Revealing Śiva's superiority by retelling Viṣṇu's deeds: Viṣṇu's manifestation myths in the Skandapurāṇa

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devāsurāṇāṃ yad vṛttaṃ bhaviṣyaṃ kathitaṃ śubhāḥ |

tad vayaṃ śrotum icchāmo yadi vo 'nugrahe matiḥ ||

"We wish to hear that which was told about the future affairs of the gods and the Asuras,

oh glorious ones, if you would like [to do us] a favour."

Skandapurāṇa 112.112

5   Royal succession and divine wars: the textual context of Viṣṇu's manifestation myths

The three manifestation myths of Viṣṇu come across as one unit. They present a coherent new image of Viṣṇu being dependent on Śiva, introduce an afterlife that has the same problem-solution structure and add a boon that becomes more religious as the text progresses. However, the manifestation myths are not told in one sequence. The Narasiṃha myth is told in SP 70—71 and the Varāha myth in SP 76.14—110.end. In between, the Skanda myth is introduced (SP 72) and the Andhaka myth starts with the birth of Andhaka (SP 73ff.)[392]. There is also a large gap between the Varāha myth and the Vāmana myth, because the latter only starts in SP_{Bh} 116.13cd. In between, there is a section on the teaching of *vratas* by Pārvatī (SP 111.1—112.72), the Andhaka myth continues (SP 112.73—end), and several narratives on wars between the gods and the Asuras are told (SP_{Bh} 113ff.). Each manifestation myth is thus surrounded by other narratives and has its own textual context[393].

Since the three manifestation myths are so closely connected thematically, it would make sense to tell them in one sequence, in particular for the sake of highlighting the increase of Śiva's boons to Viṣṇu. This raises the question why the present situation is different. Is it a deliberate choice of the *Skandapurāṇa* composers to separate the myths? If so, what are their objectives? How do the manifestation myths fit into their textual context? These questions will be addressed in this chapter.

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[392] Both myths continue later in the text: the Skanda myth continues in SP_{Bh} 163—65 and the Andhaka myth in SP 112.73—end and SP_{Bh} 130—57.

[393] I make a distinction between the *textual* context, which concerns the narratives surrounding the myth in question and the *context of the text as a whole*, which addresses adjustments in the manifestation myths that align them with the Śaiva ideology of the *Skandapurāṇa*.

As I have shown in the previous chapters, the manifestation myths in the *Skandapurāṇa* are full of innovations and alterations that have a well-definable rationale behind them, whether ideological or tradition-driven, are structurally employed and follow a repeated pattern. The choices can therefore often be seen as deliberate choices of the composers[394]. We may assume that this is also the case with the position of the manifestation myths in the text. In a forthcoming article on the content, composition and narrative structure of the *Skandapurāṇa*, Yuko Yokochi (forth.) gives examples of narratives whose place in the text seems illogical at first glance—from the perspective of chronology for instance—but can be explained nonetheless. One of the examples is the myth in which Pārvatī adopts an Aśoka tree (SP$_{Bh}$ 158—62) because she is *aputrā*, "without a son" (SP$_{Bh}$ 162.69a). The story is told immediately after the Andhaka cycle, in which Skanda, the son of Śiva and Pārvatī, in fact already featured (for example, in the afterlife episode of the Varāha myth)[395]. From a chronological point of view, it is therefore not possible that Pārvatī is *aputrā*. However, according to Yokochi, this chronological inconsistency can be explained as the continuation of a shared theme: "it continued the motif of the adoption of a son, which motif also concluded the Andhaka Cycle when Śiva adopted Andhaka and Umā too accepted him as her son (SP 157). The Aśoka tree episode is also appropriate in this place since it foreshadows the birth of Skanda as told in SP 163" (Yokochi, forth.). The decision to place the Aśoka tree narrative in this particular place can be hence explained from its textual context, which deals with the adoption and the birth of a son.

Similarly, we may expect the *Skandapurāṇa* composers to have had their reasons to separate Viṣṇu's manifestation myths, which from the perspective of their unifying

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[394] In chapter 3, I have demonstrated that the composers followed various layers of consistency to compose a coherent, trustworthy and acceptable retelling of Viṣṇu's manifestation myths. The study in chapter 4 has shown that the composers placed the most significant message at the end of the narratives. By looking for narrative techniques and choices of style and structure in the *Skandapurāṇa* version of the manifestation myths, it is possible to unveil some of the intentions and ideas of the anonymous composers.

[395] As mentioned in note 205, I generally use the term "(myth) cycle" in the same way as the editors of the *Skandapurāṇa* do, *viz.* "in a loose sense to indicate a more or less complete narrative unit" (SP Vol. IV, 3 note 1). However, in the present chapter, there are cases in which stricter criteria to define the textual context of the manifestation myths are needed. Therefore, I try to refer to a specific narrative as much as possible, instead of a complete myth cycle. In this particular case, it is nevertheless relevant to mention the Andhaka *cycle*, instead of the Andhaka *myth* (which happens to end in SP$_{Bh}$ 157 as well), because the argument involves the Varāha myth which is part of the Andhaka cycle according to the editors' definition of the term.

themes seems illogical at first sight. In order to understand the rationale behind this decision, I will investigate "the immediate context" of these myths, a term borrowed from Tamar Alexander-Frizer in *The Pious Sinner* (1991)[396]. I make a distinction between the *direct* immediate context and the *relative* immediate context[397]. The *direct* immediate context concerns the narratives that directly precede and follow the manifestation myth under discussion. To decide which narratives belong to the direct immediate context, I look for shared content that connects the narratives. The example of the Aśoka tree episode above (SP$_{Bh}$ 158—62) is linked in its direct immediate context to SP$_{Bh}$ 157 with the adoption of Andhaka and, to a lesser degree, to SP 163 with the birth of Skanda, because each involves the adoption and birth of a son. The direct immediate context of the manifestation myths in the *Skandapurāṇa* are discussed in section 5.1, along with the shared themes that connect them.

The *relative* immediate context concerns narratives that are told relatively close to the manifestation myth under discussion. It is likewise determined on the basis of shared topics. The main difference with the direct context, however, is that the relative context could consist of narratives that do not directly precede or follow the narrative in question. I will examine which narratives belong to the relative immediate context of the

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[396] In *The Pious Sinner*, Alexander-Frizer studies different versions of Jewish narratives in the *Book of the Pietists*. Since there is little known about the method of transmission of this text, "in studying the stories one can draw only limited conclusions about the social context of the telling as an event or the audience's reactions. Hence context will be treated in a way that differs somewhat from the foregoing [i.e. context as "the specific and social situation in which that particular item is actually employed" (Alexander-Frizer 1991, 30)], and two aspects germane to the present study will be discussed: the *immediate context* (the micro-context), which is the location of a given story with respect to the passages preceding and following it; and the *wider context* (or macro-context), which is the story's significance in the ethical and theological doctrine of German-Jewish Pietism [i.e. the religious strand promoted in the *Book of the Pietists*]" (ibid, 31). In the case of Viṣṇu's manifestation myths in the *Skandapurāṇa*, the immediate context concerns the narratives preceding and following the manifestation myths—not necessarily *directly* preceding and following them— and the wider context concerns the religious ideology of the *Skandapurāṇa* as a whole, studied in the previous chapters (e.g. in chapter 3 in relation to the internarrational consistency of the composers).

[397] Alexander-Frizer does not make this differentiation, but she applies both subtypes indiscriminately. For example, in her study on "The Tale of the Pious Sinner", she shows that the tale, told in paragraph 80, is "a continuation of discussions in paragraphs 76, 77, 78 and 79" (Alexander-Frizer 1991, 102), which would be a case of *direct* immediate context in my wording. In her study on "The Blood Test" Tale, however, she notices a shared topic between paragraphs in the *relative* immediate context, namely paragraphs 281, 286, 289, 290 and 291, which is the tale itself (ibid, 52).

manifestation myths and the themes that link them in section 5.2. It will become clear that the manifestation myths, despite the gaps between them, are closely connected to each other, based on their relative immediate context.

In section 5.3, I will return to the question what the composers' intentions may have been to separate the three manifestation myths. I will approach this question from two angles. First, I will explore how the chosen situation contributes to the compositional unity of this part of the *Skandapurāṇa*. Then, I will examine whether the findings can tell us something about the ambitions of the *Skandapurāṇa* composers for the text as a whole, focussing particularly on the reasons why the composers did not only tell the manifestation myths, but addressed larger topics instead.

5.1 Direct immediate context

The direct immediate context of the manifestation myths is determined by the fact whether the narrative(s) preceding and/ or following the manifestation myth share the same topic. The topic can be easily recognizable, when the main characters of the main story are the same, as well as the setting of the main story (for example, the heavens or the netherworld) and its subject. When the main characters do not agree, and there is not a clearly shared subject, the narrative could still be connected on a thematic level. The Aśoka tree episode mentioned above is an example of the second situation. This episode deals with Pārvatī as the main character, it is set in a heavenly realm, and the subject is the acquirement and adoption of a son. It is through this final theme that the narrative can be connected most clearly with its preceding narrative, the Andhaka myth. The latter features Andhaka and the Asuras, among whom he is brought up, as the main characters, and Śiva and Pārvatī only appear later as his adopting parents. The setting in which the myth takes place is both heaven and the netherworld. Furthermore, the most prevalent topic of the main story is the battle between Andhaka and the Asuras on one side and Śiva's Gaṇas on the other side. However, there is one more underlying theme in the myth, *viz.* the adoption of a son. It is this topic that connects the Andhaka myth with the Aśoka tree episode[398].

