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SATĪ AND SATĪ
FROM THE ORIGINS TO THE ŚĀKTA UPAPURĀṄAS

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INTRODUCTION

Satī, or *suttee*, the ritual self-immolation of a widow on her husband's funeral pyre, is a topic that has often been discussed among Indologists, especially in the last few decades¹. It was practiced by Hindu women desirous of both attaining a higher status in their next life, as well as of following their husband in death. It has been argued (Oldenburg 1994, 106) that many women were forced to perform *satī* by their families, whose major aim was to prevent them from being socially excluded because of their widowhood. In 1829 the British government promulgated a law in order to ban *satī*, but the custom, even though never widely practiced among Hindu women (Stein 1978, 257), never ceased to be performed until 2002, when the last self-immolation of a widow seems to have occurred (see Chakraborty 2002).

Why did *satī* start being practiced? Why was this custom called with such a name? Is it related to the Purāṇic myth of Satī (a wife of Śiva), which bears its same name? Apparently not. In the latest versions of the myth, Satī burns herself not because her husband died, but because of her anger towards her father, Dakṣa, who did not want Śiva and Satī to attend a *yajña* (sacrifice) together with all the other gods. What is, then, the relationship between the rite and the myth? Is there any? Has the myth just been misinterpreted from those who sought in it the reason for a wife to commit self-sacrifice?

Since the main research question is difficult to be answered because of the large number of texts that should be taken into account, and also because of their uncertain dates, the thesis will be an attempt to answer the main research question starting from some sub-questions related to that one. The sub-questions that will serve as a line-guide in the research plan are: where did the Satī myth originate from? What are its antecedents? How

¹ For an overview on the topic see: Leslie (1989); Hawley (1994); Weinberger-Thomas (1996); Bose (2000); Chakraborty (2002); Lakshmi (2003); Brick (2010).

did the earliest versions of the myth develop into the story where the goddess Satī throws herself in the sacrificial fire? How and why did the shift happen? Is it related to the fact that the rite was acquiring more and more popularity starting from the late Gupta age (fifth century CE onwards), and thus has the rite somehow influenced the myth? How did the myth develop in later texts such as the Purāṇas? And how did it develop in the Śāktapurāṇas (the Purāṇas that are mainly focusing on the figure of the Goddess and on her power and that are also the latest ones)²? What are the steps the story went through from the Vedas to the Śāktapurāṇas?

The starting point for this kind of research has been the analysis of the change of the myth in the shift from the Brāhmaṇas versions to the early Purāṇic version, where Satī does not sacrifice herself. The texts taken into account here are the *Aitareyabrāhmaṇa*, the *Tāṇḍyamahābrāhmaṇa*, the *Gopathabrāhmaṇa*, and the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*. This stage of the research revealed the main differences between the earliest versions of the myth in the Brāhmaṇas and those that appear in the early Purāṇas. This step is more about how the myth was involved in the process of origination of the ritual.

In the second part of the thesis a comparison has been made between some versions of the myth taken from the late Upapurāṇas (also with the help of Mertens' work on the development of the myth of Dakṣa), i.e. the *Kālikāpurāṇa*, the *Devībhāgavatapurāṇa*, the *Mahābhāgavatapurāṇa*, and the *Bṛhaddharmapurāṇa*. The comparison has helped tracing the main differences between these versions and finding the changes the myth has gone through from the tenth to the eighteenth century approximately, when the ritual *satī* had already become established. Thus this step of the research is more an attempt to define whether the ritual has influenced the myth, and not *vice versa*.

² The first scholar, who referred to some texts produced in Bengal and Assam (such as the *Kālikāpurāṇa*, or the *Yoginītantra*) as 'Śākta literature' is Farquhar (1920, 354).

The main problem about conducting the kind of analysis that is being put forth in this work has been that such ancient texts are never dated precisely, most of them are dated to a range that covers at least a couple of centuries, and scholars hardly ever agree on dates. Thus it is hard to say exactly when the myth went through a particular change.

Parallel with the study of the texts, the study of the versions of the myth of Saṃdhyā has been brought forward. Saṃdhyā was the first female goddess who immolated herself in the fire. This myth is connected to that of Satī because it involves both Dakṣa, Satī's father, and a goddess immolating herself as a result of not being married, and thus controlled, by a male figure. One of the major claims of this thesis is that the myth of Satī probably originated from the myth of Saṃdhyā, who was one of the daughters of Prajapātī (who then became Dakṣa in Purāṇic literature). If that is true, the origin of the ritual *satī* from the myth of Saṃdhyā (who then became Satī) would result much more obvious, since Saṃdhyā had to burn herself in the fire because, not being married to anyone, was able to seduce all the other existing gods. This part of the research has led to the conclusion that the myth of Satī probably originated from there, and that women started ascend their husbands' funeral pyres as they shared the same sentiments that arose in Saṃdhyā when she was about to burn herself, and thus the sense of guilt for not being married to anyone and for not having a male figure to be able to repress their seductive power. It should be specified that this feeling of guilt was originally created by a male-centred vision of the feminine, which was accepted by the women, who then started to see themselves fitting in it.

Finally, the conclusion will explain how and why, according to the sources that have been used, it is possible that both the myth influenced the rite, and the rite influenced the myth. Now that an introduction to the subject and to the research questions has been provided, a brief overview on the structure of the specific chapters will show how the entire discourse will be led, chapter-by-chapter.

The introduction to the thesis will present the topic and the main research questions. A general outline of the myth and an overview on the studies conducted on *satī* so far will be provided in the first chapter, ‘*Satī and Satī*’, in order to contextualize the topic and to build the starting point for the discourse that will be led throughout the other chapters of the thesis. This chapter is also where the secondary bibliography has been analysed to briefly comment on the insights other scholars had in their studies on *satī*.

The second chapter, ‘*The Satī Myth before the Myth*’, will include an analysis of the first versions of the myth appearing in some early texts, i.e. the Vedas and the Brāhmaṇas, in which Satī does not immolate herself in the fire, or does not appear at all. It will be explained how the myth evolved and the various versions of the antecedents of Dakṣa’s myth will be presented. The link between the myth of Satī and that of Saṃdhyā will also be traced. In doing so, it will be explained the process of change from the myth of Saṃdhyā to that of Satī. It is likely that during this process the rite involving widow–burning originated.

In chapter three, ‘*The Evolution of the Myth in the Śakta Upapurāṇas*’, the link between the first versions of the myth of Dakṣa and more recent versions appearing in the Purāṇas will be traced, and a research sub–question will be investigated, i.e. when and where did the final version of the myth of Dakṣa’s sacrifice, the one in which Satī immolates herself in the fire, first appear? The translation of the passages involving the myth of Satī in the Śāktapurāṇas (i.e. *Devībhāgavatapurāṇa*, *Bṛhaddharmapurāṇa*, *Kālikāpurāṇa*, *Mahābhāgavatapurāṇa*) will be provided in the appendixes. These constituted the basis for the comparison between the different versions, which are discussed later in the chapter, in order to trace back the history of the myth in relatively late texts such as the Śāktapurāṇas.

The conclusions will sum up what has been said in each chapter and will provide an answer to the research questions, with reference to the assumptions drawn at the end of each stage of the research.

For what concerns the methodology, secondary sources have been discussed and commented on in the introduction and throughout the entire thesis. Their analysis will help developing the discourse that will be led in the first two chapters and in the one including the comparison between the versions of the myth in the Śāktapurāṇas. Secondary sources will again be employed to comment on the passages from the Vedas and the Brāhmaṇas. Primary sources will be used as a source for the translation of the selected passages on Satī's myth. To be noted is that it is likely that many texts, of which a translation will be provided, have been already edited and translated, although a literal translation will permit a deeper understanding of the passages taken into account in the chapter that includes the comparison and analysis of the myths.

The thesis is in its whole an attempt to start tracing back the way the myth travelled to become how it is now known, particularly how the myth influenced the rite and *vice versa*. It also constitutes a basis for a wider research project that will lead to the critical edition of the *Bṛhaddharmapurāṇa*, a text that has helped identifying the relationship between the myth of Saṃdhyā to that of Satī and from the myth of Satī to the ritual self-immolation of widows.

CHAPTER ONE

SATĪ AND SATĪ

The first historical evidence which bears witness to a *satī* is dated 510 CE (Torri 2000, 132; Kane 1941, 629). It is a *satī* stone³ dedicated to a woman who sacrificed herself after her husband's death, which happened during the Eran battle (510 CE)⁴. The latest widow's self immolations happened in 1987 and 2002. Although *satī*, as it was pointed out earlier, was forbidden in 1829, the eighteen-year-old Rajput woman Roop Kanwar ascended her husband's funeral pyre in 1987 in a village in the northern part of Rajasthan. That episode raised many discussions among scholars from different disciplines, who started to investigate the phenomenon. Leslie (1989, 182) had argued that very likely other *satīs* were performed in India, both before and after the Roop Kanwar case happened. Later, in 2002, Chakraborty wrote an article on *The Telegraph* entitled '*Sati in Panna, shielded by the faithful and witnessed by sons*' in which the author also claimed that the woman was forced to commit *satī*.

The term *satī* comes from the Sanskrit word *sat*, the present participle of the verb 'to be', which can also mean 'good' or 'venerable'. *Satī* thus literally means 'virtuous woman'. The word can be referred to both the woman who sacrifices herself, and to the act of self-immolation itself. Although, '*satī*' can also mean 'she who is real', since 'real' is another possible translation of '*sat*'. Indeed, according to the myth, Śiva Ardhanārīśvara, the Lord who is half a man and half a woman, created the Goddess making his female part come out of himself. She released her power throughout the universe and became 'real' by coming

³ A *satī* stone is a memorial stone erected to commemorate and even, sometimes, worship a woman who died performing *satī*. *Satī* stones can display different shapes and dimensions (Trinco, Forthcoming). For more detailed information about *satī* stones see also Settar (1982), and Verghese (2001).

⁴ Eran is placed in Madhya Pradesh. The Eran battle put an end to the Gupta dynasty, when the white Huns (a nomad people from Central Asia) having conquered the oriental provinces of the Sasanid Empire and defeated the Persian army, repeatedly attacked the Gupta Empire until 510, when they definitively defeated the Indians (Torri 2000, 117–118)

into existence as Dakṣa's daughter Satī (Kramrisch 1981, 243).

The Sanskrit terms that were originally used to name the ritual of *satī* were *sahagamana* ('going with'), *anugamana* ('following'), *anumaraṇa* ('dying after'), etc. *Anugamana* became a synonym of *anumaraṇa* because of a misinterpretation of some verses in the *Parāśarasmṛti*, which states that:

In case of the death of her husband if the woman pursues celibacy she gains heaven just as a celibate man does.

One [= a woman] who follows the path of her husband resides in heaven for three and a half million years, that is, the number of hairs on a human body⁶.

(Trans. Bose 2000, 25)

According to Rajput customs a wife has to go through three stages in order to gain *satī*. These are the stage of *pativrātā*, or 'devoted to the husband', the stage of *satīvrātā*, or 'she who has made the vow of becoming a *satī*', and the stage of *satīmātā*, meaning 'mother *satī*'. The term *pativrātā* can be used to address any married woman. According to tradition the *pativrātā* should die before her husband. If that does not happen, she is considered somehow as the cause of her husband's death, because of the bad deeds made in her present of previous life (Stein 1978, 255). A *pativrātā* can reaffirm her loyalty and devotion to her husband by immolating herself. By doing so, she can push away her guilt, which, as it was pointed out earlier, must be a concept originated at first in a patriarchal social environment. The *satīvrātā* is able to catch fire thanks to the good deeds she made when she was a

⁶ *mṛte bhartari yā narī brahmacaryavrate sthitā |*
sā mṛtā labhate svargaṃ yathā te brahmacāriṇaḥ ||
tisraḥ koṭyo ardhakoṭī ca yāni lomāni mānave |
tāvatkāla baset svarge bhartāraṃ yā anugacchati ||
(*Parāśarasmṛti* 4.31–32)

In the verse that immediately precedes the one quoted here, the author of the text affirms what kind of circumstances a woman is allowed to get married after her husband has died. It does not follow immediately that Parāśara meant 'to follow the husband in death' by '*anugacchati*'. He in fact also enumerates the conditions in which a woman can remarry after her husband's death, or even when he is still alive (Bose 2000, 25).

pativratā. The good deeds made during her life can increase her *sat* to the extent that, at the time she has to ascend the funeral pyre of her deceased husband, it is released in the form of heat. So, when the widow decides to sacrifice herself, she catches on fire through her own accumulated power, without needing anyone to light the pyre (Harlan 1994, 81–2).

