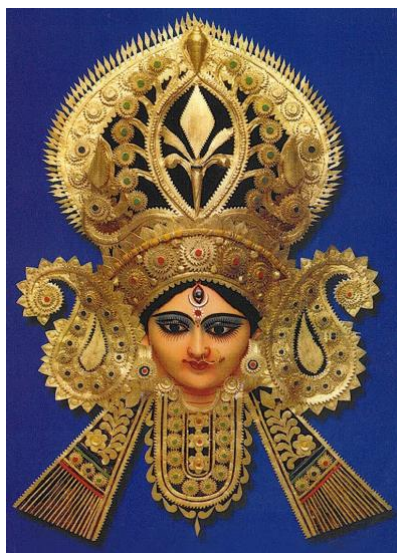


SOME TRUTHS OF GODDESS MOTHER DURGA



The nature, with the blue sky of autumn, vibrates every year, with the hymn of MANTRAS, songs, and laughter. You organise with dedication, collect donations and painstaking care; bring Mother Durga and present her to all. The yearlong waiting gets over and the mother Goddess Durga once again arrives amongst us. Be it the young or the old, everyone is filled with joyous expectation of fun, of new dresses, of Prasad, of Khichari bhog, of merriment, of dances and competitions. From the northern end of our country to the southern, the country is celebrating. The Divine Mother makes Her arrival to be with us and brings in the divine bliss, which, as we are her children, is ours by birth right. But there is a deeper meaning to all these, brought about to us by our ancient Rishis. Mother Durga comes to us to remind us that all we are engrossed in is our race for sensual pleasures, material gains and money. Buddha, seeing her glowing aura was asked, “*Who are you, are you God, are you a Saint?*” He had replied, “*I am awake*”. Mother Durga wants with her presence every year, to awaken us. And Mother is sad, that all we are busy, is playing our little roles in our families, a shadow of western life.

Goddess Durga is known to us in many forms, Vaishno Mata, Mahakali, Jagadhatri, Chandī, etc; are amongst a few. Mythological stories of every religion are as great, as the other. Let me make you aware of some Vedantic truths of Goddess Durga.

The idol of Mother Durga, that we see, sitting on the back of a lion and killing the Mahishasur, signifies the lifelong struggle that goes on within each one of us. The Mahishasur signifies the tendencies of Asuras, the **KAMA, KRODHA, LOBHA, MOHA, MATSYA** etc., which exist within each of us, and troubling us.

The lion signifies our Viveka, the sense of wisdom (Gyana), the knowledge which differentiates and allows us to choose good from the evil. The Pashuraj, our Viveka, controls the evil, our greed and desire (Mahishasur), within us. We are the children of our Mother Durga, the Divine Mother, is within us, and controlling this Viveka, the lion. With her ten hands and ten weapons such as knowledge, truth, purity, detachment, concentration (dharana), love, patience etc. Mother’s left foot is pressing down on the heart also controls the evil Mohishasur within us.

When the idol is being made, you also see inclusion of idols such as the mighty Kartikeya, the Goddess of knowledge Saraswati, the goddess of wealth Lakshmi, the Guide and protector Ganesha. All, as the children of Durga, know them. Strangely, though, we also find - in the script of “Chandi Purana” that Durga was virgin. In

addition, why should she call her children, when she was busy with the earth-shaking war with Mahishasur? There must, therefore, be another meaning to this?

To achieve the ultimate, the blessings of Mother Durga, the "Nirvana", we need the strength and the physique of Kartikeya. If the health is good and we are strong, we get the power to acquire knowledge, memory, intellect, Gnyana, etc. thereby implying the appearance of Goddess Saraswati. When you have acquired the knowledge, Jnana, intellect, memory, you earn wealth, money. That is the appearance of Goddess Lakshmi in our life. Nevertheless, we must remember that when we have money, knowledge, appearance, and strength, we become proud and egoistic. To keep us away from this pride and ego, we need our protector Vighna Nashak Ganesha. When we have acquired these four strengths, and learn to control our senses, we get to achieve the blessings of Mother.

Durga Puja celebrations are normally spread over five days (from Sashthi to Dashami) during which all people without any distinction of class, creed, or caste, assemble in the Puja pandals, offer their prayers to the Supreme Goddess, and take part in a variety of social and cultural functions. Thus, Durga Puja supplies a platform for projection of the art and culture of India, and an informal forum, in this vast and varied land of ours, for interaction between different streams of art and culture. This kind of spontaneous social and culture interaction between different linguistic communities has also contributed surely and silently towards a national integration.

Goddess Durga is "Adya-Shakti", the Eternal source of Supreme power, responsible for creation and its sustenance. She is all Mahamaya-the Goddess of illusion, the personification of the power of Maya. According to an episode from Purana, Indra, Surya, Pavan, Varun and Yama, could not destroy even a dry leaf of grass, with their own power, when unaided by the Divine Mother.

