

GLOSSARY

Abhayā, "she who assures that no harm will be done"; epithet of Durgā.

abhaya, the negative of the word "fear" (*bhaya*); by extension, "assurance that no harm will be done."

Abhimanyu, "fearless and wrathful"; name of the warrior son of the Pāṇḍava Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa's sister Subhadrā. A major figure in the great Bhārata war, Abhimanyu knew how to penetrate the best of (i.e., the virtually impenetrable) military formations but did not know how to exit from the hostile forces so arrayed. (Two explanations account for this great warrior's vulnerability. While still in his mother's womb, Abhimanyu had heard his father discussing with the other Pāṇḍavas military strategy, learning from him how to breach formidable enemy alignments; Abhimanyu failed, however, to gain knowledge of the means by which to exit from those opposing ranks, for his mother fell asleep before Arjuna had finished speaking to his brothers. According to another tale, the moon, for failing to pay due deference to the sage Garga, was cursed to be incarnated in the world of humans as Abhimanyu; though a sage's curse once uttered cannot be retracted, Garga out of pity lessened its severity by declaring that Abhimanyu, at the end of his sixteenth year, could be slain in battle and would then return to heaven.) Abhimanyu is slain at the completion of his sixteenth year by seven opposing Kaurava warriors. In Kāśīrāmadāsa's Mahābhārata, the fight of the seven against the one is referred to as an unfair battle (*anyāya śamara*), exactly the way weaponless Meghanāda characterizes his fight to the death with a heavily armed Lakṣmaṇa supported by Meghanāda's own uncle in the sixth canto of *The Slaying of Meghānada*. In the Mahābhārata, Abhimanyu fights valiantly but futilely, ripping off parts of chariots and hurling them at his attackers, similar again to what Meghanāda, in *The Slaying of Meghānada*, does in the temple with the various paraphernalia required for *pūjā* as he attempts in vain to save his life. (Cf. Kāśīdāsi Mahābhārata, "Droṇa Parva.")

Āditeya, "son of Aditi"; epithet of Indra; matronymic from Aditi, mother of the gods.

Aditi, mother of the gods; the antithesis of Diti, progenitress of the Daityas (also known as Asuras, Dānavas, Karbūra, Rākṣasas, i.e., the anti-gods by whatever name).

Āditya, the sun god, who daily ascends the "rising-hill" in the east, rides across the sky in his one-wheeled chariot, and descends the "setting-hill" in the evening.

Āgama, a class of Hindu texts, often including esoteric lore and framed as a conversation between Śiva and his wife Pārvatī, with the former instructing the latter.

Agni, fire or the god of fire; Meghanāda's chosen deity. Fire and wind support each other, hence the epithet of "wind's companion" for Agni.

Airāvata, "produced from the ocean"; name of Indra's elephant mount, one of the many objects produced from the primordial ocean when churned by the Suras (gods) and the Asuras (anti-gods).

Aja, a patriarch within Rāma's lineage; grandfather of Rāma; see Dilīpa.

Akampana, "non-trembling"; name of a Rākṣasa warrior.

Ākhaṇḍala, "breaker"; epithet of Indra; "Indra's bow/Ākhaṇḍala's bow" is the rainbow.

Alakā, city ruled by Kubera, the god of riches, located in the Himālaya mountains.

Ambikā, "mother"; epithet of Durgā.

amṛta, the negative of the word "dead" (*mṛta*); by extension, "ambrosia, an immortality-producing elixir, the nectar of the gods." One of the many products that came out of the primordial ocean when churned by the Suras (gods) and the Asuras (anti-gods), the *amṛta* was initially appropriated by the Asuras. In order to obtain the *amṛta* from the Asuras, Viṣṇu assumed the guise of Mohinī, an enchantingly beautiful woman, and thereby distracted the Asuras. Viṣṇu's mount Garuḍa, also known as Vainateya, stole away the *amṛta* from the preoccupied Asuras, depriving them of that powerful elixir.

Anaṅga, "he who is without a body"; epithet of the god of love, Kāma, who at the behest of the other gods aroused Śiva sexually, breaking the great sage's yogic meditative trance. Angry, Śiva with fire from his third eye incinerated Kāma, who thereafter was devoid of bodily form, though he continued to exist incorporeally.

Ananta, "the one without end"; epithet of Śeṣa and of Vāsuki, both Nāga monarchs and mythological cobras; Vāsuki (Ananta) supports the entire world on his many heads; see Śeṣa.

Aṅgada, nephew of Sugrīva and crown prince of the southern kingdom of Kiṣkindhyā, allied with Rāma against the Rākṣasas.

Añjanā, mother of Hanumān.

Annadā, "she who is a giver of food"; epithet of Durgā.

Antaryāmī, "he who resides within"; the god who knows one's inner thoughts.

Antaryāminī, "she who resides within"; the goddess who knows one's inner thoughts.

Apsarā, a class of celestial demi-goddesses or nymphs, known for their exceptional beauty and their dancing ability.

Asilomā, "he whose body hairs are swords"; name of a Rākṣasa warrior.

Aśoka, "non-sorrow"; name of the grove on the island kingdom of Laṅkā wherein Sītā is held captive.

aśoka, a variety of flowering tree.

Asura, a class of enemies of the gods; the negative of Sura (god); often considered synonymous with Daitya, Dānava, Karbūra, and Rākṣasa.

Āsutoṣa, "he who is satisfied readily"; epithet of Śiva.

Aśvatthāmā, son of Droṇa, ally of the Kauravas against the Pāṇḍavas in the war narrated in the Mahābhārata. After the one hundred sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra had been slain or lay dying, Aśvatthāmā, whose father fought and died on the side of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons, vowed to avenge the Kauravas' defeat by slaying the Pāṇḍavas. He with two accomplices set out for the Pāṇḍavas' camp. As night set in, they rested, but Aśvatthāmā noted that an owl stayed alert at night to catch its prey while other birds slept, which led him to propose a night attack. When the three conspirators reached the encampment, they found its entryway guarded by Śiva, who refused to give them passage. Aśvatthāmā then emptied his quiver on Śiva, but the god proceeded to swallow those arrows without being wounded. Unsuccessful through brute force, Aśvatthāmā performed a *pūjā* to Śiva and ultimately threatened to offer himself up as a human sacrifice unless the god grant him a boon, thereby allowing his vow of vengeance be fulfilled. He also requested and received Śiva's falchion with which to do his dirty work. Śiva

acceded to these requests and stepped away from the gate. Asvatthāmā then entered, slew Dhr̥ṣṭadyumna and Śikhaṇḍī, both brothers of Draupadī (common wife of the five Pāṇḍavas), and decapitated the five Pāṇḍavas' five sleeping sons, thinking them to be the senior Pāṇḍava warriors. Asvatthāmā presented the five severed heads to dying Duryodhana, eldest of the one hundred Kauravas, who realized that his cousins, the Pāṇḍavas, yet lived but that their offspring were now dead. With that knowledge, Duryodhana succumbed. (Cf. Kāśīdāsī Mahābhārata, "Sauptika Parva.")

Asvini, mother of the Asvins, twin divine warriors. By one account, Saṃjñā, wife of the sun, finding the heat of her husband intolerable, assumed the appearance of a horse (*aśva*) and went wandering off in the land of Uttarakuru. Sūrya, the sun, came to know of her whereabouts, went there, and impregnated his Asvini ("she who has the appearance of a horse"). Asvini, also known as Vaḍabā (see Vaḍabā), gave birth to twin sons, charioteers both, who were known not only for their handsome appearance but also for their skill as medical practitioners to the gods. Asvini, by another account, is considered one of the twenty-seven (later increased to twenty-eight) stars (*nakṣatras*: constellations or lunar "houses" through which the moon passes), all twenty-seven of which are beautiful wives of Candra, the moon.

Atikāya, "whose body is huge"; name of a Rākṣasa warrior.

Ayodhyā, the kingdom and capital city of Daśaratha, to be inherited by Rāma, located in northern India, on the Sarayū river.

Bali, a Daitya humbled by Viṣṇu in his fifth of ten *avatāras* or incarnations. Bali prided himself on his dominion over the three worlds: heaven, earth, and the nether region called Pātāla. Viṣṇu, appearing before him in the form of Vāmana or "the dwarf," asked Bali for as much territory as he, Vāmana, could traverse in three strides. Haughty Bali acceded to the request of this dwarfish being whereupon Vāmana increased in size and strode through heaven and earth in two paces, but left the humbled Bali sovereignty over the lower regions.

Bhagavatī, name of Durgā, emphasizing her role as supreme goddess; feminine of Bhagavān (supreme lord).

Bhairava, name of Śiva, emphasizing his violent, terrible, formidable aspect.

Bhairavī, name of Durgā, emphasizing her aspect as the spouse of the formidable Śiva; also an epithet of the goddess as Kālī.

Bharata, (1) one of the three half brothers of Rāma, the other two being Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna. When, due to a boon granted his mother, Bharata was to assume the throne of the deceased Daśaratha, he demurred and placed Rāma's sandals on the throne instead; see Kaikeyī. Also, (2) progenitor of the Bhāratas, the lineage engaged in the internecine war recounted in the Mahābhārata; see Bhārata (2).

Bhārata, (1) name for India and for the "continent" (*varṣa*) that is premodern India (canto 4); also, (2) descendants of Bharata (canto 8).

Bhāratī, name of Sarasvatī, goddess of speech, the arts, and learning; her complexion is white.

Bhartṛhari, name of a famed Sanskrit poet, author of *Bhaṭṭikāvya* (Bhaṭṭi's Verse Narrative), a work illustrating grammar and poetic conceits while at the same time narrating the tale of Rāma; Bhaṭṭi is considered the Prakrit form of Bharṭṛ.

Bhava, "essence, existence"; epithet of Śiva.

Bhavabhūti, name of a famed Sanskrit poet, author of the drama *Uttararāmacarita* (The Later History of Rāma).

Bhavānī, name of Durgā.

Bhaveśa, "lord of existence"; epithet of Śiva.

Bhaveśvarī, "goddess of existence"; epithet of Durgā.

bheri, a kettledrum.

bhindipāla, a weapon whose nature is uncertain--either a short javelin thrown by hand or shot through a tube, or a stone fastened to a cord, a sling.

Bhīma, "ferocious (masculine)"; (1) epithet of Śiva, emphasizing his more violent aspect; also, (2) a shortened form of Bhīmasena, second eldest of the five Pāṇḍava brothers.

Bhīmā, "ferocious (feminine)"; epithet of Durgā in her more violent aspect.

Bhīmasena, second eldest of the five Pāṇḍava brothers; see Bhīma (2).

Bhīṣaṇa, "monstrous, terrible"; name of a Rākṣasa warrior.

bhomara, a spear whose shaft is twisted like an auger.

Bhṛgurāma, another name for Paraśurāma or "Rāma with the ax," who is the sixth of the ten *avatāras* of Viṣṇu and also an extremely formidable fighter. A Brāhman by caste, Bhṛgurāma/Paraśurāma is said to have slain with his ax all of the Kṣatriyas (the warrior caste). The word *bhṛgu* itself suggests strength, having as it does as one of its literal meanings "sheer cliff or mountain plateau."

Bhūta, "ghost, spirit"; Śiva is the lord of the Bhūtas.

Biḍālākṣa, "cat-eyes"; name of a Rākṣasa warrior.

bimba, a red fruit.

Bṛhannalā, "big reed"; pseudonym of Arjuna. After the eldest Pāṇḍava had lost (been cheated) at dice, the five brothers and their common wife, Draupadī, went into forest exile for twelve years, according to the terms of the wager. The thirteenth year they were to dwell incognito. If identified, they would have to live another twelve years exiled. The thirteenth year was spent in the domain of Virāṭa, king of the Matsyas. Arjuna chose to disguise himself as a eunuch and dress in women's clothes, hiding with conch shell bangles the calluses on both arms (he was ambidextrous) produced by the bowstring. He took the name Bṛhannalā and passed himself off as a song and dance instructor for the girls of the palace. As the thirteenth year ended, the Kauravas, in league with another king and not knowing the Pāṇḍavas' whereabouts, invaded the Matsya kingdom where they rustled king Virāṭa's cattle. The king and all the Pāṇḍavas save Arjuna were out fighting the invaders when news of the stolen cows reached prince Uttara, who was still in the palace. Virāṭa's son accepted the eunuch as his chariot driver, then set off to engage the enemy. But, intimidated by the mighty Kauravas, Uttara could not bring himself to fight. The two retreated to a particular *samī* tree in which the Pāṇḍavas had stashed their weapons and regalia when donning disguises for the thirteenth year. Arjuna changed back into his martial attire. Now fully accoutered, Arjuna, this time with Uttara as his chariot driver, retrieved the cow herd then routed Karṇa, Duryodhana, and the supporting Kaurava forces. (Cf. Kāśidāsī Mahābhārata, "Virāṭa Parva.")

cakra, a discus weapon; a chariot wheel.

cakravākī, a particular bird, female; used as a poetic conceit, the couples, *cakravāka* and

carlavāki, are said to be separated at day's end and to mourn for each other the whole night long.

Cāmara, "yak-tail fly-whisk"; name of a Rākṣasa warrior.