As it has been said in the introduction, *satī* was never widely practiced. According to Menski (1998, 184) this is because *satī* is both looked at with fear and admiration: it symbolises both ritual and individual power. In the *Strīdharmapaddhati*⁷, its author Tryambaka affirms that the correct behaviour of a woman towards her husband can be shown *also* through practicing *satī*, and that it should not be practiced by all women but only by those who aim to reflect a supreme ideal (Leslie 1989, 184). Although Tryambaka takes into consideration the fact that the practice could be forbidden because it is a form of suicide. He supports this view by quoting the *pūrvapakṣa*⁸ against suicide, according to which “[...] one should certainly not depart (his life) before its full length (has been lived out)”, adding that the rule can be modified through additional prescriptions because of the fact that it is only a general rule (Leslie 1995, 292–293). Tryambaka explains this point relying on the standard division in three different kinds of ritual actions: *nitya*, or recurrent, *naimittika*, or mandatory in specific occasions, and *kāmya*, or optional. *Satī* should be considered either *naimittika* or *kāmya*. According to Tryambaka, it is a *kāmya* ritual, even though its practice produces great merit and he himself considers it to be the only choice for a widow (ibid., 185; 293). According to Lakshmi (2003, 88) it is not important to state whether the rite is compulsory or facultative, because there is no difference between the annihilation of the self through auto-immolation or through widowhood. The illusion of the

⁷ The *Strīdharmapaddhati* is a law treatise on women correct code of conduct composed by Tryambaka in the eighteenth century.

⁸ The *Pūrvapakṣa* is a way of dialectically engaging an interlocutor in a speech. It consists of in-depth study and understanding of the other's vision before criticizing it (Tilak 2013, 288).

possibility of a choice is thus a paradox. The widow can, in fact, only choose how to abandon her freedom.

Though forbidden, the ritual of *satī*, which was initially practiced only by high-caste women, started spreading and became a proper custom also among the lower castes (Harlan 1994, 82). It was probably seen as a means to attain a higher status (Stein 1978, 257)⁹. The reason why a woman should commit *satī* is her indissoluble bond which ties her to her husband (Courtright 1994, 28). Nevertheless, that bond is the very same reason that should prevent a widow from committing *satī*. If it was actually eternal, not even one of the spouses' death should be able to break the tie between them, which is, according to Menski (1998, 80) of pivotal importance in order to understand *satī*, but does not justify its existence. Thus, what could make a widow commit *satī* is the fear of consequences of widowhood. Gilmore (2001) pointed out that women are considered, not only in India, as malignity nucleuses that have to be controlled. In India, they are, in fact, always bound to a male figure that has to control their sensuality, of whom they constitute an appendix (Embree 1988, 228). The father in the childhood, the husband in the adulthood and the male children in the old age are supposed to tone the women's sensuality down. This is stated in the following passage from *Manusmṛti* (9.2–3), the most important Indian law treatise, dated approximately to the second century CE:

Day and night men should keep their women from acting independently; for, attached as they are to sensual pleasures, men should keep them under their control. Her father guards her in her childhood, her husband guards her in her youth, and her sons guard her in old age; a woman is not qualified to act independently¹⁰.

(Trans. Olivelle 2004, 190)

⁹ As an example for this, the dead husband's family can prevent the widow from inheriting the husband's properties (Leslie 1989, 176).

¹⁰ *asvatantrāḥ striyaḥ kāryāḥ puruaiḥ svairdivāniśaṃ |*
viṣayeṣu ca sajjantyaḥ saṃsthāpyā ātmano vase |
pita rakṣati kaumāre bharthā rakṣati yauvane |
rakṣanti sthavire putrā na strī svātantryamarhati ||

A widow, as an unmarried daughter, is considered bad luck. Widows often end up being socially excluded, but if they ascend their husband's funeral pyre they can be worshipped as deities and the place where the sacrifice has happened to become a sacred place.

According to Pandey (1969, 252), *satī* was widely practiced around the times when the *Baudhāyanagr̥hyasūtra* and the *Āśvalāyanagr̥hyasūtra* were composed, which is around 500 BCE. These texts contain prescriptions for the ritual. Although, the verses that should be recited while *satī* is being performed appear for the first time in the *Ṛgveda*, where the widow is not supposed to sacrifice herself. According to the *Ṛgveda*, the widow should lie down next to her husband's corpse placed on the pyre, while some verses are being recited, which state that the wife was always faithful to her husband and she would follow him in his afterlife. At that point one of the husband's brothers should ask the widow to come off the pyre and stay in this world. The description of the ritual is absent in later prescriptive texts, it is not even mentioned in the *Manusmṛti* (ibid.).

In the *Viṣṇudharmasūtra*, probably composed between the sixth and ninth century CE, it is said that, once her husband has died, a widow should observe chastity, or follow him on the funeral pyre (Brick 2010, 204). In this case, thus, it seems that the widow could choose whether to stay alive or sacrifice herself. According to Stein (1978, 206–60) Aparārka quotes some texts according to which the practice is forbidden to brahmins' wives.

An interesting passage from the *Kādambarī* (Pūrvabhāga, 177), quoted below, states an invective against *satī*:

Questo che chiamiamo *anumarāṇa* è del tutto inutile, è via percorsa da gente incolta, è una manifestazione di follia, è comportamento da ignoranti, è usanza barbara, è teoria vile, è folle fanatismo, è un insano errore che una pensi che è tutto finito se padre, fratello, amico o marito sono

morti¹².

(Trans. Piretti Santangelo 1991, 206)

Medhātithi (ninth or tenth century CE) also lines up against *satī*:

(Author:) Suicide is prohibited for women just as it is for men.

(Objection:) Yet one should also certainly carry out like a mandatory duty the following statement from the Dharmaśāstra of Aṅgīras: “(Women) should follow their husbands in death.”

(Reply:) This statement praises the reward of performing this act. And since it qualifies a woman who desires that reward to perform it, the case is analogous to the *śyena* sacrifice. Indeed, even when a person is qualified to “kill living beings by means of *śyena* sacrifice” actually engages in that rite when blinded by excessive hatred, it is not in accordance with dharma. It is just so here as well: when a woman who has an excessive desire for the result dies despite the fact that there is a prohibition against this and she is acting in violation of it, her reason is not sanctioned by the *śāstras*. Hence, a woman is certainly prohibited also from following her husband in death¹⁴.

(Trans. Brick 2010, 207)

Moreover, since it is in contradiction with the perceived Vedic scripture, “Therefore, one should not depart before one’s natural lifespan” (*Śathapathabrāhmaṇa* 10.2.6.7), one can construe this *smṛti* text to have a different meaning. In this regard, it is just like the *smṛti* “Having recited the Veda, one should bathe,” which indicates that a person who has not learned the Veda’s meaning should bathe after simply reciting it.

According to Müller (Pollock 2009, 952), the ritual started being practiced because

¹² *yad etad anumaraṇam nāma tad atiniṣphalam |*
avidvajjanācarita eṣa mārḡaḥ mohavilasitam etat |
ajñānapaddhatir iyam rabhasācaritam idam kṣudradrṣtir |
eṣā atipramādo 'yam maurkhyaskhalitam idam |
yad uparate pitari bhrātari suḥrdi bhartari vā prāñāḥ |
parityajyante |

¹⁴ *pumvat strīṇām api pratiśiddha āmatyāgah | yad apy āṅgirase patim anumriyeran ity uktam tad api nityavad avaśam kartavyam | phalastutis tatrāsti | phalakāmāyās cādrikāre śyenatulyatā | tathaiva śyenena hiṃsyād bhūtānīty adhikārasyātīpravrddhaataradveśāndhatayā satyām api pravṛttau na dharmatvam | evam ihāpy atīpravrddhaphalābhilāṣāyāḥ saty api pratiśedhe tadatīkrameṇa maraṇe pravṛtīyupapatter na śāstrīyatvam | ato 'sty eva patim anumaraṇe 'pi strīyāḥ pratiśedhaḥ | kiṃ ca tasmād u ha na purāyusaḥ preyād iti pratyakṣasrutivirodhe smṛtir apy eṣā anyārthā śakyate kalpayitum yathā vedam adhītya snāyād ity adhyayanānantaram aakṛtārthābhābodhasya snānasmarāṇam | (Medhātithi 5.155). Brick (2010, 207) could not identify the *smṛti* which contains this passage.*

of a misinterpretation of a verse in the *Ṛgveda*, which recites: *ā rohantu janayo yonim agneḥ* (10.18.7) (‘let the wives ascend the womb of fire’). Müller amends the verse substituting *agneḥ* with *agre*, thus changing its meaning into ‘let the wives ascend to the *yoni*’, and take it as an evidence for the previous misinterpretations. The verse that immediately follows the one quoted by Müller is another evidence in support of his argument, since it is encouraging the widow to stay in the world of the livings and accept her husband’s death (*Ṛgveda* 10.18.8):

O woman, arise to the world of the living! Come, this man near whom thou sleepest is lifeless. Thou hast enjoyed this state of being the wife of thy husband, the suitor who took thee by the hand¹⁶.

(transl. Bose 2000, 30)

According to Mertens (1998, 100), the earliest mention of a ritual *Satī* in the Dharma literature can be found in the *Viṣṇusmṛti* (20.39; 25.14), dated to the fifth century CE, and in the *Bṛhaspatismṛti*, which is dated to the sixth–seventh century CE. In these texts, both the options of burning themselves, or of retiring to ascetic life, were suggested to widows.

The sum up of the studies that have been conducted on the topic shows that no strong evidence has been found to establish when the *satī* ritual originated. Nevertheless, this practice has much in common with the Purāṇic myth of *Satī*. There exist many versions of the myth, whose very first version, according to Sircar (1973, 5), can be found in the *Ṛgveda* (10.61.5–7), although the hymn ‘belongs to the most difficult, one might almost say most hopeless, portions of the *Ṛgveda*’ according to Griffith (1973, 574). Jamison and Brereton (2014, 1473), in their more recent translation, affirm the same, but try to interpret the verses as follows:

¹⁶ *udīrṣva nāri abhijīvalokaṃ gatāsumetamupaśeṣa ehi |*
hastagrābhasya didhiṣoḥ tava idaṃ patyuh janitvam abhisambhūtha ||

5. He whose (penis,) which performs the virile work, stretched out, discharging (the semen)— (that one,) the manly one, then pulled away (his penis, which had been) “attending on” (her). Again he tears out from the maiden, his daughter, what had been “brought to bear” on her—he the unassailable.

6. When what was to be done was at its middle, at the encounter when the father was making love to the young girl— as they were going apart, the two left behind a little semen sprinkled down on the back and in the womb of the well-performed (sacrifice).

7. When the father “sprang on” his own daughter, he, uniting (with her), poured down his semen upon the earth. The gods, very concerned, begat the sacred formulation, and they fashioned out (of it?) the Lord of the Dwelling Place, protector of commandments.

8. Like a bull in a contest he threw off foam. Heedless, she went away, hither and yon. Twisting away, she hastened like the Gift-Cow on foot. [The father:] “Now those caresses of mine have not grasped (her).”

(Jamison 2014, 1476)

Through the Brāhmaṇas’ versions first, and through the Purāṇic ones later, it slowly evolved into a more elaborated version, the one where Satī immolates herself into the fire.

The popularity of the myth of Dakṣa is explained by Mertens (1998, 385–6), who assumes that it suited to represent religious quarrels through its various opportunities for verbal duels or actual fight scenes. Mertens makes no reference to the *satī* rite as a possible reason for the Dakṣa myth being so well known.

According to the basically all the Purāṇas, Satī is an incarnation of Durgā and a daughter of Dakṣa. Dakṣa is about to perform a sacrifice to which all the gods are invited, except for Śiva and Satī. Satī goes to her father who is unhappy with Satī’s choice of marrying Śiva, because he was used to visit cremation grounds and commit impure acts (Weimberger–Thomas 1996, 162; O’Flaherty 1973, 280). Satī thus decides to immolate herself into the sacrificial fire out of the anger against her father.

Even if there are many different versions of the myth in the Purāṇas, none of them shows a clear connection with the rite of *satī*, apart from the fact that both the myth and the ritual involve a self-sacrifice. According to Kingsley (1988, 40), the relationship between

the rite and the myth simply lies on the meaning of the term, which is ‘faithful wife’. In fact, by immolating herself, Satī acts as a faithful wife towards Śiva. The relationship between the reason for which Satī committed *satī*, and the reason why widows practice it remains unclear.

In some versions of the myth¹⁸, after Satī has died, Viṣṇu decides to put an end to Śiva’s grief by cutting Satī’s body into pieces. Every part of Satī’s body created a sacred place, or *pīṭha*, where she will always be worshipped. Satī’s *yoni* falls on the mount Nīlācala (Kāmākhyā)¹⁹ in Kāmarūpa (Assam). When Śiva goes on earth in search of her, he finds her *yoni* on the mount and, taking the shape of a *liṅga*, sexually unites with the *yoni* and stays there eternally (Kinsley 1988, 38). They thus re–unite after Satī’s self–immolation, and this seems to be a closer link to the ritual *satī*, which is supposed to make the spouses’ bond eternal. Nevertheless, the relationship between the myth and the ritual remains unclear.

According to Mertens (1998, 83), because the myth of Satī’s death is already present in the core of the *Brāhmapurāṇa* and of the *Vayupurāṇa*, its origins can be traced back to the fourth century CE, when these two texts were probably composed. Early versions of the Purāṇic myth of Dakṣa (except for the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*) are identifiable by the fact that the myth of Satī’s death is added as a sort of a thematic and special prequel. In the fully developed versions of the myth, since the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (most probably composed around the eighth–tenth century CE)²⁰, the Satī myth is an integral part of the plot (*ibid.*).

