A GARLAND OF

FORGOTTEN GODDESSES

TALES OF THE FEMININE DIVINE

FROM INDIA AND BEYOND

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CONTENTS

Introduction

Much of the world rarely questions the idea that God is male. The notion that God is female may even strike some readers as radical. But in India goddesses are everywhere. They are the bedrock of ancient religious traditions that extend back thousands of years. Goddesses are honored in, though not central to, the oldest scripture from India, the *Ṛg Veda*. Some scholars even find continuities between certain early historical nature goddesses linked to fertility, such as *yakṣiṇī*s, and artistic representations going back even further—to the dawn of human civilization as we know it—in artifacts from the third millennium BCE Indus Valley civilization.[1]

Whatever their origins, India's goddess traditions proliferated and became central to religious and narrative literature there from late classical times (after ca. 600 CE). The stories in this book offer fascinating case studies of alternative imaginings of gender, devotion, and power. This is not to say that Hindu goddess traditions are necessarily examples of feminist spirituality; of the twelve goddess tales translated here, some envision female power and agency in thought-provoking and potentially inspirational ways, some are patriarchal in character, and many are ambiguous in how they portray female power. All offer studies in how the feminine divine has been construed and reckoned with in the religious imagination of Hindus.

FORGOTTEN GODDESSES

The book styles these twelve selected goddesses and their stories as "forgotten" in multiple senses. For some of them—the Seven Mothers, Rāṣṭrasenā,

Tvaritā, and Avyapadeśyā—their former glory, expressed in the translated sources, has waned to the point that a relatively small number of people still actively worship them or know of the ancient accounts translated here. Others, such as Bhadrakāḷī, Cāmuṇḍi, Svasthānī, Kailā Devī, Bahucarā Mātā, and Rangda, enjoy popular living traditions with millions of followers; in these cases "forgotten" certainly does not imply a lack of significance.

What unites all of these goddesses is that they are rarely mentioned in surveys of Hindu goddesses. In this sense, they have been forgotten by many of the authorities who speak for and about Hinduism to cosmopolitan audiences. Two other goddesses featured here have not yet been mentioned: Kauśikī and Kāmeśvarī. They are closely linked to Durgā and Tripurasundarī, respectively, and so each is honored as the Great Goddess by tens of millions of Hindus in vibrant living traditions. Durgā and Tripurasundarī are in no sense forgotten figures. However, our understanding of their early histories and transformations over time is rudimentary. The rare and largely forgotten sources translated here add depth and nuance to their better-known collections of traditional lore.

The types of sources selected for this book are also poorly represented in scholarship on Hindu goddesses. As described later in the introduction, the late-classical religious development of esoteric scriptures called "Tantras" is central to the rise of goddess traditions as we know them in southern Asia. Yet these prolific early sources have been largely ignored in American scholarship on goddesses. Several of our selections belong to the popular classic narrative genre called "Purāṇas" (ancient lore). While the Purāṇas have been relatively well studied, research on Hindu goddesses has tended to focus on a small number of popular Purāṇas readily available in printed editions. The well-studied *Devī Māhātmya* (Glorification of the goddess), for example, is an important piece of the puzzle mentioned frequently throughout this book.[2] But it is only one among many dozens of influential goddess scriptures from the first millennium, most of which have not even been published, let alone translated and studied in depth. Several contributors have done painstaking research to access and read unpublished manuscripts in order to uncover the fascinating stories of the goddesses Bhadrakāḷī, Kauśikī, the Seven Mothers, Svasthānī, Rāṣṭrasenā, Tvaritā, Kāmeśvarī, and early Tantric views of Kālī (here called Avyapadeśyā, "the Indefinable One"). Popular living traditions also possess fascinating but understudied archives of oral lore, songs, performances, and devotional booklets marketed to pilgrims. The chapters on

Cāmuṇḍi and her sister Uttanahaḷḷi, Kailā Devī, Bahucarā Mātā, and Rangda draw on such undervalued sources to help show how these goddesses are significant to a broad range of Hindus today.