Cāmuṇḍā, epithet of Durgā in her more frightful aspect. The name is derived from Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa, two gigantic demons whom Durgā slew.

Caṇḍāla, one of the lowest castes in the Hindu hierarchy, metonymic for the lowest of the low in society, an untouchable.

Caṇḍī, name for the goddess Durgā in her more ferocious aspect; the incarnation of the goddess desired by the gods--and created from their combined powers--for the purpose of defeating the buffalo Asura (see Mahiṣāsura), the iconic reenactment of the slaying of which is central to the annual Durgā Pūjā festival in Bengal; she who vanquished the Asura Raktabīja and the Asura brothers Śumbha and Niśumbha. (Cf. Devīmāhātmya.)

Candracūḍa, "he who wears the moon as a crown"; epithet of Śiva.

Caturbhujā, "he who has four arms"; epithet of Viṣṇu.

Cikṣura (also spelled Cikkura), "loud, like the crack of lightning"; name of a Rākṣasa warrior.

Cintāmaṇi, "gem of thought; mythic wishing gem"; epithet of Viṣṇu (canto 7). Since Rāma is, from one perspective, an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, the epithet can also apply to Rāma (canto 6). Moreover, since *cintā* means not only "thought" but also "worry" in Bangla, the suggestive meaning of the epithet could be "gem of worries," an apt rendering in both occurrences in *The Slaying of Meghanāda*.

Citrālekḥā, name of one of the members of the class of celestial demi-goddesses called Apsarā, known for their exceptional beauty and their dancing ability.

Citrāṅgadā, one of Rāvaṇa's queens, mother of Virabāhu, and daughter of Citrasena, a heavenly Gandharva. (Cf. Kṛttivāsī Rāmāyaṇa, "Laṅkā Kāṇḍa.") Though unrelated to this character, there is in the Mahābhārata a Citrāṅgadā, who resides in Manipura and has a son by Arjuna. (Cf. Kāśīdāsī Mahābhārata, "Ādi Parva" and "Aśvamedha Parva.")

Citraratha, "he whose chariot is bright or of many colors"; name of the leader of the class of celestial demi-gods called Gandharva, known for their musical skills but also for their expertise in warfare.

Daitya, a class of enemies of the gods; matronymic from Diti; often considered synonymous with Asura, Dānava, Karbūra, and Rākṣasa.

Ḍākinī, a class of female goblin-like demi-goddesses who attend upon Śiva and Durgā.

Dakṣa, (1) father of the twenty-seven stars (*nakṣatras*: constellations or lunar "houses" through which the moon passes), all twenty-seven of which are considered beautiful wives of Candra, the moon (canto 1). Also, (2) father of the goddess in her first anthropomorphized incarnation when she is known as Satī. He plans to perform a grand sacrifice but, intentionally and foolishly, excludes his son-in-law, Śiva, from the guest list. Satī, the epitome of the faithful wife, sides with her husband and is mortified to death, literally, by her father's rudeness towards Śiva. Hearing of his wife's demise, an enraged Śiva trashes Dakṣa's sacrifice, killing the host sacrificer, his father-in-law. Beside himself with grief, he stays near his wife's lifeless body constantly. Concerned that Śiva will be preoccupied with mourning, unmindful of his responsibilities as supreme lord of the universe as long as his wife's corpse is present, the other gods send

Cakrapāṇi (Viṣṇu, with discus in hand) to dismember Satī with his discus into fifty-one parts, to be scattered across the South Asian subcontinent. Where those parts landed became the fifty-one *mahāpīṭhas* or sacred places of pilgrimage for worshipers of the goddess. Śiva, still despondent, goes off into the mountains to meditate. Once again the gods fear that a meditating Śiva will leave the universe devoid of a supreme lord. They prevail upon the goddess to incarnate again, this time as Pārvatī, daughter of the Himālayas, also known as Himādri. Kāma is thereupon enlisted to break Śiva's trance so that he might become attracted to Pārvatī and thus resume an active role in governing the world (canto 2).

dāmāmā, a large war drum.

damaru, a small, hourglass-shaped drum with heads on either end; played by Śiva and by present-day snake charmers.

Dānava, a class of enemies of the gods; matronymic from Danu; often considered synonymous with Asura, Daitya, Karbūra, and Rākṣasa.

Daṇḍadhara, "staff-holder"; epithet of Yama, who wields the staff (*daṇḍa*) of punishment (*daṇḍa* also means "punishment").

Daṇḍaka, a forest in southern India in which are not only the smaller Pañcavaṭī forest (where Sītā, Rāma, and Lakṣmaṇa were residing when Sītā was abducted by Rāvaṇa) but also Kiṣkindhyā, kingdom of Sugrīva and "the southerners."

Danu, mother of the Dānavas.

Daśānana, "he who has ten heads"; epithet of Rāvaṇa, who has ten heads and twenty arms.

Daśaratha, "he who has ten chariots"; father of Rāma, Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa, and Śatruḥna. Kauśalyā (mother of Rāma), Kaikeyī (mother of Bharata), and Sumitrā (mother of Lakṣmaṇa and Śatruḥna) are the three wives of Daśaratha.

Dāsarathi, epithet of Rāma, primarily; can be used for his three half-brothers (refers to Lakṣmaṇa, canto 6); patronymic from Daśaratha.

Devadatta, "given by the gods"; (1) name of Arjuna's (Pārtha's) conch shell battle horn; also, (2) name of the bow given Lakṣmaṇa by the gods.

Devendra, "Indra (lord, foremost) of the gods"; epithet of Indra.

dhāka, a large barrel-shaped drum.

Dhanada, "giver of wealth"; epithet of Kubera, god of riches. He is also lord of the class of demi-gods known as Yakṣas; and he is a half brother (same father, different mother) of Rāvaṇa, though Kubera himself is aligned with the gods, not with the Rākṣasas.

Dharma, a god who embodies, so to speak, moral duty, just law, and the best of what is meant by religion. Dharma, in Bangla Hinduism, is a somewhat minor folk deity; Dharma is also a name by which Yama, the god of death, is known. Datta's Dharma, however, is a more generalized, all-encompassing, moral deity.

dharma, translated variously as Duty, the Law, and Religion; it is that which one ought to do, that to which one should be steadfast.

dhola, a drum held horizontally and played on both ends with two hands.

Dhūmaketu, "comet, falling star"; literally, "banner of vapor or smoke"; a comet augurs ill, bringing with it disaster; a name for fire and the sun.

Dhūmrākṣa, "he whose eyes are smoke"; name of a Rākṣasa warrior.

Dhūrjaṭi, name of Śiva.

dhuti, the dhoti or lower cloth worn by men.

dhuturā, a particular plant, its fruit and its flowers, associated with Śiva. Śiva indulges in a narcotic made from *dhuturā*.

Digambara, "he who is clad only by the sky"; name of Śiva, naked and lying prostate with Kālī standing or dancing upon his chest.

Digambarī, "she who is clad only by the sky"; name of goddess Kālī, when naked and standing or dancing upon the chest of her spouse Śiva.

Dilīpa, a patriarch within Rāma's lineage (Dilīpa begat Raghu, who begat Aja, who begat Daśaratha, who begat Dāśarathi, the patronymic name for both Rāma and his half brothers).

Diti, mother of the Daityas; the antithesis of Aditi, progenitress of the gods.

dola, "swing"; the name of the swing festival when child Kṛṣṇa is swung. It is one of the most joyous and festive times in the Hindu calendar, a time when red powder is thrown--or dissolved in water and sprinkled--upon one another, imitating the sportive play between Kṛṣṇa and the Gopīs or cowherd women in Vṛndāvana. This same festival also goes by the name of Holi.

Droṇa, an expert in weaponry; he taught his skills to the Kauravas, fought on their side, and died in the great Bhārata war.

dundubhi, a large war drum.

Durgā, the goddess, consort of Śiva. Her annual, autumnal *pūjā* is the major Hindu festival in Bengal. (1) On the sixth day of the waxing moon during the appropriate autumn month, Durgā (in this context called Gaurī, Haimavatī, Pārvatī, Umā, among a myriad other names) arrives home in Bengal, having come from her husband's in the Himālayas. From then on through the ninth day of the waxing moon, she is visiting her parents, and her *pūjā* is joyously performed all over Bengal. On the tenth day of the waxing moon, called Vijayā or Vijayā Daśamī, "the victorious tenth," she must leave her father's home and return to the proper place for a married woman, beside her husband, in this case, Śiva, who resides on Mount Kailāsa. On that day the Durgā icons are immersed in the Ganges, and the vital force of the goddess leaves the clay and straw image, traveling upstream to her husband's abode where she stays until the next year when again she will pay a visit to her parents and her childhood home, much to everyone's delight. (2) Durgā in her iconography for the Durgā Pūjā does not appear as the young Bengali married daughter arriving home for the annual visit but instead as the supreme ten-armed goddess, slayer of the buffalo demon (see *Mahiṣāsura*). In that powerful aspect, she has for her *vāhana* or conveyance the lion, hence the epithet "she who rides a lion" (canto 5). Note that Vijayā, besides being the "victorious" tenth day of the waxing moon, is the name of one of Durgā's two heavenly attendants, Jayā being the other. Furthermore, in the Durgā Pūjā iconography, Durgā, along with her husband Śiva, has four children, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Kārttikeya, and Gaṇeśa (see Gaṇendra).

Duryodhana, eldest of the one hundred Kauravas, all of whom are slain in the great Bhārata war.

Dūṣaṇa, "defiling, violating"; name of a Rākṣasa general who, along with a Rākṣasa named Khara, is slain by Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in the Pañcavaṭī forest well before the battle on Laṅkā. Both Dūṣaṇa and Khara were sent against Rāma and

- Lakṣmaṇa by Sūrpaṇakhā to avenge her humiliation at the hands of Lakṣmaṇa; see Sūrpaṇakhā.
- Ekāghnī, "single-slayer"; epithet of the Śakti missile obtained from Indra by which Karṇa, allied with the Kauravas, slew Ghaṭotkaca, who was fighting for the Pāṇḍavas; the powerful missile could be used by Karṇa to slay but a single enemy; see Ghaṭotkaca and Karṇa.
- Fate, a translation throughout *The Slaying of Meghanāda* of the word Vidhi; see Vidhi.
- Gandhamādāna, the mountain on the Indian mainland (as opposed to Laṅkā) whereon grows the restorative herb, Viśalyakaraṇī, by which Lakṣmaṇa is revived.
- Gandharva, a class of celestial demi-gods who are the heavenly musicians and also knowledgeable about warfare.
- Gaṇendra, "Indra (lord, foremost) of the Gaṇas, a class of demi-gods"; epithet of Gaṇeśa, who, along with Kārttikeya, is a son of Śiva and Durgā.
- Ganges, a most holy river in northern India flowing from the Himālayas (out of the cave named Gomukhī, "cow-mouthed") to the Bay of Bengal. Because she (goddess Gaṅgā, the Ganges) was caught first in Śiva's matted hair, thus protecting the earth from the impact of her descent from heaven to the mortal world, she is said to be Śiva's second wife. Auspicious Ganges water is used in purification rituals and *pūjās* of all sorts.
- Garuḍa, a gigantic warrior bird and eternal enemy of snakes; the vehicle or transport for Viṣṇu. Garuḍa is referred to in *The Slaying of Meghanāda* as the father of Jaṭāyu; by other accounts he is Jaṭāyu's uncle; see Vinatā.
- Gauḍa (also spelled Gaur in English), archaic name for the land of Bengal.
- Gaurī, "she who has a fair complexion"; epithet of Durgā.
- Gavākṣa, "he whose eyes are like those of a bull"; name of a warrior from the southern kingdom of Kiṣkindhyā, allied with Rāma against the Rākṣasas.
- Ghaṭotkaca, an enormous warrior born from the union of Bhīmasena and the Rākṣasī Hiḍimbā. After Ghaṭotkaca's birth, Bhīma returned to the company of his Pāṇḍava brothers; his son, raised by Hiḍimbā, promised to come to his father's side when called to mind. In the midst of the internecine Bhārata war, Ghaṭotkaca reappeared to fight for his father's cause on the side of the Pāṇḍavas and, after decimating the Kaurava ranks, was slain by Karṇa with the Śakti missile designated "single-slayer" (see Ekāghnī) discharged from the bow "black-back" (see Kālapṛṣṭha). (Cf. Kāśīdāsī Mahābhārata, "Droṇa Parva.")
- Giriśa, "lord of the mountain"; epithet of Śiva.
- Godāvarī, name of a river in southern India.
- Gokula, "cow herd"; name of the village where Kṛṣṇa was raised, somewhat distant from the city of Mathurā where he was born; also called Vraja and encompasses Vṛndāvana where Kṛṣṇa sported with Rādhā and the other Gopīs; situated beside the Yamunā river.
- Gomukhī, "whose mouth (or face) looks like that of a cow's"; name of a sacred cave in the Himālayas from which emanates the holy Ganges river.
- Haimavatī, "of the Himālayas"; epithet of Durgā/Gaurī, "mother" of Kārttikeya; see Kārttikeya.
- halāhala*, a particular poison, also known as *kālakūṭa*. Along with *amṛta* or the elixir of immortality, the poison *halāhala* (*kālakūṭa*) was one of the many products that came out of the primordial ocean when churned by the Suras (gods) and the

Asuras (anti-gods). The poison would have destroyed the world had not that virulent substance been swallowed by Śiva, thus turning that god's neck blue, which accounts for one of Śiva's epithets, Nilakanṭha ("he whose throat is blue").

