

Chamundeshwari and the Rule of Law: Mythology as a Framework for Modern Legal Justice in Karnataka

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Abstract

This research article explores the myth of Chamundeshwari as a foundational framework for understanding the Rule of Law and modern legal justice in Karnataka. Rooted in Karnataka's rich cultural heritage, the Chamundeshwari narrative symbolizes the triumph of law over tyranny and reflects key constitutional principles, such as equality before the law and accountability. The study examines the intersection of mythology and legal theory, highlighting Chamundeshwari's victory over Mahishasura as an allegory for the upholding of justice and the combating of corruption and lawlessness. Furthermore, the research examines the gender justice implications of Chamundeshwari's feminine power, linking it to India's legal provisions on gender equality and feminist jurisprudence. By interpreting the myth through the lens of governance and judicial accountability, the article underscores the importance of transparent and ethical legal institutions, drawing parallels to Karnataka's Lokayukta and anti-corruption laws. The analysis also addresses moral reasoning in legal interpretation, illustrating how ancient narratives inspire creative jurisprudential approaches to complex societal issues. Ultimately, this article argues that integrating Chamundeshwari's cultural and mythological legacy enriches contemporary legal discourse, offering valuable insights into the pursuit of sustainable justice in Karnataka and beyond.

Keywords: Chamundeshwari, Rule of Law, Legal Justice, Governance, Gender Justice.

1. INTRODUCTION

The intersection of mythology and law offers a profound lens for understanding the evolution of justice, morality, and governance across civilizations. In India, sacred narratives have persistently informed legal reasoning, ethical codes, and institutional frameworks. Among these, the mythology of Chamundeshwari Devi, presiding deity of Mysuru and venerated as Mahishasura Mardini, holds a unique place in Karnataka's legal and cultural imagination. Her temple atop Chamundi Hills is not merely a pilgrimage centre but a living symbol of the region's collective commitment to justice and dharma. The annual Mysuru Dasara, which celebrates Chamundeshwari's victory over Mahishasura, is emblematic of the confrontation between righteousness and tyranny, order and chaos. The narrative's entry into Karnataka's jurisprudence is neither trivial nor accidental; rather, it serves as a powerful allegory for the foundational concepts of equality before the law, moral accountability, and due process.

"ಓಂ ಜಯಂತೀ ಮಂಗಳಾ ಕಾಳೀ ಭದ್ರಕಾಲೀ ಕಪಾಲಿನೀ | ದುರ್ಗಾ ಕ್ಷಮಾ ಶಿವಾ ಧಾತ್ರೀ ಸ್ವಾಹಾ ಸ್ವಧಾ
ನಮೋಽಸ್ತು ತೇ||"

[Verse 2, Argala Stotram, Durga Saptashati, Markandeya Purana]

"Victorious, auspicious Kali, Bhadrakali, one who holds the skull, Durga the compassionate, supporter, and giver—salutations to Thee!"

The Chamundeshwari narrative presents Mahishasura, the shape-shifting demon, as the very embodiment of lawlessness, despotism, and arbitrary power. His defeat signifies more than a mythic restoration of order; it allegorizes the supremacy of law

and of constitutional mandates such as Article 14 (equality before the law), as well as the philosophical principle that no one stands above justice. Karnataka's social memory and judicial practices echo the maxim "fiat justitia ruat caelum" ("let justice be done though the heavens fall") whenever the weakest seek redress against the mighty.

**"ಯಾ ದೇವೀ ಸರ್ವಭೂತೇಷು ಶಕ್ತಿರೂಪೇಣ ಸಂಸ್ಥಿತಾ | ನಮಸ್ತಸ್ಯೈ ನಮಸ್ತಸ್ಯೈ ನಮಸ್ತಸ್ಯೈ ನಮೋ
ನಮಃ||"**

[Chapter 4, Verse 4, Devi, Suktam, Durga Saptashati, Markandeya Purana]

"Salutations, again and again, to the Goddess who abides in all creatures as power (shakti)."