Given the intricate and multifaceted religious history of Indian civilization (and Indian-influenced civilizations farther afield), it is important to understand some of the major religious currents that have affected goddess traditions. Knowing the structures of religious history discussed in the following sections will help the reader come to a deeper understanding of the tales themselves.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND SPREAD OF HINDU GODDESS TRADITIONS

Thomas Trautmann offers a useful framework of developments in Indian religious history, summarized here.[3] The historical period in Indian religions begins with the Vedic religion, which flourished among the Indo-Aryan speaking tribes of northern India from around 1500 to 500 BCE. At this time, the primary religious mode—at least so far as can be discerned from textual records—consisted of worshiping a pantheon of sky-dwelling and earthly gods, and a handful of goddesses, through recitation of hymns and offerings of food in a sacred fire. These food offerings consisted of various grains and dairy products, as well as livestock. The central importance of food offerings for strengthening the relationship between humans and the gods led Trautmann to characterize it as a *religion of sacrifice*. The stamp of the Vedic sacrificial religion is evident in the present book; for example, the goddess Uttanahaḷḷi of Mysuru is described as a seven-tongued goddess of fire, who, like the Vedic fire god Agni, is hungry for offerings (chapter 2). And it is also visible in the tale of Bahucarā, in which the goddess confronts demons who threaten the performance of Vedic sacrifices (chapter 7).

After around 500 BCE, religions such as Jainism and Buddhism rose to prominence and emphasized quite different values and ways of being religious. In contrast to prominent ideals in Vedic society of the time, they taught that violence, attachment to material things, and seeking pleasure in marriage and family life are obstacles to salvation. For these religions, at least in their early phases, the direct path to liberation lay in renouncing family and society, withdrawing into isolation or becoming part of an alternative community of nuns or monks, practicing meditation in order to tame one's desires, and

otherwise living an austere life. The immense growth of *religions of renunciation* under the Mauryan dynasty led to their ideas becoming commonplace in Hinduism and all subsequent religions founded in India. The earliest Upaniṣads of the Vedic tradition are some of the first texts to show similar concerns, though this class of Hindu texts did not develop a full-fledged focus on renunciation until centuries after the rise of Buddhism and Jainism. The imprint of values from the religions of renunciation is apparent throughout this book in several forms. The great Hindu god Śiva himself, frequently regarded as the consort of most of the goddesses in this book, is usually portrayed as an austere renouncer. When the Svasthānī tale extols the religious benefits of restricting food intake, sleeping on the ground, and conquering the senses (chapter 5), or when ascetics (sādhus) play such an important role in the Kailā Devī tale (chapter 6), the values of renunciation live on.

After the fall of the Mauryan empire, which is to say, starting from around 200 BCE, new religious values developed that emphasized personal *devotion* to a particular supreme God or Goddess, or to various sorts of enlightened beings in Buddhism and Jainism. In early devotional Hinduism, the high God was typically a form of Viṣṇu or Śiva; only later did goddess worship emerge in the written record, with similar massive movements of devotion, often to a singular almighty Goddess such as Durgā or Kālī. The names for these movements are derived from the names of the deities they identify as sovereign; followers of Viṣṇu became known as Vaiṣṇava, followers of Śiva are Śaiva, and followers of any of the numerous figures honored as the premier Goddess are called Śākta after the generic name for divine power, which is always gendered feminine: *śakti*. These terms are used frequently throughout this book.

A core idea of devotional religion is that finding favor with one's personal deity does not depend on rituals, as it did in the Vedic sacrificial religion, or upon renunciation of family and social life, as it did in the religions of renunciation. Rather, a feeling of pure devotion in one's heart toward the supreme deity is enough for salvation, as taught in early devotional classics such as the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The values of devotional religion are central to most of the goddesses in this book, as is plainly visible in the various narratives of savior goddesses who entered the world to fight demons and restore order, such as Bhadrakālī, Kauśikī, and the Seven Mothers (chapters 1, 3, and 4).

