The inside and Outside of the Domestic:  

Durgā Kāli as the Great Goddesses in the  

Mahābhāgvata Purāṇa
Introduction

The opening verse of the MBP offers salutation to the goddess as the Ultimate One.

Obeisance to the Ultimate (parām 1.1) goddess, the mother of the universe. Brahmā, Hari and Hara became the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe respectively by worshiping her. The yogis meditate on her and the munis know her to be the primordial Prakṛti. She created the universe by her own will. (1.1)

However, in the subsequent verse, she is said to be born as the wife of Śiva

Later, she was born to become the wife of Śambhu. Śambhu begot her as his wife by performing terrible tapas and had taken her feet to his heart. May that goddess protect you all. (1.1-2)

The Ultimate Goddess in the MBP is referred to as Devī, Bhagavatī or Durgā. Kāli is also considered to be one of the supreme forms of the goddess. The embodied goddess as the wife of Śiva is Satī and Pārvatī. The goddess as Durgā and Kāli are not entrenched within the realm of the domestic. In the MBP, we do not have an elaborate prescriptive section on the dark nude goddesses with garlands of human skulls, as we see in the KP. Yet they make their presence felt in the mythic content of the MBP as well as in the iconographic features of the goddesses described in the myths. In this chapter, it is shown how the domestic becomes the sole reference space of the goddess, even when she is not always seen within the domestic sphere in all her forms. It is
discussed how the entry of the dark, nude goddesses in the mainstream of the narrative in the MBP disrupted the normative ideal of woman that the KP sought to uphold and how such entry into the myths altered the meanings of the goddesses and their autonomous space.

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_Durgā as the Great Goddess of the MBP_

Interestingly, the MBP is not composed or compiled by Vyāsa like the other Purāṇas. It is said to be revealed to Vyāsa by the grace of Durgā. The sūta narrates the
Vyāsa composed the seventeen Purāṇas, but remained dissatisfied. He wondered how he would be able to narrate the glories of the Mahāpurāṇa which has no parallel, the Mahāpurāṇa in which the essence and glory (param tatvaṃ māhātmyaṃ, 1.14) of the goddess is described. He knew that it was extremely difficult to realize the true essence of the goddess. Hence, he went to Himavat to perform tapas by devoting himself to Durgā. The goddess was pleased. Herself remaining invisible in the sky, she asked Vyāsa to go to brahmaloka where the Śrutis resided. She promised to appear before Vyāsa and fulfill his aspirations. Accordingly, Vyāsa went to brahmaloka, bowed down to the Vedas and asked them about the immutable Brahman. The four Vedas described the glory of Durgā and said that she herself is the Parama Brahma (tāmāhaḥ paramaḥ brahma durgāḥ bhagavatiḥ mune 1.26). The Vedas then started eulogizing Durgā as the Ultimate one, the one worshiped by Hari and Śambhu. (1.1-44)

In its very inception, the MBP thus upholds Durgā as the Ultimate Goddess. She is the immutable Brahman. The attempt to associate the goddess with the Vedic tradition is all too obvious in the myth. The Supremacy of the goddess does not necessarily contradict the authority of the Vedas, as they are made to bow down to the goddess who herself is of the form of immutable Brahman. Some of the earlier Purāṇas also sought to project the goddess as a part of the Vedic tradition, but the MBP is categorical from the beginning and the authors of the MBP persistently seek to project the goddess and her worship to be consistent with the Vedas. As the goddess(s) comes closer to the Vedic-brahmanical scheme, her philosophical connotations continue to
change. In the DP, as we have seen, the goddess as *Vidyā* bestows deludes, but there is no negative tag attached to her or the function of delusion. The DP does not uphold the goddess as *brahman* and also does not offer us the theology of *Māyā*. The goddess in the DBP as *Māyā* is said to be constitutive of both *Vidyā* and *Avidyā*. As *Vidyā*, she liberates and as *Avidyā* she deludes. In the KP, *Mahāmāyā* in abstraction is initially said to be liberative, but the functionality of *Māyā* has been gradually limited to causing delusion. In the MBP, the goddess is identified with *Brahman* from the very beginning. It does not posit *māyā* vis-à-vis *brahman* as we see in the Advaita-vedanta tradition, but it does ascribe *Māyā* the negative agency of causing delusion. It is said that for the sake of creation, the goddess divided herself into three forms, namely that of *Māyā*, *Paramā* and *Vidyā*. She traps beings into *samsāra* in the form of *Māyā*, she provides vibratory impulse (*parespandanādiśaktiryā* 3.22) in the form of *Paramā* and as *Vidyā*, she liberates.¹ Though the MBP identifies the goddess with *Brahman*, she is not the formless one. The text offers descriptions of the discrete forms of the goddess and also identifies her with different gods and goddesses.

The goddess, being pleased, showed them her own forms (*svarūpaṁ darśayāmāsa* 1.36). She is said to exist in the form of light in all living beings, but she appeared in discrete forms to dispel the doubt of Vyāsa. Her different appearances is described thus: “At times, she has the brilliance of thousands of suns and at times she is of the hue of crores of moons. Her complexion is that of the rain-bearing cloud. She has four arms. She usually mounts a lion and occasionally a corpse.”² The number of her arms may vary from two to infinity. She is also said to exist in the forms of Viṣṇu with Kamalā, Kṛṣṇa with Rādhā, and Śiva with Gaurī. Thus, having known the goddess to be *Parama Brahman*. Vyāsa attained liberation (*jīvanmukto* 1.45). The DeVī Bhagavatī pointed
towards a lotus beneath her feet in which was written the Purāṇā named Mahābhāgavata. The sūta then narrated the Purāṇā as he had heard it from Vyāsa. However, he requested his audience to keep it a secret. (1.36 – 1.52)

The Great Goddess who reveals the Purāṇā to Vyāsa is Durgā. The goddess appears in many forms in the text and Patricia Dold rightly points out that “sometimes she ‘looks’ like a classic Kālī, but at other times, she is more like a Durgā, or even like a conflation of the two.” However, it is difficult to accept Dold’s proposition that “…characteristics typical of Kālī appear in many of the Mahābhāgavata’s description of the Great Goddess or her supreme physical form, and Kālī (by name or by description) is central to most of its narratives.” Dold does not take into account the primacy ascribed to Durgā in the text. When the goddess is described as the Supreme One in abstraction or is eulogised as the Ultimate One, she is mostly referred to as Durgā. At times, she is evoked by the name of Śivā or Ambikā, but she is not referred to as Kālī on these occasions. Kālī is also one of the supreme forms of the goddess. However, she appears only in specific junctures in the narrative of the text. Dold’s emphasis on Kālī seems to have stemmed from her reading of the text in the light of the standard iconographies of Durgā and Kālī, the latter being the most representative goddesses of the kind in modern brahmanical pantheon. If we take into account the numerous dark, nude goddesses with garland of human skulls, whom we frequently encounter in the KP, and situate the MBP in the cultural matrix to which the goddesses belong, the MBP will throw fresh light on the long-standing conflict and negotiation between the local and brahmanical cultures. Dold herself points to the influence of the
local tradition of the *Tantras* on the mythic content of the *MBP*, to which we shall now turn.

Devī created Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. Then she divided herself into three parts and promised to become the wife of each of them. She instructed them to create, preserve and destroy the universe and she promised to bear them children. Śiva wished to obtain her for his wife alone, and so he began to propitiate her with *tapas* and *bhakti*. Viṣṇu and Brahmā then also stopped creating and practised asceticism. In order to test them, the Devī assumed a terrifying form and appeared before each one in turn. Brahmā became four-facèd in order to turn away from her and Viṣṇu closed his eyes and plunged into the water. She was unable to turn Śiva from his asceticism, for he was a great *yogī*. Then she was pleased with him and promised to become Sāti in order to marry him. (3.15-70)

The autonomous goddess agrees to be the wife of the gods. Unlike the *KP*, in the *MBP*, the goddess is not portrayed as the devotee of her husband, Śiva. Instead, Śiva has to pass the test of the goddess to prove himself to be a worthy husband. Patricia Dold says that the testing motif of the *MBP* might have been influenced by Śaiva mythology in which the “‘disgusting’ and unconventional are used to criticize ignorance and pride.” According to Dold, the most “compelling parallels” to the tests in the *MBP* is found in the *Tantras*. Dold draws our attention to the Buddhist *Tantras* studied by Miranda Shaw and discusses at length, the instances of the *yoginī* testing their potential disciples: “According to the Śakta Buddhist Tantras studied by Miranda Shaw, women teachers and enlightening goddesses (the two are often the same) frequently confront prospective male initiate with their unconventional—one might say...
'Kaliesque'— appearance and behaviour. When prospective initiates pass the test by heroically facing the anomalous or repulsive...they are accepted as initiates. When they fail and flee from or reject the teacher, it is often due to pride in themselves or in their status.8 We cite here one of the instances of such test, passed by the Buddhist missionary Atiśa. Atiśa met a woman who was as thin as a skeleton, was wearing a necklace of bones and skulls and was behaving strangely, laughing at one moment and weeping the next. He thought that she might be a good teacher and requested her to instruct him. She said, “If you want religious teaching, you will have to come to eastern Bengal.” Atiśa followed her until she reached a cremation ground. There she suddenly turned back and asked him, “How did you guess that I have some special religious instruction to impart? Do I look like I have any?” “Yes”, replied Atiśa, “you certainly do!” Being pleased, she initiated him.9

In the earlier chapter, I have pointed out the similarities between the goddesses and the yoginis of the KP with the goddesses and yoginis of the Buddhist Tantras. The KP however, is selective in its appropriation of Tantric practices and it imparted new values on the local goddesses. The mythic content of the KP is loaded with brahmanical ethos. The stark reversal of the hierarchy of the relationship between the goddess and Śiva at the very outset in the MBP, and the tension between the goddess and her father and husband portrayed in the text, reveals that the local cultural values could not be wiped out easily and that it was capable of exerting considerable counter pressure. However, as brahmanism was spreading its sway, the local religious/spiritual practioners could survive only in pockets and in “secrecy”. In the MBP, we do not come across any instance of a woman initiating an adept, except when the goddess
reveals her true self or help others overcome false pride. The yoginīs of the KP are no more seen in the spiritual realm in the MBP. Dold argues that influence of the Tantras must have been significant on the MBP. R.C. Hazra is of the opinion that the provenance of the MBP is eastern Bengal and the account of Atiśa clearly points to this region. It is probable that with the gradual spread of brahmanism, the yoginīs and other local spiritual practitioners were pushed to the interior for ‘secret’ survival. The secrecy of the goddess is, indeed, a key-word in the MBP. It is a rare Purāṇa in which the sūta requests his audience to keep the contents of the Purāṇa a secret. Moreover, though the supremacy of the goddess over Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, as well as over the entire universe, is ordained, it is not meant for public consumption. In effect, the glory of the goddess as the autonomous Supreme Principle is to remain concealed. Once Nārada asked Śiva about the deity who was worshipped even by Maheśvara, Brahmā and Viṣṇu. Mahādeva refused to disclose the secret. Viṣṇu also refused, saying, “By worshiping the three of us, you can attain paramāṇa pada. You do not need to know whom we worship.” Later, being eulogized and being repeatedly urged by Nārada, Mahādeva revealed that mūlaprakṛti, the primordial goddess, was their devatā. He then narrated how the formless goddess assumed the forms of Sātī, Umā and Sāvitri on her own as a manifestation of her līla. The narrative of the MBP is then all about the goddess becoming and being the wife of Śiva.
The goddess is born as the fair complexioned Sati in her gentle form to beget Śambhu as her husband. Chapters four to twelve of the MBP narrate the birth of Sati to Dakśa and Prasūti, her marriage with Śiva, their amorous sport, Dakśa’s criticism of Sati and Śiva, Sati’s decision to leave Dakśa and to destroy his yajña. Śiva prohibiting Sati to go to Dakśka’s place, Sati turning into Kālī to teach Hara a lesson, the death of chāyā Sati, the destruction of the yajña by Vīrabhadra, and the reconciliation between Śiva and Dakśa. Unlike in the KP, the thrust in the account of Sati in the MBP is not the enchantment of Hara, the yogī, by the goddess, or the togetherness of their conjugal life. In the MBP, Śiva himself propitiates the goddess to be his wife and their marriage and togetherness is merely touched upon in the MBP. The focus of the Sati episode in the MBP is Dakśa’s non-acceptance of Śiva, his censorship of Sati and Śiva, Sati’s reaction to her father’s behaviour and her husband’s exercise of lordship over her. According to popular belief, Sati gave up her life being unable to bear her husband’s defamation. As we have already noted, the defamation of the husband is not the reason behind the death of Sati, in both the DBP and the KP. The MBP does elaborate Dakśa’s hostility towards Śiva and Śiva’s humiliation is one of the major issues in the myth. However, initially, it is the insult of Sati by Dakśa which impels Sati to abandon Dakśa. Another significant development in the account of Sati in the MBP is the decision of Sati to destroy the yajña of Dakśa. Thus, in the MBP, we have two intersecting threads that highlight the hostility between Śiva and Dakśa on the one hand and Sati’s relationship with her father and her husband on the other. At one level, she is caught in the web of animosity between her husband and her father and finds herself at the
receiving end in the hierarchy of relationships. At another level, she is not dissociated from her Supreme self and she challenges the restrictions that domesticity imposes on her. However, Sāti confronts the limits only by appearing in the ghastly form of Kāli. The MBP does not segregate the spouse goddess Sāti from the autonomous goddesses whom we see in the prescriptive section of the KP. Sāti and Kāli are identified as one person with different persona and yet, a disjuncture is maintained between the two. In this section, it is explored how the MBP situates the fair complexioned, gentle Sāti and the dark, ghastly Kāli in the realm of the domestic that it seeks to build and the extent to which the goddesses thwart this attempt.

Brahmā once told Dakṣa that the Paramā Prakṛti, being propitiated by Śambhu himself, had promised to be his wife. Therefore, she would definitely be born somewhere (kutrāpi samutpannā 4.3) and would beget Śambhu as her husband (maheśvaram patimāpsyati 4.3). Brahmā advised Dakṣa to perform penance with devotion to the goddess and make her agree to be born as his daughter. At the behest of Brahmā, Dakṣa worshipped the goddess to attain her direct vision. After three thousand divine years, the goddess appeared before Dakṣa. She was dark, naked and beautiful. She was wearing a garland of human skulls and her hair was untied. (4.1-12)

The iconographic features of the goddess in the form in which she appears before Dakṣa are significant in themselves. The goddess largely resembles the dark goddesses whom we have come across in the prescriptive section of the KP. This appearance of the goddess in the MBP as the dark, nude one with dishevelled hair and garland of human skulls and sitting on her mount lion conforms the compelling presence of the goddesses with such iconographic traits in this region. In the KP, as we
have already noted, an attempt has been made to identify the two dark goddesses, namely Bhadrakālī and Ugracanḍā with Durgā, who is said to be of golden complexion. Yet, Durgā is seen rarely in the KP and as Kālī or Māhāmāyā, the goddess is never described as the nude one with a garland of human skulls in the mythic section of the text. The attempts of the authors of the KP to mythify Kālī as the docile spouse and compartmentalize the dark, nude goddesses as the object of meditation was perhaps not as successful as expected. The description of the goddess appearing before Dakṣa in the MBP is in a way the triumph of the genre of the dark, nude goddesses with dishevelled hair, whom we encounter in the prescriptive section of the KP. The authors of the MBP adopt a different strategy to deal with the dark goddess, now that she surfaces in the myths in this form of hers.

The goddess agreed to be born as the daughter of Dakṣa. She told Dakṣa that Śambhu himself wanted her to be his wife. Hence, she would be born in Dakṣa’s place to become Śiva’s gehini (homemaker) The goddess foretold that as Dakṣa’s daughter she would be of the complexion of molten gold. She would be beautiful in body and gentle in appearance (cārvāṅgī saumyarūpā 4.17). She however, warned Dakṣa that when his merits acquired by performing tapas would be exhausted and he would cease to hold her in high esteem (mayi mandādaro bhavān 4.17), she would reassume her dark form. She would go to Dakṣa’s place in this dark form and would return to her abode after deluding the entire world. Having said thus, the goddess disappeared. (4.14-4.18)

Dakṣa and Hara have to propitiate the goddess to beget her as the daughter and as the wife. If one worships the goddess, anything and everything is possible. Even the
infinite goddess becomes finite, embodied in concrete relationships. However, the wifehood of the goddess is more fundamental than her daughterhood. Her daughterhood is simply a means to be the *gehini* of Śaṅkara. The term *gehini* appears in the *MBP*, for the first time in the *Upapurāṇas* of Bengal. We do come across the terms such as *patnī* or *vanitā* which describe the goddess as wife, but the term *gehini* has been used most frequently in the *MBP*. Among the *Upapurāṇas* of Bengal, the *MBP* is the one which introduces Durgā as the Great Goddess. The goddess becomes great at the cost of losing her specific domain. She is no longer associated with *durga* (fort), nor does she slay Durgamāsura in the battlefield. Her domain is now restricted to the *grha*. She is to be the *gehini* of Śaṅkara.