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[398] As mentioned above, the acquirement of a son furthermore connects the Aśoka tree episode with the following narrative on Skanda's birth. In this case, the setting is the same as well, *viz.* the heavenly realms, and although the main character in the latter is primarily Skanda, Śiva and Pārvatī also play an important role.

In order to identify a shared topic, one might look for linking verses that refer to the mutual topic. This is frequently used as a compositional technique to make the transitions between narratives smoother and to unify a section. It is important to make a distinction between verses that connect narratives on the level of the *main topic* and those that make a bridge with *less central story elements* that the narratives have in common. Examples of the first are, for instance, studied by Horst Brinkhaus in the context of the *Harivaṃśa*. In his article '*Āścaryakarman* and *prādurbhāvas* in the *Harivaṃśa*' (2001), Brinkhaus shows that each list of Viṣṇu's manifestations and deeds, appearing in the *Harivaṃśa*, has a different aim, from which the composers' intentions can be deduced. For example, HV 31 forms one set of Viṣṇu's nine manifestation myths that includes both human and animal manifestations. The sequence is clearly introduced[399] and concluded[400] by reiterating the main topic of this chapter, *viz.* Viṣṇu's *prādurbhāvas* ("manifestations"). Each myth is furthermore connected through a linking verse, emphasizing the shared subject[401]. I would identify such a section as constituting one coherent direct immediate context. In his article, Brinkhaus tries to find a reason for the inclusion of the section on Viṣṇu's *prādurbhāvas*. At the time when this enumeration was added to the *Harivaṃśa*, the text was primarily concerned with lists dealing with either human or animal manifestations and did not contain lists that combined the two types of manifestations. According to Brinkhaus, the composers wanted to fill this void, by adding a comprehensive list of Viṣṇu's

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[399] HV 31.13:
hitārthaṃ suramartyānāṃ lokānāṃ prabhavāya ca |
bahuśaḥ sarvabhūtātmā prādurbhavati kāryataḥ |
prādurbhāvāṃś ca vakṣyāmi puṇyān devaguṇair yutān || 13 ||
"For the sake of the welfare of gods and men, as well as for the sake of the control over the worlds, [Viṣṇu] whose essence [consists of] all beings, manifests himself many times according to his duties. Now I will tell about these auspicious manifestations, which are filled with divine qualities."
[400] Viṣṇu's manifestations of the past are concluded in HV 31.148ab: *ete lokahitārthāya prādurbhāvā mahātmanaḥ*, "these are the manifestations of the noble one for the sake of the world".
[401] Almost each myth is connected with the previous one by a connecting sentence. The myths are either connected through the word *bhūyaḥ*, "furthermore", or by a sentence referring back to the previous manifestation and announcing the next. For example, the Narasiṃha myth starts by referring to the previous myth about Varāha.
HV 31.31:
vārāha eṣa kathito nārasiṃham ataḥ śṛṇu |
yatra bhūtvā mṛgendreṇa hiraṇyakaśipur hataḥ || 31 ||
"This Varāha [manifestation] has been told; now listen to [the manifestation] of Narasiṃha, in which Hiraṇyakaśipu is killed by the lord of animals [i.e. Narasiṃha]."

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manifestations that "are indiscriminately described as being on one and the same level, i.e. as being theologically equivalent, be they non-human or human" (Brinkhaus 2001, 36).

The second type of linking techniques has been studied by Yokochi (forth.). She identifies different 'narrative layers', "based on two criteria: 1) a sequence of events, and 2) the main character(s) of these events" (Yokochi, forth.). In other words, a narrative layer consists of narratives that follow the same timeline and the same figures. The timeline also often takes place in the same place, but this is not taken into consideration in the article. This approach results in a division into several layers, of which layer A is the main layer, where "Śiva is the principle character, since the ultimate aim of the composition of the SP, as we understand it, is to show that this world is his universe" (ibid.)[402]. The timeline, place and main characters are occasionally stressed by the *Skandapurāṇa* composers with the help of linking verses. The shared elements of time, place and main characters are taken up at the beginning of the following narrative; for instance, in the form of a question of Vyāsa to Sanatkumāra about what Śiva did when he had returned home to Mount Mandara. Although verses like this provide insight into the timeline of the narrative and its main characters, they do not necessarily provide information on the *main topic* of the narrative—which, conversely, the linking verses in the *Harivaṃśa* examples do. Since in the present chapter, I focus on the content of the individual narratives and look for a relationship between narratives on the level of main topics, rather than on the level of narrative layers, I make a distinction between linking verses related to the main topic and linking verses related to the timeline and main characters. The latter are not of concern here.

5.1.1   The Narasiṃha myth

The Narasiṃha myth (SP 70—71) is preceded by a Māhātmya on the holy place of Gaurīśikhara (SP 69). The Māhātmya ends with the statement that Śiva and Pārvatī

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[402] Yokochi continues: "Since Śiva is absolute, however, he keeps a distance and cannot act as the leader who propels the story. In the first part of the narrative (SP 3—8), it is Brahmā who propels the story" (Yokochi, forth.). This is why it happens that there are narratives in layer A in which Śiva does not play an active role.

returned to Mount Mandara, after Śiva had blessed Gaurīśikhara (SP 69.77)[403]. The Narasiṃha myth continues this final event in the form of a question from Vyāsa to Sanatkumāra: what did Śiva do when he returned to Mount Mandara with Pārvatī (SP 70.1)[404]? Sanatkumāra answers that Śiva and Pārvatī roamed around on the mountain (SP 70.2)[405], when Indra, Śaśāṅka and Vāyu came by to make some requests (SP 70.3—20). The elements that connect the end of the Māhātmya with the start of the Narasiṃha myth are the main character (Śiva), the time (when he returned) and the place (Mount Mandara). The elements link the two narratives on the level of timeline and main characters, so the myths may be placed in the same narrative layer. However, the linking verses do not connect the two narratives on the level of the main topic. In order to know whether there is a shared main topic, we have to take the full stories into account.

To start with the Gaurīśikhara Māhātmya, this constitutes the final chapter of "Pārvatī's myth"[406] (SP 34.1—61 and SP 53—69). The myth starts with a scene in which Śiva repeatedly calls Pārvatī *kṛṣṇā*, "the dark one". Pārvatī is saddened by this and wants to cast off her dark complexion and obtain a fair complexion instead, and—she adds— she also wants a son (SP 34.11—12)[407]. Śiva wants to give her these boons immediately,

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[403] SP 69.77:
evaṃ nagendraṃ sa tadānugṛhya munīndra sārdhaṃ girirājaputryā |
devaiḥ sasiddhair anugamyamānaḥ śarvaḥ punar mandaram ājagāma || 77 ||
"Having thus favoured the lord of mountains [i.e. Gaurīśikhara] then, oh master of sages, Śarva [i.e. Śiva] went back to [Mount] Mandara together with the daughter of the king of the mountains [i.e. Pārvatī], accompanied by gods and Siddhas ["Accomplished Ones"]."
[404] SP 70.1:
vyāsa uvāca |
sa gatvā mandaraṃ bhūyo giriputryā saha prabhuḥ |
yac cakāra mahādevas tan me brūhi mahāmune || 1 ||
"Vyāsa said: Having gone to [Mount] Mandara again together with the daughter of the mountains [i.e. Pārvatī], what did lord Mahādeva ["the Great God", i.e. Śiva] do? Tell me that, oh great sage."
[405] SP 70.2:
mandaraṃ girim āgatya pārvatyā sahito haraḥ |
reme hiraṇmaye divye sarvaratnavibhūṣite || 2 ||
"Having reached Mount Mandara, Hara [i.e. Śiva] roamed around together with Pārvatī on the golden, divine [mountain], which is adorned with all kinds of jewels."
[406] I borrow the name of this myth from SP Vol. III, 5. The myth forms a part of the Vindhyavāsinī cycle that furthermore consists of "the Kauśikī-Vindhyavāsinī myth with a prologue and a supplement" in SP 60.14—21, SP 60.72—132 and SP 61—68 (ibid, 6), and "[o]ther episodes" in SP 56—57, SP 60.1—13 and SP 60.22—71 (ibid, 7).
[407] SP 34.11—12:
yadā yadā vadasi māṃ kṛṣṇeti vadatāṃ vara |
tadā tadā me hṛdayaṃ vidīryata iva prabho || 11 ||

but Pārvatī wishes to practice *tapas* to earn them. With Śiva's permission, she goes to a peak in the Himālayas to practice *tapas* (SP 34.1—61). After a while, Śiva gives Brahmā his consent to stop Pārvatī's *tapas* and to grant her the boons of a fair complexion and a son. Brahmā does accordingly (SP 53—55). Pārvatī becomes *gaurī*, "the white one", and her embodied dark complexion is sent to the Vindhya mountains to live there (SP 58). When Pārvatī has returned home (SP 59), she takes Śiva back to the peak where she became *gaurī*, and Śiva calls it "Gaurīśīkhara" (SP 69)[408]. In short, Pārvatī's myth centres around Pārvatī, the *tapas* she performed and the boons she received.

The Narasiṃha myth, on the other hand, is concerned with the deeds of Viṣṇu's manifestation as Man-Lion and how Śiva releases him from this form. At first glance, the two narratives seem unrelated because the main characters are different and the topics of the main stories also seem unconnected. There seems to be, therefore, no reason to place the Narasiṃha myth in this particular direct immediate context. However, both Pārvatī's myth and the afterlife episode of the Narasiṃha myth, which I have identified in chapter 4 as the most important part of the myth, revolve around a major, positive change of the body. Pārvatī casts off her dark complexion and becomes *gaurī*, and Viṣṇu casts off his Man-Lion form and becomes a god again. This shared underlying theme could be the reason why the Narasiṃha myth was placed at this particular position in the text.