Starting around 500 CE, Hindu Tantric religious cults developed within the Śaiva sects, and within a few centuries followers of Viṣṇu, followers of the goddesses, and Buddhists developed their own Tantric corpora, as did some

lesser-known religious traditions.[4] The adjective "Tantric" has been applied to a wide variety of texts and practices. In Asia, some use it to refer to strange magical practices and transgressive rituals. In the United States, many think it refers exclusively to sacred sexuality. Neither is characteristic of the Tantric tradition as a whole, although both are present in some contexts. The Tantric tradition referred to here is an important initiation-based religious movement that purportedly was based on secret teachings of divine figures. It has had an indelible impact on the religions of Asia and left us thousands of scriptures (Tantras), most of which remain unpublished and unknown to scholarship. The Tantras are critically important to understanding the history of Hindu goddess traditions.

Central to early Tantras is the power of mantras and *vidyā*s (gendered masculine and feminine respectively). Tantric practitioners repeat these sacred utterances both to accomplish spiritual salvation and to gain worldly powers such as rainmaking or the attainment of godlike longevity and power. In practice, such sacred sounds were regarded as ways of ritually evoking a deity's presence or even causing divine possession. A Tantric *vidyā* is not only a sacred sound or spell but is considered to be the deity herself embodied as sound. It is thus perceived as a powerful living force, a link between the human and the divine.

All these religious developments—the Vedic sacrificial religion, renunciation religions, devotional movements, and the Tantric traditions—were composite affairs that intermingled in interesting and complex ways over the course of time. The Tantras encompassed elements of each of the prior three religious developments but also introduced unique deities, beliefs, and practices. Some might have worshiped a goddess like Kāmeśvarī (chapter 11) by following long-standing devotional practices, such as offering flowers and fruit to an external image of her. However, the Tantric devotee would normally show devotion through an intense sort of meditation in which one builds a detailed image of the goddess in the mind and proceeds to worship her mentally and by reciting her *vidyā*, usually silently. Far from being a form of daydreaming, Tantric visualization involves intricate and highly controlled techniques to enter altered states of consciousness wherein extraordinary visions of the goddesses may occur.

Goddesses began to rise to prominence in mainstream literature in the early medieval Tantric age. A goddess such as Kālī first came to be regarded as the supreme mother of the universe in esoteric Tantras such as the voluminous

Jayadrathayāmala (chapter 12), rather than in the Purāṇic narratives of popular Hindu devotion, where she is portrayed as a manifestation of Durgā's wrath. In this volume, the translated sources on Tvaritā, Kāmeśvarī, and Avyapadeśyā Kālī (chapters 10, 11, and 12) are all from unpublished early Tantric scriptures, while the chapters on Kauśikī, the Seven Mothers, Rāṣṭrasenā, and Rangda (chapters 3, 4, 8, and 9) show significant influence from Tantric traditions. Other goddesses, such as Bhadrakāḷī and Bahucarā Mātā, have important Tantric dimensions to their cults not reflected in the translated stories.

The early Tantras have been unfairly neglected in scholarship on Hindu goddesses. While a small number of orthodox Hindu texts have been the subject of an appreciable number of books and dissertations, the vast and largely unpublished archive of Tantric literature continues to languish, rarely even acknowledged. A concerted movement to change this situation began in the early 1980s, especially with the pioneering work of Alexis Sanderson, which is ongoing and has been expanded upon by many of his colleagues and pupils. Most notable in this respect is the scholarship of Diwakar Acharya, Mark Dyczkowski, Dominic Goodall, Harunaga Isaacson, Marion Rastelli, and Somadeva Vasudeva, among others. Several of the contributors to this volume—namely Anna Golovkova, Shaman Hatley, Olga Serbaeva, Michael Slouber, and Judit Törzsök—share the project of making the significance of the early Tantras better known to students and scholars of goddess traditions and Indian religions in general.

