

Chapter 2

The Myth: the Goddess and the Demon

“[In myth] traditions mingle, here heaven and earth, good and evil meet, here God and man come face to face. The narrator does not think in terms of fact versus fiction, history versus myth, to him the history of the goddess is as ‘real’ as the goddess herself. Where we might separate a myth from a historical fact, he will join them, mix them into a space which gives him access to both the historical world and the mythical world. That is the space in which goddess and devotee meet”. (Meyer 1986, 1)

The goddess fighting the (buffalo) demon is the archetypal myth of the Goddess throughout India. The myth exists in countless versions, and is not just one story, although the *Devīmāhātmya* (also known as *Durgāsaptasatī*, 700 [verses] to Durgā, or *Caṇḍīpāṭha*, Durgā’s recitation) has contributed greatly to its fame. The myth has been widespread in Tamil Nadu at least since the Pallava dynasty (3rd–9th centuries CE), shown by the frequency and scale of iconographic representations (Shulman 1980, 177).⁵⁷

As Eveline Meyer shows in her fascinating work on the mythology of the goddess *Aṅkālaparamēcuvarī*, the study of myths is important for several reasons: for understanding the complex nature of the goddesses featuring in them, since the goddess lives as much in her myths as in her temples and rituals; for knowing which narratives the narrator is familiar with and how he builds them into other myths; to discover recurring patterns and themes in the myths; and for the understanding of particular rituals, including religious festivals (1986, 1–2). Sometimes the ritual may illuminate the myth, and sometimes the myth illuminates the ritual.

I will introduce the generic pattern of the myths of the goddess killing the demon from the *Devīmāhātmya* and the *Lalitopākhyāna* before proceeding to the local versions prevalent in Kanchipuram, related to the *Kāmākṣī* and *Paṭavēṭṭammaṅ* temples. After summarizing the myths, I will analyze their recurring and important motifs and themes. The synopses presented in here serve as important background knowledge when discussing certain rituals in the following chapters.

57 An example is the well-known *Mahiṣāsūramardīnī* relief in Mahabalipuram (late 7th century, figure 2.1).

The *Lalitāsahasranāma*, *Lalitopākhyāna* and the Demon Killing Pattern from *Devīmāhātmya*

Most myths of the goddess killing the demon conform to a pattern modeled on the well-known Mahiṣāsūramardīnī (“the Slayer of the Buffalo Demon”) myth from the *Devīmāhātmya* (henceforth *DM*, “Glorification of the Goddess”).⁵⁸ Composed during the 5th or 6th century (Coburn 2002, 266), the *DM* was the first Sanskrit text praising the supreme divine as female. Although it forms part of the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa* (81–93), the *DM* has an independent life as a text of its own, and forms the basis of *śāktism*, the theological teachings concerning the goddess and her worship.



Figure 2.1: Mahiṣāsūramardīnī relief, Mahabalipuram, 2011.

The *DM* presents the warrior goddess Durgā in a cosmic struggle against forces of evil and chaos to maintain order and balance in the universe. The basic structure of the myth is as follows:

- 1) A demon gains power, usually through austerity, gets rewarded by a boon and becomes invincible.
- 2) The demon defeats the gods.

58 For studies on the *DM* and a translation of the Sanskrit text, see Coburn (1991, 2002).

- 3) The gods aim for revenge and asks one of the great deities for help.
 - 4) A battle takes place, often with an army created by the heroine.
 - 5) The demon is killed.
 - 6) The gods praise the heroine who killed the demon.
- (Brooks 1992, 67–68)

As Brooks (1992) shows, this well-established 6-staged “skeleton” of the myth of Durgā and the buffalo demon forms the basis also of the myth in the *Lalito-pākhyāna* (henceforth *LU*) of the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*, in which goddess Lalitā kills the demon Bhaṇḍāsura.⁵⁹ As we shall see, this is also the case with the local myths from Kanchipuram.

While the *DM* is recited as part of the worship of the goddess during Navarātri in many places in India, it does not hold as prominent a position in Kanchipuram. Here, the local goddess Kāmākṣī, a form of Lalitātripurasundarī, is the prime object of veneration during Navarātri. Instead of the *DM*, we find that the *Lalitāsahasranāma* in “the thousand names of goddess Lalitā”, henceforth *LSN*) is frequently recited in Kanchipuram during the festival. Through her 1000 names, Lalitā’s image is presented as complex as that of Durgā of the *DM*. Several of the goddess’ names in this hymn bear reference to the *LU* myth (n. 65–82),⁶⁰ and her names also include those of warrior goddesses Durgā (n. 140) and Kālī (n. 751). Just as Durgā in the *DM*, Lalitā is more powerful than the male gods; she for instance creates Viṣṇu’s ten *avatāras* out of her fingernails during the fight (90–136). Moreover, the *LU* presents itself as bigger than the *DM*, by encompassing the *DM* myth into Lalitā’s fight with Bhaṇḍāsura’s armies (80–88). After elaborate battle scenes, Lalitā slays the demon with the weapon called *Kāmeśvara* (142).

The myths of Kāmākṣī killing Bandhāsura resemble the *LU* in several ways, and we will return to the *LU* in the analysis of these myths. The myth of Paṭavēṭṭammaṇ, on the other hand, rather resembles the Mahiṣāsuramardinī myth of the *DM*.

59 For a synopsis of the *LU* myth, see Brooks (1992, 68–69).

60 E.g. *Bhaṇḍāsura-vyadhoyukta-śakti-senā-samanvitā* (n. 65): “She who is equipped with an army of śaktis, ready to kill Bhaṇḍāsura”; *Bhaṇḍāsuraendra-nirmukta-śāstra-pratyāstra-varṣiṇī* (n. 79): “She who rains forth weapons in return to every weapon released by Bhaṇḍāsura”; *Karāṅguli-nakhotpanna-Nārāyaṇa-daśakṛtiḥ* (n. 80): “She out of whose fingernails Viṣṇu’s ten *avatāras* emerge”; *Mahāpāśupatāstrāgni-nirdagdhasura-sainikā* (n. 81): “She who burnt the armies of *asuras* to ashes with the Mahāpāśupata weapon”; *Kāmeśvarāstra-nirdagdha-Bhaṇḍāsura-Sūnyakā* (n. 82): “She who burnt the city of Suyaka along with Bhaṇḍāsura with the *Kāmeśvarāstra*”.