Given all these premises and considerations on the previous studies on *satī*, the link

¹⁸ According to Kingsley (1988, 226) the versions of the myth that include the creation of the *śakta pīṭhas* can be found in the *Bṛhaddharmapurāṇa* (2.6,10), *Kālikāpurāṇa* (15–18), and *Mahābhāgavatapurāṇa* (8–11)

¹⁹ Where Satī’s sexual organs fell, a temple was built in which no image of the goddess appears. The shrine only contains a *yoni* carved in the rock. There is an underground source beneath the ground that keeps it moist. Between July and August, after the arrival of the monsoons, a big ceremony is organized, during which the red water that flows from the spring is drunk by the devotees. It represents the Devī’s menstrual blood (Patel 1994, 79–80).

²⁰ See Rocher (1986, 147–8).

between the Satī myth and the ritual will be discussed in the next chapter with reference to another myth, the one of the creation, which involves a female deity called Saṃdhyā. It will be claimed that, before the shift from the version of the myth in the Vedas to the one in the Purāṇas, there was a stage where the myth of Satī and that of Saṃdhyā were closely related, because Saṃdhyā was considered, according to some Purāṇas, a previous incarnation of Satī. This could not actually lead to find a textual evidence according to which the myth originated from the ritual or *vice versa*, but it will at least show evidence for a clear link between them.

CAPTER TWO

THE SATĪ MYTH BEFORE THE SATĪ MYTH

The aim of this chapter is to find the link between the ritual *satī* and the goddess Satī through the study of the myth of Saṃdhyā, who, according to some Purāṇas, i.e. the *Bṛhaddharmapurāṇa*, the *Śivapurāṇa*, and the *Kālikāpurāṇa*, appears to be a previous incarnation of Satī. O'Flaherty study (1973) on the evolution of the recurring themes in the mythology of Śiva will constitute the starting point to further conduct the analysis on the identity of certain characters in the Satī myth. Successively, the Purāṇic versions of the myth will be compared to the versions in the Brāhmaṇas, to show the changes the myth was subjected to throughout its evolution.

According Weinberger–Thomas (1996, 163) the close link between impurity and the female sex derives from the myth of creation, according to which Brahmā first creates the *mānasaputra* ('sons born from the mind') and Saṃdhyā. As soon as Brahmā puts his gaze on her, he starts feeling a sense of desire towards Saṃdhyā. From that feeling Kāma, the god of Love, comes into being. He decides to test his power on the only existing creatures: the Creator, his ten sons²¹, and his daughter. All of them fall victims to loving desire. Only Dharma is able to regain self–control and decides to ask for Śiva to intervene. Śiva and the other children of the Creator start sweating out of their shame. Manu, the man's progeny, was born out of Śiva's sweat. Dakṣa's sweat creates Rati, the Sexual Pleasure, who has strong seductive powers. Furious for the humiliation caused by Kāma's testing of his powers, Brahmā throws a curse on him, condemning him to death by the hand of Śiva. Kāma protests, for he has done nothing but follow the orders of Brahmā, who, however, can no longer withdraw his word. Kāma will be reborn out of his own ashes on the day that Śiva

²¹ The *mānasaputras* born from Brahmā's mind are: Bṛghu, Pulatsya, Pulaha, Kratu, Aṅgiras, Marīci, Dakṣa, Atri, Vasiṣṭa, and Narada (Mani 1975, 474).

will marry. Dakṣa gives his daughter Rati as a wife to Kāma: since then, love and sexual pleasure are inseparable. Saṃdhyā, on the other hand, responsible for the disorder among the gods, wants to expiate her own guilt. She decides to self-immolate into the fire, after having passed through a period of atonement lasted four cosmic eras. Śiva agrees to satisfy Saṃdhyā's desire, and once she will be reborn, she will be remembered in the world for her chastity. Also, her wishes will be fulfilled: no being will ever be touched by desire at birth like she did, and since then sexual desire is only brought about by puberty. During the sacrifice of Saṃdhyā, Agni, the god of Fire, divides the goddess's body into two parts: the top becomes the Sunrise, and the bottom the Sunset. From the sacrifice Arundhatī comes into being, a goddess invoked by the chaste and faithful women, and in particular by the *satīs* at the time of their solemn declaration of will to self-immolate. Brahmā, in the end, still wants to take revenge on Śiva, for he had desired Saṃdhyā, and starts distracting him from his ascetic prayers. All his attempts fail until Durgā promises to Brahmā that she will be reborn as Satī, who will seduce Śiva and become his wife (see O'Flaherty 1973, 162–3).

The considerations that can be drawn from a first look into this overview of the myth, are that Sandhyā is struck by the guilt of having seduced the other gods. She thus decides to sacrifice herself and be purified by the fire. In this way, her nature of seductive woman is annihilated. On the other hand, it can be noticed that the goddess Rati is condemned to the same end through other means: her femininity is controlled by Kāma, to whom she is given as a bride. Marriage thus puts an end to the fear of women's autonomy. As Malamoud observes (1994, 68), *vivāha* (marriage) can be interpreted both as a *saṃskāra* (rite) of passage and as *yajña* (sacrifice), in which the woman is the subject in the first case, the object in the second one. In both the circumstances, the process will lead the woman to be *saṃskṛta* (carried to perfection). To be noted is the fact that the only fundamental *saṃskāra* also valid for women is the *vivāha*. If marriage is intended as a sacrifice, the

bride's father represents the sacrificer, while the bride and the husband are the deities. Saṁdhyā then has to self-immolate in order to purify herself, since it was not possible for her to 'sacrifice' through *vivāha*. According to O'Flaherty (1973, 173–4), Dakṣa has in the myth of Satī the same role Brahmā has in the one of creation. Śiva is about to kill Brahmā during his wedding with Satī, because he is attracted by her. Viṣṇu, however, tells him: "You must not kill Brahmā because he has made Satī your bride" (*Śivapurāṇa* 2.2.19.56). The statement makes evident the identity between Dakṣa and Brahmā, who have many features in common, which will be discussed later in this chapter. For example, Brahmā had created Sandhyā with whom he had committed incest, and Dakṣa too, according to the Vedas, had committed incest with one of his daughters, Ūṣas.

2.1 The Vedic Antecedents

In order to clarify whether there is effectively a connection between the myth of creation and that of the *Dakṣayajña*, the tie between the myth of Satī and the earlier versions in the *R̥gveda* (which nevertheless is too corrupted to be translated according to Griffith [1976, 574]) and in the Brāhmaṇas will be first taken into account for an analysis. According to some Brāhmaṇas versions (i.e. the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*, .4.1–8 and the *Tāṇḍyamahābrāhmaṇa*, 8.2.10–11), Prajāpati committed incest with his daughter Dayus/Ūṣas. Then the gods, disgusted by his behaviour, ask Rudra to kill him with his arrow. Rudra pierces him and Prajāpati's germinal fluids (*retas*) fall on the ground. However, because Prajāpati represents the sacrifice itself, no part of his body can be wasted, and each part has to be sacrificed first. So the gods decide to take Prajāpati's *retas* to Bhaga, who, straight after having looked at them, gets his eyes burnt. Then they take it to Pūṣan, who tries to eat it, but his teeth fall soon after he tries to bite it (Sircar 1973, 5).

An early development of the myth can already be found in the *Gopathabrāhmaṇa* (2.1), according to which Prajāpati was performing a sacrifice but forgot to make proper

offerings for Rudra, who then took away part of the *yajña* (ibid.). This can be seen as a common feature with the Satī myth, since there too Śiva was not invited to the sacrifice and destroyed it.

The ‘root–myth’ of creation slowly took the form of the story of Dakṣa’s sacrifice after having been subjected to a change: according to the earliest versions, Dakṣa was beheaded by Rudra, who, in that way, re–established the orthodox moral order and punished Dakṣa, who had committed incest (O’Flaherty 1973, 274). Thus, according to O’Flaherty (ibid.), the myth symbolized a conflict between the moral Rudra (Śiva), and the immoral Prajāpati (Dakṣa), but the roles switched in the Purāṇic versions. O’Flaherty (ibid., 128) points out that the incest was attributed to Dakṣa as early as the *Ṛgveda*, and the Purāṇas show that the incest he committed was essential for Dakṣa for the same motivations that it was essential for Brahmā in the myth of creation (where Brahmā would not have been able to create if the incest had not happened).

Furthermore, O’Flaherty (ibid.) clarifies why Dakṣa’s head, once he was beheaded by Śiva, was replaced with that of a goat (see also *Devībhāgavatapurāṇa*, 7.30.39–44). The goat is the symbol of lust in Hindu mythology. For example, when Indra is castrated, his testicles are replaced with those of a ram or goat; Indra takes also the form of a ram to rape a Brahmin woman. Prajāpati’s seed too, after it has fallen to the ground, transformed into a billy–goat. O’Flaherty also adds that Dakṣa’s head is offered to the fire just as Brahmā’s seed (ibid.).

Sircar tries to explain the development of the myth of Dakṣa from the *Ṛgveda* to the Purāṇas, although, the connection between the myth of creation and that of Dakṣa does not seem very clear, apart from the fact that Dakṣa appears in both of them:

The earliest form of the *Dakṣa–yajña–nāśa* probably to be traced in the *Mhābhārata* (12.282–283; cf. *Brahma Purāṇa*, 39) and a slightly modified form of the same story is found in many of the Purāṇas

(*Matsya*, ch. 12; *Padma*, *Sṛṣṭikhaṇḍa*, ch. 5; *Kūrma*, I, ch. 15; *Brahmānda*, ch. 31, etc.) as well as in the *Kumārasambhava* (I, 21) of Kalidāsa who flourished in the fourth and fifth centuries and adorned the court of the Gupta Vikramādityas [Chandragupta II]. According to this modified version of the legend, the mother–goddess, who was the wife of Śiva, was in the form of Satī one of the daughters of Dakṣa Prajāpati. Dakṣa was celebrating a great sacrifice for which neither Satī nor Śiva was invited. Satī, however, went to her father’s sacrifice uninvited, but was greatly insulted by Dakṣa. As a result of this ill–treatment, Satī is said to have died by *yoga* or of a broken heart, or, as Kālidāsa says, she put herself into the fire and perished. In the *Mahābhārata* version of the story, referred to above, the wife of Śiva is only responsible for pointing out, to her husband, Dakṣa’s impertinence in disregarding the great god; but she is neither said to have been Dakṣa’s daughter nor to have died at Dakṣa’s house as a result of the latter’s ill–treatment. It will be seen that the two strains of the legend as found in the Brāhmaṇas, viz. Prajāpati insulting his own daughter and disregarding Rudra–Śiva, have both been cleverly accommodated in the story of the Purāṇas.

(Sircar 1973, 5–6)

According to the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* (1.7.4.1–3) Saṃdhyā is not Brahmā’s daughter, but Prajāpati’s [Dakṣa’s]. Thus the passage is an important evidence which proofs the identification of Satī and Saṃdhyā:

Prajāpati conceived a passion for his own daughter, –either the Sky or the Dawn. ‘May I pair with her!’ thus (thinking) he united with her. (1)

This, assuredly, was a sin in the eyes of the gods. ‘He who acts thus towards his own daughter, our sister, [commits a sin]’ they thought. (2)

The gods then said to this god who rules over the beasts (Rudra), ‘This one, surely, commits a sin who acts thus towards his own daughter, our sister. Pierce him!’ Rudra, taking aim, pierced him. Half of his seed fell to the ground. And thus it came to pass. (3)

(Trans. Müller 1993, 208–9)

In the *Kālikāpurāṇa*, composed several centuries later, the identification between Satī and Saṃdhyā appears once again, in a passage where Satī states:

It is the time I should have the punishment merited by my action. Since my father and the brothers became lustful after they beheld me amorous, and desired me carnally straight way, there was none who was more sinner than I. On seeing them I had also become lustful, and by transgressing all limits cherished the sexual desire in my heart for my own father and brothers as if they were my husband. I shall atone for this sin of mine and immolate myself in the fire following the vedic path.

(KP 19.72–75)

The Dawn is known as Uṣas in some Brāhmaṇas, and as Saṃdhyā in others, although both the goddesses symbolize the Dawn. In the *Aitareyabrāhmaṇa* (3.33), the story appears as follows:

Prajāpati felt love towards his own daughter, the sky some say, Uṣas others. Having become a stag he approached her in the form of a deer. The gods saw him, ‘A deed unknown Prajāpati now does.’ They ought one to punish him; they found him not among one another. These most dread forms they brought together in one place. Brought together they became this deity here; therefore his name containing (the word) Bhūta; he prospers who knows thus his name. To him the gods said, ‘Prajāpati here hath done a deed unknown; pierce him.’ ‘Be it so,’ he replied, ‘Let me chose a boon from you.’ ‘Choose’ (they said). He chose this boon, the overlordship of cattle; Therefore does his name contain the word ‘cattle’. Rich in cattle he becomes who knows thus this name of his. Having aimed at him he pierced him; being pierced he flew upwards; him they call ‘the deer’. The piercer of the deer is he of that name. The female deer is Rohiṇī; the three-pointed arrow is the three-pointed arrow. The seed of Prajāpati outpoured ran; it became a pond. The gods said, ‘Let not this seed of Prajāpati be spoiled.’ It became ‘not to be spoiled;’ that is why ‘not to be spoiled’ (*māduṣa*) has its name; connected with man is called ‘not to be spoiled;’ that being ‘not to be spoiled’ they call mystically ‘connected with man (mānuṣa)’, for the gods are lovers of mystery as it were.

