CHAPTER VII

WHAT IS ŚAKTI?¹

Here, in the course of the present discussion, it has become necessary to decide a few points about Śakti-tattva. Whether because of the particular age we live in, or of sectarianism, there exist in Bengal a number of leaders, or pseudo-leaders, of the religious community who think and preach that they alone and a few other persons belonging to their community and holding their views are learned in all Śāstras, competent to pass judgment on all Tattvas and Dīkṣā-gurus of sādhakas² belonging to all communities. We know not by what curse of Bhagavān they consider it a great sin, for which there is no atonement, to believe that Bhagavān and Bhagavatī are one and the same being, nor why they look down with hatred and disgust, even as though their touch were polluting as that of hell-worms, on all persons who entertain such a belief. Such conduct by men towards their fellow-beings is not altogether impossible; but there is no escape for even Devatās, no pardon for even Iśvara, from them. A little inquiry in confidence will reveal to Sādhakas that in most places these people, being themselves Vaiṣṇavas, first worship Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and then offer to Śrī Rādhikā the articles already offered to Him. The reason for their doing so is that Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who holds all Śakti, is Lord and Śrī Rādhikā, who is Śakti Herself, is His handmaid, and that it is the duty of the handmaid to partake of the leavings of Her Lord’s food, leavings which are tokens of His favour and, consequently, precious and particularly dear to Her. The honour of Rādhikā, however, is thus in a fashion maintained, because She is the companion or, at least, handmaid of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. But the case of Gāyatrī, who is single, is different. Had She been the companion of any Deva they could easily have included Her in the same class with Rādhikā; but Gāyatrī, the Mother of the three Vedas, and the progenitrix

¹ Śakti-tattva. Śakti is that which makes able, or that Power by virtue of which things happen or act (see post). That power belongs to, or more properly is, the Brahman, and is of various kinds, as to which see following pages.

² That is, gurus who initiate: and other matters relating to sādhakas.
of the triad of Devas,¹ is no one’s companion, and thus there is no opportunity to call Her anyone’s handmaid. For this reason they have altogether abandoned Gāyatrī, considering Her to be “bare Śakti”. Born in the line of Brahmā, these people yet think that it is a great sin to repeat Gāyatrī or even to admit that She is Brahmā or Īśvara, and consider that it is improper to divulge to the public this intense secret devotion in the store of sādhana. It is only with a view to keeping up social and family custom and distinction of caste in the sight of others that Brāhmaṇa Purohitas² are called in, as a formal matter, to invest their children with the sacred thread.³ If, unable to make time himself, the Purohita requests the father or grandfather of the invested boy to teach him Sandhyā⁴ and Gāyatrī,⁵ it is often found that the greatest difficulty arises.

Besides this, there are a few philosophical⁶ pandits who say that worship of Śakti is not directly worship of Brahmā. In their opinion such an inference is not even contrary to the teaching of Śastra. They have decided that Ādyāsakti Mahāmāyā⁷ is She who is called māyā⁸ or avidyā⁹ by the Vedānta. This māyā or avidyā is gross matter, something devoid of consciousness. It is only when Ātmā, who is consciousness itself, is reflected in Her that She appears to possess consciousness for Her work. For this reason these people say that He who possesses sakti is full of consciousness while sakti is gross matter. What, then, are those who worship gross matter instead of Brahmā but gross matter themselves?

Let us see whether this conclusion of theirs is approved of by the Śastra. What the Tantra-Śastra has said about sakti we reserve for subsequent discussion. For those people firmly believe that the purpose of the Tantra Śastra is to give prominence to sakti, and, consequently, evidence drawn from this source will not appear to be of much weight to them. For this reason we shall first of all quote evidence from the Śrimad Bhāgavata. The following appears in the hymn to Śiva by Brahmā contained in the Chapter on Dakṣa’s sacrifice in the Śrimad Bhāgavata:

"I know that thou art the Īśvara (creator) of the universe. I know also that Thou art Parabrahman, in whom are inseparably united Śakti and Śiva, the womb (yoni) and the seed from which the universe is born. Bhagavān, it is Thou who dividest Thyself into the two forms of Śiva and

¹ Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśvara. ² Priests. ³ At the upanayana ceremony. ⁴ The prayers and ritual which go by that name (see Introduction to Tantra Śastra). ⁵ The mahāmantra of that name. ⁶ Dānānik. ⁷ The Devī as primal Śakti. ⁸ Illusion (see Introduction to Tantra Śastra). ⁹ Ignorance (see Introduction to Tantra Śastra).
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Śakti, and, like a spider in play, dost create, preserve and destroy the universe."

Here Brahmā Himself says that Parabrahman is the non-differentiated substance 1 of Śiva and Śakti. He, therefore, has not embraced Brahmaism by omitting that part which consists of Śakti. Again, in the Śrīmad Bhāgavata, Bhagavān says to Uddhava:

"Pra-kṛti, the material of this universe, the supreme Puruṣa, its receptacle and Kāla (Time) its revealer—I am Brahmā divided into these three parts."

In the Śrīmad Bhāgavadgītā, Bhagavān says to Arjuna:

"Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, and reason also, and egoism 2—these are the eightfold division of My nature.

"This the inferior. Know My other nature, the higher, the life-element, O mighty-armed! by which the universe is upheld." 3

Here Bhagavān first speaks of gross 4 Pra-kṛti, which is divided into eight parts, and then calls the Śakti, who is eternal consciousness 5 itself and gives life to all Jivas, as His (Supreme) 6 pra-kṛti, thus dividing pra-kṛti into two main parts according as She is "gross" and "conscious".

Again, "Brooding over nature (pra-kṛti) which is Mine own, I am born through My own Power (māyā)." 7

Here, also, Bhagavān has differentiated between His own true pra-kṛti and māyā.

The following appears in the hymn to Śiva by Pūtātmā contained in the Kāśikāṅḍa of the Skanda Purāṇa:

"O Viśveśvara, 8 Thou art the universe itself. There is no difference between Thee and the universe, for Thou art omnipresent and the subject of praiseful hymn, 9 the maker of the hymn and even the hymn itself. Thou art both with and without attributes. Even yogīs are without spiritual perception of this truth concerning Thee, O Lord, who moveth as Thou wilteth. She is Thy Śakti who appeared as an embodiment of Thy desire when Thou wert no longer able to enjoy Thyself alone. Though one in reality, Thou hast acquired a dual aspect according as Thou art Śiva and Śakti. Thou art Bhagavān, the embodiment of knowledge and desire is Thy Śakti. Thou, in Thy twofold aspect of Śiva and Śakti, gave rise in Thy play to the Śakti of action, and from this

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1 Tattva.
2 Manas, buddhi, abhāṅkāra.
3 Jāda.
4 Pra-pra-kṛti.
5 Bhāgavadgītā, chap. iv, verse 6. A slight departure has been made from Mrs. Besant's translation in order not to differ from the author's Bengali version. Mrs. Besant's translation is: "Though brooding over nature, which is Mine own, yet I am born through my own Power."
6 Lord of universe.
7 Śiva.
Principles of Tantra

Śakti of action has been generated this world. Thou Thyself art the embodiment of the Śakti of knowledge, Umā is the embodiment of the Śakti of desire, and this universe is the embodiment of the Śakti of action.\(^1\) Thus Thou art the sole cause of the universe.”

Again: “Thou as Prakṛti and Puruṣa first created the Brahmāṇḍa, and then inhabited it as all things moving and non-moving. Therefore, O Thou who pervadeth the whole world, nothing is different from Thee. All things exist in Thee, and Thou pervadeth all things.” Vālmiki says in the Uttarakāṇḍa of Adbhūta Rāmāyaṇa:

“Jānaki is primeval, eternal. She is the visible Prakṛti itself. Through Her, austerity is fruitful and heaven is gained. She is the eternal vibhūti of vibhūs.\(^2\) It is that Mahāśakti whom Brahmavādīs\(^3\) describe in the two forms of Vidyā and Avidyā. She is Riddhi;\(^4\) Siddhi, full of guṇas, made of guṇas, and above guṇas. She exists as both Brahman and Brahmāṇḍa. She is the cause of all causes. She eternally plays as Prakṛti and Vikṛti.\(^5\) She is full of consciousness, and blooms in consciousness. She exists in all things, is Brahman and Mahākūṇḍalinī. All this world, consisting of moving and non-moving things, is but Her play, O Brahman. Holding Her in their hearts, yogis sever the heart’s ties, and exist under their own true aspect. O Good Doer! whenever dharma\(^6\) becomes tarnished and adharma\(^7\) flourishes, Mahāprakṛti appears through Her own māyā. Rāma also is the supreme light, the supreme abode, and the supreme Puruṣa in flesh and blood; for there is, in reality, no real difference between Sītā and Rāma. It is because sādhūs have realized this that they have thrown off the slumber of māyā, awakened to the state of the knowledge of truth, and crossed from the jaws of death to the other side of the sea of samsāra. Rāma is incomprehensible, full of eternal consciousness, omniscient, omnipresent, the sole creator, preserver, and destroyer of all things, blissful and all pervading. Yogis contemplate Him inseparably with Sītā. I shall truly relate, by way of illustration, how; though in truth birthless, Prakṛti and Puruṣa, who exist in causal bodies, take high and wonderful births. Being in truth formless, They assume forms for the salvation of mankind and out of their mercy for it.”