Hanumān (also spelled Hanūmān), "having a pronounced mandible"; name of a powerful warrior from the southern kingdom of Kiṣkindhyā, allied with Rāma against the Rākṣasas. Hanumān is "the son of the wind," the son of Prabhañjana, and able to traverse vast distances quickly.

Hara, "destroyer"; epithet of Śiva.

Hari, a name of Viṣṇu.

Hastinā (also Hastināpura and Hāstinapura), city of the Kauravas and their patriarch, the blind Dhṛtarāṣṭra; following the Bhārata war, the Pāṇḍavas' capital city; located on a bank of the Ganges.

Hemakūṭa, "gold-peaked"; name of a mythical mountain located in the northern reaches of the Himālayas; identified with Mount Meru.

Hiḍimbā, a Rākṣasī enamored of Bhīmasena with whom she conceived a son, Ghaṭotkaca.

Himādri, "the mountain of snow"; another name for Himālaya ("abode of snow"), the mountain range who is considered the father of Pārvatī, also known as Durgā.

Hiraṇyakaśipu, name of a Daitya king, slain by Viṣṇu in his Narasiṃha *avatāra*, or the fourth of Viṣṇu's ten *avatāra* forms. Hiraṇyakaśipu had obtained a boon from Brahmā by which he, Hiraṇyakaśipu, could not be killed by god, man, or beast. He then established an oppressive sovereignty over all the three worlds-- heaven, earth, and Pātāla. At the request of Hiraṇyakaśipu's son Prahlāda, who was a devotee of Viṣṇu, Viṣṇu assumed the form of neither god nor man nor beast but of a half man (*nara*), half beast (*siṃha*, the lion), and slew Hiraṇyakaśipu.

hotrī, a Brahmin priest who performs Vedic sacrifices, some of which consist of offerings of ghee (drawn butter) into the sacrificial fire.

Hṛṣīkeśa, "he who is master of the senses"; epithet of Viṣṇu.

Hutāśana, "who eats the offering of ghee"; epithet of Agni, the god of fire or fire itself.

Ikṣvāku, founder of the "solar" dynasty in Ayodhyā, from which Rāma is descended; term used to designate any descendant from within that lineage.

Indirā, name of Lakṣmī.

Indra, lord of the gods; lord of the skies; also, a superlative suffix, e.g., "Indra among sons" means "best of sons." Indra wields the thunderbolt. The rainbow is said to be Indra's bow (in modern Bangla, it is called Rāma's bow). In post-Vedic Hinduism, Indra is less powerful and could be defeated; see Indrajit ("victor over Indra") and Tāraka.

Indrajit, "victor over Indra"; epithet of Meghanāda, who by the power of *rudra* overcame Indra in battle.

Indrāṇī, wife of Indra; analogous to the superlative use of "Indra" meaning "best of . . . (feminine)."

Indraprastha, a city given to the Pāṇḍavas by the Kuru patriarch, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and located on a bank of the Yamunā river.

Indumatī, paternal grandmother of Rāma.

Īśāna, name of Śiva and associated with him as lord of the north-east direction.

Īśānī, name of Durgā.

Īśvarī, goddess, feminine of Īśvara (god, lord); indicates Durgā in *The Slaying of Meghanāda*. Jagadambā, "mother of the world"; epithet of various forms of the goddess. It designates Durgā (cantos 2 and 5) and Lakṣmī (cantos 6 and 7).

Jāhnavī, epithet of Gaṅgā, the Ganges; patronymic from the rishi Jahnu; see Ganges.

Jāmbuvāna (also spelled Jāmbuvat), name of a warrior from the southern kingdom of Kiṣkindhyā and allied with Rāma against the Rākṣasas.

Janaka, king of Videha/Mithilā and father of Sītā.

Jānakī, epithet of Sītā; patronymic from Janaka, king of Videha/Mithilā.

Jaṭādhara, "he who holds upon his head the *jaṭā* (a pile of matted hair)"; epithet of Śiva.

Jaṭāyu, a warrior who perishes while attempting to prevent Rāvaṇa from transporting the kidnapped Sītā back to Laṅkā. Referred to in *The Slaying of Meghanāda* as the son of Garuḍa, he is by other accounts Garuḍa's nephew; see Vinatā.

jāṭi, a weapon of some sort.

jāṭi (also spelled *jāṭī*), a white flower associated with the spices mace and nutmeg.

Jayā, one of the two female attendants of Durgā, Vijayā being the other.

Jiṣṇu, "victorious"; epithet of a number of gods and also Arjuna but designates Indra in *The Slaying of Meghanāda*.

Kabandha, name of a headless Rākṣasa. By a strike from one of Indra's thunderbolts, Kabandha's skull and thighs were pushed into his body, leaving him with no visible head, a large barrel-shaped torso, a mouth in the middle of his belly, and exceedingly long arms.

kadamba, a variety of tree with fragrant orange blossoms beneath which Kṛṣṇa dallies with the cowherd maids.

kādambā, the female of a variety of waterfowl, similar to the teal, whose call is soft and melodious.

Kaikeyī, Daśaratha's second of three wives, Kauśalyā (Rāma's mother) and Sumitrā (Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna's mother) being the other two. On the advice of Mantharā, her personal serving woman, Kaikeyī took advantage of her position as her husband's favorite wife and asked him for two boons, which he, consumed by passion for her, granted. One was that when he vacated the throne, his eldest son, Rāma, should be exiled from Ayodhyā for fourteen years; the other was that her own son, Bharata, should be installed as crown prince, in line to succeed his father. Later, when reminded of this by Kaikeyī, Daśaratha agonized over what he had earlier promised. Rāma, that most righteous of sons, kept his father honest by willingly and most dutifully choosing on his own to go into exile. Daśaratha, out of grief for his departed son, died soon thereafter.

Kailāsa, the mountain in the Himālayas on the peak of which Śiva and Durgā reside; also, the city there in which live Śiva and Durgā.

kālakūṭa, a particular poison, also known as *halāhala* (see *halāhala*), and used in *The Slaying of Meghanāda* to designate snake venom specifically.

Kālanemi, name of a Rākṣasa warrior. In the Bangla Rāmāyaṇa by Kṛttivāsa, he becomes identified as a maternal uncle of Rāvaṇa to whom Rāvaṇa promises half of the kingdom of Laṅkā if he, Kālanemi, will slay Hanumān before the latter can secure the life-restoring herb by which fallen Lakṣmaṇa is to be revived from

(near) death. While on this fool's errand, Kālanemi fantasizes about his presumed half of the kingdom, including, in this fantasy, his half of Rāvaṇa's many wives, Mandodarī, his nephew's chief wife among them. Hanumān defeats Kālanemi, and so the fulsome daydream goes unrealized. The expression "Kālanemi's half of Laṅkā (*Kālanemir Laṅkābhāga*)" in Bangla is comparable to "counting one's chickens before they are hatched; building castles in the air." The term "Uncle Kālanemi (*Kālanemi māmā*)" refers to an esteemed person who aids and abets in nefarious activities. Datta makes this very recognizable Rākṣasa into the father of Pramīlā, a female character whom Datta has created, drawing selectively from several sources. In other Hindu mythology the name Kālanemi is associated with Kaṃsa, the wicked king of Mathurā and slain by Kṛṣṇa.

Kālapṛṣṭha, "black-back"; name of Karṇa's bow.

Kali, a personification of wickedness; the one spot on a pair of dice (the losing mark); and the name of the fourth and most degenerate era (see *yuga*). Kali coveted Damayantī, the gorgeous princess, who had chosen Nala as her husband (see Nala [2]). Angered, and concluding that Nala had reneged on his promise to the gods, which the gods assured him Nala had not, Kali vindictively sought and gained the opportunity to enter Nala's body and, through his evil influence, to cause Nala to engage in dice gaming and to lose everything, his kingdom and all his possession, except for his faithful wife Damayantī. (Cf. Kāśīdāsī Mahābhārata, "Vana Parva.")

Kālī, the goddess in her most horrific aspect. The iconography of Kālī shows her as of black complexion, essentially naked though wearing a garland of human heads and a belt of human hands, and often holding in one of her four hands a bloody human head and in another a sword of some sort. She frequents execution and cremation grounds and battlefields wherein slaughter occurs; she is also, however, seen standing naked upon the chest of her supine husband, Śiva.

Kālidāsa, classical Sanskrit's most famous poet. Best known as the author of the poem entitled *Meghadūta* (The Cloud Messenger) and the eponymously titled drama *Śakuntalā*, Kālidāsa also composed the celebrated verse narrative by the name of *Raghuvamśa* (The Raghu Lineage). It is as author of *Raghuvamśa* that Datta claims Kālidāsa as one of his ancestors in a long and illustrious line of poets who have over the centuries composed literature on the theme of Rāma and the Rāmāyaṇa.

Kāma, "passion, love, carnal desire"; the disembodied god of love; husband of Rati ("passion, coitus"). When Indra had been defeated by the Asura Tāraka and the enemies of the gods had occupied heaven, Indra with his divines went to Brahmā seeking help. Brahmā told them that a son born of Śiva's seed would in time vanquish Tāraka. But Śiva was meditating, unconcerned with the world and oblivious to women--one of whom, Gaurī (Durgā, Haimavatī), waited on him and was destined to be his bride. In order to rouse Śiva from his trance and put him in the right frame of mind for the task at hand, Indra engaged the services of Kāma. Accompanied by his followers--the spring breezes--and serenaded by the cuckoo and honeybees, Kāma, armed with his flower-bow and five blossom-arrows, went to Śiva. As Kāma drew back the bowstring fitted with

his arrow called *sammohana* ("beguilement"; the other four arrows, all pertaining to mental or physical states associated with being in love, are *unmādana* [stupefaction], *śoṣaṇa* [desiccation], *tāpana* [burning], and *stambhana* [paralysis]), Śiva became slightly restless, then stirred from his meditation. When he looked about, he saw before him Kāma, bow in hand. Śiva was incensed by this intrusion upon his yogic exercise. The third eye, located in Śiva's forehead, opened and fire poured out, reducing Kāma on the spot to ashes. Kāma's wife Rati continues to accompany her husband, who is now without a body. Śiva, his trance broken by Kāma, eventually marries Haimavatī and spills his seed in excitement while with her. From that seed is born Kārttikeya, the future slayer of Tāraka; see Kārttikeya and Tāraka.

Kamalā, "lotus-lady"; epithet of Lakṣmī.

kamaṇḍalu, a gourd or vessel made of wood or earth in which to hold water, carried by ascetics and religious students.

Kandarpa, one of the names for Kāma, god of love. The etymology of the name is in doubt but could have meant originally "inflamer of a god."

Kapardī, "he who has a mass of matted hair"; epithet of Śiva.

kārā, a relatively small, single-headed drum.

Karbūra (also spelled Karbura), another name for Rākṣasa; often considered synonymous with Asura, Daitya, and Dānava.

Karṇa, a half brother of the Pāṇḍavas (fathered by the sun on Kuntī before her marriage to Pāṇḍu) but one who fought on the side of the Kauravas. Karṇa, born wearing earrings and impregnable armor, relinquished them to Indra in exchange for that god's *śakti* missile with which he planned to slay Arjuna. Indra had stipulated that the missile could be used by Karṇa to kill but one enemy. As Ghaṭotkaca, seemingly invincible, set about laying waste the Kaurava forces, Karṇa was prevailed upon to expend his "single-slayer" (see Ekāghnī) weapon. This Karṇa did, killing Ghaṭotkaca, though knowing full well that he, Karṇa, would be leaving himself vulnerable to Arjuna--by whom he was subsequently slain. (Cf. Kāśīdāsī Mahābhārata, "Droṇa Parva.")

Kārttikeya (also known as Kārttika), god of war; general of the gods and known for his good looks; matronymic from Kṛttikā, who is technically not his mother but his six-fold wet nurse. He was born of the seed spilled from Śiva, who had been excited by Gaurī (Durgā, Haimavatī, Pārvatī). The myth is common knowledge, but details of his birth vary among texts. In one most popular Bangla narrative, Śiva ejaculates while dallying with Gaurī. Gaurī, unable to hold his semen, casts it into the fire who, in turn, immerses it in the Jāhnavī (Ganges) who deposits it among the reeds upon the shore where the six Kṛttikās (the Pleiades personified) found and nursed the child, who has six heads from having six wet nurses. (Cf. Mukundarāma Cakravartī, *Caṇḍī Maṅgala*.) The birth of Kārttikeya and his slaying of Tāraka are celebrated in the famous Sanskrit artful "great narrative poem" (*mahākāvya*) by Kālidāsa, *Kumārasambhava* (The Birth of Kumāra [a name for the war-god]); see Kāma and Tāraka.