Lord Vishnu, aided by Mahamaya, was able to kill the two great demons. Madhu and Kaitabh, and the Goddess is therefore acclaimed as "Madhu Kaitavadi Daitya Dalani". Mahishasur, the king of the Asuras later, became immensely powerful and, after defeating the Gods, occupied the throne of heaven. The Gods, after their defeat and humiliation at the hands of Mahishasur, in utter distress, invoked Goddess Durga and prayed for her help in their fight against the Asuras. The Divine Mother killed Mahishasur in a fierce battle and Heaven once again, was restored to Gods.

The Goddess is, therefore known as the "Mahishasur Mardini". Durga aided by Kali killed the Chief Commander of the Asuras Army "Raktabeej", and in the form of 'Kalika', she killed Chanda and Munda. Later she also killed two other great demons Shumbha and Nishumbha. The truth, therefore, is that Durga appeared repeatedly to destroy the Danavas. The Danavas stood for the forces of Evil, to protect the oppressed and to destroy the Evil doers during different ages to re-establish the Rule of Dharma.

Devi Puran, Markandeya Purana, Devisukta, Durga-Saptashati and Chandi are a few of the important holy treatises on Goddess Durga. Durga protects all her children, who has faith and look for her protection.

"I am equally the mother of the wicked, as much as of the virtuous."

Durga is "Durgati-Nashini" she provides protection to all, against troubles caused by the forces of Evil. It is said that in 'Satya Yuga, Raja Surath lost his Kingdom to his enemies, and similarly Samadhi Vaishya, an industrious businessperson, lost his wealth and business. They performed Puja of the Goddess with a view to regain the lost kingdom, their property and wealth. The Puja had the desired effect. The King and the

Vaishya got back everything they had lost. This Puja was performed in spring and is known as "Basanti Puja". Shri Rama, the seventh incarnation of Lord Vishnu, which enabled and gave him strength to kill Ravana, performed Sharadiya Durgotsav, which is held during autumn, in "Treta Yuga". As the legend goes, Ravana was the priest to perform the same Puja, which was intended for his own destruction. No other Brahmin, including Devguru Brihaspati was found eligible to perform this Puja. Before the start of the Puja, legends say that Ravana needed 108 blue lotuses (Neel Kamal Padma Phool), from Rama. The troops of Hanuman and Jambuvan got the necessary 108 lotuses. All 108 were necessary for Rama to achieve victory over Ravana. To test Rama, Durga Mata, hid one Lotus flower. When Rama found one flower missing and time was running out for the Muhurat, Rama took the bow and arrow to take one of his own eyes as he is called Kamalalochan. Durga Mata, at this point of time Materialised and held Rama's bow and arrow and gave the lotus back. Ravana completed the Puja for Rama, helped Rama in this ceremony of his (Ravana's) own defeat, and were destroyed after weeks of battle. The battle started on the 'Saptami' and Ravana was finally killed on the 'Sandhikshan' i.e., the crossover period between Ashtami (the next day) and Navami (the day after). Ravana was cremated on Dashami. Since the period of this worship was different from the conventional period (during the spring - 'Basanta'), this Puja is also known as 'Akal-Bodhan' or a worship (Bodhan) in an unconventional time (A-Kaal).

Similarly, many of us do not understand the significance of Kali-Ma standing naked on top of Lord Shiva. Kali Ma, with her left hand holding an axe and a cut off bleeding head; and on her right hand Abhay Mudra and blessings. Most people are truly not aware of the significance of Kali. "Kal" means time; it has neither a beginning nor an end. From the beginning of "This Universe", from the start of life, until this date; as you read this article; is time. Who started the concept of time? Is there an end to it? Many questions, from time immemorial, have come to the mind of the inquiring devotee. To understand this "Time", we need 'Energy'. As you are aware, Energy can neither be created, nor destroyed. Energy similarly has neither a beginning, nor an end.

As per "Eshoponishad", this energy is "Isha". This "I" of Isha is added to Kal (Time) + I, and therefore Kali. We know powerhouse stores power. To use this power, however, we need electrical wires and a bulb. Lord Shiva, lying under the feet of Kali, is the powerhouse and Kali is the outward expression of this power.

Though there are two - Shiva and Kali there is only one. Within a human body of ours, "Jivatma & Paramatma". To realize this energy within, one need to do Sadhana through a special form of Raja Yoga, known to very few, is Kriya Yoga. Kriya Yoga is the Supreme form of Raja Yoga. With the materialization of our birth as a human being, we must make these seven charkas (Muladhara, Swadhisthan, Manipur, Anahuta, Visudhya, and Agnyachakra & Sahasrahar) awaken and light up. Just as you light up a street with lampposts, you light up your body with the realizations and awakened states of charkas. To awaken and become desire less from our simple world of six senses, and realize the true strength within, and become one with the Universe or Cosmos, is the true sense of worshipping Kali, or "The Divine Mother" or "Diwali" -- (Kathopanishad).

May the Divine Mother bless us and grace us with her blessings; so that we could spread the fire, the torch, which Paramhansa Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and The Divine Mother Sarada Ma; left for us to spread it to each soul. May we be blessed by Mother to bring about this change within us? We, in turn, then are allowed to remove the sufferings and misery from the people around us. May we make our inner soul worthy of "The Infinite Vedantic Truth" and of this great country Bharat (India)!