Again, when thousand-headed Rāvana was killed by Sītā in the form of Kālikā, Rāmacandra said in his hymn to Her:

\(^1\) The three Śaktis—Jñāna (cognition), Icchā (volition), Kriyā (motion).
\(^2\) Vibhūti is the thing which characterizes the higher nature. Vibhū is one who is all-pervading, and vibhūti is both that to which it displays and the power by which it displays.
\(^3\) Worshippers of the Brahman.
\(^4\) Spiritual wealth.
\(^5\) Freely rendered as “As cause and effect.”
\(^6\) Righteousness.
\(^7\) Unrighteousness.
"Blessed is my birth to-day, and successful is my devotion; for, being unrevealed to the world, Thou hast favoured me by appearing to my view. All the world is Thy creation, and Pradhāṇa¹ and other Tattvas² are seated in Thee. At the time of the great dissolution this world disappears in Thee. Thou art the highest goal of Jīva. Some speak of Thee as Prakṛti, different from Vikṛti, while, O Companion of Śiva, others of the spiritually wise describe you as Śiva, Pradhāna Puruṣa, Mahattattva, Brahmā, Iśvara, Avidyā, Niyati, Māyā and Kāla³ and hundreds of other limbs emanate from and exist in Thee. Thou art the supreme Sakti, which is eternal and the highest good. Thou art free from all differences, and the shelter of all differences. Thou existesth as Thine own true Self, O Yogeśvari, who art Paramēśvari. It is by entering into Thee Puruṣa makes and unmakes Pradhāna⁴ and all other things of the world. It is by uniting with Thee that Puruṣa, the supreme Deva, enjoys the bliss of His Ownself. Thou art the supreme bliss and also the giver of supreme bliss. Thou art the supreme space, the supreme light, immaculate, Śiva, omnipresent, subtle, Parabrahman, and eternal."

The following appears in the Mahābhāgavata:

"I bow to the Devī, who grants heaven and liberation, by worshipping whom Vīruṇci⁵ has become the creator, Hari⁶ the preserver, and Giriṣṭha⁷ the destroyer, of this world; who is the object of contemplation by Yogīs, whom Munis possessed of spiritual knowledge describe as the primal and supreme Prakṛti.

"May She preserve us⁸ who on creating this world according to Her free will has taken birth in it, and receiving Śambhu for Her husband, and whose feet Śambhu placed on His breast when receiving Her for His wife as the fruit of His austerities."

Suta⁹ said: "High minded Mahaṛṣi Bhagavān Vyāsa the speaker of endless Dharmāṣṭras, chief of all men, learned in the Vedas, and proficient in spiritual knowledge, received no satisfaction from his work in connection with the seventeen Purāṇas. He then bethought himself 'How shall I relate that Mahāpurāṇa, than which no greater Purāṇa exists on earth, and wherein the supreme Bhagavatī is dealt with in all detail? Failing to know the truth¹⁰ about the Devī, his heart became agitated. He

¹ The material cause. ² Its derivatives. ³ Śiva; the material and efficient cause; the Tattva Mahat, first of their issue; Creator; Lord; nescience; destiny; power of illusion and time. Niyati also is the Śaiva category of space. ⁴ Vide last note. ⁵ Brahmā. ⁶ Visnu. ⁷ Śiva. ⁸ The author's rendering is free here. He writes: "May the creatrix of the universe who is worshipped by Śiva preserve the three worlds." ⁹ Lomaharṣanā, the narrator. ¹⁰ Tattva.
thought, ‘How can that supreme and most abstruse truth be known to me which is not known to even Maheśvara of vast knowledge?’ So thinking, and finding no other means, Vyāsa of great intelligence set his whole-hearted devotion on Durgā, went to the Himālaya, and there practised severe austerities. The consort of Śiva, who is ever fond of Her devotees, was pleased with such devotion and, remaining unseen in the sky, said, ‘Mahāmuni Vyāsa, go to Brahmaloka where all the Śrutis incarnate live; there you will know my stainless supreme existence. There sung by the Śrutis, I shall become visible and do what is desired of by you.’ Hearing the message from above, Bhagavān Vedavyāsa at once repaired to Brahmaloka, bowed to the four Vedas and asked, ‘What is the supreme and undecaying Brahman?’

“Great Muni, hearing the Rṣi ask this question with modesty and submissiveness, the Vedas at once replied by turn.”

Ṛgveda said: “In whom are contained all things, out of whom appear all things, and whom all describe as the highest Being, that Ādyā (primal) Bhagavati is Brahman itself.”

Yajurveda said: “The Iśvari who is worshipped in all yajñas and in yoga and for whose existence we (Vedas) are deemed the authority, that Bhagavati alone is Brahman itself.”

Sānaveda said: “By whom this universe is moved, whom all yogis contemplate, and by whose light the universe is manifested, that world-pervading Durgā alone is supreme Brahman.”

Athravaveda said: “The Iśvari of Suras whom all who are favoured for their devotion see, that Bhagavatī Durgā all Śāstras describe as Supreme Brahman.”

Suta said, hearing the incarnate Śrutis thus express themselves: “Vyāsa, the son of Satyavati, became certain that Bhagavati Durgā was supreme Brahman.” After they had spoken as above mentioned, the Śrutis also again said unto the Mahāmuni: “What we have said we shall make directly visible to you.” So saying, the Śrutis began to sing in praise of that Paramesvarī who is existence, consciousness, and bliss, who is pure, and who holds in Herself all Devas and Devis.

The Śrutis said: “Supreme universe-embracing Durgā be pleased. The three Purusas Śri, Viṣṇu, and Maheśvara, are created with their individual guṇas according to Thy will for the threecfold work of creation, preservation, and destruction. But, O Mother, Thou hast no creator in the three worlds. Who in the world can therefore describe Thy qualities, impenetrable by the intellect of Jīvas?”

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1 Tattva.
2 Bhakti.
3 That is, the four Vedas incarnate (Mārtimatt). Literally, “possessing form”.
4 Devas and Devis.
5 “Persons”.
"O Mother of the three worlds, it is by worshipping Thee that Hari destroys invincible Daityas and thus preserves the three worlds, and it was by holding Thy feet on His breast that Maheśvara was able to drink poison deadly enough to destroy the three worlds. What can we say which will describe the force of that (incomprehensible) nature of Thine?"

"We bow to Thee, O Mother who art the body, the consciousness, the Śakti of motion, and other Śaktis, and the highest Śakti, constituted of Thy own guṇas by the instrumentality of māyā of the supreme Puruṣa (Paramātmā), and Thou art She who residest as consciousness in the bodies of Jivas, who, charmed by Thy māyā and with differentiating knowledge, describe Thee as Puruṣa."

"Brahma-tattva is that aspect of Thine which is devoid of all distinctive conditions, such as masculinity, femininity, etc. Next, Śakti is that primary desire of Thine which arose in Thee for creating the world. That Śakti appeared in one half as the supreme Puruṣa, so that both Prakṛti and Puruṣa are but Śakti in different forms. Both are but manifestation of Thy māyā. Even Parama-brahmatattva, therefore, is nothing but Thyself as Śakti."

"Just as to a searcher for truth things like hail formed of water and yet hard, are known to him to be water, so to an inquirer into the nature of all things in this world which has its origin in Brahmā, the latter has no separate existence from that of Śakti. Buddhī as Puruṣā, when realized as Śakti, also is Brahmā; for Śakti is manifested Brahman."

"The six Śivas, beginning with Brahā, which exist in the six cakras in the body of the Jiva are, when considered separately from Thee, only pretas (that is to say, gross matter in regard to their individual functions). It is only when they come under Thy protection that they attain Param Śiva-hood (that is to say, become Śivas under the influence of Śakti). So, O Śīve, Śiva-hood is not in Śiva, but in Thee. O universe-pervading Devī Durgā, O Mother Whose lotus feet are worshipped by mortals, have mercy on us."

