

प्रकृतिरूपा

She Who Is Nature

DURGA AND HER NINE FORMS

By Bibek Sharma Chapagain

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She Who Is Nature: Durga and Her Nine Forms

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A note on how this book was made. *All images in this book are AI-generated. I also used AI to review my draft and to help me express myself in a better way. These stories have been passed down from generation to generation for thousands of years, and I felt it was my duty to learn them and share them with others.*

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ॐ

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु मातृरूपेण संस्थिता ।
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥

yā devī sarvabhūteṣu mātṛrūpeṇa saṃsthitā
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namaḥ

To the Goddess who lives in every being as the Mother, I bow to her, I bow to her, I bow to her, again and again.

(Devi Mahatmya 5.71–73)

A Note Before You Begin

People have called her by many names. Here, she is Durga, and she is nature.

These stories have stayed with me for a long time, the way old songs do. I wanted to tell them so that anyone could enjoy them, whether they've heard of Durga or not.

The idea behind them is simple and very old. Nature isn't just something around us. It breathes, it changes, and it has a face. People call that living nature Prakriti, and one of the faces she shows is Durga, a goddess who can be as gentle as a mother's hand or as fierce as a summer storm.

Durga is often shown in nine forms, each with her own story. Every autumn, over nine nights of a festival called Navaratri, people honor them one at a time, like lamps lit one after another, and on the tenth day they celebrate her victory. I've kept that order here.

Each chapter has an image of her, a story and two prayers, the way people have said them for generations, with an easy guide to saying them. The stories come from old writings and from voices that still tell them. I've told them simply, and the sources are at the back.

There is an old belief that when you read her stories, something in you begins to stir. She is not only out there in the mountains and the rivers. The same energy lives in you, and her stories are a way of waking it. So take your time. Read one form a night, if you like, and let her stay with you a while.

A World Full of Gods

People are often surprised by how many gods there are in the Hindu way of seeing the world. There are gods of rivers and mountains, of the sun and the rain, of wealth, of music, of strength. Some people count millions. It can sound confusing at first. But the idea underneath is very simple.

Look at what keeps you alive. Water, so you can drink. Soil, so food can grow. Trees that give shade and fruit and the air you breathe. Fire that cooks your meal and warms your hands. The sun that wakes you, the moon that marks the months, and the stars that have guided travelers for as long as anyone remembers. If any one of these were taken away, you wouldn't be here. So people learned to bow to them. A river is called a mother. A tree is watered and tied with a thread. Each morning, water is poured toward the rising sun as a small thank-you.

The same feeling reaches into the home. An old teaching says: *Matri devo bhava, pitri devo bhava, atithi devo bhava*, "let your mother be a god to you, let your father be a god to you, let your guest be a god to you." You are here because of them too. Even a stranger at the door is treated as if a god had come to visit.

So a god, in this sense, is anything that made you what you are. The first act of worship is just gratitude.

Behind all these faces, people saw three great movements. **Brahma** creates. **Vishnu** keeps things going. **Shiva** lets things end, so that something new can begin. Every seed, every season and every life passes through all three: it is born, it lives, and it returns.

And you are not standing outside of this, watching. You are made of the same water, the same soil, the same air and warmth. You are nature too. The energy that moves the river also moves in you.

That is why people worship different gods for different things. Someone who longs to sing, or to learn, bows to **Saraswati**, goddess of music and wisdom.

Someone who wants to grow strong and steady prays to **Hanuman**, god of strength and devotion. They aren't really asking for a gift from far away. They are trying to become a little more like the one they love, to wake up that same energy inside themselves.

Seen this way, a god is not only out there. A god is also a part of you, waiting to be remembered.



प्रकृतिरूपा · *She Who Is Nature*

Chapter One

प्रकृतिरूपा

She Who Is Nature

Watch a single day from start to finish.

The sky turns from black to gray to gold. Birds wake. Dew dries on the grass. By noon the light is hard and white, and by evening it softens again into orange. Then the stars come out, and the night grows so dark you can hardly see your own hand.

All of that, the dark and the light and everything in between, is one being. In Sanskrit she is called **Prakriti** (PRUK-ri-tee), which means nature. It covers the forests and the oceans, but also the clouds, the soil, your breath, your heartbeat, the moods that come and go in you like weather. The modern world often treats nature as something without life, just land and water and weather to be measured and used. But people who live close to it, who plant and harvest and watch the sky, know it differently. To them, nature has eyes. She knows when to bloom and when to let go. She is the one who makes life happen.

In an old hymn, Brahma the creator calls out to her in the dark:

प्रकृतिस्त्वं च सर्वस्य गुणत्रयविभाविनी ।
कालरात्रिर्महारात्रिर्मोहरात्रिश्च दारुणा ॥

prakṛtis tvaṃ ca sarvasya guṇatraya-vibhāvinī
kālarātrir mahārātrir moharātriś ca dāruṇā

"You are the Prakriti of all things, the one who brings forth the three gunas. You are the Night of Time, the Great Night, the terrible Night of Delusion." (Devi Mahatmya 1.78)

The three gunas are the three threads that nature is woven from. **Sattva** is light and calm, like still water at dawn. **Rajas** is movement and fire, like a river in flood. **Tamas** is heaviness and rest, like the deep dark of night.

Everything in the world, from a mountain to a mood, is some mix of the three. And in the forms ahead you'll see all of them in her: the calm of Mahagauri, the fire of Chandraghanta, the night of Kalaratri.

Brahma also calls her **Shakti**, power. It is the power in a seed that pushes up through hard earth, and in a river that slowly cuts through rock. There's an old saying that without Shakti, Shiva becomes *shava*, a corpse. She is what gives even the greatest god his life.

One of her best-loved faces is **Durga**. Her name means "hard to reach," like a fort high on a mountain. She can be gentle and she can be fierce, for the same reason nature can. The river that floods a village in one season waters its fields in the next.

In this book you'll meet her nine times, in nine forms. Young and old. Calm and fierce. Black as night and white as snow. Don't think of them as nine goddesses. Think of them as nine seasons of the same earth.