Once the goddess agrees to be the *gehini*, she has to follow the norms of the domestic. The nude dark goddess with dishevelled hair appears only outside the realm of the domestic in the *MBP*. The dark one, who appears before Dakṣa, is to be born as the golden bodied ‘gentle’ daughter and wife. In the *KP*, the goddess is of dark complexion, both in the person of Satī and Kālī. Kālī changes herself into the golden complexioned one, only after she is married to Śambhu. The *MBP* introduces the fair goddess in the person of Satī and Pārvatī from the very beginning.

The goddess entered the body of Prasūti, the wife of Dakṣa. In due course, she gave birth (*susuve 4.22*) to a beautiful girl child of fair complexion having eight arms. Dakṣa was delighted to see the child. He celebrated the birth of his daughter with great festivity. On the tenth day, she was named Satī. As Satī grew up, Dakṣa became anxious to get her married. He knew that Satī would not marry anyone else except Hara. However, Dakṣa did not consider Śaṅkara to be worthy of being the
husband of his daughter because the Rudras who were procreated from the *aṃśa* (part) of Śaṅkara, were subordinated to his orders. (*mamānjāvaśavarttinah* 4.32) Dakṣa decided to arrange the *svāyāṃvara* of Satī without inviting Śiva. (4.18-35)

Unlike in the *KP*, the birth of the daughter is a cause of celebration in the *MBP*. The goddess as a daughter is welcome in her own right and no demand of sons is made prior to her birth, as we witness in the *KP*. Unlike the *KP*, there is also no elaboration on the nomenclature of ‘Satī’ as the righteous or virtuous woman. In the *MBP*, Satī is often referred to as the embodiment of *Praśāti* (*prāśātinī*) and the identity of Satī, the embodied goddess is not altogether dissociated from the Ultimate goddess in abstraction. However, as soon as the infinite goddess, the embodiment of Prakṛti, becomes personified as daughter and wife, her being becomes finite in relationships. The omnipotent goddess, having absolute authority over the universe is now subjected to the authority of the father and the husband. Dakṣa knows her daughter to be the Ultimate One, the primordial Prakṛti (*kanyeyāṃ jagatāmādyā prakṛtiḥ paramā svayam* 4.28). She has to be propitiated so that she is born as his daughter. While as a devotee, Dakṣa has to surrender to the autonomous female – the goddess, as a father he is free to ignore the will of his daughter. It is for the father to decide the right match for his daughter. Though he arranges for the *svāyāṃvara*, he thrusts upon Satī, his own choice of suitors of eminent ranks.

Exquisitely dressed *devas*, *daityas* and *munis* attended the *svāyāṃvara*. They had the *tejas* of the sun and the lustre of the moon. The elephants, horses, chariots and flags which accompanied them were also well decorated with gold and precious stones. As Satī entered the assembly hall of the *svāyāṃvara*, Maheśa came there and placed himself
in space, mounting on his bull. He was visible to everybody except Dakṣa. Being convinced of Śiva’s absence in the assembly, Dakṣa asked Satī to choose her groom from among the many dignitaries who had come. Satī, the embodiment of Prakṛti, (prakṛtirupini 4.27) uttered the name of Śiva and placed the garland on the ground. Hara, assuming a divine form (divyarupadharastadā 4.49), appeared immediately and bore the garland on his head (dadhiya śirasā haraḥ, 4.48). In this form, he was bedecked with gems and had the splendor of crores of moons. He sported celestial garland and apparel and was anointed with heavenly perfume. His three eyes were as bright as joyful lotus. Having accepted the garland given by Satī, Sadāśiva, thrilling with rapture suddenly disappeared. (4.36-51)

Śiva comes to the svayaṃvara sabhā on his bull, but he transforms himself to a divine form when he accepts the garland offered by Satī. Śiva is not acceptable the way he is. Mahēśa has to be tailor-made to make him move from the periphery to the centre. Even his transformation is not considered sufficient for his acceptance to the inner circle of divinities. He may resemble the eminent gods, but his lowly status still looms large.

Dakṣa’s regard decreased, (mandādarāḥ 4.52) for Satī, as she chose Śiva in the svayaṃvara. However, Brahmā advised Dakṣa to get Satī married off to Śiva, since she herself had accepted Śiva as her husband (śivam vṛtavati svayam 4.54). Dakṣa then recalled the words of the goddess Prakṛti and invited Śiva with great respect. Following the nuptial rites, Mahēśa delightfully accepted Satī as his wife. All the devas, dānavas, munis and kinnaras were extremely happy because of this marriage. It was only Dakṣa Prajāpati who became aggrieved. As he thought of Viśveśa, always smeared with ashes and having matted locks,
he censured Satī all the more. And when Satī went away with Hara to Himādri, even the residual of Dakṣa’s divine knowledge withered away.

Aggrieved and devoid of merits, Dakṣa wailed (ruroda duhkhaṁttah kṣinapunyah 5.1). He reviled (vinindana 5.1) Śaṅkara and Dakṣayanī. Sage Dadhicī, a great devotee of Śiva, tried to make Dakṣa perceive the true self of Satī and Śiva. He averred that Satī was the primordial Prakṛti (satiyamādyā prakṛtiḥ 5.4) and Śiva, the ultimate Pumān (śivah parah pumān 5.4). Dadhicī observed that Dakṣa must have criticised Satī and Śiva out of ignorance. He felt that Satī, the embodiment of great delusion (mahāmohasvarūpayā 5.6), was perhaps preventing Dakṣa from discerning the truth. (4.52-5.6)

The authors of the MBP try to justify Dakṣa’s non-acceptance of Śiva on two counts. The goddess has herself prophesied that when the merits of Dakṣa diminish, he will treat the goddess with disrespect. In this passage, Dadhicī says that Dakṣa may have been deluded by the goddess herself. As Dadhicī says, she can even make Dakṣa forget the real self of his daughter. The veil of delusion, however, is not spread by Mahāmāya, but by the Puraṇic authors to rationalize Dakṣa’s exercise of authority over the goddess. Dakṣa is fully aware of the real self of Satī, but he refuses to accept Satī’s choice of Śiva as her husband. He has his own reasons to denounce Śiva.

Dakṣa catechised against Dadhicī: if Śambhu be the ultimate pumān, then why was he fond of crematoriums? Why was he a beggar smeared with ashes? Why did he look monstrous with three eyes? Dadhicī was shocked by the evil disposition of Dakṣa’s mind. How could Dakṣa say so about the god of gods (sarvveśvareśvrahaḥ 5.9), the ever joyful one (nityānandamayah 5.9), the complete one (purñah 5.9)! Dadhicī countered each of the charges brought against Śambhu. He
affirmed that those who took refuge in Śambhu were freed of all sufferings. He wondered how Dakṣa could call him a beggar. Even Brahmā and other gods were incapable of visualising the true self of Śambhu. Dadhicī reasoned that Dakṣa must have called Śambhu virūpa (devoid of beauty) out of ignorance. He added that Sadāśiva, being the omnipresent god, made no distinction between a crematorium and a palace. He pointed out that Śiva stayed in Śivaloka, Kailāsa and Vārānasī, the best places to dwell in. It was sheer iniquity (durmatiḥ 5.17) on the part of Dakṣa to say that Śiva had no other place to stay but the crematorium. Dadhicī advised Dakṣa not to disparage (ninda 5.18) Śiva. (5.7-18)

Śiva is merely a monstrous beggar when compared to the handsome, gorgeously dressed, wealthy gods. The mention of Śiva as a kāpālika in the MBP comes much later and that too only once. In the KP, Dakṣa does not invite Śambhu to his yajña because he is a kāpālika. Elsewhere in the KP, however, kāpālikas are held in high esteem. Staying in the crematorium or smearing ashes on the body does not figure in the MBP as the practice of the followers of a particular cult. It is ‘beggarly’, not even the despicable traits of some other culture or practices, but despicable because it is lowly according to Dakṣa’s own parameters. Dadhicī also does not try to defend Śiva as the kāpālika or the way he is. Instead, he elaborates Śiva’s greatness in terms of his wealth and splendor. It is, however, not easy to wipe out the traces of the otherness of Śambhu.

Dakṣa was not convinced by Dadhicī. He continued lamenting about Satī. He wondered how his beautiful daughter, used to luxurious beds, would reside in the burning ground with her
monstrous husband. Dakṣa ungrudgingly accepted Śaṭi as the primordial Prakṛti and Śiva as the purāṇa puruṣa, the lord of the three worlds, the innocuous one. He had no doubt about the greatness of Maheṣa. Ṛṣis had said so and Ṛṣis never lied. But, he refused to accept Śambhu as the Ultimate One. Dakṣa had his own reasons to believe so.

Dakṣa narrated to Dadhicī the antecedent of the eleven Rudras. When his father, Brahmā, was creating offsprings, there appeared the eleven Rudras who sought to destroy the creation of Brahmā. Brahmā attempted to pacify them, but they remained recalcitrant. Brahmā then asked Dakṣa to bring the Rudras under control. This made the Rudras afraid and they remained subjugated to Dakṣa forever. Dakṣa averred that since the Rudras, the aṁśasambhavā (the partial manifestations) of Śiva, were subordinated to Dakṣa, he had no reason to accept Śiva’s superiority. Dadhicī’s efforts to convince Dakṣa failed. Dakṣa asserted that unless Śiva attacked him (samākramisyati 6.45), his contempt for Śiva would remain. (5.33-46)

The myth of Dakṣa’s yajña is largely refigured in the MBP. The myth unfolds in new twists and turns which we do not find in the DBP or the KP. This is perhaps necessary because Śiva had already been accepted within the brahmanical pantheon and the Purāṇas played an important role in it, as is evident from the term śivaṁ purāṇapuruṣam. Śiva and Maheṣa are two names of the god which are quite common in the earlier Puranic literature. It is significant that Dakṣa initially concedes to the supremacy of Śiva and Maheṣa, but rejects Śambhu. Then, in the next verse, he explains his reasons to denounce Śiva. This brief passage gives us an inkling of the
attempt to identify Śambhu, possibly an indigenous god of the eastern India, with Maheśa or Śiva, who were already glorified in the Mahāpurāṇas. As we have seen, the name Śiva occurs rarely in the KP and an explanation is offered much later in the text for the nomenclature “Śiva”. In the KP, he is primarily known as Śambhu. There is no mention of the Rudras elsewhere in the MBP. Śiva is rarely mentioned as Rudra in this text.

Dakṣa’s animosity towards Śiva is thus the central theme of the myth of the yajña of Dakṣa in the MBP. Three different explanations are offered to justify Dakṣa’s disregard for Śiva – Śiva is an ugly destitute, his amśas are subordinate to Dakṣa and he is a kāpālika. While the first and the third charges against Śambhu are commonly found in the Purāṇas, the account of the Rudras in the MBP is an unusual one. Contrary to the KP, the conjugal life of Hara and Satī is not the mainstay of the myth and the description of the married life of Hara and Satī is flanked in-between the elaboration of the hostility between Śiva and Dakṣa, in the MBP.

In the meanwhile, Mahādeva went to the Himālayas with Satī and was welcomed by the mahārṣis, the wives of gods and others. Later, Śambhu sported with Satī in desolate places, day and night, in the Kailāsa, in the Meru, on the Mandāra. At times, he brought flowers and made garland for Satī; at times he wiped off the beautiful face of Satī with great love. Neither Satī nor Mahādeva could live without each other. Thus, ten thousand years passed as Satī deluded Mahādeva by her māyā (mahādevam vimohya nijamāmayā 7.13). (6.1-7.13)

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In the Sati episode of the KP, the depiction of the conjugal life of Hara and Sati comes immediately after their marriage. In the MBP, the narrative takes a sharp turn to Dakśa’s hostility towards Śiva and Sati after the description of their marriage ceremony. The description of the conjugal life of Hara and Sati is much compressed compared to the KP and the MBP also does not elaborate upon the role of Kāma and Mahāmāyā in enchanting Hara. Nevertheless, the MBP, like the KP, maintains that the amorous sport is due to the delusion created by Mahāmāyā. The attachment of Śambhu with Sati after their marriage is the most glaring feature of the KP. In the KP, the core of the myth of Dakśa’s yajña is the death of Sati and the destruction of the yajña by Śambhu because of his love for his wife. The MBP offers too many justifications for Śiva’s attack on Dakśa’s sacrifice and the element of Śiva’s passionate attachment to Sati loses its primacy.

Nārada told Dakśa that Śiva would avenge his insult. He would come to Dakśa’s place and shower ashes and bones and annihilate Dakśa and his clan. Dakśa’s ministers did not readily believe that Śiva, the lord of lords, would perform such a mean act. However, they agreed with Dakśa’s proposal to perform a yajña. Dakśa decided to invite all the devas to his yajña except Śiva. He also resolved to assign the task of protecting the yajña (makhasaṃrakṣakatvena 7.33) to Viṣṇu, the lord of sacrifice (vajneśvaram 7.33), the one who wards off all obstacles (sarvvabīghnanivāram 7.33). Dakśa thought that if he could accomplish such an auspicious act, Bhūtanātha would never be able to forcibly enter into his mansion. Dakśa commenced his yajña. Dadhicī tried to convince Dakśa that Śiva and Viṣṇu were the one and the same. Dakśa was adamant. He did not consider a kāpālika worthy of sacrificial share. Having prophesied that Śambhu would destroy the yajña, Dadhicī left the place along with other sages. (7.21-81)
The character of Närada does not figure in the KP. In the MBP, Närada incites Dakṣa and the latter himself invites an attack by Śiva. The MBP is uncomfortable with the idea of Śiva destroying the yajña of Dakṣa, as is evident from the disbelief of his ministers. Hence, Dakṣa himself is projected to call for an attack and he is also on the guard to prevent a possible attack. He decides to perform the yajña to ward off the threat of Śambhu.

Thus in the MBP, Dakṣa’s decision to perform a yajña is in anticipation of an attack from Śiva. His refusal to invite Śiva to the yajña merely reiterates the theme of his hostility against Śiva that spans the entire narrative.

Satī the omniscient one came to know about Dakṣa’s yajña. She recalled her words to Dakṣa in the past. Dakṣa had shown disrespect to her. His merits had diminished. Hence, Satī decided to leave him. She simply waited for a pretext (chalam pratikṣamāṇābhūddakṣayajnavnaśane 7.91) to destroy the yajña of Dakṣa.

Närada visited Hara and Satī and reported to them about the grand yajña that was organized by Dakṣa. He urged both of them to go to Dakṣa’s place. Närada pleaded with Tridaśeśvara that he should either take his sacrificial share or cause impediment to the performance of the yajña (vighnam vācara 7.100). He argued that people would start ignoring Śiva (lokānāṁ tadāvajñā bhaved 7.100), if he did not take Dakṣa’s attempt to humiliate him seriously. Śiva refused to comply with the entreaties of Närada. Neither he nor his beloved Satī would go to Dakṣa’s place.
Nārada realized that Śiva was a *paramayogī* and obeisance or aspersion made no difference to him. Nārada then instigated Satī to go to her father’s place. He said, “O mother! How can a daughter remain composed after having heard the news of the performance of a grand *yajña* in her father’s place? All your sisters have assembled there and Dakṣa has gifted them various golden ornaments. Only you have been deprived of your due by the haughty Dakṣa. O mother of the world, destroy his insolence.”

Satī does not decide to leave Dakṣa because he has condemned her husband. Even before she is born as Dakṣa’s daughter she has warned Dakṣa that when he would dishonour her, she would leave him. Dakṣa tries to undo Satī’s choice to beget Śiva as her husband and the rift between the father and the daughter increases. It is clearly stated in the text that Dakṣa’s regard for Satī diminished when she chooses Śiva in the *svayamvara*. Thus, Dakṣa criticises both Satī and Śiva. Dakṣa’s fault is not only to have insulted Śiva by not inviting him to the *yajña*. He has dishonoured the goddess herself by not inviting her as well.

Unlike the more popular versions of the myth, Satī does not give up her life due to her inability to accept the defamation of her husband Śiva. She decides to abandon Dakṣa even before attending the *yajña* because he has been disrespectful towards her. Going to the sacrificial ground is just a pretext. More importantly, unlike in the *KP*, Satī does not want to give up her body in the *MBP*. Instead, she decides to destroy Dakṣa’s *yajña* in lieu of the contumely thrusted on her. Śiva being a *paramayogī* remains indifferent. It is not so with Satī. Nārada can even think of instigating Satī by
mentioning the gift of gold ornaments to her sisters. However, the emphasis of Nārada is on the insult of Satī inflicted on her by Dakṣa. It is significant that Nārada does not urge the goddess to redress the aspersions made on her husband, Śiva. Rather he incites Satī to chastise Dakṣa for insulting her. Satī in her turn, persuades Śiva to go to Dakṣa’s place.