Local Myths of the Goddess and the Demon: *Sthalapurāṇas* and *Māhātmyas*

While the mythologies of village goddesses such as Paṭavēṭṭammaṇ tend to be transmitted orally, the Brahmanical shrines and temples usually refer to texts, often (also) composed in Sanskrit, which narrate the myths attached to these shrines. This distinction sometimes becomes blurred with the introduction of new media such as the Internet, as many temples of village goddesses and Brahmanical deities today have their local stories featured on their web page, and/or in pamphlets and CDs sold in the temples.⁶¹ It is also important to note that the Sanskrit texts of the Brahminical temples exist and have existed alongside, and been nourished by, an oral tradition, and still is.

Local mythology is found particularly in the texts called *māhātmyas* (Skt. “greatness; glorification”) or *sthalapurāṇas* (Skt. “ancient [stories] of the place”, Ta. *Talapurāṇam*). These texts resemble the *purāṇas* in character and content and contain local versions of Hindu mythology. The *māhātmyas* are localized texts that glorify and legitimize places, shrines, and deities, and they developed in connection with these places as a pilgrim’s literature attracting devotees to the temples (Shulman 1980, 17). They are composed in local languages and in Sanskrit, and often more or less similar versions exist in vernaculars as well as in Sanskrit. Many of the *māhātmyas* claim to belong to one of the 18 *purāṇas*, possibly to enhance their status, but in fact the standard prints of the *purāṇas* usually do not contain the local *māhātmyas* claiming to belong to them.

The *māhātmyas* share the common Hindu pantheon with the major *purāṇas* and often copy their themes and stories, but elaborate on them and provide them with a local character, so that local myths and motifs are blended in. Through the “localization of mythic action” (Shulman 1980, 40) these local texts narrate how certain places and shrines came to be holy; the deeds of deities and sages connected to the shrines; and the merits one gets from performing specific rituals at these sacred places, which are often called *kṣetras* (Skt. fields; [sacred] territories). The rich local mythological in the many Tamil *māhātmyas* and *sthalapurāṇas* is an invaluable source for the study of local Hinduism, as well as for topography, as they contain much information on temple structures and shrines.⁶²

61 See Erndl (1993) for a discussion on the role of pamphlets in relation to Sanskrit and oral mythology.

62 The *māhātmyas* and *sthalapurāṇas* were for long underestimated sources in studying Hinduism and regarded inferior to the pan-Indian texts by several early Indologists. Shulman (1980) has contributed greatly to the study of Tamil *māhātmyas* with his

Kāmākṣī and Bandhakāsura/Bhaṇḍāsura/Paṇṭācuraṇ

A rich mythological tradition surrounds Kāmākṣī, expressed in various *māhātmyas* and *sthalapurāṇas*, in which she kills different demons.⁶³ However, the myth related to the Kāmākṣī temple's contemporary Navarātri celebrations is found in the Sanskrit *sthalapurāṇa* called *Kāmākṣīvilāsa* (*KV*),⁶⁴ in which Kāmākṣī kills the demon Bhandaka (Bhandakāsura). This story is referred to by the priests as the basis of the fight that is enacted in the temple during the first eight evenings of Navarātri. According to them, the demon's name is Bhandaka (Bhandāsura, Ta. Paṇṭa; Paṇṭācuraṇ), sounding like an abbreviation of Bhandaka, but more likely modeled on Lalitā killing the Bhaṇḍāsura in the *LU*.

According to David Dean Shulman, the *KV* offers “perhaps the most complete and most mature versions of the myths of Kamākṣī” (1980, 292, fn. 28). The *KV* claims to belong to the *Śrīvidyākhaṇḍa* of the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa* but does in fact not form part of its standard printed edition. This connection is not insignificant, as the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa* includes the *DM*, the archetypal myth of the goddess killing the demon.⁶⁵ Although the name *Kāmākṣīvilāsa* (the “play” or “manifestation” of Kāmākṣī) indicates that Kāmākṣī is the main character, the *KV* in fact contains almost an equal share of myths for all the three principal and well-known deities of Kanchipuram: the goddess Kāmākṣī, Ekāmranātha Śiva and Varadarāja Viṣṇu. Despite narrating the sanctity of the entire sacred Kanchi *kṣetra*, Moßner (2008, 1) labels the text a Śākta *Kāñcīmāhātmya* as opposed to

analyses of Śaiva (and Śākta) myths (see also Shulman 1978, 1976, 1985, 1984). A more recent publication on South Indian temple networks which includes several chapters discussing *māhātmyas* and *sthalapurāṇas* is Ambach, Buchholz and Hüsken (ed.), 2022.

63 Among these, there is a Sanskrit *Kāmākṣīmāhātmya* consisting of four chapters which claims to belong to the *Sahyādrīkhaṇḍa* of the *Skandapurāṇa*, which contains the story of Kāmākṣī killing Mahiṣāsura (4.1–17); the ritual text *Saubhāgyacintāmaṇi*, which contains a myth of the goddess killing the demon Andhakāsura (38.1–38). The *Kāmākṣīvilāsa* contains a myth on how goddess Kāmākṣī killed the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha assuming the form of Viṣṇu (1.94–125) in addition to her fight with the demon Bandhaka (which is explored below). In addition, there are two Sanskrit *Kāñcīmāhātmyas*, one Vaiṣṇava and one Śaiva, but in the myths therein Viṣṇu and Śiva kill the demons, and not the goddess (see Dessigane, Pattabiramin, and Filliozat 1964, Porcher 1985). For more on Kanchipuram's various *māhātmyas*, consult Buchholz 2022.

64 The *KV* is rendered in Tamil prose as *Kāmākṣīlīlāpirapāvam*, first published in 1906, and as *Kāñcimahimai*, first published in 1927 (Schier 2018, 85). See Shulman (1976) for other Tamil versions of the myth of Devī and the buffalo demon.

65 A striking intertextuality with the *DM* is found in the myth of Kāmākṣī killing the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha. This myth is however used here to establish the supremacy of the goddess in Kanchipuram over the manifestations of Ekamranātha Śiva and Varadarāda Viṣṇu.

the two other *Kāñchimāhātmyas* mentioned in fn. 63. This is persuasive since the text places Kāmākṣī on top of the local divine hierarchy and establishes Varadarāja and Ekāmranātha as forms of her. Moreover, the text is mentioned as the *sthalapurāṇa* of the Kāmākṣī temple in the Indian census of 1961 (Moßner 2008, 7).