या देवी सर्वभूतेषु शक्तिरूपेण संस्थिता।
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः॥

“To the Goddess who lives in all beings as power, I bow to her, I bow to her, I bow to her, again and again.” (Devi Mahatmya 5.32–34)



दुर्गा · *Durga is born from light*

Chapter Two

दुर्गा

A Mountain of Fire Becomes a Woman

Long ago, the gods and the demons fought a war that lasted a hundred years. The demons were led by **Mahishasura** (ma-HI-shaa-su-ra), who could take any shape he liked but loved most to be a huge black buffalo. In the end heaven fell. Mahishasura threw Indra, its king, off his throne and sat there himself. He took over the work of the sun and the moon, the wind and the fire. The sky no longer knew whose light it carried. Indra and the others were pushed out of heaven and wandered the earth like ordinary people, dusty and tired and far from home.

They went to Vishnu and Shiva and told them everything. As Vishnu and Shiva listened, their faces darkened with anger, the way a sky darkens before a storm. Then a great light poured out of Vishnu's face. The same light came from Brahma and from Shiva, and then from everyone standing there. All of it flowed together into one place, like rivers running to the sea.

अतीव तेजसः कूटं ज्वलन्तमिव पर्वतम्।
ददृशुस्ते सुरास्तत्र ज्वालाव्याप्तदिगन्तरम्॥

"The gods saw a mass of light like a mountain on fire, its flames filling every direction." (Devi Mahatmya 2.12)

Slowly the light took a feminine shape. Each of them gave a part of her. Shiva's light became her face, Vishnu's her arms, and fire lit her three eyes. The moon, the sea, the earth and the sun each made another part of her, right down to her toes. She was built the way a mountain is built, a little from everything.

Then they gave her their weapons. Shiva gave a trident, Vishnu a discus, the sea a conch shell, the wind a bow and arrows. Indra gave his thunderbolt. The

sun filled every pore of her skin with his rays, so that she glowed like morning. Last of all, the king of the mountains gave her a **lion**.

हिमवान् वाहनं सिंहं रत्नानि विविधानि च।

"Himavat gave her a lion as her mount, and jewels of many kinds." (Devi Mahatmya 2.30)

She laughed, and the mountains shook. The sea rose up to listen. The demons heard it and came running, and she went out to meet them with her lion at her side. How that battle ended is the last story in this book.

For now, look at what she is made of: the sun, the moon, the wind, the fire, the sea. Each of them had been beaten alone. Together, they became her.

Chapter Three

नवदुर्गा

The Nine Forms

So where do the nine forms come from?

Their names are kept together in a short prayer called the Devi Kavacham, "the armor of the Goddess." People say it before reading her long hymn, the way you might wrap a shawl around your shoulders before stepping out into the cold.

The prayer opens with a story. Once, the sage Markandeya came to Brahma with a question. "Grandfather, tell me the one secret that keeps everyone safe, the one you have never told anyone." Brahma smiled and said, "There is such a secret, and it helps every living thing. It is the armor of the Goddess. Listen." And he began to name her, one form at a time:

प्रथमं शैलपुत्री च द्वितीयं ब्रह्मचारिणी ।
तृतीयं चन्द्रघण्टेति कूष्माण्डेति चतुर्थकम् ॥
पञ्चमं स्कन्दमातेति षष्ठं कात्यायनीति च ।
सप्तमं कालरात्रीति महागौरीति चाष्टमम् ॥
नवमं सिद्धिदात्री च नवदुर्गाः प्रकीर्तिताः ।
उक्तान्येतानि नामानि ब्रह्मणैव महात्मना ॥

"The first is Shailaputri, the second Brahmacharini, the third Chandraghanta, the fourth Kushmanda. The fifth is Skandamata, the sixth Katyayani, the seventh Kalaratri, the eighth Mahagauri. The ninth is Siddhidatri. These are called the Nine Durgas. These names were spoken by the great Brahma himself." (Devi Kavacham 3–5)

That's all the prayer gives us, nine names in a row. Everything else, the stories and the images, grew around those names slowly, the way moss grows over a stone. Here they are, with what each name means:

No.	Form	Meaning of the name
1	Shailaputri	Daughter of the mountain
2	Brahmacharini	She who walks the path of discipline
3	Chandraghanta	She who wears the moon like a bell
4	Kushmanda	The little warm egg of the universe
5	Skandamata	Mother of Skanda
6	Katyayani	Daughter of the wise man Katyayana
7	Kalaratri	The Night of Time
8	Mahagauri	The great shining one
9	Siddhidatri	Giver of every gift
10	Mahishasuramardini	She who crushed the buffalo demon

You can read the nine as one life. She is born a mountain's daughter, grows strong through hard work, marries, makes the world, holds a child, goes to war, walks through the darkest night, comes out shining, and at last gives away everything she has. Or you can read them as the seasons of a year, or the hours of a single day, from the cold blue of dawn to the deep quiet of midnight. No one reading is the only right one.

In the chapters ahead, each form has her own image, her own story and her own prayers. Take them slowly, one at a time. By the end, you may start to see her everywhere: in a mountain, in the morning sun, in the moon over your roof.



शैलपुत्री · *Shailaputri*

Chapter Four

The First Form

शैलपुत्री

Shailaputri

Daughter of the Mountain

Before there was Shailaputri, there was Sati.

Sati loved Shiva, a wild god who lived alone among the snows, wrapped in ash and silence. Her father, King Daksha, a proud man, never accepted him. One day Daksha lit a great sacred fire and invited everyone in the world except Shiva. Sati went anyway, hoping to heal the quarrel. Instead, she heard her father mock the one she loved, in front of everyone. And Sati, like a flame that will not be insulted, let her body go.

The mountains do not forget. In time, the Himalaya itself became her father. Its king, Himavat, and his queen, Mena, held a newborn girl in their arms and named her Parvati, "she of the mountain." She was **Shailaputri** (shy-la-POO-tree), the daughter of the mountain, the same soul come home in a new body.

She grew as the moon grows, a little brighter each night. When she told her mother she wanted to go and live alone in prayer, Mena cried, "U, ma!", "Oh, don't!", and from that cry came another of her names: Uma.

In this image of her, she sits on a white bull among the peaks, a trident in her right hand and a pink lotus in her left, a half-moon in her hair. Her face is calm. She has already lost everything once, and she has come back smiling.

That is how the nine forms begin: with a mountain, and a return.

She rides a bull, holds a lotus and wears the moon in her hair. Field, water and sky are all part of her picture. She is the mountain's daughter, and the whole landscape is her family.