Satī told Śiva that it would be proper (nyāya 8.3) to go to Dakṣa’s yajña. She said that Dakṣa would treat them with respect once they reach there. Śiva contended Satī and said that it was Satī’s inanity/iniquity (durmmati 8.23) to think that Dakṣa would ever be respectful to him. Satī, however, eagerly expressed her wish to attend the yajña of Dakṣa. She argued that it was not required of a daughter to be invited to go to her father’s place. Once she reached there, Dakṣa would treat her respectfully out of affection. Satī then sought Śiva’s permission to visit her father. (8.1-29)

Satī is not only Daśka’s daughter; she is also Hara’s wife. A daughter can go to her father’s place, uninvited. Dakṣa may be delighted to see her. However, in order to go to her father’s place, Satī needs the permission of her husband – of the lord, whose orders have to be complied with. Even if Dakṣa treats Satī with veneration, it will not be enough. How will Satī accept her husband’s dishonour? What else can she do, but to give up her life? Satī herself does not think of giving up her life. Śiva inculcates the ideal of wifehood to Satī, the Paramā Prakṛti, who also happens to be a wife. The ideal wife Satī, who gives up her life being unable to bear the castigation of her pati- the husband, appears in the MBP only in the discourse of Śiva, not in the mainstream of the narrative.
Śiva forbade Satī to go to Dakṣa’s place. A woman who surpassed her husband never attained happiness. Hence, Satī should not disobey his order. However, Satī remained firm in her resolution and decided to attend Dakṣa’s ceremony. If Dakṣa treated her with respect, she would make him offer a sacrificial share to Śiva — if not, she would destroy the yajña (mahāyajñam nāśayāmi 8.39). Śiva was not impressed by Satī’s determination. He was convinced that Dakṣa would never be respectful towards him. He prophesied, “You will only suffer humiliation and will never be treated with respect. Your father will condemn me. Having heard such aspersions you will have to give up your life. What will you do then?”

Even the life-threatening prognostication of Śiva did not deter Satī. She reiterated her decision to go. Then, Śiva became suspicious of Satī’s intentions. He told Satī that the venerable ones (mānyaḥ 8.45) never visited the house of the irreverent (apūjaka 8.45). A homage without devotion (apūjakasya yā pūjā 8.45) was not of any worth. He asserted that his humiliation must be a source of pleasure to her. What else would take her to the house of his slanderer (mannindakagrhe 8.46)?

Satī retorted that she did not intend to participate in the abuse of Śiva. She only wanted to go to Dakṣa’s place. She argued that Śiva had already been insulted when Dakṣa did not invite him to the yajña. She reiterated Nārada’s words — nobody would offer oblations to Śiva respectfully, if he did not take Dakṣa seriously. Śiva retorted, “O devi, you always do whatever you feel like. The wicked/stupid (kudhiḥ 8.53). blame others for their own evil doing. O daughter of Dakṣa, I know you to be. beyond prohibition. Do whatever you please. Why are you waiting for my consent?”

(8.30-54)
Śiva has to pass the test of being a husband, worthy of the goddess. However, when the goddess becomes his wife, he exercises his lordship over her. The husband—lord defines the boundaries for the wife, whether she be a mortal woman or the omnipresent one. It is he who decides what is permissible. Initially, Sāti tries to conform to the authority of the husband. She persuades Śiva to go to Dakṣa’s place by justifying her position. When Śiva disagrees, she seeks his permission to go alone. Finally, she asserts herself. The circumscription of the goddess becomes visible only when she actually attempts to step beyond the otherwise invisible boundaries. The goddess may have absolute command over the universe in her formless form. In abstraction, the entire universe may be at her disposal. As the wife, however, she is at the disposal of her husband and is limited by the restrictions imposed by him. No wonder, the term abāritā becomes an abusive term in Śiva’s usage.

Śiva completely undermines the dynamics of the relationship between the father and the daughter. It is his insult by Dakṣa that looms large in Śiva’s mind. The ideal wife should not accept the humiliation of her husband. The confines of wifehood within which Śiva seeks to place his wife does not even allow her the agency to give up her own life. Śiva prophesies that Sāti will loose her life, helplessly, being unable to bear the humiliation of her husband. She will not even decide to die on her own. It is, therefore, not surprising that Śiva does not pay any heed to Sāti’s repeated claim of destroying the yajña of Dakṣa. In Śiva’s discourse, the question is not merely the wife’s acceptance of the humiliation of her husband. It is all about giving up her agency to think, to judge and to act. Śiva’s reaction shows that Sāti’s intention to chastise Dakṣa appears to him to be a baseless statement of a stupid/wicked woman. A woman who
dares to step beyond the limits set by the male author(s)ity is but stupid/wicked. Sātī in the MBP, however, does not internalize Śiva’s discourse.

Sātī was furious. She pondered for a while. Śaṅkara had himself requested her to be his wife. Now, he was criticizing her out of disdain (māmabajñāya 8.57). Sātī was determined to teach him a lesson. She decided to abandon both Hara and her father, the insolent Dakṣa. She would come back when Hara propitiated her again to be his wife. The goddess then enchanted Hara with her dreadful three eyes. (8.56- 59)

Sātī decides to leave her father as well as her husband when they express disregard for her. David Kinsley notes that this account in the MBP stresses “a central śākta theological principle,” that of the superiority of the goddess over male deities. It should, however, be noted that the superiority of the goddess in the narrative context is not always borne out in the śākta texts. In this respect, the MBP stands in sharp contrast to that of the KP in which Sātī is the follower of Śambhu and his devotee. In the KP, Sātī thinks of chastising Dakṣa, but does not actualize it. She dies with the regret for not being able to bear Śaṅkara a son. Her subjectivity lies only in serving the purpose of the gods as the enchantress, devoted wife and the potential mother. In the MBP, the goddess is far more deeply embedded in the hierarchy of relationships as she is subjected to the authority, (even humiliation) of the father and the husband. Unlike the KP, Sātī in the MBP, challenges the norms of womanhood in general and wifehood in particular which are thrust upon her. She does not break out of the confines in her “gentle” (saumyā) form. She can remind Hara that she remains the formidable one, a force to reckon with, only in her “terrible” (bhimā, bhayānakā ) form. As long as she is in her gentle form, Maheśa tries to dominate her. He even goes to the extent of
slandering Satī when she refuses to succumb to his lordship. When Satī turns into the terrible, dark one, Śaṅkara is scared. He does not even recognize her as Satī.

Hara was appalled by the sight of the dreadful goddess. He fled in different directions. Dākṣayanī cachinnating wildly, comforted Maheśa saying, “Do not worry” (mābhairīti 8.65). Śambhu was not convinced. He continued to run helter-skelter. Seeing that Śambhu was terrified, the goddess became compassionate (dayānītā 8.67). She assumed ten forms covering all directions. In whichever direction Śiva fled, he saw a dreadful goddess. Śambhu could not bear the sight and closed his eyes. After a while, when he became composed, he looked up and saw a dark woman with dishevelled hair. She was nude and had four arms. She had the lustre of crores of suns.

Śiva failed to recognize her as Satī. He addressed her as Śyamā and asked her who she was. The goddess affirmed that she was Satī, but Śiva was still confused. He wondered, how could Satī be the dark one? Why did she have a horrendous look and who were those gruesome goddesses along with her? Satī enlightened Śiva. She revealed herself as Prakṛti, the subtle one, the creator as well as the destroyer. She had assumed fair complexion (gauradehīkā 8.74), because she desired Śiva according to her earlier promise. Now, she had taken ghastly (bhayānakā 8.75) form to destroy Dakṣa’s yajña. She added, “The ten figures (daśamūrttayaḥ 8.76) of the terrible goddesses (mahābhīmā 8.76) in the ten directions are all my forms. O Śambhu! Do not be afraid. You are my husband, as dear to me as my life (tvaṁ maiprāṇsamo bhartā 8.77) and I am your wife (vanītā 8.77) Satī.” On Śiva’s request, Satī helped Śiva identify the ten goddesses distinctly. They were the Mahāvidyās—Kāli, Tārā, Sodāsī, Bhuvaṇesvari, Bhairavī, Chinnamastā, Sundarī, Bagalāmukhī, Dhumāvatī, Mātangī. (8.60-8.80)
The dark nude goddess, with a garland of human skulls returns. In the liturgical section of the KP, Satī is said to have appeared in the form of Ugracaṇḍā. The iconographic features of the goddess appearing before Hara in the MBP is strikingly similar to that of Ugracaṇḍā in the KP. However, there is a difference in the ways the KP and the MBP deal with the so called “gentle” (saumyā) and the ‘errible’ (bhīmā) goddesses. The KP ‘segregates’ the gentle, spousified, docile Satī of the mythic section from that of Ugracaṇḍā and other autonomous goddesses of the prescriptive section. In the KP, the goddess appears as Ugracaṇḍā and destroys the yajña of Dakṣa only after giving up her body as Satī. The MBP integrates the dark nude goddess into the person of Satī. Śambhu fails to recognize her as his wife. Later, as we shall see, Dakṣa thinks that she resembles Satī, but cannot recognize her as his daughter. The goddess repeatedly reiterates that she is Satī, the wife of Śambhu and the daughter of Dakṣa. The goddess in this form is also called Bhairavī and Kālī.

In the MBP, Satī and Bhairavī Kālī are not two different forms of the goddess, as Satī and Ugracaṇḍā in the KP. Rather she is one - the Satī - in her two different appearances - fair and dark, and gentle and terrible. The fair complexioned “gentle” and the dark complexioned “terrible” selves of the goddess, as the one in / of Satī is not the oneness of the goddess(s) abiding in or embodying the opposites, as we have seen in the earlier Purāṇas (specially the DP and the DBP). In the KP, the goddess is the cause as well as the site of dualities, but only in abstraction. The authors of the MBP bring her back as the embodiment of the qualifying dualities in the person of Satī herself, though with a major twist. There is a simultaneous coalescence and disjuncture in the person of Satī. The two different persona of the goddess as the fair and the dark
one are coalesced in the person of Śatī. The disjunction is clearly stated by Śatī herself. She is in her golden complexioned “gentle” form to be the wife of Hara; in her “terrible” appearance she will destroy the yajña of Dakṣa. Śiva recognises the potential of the goddess as ṣakti and her ṣakti only in her terrible form.

The goddess expressed her intention to start off for Dakṣa’s place. She sought Śiva’s permission for the same, even if Śiva himself was not willing to go. However, she preferred to go to destroy Dakṣa’s yajña as a follower of Śiva (mamābhīṣṭaṁ tavaivānugatāpyaham 8.97). Śiva was still overwhelmed with fear. He implored forgiveness for whatever he had said out of ignorance to the Parameśānī. He said, “You are the Paramā Vidyā, residing in every being (sarrvabhūta). You are the Svatantrā Paramā Śakti (the Ultimate śakti, the autonomous one). Who can forbid you (kāste vidhinisadhakaḥ 8.101)? What śakti do I have to prevent you (ṣaktistvāmniseddhum 8.102), if you wish to destroy the yajña of Dakṣa? O Maheśānī! Please forgive me for whatever I have said. I was deluded into believing that I am superior to you, being your husband (yaccoktamohena matvātmānāṁ patīṁ tava tatksamasaśv 8.103) Do act as you please (yathāruci tathā kuru 8.103).” Śatī was ready to start off for Dakṣa’s place. She asked Śiva to stay back. She assumed the form of terrible Kāli. The other eight forms of Śatī vanished.(8.81-116)

Śatī is successful in making her husband succumb to her as the Ultimate and the All - encompassing One, not merely in abstraction, but in concrete forms. Śambhu even apologizes to the goddess for his masterly attitude towards her. The account of Śatī-Kāli in the MBP is indeed a rare one in the brahmanical texts. The wife in the brahmanical texts hardly questions the authority of her husband. Śatī’s refusal to
concede to the peremptory treatment to which she is subjected and her decision to leave her imperious husband is a challenge of an exceptional order. Yet, even after she decides to leave her husband, she prefers to be her follower.

Satī reached Dakṣa's palace. Her mother Prasūti welcomed her, took her in her lap and wiped her face. Prasūti was scared that her beloved daughter might give up her life. The mother told Satī about the dream she had the earlier night. She had dreamt of Satī in the form in which she had arrived. She had also seen the destruction of the yajña and the death and revival of Dakṣa in her dream. Prasūti was sure that Dakṣa would be punished for censuring Śiva, but she requested Satī not to abandon her ever. Thus welcomed, Satī bowed down to her mother and with her permission (anujñātā 9.30) went to meet Dakṣa.(8.17-9.30)

The celebration of the bond between the mother and the daughter in the MBP is of rare occurrence in the brahmanical myths. David Kinsley and Patricia Dold relate Satī's attachment with her mother in the MBP to the social reality in the Garhwal region of the Himalayas, as is evident from the work of William Sax.' Dold says, "Prasūti's insistence on her connection with her daughter, her joyous celebration of her daughter's return, and her conviction that they shall never be parted are perfectly understandable in light of Sax's ethnographic evidence." William Sax notes that the Garhwali literature as well as the local husbands emphasise that a marriage entails a change in the women's kinship bonds and a married woman no longer belongs to her natal family. Garhwali women have their own perspective. They visit their natal home to attend performance of rituals and other celebrations and the families eagerly wait for the periodic return of their daughters. The MBP reflects the tension between the two
perspectives on the status of a married woman vis-à-vis her natal and adopted families, and shows how the ‘official’ version of the distancing of a married woman from her natal home, after marriage was in the making.

The inmates of Dakṣa’s palace and the sages and others assembled in the yajña-grha (sacrificial hall) were surprised to see her. They wondered how Satī, of golden complexion, the gentle and the beautiful one, had become dark and terrible (bhīmarūpā 9.32), of the complexion of collyrium, with dishevelled hair, eyes dazzling with anger, wearing elephant skin and having four arms. They thought that the enraged Satī must have come to the yajña to punish Dakṣa. She would destroy the yajña as Dakṣa insulted her. They recalled that in the past, at the time of destruction (saṃhārakāle 9.36), the goddess had annihilated even Viṣṇu and Brahma. Therefore, Viṣṇu would be helpless if she decided to destroy the yajña. The sages who had not paid homage to her for fear of Dakṣa, now worshipped her mentally.

Everyone in the yajña-grha recognized the goddess as Satī except Dakṣa Prajāpati, the father, who gave birth to her. He saw Kālī, blazing with anger, her hair untied, of the hue of collyrium, without clothes (tyaktavastrām 9.43). Dakṣa asked her, “O shameless one (vigatatrape 9.44)! Who are you? Whose daughter are you? Who is your husband? Why have you come here? You resemble my daughter Satī. Are you my daughter Satī who has come from the place of Śiva?” (9.1-45)

The very appearance of Kālī evokes the threat of cosmic destruction. As she sets off for Dakṣa’s place in the chariot, it “seemed that she was about to destroy the universe, as she does in the end of the yuga” (grasantīva jagat sarvam yugānte 9.113). She is the Ultimate destroyer. Except Dakṣa, everyone else bows down to her and
accepts her in the terrible form. Her destructive form or her wrath is not treated as her whims. Dakṣa has insulted her. Hence, he will be paid back. In the DP, Kālī is said to have destroyed the yajña of Dakṣa, being insulted by him. In most versions of the Dakṣa myth, the razing of Dakṣa’s yajña remains, but Kālī is not seen in her “destructive” role. Kālī, the destroyer makes a forceful entry into the MBP account, though not as Kālī but as Satī-Kālī. In the MBP, she is not presented as an autonomous goddess; her identity is constituted by her relationship with her father and her husband. In the yajña-grha, it is not Dakṣa’s insult of Satī-Kālī, but his derision of her husband that made her act. However, the Absolute destroyer, the one who destroys the cosmos and even Brahmā and Viṣṇu, refrains from annihilating Dakṣa because he is her father. Later, it is said that the goddess abandons all those who do not follow the path of dharma (adharman 11.10), irrespective of her personal relationship with them. She is only related to dharma and is not bound by the worldly relationships (laukikaḥ 11.10). Those who follow the path of dharma are her family and friend and those who violate the path of dharma (adharmanaḥ 11.11) are her foes. Dakṣa violates dharma as he insults Śiva. Hence, the goddess leaves him. Though it is said that she is not bound by worldly relationships, she finally spares Dakṣa’s life to uphold the sanctity of worldly relationship, so that people do not become impatient with their fathers (tadā lokāḥ katham dhairyaḥ vidadhvyah pitram prati 11.16). The legitimate wrath of the woman/goddess is now undermined by the overriding requirement of the normative principle that governs the relationship between the father and the daughter. In the MBP, Kālī sets off for Dakṣa’s palace to destroy his yajña. At the end, she only succeeds in initiating the process.
Satī told Dakṣa that she was his daughter. Dakṣa wondered how far the change in Satī was due to her unworthy husband. He explained that his affection for Satī had not diminished. He did not invite Satī to his yajña because she was Śiva’s wife. He asked Satī to accept the clothes and ornaments that had been kept for her, but he kept on criticizing Śiva. Satī was furious. She thought of razing the yajña and turning all the devas, including Dakṣa, into ashes. However, she restrained herself because she did not want to commit the sin of killing her father (pitṛhatyābhayena 9.53). Instead, she thought of deluding them. She created a chāyā Satī (shadow Satī) and told her, “Destroy this yajña. Argue with the father and having heard the depreciation of Śiva from his mouth, enter into the fire of the yajña. You will then blaze with anger.” She added that having heard the news of her entry into the fire, Maheśvara, overwhelmed with grief, would destroy the yajña. The real then Satī disappeared. Nobody present in the hall realized it.