Although it is possible to find an underlying shared theme with the narrative preceding the Narasiṃha myth, this is not the case with the narrative following it, which is concerned with the birth of Skanda. The Narasiṃha myth ends in SP 71.73, where it is stated that Śiva "went back to his own abode" (*dhāma svākyaṃ [...] jagāma*, SP 71.73d), which is Mount Mandara. In the next chapter, SP 72, the Skanda myth starts with Vyāsa's question what Śiva did after he had removed Viṣṇu from his Lion form and had gone to Mount Mandara (SP 72.1—2). This is again a compositional technique to make the

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etadartham ahaṃ pādau praṇamya tava śaṃkara |
vijñāpayāmi sarveśa gauravarṇam anuttamam |
vijñāpayāmi putraś ca yathā mama bhaved iti || 12 ||
 "Every time you call me 'dark', oh best of speakers, it is as if my heart breaks, oh lord. For that reason, I, having bowed down to your feet, oh Śaṃkara [i.e. Śiva], request an unsurpassed white complexion, oh lord of all, and I request that I will have a son."
[408] The summary of the main narrative of the Vindhyavāsinī cycle is based on SP Vol. III, 7—9, where one can also find a summary of the intermediate narratives.

transition between two unrelated narratives smoother, continuing the timeline and main character(s). It shows that the two narratives should be placed in the same narrative layer. However, it does not tell us anything about a shared main topic. The Skanda myth (SP 72, SP$_{Bh}$ 163—65) is concerned with the conception and pregnancy of Skanda, his consecration as the leader of the divine army and his slaying of Tāraka. Neither the main character, nor the main topic of the Narasiṃha myth and the Skanda myth are thus related. Even underlying themes, such as a change of the body or the acquisition of a son, are not found. The Narasiṃha myth is therefore not related to the narrative that follows it, and its direct immediate context ends there. It should be noted, however, that the Skanda myth does in fact take up Pārvatī's myth again. After all, one should recall that Pārvatī had two objectives with her *tapas* (SP 34.11—12): the first was to obtain a fair complexion, which is realized in the same narrative in SP 58.7[409], and the second was to obtain a son, which is effectuated only in the Skanda myth starting in SP 72[410]. Both the Narasiṃha myth with the underlying theme of "change of the body" and the Skanda myth with the promise of a son are thus connected to Pārvatī's myth, but the Narasiṃha myth is not related to the Skanda myth.

5.1.2 The Varāha myth

In the previous chapters, I focussed on the Varāha myth from the moment that the gods ask Brahmā for help to counter Hiraṇyākṣa, and that Viṣṇu becomes a Boar to solve this problem (SP 96ff.). However, the reason for Varāha to come into being starts already in SP 76.14, when Hiraṇyākṣa decides to challenge the gods for battle as revenge for killing his elder brother Hiraṇyakaśipu.

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[409] SP 58.7:
vigāhamānā vyajahat kṛṣṇāṃ kośīṃ tadānaghā |
sā vireje tayā muktā kalevendor ghanātyaye || 7 ||
"Plunging [into the pond created by her tears of joy (SP 58.4—5)], the sinless one then cast off her dark skin. Being released from it, she shone like the digit of the moon in autumn."
[410] Yokochi has studied Pārvatī's wish for a son in SP Vol. III and argued that in fact, "the primary object of her *tapas* is to obtain a son. In the beginning of chapter 72, where the main story resumes after the end of the Vindhyavāsinī Cycle, it is told that Pārvatī asked Śiva to realize her wish to bear a son comparable to him and that Śiva consented to this, referring to the fact that she had once wished for a son before going to practise *tapas* (72.17), precisely as related in 34.12ef. Hereafter, Śiva and Pārvatī embark on a project to give birth to Skanda, which starts the myth cycle of Skanda" (SP Vol. III, 23—24).

As the fact that the Varāha myth does not start at the beginning of a new chapter already suggests, the myth is hardly discernible from the one preceding it: the Andhaka myth. Right at the beginning of the Andhaka myth in SP 73, the connection between the two narratives becomes clear, *viz.* their main characters are closely related to each other. The Andhaka myth starts with Vyāsa's question to Sanatkumāra who the father of Andhaka is and how Andhaka was killed (SP 73.1)[411]. Sanatkumāra's answers start as follows.

> SP 73.3—4:
>
> *kaśyapasya sutau dityāṃ daityau tau saṃbabhūvatuḥ |*
> *hiraṇyakaśipur jyeṣṭho hiraṇyākṣas tato 'nujaḥ |*
> *jyeṣṭhas tatrābhavad rājā hiraṇyakaśipus tadā || 3 ||*
> *tasmin vinihate vīre narasiṃhena dhīmatā |*
> *hiraṇyākṣo 'bhavad rājā sarvadaityanamaskṛtaḥ |*
> *aputraḥ sa tapas tepe putrahetor iti śrutiḥ || 4 ||*
>
> "Two sons were born from Kaśyapa and Diti: Hiraṇyakaśipu was the elder and Hiraṇyākṣa the younger. The eldest among them, Hiraṇyakaśipu, became king then. When that hero [i.e. Hiraṇyakaśipu] was killed by the wise Narasiṃha, Hiraṇyākṣa became king, being honoured by all the Daityas. It is heard that he, being childless, practiced *tapas* for the sake of a son."

These introductory verses both look back to a previous narrative and pave the way for the following one. By referring back to Hiraṇyakaśipu and his killing by Narasiṃha, the Andhaka myth is linked with the Narasiṃha myth, even though the start of the Skanda myth is told between them. This is a logical connection because the two Daityas are brothers, which was also already mentioned in the Narasiṃha myth in a similar verse (SP

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[411] SP 73.1:
vyāsa uvāca |
andhako kasya putro 'sau kiṃvīryaḥ kiṃparākramaḥ |
kathaṃ ca nihataḥ saṃkhye sarvam etad vadasva me || 1 ||
"Vyāsa said: Whose son is this Andhaka, how powerful is he, how strong is he and how was he killed in battle? Tell me all that."

70.22)[412], and Hiraṇyākṣa succeeds his elder brother when he died. In this way, the lineage of the Daityas is continued[413].

Family ties are also the means to connect the Andhaka myth with the next narrative, the Varāha myth. It is immediately made explicit that Andhaka and Hiraṇyākṣa are father and son, and this automatically lays the foundations for telling the story of Hiraṇyākṣa later. It is, however, also clear that at this point of the text, we are still in the Andhaka myth because the main concern of the first few chapters is Andhaka. They recount how Andhaka came into being through Hiraṇyākṣa's *tapas*, why he was born blind, how he received eyesight through *tapas* and how Hiraṇyākṣa celebrated Andhaka's successful *tapas* with a Kaumudī festival[414] (SP 73.4ef—76.13).

Directly after the description of the festival, the Varāha myth is told in one breath, starting with the entry of the Asuras into Hiraṇyākṣa's palace (SP 76.14—15)[415]. In SP 76.42ef, it becomes clear that they entered the palace "for the sake of revenge on the gods" (*surāṇāṃ viprakārārtham*). The council for war, the battle itself, Hiraṇyākṣa's victory and

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[412] SP 70.22:

ditir nāmābhavat patnī kaśyapasya prajāpateḥ |
dakṣasya duhitā vyāsa sā jajñe tanayadvayam |
hiraṇyakaśipuṃ jyeṣṭhaṃ hiraṇyākṣaṃ kanīyasam || 22 ||

"Prajāpati Kaśyapa had a wife called Diti. She was the daughter of Dakṣa, oh Vyāsa, [and] gave birth to* two sons: Hiraṇyakaśipu was the elder, Hiraṇyākṣa the younger."
* I follow the editors of this part of the *Skandapurāṇa* in understanding the perfect *jajñe* with a causative meaning (SP Vol. IV, 38 note 67).
The mentioning of Hiraṇyākṣa has a compositional function of foreshadowing to the Varāha myth, which will be demonstrated in section 5.3.
[413] The link with the Daityas' succession will become a central element in the study of the relative immediate context in section 5.2.
[414] "The Kaumudī festival, as its name indicates, celebrates the light of the full moon [for *kaumudī* means "moon light"]. It is associated with royalty" (SP Vol. IV, 62 note 153). For secondary literature on the festival's date on the ritual calendar, see ibid. The rituals and customs performed at Hiraṇyākṣa's festival are provided in the synopsis of SP Vol. IV (ibid, 63—64).
[415] SP 76.14—15:

evaṃ samabhavad vyāsa bahucitras tadotsavaḥ |
dānavānāṃ tadā prītisaukhyaviśrambhavardhanaḥ || 14 ||
tasminn uparate bhūyaḥ pūrvavat saṃpratiṣṭhite |
prakṛtisthe jane vyāsa dānavās te samāgatāḥ |
viviśur bhīmasaṃhrādāḥ sabhāṃ divyāṃ manoramām || 15 ||

"Thus the lovely festival took place then, which increases joy, happiness and intimacy among the Dānavas, oh Vyāsa. When it stopped and everyone was established in their own form like before again, the Dānavas, having assembled, entered the divine and beautiful assembly hall with terrifying noises."

finally Viṣṇu's intervention as Varāha follow logically hereafter. The direct immediate context of the Varāha myth therefore includes the Andhaka myth, which starts in SP 73, and the connection between the two narratives is the familial relationship between Hiraṇyākṣa and Andhaka as the main topic.

