

# Lalitopākhyāna

~ CHAPTER SUMMARIES ~



TRIPURĀ  TALLIKĀ

2024

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# INTRODUCTION

**F**or the 2024 fall Navarātrī Tripurā Tallikā is pleased to release abridged summaries of each of the 40 chapters of the Lalitopākhyāna as found in the Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa translated and annotated by G.V. Tagare (1958). This work is crafted to deepen and enrich the spiritual journeys of Her devotees by offering accessible insights into this sacred text's divine narratives.

To facilitate a deeper engagement during the Navarātrī festival, the chapter summaries are divided into nine segments, corresponding to each day of the celebration.

TRIPURĀ  TALLIKĀ



*SECTION I:*  
*INTRODUCTORY CHAPTERS*

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*Ch. 5-10*

CHAPTER 5

*Agastya & Hayagrīva*

**A**gastya, the learned sage, after traveling across sacred places, witnesses the ignorance of beings and reflects on their worldly desires. In the city of Kāñcī, he worships Śiva and Kāmākṣī, where Lord Viṣṇu, pleased by Agastya's long penance, appears in his Hayagrīva form.

Viṣṇu, radiant and powerful, blesses Agastya and offers him a boon. Agastya requests guidance on how to liberate ignorant beings from worldly bondage.

Viṣṇu advises that salvation and worldly enjoyment are both impossible without the worship of Goddess Tripurā and that liberation comes by identifying one's soul with the Great Goddess through devotion, meditation, and performing holy rights. He recounts how even Śiva and other Devas attained greatness by meditating on Parā Śakti.

Viṣṇu imparts this esoteric doctrine to Agastya, wishing for the welfare of all beings.



CHAPTER 6

*Dialogue Between Agastya &  
Hayagrīva: the Nature of Violence, etc.*

**A**gastya, filled with curiosity, humbly invites Hayagrīva to share the story of the Great Goddess, her manifestations, and her divine activities. Hayagrīva begins by describing the Goddess as eternal, the source of both good and evil actions, who can only be perceived through deep meditation.

He proceeds to describe her manifestations and points that at the dawn of creation, Śakti first appeared through Brahmā's meditation as Prakṛti, the force behind the Devas' achievements.

Her second manifestation came during the churning of the ocean for nectar, as Mohinī. She was so enchanting that even Śiva, though typically indifferent to worldly desires, was so charmed by Mohinī that he fathered Śāstā, the suppressor of demons, with her.

[Finally, her third manifestation emerged as Lalitā, who appeared with the divine mission to vanquish the demon Bhaṇḍāsura.]

Agastya, intrigued by this unusual episode of Śiva's enchantment, seeks more details. Hayagrīva explains how Indra, the king of the gods, once ruled with prosperity and honor. However, his arrogance angered the Goddess, who sent the sage Durvāsā to test him. Disguised as a madman, Durvāsā encountered a Vidyādhara woman who had received a sacred garland from the Goddess after intense penance. Durvāsā, impressed by the garland, asked for it, and the woman gladly handed it over.

Durvāsā, delighted, placed the garland on his head, then presented it to Indra. However, Indra disrespected the gift by placing it on his elephant, which threw it to the ground. Angered by this insult to the Goddess's sacred garland, Durvāsā cursed Indra, stripping him of his glory. As a result, Indra's power and victory were transferred to Bali, the Daitya.

Indra, now devoid of splendor, returned to his city and consulted Bṛhaspati, seeking a remedy for his misfortune. Bṛhaspati explained that no action, good or bad, disappears without atonement or consequence. He provided a detailed discourse on the nature of sin, karma, and the importance of performing sacrifices and rituals according to one's role in society. He emphasized that even when committed out of necessity, certain actions, like violence or sacrifice, may require penance, but can also serve a higher purpose.

Hayagrīva concluded by recounting how, in ancient times, the Goddess Māyā created the Devas, Asuras, and humans along with sacrificial animals to preserve cosmic balance. Brahmā, through his diplomacy, ensured the sacrifices were performed according to divine law, pleasing both the Devas and the Goddess, thus maintaining harmony in the universe.





## *The Sins of Theft & Drinking Liquor*

**I**ndra asks Bṛhaspati to explain the nature of theft and its consequences. Bṛhaspati explains that killing an animal is sinful, but killing someone who has sought your trust is an even greater sin, especially when committed against the most vulnerable or those with great hardship. Stealing from a poor person, a Brahman, or a large family is considered one of the gravest sins, and there is no atonement for it. Stealing from a trusted individual increases the severity of the sin, and stealing from someone of a lower caste incurs greater karmic consequences.

Bṛhaspati then recounts the story of a thief named Vajra in the city of Kāñcī. Vajra amassed wealth by stealing and hid his loot in the jungle, unaware that a Kirāta (forester) named Vīradatta secretly took a portion of the wealth. Vīradatta, with the stolen wealth, built a tank and a temple, dedicating the rest to sacred activities. The Brāhmaṇas praised him, and he was renamed Dvijavarmā, becoming a respected figure.

When Dvijavarmā died, a battle ensued among Yama's messengers, as well as those of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Rudra, over his soul. Nārada intervened, revealing that Dvijavarmā would remain in a gaseous state until Vajra and the others died. Dvijavarmā's wife performed sacred rites and gained liberation for her husband, who regained his body.

Afterward, Vajra and those he had stolen from passed away and were judged by Yama. Despite their sins, they first enjoyed the fruits of their good deeds and were eventually taken to heaven, led by Dvijavarmā.

Indra then asks about the consequences of drinking alcohol, and Bṛhaspati outlines the different types of liquor and their effects. He explains the sinfulness of drinking without worshipping Parā Śakti, especially for Brāhmaṇas. For those who have fallen into sin, Bṛhas-

pati prescribes repentance, worship of Parā Śakti, and specific expiatory rites to cleanse themselves.



## CHAPTER 8

### *Narration of Sexual Crimes*

**I**ndra seeking clarity on the nature of sinful actions, specifically asks Bṛhaspati about the sin of approaching a forbidden woman and the appropriate means of expiation. Bṛhaspati explains that the gravest sins involve approaching one's own mother, sister, or the wife of a preceptor or maternal uncle, and for such sins, no expiation is possible. He further elaborates on varying degrees of sin and atonement based on the caste or status of the woman involved. For instance, defiling a Guru's wife leads to years of intense penance, while cohabiting with a woman of lower status requires less severe purification rites.

Bṛhaspati outlines numerous methods of purification, including fasting, *prāṇāyāmas*, and specific rituals, depending on the nature of the transgression. For example, approaching a woman of the same caste may be expiated by fasting, while contact with lower-caste women requires longer rituals and even worship of *Dharāśakti* (the Earth Śakti). He also describes different forms of *Dāsī* (a slave, harlot) and their associated levels of sin.

Regarding sexual conduct, Bṛhaspati explains that cohabiting with a menstruating wife or a virgin without marriage, even with parental consent, incurs specific atonements. He emphasizes that sexual intercourse conducted with reverence and proper mantras, such as those invoking *Vāsudeva* and *Lakṣmī*, is sanctified, especially for those endowed with spiritual knowledge.

The conversation transitions into a broader discussion of sin caused by contact with forbidden things or people. Bṛhaspati explains the concept of four types of sinners: the perpetrator, collaborator, instigator, and abettor, with varying degrees of guilt. He lists items whose sale incurs sin and advises on how to purify oneself after consuming defiled food, particularly that prepared by impure individuals like harlots or outcastes.

Bṛhaspati concludes by revealing a powerful secret: the *Pañcadaśākṣarī* Mantra dedicated to Parā Śakti can absolve one of all sins and prevent calamities. He encourages meditation on Śakti and the repetition of the mantra, which brings salvation and protection from poverty, sickness, and enemies.

Finally, Bṛhaspati reassures Indra that these means of atonement will ensure a life of purity and spiritual success.



## CHAPTER 9

# *Churning of the Ocean of Nectar*

**I**ndra troubled by his misfortunes, seeks guidance from Bṛhaspati, asking for the cause of his suffering and how he can atone. Bṛhaspati recalls the birth of Viśvarūpa, a devout son of Dhātā and Rūpavatī, who became the priest of the Devas despite being the nephew of the Daityas. Indra, fearing Viśvarūpa's power and influence, killed him while he was deep in penance, believing it would protect the Devas.

Indra's sin was severe, and Brahmā, angered by the death of Viśvarūpa, cursed him to lose his splendor and power. This curse left the Devas leaderless and vulnerable to attacks from the Daityas. Separated from their leader, the Devas sought Brahmā's help, who then turned to Nārāyaṇa for a solution. Nārāyaṇa, in his compassion, split the burden of Indra's sin, assigning parts to women (as menstruation), trees (as sap), and the Earth (as barren spots), thus relieving Indra of the curse.

Though Indra was restored to his position, his arrogance persisted, and he once caused harm to Mount Kailāsa. Angered by this, the great sage Durvāsā, sent by Lord Śiva to humble Indra, cursed him, further stripping him of his glory. As a result, the three worlds fell into disarray—rituals ceased, and the balance of the cosmos was disturbed.

In this weakened state, the Daityas launched a fierce attack on Svargaloka, leaving the Devas helpless. Indra and the Devas fled to Brahmā, who instructed them to seek refuge in Nārāyaṇa once again. Nārāyaṇa advised them to churn the Ocean of Milk, promising that the nectar of immortality (*Amṛta*) would restore their strength. He suggested forming an alliance with the Asuras for this task, using Mount Mandara as the churning rod and Vāsuki, the serpent, as the rope.

During the churning, several treasures emerged: Surabhi, the divine cow; Vāruṇī, the goddess of liquor; the Pārijāta tree; celestial

damsels; the moon, accepted by Śiva; poison, consumed by the Nāgas; the Kaustubha gem, taken by Viṣṇu; and the herb Vijayā, claimed by Bhairava.

Finally, Dhanvantari appeared, holding a pot of Nectar, followed by the emergence of the goddess Śrī (Lakṣmī), seated on a lotus. The Devas and sages rejoiced as Śrī was bathed by the eight elephants of the quarters and adorned with divine ornaments. She then took her place on the chest of Viṣṇu, bestowing blessings upon the Devas, and restoring peace and prosperity to the universe.



## CHAPTER 10

### *Manifestation of Mohinī*

**T**he Devas, under the leadership of Mahendra and with the assistance of Viṣṇu, became elated after receiving support from the Lord. Meanwhile, the Daityas, abandoned by the Goddess Śrī due to their enmity with Viṣṇu, grew despondent. A violent dispute erupted when the Daityas stole the vessel of nectar from Dhanvantari, triggering a battle between the Asuras and Devas.

As the battle raged, Brahmā withdrew to his realm, while Śiva remained in Kailāsa. Seeking to restore balance, Viṣṇu worshipped Lalitā, the goddess whose essence is intertwined with his own. Through deep meditation on Māheśvarī, he became one with her in form and power, transforming into the enchanting and mesmerizing Mohinī.

Mohinī, the embodiment of love and allure, appeared in the midst of the battle and enchanted the Daityas with her beauty. She convinced them to end the conflict and promised to distribute the nectar equally between the Devas and Asuras. Deluded by her words, the Daityas handed her the nectar, believing in her impartiality. Mohinī then served the nectar to the Devas first, cutting off Rāhu when he attempted to disguise himself as a Deva. After distributing all the nectar to the Devas, Mohinī vanished, leaving the Asuras furious when they discovered the empty vessel.

Empowered by the nectar, the Devas, led by Indra, fought the weakened Asuras and forced them to retreat to Pātāla. Mahendra, now restored to his throne and strength, resumed his role as protector of the three worlds, while the Devas roamed the cosmos without fear.

