

# Chapter 1

## The Appearance of the Great Goddess before the Mountain King Himalaya and the Gods

Janamejaya spoke:

- 1.1. You said earlier that the supreme lustrous power manifested itself on the crest of Himalaya, the Mountain Lord.

This you mentioned only in passing. Now explain it to me in full detail.

- 1.2. What thoughtful person would ever tire of drinking the nectarine tales of Shakti?

Death comes even to those who drink divine ambrosia, but not to one who hears this act of hers.

Vyasa spoke:

- 1.3. You are blessed and completely fulfilled; you have been taught by those of great heart;

And you are fortunate, for you possess true devotion to the Goddess.

- 1.4. Hear, O King, this ancient tale. When the body of Sati was consumed in flames,

The bewildered Shiva wandered about, falling here and there motionless on the ground.

- 1.5. He was unaware of the manifest world, his mind being fully absorbed.  
Regaining his self-composure, he passed the time contemplating the true form of the Goddess.
- 1.6. Meanwhile, the three-tiered universe, with all that is mobile and immobile, lost its auspicious charm  
When the entire world with its oceans, continents, and mountains was bereft of energy.
- 1.7. Joy shriveled up in the heart of each and every being.  
All peoples were despondent, their careworn spirits exhausted.
- 1.8. Then, ever drowning in a sea of misery, they were consumed by disease.  
The planets retrogressed ominously; the fortunes of the gods declined.
- 1.9. Kings, too, suffered misfortune due to material and spiritual forces set in motion by the death of Sati.  
Now at that time arose a great demon, Taraka by name.
- 1.10. The fiend became master of the three-tiered universe after procuring from Brahma this boon:  
“Only a legitimate son of Shiva shall be your slayer.”
- 1.11. With his death thus fixed by Brahma, the great demon,  
Realizing no lawful son of Shiva existed, roared and rejoiced.

- 1.12. And all the gods, attacked by Taraka and driven from their own homes,  
Lived in a state of persistent anxiety due to the absence of any legitimate son of Shiva.

The gods thought:

- 1.13. Shiva has no wife; how shall he engender a son?  
How can we prosper, deprived of good fortune?

Vyasa continued:

- 1.14. Thus afflicted with worry, all the gods journeyed to Vishnu's heaven,  
Taking counsel with him in private. He then explained their proper recourse:

Vishnu spoke:

- 1.15. Why are you all so worried, for the Auspicious Goddess is a wish-fulfilling tree?  
Dwelling in her Jeweled Island Paradise as Ruler of the Universe, she is ever attentive.
- 1.16. She neglects us now only because of our misbehavior.  
Such chastisement by the World Mother is simply for our own instruction.
- 1.17. As a mother feels no lack of compassion whether indulging or chastening her child,  
Just so the World Mother feels when overseeing our virtues and vices.
- 1.18. A son transgresses the limits of proper conduct at every step:  
Who in the world forgives him except his mother?

- 1.19. Therefore go for refuge to the supreme Mother without delay,  
With sincere hearts. She will accomplish what you want.

Vyasa continued:

- 1.20. Thus enjoining all the gods and accompanied by his wife, the great Vishnu,  
As chief of the gods, set forth at once with his fellow lords.
- 1.21. He came to the great rocky crag, Himalaya, Lord of mountains,  
And all the gods commenced the preliminary acts of worship.
- 1.22. They then performed the Mother's sacrifice, knowing well her ceremonial rites.  
All the gods hastened to perform her ritual observances, including the third-day rites, O King.
- 1.23. Some of the gods were fully absorbed in meditation; others were focused on her name.  
Some concentrated on her hymn, while others were intent on reciting her names.
- 1.24. Some were devoted to chanting mantras, or practicing severe austerities.  
Some were absorbed in mental sacrifices, and others installed mystic powers in their bodies.
- 1.25. Unwearied, they worshiped the supreme Shakti with the mantra known as Hrillekha.  
Many years thus passed away, O Janamejaya.