Suta said: "Thus, sung in a hymn by the incarnate Śrutis, the eternal Mother of the universe showed Herself to them."
Although that Mahādevī exists as light (consciousness) in all living things yet She assumed a distinct body in order to dispel the doubts of Vyāsa."

That body was of the brilliance of a thousand suns, and fair with the beauty of ten million moons. She had a thousand arms bearing celestial weapons, was decked with celestial ornaments and garments; smeared with celestial unguents, and seated on a lion. At times She was also seated on a corpse, and had four arms, and was of the colour of a freshly formed cloud. In this manner She appeared sometimes as two-armed, sometimes as four-armed, sometimes as ten-armed, sometimes as eighteen-armed, and sometimes as an hundred-armed. At times She appeared possessed of an infinite number of arms and of a sublime divine form."

Sometimes She appeared as Viṣṇu, with Lākṣmī on His left, at others as Śrī Kṛṣṇa with Rādhikā on His left; yet again as Brahmā, with Sarasvatī on His left, and then as Śiva, with Gaurī on His left."

"The all-pervading Devī who is Brahman in reality dispelled Vyāsa's doubts by thus assuming various forms."

Sūta said: "Seeing all these wonderful forms of Jagadambā, Vyāsa, the great Muni and son of Parāśara, knew the sublime Brahmātattva, and became free from the condition of a Jīva. Then, knowing the desire of Vyāsa, Devī Bhagavatī, the dweller in all hearts, showed him the thousand-petalled lotus lying under Her feet. In the petals of the lotus Vyāsa, the great Rṣi, saw the great Purāṇa, named Mahābhāgavata, replete with sublime letters. Thus blessed, he praised the Devī in various ways, bowed to the earth before Her, and returned to his hermitage."

"He then disclosed the Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa, most sacred and full of sublime letters, just as he had found it in the thousand-petalled lotus lying under the lotus feet of Jagadambā." ¹

Again, the following appears in the second chapter of the same book:

Nārada asked: "O Thou, the worshipped of the three worlds, chief of Devas and merciful to devotees, Thou art the greatest of those who know the pure Ātmā and Brahman. O Paramēśvara! Thou alone knowest the nature of all things. O Lord of the universe. The other Devas and Rṣis know it not." "Thou (alone of all Devas) fondly holdest on Thy head Gangā, who purifies the three worlds (because Thou knowest

¹ The mother of the world.
² Jhāni.
³ Vastu-tattva, the principle of all physical existence.
⁴ Śiva called Gangādhara. "Whose coiled and matted hair is wet with the spray of Gangā" (Mahānirvāṇa Tantra, chap. i). When the River Ganges descended from Heaven, He intercepted it by His head, so that the earth might not be crushed by the weight of the falling stream.
Her greatness). Thou hast made the moon Thy head ornament (because Thou knowest its essential beauty). Tell me, therefore, O omnipresent Deva, that which I ask of Thee now. O Mahēśvara, who is the Devatā whom Ye too worship?  "

"Whoever worships Thee as well as Bhagavān Viṣṇu, and Brahmā, the Lord of the Universe, with devotion, attains to such a high state as it is in the power of none on earth to describe. Such being the more than worldly greatness of yourselves, I desire by all means to know the Devatā whom Ye too worship. Tell me, O Mahēśvara, who is that Devatā."

Vyāsa said: "O great Muni Jaimini, hearing these words of Nārada, Mahādeva repeatedly revolved the matter in His mind, and then Mahādeva said: 'Great Rṣi, that which you desire to know is the highest and most abstruse truth. My child, how can I reveal that unrevealable truth?'"

Vyāsa said: "Thus replied to by the Deva of Devas, Nārada stood, and, with folded hands, thus addressed Nārāyaṇa, the omnipresent Lord of the universe:

"Though very merciful to His devotees, Bhagavān Mahēśvara, the Deva of Devās, is yet reluctant to say who is the Devatā He worships. Tell me therefore, O Thou Who art merciful to the supplicant, and chief of Devas, who that Devatā is."

Nārāyaṇa said: "Great Rṣi, what need have you to hear of that matter? We are your Devatas, and you will attain the highest state by worshipping us. What reason can you then have to know the Devatā We ourselves worship?"

Vyāsa said: "Thus spoken to by Bhagavān Viṣṇu also, Nārada, the great Muni (finding no other means), thus prayed with folded hands and propitiatory words, to both Śiva and Viṣṇu."

Nārada said: "O Viśveśvara, the Deva of Devas, be gracious unto me; O Vāsudeva Nārāyaṇa be gracious unto me. O Sambhu, brilliant with the ornament of snakes, be gracious unto me. O Viṣṇu, decked with the kaustubha jewel, be gracious unto me. O merciful Gангādhara, O worshipful Deva, armed with the cakra, be gracious unto me. Viśveśvara, naked as space, O Gadāhara, dressed in yellow, be gracious unto me. O Destroyer of Asura Tripura, I bow to Thee. O Destroyer of Asura Baka, I bow to Thee. O Destroyer of Asura Andhaka, I bow to Thee; O Destroyer of Asura Kamsa, I bow to Thee. O five-headed Deva, riding on a bull, I bow to Thee. O Viṣṇu, seated on Garuḍa, I bow to Thee."

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2 Śiva is represented as bearing the crescent moon.  
3 Tattva.  
4 Nārada prays alternately first to Śiva and then to Kṛṣṇa.  
5 Discus of Viṣṇu.  
6 Demons, Tripura, and Andhaka, slain by Śiva and the other two by Kṛṣṇa.  
7 The king of birds, carrier of Viṣṇu.
Seeing Nārada, the great Devaṛṣi, thus engaged in prayer, Bhagavān Viṣṇu looked towards Deva Maheśvara and said:

Viṣṇu said: "Nārada, the son of Brahmā is devoted, wise and modest. Thou ought by all means to favour him, for Thou art gracious to devotees."

Vyāsā said: "Hearing these words of Viṣṇu, Maheśvara, too, who is ever gracious to the supplicant, said, 'Be it so.'"

Then high souled Nārada, possessed of pure knowledge, again questioned Mahādeva, the seat of mercy and Deva of Devas.

Nārada said: "It is by worshipping Thee, Viṣṇu and Brahmā, the Lord of the Universe, that Indra and other Lokapālas have attained high states. O Chief of Devas, who is the perfect, immutable Devatā whom Ye worship? Tell me this if Thou hast favour for me. If Thou wilt tell me by whose favour Ye have attained such high Iśvarahood, then shall I know that Thou art gracious unto me."

Vyāsā said: "Thus addressed, Bhagavān, high-souled Śaṅkara, the Lord of Yogīs, receiving Nārada's words in good grace, revolved all things in His heart, repeatedly contemplated the lotus-feet of Śrī Durgā, and began to speak to Nārada the great Muni of the one perfect and supreme Brahman."

Mahādeva said: "She who is pure, eternal Mūlaprakṛti is Para-brahman itself and the Devatā We worship.

"That Maheśvarī is the sole Mistress of the millions of Brahmās, Viṣṇus, and Maheśvaras who are Lords of creation, preservation, and destruction, in different Brahmāṇḍas just as this Brahmā, this Janārdana, and myself, Maheśvara, are the Lords of creation, preservation, and destruction in this Brahmāṇḍa. Though really formless, that Mahādevi assumes bodies in play. This entire universe has been created, is being maintained, and will, in the end, be destroyed by Her. And during its existence the world is overpowered by Her enchantment."

"In Her own play She, in former times, incarnated Herself in full as the daughter of Dakṣa Prajāpati; She also incarnated Herself as Umā, daughter of Himālaya. In partial incarnation She is the consort of Viṣṇu as Lakṣmī and Sarasvati, and the consort of Brahmā as Śaṅkūṭī."

Nārada said: "Chief of Devas, if Thou art pleased with me, if Thou hast kindness for me, then, O Lord, tell me fully and in detail how that

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1 Regents of the quarters, Indra, Agni, Yama, Nirṛiti, and others.
2 Tattva.
3 Vidhāṭī.
4 Crores. Each world-system has its own Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva.
5 Pūrṇa—that is, in such incarnation all the Viḥāṭīs (see post) of the Bhagavān are manifested, not so in partial (Anśik) incarnation.
6 See last note. For as Brahmā and Viṣṇu are but partial manifestation of the Brahman, so are their Saktis.
perfect Prakṛti formerly took birth as Dakṣa Prajapāti’s daughter, and how Maheśvara obtained Her who is in truth Brahman for wife; again, how She took birth as Himālaya’s daughter, and how three-eyed Mahādeva obtained that three-eyed Devī for His wife; and again, how that Mother of the universe gave birth to Her two sons, invincible and six-headed Kārtikeya and elephant-headed Ganeśa.”