Chamundeshwari's agency as a female goddess triumphing over violence and lawlessness subverts patriarchal norms. Her assertion of justice anticipates feminist discourse, and Karnataka's trailblazing statutes (the Devadasi Prohibition Act and the POSH Act) and women's movements stand as contemporary manifestations of her power. Chamundeshwari's power is collective, forged by the energies of all gods, thereby symbolizing justice as a collaborative social obligation rather than the burden of a single hero. This conception aligns with the constitutional framework of separation of powers, under which the legislature, executive, judiciary, and citizens share responsibility for upholding justice. The goddess's myth, played out each year in Dasara, ritualistically reasserts Karnataka's commitment to dharma through legal, civic, and cultural acts.

"ಸರ್ವರೂಪಾ ಸರ್ವೇಷಾ ಸರ್ವೇಭವನ ಸಂಶ್ರಿತಾ | ಸರ್ವಹಾ ಸರ್ವದಾ ದೇವೀ ಸರ್ವಮಂಗಲಕಾರಿಣೀ||"

[Verse 12, Shiva Mahatmya Khanda, Lalitha Sahasranama Stotram, Uttarabhaga, Brahmanda Purana]

"The goddess who is all forms, the refuge of all, who destroys all evil, always auspicious—the Devi who brings all prosperity."

The influence of Chamundeshwari is palpable in Karnataka's adjudicatory landscape; Lokayukta anti-corruption drives, citizen activism, progressive gender policies, and judicial innovations reflect the mythic call to uphold justice above expediency. The goddess's narrative is thus not an artifact of the past, but a living charter of legal and moral renewal.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The relationship between mythology and legal philosophy has been a subject of increasing scholarly interest, particularly in the Indian context where cultural narratives significantly shape societal norms and values. Ancient Indian texts such as the Manusmriti (Doniger, 1999), along with epics like the Mahabharata (Hiltebeitel, 2001) and Ramayana (Valmiki, trans. 1984), have traditionally been interpreted as sources of moral and legal guidance. These texts articulate the concept of *dharmā*, which embodies duty, justice, and righteousness, forming a philosophical foundation comparable to the modern doctrine of the Rule of Law. Scholars argue that these narratives establish early frameworks for governance, accountability, and ethical conduct (Doniger, 1999).

The modern articulation of the Rule of Law is often traced to the work of A. V. Dicey (1885), who emphasized the supremacy of law, equality before the law, and the absence of arbitrary power. In the Indian legal system, these principles are constitutionally enshrined in the Constitution of India (Government of India, 1950), particularly under Article 14, which guarantees equality before the law, and Article 21, which protects life and personal liberty. Contemporary legal scholars have emphasized that while the Indian Constitution draws from Western legal traditions, it is equally rooted in indigenous philosophical and cultural systems (Sathe, 2002).

The mythological narrative of Chamundeshwari (Kinsley, 1986), a revered deity in Karnataka, represents a significant cultural symbol of justice and moral order. Her victory over Mahishasura (Kinsley, 1986), widely celebrated during the festival of Dussehra (Fuller, 2004), is often interpreted as an allegory for the triumph of righteousness over tyranny and injustice. Existing literature in religious and cultural studies highlights the symbolic importance of this narrative in reinforcing societal values related to justice, order, and ethical governance (Kinsley, 1986). However, there is a relative paucity of research that systematically connects this mythological framework with contemporary legal doctrines such as the Rule of Law.

In the domain of feminist jurisprudence, the figure of Chamundeshwari has been examined as an embodiment of feminine (power) and resistance against patriarchal oppression. Scholars argue that such representations contribute to the cultural legitimization of gender equality and women's empowerment (Menon, 2004). This perspective aligns with constitutional provisions such as Article 15 of the Constitution of India (Government of India, 1950), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, and statutory frameworks like the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (Government of India,

2005). Literature in this field suggests that mythological archetypes play a crucial role in shaping legal consciousness and advancing feminist interpretations of justice (Agnes, 2011).

