

Hymns from the Chandī

(*English Translation by Devadatta Kali*)

Brahmā's Hymn

Brahmā said: You are svāhā and svadhā—the mantras of consecration to the gods and the ancestors. At your bidding they are uttered, and they are your very embodiment. You are the nectar of immortality, O imperishable, eternal one. Truly, you abide as the transcendent being, yet in every moment you abide, inseparable and inexpressible, as the eternal source of all becoming. Indeed you are that. You are Sāvitrī, the source of all purity and protection; you are the supreme mother of the gods. (1–2)

By you is this universe supported, of you is this world born, by you is it protected, O Devī, and you always consume it at the end. You are the creative force at the world's birth and its sustenance for as long as it endures. So even at the end of this world, you appear as its dissolution, you who encompass it all. You are the great knowledge and the great illusion, the great intelligence, the great memory and the great delusion, the great devī and the great asurī. (3–5)

You are primordial matter, differentiating into the threefold qualities of everything. You are the dark night of periodic dissolution, the great night of final dissolution, and the terrifying night of delusion. You are radiant splendour; you reign supreme yet are unassuming; you are the light of understanding. Modesty are you, and prosperity, contentment, tranquillity and forbearance. Armed with sword and spear, and with club and discus, waging war with conch, bow and arrows, sling and iron mace, you inspire dread. Yet, you are pleasing, more pleasing than all else that is pleasing, and exceedingly beautiful. Transcending both highest and lowest, you are indeed the supreme sovereign. (6–9)

Whatever exists, true or untrue, and wherever it may be, O soul of everything, you are the power of all that. How can I praise you? By you, even he who creates, protects, and devours the world is subdued with sleep. Who here can praise you? You have caused even Viṣṇu, Śiva, and me to assume our embodied forms. Who then can truly praise you? Thus extolled, O Devī, may you with your exalted powers confound those unassailable asuras, Madhu and Kaiṭabha. Let Viṣṇu, the lord of the world, be quickly awakened from his slumber and be roused to slay the two great asuras. (10–14)

Śakra & the Devas' hymn

To the Devī, who spreads out this world through her own power and who embodies herself as all the powers of the hosts of gods; to Ambikā, who is worthy of worship by all the gods and great seers, we bow down in devotion. May she grant us that which is auspicious. (1)

May she whose unequalled might and splendor even the blessed Viṣṇu, Brahmā, and Śiva are powerless to describe, may she, Caṇḍikā, be intent on protecting all the world and on destroying the fear of misfortune. (2)

O Devī, we bow before you who are yourself good fortune in the dwellings of the virtuous and misfortune in the abodes of the wicked, intelligence in the hearts of the learned, faith in the hearts of the good, and modesty in the hearts of the high-born. May you protect the universe! (3)

How can we describe this form of yours, which surpasses thought? And your abundant, exceeding valour that destroys evil? And your deeds in battle, O Devī, among all the throngs of gods and demons? (4)

You are the cause of all the worlds. Though containing the triple forces of creation within yourself, you are untouched by any imperfection. You are unfathomable even to Viṣṇu, Śiva, and the other gods. You are the resort of all. You are this entire, manifold world and you are primordial matter, supreme and untransformed. (5)

O Devī, you are the mantra of consecration whose utterance in all sacrifices brings satisfaction to the whole assemblage of gods, and you are the mantra which humans proclaim as the cause of satisfaction to the hosts of ancestral spirits. (6)

O Devī, who are the cause of liberation and great, inconceivable austerities: sages yearning for liberation contemplate you with senses restrained, intent upon truth, with all faults cast off, for you are the blessed, supreme knowledge. (7)

With sound as your essence, you are the treasury that holds the taintless Vedic hymns, sung to resound joyfully with your holy name. You are the blessed Devī, who embodies the three Vedas. Intent on conferring well-being, you are the supreme destroyer of pain in all the worlds. (8)

O Devī, you are the intelligence by which the essence of all scriptures is understood. You are Durgā, the vessel free of attachments that takes one across life's difficult ocean. You are Śrī, the radiant splendor that abides in the heart of Viṣṇu. You are Gaurī, the shining goddess who abides with the moon-

crowned Śiva. (9)

Gently smiling, your shining face resembles the full moon's orb and is as pleasing as the lustre of the finest gold. Beholding it, how could Mahiṣāsura, even though enraged, be moved to strike it? (10)

Still stranger was it, O Devī, that Mahiṣa did not perish the instant he beheld your wrathful face, reddened like the rising moon and scowling frightfully. For who can behold the enraged face of death and still live? (11)

O Devī, who are supreme, be gracious to all creation, for when angered you can annihilate multitudes. We saw this the moment you brought Mahiṣāsura's vast power to an end. (12)

