



ISSUE 2

SHEKHAR KAPUR'S

DEVI

DWILJA

KOTIAN / SINGH

SHEKHAR KAPUR'S
DEVI

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IT WAS THE SECOND CENTURY of mankind's arrival on earth when the Gods of Light took up arms against one of their own. Bala, a fallen God, had rejected the old ways of the Pantheon and sought to impose his dominion over man.

Feeding off the forced worship of men, Bala had grown too powerful for the pantheon to take him on alone. So the pure Gods each sacrificed a part of themselves to create a powerful entity.

She is Devi.

Story so far.

LED BY DEVI, THE DURAPASYA, HUMANS WHO FIGHT ALONGSIDE THE GODS, WAGED WAR AGAINST THE DREAD LORD BALA. THIS BATTLE CULMINATED IN A HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT BETWEEN BALA AND DEVI, RESULTING IN BALA BEING BLINDED, CAPTURED, AND IMPRISONED IN JWALA--THE INFERNAL PRISON DEEP WITHIN THE EARTH'S CORE. THE KEY TO THE PRISON WAS ENTRUSTED BY BODHA, THE SUPREME LORD OF CREATION, TO A CREATURE OF FIRE AND STONE CALLED THE GATEKEEPER. AS HIS SARCOPHAGUS WAS SEALED, BALA SWORE HE WOULD RETURN, THAT NO PRISON COULD EVER HOLD HIM! IN THE PRESENT DAY A MAN CLAIMING TO BE THE DREAD LORD HAS CONTACTED THE APSARA ASSASSIN, KRATHA, SEEKING HER SERVICES FOR A VERY SPECIAL JOB THAT COULD DOOM ALL OF HUMANITY.



Part Two
DWIJA

LOCATION: SITAPUR, INDIA.



WHOA!



WELL...
THAT'S A
PRETTY GOOD
REASON.



HUHF...HUHF...
IF I EVER...EVER CATCH
THAT...WHATEVER THAT
WAS...HUFFFF...I'M GOING
TO PUT ONE IN HIS...
WHEW! I GOT TO
QUIT SMOKING



THERE YOU ARE, YOU
LITTLE BASTARD. NO ONE
HIGGES AT INSPECTOR
RAHUL SINGH AND GETS
AWAY WITH IT.
WELL, EXCEPT
FOR THE EX.



Kohi naa ja ane, oh ai si Ba ate, OHH HH
Bar sateeeeee ehhhhh!

LOCATION: TOTO'S KARAOKE
BAR, SITAPUR.

MAKE IT
STOP!

Yeh Bh igi bh igi
RAAA TE EEE EHH HH!!!

HI! YOU MUST
BE KRATHA.

I'M AMARA GAELE,
BALA SENT ME TO
MEET YOU HERE.

ABOUT TIME!
ONE MORE CHEESY
RENDITION OF
"WOH LAMHE"--

--AND I WOULD
HAVE HAD TO KILL
EVERYONE IN THIS
GODFORSAKEN BAR...
FREE OF CHARGE.

SORRY--
TRAFFIC'S KILLER.
SUBWAY CONSTRUCTION HAS
THE WHOLE CITY...UM...
UPSIDE DOWN.



NAME YOUR POISON.

NOTHING FOR ME, THANK YOU. I HAVE TO GET BACK TO WORK AFTER THIS.

UH-HUH. BALA SAID YOU WOULD HAVE INFORMATION ABOUT THE MARK.

YOU DID REMEMBER TO BRING IT ALONG WITH YOU-- RIGHT?



YEAH, I DID.



SO THIS IS THE **DEV/** INCARNATE? WHO WOULD IMAGINE THAT SUCH A FRAIL LOOKING THING COULD HOLD SO MUCH **POWER?**



WE KEEP A CLOSE WATCH ON HER, BUT WE DON'T KNOW WHETHER SHE HAS MANIFESTED HER **DEV/** POWERS YET ONE OF THE REASONS WHY BALA CHOSE THE WORLD'S BEST ASSASSIN FOR SUCH A SEEMINGLY...UH... SIMPLE JOB.



AND WITH THE AMOUNT OF MONEY THAT HE'S OFFERING, THE WORLD'S BEST ASSASSIN DOESN'T *MIND* LETTING HER STANDARDS DROP A LITTLE.