Kātyāyanī, epithet of Durgā. The name is derived from the fact that the rishi Kātyāyana, one of the authors of the *dharma śāstras*, worshipped Durgā.

kaunta, a lance-like weapon.

Kaurava, refers to Dhṛtarāṣṭra's one hundred sons, who fought and were slain in the great Bhārata war; patronymic from Kuru, famed king in the "lunar" dynasty. Pāṇḍu and Dhṛtarāṣṭra are brothers and descendants of Bharata within that same "lunar" lineage. Kaurava, technically, can refer to an ancestor of either Pāṇḍu or Dhṛtarāṣṭra; the epithet, however, has come to designate Dhṛtarāṣṭra's one hundred sons exclusively, in contradistinction to their cousins, the Pāṇḍavas, and is used in this way in *The Slaying of Meghanāda*.

Kauśalyā, mother of Rāma; Daśaratha's first of three wives, Kaikeyī and Sumitrā being the other two.

Kaustubha, a wondrous mythical gem, produced from the churning of the ocean and worn suspended from a cord around Viṣṇu's neck.

Keśarī, "he who has the mane of a lion or of a stallion"; name of a warrior from the southern kingdom of Kiṣkindhyā, allied with Rāma against the Rākṣasas.

Keśava, "having much hair"; epithet of Viṣṇu.

Khara, "sharp, keen"; name of a Rākṣasa warrior and considered to be a half-brother to Rāvaṇa. Along with a Rākṣasa named Dūṣaṇa, Khara is slain by Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in the Pañcavaṭī forest well before the battle on Laṅkā. Both Khara and Dūṣaṇa were sent against Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa by Sūrpaṅakhā to avenge the humiliation to her from Lakṣmaṇa; see Sūrpaṅakhā.

Kīcaka, an army general in the kingdom of Virāṭa where the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī spent the thirteenth and final year of their exile, incognito. Kīcaka took a liking to the beautiful Draupadī, was publicly abusive to her and kicked her, but also wanted to make love to her. Yudhiṣṭhira had placed his brothers under strict orders not to break with their disguises, and thus the public insults of their collective wife had to be tolerated. It was a mere thirty days before the thirteen long years were to be concluded, but Kīcaka had been strongly importuning Draupadī. In desperation, she went to Bhīmasena. Bhīma devised a plan whereby she would seemingly agree to meet Kīcaka in the dance practice hall, after dark when it was empty. But there in place of Draupadī that night sat Bhīma, unrecognizable by Kīcaka in the darkness. Following a bit of foreplay, Kīcaka, to assuage her wounded pride that seemed to be lingering due to the previous public abuse and to get her more in the mood for loving making, invited "Draupadī" to kick him in the head, which he bowed down before her. Bhīma then proceeded to give Kīcaka three solid kicks to the head. Kīcaka, stunned momentarily, eventually got to his feet, and a horrendous fight ensued--including, specifically, biting and scratching and rolling about on the floor and punching and more kicking--ending in the death of Kīcaka. (Cf. Kāśīdāsī Mahābhārata, "Virāṭa Parva.")

kiṃśuka, a tree bearing beautiful blood-red flowers.

Kinnara, a class of celestial demi-gods with a head like a horse and a body like that of a human's, known for their exceptional singing voices.

Kinnarī, a class of celestial demi-goddesses with a head like a horse and a body like that of a human's, known for their exceptional singing voices.

Kirāta, a particular community of forest dwellers who lived by hunting.

Kirīṭī, "he who wears a diadem"; epithet of Arjuna.

Kiṣkindhyā, name of a kingdom, and of its capital city, in the southern part of the South Asian

subcontinent. When Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa arrived there, searching for Sītā, Kiṣkindhyā's ruler was Vāli; following the death of Vāli, brought about by Rāma himself, Sugrīva became king in his elder brother's stead and formed an alliance with Rāma.

koṣā, a small, shallow, elongated copper vessel for holding Ganges water for use during a *pūjā*.

koṣī, a small copper ladle for spooning water out of a *koṣā*.

Kṛṣṇa, an *avatāra* form of Viṣṇu and the most popular form of Viṣṇu among Bengali Vaiṣṇavas. He is known best to Bengalis as the lover of Rādhā and the other Gopīs with whom he sports in Vṛndāvana, a forested grove in the district of Vraja. He wears a yellow *dhuti*, plays the flute, and is of blue-black complexion. So attractive is he that he charms even the god of love, Madana himself; in turn, Kṛṣṇa/Viṣṇu can be charmed by his own (Viṣṇu's own) lovely consort, Lakṣmī. As an *avatāra*--the function of all *avatāras* is to rid the world of some great threat to mankind and the gods--Kṛṣṇa slays the oppressive king Kaṁsa of Mathurā. Warned that a son of his cousin Devakī and her husband Vasudeva would bring about his death, Kaṁsa had the couple imprisoned and slew their first six children. The seventh, Balarāma, was transferred into the womb of Vasudeva's other wife, Rohiṇī, prior to birth. Vasudeva spirited away in the dead of night his eighth child, Kṛṣṇa, to the village of Gokula in Vraja across the Yamunā river and left him in the care of a cowherd named Nanda and his wife Yaśodā, there to be raised out of harm's way. It is from Vraja that the adult Kṛṣṇa is summoned to Madhupura by another of his uncles, Akrūra, to carry out the task of removing from this world the wicked Kaṁsa.

Kṛtānta, "he who terminates, he who brings about an end"; epithet of Yama, god of death.

Kṛttikā, one of the twenty-seven stars (*nakṣatras*: constellations or lunar "houses" through which the moon passes), all twenty-seven of which are considered beautiful wives of Candra, the moon; the Pleiades constellation (the six visible stars) deified. She/They served as six wet nurses for Kārttikeya, who therefore has six heads with which to nurse the six-fold Kṛttikā.

Kṛttivāsa, author of the most well-known Rāmāyaṇa in Bangla.

Kṣatriya, the warrior class; the second social class in Hindu society's *varṇa* hierarchy, consisting of, in presumed order of rank, Brāhman, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya, and Sūdra.

Kṣemaṅkarī, "she who bestows auspiciousness"; epithet of various goddesses but referring in *The Slaying of Meghanāda* to Durgā (cantos 2 and 9) and to Datta's own creation, goddess Māyā (canto 8).

Kulisī, "he who has the thunderbolt"; epithet of Indra.

Kumāra, name for Kārttikeya; see Kārttikeya.

Kumbhakarna, "he who has jug-ears"; one of Rāvaṇa's three brothers, along with Vibhīṣaṇa and elder half-brother Kubera. Rāvaṇa, Kumbhakarna, and Vibhīṣaṇa all practiced austerities for which Brahmā was obliged to grant the brothers individually a boon. Each expected to ask for immortality, but only Vibhīṣaṇa's request would be honored. In the case of Rāvaṇa, Brahmā allowed instead that he need not fear Yakṣas, Rākṣasas, gods, or Gandharvas. Since Rāvaṇa considered men and animals of no threat, he was pleased to accept Brahmā's

offer of virtual immortality, unaware that the god Viṣṇu would incarnate as the human being Rāma and be his undoing. The gods, frightened that Kumbhakarṇa might become indestructible, implored Sarasvatī, goddess of speech, to go and sit upon Kumbhakarṇa's tongue. When Brahmā asked Kumbhakarṇa what boon he wished, his tongue spoke, requesting perpetual sleep. Brahmā declared it so. Rāvaṇa, realizing what had happened, weeping, begged Brahmā to alter his edict. Obliging, Brahmā modified the boon to be that Kumbhakarṇa would sleep for six months at a stretch and then awake for a day at which time he would eat gluttonously. If, however, Kumbhakarṇa were awakened before the completion of the full six months, he would be slain that very day. (Cf. Kṛttivāsī Rāmāyaṇa, "Laṅkā Kāṇḍa.")

Kumbhīpāka, name of one of the numerous hell holes or punishment pits in Naraka, "hell." (Naraka is not the same as Pātāla, "the netherworld"; see Pātāla.)

Kumuda, "red lotus blossom"; name of a warrior from the southern kingdom of Kiṣkindhyā and allied with Rāma against the Rākṣasas.

Kuru, famed king in the "lunar" dynasty. Kuru--like the patronymic made from it, Kaurava--is used to refer to the descendants of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, as opposed to the Pāṇḍavas.

Kurukṣetra, "Kuru-field"; the field on which was waged the major battle between the Pāṇḍavas and their cousins, the Kauravas, the central event related in the Mahābhārata.

kuśa, a particular grass, used as an auspicious seat, not exclusively but particularly at the time of performing a religious ritual.

Kusumeṣu, "he whose arrows are flowers"; epithet of Kāma, god of love.

Lakṣmaṇa, one of Rāma's three younger half brothers, Bharata and Śatrughna being the other two.

Lakṣmī, goddess of luck or good fortune as well as of beauty (also called Śrī) and identified as the wife of Viṣṇu. She was produced from the ocean at the time of the churning--along with the elixir of immortality, Viṣṇu's Kaustubha gem, etc.--and thus can be thought of as the daughter of the ocean. The Bangla Mahābhārata explains her presence in the ocean (instead of seated at Viṣṇu's side or with head resting on Viṣṇu's chest) as the result of a curse by the irascible sage Dūrvāsā; cf. Kāśīdāsī Mahābhārata, "Ādi Parva." She is said to have appeared from a lotus or on a lotus from within the sea, or with a lotus in her hand-- thus the association with lotuses; see Kamalā. She, as good fortune, is associated with wealth; anyone who possesses wealth and fortune possesses her--until and unless he loses such, at which time Lakṣmī is said to desert him. As a king's fortune or majesty, she is often called Rājalakṣmī. Since Rāma is considered an *avatāra* or incarnation of Viṣṇu, Sītā becomes associated with his wife Lakṣmī. And, in the Bangla Hindu mythology related to the annual Durgā Pūjā festival, Lakṣmī along with goddess Sarasvatī join Ganeśa and Kārttikeya as the four children of Śiva and Durgā.

Laṅkā, Rāvaṇa's island kingdom; refers both to the island and to the walled city on the island; associated with modern Śrī Laṅkā.

lāṭhi, a stick or staff, a common weapon for law-enforcement personnel.

līlā, "sport, godly diversion"; what transpires on earth is all divine play, inexplicable and incomprehensible to man.

Madana, "the maddener"; epithet of Kāma, the god of love whose wife is Rati; see Rati. Kāma

is sexual desire and thereby maddens or inflames; on the other hand, he was driven to distraction by Viṣṇu, in his Kṛṣṇa incarnation, hence the epithet of Kṛṣṇa as Madanamohana or "maddener of Madana" and "he who inflames Madana" in cantos 1 and 6, respectively.

Mādhava, another name for Viṣṇu, but also for Kṛṣṇa. Of course, the two are one, and the same appellation for both tends to emphasize this unity. In *The Slaying of Meghanāda*, Mādhava refers to Kṛṣṇa in cantos 2 and 5, and to Viṣṇu, husband of Lakṣmī, elsewhere.

Madhupura, a city kingdom, also known as Mathurā, ruled by the wicked Kaṁsa, Kṛṣṇa's uncle (Kṛṣṇa's mother, Devakī, and Kaṁsa are cousins) whom Kṛṣṇa slays. Madhupura lies on one side of the Yamunā river; on the other side of that river is Vraja (containing the village of Gokula and the forested area known as Vṛṇḍāvana) wherein Kṛṣṇa grows up and dallies with the cowherd womenfolk, the Gopīs, Rādhā prominent among them. Another uncle, Akrūra, summons Kṛṣṇa to Madhupura in order to rid that city-kingdom of its horrid tyrant Kaṁsa. Kṛṣṇa obliges and goes off to Madhupura, leaving Vraja never to return; see Kṛṣṇa.

Mahābhārata, "the great Bhārata [war]"; one of the two major Hindu Indian epics, the Rāmāyaṇa being the other. In eighteen *parvas* or books, the Mahābhārata recounts the events leading up to the war; the war itself between the descendants of Bharata, specifically the five sons of Pāṇḍu (the Pāṇḍavas-- Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīmasena, Arjuna, Sahadeva and Nakula) and the one hundred sons of Pāṇḍu's brother, the blind Dhṛtarāṣṭra, known collectively as the Kauravas, Duryodhana chief among them; and the aftermath of the war.

Mahāśakti, "the great Śakti"; *śakti* means "power" but also is the name by which the mother goddess is known, "power" deified. All Hindu goddesses are, in some sense, an aspect of the one "mother goddess" or Śakti or goddess Durgā.

Mahendra, "the great Indra"; epithet of Indra.

Maheśa, "the great Īśvara or god"; epithet of Śiva.

Mahesī, "the great goddess"; feminine form of Maheśa; epithet of Durgā.

Maheśvarī, "the great goddess"; feminine form of Maheśvara ("the great god"); epithet of Durgā.

Mahiṣāsura, the buffalo Asura, slain by Durgā. The iconic representation of Durgā slaying Mahiṣāsura is found in every public display of the goddess during the autumnal Durgā Pūjā, the major annual Hindu festival in Bengal--an event in mythic time that corresponds with Rāma's slaying of Rāvaṇa.