(Trans. Keith 1920 185–86)

The story here is similar to the one in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*, and Prajāpati is presented as the Dawn’s father. Although, the myths of Dakṣa and that of creation are not only linked by the fact that Saṃdhyā is reborn as Satī, and thus Saṃdhyā and Uṣas are identified with Satī. There are other elements that clarify the identification of the two myths, and they will be shown in the next paragraph.

2.2 Identification of Brahmā and Dakṣa, Satī and Saṃdhyā

Looking at the myths of Dakṣa’s sacrifice and that of the creation, numerous analogies can be noticed, to the extent that the two myths could be considered as two different versions of the same story. The main characters are Dakṣa in Dakṣa’s myth and Brahmā in the myth of creation. Brahmā creates the universe, and Dakṣa creates the sacrifice. Brahmā also creates the primordial woman, Saṃdhyā, while Dakṣa gives birth to Satī. Brahmā starts desiring his own daughter, and the other gods too start to be attracted by her. On the other side there is Dakṣa, who, according to another myth, has committed incest with his own daughter, and in this myth does not approve Satī’s husband (does he want to

keep her for him?). Brahmā has to make up for what he did in the end, and he does so by condemning Kāma to death by the hand of Śiva, and by distracting Śiva from his ascetic meditation and sending Durgā, in the form of Satī, to him. Dakṣa too, after having built up the sacrifice, sees it being destroyed and his daughter jumping into the fire. Brahmā hates Śiva for having desired his own daughter, Saṃdhyā, and shares this hatred towards Śiva with Dakṣa, who does not like him as a husband for his daughter. In the end, both the myths also share the same conclusion: Satī and Saṃdhyā sacrifice themselves into a sacrificial fire.

According to O’Flaherty (1973, 121), the Brahmā and the Dakṣa myths, as Brahmā and Dakṣa, are connected to each other also through the way in which Śiva acts towards them in the myths: Brahmā’s desire for his own daughter, as Śiva’s punishment as a result of it, are recurring themes in Śaiva mythology. The episode is not only narrated in the story of Dakṣa’s sacrifice, but also in the myth of Śiva’s wedding with Satī. Brahmā’s incest and its punishment lead Kāma to be cursed and Śiva to be married to Satī. At Śiva’s marriage, Brahmā repeats his act of desire, but Śiva decides to forgive him, for it is thanks to Brahmā that he is getting married to Satī. The myth of the wedding itself shows its tie with the one of creation, for when Brahmā is showing his desire for Satī, he says: ‘As I wished to delude Śiva by a trick [i.e. trap him in a marriage caused by lust], so even now Śiva has deluded me with his magical game.’ (ibid.)

O’Flaherty, nevertheless, focuses more on the identification between Śiva and Brahmā, rather than between Dakṣa and Brahmā (ibid., 113), as Śiva appears as an incestuous and lustful creator in the popular tradition, and particularly in Bengali literature, where he is linked to Brahmā for they both desired their own daughters. Śiva inherits the theme of incest when he becomes a father-god, a process which is evident throughout Bengali literature. The reference to Bengali literature and to the motifs that can be recognized in these myths can lead to a connection with Bengali Purāṇic literature, where

Śiva has a much more prominent role in the myths, and also is in that part of India that Śaktism became more firmly established than in other parts of India. O’Flaherty underlines the identification of Brahmā and Śiva also saying that they are both referred to as *Pañcavaktra*, ‘five headed’ and share many attributes in their iconography (ibid., 127). One identification between the two myths O’Flaherty draws is due to the fact that, according to her, ‘[t]he traditional conflict between ascetic and erotic creation is personified in the Dakṣa myth (as in the myth of Brahmā) as the conflict between Śiva the ascetic and Dakṣa the *prajāpati*’ (ibid., 129).

Focusing on the main female characters of the myth, it can be noticed that also Satī and Saṃdhyā share many aspects with each other. Both of them get married after Brahmā’s will: Saṃdhyā is reborn as Arundhatī and is given as a wife to Vasiṣṭha, while Satī is a reincarnation of Durgā, who is sent by Brahmā to distract Śiva. Both the deities are considered to be the emblem of the devoted wife: Arundhatī is invoked during Hindu weddings and also by those women who are about to commit *satī*; Satī is herself called *satī*, thus the connection is here easy to see. Although, there is apparently a substantial difference between the two myths: while Saṃdhyā immolates herself in order to go through a purification and is reincarnated as Arundhatī, who is effectively a devoted wife, it has been pointed out (Weinberger–Thomas 1996, 165–6) that Satī burns herself out of her own will, ‘Satī immolates herself in order to satisfy the demands of her own ego. The desire to abandon her body springs from a narcissistic injury [...]’ (ibid., 165) and getting from the self–sacrifice the opposite result with regard to what it would be expected. She in fact abandons her husband to whom she would have to be faithful and devoted. He is not even dead, as the husbands of those women who committed Satī. In the end, although, Saṃdhyā as well had sacrificed herself after her own will, with the purpose of expiating the sin of having seduced her father and brothers, while no one had asked her for that ultimate act,

and, even if (as it was stated before in this work) this aspect has been denied, also the *satīs* immolate themselves out of their own will.

Another common feature that Satī and Saṃdhyā share is that, according to the myth, they both meditate on their husbands before entering the fire. In some early versions of the Dakṣa myth in the Purāṇas (see for example *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* 4.4.24–27), Satī catches fire as a result of her meditation on her husband. Similarly, Saṃdhyā meditates ‘[...] upon the chaste Brahmin for her husband [...]. Her body became the oblation, and she arose from the fire as an infant girl, named Arundhatī’ (O’Flaherty 1973, 65). To be noted the fact that Satī is reborn after the sacrifice as well, but as Pārvatī, and that, as O’Flaherty points out (ibid.) Saṃdhyā’s *tapas* is a furious response against her relationship with Brahmā, although it is Brahmā who sends Vasiṣṭha to help her and, to put it in terms of the pattern of the myth, to enact the change from *tapas* to sexuality in her. In this, an analogy between Śiva and Vasiṣṭha can be traced, since they both transform into *brahmacārins* in order to seduce their future wives (ibid.).

One other remarkable aspect of the mythology around Śiva is that if Śiva and Agni are identified, as O’Flaherty (ibid.) points out, then, when Satī burns herself is she actually following her husband? In fact if that would be the case, by self-immolating she would both start the destruction of Dakṣa’s sacrifice and be faithful towards Śiva, who is identified with Agni.

Thus it can be stated, on the basis of what Kerényi suggested (1948, 16) about the recurrence of themes in mythology, that the myth of creation and the one of Dakṣa’s sacrifice are simply two different versions of the same myth, since the characters involved in the story change, but the roles attributed to them are the same, and so is the purpose of the myth. In fact, as it has already been pointed out, but with reference to the puruṣa myth of creation (Beane 1977, 205–6) the myth of creation explains how the universe was created,

which is actually also what the myth of Satī explains. In the *Śāktapurāṇas* versions, where the *pīṭhas* appear after Satī's death, a new Śāktic universe is created, which is the one of the *pīṭhas*, where the goddess' presence will always be effective. The two myths are although not only essentially the same myth, they are also connected to each other, in the sense that the reason that brings up the need for self-immolation to Saṃdhyā (Satī) in the myth of creation is also one of the reasons that leads the widows to self-sacrifice, i.e. the sense of guilt that comes from the awareness of the risk of not being sexually controlled by a male figure. The end of the myths can be compared under the point of view of the restoration of the universal order. In the myth of creation, the order was restored once Kāma was punished and Saṃdhyā self-immolated; in Dakṣa's sacrifice myth, the order was restored once Śiva's grief was put to an end by Viṣṇu, who created the *śākta pīṭhas* out of Satī's body.

As it is clear from the roles the characters have in the myths, the story itself, and the themes that are used, it can be stated that the myth of creation and that of Dakṣa's sacrifice are closely related. It is probable that the Dakṣa myth was originally a different version, or an evolution, of the myth of creation. As O'Flaherty points out (1973, 129), the *Varāhapurāṇa* (33.1–33) firmly highlights the tie between the two myths:

Brahmā created various creatures, but when they failed to increase he became angry and began to do *tapas*. Rudra appeared and Brahmā said to him, 'Produce creatures to fill the universe, for you are able to do this.' When Rudra heard this, he plunged into the water and began to do *tapas*, and while he was in the water Dakṣa became to create mentally, and his sons created mentally. When Rudra emerged from the water, ready to begin creation, he made the sacrifice and the gods, but then in fury he said, 'who has insulted me and superseded me, creating al this universe and this lovely maiden?' Flames came out of his mouth and turned into demons and ghosts and yogis, who pervaded the earth. Then Rudra made a marvellous bow and other weapons, and he attacked the gods and knocked out the teeth of Pūṣan and the eyes of Bhaga, and he cut off the testicles of ['The Sacrifice'], and Kratu fell to the ground, his seed pierced. Then Rudra demanded a share of the sacrifice, and the gods praised him, and he restored all those whom he had maimed.

(Trans. O'Flaherty 1973, 129)

As it can be seen, even though it is not specified that the sacrifice was Dakṣa's, it is Dakṣa that replaced Śiva as a creator of the universe, causing Śiva's anger. Dakṣa is not

beheaded, but the sacrifice is castrated by the hand of Śiva, and ‘his seed is pierced like that of the primeval Brahmā’.

In another version of the myth of creation narrated in the *Varāhapurāṇa* (21.1–88) it is even clearer that the two myths are related, since they are both narrated in one single story:

Brahmā wished to create, but he did not know how to do it. He became angry, and Rudra was born from his anger. Brahmā gave Rudra a beautiful maiden for his wife, named Gaurī [Parvatī], and Rudra rejoiced when he received her. Then Brahmā forbade Rudra to do *tapas* at the time of creation, saying, ‘Rudra, you must perform creation.’ But Rudra said, ‘I am unable’, and he plunged into the water, for he thought, ‘One without *tapas* is not able to create creatures.’ Then Brahmā took Gaurī back, and, wishing to create, he made seven mind-born sons, Dakṣa and his brothers. He gave Gaurī to Dakṣa for a daughter, though she had formerly promised in marriage to Rudra, and Dakṣa rejoiced and began a great sacrifice which all the gods attended. Then, after 10,000 years, Rudra rose from the water, and by the power of his *tapas* he saw all the world before him with its forests and men and beasts, and he heard the chanting of the priests in Dakṣa’s sacrifice. Then he became furious, and he said, ‘Brahmā created me and instructed me to perform creation. Who is doing that now?’ Flames issued forth from his ears and turned into ghosts and goblins and various weapons. Rudra destroyed Dakṣa’s sacrifice but he restored it again when the gods praised him. Dakṣa gave his daughter to Rudra as Brahmā asked him to, and Rudra took her with him to Kailāsa.

(Trans. O’Flaherty 1973, 129–30)

Here Dakṣa has a much more prominent role in the story, as it is him who creates the universe and the sacrifice.

Elsewhere (ibid., 145; 170) O’Flaherty argues that Śiva and Kāma are, basically, the same deity for numerous reasons which include the myths in the Purāṇas. For example, in the *Mahābhārata*, Śiva is himself called Kāma. Assuming that her assumption is right, and applying this identification on the myth of Dakṣa, Śiva [Kāma] would take Rati [Saṃdhyā] as a wife. The roles of the deities are interchangeable and Śiva, Dakṣa, Kāma, and Brahmā share many characteristics. Thus the connection between the myths, and furthermore between the myth and the ritual, becomes clearer.

In the *Śīvapurāṇa* (*Dharmasaṃhitā* 10.32–4) it is also said: Śīva is a great womanizer, and although he is the enemy of Kāma he is the lover of the Ganges and full of passion for Saṃdhyā.’, and O’Flaherty (ibid., 230), asserts:

Another Purāṇa accounts for Śīva’s relationship with Saṃdhyā (‘Twilight’) as well as with the Ganges, simply by adding a third sister, Rāgiṇī (‘The Red’), who is cursed to become the redness of twilight as punishment for trying to receive Śīva’s seed when her tapas was insufficient.

To conclude, it is possible that originally the myth of the creation and that of Dakṣa were two versions of the same myth. In the earliest versions of the myth as found in the Brāhmaṇas, Saṃdhyā was Prajāpati’s daughter, and not Brahmā’s. Successively, the myth evolved until it reached the form of the myth of Dakṣa’s sacrifice in which Satī starts appearing at some point in time. Satī and Saṃdhyā are essentially the same deity, Dakṣa’s daughter (O’Flaherty 1973, 102), who decides to self-immolate in the fire.

O’Flaherty’s conclusion of ‘*Asceticism and eroticism in the mythology of Śīva*’ seems to fit the analysis done in the present work (ibid., 318):

By refusing to modify its component elements in order to force them into a synthesis, Indian mythology celebrates the idea that the universe is boundlessly various, that everything occurs simultaneously, that all possibilities may exist without excluding each other. The myths rejoice in all the experiences that stretch and fill the human spirit; not merely the moments of pure joy that we want to capture, nor the great tragedies and transitions that transform and strengthen us, but all the seemingly insignificant episodes and repetitious encounters of banal reality which the myth—with its minute detail and its awareness of simultaneous scales—teaches us to sanctify and to value. Untrammelled variety and contradiction are ethically and metaphysically necessary; this constitutes the peculiar charm and strength of the Hindu worldview.