SO... WHAT'S HER NAME?



TARA DIDI!

TARA DIDI!

WATER



GUESS WHAT I GOT?



ALRIGHT! BRAND NEW CRICKET STUFF!

YEAH! QUICKET SUFF.

WE'LL BE THE BEST-EQUIPPED TEAM IN THE BASTI. IF WE WIN THE NEIGHBORHOOD TOURNAMENT, TARA DIDI--WE'LL DEDICATE IT TO YOU.

OH, NEVER MIND THAT, SWEETIE. I'M GLAD I COULD HELP. JUST HIT A FEW SIXERS FOR ME, OKAY?



DIDI, I'M SO GLAD YOU DIDN'T FORGET US AFTER YOU MOVED AWAY.



WHO IS THAT GIRL, JI? IS SHE A SOCIAL WORKER?

OH, THAT'S
TARA, BEHEN-JI.*
SHE MOVED ACROSS
THE STREET JUST A
FEW MONTHS BEFORE
YOU GOT HERE.
OWNS ONE WHOLE
FLOOR OF THE
BUILDING.

NONSENSE--SHE
DOESN'T OWN IT!
IT'S BEEN BOUGHT
FOR HER.

SHE
LOOKS NICE AND
INNOCENT BUT REALLY--
CHI-CHI-CHI-CHI, I CAN'T
EVEN GET MYSELF
TO SAY IT.

WHAT IS
SHE? GAY?
BECAUSE I READ
AN ARTICLE
THE OTHER DAY
IN FEMINA
THAT...

SISTER

SHE'S
A BLOODY
WHORE.

HAS TWO
BODYGUARDS OR AT LEAST,
SHE CLAIMS THEY'RE BODYGUARDS,
AND HER BOYFRIEND (WHO BOUGHT
HER THE FLAT TO BEGIN WITH)
SPENDS NIGHTS WITH HER.

THEY AREN'T
EVEN MARRIED!

BUT WHY WOULD
A PROSTITUTE NEED
BODYGUARDS?


BECAUSE
HER BOYFRIEND
IS A BHAJ.

HER
BOYFRIEND...
IS HER
BROTHER?!

NO SILLY,
BHAI--AG IN HER'S
A GANGSTER.

OH...
THAT KIND
OF BHAJ.*

*BROTHER ALSO MEANS GANGSTER IN HINDI SLANG.




MIGHTY IMPRESSIVE.
BULLET THROUGH THE HEART
AT 500 YARDS--IT SEEMS YOUR
DRINKING, HASN'T EFFECTED
YOUR AIM, RAHUL.

WHATEVER
YOU SAY, DR. RAO.
DRINKING OR NO DRINKING
I KNOW HOW TO HANDLE A GUN.
GOD GIVEN ABILITY I EVER
TELL YOU THAT?

CONSTANTLY.


WHAT A
SPECTACULAR FALL
FROM GRACE. ONE DAY
ON TOP OF THE WORLD, THE
NEXT DAY THE POLICE
MORTICIAN IS YOUR
ONLY FRIEND...



... AND YOUR
CAREER IS NOTHING MORE
THAN A DISTANT DREAM...
HMMM. FANGS?


WELL, THAT'S THE
THING SEE, HE DIDN'T
HAVE FANGS WHEN I FIRST
CHASED HIM. HE GREW
THEM. AND THEN
HE HISSED.

YOU REALLY
OUGHT TO LAY
OFF THAT
COUNTRY LIQUOR,
MY FRIEND.



THEN AGAIN, I'VE BEEN DOWN
HERE LONG ENOUGH TO SEE
A LITTLE BIT OF EVERYTHING YOU
CAN IMAGINE AND EVEN MORE
OF WHAT YOU CANNOT.

WELL, HELLO
THERE!



SEEMS YOU
MISSED HIS HEART BY
MERE INCHES, RAHUL.
SO MUCH FOR YOUR GOD
GIVEN ABILITY.





HE... HE
ATTACKED
ME.

I KNOW.

HE WAS
DEAD.

I KNOW.

GOOD
GOD!

I DOUBT GOD
HAD ANYTHING TO
DO WITH IT



WHAT IS
IT?