“Before creation this world was devoid of sun, moon, and stars, and without day and night. There was no fire and no distinction of directions. The Brahmanḍa was then destitute of sound, touch, and the like, etc., devoid of other force,¹ and full of darkness. Then but that one eternal Brahman of whom the Śrutis speak, and the Prakṛti, who is existence, consciousness, and bliss, alone existed.”

“She is pure, full of knowledge, beyond the reach of speech, perpetual, immaculate, unapproachable by even yogīs, all-pervading, untroubled, eternally blissful, subtle, and devoid of all such properties as heaviness, lightness, and the like.”

“Subsequently, when that Ānandamayī became desirous to create in order to manifest Her own play of bliss, that supreme Prakṛti, though in truth formless, at once assumed a form by the strength of Her own will.

“That Devī with form was of the colour of crushed collyrium,² Her face was fair and as charming as a full-blown lotus. She had four arms, fiery eyes, dishvelled hair, and full and erect breasts.³ She was naked as space, terrific, and seated on a lion.

“She then at once created, of Her own will, a Puruṣa (Mahākāla) with her three guṇas, sattva, rajas, and tamas. But the Puruṣa was even then devoid of unconsciousness.”

“Seeing that Puruṣa made of three guṇas unconscious, She communicated to Him Her own desire for creation.”

“Being thus possessed of Śakti through the communication of the desire of Mahāśakti, that Mūlapuruṣa ⁴ created with delight three Puruṣas, according to the threefold division of guṇas—namely, sattva, rajas, and tamas, and the three Puruṣas thus created were termed Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Maheśvara.”

“Still, when She saw that there was no sign of creation, the Devī divided that Mūlapuruṣa into two parts—namely, Jīva and Paramapuruṣa.”

¹ Tejas.
² Añjana.
³ The Devī is generally represented as so formed. They and other physical features are the signs of the Great Maternity. See passages cited in A. and E. Avalon’s “Hymns to the Goddess”.
⁴ Primeval or root Puruṣa.
"Prakṛti also divided Herself, according to Her own will, into three parts—namely, Māyā, Vidyā, and Paramā."

"Of these Māyā is She who charms Jīvas and is the Sakti who creates the Samsāra. Paramā is the Sakti, full of consciousness and life, who is the cause of movements in Jīvas, and Vidyā is She who is made of pure spiritual knowledge and who is the Sakti which dissolves the samsāra."

Māyāvṛto hi jīvastāng paramāṅg nekṣate mune
Tābhīyāṃ samāṣritāstespi puruṣā viṣayaiśināh
Babhūburmunīśārddūla mugdhamāyayā tadā
Sā tṛṣṭyā parā vidyā pañcadhā yābhavat svaṃam
Gangā durgā ca sāvitri lakṣmiśchaiva sarasvatī
gā sā prāha prakṛtirvidyā brahmaśvīṣumahaśvarān
Pratyaśaśa jagaddhātri vinīyojya prthak prthak
Srīṣṭyarthān puruṣā yuyang mayā śṛṣṭā njecchhayā
tatkārya mahābhāgā yathecchha mama jāyate
Brahmā śṛṣṭi bhūtāni śthāvarāni carāṇa ca
Vividhāni vicitrāni cāṣamkhayāni samyatah
Viṣṇureṣa mahāvāhuh karotu pratipālanam
Niharta jagatāng kṣobhakārakān valināṅg varah
Śivastamogunākrāntaḥ sēṣe sarvamidang jagat
Nāṣayiṣyati nāśecchā yadā me sambhaviṣyati
Parasparaṇaḥ śṛṣṭyādikāreyuṣu triṣu vaidhruvam
Vidhātavyaḥ hi sāhāyyaṃ yuṣmāabhiḥ puruṣatrayaiḥ
Ahanca pañcadhā bhūtvā sāvityādyā varāṅganāh
Bhavatām vanitā bhūtvā vihariśye njecchayā
Tathāṅgaṭasca sambhūya sarvajanaṃṣu yoṣitaḥ
Prasāviṣyāmi bhūtāni vividhāni njecchayā
Brahmangstvaṃ mānaśūng śṛṣṭing karotu mama śāsanāṁ
Śāmpratam nānyathā śṛṣṭivirśteyam bhaviṣyati
Ityuktā tanmahāvidyā prakṛtiḥ sā paratpara
Śvayamantardhadhe teṣāṁ brahmādīnāṃca paśyatām

["O Muni! overpowered by Māyā, Jīva does not see that Paramā. Subject to these two (Paramā and Māyā), O great Muni, those Puruṣas (Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva) also became at that time attached to the world, being influenced thereto by Māyā. The third supreme Vidyā is She who divided Herself into five forms—namely, Ganga, Durga, Sāvitrī, Lakṣmi, and Sarasvatī. Addressing Herself to Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Mahēśvara separately, that Prakṛti Vidyā, the visible Jagaddhātrī (holder

1 The author does not translate these verses, an English rendering of which is given in brackets below.
of the universe), said to them: 'You, Purusa, have been created by me of my own accord for the purpose of creation. O high-favoured Deva, do that which is my desire. Brahma, do Thou create with care all things, movable and immovable, of various kinds, diversified and innumerable. Visnu, this great-armed Deva, the best of the strong, do Thou maintain by destroying all such as oppress the worlds. Siva, through the tamas guna, will in the end destroy all this world when the desire for destruction will arise in me. In these three works of creation and the like do you three Purusas render help to each other. I, too, will divide myself into five forms as Savitri and other fair women, and being your wives move as I desire. And becoming, with a part of myself, the female among all living things, I shall give birth to various beings of my own will. O Brahma, do you, under my order, make a mental creation. At present no other creation should be made.' Saying this to them, that Prakrti Mahavidya, who is supreme over the supreme, Herself disappeared from the sight of Brahma and the other Devas.'"

The following appears in the second chapter of Devi Bhagavata:

"The Parama (supreme) Adya (primal) Sakti, who is called Vidya according to Sruti, She who dwells in all things, resides in all hearts, destroys the bonds of samsara, and is incomprehensible to the wicked; She who is ever visible to munis who meditate upon Her—may that Bhagavati, whose substance is existence, consciousness, and bliss—grant a pious mind to Jiva."

"She who, after having created the universe as sat and asat and jagat and caitanya, maintains it by Her own sakti consisting of three gunas; She who, again, at the end of the Kalpa, alone sinks in Self-bliss after destroying the manifestation of this universe—I remember that Mother of the Universe in my heart."

"It is generally known that Brahma creates all this universe; but those who are acquainted with the Puranas and Vedas say that He took birth in the navel-lotus of Visnu. They have thus indirectly said that Brahma is not an independent Creator of the world for He, too, has had to be born elsewhere according to another's desire."

"For when in Mahapralaya Visnu lay on the bed of Ananta, Brahma appeared in His navel-lotus. Here, too, thousand-headed Ananta Deva supports Visnu on His body. How can Bhagavan be said to possess independent Sakti when He has to depend on another for His support?"

When in Mahapralaya the world is converted into a single ocean, the water of that single ocean is undoubtedly liquid. All admit that a liquid

\[^{1}\] True, permanent. \[^{2}\] Untrue, transient.

\[^{3}\] Gross, material, immovable.

\[^{4}\] Consciousness, moving sentient life.

\[^{5}\] The thousand-headed snake.

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can never exist without a receptacle. But Viṣṇu supports Brahmā, Ananta Deva supports Viṣṇu, and the water of the ocean supports Ananta Deva; but who supports this mass of water? Extremely difficult to understand is this matter. When, on carefully examining one receptacle after another, one comes to the end of all receptacles, then it is that there is disclosed the Supreme existence of the Mahāsakti who supports all things. I make supplication to that Mother of all things.

"I make supplication to that Supreme Sakti, to that Devī to whom Brahmā, seated on the navel-lotus, prayed when (on the occasion of the destruction of Madhu and Kaitabha) he saw Viṣṇu with His eyes shut in yoga-nidra."  

Again the following appears in the fourth chapter of the same book:

Sūta said: "Thus, asked by Vyāsa, high-minded Nārada, proficient in the knowledge of Veda, spoke, with great delight."