Her mantras

Name mantra

ॐ देवी शैलपुत्र्यै नमः

Om Devi Shailaputryai Namah

Say it

Om DAY-vee shy-la-POOT-ryai NUM-ah

"Om. I bow to the Goddess Shailaputri."

Dhyana shloka

वन्दे वाञ्छितलाभाय चन्द्रार्धकृतशेखराम्।
वृषारूढां शूलधरां शैलपुत्रीं यशस्विनीम्॥

vande vāñchitalābhāya candrārdhakṛtaśekharām
vṛṣārūḍhāṃ śūladharāṃ śailaputrīṃ yaśasvinīm

Say it

VUN-day vaan-chi-ta-LAA-bhaa-ya chun-draar-dha-kri-ta-SHAY-kha-raam
vri-shaa-ROO-dhaam shoo-la-dha-RAAM shy-la-POO-treem ya-shas-VI-neem

"For the fulfillment of my wishes I bow to the glorious Shailaputri, who wears the half-moon in her hair, rides a bull and holds a trident."



ब्रह्मचारिणी · *Brahmacharini*

Chapter Five

The Second Form

ब्रह्मचारिणी

Brahmacharini

The Young Ascetic

The girl from the mountain grew up, and she fell in love.

Brahmacharini (brah-ma-CHAA-ri-nee) is Parvati as a young woman who has chosen a hard path. Her name means "one who walks the path of discipline."

She had set her heart on Shiva. But Shiva was still grieving for Sati. He sat deep in meditation on his mountain and noticed no one at all. So Parvati decided to reach him the only way that would work: by becoming as strong in spirit as he was.

She put away her silks and wore tree bark and a belt of grass. She gave away her jewels. In the burning summer she sat between fires, repeating his name. Through the rains she sat on bare rock. On winter nights she stood in icy water. For a year she ate only fruit, then only fallen leaves, and then not even leaves, so people began to call her Aparna, "the one without even a leaf." The story says she kept this up for three thousand years.

Near the end, a young student with matted hair wandered up to her hut. He sat down and began to mock Shiva. Why would she want a wild man like that, who lived among ghosts and smeared himself with ash? Parvati grew angry and told him to leave. Then the student smiled and showed his true face. It was Shiva himself. "From today," he said, "I am yours."

In this image of her, she walks barefoot through a quiet forest at dawn, a string of prayer beads in one hand and a small water pot in the other. She wears plain white, with flowers where jewels would be. Her eyes are half closed, and she is smiling a little, as if she already knows how the story ends.

Her strength is the strength of a seed in cold ground, doing nothing anyone can see through a long winter, until one day it is ready.

Her flower garlands, her prayer beads made from the seeds of the rudraksha tree, and the forest path under her bare feet all come straight from the woods. She is nature at its simplest.

Her mantras

Name mantra

ॐ देवी ब्रह्मचारिण्यै नमः

Om Devi Brahmacharinyai Namah

Say it

Om DAY-vee brah-ma-CHAA-rin-yai NUM-ah

"Om. I bow to the Goddess Brahmacharini."

Dhyana shloka

दधाना करपद्माभ्यामक्षमालाकमण्डलू ।
देवी प्रसीदतु मयि ब्रह्मचारिण्यनुत्तमा ॥

dadhānā karapadmābhyām akṣamālākamaṇḍalū
devī prasīdatu mayi brahmacāriṇy anuttamā

Say it

da-DHAA-naa ka-ra-pud-MAA-bhyaam uk-sha-MAA-laa-ka-mun-da-LOO
DAY-vee pra-SEE-da-tu MA-yi brah-ma-CHAA-rin-ya-nut-ta-MAA

"May the supreme Goddess Brahmacharini, who holds prayer beads and a water pot in her lotus hands, be kind to me."



चन्द्रघण्टा · *Chandraghanta*

Chapter Six

The Third Form

चन्द्रघण्टा

Chandraghanta

The Moon Bell

The third form looks ready for a fight. Then you notice she is smiling.

She is **Chandraghanta** (chun-dra-GHUN-taa), "moon bell." On her forehead she wears a half-moon shaped like a bell.

She is the most mysterious of the nine. No old story carries her name, so the tales people tell about her are newer ones, handed down by those who love her. Two are told most often.

The first takes place at a wedding. When Shiva finally came to marry Parvati, he arrived the way he lived: with a crowd of ghosts and goblins and wild hermits, ash on his skin and snakes around his neck. Parvati's mother took one look and fainted. So Parvati changed. She took on a fierce new form, riding a lion with weapons in ten hands, and stood between her family and the frightening wedding party. Then she asked Shiva, gently, to come as a bridegroom should. He returned handsome and shining, and the wedding went ahead with everyone smiling.

The second story is about a battle. A demon sent an army of giant bats to blot out the sky. Her lion roared, the moon bell on her forehead rang out, and the sound alone scattered them like leaves.

Both stories agree on one thing. Chandraghanta is a protector, and her sound chases fear away.

In this image of her, she sits on a roaring lion, ten arms holding a sword, a mace, a trident, a bow and an arrow, a lotus, a water pot and prayer beads, two hands open in blessing. Tiny bells hang from her belt. With all those

weapons you might expect an angry face, but hers is calm, almost gentle. She is ready for battle. She just isn't angry about it.

Think of a mother bird, small and soft, until something comes too near her nest. Chandraghanta is that change: calm until something she loves is in danger, and then impossible to move.

The half-moon on her forehead and the lion roaring beneath her belong to the forest at night, when every animal is awake and listening. She is nature on guard.

Her mantras

Name mantra

ॐ देवी चन्द्रघण्टायै नमः

Om Devi Chandraghantayai Namah

Say it

Om DAY-vee chun-dra-GHUN-taa-yai NUM-ah

"Om. I bow to the Goddess Chandraghanta."

Dhyana shloka

पिण्डजप्रवरारूढा चण्डकोपास्त्रकैर्युता ।
प्रसादं तनुते मह्यं चन्द्रघण्टेति विश्रुता ॥

piṇḍajapravarārūḍhā caṇḍakopāstrakair yutā
prasādaṃ tanute mahyaṃ candraghaṇṭeti viśrutā

Say it

pin-da-ja-pra-va-raa-ROO-dhaa chun-da-ko-PAAS-tra-kai-ryu-TAA
pra-SAA-dum ta-NU-tay MAH-yum chun-dra-GHUN-tay-ti vish-ROO-taa

"Riding the noblest of beasts, armed with fierce weapons, she who is known as Chandraghanta gives me her grace."