The final two relevant developments in Indian history are the immense growth of Islam in southern Asia over the past thousand years and the presence of European colonialism in the past several centuries. Islam was first brought to India by Arab merchants who came by sea as early as the seventh century CE, but it was not until large-scale empires under Muslim leaders arose in northern India that significant numbers of Indians began to convert. Tensions between Hindus and Muslims have marred the past century of South Asian history. However, religious identities tended to be more fluid and complex before colonial times, as demonstrated with historical evidence in the volume *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*.[5] Muslims are among the devotees of the goddess Bahucarā in Gujarat, for example (chapter 7). When the Kailā Devī narrative (chapter 6) speaks of protecting icons of the goddess from Muslim iconoclasts, it does so with a particular figure in mind: the infamous eleventh-century warlord Mahmud of Ghazni, who was in no way typical of Muslims in India. The

Muslim-led empires of medieval north India were composite affairs, with bureaucracies and militaries composed of both Hindus and Muslims. Armies of the sultans, and later those of the Mughals, sought victory in battle for political and material gain, just as Hindu armies fighting each other had long done. With few exceptions, these were not battles between religions.

The story of colonial interactions with Hindu goddess traditions is particularly fascinating, and it is seldom flattering to Europeans. The behavior of Victorian-era Britons visiting or stationed in India was often driven by racism and reflected a sense of Christian superiority.[6] European colonialism does not directly impact any of the stories told in this book; however, indirect impacts may be noted in shifting practices. The fact that animal sacrifice—the practice of butchering livestock as food offerings to the deity—was once acceptable nearly everywhere but in some areas is now uncommon and illegal (see the Bahucarā, Kailā Devī, and Rāṣṭrasenā chapters) may be partially due to strong disapproval of such rituals on the part of colonial Christian rulers, as Masakazu Tanaka argues in "Sacrifice Lost and Found."[7] On the other hand, other factors have contributed to shifting tastes. Animal sacrifice is primarily associated with particular Śaiva and Śākta deities, whereas Vaiṣṇavas usually view it as unacceptable. Animal rights campaigns and the orthodox high-caste orientation of contemporary Hindu nationalist culture have also contributed to the trend away from animal sacrifice.

GEOGRAPHY

The fixed boundaries of modern nation-states often skew our understanding of the spheres of influence of a given culture or religion. Hinduism is most closely associated with India, but it also spread to, and was in turn influenced by, a large number of other Asian countries. Map 1 shows the spread of the goddesses in this volume all over southern Asia. Starting around the third century BCE, mariners established trade networks between India and Southeast Asia. Sustained relations led most of Southeast Asia to incorporate features of Indian civilization into their own cultures. The story of Southeast Asian influence on India is less well understood and is the subject of ongoing research.[8]