Chāyā Satī reproached Dakṣa for insulting Śiva. Dakṣa in turn abused chāyā Satī for defending Śiva and hurled further abuses at Śiva and Satī. Chāyā Satī then transformed herself into an overwhelming form. Her head touched the stars, her body expanded and she cachinnated wildly. Radiating like a thousand suns, she told Dakṣa that she would leave the body that was born of Dakṣa. She would immolate herself in front of everybody. Chāyā Satī then entered into the fire of the yajña. An immediate catastrophe followed. The earth trembled, wind started blowing fiercely, a massive meteor came down and there was a shower of blood. The fire of the yajña extinguished. In a fraction of a second, the yajñagṛha looked like a crematorium. The brāhmaṇas managed to resume the yajña with great difficulty.

Nārada informed Śiva that having heard his insult, the enraged Satī had given up her body. He added that after the demise of Satī, Dakṣa was aggrieved for a while and then he resumed the yajña. Śiva
was overwhelmed with grief. He wondered if Sāti had left him because he forbade her to Dakṣa’s place. In a state of jeremiad, Śiva became infuriated. He created the terrible Vīrabhadra from the fire erupting from his third eye. Śiva ordered Vīrabhadra to ravage Dakṣa’s yajña. He also instructed Vīrabhadra to decapitate Dakṣa as his mouth was defiled by slurring Śiva.24 Thousands of accomplished armed warriors, called pramathas, were created from Śiva’s sigh to assist Vīrabhadra. They went to Dakṣa’s palace and created havoc. (9.46-10.26)

The mythic section of the KP states that Śambhu himself had destroyed the yajña of Dakṣa. Elsewhere in the KP, Ugracandra is said to have destroyed the yajña. The MBP combines the two accounts, but in this text the goddess is seen only in her destructive form and not in her destructive role. The task of annihilating the yajña is assigned to chāyā Sāti. Sāti does not give up her body passively, as Śaṅkara has predicted. However that persona of the goddess who dares to challenge the confines of the ideal daughter and wife is finally muted. Inspite of her refusal to accept her father’s insult and her husband’s overbering attitude, she ends up by complying with the expected role of the daughter and the wife. In the MBP, we only have the ‘shadow’ of the terrible goddess, the shadow of the real person of the saumya Sāti and even the shadow is made to enter the fire of the yajña. Subsequently, Śiva occupies the centre-stage in the narrative.

Vīrabhadra and the pramathas humiliated and tortured all the gods and guests of Dakṣa except the brāhmaṇas. Viṣṇu, the lord of the sacrifice, who was supposed to protect the yajña, reasoned that this yajña was bound to be destroyed as Dakṣa had been disrespectful to Śiva. Viṣṇu thought that Dakṣa had insulted him as well, because he and Śiva were identical. Dakṣa had invited him as Viṣṇu and insulted him as Śiva.
This was a double-dealing. Therefore, he decided to act in the similar manner. As Viṣṇu, he would try to protect the yajña, but would be defeated. As Śiva, he would destroy the yajña. Viṣṇu started fighting with Viśrabhadra. After a fierce combat, when Viśrabhadra overpowered Viṣṇu and was about to kill him, a celestial voice restrained Viśrabhadra. He was reminded that Viṣṇu and Śiva were identical. Viśrabhadra then bowed down to Viṣṇu and started hitting Dakṣa on his face with which Dakṣa had disparaged Śiva (vininditosi tadvaktre praharāmi 10.65). Finally, Viśrabhadra beheaded Dakṣa with his sharp nails.

After the yajña was destroyed, Brahmā went to Śiva. He assured Śiva that Sati was immortal; she could not die. He added that the jaganmayi Mahāmāya had deluded Dakṣa (vimohāya 10.70) by placing chāyā Sati near the yajñakunda (sacrificial altar). The real Sati (prākṛta devī 10.71) had moved to the sky (svayamgaganamāsthitā 10.71). Brahmā requested Śiva to attend the yajña. He told Śiva that Sati would reappear if they prayed for her after the yajña was properly concluded. Persuaded by Brahmā, Śiva went to Dakṣa’s place and ordered Viśrabhadra to resume the yajña. Brahmā also requested Śiva to bring back Dakṣa to life. Intelligent (buddhimān 10.81) Viśrabhadra, being commanded by Śiva, revived Dakṣa by grafting a goat’s head on his body. This was done to convey the message that if one insulted Īśvara (Śiva), one would become mute as an animal. Brahmā then asked Dakṣa to propitiate Śiva to atone for his sins of criticizing the lord of lords (Śiva). Being eulogized, Śiva forgave Dakṣa. Brahmā then said to Śiva with devotion, “O Sadāśiva! You are the merciful one (bhaktānukampī 10.95). You have protected Dakṣa on my request. Henceforth, if the gods accept their share of the yajña without giving you your due, they will meet with the same fate as they did in the yajña of Dakṣa.” (10.27-10.98)
Dakṣa is not chastised because of Śatī’s death. He is to be decapitated because it is the same mouth that insulted Śaṅkara. The *paramayogī* earlier posed to be indifferent to his censorship by Dakṣa. Nārada’s instigation to incite Śiva to cause impediments in the *yajña* of Dakṣa has failed. It is Satī who takes Dakṣa’s contumely seriously and wants to ensure a share of the *yajña* for Śiva. The destruction of Dakṣa’s *yajña* and his decapitation is however, done to ensure Śiva’s acceptance in the pantheon of brahmanical deities. Unlike in the *KP*, in the *MBP* Śambhu does not destroy the *yajña* himself. It is Viṣṇu who attacks Dakṣa’s palace and carries out the “demeaning” task. The hostility between Śiva and other gods, particularly Viṣṇu is also largely reconciled in the *MBP*. Viṣṇu fights to protect the *yajña* with the knowledge that he is identical with Śiva. In the detailed account of Dakṣa’s *yajña* in the *MBP*, the element of Śiva’s attachment with Satī and the destruction of the *yajña* by an aggrieved husband is altogether lost. After the demise of *chāyā* Satī, Satī is literally wiped off the contour of the myth and now it is all about Śiva and Dakṣa. It seems that the ultimate aim of the myth is to instill fear in the minds of those who dare to ignore Śiva. Dakṣa with the goat face is only made the ‘scapegoat’ for the same. When Śiva remembers Satī after the completion of the *yajña*, his fault is taken lightly by the goddess herself. She declares that she can never leave Śiva in acuality.

After the *yajña* was complete, Śiva was overwhelmed with grief. He wailed like an ordinary man for Satī. Brahmā and Viṣṇu tried to console him. They told Śiva that the demise of Satī was an illusion. She was one who would never be born or die. The goddess would never abandon one who adhered to *dharma* and would never stay with one who committed an unrighteous act, even if it was her father.
In order to see her once again, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva started eulogizing the goddess. Being thus praised, the goddess appeared in the sky and showed the gods what had actually happened at the site of the yajña of Dakśa. She asked Mahādeva to calm down (sthiro bhava 11.36) and assured him that she would again accept him as her husband when she would be born as the daughter of Himālaya and Mena. She said, “You are not the one whom I can ever leave (na mayā parisantyajyastvam kadacinmahesvāra 11.38). I am Mahākāli residing in your heart (tavaiva hrdayastham mahākālī 11.38). Hence, you are Mahākāla, the destroyer of the universe. You have been slightly rude with me out of your sense of lordship. (tvam prabhutvābhīmānena kiñcinmāuktavānasi 11.39). Because of this offence (aparādha 11.40), I will not remain your wife (sāksātpatnīsarupataḥ 11.40) for some time.”25 She asked Śiva to roam around the world carrying the body of chāyā Satī on his head. She predicted that parts of her body will fall in different places. (sa deho bahudhā bhūtvā patisyati dharatale 11.43) and those will be considered mahāpiṭhas. She asked Śiva to perform tapas in the best of all piṭhas, the piṭha where her yoni would fall. Thus assuring (samāsvāsyā 11.45) Mahādeva repeatedly, she disappeared.

Śiva placed the body of the chāyā Satī on his head and started dancing happily. He thought, “O Satī! Though you are my wife, I am carrying your chāyā on my head by abandoning worldly shame (lokalajjām parityajana 11.62). I consider myself extremely fortunate.”26 Śiva danced so vigorously that the universe was on the verge of collapse. Viṣṇu then sliced up the body of chāyā Satī with his cakra. When all parts of her body were thrown around, Śiva stopped dancing. Later, Śiva went to Kāmarūpa, where the yoni of Satī had fallen, and started meditating on the goddess.

The goddess was pleased after many years and appeared before Śiva. Śiva said, “O merciful one (kṛpayeśvari 12.16)! Out of
compassion, you had been my gehinī earlier; please be my gehinī again." The goddess assured Maheśvara that she would be born as the daughter of Himālaya. In her dual form (dvīdha bhūtvā 12.17), she would beget Śiva as her husband. (12.1-12.19)

Unlike the KP, the MBP does not project Hara’s bereavement as the effect of māyā. Instead, the death of Satī is said to be an illusion. In the KP, Śambhu is passionately attached to Satī and her sudden demise bewilders him. He destroys the yajña of Dakṣa and dances with the corpse of Satī in a state of maddening grief, completely oblivious of the rest of the world. The focus of the MBP on the other hand is not on the conjugal life of Śiva and Satī as long as Satī is alive. His bereavement after the death of Satī is also fractured. He mourns the loss of Satī, but goes to revive Dakṣa. He seems to forget all about Satī for the time being and then feels aggrieved again. Like the authors of the KP, the authors of the MBP are also not comfortable with the portrayal of an aggrieved husband. He is said to wail like a prākṛta (ordinary) one, which is not befitting his stature. He roams about with the corpse of the shadow of Satī only after being instructed by the goddess. Even then, he is conscious of the possibility of being shamed. In the Satī episode in the MBP, Śiva is seen to relate to Satī either with the authority of a husband to a supposedly subordinated wife or with the unconditional surrender of a devotee to the goddess as the Supreme One.28

Thus, the Satī episode in the MBP, portrays Satī vis-à-vis the relationship between Dakṣa and Śiva and Satī is seen to be entangled in the animosity between the two. The warp is woven to establish Śiva- Śambhu as the preeminent brahmanical deity. The other strand of the narrative projects Satī in an one to one relationship with
her father, mother and her husband. It underscores Sati’s emotional belongingness to her natal place as well as to her husband, and her response to them with her own sense of right and wrong. In the Satī episode, the embodied goddess is not completely dissociated from her Ultimate Self, as we see in the KP. Dakṣa remembers his daughter to be the primordial Prakṛti. Yet Satī, the fair complexioned gentle one, is subjected to the authority of the father and the husband. They even reprimand her when she refuses to submit to their authority. The embodied goddess in the MBP does challenge the confines of the normative order that her father and her husband seek to impose on her. But she does so only after assuming a ghastly appearance, that of Kāllī. Gods, including her husband, bow down to her after she decides to leave the domain of the domestic. She herself reminds others that she is the Supreme Goddess. Thus, Kāllī appears in the narrative when the goddess is seen to defy the domestic norms. However, even in her destructive form, the goddess remains restrained by her relationships and the discursive domestic space does not seem to undergo any significant alteration. She commands respect not as a daughter or a wife, but because she is successful in revoking herself as the Supreme One.

Parvaṭī-Kāllī - triumph and loss in and out of the domestic

The goddess is reborn as Pārvatī (also named Gaurī) after her death as Sātī. Chapters thirteen to thirty narrates the birth of Parvatī, her marriage to Śiva and the birth of her two sons, Skanda and Ganeśa. The account of Pārvatī in the MBP is constituted of many of the mythemes of the Pārvatī episode in the KP and a number of
verses are exact replica of the *KP*. Yet the *MBP* does not project Pārvatī as the docile daughter, the submissive demure wife or the not-to-be mother as we see her in the *KP*. The challenge posed by the goddess as Satī has its impact felt more strongly in the Pārvatī episode of the *MBP* and the breach between the embodied goddess and her Ultimate self is minimised in this episode. This section deals with the account of Pārvatī as a daughter, wife and mother and notes the similarities and dissimilarities between the accounts in the *KP* and the *MBP*. It is shown how the retention of the agency of the goddess as the Ultimate one in the person of the daughter, wife and the mother nullifies the objectification of women in the *KP* and subverts the order which upholds the husband as the lord. In the Pārvatī episode of the *MBP*, the goddess appears as Kālī, only once. In this section of the chapter, the textual strategy of dealing with the goddess as Pārvatī and Kālī has been delineated and it is shown how the entry of Kālī into the mythic section of the *MBP* radically alters her symbolism.

Menakā, the wife of Himālaya, used to visit Satī and had performed *vratas* to beget the goddess as her daughter. Girirāj and his wife Menakā had also performed terrible penance, so that Durgā was born to them. The goddess, being two-fold, was born as the two daughters of Menakā. Gaṅgā was the elder daughter and the younger one was named Pārvatī. The account of marriage between Gaṅgā and Śiva is narrated in detail. Nārada informed Śiva that Satī had been reborn as Gaṅgā. Śiva, who had been meditating, eagerly enquired about Satī. Later, Brahmā and the other gods handed over Gaṅgā to Śiva in marriage. In spite of being married to Gaṅgā, Śiva left his *pūrvāsrama* and went to Himārdi to perform *tapas*. (13.1-15.5)
In the *DBP* and the *BvP*, Gaṅgā is associated with Viṣṇu and more specifically to Kṛṣṇa as one of the forms of *prakṛti* or Rādhā.⁹ Viṣṇu as Gaṅgādhara, or the bearer of Gaṅgā is usually depicted as wearing Gaṅgā in his hair, either as a mermaid who clings to the crescent moon in his top knot or as the stream of water gushing out of his matted locks. In the *KP*, there is no mention of Gaṅgā as Śiva’s wife. In the *DBP* and the *BvP* accounts, Gaṅgā is said to emerge from the feet of Viṣṇu. The *MBP* clubs together the accounts of Gaṅgā emerging from the feet of Viṣṇu and Gaṅgā gushing out of the knot of Śiva.³⁰ Gaṅgā as the consort of Śiva is however, not seen frequently in the text. The *MBP* portrays Pārvatī and her relationship with Śiva in detail and it remains the mainstay of the narrative even after Śiva’s marriage with Gaṅgā. The grafting of Gaṅgā’s wifehood to Hara as an external element on the original myth comes out clearly when Hara goes back to meditation even after marrying Gaṅgā. The narrative then focuses on the birth of the goddess in Pārvatī.

As Menaka gave birth to the mother of the world (*jagadambikām* 15.6), flowers showered from the sky. When Girirāja heard that his daughter was as radiant as crores of sun and had three eyes and eight arms, he immediately realised that she was the primordial *Prakṛti*. He bestowed many gifts on the *brahmānas* and went to see his daughter. He asked her with devotion, “O mother! Who are you?”³¹ The goddess showed him her different forms and also enlightened him about her intrinsic nature.³² After that, she started suckling the breast of her mother like any other child. Girindra celebrated the birth of her daughter with great festivity. The worship of Śaśṭhī was performed on the sixth day, and on the tenth day she was named Pārvatī. (15.4-19.4)
Himalaya recognises his daughter as the Supreme Goddess soon after her birth. Unlike Dakśa, he does not exercise fatherly authority over her. Instead, he surrenders to the goddess with devotion, even though she is his daughter. Sukumari Bhattacharji has pointed out that in Sanskrit literature, description of the childhood of a girl or a goddess is rare, while many texts are devoted to the description of the child god Kṛśṇa. The celebration of the birth of the daughter by Girindra along with the revelation offered by the new born child are thus a rare treat. However, the MBP is also silent on the childhood of the goddess and the years till she attains marriageable age are glossed over.

Nārada visited Girindra’s place. He made Girindra aware of the real self of Gaurī. He told Girindra that his daughter was the primordial Prakṛti. She was destined to be Śambhu’s wife. Girindra told Nārada that he had heard of Maheśvara performing rigorous tapas - that he had been contemplating on Paramaṇa Brahman and had no sense of the external world (na vāhyamikṣate 20.26). Girindra wondered, “Who will be able to divert (bhrāṃśayitamut 20.27) the attention of Maheśvara whose mind is without motion? How will he agree to marry my daughter?” Nārada assured Girindra that Maheśa would accept his daughter. He said that the son of Śiva and Pārvatī would kill Tārakāsura who had been tormenting the devas. Hence, Indra and other gods would try to infatuate (vimohane 20.33) Mahādeva to concede him to marry Pārvatī. However, Nārada added that the initiative of Indra or Kāma would be mere formalities (nimītramatramityuktaṃ laukika 20.34). Actually, the daughter of Girindra, who herself was Mahāmāya, the enchantress of the world, would enchant Hara. Nārada further said that Śiva was performing his tapas to beget Mahākāli as his wife. He would soon discern that the goddess had taken birth in Himavān’s place. Then Śaṅkara himself would come to Himavatprastha. (20.1-39)
Śiva readily marries Satī and Gaṅgā. It is not so with Pārvatī. The marriage of Śiva and Parvati has long been complicated by the issue of the transformation of the “ascetic” god into an “erotic” one, as we have seen in the earlier chapter. In the MBP, Śiva remains steeped in meditation and disinterested in marrying Pārvatī. This is the myth of Śiva and Pārvatī which had already been popularized in the brahmanical normative and creative literature. The elements constitutive of the myth(s) of Pārvatī’s marriage with Hara in the KP are largely retained in the MBP, but it is interspersed with sections that try to negate the role of Pārvatī in winning over Śiva as her husband through her physical beauty or her tāpas. The account in the MBP reveals the tensions in the attempts of grafting the classical brahmanical wife Pārvatī on the goddesses of a genre which upholds the supremacy of the goddess in her own right. Unlike in the KP, in the MBP, we do not have the linear degression of the goddess as Mahāmāyā in abstraction to Pārvatī, the women as an object of desire to Pārvatī, the subordinated wife. In the KP, Pārvatī almost forgets her own self as the Ultimate one. Pārvatī in the MBP, retains her identity with and agency as the Ultimate goddess to a large extent.