To put it in one sentence, every myth and every mythological theme in Indian mythology is interconnected with and derived from each other.

The origin of the relationship between the ritual *satī* and the Dakṣa myth has been tentatively explained and interpreted through the analysis of the versions of the myth of creation contained in numerous Brāhmaṇas, and through the identification of the characters in the myth of creation and that of Saṃdhyā (particularly focusing on the identities of

Dakṣa/Brahmā and Satī/Saṃdhyā). Next chapter will focus on the most recent versions of the myth of Dakṣa and on their development when *satī* had already become a relatively common practice, in order to show how the ritual has influenced the narration of the myth up to the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER THREE

THE EVOLUTION OF THE MYTH IN THE ŚAKTA UPAPURĀṆAS

In this chapter the versions of the Saṭī myth as they appear in the Śākta Upapurāṇas will be compared. Before doing so, a text background will be provided for each of the Śākta Upapurāṇas that will be discussed, in order to contextualise and analyse them deeply.

3.1 The Śākta Upapurāṇas

The *Purāṇas* are a category of Hindu texts that both have a didactic as well as a literary purpose. They contain myths involving Hindu deities as well as prescriptions on how to propitiate certain deities in particular occasions, and are usually divided into eighteen Mahāpurāṇas (the most important ones) and eighteen Upapurāṇas (the ones of secondary importance) (Rocher 1986, 1). A further subdivision was made for the Upapurāṇas, and one of the subgroups, to which the texts that will be analysed in this chapter belong, is the one of the Śākta Upapurāṇas. These are, according to Kumar (1983, 22), editor of the first critical edition to the *Mahābhāgavatapurāṇa* (MBP), the *Devīpurāṇa* (DP), the *Kālikāpurāṇa* (KP), the MBP, the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (BhP)²⁷, and the *Caṇḍīpurāṇa* (CP), and were all written in the eastern part of India between the sixth and the eleventh centuries, where Śaktism was widespread at that time. According to Rocher (1983, 113) and Hazra (1940, 1), the Śākta

²⁷ The BhP is not considered a Śākta Upapurana here, since it was certainly composed earlier than the other Śākta Upapurāṇas, and it cannot be stated that the Goddess is the main figure in the text. The BhP is probably the most popular of all the Purāṇas (Rocher 1986, 148; Tagare 1976, xxxv), and it appears both in the lists of the Mahāpurāṇas, as well as in those of the Ūpapurāṇas, although its name could also be referring to the *Devībhāgavatapurāṇa* (Rocher 1986, 149). It is composed of twelve *skandhas* and 335 *adhyāyas*. For what concerns the date of the compilation of the BhP, it has been a topic of great controversy since the beginning of the nineteenth century, but the most recent studies tend to date it around the ninth or eleventh century CE, long before all the Śākta Upapurāṇas were composed. About the BhP's place of origin there is a wide agreement on its Tamil Nadu origin (ibid.). Many authors also argued about the BhP being the 'Bhāgavata' mentioned in the lists of the Mahāpurāṇas or not (Mackenzie–Brown 1983, 551; Rocher 1986, 146). According to Mackenzie–Brown (1983, 565) there is not a real *Bhāgavata* and a false one, but only a different perspective on the events of the universe shown by the BhP and the *Devībhāgavatapurāṇa*, which is the other Purāṇa mentioned as 'Bhāgavata' in the lists.

Upapurāṇas are four, namely the DP, the *Devībhāgavatapurāṇa* (DBhP), the KP, and the BP. In Hazra's list other Śākta Upapurāṇas are mentioned²⁸, and the CP is among them, but they are only available in manuscript form, therefore secondary literature about them is still lacking.

The Śākta Upapurāṇas are called Śākta because their main focus is on the Goddess in all her forms (Durgā, Kālī, Caṇḍī, Satī, Gaṅgā, etc.) the myths involving her, and the proper ways to worship her (ibid., 2). Even though female deities were worshipped since the Vedic times, these texts were composed relatively late, when the conception of the Devī as Śakti, or supreme female principle, started to spread and to become established.

In this chapter two Purāṇas are added to Hazra and Rocher's lists: The *Bṛhaddharmapurāṇa* (BṛP), which, although Hazra (1940) defines it a 'non-sectarian Upapurāṇa', is clearly a Śākta work for all its three *khaṇḍas* revolve around the figure of the Goddess, and the *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa* (BvP), although Satī's myth does not appear in the latter. The following paragraphs will show the reason of the inclusion of these two Purāṇas in the analysis of the development of the myth of Satī.

3.2 Mertens and the evolution of the Dakṣa myth

Annemarie Mertens published an extensive PhD thesis on the evolution of the myth of Dakṣa, from the Vedic to the Purāṇic literature, passing through epic literature as well. The work is entitled *Der Dakṣamythus in der episch-purāṇischen Literatur: Beobachtungen zur religionsgeschichtlichen Entwicklung des Gottes Rudra-Śiva im Hinduismus* (1998). Although it is interesting to note how the versions of the myth are connected to each other and the changes that are shown from one version to another, in the short chapter on the connection between the ritual and the myth, the tie between the Dakṣa myth and that of the

²⁸ *Bhagavatīpurāṇa*, *Caṇḍīpurāṇa* (or *Caṇḍīkāpurāṇa*), *Devīrahasyapurāṇa*, a second *Kālikāpurāṇa* (also known as *Kālīpurāṇa* or *Satīpurāṇa*).

creation is not mentioned. Contrarily, it is affirmed that it cannot be stated that the myth of Saṭī and the ritual are closely connected (*ibid.*, 99–101). Nevertheless, Mertens’ analysis of the Dakṣa myths in the Purāṇas has been taken into account in the analysis made here. Nevertheless, the purpose of the analysis that will be shown here is different: here the Dakṣa myth is only analysed with regard to the parts that involve Saṭī’s death, aiming at showing how the ritual influenced the myth, once the myth became established as the Dakṣa myth and differentiated from the myth of creation from which it has been proved to derive.

The table below shows Mertens’ study of the connections between the versions of the myth of Dakṣa in Purāṇic literature, as it is shown in her work (Mertens 1998, 388). According to her (*ibid.*, 99), the Saṭī myth was added to the core of the story of the Dakṣa myth, which appeared earlier in Purāṇic literature.

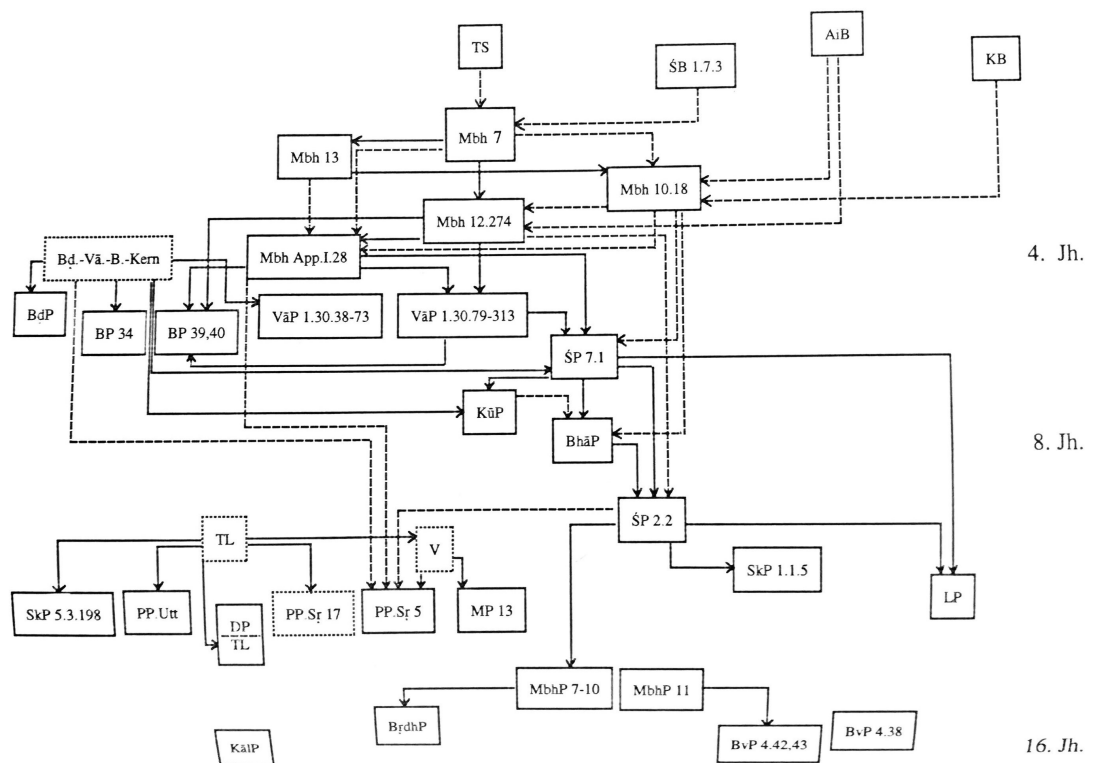


Fig. 1 The evolution of the Dakṣa myth in the epic and Purāṇic literature according to Mertens (1998, 488).

The table shows the dependency, which exists between the versions of the “sacrifice” and Dakṣa myth respectively, which Mertens analysed in her work. The texts are represented by the abbreviations of the texts within a square. The squares with discontinuous lines denote a text, which is the source for several other texts. The dependency between the squares is indicated by an arrow. The direction of the dependency is shown by the direction of the arrow. The continuous lines indicate a sure or likely influence. The discontinuous lines indicate a possible or assumed influence. Later texts, which were influenced, can always be found further down than earlier influencing texts. The position of the squares to each other only indicates a relative chronology if they are connected with lines. Exceptions are the two MBhP texts, which were likely written by the same author. The data regarding the absolute chronology can be given due to the dating of individual texts: The 4th century refers to the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* and the *Vāyupurāṇa*, which are supposed to contain the root-myth of the Dakṣa’s sacrifice. The eighth century refers to the BhP version and the sixteenth century to the BvP version. The other versions found a relative attribution to these time periods due to their literary historical connections to the aforementioned texts. Although the Kalp myth and the BvP version (4.38) can not be connected to the examined sources, they have been included for the sake of completeness.

3.3 The *Mahābhāgavatapurāṇa* (MBP)

Kumar (1983, 22) gives some evidence to support the Bengali origin of the MBP: some chapters are entirely dedicated to Kāmarūpa (located in contemporary Assam), which, according to this *Purāṇa*, is the best of the fifty-one *mahāpīṭhas* generated by the fall of Satī’s body parts after she had sacrificed herself. Specifically, Kāmarūpa is where her sexual organ (*yoni*) fell. Another piece of evidence is that, according to the myth described in this text, Gaṅga wanted to visit Kāmākhyā while she was following Bhagīratha. Even if she changed her mind in the end not to disappoint the sage Jahnu while travelling eastwards, the

fact that the author wanted to put Kāmākhyā in the story means that he wanted to give importance to it. Also, the narrative about Bhāgīrathī and Padmā (a Bengali river) shows that the author was familiar with these two rivers. The other pieces of evidence are: that almost all the manuscripts of the MBP were found in Bengal, mostly in the eastern part, and were written in Bengali script; that the MBP is only referred to by Bengali authors; that independent manuscripts of parts of this *Purāṇa* are found all over Bengal.

Kumar states (1983, 28) that the MBP cannot be dated later than the twelfth century, but most probably it was written between the tenth and eleventh centuries. He takes as evidence the fact that the BṛP (dated by Kumar not earlier than the tenth and not later than the fourteenth century CE) includes the MBP in the list of the eighteen Mahāpurāṇas, and thus the MBP has to precede it by a long time, otherwise it would have never be appointed to as a Mahāpurāṇa. Although, a more recent study (Dold 2007, 90) on the text, defines the MBP as contemporary of the *Yoginī Tantra*, and dates it to the sixteenth century. The table below summarizes the dates to which the MBP has been assigned and the scholars who proposed them.

Date	Reference
10 th -11 th cent. C.E.	Kumar (1983)
16 th cent. C.E.	<u>Dold (2007)</u>

Fig. 2 Dates for the MBP

For what concerns the content of the MBP, it is almost entirely about narratives that involve the Goddess as a supreme deity (Dold 2009, 224). It stresses the importance of the pilgrimage site of Kāmarūpa and its presiding goddess, Kāmākhyā, who is identified with the Goddess, especially in the passages regarding the story of Satī. As previously outlined,

according to the MBP, Kāmarūpa is considered the greatest of the *Śakta Pīṭhas*, for the Goddess is fully present there (ibid.). Devotion (*bhakti*) is the main religious and philosophical issue in the MBP. All the gods and the creatures of heaven and earth in the narrations are able to achieve their success because of their devotion towards the Goddess. The MBP has been defined a Śākta text (Kumar 1983, 22) because of the importance assumed by the Goddess in all her forms. Here the non-duality between Śiva and Śakti is emphasized. Śiva is *sat* and Śakti is *sati*, Śiva is *cit* and Śakti is *citi*, Śiva is *brahman* and Śakti is *brahmayī* (ibid., 23).