When the Varāha myth reaches its conclusion in SP 110, Śiva goes to Mount Sumeru to teach the *pāśupatavrata* to Viṣṇu (SP 110.31)[416]. In the next narrative (SP 111.1—112.72), Pārvatī teaches the Mother Goddesses various *vratas*, "religious practices". It starts with Vyāsa's question what Pārvatī did when Śiva had gone to heaven to teach the *pāśupatavrata* (SP 111.1)[417]. It is the same compositional technique of linking the elements of timeline and main character as identified in the transition from the Narasiṃha myth to the Skanda myth: what happened at the moment that Śiva (main character) was teaching the *pāśupatavrata* (time) at Mount Sumeru, a divine mountain in heaven (place)? Although these elements link the Varāha myth and the section on *vratas* in the framework of timeline and main character, and thus place them in the same narrative layer[418], the narratives are unrelated concerning other factors. The main topics are different (the lineage of the Daityas and the war between the gods and the Asuras vs. *vratas*), as well as the main characters related to these topics (Viṣṇu and the Asuras in general and Hiraṇyākṣa in particular vs. Pārvatī). The direct immediate context of the Varāha myth is thus limited to the Andhaka myth preceding it and does not include the section on *vratas* following it.

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[416] SP 110.31:

atha himagiritulyacārumūrtiṃ vṛṣabhavaraṃ bhagavāṃs tadābhirūḍhaḥ |
suragaṇasahitaḥ prabhuḥ sumeruṃ vratam upadeṣṭumanā jagāma śarvaḥ || 31 ||

"Next lord Śarva [i.e. Śiva], the master, having mounted the best of bulls then, whose form is as beautiful as Mount Himavat, went to [Mount] Sumeru to teach the *vrata*, being accompanied by gods and Gaṇas."

[417] SP 111.1:

vyāsa uvāca |
gate divaṃ mahādeve vratam ādeṣṭum uttamam |
ekākinī mahādevī kiṃ cakre tadanantaram || 1 ||

"Vyāsa said: When Mahādeva ["the Great God", i.e. Śiva] went to heaven to teach the highest *vrata*, what did Mahādevī ["the Great Goddess", i.e. Pārvatī] do in the meantime, while she was alone?"

[418] We even see a link between the topic of the final verse of the Varāha myth and the topic of the next episode: they both involve the teaching of *vratas*. However, since Śiva's teaching of the *pāśupatavrata* is just one small element of the Varāha myth, it is not an argument to connect the myth with the next episode.

5.1.3 The Vāmana myth

The Vāmana myth essentially deals with how Viṣṇu as a Dwarf defeats Bali, the king of the Daityas, during a (peaceful) battle between the gods (represented by Viṣṇu) and the Asuras (represented by Bali). The myth preceding it (SP$_{Bh}$ 116.1—13ab) tells how Bali's father Virocana, the king of the Daityas, is killed by Indra during the *devāsura* war called Āṭībaka. The two myths are unmistakably related to each other because they share two main topics: a *devāsura* war and the succession of Daitya kings. The succession is stressed by the first verse of the Vāmana myth that links the two narratives, stating that when Virocana died, Bali was consecrated as the king of the Daityas (SP$_{Bh}$ 116.13cd—14ab)[419]. The Āṭībaka myth is therefore the Vāmana myth's direct immediate context. And, in fact, the direct immediate context reaches further back until SP$_{Bh}$ 113, which marks the start of a series of *devāsura* wars and is already announced in the Andhaka myth, in the concluding verses of SP 112.

At the end of this chapter, it is told that Andhaka arrives in a forest and sees seven sages assembled there. He overhears their conversation with three other sages: Dhātṛ, Vidhātṛ and Kṛtānta. The seven sages ask the other three to tell them the following.

> SP 112.112—15:
>
> *devāsurāṇāṃ yad vṛttaṃ bhaviṣyaṃ kathitaṃ śubhāḥ |*
> *tad vayaṃ śrotum icchāmo yadi vo 'nugrahe matiḥ || 112 ||*
> *kiṃ ca vijñāpitā devī yuṣmābhiḥ surasattamāḥ |*
> *kathayadhvaṃ ca tat sarvaṃ yady anugrāhyatā hi naḥ || 113 ||*
> *teṣāṃ tad vacanaṃ śrutvā trayas te devasattamāḥ |*
> *tvam ācakṣva kṛtānteti vākyam ūcur mahābalāḥ || 114 ||*
> *tataḥ sa teṣāṃ bahucitrakāraṇaṃ yathābhaviṣyaṃ kathayāṃ*
> *cakāra |*

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[419] SP$_{Bh}$ 116.13cd—14ab:
hate virocane brahmā baliṃ teṣāṃ mahāsuram || 13 ||
abhyaṣecayad indratve sa ca rājā babhūva ha |
"When Virocana was killed, Brahmā consecrated the great Asura Bali into kingship, and he [i.e. Bali] became king."

surāsurāṇāṃ jayatāṃ ca kāraṇaṃ purā vidhātrā vihitaṃ yathārthavat || 115 ||

"112. 'If you would like [to do us] a favour, we wish to hear that which was told about the future affairs of the gods and the Asuras, oh glorious ones. 113. If we are entitled to be favoured, may you also tell everything about what Devī ["Goddess", i.e. Pārvatī] was told by you, oh best of deities'[420]. 114. Having heard that speech of theirs, the three very strong, best of deities said this speech: 'You should tell, oh Kṛtānta.' 115. To them [i.e. the sages], he [i.e. Kṛtānta] then started telling about the details of the future affairs (*yathābhaviṣyaṃ*) that have various, wonderful causes (*bahucitrakāraṇaṃ*), as well as about the reason for the victories of the gods and the Asuras [respectively], precisely as it was determined by Vidhātṛ [i.e. Brahmā] before[421]."

The stories about "the future affairs" that follow from SP$_{Bh}$ 113 to SP$_{Bh}$ 129 involve seven different *devāsura* wars.

1. The Amṛtamanthana war myth (SP$_{Bh}$ 113—15) contains several storylines.
    a. SP$_{Bh}$ 113. The gods and the Asuras churn nectar from the milk ocean. The Asuras steal the nectar, but it is taken back by Viṣṇu in the form of an enchanting woman (*mohinī*).
    b. SP$_{Bh}$ 114. Śiva swallows the poison that arose from the churning and becomes Nīlalohita, "the one with the dark neck".
    c. SP$_{Bh}$ 115. Prahlāda, Hiraṇyakaśipu's son, is defeated by Viṣṇu in battle.

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[420] The editors of SP Vol. V, forth. note that this request is not followed up.

[421] Brahmā is meant here and not the sage Vidhātṛ, because in the passage preceding these verses, it is told that the three sages were instructed by Brahmā to tell the Prajāpati Kaśyapa "what happens between the Devas ["Gods"] and Asuras, about their mutual friendship, the production of the Amṛta, and the rule of their kingdom" (SP Vol. V, forth.).

2. In the Āṭībaka war myth (SP$_{Bh}$ 116.1—13ab), Virocana, Prahlāda's son, is killed by "the lord of the gods" (*devendrena*, SP$_{Bh}$ 116.3d), i.e. Indra.

3. The Vāmana war myth (SP$_{Bh}$ 116.13cd—121.22) contains two storylines.

    a. SP$_{Bh}$ 116.13cd—117.20. Bali, Virocana's son, is defeated by Viṣṇu in the form of a Dwarf.

    b. SP$_{Bh}$ 117.21—121.22. Viṣṇu becomes a Dwarf again and is rescued from this form by Śiva.

4. The Tārakāmaya war myth (SP$_{Bh}$ 121.23—124.end) contains several storylines.

    a. SP$_{Bh}$ 121.23—end. The Asuras seek refuge with Tāraka and Maya, two Dānavas. They start a war against the gods, but Rāma Jāmadagnya intervenes by killing the Saiṃhikeyas.

    b. SP$_{Bh}$ 122.1—16. As Rāma Jāmadagnya leaves the battle ground, the Tārakāmaya war continues with Viṣṇu killing Kālanemi, and Tāraka and Maya retreating to Pātāla. Sanatkumāra announces the next *devāsura* war called Dhvaja (SP$_{Bh}$ 122.16).

    c. SP$_{Bh}$ 122.17—124.end. Vyāsa wants to hear about the Dhvaja war (SP$_{Bh}$ 122.17), but he also wants to know what Rāma Jāmadagnya did after killing the Saiṃhikeyas (SP$_{Bh}$ 122.18). Sanatkumāra first answers the second question, by telling a relatively long story on Rāma, including him destroying the *kṣatriyas* twenty-one times (SP$_{Bh}$ 123.19—22).

5. The Dhvaja war myth (SP$_{Bh}$ 125—28) contains several storylines.

    a. SP$_{Bh}$ 125. The Dānava called Vipracitti is killed by Indra with his thunderbolt.

    b. SP$_{Bh}$ 126—28. Vyāsa wants to know more about the place called Bhastrāpada, where Vipracitti practiced *tapas*, and Sanatkumāra tells about it.

6. In the Hālāhala war myth (SP$_{Bh}$ 129.1—18), a bad Gaṇa called Hālāhala starts a war against the gods, but the gods kill all Asuras.

7. In the Andhakāraka war myth (SP$_{Bh}$ 129.19—end), a Dānava called Devatāntaka, "the Slayer of Deities", together with the Asuras, harasses the gods with *māyā*,

"sorcery". Apsarases are sent to stop them by tricking them. The trick works because the Asuras start fighting each other and kill one another.