Maināka, a mythical mountain with wings. All mountains used to be able to fly, but some abused the privilege by falling on cities and villages. So, Indra, with his thunderbolt, clipped their wings. Only Maināka escaped--Indra in hot pursuit--and received sanctuary in the ocean. When Hanumān was leaping/flying across the ocean to search for Sītā on Laṅkā, the ocean requested Maināka to elevate half of his body out of the water in order to provide Hanumān with an intermediate resting spot. Maināka obeyed; Hanumān thanked him; and Indra, pleased with this mountain's good behavior, gave him *abhaya*--assurances that he need not fear, i.e., he could keep his wings.

Maithilī, epithet of Sītā, derived from the place name Mithilā, the capital of Sītā's home

- kingdom, Videha.
- mākāla*, a lovely reddish golden fruit with an inedible and foul-smelling pulp (used figuratively in Bangla for a very handsome but worthless person).
- makara*, a mythical sea creature, sometimes translated as dolphin, crocodile, seal, or fish. In the Zodiac, the *makara* corresponds to the equally mythical beast Capricorn. The god-of-love's banner bears the *makara* insignia.
- Makarākṣa, "*makara*-eyed"; name of a Rākṣasa warrior.
- Mānasa, "mind"; name of a mythical lake located in the Himālayas, near Mount Kailāsa, home of Śiva.
- Manasija, "he who is born of the mind or heart"; epithet of Kāma, god of love.
- Mandākinī, name for the Ganges river as it flows in the heavens.
- Mandara, name of a mythological mountain. All mountains in mythic times had wings and were able to fly--and were thus in motion--until Indra, with his thunderbolt, clipped their wings and made them stationary. The mountain called Mandara, moreover, was turned upside down and used by the Suras (gods) and Asuras (anti-gods) as a rod to churn the cosmic ocean; the serpent Vāsuki, also known as Ananta, served as the cord wrapped around Mandara by which that "mountain peak *cum* churning rod" was spun in a back-and-forth. motion. The poetic conceit of a woman's breasts putting to shame a mountain is a fairly common one.
- Māndhātā, a king of the "solar" dynasty. The expression "during the reign of Māndhātā" conveys the sense of "in very ancient times."
- Mandodarī, Rāvaṇa's chief queen, mother of Meghanāda, and daughter of the Dānava architect Maya.
- Manmatha, "he who churns the mind or heart"; epithet of Kāma, god of love.
- Mantharā, Kaikeyī's personal serving woman. Mantharā advised her mistress to get Daśaratha to promise that Kaikeyī's son Bharata be installed as the crown prince and that Rāma be sent into exile for fourteen years.
- mantra*, formulaic speech, ritualistic speech, meant to effect something.
- Māriḥa, a Rākṣasa requested by Rāvaṇa to assume the guise of a golden stag in order to tempt Sītā and thereby lead Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa away from her so that Rāvaṇa could approach and abduct her. (The word for "mirage" is *marīcikā* and, though not cognate with Māriḥa, it is suggestive of this elusive Rākṣasa.)
- Mātali, Indra's chariot driver.
- Maya, a notable Dānava, father of Rāvaṇa's chief queen Mandodarī and a master builder. He escaped the burning Khāṇḍava forest and was protected by Arjuna. In gratitude, Maya constructed for the Pāṇḍavas an exquisite assembly hall at Indraprastha on the bank of the Yamunā river, one which rivaled the Kauravas' court in Hāstinapura (also Hastinā/Hastināpura) on the bank of the Ganges. (Cf. Kāśīdāsī Mahābhārata, "Sabhā Parva.")
- Māyā, a goddess of Datta's invention, though all goddesses are in a sense an aspect of one and the same mother goddess. Māyā is referred to at times as Mahāmāyā (the great or grand Māyā), a name that can apply to any number of goddesses. (Cf. Bhāratacandra's *Annadā Maṅgala*, probably the best known and most popular Bangla text at the time when Datta was writing *The Slaying of Meghanāda*--therein goddesses Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, and the eponym Annapurṇā/Annadā are

- all called Mahāmāyā.)
māyā, "illusion"; theologically speaking, *māyā* is what humans think to be the real world but what is in fact all illusion. The material world is a manifestation of a god's/goddess' power of *māyā*.
 Meghanāda, "cloud-noise" or "thunder"; epithet of Rāvaṇa's most illustrious son, also known as Indrajit.
 Meghavāhana, "whose transport is the clouds"; epithet of Indra, lord of the skies.
 Menakā, name of one of the class of celestial demi-goddesses called Apsarā, known for their exceptional beauty and their dancing ability.
 Meru, name of a mythical mountain located in the northern reaches of the Himālayas, considered to be the North Pole; also called Sumeru.
 Minadhvaja, "he whose banner displays a fish"; epithet of Kāma, god of love.
 Mīsrakeśī, name of one of the class of celestial demi-goddesses called Apsarā, known for their exceptional beauty and their dancing ability.
 Mohana, "he who enchants"; epithet of Śiva.
 Mohinī, "she who enchants"; the persona, that of an exceedingly beautiful woman, assumed by Viṣṇu to enchant the Asuras and thereby steal away from them the *amṛta* that had been churned from the primordial ocean.
mṛdaṅga, a percussive musical instrument.
 Mṛtyuñjaya, "he who is victorious over death"; epithet of Śiva.
mudgara, a cudgel or short club.
 Mura, a Daitya slain by Kṛṣṇa.
muraja, a percussive musical instrument.
 Muralā, attendant of Vāruṇī, who is the wife of the god of the oceans; name of a river in southern India which empties into the Bay of Bengal.
 Murāri, "he who is the enemy of Mura (a Daitya slain by Kṛṣṇa)"; (1) epithet of Kṛṣṇa, and of Viṣṇu; also, (2) name of a famed Sanskrit poet, author of *Anargharāghava* (The Priceless Rāghava), a drama centered on Rāma.
muṣala, a pestle-like bludgeon.
 Nāga, snake; demi-gods who occupy the nether realm of Pātāla.
nāgapāśa, a noose resembling a snake; a weapon used to immobilize the opponent.
 Nagendra, "the Indra (lord, foremost) of mountains"; epithet of Himālaya, father of Pārvatī/Durgā.
 Nahuṣa, a king in ancient times. Once, when Indra after slaying Vṛtra went off to do purifying penance, all the sages got together and persuaded Nahuṣa to occupy the throne of the king of the gods vacated by Indra.
 Naikaṣeya, epithet of Rāvaṇa (also applies to two of his brothers, Kumbhakarṇa and Vibhīṣaṇa); matronymic from Nikaṣā.
 Nala, (1) name of a warrior from the southern kingdom of Kiṣkindhyā, allied with Rāma against the Rākṣasas (cantos 6, 7, and 8). Also, (2) name of a king, both handsome and good, whom the beautiful princess Damayantī chose for her husband at the *svayamvara* (see *svayamvara*) attended by a number of the gods (canto 6). Previously, those gods, having learned of her good qualities, had asked Nala to intercede on their behalf to ask Damayantī to marry one of them, not Nala. Nala, ever obliging, relayed the proposal to Damayantī, who, however, affirmed her love for only Nala. She suggested a *svayamvara* at

which she would choose Nala, thereby absolving Nala of any responsibility for advancing his own suit personally over that of the gods. Being told of Damayanti's intentions by Nala, the gods decided to come disguised as Nala. Only after she begged them to evince godly attributes (no perspiration, casting no shadow, feet not touching the ground, eyes not blinking) could she determine who was the real Nala, whom she then chose to be her husband. (Cf. Kāśīdāsī Mahābhārata, "Vana Parva.")

Namuci, "he who lets no one escape"; name of an Asura slain by Indra.

Nandana, "gladdening"; Indra's paradisiacal garden.

Nandī, Śiva's main attendant.

nārāca, a kind of missile made of iron, shot from a bow.

Narāntaka, "he who destroys men"; one of Rāvaṇa's sons.

Nikaṣā, mother of Rāvaṇa, Kumbhakarna, and Vibhīṣaṇa.

Nikumbhilā, (1) a temple on Laṅkā or (2) the name of a ritual performed at a particular place.

According to some, it is a grove at Laṅkā city's western gate for the performance of sacrificial rites (Monier-Williams, Sanskrit-English Dictionary, s.v. *nikumbhilā*); according to others, it is a cave located in the western part of Laṅkā (Haricaran Bandyopadhyay, Vangīya Śabdakoṣa, s.v. *nikumbhilā*); according to one editor of the Bangla Rāmāyaṇa, it--whatever it is--is located "twenty *krośa* [one *krośa* equals approximately two miles] from Sri Lanka's Colombo" (Nayanacandra Mukhopadhyay, *Sacitra Kṛttivāsī Rāmāyaṇa*, app. I, s.v. *nikumbhilā*).

Nīla, name of a warrior from the southern kingdom of Kiṣkindhyā, allied with Rāma against the Rākṣasas.

Nīlakaṇṭha, "he whose throat is blue"; epithet of Śiva, who drank the poison produced at the time of the churning of the cosmic ocean in order to save creation. The poison darkened his throat, but Śiva survived.

Niśācara, "he who moves at night"; another name for a Rākṣasa.

Niśācarī, "she who moves at night"; another name for a Rākṣasī.

Niṣāda, a hunter; the name of a particular caste of low status. The first occurrence of this word, in canto 4, in a simile describing Sītā succumbing to grief as she relates, in essence, a portion of the Rāmāyaṇa, is evocative of the manner in which Vālmīki is said to have discovered the metre, *śloka*, used to compose the Sanskrit Rāmāyaṇa; see Vālmīki.

Nistārīṇī, "she who saves"; epithet of Durgā.

Niśumbha, younger brother of the Asura Sumbha, both slain by Durgā.

Nṛmuṇḍamālīnī, "she who wears a necklace of human heads"; epithet of the goddess Kālī but also the name of Pramīlā's maid servant.

pā, the cuckoo's call. A wonderful songbird and so recognized as such in South Asia, the cuckoo is said to sing the fifth note of the scale as its very own, "quintessential" song. The names of the tones--"do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti," of a Western diatonic scale--are in the classical Indian musical system "sā, re, gā, mā, pā, dhā, ni," with "pā" being the fifth interval. A gloss for the word "fifth" in premodern Bangla is "fine, charming." Writes Sukumar Sen, "The peculiar meaning comes from the popular idea of the fifth note (the cuckoo's cry) being the sweetest of

the septet"; *An Etymological Dictionary of Bengali: c. 1000-1800 A.D.*
(Calcutta: Eastern Publishers, 1971).

Padmayoni, "he who originates from a lotus"; epithet of Brahmā.

Pañcamukha, "he who has five faces"; epithet of Śiva, whose iconographic representation sometimes, but not always, shows him with five faces facing in five directions; see Sahasrākṣa for a tale of how Śiva got his five faces.

Pañcaśara, "he who has five arrows"; epithet of Kāma, god of love, whose five arrows are made of the blossoms of the mango, *aśoka*, jasmine, *bakula*, and myrtle and induce rapture, excitement, absorption, paralysis, and stupefaction.

Pañcatantra, "the five lessons"; a Sanskrit text of moral tales teaching princes how to behave.

Pañcavaṭī, a tract of forest through which flows the Godāvarī river and located within the larger Daṇḍaka forest in southern India; the locale where Sītā, Rāma, and Lakṣmaṇa were spending some of their days in exile.

Pāṇḍava, patronymic from Pāṇḍu, who had five sons, Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīmasena, Arjuna, Sahadeva and Nakula. Pāṇḍu's sons and those of Pāṇḍu's brother, the blind Dhṛtarāṣṭra, fought against each other in the great war narrated in the Mahābhārata.

pārijāta, a mythical heavenly flowering tree and its blossom, extracted from the cosmic ocean when churned by the Suras (gods) and Asuras (anti-gods).

Pārtha, epithet of Arjuna; matronymic from Pṛthā (also known as Kuntī), mother of Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, and Arjuna. Although the name could apply to all three of Kuntī's children, it designates Arjuna most commonly.

Pārvatī, "daughter of the mountain"; epithet of Durgā; patronymic from Parvata (literally, "mountain"), also known as Himālaya.

Pāśī, "possessing a noose"; epithet of Varuṇa, god of the sea.

Pāśupata, "related to Paśupati"; a wondrous weapon bestowed upon Arjuna by Paśupati (Śiva, in the guise of a Kirāta hunter); it is the missile that will be discharged by Śiva (Paśupati) at the time of the destruction of the universe. (Cf. Kāśīdāsī Mahābhārata, "Vana Parva.")

Paśupati, "lord of the animals"; epithet of Śiva.

Pātāla, one of the three worlds comprising the universe--the other two being the earth (*martya*) and the heavens (*svarga*). Pātāla is quite separate from, and should not be confused with, Naraka or "hell" where punishment is meted out to those who have transgressed *dharma*.

paṭṭiśa, a large, double-edged battle-ax mounted on a shaft as long as a man is tall.

Paulastya, epithet of Rāvaṇa; patronymic from the rishi Pulastya, ancestor of Kubera, Rāvaṇa, Kumbhakarna, and Vibhiṣaṇa, but designates Rāvaṇa only in *The Slaying of Meghanāda*.