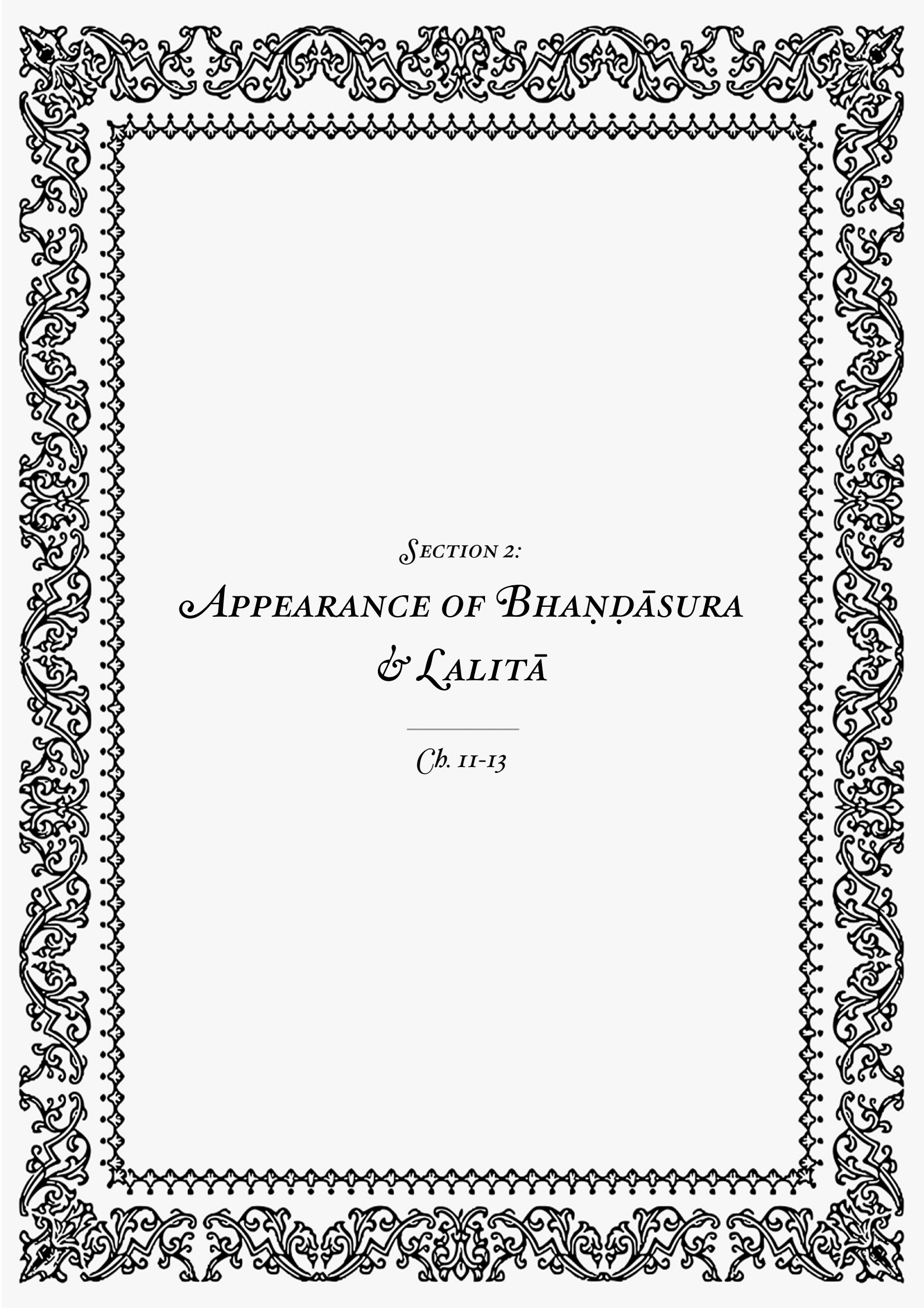
Nārada, having witnessed Mohinī's actions, was astonished and went to Kailāsa to inform Śiva. Upon hearing the news, Śiva became curious and, along with Pārvatī, traveled to meet Viṣṇu. Upon arrival, Śiva requested to see the beautiful form of Mohinī that had bewitched both the Devas and Asuras.

Viṣṇu meditated on the form of Mohinī and, upon Śiva's request, transformed into the enchanting goddess. Śiva was immediately captivated by Mohinī's beauty, abandoning even Pārvatī as he chased after her. Overcome by passion, Śiva embraced Mohinī, and from their union, Mahāśāstā was born, a deity destined to defeat numerous Daityas. As Mohinī disappeared, Śiva, along with Pārvatī, returned to his abode on Mount Kailāsa.

Hayagrīva then revealed to Agastya the story of Bhaṇḍāsura, a powerful demon who had tormented the Devas and forced even Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva to flee. To end his reign of terror, the goddess Lalitā arose from the fire of a great sacrifice. With four arms holding divine weapons, Lalitā, the supreme goddess identical with Brahman, skillfully destroyed Bhaṇḍāsura in battle, thus restoring peace to the three worlds.







*SECTION 2:*  
*APPEARANCE OF BHAṆḌĀSURA*  
*& LALITĀ*

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*Ch. II-13*

## CHAPTER II

### *The Appearance of Demon Bhaṇḍa*

**A**gastya asks Hayagrīva to recount the story of Bhaṇḍāsura and the goddess Lalitā. In response, Hayagrīva begins by explaining that after the self-immolation of Satī, Śiva withdrew to the Himālayas, consumed by grief. Satī was later reborn as Pārvatī, the daughter of the Mountain King. Upon discovering the divine nature of his daughter through the sage Naradā, the king placed Pārvatī in the service of Śiva, hoping to rekindle their union.

During this time, the gods were being terrorized by the demon Tāraka, and they sought guidance from Brahmā. Brahmā advised them that the only way to defeat Tāraka was to have a child born from Śiva and Pārvatī. To facilitate this union, Brahmā suggested enlisting the help of Kāmadeva, the god of love.

Hayagrīva then narrates the tale of Kāmadeva's birth. Kāma was born when Viṣṇu glanced at Mahālakṣmī to relieve Brahmā of the burden of creation. Blessed with a boon of invincibility, Kāma was charged with stimulating creation and ensuring its continuation.

The gods, knowing the importance of Śiva and Pārvatī's union, praised Kāma and urged him to strike Śiva with his arrow of love, thus awakening his affection for Pārvatī. Responding to their plea, Kāma courageously approached Śiva and shot his arrow, piercing the god's heart.

However, Śiva, enraged at the disruption of his deep meditation, arose and, in his fury, reduced Kāma to ashes with the fire of his third eye. Despite this, the seeds of love had been sown, setting the stage for future events and the eventual birth of the hero who would vanquish the demon Tāraka.

From these ashes of Kāma, Citrakarmā, the Lord of the Gaṇas, crafted a boy, who came to life when Śiva glanced upon him. Citrakarmā then taught the boy the powerful *Śatarudriya* mantra and encouraged him to bow to Śiva 100 times while repeating it. The boy

followed these instructions, and Śiva, pleased with his devotion, granted him a boon: the boy would receive half of his enemies' power during battle, his arrows would neutralize the weapons of his foes, and he would rule a kingdom for 60,000 years.

Upon witnessing these events, Brahmā exclaimed, "Bhaṇḍa, bhaṇḍa," meaning "fortunate" or "buffoon," and thus the boy was named Bhaṇḍa, who would eventually rise to power as the demon Bhaṇḍāsura.



## CHAPTER 12

# *The Rule of Bhaṇḍa & Manifestation of Lalitā*

**B**orn from Rudra's anger, Bhaṇḍa transforms into a fearsome demon of immense power. At the behest of Śukra, the preceptor of the Asuras, Bhaṇḍa commands the architect Maya to construct a magnificent city for him to rule. Once the city is completed, Bhaṇḍa is crowned king, supported by eight formidable assistants and four devoted wives. In celebration, Śukra bestows upon him powerful gifts, further strengthening his reign.

The Asuras, under Bhaṇḍāsura's reign, continuously propitiate Śiva and are blessed with great abundance, which endures for 60,000 years. However, to restore balance and empower the Devas, Viṣṇu creates Māyā, a force that weakens the Asuras' devotion. Under Māyā's influence, Bhaṇḍāsura and his army forsake the Vedas and abandon the worship of Śiva. This decline continues for 10,000 years.

Nārada, concerned about the growing threat, approaches Indra and warns him that if Bhaṇḍa is freed from Māyā's grasp, he will destroy all the worlds. He advises the Devas to propitiate Parā Śakti, the supreme Goddess, to defeat Bhaṇḍāsura. Following his counsel, Indra and the gods worship the Goddess in the Himalayas for 10,000 years and 10 days, seeking her aid.

Meanwhile, Śukra informs Bhaṇḍāsura of the Devas' efforts to invoke Devī's power and urges him and his ministers to travel to the Himalayas to disrupt their worship. Bhaṇḍāsura agrees and sets out with his army to create obstacles for Indra and the other gods.

Upon seeing the approaching demons, Devī manifests a massive, impenetrable wall to block their path. Bhaṇḍāsura's forces launch various *astras* (weapons) to break through the barrier, but after numerous failed attempts, they are forced to retreat.

The Devas, intimidated by Bhaṇḍāsura's strength, decide to offer a special sacrifice of *Mahāmamsa* (great flesh) to further propitiate Devī. In response to their devotion, Devī finally appears from the sacrificial fire, ready to confront Bhaṇḍāsura and his army.





CHAPTER 13

*The Hymn of Praise (Lalitā Stavārāja)*

Upon the appearance of Devī, the gods, filled with awe and reverence, sing the *Lalitā Stavārāja*, a hymn of praise in her honor. Moved by their devotion and worship, Lalitā smiles graciously as the gods bow down before her, acknowledging their sincere prayers.

Indra, stepping forward, humbly asks the Devī for protection against the mighty demon Bhaṇḍāsura, whose strength had grown too great for the gods to overcome alone. Lalitā, pleased with their unwavering faith, assures them that she will defeat Bhaṇḍa. Furthermore, she blesses them, proclaiming that anyone who recites the *Lalitā Stavārāja* will be granted virtue, glory, prosperity, health, long life, and progeny.





*SECTION 3:*

*PRELUDE TO WAR*

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*Ch. 14-21*

## CHAPTER 14

### *Appearance of Kāmeśvara*

**V**arious deities arrive from all corners of the universe to pay homage to Lalitā, honoring her supreme power and grace. In recognition of her divine stature, Viśvakarmā, under the command of Brahmā, constructs a magnificent city for the Goddess. The city is described as resplendent, with golden palaces, jeweled streets, and celestial gardens filled with the fragrance of divine blossoms—a paradise worthy of the Goddess.

As Brahmā surveys the grand city, he reflects that it must be ruled by a couple, a King and Queen. He begins to wonder if Śiva, with his fierce and ghoulish nature, can truly be the right husband for Lalitā. At that moment, Śiva appears before Brahmā, having adopted a mesmerizing, enchanting form that exudes beauty and grace. Overcome by the sight, Brahmā names him Kāmeśvara, the Lord of Love, declaring him the perfect consort for Lalitā.

Mutual attraction blossoms between Kāmeśvara and Lalitā, as their divine energies draw them together in perfect harmony. Seeing their connection, Brahmā appeals to Lalitā, urging her to take up her rightful role as the Queen of the divine city. He asks her to ascend the throne alongside Kāmeśvara, thus completing the union that will rule over the heavenly realm.





## *Festivities in Honor of the Marriage of Lalitā With Kāmeśvara*

Lalitā, embodying supreme independence and divine authority, proclaims that her husband must be someone whose conduct aligns perfectly with her own values and principles. In a discussion of the nature of marriage, the gods offer praises to Lalitā, recognizing her unmatched wisdom and strength. After much contemplation, Lalitā takes the symbolic step of throwing her garland onto Kāmeśvara, signifying her acceptance of him as her equal and consort.

Viṣṇu, in his role as the cosmic preserver and as the Goddess' brother, formally gives Lalitā's hand in marriage to Kāmeśvara, as the gods gather to witness the sacred union. The marriage ceremony proceeds with great joy and reverence, with various gods presenting numerous divine gifts to Lalitā, honoring her as the Queen of the universe.

- Brahmā gives her a sugarcane bow of imperishable strength,
- Viṣṇu offers unfading flower arrows,
- Varuṇa presents a serpentine noose (*nāgapāśa*), and
- Viśvakarmā, the celestial architect, bestows a goad.

As the celebrations continue, Brahmā creates a beautiful chariot named Kusumākara and seats the divine couple upon it. A grand procession follows, filled with celestial beings and deities, glorifying the union of Lalitā and Kāmeśvara. Once the procession concludes, the couple is seated on a magnificent throne, the ultimate symbol of their rule over the divine city.