Nārada said: "High-favoured son of Parāśara the matter which you ask me was, of yore, asked by my father, Brahmā, of Bhagavān Madhu-sudana."

"Seeing Hari, the chief of Devas, Lord of the world, and husband of Lakṣmi, rapt in meditation, my father was astonished and questioned that Vāsudeva, immersed in intense devotion, who is decked with the Kaustubha Jewel, holds the conch-shell, discus, and mace, bears the Śrīvatsa mark, and is dressed in yellow garments; He who is four-armed, the cause of all Lokas, the Guru of the world, the Lord of the world, the Deva of Devas."

Brahmā said: "O Janārdana, Deva of Devas and Lord of the world, since Thou art Thyself the Īśvara of past, future and present, why dost Thou perform austerity and devotion, and whom dost Thou contemplate? This is a matter of great wonder to me. Being Thyself the Lord of all the world, yet Thou contemplatest another. What, O chief of Devas, can be stranger than this?"

"Sprung from Thy navel-lotus I am Creator of this entire universe. Thou art the cause of all causes. What greater Devata can there be in this world than Thyself? O husband of Lakṣmi! tell me this."

"Lord of the world, I know that Thou art the first of all, the cause of all, the creator, preserver, and destroyer of all, the doer of all work, and the possessor of all Saktis. Great King, I create this world according

1 Tattva.  
2 Sleep of Yoga.  
3 A name of Kṛṣṇa as the destroyer of Madhu, the demon.  
4 A gem secured by Viṣṇu at the churning of the ocean.  
5 Śaṅkha.  
6 Cakra  
7 Gada.  
8 A patch of white hair on the breast of Viṣṇu.  
9 The fourteen regions.  
20 Lord Ordainer.
to Thy desire; and Hara, who destroys it at the time of dissolution, is also always guided by Thy words.

"Isā, it is under Thy orders that the sun travels in the sky, the wind blows auspiciously or inauspiciously, fire gives heat, and clouds pour rain. Being Ishvara of all, what Devata dost Thou contemplate? This I cannot conceive; for as for myself I do not see a greater Devata than Thyself in the three worlds."

"O Noble-doer, I pray Thee, kindly tell me this, for Smṛti says that great people seldom make a secret of anything."

Hearing these words of Prajāpati, Viśṇu said: "Be attentive; I shall tell you that which I have in my mind."

"Although Devas, Asuras, and men know Thyself, Myself, and Mahādeva to be creator, preserver, and destroyer, yet Thou, versed in the Veda, know that it is through Śakti that Thou art creator, I am preserver, and Mahādeva is destroyer."  

"In Thee exists the Rājaśi Śakti who brings forth the world, in Myself the Sāttviki Śakti, who maintains the world, and in Mahārudra the Tāmāśi Śakti, who destroys the world."

"Devoid of these Śaktis Thou art no longer Lord of creation, I am unable to maintain the world, and Mahādeva also is unable to destroy it."

"Vibhu, both directly and indirectly we are always subject to that Ishvarī of all. O Noble-doer, listen to an instance of this."

"It is true that in Mahāpralaya I lie on Ananta as my couch, but even then I am certainly dependent; for subject to that Mahāśakti, I again awake at the proper time under the influence of Kāla."

"It is under Her that I ever practise austerity and at times freely enjoy the company of Lakṣmī, and at times I am engaged in terrific wars with Dānavas—wars fearful to all Lokas and oppressive to the beings therein."

"Knower of Dharma, of yore, in that one ocean, I fought a hand to hand fight for five thousand years. You saw that with Your own eyes."

"It was through the grace of the Supreme Devī that I was able to kill the two wicked Dānavas, Madhu and Kaitabha, intoxicated by vanity and born of the dirt of my ears."

"Did You not perceive even then that the Śakti aspect alone, supreme over the supreme, is the cause of all action? Great Soul, who do You, then repeatedly ask about the matter?"

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1 Lord Ordainer.  
2 Brahma.  
3 And so the Kuhjika Tantra says that it is not Brahma, but Brāhma, who creates; it is not Viṣṇu, but Vaiṣṇava, who preserves; it is not Rudra, but Rudrāṇi, who destroys. Their husbands are as inert as corpses.  
4 Omnipresent Deva.  
5 The great dissolution of things.  
6 Time.
"She is the cause of all causes, created by whose will I, as Puruṣa, live in the one ocean and incarnate myself age after age as tortoise, boar, half-man and half-lion, dwarf, and the like."

"No one in the three worlds wishes to be born as a lower animal. I, too, did not of my own free will, take birth as a boar and as other lower animals."

"Who will willingly take birth as a fish or the like, forsaking the blissful company of Lakṣṇa in Vaikuṇṭha? What independent Puruṣa leaves a soft bed for the back of Garuḍa² and proceeds to wage formidable wars with invincible Daityās?"³

"O birthless Deva, in ancient time, when the bow-string slipped in your presence, my head was severed and thrown off, no one knew where. At that time You cut off the head of a horse and had it attached to my body by Viśvakarma, the great artisan."⁴

"Since then I am known by the name of Hayagrīva, Lord of Lokas.⁵ That incident You saw with Your own eyes. Had I been independent why should I have suffered so much trouble amongst the Lokas?"⁶

"Know, therefore, that I am not independent, that I am in every way subject to Śakti, and that I always contemplate that great Śakti. Lotus-born Deva, I do not know of any truth⁷ superior to this."⁸

Narada said: "This was told by Viṣṇu to the lotus-born Deva. O great Muṇi, the lotus-born Deva subsequently told this truth⁹ to me."

"Do you too, therefore, worship the lotus-feet of the Devī in your heart without misgiving, for the attainment of your object."

Sādhaka, can anyone who has no bias as regards Śakti and no malice also as regards Viṣṇu, if chosen an arbiter, ever say, on seeing all this evidence drawn from the Śastra, that he who considers Śakti to be devoid of consciousness¹⁰ is a believer? In all ages, and particularly in the Kali age, the career of religious revolution is indomitable. When Caitanya-deva¹¹ deluged all Bengal with huge waves of the name of Hari, he observed that Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, and Vaiśya families were on the verge of ruin. He thought that in the then state of society full of Navaśākha Śūdras,"¹²

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¹ The Bird-king, vehicle (vāhana) of Viṣṇu.
² Hence Viṣṇu is called Hayagrīva (horse-faced one). The incident is related in Devī Bhāgavata. Viṣṇu fell asleep resting on his bow. Brahmā and others, wishing to awaken him, induced the white ants, called vamrīs, to bite through the bow-string. The mighty bow was released and cut off Viṣṇu's head, which was not found, and a horse's head was then joined to the body.
³ The Saṁgha region. See Introduction to Tāntric Śāstra.
⁴ Tattva.
⁵ Jāda.
⁶ The Viśṇu Saint of that name.
⁷ Millman, gardener, oilman, weaver, confectioner, betel-grower, potter, smith, and barber castes—middle-class Śūdras, as opposed both to the highest class Kāyasthas, etc., and the lowest class.
incompetent for either the Vaidik or Tantrik dharma, Harinam Samkirtana was the best Dharma, and consequently be preached that Dharma.

In those days, owing to the degeneration of Brähmanaṣas in a society full of Śūdras and of the lowest classes, such Purāṇas as Devi-bhāgavata, Mahabhaṭṭagavata, etc., in which the greatness of Śakti is established, ceased to be preached in Bengal. Moreover, owing to the steady increase of the lowest classes through the influence of the Kali age, only such Purāṇas and Śāstra as are favourable exclusively to the preaching of the name of Hari, and mainly and elaborately describe the greatness of Viṣṇu amongst all Devas and Devīs, began to be read, explained, recited, and so forth. Although the teachers and Brähmanaṣas of the country proficient in Śāstra were in many cases worshippers of the Śakti Mantra, most of them were yet dependent on Śūdras for their living, so that in spite of their knowledge of the Śāstras in which the greatness of Śakti is established, they dared not bring them forward to the public notice for fear of thereby losing their means of livelihood.

Next, those who became Prabhus, upon the spread throughout the country of branches and sub-branches of the Caitanya community, have from generation to generation shown extreme partiality towards one part of the Śāstra, so that the inferences which they have drawn therefrom touch only that part of the Śāstras, and are alone revered as essential truths within their own community. It is these one-sided inferences of the Prabhus which have brought ruin on Bengal. Ordinary Vaiṣṇavas have been given to understand that the Lord is the owner of Śakti and that Śakti is His servitress, so that they worship Rādhikā with articles of food already offered to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. At the present time the book Caṇḍī, contained in the Mārkandeyā Purāṇa, which describes the greatness of the Devī, is commonly taken to be the Śāstra in which Śakti stands supreme. The Prabhus, quoting it as their authority, say that as one of the names of Śakti is Viṣṇumāyā, she must therefore be a great Vaiṣṇavi. It is thus because Śakti is considered to be a great Vaiṣṇavi, that modern Vaiṣṇavas do Śiva the favour of taking Him for a "Spiritual brother". Let Bhagavān judge their conduct. Here we shall merely discuss the Śāstrīk evidence, on which the notion that Bhagavati is a great Vaiṣṇavi is based.