Religion was one of the principal elements of Indian culture adopted in Southeast Asia. Tantric forms of Hinduism and Buddhism spread early on, as well as devotional forms of religion and the Indian epics. Indonesia, the location of the chapter on Rangda, is home to over seventeen thousand islands
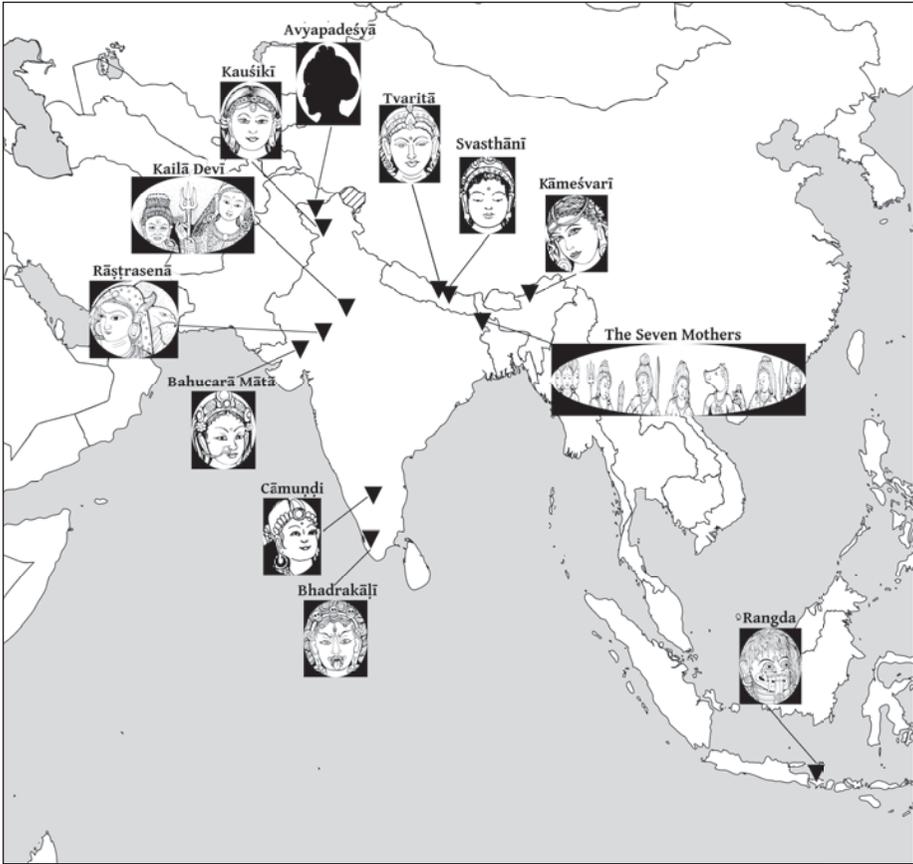
MAP 1. Distribution of goddesses in southern Asia

and about 270 million people. Its name literally means "Indian islands," refer-ring to the influence of Indian religion and culture there. It is natural, then, to find the goddess Durgā as a prominent figure in eastern Java and Bali, as seen in the *Calon Arang* tale in chapter 9. Other Southeast Asian nations, such as Thailand, Cambodia, and Malaysia, were also heavily influenced by Indian civilization, as were places farther afield.

THOUSANDS OF GODDESSES OR ONE?

The fluid nature of Hindu discourse on the divine often confuses new learners. By all accounts, numerous goddesses and gods populate the Hindu pantheon

in every phase. In the past, this often led outsiders to categorize Hinduism as polytheistic: a religion with many gods. But the idea that religions can all be categorized on the basis of having one God or many gods is misguided, over-simplifying a complex matter. From the earliest scriptures, Hindus have approached the divine differently, claiming that it is *both one and many*; the two concepts are not mutually exclusive. This idea especially came to the fore with the rise of the devotional religious movements previously mentioned, and continued to be prominent thereafter. Devotional forms of Indian religions tend to regard a particular deity as foremost while acknowledging that lesser divine figures also exist in some sense. Often the other figures are regarded as creations or emanations of that one supreme deity.

As described previously, the two most common groupings in the Hindu religion were the Vaiṣṇavas and Śaivas, who worshiped either Viṣṇu or Śiva as the highest divinity. Classical Sanskrit texts tended to lump goddesses under one or the other of these labels as mere consorts of the male god. But with the emergence of purely Śākta religious movements—which is to say, the idea of one supreme Goddess to rule them all—there was rapid growth in movements concerned solely or chiefly with goddesses. Because the goddess traditions of Tantric Śaivism were the most prolific, all of these goddesses tend to be con-flated as different forms of Śiva's consort. While the Goddess is subordinate to Śiva in some of the first Tantras, she transcends even him according to many subsequent Tantric movements, such as the Trika, Yāmala, Śrīvidyā, and Krama schools discussed in chapters 3, 4, 11, and 12, respectively. In this way, the multitudes of local goddesses could stake their claims to supremacy by linking themselves to preexisting structures of Śaiva Hinduism.