It is interesting to note how the MBP retains the mythemes of the necessity of the birth of a son of Hara, the appointment of Kāma by Indra and the enhancement of Hara by the goddess, as we have seen in the KP. The MBP however, radically alters the pre-eminence of the mythemes in the structure of the myth. The MBP does not posit the meditative self of Hara in opposition to his longing for Pārvatī. The popular image of Śiva as meditating on the Supreme light is brought in the MBP account, but the authors of the MBP retain the same thread which has so far woven its narrative. It is repeatedly
reiterated that Śiva has been contemplating on the goddess and performing tapas to beget the goddess as his wife. Thus in the MBP, Śambhu does not swing between ‘aversion’ to women and ‘attachment’ to women in a “pendulous movement”, as he does in the KP. In the MBP, Hara moves from his meditative stage to married life in a linear path and Kāma and the goddess merely catalyses his movement in the path. Though Kāma is appointed by Indra to excite Śiva, it is said to be a mere formality. The pivotal figure in the enchantment of Hara is Pārvatī herself.

Śambhu came to Himavatprastha. Girindra met Śambhu and worshiped him with devotion. Śambhu requested Girindra to ensure that nobody disturbed him while performing tapas. Girindra issued the orders accordingly. Meanwhile, Pārvatī attained the age of marriage. One day, she expressed her wish to go to Śiva for performing tapas. Then she narrated to her parents how Brahmā had propitiated her to enchant Hara.

Once Śiva censured (nininda 21.37) Brahmā for having developed carnal desire by seeing own mind-born daughter, Sandhyā. Brahmā was highly ashamed (lajjayopeta 21.38) by the words of Śambhu. He started worshipping Śivā, the enchantress of the world (jaganmohinīn 21.38). The goddess was pleased and offered Brahmā his desired boon – she would enchant (mohayasyasi 21.43) Hara in the form of a woman (yośitrūpena 21.43), whenever Hara resided in a lonely place without any companion. Pārvatī revealed to her parents that earlier she had allured Hara as Sātī, being the daughter of Dakṣa. After the merits of Dakṣa waned, she was reborn to Himālaya and Menakā as the enchantress of Hara (haramohini 21.46). She added that Śaṅkara had been performing tapas to beget her (māmava samlabdhum 21.47) and she had earlier promised to beget him as her husband. Pārvatī thus
expressed her wish to go to the desolate place where Maheśvara had been performing tapas. She concluded by saying, “I shall so enchant (mohayiṣye 21.49) Hara that he would accept me as his wife, giving up the path of yoga.”

Menakā became anxious about her daughter. How would she stay alone in the forest? Pārvatī reminded Menakā that she was beyond mourning (aśocyaḥam 21.55). She assured her mother saying that she herself was the primordial Prakṛti (prakṛtirādyāsmai 21.56, the ever joyous one (nityāndamayī 21.56) and that she would never be afflicted with grief, whether she stayed in the forest or in the house. The daughter added that she was Mahākālī, the dweller of the crematorium, the one who used corpse as her seat (ahāṃ śmaśānasāmvasā mahākālī śavāsanā 21.57). She averred that she was not scared to stay in a lonely place. She promised Menakā to come back after enchanting Mahādeva (vimohya 21.58). Having heard the horrifying words (vacanaḥ...bhayadām mahat 21.59) of Pārvatī, the bewildered Menakā exclaimed, “U-mā.” Henceforth, Pārvatī came to be known as Umā. (21.1-61)

Pārvatī wants to go to Śiva to perform penance, but her intention is to enchant Hara. This might appear as "ascetic seduction" that Wendy Doniger O’ Flaherty and David Shulman speaks of. In the MBP, though Pārvatī says that she will go to Hara to perform tapas, she does not perform tapas to beget Śambhu as her husband. She is seen to perform meditation along with Śambhu much later and even then, they mutually meditate on each other. We do not find the portrayal of Pārvatī as performing pancatapā anywhere in the MBP. Nor does she perform penance to absolve herself of the impurities incurred by taking birth from the yoni, as we see in the KP. It is Maheśa who performs tapas to beget the goddess as his wife and the same is reiterated even after Pārvatī declares her intention to go to Śiva for performing tapas.

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enchant Śiva in the form of a woman, being pleaded by Brahmā. The myth of Brahmā and Sandhyā is the entry point to the account of the marriage of Śambhu and Satī in the KP. In the KP, however, Brahmā’s concern is how the great yogī, who cannot even bear the name of a woman will be married. In the MBP, Śiva performs tapas to beget the goddess from the very onset of the account and Brahmā worships the goddess primarily to retribute Śiva’s criticism. He requests the goddess to be born as a charming woman because she is the only one who can enchant Hara. The very topography of the woman’s body as the cause of excitement of the sexual other is implicit in Brahmā’s request. However, in the MBP, we do not find the crude use of woman as the object of desire, as is seen in the KP. Unlike the Satī episode of the KP, Pārvatī does not enchant Hara as Mahāmāyā in abstraction or by her physical charm in person. The MBP does not dissociate the entity of the goddess who enchants the whole world and Pārvatī, the goddess in person, as two distinct entities.

Himālaya along with Pārvatī and her two friends went to Mahādeva. Himālaya told Śiva that Pārvatī and her friends would stay there to attend (śūṣrūṣānaparāyaṇā 22.2) Mahādeva. Śiva realized the true self of Pārvatī through contemplation and agreed to Girīndra’s proposal happily. Śiva did not show any explicit eagerness to accept her as his wife because he was thinking of her in his meditation. Seeing his apparent reluctance, Mahādevī wished to enchant Mahādeva.

Meanwhile, an asura named Tāraka became powerful by the boon of Brahmā. He ousted all the gods from heaven. Brahmā told the gods that Tārakāsura could be slain only by the son of Maheśa. He advised the gods to take proper initiative to get Mahādeva married. The gods wondered who would approach the yogī, averse to worldly life
(yogī saṃsāravimukhah 22.34), for making him accept a wife. Brhaspati assured the gods saying that Maheśa would give up meditation soon. He was performing tapas to beget the goddess as his wife. He said, “What else is the purpose of Mahādeva, the one adorned by the yogīs, for performing terrible tapas (tapasogreṇa 22.40)?” Brhaspati added that the goddess, born as the daughter of Himalaya had also been staying near Maheśa. Maheśa had become devoid of sexuality because of performing tapas for a long time. Hence, Kāmadeva had to pierce Maheśa with his arrow to inflict longing for bodily pleasure in him. Being thus advised, the gods told Kāma that the primordial Śakti, the wife of Maheśa (maheśavanitī 22.57), reborn as the daughter of Himavat had been staying in his proximity. She was in her full youth, exquisitely beautiful and a jewel among women (ārūḍhayauvanā devī strīrātanamatisundari 22.58). Yet Hara was not thinking about her, being devoted to yoga (yogācintāparastattvam 22.59).

The gods appointed Kāma to interrupt the meditative trance of Maheśa (dhyānabhāṅge niyojaya 22.42) and to enchant him. They requested Kāma to ensure that Vṛṣbhadhvaja sported with Girijā in the same way he sported with Satī. Kāmadeva was apprehensive; he might be killed if he distracted Hara. He recalled that earlier when he had pierced Brahmā with his arrows, the latter became excited and embraced Sandhyā. Brahmā had then cursed Kāma saying that he would be killed by the fire of the third eye of Hara. Kāma therefore, requested the gods to protect his life. The gods agreed.

Kāmadeva tried, but could not find any entrance to Mahādeva’s body. He was also afraid of making Hara the target of his arrows. Seeing Kāma hesitant, Mahāmayā Mahēsvatī herself went forward to enchant Maheśa as she enchanted the whole world.40 When she stood in front of Maheśa with her sakhīs (sākhīvhyāṁ maheśasya sammukhe samsthitā yadā 22.94), Mahādeva opened his eyes and gazed at Pārvatī. Kāmadeva
then shot his arrows. Being pierced by the arrows of Kāma, the carnal
desire of Mahādeva was aroused and he tried to embrace Pārvatī.
However, he restrained himself and pondered about the cause of his
lapse. He saw Kāma with his bow and arrow and realized what had
happened. He was furious and burnt Kāma into ashes. (22.1-113)

The motifs of Pārvatī offering services to Mahādeva, the need to have a son
who would kill Tārakāsura, the apparent aversion of Śiva towards Pārvatī, the
introduction of the figure of Kāma to excite Maheśvara are almost the same as in the
KP. Pārvatī is made to attend to Śiva, as we have seen her do in the KP. However, in
the Pārvatī episode of the MBP, the subjugation of the goddess to Śiva does not gain
ground..Hara is also never depicted as ‘averse’ to women or the goddess; at most, he is
gelid. His apparent cold response to Pārvatī is not because of his reluctance to marry,
but because he is absorbed in contemplation. It is also stated clearly that Śambhu
meditates on the goddess herself and not on the Supreme Self or the Supreme Light, as
we see in the KP. The goddess as Mahāmāyā, now in the woman’s body of Pārvatī, is
not represented as the mere object of desire. It is true that even in the MBP account,
Kāma is successful in his endeavor when Pārvatī stands in front of Śiva. Unlike the KP,
Kāma does not use a beautiful woman as a prop in his endeavour to arouse Śiva and
neither Hara nor other gods, consider the woman as a fetter to meditative practices. The
embodied goddess Pārvatī uses her agency as Mahāmāyā to enchant Hara. In the MBP,
there is no denunciation of women as enchantress who entangle men in the vicissitudes
and the vices of worldly life, as we have seen in the KP. Mahāmāyā Pārvatī, the
embodied woman enchants Hara in the same way as she enchants the whole world. The
instrumentality of Kāma is limited to the regeneration of sexual feelings in Maheśvara
who has been in meditation for long. The text does not condemn sexuality per se, and
the goddess herself reproaches Śambhu for having killed Kāma.

Pārvatī asked Mahādeva why he destroyed Kāma. She said, “I
am the primordial prakṛti. You are performing mahātāpas for a long
time to get me as your wife. Then why did you destroy Kāma? Without
Kāma, why do you intend to have a wife? It is not righteous for a yogī to
indulge in destruction (nāśayet 25.6).” Śaṅkara was alarmed (cakita).
He realized the true self of Pārvatī through contemplation. He
considered himself fortunate on beholding her directly like his beloved
Satī. Pārvatī told Śiva that being pleased with him, she had reappeared in
the present form and that she had come to him to beget him as her
husband. (23.4 - 13)

The Kālī of the KP is terrified and afflicted with grief when Śiva destroys
Kāma. In contrast to the account in the KP, Pārvatī plays a far more affirmative role in
the MBP. She is not the timid, docile woman who is to be consoled by the father and
who can be made subservient to the demands of the would-be-husband. Pārvatī herself
questions the legitimacy of Śiva’s destruction of Kāma. The attempt of the authors of
the MBP to retain the portrayal of the consort of Hara as the submissive wife of the KP
is constantly thwarted. The influence of the local tradition which upholds the
supremacy of the goddess is prominent in the MBP and this accounts for the
refiguration of the myths of Hara and Satī, and Pārvatī,-Kālī inspite of the incorporation
of verses from the KP. The local tradition surfaces in the MBP in its mythic content as
well as in the retainment of the iconographic features of the dark nude goddess in the
mythic section.
The *MBP* does not “split” Pārvatī Gaurī, the fair complexioned one from Kālī, the dark complexioned one, by pushing the latter into the realm of the polluted. While in the Satī episode, Śiva fails to recognize the dark goddess as his wife, in the Pārvatī episode, he himself wants to see her in the form of Kālī and surrenders to her with devotion. He chooses to remain under the feet of the goddess Kālī as the corpse. Kālī is no more seen as the consort of Hara, except for this instance, in this episode. She is compartmentalized in a different realm, but not put in binary opposition to the fair complexioned Gaurī. She is neither considered polluted, nor is there any explicit depiction of Kālī in negative terms. Instead, Śiva’s earnest desire to see the goddess in the form of Kālī is a recognition of the primacy and acceptability of the goddess in this form of hers.

However, in the *MBP*, the identification of Pārvatī and Kālī is not that of a free flow, as is seen in the *KP*. In the *KP*, Mahāmāyā is first born as Satī and then as Kālī. The identity of Kālī and Pārvatī is maintained in the same persona and the names are used synonymously in the *KP*. In the *MBP*, Pārvatī or Kālī refers to the same goddess, but in different forms. Pārvatī is essentially of golden complexion while Kālī is the dark one and Kālī appears in the narrative only in specific junctures. In the Satī episode of the *MBP*, Kālī is seen in her subjective self – she makes Śambhu plead guilty and she herself goes to the *yajñā* of Dakṣa. In the Pārvatī episode, Kālī looses her subjective self – she merely appears, to be beheld as an object of *darśana*. The *MBP* identifies Satī with Kālī and Pārvatī with Kālī, but also maintains a distinction between them in terms of their physical appearance and in terms of their appearance in the narrative.
The MBP thus maintains a *hyphenated disjuncture* between Pārvatī-Kāli as it does with Sati - Kāli. 42

Śiva requested the goddess to show him her form of Kāli. Pārvatī transfigured herself into her earlier nude form of soothing black hue, puffed lips, big eyes, firm breasts, dishevelled hair touching her feet, tongue sticking out. She looked horrifying. Having seen the goddess in this form, Hara took her feet on his chest. He performed *paramayoga* and lay down. In the state of the enjoyment of meditative bliss, he became as still as a corpse (*nispandaḥ śavarūpa 23.25*) and looked at the goddess with great regard (*dadarśa paramādaraḥ 23.26*). He then started eulogising the goddess by chanting her thousand names. Kāli being pleased, Śiva requested the goddess to grant him a boon: wherever the goddess would appear in the form of Kāli, she would remain on the chest of corpse-like Śiva. Hence she would be famous by the name of *śavavāhanā mahākāli*.43 (mahākāli with the corpse as her mount) The goddess agreed and resumed her earlier form of fair complexion. (23.14-196)

The entry of Kāli into the mainstream account of the MBP as the dark nude one on the corpse takes place at the cost of the radical alteration of the symbolism of her iconography. While the śava is retained, it is not the corpse in itself, but her husband Śiva in meditative trance, lying like a corpse. It marks a seminal juncture in the transformation of Kāli who licks the corpse with lolling tongue and similar other goddesses whom we find in the KP and in the Buddhist Tantras of Bengal. The MBP retains the association of the goddess with the corpse as *śavavāhana Mahākāli*, or as Kāli sitting on the throne of the corpse and also makes stray mention of the corpse metaphysically.44 It however, erases the culture(s) which hold and sustained the
goddesses and yoginis The attempt of deracinating the goddess from the local culture(s) had already begun in the KP. The KP, at least retains the traces of the local culture(s) in its prescriptive section and there we find Kālī as one among equals, sharing her features with many other goddesses. Though the KP does not provide us any detail of the meanings of the goddesses and the subjective practices of the yoginis related to the śava, preta or kuṇa, it does provide us with a glimpse of Kālī’s situatedness in the goddess matrix. The MBP does not make any mention of the goddesses of the like, except the stray reference to the Daśamahāvidyās. The matrix of the goddess is lost and Kālī, the dark nude goddess is seen in the brahmanical pantheon as the lone goddess whose identity and symbolism is radically erased or redefined. Now that Śiva, the husband lies under the feet of Kālī as a corpse in the MBP, the overhauling transformation is already made. It paves the way for the mythic Kālī who sticks out her tongue in shame, having placed her feet on her husband’s chest – the myth becoming largely popular in Bengal in the later period. Kālī and Pārvatī are identified with each other in the MBP, but the goddess is not referred to as Kālī any more. We only see Pārvatī/Gourī in association with Śiva in the narrative.

Śiva went back to perform tapas. He had smeared the ashes of Kāma on his body. Both Šambhu and Pārvatī started performing tapas on the peak of the mountain. While Šambhu meditated on the goddess, the goddess meditated on Šambhu. Three thousand years passed. Šambhu, being aggrieved because of the ashes of Kāma, went to Pārvatī. He said to the goddess with folded hands, “O paramesāni! Please give up your severe tapas. You have bought me as your slave at the great expense of your meditation and japa (dhyānena parijapyena mālyena mahatā tvayā 24.5). Please allow me to serve you. O Śivā! Let me cleanse your body, anoint you and bedeck you with ornaments, if you
are pleased with me. I am burnt by the ashes of Madana on my body.
You dispel all sufferings (sarvadurgatiḥara 24.9). Those who take
refuge in you never suffer. I have always taken refuge in you with
devotion. Please take me out of the mahādurga-kāmasāgara (the terrible
ocean of Kāma). O merciful one! You bestow mokṣa on those who are
captured in the web of samsāra; please deliver me from the ocean of
Kāma.”

Himadehajā became bashful. She did not speak to Mahādeva
directly. With her head hanging low, the smiling faced goddess said to
her friend, “I am not yet gifted away by my father. How can I be close to
him? Let Hara accept my hands by following the nuptial rights. Let him
send a man of intellect to my father with the proposal of marriage.”