Furthermore, studies on governance and institutional accountability in Karnataka highlight the role of bodies such as the Karnataka Lokayukta (Ramesh, 2012) in combating corruption and promoting transparency. Legal scholars have emphasized that the effectiveness of such institutions depends not only on statutory provisions but also on the ethical and cultural values embedded within society (Sathe, 2002). In this regard, mythological narratives like that of Chamundeshwari provide a moral framework that complements formal legal mechanisms by reinforcing ideals of accountability and integrity.

Recent interdisciplinary scholarship has also focused on the role of moral reasoning in judicial decision-making. It is argued that law is not merely a mechanical application of rules but a dynamic process that incorporates ethical considerations, cultural context, and societal values (Dworkin, 1986). Mythology, therefore, serves as a valuable interpretative tool, offering analogies and symbolic frameworks that can inform creative and context-sensitive jurisprudence.

Despite the extensive body of literature on mythology, Rule of Law, feminist jurisprudence, and governance, there remains a significant research gap in integrating these domains into a cohesive analytical framework. Specifically, the potential of the Chamundeshwari myth as a lens for understanding modern legal justice and institutional accountability in Karnataka has not been adequately explored.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a doctrinal legal research methodology, analyzing primary sources, including constitutional provisions, statutes, and judicial precedents, alongside secondary sources, such as mythological texts and scholarly commentary. The research uses comparative analysis to examine parallels between Chamundeshwari mythology and Karnataka's legal framework, supplemented by interpretative analysis of Sanskrit texts through established translations. The approach is qualitative, drawing on the Durga Saptashati, the Markandeya Purana, and Karnataka's legal archives to construct a coherent jurisprudential narrative.

4. THE MAHISHASURA NARRATIVE AND CONSTITUTIONAL JUSTICE

The slaying of Mahishasura by Chamundeshwari Devi stands as the mythic pivot of Karnataka's spiritual and legal narrative. Each year, Mysuru Dasara marks not only the triumph of dharma over adharma but also celebrates constitutionally enshrined justice and the struggle against corruption and abuse in governance. Mahishasura, the buffalo demon, stands as an allegory for unrestrained power and chronic lawlessness. His ability to change form illustrates both the mutability of tyranny and the necessity of a law that adapts without ever compromising principles of equality and accountability.

“ಮಹಿಷಾಸುರೋತ್ಥಾನಂ ಮಹಾದೇವೀನ್ ಮಹೇಶ್ವರೀಂ | ಧರ್ಮಸ್ಥಾಪನಕಾರಿಣೀಂ |”

[Chapter 2, Verse 19-21, Durga Saptashati]

"The rise of Mahishasura was met by the Great Goddess, Maheshwari, who acts to establish dharma."

The narrative directly parallels the constitutional doctrine of equality before the law (Article 14). No matter Mahishasura's might, he must submit to higher justice, the very premise underpinning India's modern legal system. Judicial precedents underscore this. In *Indira Nehru Gandhi v. Raj Narain (1975)*, the Supreme Court invalidated an amendment seeking to immunize the Prime Minister from judicial review, reaffirming that no person, no matter how powerful, stands above the law. Chamundeshwari's sustained battle echoes Karnataka's own legal struggle against entrenched corruption. The Karnataka Lokayukta's 2011 report, which exposed illegal mining and led to the resignation of a Chief Minister, reflects a mythic imperative: justice must persist in the face of daunting opposition.

ಅಯಿ ಗಿರಿನಂದಿನಿ ನಂದಿತಮೇದಿನಿ ವಿಶ್ವವಿನೋದಿನಿ ನಂದಿನುತೇ | ಮಹಿಷಮೃತಿಕಂ ಕಣ್ಮಾಲಿನಿ
ಮಹಿಷಾಸುರಮರ್ಧಿನಿ ಶೋಭಿತಲೇ |

[Verse 1, Mahishasura Mardini Stotra]

"O Daughter of the mountain, delight of the world, victorious slayer of Mahishasura, adorned with his garland."