There is thus a pragmatic dimension to the claim that all the goddesses are one. It is not simply a philosophical position. This sort of monism ("one-ism") also has practical implications for the lives and identities of Hindus on the local level. Consider, for example, the goddesses of the royal city of Mysuru, who are intimately associated with the hill and hillock near the city. As local goddesses (*grāmadevatā*), they most likely originated as fierce mothers who protect the territory they govern. The primary sister of the pair is Cāmuṇḍi, a name most commonly associated with a fearsome form of the goddess Kālī. However, at some point the association shifted, and she became identified with the qualities and mythological deeds of the regal Durgā. The local nar-rative states that Cāmuṇḍi is the true identity of the goddess of pan-Indian fame, and that her feat of fighting and slaying a buffalo demon happened on

the very hill that stands next to the city of Mysuru. Such a claim raises the status of Cāmuṇḍi, and of her town as a place of pilgrimage, for Hindus from all over the subcontinent. She is no longer one among thousands of local goddesses worshiped since time immemorial; she is now the Mother of the Universe, who chose to bless the lucky inhabitants and visitors of this lovely south Indian city.

These same dynamics applied to most of the goddesses in this book, though with varying results: some rose to prominence for a time, only to be plowed back into the soil of obscurity via subsumption under more well-known figures like Kālī and Durgā (e.g., Tvaritā, Kāmeśvarī, and Avyapadeśyā in chapters 10, 11, and 12); some rose to popularity precisely because of their claim to pan-Indian fame, which saved them from obscurity (e.g., Uttanahaḷḷi, Kailā Devī, and Rangda in chapters 2, 6, and 9); and some continually balance their transregional and local identities as both goddess of place *and* supreme Mother of the Universe (e.g., Cāmuṇḍi, Svasthānī, and Bahucarā in chapters 2, 5, and 7).

THE BOTANICAL IMAGERY AND STRUCTURE OF EACH CHAPTER

English and many Indian languages share the metaphor that imagines an anthology of literary works as a flower garland. Classical Indian poets and scholars saw garlands everywhere; they spoke of the ocean as garlanded with waves, musical compositions as garlands of musical notes, and even the alphabet as a garland of phonemes. The book's title is not only a tribute to this metaphor in Indian literature; the image also aptly describes the mechanism of religious change that each goddess undergoes throughout her history. She often starts as a local deity or the focus of a Tantric sect, here represented by the symbol of an individual flower. Her popularity then grows and her status is raised by the claim that she is really a form of a more famous pan-Indian goddess. This process of linking a local goddess with a transregional one is like the string of a garland that holds the individual parts together while also subsuming the individual identity of each flower under the unified whole of the garland.

Each chapter is arranged to foreground the translated source. Preceding each translation is a brief introduction providing the essential minimum context about the goddess and source, including the region, date, and themes to look for in the text. Further context is withheld until after the translation,

in order to encourage readers to engage with the source and try their hands at analysis first, without the influence of the scholar's essay.

These essays, called "The Goddess in Context," are intended to deepen and clarify the reader's understanding, and are divided into sections called "Seed," "Flower," and "Fruit," in keeping with the botanical imagery of the book as a garland. The origin and early precursors of the goddess are explained in "Seed." Her flourishing or high point in popularity is described next in "Flower" (indeed, the English word flourish is derived from a Latin root that means "to flower"). This often corresponds to the period of the text translated. And finally comes "Fruit." Please note that "fruit" is used in this historical analogy in its *botanical* sense. The fruit is the final step in a plant's reproductive cycle; it is not meant in the human-centered agricultural sense of a product for consumption. So, when we speak of the "fruit" era of a particular goddess's development, we mean what comes after her period of flourishing. Some of the goddesses in this volume are virtually forgotten, and so the fruit section is about their waning popularity or absorption into a new and more widely known identity (as a fruit sets seed). Others are still very much part of living local traditions that are currently expanding their sphere of influence; they are still flourishing. All the goddesses offer fine case studies of the dynamics of religious change in the world's oldest continuous goddess tradition.

Following the "Fruit" section is information on the nature and specifics of the translated source, including full bibliographical details, and then a short list of suggestions for further reading and notes for the whole chapter.

