā**” here means all of the 64 kalās or sciences or streams of education--these include nāṭya

śāstra (the art of dance), śilpa śāstra (the art of sculpture), sangīta śāstra (the art of music), citra śāstra (the art of drawing and painting), *ratna parīkṣā* (art of knowing and identifying imperfections in precious stones), to name a few.

In this way, there are 64 streams of education or acquired skills or arts. Ambā is All-Knowing and therefore the repository of all of these 64 branches of studies.

It is almost impossible for one to know and develop expertise in all of the kalās in one lifetime. It is difficult to even learn the name of all the arts and streams of learning. Generally after earning a degree or two, we already feel that we know and understand everything. But the more we pursue learning, the more we come to realize that the body of knowledge that we have yet to study and master is vast. What we know is equal to a mound of sand held in the palm of our hand. What we don't know is as vast as this universe itself.

“Kaṭṛathu kai maṇ aḷavu, Kallāthathu ulagaḷavu,” it is said in Thamizh (Tamil).

We begin to understand the disproportionate amount of ignorance in us -- and the vast amount of learning we have yet to master. But Ambā *is* all of these streams of learning. That is the meaning of Verse 5. “You are all-knowing of everything that has to be known in this world. Since you are all of those *kalās* and *śāstrās* (streams of knowledge), please help and protect this ignorant ‘me’”.

tvayaikayā pūritamāmba yaitat--kā te stutiḥ stavya parā parōktiḥ
(Chapter 11, Verse 6)

Even if we attempt to describe you, how can we even try to extoll [your *prabhāvam*]? “kā te stutiḥ”?

“Oh Mother, Since you are all of these forms and all of the Universe, it is silly for me to even try and say I have achieved anything. All of my knowledge is from you --and isn't it very silly of me to show off your knowledge that you gave me? Isn't it [ridiculous] of me to proclaim any knowledge to be “mine”? In Tamil we would jokingly say to the daughter, “There is no need to boast about your own home to your own brother” Isn't this silly? Weren't both [brother and sister] raised in the same household? Wouldn't the brother and the sister not know everything that was happening in one house?

Similarly, all of the Vidyāḥ (streams of Knowledge) are a part of you. [Therefore, even the art of speech and articulation is You]. So how do I even praise you? All I can do is just to do namaskārams to you.

In Chapter 4, Brahma, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara try to expound on your Prabhāvam, but even they are unable to do so. “*Yasyā prabhāvamatulam bhagavānananto--brhamāharaśca na hi vaktumalaṃ balaṃ ca*” refers to this.

When they [even Brahma, Viṣṇu and Maheśvarā] are unable to do so, I am nothing but a speck. I am not even going to try. However, I am experiencing pain and suffering in this life. I need all of my suffering to be removed. All I am going to do is offer namaskārams.

After this point in the Nārāyaṇī Sūktam, the devās are just doing namaskārams repeatedly to Ambā.

sarva bhūtā yadā devī, svarga muktipradāyinī |
tvañ stutā, stutaye kā vā bhavantu paramōktayaḥ ||
(Chapter 11, Verse 7)

Oh Mother, you are the one who grants *svarga* (heavenly abode) and also grants Mukti (liberation). I don't want to just attain *svargam*. Because once I go to *svarga-loka*, I have to come back to this earth again. For, after all of the good merit (*puṇya*) are exhausted, then the cycle of birth and death will continue and will have to take place on earth again. One has to experience pain and suffering and hardship back on earth. I do not want that. I want to attain *mukti* (liberation) from *svarga* -- I want ultimate liberation or *mokṣa*. *Mokṣa* is attained by reaching your Lotus feet or by attaining *sāyujyam* or total unity with you. Please grant me unity with you.

sarvasya buddhi rūpeṇa, janasya hṛdi sañsthite |
svargāpa vargade devi, Nārāyaṇī namō:'stute ||
(Chapter 11, Verse 8)

The passage beginning with the afore-mentioned ślokā where we first encounter the *padam* **Nārāyaṇī namō'stute**, through and including the next 16 ślokās -- is called **Nārāyaṇī Stuti**.

Earlier I mentioned Nārāyaṇī Sūktam: the sūktam comprises 37 ślokās in all. Let us look closely at the *padam* "Nārāyaṇī".

Who is Nārāyaṇī?

To whom is the Nārāyaṇī Stuti or Nārāyaṇī Sūktam addressed to? Who is Nārāyaṇī denoted by? It is important to understand whom we are invoking.

When we perform a *homam* or *havan*, when an oblation is offered with ghee, let us say I chant: "Indrāyasvāhā", or "Indrāya idam na mama".. This phrase means I am offering this āhuti to Lord Indra and this is no longer mine. Thus I am instructing / supplicating Agni to transmit or take this āhuti to Indra.