The date of the text is uncertain (Shulman 1980, 392, fn. 28, Wilke 1996, 157). Moßner suggests the *terminus ante quem* to be the last decades of the 17th century, when the golden image of Kāmākṣī was brought to Thanjavur due to the threat of a Muslim invasion,⁶⁶ and the *terminus post quem* to be after the Chola kings (their decline was in the beginning of the 13th century), who are devoted a section in the *KV* (14.215–232) (2008, 7). On the other hand, Nagaswamy proposes that the *KV* was composed during the late 19th century, possibly at the time of publication, because it refers to “structures of very recent origin” in the Kāmākṣī temple (1982, 207–208).⁶⁷ The first printed edition was published in 1889.

The *Kāmākṣīvilāsa* comprises 14 chapters. Chapter 12 is dedicated to the glory of the goddess Tripurasundarī who dwells in the Kamakoṭipītha. This chapter narrates Kāmākṣī’s manifestation, her attributes, and heroic deeds, and contains the story of her slaying the demon Bandhaka after which she was installed in the Kāmākṣī temple of Kanchipuram. In the opening verse of this chapter, Kāmākṣī is praised as the killer of the demon: “I praise Kāmākṣī, the slayer of the *asura* Bandhaka, Mahātripurasundarī, richly endowed through her eyes that are the cause of all”.⁶⁸ The demon has entered the storyline already in the previous chapter 11, when the gods are tormented by Bandhaka and flee through a deep cave at Gomukha, and come out of the cave (Skt. *bila*) in Kanchipuram called Kamakoṣṭha.⁶⁹ There, they encounter the goddess Tripurasundarī who dwells in the cave.

66 The festival images of Ekāmranātha and Varadarāja were also brought out of Kanchipuram at this time, to Udayapalayam, but they returned to Kanchipuram in 1710. The golden festival image of Kāmākṣī (known as Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī, *suvarṇakāmākṣī* in the *KV* 14.92–109), which used to serve as a bride in the marriage festival of Ekāmranātha, was then brought to Thanjavur, where a temple for her was inaugurated in 1786 (see Schier 2018, 138–152 and Hüsken 2017).

67 Nagaswamy does not specify which temple structures he talks about, making it difficult to take a stand regarding the text’s date based on these arguments.

68 *viśvakāraṇanetrāḍhyāṃ mahātripurasundarīm bandhakāsurasamhartrīm kāmākṣīm tām ahaṃ bhaje* (*KV* 12.1).

69 This cave (*mahābila*) is situated in the *Gāyatrīmaṇḍapa* inside the sanctum of the Kāmākṣī temple. Later in the Bandhakāsura myth, Kāmākṣī instructs the gods to build the *Gāyatrīmaṇḍapa* and install her image there. Wilke says about the *bila*: “[it] is the place

Here follows a summary of the Bandhakāśura myth from the *KV* (11.19–25; 12.16–114):⁷⁰

There was a *rākṣasa* (Skt. “demon”) called Bandhaka, king of daityas, long-lived after a boon from Brahmā, who conquered Śiva and settled at Kailāśa with his troops. He invaded all the worlds by war and tormented gods, sages and good men out of arrogance. The gods, frightened of the demon, went to Kanchipuram through the cave called Kāmakoṣṭha. There, they encountered the goddess Mahātripurasundarī, and dwelt outside the cave in a divine Campaka tree in the form of parrots.

While in the tree, to get relieved of their sorrows, they meditated upon the goddess Mahātripurasundarī. The goddess then emerged from the cave, and out of compassion for the gods she burned the whole world to ashes in the form of the fire of destruction. She was the only one remaining, without qualities (*guṇa*), before she manifested herself again. Standing in the void, she created the *trimūrti* Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva from her three eyes, all of whom had the shape of infants. She fed Brahmā with milk consisting of the knowledge of creation, Viṣṇu with milk consisting of the knowledge of preservation, and Śiva with milk consisting of the knowledge of destruction. Drinking the milk, the *trimūrti* again got their youthful forms, and they saw that the world was desolate, thinking they were in a dream. Then, out of fear, they performed their respective actions of creating, preserving and destroying the world. And as before, the world contained Bandhaka, and the gods were settled in the tree near the cave as parrots. But the creator (*dhātr*, i.e. Brahmā), having experienced the death of the world and its recreation, said to them: “This is a dream.”

Seeing the dreadful demon Bandhaka, lord of Dānavas, born again and sleeping at Mt. Kailāśa at night, the goddess was angered. She put down one foot at his heart and the other one at his neck. With brilliance, in the form of Mahābhairava [*sic*] endowed with 18 hands and 18 weapons, she grabbed Bandhakāśura’s tuft, took the five elements and killed the enemy angrily. In a moment, she killed all the other daityas in the whole world wherever they were, with her weapons. Thereupon, at sunrise, the goddess became a five-year-old girl (*pañcavārṣikakanyakā*). She dragged the fierce-looking Bandhaka by his tuft and settled in Kāmakoṣṭha.

where all the powers of the goddess are assembled; it is a place of penance [...]; it is the cave of Kāma, the womb of the goddess; it is associated with the graveyard” (1996, 157).

⁷⁰ The summary is based on my own translation of the chapter(s) in question. I have summarized rather than translated the myth to make it more accessible to the reader.

The gods in the tree saw the girl, wearing all auspicious marks and beautiful clothes and ornaments, resembling inflamed gold, as she was dragging the deceased demon along by his tuft. They realized she was the goddess and assumed their own forms. After praising her with divine and captivating music, *stotras*, incense and flower rains, they asked the girl who she was and how the demon, their tormentor, was killed.

The girl told the gods to bury the demon, erect a victory post, build a temple for her in the cave and place her on a throne, and worship her duly from midnight to sunrise. Only then would she reveal who she was, after *darśana* the next morning. The gods bowed before the maiden, dug a hole right there and buried the body of Bandhaka in it. Immediately they raised a victory post and built a *maṇḍapa* as great as the cave.⁷¹ They sunk into an ocean of wonderous water, determined that the maiden was the goddess, meditated upon her and performed tapas at the break of dawn. Opening the door to the *maṇḍapa* in the morning, the gods saw Tripurasundarī, Lalitā, Rājarājeśī, who had assumed her own true form. The goddess said: "I burnt the world to ashes by the fire of destruction. From the wish to create the world again, I created Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. I killed Bandhakāśura in the form of a maiden, and all other *rākṣasas*, and brought him to the cave. I will dwell happily in the Gāyatrīmaṇḍapa forever! This supreme place will be known as *pralayajitkṣetra* (field conquering destruction), very stable even through destruction." The gods bowed to her and worshipped her again with lamps and food. They embellished the goddess with beautiful gifts and took her for a procession in her palanquin. The goddess told the gods that she was manifest in the world as an ocean of nectar, as *śakti*, and that she would henceforth dwell in the temple known as Kāmākṣī, bestowing wishes to the gods and others.