Paulomī, epithet of Śacī, wife of Indra; patronymic from the Dānava Puloma, who cursed Indra for violating his daughter and then was slain by Indra.

Paurava, epithet of the Pāṇḍavas; patronymic from Puru, distant ancestor of the Pāṇḍavas (and Kauravas). Indraprastha is the capital city of the Pāṇḍavas.

Pavana, god of the winds; the wind deified. Pavana is the father of Hanumān, ally of Rāma.

In *The Slaying of Meghanāda*, the wind is cast in the role of one hostile to the sea, a characterization that comes from Datta's reading of the Homeric epics, not from the Indic epic tradition.

phīṅgā, a rather common black colored songbird.

Phuladhanu, "he whose bow is made of flowers"; epithet of Kāma, god of love.

Pināka, name of Śiva's bow. It was the bow used as a test at Sītā's *svayamvara* (see *svayamvara*); only the suitor who had the strength to string Pināka would be considered a fit spouse. Rāma's strength was such that he not merely bent the bow enough to string it but in fact broke that most powerful of bows.

Pinākī, "he who wields the bow named Pināka"; epithet of Śiva.

Pītāmbara, "he who wears the yellow garment"; epithet of Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu, referring to the latter in *The Slaying of Meghanāda*.

Prabhā, "radiance"; name of the wife of Sūrya, god of the sun and the sun deified.

Prabhañjana, "breaker"; epithet of Pavana, god of the winds and the wind itself deified; father of Hanumān.

Prabhāṣā, "well-spoken lady"; Meghanāda's wet nurse.

Pracetas, name of Varuṇa, god of the sea.

praharāna, a *lāṭhi* or stave or club of some sort.

prakṣvedana, a spear made of iron.

Pralaya, the time of and the act of the destruction of the universe, following the fourth and most degenerate *yuga*, the *Kali yuga*, after which the universe will be created anew; see *yuga*. It is Śiva who destroys the world. At this time of universal dissolution, fires and storms rage, and the world is inundated.

Pramatta, "besotted"; name of a Rākṣasa warrior.

Pramilā, the one and only wife of Meghanāda and daughter of a Dānava by the name of Kālanemi. Meghanāda has no wife in Vālmiki's Sanskrit Rāmāyaṇa nor any named spouse in Kṛttivāsa's Bangla version--though the number of his wives is given in that latter text as 9,000; cf. Kṛttivāsī Rāmāyaṇa, "Laṅkā Kāṇḍa."

Pramoda, "gladness"; name of a pleasant retreat on the isle of Laṅkā but some distance from the walled city.

Providence, a translation throughout *The Slaying of Meghanāda* of the word Vidhātā; see Vidhātā.

pūjā, an act of ritual worship.

Puloma, father of Indra's wife Śacī. The Dānava Puloma was slain by his son-in-law, Indra, whom Puloma had cursed for violating his daughter.

Puṇḍarikākṣa, "he who has lotus-blossom-like eyes"; epithet of Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu, referring to the latter in *The Slaying of Meghanāda*.

Purāṇa, "old"; the texts containing ancient lore, the Puranas.

Purandara, "destroyer of cities"; epithet of Indra.

purohit, a Hindu priest.

Puṣpaka, name of Kubera's wondrous flying chariot, the original commandeered by his half-brother Rāvaṇa and used by the latter for, among other things, transporting the kidnapped Sītā from the Pañcavaṭī forest on the mainland of India to his island kingdom on Laṅkā.

rabāb, a stringed musical instrument, cognate with the European rebec or rebeck.

rāga, principal mode or scale in Indian classical music, of which there are six.

Rāghava, epithet of Rāma; patronymic from Raghu, great grandfather of Rāma, Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa, and Śatrughna, but designates Rāma only in *The Slaying of*

Meghanāda.

- Rāghvacandra, epithet of Rāma; see Rāghava. Though "candra" literally means moon, Rāma is of the "solar" dynasty of kings, not of the other major royal line, the "lunar" lineage, which includes the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas.
- Rāghavānuja, "the one born after Rāghava (Rāma)"; can apply to Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa, and Śatrughna, the three younger brothers of Rāma, but designates Lakṣmaṇa only in *The Slaying of Meghanāda*.
- Rāghavendra, "an Indra (lord, foremost) among Rāghavas"; epithet of Rāma.
- Raghu, a patriarch within Rāma's lineage; great grandfather of Rāma; see Dilīpa.
- rāgiṇī*, secondary mode or scale in Indian classical music, of which there are thirty-six.
- Rāhu, an Asura identified with the eclipse. An eclipse of the moon, which is made of ambrosia (called *amṛta*, also *soma*), occurs when the moon is swallowed by Rāhu. During the churning of the primordial ocean by the Suras (gods) and Asuras (anti-gods), the Asuras initially captured the *amṛta* extracted from the ocean. At one point Rāhu tried to make himself immortal by drinking that *amṛta*, but Viṣṇu decapitated him. Since the *amṛta* touched his mouth and started down his gullet only, it is only that part of him, the head and upper throat, became immortal and continued to exist as a separate entity. Rāhu still lusts after the *amṛta* of immortality and manages to swallow the moon from time to time. Since Rāhu has no body, the moon passes through his mouth and reappears out of his gullet, never to be consumed and digested by that Asura.
- Rājalakṣmī, "Lakṣmī of the king"; epithet of goddess Lakṣmī; as Rājalakṣmī, she is royal fortune personified, present when the raja and the rajadom are prosperous, absent when their fortunes are reversed.
- Rākṣasa, an anti-god or opposer of the gods; the name, ironically, derives from *rakṣ*, "to protect," and is interpreted to mean something to be protected from (Monier-Williams, Sanskrit-English Dictionary, s.v. "*rakshas*"); often considered synonymous with Asura, Daitya, Dānava, and Karbūra.
- Rākṣasi, the feminine of Rākṣasa, a female Rākṣasa.
- Raktabīja, "drop(s) of blood"; name of a particular Asura who served as general in the army of the two Asura brothers Śumbha and Niśumbha. He was a particularly difficult adversary for Durgā to overcome, for whenever a drop of his blood would fall to the ground, another Raktabīja would spring forth to continue the fight. (Cf. *Devīmāhātmya*.)
- Raktākṣa, "he whose eyes are blood red"; name of a warrior from the southern kingdom of Kiṣkindhyā, allied with Rāma against the Rākṣasas.
- Ramā, "pleasing lady"; epithet of Lakṣmī.
- Rāma, name of the warrior prince, eldest son of Daśaratha, husband of Sītā; immortalized in the epic tale, Rāmāyaṇa. In later Hinduism Rāma was elevated from mortal to god, becoming known as an *avatāra* or incarnation of Viṣṇu.
- Rāmabhadrā, name of Rāma. The "bhadrā" is an honorific suffix meaning blessed or fortunate. Rāmabhadrā is also a name for Kṛṣṇa's elder brother, Balarāma, though not used in this sense in *The Slaying of Meghanāda*.
- Rāmacandra, name of Rāma. Though "candra" literally means moon, Rāma is of the "solar" dynasty of kings, not of the other major royal line, the "lunar" lineage, which includes the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas.

- Rāmānuja, "the one born after Rāma"; can apply to Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa, and Śatrughna, the three younger brothers of Rāma, but designates Lakṣmaṇa only in *The Slaying of Meghanāda*.
- Rāmāyaṇa, "the wanderings of Rāma"; one of the two major Hindu Indian epics, the Mahābhārata being the other. In seven *kāṇḍas* or books, the Rāmāyaṇa tells of the self-imposed exile of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, and Sītā; Sītā's abduction by the Rākṣasa king, Rāvaṇa; the war on Laṅkā between the Rākṣasa forces and Rāma's, with his southern allies including Hanumān; and the rescue of Sītā.
- Rambhā, name of one of the members of the class of celestial demi-goddesses called Apsarā, known for their exceptional beauty and their dancing ability.
- rasa*, "juice"; the quintessence of something; the prevailing sentiment or emotion in a work of literature. This pregnant and salient term of Indian aesthetics stands for, on one level, the eight (or sometimes nine or ten) dominant sentiments present in literature: *śṛṅgāra* (erotic love) (also called *ādirasa*, "the original *rasa*"), *vīra* (heroism, virility), *karuṇa* (pathos), *adbhuta* (wonder), *hāsya* (mirth), *bhayanaka* (terror), *bībhatsa* (disgust), and *raudra* (fury)--and sometimes *śānta* (contentment) and *vātsalya* (parental affection). An individual piece of literature is to have one of these *rasas* dominant, though others may be present. On another level, *rasa* has been interpreted by aestheticians to mean an almost metaphysical quality of good literature that is produced by the work of literature and experienced or tasted by the literary connoisseur; such a *rasa* is transitory, lasting only as long as the literature is being experienced.
- Rasātala, lowest level of the seven-tiered netherworld called Pātāla; often metonymically used for Pātāla collectively.
- Rati, "passion, coitus"; wife of Kāma, god of love.
- Ratnākara, "gem quarry" or "ocean"; the name of the poet Vālmiki when he was still a murderous thief; see Vālmiki.
- Raurava, name of one of the many hell holes or pits of punishment in Naraka, "hell." (Naraka is not the same as Pātāla, "the netherworld"; see Pātāla.)
- Rāvaṇa, lord of the Rākṣasas and ruler of Laṅkā.
- Rāvaṇānuja, "the one born after Rāvaṇa"; can apply to Kumbhakarṇa and Vibhīṣaṇa, younger brothers of Rāvaṇa, but designates Vibhīṣaṇa only in *The Slaying of Meghanāda*.
- Rāvaṇi, epithet of Meghanāda; patronymic from Rāvaṇa.
- Rohiṇī, one of the twenty-seven stars (*nakṣatras*: constellations or lunar "houses" through which the moon passes), all twenty-seven of which are considered beautiful wives of Candra, the moon. Rohiṇī, among those 27, is most often named as the moon's favorite wife. (Rohiṇī is also the name of Vasudeva's second wife, mother of Balarāma; see Kṛṣṇa.)
- Rudra, "furious"; epithet of Śiva. Also, the Rudras, plural and collectively, are considered the progeny of Rudra and are associated with the (furious) winds.
- rudra*, Śiva's power or fury objectified.
- Śacī, wife of Indra, lord of the gods.
- Sadānanda, "he who is always pleased"; epithet of Śiva.
- Sahasrākṣa, "he who has 1,000 eyes"; epithet of Indra. Indra became infatuated with the sage Gautama's wife, Ahalyā. In Gautama's absence, Indra disguised himself as

Gautama and had sex with Ahalyā. Gautama happened upon the cuckolding Indra and cursed him to have 1,000 vaginas all over his body, vaginas which in time metamorphosed into eyes. Ahalyā, for her part, was cursed to become a stone for 1,000 years, only to be released from that curse by the touch of Rāma's foot, which occurred soon after Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, and Sītā wandered off into exile. A different tale is told in the Bangla Mahābhārata to account for this epithet of Indra. In order to defeat the two Asura brothers, Sunda and Upasanda, who had been given a boon by Brahmā that each could be killed by no one except his own brother, Viśvakarmā, the gods' architect and master builder, fashioned an exceedingly gorgeous woman from the most handsome bits of the supremely beautiful beings in all the three worlds, thereby creating Tilottamā ("she of the best [*uttamā*] of bits [*tila*]"). Tilottamā incited jealousy between the two brothers, who fell to fighting and eventually killed each other; see Sunda. Prior to appearing before those brothers, however, Tilottamā stood in front of the gods. Her glamour so riveted Śiva that his face(s) became five, pointing in all directions so that wherever his face looked, she was there. Those four (new, directional) faces, plus the one he had before Tilottamā appeared, account for the five faces of Śiva and also for his epithet, Pañcamukha, "he who has five faces." Indra, also, reacted somatically to Tilottamā's stunning beauty. When Indra saw Tilottamā, more eyes developed in and of themselves all over his body, the better for Indra to gaze at pretty Tilottamā. (Cf. Kāśidāsī Mahābhārata, "Ādi Parva.")

Śaiva, a devotee of Śiva.

Śakra, "he who supports; mighty"; epithet of Indra, lord of the skies.

Śākta, a devotee of Śakti, of the mother goddess, of goddesses Durgā and Kālī, in particular.

Śakti, "power, force, strength" ; (1) a name by which the mother goddess is known. All Hindu goddesses are, in some sense, an aspect of the one "mother goddess" or Śakti or, in other words, goddess Durgā. Also, (2) name of the special missile by which Lakṣmaṇa is seemingly slain; see Ekāghnī.

Śaktidhara, "wielder of power"; epithet of Kārttikeya, god of war, general of the gods.

śāla, a variety of tree, particularly tall, the lumber from which is strong.

śālmālī, a variety of tree, the seed pods of which produce a kapok-like substance.

Śamana, "he who calms or quells"; epithet of Yama, god of death.

Śambara, name of an Asura in Vedic times associated with and slain by Indra, then later, in the times of the epics, associated with and slain by Kāma, god of love.

Śambhu, "helpful"; epithet of Śiva.

samī, a variety of tree. High up in such a tree the Pāṇḍavas deposited their battle gear before approaching, in disguise, king Virāṭa at the start of their thirteenth year in exile.