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1 Adhikāra.
2 Singing Hari's (Viṣṇu's) name with music and dancing.
3 Adhyāpakas.
4 Gossains, or religious preceptors of Vaiṣṇavas.
5 The Vaiṣṇava Saint of that name.
6 Literally, leavings of food partaken by Śrī Kṛṣṇa.
7 Worshipper of Viṣṇu.
It has been said in Caṇḍi:

"Under the influence of the Mahāmāyā of Bhagavān, who preserves the samsāra, Jivas fall into the pit of illusion, with its eddies of moneyness." *

Do not, therefore, be astonished at this. Mahāmāyā is the Yogamātrā of Hari, the Lord of the universe, and it is by Her that this world is charmed.

"That Devī Bhagavatī Mahāmāyā forcibly draws the mental faculties of even the wise and gives them over to illusion." **

By Her is created this world, consisting of things moving and non-moving, and She alone, when so pleased, is the dispenser of blessings and gives salvation to Jīva.

"That eternal (Supreme) Vidyā is both the cause of salvation, and the cause of Jivas' bondage in Samsāra. She is the Iṣvari of the Iṣvaras of all." ***

The Vaiṣṇava Prabhus here say that the two adjectival expressions, "The Yogamātrā of the Lord of the Universe" and "The Mahāmāyā of Hari," prove beyond doubt the subordination of Mahāmāyā or Sakti to Hari, otherwise, "Why," they argue, "should Śāstra call Her the Mahāmāyā of Hari or the Yogamārā of the Lord of the Universe?" What is known through another is surely subordinate to that other; as, for instance, expressions such as man's sleep, man's intelligence, and man's power indicate sleep, intelligence, and power subordinate to man.

We shall subsequently refer to the Śāstrik interpretations and inferences regarding the points in issue. Here it is merely necessary to understand whether Bhagavān's Yogamātrā is a thing similar to your or my nidrā. Assuming, for argument, that Yogamātrā is nothing but the nidrā-sakti subordinate to Bhagavān: the question still remains, why, in the chapter relating to the destruction of Madhu and Kaitabha, and in which the power of Yogamātrā has been described, Brahmā, seated on the navel-lotus of Bhagavān, is said to have prayed to Nidrā instead of to Viṣṇu for Viṣṇu's awakening? Who is there in the world so foolish as to pray to sleep, a thing unconscious, instead of the sleeping conscious person for his awakening? Again, the killing of Madhu and Kaitabha by Bhagavān redounds to the glory of Bhagavān alone. But why, when about to relate the greatness of Sakti in the Caṇḍi, does Mārkaṇḍeya, the great Raṣi, first

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* Moha. ** Mamatā (egoism). *** Sleep of Yoga of Iṣvara. 

* Moha; and so also the Kālikā Purāṇa states that the Devī leads men into confusion, egoism, sensual desire, etc. She is the bewilderer (sarvamohini) (Lalitā Sahasranāma, verse 137), bewilder the world with Her māyā (Kūrma Purāṇa). 

* The Devī (see Introduction to Tantra Śāstra). ** Lord of all Lords. 

* Sleep. ** Power of sleep.
of all speak of the greatness of Viṣṇu as illustrated by the killing of Madhu and Kaitabha?

We deem it a sin even to believe that anything said by the great Rṣi, Mārkaṇḍeya, can be tainted with the fault of superfluity. What, then, is the right solution of these questions? Some interpreters of the Caṇḍi have, with the object of arriving at that solution, devised forced meanings of the ślokas concerned, and by their means endeavoured to establish the greatness of Śakti. But we say that a solution arrived at through forced meanings of the words of Śāstra can never be a right solution. Again, what danger has there appeared which is so great that the unsuspecting world must be deceived with forced interpretations of the words of Śāstra? What does it matter to you or to me if, according to Śāstra, Viṣṇu becomes supreme and Śakti His subordinate? In reality, what the interpreters consider to be a danger is none at all, but rather a blessing. None can become subordinate or supreme. What one is, one remains. Only you and I, through the perversity of our intellects, ascribe to Devatas the states of superiority and subordination to which we ourselves are subject, and, being thus unable to perceive the subtle Śāstrīk truth, we go down to perdition. The Śakti-tattva made of māyā, with which you and I am acquainted, is not the same thing as the Śakti-tattva superior to māyā which belongs to Bhagavān. The sleep consisting of delusion and māyā, which we know of, is not the same thing as Bhagavān’s sleep, which consists of constant consciousness. Just as you and I are overpowered by sleep, so your and my sleep is also corrupted by the corruption of non-conscious gross matter. But when Bhagavān is overpowered by sleep, His yoganidrā is that great Śakti which is ever awake and full of light. When a Jīva sleeps his imperfect sleep, another can awaken him by any means; for any sharp contact with sound, touch, etc., causes the Jīva’s senses to ruffle the imperfect power of sleep and to awaken him by his own consciousness; thus you and I can awaken a sleeping person by calling or pushing him.

But not so with Bhagavān. He possesses all śaktis. No śakti in Him is imperfect. For this reason, while Jīva’s sleep is sleep, Ishvara’s sleep is yoganidrā. Your and my māyā is called simply māyā. But this māyā is called yoga-māyā. You or I can, at the utmost, be a yogī, but Bhagavān is the Ishvara of all yogas, and so His Śakti is Ishvari of the Ishvara of all yogas. A Jīva can rarely acquire an infinitesimal part of that śakti by dint of yoga, but that śakti is eternally present in Bhagavān. Jīva is imperfect; so Jīva’s śakti also is imperfect. Bhagavān is perfect; so His Śakti also is perfect. Jīva is constituted mainly of the inert principle;

1 Tattva. 2 Moha. 3 Jāda. 4 Jyotih.
and so Jiva’s Sakti is also predominated by the same principle. Bhagavān is made of consciousness; so His Sakti also is made of consciousness. Your or my Sakti of sleep is constituted of the inert principle, but Bhagavān’s Sakti of sleep is constituted of the conscious principle.

Even when He is asleep, He remains awake; for while your or my sleep is merely constituted of the tamas guṇa, His sleep is superior to tamas guṇa, although constituted of it. For this reason, at the time of the great dissolution the Mother of the universe assumes the aspect of sleep; and, taking on Her lap all Her sons and daughters from Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara downwards, inhabiting the innumerable crores of Brahmāṇḍas, She puts them all to sleep. But She who is existence, consciousness, and bliss, and supports the universe, Herself remains awake. When, after a whole day’s play, the son stands before the mother in the evening, with a weary body, she at once takes him on her lap and removes the weariness by putting him to sleep. It is this subject which has been so well depicted in the illuminating story of the killing of Madhu and Kaitabha. After the great dissolution when the world remains immersed in the one ocean, Bhagavān sleeps in Yoganidrā to the close of ages, shutting his eyes and lying on Ananta in the midst of that mass of water which deluges the Brahmāṇḍas.

Viṣṇu is the preserver of the world. Whom will He preserve when the great dissolution is accomplished? When there will be creation again, then there will be necessity for preservation. The long period intervening is the time for Viṣṇu’s rest. Viṣṇu plays till the arrival of the great dissolution, and instantly the son’s play is ended the Mother lays Him on the bed of rest and puts him to deep sleep. Unlike other mothers, She has to make no effort in order to put the son to sleep. The universe-pervading Devī is Herself in one aspect sleep. In proper time She appears in that aspect, and lays Bhagavān on Her lap. He cannot, therefore, be awakened by being called like other sleeping persons. He can rise only when the Devī, who appears as sleep, frees Him from Her own tāmasik bonds. When, therefore, Bhagavān Brahmā failed to break Viṣṇu’s sleep by all manner of prayer, entreaty, etc., He understood that that sleep, which was in reality consciousness, was not ordinary sleep. Perceiving that the mercy of Yoganidrā, the Mother of the world, could alone save Him, He began to praise Her. From the very fact that all the prayers, entreaties, loud calls, and the like, of Brahmā, with His four mouths, could not break Viṣṇu’s sleep, it must be understood that sleep was not subordinate to Viṣṇu, but Viṣṇu was subordinate to sleep. Had it been Viṣṇu’s sleep, it would have been easily broken; but it was sleep’s Viṣṇu, and therefore the sleep did not break.