Lord Śiva then bowed to the goddess and granted a boon that everyone who worships the goddess in Kanchipuram shall obtain a *koṭi* (a crore, i.e. 10 000 000) of wishes. Śiva disappeared before the goddess's throne and reappeared later in the form of the sage Durvāsas, along with a group of students.

71 The *maṇḍapa* built by the gods is in a later *śloka* named *Gāyatrīmaṇḍapa*, that is the sanctum that houses Kāmākṣī's image today.

The sage initiated his students⁷² and gave the Cintāmaṇī Tantra,⁷³ the precepts of worshipping the goddess.”

The reader will recognize the pattern described in the beginning of this chapter, but also notice several new motifs, such as the parrot shaped gods, the destruction and re-creation of the world, the five-year-old goddess dragging the demon, and the localization of the goddess, the cave and the temple.

With the destruction of the world and its re-creation, the *KV* presents the goddess as *nirguṇa*, devoid of qualities, as the *DM* does with Durgā. Lalitā is the supreme reality, surpassing and encompassing the other gods. She is the cause of the world’s destruction, and the only one who is left, formless, when the world is a void. She is the primary cause for the world’s creation, as she creates the Trimūrti who in turn performs *their* respective actions of creating, preserving, and destroying after being fed with the milks of knowledge. The world then appears to them as a dream (*svapna*), or as *māyā*; illusion or appearance. *Māyā* is the cosmic dream-play of the goddess,⁷⁴ or the idea that the world is created as a stage for Her to act upon, the ground for her *līlā*, expressed for instance in sporting combats with demons. While the *KV* does not elaborate on the fight in any detail, the theme of *līlā* is expressed in this cosmology, and how Lalitā, effortlessly aloof from the world, accomplishes in an instant what the gods do not manage.⁷⁵

Indeed, both the *DM* and the *LU* are significantly more violent than the *KV* and describe the battle scenes elaborately. The *DM* moreover narrates how the goddess laughs and plays while fighting, betraying no exertion (Kinsley 1979, 52). Durgā and Lalitā of these texts are depicted as warrior goddesses, while Kāmākṣī is not. The goddess in the *LU* moreover has a more royal character, which is not stressed in the *KV*. Lalitā of the *LU* acts as the royal commander in the battlefield who instructs her subordinates, and she herself only kills the

72 This Sanskrit *śloka* is ambiguous (*dikṣam yathākramāt kṛtvā*, from *KV* 14.114). Moṣner reads it as the students followed the religious observances as prescribed (“befolgten gemäß der Tradition religiöse Observanzen”) (2008, 77).

73 Cintāmaṇī is a generic term for tantric texts (Moṣner 2008, 77), but in this context probably refers to the ritual handbook *Saubhāgyacintāmaṇī* (*SC*), which is used as the manual for worship in the Kāmākṣī temple. This is plausible because of the adjective “*devyarchanavidhim*” (precepts for worshipping the goddess) describing it, and the popular belief that the sage Durvāsas composed the *SC*.

74 *Māyā* is not only a power of the gods, but a common epithet of the goddess (*mahāmāyā*), which is also found in the *KV* (1.60, 1.77–78).

75 As Kinsley (1972, 150, 1979, 52–53) points out, this effortlessness is reflected in iconography: the face of the goddess is usually calm and shows no emotional involvement, while the demon may be depicted tormented, in pain or half dead.

biggest enemy, Bhaṇḍa. While the armies, soldiers, cavalries, and weapons sent back and forth are described in detail in both the *DM* and the *LU*, where the emphasis is on the battle scenes, in the *KV*, Lalitā kills the world's most dreadful demon in his sleep (!). Still, the posture described while she kills him resembles the well-known posture from the *DM*, where the goddess places a foot on the buffalo's neck, and the demon emerges halfway in his anthropomorphic form out of the buffalo's mouth before he is decapitated. The *KV* tells that Lalitā proceeds to kill all other demons, but neither of these fights are elaborated. This reflects a reluctance of promoting the more ambivalent and *ugra* nature of Kāmākṣī in this specific Sanskrit text.

After her battle, the goddess settles in Kanchipuram and requests a temple from the gods. With this, the Bandhakāsura myth of the *KV* serves as a creation myth for the Kāmākṣī temple and the goddess' manifestation there.⁷⁶ The myth presents Lalitā as available on earth installed in the temple as Kāmākṣī, granting devotees the fulfillment of a crore (*koṭi*) of wishes (*kāma*), yielding the cave's name Kāmakoṭi. As such it is linked to the concept of *pratiṣṭhā*, the rooting or consecration of a deity at a particular place. The myth thus both emphasizes Kāmākṣī's accessibility for *bhakti* (devotion) as well as her transcendence as the supreme reality, and points both to her localization and universalism.

The goddess Lalitā has several representations in the myth. First, she dwells in the cave as the supreme Mahātripurasundarī who turns the world to ashes out of compassion with the tormented gods. When the world has re-appeared, she assumes the fierce form of 18-armed Mahabhairava (lit. "very frightful, terrible") endowed with 18 arms wielding 18 weapons and kills the demon(s) angrily. Thereupon she becomes a five-year-old girl (*kanyakā*; maiden, girl, virgin) and drags Bandhakāsura by his tuft to Kāmakoṣṭha. After the gods have worshipped her duly, she assumes her own true form (*svasvarūpa*) as "Tripurasundarī, Lalitā, Rājarājesī" and dwells thereafter in the temple as Kāmākṣī.

76 The *KV* does not point towards any connection between this myth and the timing of Navarātri: the goddess left her maiden form and assumed her own true form as Tripurasundarī in *Kṛtayūga*, at the break of dawn the Friday of the first dark fortnight in the month of Phālguna (Ta. Paṅkuṇi, i.e. February–March, *KV* 11.74–77), and *not* during Āśvina Navarātri in the month of Puraṭṭāci (September–October). In the ritual handbook *Saubhāgyacintāmaṇi* on the other hand, the connection between the myth of the goddess and the demon and the timing of Navarātri is made explicit. In this text, the full moon day of the month Āśvina and the nine days starting from the first day of the bright fortnight are labeled as superior (*SC* 38. 1–4).



