

Goddess Parvathi
Retold by
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Goddess Parvathi is the consort of Lord Shiva. She is called like that because she is the daughter of Mountain (Parvatha). She is also known as Uma, Kathyayani, Gauri, Kali, Haimavathi, Easwari, Shivaa, Bhavani, Rudhrani, Sarvani, Sarvamangala, Aparna, Durga, Mrudani, Chandika, Ambika, Aarya, Dakshayani, Girija, Chamunda, Bhairavi, Meenakshi, etc. Most of these names indicate the various facets and moods of the goddess. Some of them are names which she assumed in different births. The stories of her origin and some of her births are given below:-

Sathi

Sathi was Lord Daksha's daughter. There is a story about her birth. There were a group of very powerful asuras called Halahalas. They did thapas towards Lord Brahma and got many boons. Later, they conquered all the three worlds and banned people from offering prayer to Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva waged a war on Halahalas and the battle went on for 60,000 years. As a result both, Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva became very tired and morose. Realizing the state of affairs, Lord Brahma requested his son Sanaka and other Prajapathis including Daksha to do Thapas to please Mahamaya (great enchantress) and help to give fresh enthusiasm to Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva. That thapas went on for one lakh years. At last the Goddess came before them with four hands and three eyes. She assured Daksha that she will be born as a daughter to him. She was born to Daksha who named her as Sathi. Sathi was given in marriage to Lord Shiva and both Lord Shiva and Sathi continued to live in Daksha's house.

During this time Sage Durvasa, went to Jaambunadha and did thapas to please Jagadambika (Mother of the universe). She came before him and gave him a garland which she was wearing. That garland was presented by Sage Durvasa to Daksha. Daksha hung that garland in his bedroom. Attracted by the remarkable fragrance oozing out of the garland, he made to love to his wife and that very sacred garland became tainted. Because of this sin he has committed, Daksha became infuriated with his daughter and son-in-law and drove them out of his house.

Later he performed a great Yaga (fire sacrifice), for which he did not invite his daughter and son in law. Sathi, in spite of her husband's opposition attended the Yaga and was insulted. Unable to bear this, she jumped in the Fire and died.

Kali

At this time sage Kasyapa, got an asura son called Vajranga, through his wife Dithi. Vajranga was a very pious individual and did Thapas for 1000 years to please Lord Brahma. Later when he woke up from the Samadhi, he saw his wife Varangi crying by his side. She informed him that Devendra troubled her a lot, when Vajraanga was doing Thapas. This infuriated Vajraanga and he again did Thapas. When Lord Brahma, he requested him to bless him with a son who will defeat Devendra. A son was born to him in due course. He was named as Tharaka. Tharaka started doing Thapas at a very young age in the middle of five fires in summer and inside water during winter. When Brahma

appeared before him, he wanted a boon, that only a seven day old child should be able to kill him. Along with Asuras called Kalanemi, Prasena and Jamba, Tharaka conquered all the three worlds. He troubled good people and encouraged bad people. When Devas approached Lord Brahma, he told them, that if a seven day child can become capable of killing this asura, it should only be born to Lord Shiva. He also told them that Sati would be born as a daughter to Himalaya Mountain and his queen Mena. She would marry Lord Shiva and their son would kill Tharaka. At this time Lord Shiva was wandering all over the world (some references say doing thapas). Himalaya and Mena had three daughters and one son. The three daughters were Ragini, Kutila and Kali and a son called Mainaka. Kali was jet black in colour and did great thapas, so that she can marry Lord Shiva. Her sisters also had the same wish and they also did thapas. The devas asked the God of love to shoot an arrow on Shiva so that he starts considering of a marriage (The common version is that he should be woken up from his thapas). The devas took first Ragini to Lord Brahma and asked him whether, she would be able to bear the child capable of killing Tharaka. Lord Brahma told them that she would not be. Ragini got very angry and misbehaved with Lord Brahma. He cursed her to become Sandhya (dusk). Devas later took Kutila to Lord Brahma. Brahma did not feel that she is suitable. When she misbehaved with Brahma she was cursed to become a river. Mena who had lost two daughters requested Kali to come back to her home after stopping the Thapas. She replied "Uu maa" (meaning-no mother). This became one of her names. She was also called Parvathi because she was the daughter of the mountain. Later Kali came back to the house of Mena. But she later again, left her home and again started thapas. She was only a very young girl and was accompanied by two of her friends. This Thapas continued for several thousand years. At this time Lord Shiva visited the house of Himalaya and Mena. Hearing that they have a daughter who wanted to marry him, he visited Kali's hermitage. But when Kali recognized him as Lord Shiva, he vanished from there. Kali intensified her Thapas. One day a young Brahmin boy visited her hermitage. When Kali told him that she was doing Thapas with an intention of marrying Shiva he told her that seemed to be foolish. "You are a princess brought up well. Shiva lives in the Cremation Ghat, dressed in elephant skin, travels on a mere bull and ties a snake around his neck." Kali got very angry with him and tried to drive him away. The boy was really Lord Shiva. He showed her his real form and both of them got married.