3.4 The Kālikāpurāṇa (KP)

Almost all scholars agree on the geographical origin of KP, i.e. some place close to Kāmarūpa or Kāmarūpa itself. The date, like that of the other Purāṇas, is unsure. It was originally dated to the fourteenth century, but subsequently it was established that 1000 CE must be the *terminus ante quem*. Scholars noted a reference to King Dharmapāla of Kāmarūpa in the text, and postdated it to the eleventh or twelfth century CE Hazra proposed to date it between the tenth and the first half of the eleventh century (Rocher 1986, 182). The differences between the various versions of the KP could prove that there is not such a text in the same form as the versions of the eleventh–twelfth century. Hazra, for example, admits the existence of another KP, also called *Kālīpurāṇa* or *Satīpurāṇa* (ibid., 62).

Satī's myth in KP is very similar to the one which is found in the DBhP. The only, fundamental difference is that Satī does not jump into the sacrificial fire. After the self-immolation, Śiva takes the form of the *liṅga* and reunites with Satī. To be noted is also the analogy between the ends in both the versions.

3.5 The Devībhāgavatapurāṇa (DBhP)

According to Ramachandran (1951), the DBhP would have been composed in the sixth century BC. The hypothesis was based on the assumption that the relief of Nara and Nārāyaṇa, carved in the Gupta temple at Deogarh, dated approximately to the beginning of the sixth century BC, had been carved by drawing inspiration from the incident of Nara and Nārāyaṇa's penance described in the fourth *skandha* of the DBhP (Rocher 1986, 172). The story narrates of Indra's attempt to distract the two deities from meditation. In order to do so, he sends Kāma, Rati, Vasanta and thousands of *apsaras* (Rocher 1986, 169). However, this hypothesis has not been accepted by other scholars, who tend to date the text from 900 to 1350 CE. Hazra (1963, 346) dates it back to the eleventh or twelfth century CE. According to Layle (1973, 102–105), the text would have evolved progressively, passing through five different phases, the latter of which dates back to the eleventh century. Hazra (1963, 353–359) finds valid arguments both in support of the hypothesis of the Bengali origin of the DBhP, and of that outside Bengal. He therefore concludes that:

The author of the *Devībhāgavata* was a Smārta Śākta Brahmin of Bengal and [...] he migrated to Benares (probably because it was the best place of residence for a Devi-worshipper), lived there for a long time, and then wrote the *Devībhāgavata*.

In the myth of Satī described in the DBhP, after a brief review of the motivations that led the goddess to self-immolation, Śiva's grief at the sight of Satī dying among the flames is described. Later Viṣṇu, taking his bow and arrows, divides the goddess's body into small parts. Falling to the ground, the fragments form the sacred *pīṭhas*.

According to Mertens (1998, 274), the version that appears in the DBhP differentiates itself from the versions that represent an earlier stage of Purāṇic Śāktism, i.e. the *Matsyapurāṇa* and the *Padmapurāṇa*. She also points out (ibid., 300) that in the Bengali Śākta Upapurāṇas, i.e. the MBP, the BṛP, the BvP, and the KP, there is more emphasis on the part of the myth that involves the creation of the *pīṭhas*. It is also commonly

acknowledged (ibid., 301) that tantric Śaktism was at home in the eastern part of the Indian Subcontinent, and therefore it is not surprising that the Dakṣa myth is clearly influenced by the Śaktic tradition (see KP 18.1–12; DBP 7.30; MBP 9.30–90; BṛP *madhyakhaṇḍa*, 40).

Mertens, commenting on the Dakṣa myth passage in this Purāṇa (ibid., 343), states that the Satī myth in the *Bṛhaddharmapurana* is very extensive but of inferior literary quality. The easy language and the superficial, sometimes even inconsequential, redaction make it pale compared to the Satī myths in the other Purāṇas, especially in the passage where *Satī* appears as Kālī in Śiva’s dance. This statement will be proved wrong in the paragraph where the myths will be compared.

3.6 The *Bṛhaddharmapurāṇa* (BṛP)

The BṛP, defined by Hazra (1963) as a non-sectarian *Upapurāṇa*, is probably the most interesting text among the ones that are being treated in this chapter. It is not included in the category of the Śākta upapurāṇas given by Hazra (1940), and it does not seem to have been taken into consideration in recent studies on the Purāṇas. It is thus hard to establish the religious and cultural context from which the text emerged. It describes itself as a ‘Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, and Śākta Śāstra (Rocher 1986, 166) and is divided into three sections: the *pūrvakhaṇḍa*, the *madhyakhaṇḍa* and the *uttarakhaṇḍa*. The entire *madhyakhaṇḍa* of the BṛP entirely deals with Satī’s myth, from the birth of his father Dakṣa at the time when the universe was created by Brahmā, to the reincarnation of the Goddess as Gaṅgā and his marriage to Śiva. The Śākta component of BṛP is certainly not indifferent, but one can also notice a strong Vaiṣṇava influence. For example, at the end of the chapter on Satī’s death and the creation of the Śākta Pīṭhas, a long hymn to Viṣṇu appears, in which he is hailed as the saviour of the universe for having stopped Śiva’s grief over the death of his wife, through the dismemberment of her body and the creation of holy places out of it.

The origin of the BṛP is almost certainly Bengali (Hazra 1963, 448–456), as all the text manuscripts have been found in Bengal, while the dating remains uncertain. Early studies on this text (Hazra 1963; Rocher 1986) dated it from the thirteenth to the fourteenth centuries CE, but recent studies focusing on other Purāṇas (see Dold 2009) have moved the date forward by at least three centuries on the basis of the presence of the Mahāvidyās, which seem to have appeared relatively later in Sanskrit Hindu texts and more in general in Hindu culture, around the twelfth century (Shin 2010, 16). In earlier texts the Mahāvidyās are not present, as they in fact seem to replace the role of the *yoginīs*, which can be found in earlier texts.

The most interesting feature of the *madhyakhaṇḍa* is the fact that it clearly links Satī, her reincarnation as Gaṅgā, and the myth of creation, and thus Satī's previous incarnation as Saṃdhyā. Even Mertens does not mention the connection between the Dakṣa myth, and thus that of Satī, with the myth of creation (as O'Flaherty does) and its Vedic antecedents. However, she points out (1998, 343) that the Satī myth in the BṛP is very extensive but of inferior literary quality, especially in the passage when Śiva is described dancing with Satī in the form of Kālī. Mertens also reaffirms (ibid.) that much more importance is given to the part about the creation of the *pīṭhas* with regard to the non-Śāktic Purāṇas.

3.7 The *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa* (BvP)

Although according to Hazra (1940, 166) and Rocher (1986, 163) the BvP is dedicated to Kṛṣṇa, it is pointed out by Pintchman (2001, 84–5) that although it is a Kṛṣṇaite work, both Durgā and Rādhā are identified with *prakṛti*, the supreme feminine creative principle, who transcends all the other female deities and is their source. Prakṛti is said to be eternal as Kṛṣṇa, for they are indissolubly tied to each other (ibid.).

The BvP consists of four parts called *Brahmakhaṇḍa*, *Prakṛtikhaṇḍa*, *Gaṇapatikhaṇḍa*, and *Kṛṣṇājanmakhaṇḍa*. According to Hazra (1940, 166) it is one of the latest Purāṇic works, originally composed around the eighth century CE, but was subjected to changes from the tenth century on when some Bengali unknown authors rewrote some of its parts, and reached its present form approximately in the sixteenth century. Pintchman (2001, 84) dates the BvP to the fifteenth–seventeenth century, and so does Mertens (1998, 387). Both Hazra (1940,166) and Rocher (1986, 163) state that there is general agreement on the assumption that the BvP was composed in Bengal.

3.8 The *Devīpurāṇa* (DP)

The DP consists of four *pādas*, named *Trailokyavijaya*, *Trailokyābhyudaya*, *Śumbhaniśumbhamathana*, and *Devāsurayuddha*. Although, only the first two *pādas* of the Purāṇa have been edited so far (Rocher 1986, 166). The Devī and her worship in all her forms are the most important themes in the DP. According to Rocher (ibid., 167) the DP was probably composed in Bengal in the second half of the sixth century CE, although, considered the dates of composition of the other Śākta Upapurāṇas, it was probably composed much later.

This Purāṇa does not contain any passage on the story of the Dakṣa’s sacrifice, nor of Satī’s death. It could be part of those *pādas* that have not been edited yet, but there is no way to know until the text will be fully edited.

3.9 Comparing the different versions

The DP is, according to the studies published so far, the earliest of the Śākta Upapurāṇas, and does not contain any version of the Satī myth. The KP is, according to Urban (2009, 10) (who dates it to the tenth or eleventh century CE) the earliest ones that contain the story of Satī’s self-immolation and subsequent dismemberment. The passage

translated in *Appendix III* from the KP narrates about Śiva's grief after Satī has died, and about Viṣṇu, who cuts Satī's limbs and prevents Śiva from destroying the three worlds out of despair. It is not a very long and articulated passage, although it could have inspired the much longer version of the story in the sixteenth-century BṛP, in which Viṣṇu comes and splits up Satī's body (cf. *Appendix II*) with his discus:

Then Satī, with eyes turning red in anger by adopting a posture of yoga closed all the (nine) doors in her body and made an undistinguished sound (*sphoṭa*). By that sound (*sphoṭa*) her spirit went out from her body by breaking open the tenth door. Then the gods in the heaven having seen her (Satī) dead, with eyes full of tears, made the loud exclamation of *hā hā* in sorrow.

(Trans. Shastri 1972, 173)

The passage where Satī's immolation is told in the DBhP (7.30.36–37) is even shorter than the one in which her dismemberment is described, and recites as follows:

O King! For that offence, the Satī resolved to quit her body that was born of Dakṣa, to preserve the prestige of the Sanātan Darma of devotion to Her Husband and burnt her body by the fire arising out of yoga.

(Trans. Vijñanananda 1977, 698)

These passages, on their part, follow the story as it is narrated in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (BhP), one of the most popular among all the Mahāpurāṇas – apart from the fact that in the KP she meditates but does not catch fire. In the BhP (4.4.24–28), Satī does not jump into the sacrificial fire, but burns out of the fire she creates through *samādhi* (just as in the DBhP, where, although, only a couple of verses are dedicated to the narration of the event):

Maitreya said:

Oh vanquisher of enemies, having thus addressed Dakṣa in the sacrificial hall, she sat silently on the ground with her face to north. She wore a yellow garment. She touched water, and closing her eyes, she entered the *yogic* path (for casting off her material body). (24) Steady in her *yogic* posture, she controlled *prāṇa* and *apāna* equally at the navel. She gradually brought it up and steadied it along with intellect at the mystical plexus in the heart. The pure, sinless lady brought it through her throat to

the midregion of the eyebrows. (25) Thus, out of her anger against Dakṣa, she desired to cast off her body which was many times lovingly placed (and caressed) on his lap by god Śiva, the most exalted amongst the great. The strong-willed lady instituted the *yogic* contemplation of fire and wind in her limbs. (26) Then meditating on the bliss on the lotus-like feet of her lord, the preceptor of the world (Lord Śiva), Satī (was so absorbed that she) perceived nothing else. She destroyed all impurities. And her body was ablaze with fire produced by her *samādhi* (*yogic* concentration). (27) Then arose a tremendous uproar of grief (‘alas! Alas!’) both in the heaven and on the earth by those who witnessed the great miracle. Alas! Provoked by (her father) Dakṣa, Satī, the beloved spouse of Lord Śiva, had thrown away her life (28).

(Trans. Tagare 1976, 433)

The KP was probably composed contemporarily or slightly earlier than the DP and DBhP, and its version of the Satī myth is very similar to that contained in the DBhP. The words used to describe Śiva’s grief are almost the same as in the DBhP³² and the structure of the passage is similar too: Śiva is described extremely sorrowful in the beginning, and both the passages specify that he was acting as a human being in showing his pain; in the end of both the passages Brahmā and the other gods try to find a solution to save the world, which is likely to be destroyed because of Śiva’s anger. Thus it is likely that the DBhP and the KP influenced each other in their structure, and the BṛP, which although, being composed later than the KP and the DBhP, could be influenced by both (cf. Mertens 1998, 388). The BṛP version, in contrast, is much more extensive than the KP and the DBhP ones, and a whole chapter is dedicated to the narration of Śiva’s sorrow and of Viṣṇu coming to save Śiva and the three worlds. The passage in the BṛP, contrarily to what Mertens states, appears to be of better literary quality, compared to the versions of the myth in the other Śākta Upapurāṇas, especially in the passage where Śiva’s dance with Satī on top of his head is described (cf. Mertens 1998, 343). The BṛP version of the Satī myth seems to be somehow connected to the DBhP, and thus also with the KP, which can be considered as ancestors (since the story is much more elaborated in the BṛP) and to the MBP, probably composed contemporarily to the BṛP (sixteenth century CE), that is likely also connected to the KP and the DBhP. The MBP version is very extensive too, especially the passage regarding Satī’s arrival at his

³² Cf. KP (18.1–12) and DBhP (7.30.39–50).

father's house and her transformation into her terrific form Kālī before the actual self-immolation. It is thus not unlikely that the MBP and the BṛP versions were composed not far in time from one another.