HIS WRIST



THE ABYSS... WAIT,
I'VE HEARD OF THIS PLACE
... YEAH, ITS UH, ITS ON MILL
ROAD. OPENED VERY
RECENTLY.



YA'KNOW, WHERE
THESE FILMY STARS
HANG AROUND IN THEIR
SLINKY CLOTHES AND SLICK
HAIR, MAKING EYES AT ONE
ANOTHER. IT'S THE "IN"
PLACE OF THE
MOMENT.

AND IT'S
OWNED BY
IVAM--



--WHO, INCIDENTALLY, IS
ONE OF THE BIGGEST
CRIME BOSSSES IN
SITAPUR. AND...



HEY, WHERE ARE
YOU GOING? WHAT AM
I SUPPOSED TO WRITE
AS THE CAUSE OF
DEATH.

SUBJECT
LOST HIS
HEAD.

LOCATION: SITAPUR, THE LOWER WEST DOCKS

PLEASE *IYAM* BHA! I MADE A MISTAKE

OH, *NOW* YOU REALIZE YOUR MISTAKE.

I TOLD YOU ONCE. I TOLD YOU A HUNDRED TIMES. THAT PART OF TOWN--THE BASTI--IS UNDER MY PROTECTION AND I DO NOT WANT *ANYONE* PEDDLING DRUGS OUT THERE.

MARK MY WORDS...THE BASTI IS OFF LIMITS.

SORRY, *IYAM* BHA! IT-IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN.

I KNOW.

SHYAM.

YES BOSS.

CUT THIS GUY UP AND FEED HIM TO THE PIGS. I'M LATE FOR SOMETHING IMPORTANT.

MY PLEASURE.

THE ABYSS, PAGE 3" CALLED IT "THE ONLY PLACE TO BE." SO THEN, WHY IS IT THAT THIS IS THE LAST PLACE I REALLY WANT TO BE?



"POPULAR GOSSIP COLUMN."



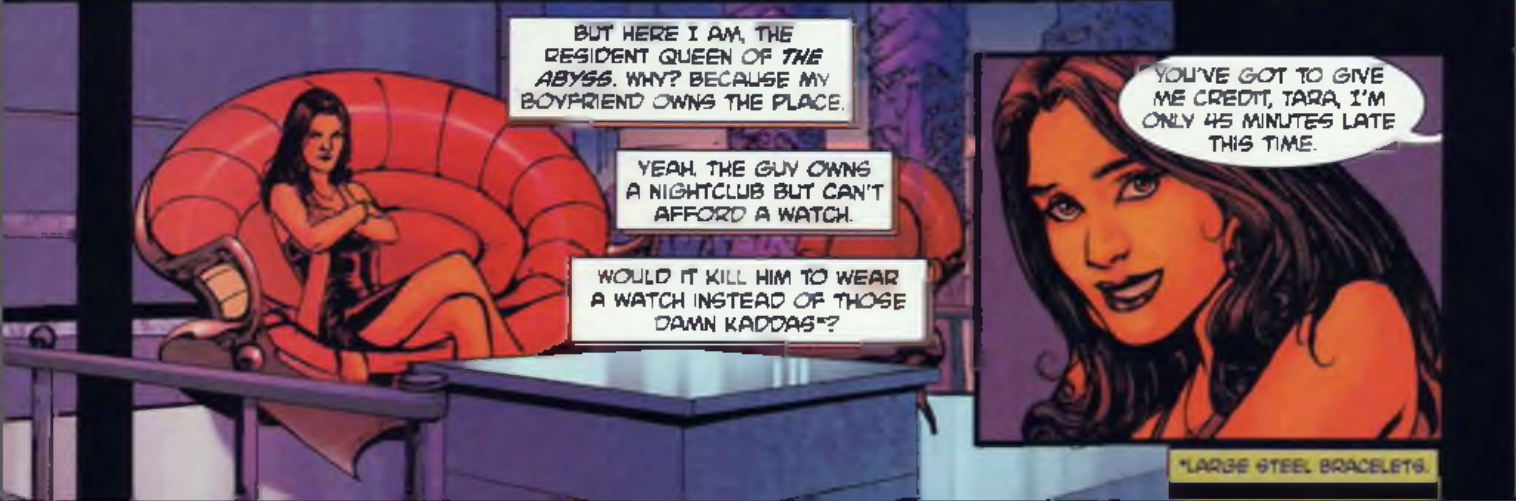
I WONDER WHAT THEY THINK. I REALLY DO--COMING IN HERE NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, TRYING SO HARD TO DANCE IN A FIRE TRAP.