Figure 2.2: Bālā Kāmākṣī, scan of card bought in Kanchipuram in 2014.

However, in Kanchipuram it is widely known, and emphasized by the priests of the Kāmākṣī temple, that Kāmākṣī killed the demon in the form of a maiden (Bālā Kāmākṣī, figure 2.3).⁷⁷ Indeed, not a single person I talked to, priest or devotee, mentioned her form as Mahābhairava. The dismissal of the Mahābhairava form may be an attempt to play down a fierce aspect of Kāmākṣī, as Kāmākṣī's manifestation in Kanchipuram is that of a benign goddess. Interestingly, the goddess, too, explains in her speech to the gods in the *KV*, after she has

⁷⁷ Bālā Kāmākṣī has her own temple in Nemili. Her iconography is prominent also in the Kāmākṣī temple of Kanchipuram, for instance on posters and plastic pocket cards sold in the small shop near the main entrance. She is depicted in a benign form, seated in a lotus with two hands holding a rosary and a palm leaf manuscript, and two hands in the *varadā* (Skt. "gift-bestowing") and *abhaya* (Skt. "fearlessness") *mudrās*, young, with a white complexion. Bālā is also one of Lalitā's names in the *LS* (n. 965), and in the *LU* she joins the battle against Bhaṇḍā's forces as Lalitā's nine-year-old daughter born from her crown.

revealed her true form, that she “killed Bandhaka in the form of a maiden and brought him to the cave.”⁷⁸ In other words, in her own recap of the story, the goddess herself dismisses her fierce form as Mahāhairava substituting the maiden in its place, and it seems that Kāmākṣī herself is de-emphasizing her fierce aspect.

But the myth still reflects the fierceness of Kāmākṣī through manifestation as Bālā. The goddess killing the demon in the form of a maiden is a motif very common in Tamil myths. As Shulman has shown, the maiden form of the goddess is potentially a highly dangerous form, as she embodies a sexuality that has not yet been unleashed (1980, 144–149). Virginity is here regarded a kind of *tapas* (Skt. “austerity”), which provides the goddess with powers (Ta. *aṇaṅku*) to create and destroy, and with ambivalence. According to Shulman, the virgin goddess is “the epitome of violent power” (1980, 140). These powers may be kept in check and made to good use through a goddess’s marriage. The goddess’s wifely form is an utterly auspicious form, who performs a different kind of *tapas* and thereby uses her powers differently; through devotion and chastity (Ta. *karpu*) towards her husband. The two types of goddesses embody different kinds of strength, as the maiden may use her powers malevolently, be it through afflicting people with disease or killing demons.

The myth moreover reflects the popular legend of Kāmākṣī’s fierce form (her black form) who dwelt in the cave (*bila*), which transformed to a benign goddess (her white or golden form; *Gaurī*) when installed in the temple. The same motif is also expressed in the stories of her taming by the Śaṅkarācārya, as mentioned in the previous chapter, in which the powers of the wild goddess were confined into the *śrīcakra*.⁷⁹

The Priest’s Version

When I asked the priests of the Kāmākṣī temple to narrate the myth of Kāmākṣī and the demon, I was told a story quite similar in content and structure as given in the *KV*. Here follows the Bandhāsura myth narrated by Mr. Satyamurti Sastrigal:⁸⁰

“Once, when lord Śiva was doing *tapas*, Maṅmatan (Kāma) shot arrows with flowers at Śiva to distract him. Śiva got angry and burned him to ashes with

78 [bhandakam] *nihatya kanyāvaṣeṇa tam ākrṣya mahābile (KV 89)*.

79 See Wilke 1996.

80 This is the myth in its entirety, translated from Tamil to English by my research assistant Srividya.

his 3rd eye. Vināyakar (Gaṇeśa) made an idol of the ashes. Looking at it, Śiva smiled and laughed. That doll got life and was Bandhāsura. He did tapas to Śiva who was pleased and granted him a boon. Bandhāsura asked for a life without death. Lord Śiva said that it was not possible and asked him to ask for a different boon. Bandhāsura then asked that wherever he is and whom-ever he thinks of, he will get their powers, and that only a child below 9 years of age not born from a man and a woman could kill him. He was granted both wishes.

After this, he harassed all the *devas* and the people. The *devas* asked lord Śiva for a solution. Lord Śiva said: “go to Kanchipuram, via the *biladvāram*. Take the form of parrots, pray to Ādiparāśakti and be in the Cenbaga tree.” They did what lord Śiva said, and when they started to pray, they found a little girl who killed the *asura* and dragged him. The gods asked who she was, and the girl said: “Make a small idol and pray to it in Kanchipuram during the *Brahmamuhūrta* period. Then you will know who I am!” The next day they went and saw her in that period. She sat in the *kaṭi āsana* (hip posture) with four hands. That is who Kāmākṣī is – it is Ādiparāśakti (the supreme primordial power) who has taken the form of Bālā and killed the demon.

For this, Brahmā made an offering of lotuses, Viṣṇu gave the *sudarśana-cakra*, and Śiva gave the *śrīcakra* as a pendant and put it on her. Then he took the form of Durvāsar Mūnivār and created the *Saubhāgyacintāmaṇi*. All *pūjās* that are performed here [in the Kāmākṣī temple] are performed according to the *Saubhāgyacintāmaṇi*.”

Many of the elements from the *KV* reappear in this narrative, but we also notice a few differences. The oral myth is more accentuated on the origin of the demon and his granting of boons, which is hardly mentioned in the Sanskrit version. According to the priest, the demon cannot be killed by anyone but a child below the age of nine years, a boon granted to him by Śiva, along with the boon of assuming the powers of anyone he thinks of (in the *KV* myth, Bandhakāsura receives the boon of longevity from Brahmā). This is important, because in it lies the premise for Kāmākṣī to assume the form of Bālā to kill the demon. This is also expressed in the ritual worship of girls below the age of nine (*kanyā pūjā*), which is performed daily in the Kāmākṣī temple during Navarātri. The fierce form of Mahāhairava from the *KV* is not mentioned in the priest's narrative. Indeed, neither is the fight – narrated from the gods' perspective, we are simply told that the gods see the girl approaching with the already killed *asura*. The fight itself happens off stage, like in the classical tragedies. Again, the priest plays down Kāmākṣī's fierceness.