(24.1-16)

Some of the verses depicting Śambhu’s expression of longing for Pārватī
are exact replicas of the verses in the KP. In spite of the striking similarity in words, the
MBP does not sexually objectify the goddess like the KP. There is a marked difference
in the ways Hara approaches the goddess for sexual gratification in the KP and the
MBP. In both the texts, Hara expresses his plight of passion. In the KP, he submits to
passion and asks Kālī to offer him her nectar-like body. In the MBP, he submits to the
goddess who removes the suffering of all and sundry. The one who rescues in distress
is requested to deliver him from the affliction of Kāma. Noteworthy here, is the use of
the term durga and Hara’s submission to the goddess as a devotee does in times of
distress. The goddess does deliver Śiva, but she does not speak in the way she usually
responds to the prayers of a devotee. She becomes the bashful maiden of the KP, who
does not even speak directly to Śiva, and remains the woman to be transferred from one
hand to the other. At the least, the MBP does not negate the will and the agency of the
goddess in accepting Śambhu as her husband, as we see in the KP.

Mahādeva found Pārvatī’s proposition reasonable. He called
upon Marici and other sages and expressed his intention to marry for the
well-being of the world and to beget progeny (hitāya sarvajagatāṁ
tathā santānavṛddhaye 24.28). He said, “I have been meditating on Śatī
since she left me by her māyā. Having been pleased by my tapas, she
has promised to accept me as her husband on her own (nijecchayā
24.30). However, the one with beautiful body and charming face can be
my wife only after her father, Himavān (the king of mountains), invites
me and offers me her hand. I am burnt by the ashes of Kāma and have
no peace of mind. If you help me to beget my beloved, only then I will
be at ease.” The sages went to Himalaya and urged him to give away
Pārvatī to Śiva in marriage (dadāti tāṁ 24.37). Girindra accepted the
proposal gladly. Having heard this news, Śambhu was relieved. The
sages advised Śambhu to get married on the śukla pañcamī of the month
of Vaiśākha to create progeny.

Mahādeva vowed before the sages that if he got his beloved
Pārvatī, he would be in her service forever. He would never cause
displeasure to her, even out of delusion. He would follow her
everywhere and would not leave her for a moment. (24.17-25.30)

The marriage is ostensibly for the sake of the world and to create progeny. Yet
Śiva himself expresses his longing for union after prolonged separation. Before the
goddess enters into marital relationship with Śiva for the second time, it is ensured that
he does not repeat his earlier mistakes. In the KP, Pārvatī undergoes severe austerities
to beget Śiva as her husband. She passes through similar ordeals even after her
marriage in order to prove herself to be the ideal wife. In the MBP, the hierarchy of relationship between the goddess and Śiva is inverted. We have the Supreme Goddess in the person of Pārvatī to whom Śiva surrenders with devotion. He promises to be her follower.

Once Śambhu collected wild flowers and making a garland scented with camphor and aloe wood offered it to Pārvatī. Pining with love, he embraced Pārvatī passionately (premālingyā amarāturaḥ 29.4). In order to produce a son (putramutpadayitumādṛtaḥ 29.5), he wished to be sexually united with the goddess. He ordered Nandī not to let anybody in without his permission. Then, being enchanted by Kāma, Śambhu sported with Pārvatī for fifteen thousand years (kāmena parimohitah 29.8). Immersed in the ocean of love (premānandanimagnah 29.9) and with his mind engrossed in kāma (kāmayāptamānasah 29.9), Hara copulated with Pārvatī (saṃramamāṇasya 29.10). He neither ejaculated nor did he become exhausted. Vasudhā (the earth) being unable to bear the thrust of Śambhu (tasya pādaprakhāreṇa vasudhā paripūditā 29.11), informed the gods of her distress. Brahmā consoled Pṛthvī by saying that Mahēśvara was copulating with Pārvatī for the sake of the gods. The son born from his semen would be the slayer of Tārakāsura. However, Brahmā added that if Śambhu’s son (śambhoḥ suto 29.27) was born in the goddess (devyām yadi sañjāyate 29.27), he would be a source of danger to both the devas and the asuras. The world would be unable to bear his valour. Brahmā urged the gods to ensure that the child was born somewhere else. (29.1-29)

The MBP does not denounce the sexual life of Śiva, the great yogī. The amorous sport in the conjugal life of Śiva and Pārvatī is not said to be the delusive effect of
Mahāmāyā. However, in the MBP, we do not find the detailed description of togetherness of Hara and Suṭi or Pārvatī, as proved in the KP. In the Pārvatī episode of the MBP, the love play between the two is essentially for the sake of procreation and that too to produce a son. Like the KP, the MBP also projects prolonged coitus between the two as a threat to the world. In the MBP, the threat of the creatrix potential of the goddess is more prominent than in the KP. The gods are unambiguous; they do not want the son of Śambhu to be born in the goddess.

Brahmā along with the other gods went to implore the Paramesvarī to refrain Śambhu from sexual union. Having reached there, they saw Hara and Pārvatī sporting amorously (ramantau 29.33). Overwhelmed with desire, he neither abstained from copulation nor was he embarrassed (lajjānvito 'bhavat 29.34). Unabashed Pārvatī also did not leave Mahēśa in coitus.

The devas then started eulogizing the mother of the worlds, the embodiment of bashfulness (lajjārūpinīm jagadadvikām 30.1). They said, “You are the mother and Śiva is the father of the worlds. We are your children. You consider the devas to have childlike innocence. Hence, you are not different (suraganānāstyева te sambhramaḥ 30.2) O mother Śivasundari! You are the embodiment of lajjā (bashfulness) of the three worlds. O Devi, be demurred, protect the dharanī (earth), be pleased with us: O mother of the world (viśavajanani 30.3)! You are the non-dual brahman, devoid of the three guṇas. A part of you, appears as male in the form of Śambhu out of your own will. O Śivā, the enchantress of the three worlds, you yourself enjoy with him in the female form. You playfully appear as Kṛṣṇa and making Śambhu as your woman, you sport with her. O mother of the gods (mātaradevesī 30.5), the protector of the worlds, be pleased with us. Please refrain yourself now (virama tvamidānīntu 30.5).”

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Thus eulogized, Bhagavatī paravatātmajā (the daughter of the mountain) became bashful (lajjānvitā 30.6). She gave up making love (parisantyajya samgama 30.6). As she stood up, from her vīryā was created the parah pumān (ultimate man).51 He was a bhairava of excellent might and terrible eyes. Parvatī asked him to guard the main door of the palace. Having said so, the mother of the three worlds entered the mandira (temple), her head hanging low out of bashfulness (lajjyāvānatānanā 30.9). (29.30-30.9)

Unlike in the KP, the gods do not approach Śambhu to thwart the process of intercourse in the MBP. They reach the place where Hara and Pārvatī had been sporting with each other and appeal to the goddess. In the KP, Pārvatī curses Nandi and Bhṛṅgi as they see her coming out in a dishevelled attire after sporting with Hara. She considers it highly improper to be seen by her sons in that state. As the goddess in the MBP is not decorous on her own, the gods pray to her to be bashfull. The goddess has to follow the norms of propriety. If she does not behave in a manner becoming of a woman on her own, she must do so by conceding to the prayers of the gods. Now, that the goddess herself is made to refrain from lovemaking, the threat of the curse of angry Pārvatī, as is seen in the KP, is also removed.

The goddess can not said to be barren in the MBP, as she creates a son from her own vīrya. C. A. Humes notes the significance of the term vīrya in association with the goddess in the DM. She argues that the term vīrya was originally masculine, but was later appropriated to promote the goddess’s superior agency in creation. Later texts reasserted “masculine-modeled concepts of creation through the contested notion of vīrya.”52 Humes’s observation seems to hold true for the MBP as well. Humes adds,
“this linking of virility, shakti, seed, and universal motherhood, together with the deliberate de-emphasis of humans’ role in creation, underscore that Devi is not merely field or womb, nor a facile combination of the masculine and feminine: her personal nature extends beyond her creation or routinely constructed gender roles.” Humes’s observation is strikingly pertinent when seen in the light of the Sanskrit normative literature, which projects woman as the passive field in which the man sows his seed. The creation of the bhairava by Pārvatī from her vīrya or the creation of Gaṇeśa from the paste of haridrā besmeared in her body also sets a parallel to the self-sufficient creative potential of Śiva. Pārvatī creates the son from her own vīrya or the haridrā in the same way Nandi and Bṛṛṅgin are produced from the tejas of Śaṅkara in the KP. However, when seen from the perspective of a culture which venerated the yoni, such accounts necessarily undermine the sanctity of the female body in general and the female reproductive organ in particular. The desperation of the brahmanical authors to negate the subjectivity of the birth-giving female comes out clearly in the description of the process of the birth of Skanda.

Śambhu decided to shed (śambhuścāpi pariyaktum svareto 30.10) his retas (semen) for the sake of Prthvi. Brahmā ordered Vāyu to blow the retas away and throw it inside the yoni of the female (tadyoṣitāṁ yoniṁ 30.13). Vāyu started blowing with high velocity. Śambhu discharged (tatyāja 30.15) his retas on the head of Vaṇhi. He could not bear the molten silver-like (rajatādrisamāṁ 30.15) retas and threw (paritatyāja 30.15) it in the grove of reeds (sarakānena 30.15). Vāyu divided it into several parts and blew them inside the yonis of six kṛttikās. The fusion of the retas with the blood occurred in the udara (abdomen) of the Kṛttkā’s. The kṛttikās, being unable to bear the retas, abandoned (tatyajuśca 30.21) it. They placed the mixture of semen and
blood in a wooden box and threw it in the Ganga. Brahma carried the wooden box to his own place. Inside the wooden box was born (vyajāyata 30.24) the paraḥ pumān (paramount man), with twelve arms, twelve eyes and six heads (tatkāṣṭhakoṣamadhye tu vyajāyata paraḥ pumān 30.24). Being aware of the birth, Brahma broke open the box. As the son was born of the skandita (caroming)55 retas, he was named Skanda.

The devas requested Brahma not to disclose to Pārvatī and Śiva about the birth of their son. They were afraid that Bhagavatī or Śiva might not send their son to the battlefield out of affection. Accordingly, the birth of Skanda was kept a secret to his parents till Tārakāsura was slain by him.(30.10-33.21)

Skanda is neither born in the woman’s body nor is he reared by a woman. The subjectivity of motherhood has already been extricated of Pārvatī in the KP. Skanda is given birth by the Kṛttkās and partially nurtured by Bahula. The MBP completely erases the subjective experience of mothering. Pārvatī, the one who copulates, is refrained from accepting the retas of Śiva. The fusion of blood and retas takes place through artificial means. Vāyu inseminates the Kṛttikas, but even they do not bear the child within their body. The womb is nothing more than a receptacle and it can well-neigh be a wooden box. Skanda therefore, grows in the box and is externally taken care of by Brahmā, a male. The incipient nurturing mother is seen in the Gaṇeśa myth, only after the birth-giving subjectivity is extricated of her. Pārvatī suckles him her breast and the child is immediately depicted to have grown up, whom the goddess assigns the task of guarding the door.
The Pārvatī episode of the *MBP* thus retains many of the mythemes of the Pārvatī episode in the *KP*. Yet in the *MBP* she is not the docile daughter, the subordinated wife or the not-to-be mother of the *KP*. The alteration in the characterisation of the daughter, wife and mother in the *MBP* is largely because the embodied goddess is not dissociated from her Ultimate Self, as is being done in the *KP*. Neither Dakṣa nor Śiva exercise their authority over Pārvatī as father or husband because now they recognise her as the Supreme One, even in her embodied form. As the mother, Pārvatī does not bear the child in her womb and does not give birth from the womb. Yet she can create from her own vīrya or from the haridri paste in her body, which shows that she is not a passive recipient of the male seed. The goddess as the daughter, wife and mother is, however, essentially the golden complexioned Pārvatī. Kāli is recognized as one of the supreme forms of the goddess. She is never seen in the realm of the domestic, but her autonomous space and her meanings are lost as the corpse becomes Śiva himself. The *MBP* thus maintains a hyphenated disjunction between the goddess Pārvatī, situated within the domain of the family and Kāli, who is not seen in the domestic realm, but identified in terms of familial relationships.

*The Goddess as the Bestower of Victory*

The *MBP* narrates both the stories of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* with its own alterations. The goddess appears in these narratives as the one who bestows victory in the context of the battle between Rāma and Rāvana and between the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas. The *MBP* does not narrate the myths of the goddess
slaying asuras. The KP mentions the bodhana (awakening) and worship of the goddess by the gods in the wake of the battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa. The MBP provides a more elaborate account and the goddess as Mahiṣāsuramardini appears only in the eulogisation of Rāma. The gradual erasure of the goddess from the battlefield becomes all the more intriguing in the context of the MBP. It does not undo the myths of the battle per se, but replaces the older myths with new ones. The association of the goddess with warfare is retained, but it removes the embodied goddess from the battlefield.

Nārada asked Mahādeva to narrate about the annual autumnal worship which pleases the goddess and which was performed by Raghuttama to kill Rāvaṇa. He asked Mahādeva to enlighten him on how Viṣṇu descended on earth in human form as Rāma and how he worshipped the goddess of the world. The MBP introduces two new elements in the account of the battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa—the association of goddess with Rāvaṇa and akālabodhana (the untimely awakening of the goddess).

Rāvaṇa conquered the three worlds by the grace of the goddess. (Later it is stated that Brahmā had given him the boon to be invincible). The goddess Śarvāṇi, the one affectionate to her devotees stayed in the city of Rāvaṇa, along with the yogini-gaṇas (36.8, 36.26), till his merits of penance wizened away (punyaṁ na yāvat kṣiṇatāmagāt 36.7) as a result of his tormenting the world. The gods requested Brahmā to deliver them of the torment inflicted by Rāvaṇa. Brahmā said that while asking for the boon of invincibility, Rāvaṇa had not mentioned human beings because he considered them his bhakṣya (food). He therefore, advised Viṣṇu to be born as a mortal man. Viṣṇu agreed, but said that he would be able to kill Rāvaṇa only if the goddess Kātyāyani, the bestower of
victory to Rāvaṇa (tasya jayapradā 36.26) left Lāṅkā. Hence, she did not protect the one who abhorred (vidvīṣato 36.35) Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara. Then, three of them went to Mahādevi Pārvatī and bowed down to her.

The gods addressed the goddess as the mother and surrendered to her. She said, “I am also thinking about Rāvaṇa’s destruction. If I get the right opportunity (nimitta 36.58), I shall destroy him. However, I cannot kill him on my own because I have a direct relationship with him.” She asked Viṣṇu to kill Rāvaṇa and promised to help him (sāhāyyam te kariṣyati 36.59). She added that Kamalā, her amśajā would be born as Sītā. The goddess also prophesied that Rāvaṇa would abduct Sītā out of ravenousness (atilobhena harisyati 36.60). She promised the gods that she would desert Lāṅkā, with the permission of Śiva (śivasyānumate 36.62) as soon as Sītā entered the city. She also said that Rāvaṇa would be destroyed by her wrath, when he disrespected the other form of hers – that of Lakṣmī (Sītā). The goddess assured Viṣṇu that she was the eternal destroyer (saṁhārakāriniḥ nityān 36.69) and that Viṣṇu would be victorious by her grace. She advised Viṣṇu to worship her clay image, according to the rules prescribed in the Vedas, in autumn (śaratakāle 36.71). (36.1-71)

Rāvaṇa’s association with the goddess comes across very strongly in the MBP. It perhaps points to some versions of the myth which portrays Rāvaṇa as a devotee of the goddess prior to her association with Rāma. Rāma can kill Rāvaṇa only after the goddess abandons Rāvaṇa. The detailed explanation given in the MBP as to why and how the goddess leaves Rāvaṇa is significant in itself. As we have noted earlier, the goddess never stays with anyone who insults her. In the DBP, Lakṣmī leaves her husband Viṣṇu, when he treats her with disrespect. In the KP and the MBP, Sātī leaves
her father and/or her husband, when they show disrespect towards her. Similarly, the
goddess staying in the city of Laṅkā will go away when Rāvaṇa insults her own
aṃśajā, Sītā. In this myth, however, the issue of personal humiliation of the goddess is
largely superseded by her identification with the multitude of forms – whether it be
Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśa, Sītā or the world at large. In the process of identification of
the multitude forms of the goddess, the transformation of Pārvati to her eighteen-armed
form in front of the gods loses any specific signification. Yet she reminds us of the
eighteen armed goddess who reigns the battlefield in the DBP. The goddess, the eternal
destroyer, does not destroy in the battlefield in the form of a female in the MBP. She
only promises Viṣṇu to help him in killing Rāvaṇa. Unlike the asuras of the DBP or the
KP, Rāvaṇa does not ask for the boon of invincibility vis-a-vis woman. The
goddess/woman - warrior is now altogether pushed out of the realm of the battlefield
and even from the myths depicting warfare. Her association with the battlefield remains
no more in her subjective self of the warrior, but as the one who bestows victory and
who assists the warrior in her formless form.