MAYBE PEOPLE COME TO THIS PLACE TO ACTUALLY CONTEMPLATE THE MEANING OF LIFE--IF THEY EVER DO THAT IN THE FIRST PLACE.



NO. PEOPLE COME HERE FOR THE OVER PRICED BOOZE AND THE BAD MUSIC LOUD ENOUGH TO DRIVE YOU MAD.



BUT HERE I AM, THE RESIDENT QUEEN OF THE ABYSS. WHY? BECAUSE MY BOYFRIEND OWNS THE PLACE.

YEAH. THE GUY OWNS A NIGHTCLUB BUT CAN'T AFFORD A WATCH.

WOULD IT KILL HIM TO WEAR A WATCH INSTEAD OF THOSE DAMN KADDAS*?



YOU'VE GOT TO GIVE ME CREDIT, TARA, I'M ONLY 45 MINUTES LATE THIS TIME.

"LARGE STEEL BRACELETS."



IYAM,
I'VE BEEN WAITING
FOR SO LONG!

COME
HERE, GIVE
ME A KISS.



TALE AS
OLD AS TIME.

CUTE CHICK,
BAD BOY.
UNBELIEVABLE.



SO,
WHAT ARE YOU
DRINKING TONIGHT?
VODKA? GIN?

YEAH RIGHT,
IYAM. YOU KNOW
I DON'T--

IYAM BHAJ,
THERE'S A CALL
FOR YOU FROM
MISS GAELLE.



YES...YES THIS IS A BAD
TIME...DO YOU REALLY
NEED ME TO..I SEE, I'LL
BE RIGHT THERE.



LISTEN, TARA,
I GOT TO GO AND
TAKE CARE OF
SOMETHING.

WHAT?
YOU JUST GOT HERE.
WHERE DO YOU HAVE
TO GO NOW?!

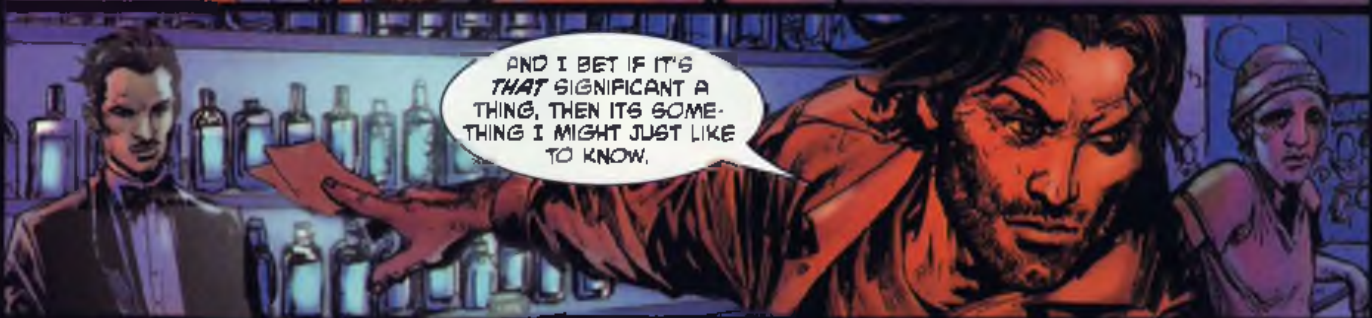


YOU KNOW
BETTER THAN TO ASK
ME ABOUT MY BUSINESS.
I'LL MEET YOU LATER
AT YOUR PLACE.

GO THERE
AND WAIT FOR
ME.



HMMM, LEAVING
YOUR GIRL BEHIND,
IVAM? THIS *MUST* BE
IMPORTANT.



AND I BET IF IT'S
THAT SIGNIFICANT A
THING, THEN ITS SOME-
THING I MIGHT JUST LIKE
TO KNOW.