The priest's myth also includes a prologue according to which the god of love Maṅmatan (Kāma) disturbs the asceticism of Śiva with his arrows. Śiva then reduces Maṅmatan to ashes, who is then revived as Bandhāsura by Gaṇeśa.⁸¹ The motif of creating Bhandāsura from the ashes of the god of love is not explicit in the *KV*. There, the demon's origin is in fact not mentioned at all. However, in a later chapter of the *KV* Kāma asks Kāmākṣī to get him his body back (*KV* 14.9–66), which may allude to this story. Kāmākṣī grants his wish and helps Kāma defeat Śiva in battle by withdrawing the *śaktis* of all Śiva temples into the cave.⁸² As Śiva propositions on her, she rejects him saying: "I am not Gaurī" and creates a crore of Kāmas to fight Śiva. The goddess tells the conquered Śiva to take refuge with Maṅmatan and meditate on her, and then takes the form of Gaurī.⁸³

Kāmākṣī is closely associated with the god of love, as is reflected in her name ("she whose eyes are desire"), and through her iconography – Kāmākṣī carries the weapons of Kāma; the sugarcane bow and flower arrows, on which a parrot sits (Kāma's vehicle). The myth is another hint at this close connection. As Shulman has shown, the divine marriage of the god and goddess is the central structural element of the Tamil *sthalapurāṇas* (1980, 138), and the core of many festival cycles in Hindu temples. Śiva burning Kāma to ashes is the first step towards marriage between Śiva and Pārvatī in many *purāṇas*. In Mr. Satyamurti Sastrigal's myth we learn that the demon is a Śiva devotee, who performs *tapas* towards and is granted a boon by Śiva (*dveṣabhakti*). This, too, is a common motif in South Indian demon myths. Shulman takes a step further and suggests that the demon and Śiva are in fact one and the same. The demon is identified

81 The motif of Śiva reducing Kāma to ashes is found in several *purāṇas*, including the *Matsyapurāṇa*, the *Śivapurāṇa* and the *LU*. In the latter, Kāma disturbs Śiva's meditation and shoots a flower arrow at him to help the gods destroy Tārakāsura, who could not be defeated by anyone except Śiva's son. Śiva then reduces Kāma to ashes with his third eye and sends him forth formless into the universe. Yet the unleashing of love affects Śiva and results in his union with Pārvatī, after which their son Kārtikkēyaṅ (Murukaṅ) is born, who finally defeats the demon. One of Lalitā's names in the *LS* also concerns the remedy of Kāma (n. 84). In some stories, Śiva burns Kāma who takes the form of a tree (O'Flaherty 1973, 158–159). Interestingly, the fight between the goddess and the demon is enacted in many temples with a (*vanni* or banana) tree standing for the demon (see chapter 4). According to O'Flaherty, Kāma is pictured as "a tree whose sprouts are women" and is particularly associated with pine trees (*ibid.*). See O'Flaherty (1973, 141–169) for more on Śiva's relation to Kāma in Hindu mythology.

82 This myth explains why there are no separate shrines for the goddess in any of Kanchipuram's Śiva temples.

83 Gaurī ('shining, brilliant') is the golden form of Kāmākṣī, who becomes Śiva's consort. In this myth Kāmākṣī is transformed to her benign form through marriage. See Shulman (1980, 170) for a full summary of Maṅmatan myth from the *KV*, which might be an elaboration of *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* 3.4.30.59.

with Kāma as his revived ashes who is identified with Śiva, whose manifestation in Kanchipuram is known, according to the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*, as Kāmeśvara (“lord of desire”) (Shulman 1980, 171). Shulman proposes a symbolic marriage between the goddess and the demon, substituting Śiva with the demon devotee.⁸⁴ In the *KV*, the demon sacrifices himself/is sacrificed at the hands of the maiden goddess, after which Śiva emerges from the nether world through the cave of Kāma. This cave is “the womb of the goddess, the Kāmakkōṭṭam” (Shulman 1980, 176), and Śiva later marries the goddess at the local shrine in question (see Shulman 1980, 169–176).

Paṭavēṭṭammaṇ and Makiṣāsuraṇ

While there are no written texts pertaining to the Paṭavēṭṭammaṇ temple, there is a rich oral mythological tradition surrounding this goddess. According to Paṭavēṭṭammaṇ’s priest Mr. Mahesh the goddess has had five births: as Reṇukā, as Māriyamman (Paṭavēṭṭammaṇ), as Aṅkāḷa ammaṇ of Mel Malianur, as Kalkattā Kālī [sic] and as Satiyanasūyā.⁸⁵ Out of these, it is the Kalkattā Kālī story that forms the basis of the temple’s Navarātri celebrations and the goddess’s fight with the demon.

Here follows a summary of the myth of Makiṣāsuraṇ as told by Mr. Mahesh, main priest in the Paṭavēṭṭammaṇ temple:⁸⁶

“There was a young Brahmin boy who wanted to become a *saṃnyāsin* (Ta. *caṅṇiyāci*, an ascetic) at a young age, and a Brahmin girl who wanted to marry him. She asked if they could marry, and after a living a good life together for some years, then he could become an ascetic. But the boy was not interested in married life and denied her request. Since the girl thought his mentality resembled the *asuras* (Ta. *acurar*) who live in the forest, she cursed him to be an *asura*. He in turn was angry for being cursed for his wish, and cursed her back so that she, too, would be born in a demon family.

84 This has an interesting parrallel in a ritual described by Beck (1981), where a local goddess in the Coimbatore district marries (presumably) a demon in the form of a tree trunk, is widowed for a short period, and later marries Śiva.

85 See Ilkama (2012) for the Reṇukā, Māriyamman and Satiyanūsā myths relating to the Paṭavēṭṭammaṇ temple. The Aṅkāḷa ammaṇ myth resembles closely the one Meyer retells from Mel Malaiyanur (1986, 36–37).

86 The summary is a close retelling of the story which was translated from Tamil to English by my research assistant Mr. Subramanian.

The curses became true. One history says they were born brother and sister. The other says they were husband and wife. Which one is true I am not aware of, but the story that says husband and wife looks good.