The Vāmana myth is embedded in this series of *devāsura* wars. It concludes the wars with the successive Daitya kings—because from the Tārakāmaya war, the main Asura is a Dānava—but the series of battles continues to SP$_{Bh}$ 129. Both elements—the succession of the Daitya kings and the series of *devāsura* wars—are stressed by means of linking verses. For example, the Āṭībaka war myth starts by referring back to the Amṛtamanthana war, after which Prahlāda "the lord of Asuras handed the kingship over to [his] son Virocana" (*putre virocane rājyaṃ pradadāv asureśvaraḥ*, SP$_{Bh}$ 116.2cd)[422]. When the succession of the Daitya kings ceases, the narratives only refer to the shared topic of *devāsura* wars. For instance, in the transition from the Tārakāmaya war to the Dhvaja war, the linking verse speaks of "another" war (*param*, SP$_{Bh}$ 125.1a)[423].

The Andhakāraka myth does not only conclude this section in SP$_{Bh}$ 129, but also the direct immediate context of the Vāmana myth because the next chapter, SP$_{Bh}$ 130, takes up the Andhaka myth again. Instead of referring back to the stories just told, Vyāsa somewhat abruptly asks how Andhaka was killed by Śiva (SP$_{Bh}$ 130.1)[424], and Sanatkumāra continues the story about Andhaka, starting with a boon that Andhaka had acquired earlier. This marks the continuation of a narrative that is unrelated to the

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[422] SP$_{Bh}$ 116.1—2:
evaṃ tad abhavad vyāsa amṛtasyāvamanthanam |
yuddhaṃ ca sumahāghoraṃ prahlādena sahaiva tu || 1 ||
sa tu kālena mahatā kṛtvā yuddhaśatāny uta |
putre virocane rājyaṃ pradadāv asureśvaraḥ || 2 ||
"In this way, the churning of the nectar and the very horrible battle with Prahlāda took place, oh Vyāsa. And after a long time, he [i.e. Prahlāda], the lord of the Asuras, having fought hundreds of battles, handed the kingship over to [his] son Virocana."
[423] SP$_{Bh}$ 125.1:
ataḥ paraṃ pravakṣyāmi dhvajasaṃgrāmam ūrjitam |
devānām asurāṇāṃ ca prāṇayogavināśanam || 1 ||
"Next I will tell about another great war between the gods and the Asuras [called] Dhvaja, which destroys [any] connection with life."
[424] SP$_{Bh}$ 130.1:
vyāsa uvāca |
andhako sa kathaṃ daityo hareṇa vinipātitaḥ |
yasya trailokyam akhilaṃ bhayāt sarvaṃ vaśe sthitam || 1 ||
"Vyāsa said: How was this Daitya Andhaka destroyed by Hara [i.e. Śiva], in whose power the entire triple world has fallen out of fear?"

devāsura wars that had been recounted just now. The direct immediate context of the Vāmana myth as one of the *devāsura* wars therefore starts in SP$_{Bh}$ 113 and ends in SP$_{Bh}$ 129.

5.1.4 Differences between the three myths

The manifestation myths of Narasiṃha, Varāha and Vāmana have their own direct immediate context. The Narasiṃha myth can be connected with Pārvatī's myth in which Pārvatī becomes *gaurī*. Even though the myths are concerned with different main characters and different main topics, there is one shared theme, which in fact can explain why the Narasiṃha myth is placed there: in both myths, the transformation of the body of the main character is central. By the grace of Śiva, Pārvatī casts off her previous black complexion and obtains a white complexion, and Viṣṇu casts off his Man-Lion manifestation and obtains his own divine form thanks to Śiva. Both myths revolve around a major change of the body, which connects the two. There is no such shared theme or main topic with the start of the Skanda myth that follows the Narasiṃha myth in SP 72, so the direct immediate context of the Narasiṃha myth does not continue in the next narrative.

The Andhaka myth forms the direct immediate context of the Varāha myth for two reasons. First of all, the start of the Varāha myth is almost indiscernible from the Andhaka myth, since the description of the Kaumudī festival dedicated to Andhaka seamlessly flows into the announcement that the Asuras go to war for revenge on the gods for killing Hiraṇyakaśipu. Second, at the beginning of the Andhaka myth in SP 73, the familial relationship between Hiraṇyākṣa and Andhaka is made explicit: they are father and son. This is such a strong connection that it creates the direct immediate context. The direct immediate context does not, however, continue after the Varāha myth. In SP 111, the text shifts to Pārvatī teaching the Mother Goddesses on *vratas*. This is a new topic, with ditto main characters, and there is no underlying shared theme with the Varāha myth.

Finally, the Vāmana myth appears in a series of *devāsura* wars in SP$_{Bh}$ 113—29. Being the third in this sequence, the narratives preceding and following the Vāmana myth are its direct immediate context, and the shared topic is *devāsura* wars. The Vāmana myth furthermore particularly relates to the previous two *devāsura* wars on the basis of the

succession of the Daityas, which starts with Prahlāda in the Amṛtamanthana myth, is continued with Virocana in the Āṭībaka myth and concluded with Bali in the Vāmana myth. Both main topics often occur in the first verses of the next narrative that function as linking verses.

The present study has shown that each manifestation myth has its own direct immediate context. However, the Varāha and Vāmana myth are connected to each other if we take their entire direct immediate context into consideration. They are both related to the Andhaka myth: the Varāha myth because it is told directly after the start of the Andhaka myth, and the Vāmana myth because the series of the *devāsura* wars is overheard by Andhaka. The Narasiṃha myth, on the other hand, is not linked to the Andhaka myth and is, as such, most disconnected from the other manifestation myths in terms of the direct immediate context[425].

5.2   Relative immediate context

Although the manifestation myths have their own direct immediate context, in the present section, I will demonstrate that they do belong to the same relative immediate context. This is based on several factors that connect these and other myths told in SP 70—71, SP 74.16—110 and SP$_{Bh}$ 113—29 on a stylistic, referential and thematic level: the use of unique epithets and stock phrases, references back and forth, and shared underlying themes. Some of the first two connecting factors have been studied in other publications, and will be summarized in the following lists; the third factor I will explore below.

First of all, the language used in this text portion has some characteristic features in common.

- As shown by the editors of the *Skandapurāṇa*, it is only in this part of the *Skandapurāṇa* (SP 71.46b—SP$_{Bh}$ 126.4b) that Vyāsa is called *śaktinandana*, "son of Śakti"[426] (SP Vol. IV, 18).

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[425] After addressing the relative immediate context of the three manifestation myths, I will turn to question why the Narasiṃha myth is disconnected from the other manifestation myths in section 5.3.
[426] For references, see SP Vol. IV, 18 note 44.

- The editors also demonstrate that several stock phrases used for the battle descriptions in SP 76—108 and SP$_{Bh}$ 115—29 only appear there and not, for instance, in battle scenes of the Skanda cycle, nor in the description of the battle between Andhaka and Śiva's Gaṇas (SP Vol. IV, 23).

Second, in the *devāsura* war myths in SP$_{Bh}$ 113—29, there are several references to earlier kings and wars that do not fall into this section.

- In the Amṛtamanthana myth, the Daityas address Viṣṇu who has just stolen the *amṛta* back from the Asuras, referring to his earlier actions against Hiraṇyakaśipu and Hiraṇyākṣa (SP$_{Bh}$ 115.4)[427].
- In the Vāmana myth, Bali is said to be much greater than Hiraṇyakaśipu and Hiraṇyākṣa (SP$_{Bh}$ 116.75)[428].
- A few verses later in the same myth, a connection is made with four of Bali's predecessors: Hiraṇyakaśipu, Hiraṇyākṣa, Andhaka and Prahlāda, omitting only Virocana (SP$_{Bh}$ 116.86—87ab)[429].

[427] SP$_{Bh}$ 115.4:
tvayā nikṛtyā nihato hiraṇyakaśipuḥ purā |
hiraṇyākṣaś ca daityendro 'mṛtaṃ cedam apāhṛtam || 4 ||
"Earlier, Hiraṇyakaśipu and Hiraṇyākṣa, the lord of Daityas, were killed by you with deceit, and [now] this *amṛta* was stolen [by you]."
[428] SP$_{Bh}$ 116.75:
hiraṇyakaśipū rājā hiraṇyākṣaś ca dānavaḥ |
tava rājñaḥ kalāṃ putra nārhataḥ* ṣoḍaśīm api || 75 ||
"King Hiraṇyakaśipu and the Dānava Hiraṇyākṣa are not worthy even a sixteenth portion of you as a king, oh son."
* Bhaṭṭarāī reads *nārdhataḥ*, which I consider a typo of *nārhataḥ*.
[429] SP$_{Bh}$ 116.86—87ab:
hiraṇyakaśipū rājā nātyantaṃ sukham āptavān |
hiraṇyākṣas tathā caiva andhakaś caiva tatsutaḥ || 86 ||
bhavān pitāmaho 'smākaṃ tathā krūreṇa karmaṇā |
"King Hiraṇyakaśipu did not obtain infinite bliss, nor [did] Hiraṇyākṣa, nor his son Andhaka, nor you [i.e. Prahlāda], our grandfather, because of bad deed[s]."

Besides these references in the Amṛtamanthana and Vāmana myth, most references to an earlier narrative appear in the Varāha myth that recalls events of the Narasiṃha myth[430].