WHERE TO,
MEMSAHIB?!

... HOME.

MADAM





THERE'S A PROCESSION OUT THERE. LOOKS LIKE SOME PUJA,* MEMSAHIB.

*HINDU RITUALS WITH PRAYERS



I CAN SEE THAT. CAN'T YOU ASK THEM TO MAKE WAY OR SOMETHING?



OYE, WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?



DEVI PUJA.*

WHAT? DEVI PUJA ISN'T TILL---

*ANNUAL RELIGIOUS FESTIVAL FOR THE GODDESS DURGA HELD IN THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER.



NOT THAT DEVI.



AIEEEEE!



TARA MEHTA,
BELIEVE ME WHEN
I SAY THIS, YOU ARE
DESTINED FOR
GREATER THINGS.



HOWEVER, THERE
IS ALWAYS PAIN IN
REBIRTH.



MOVE HER
UP FRONT. TONIGHT
THE DEVI WILL RIDE IN
THE MANNER THAT SHE
DESERVES.

LIKE A
GODDESS.



WE HAVE A SITUATION.

WHAT KIND OF A SITUATION?

A BAD ONE.



YOUR TARA JUST GOT KIDNAPPED.

BY WHOM?



LOOKS LIKE DURAPAGYA.

IS THAT A PROBLEM FOR ONE SO ADEPT AT THE ART OF KILLING AS YOU?

YOU NEVER MENTIONED ANYTHING ABOUT DURAPAGYA. THESE PEOPLE ARE A SECRET SOCIETY THAT DATES BACK TO BEFORE THEY EVEN HAD DATES.

DOES IT MATTER?



NO IT DOESN'T. IT JUST MEANS THAT FOR EVERY ONE OF THEM I HAVE TO KILL TO GET TO HER THE PRICE OF THE JOB WILL GET THAT MUCH HIGHER.

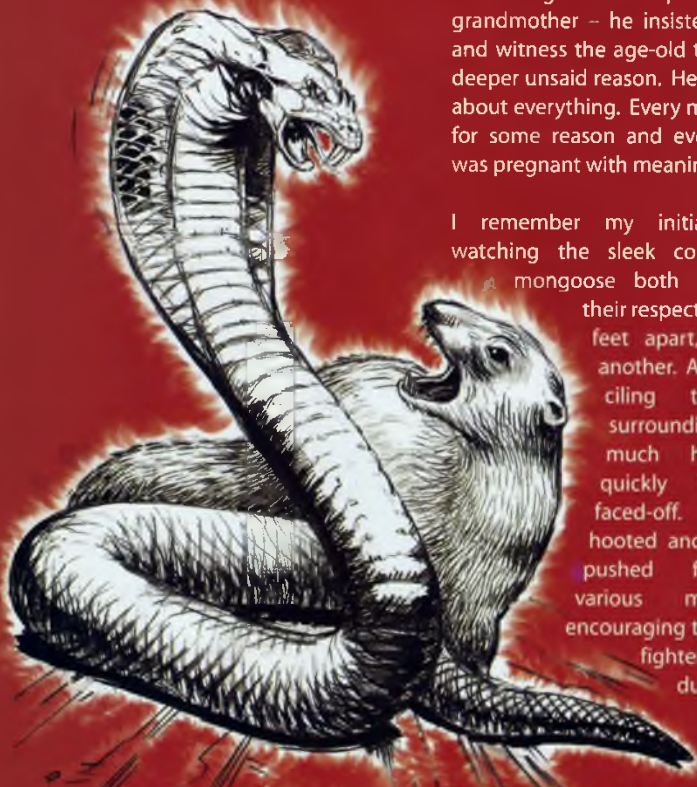
SO, HOW DO YOU WANT ME TO PROCEED, LORD BALA?



MAKE YOURSELF
A WEALTHY WOMAN...
KILL... THEM...ALL!

TO BE CONTINUED.

The Cobra and the Mongoose



I was about 10 years old the first time my grandfather took me to one of the cobra vs. mongoose fights in India. While not as prevalent today as they once were, these duels still exist, especially in the crowded alleyways of the old parts of the city (for me, Delhi) where small throngs congregate and throw down a few rupees to bet on which of the two creatures will survive the battle.

