

“Virtuous woman, from today onwards, your black complexion would change into one of the hue of a lotus petal. Because of that ‘gaura’ hue you would be called ‘Gaurī’.” By the time Brahmā finished blessing her the colour changed into the one described by Brahmā.

4) *Gaurī changes into Kātyāyanī, Vindhyaśini, Caṇḍikā and Cāmuṇḍikā.* When Devī became Gaurī her superficial skin peeled off and dropped down, it is said.

At that time there were two great demons called Rambha and Karambha. They had no sons and they started severe penance. Karambha was doing penance standing in deep waters and a crocodile swallowed him. The crocodile was none other than Indra. Rambha did penance standing in the midst of fire and finding no result even after a long time decided to sacrifice himself into the fire. Agnideva then appeared before him and blessed him thus : “Oh Rambha, you will get a mighty son of the woman you love.” Rambha stopped his penance and returned home with the boon. On the way he saw a beautiful she-buffalo and passion rose in him and he made contacts with the buffalo. The buffalo became pregnant and in due course delivered a child which later on became the notorious Mahiṣāsura. In the meantime a buffalo loved Mahiṣāsura’s mother and it attacked Rambha and gored him to death. The Yakṣas burnt his dead body in a funeral pyre and the she-buffalo jumped into the pyre and abandoned her life. From that pyre there arose then another demon and he was the notorious Raktabīja. Mahiṣāsura became the king of demons and Raktabīja, Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa became his ministers. They attacked the devas and drove them to exhaustion. The devas took refuge in Brahmā to think of a plan to kill those asuras. Viṣṇu, and Śiva took part in the conference. Viṣṇu the eternal, got angry along with Śiva and became fierce like the fire of death. Brahmā and the devas also became angry and from the face of everyone a brilliance emanated and all these brilliances joined together and reached the holy āśrama of Kātyāyana maharṣi and that eminent sage also sent out a brilliance. The ascetic brilliance joined with the divine brilliance and the combined brilliance shone like a thousand suns. Then this superior brilliance entered the peeled-off skin of Kālī to produce the fierce and divine form of a goddess named Kātyāyanī. Each limb of the new form was made up of the brilliance of a particular god as follows : From the brilliance of Mahendra was formed the face; from Agni, the eyes; from Yama, the hair; from Viṣṇu, the eighteen hands; from Indra, the central parts; from Varuṇa, the hip and the thighs; from Brahmā, the feet; from Sūrya, the toes; from Prajāpati, the teeth; from Vasu, the fingers of the hands; from Yakṣa, the nose; from Vāyu the ears and from the ascetic brilliance, the erotic eyebrows. Thus Kātyāyanī shone in the world with a figure formed with distinctive perfection.

All the gods and devas presented Kātyāyanī with gifts:— Śiva gave her a trident (triśūla); Viṣṇu a Discus; Varuṇa, a conch; Agni, a javelin; Vāyu, a bow; Sūrya, a never-empty quiver; Indra, Vajraghaṇṭā; Yama, a daṇḍa (stick); Vaiśravaṇa, a mace; Brahmā, a rosary garland; Kāla, a sword and shield; Candra, Cāmara (white brush-like fan) and a pearl necklace; Ocean a garland; Himavān, a lion; Viśvakarmā, a moon-disc Cūḍāmaṇi, earrings and a dagger; the King of Gandharvas, a silver-plated drinking cup; the King of

nāgas, a nāgahāra; and the Ṛtus (seasons), never-fading flowers. The three-eyed Kātyāyanī on getting all these was highly pleased and made a roaring sound. Devī, thus worshipped and adored by all, mounted on the lion and went to the topmost peak of the Vindhya. Indra and Agni went and served Kātyāyanī thus living there. Vindhya called Devī, Kauśikī and Agastya called her Durgā.

Mahiṣāsura once went to the Vindhya after conquering all the three worlds. He was accompanied by his ministers, Raktabīja, Caṇḍa, Muṇḍa, Cikṣura and Naraka. They met there the goddess Kātyāyanī. Mahiṣāsura fell in love with the beautiful and well-figured Kātyāyanī and he sent Dundubhi as messenger to the goddess to make her know his desire. Dundubhi approached Kātyāyanī and told her to become the wife of Mahiṣa, the emperor of all the three worlds. Devī replied that she would accept as her husband one who defeated her and that was the custom also in her caste. Mahiṣāsura with a huge army and heavy equipments went to war with her. But Kātyāyanī entered the field alone mounted on her lion and the devas watching her enter the battlefield without wearing even an armour were shocked. Devī went forward reciting the mantra of Viṣṇupañcākṣara given to her by Śiva and lakhs and lakhs of demons were killed by the adroit sword-swinging and the dinning roar of Kātyāyanī. Mahiṣa and his ministers surrounded her and Devī stepping down from the lion started to dance wielding her sword. Swinging her sword to the rhythm of her dance-steps Devī picked up the leading demons one by one and killed them. Seeing that, Mahiṣāsura approached her, burning with rage like the pralayāgni. All the attendants of Devī fled. Those who remained were trampled to death by Mahiṣāsura. Devī at first killed the ministers and then faced Mahiṣāsura. Mahiṣa became an elephant and Devī cut off its trunk. The elephant became a buffalo then. Devī sent a spike and it broke. Even Devī’s Discus, granted to her by Viṣṇu was blunted when it hit the rock-like body of Mahiṣāsura. Varuṇapāśa, Yamadaṇḍa and Indravajra were all alike fruitless against the mighty Mahiṣāsura. Angered Devī jumped on the buffalo form of the demon and drove it to exhaustion and when at last its power of resistance had failed, Devī plunged her spear into the ears of the buffalo and the demon fell dead.

Many years went by. Kaśyapa begot of his wife Danu three great sons named Śumbha, Niśumbha and Namuci. All were fierce demons. Namuci attacked Indra but they soon came to a compromise. But Indra hid in the foam of the ocean which entered the ears, nose and mouth of Namuci while he was playing in the ocean. Indra used his Vajrāyudha from inside and killed him. Śumbha and Niśumbha were angry and they entered svarga and defeating everyone there, carried all the riches from there to the earth. They met Raktabīja and he said “Oh Lords, I am Raktabīja, minister of Mahiṣāsura. Kātyāyanī Devī killed virtuous Mahiṣāsura. His two ministers Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa are hiding inside the ocean afraid of Kātyāyanī devī.” While he was speaking thus Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa also came there. When they all exchanged ideas Śumbha called one of his men and said “Bho: Sugrivāsura, go and tell Kātyāyanī to be my wife.” Sugriva went to Kātyāyanī and returned disappointed and said “Lords Śumbha and Niśumbha,