How Kali became Gauri?

Shiva and Kali lead an extremely happy life. Shiva preferred to call her "Kali". But one day he called her "Kali, Kali". She felt he was jeering at her, for her black colour. She told him, "If you shoot an arrow against somebody, there would be an wound but over time, the wound would heal. If you cut a tree with an axe, the tree would again recover but if you shoot a person with harsh words, the wilting would be final. My black colour is not due to my mistake. Since you do not like it, I am going away from you." She went to a deep forest and created four maid servants called Somaprabha, Jaya, Vijaya and Jayanthi to look after her and started Thapas again. Brahma appeared before her. When she wanted, colour change of her body, he told her "Oh Kali, the black colour will peel off from your body and you would assume white colour and people would start calling you Gauri." As told by him the black skin got peeled off and she became extremely white and she went back to Join Lord Shiva.

Parvathi and Mahishasura

There were two asuras called Ramba and Kuramba. Both of them did not have children and did great Thapas. Kuramba did Thapas in the middle of water and he was swallowed by Indra, who took the form of a crocodile and swallowed him. Ramba did thapas in the middle of fire. When the god was not appearing before him, he started to cut parts of his body and putting them in fire. Agni, the God of fire came before him and blessed that he will have a very strong son in the first girl whom he is passionate about. On the way he saw a pretty buffalo and fell in love with it. As a result was born Mahishasura. When this was going on another He -buffalo fell in love with Mahisha's mother and in the fight that buffalo killed Ramba. Mahisha and his mother requested a Yaksha to protect them. The yakshas helped them to cremate the body of Ramba and the she buffalo jumped in the funeral pyre of Ramba and died. From the funeral pyre raised a very strong asura called Raktha Bheeja. He became a close friend and minister of Mahishasura. Two more asuras called Chanda and Munda, also joined them and became ministers and helpers of Mahishasura. Mahishasura and his three friends attacked Devas and troubled them. Devas along with Lord Brahma approached Lord Vishnu and then Lord Shiva. Lord Vishnu and Shiva and others got extremely angry at Mahishasura. The anger from all of them separated and joined together in to a glittering ball of fire and from that fire rose and joined at the top of Vindhya Mountain and reached the hermitage of Sage Kathyayana. From that great sage raised his power and that also joined this ball of fire and shined like one thousand Suns. This fire ball of power reached the place where Gauri had shed her black skin and joining together the Goddess called Kathyayani arose. She got the face from the power of Mahendra, three eyes from the power of fire god, eighteen hands from the power of Vishnu, middle from the power of Indra, thighs and hips from the power of Varuna, two lotus like feet from the power of Brahma, fingers and toes of the feet from the power of Sun god, fingers of the hand from the powers of eight Vasus, teeth from the power of Prajapathis, nose from the power of Yakshas, ears from the power of Vayu(wind god),. That Goddess was known all over the universe as Kathyayani. Lord Shiva gave her his soolayudha (trident), Lord Vishnu gave her his Chakra (holy wheel), Varuna gave her his conch, Agni gave her his Vel (lance), Vayu gave her his bow, Sin gave her inexhaustible arrows, Indra gave her his Vajrayudha (Diamond weapon), Yama gave her sword, Lord Brahma gave her his beads of prayer, Moon gave her his white fans, Himalayas gave her a lion to ride, and so on. Kathyayani after receiving these offerings made a victory cry and climbed on the Lion and traveled to the top of Vindhya Mountain. Vindhya Mountain called her Koushiki and Sage Agasthya called her as Durga.