Those to whom you are bounteous are honoured among peoples, theirs are riches, theirs are glories, and their righteous acts know no limit. They indeed are blessed with devoted children, attendants, and wives. (13)

One who is virtuous and ever mindful performs daily all righteous deeds, O Devī, and by your grace attains to heaven. Are you not, then, the giver of rewards in all the three worlds? (14)

Remembered in distress, you remove fear from every creature. Remembered by the untroubled, you confer even greater serenity of mind. Dispeller of poverty, suffering, and fear, who other than you is ever intent on benevolence toward all? (15)

The world attains happiness when you slay its foes, and though they may have committed enough evil to keep them long in torment, even as you strike down our enemies, O Devī, you think, "May they reach heaven through death in battle with me." (16)

Why does your mere glance not reduce all asuras to ashes? Because when assailed by your weapons and thus purified, even those adversaries may attain the higher worlds. Even toward them your intentions are most gracious. (17)

If the intense light flashing frightfully from your sword or the glaring brilliance of your spearpoint did not blind the asuras' eyes, it was because you made them behold the moonlike radiance beaming from your face. (18)

O Devī, your nature is to subdue the misconduct of the wicked. Others cannot equal your inconceivable grace, for even while your might destroys those who have wrested power from the gods, you show compassion toward those very foes. (19)

To what may your prowess be compared? Where else is there beauty so rav-

ishing, yet striking fear into enemies? Where in the three worlds are compassion in heart and resolve in battle seen as they are in you, O beneficent Devī? (20)

Destroying all foes, you have saved the three worlds. Slaying them at the battle-front, you led even those frenzied, hostile throngs to heaven, even while dispelling our fear of them. Salutations to you! (21)

Protect us with your spear, O Devī, and protect us with your sword, O Ambikā. Protect us with the clangour of your bell and the resonance of your bowstring. (22)

Guard us in the east and in the west, O Caṇḍikā. Guard us in the south and also in the north, O Īśvarī, by brandishing your spear. (23)

With your gentle forms that move through the three worlds and with your surpassingly terrible ones, protect us and also the earth. (24)

O Ambikā, with sword, spear, mace, and whatever other weapons your tender hands have touched, protect us on all sides. (25)

Aparājita Stutiḥ

Salutation to the Devī, to the great Devī. Salutation always to her who is auspicious. Salutation to her who is the primordial cause, to her who is gracious. With minds intent, we bow down to her. (1)

Salutation to her who is terrible. To Gaurī, the eternal, shining one; to her who sustains the universe, salutations again and again. Salutation always to her who is moonlight, who has the form of the moon and is blissful. (2)

We bow to her who is auspicious beauty. We make salutations again and again to her who is prosperity and attainment. Salutations again and again to her who is the fortune and misfortune of kings, to Śarvāṇī, the consort of Śiva. (3)

Salutation always to Durgā, who takes us through difficulties, who is the creator and indwelling essence of all, who is right knowledge, and who also appears dark as smoke. (4)

We bow down to her who is at once most gentle and most fierce. Salutations to her again and again. Salutation to the support of the world. To the Devī, who is creative action, salutations again and again. (5)

To the Devī, who in all beings is called Viṣṇumāyā, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again. (6)

To the Devī, who in all beings is seen as consciousness, salutation to her, sa-

lutation to her, salutation to her again and again. (7)

To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of intelligence, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again. (8)

To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of sleep, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again. (9)

To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of hunger, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again. (10)

To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of shadow, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again. (11)

To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of power, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again. (12)

To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of thirst, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again. (13)

To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of forgiveness, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again. (14)

To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of order, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again. (15)

To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of modesty, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again. (16)

To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of peace, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again. (17)

To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of faith, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again. (18)

To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of loveliness, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again. (19)

To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of good fortune, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again. (20)

To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of activity, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again. (21)

To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of memory, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again. (22)

To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of compassion, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again. (23)

To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of contentment, salutation

to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again. (24)

To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of mother, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again. (25)

To the Devī, who abides in all beings in the form of error, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again. (26)

To her who presides over the elements and the senses, and is ever present in all beings, to the all-pervading Devī, salutations again and again. (27)

To her who pervades this entire world and abides in the form of consciousness, salutation to her, salutation to her, salutation to her again and again. (28)

Praised long ago by the gods for fulfilling their desires and likewise honored daily by the lord of the gods, may Īśvarī, the source of all good, create happiness and prosperity for us, and may she destroy our misfortunes. (29)

Tormented by arrogant daityas, we gods now honor her, the supreme power. With bodies bowed down in devotion, at this moment we remember her who destroys all afflictions. (30)