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1 Mahāpralaya.  
2 Tattva.
Again, in the place where Bhagavān is described as being tired with fighting with Madhu and Kaitabha, Śāstra says:

"Charmed by Mahāmāyā those two Daityas, maddened with the pride of their great strength, requested Keśava\(^1\) to ask for some blessing from them." What kind of thing was that charming by Mahāmāyā? The Caṇḍi does not particularly relate when and how She charmed the Asuras, and why the two Daityas also all at once asked Bhagavān to seek a blessing from them. In fact, although the greatness of the Devī has been described in the Caṇḍi, the description is very short. We cannot, therefore, get a correct answer to these intricate questions from the Caṇḍi itself. For this reason we shall quote from the Devī-Bhāgavata the relevant portions of the account which it gives of the killing of Madhu and Kaitabha. Seekers of truth will know from them the deep mystery which surrounds the story of the killing of Madhu and Kaitabha and free their minds from doubts.

When, after having performed severe austerities for a thousand years, and having received, on that account, the blessing of death-at-will\(^2\) from the Devī, Madhu and Kaitabha advanced to fight with Brahmā in order to wrest from Him His lotus-seat, Brahmā prayed to Viṣṇu in great fear but failed to awaken Him. Here Śāstra says:

"Seeing that all His prayers were of no avail in awakening Bhagavān Hari, who was lying under the influence of Yoganidrā, Brahmā thought to himself that Viṣṇu was surely sleeping under the influence of that Mahāšakti. What will my sorrow avail, when the Founder of Dharma\(^3\) Himself will not awake at this crisis of Adharma?\(^4\)

"The two Dānavas, puffed up with pride, have come with the object of killing me. What shall I do—where shall I go? There is none to save me." Revolving this in His mind, Brahmā decided and resolved to pray to Yoganidrā with unswerving devotion. He considered in His mind that in the insurmountable danger which faced Him at the time, Mahāšakti alone could save Him; that Mahāšakti, under whose influence even Viṣṇu, whose substance was eternal consciousness, lay deprived of the power of movement.

"Just as a dead man does not perceive sound and other qualities of the things of the world, so Hari also, with eyes closed in sleep, does not perceive the prayers that I am making to Him." When, in spite of my many and earnest prayers, He does not shake off His sleep, I know of a certainty that sleep is not under His control, but that He is under the control of sleep. He who is under the control of another is surely that

\(^1\) Viṣṇu.  
\(^2\) Righteousness.  
\(^3\) Death only when desired.  
\(^4\) Unrighteousness.
other’s servant. This Yoganidrā is, therefore, mistress over even Bhagavān Hari, husband of Lakṣmī.

(It is not only that Bhagavān Viṣṇu is under the power of Paramēśvarī in Her full aspect, but He is also under the power of Her partial incarnation.) “He is always bound in love to even Lakṣmī, the daughter of Ocean, and under Her control.”

“It is therefore certain that Bhagavatī, in Her aspect of Śakti, thus holds the entire universe under Her control. There is not the least doubt that myself, Viṣṇu, Śambhu, Sāvitri, Ramā, and Umā—everyone of us—is under the control of that Īśvari of all: under whose influence even Bhagavān Hari sleeps like an ordinary mortal without control over His limbs. What wonder, then, that under Her influence all other great persons should remain charmed? I shall to-day please, by means of prayers, that Yoganidrā by whom, when released, Janārdana Vasudeva1 will engage in war.” Having thus determined, Bhagavān Brahmā began to pray, from His place on the stem of Viṣṇu’s navel-lotus, to Yoganidrā in Nārāyaṇa’s body.

Brahmā said: “Mother, all that the Vedas say has taught me that Thou, O Devī, art the sole cause of this phenomenal world; wherefore even Puruṣottama Viṣṇu, who awakens all worlds, is to-day lying asleep under Thy influence. Dweller in all things, Mother, Thou art above guṇas. Who is so wise amongst the millions of Devas as to certainly know that which is the free play of illusion caused by Thee? I am in every way ignorant in the matter, and Nārāyaṇa here sleeps without control over Himself. The person whom followers of the Sāmkhya Philosophy call Puruṣa, whose substance is consciousness, is admitted by them to be also Prakṛti, the Creatrix of the world devoid of consciousness. Art Thou really such Prakṛti? Otherwise, why should Nārāyaṇa, the seat of all consciousness in the world, be to-day made unconscious by Thee? (Unless the Mother be unconscious, how can She bear the sight of such misery of Her son?) Bhavāni, with Thy guṇas, Thou art making all manner of play.4 Who has the power to know the process of this yoga of creation practised by Thee whom munis thrice daily contemplate under the name Sandhyā with all guṇas? Mother, Thou art intelligence, which is the source of all knowledge in the three worlds. Devī, Thou art Lakṣmī, who ever grants happiness to Suras,5 and glory (intelligence, patience, beauty, reverence)

1 Viṣṇu.
2 The best of Puruṣas.
3 The Sāmkhya distinguishes between Puruṣa and Prakṛti. But probably Brahmā, the speaker, here means to say that Prakṛti and Purusa are really one, and not two, and it is that one whom the Sāmkhya Philosophy sees in two aspects, at once time as full of consciousness, and again as devoid of consciousness.
4 Nātya.
5 Devas.
and love in the hearts of all beings in the three worlds.\footnote{And so also the \textit{Cūḍā} says: \textit{Kīrttih śīrvāk ca nārīnāṃ smṛti-r-medhā dhṛitiḥ kṣamā.}} Thinking even in a hundred ways on the present state of my sorrow and suffering, I find nothing more strongly proved than this, that Thou art the Genetrix of all the world; otherwise who but the Mother of Brahmā and others, and the Genetrix of the Brahmāṇḍa, can put to sleep the son who is all full of Brahman?\footnote{The son all full of Brahman is Viṣṇu under the influence of yoganidrā. Brahmā is here saying that this Yoganidrā must be the mother of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Maheśvara, for who but this mother can put Viṣṇu to sleep? The Mother alone can put the son to sleep.} Devī, withdraw Thyself from the limbs of Nārāyaṇa and assume a wonderful form. Sportful as Thou art, like a child (Thy sport is sport of will like that of children) Thou canst do whatever Thou likest. Do Thou kill me or these two Daityas. And if Thou wilt not kill them Thyself, awaken Hari, who, when awake, will kill them. Whether Thou Thyself killest or by means of Viṣṇu, in both cases the work will be Thine alone.”

Śūta said: “Thus prayed to by Brahmā in the waters of the one ocean that Devī whose substance was the tāmas guṇa withdrew Herself from all the limbs of Viṣṇu of incomparable brilliance, in order to destroy the two Daityas. Assuming a charming form, She stood beside Bhagavān. Upon the Devī withdrawing Herself from Bhagavān’s body, it moved. Seeing Nārāyaṇa regaining consciousness, Vidhāta\footnote{Sleep.} was greatly satisfied.”

Again, the following appears in the eighth chapter in connection with the fight with Madhva and Kaitabha:

“When full five thousand years had passed in the fight, Nārāyaṇa bethought himself how their death might be caused. ‘Five thousand years have I fought. It is a wonder to me that although I feel tired, these formidable Dānavas are not at all wearied. Where are gone my strength and prowess in this fight? And why do they fully retain their strength? What is the cause of this? Let me think upon it.’ Seeing Nārāyaṇa thus immersed in thought, the two Daityas, intoxicated with vanity, became overwhelmed with joy, and said, with voices deep as the rumbling of clouds:

‘Viṣṇu, if you have no strength left in you, if the fight has wearied you out, join the palms of your hands, and, putting them on your head, say: ‘Surely do I become your slave.’ Otherwise, if you are capable, fight with us, so that we may first kill you, and next this four-headed one.’”

Śūta said: “Hearing these words spoken by them in that vast ocean, Viṣṇu, of mighty intellect, and wise to conciliate, gently spoke.”

Hari said: “It is the Sanātana Dharma\footnote{Brahmā.} of heroes not to strike anyone who is wearied or is afraid, or has given up arms, or has fallen down,
or is young in age. Besides this, for five thousand years I have fought singly with you two brothers, who are both equally powerful. You have alternately taken rest. But from beginning to end I have fought singly, so that I shall first take as much rest as you have done, and then fight with you. Although you are strong and intoxicated with pride, you are in justice bound to wait so long as I take my rest. And after rest I too shall, as in justice bound, engage in fight with you."