Samīra, the wind deified.

Sañjaya, personal warrior manservant of Dhṛtarāṣṭra. It is he who tells the blind king of the results of the great Bhārata war including the deaths of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's one hundred sons. (Cf. Kāśidāsī Mahābhārata, "Nārī Parva.")

Sañjivanī, "life instilling, life restoring"; a name for the realm of Yama, the god of death.

Śaṅkara, name of Śiva.

Śaṅkarī, name of Durgā.

sapharī, a variety of fish with silvery scales.

saptasvarā, a musical instrument consisting of seven vessels filled with water and played by striking the rims of those vessels.

Śarabha, "a mythological animal with eight legs, stronger than both the lion and the elephant"; name of a warrior from the southern kingdom of Kīṣkindhyā, allied with Rāma against the Rākṣasas.

Saramā, wife of Rāvaṇa's brother Vibhiṣaṇa.

Sāraṇa, Rāvaṇa's prime minister.

Ṣaḍānana, "he who has six faces"; epithet of Kārttikeya, god of war, general of the gods.

Sarasvatī, goddess of speech, the arts, and learning.

Sarayū, a river in northern India on which was located Rāma's capital of Ayodhyā.

Sarvabhuk, "eater of everything"; epithet of Agni, god of fire and fire itself and Meghanāda's chosen deity.

Sarvasūci, "he who is all pure"; epithet of Agni, god of fire and fire itself and Meghanāda's chosen deity.

Śasāṅkadhāriṇī, "wife of him who holds the hare-marked moon [on his head]"; epithet of Durgā.

Satī, "she who is true"; epithet of Durgā; see Dakṣa (2).

Śatrughna, the youngest of Rāma's three half-brothers, Bharata and Lakṣmaṇa being the others.

Satya, "truth"; name of the first of four eras (see *yuga*) in the Hindu cosmological cycle.

Saumitri, epithet of Lakṣmaṇa; matronymic from Sumitrā, youngest of Daśaratha's three wives.

Sauri (also spelled Śauri), "he who is heroic"; epithet of Viṣṇu.

śela, a sharp-pointed missile.

seṃuti, a white rose-like flower.

Senā, name of the wife of Kārttikeya. The word *senā* also means army, and Kārttikeya is the general of the gods.

Śeṣa, a mythological snake, also known as Ananta; sometimes identified as king of the Nāgas (the great snakes); represented at times as forming the canopy, with his hoods, over Viṣṇu and at other times as supporting the entire world on his many heads, given as a thousand, usually, but increased to 10,000 (*ayuta*) by Datta.

śimula, another name for the *śālmālī* tree; see *śālmālī*.

Śikhidhvaja, "he whose banner displays a peacock"; epithet of Kārttikeya, whose vehicle is the peacock.

Sītā, wife of Rāma. She was found as a baby by King Janaka in a plowed furrow (*sita*), hence the name.

Śiva, the great lord; the god who presides over the destruction of the universe at the end of the four-*yuga* cycle, concluding with the Kali *yuga*; husband of Durgā; chosen deity of Rāvaṇa. Śiva is also known as Rudra, "the furious one," whose abstracted power is called *rudra* and is at one point bestowed upon Rāvaṇa. Śiva is the greatest of yogis; he holds a trident, has on his head the *jaṭā* (a pile of matted hair), wears snakes upon his body, and has a third eye in the middle of his forehead which when open spews fire and once incinerated the god of love, Anaṅga; the Ganges river, also called Tripathagā, falls from heaven to earth landing in his hair (canto, 9).

Skanda, name of Kārttikeya.

Smara, "memory"; epithet of Kāma, god of love.

Śrī, (1) an honorific title for men, comparable to "Mr." or "the honorable"; also, (2) name of

- Lakṣmī, goddess of beauty and good fortune, and spouse of Viṣṇu.
- Śrīkaṇṭha, "he whose voice is that of Śrī, goddess of beauty"; epithet of the famed Sanskrit poet and scholar Bhavabhūti, who composed the drama *Uttararāmacarita* (The Latter History of Rāma).
- Sthāṇu, "stationary, firm, immovable"; epithet of Śiva, alluding to his condition while deep within a yogic trance.
- Subāhu, "he who has good (strong) arms"; name of a warrior from the southern kingdom of Kiṣkindhyā, allied with Rāma against the Rākṣasas.
- Sudakṣiṇā, wife of Dilīpa, one of Rāma's predecessors in the "solar" dynasty.
- Sugrīva, king of the southern kingdom of Kiṣkindhyā and ally of Rāma. With Rāma's active help, Sugrīva slew his elder brother Vāli (Rāma did the actual killing), laid claim to the Kiṣkindhyā throne, and married his brother's wife Tārā; in exchange for Rāma's assistance, Sugrīva committed his troops to aid Rāma in recovering Sītā.
- Śūlapāṇi, "he whose hand holds a trident"; epithet of Śiva.
- Śūli, "he who has a trident"; epithet of Śiva.
- Sumālī, name of a warrior from the southern kingdom of Kiṣkindhyā, allied with Rāma against the Rākṣasas.
- Śumbha, elder brother of the Asura Niśumbha, both slain by Durgā.
- Sumitrā, mother of Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna and the youngest of Daśaratha's three wives, Kauśalyā and Sumitrā being the other two.
- Sunāsira, name of Indra. The name itself may derive from the names of two "rural deities favorable to the growth of grain, probably personifications of 'share' [*śunā*] and 'plow' [*sīra*]." (Monier-Williams, Sanskrit-English dictionary)
- Sunda, an Asura and elder brother of Upasunda. The brothers were totally unified in thought and deed and decided to gain control of the three worlds by virtue of the power they would accumulate through performing austerities. For years they fasted, living on air alone. Brahmā, noting their austerities, summoned them and offered them a boon. They chose immortality. Brahmā balked, unwilling to accede to such a request. The brothers responded by saying they would continue their austerities (and thereby continue to accumulate power) until and unless they were bestowed the boon they sought. Brahmā explained to them that birth inevitably implied death. He asked them to make some provision for death. The brothers answered by proposing that they were not to be killed at the hands of another; only if and when they themselves were to turn on one another would they be slain by their own hands. Brahmā said "be it so," and the brothers proceeded to conquer and oppress all the three worlds. The gods and rishis, now displaced from their heavens, approached Brahmā, seeking a solution to the obvious problem. Brahmā called upon Viśvakarmā, the gods' builder, and directed him to fashion the most gorgeous of women in the entire three worlds. For this, Viśvakarmā collected the most handsome bits of the most stunningly beautiful beings in all the three worlds and created Tilottamā ("she of the best [*uttamā*] of bits [*tila*]"). When the brothers, who had been dallying atop the Vindhya mountains with their numerous Asura wives and Vidyādhari demi-goddesses, saw Tilottamā, they were utterly infatuated. Sunda took hold of her right hand; Upasunda grasped her left. Sunda then told

Upasunda to let go of her hand, that he saw her first, that she was his wife, and that she should be respected as such by Upasunda. Upasunda claimed she married him and that Sunda ought not touch the wife of his younger brother. The two brothers insult each other and eventually come to blows, whereby each kills the other. (Cf. Kāśīdāsī Mahābhārata, "Ādi Parva.")

Sūrpaṅkhā (also spelled Śūrpaṅkhā), sister of Rāvaṇa. Upon seeing Rāma in the Pañcaviṅśī forest, this Rākṣasī was smitten with desire. By wizardry, she assumed the form of a beautiful woman, approached Rāma, and proposed marriage. Rāma, in jest but mock concern, told her that he did not want her to become a mere co-wife (to Sītā), suggesting instead that she proposition Lakṣmaṇa who looked the bachelor, though he was actually already married; see Ūrmilā. This Sūrpaṅkhā did, but Lakṣmaṇa encouraged her, facetiously, to press her case with Rāma. And she readily did that also, by trying to eat her competition, Sītā. Seeing his wife in danger, Rāma directed Lakṣmaṇa to protect Sītā, which Lakṣmaṇa accomplished by discharging a missile that lopped off Sūrpaṅkhā's nose and ears. Defaced and humiliated, she retreated to the side of the Rākṣasas Khara and Dūṣaṇa. They and their legions attacked but were defeated by Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. Sūrpaṅkhā then returned to Laṅkā where she incited Rāvaṇa to punish Rāma by kidnapping Sītā, arguing that Rāma would die out of sorrow for his lost wife. Rāvaṇa, hearing the description of pretty Sītā and being himself lustful by nature, agreed to do so. He enlisted the help of the Rākṣasa Mārīca, who first tried to talk Rāvaṇa out of this foolhardy venture but ended up assisting him by turning himself into a golden stag that Rāma and then Lakṣmaṇa followed into the forest--giving Rāvaṇa the chance to abduct the unprotected Sītā, thereby touching off the great battle in Laṅkā and bringing about Rāvaṇa's eventual downfall. (Cf. Kṛtīvāsī Rāmāyaṇa, "Araṇya Kāṇḍa.") Vālmīki's Sanskrit version of the Rāmāyaṇa had extended this scene somewhat by having first the sole surviving Rākṣasa return to tell Rāvaṇa of the deaths of Khara and Dūṣaṇa. Rāvaṇa approaches Mārīca with his scheme for kidnapping Sītā only to have Mārīca talk him out of it--for Mārīca had previously met up with Rāma and been defeated. Then Sūrpaṅkhā returns, disfigured. She both titillates (with a description of Sītā's beauty) and shames her brother into action. The results are the same. Rāvaṇa steals away Sītā and by so doing sets in motion the course of events that lead to his own destruction.

Suvacānī, "she who is well spoken"; name of a goddess invoked by women in distress; a goddess whose words come to fruition.

Svātī, one of the twenty-seven stars (*nakṣatras*: constellations or lunar "houses" through which the moon passes), all twenty-seven of which are considered beautiful wives of Candra, the moon. Pearls are said to form when and only when it rains while the star Svātī is in the night sky; it is then that oysters suck in those particular raindrops, turning them into pearls. Also, Svātī is identified with the star Arcturus and as a wife of the sun.

svayamvara, a ceremony by which the bride-to-be chooses from prospective grooms the one whom she will marry. Along with such a ceremony, the prospective grooms may be put to a test to determine who is the fittest and proper husband; see Pināka and Nala (2).

Śyāma, "dark colored, dark blue or green or black"; epithet of Kṛṣṇa, the dark lord, whose complexion is usually depicted as dark blue or blue-black.

tāla, a variety of palm tree.

Tālajāṅghā, "having shanks like palm trees"; name of a Rākṣasa warrior.

tamas, "ignorance, darkness"; one of the three qualities that is constitutive of everything in differing portions, the other two being *sattva* (truth, goodness) and *rajas* (passion, spiritedness).

Tāpasendra, "Indra (lord, foremost) of the ascetics"; epithet of Śiva.

Tārā, wife of Vāli, king of Kiṣkindhyā. Following the death of Vāli, Tārā becomes the wife of Sugrīva, Vāli's younger brother. Tārā's name is homonymic with the word for "star, astral body."

Tāraka, an Asura who captured heaven and was eventually defeated by Kārttikeya. Indra, vanquished by Tāraka, had gone with the other gods to seek Brahmā's counsel. Brahmā declared that only a son (named Ṣaḍānana, "the six-headed," also called Kārttikeya) born of Śiva's seed could slay Tāraka. Śiva at that time was unmarried and deep in yogic meditation. He had to be aroused from his trance. For that purpose, Indra sought the services of Kāma, the god of love, who awakened Śiva but was burned to ashes by Śiva for his effort. Later Śiva spilled his semen while dallying with Gaurī (Durgā, Haimavatī), which resulted in the birth of Kārttikeya, who eventually led the gods against the Asuras and personally slew Tāraka; see Kāma and Kārttikeya.

Tārakāri, "enemy of Tāraka (name of an Asura)"; epithet of Kārttikeya.

Tārīṇī, "she who rescues"; epithet of Durgā.

tomara, a lance of sorts.

Trijaṭā, "she who wears three piles of matted hair"; serving woman for Rāvaṇa and Mandodarī, Rāvaṇa's chief queen.

Tripathagā, "she who flows in three paths"; epithet of Gaṅgā, the Ganges river, who falls from the heavens onto Śiva's matted hair. The three paths refers to the Ganges as she flows in heaven, on the earth, and through Pātāla's netherworld.

Tripura, "three cities"; name of an Asura, defeated by Śiva. The three cities, collectively personified as an Asura, were built by Maya in the heavens (of gold), in the space between heaven and earth (of silver), and on earth (of iron). When the Asuras were about to destroy the three worlds, the gods importuned Śiva who responded by burning the three cities and putting to death all the Asuras who lived there.

Tripurāri, "foe of the Three Cities (Tripura)"; epithet of Śiva.

Trisūlī, "he who has a trident"; epithet of Śiva.

Tryambaka, "he who has three eyes"; epithet of Śiva.

tulasī, name of a holy tree, especially sacred to Vaiṣṇavas, i.e., devotees of Kṛṣṇa and of Rāma.

turi, a battle horn made of brass.

Tviṣāmpati, "lord of a mass of brilliance"; epithet of Sūrya, the sun god.