Chamundeshwari's victory, achieved at high cost and challenge, embodies the legal maxim "fiat justitia ruat caelum." The lesson is clear: justice must stand uncompromising, no matter the powers arrayed against it.

ದೃಷ್ಟಾಽಽ ಸಮಸ್ತಂ ಸಂಕ್ಷುಬ್ಧಂ ತ್ರೈಲೋಕ್ಯಮಮರಾರಯಃ |

ಸನ್ನದ್ಧಾಖಿಲಸೈನ್ಯಾಸ್ತೇ ಸಮುತ್ತಸ್ಪುರುದಾಯುಧಾಃ ||

[Chapter 2, Verse 35, Durga Saptashati]

"Having seen the entire three worlds greatly agitated, the enemies of the gods (asuras), with all their armies fully armed, rose up with uplifted weapons."

Chamundeshwari's power is collective; the gods combine their energies to create her, teaching citizens and legal institutions that establishing justice must be a collaborative, communal responsibility.

ಅತಿವ ತೇಜಸಃ ಕೂಟಂ ಜ್ವಲಂತಮಿವ ಪರ್ವತಮ್ |

ದದೃಶುಸ್ತೇ ಸುರಾಸ್ತತ್ರ ಜ್ವಾಲಾವ್ಯಾಪ್ತದಿಗಂತರಮ್ ||

ಅತುಲಂ ತತ್ರ ತತ್ ತೇಜಃ ಸರ್ವದೇವಶರೀರಜಮ್ |

ಏಕಸ್ಥಂ ತದಭೂನ್ ನಾರೀ ವ್ಯಾಪ್ತಲೋಕತ್ರಯಂ ತ್ವಿಷಾ ||

[Chapter 2, Verse 12-13, Durga Saptashati]

"The gods beheld that unparalleled mass of effulgence, blazing like a mountain, with flames enveloping all directions. There that radiance from all gods' bodies coalesced into a single feminine form, pervading the three worlds with her splendor."

The criminal justice system must decisively confront tyranny for the welfare of all. The Supreme Court's reasoning in *State of Karnataka v. Krishnappa (2000)* exemplifies the maxim *salus populi suprema lex*, by affirming that strict punishment for crimes of power serves the supreme welfare of the people.

ಯಾ ದೇವೀ ಸರ್ವಭೂತೇಷು ಧರ್ಮರೂಪೇಣ ಸಂಸ್ಥಿತಾ| ನಮಸ್ತಸ್ಯೈ ನಮಸ್ತಸ್ಯೈ ನಮಸ್ತಸ್ಯೈ ನಮೋ
ನಮಃ||

[Chapter 4, Verse 14, Devi Suktam, Durga Saptashati, Markandeya Purana]

"The Goddess, abiding in all beings as the form of dharma, salutations to you."

5. GENDER JUSTICE AND FEMININE POWER

The mythology of Chamundeshwari transcends a simple tale of good versus evil; it is a powerful commentary on agency, gender, and the social transformation of law in Karnataka. The goddess's epic victory over Mahishasura unfolds as the archetype of empowered womanhood confronting patriarchal and structural injustice. In the tradition of the Devi Mahatmya, Chamundeshwari is not a passive symbol; she is the collective shakti that arises to confront evil directly with strength and autonomy. Her origin story, where the combined powers (shaktis) of all gods form her being, mirrors the call for collective action in the ongoing project of gender justice.