They were born as Makiṣāsuraṅ (Skt. Mahiṣāsura) and Makiṣi. Both of them had the head of a buffalo and went for doing penance.⁸⁷ Makiṣāsuraṅ got a boon from Śiva that he would lead a life without death and with permanent wealth that does not diminish, and that his body could not be burnt. Makiṣi asked that she could only be killed by a child at the age of 16, born from a couple of equal sex and leading the life of a king, thinking such a death was not possible. This Makiṣāsuraṅ story is the history of Kalkattā Kālī, and Makiṣi is the Aiyappaṅ story.⁸⁸

Makiṣāsuraṅ started creating a place of his own, and his wealth increased. Once he demanded a share in the *homa* (Ta. *hōmam*, fire sacrifice) of the gods, but the gods denied. He started to destroy the gods and put the sages who performed the *homa* into the fire. He increased day by day and went out of control. The gods went to lord Śiva and complained. Then Śiva created Śakti. The gods did a *homa* for 108 days, and the 108th day was a new moon day (Ta. *amāvācai*), the start date of Navarātri. Navarātri is for gathering all 3 *śaktis* – Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī and Durgā; their powers. That is why the first three days is for Lakṣmī, and so on. This is how the three *śaktis* were gathered, and every day of the Navarātri function, weapons were grouped. For this war, they gathered all weapons, and did *pūjā* (Ta. *pūcai*) for them, so on Vijayadaśamī, the 10th day, all the powers come together. All the powers put together is called Ādiśakti. She destroys Makiṣāsuraṅ. Only because *pūjā* was done this day, and next day she went for *samhāra* (Ta. *samhāram*, war). That is why the gods won the battle.

This incident happened in Kolkata, so that is the “head office” for Kālī temples. The demon was destroyed in a period between morning and night. So, we would have a question: why Makiṣāsuraṅ has this powerful boon, but was killed. According to his boon, he should not die at all! Moreover, his body should not be burnt, and his wealth should be permanent. And his wealth did in fact not go away at all, neither was his body burnt. What happened was this: The goddess cut off Makiṣāsuraṅ’s head and wore his intestines as a

87 In Tamil, *makiṣaṅ* or *makiṣaṅ* is a Sanskritized form for buffalo (Ta. *erumai*). *Makiṣi* is the feminine form.

88 Aiyappaṅ was, according to legend, a child from a union of Viṣṇu and Śiva. To overcome the demoness’s boon, Viṣṇu took birth as his female *avatāra*, the enchantress Mohinī, who united with Śiva. Aiyappaṅ was born and destroyed the demoness.

garland. And the head was under her legs. So, it is like all the criteria of the boon is satisfied: the demon did not die but took refuge [with the goddess].

During the battle different incidents happened. Makiṣāsuraṅ also tried to cheat the goddess by taking the form of Śiva; he went in that form to Kālī devī and they had an argument. Eventually she realizes it is not Śiva, so she assumes a ferocious form and that is why we can see some images with Śiva under the feet of Kālī; it is Makiṣāsuraṅ who has come in that form. In the pictures she will not have a full dress, and after being cheated, all the hands of the *asura* were cut off and tied around her waist. And there will be skulls around her neck. That is because she destroyed demons and soldiers; she took their skulls and wore as garlands. She puts Makiṣāsuraṅ down. These things happened during the Navarātri period. The last day Makiṣāsuraṅ took refuge under her feet. That is why they have the *kolu*, the goddess is in the *kolu* and gets the power from all the gods. Makiṣāsuraṅ was not destroyed fully but took refuge at the feet of the goddess. That is why the *pūjā* offered to the goddess is also for the *asura*."

While Kāmākṣī's myths resemble the *LU*, the myth of Mr. Mahesh shares traits with the *DM*, with additions and differences. The pattern presented in the beginning of the chapter is intact apart from the gods praising the goddess, which is absent in Mr. Mahesh's myth.

The myth starts with the demon's origin from a rather unfair curse to a pious Brahmin boy, explaining the origin of the two demons relating to two well-known myths in South India, Makiṣa and Makiṣi. As in the myth of Kāmākṣī's priest, the demon gets his boon from doing *tapas* to Śiva, whom the gods resort to once the demon gets out of control. Śiva creates Śakti to aid the gods, who perform a 108-day *homa* to empower her. The myth therefore depicts *śakti* as created from the gods' united power, like the narrative in the *DM*. In the *DM* myth the goddess is created from a brilliant light (Skt. *tejas*) emerging from the gods, but in the Kalkattā Kālī myth the gods gather the powers of Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī and Durgā during Navarātri, corresponding to the notion that the first three days of the festival are for Lakṣmī, and so on. The content of Pāṭavēṭṭammaṅ's myth also relates to the *kolu* and the worship of weapons on the ninth day of the festival known as *āyudha pūjā* or Sarasvatī Pūjā.⁸⁹ Severa respondents explained how the goddess on the *kolu* draws powers from the gods surrounding her in order to fight the demon.

The battle scenes and the actual killing of the demon are not described in any detail. Still, the fierce form of the goddess is more prominent in Mr. Mahesh's

89 See chapter 8.

myth than in the myths current at the Kāmākṣī temple. Kālī is known as an *ugrā* and bloodthirsty goddess, as a destroyer. She is associated with the flux and movement of existence (Kinsley 1979, 20) and can be seen as the very embodiment of *līlā*, frequently depicted dancing upon her husband's, or the demon's, corpse. The narrator is not hesitant on emphasizing this: her dress is not proper for a female, and she wears her victims' skulls and arms as ornaments.

We also note that a cosmological aspect, which is very prominent in the *KV*, is absent in the myth of Kalkattā Kālī: neither the goddess's transcendence nor her immanence (the *bhakti* aspect) is mentioned. Interestingly, Mr. Mahesh's myth relating to Navarātri is not at all localized in Kanchipuram, but in the distant Kolkata. This might be because of the fame of Kolkata's Durgā Pūjā, out of a desire for an association between the temple's themed *alaṃkāras* and the magnificent themed *paṇḍals* (temporary structures set up for venerating a deity) of Kolkata.⁹⁰

I propose that both the lack of cosmology and of localization of the myth is due to the different characters of the goddesses in question, as well as the type of myth. While the benign Kāmākṣī in her myths is identified with the pan-Indian and cosmological deity Lalitā-tripurasundarī, Paṭavēṭṭammaṇ has her origin as Reṇukā, a human wife who unfairly was decapitated from transgressing a sexual norm.⁹¹ Revived as a goddess she is placed in the tradition of more approachable village goddesses: Paṭavēṭṭammaṇ is not a cosmological deity like Kāmākṣī. Still, the priest entitles the killer of the demon Ādiśakti (Skt. "primeval power"), like Kāmākṣī's priest,⁹² since localized goddesses also are perceived as parts of the primeval energy. When I say "type" of myth, I refer to the fact that the myth of Kalkattā Kālī is not Paṭavēṭṭammaṇ's creation myth, or a story generally associated with her. Paṭavēṭṭammaṇ's origin myth is the Reṇukā