The "noblest of beasts" is understood to be the lion.



कूष्माण्डा · *Kushmanda*

Chapter Seven

The Fourth Form

कूष्माण्डा

Kushmanda

Who Smiled the World into Being

The fourth form takes us all the way back to the beginning of everything.

Her name is **Kushmanda** (koosh-MAAN-daa), and people love to take it apart. *Ku* means little, *ushma* means warmth, and *anda* means egg. Put together, she is "the little warm egg," the seed the whole universe grew from. The same word is also the name for a pumpkin, round and full of seeds.

Here is the story people tell about her. Before anything existed, there was only darkness. No sun, no stars, not a sound. Then she smiled. The light of that smile spread through the dark like dawn across a sleeping valley, and from it came everything: the warm egg of the world cracking open into stars and planets and suns. Ever since, they say, she has lived at the heart of the sun, giving it its heat and light.

Some people also read her name the other way, as "she who swallows the world," the one who takes everything back in at the very end. The two belong together, like breathing. The one who breathes the world out is also the one who breathes it in.

In this image of her, she glows like the sun, and the sun itself blazes behind her. Her eight hands hold a water pot, a bow and an arrow, a jar of nectar, a spinning discus, a mace, prayer beads and a lotus. She sits on a tiger, and around her the dark of space fills with planets pouring out of a small glowing egg.

Her prayer verse paints her more simply. It gives her just two hands, holding two pots. One is full of the nectar of the gods. The other is red with blood. Sweetness and sacrifice, life and death, held in the same pair of hands.

Her story is about joy. Nobody needed a world, and nobody was angry. She smiled, and there it was. The next time you feel the sun on your face on a cold morning, you could think of it as her smile, still reaching you after all this time.

Her golden skin and the sun at her back are the light of a clear morning, and the planets around her are that same light spreading out. She is nature as the first sunrise.

Her mantras

Name mantra

ॐ देवी कूष्माण्डायै नमः

Om Devi Kushmandayai Namah

Say it

Om DAY-vee koosh-maan-DAA-yai NUM-ah

"Om. I bow to the Goddess Kushmanda."

Dhyana shloka

सुरासम्पूर्णकलशं रुधिराप्लुतमेव च।
दधाना हस्तपद्माभ्यां कूष्माण्डा शुभदास्तु मे॥

surāsampūrṇakalaśaṃ rudhirāplutam eva ca
dadhānā hastapadmābhyāṃ kūṣmāṇḍā śubhadāstu me

Say it

soo-RAA-sam-POOR-na-KA-la-shum ru-DHI-raa-PLU-ta-may-va cha
da-DHAA-naa has-ta-PUD-maa-bhyaam koosh-MAAN-daa shu-bha-DAAS-tu may

"Holding in her two lotus hands a pot full of nectar (sura) and a pot covered in blood, may Kushmanda bring me good fortune."



स्कन्दमाता · *Skandamata*

Chapter Eight

The Fifth Form

स्कन्दमाता

Skandamata

Mother of Skanda

The fifth form is a mother holding her child.

She is **Skandamata** (SKUN-da-MAA-taa), "mother of Skanda." Skanda is a young warrior god, also called Kartikeya or Murugan, and his birth is one of the great stories.

A demon called Taraka had been promised that only a son of Shiva could ever defeat him. Shiva lived alone on his mountain and seemed to want no family at all, so Taraka felt perfectly safe. He took over the heavens, just as the buffalo demon had done before him.

Then Shiva and Parvati married, and the whole world waited for this son. When he came, he took a long road into the world. Shiva's fiery seed was too hot for anyone to hold. Fire carried it until it burned. The river Ganga carried it next, and laid it down gently in a forest of tall reeds on her bank. There, among the reeds, a shining baby boy appeared. Six star-maidens, the stars we call the Pleiades, came down from the sky to nurse him, and so that he could drink from all six at once, he grew six faces.

Then Parvati came. She lifted the child, held him on her lap and fed him as her own. That tender moment is Skandamata. And when the boy was grown, she gave him a spear called Shakti, her own power in the shape of a weapon. With it he defeated Taraka and set the heavens free.

The small details change from one telling to another, but the shape stays the same. A child who will save the world is carried by fire, water and stars, and then gathered into his mother's arms.

In this image of her, she sits on a pink lotus with a lion resting beside her. Two of her hands hold lotus flowers, one is raised to say “don’t be afraid,” and the last holds the little boy on her lap, six faces and a tiny spear. Behind them a river runs through tall reeds under the evening stars.

Look at how many things care for this child before his mother does: fire, a river, the reeds, the stars. New life is passed from hand to hand until it is safe. And when he grows up, she gives him more than milk. She gives him her strength. Any parent who has watched a grown child walk out the door knows what that gift means.

She sits on a lotus by a river, with tall reeds and evening stars behind her and a lion resting at her side. With her child on her lap, she is nature at home.

Her mantras

Name mantra

ॐ देवी स्कन्दमातायै नमः

Om Devi Skandamatayai Namah

Say it

Om DAY-vee skun-da-MAA-taa-yai NUM-ah

"Om. I bow to the Goddess Skandamata."

Dhyana shloka

सिंहासनगता नित्यं पद्माश्रितकरद्वया ।
शुभदास्तु सदा देवी स्कन्दमाता यशस्विनी ॥

siṃhāsanagatā nityaṃ padmāśritakaradvayā
śubhadāstu sadā devī skandamātā yaśasvinī

Say it

SIM-haa-sa-na-ga-TAA NIT-yum PUD-maa-shri-ta-ka-ra-DVA-yaa
shu-bha-DAAS-tu SA-daa DAY-vee skun-da-MAA-taa ya-SHAS-vi-nee

"Always seated on a lion as on a throne, with lotuses in two hands, may the glorious Goddess Skandamata always bring good fortune."



कात्यायनी · *Katyayani*

Chapter Nine

The Sixth Form

कात्यायनी

Katyayani

The Warrior Daughter

The sixth form is a warrior, and she has two stories, one loud and one quiet.

Her name is **Katyayani** (KAAT-yaa-ya-nee), "daughter of Katyayana," a wise old hermit. Some say she appeared in his forest home. Others say she took his name because he was the first to pray to her.