- Yokochi, forth. points out that the story of Hiraṇyākṣa presupposes a story of his elder brother, because he succeeds Hiraṇyakaśipu, and this is explicitly mentioned at the beginning of the Andhaka myth (SP 73.4a—d, quoted in section 5.1.2).
- Yokochi, forth. also notices that the motive of revenge is a recurring theme in the Varāha myth. Hiraṇyākṣa wants to avenge the gods for killing his brother[431].
- Other textual references to the Narasiṃha myth in the Varāha myth are the following.
    - Hiraṇyākṣa repeatedly states that Hiraṇyakaśipu was killed by the gods (e.g. SP 81.5ab)[432], as do his fellow Asuras (SP 77.20)[433].
    - The gods refer to Hiraṇyakaśipu's death by Narasiṃha (SP 97.44cd)[434].

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[430] Similar references also appear in the SP$_{Bh}$ 172, where, among other events, Viṣṇu fights with Prahlāda. This has been shown by Martine Kropman in her article 'The consecration of Kumāra. The role of Thanesar and King Harṣa in the composition of the *Skandapurāṇa*' on the composition and growth of the *Skandapurāṇa*. In the section on "internal coherence and interrelation" in the text, she connects "the stories of Hiraṇyakaśipu, Hiraṇyākṣa, Andhaka and Prahlāda" (Kropman 2019, 113). In the latter, all four Daityas are mentioned in one breath (SP$_{Bh}$ 172.49cd—51), and Kropman argues that this does not only confirm "the association between the mentioned *asuras* in the minds of the composers [but also,] it puts up a divide between these and the other important asuras in the SP: primarily Tāraka, Sumbha, Nisumbha and Mahiṣāsura – all of whom are part of the main story" (ibid.). Although this reference can be considered a connecting factor with Narasiṃha etcetera, I do not take SP$_{Bh}$ 172 into consideration because it is not in the vicinity (i.e. relative immediate context) of the manifestation myths.
[431] There are several references to Hiraṇyākṣa's wish to take revenge on Viṣṇu for slaying his brother, including the following verse.
SP 78.19:
hiraṇyākṣas tu daityendro hiraṇyakaśipor varaḥ |
sa nūnaṃ bhrātur anvicchan hatasya pratikāritām || 19 ||
"And Hiraṇyākṣa, the great lord of Daityas, now sought revenge for the killing of his brother Hiraṇyakaśipu."
[432] SP 81.5ab: *te yūyaṃ nyāyam utsṛjya hatvā me bhrātaraṃ punaḥ*, "having abandoned the law, you killed my brother then".
[433] SP 77.20:
hiraṇyakaśipū rājā bhrātā no jyeṣṭha uttamaḥ |
so 'pi śakto 'ham ity eva ekākī devatair hataḥ || 20 ||
"King Hiraṇyakaśipu, our great elder brother, also thought 'I can [do it] alone' [but] he was killed by the gods."
[434] SP 97.44cd: *hataḥ sa daityo narasiṃharūpiṇā yathā purā tasya gurur mahābalaḥ*, "the Daitya [i.e. Hiraṇyākṣa] is [considered] dead, just like his mighty elder brother [was killed] by the one with the Narasiṃha form before".

o Viṣṇu boasts that he has killed Hiraṇyakaśipu in the form of a Man-Lion (SP 106.9ab)[435].

Besides these linguistic features and references on the level of individual verses[436], there are two topics that contribute to the unity of the Narasiṃha, Varāha and *devāsura* war myths on a thematic level. First of all, the first five myths in this section meticulously follow the succession of the Daitya kings according to their lineage. Second, all myths deal with *devāsura* wars. Both topics are discussed next.

The Narasiṃha, Varāha, Amṛtamanthana, Āṭībaka and Vāmana myth follow the chronological succession of the Daitya kings. The same order is found in the *vaṃśa* section of the *Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa*, and the *Skandapurāṇa* composers seem to have followed this standard list[437].

- Hiraṇyakaśipu is the eldest son of Diti and Kaśyapa[438].
- Hiraṇyākṣa succeeds his brother Hiraṇyakaśipu[439].

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[435] SP 106.9ab: *hato 'sau narasiṃhena mayā daityaḥ pratāpavān*, "that mighty Daitya [i.e. Hiraṇyakaśipu] was killed by me as Narasiṃha".

[436] Based on these textual and stylistic similarities, it has been recently proposed by Kropman (2019) and Yokochi (forth.) that this section was composed by the same group of composers. According to Kropman, the Narasiṃha myth and the Andhaka cycle as a whole are probably later additions than, for example, the Skanda cycle. Yokochi makes a further distinction and argues that the Andhaka myth is earlier than the Narasiṃha, Varāha and *devāsura* war myths, of which at least the Narasiṃha and Varāha myths were written by the same group of composers. In personal communication, she added that probably most of the *devāsura* war myths (SP$_{Bh}$ 113—29) were written by that same group as well.

[437] The relevant verses are PPL *vaṃśa* 2.66, 68—69a, 70a and 70b (text group I: *Agnipurāṇa*, *Brahmapurāṇa*, *Garuḍapurāṇa*, *Harivaṃśa*, *Śivapurāṇa Dharmasaṃhitā* and *Viṣṇupurāṇa*) and PPL *vaṃśa* 2C.3, 26—27a, 31$_2$a and 35ab (text group IA: *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* and *Vāyupurāṇa*).

[438] SP 70.22—23ab (Narasiṃha myth), see note 412.

[439] SP 73.3—4cd (Andhaka myth), see section 5.1.2.

- Prahlāda is the son of Hiraṇyakaśipu[440]. He seems to succeed Andhaka, Hiraṇyākṣa's son, but this is not explicitly mentioned[441]. It is, however, clear that

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[440] SP$_{Bh}$ 113.2 (Amṛtamanthana myth):
bhaviṣyaty asurāṇāṃ tu hiraṇyakaśipoḥ sutaḥ |
indro mahābalo vidvān prahlādo 'surapuṃgavaḥ || 2 ||
"The son of Hiraṇyakaśipu, the mighty and wise Prahlāda, the bull among Asuras, will become the king of the Asuras."

[441] As Yokochi 2009 shows, Andhaka is a relatively new figure in the Purāṇic corpus. He does not appear in the list of descendants of Kaśyapa and Diti in the *Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa*. Instead, according to some texts, Hiraṇyākṣa has four sons and according to others, five (see PPL *vaṃśa* 2.72—73ab for text group I (*Agnipurāṇa, Brahmapurāṇa, Garuḍapurāṇa, Harivaṃśa, Śivapurāṇa Dharmasaṃhitā* and *Viṣṇupurāṇa*) and PPL *vaṃśa* 2C.23—24ab for text group IA (*Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* and *Vāyupurāṇa*)). The *Skandapurāṇa* replaces the four or five sons of Hiraṇyākṣa by one son, Andhaka.

Since Andhaka is new in the lineage of the Daityas and since the Andhaka myth is probably earlier than the section under discussion here, I exclude him from this enumeration, but a few words on the line of succession is in place here, in order to know who succeeded Hiraṇyākṣa: his own son Andhaka or the son of his brother, Prahlāda. Despite Andhaka's major role in the *Skandapurāṇa*, it is nowhere made explicit that he becomes the king of the Daityas. There are only a few hints that suggest that he succeeds his father Hiraṇyākṣa and becomes king *before* Prahlāda. He seems to be already king when he reaches the forest, overhearing the sages' conversation at the end of SP 112. This can be deduced from the following references and compositional decisions. 1) The Amṛtamanthana myth (with Prahlāda as the main character) starts with Sanatkumāra's summary of the story, including the introduction of Prahlāda as the king of the Asuras, and Sanatkumāra uses the future tense for him (SP$_{Bh}$ 113.2, see note 440). The use of the future tense shows that Prahlāda did not succeed his uncle Hiraṇyākṣa, but someone else must have. Although it is not made explicit that this was Andhaka, we may assume that he was next in line after Hiraṇyākṣa's death. 2) If we take the order of the stories in the *Skandapurāṇa* into account, then Andhaka is the logical next king after Hiraṇyākṣa because first the Andhaka myth is partly told and later the Amṛtamanthana myth. In fact, Andhaka himself overhears the Amṛtamanthana myth in the forest. 3) In SP$_{Bh}$ 130.2ab, which is the continuation of the Andhaka myth, it is broadly stated that "in the beginning, there was a king of the Daityas called Andhaka, the enemy of the triple world" (*andhako nāma daityendra ādau trailokyakaṇṭakaḥ*). Although *daityendra* can also have the more general meaning of "supreme Daitya", the chapter continues with similar references to Andhaka as king. 4) Namely, further on in SP$_{Bh}$ 130, it is Prahlāda himself who addresses Andhaka as *dānavendra*, "oh king of the Dānavas" (SP$_{Bh}$ 130.8a), *dānavānām adhipate*, "oh overlord of the Dānavas" (SP$_{Bh}$ 130.12c) and *dānaveśvara*, "oh lord of the Dānavas" (SP$_{Bh}$ 130.13b). The fact that precisely Prahlāda uses this terminology is significant because it makes him explicitly *not* the king of the Daityas. 5) Finally, in SP$_{Bh}$ 172, Prahlāda is king the Daityas (e.g. SP$_{Bh}$ 172.24a: *daityarājena*, "by the king of the Daityas"), and his power is compared to the power of previous kings, as the following verse shows.
SP$_{Bh}$ 172.50cd—51ab:
hiraṇyakaśipur nāsīd rājā tatsadṛśo mahān || 50 ||
nāndhako na hiraṇyākṣaḥ prahlādasadṛśo bale |
"In terms of power, Prahlāda is not like the great king Hiraṇyakaśipu, Andhaka and Hiraṇyākṣa."
It is not made explicit that Andhaka is also a previous king, but since he is mentioned in one breath with Hiraṇyakaśipu and Hiraṇyākṣa, who are definitely previous kings by that time, Andhaka can be understood as such as well.

he will become the king of the Daityas some time in the future, as stated in SP$_{Bh}$ 113.2 (see note 440)[442].