Udagra, "haughty, monstrous"; name of a Rākṣasa.

Ugracaṇḍā, "she who is wrathful and violent"; epithet of Durgā in her more violent and wrathful aspect.

ululu, the sound "ulululululu . . .," made by women at auspicious times or festive occasions; it is a sound of joy, as opposed to the howl or wail denoted by the Latinate

English word "ululation."

Umā, name of Durgā, wife of Śiva; often used to imply the goddess as the young wife of Śiva, as opposed to the goddess in her more powerful, warrior-like mien.

Upasunda, an Asura and younger brother of Sunda; see Sunda.

Upendra, "born subsequent to Indra"; epithet of Viṣṇu.

Ūrmilā, wife of Lakṣmaṇa, and also younger sister of Sītā.

Urvaśī, name of one member of the class of celestial demi-goddesses called Apsarā, known for their exceptional beauty and their dancing ability.

Vaḍabā, name of Pramīlā's horse. Vaḍabā is also the name of a horse-headed goddess who resides within the ocean. The "fire of Vaḍabā," known too as Vāḍaba or "the mare's fire," spews from her mouth and burns forever underwater in the depths of the Indian Ocean; see Vāḍaba.

Vāḍaba, "the mare's fire." It burns beneath the sea, at the South Pole by some accounts. A couple of stories relate its coming into existence. One speaks of the rishi Aurva, born of the Bhṛgu lineage. Kṣatriya forces were slaying the Brāhman Bhārgavas, even destroying children in the womb. One Bhārgava woman, to preserve her embryo, hid it in her thigh (*ūru*, hence the derivative name Aurva). Aurva burst forth from her thigh, blinded the enemy with his brilliance, and from his anger produced a flame that threatened to burn the three worlds. The Bhārgavas prevailed upon him to spare the world and cast his flaming rage into the ocean. (Cf. Kāśīdāsī Mahābhārata, "Ādi Parva.") The Sanskrit Mahābhārata attributed to Vyāsa, in J.A.B. van Buitenen's translation, ends this episode within the Ādi Parva as follows: "Thereupon, my son, Aurva cast out the wrath-born fire into Varuṇa's domain, and it eats the waters of the ocean. Thus do the scholars of the *Veda* know that it became a huge horse head, which spits fire from its mouth and drinks the waters of the ocean."¹ Another tale tells of the rishi Ūrva (alternative name for Aurva) who, desiring a son not born of woman's womb, churned fire in his own chest and brought forth a fiery son who then took his place in the southern seas and was known as Vaḍabā.

Vaidehi, epithet of Sītā; derived from Videha, name of a kingdom whose main city was Mithilā, ruled over by Sītā's father, Janaka.

Vaijayanta, name of Indra's palace in his heaven, which is called Amarāvati or just Amarā.

Vaikuṇṭha, name of Viṣṇu's heavenly city.

Vainateya, the great bird Garuḍa, vehicle for and attendant of Viṣṇu; matronymic from Vinatā.

Vaiśvānara, "belonging to all men"; epithet of Agni, the god of fire and fire itself; Meghanāda's chosen deity.

Vaitaraṇī, the river that separates Naraka, "hell," from the other three worlds of heaven (*svarga*), earth (*martya*), and Pātāla.

Vajrapāṇi, "he whose hand holds a thunderbolt"; epithet of Indra.

Vajrī, "he who has a thunderbolt"; epithet of Indra.

Vāli, ruler of the southern kingdom of Kiṣkindhyā but slain by Rāma; elder brother of Sugrīva.

Vālmīki, composer of the Sanskrit Rāmāyaṇa. Ratnākara, son of a sage, was during the first part of his life a dacoit, robbing and murdering for a living. God Brahmā and

¹ J.A.B. van Buitenen, tr. and ed., *The Mahābhārata: I The Book of the Beginning* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1973, pp. 341-42.

the sage Nārada approached him one day and successfully persuaded him to change his ways by suggesting the sinner ask his father, mother, wife and son whether they, who lived off his illicit earnings, would be willing to bear the burden of his sins. None of the ingrates was, which moved Ratnākara to reform. Brahmā directed him to repeat Rāma's name and thereby absolve himself of all his sins. Ratnākara, however, feeling unworthy, could not bring himself to utter Rāma's sacred name, so Brahmā had him pronounce the word which describes a man who has died. Death and a dead person being polluting, Ratnākara felt fit to utter such an unworthy word. The word "dead" is pronounced *marā* in Bangla. As Ratnākara chanted *marā marā marā*, he eventually, with the words running together (*marā marā marā marāmarāmarā*), was saying Rāma's name (*ma/rāma/rāma/rāma rāma rāma rāma*). Ratnākara then sat in one spot and chanted that holy name for 60,000 years during which time his body was devoured by ants. But still he continued to chant Rāma's name, from within the ant hill. After 60,000 years Brahmā returned, saw the ant hill, and heard the words "Rāma, Rāma, Rāma" coming from within. He had Indra cause rain to fall for seven days, washing away all of Ratnākara but his bones. Then Brahmā, the creator, summoned Ratnākara back to life, gave him the name Vālmiki, a patronymic from *valmika* (ant hill), and instructed him to compose the Rāmāyaṇa. Vālmiki (alias Ratnākara) protested that he knew not poetry nor metre, to which Brahmā replied: "Sarasvatī shall dwell upon your tongue / Much poetry shall issue from your mouth." As the passage proceeds, we find Vālmiki seated beneath a tree, beside a lake, chanting Rāma's efficacious name. At such time, a hunter (Niṣāda) happens by and fells with his arrow one of two herons perched upon a branch, above Vālmiki. Those herons were loving each other when the one was hit, falling into Vālmiki's lap. Horrified by this senseless violence against innocent birds, Vālmiki cursed the fowler. The curse itself, emanating from a profound sense of grief (*śoka*), came out as though spontaneously in a new metrical pattern called *śloka*: a Sanskrit couplet metre (unrhymed) of sixteen syllables per line divided into hemistiches of eight units each. And so, we have the origin (out of *śoka*) of *śloka*, the prevalent epic metre in Sanskrit literature. (Bangla relies predominantly upon *payār* in its epics.) Vālmiki then proceeded to compose the Rāmāyaṇa in his newly found *śloka* metre. (Cf. Kṛttivāsī Rāmāyaṇa, "Ādi Kāṇḍa.")

Vāma, name of Śiva.

Vāmana, the fifth *avatāra* of Viṣṇu when he descended to earth in the form of a dwarf to humble the Daitya Bali; see Bali.

Vanadevī, "forest goddess"; a goddess presiding over the forest.

Varadā, "she who grants boons"; epithet of goddesses, Sarasvatī, et al.

Varānanā, "she whose face is beautiful"; name of an Apsarā, demi-goddesses renowned for their beauty; in *The Slaying of Meghanāda* the epithet is applied to Rati, wife of Kāma, god of love.

Vāruṇī, wife of Varuṇa, god of the sea. Her name (feminine of Varuṇa) is spelled several ways.

Vāsantī, "she who is like the springtime"; "the jasmine"; "a light orange color"; name of the

- confidante to Meghanāda's wife Pramīlā.
- Vāsava, epithet of Indra as lord of the Vasus, "the good ones," i.e., the gods; "Indra's bow/Vāsava's bow" is the rainbow.
- Vāsavajit, "victor over Vāsava"; epithet of Meghanāda.
- Vāskala, name of a Rākṣasa warrior.
- Vibhāvasu, "he whose wealth is brilliance"; epithet of Agni, god of fire and fire itself; Meghanāda's chosen deity.
- Vibhīṣaṇa, younger brother of Rāvaṇa and husband of Saramā. He advises his brother to return Sītā, is kicked for his counsel, and defects to become one of Rāma's trusted allies.
- Vidhi, "fate"; often identified with Brahmā. The term "Fate" in this translation of *The Slaying of Meghanāda* is always a rendering of the word *vidhi*.
- Vidhātā, "providence"; often identified with Brahmā. The term "Providence" in this translation of *The Slaying of Meghanāda* is always a rendering of the word *vidhātā*.
- Vidyādhara, a class of celestial demi-gods, known for their skills in the arts.
- Vidyādhari, a class of celestial demi-goddesses, known for their skills in the arts and for their beauty.
- Vijayā, one of the two female attendants of Durgā, Jayā being the other.
- vīṇā*, a stringed musical instrument.
- Vinatā, mother of Garuḍa and five other sons, including her eldest son Aruṇa, who in turn had two sons, one of them being Jaṭāyu.
- Vindhya, the mountain range in central India which, in a sense, divides northern from southern India.
- Vīrabāhu, "virile-armed"; a son of Rāvaṇa and Citrāṅgadā. He is a character created by Kṛttivāsa.
- Vīrabhadra, name of a warrior and factotum for Śiva.
- Virāṭa, name of a king in whose realm the Pāṇḍavas lived in disguise during their thirteenth year of exile; also, name of the kingdom itself.
- Virūpākṣa, "odd-eyed"; (1) name of a Rākṣasa warrior; also, (2) an epithet of Śiva, referring to the third eye in the middle of his forehead.
- Viśalyakaraṇī, the restorative herb that grows upon Mount Gandhamādāna on the Indian mainland and is needed to revive Lakṣmaṇa. In more traditional Rāmāyaṇas, Hanumān leaps or flies to the mountain and, after some adventures, manages to bring the herb back to Laṅkā. In *The Slaying of Meghanāda*, where Hanumān is no flying monkey, the mountain, according to Rāvaṇa's prime minister, would appear to have come of its own accord.
- Viśvanātha, "lord of the universe"; epithet of Śiva.
- Vītihoṭra, "he by whom the *soma* offering is eaten"; epithet of Agni, god of fire and fire itself; Meghanāda's chosen deity.
- Vraja, the land where Kṛṣṇa grew up and played with the Gopīs or cowherd wives, Rādhā in particular. Vraja, wherein is found the village of Gokula and the Vṛṇḍāvana forest, is located on one bank of the Yamunā river; across that river and a ways away lies Madhupura to where the adult Kṛṣṇa goes to slay king Kāṃsa, never to return to Vraja; see Kṛṣṇa and Madhupura.
- Vṛṣabhadhvaja, "he whose banner displays a bull"; epithet of Śiva.
- Vṛṣadhvaja, "he whose banner displays a bull"; epithet of Śiva.

- Vṛtra, name of an Asura whom Indra slew with his thunderbolt. An ancient malevolent force from Vedic times, Vṛtra was associated with darkness and drought and considered in perpetual conflict with Indra, lord of the skies.
- Vyomakeśa, "he whose hair is in the sky"; epithet of Śiva.
- Yakṣa, a class of supernatural beings related to the Rākṣasas though usually not malevolent. Their lord, Kubera, is the elder half brother of Rāvaṇa and presides over riches; see Dhanada.
- Yama, god of death. He carries a staff (*daṇḍa*) with which to punish (*daṇḍa* also means punishment); see Daṇḍadhara.
- Yamunā, a major river in northern India; flows from the Himālayas past Hastinā (first the Kauravas' and later the Pāṇḍavas' capital), past Madhupura and Vraja (where Kṛṣṇa was born and where he grew up, respectively), and joins the Ganges river at Prayāga, now called Allahabad, on their collective way to the Bay of Bengal. Yamunā is considered to be the daughter of the sun, (canto 1); one of the many tales illustrating Kṛṣṇa's powers tells of him subduing (actually dancing on the multiple heads of) the poisonous water serpent, Kāliya, who threatened those from Vraja bathing in the Yamunā river (canto 3).
- Yogāsana, "a posture or sitting position for yogic meditation"; name of a plateau at the very top of Mount Kailāsa where Śiva meditates.
- Yogīndra, "Indra (lord, foremost) of yogis"; epithet of Śiva as well as, quite literally, "the greatest of yogis." In *The Slaying of Meghanāda*, Yogīndra is said to possess a "mind-lake." Mānasa means "the mind, thought, desire, the heart" and is the name of a particular lake in the Himālayas to which swans (*haṃsa*) retreat with the advent of the monsoon season, according to a well-established poetic conceit. Moreover, a *mānasa-putra* is a son created from one's mind or heart or desire, a "son of the mind or heart." Extending this to the image in canto 7, the *mānasa-haṃsa* is both a "swan of the mind" and a "swan upon lake Mānasa." Cintāmaṇi (literally, "gem of thought," epithet of Viṣṇu) is likened here to the swans (thought personified) upon the lake-*cum*-mind of the greatest of yogis, Śiva, deep in meditation; see Cintāmaṇi.
- Yoginī, a female yogi. Along with Ḍākinīs, who are female goblin-like demi-goddesses, Yoginīs also attend upon Śiva and Durgā.
- yuga, the four "ages" which, taken together, form a complete cycle (*kalpa*) in Hindu cosmological time. In descending order (temporally and morally), they are the Satya (also called Kṛta) *yuga*, sometimes characterized as "the golden age," the Tretā *yuga*, the Dvāpara *yuga*, and the Kali *yuga* or the present era, known as the most degenerate of all. At the conclusion of the Kali *yuga* comes Pralaya or the destruction of the world, following which a new cycle will begin.