Her first story will sound familiar. When the buffalo demon drove everyone out of heaven, their anger poured out as flames, and the flames joined into a goddess as bright as a thousand suns. It is the same moment we saw in Chapter 2, and in this telling her name is Katyayani. Each of them gave her a weapon, and she went to live in the hills. Before long the buffalo demon heard how beautiful she was and asked her to marry him. She told him the only way to win her was to beat her in battle. In the fight she leapt from her lion onto the buffalo's back and struck him down.

Her second story is much gentler. In a village by the river Yamuna, the young girls were all in love with Krishna, the cowherd boy who played the flute. For a whole month of early winter they rose before dawn, bathed in the cold river, shaped a little figure of the goddess out of sand, and prayed to her together:

कात्यायनि महामाये महायोगिन्यधीश्वरि ।
नन्दगोपसुतं देवि पतिं मे कुरु ते नमः ॥

kātyāyani mahā-māye mahā-yoginy adhīśvari
nanda-gopa-sutaṃ devi patiṃ me kuru te namaḥ

"O Katyayani, great power of illusion, great yogini, ruler of all, O Goddess, make the son of Nanda my husband. I bow to you." (Bhagavata Purana 10.22.4)

Even now, young women pray to Katyayani when they hope to find the right person to marry.

In this image of her, she rides a great lion as it leaps over green hills. She wears red, and her skin is gold. In one hand she raises a curved sword shaped like a crescent moon, called Chandrahasa, "the laughing moon." Another holds a lotus, and her other two hands bless and say "don't be afraid." Her eyes are fierce, but her face is kind. Down in the corner, if you look closely, the village girls stand in the river, looking up at her.

She carries the strength of the whole world in her sword. And yet she stops by a river to listen to a few cold girls make a wish. The one who strikes down the buffalo demon is the same one who hears them.

Her lion leaps over green hills, and below her the river turns gold in the morning light where the village girls are bathing. She is nature on the move.

Her mantras

Name mantra

ॐ देवी कात्यायन्यै नमः

Om Devi Katyayanyai Namah

Say it

Om DAY-vee KAAT-yaa-yun-yai NUM-ah

"Om. I bow to the Goddess Katyayani."

Dhyana shloka

चन्द्रहासोज्ज्वलकरा शार्दूलवरवाहना ।
कात्यायनी शुभं दद्याद्देवी दानवघातिनी ॥

candrahāsojjvalakarā śārdūlavaravāhanā
kātyāyanī śubhaṃ dadyād devī dānavaghātinī

Say it

CHUN-dra-HAA-soj-jva-la-ka-RAA SHAAR-doo-la-va-ra-VAA-ha-naa
KAAT-yaa-ya-nee SHU-bhum DUD-yaad DAY-vee DAA-na-va-GHAA-ti-nee

"Her hand blazing with the crescent sword Chandrahasa, riding a great noble cat, may the Goddess Katyayani, slayer of demons, give us good fortune."



कालरात्रि · *Kalaratri*

Chapter Ten

The Seventh Form

कालरात्रि

Kalaratri

The Night of Time

The seventh form is the one people are most afraid of, and she means to be.

Her name is **Kalaratri** (KAA-la-raa-tree). *Kala* means both "black" and "time," and *ratri* means night. So she is the Black Night, or the Night of Time.

Hers is one of the oldest names of the nine. It belongs to the night that comes at the very end of things, when everything that was ever made goes back to her and even time rests for a while.

There is a story often told about her. The Goddess was fighting a demon called Raktabija, whose name means "blood seed." Every drop of his blood that touched the ground rose up as another Raktabija. The more she wounded him, the more of him there were, until the whole battlefield swarmed with copies. So she called on her darkest self and asked her to open her mouth wide. That dark goddess caught every drop before it could fall, like dry earth drinking the rain, until Raktabija had nothing left and fell. In the oldest telling the dark one is called Kali, but the story has long been told about Kalaratri too, and it suits her well.

She has another name that surprises people: Shubhankari, "the one who brings good." She looks terrible, but she never harms those who come to her. She only frightens the things that frighten them.

In this image of her, she rides a gray donkey straight toward you, out of the dark. Her skin is black as a night with no moon. Her long hair flies loose, and thin flames curl from her breath. She has three round, blazing eyes, a necklace that flashes like lightning, and red hibiscus at her ears. Of her four hands, two are open, giving a blessing and saying "don't be afraid," and two

hold an iron hook and a curved sword. A spiked iron ring shines on her left ankle.

Her prayer verse says she wears no clothes at all, and people explain this beautifully: she is “sky-clad,” dressed only in space and the four directions. A goddess whose body is the whole night sky needs nothing else. In this book, as in many paintings, she wears a dark red robe.

Leaves fall. Fires sweep through forests. Old things die so that new ones can grow. We don’t like to look at this side of the world, but there is no spring without it. Walk through a burned forest a year later and it is green again. That is why the most frightening of the nine is also the one who brings good. She asks us not to be afraid of the dark, because the dark is her too.

Her skin is the color of a sky with no moon, stars shine all around her, and a ring of fire lights up the dark. She is nature at night.

Name mantra

ॐ देवी कालरात्र्यै नमः

Om Devi Kalaratryai Namah

Say it

Om DAY-vee KAA-la-raat-ryai NUM-ah

"Om. I bow to the Goddess Kalaratri."

Dhyana shloka

एकवेणी जपाकर्णपूरा नग्ना खरास्थिता ।
लम्बोष्ठी कर्णिकाकर्णी तैलाभ्यक्तशरीरिणी ॥
वामपादोल्लसल्लोहलताकण्टकभूषणा ।
वर्धनमूर्धध्वजा कृष्णा कालरात्रिर्भयङ्करी ॥

ekaveṇī japākarṇapūrā nagnā kharāsthitā
lamb
o
ṣṭhī karṇikākarṇī tailābhyaktaśarīriṇī
vāmapādollasallohalatākaṇṭakabhūṣaṇā
vardhanamūrdhadhvajā kṛṣṇā kālarātrir bhayaṅkarī

Say it

AY-ka-vay-nee JA-paa-karna-POO-raa NUG-naa kha-RAAS-thi-taa
LUM-bosh-thee KAR-ni-kaa-KAR-nee TAI-laa-bhyak-ta-sha-REE-ri-nee
VAA-ma-paa-dol-la-sal-LO-ha-la-taa-KUN-ta-ka-BHOO-sha-naa
VAR-dha-na-MOOR-dha-DHWA-jaa KRISH-naa KAA-la-raa-trir BHA-yun-ka-ree

"With a single braid and red hibiscus at her ears, sky-clad, riding a donkey, with long lips and ornaments in her ears, her body shining with oil, her left foot bright with a spiked iron ornament, her banner raised high, dark as night: this is Kalaratri, the fearsome one."