So when I say "Nārāyaṇī namō'stute" to whom am I offering prostrations? All along, I have been invoking "Caṇḍikā" in the Devī Māhātmyam. Now suddenly I'm chanting: "Nārāyaṇī namō'stute"! Who is this Nārāyaṇī? The phrase occurs 16 times as well, so it is very important to understand whom we are addressing in this hymn.

"Nārāyaṇī" denotes the power or śakti of Nārāyaṇa. Recall that Caṇḍikā's śakti emerged [from the little girl child form of Caṇḍikā]. Similarly, imagine Nārāyaṇī is the ultimate power capable of granting *jīvan mukti*. The initial prayer starts with asking to grant the *jīva* (the embodied consciousness) its *mukti* (or liberation). This Nārāyaṇī is the substratum of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvarā, and She is also the substratum of this universe. She is therefore the substratum of the *jīva*. She is also the grantor of all of the

wishes that mankind asks for. She lives in the pure white *vaikuṅṭha*; She is in the 3 gunās: sattva, rajas and tamas. She is in every atom and in the deepest recesses of the mind. She is the [causal principle and] enlivening force or inner *śakti* of all living organisms. She is also the *śakti* or the power of Lord Kṛiṣṇa who is the son of Vasudevā. All of these explanations are provided, in order to help us understand Her prabhāvam--so we do not mistake Nārāyaṇī to be the consort or *patnī* of Lord Nārāyaṇa. Nārāyaṇī is the *stree* or female anthropomorphic form of Nārāyaṇa. Nārāyaṇī is [therefore] another name for Caṇḍika. [Nārāyaṇī, therefore is Brahman.]

The devās further offer namaskārams to each and every one of the Mātru-śakti-s or the divine forms [of Brahman and therefore divine forms of Mother Caṇḍikā herself] that assisted in the destruction of Śumbha-Niśumbha: recall these forms were Brahmāṇī, Vārāhī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Nārasimhī, and Aindrī. They also offer namaskārams to Śivadūtī or Caṇḍikā-śakti, and Kālī-Cāmuṇḍā. [Ślokā-s 13 through 21 are prayers to the various forms of the Divine Mother encountered in the Uttara Caritram.] All of these forms of the Devī are all Caṇḍikā. They are all Nārāyaṇī. The *padam sarvasvarūpe* in verse 24 and phrase *rūpair anekair bahudhātma mūrtim* in verse 30 (later in the Nārāyaṇī Sūktam) refer to all the various forms of the Divine Mother seen in the Caṇḍī.

sarva maṅgaḷa māṅgaḷye, śive sarvārtha sādḥike |
śaraṇye tryambake gaurī Nārāyaṇī namō:'stute ||
(Chapter 11, Verse 10)

[“Oh the most auspicious of all auspiciousness; Oh Mother who confers the highest fruits of *sādhanā*; Oh Great Refuge, Mother Gowrī, Nārāyaṇī, Our namaskārams unto you.].

After offering all the initial prostrations, the devās specifically extoll the Divine Mother as the embodiment of auspiciousness.

See: If we need something, then it is wise to go to a person who is endowed and and ask them for help. It would make sense to do so--as there is hope and a better guarantee that *that* person will help you. If the person is extremely wealthy, such a person will not stand to lose anything by helping you--the help may be like a drop of salt in the ocean. What is the point in seeking financial help from someone who is seeking alms himself? [The Divine Mother is the only devatā who can confer *sakala soubhāgyam* or all prosperity, because She is the highest and most exalted auspiciousness out of all auspiciousness.]

The above *śloka* is meant to confer all manner of prosperity on the seeker. For who can be better than Ambā to confer prosperity along every axis (material, as well as spiritual)?

Here, the devās seek all manner of prosperity by going to Ambā, who is the very substrate and repository of all auspicious things. [But the prayer has the following implied meaning as well:] “Please grant me auspiciousness--grant me only those boons and things that I can handle or manage. I might ask for way too many things and may not know what is good for me. But Mother, please grant me what is right for me [and please keep me safe from harm].

śaraṇāgata dīnārta paritrāṇa parāyaṇe |
sarvasyārti hare devi, Nārāyaṇī namō:'stute ||
(Chapter 11, Verse 12)

[“Salutations to you, Nārāyaṇī, who rescues the distressed and afflicted who seek refuge in you! Oh Devī who removes all suffering, namaskārams to you.”]