Sūta said: "Hearing these words uttered by Bhagavān, the two Dānava became assured, and, being resolved on fighting, sat at a distance from the field of battle. Seeing the Dāityas sitting at a considerable distance, Vāsudeva began to think to himself how their death might be caused. In meditation Bhagavān, the Dweller in all things, came to know that Devi had given them the blessing of death-at-will, and, consequently, the hard labour of fighting could not weary them. He thought: Uselessly have I fought so long, useless has become my labour, and now that I have for certain known the truth, how can I fight with them? But if I do not fight, how will these two Dānava, puffed up with the blessing which they have received, and who are the source of constant trouble to Devas, be destroyed? The blessing which Bhagavati has granted to them is but little likely to be fulfilled; for even they who have most cause for grief do not willingly court death.¹ When even the diseased and poverty-stricken do not desire to die, why should these two Asuras, in the intoxication of pride, court death willingly? However that may be, I shall today seek the protection of Mahāvidyā who is Sakti and filler of all desires; for, unless She is pleased, no desire can be fulfilled." As He thus thought, Bhagavān Viṣṇu saw Yoganidrā, the consort of Śiva, appear in a charming form in the sky. Thereupon, almighty Nārāyaṇa, the master of yoga, began to pray with joined hands to that Iśvar of the world, the dispenser of blessings, for the destruction of the two Asuras.

Viṣṇu said: "I bow to Thee, O Devi, Cāndi Mahāmāya, Thou who hast no beginning and no end, who dost create, preserve, and destroy, who grantest both enjoyment and salvation, and who art the consort of Śiva. Devi, I know neither your form with attribute,² nor your attributeless aspect.

"How can I, therefore, know the innumerable forms under which Thou appearest? Although it is impossible for me to gauge your power, this much at least I know, that I slept and was unconscious under Thy influence. I could not awaken, though repeatedly and assiduously summoned by Brahmā. Mother, because my five senses of knowledge, and

¹ The blessing is death-at-will, and as no one desires death there is no likelihood of this blessing being fulfilled—that is to say, of their death, which depends on their will, occurring.
² Saguṇa.
my mind, contracted under Thy influence, I became wholly unconscious. I awoke only when I was released by Thee, and after that I have fought much. This long fight has tired me, but failed to tire these two Asuras whom your blessing has made great heroes. When the Dānavas, intoxicated with pride, came to kill Brahmā, I challenged them in fight in any fashion they might choose. Since then I have fought hard with them in this vast ocean.

"But, O Giver of honour, who can dishonour those whom Thou hast honoured? When, after five thousand years of fight, I saw that they neither desisted nor were tired, then I came to know that Thou hadst granted them a wonderful blessing in the matter of death. Knowing this, I seek the protection of Her who protects all who are helpless. Mother, in the long fight I have become tired. O Destroyer of the foes of Devas, help me in the work of the Devas. Through haughtiness caused by the blessing granted by Thee, the two Asuras, who are incarnations of sin, have now become ready to kill me. Mother, what shall I do now, where shall I go (but seek Thy protection in this great peril)?" Thus addressed, the Devī smiled, and said to the bowing Lord of the world: "Vāsudeva, these two heroes can be deceived and then killed. Nārāyaṇa, I shall charm them with arch glances. Thus charmed by my māyā you shall, O Nārāyaṇa, soon destroy them."

Sūta said: "Hearing these loving words of the Devī, Bhagavān reappeared in the field of battle in the midst of that vast ocean. Then, those two composed and mightily powerful heroes came to the same place and were delighted to see that Viṣṇu had already arrived there. They said: 'O high-aspiring one, stay (we are two-armed), but you are four-armed. Still take the field of battle, knowing for certain that victory and defeat depend on fate. The strong ever win, but the weak also do sometimes win by chance. Wise persons should, therefore, indulge in neither joy nor grief in these matters. Enemy of Dānavas, many Daityas have, in former times, been defeated by Thee. But now, fighting with us, you are defeated.'"

Sūta said: "Seeing that the two long-armed Dānavas who had thus spoken were prepared for fight, Viṣṇu, with wondrous skill, dealt blows on them with his fists. They also, intoxicated by their great strength, began to strike Bhagavān with their fists. Thus they waged terrible war with each other. Seeing the powerful Dānavas thus engaged in fighting, Nārāyaṇa, with a pained look, cast his gaze upon the Devī's face."

Sūta said: "Seeing Viṣṇu thus looking pained and pitiable, the Devī (whose three eyes were like the morning sun) deeply reddened them, and, glancing at the two Asuras, laughed. Then, smiling softly, she pierced their hearts with arch glances, which spoke of feelings of love and desire,
and were as the five arrows of Kāma.\(^1\) Sorely struck by the arrows of
desire, the two sinful Dānavas, thinking that the arch glances of the Devi
meant favour to them, were charmed. They stood motionless, regarding
the transparent beauty of the Devi. Viṣṇu, too, who knows the purpose
of every action, understood the Devi’s object, and perceiving that the
Dānavas were charmed, smiled and sweetly said, with a voice which
sounded like the rumbling of clouds: ‘Heroes, I have been much pleased
with your fighting. Ask for any blessing which you may desire and I
shall grant it. Formerly, I have seen many Dānavas fighting; but I have
neither seen nor heard of any Dānava who can fight as you have done. I
am, therefore, greatly pleased at the incomparable strength of arms pos-
sessed by you two brothers, and am ready to grant you any blessing which
you may desire.’

Sūta said: “The two Daityas, who were overcome by lust, at the sight
of Mahāmāya, in whom all the world find delight, said, their vanity being
wounded by Viṣṇu’s words: ‘Hari, what is it that you desire to give us?
We are not beggars, rather we are ready to give to you. Know us to be
givers and not beggars. Hṛṣikeśa,\(^2\) ask for whatever blessing you may
desire. Vāsudeva, we too have been pleased with your admirable fight-
ing.’ Hearing these words, Janārdana\(^3\) said in reply: ‘If you have been
pleased, grant me to-day this blessing that you be killed by me.’”

Sūta said: “Hearing these words of Viṣṇu the two Dānavas became
extremely astonished and, thinking themselves to have been deceived,
were grieved at heart. Then, seeing all the world full of water and
destitute of land, they bethought themselves, and said to Viṣṇu: ‘Lord of
Devas, Janārdana Hari, you are truthful, therefore grant us now the
blessing desired of us, which you promised us but a while ago; kill us in
some extensive place where there is no water. We have kept our promise
by being willing to be killed by you, and now you too keep your promise
and be truthful.’ Remembering His Sudarśana cakra,\(^4\) Bhagavan
Viṣṇu smiled and said: ‘High-favoured Dānavas, I accept your proposal,
and shall kill you in an extensive place where there is no water.’ So say-
ning, the Lord of Devas extended His thighs and displayed them as a water-
less place above the waters of that vast ocean, saying to the two Dānavas:
‘Here there is no water; lay your heads upon them so that I may keep
my word and you too may keep yours.’ Hearing these words of Bhagavān
in keeping with His promise, the two Daityas devised a plan in their
minds and extended their bodies to an extent of one thousand yojanas\(^5\)

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\(^1\) Deva of Love.
\(^2\) Viṣṇu.
\(^3\) Sudarśana is the name of the weapon (cakra or discus) of Viṣṇu and means of good appearance.
\(^4\) A yojana is about eight miles.
each. Seeing this, Bhagavān also extended His thighs to double those dimensions. Madhu and Kaitabha were astonished at seeing such inconceivable power of māyā possessed by Nārāyaṇa, in whom all māyā is seated, and laid their heads on the two wonderfully extended thighs of Bhagavān. Thereupon, Viṣṇu of great prowess, rapidly severed with His Sudarśana cakra, the great heads of the two Daityas lying upon His thighs. Thus the two Daityas died, and the mass of fat which was emitted from their bodies covered the whole surface of the ocean. Because of this, the earth is everywhere known as medini, and for the same reason (that is to say) because formed in mixture with that mass of fat soil is unfit for eating.

“Great Munis, what you asked me I have related truly and precisely. Wise men should worship Mahāmāyā, who is also Mahāvidyā. She is Paramā Śakti, whom Suras and Asuras and all worship. There is no truth higher than this in the three worlds. This is the truth, the truth, and the truth again. This is the spiritual truth which the Veda Śāstra establishes. Worshipful is that Paramā Śakti, whether in Her form with attribute or in Her attributeless aspect.”

1 Tattva.