A few words in this verse are old and hard to translate exactly. No published English translation of it has been found, so the meaning given here is my own best reading.



महागौरी · *Mahagauri*

Chapter Eleven

The Eighth Form

महागौरी

Mahagauri

The Shining White One

After the darkest night comes the brightest morning.

The eighth form is **Mahagauri** (ma-HAA-gow-ree), "the great shining one." *Gauri* means fair, or bright, and it is one of Parvati's oldest names.

There are three stories about how she became so bright, and they don't agree with each other. Nobody seems to mind.

In the oldest, a bright goddess steps out of Parvati's body, and Parvati herself is left dark. That one runs the opposite way to the others.

In the second, Shiva teases Parvati by calling her "Kali," the dark one. She is hurt, so she goes off alone and prays until her skin turns golden. The dark skin she leaves behind takes on a life of its own and becomes a warrior goddess.

The story most people tell today is the simplest. After all those years of hard practice in the sun, the rain and the dust, Parvati's body had turned dark. When Shiva finally accepted her, he washed her with water from the river Ganga, and her skin shone white as lightning.

So is she dark or bright? The stories answer: both. Light and dark keep coming out of each other, again and again, like night and morning. That is why it feels right to meet Kalaratri and Mahagauri one after the other.

In this image of her, she sits on a white bull before a waterfall pouring down from the snowy mountains. Everything about her is white: her skin, like a conch shell or the moon or jasmine flowers, her silk sari, her pearls and sil-

ver. Of her four hands, two hold a trident and a little hand drum, and two give a blessing and say “don’t be afraid.” Her face is young and very peaceful.

Think of the first morning after a long rainy season, when the dust has been washed away and the mountains stand white and sharp against a clean blue sky. Everything looks new. Mahagauri is that kind of clearness. She comes after the hard work of Brahmacharini and the long dark of Kalaratri, and she feels like rest. Her verse calls her the one who brings joy to Shiva, as if nature and spirit were simply glad of each other.

Her pearls, her silver and the waterfall behind her shine like moonlight on a river. She is nature at its calmest.

Her mantras

Name mantra

ॐ देवी महागौर्यै नमः

Om Devi Mahagauryai Namah

Say it

Om DAY-vee ma-HAA-gow-ryai NUM-ah

"Om. I bow to the Goddess Mahagauri."

Dhyana shloka

श्वेते वृषे समारूढा श्वेताम्बरधरा शुचिः ।
महागौरी शुभं दद्यान्महादेवप्रमोददा ॥

śvete vṛṣe samārūḍhā śvetāmbaradharā śuciḥ
mahāgaurī śubhaṃ dadyān mahādevapramodadā

Say it

SHVAY-tay VRI-shay sa-MAA-roo-dhaa SHVAY-taam-ba-ra-DHA-raa SHU-chih
ma-HAA-gow-ree SHU-bhum DUD-yaan ma-HAA-day-va-pra-MO-da-daa

"Riding a white bull, dressed in white and pure, may Mahagauri, who brings joy to Mahadeva (Shiva), give us good fortune."



सिद्धिदात्री · *Siddhidatri*

Chapter Twelve

The Ninth Form

सिद्धिदात्री

Siddhidatri

Giver of Every Gift

The ninth form gives everything away.

Her name is **Siddhidatri** (SID-dhi-daa-tree), "the giver of siddhi." A siddhi is a perfection, a kind of mastery that comes after a long time of practice, like a gift you have finally earned.

People have long spoken of eight great ones: the power to become as small as an atom or as huge as a mountain, to become heavy or as light as air, to reach anywhere, to have any wish come true, to lead others, and to master yourself. Siddhidatri, they say, holds all of them, and gives them away.

There is a story about her that goes to the heart of this whole book. At the very beginning of things, Shiva came to her and asked for the power to create. She gave him every gift she had. And then she did something more. She became half of him. From that moment Shiva became Ardhanarishvara, "the lord who is half woman." In old carvings you can see him that way: one side man, one side woman, joined straight down the middle. One of the most famous is cut into the rock of a cave on an island, and it has been there for about fourteen hundred years.

In this image of her, she sits on a wide-open pink lotus, with a lion resting beside her. She wears a bright red sari and a gold crown. In her four hands she holds a spinning discus, a conch shell, a mace and a lotus. All around her, at a respectful distance, every kind of being has gathered: wise old sages, heavenly musicians, spirits of the forest, even a few horned demons. Every one of them has folded hands. Nobody has been turned away.

A fruit tree doesn't ask who is picking its fruit. Rain falls on every field alike. Siddhidatri is that open hand. And her story holds the biggest idea in this book. In it, Shiva stands for awareness, and she is power, she is nature. Without her he can make nothing at all, and so half of him is her. In the last chapter you'll see the old hymn go one step further and call her the awareness too. If you remember one picture from this book, let it be Ardhanarishvara.

She sits on an open lotus with a lion at her side, while sages, gods, musicians, deer and peacocks gather around her. Every kind of life comes to her. She is nature in full bloom.

Her mantras

Name mantra

ॐ देवी सिद्धिदात्र्यै नमः

Om Devi Siddhidatryai Namah

Say it

Om DAY-vee SID-dhi-daat-ryai NUM-ah

"Om. I bow to the Goddess Siddhidatri."

Dhyana shloka

सिद्धगन्धर्वयक्षाद्यैरसुरैरमरैरपि ।
सेव्यमाना सदा भूयात् सिद्धिदा सिद्धिदायिनी ॥

siddha-gandharva-yakṣādyair asurair amarair api
sevyamānā sadā bhūyāt siddhidā siddhidāyinī

Say it

SID-dha-gun-DHAR-va-YUK-shaad-yair a-SU-rair a-MA-rair a-pi
SAY-vya-maa-naa SA-daa BHOO-yaat SID-dhi-daa SID-dhi-daa-yi-nee

"Served always by sages, heavenly musicians, nature spirits and others, by demons and by the gods too, may she, the Giver of Perfection, always grant us success."



