

DURGA

Durga is the powerful and mighty Goddess, symbolising God's maternal aspects like beauty, love and compassion as well as the victory of good over evil. She also defeated the demon Mahisasura in a great battle which lasted nine nights.

- Durga is a Goddess commonly portrayed mounted upon a ferocious lion, wielding ten arms. She is seen holding a spear with which She is piercing the buffalo-demon Mahishasura and holds an array of deadly celestial weapons. She protects from all ten directions and Her ten arms symbolise totality.
- In the Sri Bhagvata Purana She arises from Vishnu and takes Krishna's place in Devaki's womb, saving Him from being killed by the demon Kamsa.
- In the Sri Devi Mahatmyam, a part of the Markandeya Purana, Durga's most powerful form is created from the light and energy of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva to slay Mahishasura.
- Durga has 64 different forms (Roop) but her main 3 forms are Maha-Lakshmi, Maha-Saraswati and Maha-Kali; although different by name, they are ultimately the same energy. This female trinity personifies wealth, knowledge and power and represents three important attributes or human necessities in life.
- **Maha-Lakshmi** (Goddess of wealth) represents the material and monetary wealth that one needs in life to sustain themselves, e.g. buying food, a house. She is virtue and prosperity.
- **Maha-Saraswati** (Goddess of knowledge and wisdom) represents education and knowledge, and one must learn to harness the power of the mind for both academic and spiritual learning.
- **Maha-Kali** (Goddess of destruction) represents physical strength and power, which is required to carry out work. Man requires a balanced combination of all three of these things in life – money (Lakshmi), intellect (Buddhi) and physical strength (Shakti).
- We should understand that Durga embodies these qualities, and so by worshipping Her, we aim to enrich our own lives with Her virtues.
- The festival of Navaratri presents us with an opportunity in which we can reflect upon Her characteristics and instill them into our lives.
- **Durga is Prakriti (Mother Nature), the substance that gives form and identity to all things. She is Shakti, the power and force that enables all creatures to exist, to feel, to think, act and react. She is Maya, the illusion and delusion that makes life alluring yet elusive.**
- **Therefore, when we worship her we are worshipping Nature, Shakti and understanding Maya.**