In a moment of deep reverence, Brahmā names Lalitā as Kāmākṣī and Kāmeśvarī, acknowledging her power to fulfill the desires of her devotees with just a glance. The newly crowned couple

then happily rules over the glorious city of Śrīpūram for 10,000 years, bringing peace, prosperity, and divine grace to all.

One day, Sage Nārada approaches the divine couple and urges Lalitā to confront the growing threat of the demon Bhaṇḍāsura. He advises her to dispatch the gods back to their respective duties and to prepare for the battle ahead. Moved by Nārada's words, the Goddess, always ready to protect the universe, consents to his advice.



## CHAPTER 16

# *March of Victory / Appearance of Sampatkarī and Aśvārūḍhā*

**A**s Lalitā prepares for the great battle against the forces of Bhaṇḍāsura, she creates a mighty drum called the Mardala, forged from the essence of the Seven Oceans. This celestial drum echoes across the heavens, symbolizing the call to war. Following this creation, many other drums form, each with unique features, resonating with the divine energy of the Goddess and signaling the readiness of her forces.

Next, the Goddess uses her silver goad to create a powerful deity named Sampatkarī. Born from the divine weapon, Sampatkarī radiates like the midday sun, her appearance fierce and commanding. She holds a vibrant, thin-bladed sword, glowing with the terrifying glare of the God of Death. The Goddess mounts a gigantic elephant named Raṇakolāhala, whose massive size and uproarious energy evoke the essence of battle. As she marches forward, her army fills the sky with banners and emblems, while the elephants, fierce like mountains, follow her in vast numbers.

From Lalitā's coral noose emerges Aśvārūḍhā, a deity of great speed, seated on a powerful horse. Her army of well-bred horses, hailing from different lands such as Vanāyujas, Kāmbojas, and Sindhudeśajas, gallops forward, their hooves tearing through the earth. These horses, adorned with auspicious markings, are known for their speed, endurance, and ability to read the minds of their riders, making them perfect for battle.

Aśvārūḍhā herself rides the magnificent horse Aparājita, radiant with jewels and bells that echo like war drums. The horse, fast and stately, moves as though it has wings, its tinkling bells and powerful strides roaring with defiance against the Asuras. Aśvārūḍhā, with her

four hands holding the noose, goad, cane, and bridle, rides with blazing splendor, appearing like the midday sun as she leads the charge.



## CHAPTER 17

# *March of Armies of Daṇḍanāthā & Mantriṇī*

Lalitā's formidable generals and their armies begin to take their places in the great war. Leading her forces is Daṇḍanāthā, Lalitā's Commander-in-Chief, whose presence radiates immense power and authority. Daṇḍanāthā rides a majestic lion, Vajraghoṣa, whose open mouth and fierce claws seem to shake the very earth. Her army moves with the brightness of innumerable moons, their path illuminated by white umbrellas adorned with jewels, dispelling the surrounding darkness. Daṇḍanāthā, adorned in armor the color of the rising sun, is unstoppable as she advances with the sole intention of slaying the Asuras. The gods of the heavens, in awe of her strength, sing praises to her by invoking her 12 sacred names<sup>1</sup>.

Following closely is Mantrināthā, also known as Rājaśyāmalā, Lalitā's Prime Minister. Mantrināthā commands a vast army of Śaktis, who delight the universe with their beauty and power. Her Śaktis ride on a variety of animals—peacocks, swans, mongooses, and cuckoos—and some are carried in elegant palanquins. Each Śakti has a dark complexion, adding to their mysterious and powerful aura. Mantrināthā herself rides in a grand chariot with wheels worthy of admiration, accompanied by her two attendants, Yantriṇī and Tantriṇī. As she holds her bow, Citrajīva, gifted to her by Dhanurveda, the Science of Archery that emerged from a young parrot, she draws its string with such precision that the twang resounds through the skies, harmonizing with the melodious tinkling of her bangles.

<sup>1</sup> Daṇḍanāthā's 12 sacred names:

1. *Pañcamī*, 2. *Daṇḍanāthā*, 3. *Saṅketā*, 4. *Samayeśvarī*, 5. *Samayasāṅketā*,
6. *Vārābhī*, 7. *Potriṇī*, 8. *Śivā*, 9. *Vārtālī*, 10. *Mahāsenā*, 11. *Ājñācakreśvarī*,
12. *Arighnā*.

The armies of Daṇḍanāthā and Mantrināthā, in perfect harmony, march together, their collective strength shaking the very foundation of the universe. As Mantrināthā advances, heaven-dwellers chant her 16 names<sup>2</sup> in reverence, praising her wisdom and martial prowess.

Her army of Śaktis, each riding their unique mounts, adds to the majesty of the procession.



<sup>2</sup> Mantrināthā's 16 sacred names:

1. Saṅgītayoginī, 2. Śyāmā, 3. Śyāmālā, 4. Mantranāyikā, 5. Mantrinī, 6. Sacīveśānī,
7. Pradbhāneśī, 8. Śukapriyā, 9. Vīṇāvātī, 10. Vaiṇikī, 11. Mudriṇī, 12. Priyakapriyā,
13. Nīpaprīyā, 14. Kadambeśī, 15. Kadambavanavāsīnī, 16. Sadāmadā.



CHAPTER 18

*The Victorious March of  
Lalitā Paramēśvarī*

Lalitā, the supreme Goddess, is described in all her radiant glory as she prepares to lead her forces into battle. She holds a blazing goad and a noose that resembles a serpent, symbols of her attractive power and control over the universe. In her other hands, she also carries a sugarcane bow and a set of five bright, flowery arrows. Her bangles tinkle softly, a pleasing sound amidst the tension of war. Her divine form radiates a dazzling red light, brighter than a thousand suns, illuminating the sky as if it were filled with moons. Above her, a circular white umbrella, adorned with spotlessly pure pearls, hovers protectively, resembling the sphere of the moon. Surrounding her are her loyal female attendants, led by Vijayā and others, fanning her with four jewel-encrusted, splendid cāmaras (chowries), further amplifying her majesty.

Lalitā is served by Kāmeśvarī and the Nityās of stunning beauty and desirable lustre, who surpass even the sun in brilliance with their glistening weapons and charming martial attire. She rides the grand chariot Śrī Cakra, whose flagstaffs rise more than 10 Yojanas in height, scraping the clouds above. The chariot roars and rumbles continuously, a powerful sound that echoes through the heavens. Lalitā, robed in a tawny garment that glitters with purity and splendor, moves forward with the intention of waging war, her resolve unwavering.

As she advances, the gods, in awe of her power and grace, eulogize her with 25 sacred names<sup>3</sup>.

Each of these names has the power to subdue the sins of the world, filling the cosmos with reverence for the divine Goddess.



<sup>3</sup> Lalitā's 25 sacred names:

1. *Siṃhāsaneśvarī*, 2. *Lalitā*, 3. *Mahārājñī*, 4. *Varāṅkuṣā*, 5. *Cāpā*, 6. *Tripurā*,
7. *Mahātripurasundarī*, 8. *Sundarīcakranāthā*, 9. *Samrājñī*, 10. *Cakriṇī*,
11. *Cakreśvarī*, 12. *Mahādevī*, 13. *Kāmeśī*, 14. *Parameśvarī*, 15. *Kāmarājapriyā*,
16. *Kāmakōṭikā*, 17. *Cakravartinī*, 18. *Mahāvidyā*, 19. *Śivā*, 20. *Anaṅgavallabhā*,
21. *Sarvapatālā*, 22. *Kulanāthā*, 23. *Āmnāyanāthā*, 24. *Sarvāmnāyanivāsini*,
25. *Śṛṅgāranāyikā*.



## *Deities Stationed on the Chariots Cakrarāja & Geyacakra*

**T**he story continues with detailed descriptions of the divine chariots belonging to Lalitā and her trusted Minister, Mantriṇī, as they prepare for the cosmic battle. Lalitā's chariot, Cakrarāja, is a magnificent structure divided into nine distinct steps, each housing powerful deities and śaktis that symbolize the various cosmic forces at play.

On the ninth step of Cakrarāja reside ten Siddhidevīs, starting with Aṇimā, along with eight powerful śaktis, beginning with Brāhmī, and ten Mudrādevīs, starting with Sarvasaṅkṣobhiṇī. Above them, on the eighth step, are the Śaktis representing the sixteen digits of the moon, with Kāmākarṣaṇikā as the foremost. The seventh step is home to the Guptatarās, secretive yoginis such as Anaṅgamadanā, while the sixth step is occupied by the Sampradāyā (traditional) yoginis. The fifth step houses the Kulottīrṇas, followed by the fourth step where the Nigarbha yoginīs reside. On the third step are the Rahasya yoginīs, and the second step is occupied by three important yoginīs starting with Mahākāmeśvarī. Finally, on the first and highest step, Devī Lalitā herself stands in all her glory, guiding the forces of light and order.

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Mantriṇī's chariot, *Gīticakra* (or *Geyacakra*), is equally impressive, though it is divided into seven steps. The first step is the residence of Mantriṇī herself, who oversees all matters related to the governance and strategy of the divine forces. On the second step reside Rati, Prīti, and Manojā, deities associated with love and desire. The third step is occupied by the deities of the arrows of the God of Love, while the fourth step houses eight deities led by Brāhmī and followed by another group of eight deities starting with Lakṣmī, representing

prosperity and fortune. The fifth step is occupied by sixteen powerful deities beginning with Vāmā, and the sixth step is the domain of the Bhairavas, fierce deities starting with Asitāṅga. The seventh step holds four deities starting with Mātāṅgī. Mantriṇī's chariot is also a home to four deities starting with Gaṇapati, four starting with Sarasvatī, as well as the protectors of the cardinal directions.

Mantriṇī, is also known as Mudrinī in Lalitā's divine administration. Endowed with immense power by Lalitā herself, Mantriṇī is distinguished by the royal ring she wears, symbolizing her authority. All petitions and requests to Lalitā must be made through Mantriṇī, underscoring her significance as the key intermediary between the Goddess and those who seek her blessings.



## CHAPTER 20

# *Deities Stationed on the Chariot Kiricakra*

**T**he mighty war chariot, Kiricakra, of Lalitā's Commander-in-Chief, is described in all its grandeur as it prepares for the battle against the demon Bhaṇḍa. The first step of this powerful chariot is occupied by Daṇḍanāyikā, renowned for her prowess in destroying the haughty and wicked Daityas. The second step is commanded by three deities—Jṛmbhinī, Mohinī, and Stambhinī—each skilled in suppressing the Dānavas. Their combined powers ensure that no demon can stand in their way.

On the third step are five deities, led by Andhinī, whose laughter shakes the three worlds, instilling fear in the hearts of their enemies.

The fourth step is occupied by six Mātṛkās, fierce mother goddesses. On the fifth step are seven deities, known as the Dhātunāthās, starting with Yākinī, guarding the sacred essence of the universe.

Standing on either side of the chariot are two formidable weapons, the ploughshare and the pestle, each assuming the form of deities, along with the *cāmaragrāhinīs*, Krodhinī and Stambhinī. The fierce Bhairava, Caṇḍoccaṇḍa, who roars like a lion, stands in front.

As we move to the sixth step, we find eight deities beginning with Vārtālī, accompanied by the powerful Buffalo vehicle, ready to charge into the fray.

In the next step, numerous deities gather, including directional deities, gandharvas, rudras, and siddhas, all led by Jṛmbhinī, Stambhinī, and Mohinī. Below this, Kṣetrapāla and Vārāhī's Lion vehicle stand guard alongside the Great Dark Deer vehicle.

The seventh step houses 1,000 deities, their names enshrined in the now-lost Daṇḍinī Sahasranāma, while the Ocean of Wine deity, takes his place on the same step.

Surrounding the chariot, ten great Bhairavas, beginning with Hetuka, reside in all the eight quarters, above and below, watching over the battlefield.

Next, the six charioteers of Lalitā, along with the charioteers of Mantrinī and Daṇḍanāthā, are described, each commanding their own respective vehicles, driving the forces of the divine army into battle.

With all preparations complete, Lalitā, seated atop her glorious chariot, sets out to confront the demon Bhaṇḍa with unwavering determination, ready to fulfill her mission of defeating him and restoring cosmic balance.