Mahishasura surrounded by his friends Raktha Bheeja, Chanda, Munda, Chikshura and Naraka came to Vindhya Mountain after conquering the entire world. There he saw Kathyayani and wanted to marry her. He sent his friend Dundhubhi as an emissary to Kathyayani. Kathyayani told him that she was willing to marry Mahisha, provided he defeated her in war. (Similar story about Shumbha and Nishumbha and their emissary is Sugreeva as told in Devi Mahathmyam. But this story is from Devi Bhagwatham). After chanting the Manthra called Vishnu Panjara, taught to her by Lord Shiva, Kathyayani rode on the lion and fought with Mahishasura. Mahishasura opposed her along with her friends. The goddess jumped down from the lion and killed most of his Rakshasa chiefs.

Mahishasura transformed himself in to an elephant and attacked her. She then cut off his trunk. He then transformed himself in to a bison. The trident of Lord Shiva and the Chakra of Lord Vishnu and Vajrayudha of Indra send by the goddess could not do anything to the Mahishasura. Devi jumped on the Buffalo form of Mahishasura and cut off his neck. Thus the great Mahishasura died.

Killing of Shumbha and Nishumbha

After several years, Sage Kasypa got three great asura sons called Shumbha, Nishumbha and Namuchi through his wife-Dhanu. Namuchi fought with Indra but the battle was halted due to a treaty between them. Namuchi was living in water and Indra who was hiding in the foam of water killed him using his Vajrayudha. Shumbha and Nishmbha became very angry at Indra. They waged a battle against heaven and defeated all devas and Dig palakas. They plundered all the great treasures of heaven and descended to the earth. There they met Rakthabheeja. He told them, "Dear Sirs, I am Rakthabheeja, who was the minister of Mahishasura, who was killed by Goddess Kathyayani. Two of my friends Chanda and Munda are hiding inside the sea." At this time Chanda and Munda also came there. Shumbha and Nishumbha sent their minister Sugreeva as an emissary to Goddess Kathyayani and asked her to become wife of one of them. She again told that him that she would marry only the one who defeated her. Shumbha and Nishumbha sent Doomraksha, one of their chieftains to drag and bring Goddess Kathyayani to their presence. Doomraksha and his army were made into ash, by an angry breath of the Goddess. Then they sent an army of one crore Asuras, led by Chanda and Munda to bring the goddess. Kathyayani assumed the fierce form of Chamunda and killed both Chanda and Munda. Then Rakthabheeja led an army. One drop of blood falling from Rakthabheeja produced another Rakthabheeja. So when Kathyayani waged a war against him, several Rakthabheeja's were produced. Then Chamunda simply swallowed all blood that fell from his body and he was killed. Nishmbha then opposed her with a very vast army. Then she created seven forms out of her own self called Brahmani, Maheswari, Kaumari, Vaishnavi, Varahi and Narasimhi. (They along with Chamundi are called Saptha Mathas-seven mothers). Together they killed Nishmbha and his army. Later Shumbha also was killed.