Viṣṇu was born as Rāma and the other gods also took birth from
different yonis. Śiva was thus born as Hanumāna and Brahmā
reincarnated as Vibhīṣaṇa. Sītā’s abduction by Rāvaṇa, Hanumāna’s
discovery of Sītā in the aśoka vana, the disappearance of the goddess
from the city of Laṅkā and the entry of Rāma along with his army of
monkeys into the city are narrated briefly. Rāma reached Laṅkā on the
thirteenth day of the dark fortnight. He reasoned in his mind that without
worshipping the goddess he would not be victorious. But, he recalled
that it was daksināyana and the goddess of the three worlds was asleep.
He wondered how he could worship the goddess akāle (in the improper
time). He then decided to worship the goddess Mahāmāyā, the giver of
victory, in the form of the fathers (pitṛūpām sanātanim 40.16) with the performance of the rite called pārvana śrāddha. Rāma started performing the pārvana śrāddha on the pratipada, (the first day of the lunar fortnight, in this case the bright fortnight ) and the terrible fight with the rākṣasas began that day. Many rākṣasas were killed everyday and Rāvaṇa ran away from the battlefield after a fierce encounter. Then Rāvaṇa decided to launch counter-attack along with his brother Kumbhakarṇa. Rāma was in a fix.

Vibhīṣaṇa (Brahmā) advised Rāma to worship the goddess Kātyāyanī. Vibhīṣaṇa averred that without the grace of the goddess, Rāma would not be able to defeat the enemies in the battlefield. Rāma said, “How can I worship the goddess now? It is not the proper time according to custom. The goddess is asleep. Moreover, it is the dark fortnight.”57 Brahmā said that he would perform the bodhana (bodhayīśyāmi 42.22) of the goddess akāle (in the improper time), so that Rāma attained victory in the battlefield. (36.72-42.23)

The MBP introduces the term akālabodhana for the worship of the goddess in autumn for the first time in the Purāṇas of Bengal. In all the other texts we have dealt with so far, the mahotsava (the great festival) of the goddess is ordained to be performed in autumn itself. Even in the MBP, the goddess herself asks Rāma to worship her in autumn. Yet, Rāma is hesitant to awaken the goddess. He therefore, performs pārvana śrāddha which is also a unique feature of the MBP. In the KP, we have seen that the worship of Bhadrakāli and Ugracaṇḍā commences on the dark fortnight. The KP does not provide any explanation for the worship of the goddesses in the dark fortnight and does not treat it as an aberration. In the MBP, Brahmā performs the bodhana of the goddess on the ninth day of the dark fortnight – the same day
prescribed for the *bodhana* of Ugracanḍā in the *KP*. Though the *MBP* retains the *bodhana* of the goddess in the dark fortnight, it does not mention the worship of the goddesses Ugracanḍā and Bhadrakāli and the myth of Mahiśāṣura is altogether absent in the *MBP*.

Śrī Rāma eulogized the goddess Kātyāyanī in order to attain victory. "O Kātyāyanī, you are worshipped in the three worlds. You bestow victory in the battle; be pleased with me and bestow victory on me. I bow down to you."58 Rāma addresseds the goddess as Śivā and Durgā, as the goddess of forts and the one who removed distress (*durgeṣu devīṁ durgārṭīḥārīṁiṁ* 44.8). She is said to be *mahīśaṃsaramarddini* (44.10), *Caṇḍī caṇḍāsaṃvinimardini* (44.10), *raktavījanīhantrī* (44.12), *niśumbhasaṃhārtrī* (44.13). Rāma eulogizes the goddess as the one fond of battle, as the one who drinks blood and devours flesh (*raṇapriye, raktabhakṣye maṃśabhakṣaṇakāriīāi* 44.4), and as the one who is fond of the blood of Mahiṣa (*mahīśaṃśkritpriye* 44.10). He hails the goddess as having red eyes, red teeth and her body being smeared with blood (*raktākṣī raktadaśane raktacarccitaṅgātrake* 44.12). (42.23-44.12)

The goddess appears as the slayer of the *asuras* in this eulogy of Rāma. Mahiśāṣuramarddiniī almost becomes a qualitative adjective of the goddess as *raṇapriye* or *mahīśaṃśkritpriye*. Even in this eulogy of the goddess by Rāma, the usual iconography of the goddess as the slayer of Mahiṣa is not found. She is of fair complexion and has a pleasing lotus like face. She holds a trident and rides a lion. Her iconographic features are close to the numerous goddesses whom we encounter in the prescriptive section of the *KP*, with the exception of her fair complexion. There is no mention of Mahiśāṣura beneath her feet. The *MBP* upholds Durgā as the principal goddess, but she is not
Durgā Mahiśāsuramardinī, in the myths or in her iconographic depiction. The elucidation on the methods of worshipping the goddess in autumn comes only in the context of the battle between Rāma and Rāvana.

As Rāma eulogized the goddess, a celestial voice was heard. Rāma was assured that he would attain victory over Rāvana. Brahmā then performed the bodhana of the goddess in the bilva tree. He worshipped the goddess and eulogized her by chanting the Devīsūkta of the Vedas. The goddess foretold that Kumbhakarna and other rākṣasas would be killed in battle, starting from the ninth day of the dark fortnight till the ninth day of the bright fortnight. She further prophesied that from the seventh day of the bright fortnight to the ninth, there would be a terrible fight between Rāma and Rāvana. She asked the gods to worship her clay image with different upacāras (offerings) from the seventh day of the bright fortnight to the ninth. On the seventh day, she would enter into the bow and arrow of Rāma. On the eighth day, she would enter the of Rāghava. On the junction of the eighth and ninth day, she would decapitate Rāvana repeatedly. She would bring about the final fall of Rāvana (pātayishyami rāvaṇaṁ 45.41) on the evening of the ninth day.(44.13-45.41)

The goddess is thus not only the bestower of victory in her formless form, she is to kill Rāvana through the mediation of Rāma and his weapons. In the Tamil context, David Shulman notes certain variations in the Mahiṣa myths and observes how the goddess is dissociated from violence. In the Arunachalam myth, for instance, Durgā (Tamil Vintai) kills Mahiṣa and discovers a linga on the severed head of the asura. The linga sticks to her hand. She gets rid of it only after expiating the sin of killing the devotee of Śiva by bathing in the water for a month. Shulman notes, “The version
makes several radical changes in the myth, transforming the characters of Mahiṣa and the goddess, and imparting new values to the mythic actions. The killing of Mahiṣa has become a sin, indeed a sin of a particularly heinous kind. In one version, Devī is taught by the sage Gautama that it is wrong to harm any living being (*jīvahimsā na kartavyā*) – an injunction that seems rather exotic in the context of a myth wholly devoted to the encounter between the goddess and the demon. The introduction of this strain into the Arunācalam myth recalls the Buddhists and the Jain ethic of non-violence (*ahimsā*); but we may be closer to the basis of this phenomena if we recall the concern of the sacrificial system with the evil and dangerous consequences of slaughter. A similar concern appears in the ancient Tamil sources, which indicates that any contact with violent power, and specifically with death, is polluting; hence as we have seen, the attempt to disassociate the deity from the center of violence.”59 In the MBP as well as in the other *Upapurāṇas* of Bengal, we do not find any explicit denunciation of the association of the goddess with death as polluting. The MBP hails the blood thirsty goddess who is fond of battle, though euphemistically. Her agency in *killing* remains, but her bodily form of the female is erased from the battle field. While the goddess assists Rāma in her *formless form* in the battle field, she reincarnates in the male form of Kṛṣṇa to fulfill Šambhu’s wishes and to kill the evil rulers.

Amazed by the beauty of Pārvatī, Šambhu wished to be born as a woman. He requested Pārvatī to be born in the mortal world as a man and he himself wished to be her wife. The goddess said that her form of Bhadrakālī, of the hue of dark rain-bearing cloud, would appear in the mortal world as Kṛṣṇa, the dark one. Śiva said that one part of him would appear as Rādhā and the other parts would be born as eight other women. Thus, the goddess promised to be born as Kṛṣṇa out of love.
(premabhābatah 49.31) for Śiva. This was the principal reason (kāranaṁ mulamūritam 49.32) of the goddess taking birth as Kṛṣṇa. The MBP also provides another myth to explain the birth of the goddess as Kṛṣṇan.

The rākṣasas who were killed by Viṣṇu and the goddess were reborn in the mortal world as evil rulers. Pṛthivī was unable to bear their burden. She requested Brahmā to destroy them. Brahmā expressed his concern to the goddess, jagatdātṛī (the sustainer of the world). He urged the goddess to be personified and kill the kṣatriya kings by hook or crook (tvam mātarvigrahaṁ krivā cchalena 49.43). The goddess told Brahmā that the kṣatriyas took refuge in her female form with devotion. Hence, she would not fight with them as a woman. Instead, the Bhadrakāli form of hers would be incarnated in the male form (pumṛūpaṁ sambhāviṣyati 49.45). In order to conceal herself, she would adopt the signs of Viṣṇu (ātmsaṁgopanārthāya visnulakṣṇalakṣitah 49.47). (49.1-47)

While in the battle between Rāma and Rāvana, Viṣṇu as a human being kills Rāvana with the assistance or grace of the goddess, in the context of the battle between the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas she no more remains in the female form. In the DBP, the warrior aspect of the goddess has been described as her masculine trait. Gradually she is made to disappear from the battlefield and finally she is transformed into a man. The Bhadrakāli form of the goddess, who reigns the battlefield in most of the earlier Purāṇas and is one of the most prominent figures to be worshipped in the KP is now to be born as Kṛṣṇa. The goddess borns as a male to fulfill the wishes of Śambhu and also because she cannot kill the kṣatriyas in a female form. The same argument has been given in the case of the killing of Rāvana. This probably shows that the kṣatriyas had
appropriated the goddess as the presiding deity of victory and this explains the repeated evocation of the goddess as *jayaprādā* (42.19), *jayā dharmmaniśṭhānāṁ* (42.64), *vijayādā* (43.2), *dharmmo vijayādā* (42.69). The *pāṇḍavas* also worshipped the goddess to bestow victory on them.

The *Pāṇḍavas* visited Kāmarūpa while they were exiled. They worshipped the goddess Bhagavatī according to rule (*bhagavatīṁ sampujyātha vidhānataḥ* 56.4). They prayed to the goddess for the annihilation of their enemies, the *Kauravas*, in fierce battle. They also worshipped the goddess to win back their kingdom. The goddess Bhagavatī appeared before them and assured Yudhisṭhira that he would definitely get back his kingdom after the destruction of the *dhārtrarāṣtras*. She added that she had been born of Devakī as a man to help him. Viṣṇu himself had been born as Arjuna by her order (*mamājñayā* 56.11) to deliver the earth from the burden of the evil kings (56.1-11).

The *Puranic* authors evidently do not want to retain the blood-thirsty warrior goddess in the mainstay of the narrative anymore. In the descriptions of the different feats and exploits of Kṛṣṇa, the fierce looking Kāli appears in the climax.

Putanā, the *rākṣasī* tried to kill Kṛṣṇa by making him suck her venomous breast. Kṛṣṇa killed her by sucking her life. Kṛṣṇa then took the form of Kāli. The fierce looking Kāli, decked with skull garland (*muṇḍamālavirājītā* 51.16) devoured (*bhuktā* 51.17) the corpse of Putanā in the twinkle of an eye. Kaṁsa sent Trinanvarta to kidnap child Kṛṣṇa. As he took the child to the sky, Kṛṣṇa transfigured to the form of dreadful looking Kāli (*bhīmarūpiṇī kālī* 51.24). She beheaded the demon with her sword. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma killed hundreds of wrestlers in a
competition arranged by Kaṃsa. Kṛṣṇa appeared in his/her original form (dadhāra nijamūrtim 54.41) as Kāli and killed Kaṃsa with her sword. Then she turned back to the form of Kṛṣṇa and started dancing with Rāma (Balarāma).

The battlefield in the MBP is pervaded by male warriors. The goddess does not appear as Kāli in the battlefield. She is seen in her violent destructive role and as the devourer of corpse, only in the personal feats of Kṛṣṇa. William Sax notes a similar association of violence with kṣatriya men and women in the performance of Pāṇḍava-līlā in Garhwal. He says, “Pervasive representations of violence in Pandav Lila are not in the first instance manifestation of gender but of varṇa. Does this mean that the purportedly universal category of ‘gender’ is of no use in understanding the culturally specific tradition of Pandav Lila? I think not. For one thing, the representation of violence in Pandav Lila is itself clearly gendered, inasmuch as female violence is limited to myth, rituals and sacrifice, while male violence has to do primarily with warfare.”60 Rajput men perform in the episodes of dramatic warfare, such as the killing of Abhimanyu in the cakravyūha or Arjuna’s battle with his other son Nāgārjuna. The nature of violence associated with and performed by Rajput women is of a different order. Draupadī, who is believed to be Kāli in local mythology, is the bloodthirsty one. In one of the ritual performances cited by Sax, the woman ‘Kāli’ fiercely sucks the blood of a young goat after dancing in frenzy with eight other women. Lindsey Harlan in her field work on the Rajputs of Rajasthan, found that the goddess is revered as the protector and bestower of victory by the Rajput males. She is also perceived to be the bloodthirsty one. Harlan says that in the majority of the kuldevi (lineage goddesses) myths that Rajput men narrate, “A goddess manifests herself as a great warrior at
critical points in history, often just before he is about to wage a war. Her appearance inspires this warrior to persevere and succeed in battle, while also influencing the battle’s outcome directly by manipulating events. Typically she hovers above the battlefield as a kite, signaling her support but also demonstrating her lust for blood. She will consume the entrails of those slaughtered. 61

Sax suggests that the religious images of bloodthirsty goddesses may simply be projections of male fantasies, or they may serve to mask a more widespread masculine violence. 62 I argue that in my context the image of the bloodthirsty goddess emerges because of the erasure of the warrior goddess and the shift in the goddess’s association with warfare. As we have seen in the other Purāṇas of Bengal, Kālī, along with the other goddesses, dominate the battlefield and she devours corpses or drink the blood of the enemies. The myths of warrior goddesses were gradually replaced with the myths of battle between male combatants, and the goddess is made the bestower of victory. The association of the goddess with killing remained only in the myth of personal exploits (as we see in the feats of Kṛṣṇa-Kālī in the MBP) and this perhaps explain the gradual popularization of the goddess as the bloodthirsty devourer.

Worship and iconography of the goddesses

The MBP does not prescribe the performance of the annual autumnal worship of the goddess in a separate section and the methods and modes of worship are not as elaborate as the KP. In the MBP, the reference to the worship of the goddesses comes only in the context of the battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa, as we have noted earlier.
Brahmā said that he would worship the ten armed goddess mounting a lion in her clay image. He would awaken the goddess (bodhayīṣyāmi caīasyāṁ navamyāṁ 43.90) in the dark fortnight in the bilva tree. He said that he would start worshipping the goddess from that very day till the death of Rāvana. Accordingly, he awakened and worshipped the goddess and eulogized her by chanting the Devisūkta from the Vedas.

The goddess herself also ordained her worship in the clay image in the course of the battle between Rāma and Rāvana. She asked the gods to worship her with offerings and bali and the chanting of panegyrics from the Vedas and the Purāṇas. She ordained her special worship in the sandhikṣaṇa (juncture) of aṣṭamī and navamī (eighth and ninth days) with different offerings and bali. It is prescribed that the quantum of bali should be so huge that blood and flesh be muddened together (māṃsaśonitakarddamaiḥ 45.40). Bali is also to be offered on the navamī. After worshipping her on the morning of daśamī her image is to be immersed in flowing water (srotāśu 45.42) with great festivity (sumahotsavaiḥ 45.42). The goddess said that by performing her worship for fifteen days (from the navamī of the dark fortnight to the daśamī of the bright fortnight), the gods would be delivered (nirvṛtīm prāpsyatha 45.43) after the death of Rāvana.

The MBP does not elaborate the methods of worshipping the goddess during the five days, as is seen in the DP or the KP. Rather, it classifies the modes of worship into categories on the basis of the balis to be offered to the goddess. It is said that those who adore the goddess with sātvika disposition, should not offer bali nor should they offer her food with meat. They should perform her mahā-pūjā by making naivedya
(offerings) without meat, by chanting eulogies from the Vedāṅgas, by performing japa and yajña, by feeding many brāhmaṇas by keeping their mind under control and by being devoid of violence. The followers of the path of rājasa should perform the māhā-pūjā of the goddess by offering the bali of goat, ram, he-buffalo and the like and by offering of food with meat. Eulogies should be chanted, japa and yajña should be performed and brāhmaṇas should be fed. The tāmasik mode of worshipping the goddess is described as not even comparable to the two other modes of worship. Nothing is said about the mode of tāmasik worship and its performance is prohibited for the knowledgeable ones.