## CHAPTER 21

### *Boasting of Bhaṇḍāsura*

**A**s goddess Lalitā's divine march advances toward the city of Śūnyaka [abode of Bhaṇḍāsura], its residents are thrown into a state of panic. The loud sounds of her army's approach reverberate through the skies, causing walls in the city to crack unexpectedly, meteors to fall, and earthquakes to shake the land. The residents experience ominous signs, including a trembling in their hearts and the sight of meteors crashing down from the heavens. It is as though the very foundation of Śūnyaka is being uprooted by the force of Lalitā's presence.

Alarmed by these events, the citizens rush to inform Bhaṇḍāsura, their ruler. Though the signs are intense and dreadful, Bhaṇḍa does not lose his courage. With calm resolve, he makes his way to the chamber of consultation and deliberation, where he is joined by his younger brothers, Viśukra and Viṣaṅga. The three demons deliberate on how best to respond to the impending threat.

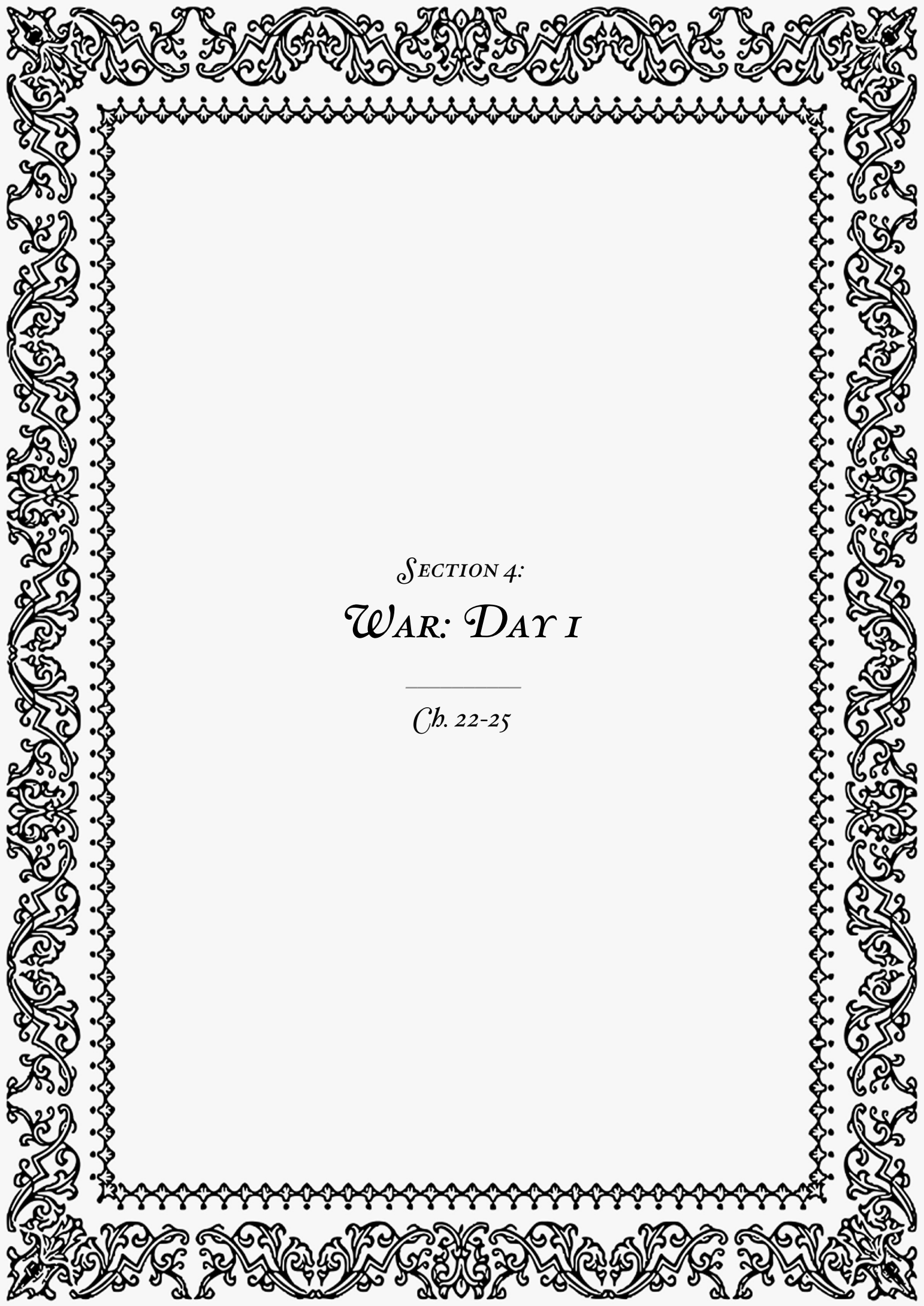
Viśukra, full of confidence, advises Bhaṇḍa to send his servants out immediately to drive away Lalitā and her forces. He believes a direct confrontation will be enough to overpower the goddess. Viṣaṅga, however, urges a more cautious approach. He suggests sending spies to Lalitā's camp to gather intelligence on their enemy's strengths and weaknesses before making any rash decisions. His careful words are meant to ensure that they are fully prepared for what lies ahead.

Despite Viṣaṅga's counsel, Bhaṇḍa remains steadfast in his belief in the strength of his armies and generals. Confident in his forces, he dismisses the idea of spying and instead orders Kuṭilākṣa, his powerful general, to prepare for battle. The entire army is mobilized, with Kuṭilākṣa at the helm, ready to meet Lalitā's divine forces head-on.

With the city of Śūnyaka trembling under the weight of foreboding signs and Bhaṇḍa's army preparing for war, the stage is set for

the ultimate confrontation between the forces of darkness and the divine power of Lalitā.





*SECTION 4:*

*WAR: DAY I*

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*Ch. 22-25*

## CHAPTER 22

# *Sampatkarī & Aśvarūḍha Kill Durmada & Kuraṇḍa*

**A**s the Daityas prepare for war against Lalitā, they arm themselves with a variety of weapons and mount diverse animals and birds, ready for battle. Bhaṇḍāsura, determined to defend his kingdom, sends his trusted general, Durmada, along with ten Akṣauhiṇīs (massive military units) to face Lalitā's forces.

At the same time, he fortifies the defense of the city of Śūnyaka by positioning Daityas at every entrance, each accompanied by ten Akṣauhiṇīs, and stations an additional ten Akṣauhiṇīs along the city's rampart walls.

A fierce battle erupts between the Śaktis and the Daityas. The Śaktis, led by Sampatkarī, engage the Daityas with their swords, causing the battlefield to be clouded with dust and soaked in blood. Durmada, mounted on a camel, unleashes a storm of arrows upon Sampatkarī's forces, momentarily stunning the Śaktis. However, Sampat-sarasvatī, riding her mighty elephant Raṇakolāhala, steps forward to challenge Durmada. The elephant demonstrates remarkable feats of strength, using its trunk, feet, tusks, and even its tail to strike at the Daityas.

In the heat of battle, Durmada manages to strike a precious gem from Sampatkarī's crown, infuriating her. Enraged, she retaliates with a volley of arrows, and Durmada is struck down, dying instantly. With their general fallen, the surviving Daityas retreat in panic, seeking refuge behind the walls of the city of Śūnyaka.

When news of Durmada's death reaches Bhaṇḍāsura, he is consumed with fury. To avenge his fallen general, he deploys his brother, Kuraṇḍa, commanding him to defeat Lalitā's forces. Armed and accompanied by an enormous army, Kuraṇḍa confronts the goddess



Sampatkarī, swearing vengeance for his brother's death. Before the battle can escalate, the goddess Aśvārūḍhā steps forward, offering to engage Kuraṇḍa herself, allowing Sampatkarī's forces to stand down.

A fierce clash begins as Aśvārūḍhā, mounted on her swift horse, leads her Śaktis—also on horseback—against Kuraṇḍa's army. In the midst of the battle, Aśvārūḍhā wields her *pāśa* weapon, immobilizing Kuraṇḍa's soldiers, leaving them helpless. Kuraṇḍa, in a swift counterattack, skillfully cuts the string of Aśvārūḍhā's bow with a well-placed arrow, but his efforts prove futile. Aśvārūḍhā quickly regains control and, with her divine goad, strikes down Kuraṇḍa, killing him instantly.

With both generals, Durmada and Kuraṇḍa, slain, the Daityas retreat once again, demoralized. The news of Kuraṇḍa's fall alongside his brother deeply disheartens Bhaṇḍāsura, who now realizes the growing strength and resolve of Lalitā's forces, leaving him in despair.



## *Nakulī Kills 5 Asura Generals & Sarpiṇī*

**B**haṇḍa, shocked and dismayed by the unexpected defeat of his forces, quickly orders his trusted commander Kuṭilākṣa to dispatch five of his most powerful generals, led by the fierce Karaṅka, to the battlefield. Along with them, a massive force of 100 Akṣauhiṇīs is sent to crush the opposition and turn the tide of battle.

Upon their arrival, the five generals use their dark magic to create a powerful *Māyā* (illusory demoness) named Sarpiṇī, a terrifying serpent sorceress. Towering in size and cloaked in a smoky, ominous aura, Sarpiṇī sows chaos on the battlefield. A sorceress of war, she unleashes countless serpents of various colors and sizes, filled with deadly poison that burns everything in their path. These serpents overwhelm the Śaktis, biting and binding them with their noose-like bodies. Despite the efforts of the Śaktis to cut them down, more serpents continue to appear, born from Sarpiṇī's magic.

In response to this growing danger, the goddess Nakulī, born from Lalitā's palate and embodying the divine realm of speech and language, rides into the battlefield on Garuḍa, the mighty eagle. Her presence is radiant with a brilliance of a molten gold, her eyes burning with anger at the sight of the serpents. From her teeth, she unleashes a swarm of 32 crores of mongooses, each glowing with golden luster. The mongooses tear through the serpent army, biting and crushing them with their sharp teeth, and soon the battlefield is covered with dead serpents.

Sarpiṇī, furious at the destruction of her serpents, fights fiercely against Nakulī. In response, Nakulī summons the Gāruḍa missile, a powerful weapon of immense force. The missile strikes Sarpiṇī, entering her body and dismantling her illusory power from within. With her sorcery broken, Sarpiṇī dissolves into nothingness, leaving the battlefield free of her menace.

Now without their powerful support, the remaining five generals, desperate and enraged, launch a direct assault on Nakulī. However, her divine power proves too much for them. One by one, Nakulī decapitates the generals, bringing an end to their threat.

In recognition of her bravery and victorious effort, Śyāmalāmbikā, Lalitā's Prime Minister, honors Nakulī and grants her the esteemed status of a satellite (*pratyāṅga*) deity, forever linking her to Śyāmalā's divine court.

In the aftermath of this glorious victory, Nakulī shows her graciousness to the surviving demons. Though defeated and terrified, they approach her seeking mercy. Smiling kindly, Nakulī spares them and instructs them to return to Bhaṇḍa with news of the battle. The demons, grateful for her compassion, flee to the city of Śūnyaka to deliver the grim news to their master. Yet, despite their report, Bhaṇḍa's rage only grows, setting the stage for the next fierce confrontation.



## *Tiraskariṇī Kills 7 Generals*

**B**haṇḍa, the lord of Śūnyaka, seethes with rage over the deaths of his fallen generals. Enraged and determined to turn the tide of battle, he summons his Commander-in-Chief, Kuṭilākṣa, and orders him to dispatch seven of his most formidable generals along with a mighty force of 30 Akṣauhiṇīs to confront Lalitā's forces on the battlefield.

The seven demons, lead by Balāhaka, renowned for their strength and ferocity believe they will be victorious. Mounted on terrifying vehicles—vultures, crows, and vampires—they charge into the battlefield, unleashing their fury. The earth shakes under their advance, and their shouts echo across the ten directions.

These generals possess a powerful boon granted by the sun-god, enabling them to immobilize anything they look at. Using this boon, they paralyze the Śaktis, throwing Lalitā's army into chaos and confusion, as the once formidable Śaktis are left helpless on the battlefield.