Mother, I take refuge in you. In my day to day life, if I were to face any difficulties or problems, please dispel those difficulties. They may take any form; and they may not even arise in ways I understand. In any and all instances, please just deliver me from the hardship. I am offering my namaskārams right now for what might come my way or happen to me later.

lakṣmi lajje mahā:'vidye, śraddhe puṣṭi svadhe dhruve |
mahārātri mahāvidye, Nārāyaṇī namō'stute ||
(Chapter 11, Verse 22)

In the above verse (*śloka* 22), namaskārams are offered to all the forms and attributes of Caṇḍikā. Why? To give an example in real life: Suppose there were a dias full of people older than us--whom we know, and we wish to (or are required to) offer them our respects and take their blessings. It is very time-consuming to take blessings from each and every one of them individually. So in all likelihood we will probably have them stand or sit in a line, and then bow down to them and take their blessings all at once--right? In this verse, the devās do something similar: Ambā is *jagat-dhātrī* (the sustainer of this entire universe). [So great is her *vibhūti* that] She has taken so many forms and attributes. In the above verse, the devās offer their namaskārams to every one of Ambā's *vibhūti*-s: prosperity, hesitation, great scholarship, faith, wealth.. She is the Great Darkness (*tirodhāna* or Veiling Grace), as well as the Great Knowledge (revealing Grace or *anugraha*.)]

medhe sarasvatī vare, bhūti bābhravi tāmasi |
niyate tvaṁ prasīdeśe Nārāyaṇī namō'stute ||
(Chapter 11, Verse 23)

[“Namaskārams to Mahāsarasvatī, the divine consort and the dark one. Oh Devī who is the eternal principle--Please Be Gracious. Namaskārams unto you, Nārāyaṇī.]

[If you look at the previous śloka or Verse 22 (which begins with “**lakṣmi lajje..**”), you will see a reflection of the Devī's prabhāvam as Mahāmāyā as described in the Rātrī Sūktam. Verse 23 above (which begins with “**medhe sarasvatī vare..**”) invokes the form of Devī as Mahāsarasvatī, who sparkles with a superior intelligence in Ambikā-Kauśikī in the Uttara Caritram. Devī then begets the dark and terrifying Cāmuṇḍā, to whom the *padam* “tāmasī” refers. In verse 22, the devās offer namaskārams to the Mahāmāyā that is Caṇḍikā--that is Nārāyaṇī. And in verse 23, they also offer prostrations to the Mahāsarasvatī and Kālī Cāmuṇḍā who are also Caṇḍikā--who are also Nārāyaṇī. All of these forms are of the Divine Mother who is none other than Brahman or Supreme Consciousness.]

[In the Ślokaś 24 to 30, the devās supplicate the Devī to eradicate their fears, dread, afflictions of all kind and calamities that could befall them.]

Let us pray in this way:

“After offering all of these salutations, I still wish for a few things for myself. I am in this worldly cycle of *samsāra* and I have responsibilities towards my family. Many are the pains and problems that

accompany me in this life of *samsara*. The number of days I have been happy is comparatively small compared to the days I've been riddled with pain and mountains of hardship. It is my good fortune that the devās have prayed to you to have their pains alleviated through Devī Sūktam. You emerged from the body of Gowrī. You then vanquished Śumbha and his brother Niśumba and their massive armies. You saved the devās by [destroying their enemies,] returning their kingdom to them and ensuring they get their food and other offerings through the fire oblations.”

[In verses 24 through 30, the devās appeal to the Devi to protect them from all potential calamity or peril; and to continue to bestow Her Grace on them. They appeal to all her forms. The *padam sarvasvarūpe* in verse 24 and phrase *rūpair anekair bahudhātma mūrtim* in verse 30 refer to the various forms that Mother Caṇḍikā or Nārāyaṇī has taken to protect her devotees from harm.]

[Let us skip ahead to verse 35.] In this *śloka*, the devās pray for the prosperity of those in all of the three worlds in the cosmos; namely, *svarga-lokā* (the abode of devās), *bhūloka* (inhabited by human beings) and *pātāḷa-lokā* (inhabited by asurās/daityās). The devās pray for Devī's Abiding Grace on all these three worlds--they pray specifically that the Divine Mother fulfill the aspirations of the inhabitants of these three worlds:

**praṇatānām prasīda tvam devi viśvārti-hāriṇī |
trailokya-vāsinām iḍye lokānām varadā bhava ||
(Chapter 11, Verse 35)**

This prayer of the devās on behalf of all three worlds shows their empathy (and compassion) for all beings. In fact, they are called '*devās*', because they seek the welfare of allies and enemies alike. Even though the asurās have gone out of their way to harm the devās egregiously, the devās nevertheless ask Devī for boons to help all three lokās and their inhabitants. Their pleas to Ambā (on behalf of themselves, human beings and asurās alike) despite having suffered enormously at the hands of the asurās, shows their enlightened way of thinking and being.

Next week I will talk more about the individual prayers and supplications related to the personal aspirations of a person stuck in *samsāra*. Such a person [who is beholden to responsibilities to his kith and kin] may feel: Oh Devī, I am not be able to observe the prescriptions or discipline advised in our *śāstrā-s* for *mokṣa-sādhana*. I am very limited in what I can do. [What do I do?] Let us look at this [predicament and the resolution for this] in detail next week.

Śrī Gurubhyo Namah! Śrī Mātre Namah!

May each and every one of you be filled with happiness and all the blessings of the Divine Mother. May all of your troubles disappear very soon due to Ambā's Grace.

Krishna Krishna