90 Bengali *paṇḍals* are increasingly represented in Tamil media: for instance, during Navarātri 2014 there were 3 articles in the Chennai times about the Durgā Pūjās celebrated in Chennai against 6 articles on *kolu* displays. The articles encouraged the reader to "don't just make time for golus [*sic*] [...] but plunge into the colors of the east with Durga Puja" and to "go pandal hopping". According to these articles, Durgā Pūjās have been organized in Chennai by Bengali associations since the 1930s, and in 2014 there were approximately 15 grand *pūjās* with *paṇḍals* in different parts of the Tamil Nadu capital. The oldest *pūjā* in the city, the Bengali Association in T. Nagar, claimed to expect about 50 000 visitors to the 2014 *pūjā*. While I have not seen any of these *pūjās* myself and do not know how many Tamils participate in them, these articles may point towards a recent growth in the Durgā Pūjās of Chennai, and in promoting them in media. I am unaware of any Durgā Pūjās celebrated in Kanchipuram.

91 See chapter 1.

92 The exact word used in the oral Kāmākṣī myth was Ādiparāśakti, meaning "supreme (*parā*) primeval power".

story, whose decapitation transforms her into Mariyamman, a story with strong elements of locality.⁹³ Apart from the Kālī myth, all the other myths associated with Paṭavēṭṭammaṇ revolve around the theme of chastity and the unfair treatment of her as a female by male characters. The Kālī myth does not explain anything about Paṭavēṭṭammaṇ's or the temple's origin and tells us more about popular beliefs about Kālī than about Paṭavēṭṭammaṇ.

An important motif expressed at the very end of the myth is that the demon does not die but takes refuge at the feet of the goddess. From there he still receives offerings according to his boon. According to the priest, this is why demons, represented in the arches above the deities' images, are offered food in the temple.⁹⁴ Shulman reads this mythical theme, the salvation of the demon dying at the hands of the goddess, as a model of self-surrendering to the deity: the actions of the demon leads to his purity and salvation at his "death" (1980, 320). As Shulman interprets it, this symbolizes the state of egoism (Skt. *ahaṃkāra*) as defeated, when the devotee realizes his true identity as a *bhakta*. On a more symbolic level of interpretation, the death of the demon thus forms a model for man to overcome ego and possessiveness. That ego is symbolized by the demon's severed head has been interpreted by other scholars too, such as Brenda E. F. Beck (1979, 32), who argues that in the most common four-armed iconography of Kālī, where she carries a severed head in her left hand, the head symbolizes how the devotee's ego must be slain for obtaining salvation. Curiously, but perhaps not surprisingly, such a symbolic connection or moral component was a fact several respondents in the temples stressed when asked about the meaning or significance of the fight between the goddess and the demon; that it ultimately concerns the destruction of ego, or evil, within man. These respondents' thoughts, all of whom were interviewed in the Kāmākṣī temple during the *curasaṃhāra*, the enactment of Kāmākṣī's fight with the demon, clearly illustrate this:

"I think [the fight] is [about] getting rid of evil. Curaṇ (the demon) represents evil, and it is the destruction of that by the divine. So, then we can understand that if there is any evil within us, and we pray for these nine days, we can eradicate it".

93 See Ilkama (2012). Consult Beck (1981), Brubaker (1977), Craddock (2001), Doniger (1999), and van Voorthuizen (2001) for other versions of the Reṇukā story.

94 This food is placed outside the temple by the *triśula*, and includes puffed rice, *dāl* (lentils), cigars and biscuits, which is offered to the demon during the enactment of the fight at Navarātri.

“*Mahiṣāsura* (killing Mahiṣāsura) is the killing of a man’s *ahaṅkāra*. Now Ammaṅ killed Mahiṣāsura, but the inner meaning is her destruction of man’s ego. We must get rid of all that. But how can that be, when every moment we say: “I do this, I have come to see this”! [...] Any *curasaṃhāra* is the destruction of evil.”

“Navarātri, you see, even though the tales talk about demons and all, this is like those days’ masters took us as a child and narrated a story. But the demons are within us. It is the anger; it is lust; greediness. That is the demons given here, they gave a name to it, a form to it. One of the demons had a buffalo head and so on.”

These quotes illustrate a clear identification of the people with the myth of the goddess and the demon, and what happens in the temple during Navarātri.⁹⁵

Concluding Remarks

The local myths of Kāmākṣī and Paṭavēṭṭammaṅ presented here conform to a generic pattern of “demon-killing-myths” originating from the *DM*, sharing a common set of Śākta theological ideas. They can be seen as combat-as-*līlā* myths (cf. Kinsley 1979) in which the goddess is ultimately aloof from her creation, battling demons as a diversion.

In the respective myths we have met a compassionate Lalitā, who both encompasses and transcends the *ugrā-saumyā* dichotomy, and a birth of Paṭavēṭṭammaṅ as the fierce Kalkattā Kālī or Mahiṣāsuramardinī, killer of the Buffalo Demon. I have explored some of the myths’ themes and motifs, including the burning of Kāma and reading the myth as defeating ego. While there are many similarities to the myths, there are striking differences, too: Kāmākṣī’s myth is stongly anchored in Kanchipuram and concerns the very origin of her temple, whereas Paṭavēṭṭammaṅ’s myth occur in Kolkata with their famed Durgā Pūjā celebrations, although the priest links the storyline to the South Indian customs of *kolu* and Sarasvatī Pūjā. The cosmological aspects prominent in the myth of Kāmākṣī are also absent in the myth of Paṭavēṭṭammaṅ as Kālī. Through exploring the demon-slaying manifestations of the goddess as Balā Kāmākṣī and Kālī, I have shown that while the fierceness of the goddess may be played down and

95 While the surrender of the demon as the goddess’s (or Śiva’s) devotee is not mentioned in the *KV* myth, ritual in the Kāmākṣī temple still hints at this: After the demon is defeated in battle, his head(s) are brought to the goddess, garlanded, and placed at her feet as a token of surrendering to her. The demon’s heads are also marked with the common forehead marks of being a Śākta devotee, namely three horizontal lines of white ash with a dot of *kuṅkumam* in the middle.

the fight not elaborated in the myths, the goddesses are able to take on fierce forms for accomplishing their task of killing the demon.

In the following chapters, we will see how the associated myths are related to several rituals in the respective temples during Navarātri.