- 1.26. Suddenly, on the ninth lunar day in the month of Chaitra, on a Friday,  
That lustrous power revealed in scripture appeared before the gods.
- 1.27. Praised on all sides by the four Vedas incarnate,  
It blazed like ten million suns, yet soothed like ten million moons.
- 1.28. Flashing like ten million streaks of lightning tinged with red, that supreme lustrous power  
Shone forth unencompassed above, across, and in the middle.
- 1.29. Without beginning or end, it had no body, no hands, no other limbs,  
Nor did it have a woman's form, a man's form, nor the two combined.
- 1.30. The dazzling brilliance blinded the eyes of the gods, O King.  
When again their vision returned, the gods beheld
- 1.31. That light appearing now in the form of a woman, charming and delightful.  
She was exceedingly beautiful of limb, a maiden in the freshness of youth.
- 1.32. Her full, upraised breasts put to shame the swelling buds of the lotus.  
Her girdle and anklets jingled with clusters of tinkling bells.
- 1.33. She was adorned with a necklace, armlets, and bracelets of gold,  
Her throat resplendent with a chain of priceless gems.

- 1.34. The locks on her cheeks shimmered like black bees swarming on delicate Ketaka blooms.  
An exquisite line of down on her midriff enhanced the charm of her shapely hips.
- 1.35. She was chewing spiced betel mixed with bits of mint camphor.  
Pendant earrings of shining gold graced her lotus face.
- 1.36. Above long eyebrows her forehead shone with an image of the crescent moon.  
Her eyes were red lotus petals, her nose dignified, her lips like nectar.
- 1.37. Her teeth resembled buds of white jasmine; a string of pearls adorned her neck.  
Her crescent-shaped crown sparkled with jewels; she was bedecked with ornaments shining like new moons.
- 1.38. A garland of jasmine flowers brightened her luxuriant hair.  
Her forehead sported a saffron dot, while her three eyes reflected her playful mood.
- 1.39. Three-eyed and four-armed, she held a noose and goad while gesturing her beneficence and assurance of safety.  
She was dressed in red and appeared lustrous like blooms of the pomegranate.
- 1.40. Richly adorned in garments all suited for love, she was worshiped by all the gods.  
Satisfying all desires, she is the Mother of all, the Deluder of all.

- 1.41. The Mother's kindly face, so gracious, displayed a tender smile on the lotus mouth.  
This embodiment of unfeigned compassion the gods beheld in their presence.
- 1.42. Seeing her, the embodiment of compassion, the entire host of gods bowed low,  
Unable to speak, choking on tears in silence.
- 1.43. Struggling to regain their composure, their necks bending in devotion,  
Their eyes brimming with tears of loving joy, they glorified the World Mother with hymns.

The gods spoke:

- 1.44. Hail to the Goddess, to the Great Goddess; to the Auspicious One always hail!  
Hail to Nature, to the Propitious One; we humble ourselves attentively before her.
- 1.45. To her, the color of fire, blazing like the sun with ascetic power, and who is worshiped for attaining the fruits of action,  
To her, the Goddess Durga, I go for refuge. Hail to that raft of swift crossing.
- 1.46. The gods created the Goddess Speech, whom animals of all sorts speak.  
This Speech is pleasing to us, this cow yielding food and strength. She is well praised; may she come to us.
- 1.47. To Kalaratri praised by Brahma, to Vaishnavi, to the Mother of Skanda,  
To Sarasvati, to Aditi, the Daughter of Daksha, we bow, to the pure Auspicious One.