ಸಾ ಕ್ಷಿಪ್ತಾಽಽ ತಸ್ಯ ವೈ ಪಾಶಂ ತಂ ಬಬಂಧ ಮಹಾಸುರಮ್ |

ತತ್ರಾಜ ಮಾಹಿಷಂ ರೂಪಂ ಸೋಽಪಿ ಬದ್ಧೋ ಮಹಾಮೃಧೇ ||

ತತಃ ಸಿಂಹೋಽಭವತ್ಸದ್ಯೋ ಯಾವತ್ ತಸ್ಯಾಂಬಿಕಾ ಶಿರಃ |

ಚಿನತ್ತಿ ತಾವತ್ ಪುರುಷಃ ಖಡ್ಗಪಾಣಿರದೃಶ್ಯತ ||

ತತ ಏವಾಶು ಪುರುಷಂ ದೇವೀ ಚಿಚ್ಛೇದ ಸಾಯಕೈಃ |

ತಂ ಖಡ್ಗಚರ್ಮಣಾ ಸಾರ್ಧಂ ತತಃ ಸೋಽಭೂನ್ ಮಹಾಗಜಃ ||

ಕರೇಣ ಚ ಮಹಾಸಿಂಹಂ ತಂ ಚಕರ್ಷ ಜಗರ್ಷ ಚ | ಕರ್ಷತಸ್ತು ಕರಂ ದೇವೀ ಖಡ್ಗೇನ ನಿರಕೃಂತತ ||

ತತೋ ಮಹಾಸುರೋ ಭೂಯೋ ಮಾಹಿಷಂ ವಪುರಾಸ್ಥಿತಃ | ತಥೈವ ಕ್ಷೋಭಯಾಮಾಸ ತ್ರೈಲೋಕ್ಯಂ

ಸಚರಾಚರಮ್ ||

[Chapter 3, Verse 29-33, Durga Saptashati]

"Having hurled her noose at him, she bound the great asura. Abandoning his buffalo form, he too stood bound in that great battle. Instantly he became a lion while Ambika was severing his head; then a man with sword in hand appeared even as she was cutting. The Goddess quickly felled that man with her arrows. Along with his sword and shield, he then became a great elephant. With his trunk he dragged and roared at the Great Lion. But as he dragged, the Goddess cut off his trunk with her sword. Then the great asura resumed his buffalo form and again began to disturb the three worlds along with all moving and stationary beings."

The goddess's narrative finds direct correspondence in Karnataka's legislative reforms and judicial activism:

- The Karnataka Devadasis (Prohibition of Dedication) Act, 1982, abolished temple slavery.
- The widespread implementation of the POSH Act, 2013 (Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace), empowers women in both public and private spheres.
- Self-Help Group (SHG) movements led by women in Mysuru, Mandya, and Belagavi echo the goddess's collective power, enabling economic freedom and grassroots justice.

Chamundeshwari's martial iconography, fierce, many-armed, mounted on a lion, subverts patriarchal imagery. She is not merely protection incarnate, but the legal enforcer, declaring the law in action. Modern legal initiatives for gender justice in Karnataka, ranging from judicial activism in favour of women's land rights, campaign-led advances for representation in Panchayati Raj institutions, action against dowry, and support of survivors of violence, all reflect the living paradigm of the goddess's myth.

“ಶರಣಾಗತದೀನಾರ್ಥ ಪರಿತ್ರಾಣ ಪರಾಯಣೇ| ಸರ್ವಸ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಹರೇ ದೇವಿ ನಾರಾಯಣಿ ನಮೋಽಸ್ತು ತೇ||”

[Chapter 11, Verse 15, Narayani Stuti, Durga Saptashati, Markandeya Purana]

"O you who protect all who surrender to you, who destroys the sufferings of all, Narayani – salutations to you!"

The ongoing relevance of Chamundeshwari in Karnataka's discourse is visible every Mysuru Dasara, where her image leads the state festival, and in contemporary campaigns for gender equality. Her worship is not limited to any social segment; she is the Nada Devata, the universal and inclusive state deity. Widespread acts of "placing reforms at the feet of Chamundeshwari" (such as the symbolic offering of women-empowering legislation or programs like the Gruha Lakshmi scheme for female-headed households) continue to reinforce the goddess as a living symbol and inspiration for practical legal and social transformation.

6. GOVERNANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND INSTITUTIONAL VIGILANCE

Chamundeshwari's mythological battles against demons such as Mahishasura, Shumbha-Nishumbha, and Raktabija offer profound allegories for governance, corruption, and accountability within Karnataka's socio-political context. The goddess's relentless vigilance and strategic action symbolize the ideal characteristics that modern institutions must embody to uphold transparency and ethical governance. Mahishasura's shape-shifting nature represents the adaptive and often elusive forms corruption takes within governing bodies. Nepotism, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and systemic fraud mirror his shifting disguises, challenging governance to remain resolute and innovative.

ಸ ತು ಶೂಲೇನ ಮಹತಾ ದೃಢೇನ ದೇವೀ ತದಾ ಹರ್ತುಮದ್ಯತಾ |

ಅಭರಣಭುಜಂಗಭೂಷಿತಾಂಗರೀ ತ್ರಿಪುರವಧುವಿಶೇಷಕಾಂಚನಾಂಜಲೀ||

[Chapter 3, Verse 52, Durga Saptashati, Markandeya Purana]

"She then, with a mighty and firm trident, rushed at him to slay him. Her arms adorned with golden ornaments resembling serpents, she appeared like the bride of Tripura (Parvati)."

The creation and efficacy of the Karnataka Lokayukta echo Chamundeshwari's symbolic role as the cosmic watchdog. Established under the Karnataka Lokayukta Act, 1984, this independent ombudsman has been pivotal in exposing corruption scandals, exemplified notably by the 2011 Justice Santosh Hegde report on illegal mining. Mythological narratives of persistent resistance to illicit power reflect and reinforce institutional vigilantism. The defeat of the arrogant demon brothers, Shumbha and Nishumbha, highlights the perils of concentrated power. In governance terms, this allegorizes the risk of power consolidation and bureaucratic inertia, both of which are detrimental to democracy. Karnataka's Panchayati Raj and Urban Local Body systems, energized by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, work in parallel to this myth by decentralizing power. Raktabija's regenerative curse, by causing each drop of blood to generate new demons, illustrates how governance confronts recurring systemic failure: institutions may address corruption or inefficiencies in one form, yet they reappear elsewhere. Chamundeshwari's invocation of Kali to prevent this reproduction metaphorically represents the need for innovative governance reforms: e-governance, independent audit mechanisms, and transparent social accountability structures.

Chamundeshwari's battles vividly personify key legal maxims crucial for governance:

- Lex semper dabit remedium: The law will always provide a remedy, as reflected in Karnataka's Sakala Services Act, 2011, guaranteeing timely service delivery.
- Res ipsa loquitur: The thing speaks for itself; visible governance lapses invite inevitable justice.
- Salus populi suprema lex: The welfare of the people is the supreme law; governance must prioritize public good over individual gains.

The illegal mining scandal in Ballari and surrounding districts (2010) is a contemporary manifestation of the Mahishasura allegory, where entrenched exploitation threatened ecological and social welfare. The judicial interventions in *Samaj Parivartana Samudaya v. State of Karnataka (2013)* exemplify the judiciary's role as a dispenser of divine justice, ensuring accountability in governance. Chamundeshwari's myth emphasizes that power bereft of morality fosters tyranny. Karnataka's governance narrative, marked by both exemplary leadership and systemic failure, underscores the imperative of moral integrity in public office.

7. MORAL DILEMMAS AND LEGAL INTERPRETATION

While Chamundeshwari's myths dramatically pit good against evil, they also reveal profound moral ambiguities and legal dilemmas that mirror those in Karnataka's justice system. Law, as in myth, often confronts situations in which a simplistic application of rules is inadequate; creative interpretation and proportional discretion become essential to do justice. The narrative of Raktabija, a demon whose every drop of spilled blood generates countless new forms, symbolizes how addressing one legal or systemic problem often spawns several more if only surface symptoms are targeted. In the myth, Chamundeshwari invokes Kali, whose tongue drinks up every drop, providing a powerful metaphor for solution-oriented, innovative jurisprudence.