As the Śaktis falter, Goddess Lalitā orders Tiraskaraṇī, a deity skilled in illusion, to intervene. Dark in complexion, she rides a chariot named *Tamolipta* (shrouded in darkness), drawn by dark horses, and wields a formidable bow, *Vāsantī Mohana*. With her prowess in magical arts, she releases the blinding *Andha* missile, which covers the eyes of the seven Daityas and neutralizes their sun-god boon, allowing the Śaktis to regain their strength.

Tiraskaraṇikā wastes no time in slaying the seven brothers, decapitating each of them with deadly precision. She strings their severed heads into a garland and roars in triumph, while the Śaktis, emboldened by her victory, slaughter the remaining Daitya forces.

The victory is complete. The battlefield is filled with rivers of demon blood, and the triumphant Śaktis praise Tiraskaraṇikā for her valor and cunning. Lalitā's forces stand victorious once again, their enemies vanquished, and their strength restored.

CHAPTER 25

*Nityā Devīs Kill 15 Generals  
Headed Up by Viṣaṅga*

**A**fter hearing of the defeat of his generals despite their immense power gained from penance, Bhaṇḍāsura, the great Asura, is filled with rage and despair. He gathers his brothers and most trusted ministers, including Viṣaṅga and Kuṭilākṣa, to discuss a strategy. Bhaṇḍa laments how fate has turned against the Daityas, turning once-powerful warriors into cowards. He expresses frustration that a woman, Lalitā, and her army of Śaktis have overcome his forces. Determined to reverse this outcome, Bhaṇḍa devises a plan to attack Lalitā from the rear, where her defenses appear weaker.

He appoints Viṣaṅga to lead the mission, accompanied by 15 mighty generals and their armies, ordering them to strike under the cover of night, when the Asuras' power is at its peak. Viṣaṅga and his forces, dressed in dark armor, set out in the darkness, moving stealthily to avoid detection. As Viṣaṅga approaches Lalitā's chariot, he believes victory is near, but the Goddess's Śaktis, including Aṇimā, raise the alarm. A fierce battle erupts as the Asuras launch a surprise attack, using powerful weapons to strike at the Śaktis.

As the situation becomes dire, the Nityā deities, led by the fierce Kāmeśvarī, rush to Lalitā's defense. Jvālāmālīnī and Vahnivāsīnī illuminate the battlefield, exposing the Daityas and dispelling the darkness. This sudden turn of events ignites a fierce and intense battle that rages on for nine hours.

The Nityā deities, each with extraordinary power, unleash their might on the Asura army. Kāmeśvarī and her fellow Śaktis, including Bhagamālā, Tvaritā, and others, fight valiantly, slaying the enemy generals one by one. The battlefield resounds with the clash of weapons and the roars of the victorious Śaktis.

Despite their strength, Viṣaṅga and his army are eventually overwhelmed. When it becomes clear that he cannot win, Viṣaṅga manages to escape, but his time will come soon.

With the night over and dawn breaking, the victorious Nityā deities, their bodies bloodied but unbowed, return to Lalitā. The Goddess, pleased with their efforts, heals their wounds with a merciful glance and praises their valor in battle, bringing peace and restoration to her army.





*SECTION 5:*

*WAR: DAY 2*

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*Ch. 26-27*

## *Fortification of Śrī Cakra; Bālā Kills 30 Sons of Bhaṇḍāsura*

**M**antriṇī and Daṇḍanāthā, ever vigilant and wise, approach Lalitā with concerns about the deceptive battle tactics of the demons. They suggest building an enormous camp with a defensive rampart of blazing fire to guard against surprise attacks from the enemy. Lalitā, trusting their counsel, agrees and assigns the task of defense to the Nityā deity Jvālāmālini, whose form is that of fire itself. Jvālāmālini encircles the ground, covering an area of 100 Yojanas with a towering flame reaching 30 Yojanas high, leaving only a small opening of one Yojana.

Upon learning about Lalitā's fortified camp, Bhaṇḍāsura consults with his allies and decides to send his 30 sons, each commanding a vast army, to attack Lalitā's forces. As the demon armies approach the fiery enclosure, Bālā, the young and fierce daughter of Lalitā, steps forward, eager to face the enemy herself. Lalitā, initially hesitant due to Bālā's tender age and her recent training in warfare, eventually grants her permission, recognizing her daughter's determination and potential.

Clad in Lalitā's armor and wielding divine weapons, Bālā enters the battlefield in a chariot drawn by 100 majestic swans. As the sons of Bhaṇḍa roar into battle, confident in their strength, Bālā unleashes a barrage of arrows with precise and deadly skill. The Asuras, towering and fierce, are bewildered by the young goddess's power. She moves swiftly, her arrows reducing entire armies to ashes. Despite the enemy's retaliation, Bālā remains untouchable, her arrows finding their mark with unerring accuracy. The battlefield is lit with the brilliance of her attacks, and even the heavens pause to watch the goddess in awe.

In a final breathtaking display, Bālā draws 30 arrows and, with a single release, decapitates all thirty sons of Bhaṇḍa. The gods and



Śaktis rejoice, showering flowers and chanting Bālā's name in awe. Mantriṇī and Daṇḍanāthā, brimming with pride, embrace the victorious goddess and swiftly deliver the news to Lalitā. Upon hearing of her daughter's heroic triumph, Lalitā is filled with immense joy and satisfaction at Bālā's extraordinary feat. The young warrior's victory becomes a source of inspiration for the entire army, as the battle continues under Lalitā's divine protection.



## *Mahāgaṇapati Destroys Jayavighna Yantra & Gajāsura*

After the devastating loss of his sons, Bhaṇḍāsura, consumed with grief and rage, swears vengeance against Lalitā. His loyal advisors, Viśukra, Viṣaṅga, and Kuṭilākṣa, offer him words of consolation, urging him to stay focused on defeating Lalitā's army. Determined to crush his enemies, Bhaṇḍāsura commands Viśukra to strike at Lalitā's forces.

Viśukra, cloaked in *māyā* (illusion), sets off towards Lalitā's camp. Upon arrival, he inscribes a powerful mystical diagram on a massive rocky slab, known as *Jayavighna*. Infusing this obstacle causing yantra with potent mantras, Viśukra hurls it into the heart of the enemy camp. The effects are immediate—the Śaktis, normally fierce and vigilant, fall into despair, lay down their weapons, and seem unable to continue the battle.

However, Mantriṇī and Daṇḍanāthā, unaffected by the illusion, quickly realize the danger posed by the yantra and voice their concerns to Lalitā. Smiling confidently, Lalitā casts a glance at Kāmeśvara, which causes the deity Mahāgaṇapati, the elephant-headed god, to emerge. Mahāgaṇapati immediately sets out to dismantle the effects of the *Jayavighna* yantra. With swift action, he destroys the obstacle, liberating the Śaktis from their state of lethargy and restoring their fighting spirit.

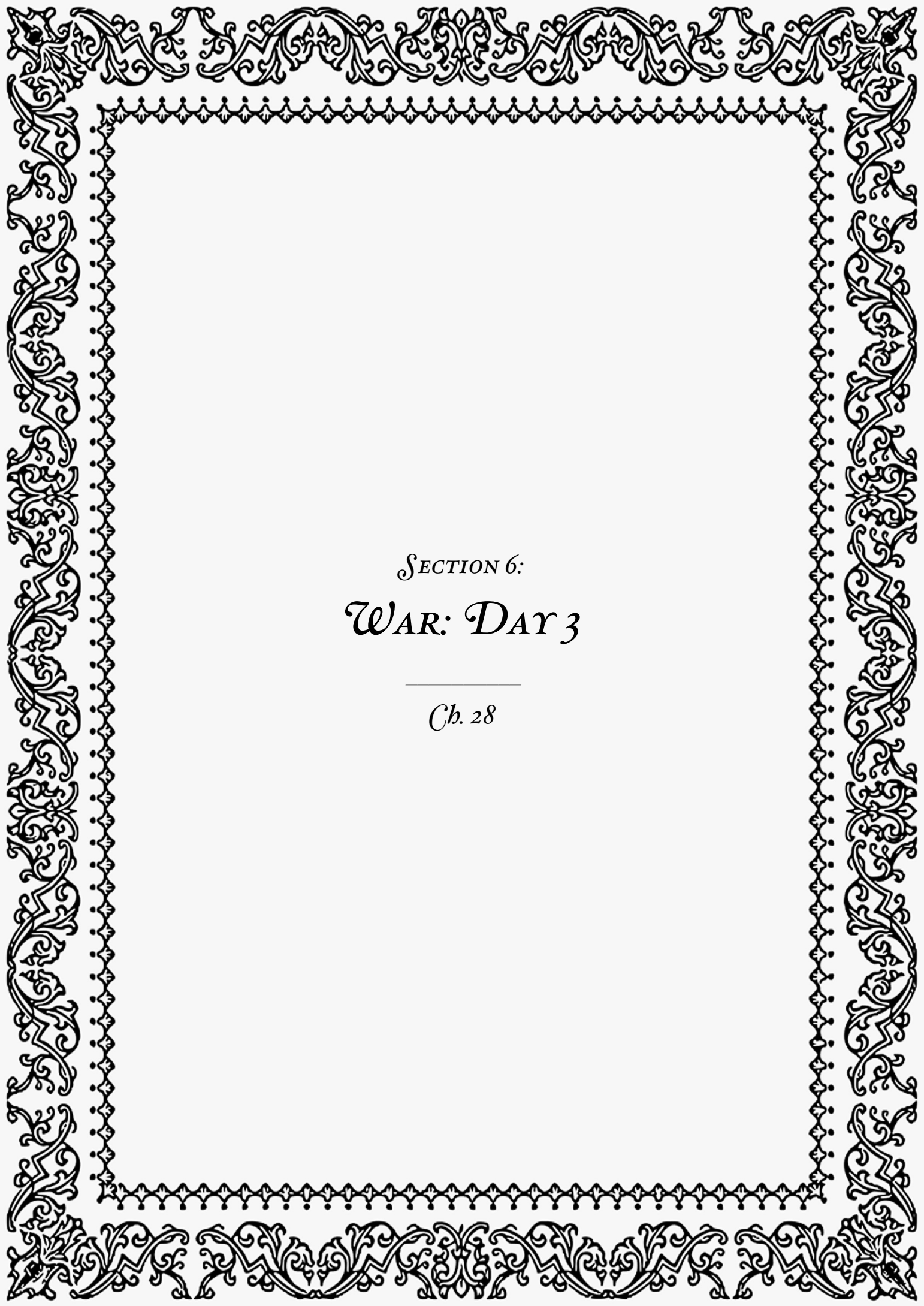
After neutralizing the threat, Mahāgaṇapati creates six Vighnanāyakas, each accompanied by their own Śaktis, and a host of other elephant-faced warriors to assist in the ongoing battle against the Asuras.

An intense and ferocious battle ensues as Mahāgaṇapati encounters Gajāsura, a powerful demon in the form of an elephant. The clash between these two colossal figures shakes the battlefield, but with

unparalleled strength and skill, Mahāgaṇapati overcomes Gajāsura and annihilates his seven Akṣauhiṇīs of troops, securing a decisive victory for Lalitā's army.

Triumphant, Mahāgaṇapati returns to Lalitā, who, pleased with his heroic deeds, grants him a boon. She blesses him with the honor of being worshipped before all other gods, ensuring that his name will be invoked first in all rituals and prayers, a testament to his unwavering loyalty and strength.





*SECTION 6:*

*WAR: DAY 3*

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*Ch. 28*

*Surasindhu (Ocean of Wine) Saves Śaktis  
From the Thirst Astra; Mantriṇī &  
Daṇḍiṇī Kill Viśukra & Viṣaṅga*

**D**istressed by the crushing defeat of his brother and the significant loss of his army, Bhaṇḍāsura, in desperation, sends his forces to battle under the command of his brothers, Viṣaṅga and Viśukra, supported by ten fierce nephews.

Meanwhile, Lalitā's generals, Mantriṇī and Daṇḍanāthā, enter the battlefield in their powerful chariots, accompanied by a 100 Akṣauhiṇīs to protect the glorious Cakraratharāja. Daṇḍanāthā, riding her great lion and brandishing her ploughshare and pestle, leads the charge, while Mantriṇī, seated in her chariot Geyacakra, fills the universe with the sound of her bow. Both armies prepare for a chaotic and intense battle, with chariots, elephants, cavalry, and infantry clashing in a great war.