- 1.48. We know you as Mahalakshmi, we meditate on you as the Shakti of all.  
May the Goddess inspire that knowledge and meditation of ours.
- 1.49. Hail to her in the form of the Cosmic Body; hail to her in the form of the Cosmic Soul; Hail to her in the Unmanifest State; hail to her in the form of the glorious Brahman.
- 1.50. Through her power of ignorance, she shows herself as the world, like a rope appearing as a serpent, wreath, and the like.  
Through her power of knowledge, she dissolves the world back into herself. We glorify her, Ruler of the Universe.
- 1.51. We glorify her whose essence is pure consciousness, represented by the word *Tat*,  
And whose nature is undiminished bliss. It is she to whom the Vedas refer as their goal.
- 1.52. Transcending the five sheaths, witness of the three states of consciousness,  
She is also in essence the individual soul, represented by the word *Tvam*.
- 1.53. Hail to her in the form of the syllable Om; hail to her embodied in the syllable Hrim.  
To her composed of manifold mantras, that is to you the compassionate Goddess, hail! Hail!

Vyasa continued:

- 1.54. Thus praised by the gods, she who dwells in the Jeweled Island then  
Answered in the sweet, joyous tones of the cuckoo.



The blessed Goddess spoke:

- 1.55. O wise gods, explain the reason that brings you together here.

I am ever the bestower of boons, a wish-yielding tree to devotees.

- 1.56. You shine with devotion, so why are you anxious when I stand nearby?

I rescue my devotees from the troubled ocean of samsara.

- 1.57. Know this promise of mine to be sincere, O best of gods.

Vyasa continued:

Hearing these words infused with loving joy, the gods were satisfied in their hearts.

- 1.58. Freed from fear, the immortals described their own ordeal, O King.

The gods spoke:

Nothing here in the three worlds is unknown to you,

- 1.59. Who are omniscient, the incarnate witness of all, O Supreme Ruler.

The demon chief Taraka torments us day and night.

- 1.60. His death shall come only at the hands of Shiva's son—so has Brahma arranged, O Auspicious One.

But as you know, Great Ruler, Shiva has no wife.

- 1.61. What can ignorant beings reveal to one who is omniscient?

Such is our situation in brief; you can infer the rest, O Mother.

- 1.62. May we always show unswerving devotion to your lotus feet;

This is our foremost wish. We also pray that you will assume a body.

Vyasa continued:

- 1.63. The Supreme Ruler listened to these words of theirs and gave reply.

The Goddess spoke:

My potency who is Gauri will be born to Himalaya.

- 1.64. She will be given in marriage to Shiva and will furnish what you need.

You shall be devoted to my lotus feet due to your earnest desire.

- 1.65. Himalaya, moved by intense devotion, truly worships me in his heart.

Thus I consider it a pleasure to take birth in his house.

Vyasa spoke:

- 1.66. Hearing her exceedingly kind words, Himalaya on his part

Replied to the Great Sovereign Queen, his eyes and throat congested with tears.

Himalaya spoke:

- 1.67. You greatly ennoble whomever you wish to favor,

For who am I, so dull and motionless, compared to you who embody infinite being and consciousness?

- 1.68. That I should become your father in the course of hundreds of births is astonishing, O Faultless One,

Even with all the merits gained by performing horse sacrifices and other religious penances.

- 1.69. Now I shall be renowned, for all the world will think: “The World Mother has become the daughter

Of that Himalaya, wonder of wonders! How blessed and fortunate is he!

- 1.70. She whose womb contains tens of millions of worlds

Has been born as his daughter—who on earth is his equal?”

- 1.71. I know not what heavenly realm has been prepared for my ancestors

To rest in, so blessed are they to have one such as myself born in their family.

- 1.72. As you have already granted me one favor through your loving compassion,

Would you also please describe for me your true nature as explained in all the Upanishads.

- 1.73. And further describe the paths of both yoga and knowledge combined with devotion, as approved by scripture.

Explain these, Supreme Ruler, so that I may become one with you.

Vyasa spoke:

- 1.74 Hearing these words of Himalaya, and with  
her lotus face kindly disposed,  
The Mother undertook to reveal the mystic  
teachings hidden in scripture.