TECHNICALITIES

Bibliographical References

Citations to published sources are referenced with a concise author-date system in the endnotes; full details of each source are provided in the reference list. Primary sources are referenced by title; the section "Primary Sources," just before the reference list, includes the editor and year for published primary sources and archival details for unpublished sources.

Translation and Epithets

Since the book is designed to appeal to a general public readership, the editor requested that the contributors make their translations as readable and jargon-free as possible. Whereas strict scholarship often demands an exactly literal

translation and brackets for any words not in the original, here we intentionally dispense with such conventions in order to make the texts more inviting and comprehensible to our readers.

The huge diversity of names and epithets of Hindu goddesses and gods can be bewildering and a potential barrier to learning. For example, when we are meant to envision the Goddess as the wife of Śiva, an Indic text may call her Pārvatī, Umā, Gaurī, or any of hundreds of other common epithets. Or, just as commonly, she may be referred to by any of the names of her alternative forms, such as Kālī or Durgā. She also might have a name calqued on the name of her male counterpart (e.g., Bhavānī, Śaṅkarī, Raudrī). In general, we have defaulted to calling her either Pārvatī or the name of her main identity highlighted in each chapter, unless the text in question explicitly speaks of her as the Great Goddess (Mahādevī), in which case we also use that honorific. The same plethora of names and epithets applies to other deities too, such as Śiva, and these have likewise been flattened in the translations by defaulting to the name Śiva for the husband of the Goddess.

An advantage of this artificial simplification of names and epithets is that readers new to Hinduism are not overwhelmed by unknown names and words. However, the disadvantage is that much of the rich cultural flavor that these names and epithets add to the primary sources is lost in translation.

Capitalization of Goddess

Hindu thealogy (discourse on the nature of goddesses and gods) comes to identify goddesses as both local deities with unique forms and identities, and as manifestations of the principal Goddess who generated the entire universe. Given that Indian scripts do not have a convention analogous to capitalization, we have opted to default to "goddess" and to reserve the capitalized form for cases where the goddess is described as singular and supreme (e.g., the Great Goddess, Mother of the World). Such a convention becomes blurry in situations where individual local goddesses are being spoken of in the singular or addressed directly as *the* Goddess. Instances of the word "goddess" occurring as part of a proper name or at the beginning of a sentence are, of course, capitalized without regard to this distinction.

Languages, Scripts, Transliteration, and Pronunciation

The book features translations and studies involving seven languages (Sanskrit, Newari, Middle Javanese, Malayalam, Kannada, Hindi, and Gujarati)

and numerous regional writing systems. Each chapter showcases samples of the diverse regional scripts these sources are written in. Because fonts that are accurate to period manuscripts are unavailable, these are approximations.

Maintaining a coherent policy of transliterating words from so many languages into the Latin script was challenging. Understandably, readers may be more familiar with rendering Indian words without diacritical marks, as in "Kali," "Shiva," "mandala," and "chakra." Scholars generally favor the more consistent and accurate approach of using diacritical marks according to international standards for each language in order to retain the one-to-one correspondence between a letter and its sound that Indian scripts can offer. In English, for example, the vowel "a" is regularly pronounced five or more ways. This and other ambiguities of English spelling lead to a variety of mispronunciations of Indian words. Chakra (*cakra*) is frequently mispronounced "shah-kra" instead of the correct "chuck-ra" and mandala (*maṇḍala*) becomes "mahn-dah-la" instead of "mun-duh-la." To avoid this sort of confusion, Indian scripts employ a larger number of letters, but they generally stand for single sounds. Readers can use the following abbreviated pronunciation guide to approximate the correct pronunciation of any word in this book:

- *a* is what linguists call a schwa, as in "a̱lone" or "u̱p"
- *ā* is reserved for the sound "ah," as in "fa̱ther" or "ho̱nor"
- *i* is a short vowel sound, as in "fi̱t" or "I̱ndia"
- *ī* corresponds to English long "e," as in "ne̱a̱t" or "tre̱e̱"
- *u* is short, as in "pu̱ll" or "wo̱o̱l"
- *ū* is long, as in "bo̱o̱t" or "ru̱de"
- *ṛ* is a vocalic r sound corresponding to "tri̱p," or in some areas of India like "bro̱o̱k"
- *e* is what we call long "a" in English, as in "ca̱ke" or "ga̱te"
- *ē* is a slightly longer variant of the above distinguished in south Indian languages
- *ai* is the long "i" in English, as in "bi̱ke" or "ni̱ne"
- *au* is a diphthong, as in the English words "ho̱u̱se" or "to̱w̱n"
- *ṃ* is a sign that nasalizes the vowel before it. It can be pronounced like the consonant "m" for simplicity

- *ḥ* indicates a sound approximated by an "h" followed by a fragmentary echo of the previous vowel

- *c* is equivalent to "ch" in English, as in "<u>ch</u>unk"

- *ṭ*, *ḍ*, and *ṇ* are retroflex sounds similar to the English consonants, but with the tongue touching the roof of the mouth

- *ś* and *ṣ* are both pronounced like "sh" in English. The latter is articulated with the tongue touching the roof of the mouth

- *ḷ* is a retroflex "l" distinguished in south Indian languages

We have omitted diacritics for modern geographical names (place-names, rivers, and mountains) and names of historical people; however, we have retained them for the names of deities and for geographical names that are no longer in use.

Notes

The notes included at the end of each chapter annotate both the translation and contextualizing essay. Notes provide additional context and clarification, technical information about the translation, and references to prior scholarship.

Glossary, List of Deities and Characters

The glossary in the back of the volume clarifies non-English words and technical terms and concepts in both the translations and essays. The list of names following the glossary serves the same purpose for the names of deities and other characters in the stories.

ADVICE TO THE READER

The fact that you made it this far in the introduction means you are already equipped with important background knowledge. The chapters of each unit are arranged in approximate order of accessibility, so we recommend that you read them in order. Important names and terms from earlier chapters are also often useful to know for the later, and sometimes more difficult, chapters. Make use of the glossary and list of names; these are tools we have carefully prepared to help you navigate these sources.

Read the brief introductions that open each chapter carefully, as they contain essential facts and tips to orient you to the story. Likewise, read each

narrative slowly, trying not only to follow its logic but also to think about the purposes it was designed to serve for its intended audience. The notes at the end of each chapter are often useful, explaining cultural aspects and technical details in the translation, as well as providing references to further reading. After finishing the story and wrapping up your own notes on it, read the translator's essay to get a more complete understanding of the passage you have just read and analyzed.

Excellent audiovisual material is widely available on the internet and can deepen understanding of these sources. For example, one can view vivid photos of women performing the Svasthānī *vrata* in Sankhu (chapter 5) by executing an image search. Likewise, the Rangda chapter can be enriched by video clips of contemporary Rangda-Barong performances in Bali. And the Bahucarā chapter is well paired with documentary material on the Pāvaiyā/Hijra communities.

NOTES

1. For recent scholarship that cautiously accepts the idea of continuity of nature divinities between the Indus Valley civilization and historical traditions, see Padma (2013, 262), Onishi (1997), Haberman (2013, 48–49), and Shaw (2006).

2. The *Devī Māhātmya* has long been regarded, on weak grounds, as centuries older than the evidence supports. See Yokochi (2004, 21–23n42). Several contributors to this volume draw heavily on Yokochi's scholarship, the importance of which has been underappreciated in South Asian goddess studies.

3. See Trautmann (2011, 102–15).

4. For abundant evidence that the early medieval period was dominated by Tantric Śaivism, see Sanderson (2009).

5. Gilmartin and Lawrence (2000).

6. For excellent and accessible overviews of the goddess Kālī in the colonial imagination, see the chapters by Cynthia Ann Humes and Hugh Urban in *Encountering Kālī* (McDermott and Kripal 2003).

7. Tanaka (2000).

8. See, for example, Acri, Blench, and Landmann (2017).