As the fight progresses, Viśukra, observing his army's weakening power against the increasing might of the Śaktis, unleashes the Tṛṣāstra, the missile of thirst, upon them. The Śaktis become afflicted with an overwhelming thirst, causing them to falter and drop their weapons.

Sensing the need to revive her forces, Daṇḍanāthā, Lalitā's Commander-in-Chief, calls upon the Ocean of Wine, Surasindhu, to quench the thirst of the weakened Śaktis.

The Wine God begins showering torrents of wine upon the Śaktis, releasing a variety of divine liquors that flow continuously for six hours. Kadambavanavāsini, the Resident of the Kadamba Forest, quickly builds a protective fort around the army to prevent the demons from gaining access to the rejuvenating nectar. The wine comes in many forms, sparkling with foam and bubbles, fragrant with flowers, and tasting of honey, spices, and rare fruits. Each Śakti se-

lects her preferred drink, quaffing the wine and regaining her strength and enthusiasm for battle.

As the Śaktis drink, they begin to rise, energized and eager to fight again. They dance, laugh, and sing, their eyes red with intoxication, while some boastfully prepare for battle with no weapons in hand. After fulfilling his task, Surasindhu approaches Daṇḍinī, describing how the Śaktis have revived, filled with joy and strength. In gratitude, Daṇḍinī grants the Ocean of Wine a boon: he will be honored in future sacrifices by priests and gods alike, bestowing siddhis (spiritual accomplishments), prosperity, and other blessings to those who drink him.

The battle resumes with renewed fury. The Śaktis, led by Daṇḍinī and Mantriṇī, unleash their full power, slaughtering the demon armies with ease. Aśvārūḍhā, mounted on her horse, kills Ulūkajit with her sharp goad, while Sampatkarī and other Śaktis decimate the remaining nephews of Bhaṇḍāsura, including the chief, Puruṣeṇa.

As the sun sets, the battle enters its final stage. Śyāmalā, with her bow drawn, engages Viśukra's charioteer and kills him with a barrage of arrows. She then confronts Viśukra himself, ending his life by unleashing the powerful Brahmaśiras astra.

As midnight approaches, Daṇḍanāthā takes on Viṣaṅga in a brutal fight. She drags him by the ploughshare that pierces his head and finishes him off with a crushing blow from her iron club, killing him instantly.

With both Viśukra and Viṣaṅga dead, the battle reaches its conclusion, with Mantriṇī and Daṇḍanāthā spending the remainder of the night in the camp, preparing their forces for the next phase of the conflict, knowing that the ultimate battle with Bhaṇḍāsura still awaits.





*SECTION 7:*

*WAR: DAY 4*

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*Ch. 29-30*

## *Lalitā Destroys Bhaṇḍāsura, his 40 Generals, his Army & the City of Śūnyaka*

**B**haṇḍa, who, enraged by his mounting losses, commands his general Kuṭilākṣa to rally his entire army and launch a final full scale attack against Lalitā. With his generals and a formidable army, Bhaṇḍa marches into battle with a fiery determination. In response, Lalitā, surrounded by her divine forces, proceeds to the battlefield, radiating immense power and divine resolve.

In this final fourth day the war reaches its climax with Lalitā unleashing millions of arrows that plunge the Asuras into a deep darkness.

Enraged, Bhaṇḍa retaliates with 11 powerful *astras* (missiles), such as *Andhāstra* (Missile of Blindness), but Lalitā effortlessly neutralizes them with her own set of 11 counter missiles, such as *Cakṣuṣmattā* (Missile of Endowment with Eyes).

Undeterred, Bhaṇḍa escalates the conflict by releasing 10 “Demon” *astras*, but Lalitā counters these with the manifestation of the 10 Viṣṇu Avatāras, which spring forth from her fingernails.

As the battle rages on, Bhaṇḍa, desperate to turn the tide, uses his ultimate weapon, the *Mahāmohāstra* (Missile of Great Delusion). Yet, Lalitā responds with the *Śāmbhavāstra* (Missile of Lord Śiva), effectively neutralizing the destructive force of this weapon.

Having fended off all of Bhaṇḍa’s attacks, Lalitā takes the offensive, deploying the *Nārāyaṇāstra* to obliterate his entire army. She follows this with the *Mahāpāsupatāstra*, annihilating all 40 of Bhaṇḍa’s generals.

The battle culminates in a dramatic final moment as Lalitā, wielding the *Mahākāmeśvarāstra*, slays Bhaṇḍa and completely destroys his city, Śūnyaka, reducing it to ashes.



As the sun sets, Lalitā, victorious and radiant in her divine glory, leads her army back to camp, basking in the triumph over the demonic forces.



## *Resurrection of Madana (God of Love)*

**A**gastya, curious about the events that followed Bhaṇḍāsura's defeat, seeks insight from Hayagrīva. Hayagrīva begins by recounting how Lalitā, after her victory, revitalized her weary Śakti army, restoring their strength and vitality. The gods, witnessing the restoration of cosmic peace, express their deep gratitude to Lalitā, praising her for her crucial role in saving the universe from destruction.

As they rejoice, the gods beseech Lalitā for one more favor: the resurrection of Madana, the God of Love, whose presence is essential to the balance of the cosmos, especially in relation to Lord Śiva's marriage to Pārvatī and the birth of Skanda, who is destined to defeat the demon Tāraka.

Lalitā, moved by compassion for Rati, Madana's grieving consort, and recognizing the cosmic importance of Madana's role, agrees to bring him back to life. The resurrection of Madana is followed by a joyous and grand celebration, as both gods and goddesses revel in the restoration of love and harmony in the universe.

Once revived, Madana embarks on his divine mission, stirring emotions in Lord Śiva and Pārvatī with his enchanted arrows. The impact of these arrows awakens Śiva's deep affection for Pārvatī, while Pārvatī, encouraged by her father, engages in intense penance to win Śiva's heart. The union of Śiva and Pārvatī follows, and from their sacred marriage, Skanda is born.

Skanda, fulfilling his destiny, defeats Tāraka, restoring further balance to the cosmos. Following his victory, Skanda marries Devasenā, bringing even more joy to the divine realms.

With his mission complete, Madana returns to Śrīpura, where he joyfully resumes his service to Goddess Lalitā, continuing to fulfill his divine role in the cosmic order.



*SECTION 8:*  
*ŚRĪPURAM*

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*Ch. 31-37*

## *The Abode of Lalitā Tripurasundarī*

**F**ollowing Lalitā's triumphant victory over the demon Bhaṇḍa Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, request the divine architects Viśvakarman and Maya to construct an exquisite abode befitting Her and Her spouse, Kāmeśvara.

Guided by celestial mandate, these skilled craftsmen were tasked with the creation of sixteen splendid cities, collectively known as Śrīnagarī or Śrīpura. Each city, resplendent with gems, is strategically positioned at the core of the sixteen hallowed locations associated with Ṣoḍaśī:

- 9 located on the sacred mountains, and
- 7 in the sacred seas.

This divine arrangement allows Lalitā to manifest in sixteen distinct forms, her presence a perpetual safeguard for the entire universe.

While numerous Śrīpuras exist, they harmoniously mirror each other in design and significance, differing only in nomenclature. Each one of the Śrīpuras is known by the name of one of the Nityā goddesses, such as Kāmeśvarīpurī, Nityaklinnāpurī, etc.

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*Silvia Schwarz Linder. "Goddess Traditions in India. Theological Poems and Philosophical Tales in the Tripurarabasya."*

The innermost dwelling place of the Goddess...is surrounded by a series of ramparts, the spaces between which are inhabited by various deities. A first series of eight ramparts is made of increasingly precious metals.

In the space between the iron and the bronze ramparts the eightfold Mahākāla dwells with his śakti Mahākālī. His abode (*kāla-cakra*) reveals his dual nature of universal destroyer and regulator of the divisions and cycles of time. The spaces inside the successive metal ramparts, made of copper, lead, brass, an alloy of five metals, silver

and gold, are inhabited by the Season deities with their respective months/śaktis.

The text provides a detailed description of the abode of Spring (*vasantacakra*) inside the bronze rampart. Spring dwells in the central bindu, embracing his śaktis and holding a goblet of wine and a piece of meat; the bindu is surrounded by seven āvaraṇas: a triangle, a pentagon, an eight-petalled lotus, a sixteen-petalled lotus, two ten-petalled lotuses and a square, presided over by various śaktis.

As in the case of Mahākāla, in his function of regulator of the temporal cycles, in the same way, the Season deities, who are all located within the outer enclosures of the abode of the Goddess, represent the temporal dimension of the world manifested by the divine Energy.

As regards the [Śrīpura] as a yantra, in the first stages of his meditation-visualization aimed at the contemplation of the Goddess dwelling in the centre of the city, the devotee is supposed to actualize the unfolding of the world within its time frames and limits.

Next is a series of ramparts made of increasingly precious gems. There are various semi-divine, human and divine beings dwelling in the spaces inside the first nine ramparts made of different gems, up to the abode of Viṣṇu inside the ruby maṇḍapa, and the abode of Śiva inside the manifold gems rampart.

From the viewpoint of the meditating devotee, his mental visualization progresses from the outer metal enclosures and proceeds towards the series of gem ramparts inhabited by beings abiding in heaven, earth and the nether world, marking thus the passage from awareness of the temporal cycles of the world to contemplation of the space dimension of the universe, whose three worlds are filled with their respective inhabitants.

Although these beings are not always consistently distributed inside the progressive ramparts, there is an implicit hierarchy among them. It proceeds from the daityas and nāgas living in the nether world, to the human beings with, among them, the munis, yogins and siddhas dwelling on the earth, to the heavenly beings, such as cāraṇas

and gandharvas, apsaras, kinnaras and kimpuruṣas, up to the divine beings, including the dikpālas, bhairavas, yoginīs and goddesses, and the gods Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. At this stage of his meditative realization, the devotee should actualize the unfolding of the entire universe with its multifarious beings.

The names of the successive ramparts – *manas* (“mind”), *buddhi* (“intellect”) and *abamkāra* (“egoity”) – clearly indicate that the meditative path of the adept should progress through and beyond the boundaries of his limited, individual consciousness, represented by *manas*, *buddhi* and *abamkāra*, until he realizes his final identification with the supreme Consciousness, personified by the Goddess dwelling in the centre of the mystical island.

[There is] a great rampart called mind, adorned with all kinds of gems... The entire space inside that enclosure is [occupied by] the pond of the nectar of immortality; by drinking this [nectar] yogins and siddhas acquire a diamond body [and] become very powerful and wise men. Truly that elixir vitae (*rasāyana*) becomes the beverage made of the nectar coming from the pond; only by smelling its fragrance shall one become master of the desired extraordinary powers.

The text continues by stating that this enclosure is guarded by Tārā, surrounded by her dark blue hued female attendants in their boats of various shapes. It is also suggested that, thanks to the powers of the *rasāyana*, the reward for those who abide within this enclosure, or the outcome of the corresponding stage of meditation for the *sādhaka*, should be the attainment of an adamant, mighty, hence immortal body (*vajrakāya*), and the acquisition of extraordinary, magic powers (*siddhi*).

Further on within the rampart of *buddhi* is the pond of bliss (*ānanda*), filled with a divine wine (*madya*). It is guarded by the goddess Varuṇī who, accompanied by her śaktis, is said to enjoy spirituous liquor (*surā*). The wine (*madya*) makes the śaktis mad with passion. Varuṇī, who’s also called Sudhamālinī or Amrteśvarī, inebriates the

three worlds by her glance and holds a cup of wine (*madirā*) and a piece of cooked meat (*piṣita*).

Inside the *abamkāra* rampart is “a pond called *vimarśa* which has the nature of the *amṛta* [filling the] *suṣumnā*; [this] supreme *amṛta* awakes in the expansion of the *suṣumnā* when the inner mind of the great yogins is filled with wind.”

The term *vimarśa* evokes the dynamic, creative pole of the divine Consciousness, the self-awareness and free action characterizing the Śakti versus the pure light (*prakāśa*), conscious light and luminous consciousness, represented by Śiva. The text lays stress on a yogic practice which might even grant immortality (*amṛta*). This enclosure is guarded by the dark hued Kurukullā in her boat, accompanied by her attendants.