ನೀರಕ್ತಶ್ಚ ಮಹೀಪಾಲ ರಕ್ತಬೀಜೋ ಮಹಾಸುರಃ |
ತತಸ್ತೇ ಹರ್ಷಮತುಲಮವಾಪ್ಸ್ಮಿದಶಾ ನೃಪ ||

[Chapter 8, Verse 62, Durga Saptashati, Markandeya Purana]

"Thus was Raktabija, the great asura, drained of blood, O King. Then the gods attained immeasurable joy."

This motif resonates in Karnataka's battles against recurring corruption and cycles of social injustice, whether in the form of environmental infractions, bureaucratic inefficiency, or criminal recidivism. Jurisprudence is thus not merely about applying codified rules but about dynamically shaping them to address new complexities, a principle evident in Supreme Court doctrines such as the "basic structure" interpretation in *Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (1973)* and the doctrine of proportionality in *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017)*

The myth does not simply advocate for annihilation; it often ends with the goddess granting liberation even to defeated asuras. This duality mirrors the legal dilemma between retributive punishment and restorative justice; the Supreme Court, for instance, weighs the death penalty only in the "rarest of rare" cases, while also encouraging reform in criminal law.

The *Ex Aequo et Bono Principle*: "According to what is Right and Just."

Chamundeshwari, as judge and warrior, both embodies and transgresses rigid doctrine, instead exemplifying *ex aequo et bono* the maxim indicating a judgment founded on equity and conscience, not mechanical application of statute.

“ಯಾ ದೇವೀ ಸರ್ವಭೂತೇಷು ಧರ್ಮರೂಪೇಣ ಸಂಸ್ಥಿತಾ| ಧರ್ಮೈಣ ನಯನಂತೀ ತ್ವಂ ಸರ್ವಾನರ್ಥ
ನಿವಾರಿಣೀ||“

[Chapter 4, Verse 14, Devi Suktam, Durga Saptashati, Markandeya Purana]

"The goddess who abides in all beings as the form of justice, by righteous means, you lead the world and dispel all wrongs."

This creative legal reasoning is emulated in Karnataka's courts using Public Interest Litigations (PILs) to develop new doctrines, whether regarding land reform, gender equality, environmental stewardship, or the rights of marginalized communities

8. LAW AS AN INSTRUMENT OF SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION

WMyth, law, and society are dynamic entities, and their transformations are often catalyzed by visionary narrative. Chamundeshwari's saga is unique not merely for her destruction of evil but also for her commitment to social balance and the upliftment of the marginalized, a theme with enduring influence in Karnataka's legal and policy landscape. The goddess's

vanquishing of Mahishasura, Shumbha-Nishumbha, and Raktabija is not an end in itself but an act that restores harmony and reorganizes the cosmic and moral order. Her acts symbolize the purpose of law: to reorder society around justice, not merely punish wrongdoing.

“ಅಹಂ ವಿಭೂತ್ಯಾ ಬಹುಭಿರಿಹ ರೂಪೈರ್ಯದಾಸ್ಥಿತಾ |
ತತ್ಸಂಹೃತಂ ಮಯೈಕೈವ ತಿಷ್ಠಾಮ್ಯಾಜೌ ಸ್ಥಿರೋ ಭವ ||”

[Chapter 10, Verse 7, Durga Saptashati, Markandeya Purana]

"I stand here in this battle having withdrawn all my manifold forms and divine powers (vibhuti) into myself alone. Stand firm in battle!"

Chamundeshwari's acts directly align with the vision of sociological jurisprudence articulated by Roscoe Pound, law as a tool for social engineering and change. Karnataka's land reforms, anti-child-marriage laws, and civil society's human rights activism reflect this creative, transformative mission.