Brahmā told Rāma about three forms of Mahādurgā Maheśvarī. He said that the goddess is omnipresent and sarvagā (43.5). She particularly resides in the pīthas. She is within the brahmāṇḍa and is also outside of it. Her Bhagavatī form, which remains within the brahmāṇḍa, is said to be her paurāṇikī form and the form which exists outside the brahmāṇḍa is her tāntrika form. Later, Brahmā also mentioned the vaidikī form of the goddess. He said that to the left of the Śivaloka is Gaurīloka. In this loka, the goddess resides in her ten armed vaidikī form. She is of the complexion of atasī flower and rides her mount of lion. The paurāṇikī form of the goddess is not elaborately described. It is simply stated that the paurāṇikī form of the goddess is also ten armed and is mounted on a lion. The place of residence and iconographic features of the tāntrika form of Durgā is narrated in great detail. Brahmā specified that the tāntrika form of Mahādurgā should remain carefully concealed (sugopyā sā mahādurgā 43.7). Brahmā said:
The goddess resides in a palace called Maṇidvīpa. In a pleasant inner apartment of the palace there is a pavilion which is made of various jewels. It is supported by pillars of shining gems and has portals decorated with pearls. There, on a beautiful throne of jewels, sits Mahādurgā, the mother of the three worlds. The goddess with auspicious face is of the hue of crores of moon. Her golden crown is decorated with thousands of shining śyāmāntaka and kāustubha gems. A number of necklaces, made of precious jewels, adorns her chest. Her smile, revealing beautiful teeth and dark eyes makes her face look beautiful. The ornament on her ears and nose and the crescent moon on her head, enhances the beauty of her face. She has four arms and she sits on a great lion/throne (mahāśīṁkopari sthītā 43.71). The goddess wears a red garment and a girdle, embellishing her thin waist, jingles.

Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva eulogise her with folded hands. Jayā and Vijayā, standing on both sides of her fans (saṁvījayati 43.75) the goddess with cāmara. Lākṣmī, who holds a strange lotus in her hand (vicitrapadmahaṇṭā 43.76) and who stands on the right side of the goddess offers her perfume. Vāṇī, with her vīṇā, is on her left side and sings the panegyrics of the Devī in accordance with the Vedās and the Āgamas. Aparājitā and others offers the goddess sudhā (nectar) in jewelled vessels. Nārada, along with the munis, sing verses from the Vedās in praise of the goddess. She is served tobacco by Nandinī and other attendants. The doors of the inner apartment of the goddess are guarded by her two sons, Gaṇādhīpa and Śaḍānana. (43.47-81)

Mahādeva enlightened Nārada on the secrets of Kālī’s subtle form. He said that Durgā’s grand domain (paramam sthānam 59.4) was inaccessible even to the devas, gandharvas, yakṣas, rākṣasas and kinnaras. Beside this place was the hidden abode of the goddess Kālī. Mahādeva described Kālī and her residence thus:
There is a magnificent palace of Kālī, built of precious jewels and guarded by thousands of bhairavas. Even Brahmā, Viṣṇu and others can not enter the palace without the permission of the goddess. Inside the palace, there is an august mandira made of different jewels. There is the seat of the goddess – a grand throne on which a corpse is stretched out (tasyopari parinyastasavopari 59.13). Mahāvidyā Mahākali is always seated on the corpse, laid out on the throne. She is dark, with dishevelled hair, wearing a garland of skulls and is completely naked. She is attended by Vijayā and other sixty four yogīns who always perform household chores for her. Mahākāla Sādāśiva is on her right side (dakṣine bhāge 59.16) and she is in perpetual amorous sport with him (ṣaṃramate sadā 59.16).

The reference to Mahākāla Sādāśiva and the iconographic details of the goddess, (almost similar to the description cited above) and Mahākāla also comes in chapter sixty three.

In chapter seventy-six, the merits of visiting the holy site of Kāmarūpa is narrated. The primordial goddess Mahāmāyā, is said to be in the form of yoni (yonirūpā 76.6) in this site. The MBP emphasizes the need to maintain the secrecy of Kāmarūpa and its presiding deity. It is said that the goddess in the form of yoni is well hidden (suguptām 76.11) in this place. It is said that the goddess Kāmākhyā, who is Kālikā, is clad in red. She has four arms, three shining eyes, terrible teeth and she is of the hue of the clouds. She graces the throne of jewels supported by a lion, a corpse and a lotus (i.e. by Viṣṇu, Śiva and Brahmā respectively. She has a lolling tongue and
looks dreadful. She looks brilliant on account of the golden crown and she is decorated by ornaments made up of precious jewels and rubies.\(^6^9\).

In the \textit{MBP}, we no more see the myriad goddesses and the \textit{yoginis} do not accompany Kāmākhyā, as they do in the \textit{KP}. There is no elucidation on the methods of worship of the goddess Kāmākhyā either. The \textit{MBP} instead makes mention of the Daāmahāvidyās accompanying Kāmākhyā.

To the left of Devī Kāmākhyā is Tārā and to her right is Bhuvneśvarī. Śodaśi is to her south-east, Bhairavī (Tripurabhairavi) to her south-west, Chinnamastā to the north-west and Bagalāmukhi and Sundarī to the north-east. Over her head is Anaṅgaṇāyikā and Dhūmāvatī is in the southern direction of the Mahāpithā (77.9-\(1^a\)). Below Kāmākhyā, there is lord Śūlī Śiva and Brahmā, Viśṇu and the other gods are always in close proximity with that \textit{pīṭha}. (77.1-12)

The goddess introduced the Mahāvidyās to Śiva in the \textit{Sātī} episode. She added that this form of the ten \textit{Mahāvidyās} was the best of her very many different forms. If worshipped with devotion, they would grant the fruits of all the four orders (\textit{caturvargaphalapradāh} 8.82)\(^7^0\). They fulfill all the wishes of the spiritual adept. They carried out the functions of māraṇa, uccātana, kṣobhaṇa, mohana, drāvana, vaśikaraṇa, stambhana, vidveśaṇa and others that were wished for (\textit{abhipreta} 8.83) by the devotees. She emphasized that all these images of her were secret ones (\textit{gopaniyā} 8.84) and were not supposed to be disclosed (\textit{prakāśya} 8.84). The interesting addition comes in the next verse. The goddess prophesied that Maheśvara himself would speak about (\textit{vaksyase} 8.86) their \textit{mantras, stotras, kavacas} and the methods of the worship,
homa and others for the sake of the sadhaka and it would be popular by the name of Āgamas. She told Śaṅkara that the Āgamas and the Vedas were the two arms and the wise ones should never make any distinction between the two

The MBP does not provide us with any details about the iconographic features, their modes of worship or their theology. However, it maintains that the Daśamahāvidyās are the principle forms of the goddess. The iconographic features of the Daśamahāvidyās vary, but most of these goddesses are described as wearing garlands of skulls or severed heads, they sit or stand on corpses or on supine Śiva in the form of a corpse; they are often naked and with dishevelled hair. David Kinsley, who has worked on Daśamahāvidyās extensively both as a group of goddesses and each of the Mahāvidyās, points out their association with kāma and death in the wide array of literature that he has surveyed. He says, “It is striking that imagery of both sex and death should be so central in Mahāvidyā material and that both are so often juxtaposed in the characterization of a goddess and in certain rituals of worship.” All these features and the associations of the Daśamahāvidyās remind us of the numerous goddesses who are mentioned in the liturgical section of KP. In the MBP, we do not come across the methods of worshipping such goddesses, nor do we come across the yoginīs of the goddesses who appear so frequently in the prescriptive section of the KP. In the stray references to the yoginīs in the MBP, they are said to pluck flowers in the palace of Kāli and do other household chores. The autonomous goddesses of the KP and the yoginīs with their spiritual practices are lost in the MBP. They emerge out of oblivion in the domain of the household, the goddess as the wife of Śiva and the yoginīs to perform the daily chores of the goddess. It is plausible that the yoginīs no more appear as yoginīs in the spiritual realm because they are altogether deified. We have
already noticed fluid status of the yoginiṣ in the KP. It seems that the goddess along with her yoginiṣ are now deified as the Daśamahāvidyās. The codification of the plethora of goddesses/yoginiṣ (whom we find both in KP and the Buddhist Tantras) as Daśamahāvidyās marks a signal alienation of these goddesses/yoginiṣ from their own culture. They are now the secret ones, they are to be kept secret to establish and maintain the hegemony of the culture that brahmanism seeks to impose. They are allowed to reappear when the subjectivity of their spiritual practices is completely erased, when they no more have any practices of their own and when they do not even speak of the practices on their own. Maheṣa who does not recognize his own wife in the terrible form and know nothing about the other forms of the Mahāvidyās is entitled to speak about the rituals and modes of worshipping them. Henceforth, the instructions would come from a male deity/guru, essentially for the male spiritual adept, the sādhaka as is evident from the Bengal Tantras, which are codified roughly from 14th – 15th centuries A.D.

**Conclusion**

The goddess in the MBP is thus seen primarily in the domestic. The Supremacy of the goddess in her autonomous form is recognized in principle, even when the goddess is seen within the realm of domestic. She is not completely dissociated from her Ultimate self. Initially, attempts are made to make the goddess subservient in the hierarchy of relationships and she is subjected to the authority of the father and the husband. She leaves them as they are fraught with pride and, in her second birth, her
father as well as her husband surrenders to her with devotion. The goddess in the MBP does not command respect because of her status as the daughter, wife or mother, but because she can revoke her Supremacy even as an embodied being. The influence of the local tradition as reflected in the Buddhist Tantras for instance, is prominent in the content as well as the iconographic features of the goddess in the myths of the MBP.

However in the MBP, the autonomous space of the goddess outside the realm of the domestic is completely lost. She is not seen as the goddess associated with the yoginis, the religious practices associated with them are not elaborated upon and the places associated with her are either made remote or are carefully concealed. The matrix of autonomous goddess and yoginis are obliviated. Kālī, the sole survivor of the dark naked goddesses, whom we see in the KP and in the Buddhist Tantras, is no more associated with the corpse. Kālī, in her iconic depiction, becomes the wife of Śiva who lies under her feet as the corpse. Thus, Durgā and Kālī are not physically appropriated within the domestic, but their meanings and identities are radically altered and linked to the domestic. Saṭī and Parvatī are the two form of the goddess who are situated within the domestic and the domestic itself is turned inside out to accommodate Durgā and Kālī. Thus the domestic becomes the only reference space of the goddess in the MBP.

1 MBP, 3.22-23. The theology of Vidyā and Avidyā is further elaborated in the Bhagavatī Gītā section. MBP, Chapters 15-17.

2 MBP, 1.38-39.

3 Patricia Dold, “Kālī the Terrific and her Tests: The Śākta Devotionalism of the Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa” in R.F. McDermott and Jeffrey J. Kripal (eds.), Encountering
4 Ibid., p.41.

5 Ibid., p.51.

6 Ibid., p.51.

7 For details, see Dold, Ibid, pp.51-52.

8 Ibid., p.51.


10 MBP, 2.38.

11 satyam badasi me putrim satiṃ prakṛtirūpinin|śivaṃ puriṇapuruṣaṃ trilokeśamanāmayam||MBP, 5.30.

12 ṛṣayah satyavacaso jñāyante hapi ca yadyapi|tathāpi sambhūḥ parama ityevam na matirnmama|śivaṃ yadanasūvāmi tasya mūlaṃ nibodha me|| MBP, 5.32.

13 tadā tasmai mayāpyuktam yadā mandādarō bhavān|bhaviṣyati kṣīnapṛṇyastadā sammohya māyā|| MBP, 7.87.

14 MBP, 7.102-106.

15 vināpamānaṃ sammānaṃ tatra ten a bhaviṣyati||mānindanaṃsahyam te kariṣyatī pitā tava|prānān āsyaṣi tacchṛtva tasya kiṃ tvaṃ kariṣyasi|| MBP, 8.40-41.

16 avāritāsi devī tvaṁ yateccahā kuru sarvavatā|apakarmma svayaṃ kṛtvā paraṃ dūṣayate kudhiḥ||jānāmi vāgbahirbhūtāṃ tvāmahe mādakṣakanyake|yathāruci kuru tvaṅca mamājňāṃ kiṃ pratiṅkṣase|| MBP, 8.53-54.


18 MBP, 8.76-77.

19 jāne tvāṃ paramēśānim pūrṇāṃ prakṛtimuttamāṁ|ajānata mahāmohādyaduktaṁ kṣantumahārasi|| MBP, 8.100.
20 MBP, 8.100-103.

21 Patricia Dold, “Kāli the Terrific and her Tests: The Śākta Devotionalism of the Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa”, op. cit., p.47.

22 yaśya saṅjāyate pāpaṁ sā taṁ tyajī niścitam
dharmmiṣṭhāḥ sā mahādevī na jahāti kadācanaḥ
dharmmaṇaḥ paryāye na pitrādivecanā
yadyate 'hasyā dharmmaṁśaṁ samvandho na tu laukikaṁ
dharmmaṁ yaḥ kurute sohasyaḥ pitaḥ mātā ca bāṇdhavaḥ
adharmaṇiḥḥī Śatrūreṇa na bāṇdhavaḥ|| MBP, 11.9-11.

23 tvamekam kuru matkāryyaṁ yajñamenaṁ vināśaya|
uktā bahuvidyāṁ vaiyāṁ pitā saha sulocane||
śivanindākaramvākyāṁ śrutvā pitrāṁśvāṁ||
viśvasva yajñavāhau tvaṁ ruṣājvalitavigrahā||||MBP, 9.7-8.

24 manṇindaṇaratiḥ vartṛm dakṣasyāpi praṭāpateḥ
chindhi gaccha druṭaṁ tatra mā chiyaṁ kuru he suta || MBP, 10.21.


26 MBP, 11.62.

27 MBP, 12.16.

28 For a detailed analysis on the devotional content of the MBP, see Patricia Dold, “Kāli the Terrific and her Tests: The Śākta Devotionalism of the Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa”, op. cit., pp.39-59.


30 For details, see MBP chapters, 64-70.

31 MBP 15.13.

32 The discourse on the nature and characteristics of the goddess is called the Bhagavatī Gitā.


34 MBP, 20.27.

35 MBP, 21.49-50.
36 We have already discussed Wendy’s observation on Pārvatī’s role in “seducing” Hara in the earlier chapter. David Shulman also notes Pārvatī’s instrumentality in “seducing” Śiva through her *tapas*. He observes, “Essentially, however, Pārvatī’s *tapas* is but a method of seduction, and she remains in the myth closer to the *apsarās* than to the ascetic” David Dean Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths: Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in South Indian Saiva Tradition*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1980, p. 14.

37 *MBP*, 22.40.

38 śīvastu sāntarasthā tāṁ dhyāyamānaḥ samutsukāḥ
   jagrāḥa sahasā naiva vāryaātvena maheśvarim|| *MBP* 22.7.

39 *MBP*, 22.40.

40 smṛtvā maheśamohārtham samuttasthau maheśvari
   mahāmāyā yaṭedaṇḥ hi moḥyate sakalam jagat|| 22.93.

41 *MBP*, 23.5-6.

42 I use the term *hyphenated disjuncture* to emphasise the character of identification of Satī, Kālī and Pārvatī in the *MBP* which not only identifies them as one but also dissociates them from each other.

43 yatra yatra tavedaṁ hi kālirūpaṁ maheśvari
   āvirbhavati tatraiva śavarūpasya me hṛd|| .
   samsthātavyaṁ tvyā loke khyāta ca śavavāhanā|
   bhavisyasi mahākālī prasīda jagadambike|| *MBP*, 24.194-195.

44 The goddess is of the form of consciousness and the world devoid of her appears like a corpse (śavat) When accompanied by her, the world gains consciousness, just as one’s machine gets operated by its owner. *MBP*, 43.39-40.

45 In the *MBP*, we no more come across the terms like *preta* or *kuṇa*, only the *śava* is referred to.

46 aham tvāṁ sarvavatā bhaktibhāvena samupāśritaḥ|
   māmudhara mahādurga-kāmasāgaramadhvataḥ|| *MBP*, 24.10.

47 yathā tvāṁ samśṛtiṣaṁ mokṣadāśi dayāmayi|
   tathā māṁ kīpayā kāmasāgarācca samuddhara|| *MBP* 24.11.


49 *MBP*, 24.29-33.
50 MBP, 30.1-5.

51 tatastasyāh svāvīryyena jāta ekaḥ paraḥ pumān
bhairavo bhīmanatraśca mahābalaparākramah|| MBP, 30.7.


53 Ibid., p. 238.

54 In chapter thirty-five of the Purāṇa, the birth of Ganeśa from the haridra paste of the body of the goddess is narrated.

55 tabhīḥ skandaliyādretaḥ saṅghājjīto hyayāṃ yataḥ
ataḥskandeti nāmnāpi khyāto loke bhaviṣyati|| MBP, 30.36.

56 MBP, 36.58.

57 kintu nāyāṃ sa kālo hi yatra devyārccanāvidhiḥ
nidrita ca mahādevi sāmpratam tridaśeśvari||
viśeṣatastau pakṣoḥayamapi kṛṣṇah pitāmahāḥ
kathamatra mahādevīmaprabuddhaṁ prapūjaye|| MBP, 42.20-21.

58 MBP, 44.1.

59 David Shulman, op cit. p 1.80.


61 Lindse Harlan, “Battles, Brides, and Sacrifices: Rajput, Kuldevīs in Rajsthan” in...Is the Goddess a Feminist, op. cit., p. 70.


63 MBP, 43.

64 MBP 44.88.

65 vijayādicaḥṣaṣṭiyogīnyah paricārkhāḥ
purakarmmāṇi kuvvanti sadā sāvahita mune|| 59.15.

66 MBP, 63.25-32.

67 MBP, 76.18.
68 MBP, 76.11.

69 MBP, 77.6-8.