Further on, is the rampart of the Sun, presided over by Suryā in his twelve forms beginning with Martāṇḍa Bhairava. Inside this great enclosure, where the heat of the early morning sun spreads, and planets, constellations and stars illuminate the world, Martāṇḍa Bhairava shines in his twelve forms, with his śaktis Mahaparakāśā (“great light”) and Cakṣuṣmatī (“sight”), and with the goddess Chāyā (“shadow”).

Then, inside the rampart of the hare-marked (*śaśaṅka*) Moon, at the doorway of the moonlight, the Lord (*nātha*) Soma, Saśin yet stainless, drinks nectar with his śaktis called Tārā (stars).

In the innermost enclosure, within the rampart of love (*śṛṅgāra*), made of kaustubha gems, is a moat filled with pure erotic rapture/sap (*śṛṅgārarasa*), presided by Kāma. Following a brief description of this enclosure, from which the mansion of the Goddess in the forest of the great lotus (*mahāpadmāṭavi*) is entered, it is specified who is, or is not, qualified to gain access to this forest. After praising the powers of Kāma, the passage continues as follows:

To gain a place in the forest of the great lotus, confused by his (Kāma’s) power, [those who are] dressed in pure garments and are full of devotion for Lalitā, by an attentive mind, reach a place in the forest of the great lotus. Indeed celestial siddhas, men and

gods are not able to approach [it]; but Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara, who by nature have pure minds, with her (Lalitā's) permission reach the highest place in the forest of the great lotus. Men attached to mundane existence, blind with passion, forming in their imagination manifold desires, and high born men irresolute because of doubtful knowledge, [immersed in] the abyss of great passions, are not clear sighted [enough] to cross over the moat of the great love that causes mental confusion [even] to mature people. Since he is of invincible loveliness, infatuating living beings in the three worlds, Smara is entitled to preside over the moat of great love. After having passed through all his seductions, that delude even great men, nobody is fit to approach the forest of the great lotus.

This passage suggests that the contemplation of the abode of the Goddess and the possibility of attaining a place therein are conditional on the ability to go through and overcome the delusions of the god of love, who can lead even mature and great people astray. Kāma, the best among Tripura/Lalitā's devotees, is the embodiment of all the qualities associated with the Goddess' saundarya, namely beauty, loveliness, grace, seductive power, and yet he personifies the danger of bewilderment inherent in such qualities. Only a few initiates possess the spiritual maturity that allows them to fully experience and savor the joy and bliss promised by the ever-deluding Lord of desire, while at the same time maintaining their inner clarity of mind and ultimate detachment. Only those who, like the three great gods, have pure minds (*śuddhacitta*) can cross this moat and approach the core of Sṛīpura.

Finally we proceed to the *Cintāmaṇigṛha* which is the great dwelling of the chief of the cakras, i.e. the Sṛīcakra. In the forest of the great lotus in the East is the arghya vessel whose support is the Fire god, accompanied by his ten *śaktis/kalās*. The vessel itself is the Sun god Sūrya, surrounded by his twelve sparkling kalās; the vessel contains the nectarean offerings (*arghyāmṛta*), made of the *kalās/digits* of the Moon,



destined for the worship of Lalitā. Brahmā, Hari, Rudra, Ísvara and Saṅkara also abide here with their respective *śaktiśkalās*.

South-East of the *cintāṃṇigrha* is an altar where the fire of Consciousness (*cidvahnī*) blazes, fed by nectar (*sudhā*); Lalitā and Kāmeśvara act as *hotrs*, protecting the world and inciting Kāma.

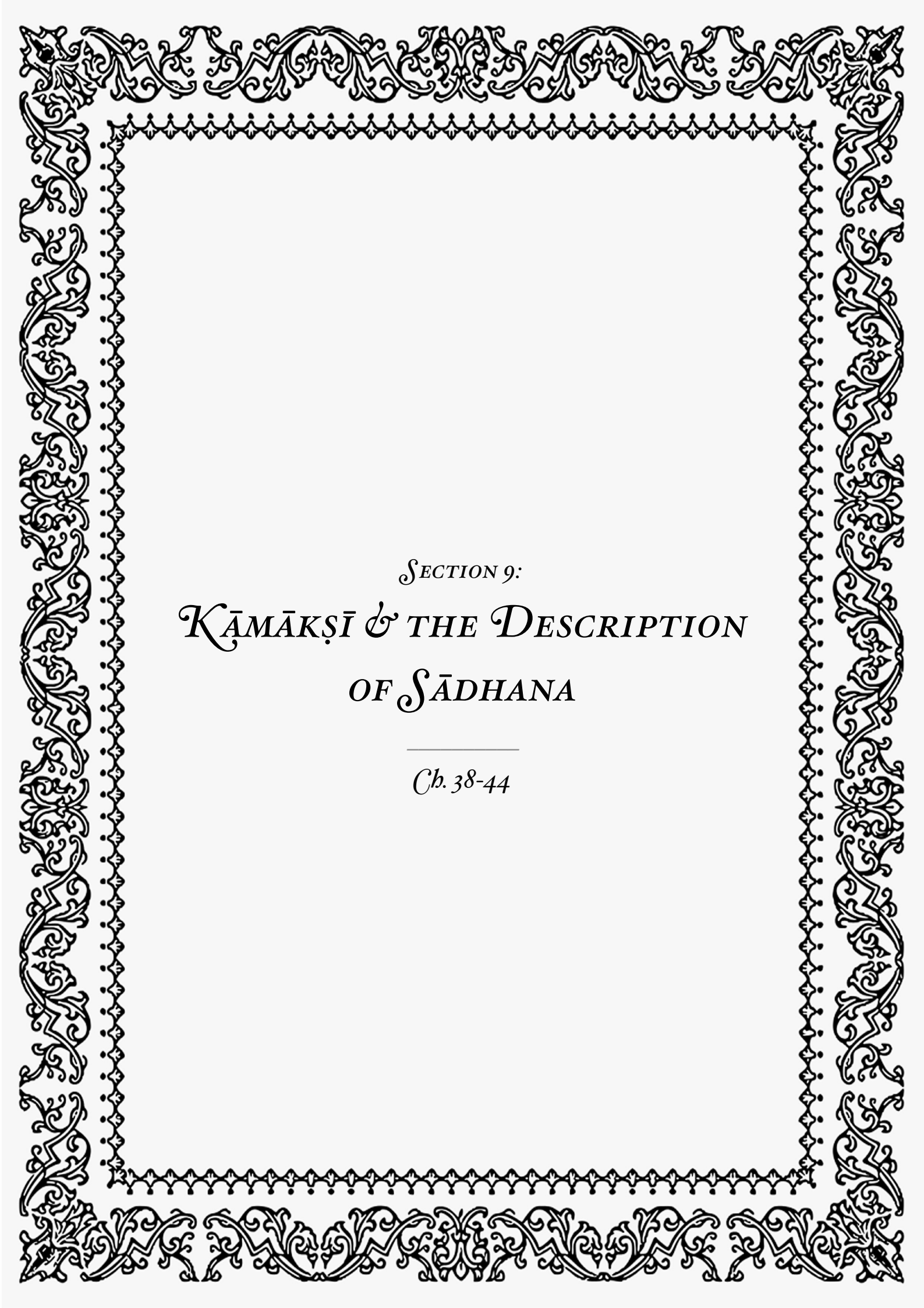
In the South-West is the Cakrarāja chariot, which has nine steps and becomes narrower as it rises; the four Vedas are its wheels and the four *puruṣārthas* (“goals of man”) its horses.

In the North-West is the Geyacakra chariot of Mantriṇī and in the North-East the Giricakra chariot of Daṇḍanathā.

In the *cintāṃṇigrha*, that becomes narrower as it rises, are three crowns which are forms of *icchā*, *kriyā*, *jñāna*. It has four doors: the Eastern door is the *Pūrvāmnāya*, the Southern the *Dakṣiṇāmnāya*, the Western the *Pāścimāmnāya* and the Northern the *Uttarāmnāya*. In its centre is the great *pīṭha* named *binducakra*, or *bindunāda*. Here stands the throne upon which Lalitā sits on the lap of Śiva Kāmeśvara: its four legs are Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśanā and Ísvara, its bench is Sadāśiva. Thirty-six steps in the form of tattvas lead to the throne, over which is a bed adorned with sixty-four pots.

Remarkably, the Lalitopākhyāna states explicitly that the *cintāṃṇigrha*, the mansion of the Goddess in the heart of Srīpura, is the abode of the Srīcakra. It might thus be asserted that the text is describing a yantra (the Srīcakra) inside another yantra (Srīpura). From the viewpoint of the meditating adept, the visualization of Srīpura with all its wondrous, vivid features, is to be regarded as a preparation for the contemplation of the Goddess in her more abstract, aniconic form, the Srīcakra





SECTION 9:  
*KĀMĀKṢĪ & THE DESCRIPTION  
OF ŚĀDHANA*

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*Ch. 38-44*

## *Procedure of Practicing the Royal Mantra*

**A**gastya, eager to learn more about the Goddess, asks Hayagrīva to explain the practice and characteristics of Lalitā's Mantras. Hayagrīva begins by praising the supremacy of the spoken word and explains that, among all Mantras, those dedicated to Lalitā are the most powerful. He highlights that the Mantras of Lalitā, especially the Kādi and Hādi Mantras, are known to bestow great spiritual powers (*siddhis*) on devout practitioners.

Hayagrīva then describes the importance of worshipping the Goddess through the Pañcatrika Mahāvidyā, which is composed of 15 letters and grants mastery over the self and the world. The practitioner is advised to begin the day with meditation, purification rituals, and adornments before performing the Nyāsa rites, which involve assigning parts of the body to various deities for spiritual protection.

The devotee is instructed to perform Japa (repetition of the Mantra) three million six hundred thousand times to invoke the Goddess and achieve spiritual success. Hayagrīva elaborates on the benefits of continued Japa, explaining that it grants control over humans, deities, and even superhuman powers. By attaining mastery of the Mantra, the practitioner becomes omniscient, eloquent, and greatly revered.

He goes on to describe the physical and spiritual transformations that occur in those who master the Mantra, including the ability to enchant others and gain immense fame and glory. The practitioner becomes skilled in all scriptures and philosophical systems, radiates kindness, and is capable of invoking awe and fear in others.

Hayagrīva emphasizes the significance of meditating on the different forms of the Goddess for specific purposes, such as acquiring wealth, wisdom, or power. He also warns that Lalitā is inaccessible to

those with impure hearts or sinful behavior. Only the righteous, who practice severe penance and meditation, can attain her favor.

Finally, Hayagrīva reminds Agastya that Lalitā manifested herself from the fire of consciousness to slay Bhaṇḍāsura and restore cosmic balance. He concludes by affirming that Lalitā, known as Mahātripurasundarī and Kāmākṣī, is the supreme deity worshipped by all gods, and her miraculous powers and mode of worship will be further elaborated in another section.



## Glory of the Goddess Kāmākṣī

**A**gastya, having heard the divine narrative of Lalitā, praises the eternal splendor that is both the source of bliss and knowledge, asking Hayagrīva for more insight into the Goddess Kāmākṣī of Kāñcī. Agastya acknowledges Tripurā as the supreme deity, holding a noose, goad, bow, and arrows, and recalls the description of her sacred Śrī Cakra. He inquires further about the two-armed deity Kāmākṣī, whose beauty shines magnificently, and asks Hayagrīva to explain her true identity.

Hayagrīva, delighted by Agastya's question, meditates on the brilliance of Kāmākṣī before revealing a great secret. He explains that the Supreme Consciousness (*Cit*), the primal cause of creation and dissolution, manifested in several forms.

- Śuddhaparā, whose body shines with the luster of snow, jasmine, the moon, and pearls. She has two arms, holding a book in her left hand and showing the *yogamudrā* with her right.
- Next is Parāparā, dazzling like ten thousand rising suns, adorned with ornaments and crowned with a crescent moon. She holds a lotus in her right hand and rests her left hand on her thigh.
- Finally, Aparā Aruṇā with four arms, holding a noose, goad, sugarcane, and five arrows, manifesting as the goddess Lalitā, who later appeared as Kāmākṣī in Kāñcī, worshipped by Sarasvatī, Ramā, and Gaurī.