▪ Prahlāda, being defeated, hands kingship over to his son Virocana[443].

▪ Finally, Bali succeeds his father Virocana when the latter was killed[444].

By including Hiraṇyakaśipu into this list, the lineage of Kaśyapa and Diti's offspring until Bali becomes complete. Based on this lineage of the Daityas, the Narasiṃha myth fits thematically in the relative immediate context of the Varāha, Amṛtamanthana, Āṭībaka and Vāmana myth.

The relative immediate context can be further expanded with the Tārakāmaya, Dhvaja, Hālāhala and Andhakāraka myth based on the fact that all nine narratives, from Narasiṃha to Andhakāraka, deal with *devāsura* wars. Just as the lineage of the Daityas was known from the *Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa* and was probably followed by the *Skandapurāṇa* composers, all nine battles would have been known from a list of twelve

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[442] Since Andhaka is a relatively new character, the succession differs here from other Purāṇic sources. Usually, Prahlāda succeeds Hiraṇyakaśipu and/ or Hiraṇyākṣa because he is the eldest son of the eldest son. For example, in the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, Prahlāda succeeds his father Hiraṇyakaśipu, after he was killed by Narasiṃha.
ViP 1.20.32:
pitary uparatiṃ nīte narasiṃhasvarūpiṇā |
viṣṇunā so 'pi daityānāṃ maitreyābhūt patis tataḥ || 31 ||
"When [Prahlāda's] father was led to death by Viṣṇu in the form of Narasiṃha, he [i.e. Prahlāda] became the lord of the Daityas then, oh Maitreya."
Cf. SP$_{Bh}$ 172.2—4cd:
purā siṃhavapuḥ kṛtvā viṣṇunā paramaujasā |
daityadānavanāthe tu hiraṇyakaśipau hate || 2 ||
prahrādas tatsuto daityo viṣṇuṃ prati cukopa ha |
hate pitari sa śrīmān mahādaityapatīśvaraḥ || 3 ||
bahūny abdasahasrāṇi cakārograṃ mahātapaḥ |
"Earlier, when Hiraṇyakaśipu, the lord of the Daityas and the Dānavas, was killed by the powerful Viṣṇu after he had made the body of a Lion, the Daitya Prahrāda [= Prahlāda], who is his [i.e. Hiraṇyakaśipu's] son, got angry with Viṣṇu. When his father was killed, the glorious great overlord of the Daityas performed severe great *tapas* for many thousands of years."
The connection that is made between Hiraṇyakaśipu and Prahlāda in the *Skandapurāṇa* is similar to the connection made in the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*. The verses seem to suggest that the two events follow each other directly and perhaps even that Prahlāda became king of the Daityas, when Hiraṇyakaśipu was killed. However, at least Hiraṇyākṣa became the king of the Asuras first and possibly Andhaka as well.
[443] SP$_{Bh}$ 116.2 (Āṭībaka myth), see note 422.
[444] SP$_{Bh}$ 116.13cd—14ab (Vāmana myth), see note 419.

devāsura wars of the *Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa* (PPL *vaṃśānucarita* 5B.71—85)[445] and may have served as a model for the *Skandapurāṇa* composers. The *Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa* section starts with an enumeration of the names of the battles (PPL *vaṃśānucarita* 5B.72cd—75) and continues with short descriptions of their main event (PPL *vaṃśānucarita* 5B.76—85). The enumeration below lists the twelve wars with their base storylines, as collected by Kirfel in the main text of the *Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa*. There are, however, variations among the Purāṇas, some of which I share in the notes, while the rest can be found in Kirfel 1927, 489—91.

1. Nārasiṃha war: Hiraṇyakaśipu is killed by Narasiṃha.
2. Vāmana war: Bali is bound by Vāmana who traversed the triple world.
3. Vārāha war: Hiraṇyākṣa is killed in a dispute with the gods and the ocean is split into two by Varāha with his tusk[446].
4. Amṛtamanthana war: Prahlāda is conquered.
5. Tārakāmaya war: Virocana is killed by Indra[447].
6. Āḍīvaka war: Jambha is killed by Viṣṇu, being possessed by Indra[448].
7. Traipura war: all Dānavas are killed in the city of Tripura by Tryambaka, "Three-eyed One", i.e. Śiva.

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[445] The passage is represented by the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*, *Matsyapurāṇa*, *Padmapurāṇa Sṛṣṭikhaṇḍa*, *Padmapurāṇa Uttarakhaṇḍa* and *Vāyupurāṇa*.

[446] There is some variation for this second event, and the reading given by Kirfel only appears in the *Matsyapurāṇa*.

- The *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* reads: *daṃṣṭrayā tu varāheṇa sa daityas tu dvidhākṛtaḥ*, "and that Daitya [i.e. Hiraṇyākṣa] was split into two by Varāha with his tusk". Hiraṇyākṣa is thus the object of the splitting.
- The *Padmapurāṇa Sṛṣṭikhaṇḍa* and the *Padmapurāṇa Uttarakhaṇḍa* read: *daṃṣṭrayā tu varāheṇa samudrastho dvidhākṛtaḥ*, "and he, standing in the ocean, [i.e. Hiraṇyākṣa] was split into two by Varāha with his tusk". Hiraṇyākṣa is again the object.
- The *Vāyupurāṇa* reads: *daṃṣṭrāyāṃ tu varāheṇa samudrād bhūr yadā kṛtā*, "when the earth was obtained from the ocean by Varāha on his tusk". The *Vāyupurāṇa* thus reports two deeds of Varāha.

[447] N.B. although the Purāṇas agree on this event in the list, when the Tārakāmaya war is told in narrative form (e.g. in HV 32—38) or when it appears in other lists (e.g. HV 30.17), the main event rather concerns Viṣṇu killing Kālanemi, instead of Indra killing Virocana.

[448] In the short enumeration of the battles, all Purāṇas mention the Āḍīvaka war as sixth (PPL *vaṃśānucarita* 5B.74a), but in the description of the wars that follows, only the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* and *Vāyupurāṇa* provide further information on it (79c—f)—with the *Vāyupurāṇa* eliminating the name of the Asura.

8. Andhakāra/ Andhakārika (BḍP and VāP)/ Andhaka (MtP)/ Andhakavadha (PdP *Sṛṣṭikhaṇḍa* and PdP *Uttarakhaṇḍa*) war: Asuras are killed by gods, men and forefathers.

From the ninth *devāsura* war onwards, the Purāṇas vary significantly. Although the majority agrees on the names of the wars provided in the enumeration of the twelve wars (PPL *vaṃśānucarita* 5B.74d—75ab), there are a number of differences in their descriptions (PPL *vaṃśānucarita* 5B.83—85). In the following, I only give a general overview of the present information.

9. Dhvaja war: most texts agree on the storyline that Vipracitti was killed by Indra.
10. Vārtra war: based on the name, we may assume that during this war, Vṛtra was killed by Indra together with Viṣṇu. However, in the description section, the name of the war "Vārtra" is often omitted[449] and the killing of Vṛtra is instead connected to either the Hālāhala war (11th)[450] or the Kolāhala war (12th)[451].
11. Hālāhala war: during this war, either Vṛtra was killed by Indra and Viṣṇu (see Vārtra war) or the Asuras were conquered by Vṛṣan[452] or the entire war is omitted[453].
12. Kolāhala war: during this war, the Asuras including Śaṇḍā and Marka were conquered either by Vṛṣan[454] or by Raji[455].

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[449] The name of the war is omitted in the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* and the *Vāyupurāṇa*. The latter has the additional problem that it only speaks about Dānavas being killed by Indra together with Viṣṇu and does not mention Vṛtra by name either.
[450] This is the case in the *Matsyapurāṇa*.
[451] This is the case in the *Padmapurāṇa Sṛṣṭikhaṇḍa* and the *Padmapurāṇa Uttarakhaṇḍa*.
[452] This is the case in the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*.
[453] The war is omitted in the *Padmapurāṇa Sṛṣṭikhaṇḍa*, the *Padmapurāṇa Uttarakhaṇḍa* and the *Vāyupurāṇa*.
[454] This is the case in the *Matsyapurāṇa*, the *Padmapurāṇa Sṛṣṭikhaṇḍa* (which mentions the Kolāhala war twice) and the *Padmapurāṇa Uttarakhaṇḍa* (which mentions the Kolāhala war twice).
[455] This is the case in the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* and the *Vāyupurāṇa*.

Nine out of twelve wars of the *Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa* list are told in the *Skandapurāṇa* relatively close to each other (Narasiṃha, Varāha and the *devāsura* war myths)[456]. According to Yokochi (2009 and forth.), the *Skandapurāṇa* composers may have used this twelve-fold list as a source of inspiration for the *devāsura* war section (SP$_{Bh}$ 113—29). Since the Nārasiṃha and Varāha war are also part of this twelve-fold list, I take all nine myths to be thematically linked by the topic of *devāsura* wars and to belong to the same relative immediate context.