To conclude, all the versions analysed in the *Appendixes (I–IV)* seem to be related to each other. One primary reason is that all these Śākta Upapurāṇas were composed most probably in the same region (i.e. Bengal), and relatively not very far in time from each other. A scheme is proposed here on the basis of the analysis made here and on that done by Mertens. The Two Purāṇas that remain out of the analysis are the DP and the BvP, which do not contain the myth of Satī. The absence of the myth in the DP could be justified by the fact that it is most probably the earliest Śāktapurāṇa composed in Bengal. Although the BvP is dated to the sixteenth century, and would be expected to tell the myth. As Mertens points out, it has very little in common with any other Purāṇa. The only incongruences between this study and Mertens', which, also, finds an interdependence between the myths in the MBhP and the BṛP, are that Mertens does not locate the DBhP in her scheme at all, and leaves the KP on its own, with no connection to any other Purāṇic version. The table below shows the evolution and the connections between the versions of the myth as analysed in the present work.

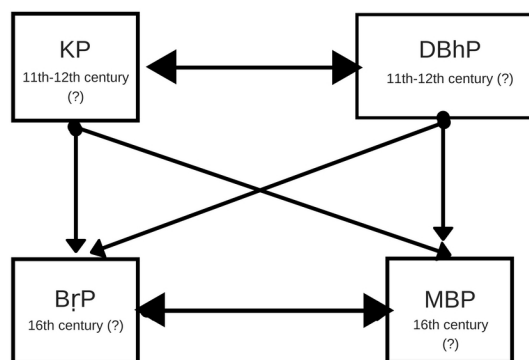


Fig. 3 Connection between the versions of the Satī myth in the Śākta Upapurāṇas.

The fact that the myth is narrated more extensively in the Purāṇas that are dated later in time could be also due to the fact that the practice of the ritual *satī* influenced the narration in, and the composition of, the versions of the myth in the Purāṇas. It is also likely that this actually happened, since Śaktism was widespread in Bengal, where the texts taken into consideration in this work were composed. First, it appears to be the myth which influenced the origin of the ritual, as it has been shown in chapter 2 through the comparison of the version contained in the *R̥gveda* with the ones contained in later texts. Nevertheless, successively, the ritual itself started influencing the myths that were composed after the ritual *satī* started to become established as a practice. The Purāṇic versions, and especially the ones narrated in the Śākta Upapurāṇas shown in this chapter, are in fact much more articulated than the earlier versions, and emphasize both the role played by Satī, and the narration itself of her self-sacrifice.

CONCLUSIONS

In the first chapter, previous studies on the *satī* ritual were analysed in order to give an idea of the background studies on the topic. It was shown how scholars throughout the last decades have tried to give their own opinion on the connection between *satī* and the Goddess named Satī. In the end, most of the studies that tried to give an explanation were not closely focusing on the myth of Satī, and not much space was given specifically to the connection between the two.

In the second chapter, O'Flaherty's study on both the creation myth and that of Dakṣa were analysed to show the connection between them and the evolution from the *Rgvedic* myth of Brahmā's creation to the Purāṇic myth of Dakṣa's sacrifice. The conclusion come up from the study on the Vedic antecedents of the Satī myth brought to formulate the hypothesis that the Satī myth is one evolved version of the myth of creation, where Dakṣa plays the role of Brahmā, the incestuous creator, and Satī plays the role of Saṃdhya, the seducer. Four main phases of the evolution of the myth can be hypothesized on the basis of the texts compared in the second chapter. Although, given the uncertainties regarding the time when the texts were composed, this could be a topic for further investigation on the subject. The supposed stages the myth went through after it originated are: 1) in the earliest texts the myth of creation only involved Brahmā, the mānasaputras, and Uṣas [Saṃdhya], who self-immolated to purify herself from her seductive power; 2) in a second stage Uṣas became Dakṣa's daughter, the one with whom he had committed an incest; 3) the third stage of the evolution comes when Uṣas is replaced by Saṃdhya in the story, and is presented as Brahmā's daughter, but she is still the goddess of the Dawn, and the degree of kinship between her and Dakṣa is still evident; 4) the fourth stage consists in the shift from Saṃdhya to Satī, and that is when the Dakṣa myth became as it is known and narrated in the Purāṇas.

In the last chapter, the way the myth evolved after *satī* was being practiced more and more is explained, with particular reference to Mertens, Rocher, and Hazra's works on the evolution of the Purāṇas. A story of the connection between the versions of the Satī myth in the Śākta Upapurāṇas was traced. According to the study conducted here, the DBhP, KP, BṛP, and MBP can be tentatively considered to be all interconnected, with KP functioning as the source for the evolution of the myth in the other three Purāṇas, of which, probably, the BṛP and the MBP are the ones composed later.

This study wants to be a starting point for the further studies on this topic, i.e. the mythology around Satī and the influence it had on the composition of the Purāṇic works, and hopefully exhaustively answered the question of the origin of the connection between the ritual *satī* and the goddess Satī.

APPENDIX I

Satī's death as narrated in the *Mahābhāgavatapurāṇa* (9.30–90)

Śrī Mahādeva said: “Thus, having obtained respect and having bowed to her mother (30), allowed by her, at that very time, Satī went towards her father. All Dakṣa's people staying in the assembly (31), were saying to one another: “How can it be that Satī, with a yellow–gold body, a gentle nature, an elegant form (32) has become terrific in form and looking like a young cloud, with dishevelled hair, terrific fangs, and eyes red out of anger(33)? She has a mantle made of leopard skin and four strong arms. How indeed has she come to this sacrifice in the assembly of the gods(34)? I think she could destroy the universe in half a second. I don't know what could ever be Dakṣa–Prajāpati's destiny today (35).”

Having humiliated her, he performs the sacrifice with the gods. Now, she has come to give the fruit of her anger (36). She is the one who, at the time of destruction, could actually destroy Viṣṇu and Brahmā. If she destroys the sacrifice, what would Viṣṇu do (37)?

Having gone there, in the place of the sacrifice, Satī saw that Prajāpati was confused and violently excited because of the hatred towards Śiva (38). Having seen her, the protectors of the oblations and the gods, as well as the ṛṣis, and Bṛhaspati, as well as the *suras*, were trembling out of fear (39). With the eyes fixed, and having abandoned their aims, all the noble gods looked at her, supreme, as figures depicted on canvas (40). Some of the gods do not bow at her out of fear for Dakṣa, they bowed with their minds to the black goddess causing universal destruction (41). Then Dakṣa, having looked at everyone in that condition, looked in every direction with eyes wide open (42). Then he saw that black goddess with her eyes shining out of anger, with dishevelled hair, naked, looking like a lamp of smoked dark kajal (43).”

Dakṣa said: “Who are you? Whose daughter are you, oh shameless woman? How did

you get here? You look like Satī (44). Oh daughter Satī, have you come here from Śiva’s house?”

Satī said: “Oh father, what is this? Don’t you recognize me, your own daughter Satī (45)? You are my father, I am your daughter. I bend to you, as you are my father.

Dakṣa said: “Oh mother [what happened?] Oh Satī, where did you get your black form from (46)? You once were in my house, with a shiny yellow–gold body, having equal splendour as the shining autumn moon, wrapped around with a divine cloth (47). You are her. Why have you now come to the assembly without your clothes? How come you are dishevelled, how come you have terrific eyes (48)? Did you get in such a state since you married your inadequate husband? You have not been invited to my energy, which is the sacrifice (?) (49), because of you being Śiva’s wife, not because of lack of affection etc. You did well to come here alone (50). Let the clothes and the ornaments that are there ready for you be grabbed. Oh daughter, you are like my breath, oh Satī, beauty of the three worlds (51). Having married Śiva as an inadequate husband you are unhappy, oh you with beautiful eyes.”

Having heard this speech of blame towards Śiva pronounced by Dakṣa (52), Satī was thinking, with her whole body ablaze for anger (53): “I can reduce to ashes my father with all the gods in half a moment, but because of the sin of killing a father, I will not do so, I will delude him with all the gods (54).”

Having thought so in her mind, then Satī, daughter of Dakṣa, immediately created a shadow with a form similar to that of herself (55). Satī spoke to the shadow–Satī: “Listen to what I say. Execute a task for me. Destroy this sacrifice (56). Oh you with beautiful eyes, having told various words to my father, and after having heard a speech of blame towards Śiva from my father’s mouth (57), you enter the sacrificial fire with your body ablaze

because of your anger. Feeling arrogantly confident for the fact that I am his daughter, he blames Śiva (58), so you will quickly reduce his arrogance into ashes. Once you entered the fire, after having heard about that, god Maheśvara, consumed by sorrow, will arrive for sure (59). After having defeated the Devas, Viṣṇu engaged in protecting the sacrifice and so on (60), he will destroy the sacrifice and kill my father.”

Having said so to the shadow–Satī, Mahākālī, with a smile on her face, having concealed herself (61), went up to the sky. Oh bull among the sages, flowers rained there, with *mṛdaṅgas* (tabours) and *bherīs* (kettle–drums), with great festivals of *tūryas* (musical instruments) (62–63). This was not seen by the gods nor by the great ṛṣis, even those ones who were near her, since they were deluded by her magical power (64).

The angry shadow–Satī said to Dakṣa–Prajāpati: “Why do you erroneously blame Śiva. Stop your words if you desire your own good, oh foolish (65). I will cut your tongue, oh great fool who blames Śiva. For the eternal supreme god was defamed in the assembly of the gods for long (66), I perceive the fruit has arrived today. I will cut the head of those who blamed Maheśana, the creator of all the worlds (67).”

Dakṣa said: “Oh my little child, do not speak like this in front of me, not even a little (68). I recognize this bad behavior, having gone to the lord of Ganas and Bhūtas as a husband, obtained by yourself with your mind, the denizen of the land of the pretas, you obtain, oh fool, a supreme pleasure proper to you (69). I am Dakṣa–Prajāpati, the ground field for gods and goddesses, how you dare praise Śiva in front of me (because) it is impossible to hear [even his name in front of me] (70).

The shadow–Satī said: “Oh Dakṣa, I will speak again if you desire your good (71). Abandon the evil intention, honour the supreme god Śiva with devotion. If, out of delusion, you will blame Śaṅkara, the supreme spirit, again (72), then Śambhu will destroy you an

your sacrifice for sure.

Dakṣa said: “Oh bad daughter of bad actions, leave my sight (73). If you get Śambhu as a husband, then you are dead for me, how can you keep thinking of Rudra as your own husband (74)? It is like an internal *tuṣānala*³³, thanks to which my fire is increased. Oh my daughter, you are foolish since you took Śiva as your husband (75). My body, by looking at you, will be consumed by the burning fire of sorrow. You are like that. Go away from my sight (76), oh woman of evil soul, do not make a list of the qualities of your husband in front of me.”

Śrīmahādeva said: “that black–shadow–goddess filled with anger (77) assumed a terrific form, with flames in her three burning eyes. She has her head in the world of the lunar constellations and her face elongated, with splendid dishevelled hair, pendent like a medal (78), who has a thousand lights of the midday sun like the cloud of the end of time (79). Thus her body was burning out of anger and with loud laughter again and again, with a deep voice the great lady said (80): “Not only I will be away from your eyes, I will soon become a stranger with regard to the body born from you (81).”

Then the shadow–goddess Satī with her eyes burning for her anger, even if all the devas were looking, entered the sacrificial fire (82). Then the earth trembled and wind blew in a noisy way and flash of lightnings fell on the surface of the earth reducing the sun into pieces (83). The directions were agitated and the clouds rained blood. All the gods were pale and the fire got extinguished in the pot (84). The oblation was devoured by jackals and dogs in the place of the sacrifice. The place of the sacrifice became like a cremation ground in half an instant (85), and Dakṣa too, with an exhausted face, suddenly died. The twice–born set the sacrifice back in motion somehow (86). The gods were trembling for their fear of

³³ A capital punishment consisting in twisting dry straw round a criminal's limbs and setting it on fire ..

Paśupati. All the gods and the great ṛṣis said to each other (87): “The unhappy one reaches far in an instant, and now indeed Śiva will hear the abandonment of Satī’s body (88). He, the great, irritated king, the agent of the absorption of the world, I don’t know what would do to whom, or if he would destroy the entire world (89). Nārada, the best of the sages, having stood up because of the unconsidered clamour, quickly went to the mount Kailāsa (90).”

APPENDIX II

Satī's death as narrated in the *Bṛhaddharmapurāṇa* (*Madhyakhaṇḍa* 7.69–79)

Jaimini³⁴ said:

“Thus what did Dakṣa do, having approached Śiva, after the sacrifice was performed? Where Gaṅgā come to be? Tell me that, oh mighty guru (1).”