महिषासुरमर्दिनी · *Mahishasuramardini*

Chapter Thirteen

The Tenth Face

महिषासुरमर्दिनी

Mahishasuramardini

The Victory

After the nine forms comes the victory.

The tenth face of the Goddess is **Mahishasuramardini** (ma-HI-shaa-su-ra-MAR-di-nee), "the one who crushed the buffalo demon." It is a long name for the moment the whole story has been building toward.

You already know how it began. Heaven fell, and its people were driven out to wander the earth. Their anger and their light flowed together into a mountain of fire, and the fire became a woman. They handed her their weapons, the king of the mountains gave her a lion, and she went out to meet the buffalo demon.

It is worth pausing for a moment on who Mahishasura really is. He could become anything: a buffalo, a lion, a man with a sword, an elephant. You could never pin him down. One way to read him is as our own restless pride and anger, which keep changing shape so we never quite catch them. She doesn't chase every shape. She holds him still, and when his true face comes crawling half out of the buffalo, she ends it.

There are stone carvings of this scene well over a thousand years old. In them the buffalo demon looks terrified. Her face is calm, as if this were simply the day's work.

In this image of her, she stands with one foot pressed down on the neck of a huge black buffalo. Her trident is driven into it, and the demon, in the shape of a man, is half out of the buffalo's mouth, still clutching his sword, as her own sword rises above him. Her lion has its teeth in the buffalo's back. Her many hands hold the gifts she was given: the trident, the discus, the conch,

the bow, the bell, the shield. High above, onlookers watch from the clouds and let flowers fall. Her verse gives her eighteen arms; in many pictures she has ten, or four. All of them are her.

Think of a forest after a storm, a river after a flood, a body after a fever. There is a moment when things settle back to the way they should be. She is that moment. And before she left, she made them a promise: whenever you need me, call, and I will come.

Her lion and the buffalo beneath her are two great animals locked together, and flowers fall on them from the clouds above. She is nature setting things right.

Mantra

ॐ दुं दुर्गायै नमः

Om Dum Durgayai Namah

Say it

Om DOOM DOOR-gaa-yai NUM-ah

"Om. *Dum*. I bow to Durga."

Dum is a seed syllable, a sacred sound with no word meaning, that carries Durga's own power. It is one of the most widely chanted Durga mantras.

Dhyana shloka

ॐ अक्षस्रक्परशू गदेषुकुलिशं पद्मं धनुः कुण्डिकां दण्डं शक्तिमसिं च चर्म जलजं घण्टां सुराभाजनम्।
शूलं पाशसुदर्शने च दधतीं हस्तैः प्रवालप्रभां सेवे सैरिभमर्दिनीमिह महालक्ष्मीं सरोजस्थिताम्॥

oṃ akṣasrak-paraśū gadeṣu-kuliśaṃ padmaṃ dhanuḥ kuṇḍikāṃ
daṇḍaṃ śaktim asiṃ ca carma jalajaṃ ghaṇṭāṃ surābhājanam
śūlaṃ pāśa-sudarśane ca dadhatīṃ hastaiḥ pravāla-prabhāṃ
seve sairibha-mardinīm iha mahālakṣmīṃ saroja-sthitām

Say it

Om uk-sha-SRUK pa-ra-SHOO ga-DAY-shu ku-LI-shum PUD-mum dha-NUH kun-di-KAAM
DUN-dum SHUK-ti-ma-SIM cha CHAR-ma ja-la-JUM GHUN-taam su-RAA-bhaa-ja-num
SHOO-lum PAA-sha su-DAR-sha-nay cha da-DHA-teem HUS-taih pra-VAA-la pra-BHAAM
SAY-vay SAI-ri-bha-MAR-di-neem i-ha ma-HAA-luk-shmeem sa-RO-ja STHI-taam

"I worship Mahalakshmi, crusher of the buffalo, seated on a lotus and glowing like coral, who holds in her hands prayer beads, an axe, a mace, an arrow, a thunderbolt, a lotus, a bow, a water pot, a staff, a spear, a sword, a shield, a conch, a bell, a cup, a trident, a noose and the discus Sudarshana."

In this verse she is called Mahalakshmi, the name the Devi Mahatmya's second part uses for the Goddess who fights Mahishasura.

Chapter Fourteen

सर्वभूतेषु

The Goddess in All Beings

Later in the old hymn, two more demons take over heaven. Those driven out remember her promise to return whenever she is needed, climb up into the mountains and sing to her. It is the most loved part of the whole hymn. Each verse names one more way she lives inside every creature, and then bows to her three times.

She lives in all beings as consciousness. As intelligence. As sleep and as hunger. As shadow, as power, as thirst. As patience, as modesty, as peace, as faith, as beauty, as good fortune. As memory, as kindness, as contentment. As mother. Even as error and confusion. Each line ends the same way, like waves reaching the same shore:

नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥

namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namaḥ

"I bow to her, I bow to her, I bow to her, again and again."

Read slowly, the hymn is a kind of map of Prakriti, of nature. It doesn't keep the Goddess far away in the sky. It finds her in the most ordinary parts of being alive. When you are hungry, that is her. When you fall asleep, that is her. When you forgive someone, that is her too. Even when you get things wrong, the hymn says, she is there.

The last verse of the series sums it all up:

चितिरूपेण या कृत्स्नमेतद्व्याप्य स्थिता जगत्।
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥

citi-rūpeṇa yā kṛtsnam etad vyāpya sthitā jagat
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namaḥ

Say it

CHI-ti ROO-pay-na yaa KRIT-snam ay-tad VYAAP-ya STHI-taa JA-gut
NUM-us TUS-yai NUM-us TUS-yai NUM-us TUS-yai NUM-o NUM-ah

"To her who fills this whole world as consciousness, I bow to her, I bow to her, I bow to her, again and again." (Devi Mahatmya 5.78–80)

This is where the whole book has been heading. We began with a girl born on a mountain and walked with her through the forest, the wedding, the making of the world, the child on her lap, the battle, the darkest night, the brightest morning and the giving of every gift. Then we saw her as every power gathered into one. Now the hymn says all of these are one. The mountain, the seed, the sun, the child, the sword, the night and the moon-white bull are all her. She is nature, and she is awake in all of it.