Unlike most of those that crowded around the cobra and the mongoose, my grandfather was a soft-spoken and solemn man, not the type to indulge in the cruel subjugation of the two animals. Still – against the pleadings of my grandmother – he insisted that I come and witness the age-old tussle for some deeper unsaid reason. He was deliberate about everything. Every moment existed for some reason and every experience was pregnant with meaning.

I remember my initial excitement watching the sleek cobra and lean mongoose both released from their respective cages a few feet apart, facing one another. After first reconciling their strange surroundings amidst so much hysteria, they quickly focused and faced-off. The crowd hooted and hollered and pushed forward, the various men crudely encouraging their respective fighters. And so the duel played out, the mongoose dancing frenetically around the serpent, swatting with its paws at the graceful hooded cobra and the snake, alternatively, dodging the mongoose's reckless assaults, hissing with each move and occasionally spitting back with a singular and precise snap.

But what started out as fascination and excitement rather quickly turned to horror as both the cobra and mongoose

became weary and I realized that one of these two animals would be killed by the other. There was something very primitive about the whole experience, watching the two hapless beings resort to a game of death because they were cornered into it by a bunch of humans seeking some entertainment during their lunch breaks. After almost half an hour, the mongoose's energy waned until it finally, sadly flopped onto its side and took its last breath. For while it had been swatting energetically at the snake, somewhere along the line, the cobra had landed a hit, buried its fangs into the mongoose and injected its deadly venom. It had happened so fast that no one really knew when exactly the fatal blow had occurred. After landing the fatal hit, the cobra's singular objective was waiting out the inevitability of the mongoose's death and surviving the last bold assaults of the dying creature.

When it was over, the spectators paid off their bets, jibed each other about their losses (or winnings), and retreated back to their lives. Likewise, my grandfather took my hand and led me away silently, not bothering to acknowledge the horrified look frozen on my face, nor to explain why he had brought me there in the first place to witness the fight. That would be up to me to figure out for myself.

Years later, in a small bookshop in old Delhi, I came across an aged text of Indian fables. One chapter described the meaning behind the cobra vs. the mongoose fight and it was then that I suddenly realized what I had ingested so many years ago.

mongoose is not just a struggle for survival between two of God's creatures; it is the eternal cosmic dance between the past and the future, between ancient wisdoms and modern technologies. The cobra, in its wisdom, with patience and presence, waits for the precise moment to strike, knowing that only one bite from its venomous fangs will do the trick. Meanwhile the mongoose dances, relentlessly stalking the serpent, hoping that all its blows will add up and wear the snake down, guaranteeing victory. It is wisdom vs. persistence, and the right balance between the two ensures a clash that can last for hours, even, legend says, the whole day. But if one side is to falter, destruction is imminent.

India is the land of everything. Those of us who have spent considerable time or grown up there affectionately describe India as being, "a lot of everything" or "an assault on all the senses." It is a hard country to reconcile because it is full of contradictions, chalked full of the sacred and profane, the divine and the diabolical, all in excess, all at the same time. The battle between the cobra and the mongoose is no different; it's both crude and cosmic, inhumane and existential all at the same time. They say there is one lesson worth taking away from it: "Do what you must to ensure the duel between the cobra and the mongoose never ends. For when it does, so does everything else."

Deepak Chopra is best known as the author of over forty books including New York Times best-sellers *How to Know God* and *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*. For two decades, Deepak has been at the forefront of bridging the technological miracles of the West with the wisdom of the East.

As Chief Visionary for Virgin Comics, he is the mastermind behind the upcoming *Ramayan Reborn*, a re-imagining of India's greatest myth.



From Series architect,

SIDDHARTH KOTIAN

Comics have always been a part of my life. They opened up new worlds to me, and in so doing, were influential in some of the greatest changes of my life. As a boy in Bombay, I remember rummaging through the local raddi walla and coming across *Batman Year One* – it was a life-changing incident. I was a kid until I found that book.

Until then my only exposure to comics had been *Tinkle* and *Archie*. I read *Year One*, re-read it, scrutinized every panel and every bit of dialogue. It was like nothing I had ever seen or experienced before – it was dark and gritty with prostitutes, drugs and violence. It changed the way I looked at this medium. It changed the way I looked at the world! This is what a comic is all about to me – it shocks you, it fascinates you, it makes you a fan for life.