Nārāyaṇī Stutiḥ

O Devī, who remove the sufferings of those who take refuge in you, be gracious. Be gracious, mother of the entire world. Be gracious, ruler of all. Protect the universe, O Devī, who are the ruler of the moving and the unmoving. (1)

You alone are the sustaining power of the world, for you abide in the form of the earth. By you, who exist in the form of water, all this universe prospers, O Devī of unsurpassable strength. (2)

Of boundless might, you are Viṣṇu's power, the source of all, the supreme māyā. Deluded, O Devī, is all this universe. In this world, you alone, when pleased, are the cause of liberation. (3)

All forms of knowledge are your aspects, O Devī, as are all women in the world. By you alone, the Mother, is this world filled. What praise can be sung to you who are beyond praise? (4)

O Devī, who have become all things, who bestow enjoyment and liberation—when you are praised, what words, however excellent, can extol you? (5)

Salutation be to you, Devī Nārāyaṇī, who abide as intelligence in the hearts of all beings, granting heavenly reward and final liberation. (6)

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who bring change as the moments of ever-

passing time, who are the power at the cessation of the universe. (7)

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who are the good of all good, the auspicious one; to you who accomplish every intent; to you, the refuge, the all-knowing, shining Gaurī! (8)

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who are the power of creation, sustenance, and destruction; who are eternal; who are the source and embodiment of the threefold energy. (9)

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who are intent on rescuing the distressed and afflicted that take refuge in you; to you, O Devī, who remove the suffering of all. (10)

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who assume the form of Brahmāṇī, riding in a swan-yoked chariot, O Devī, and sprinkling sanctified water. (11)

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who have the form of Māheśvarī, bearing trident, moon, and serpent, and riding a mighty bull. (12)

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who have the form of Kaumārī, the faultless one attended by peacock and cock, and bearing a great spear. (13)

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who have the form of Vaiṣṇavī, holding the supreme weapons of conch, discus, mace, and bow. Be gracious! (14)

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, auspicious one, who have Viṣṇu's boarlike form, grasping a great, formidable discus and uplifting the earth with your tusks. (15)

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who in the ferocious form of the man-lion are intent on killing the daityas and protecting the three worlds. (16)

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who are adorned with diadem, great thunderbolt, and thousand-eyed radiance; to you, O Aindrī, who took the demon Vṛtra's life-breath! (17)

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who in the form of Śivadūtī, of frightful visage and piercing shrieks, slew the mighty demon army. (18)

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, whose mouth bares its terrifying teeth and whose neck is adorned with a garland of skulls; to you, O Cāmuṇḍā, destroyer of Muṇḍa! (19)

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, who are good fortune, modesty, great knowledge, faith, prosperity, satisfaction to the ancestral spirits, constancy, the great night, and the great illusion. (20)

Salutation be to you, Nārāyaṇī, most excellent Sarasvatī, who are intelligence

and well-being, the divine consort and the dark one, ever constant. Be gracious, O you who are supreme! (21)

O Devī, who exist in the form of all, who are the ruler of all, possessing all power, protect us from fears. O Devī Durgā, salutation be to you! (22)

May this gentle face of yours, adorned with three eyes, protect us in every way. O Kātyāyanī, salutation be to you! (23)

May your terrible, flaming trident, exceedingly sharp and destroying all asuras, protect us from dread. O Bhadrakālī, salutation be to you! (24)

May your bell that destroys the daityas' life-force and fills the world with its ringing protect us from all evils, O Devī, even as a mother protects her children. (25)

May your sword, smeared with the mire of asuras' blood and fat and blazing as the sun's rays, be for our welfare. O Caṇḍikā, we bow to you! (26)

When pleased, you destroy all afflictions, but when displeased, you thwart all aspirations. No calamity befalls those who have taken refuge in you, and they who resort to you become a refuge to others. (27)

O Devī, multiplying your own form into many, you have wrought destruction on the mighty asuras who hate righteousness. O Ambikā, who else can accomplish that? (28)

Who other than you abides in all forms of learning, in the sacred texts that are lights of understanding, in the primordial wisdom of the Vedas? Yet who else confounds this universe in the darkest abyss of attachment? (29)

Where malevolent beings and venomous serpents lurk, where enemies and thieves abound, where forest conflagrations rage, there and even in mid-ocean you stand and protect the universe. (30)

O Queen of the universe, you protect the universe. As the self of the universe, you support the universe. You are worthy to be adored by the Lord of the universe. Those who bow in devotion to you themselves become the refuge of the universe. (31)

Be gracious, O Devī. Even as you have destroyed the asuras, protect us always from the fear of enemies. May you subdue the evils of all the worlds and great disasters born of ominous portents. (32)

To those who bow down to you, be gracious, O Devī, who remove the afflictions of all and who are worthy of praise by the dwellers of the three worlds. Confer your boons upon the worlds. (33)