When you close this book, she doesn't go anywhere. If the hymn is right, she is in the food on your plate and the breath in your chest. She is in the people sitting around you, and in the tree outside your window. And she is in you. The steadiness of the mountain's daughter, the patience of the forest, the fire of the dark night and the calm of the white morning were never only hers. They were always yours too, waiting. Perhaps that is what her stories were for all along: not to tell you about someone far away, but to wake the one already within you. Honoring her may ask no more than this: to notice her, and to let her wake.

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु शक्तिरूपेण संस्थिता ।
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥

yā devī sarvabhūteṣu śakti-rūpeṇa saṃsthitā
namas tasyai namas tasyai namas tasyai namo namaḥ

Say it

yaa DAY-vee sar-va-BHOO-tay-shu SHUK-ti ROO-pay-na sum-STHI-taa
NUM-us TUS-yai NUM-us TUS-yai NUM-us TUS-yai NUM-o NUM-ah

"To the Goddess who lives in all beings as power, I bow to her, I bow to her, I bow to her, again and again." (Devi Mahatmya 5.32–34)

The Nine Forms at a Glance

Form	Meaning	Rides	Holds	She is nature…
1. Shailaputri	Daughter of the mountain	White bull	Trident, lotus	as the landscape
2. Brahmacharini	She who walks the path of discipline	Walks barefoot	Prayer beads, water pot	at its simplest
3. Chandraghanta	Moon bell	Lion	Ten arms: sword, trident, bow, mace and more	on guard
4. Kushmanda	The little warm egg	Tiger	Eight arms: nectar jar, discus, bow and more	as the first sunrise
5. Skandamata	Mother of Skanda	Lion, at rest	Lotuses and her child	at home
6. Katyayani	Daughter of Katyayana	Lion	Crescent sword, lotus	on the move
7. Kalaratri	The Night of Time	Donkey	Iron hook, curved sword	at night
8. Mahagauri	The great shining one	White bull	Trident, small drum	at its calmest
9. Siddhidatri	Giver of every gift	Lotus, lion beside	Discus, conch, mace, lotus	in full bloom
10. Mahishasuramardini	She who crushed the buffalo demon	Lion	The weapons of every power	setting things right

Each form's name mantra follows the same simple pattern: **Om Devi**, then her name, then **Namah**: "Om, I bow to the Goddess…" For example, *Om Devi Shailaputryai Namah*. The tenth is *Om Dum Durgayai Namah*.

Reading Her Images

Every image of her is full of small signs. Once you know them, you can read her like a story.

The third eye. The eye in the middle of her forehead sees what ordinary eyes miss: what is true beneath what only looks true. Every form has it.

Her hands. An open palm raised toward you means "don't be afraid." An open palm lowered, fingers pointing down, means she is giving, a blessing. Look for these two gestures; most forms show at least one.

Many arms. More arms don't make her strange. They show that she can do many things at once: protect, give, create and fight, all at the same time.

What she holds. Many say the three points of the trident stand for the three gunas you met in Chapter 1, held in balance. The lotus grows out of mud yet stays clean. The conch's sound calls everyone to listen. The spinning discus is the turning wheel of time. The sword cuts through confusion. Prayer beads and a water pot are the tools of patient practice, and the bell's ring clears fear away.

What she rides. Each animal carries part of her nature. The lion is courage. The bull is steadiness and patience. The tiger is raw energy, like the sun's. The humble donkey, which carries the darkest form, shows that no creature is too lowly to serve her.

Moon and color. A crescent moon in her hair is a cool, calm mind and the turning of time. Red is life and energy. White is peace. Black is the night that holds everything.

Notes on grammar and verse numbers

The name mantras are printed the way people actually chant them, with *Devi*. A strict grammarian would write *Devyai* instead ("to the Goddess"). The meaning is the same either way. In the same spirit, Skandamatayai is the form people chant, where a grammarian would write Skandamatre.

About the verse numbers. Verses of the Devi Mahatmya are numbered as in the Gita Press *Shri Durga Saptashati*. Other editions count a little differently, so a verse may sit a few numbers away in your copy.

How to say the Sanskrit

The "Say it" lines in this book are a simple guide, not a scholar's system. A few rules cover almost everything:

Written	Sounds like
a	the *u* in "but"
aa, ā	the *a* in "father"
ee, ī	the *ee* in "see"
oo, ū	the *oo* in "moon"
ay, e	the *ay* in "day"
ai	the *i* in "kite"
ri, ṛ	a short *ri*, as in "rich"
sh, ś, ṣ	the *sh* in "ship"
ch, c	the *ch* in "church"
bh, dh, gh, kh	the letter with a puff of breath after it
ḥ at the end	a soft echo of the vowel before it, so *namaḥ* is "NUM-ah"

Capital letters show where to put a little weight. Don't worry about getting it perfect. These mantras have been said in a hundred accents for a very long time, and the Goddess is not checking your pronunciation.

Glossary

Ardhanarishvara: Shiva shown as half man and half woman, joined down the middle.

Devi: Goddess.

Dhyana shloka: a verse that describes how she looks, so you can picture her while you pray.

Durga: "hard to reach"; the warrior goddess born from the light of all the gods.

Gunas: the three qualities that make up nature: sattva (light, calm), rajas (movement, fire) and tamas (heaviness, rest).

Mantra: a sacred word or line, said or chanted in prayer.

Navaratri: "nine nights," an autumn festival when the nine forms are honored.

Om: a sacred sound said at the start of many prayers.

Parvati: "she of the mountain," daughter of the Himalaya and wife of Shiva.

Prakriti: nature; everything that has a shape and can change. In this book, the Goddess herself.

Shakti: power, the ability to do anything at all; another name for the Goddess.

Shiva: the wild god of the mountain peaks, husband of Parvati.

Siddhi: a perfection or mastery that comes after long practice.

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She is the river that floods, and the river that feeds.

Nature can be gentle. Nature can be fierce. Long ago, people gave that living nature a face and called her Durga.

Across nine forms she grows from a mountain's daughter into the giver of every gift. She walks through the darkest night and comes out shining. Each form is shown here, with her story and her prayers in Sanskrit, an easy guide to saying them, and what they mean in plain English.

Read one form a night, and let her stay with you a while.

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु शक्तिरूपेण संस्थिता ॥

Illustrated and arranged by Bibek Sharma Chapagain