Śuka said:

“Once the Devas, the Ṛṣis, the men and the others were gone, the foolish Dakṣa was out of his mind together with his wife Prasuti (2). Śiva became deluded, oh bull among the sages, no husband shines without a wife in the house of the father in law. Dakṣa was in constant pain, repeating in his mind: “Oh Satī (3).” “Oh Satī, where have you gone, oh virtuous daughter with beautiful eyes, having sent us blind in the best of wells since birth³⁵ (4)?” “You, having known, thanks to divine knowledge, Lord Śiva as the chief of the gods, you are the one who has taken him as a husband having abandoned all the other gods, oh lady saluted by the gods (5). You are praised by the gods. Śiva is praised by the Gods. You two are a suitable couple. That I know not, I am a fool (6). Out of a mistake that I, unfortunate, committed, you abandoned that husband Śiva and went to the other world. There is no sinner like me. And you, even in another birth, will marry the same husband, oh beautiful one (7). By us you two, Śiva and Satī, are not seen by the eye. Alas! I have been killed, I have been burnt alive, my breath is vain, but I still breathe. Having obtained the hardest thing to get in the three worlds, thrown in the deep waters, Śiva that supreme being of copper-coloured streaked eyes, I was not able to sacrifice, deceived by the prescriptions, even if knew he was my son-in-law (8–9).”

³⁴ Jaimini is a disciple of Vyāsa.

³⁵ The passage is not clear.

Śuka said:

“To Dakṣa, who was uttering his regretful speech, Śiva said, as if he was mad: ‘Where is Satī? Where is Satī? (10)’ Having stood up from that place he went towards north in a supreme and terrible way, saying, ‘Oh Satī, Kālī, Kālī (11)!’ Then he became impossible to look at even for the gods and for the Vasavas. Dakṣa and the others stayed far away, and he reached the supreme and inaccessible place (12). There, with his power he saw the stunning Satī, even though she was dead, Dakṣa’s daughter, Kālī, lying naked with the back upward (13). Seeing her on the ground, similar to a black cloud, with her eyes rolled back, her husband Śiva said, “Oh saint, stand up, I am Śiva, your husband (14).” “You fulfilled your duty as it was in your nature. oh Satī, you reached a different state. We, Śiva and Dakṣa did not fulfil our duty by only following the prescriptions, since we indeed transgressed (15). Dakṣa has gone insane by not finding you, while I will not ever abandon this dead body of yours (16). Śiva, having lamented in this way again and again like a common man, having embraced her in his arms, took her on his head (17). Having taken on his head Kālī the goddess, the daughter of Dakṣa, Śiva supremely joyful said to himself (18): “Alas! To me there is an extreme destiny that is I have to carry you, who have not been worshipped by me as a wife, on my head, abandoning worldly shame (19).’ Having said so, he started dancing perturbed with supreme bliss. Brahmā and all the other gods arrived to see him in the sky (20). Having carried her sometimes on his head, sometimes on the left hand, sometimes holding her on his right arm, her, the daughter of Dakṣa, Śiva danced on the surface of the earth, the master of the great *tāṇḍava* dance (an agitated dance) (21). Then on the earth and in the sky, that great god never was tired, he the one to whom the moon itself is a *tilaka* (a dot on the forehead) to whom the sun is a necklace (22). The protectors of the directions were beaten up by the various movements of his arms. The groups of stars were hit by the speed of his dreadlocks (23). The earth, her stability being perturbed, started

to wobble although she is immovable. Kurma and Ananta became distressed in order to sustain the earth further (24). Tormented by the air that was coming out of the stamps of his feet, the mountains Meru and Kailāsa started moving, although they are unmoving (25). Even the oceans abandoned their calmness, as their billows were stirred up, and all the animals and birds stood soundless as if they were dead, as a sudden causeless death has come upon them (26). The god, perturbed by bliss, without having placed down the supreme calamity for the world, danced with the eyes rolling back (27). Oh great sage of the gods etc., and of all the worlds, they had in their heart “how can that god stop (28)?” At that point, having determined a means, Viṣṇu, the master of protection, with his discus, called *sudarṣaṇa*, slowly cut into pieces the body of Satī that was staying on the head of the Great God as if he was extremely frightened (29). Whenever that great lord stamps his foot on the ground, at the very same time of that, throwing the *cakra*, he did the cut (30). The parts of the goddess that were cut by Viṣṇu with his *cakra* fell on the ground, oh Brahmin, and every stretch of land became more sacred than the previous one (31). Here the feet, there the thighs, here the tongue, there the face, here the breasts, there the chest, here the arms, there the hands, here the hips, there the yoni, fell from Śiva’s head (32). Wherever the parts of Satī’s body fell because of Viṣṇu’s discus, all the places became stretches of land of great auspiciousness (33). And these are the most sacred places, as they are constantly inhabited by the goddess, they are called *siddhapīṭhas*, hard to reach even for the gods. They became the great pilgrimage sites, the fields of liberation on the surface of the earth (34). As soon as those parts of the goddess fell on earth, they suddenly turned into stone, for the sake of favouring the world (35). At that time Brahmā, Viṣṇu and the protectors of the directions, starting with Carāṇa, arrived with their retinues and day after day paid respect to Satī (36). There was the crown jewel of all the pilgrimage places, where the vulva fell, because that is the place of the great yoga, on the banks of the Brahmānadā (37). Oh sage, the exposition can be known in the *Kālīpurāṇa*, only Viṣṇu knows, and no one else, the greatness of this

place (38). When Satī's body was cut in such a way, the great lord, as he was dancing, having become light, looked in every direction, bringing peace (39). All the *devas* were gone and terrified, Nārada made his mind ready to go there at once (40). Slowly Nārada, bull among the sages, approached as he was singing praises, and with *puṭāñjali* stood in front of him who was dancing, oh Jaimini (41). And having seen Nārada who was standing in front of him and doing the *añjali* Śiva asked, 'have you seen Satī, the daughter of Dakṣa (42)?'

Nārada said:

'Oh great powerful lord Śiva, you will find Satī certainly. This untimely doomsday done by you is not in place (43). You are the lord, the destroyer of the worlds, the protector, and the guardian. How come you are destroying this world by way of dancing? Such is not the action of a lord, an action that will destroy those who depend on him (44).'

Śiva said:

'I am not dancing, I have become quiet. May the gods be quiet as well. Satī's body, which was standing on her head, where did it go? Tell me. I will be listening. Where will Satī be found? Pleas, tell me that as well (45).

Nārada said:

Oh lord of the past and the future, oh three-eyed great lord, while the destruction of the three worlds was witnessed, the body of Satī, which was staying on your head, was cut into pieces by Viṣṇu's *cakra*, who was desirous to appease you and knew how. Hence you became light (46–47). Let it be seen: all the places in which the pieces of the body have fallen are the *pīṭhas*, such as Kāmarūpa etc., oh Śiva (48).'

Śuka said:

‘Thus addressed, that great god saw the circle of the *yoni*. His whole body was writhing out of desire at that sight (49). As soon as that *yoni* was seen by Śiva, oh bull among the sages, it was as if he was going to hell after having made the earth into pieces (50). Having seen everything confused, the god Śiva transformed himself into the best of the mountains and sustained the circle of that *yoni* (51). Brahmā and Viṣṇu came there to help her. All the beings [came] to support the Goddess of four parts, which consists of the *yoni* (52). And Śiva turned into a mountain and rejoiced in sustaining the *yoni*. Wherever there are parts of the body of Satī, there, oh sage, the people worshipped the Devi having installed an altar in the form of a stone *liṅga*. Then he asked Nārada, ‘Where is Satī? You tell me that (53–54).’

Nārada said:

Here exactly, in Kāmarūpa, you, having focused the mind through *yoga*, having calmed down within yourself, ‘I will go to look for the goddess Satī (55).’ Do not be restless, one should never lose himself. Oh lord, Satī will never go far without you. I will show you Satī, I swear on truth (56).’

Śuka said:

Having said so, having bowed down to the great Śiva, the divine lord of the all gods, he flew away through the sky and Śiva stood quiet (57). They were appeased and devoid of worries, so they left. If there had not been this Viṣṇu, the final doomsday would have come, and nothing else (58). Nārada, who went towards Śiva, who was also beneficial [in saving the world]. Viṣṇu, the protector, did a deed hard [for everyone] in the three worlds (59). Once again he protected these three afflicted worlds from the mouth of the one who is the god who will bring the absorption, the great god, the great lord (60). That is true, he is a great soul, the one who brings about protection from the world. Had there not been this god,

what would have happened in this world (61)? Having thought so, Brahmā, Indra and the other gods went where Nārāyaṇa was, desirous to praise him, Hari. Having reached and gathered in the world of Viṣṇu, they praised Viṣṇu all together.’

The gods said:

‘We will bow to you, Viṣṇu, primordial man, honour to you Nārāyaṇa, who are provided with the three qualities, and who lacks conceptualization (62–63). Honour to you, whose vow is the truth, who are truth, honour to you whose origin is the truth, to you whose end is the truth, whose essence is the truth (64). Honour to you god of sacrifice, sacrificed and sacrifice, lord of the god of the gods, Viṣṇu, sustainer of the world (65). Honour to you who lack cause, but still are the cause of everything, to you who are the supreme man and the individual soul, the reason of pleasure and pain (66). Honor to you of lotus–feet, of lotus–hands, honour to you of lotus–eyes, Viṣṇu, the supreme soul (67). Honour to you, lord of sacrifice, sacrifice, destroyer of Daityas and Dānavas, you, benign, of benign (Śiva’s) form, who benignly give (68). Honour to you the eternal agent of protection, to you whose quality is purity, to you who are beyond qualities, but who are perceived as if you had qualities, the supreme being (69). Honor to you, knower of the Veda, creator of the Veda, creator of the Vedic practice, to you, gross and subtle, the creator of the śāstras (70). Honour to you fruitless, particular, pure, purifier, to you creator, absorber, and proclaimer, honour, honour to you (71). Creation, which is almost annihilated, was again saved by you. Who can ward off the danger of the activity of absorption of Śambhu (72), if not Śambhu himself, the agent of absorption? This is the truth, there is no doubt.’ And you are the very agent of protection. There is no doubt in that (73).

Śuka said:

‘And having said those words , the gods praised the eternal god; together with Brahmā and Viṣṇu, they all went to see Śiva (74).’

APPENDIX III

Satī's death as narrated in the *Kālikāpurāṇa* (16.28–51; 18.1–12)

Mārkaṇḍeya said: “Then Gorāṅga, enumerating the series of Satī's qualities, despaired, extremely sorrowful, as a human being by nature (1). Then Makaradhvaja (Kāma) approached Maheśvara, accompanied by Ratī and Vasanta, knowing that Bharga was desperate (2). Simultaneously with five arrows, Ratī's husband pierced him, who was crying, extremely agitated for the pain, and deluded in his mind (3). Though Śiva had the mind squeezed by pain, overwhelmed by the arrows of Smara (Kāma), he developed a motley feeling and became deluded and afflicted (4). He falls to the ground at times, at times having risen up, he starts running, at times wanders, and then closes his eyes again (5). Thinking of goddess Dakṣayanī, smiling from time to time, almost with the ardor of passion he embraces her, who was lying on the ground (6). Shouting incessantly the name "Satī, Satī!" Śaṅkara touches her with the hand saying, ‘Abandon your modesty, which is in vain.’ (7). Caressing her with her hand and having removed her own ornaments, he put them back right there (where they were) (8). When Satī, dead, said nothing to the Lord of beings that was acting in that way, Bharga cried greatly out of the pain (9). Having seen the tears falling from him crying, Brahmā and the other gods became worried and concerned (10). ‘If the tears fell to the ground, they would burn this earth.’ So they complained, ‘What measure should be taken (11)?’ Then the gods starting with Brahmā, being agitated, praised Śanaīśvara for having restrained the tears of the deluded Bharga (12).”

APPENDIX IV

Satī's death as narrated in the *Devībhāgavatapurāṇa* (7.30.39–50)

Vyāsa said: “What happened then, I could not tell (39). Oh Lord, the fire of the wrath of Śiva generated the end of the three worlds. Vīrabhadra rose, accompanied by the hosts of Bhadrakālīs (40). When Vīrabhadra was ready to dissolve three worlds, then Brahmā and the other gods took shelter in Śaṅkara (41). Although the three worlds were destroyed, the Lord, ocean of compassion, protected them from danger and fear. Through a goat's head (42), he kept that man alive, he who is the universal self. Then Maheśvara, tired, having reached the area of sacrifice, greatly afflicted, complained (43). He saw that Satī, still conscious³⁶, was burning in the fire; he hoisted her on his shoulder, saying, "Oh Satī!" again and again (44). Śiva, who had his thoughts deluded, wandered in multiple places. Then Brahmā and the other gods were caught by a great concern (45). But Viṣṇu quickly on the spot raised the bow and arrows and cut the Satī's limbs. They fell in various places (46). There, in those various places, Śiva assumed various forms. And then he said to the gods (47): ‘For those who will worship Satī with supreme devotion in these places, nothing will be difficult to obtain (48). There the supreme mother will be close to her own limbs. For those mortals who will perform the Puraścaraṇa in these places, the mantras will be successful, especially the *Māyābīja* (49)³⁷.’ That said, Śiva, suffering because of the separation, oh excellent among kings, spent time in those places performing prayers, meditation and absorption (50).”

³⁶ *Citkalām* could be intended here as an epithet of Satī, meaning ‘the crescent of the conscience’.

³⁷ The *Māyābīja* is a *mantra* that corresponds to the *hrim* syllable (Rastelli and Goodall 2013, *sub voce*).

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