It was only several years later, when I chanced upon the old Image titles, that I realized I needed to make comics myself. Brett Booth's work on *Backlash*, the exaggerated figures, the intricate costumes and the lovely digital coloring, fascinated me. It was a visual treat and at that time it was like nothing I had ever seen before.

These two books made me want to make comics.

But who wants to be a writer? Not me. I wanted to be a penciller! (Hah, I'm such a cliché.) But writing *Devi*, creating the intricate mythology behind the character has proven to be a fascinating experience – both personally and culturally.

Devi is the first Indian super heroine to encompass the shifting times that we live in. On one hand we have our cultural heritage – the way women are treated and expected to behave in society. And on the other, we have the influx of western values and lifestyle, the clash between the conservative and the forward-thinking. Finding the right blend of these two worlds was a challenge that made this book unique.

To that end, a key element of this series is the creation of *Sitapur* – our Gotham City or Metropolis, which fuses ancient India with urban decadence. The cityscape is criss-crossed by a network of elevated steam-powered trains, the streets are filled with the new and the old. It is an exaggerated version of urban India and adds a tremendous punch to the book, both visually and thematically.

But what is modern-day India, both in western perception and eastern reality, and how is it important to *Devi*? Struggling with tradition and globalization, my India is a place working to balance the desire for personal freedom with the need to maintain our heritage. The west has become increasingly fascinated with India's mysticism, and so, through *Devi*, I have tried to appeal to that fascination with mystical Indian values while celebrating the modern-thinking urban-youth of India. And so, in the title character, many of these tensions co-exist, and her struggle is truly ours.

Devi walks the fine line between two diverse and fascinating cultures and will, I hope, bring you the best of both – imperfections, struggles and all.

Hope you enjoy it.

SIDDHARTH KOTIAN

❧ *Shakti* ❧

SHAKTI IS THE FEMININE FACE OF GOD. SHAKTI IS THE WOMB OF CREATION FROM WHICH THE WHOLE UNIVERSE IS BORN. SHAKTI IS POWER. SHAKTI IS MULTI-DIMENSIONAL. SHE COMES IN MANY FORMS:

Chitta Shakti is the power of pure consciousness. Chitta Shakti is experienced as profound peace and centered awareness in the midst of chaos, turbulence, and danger. Established in Being, it performs in action. It is the spiritual warrior in all of us.

Ichcha Shakti is the power of intention and the manifestation inherent in desire. Those that master ichcha shakti garner the infinite organizing power of intention that weaves the tapestry of the universe.

Kriya Shakti is spontaneous right action without anticipation of response – knowing what to do and when to do it with finesse. It is the power of intuition – a form of intelligence that is holistic, nurturing, relational and contextual and that eavesdrops on the mind of the cosmos and has a computing power that is far beyond linear rational thought.

Ananda Shakti is inner bliss and contentment. It is bliss that radiates from Being as light from a bonfire, transforming all who are enveloped by it.

Gyan Shakti is understanding the laws of nature and knowing that the elements and forces of the cosmos 'out there' are the same as the elements and forces within us. By harnessing these elements and forces, it becomes possible to influence nature herself through our awareness.

When Shakti awakens in us, she manifests as the Goddesses

1. Siddhi - *the Goddess with supernatural powers in the world and*
2. Riddhi - *the Goddess who controls the elements and forces of the Universe.*

As humanity evolves into a wisdom-based culture, the forces of good, truth, and harmony will continue to battle the dark forces. These epic battles will be fought in the domain of consciousness where even the most powerful technologies of destruction will be rendered impotent. Shakti will provide new raw materials for the collective imagination of humanity and give birth to an age that even Homer or Valmiki never dreamed of.

A muscular man with a dark, metallic-looking skin tone is shown from the chest up. He is wearing a black leather outfit with gold-colored buckles and a spiked collar. He is breaking through a dark metal helmet with his right hand, which is clenched into a fist. The background is a fiery orange and red, with yellow lightning bolts striking down. The man's left arm is also visible, wearing a black leather gauntlet with a metal cuff. The overall scene is one of intense action and power.

METAL DAVE

DCP