Hayagrīva describes Kāñcī as one of Śiva's two eyes, along with Kāśī. He recounts how Brahmā performed severe penance at Kāñcī to receive a vision of Śrīdevī. In response to his devotion, Lakṣmī, seated on a lotus and accompanied by Viṣṇu, appeared before him. Lakṣmī was adorned in exquisite garments and jewels, renowned as Ādilakṣmī, the primordial goddess, who is also Kāmākṣī. Overcome by

her beauty and splendor, Brahmā praised her as Tripurasundarī, the embodiment of supreme power and mercy.

As Brahmā continued to eulogize her, Kāmākṣī cast a glance of compassion upon him. With her right eye, she created Sarasvatī, and with her left eye, she brought forth Śrī (Lakṣmī). Both goddesses, born from Kāmākṣī's divine gaze, manifested as radiant masses of brilliance, prepared to serve the universe. Sarasvatī, with her mastery over speech and wisdom, entered Brahmā, while Lakṣmī took her place on Viṣṇu's chest.

At this moment, all the assembled gods—including Indra, the sages, and celestial beings—marveled at the goddess. They glorified her as Kāmākṣī, understanding that she was the one who would bring blessings to all who invoked her name. The three syllables "Kā-Mā-Kṣī," they proclaimed, are the source of all auspiciousness in the world.

Recognizing the power of this divine moment, Brahmā bowed once more and requested that Kāmākṣī remain in Kāñcī to bless humanity perpetually. Kāmākṣī, moved by his devotion, granted his wish, promising her eternal presence in Kāñcī to protect and uplift humanity.

In her benevolence, Kāmākṣī established Sarasvatī with Brahmā and Lakṣmī with Viṣṇu, and both goddesses were enshrined in their respective places. The rivers Gaṅgā and Yamunā, embodied as deities, arrived to serve the Goddess, along with other divine beings. Bhārātī (Sarasvatī) and Śrī (Lakṣmī) fanned Kāmākṣī with celestial cāmaras, while the assembled gods chanted her praises.

After describing the greatness of Kāmākṣī and her role in the cosmic order, Hayagrīva emphasizes that through devotion to her, both worldly pleasures and liberation can be attained. He concludes by revealing that the ultimate knowledge of Tripurasundarī, her secret mantra, and her transcendence over even the highest deities, is beyond the reach of most but can be shared with the pure-hearted. This divine knowledge, known only by the greatest of sages, leads to spiritual fulfillment and liberation.

## *Greatness of Kāmākṣī*

**A**gastya, seeking wisdom, asks Hayagrīva to recount the divine activities of Mahātripurasundarī, also known as Kāmākṣī. Hayagrīva explains that though Kāmākṣī resides on Earth, she also abides in the hearts of all beings, bestowing the results of their actions. All events in the world are guided by her will, and her incarnations, including Mahālakṣmī, created the universe and established the roles of the great deities.

Mahātripurasundarī married the deities: Indirā to Mukunda, Parameśāna to Pārvatī, and Pitāmaha to Sarasvatī, assigning them their cosmic duties. The gods, including Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, meditate on her from their respective realms of Brahmaloaka, Vaikuṅṭha, and Kailāsa.

Hayagrīva proceeds to tell three stories which display the greatness of Kāmākṣī.

1. Once, while Pārvatī playfully closed Śiva's eyes, plunging the world into darkness, Śiva instructed her to perform penance to atone for the chaos caused. She was to go to Kāśī and later Kāñcī to worship Kāmākṣī. Pārvatī followed these instructions, performing severe penance. Kāmākṣī, pleased with her devotion, appeared before Pārvatī in a dazzling form, showering her with blessings.
2. Pārvatī, overwhelmed with joy, realized her oneness with Kāmākṣī, as the Goddess assured her that there was no difference between them. With Kāmākṣī's grace, Pārvatī was reunited with Śiva, and they returned to Kailāsa. Hayagrīva further explains that Mahātripurasundarī is worshipped by the greatest yogins and is revered as the supreme goal.

3. Bhairava, having committed the sin of Brahmin-slaughter, wandered the Earth in penance until he reached Kāñcī, where he was ultimately liberated by Kāmākṣī's grace.
4. Similarly, King Daśaratha, yearning for a son, was guided by his guru Vasiṣṭha to worship Kāmākṣī. Through his devotion, Kāmākṣī appeared to him in a dream and promised him four sons, who would be her divine manifestations. Daśaratha's devotion and worship at Kāñcī fulfilled his desires, and he returned to Ayodhyā blessed by the Goddess.

Hayagrīva concludes by extolling the greatness of Kāmākṣī, emphasizing that her power is unparalleled, and those who worship her with devotion will have their desires fulfilled.





## *Propitiation of Goddess Kāmākṣī*

**A**gastya approaches Hayagrīva, seeking knowledge on the nature of the mystical diagram (Śrī Cakra), the supreme Mantra, and the ideal disciple. Hayagrīva explains that Śrī Cakra is the essence of Mahālakṣmī and Tripurāmbikā, whose worship grants supreme power and blessings. Great deities like Viṣṇu, Śiva, Brahmā, and even Kāma (the God of Love) attained their divine status through the worship of Śrī Cakra. The Cakra should be crafted from precious materials and worshipped with specific rituals, including offerings of Tulasī leaves, honey, and other sacred items.

Hayagrīva emphasizes that the correct worship of Śrī Cakra with the sixteen-syllabled Śrī Vidyā Mantra brings about divine blessings, including eloquence, wealth, and control over kings. Worship with different colored flowers attracts different divine energies—white for eloquence, pink for control, and yellow for wealth. He warns that improper worship or using foul-smelling flowers displeases Śiva, while proper offerings lead to the fulfillment of all desires.

Hayagrīva further details that Śrī Vidyā is the greatest of all Mantras and the key to liberation, being the very life force of all other Mantras. When practiced correctly, it destroys sins, old age, and death, bestows prosperity, removes obstacles, and grants liberation. The devotee must observe strict disciplines, perform the required *ḥapa* (chanting), *Homa* (fire sacrifice), and other rituals to gain the favor of the Goddess. Repeating the Mantra a prescribed number of times leads to the purification of sins and eventual liberation.

Hayagrīva proceeds to explain various methods for worshipping the Goddess, including specific rituals for attraction, subjugation, and control through the Śrī Cakra and Mantra. He then describes powerful practices to win over others, eliminate enemies, and gain ultimate *Siddhis* (spiritual powers). Hayagrīva emphasizes that these secrets

should be guarded carefully and only revealed to worthy disciples, as disclosing them improperly would lead to downfall.

Finally, Agastya asks about the meaning of seeking refuge (Śaraṇāgati), to which Hayagrīva responds that true refuge is placing all burdens on Śrīdevī and relying solely on her for protection and guidance. Those who practice Śaraṇāgati remain undisturbed by praise or censure and dedicate their lives to serving the Goddess. Hayagrīva outlines the six aspects of seeking refuge and encourages the practice of humility, non-violence, devotion, and renunciation to attain liberation. He concludes by affirming that Agastya is an ideal disciple, capable of receiving and passing on this sacred knowledge.



## Description of Various Mudrās

Agastya, seeking deeper knowledge, asks Hayagrīva to explain the various mystical gestures (*mudrās*) that delight Śrīdevī. Hayagrīva responds by describing several important *mudrās*.

First, he introduces the great *mudrā* called *Āvāhanī* (the Invoking *mudrā*), also known as *Trikhaṇḍā*, which involves turning the palms forward, joining the thumbs, and positioning the fingers in specific formations. Next, he describes the *Samkṣobhiṇī* (Agitator) *mudrā*, where the middle fingers are flanked by the thumbs and small fingers, and the index fingers are upright like rods. If the middle fingers are also kept upright, the *mudrā* becomes *Vidrāvīṇī* (Driving others away).

He then explains *Ākarṣiṇī* (Attracting *mudrā*), where fingers are positioned to form goads capable of attracting the three worlds. Following this, Hayagrīva describes *Unmādinī*, a complex *mudrā* where the fingers form intricate shapes resembling goads and cups.

*Mahāṅkuṣā* (the Great Goad *mudrā*) is next, where the ring and index fingers are bent like goads to achieve all objectives. Then comes *Kbecarī* (Sky-moving *mudrā*), where the arms are crossed, fingers interlocked, and thumbs upright, granting favor with the Yoginīs.

The *Bījamudrā*, which supports the proper functioning of *siddhis*, involves joining pairs of fingers in the form of a crescent moon, while *Yonimudrā*, described last, involves bending and pressing fingers together to form a sacred configuration.

Hayagrīva concludes by reminding Agastya that these *mudrās*, when performed in the proper sequence during worship, bring great delight to Śrīdevī.



## *Initiation & True Service of the Preceptor*

**A**gastya, seeking deeper knowledge, asks Hayagrīva about the type of initiation required to visualize Śrīdevī. Hayagrīva explains various forms of initiation, starting with Sparśa Dīkṣā (initiation by touch) and Dṛg Dīkṣā (initiation by vision), where the preceptor touches or gazes at the disciple, imparting divine knowledge. Hayagrīva then describes Mānasī Dīkṣā (mental initiation), the highest form, where the preceptor silently initiates the disciple through intention.

Agastya learns the importance of Kriyā Dīkṣā (initiation of holy rites), which begins with the disciple performing rituals and purification. The preceptor, after meditating on Śrī Kāmākṣī, guides the disciple through offerings and chanting sacred mantras, like the thousand-syllabled mantra dedicated to Tripurasundarī. The disciple is blindfolded and led through rituals, including placing the preceptor's lotus-like feet on his head, symbolizing surrender and devotion.

Hayagrīva emphasizes that a true disciple must serve and obey the preceptor without question, as the preceptor embodies Śiva himself. Through continuous service, devotion, and adherence to the preceptor's teachings, the disciple can attain liberation. The preceptor is the key to dispelling the darkness of ignorance, and the disciple must regard the preceptor's every word as scripture.

Initiation rituals, meditation, and japa (repetition of mantras) are crucial for achieving mastery over mantras and realizing the ultimate reality of the self. Hayagrīva stresses the significance of unwavering devotion to the preceptor, as it leads to spiritual enlightenment and liberation. The teachings conclude by reinforcing that devotion to Śrī Kāmākṣī and the preceptor results in the disciple attaining all worldly and spiritual goals, leading to ultimate freedom from the cycle of birth and death.

## *Meditation on the Goddess*

**H**ayagrīva describes to Agastya the detailed process of performing a sacred ritual using mantras, *mudrās* (gestures), and *nyāsa* (ceremonial hand placements). The disciple, who is conversant with the mantras, is instructed to prepare a special place for the ritual, sit in the proper meditative posture, and begin the rites with purification and meditation on the deity. The disciple performs various hand gestures and recites specific mantras, focusing on aligning their physical body and soul with the divine form of the deity.

The ritual involves placing certain mantras and *bījā* (seed) mantras in various parts of the body, symbolizing spiritual energies, and purifying the self. The disciple calls upon divine entities such as Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, and performs *nyāsa* to place their energies throughout the body. Special attention is given to invoking the Kuṇḍaliṇī energy and awakening it through mantras.

As part of the practice, the disciple meditates on Bhairavī, a fierce form of the Goddess, envisioning her adorned with divine weapons and ornaments, surrounded by *dūtis* (messengers). The disciple must then place letters and syllables of the sacred alphabet on various parts of their body, which represent cosmic forces.

Further instructions include performing *nyāsa* of various deities associated with elements like fire, planets, and constellations. These energies are invoked and symbolically placed on parts of the disciple's body to attain a connection with divine forces. Additionally, the disciple must meditate on Kāma, the god of love, accompanied by his consort Rati and other deities associated with desire, reflecting on cosmic unity.

Towards the end of the ritual, the disciple focuses on the deities of Śrī Cakra, a sacred geometric diagram, invoking them into their physical form and meditating on their divine qualities. The process

culminates with the placement of the sixteen Nityā deities and the worship of Tripurasundarī, the ultimate goddess of the mystical circle.

The ritual emphasizes the power of mantra, mudra, and *nyāsa* in aligning the disciple with the cosmic forces, invoking divine blessings, and achieving spiritual transformation.





TRIPURĀ  TALLIKĀ