Besides some variation in the main characters of the stories and the names of some of the battles, there is one difference between the *Skandapurāṇa* and the *Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa* in particular that should be highlighted: the order of the battles[457]. On the one hand, the *Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa* almost follows the succession of the Daityas, with Bali in the Vāmana myth as the only exception[458]. On the other hand, the *Skandapurāṇa*'s order is entirely determined by the lineage of the Daityas for the first five myths. As a result, the Vārāha and Vāmana wars become second and fifth. Moreover, since in the *Skandapurāṇa*, Virocana (Prahlāda's son and Bali's father) is the main Asura in the Āṭībaka war, this story takes the place of the Tārakāmaya war in the *Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa*[459].

To conclude, if we take the relative immediate context into consideration, then the topic of *devāsura* wars is one of the unifying themes. It runs from the Narasiṃha myth,

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[456] Yokochi 2009 notes that the *Skandapurāṇa* also recounts the myth about Indra against Vṛtra ("the Vārtra war", SP 60.22—71), as well as the myth about Śiva defeating the Asuras by destroying Tripura ("the Traipura war", SP$_{Bh}$ 168—70). The only battle that is missing in the *Skandapurāṇa* then is the Kolāhala war.

[457] The order of the *Skandapurāṇa* is 1. Nārasiṃha, 2. Vārāha, 3. Amṛtamanthana, 4. Āṭībaka, 5. Vāmana, 6. Tārakāmaya, 7. Dhvaja, 8. Hālāhala, 9. Andhakāraka.
The order of the *Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa* of the same nine wars is 1. Nārasiṃha, 2. Vāmana, 3. Vārāha, 4. Amṛtamanthana, 5. Tārakāmaya, 6. Āḍīvaka, […] 7. Andhakāra, 8. Dhvaja, […] 9. Hālāhala.

[458] The fact that the Vāmana war comes second in the *Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa* may be explained from the perspective of the composition of this section. Horst Brinkhaus has argued in 'Beobachtungen zur Frühgeschichte der Prādurbhāva-Lehre: Der Eber-mythos' that PPL *vaṃśānucarita* 5B.71—85 is an elaboration of the preceding verses (67—70) which only deal with Narasiṃha and Vāmana (Brinkhaus 1992, 63). The Vāmana war thus maintained its original place.

[459] The *Skandapurāṇa* version of the Tārakāmaya war is a collection of various smaller battles with various victims. Although the Saiṃhikeyas, Kālanemi and the *kṣatriyas* are the main opponents of the gods, in a summary at the end of the story (SP$_{Bh}$ 122.14—16), Virocana is mentioned as one of the Asuras that have been slain in this battle as well. Since Virocana was already killed in the Āṭībaka war, there seems to be some confusion here.

via the Varāha myth to the *devāsura* war section. In this way, the three manifestation myths are connected to each other on a thematic level.

5.3   Conclusions

In this and the previous chapters, I have demonstrated that the three manifestation myths are connected to each other on different levels. First of all, the stories themselves have certain characteristics that connect them, such as a new portrayal of a Viṣṇu who is dependent on the other gods, a new structure with an afterlife episode attached to the story with a key role for Śiva, and the fact that Viṣṇu receives a boon from Śiva which becomes more religious as the text progresses. Second, the Varāha and Vāmana myth are connected because of their respective direct immediate contexts. They are both linked to the Andhaka myth: the Varāha myth flows out of it within one chapter, and the Vāmana myth features in a section that has been announced in the Andhaka myth. Third, some of the linguistic features in the three myths, as well as in the other *devāsura* wars surrounding the Vāmana myth (from the Amṛtamanthana myth up to the Andhakāraka myth), are unique for this part of the text. Fourth, there are several references in each manifestation myth that cite other manifestations or Daitya kings. The Narasiṃha myth already mentions Hiraṇyākṣa, the Varāha myth has many references to events in the Narasiṃha myth, and the Vāmana myth mentions most of Bali's predecessors. Fifth, the Narasiṃha, Varāha and Vāmana myth are connected thematically by the shared topics of the lineage of the Daityas and the *devāsura* wars. As a result, the relative immediate context runs from the Narasiṃha myth, via the Varāha myth, to the *devāsura* wars in which the Vāmana myth is included.

Despite these connections, neither the three manifestation myths, nor their direct immediate contexts follow each other directly. They are separated by non-related narratives. Why did the *Skandapurāṇa* composers adopt this structure? Let us start with the separation of the three manifestation myths themselves. The reason to postpone the Vāmana myth after the Varāha myth is the most straightforward: the lineage of the Daityas from Hiraṇyākṣa until Bali demands at least the stories of Prahlāda (Bali's grandfather) and Virocana (Bali's father) to be told in between.

If we would extend this line to the Narasiṃha myth and the Varāha myth, we would all the more expect the Narasiṃha myth to precede the Varāha myth (more)

directly, since Hiraṇyakaśipu becomes the first king of the Daityas and is succeeded by Hiraṇyākṣa[460]. However, they are separated by the start of the Skanda myth and the start of the Andhaka myth. The "interruption" of the latter would not really form a problem because the main characters and the setting of the Narasiṃha, Andhaka and Varāha myth are all related. The start of the Skanda myth, however, does not seem logical at first glance, so we expect it to have been a deliberate choice of the composers to disassociate the Narasiṃha myth. The reason for this may be found in the construction of the narratives surrounding the Narasiṃha myth.

As I have shown in section 5.1, the Narasiṃha myth is preceded by Pārvatī's myth, in which Pārvatī expresses two wishes: a fair complexion and a son (SP 34.12ef—13). Whereas the former is fulfilled in the same narrative (SP 55), the latter is only realized in the Skanda myth (SP 72). Although some narratives between SP 55 and SP 72 might be secondary, most of the chapters are probably written by the same group of composers, as argued by Yokochi, forth., so the gap must have been there from the beginning of the composition. However, since the coming of a son is already announced in a different narrative, the birth of Skanda does not come as a surprise and the announcement unifies this part of the text. To put it more broadly, by introducing themes in one narrative that are picked up only later by other narrative(s), it is possible to unify the text. I would like to argue that the same holds true for the themes that are for the first time dropped in the Narasiṃha myth and are picked up later in the Varāha myth and in the *devāsura* war section, *viz.* the lineage of the Daitya kings and the series of *devāsura* wars—in other words, the topics of the relative immediate context. This compositional technique effectuates a unification of the composition.

The connecting themes of the lineage of the Daityas and the *devāsura* wars do not only help in understanding why the three manifestation myths are separated from each other, but also why the *Skandapurāṇa* composers did not just tell these myths. To demonstrate this, let me clarify what the situation would be if there would be a "Viṣṇu's Manifestation Cycle" that would only recount the Narasiṃha, Varāha and Vāmana myth.

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[460] Moreover, taking into account the timeline and main characters, that determine the narrative layer, the Narasiṃha myth (SP 70—71) could have easily switched places with the start of the Skanda myth (SP 72) which now follows the Narasiṃha myth.

In that case, the audience would hear about Viṣṇu's famous and fabulous deeds, including the necessary Śaiva additions, such as Viṣṇu's dependency, Śiva's help in returning him to his former body and Śiva's grace in granting Viṣṇu fabulous boons. These Śaiva aspects would stand out more prominently, especially since the set of three myths ends with Viṣṇu's union with Śiva, i.e. final liberation. "Viṣṇu's Manifestation Cycle" would have certainly contributed to the promotion of the Śaiva ideology of the text and would have fit in a strictly doctrinal work.

However, the actual situation tells a different story. The *Skandapurāṇa* is not just a doctrinal work; it is much more than that. As Hans Bakker states in *The World of the Skandapurāṇa*, the text

> "had no particular sectarian agenda, but aimed to provide all the Māheśvaras of its age, in particular the uninitiated laity (*laukikas*), with an exoteric, mythological account of the cosmos as created and governed by Mahādeva ["the Great God", i.e. Śiva]. What counted more than sectarian partisanship was staunch Śaiva faith and a sound knowledge of Sanskrit and the Epic and Puranic traditions" (Bakker 2014, 151).

The incorporation of Viṣṇu's manifestation myths into the *Skandapurāṇa* in general and into the framework of Daitya kings and *devāsura* wars in particular supports this assumption. I would even take one step further, because we can specify the intended end result of this undertaking: the composition of a *Purāṇa*. After all, as the study in section 5.2 has shown, the myths are not only separated from each other, they are also embedded into a larger framework of Daitya kings and *devāsura* wars which have been likely modelled after the *Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa*. As I have demonstrated in section 1.2, the *Skandapurāṇa* does not contain much *Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa* material, but it does not neglect it either. The text includes such material in its own wording and style of writing. The myth of creation is an example of Śaivization of *Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa* material, and the elaboration on the Daitya kings and *devāsura* wars is an example of dramatic visualization of *Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa* material, which itself can be classified as a

summary presentation. Instead of simply copying the long lists of the lineage of the Daityas as reported in the *vaṃśa* section of the *Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa* and that of the *devāsura* wars as reported in the *vaṃśānucarita* section of the same text corpus—as so many other Purāṇa composers have done—the *Skandapurāṇa* composers used them as a basis for narrating more complex and rich myths. By recognizing the shared themes of these narratives, one learns about the lineage of the Daityas and a series of *devāsura* wars in an attractive way, through the powerful force of narrative. The study of the immediate context of the narratives shows that the *Skandapurāṇa* composers did not aim at composing a strictly doctrinal work, but had greater ambitions: they aspired to create a convincing Purāṇa that covered a wide range of topics, in their own vivid and elegant way of storytelling with, needless to say, the necessary alterations to convey a Śaiva message.