“ಯದಾ ಚೈತತ್ ಸ್ವಧರ್ಮಸ್ಥಂ ಕುಲೇ ಜಾತು ವಿಪದ್ಯಮ್ |
ತದಾ ತ್ವಂ ಇಹ ಸರ್ವತ್ರ ಸುಖಂ ಸ್ಥಾಪಯಸೇ ಹರ ||”

[Chapter 1, Verse 44, Durga Saptashati]

"When this dharma established in families anywhere faces destruction, then You come here everywhere to reestablish well-being/sukha."

Karnataka's history is rich with substantive social transformation inspired by mythic ideals:

- **Land reforms:** Breaking oppressive zamindari structures and redistributing land to the tiller.
- **Gruha Lakshmi scheme:** Empowering women as household heads, reflecting Chamundeshwari's protective and nurturing role.
- **Mass literacy and anti-child marriage drives:** Extending the Goddess's shelter to the next generation, akin to societal veneration for Devi as the universal mother.

“ಅನ್ನದಾ ವಸುದಾ ಶುದ್ಧಾ ಸುಖದಾ ಗಾಯತ್ರಿರೂಪಿಣೀ| ಅತೀಂದ್ರಿಯಾ ಮಹಾಮಾಯಾ ಸರ್ವಭೂತಹಿತೇ
ರತಾ||”

[Verse 86, Lalita Sahasranama, Uttarabhaga, Brahmanda Purana]

"She is the giver of food and wealth, the pure, the bestower of happiness, embodiment of the Gayatri, indweller of all senses, the great illusion. always devoted to the good of all beings."

Each year, the Mysuru Dasara's Jamboo Savari and ritualized homage to Chamundeshwari reaffirm the commitment to legal justice, gender equity, and institutional reform. The goddess is invoked at every milestone: new initiatives for women, anti-corruption ordinances, or even judicial opening ceremonies, embodying the axiom that law's most actual function is to serve and transform society.

“ಸರ್ವವಿಧಾನಪರಿಪಾಲಿನಿ ಸಂಹಿತಾನಾಂ|
ಮಂತ್ರಸಿದ್ಧಾನಾಂ ದೇವಿ ನಾರಾಯಣಿ ನಮೋಽಸ್ತು ತೇ||”

[Chapter 11, Verse 16, Narayani Stuti, Durga Saptashati]

"O Devi, upholder of all systems and compendia, granter of all mantras their fruit—salutations to you, Narayani!"

9. CONCLUSION:

The myth of Chamundeshwari, not just as the slayer of Mahishasura, but also as an upholder of dharma, guardian of equality, and transformative legal actor, stands at the very center of Karnataka's identity and public justice. For centuries, her legend has continually renewed itself, inspiring rulers, reformers, legislators, and activists to confront the persistent challenges of power, oppression, and social exclusion. Today, the invocation of Chamundeshwari's name in governance reforms, judicial innovation, gender empowerment, and mass movements for integrity attests to the enduring power and relevance of myth in framing modern law. The annual Dasara, Mysuru's spectacular tribute to the goddess, is not simply a ritual; it is a continued societal recommitment to the ideals of the rule of law, gender justice, ethical governance, and collective transformation.

“ಸರ್ವಮಂಗಲಮಂಗಲೈಃ ಶಿವೇ ಸರ್ವಾರ್ಥಸಾಧಕೇ |
ಶರಣ್ಯೇ ತ್ರ್ಯಂಬಕೇ ಗೌರಿ ನಾರಾಯಣಿ ನಮೋಽಸ್ತು ತೇ ||”

"O Auspiciousness of all auspiciousness, O Auspicious One who accomplishes all purposes, O Refuge, O Three-eyed Gauri—Salutations to Thee, Narayani!"

By interpreting Chamundeshwari's battle for justice as more than mythology, by seeing her as a constitutional ideal, a feminist icon, and the spirit animating legal and policy reform, Karnataka offers the world a blueprint for harmonizing tradition with democracy, ethics with action, and divinity with justice. The ancient shlokas echo timelessly: the goddess abides wherever justice is done, wherever agents of law and conscience unite to renew society in her light

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