Meenakshi

Malayadwaja Pandya was the son of Kula shekara Pandya. He married Kanchanamala the daughter of Soora Sena .Kanchanamala was in her previous birth a Vidhyadhara Maiden, who did Thapas to Goddess Parvathi and requested her to be born as her daughter. But Malayadwaja and Kanchanamala could not beget any children. So they did Puthra Kameshti and from the fire rose a three year old girl, who sat on the lap of Kanchanamala. She had three breasts. When the queen and king were worried about this, they heard the heavenly voice telling them that the third breast will vanish, when this child meets her husband. This child was named as Thatathagai and brought up like a son. King Malayadwaja made Thatathagai as the ruler of Madurai and renamed her as Meenakshi. Meenakshi waged a war against the earth and the heaven. She defeated all of them and reached the portals of Kailasa. She first defeated Lord Nandi, who ran to Lord Shiva and informed him about his defeat. Lord Shiva then came in the form of a handsome king called Sundaeswara. As soon as Meenakshi saw him, her third breast

disappeared. Later Meenakshi married Sundareswara. Her hand was given to Sundareswara by Lord Vishnu and the Vedic ceremonies were performed by Lord Brahma. Both of them ruled Madurai for a very long time.

Maha Pratyangira Devi

To kill Hiranya kasipu and to protect his devotee Prahlada, Lord Vishnu took the awesome form of Narasimha (half lion and half man) and came out of a pillar. He took Hiranyakasipu to the main door of the palace and killed him on its steps. Then he drank the blood of Hiranyakasipu. Because of this he became very violent. Many efforts were done by Devas to appease him, but of no avail. Lord Shiva took the form of Sharabha, with the lion, eagle and human body. His two wings were Shulini and Pratyangira, who were both forms of Goddess Parvathi. He tried his best to calm down Lord Narasimha and failed. Shulini also tried her best and failed. Then arose from Sharabha, the awesome and terrible form of Pratyangira. Commonly she is pictured as having a female body and Lions head. Some others say that, she had 1000 heads. She succeeded in appeasing Narasimha. She is also called Atharva Bhadrakali because she is the protector of Atharvana Veda which deals about manthras, thanthras and Yanthras. "In some images she is shown as dark complexion, terrible in aspect, having a lion's face with reddened eyes and riding a lion, entirely nude or wearing black garments, she wears garland of human skulls; her hair strands on end, and she holds a trident, a serpent in the form of a noose, a hand-drum and a skull in her four hands. Sri Pratyangira Devi is also associated with Sri Chakra. She is considered to be a powerful repellent of the influences generated by witch-craft. In Sri Chakra worship, she protects the devotees against all odds and guides him/her along the right path."

Annapurna

She is the form of Parvathi who gave alms to Lord Shiva himself. There are two stories about the need of Lord Shiva to beg for alms.

In the popular one, this was necessitated because he plucked one head of Lord Brahma in anger. This skull stuck to his hand and refused to budge. He was told that unless he uses the skull of Lord Brahma as a begging bowl, it will not leave his hands. Parvathi took the Form of Annapurna and gave alms to Lord Shiva.

In the story that is popular in south, it is believed that once Lord Shiva went in to Daruka Vana where several sages lived with their wives. He took an extremely handsome form called Bhikshandar and tempted the wives of those sages. When they came to know about it, they cursed him that he would become a beggar. He became one and was excused once he received alms from his own wife Annapurna.

Goddess Kanyakumari

Once there was an Asura called Banasura. He did thapas to Lord Shiva and got a boon that he could only be killed by a virgin Goddess. Parvathi was born as a girl in the south India and when she grew up, she waged a war and killed Banasura. Then a marriage was arranged between her and Lord Shiva. But Since Lord Shiva from Sucheendram a near by temple town did not arrive at the appointed time, she turned all the food prepared for marriage in to stones and sand and decided to remain as a virgin goddess.

Shakambhari

There was a great Rakshasi called Durgam. She pleased Lord Brahma through penance and requested him to give a boon that all the poojas, Thapas and religious observations done in the world would reach her instead of the Gods. She started tormenting the world and also Gods became powerless because of her. The world was afflicted by a big famine which lasted for one hundred years. Durgam also stole the four Vedas. Those sages, who had taken in the caves of Himalayas, kept on praying Goddess Parvathi. She at last appeared in the form of Sathakshi (the hundred eyed) .Since she was carrying all the food needed for them in the form of vegetables and fruits, she was also called Shakambari. Seeing that her devotees were starving she became sad and cried. Her tears became great rivers which flowed from the Himalaya Mountains. Then she fought with Durgam and killed her. She recovered the Vedas and again gifted them to the world.