Divya Darshan

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Durga Puja Issue

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NA TU MAM SHAKYASE DRASHTUMANENAIV SVACHAKSHUSHA I

DIVYAM DADAMI TE CHAKSHU PASHAY ME YOGAMESHWARAM

Your external eyes will not be able to comprehend my Divine form. I grant you the Divine Eye to enable you to behold Me in my Divine Yoga. Gita Chapter 11.



She is eternal, embodied as the universe. By her all this is pervaded. Nevertheless she incarnates in manifold ways; hear it from me. When she manifests herself in order to accomplish the purposes of the devas, she is said to be born in the world, though she is eternal. - Durga Saptasati.

Our ancients have prescribed the worship of Maha Kali, Maha Lakshmi and Maha Saraswati during these Navaratris (nine nights). Durga is the embodiment of all powers. Durga represents the combination of all the powers of body, mind and soul. Maha Kali symbolises destruction of evil with the help of these powers. Maha Kali and Maha Durga are not elsewhere. They reside in every man. When the mind and the senses, instead of following the dictates of conscience, follow wicked qualities, man becomes a slave to evil habits and turns wicked. The main purpose of celebration of Navaratris is to annihilate

cruelty and wickedness in man to bring forth the principle of the Atma in pristine form. - Satya Sai BABA

Devi Bhagavatam – The Supreme Purana

As the Shiva Maha Purana is the chief scripture for Shaivites, the Vishnu Purana for Vaishnavas, the Shrimad Bhagavatam for devotees of Lord Krishna, and the Ramayana for the worshippers of Lord Rama—so too, the Devi Bhagavata Maha Purana is the primary source of knowledge and devotion for seekers of Adi Shakti, Paramba Bhagavati.

The Holy Setting

In the sacred forest of Naimisaranya, free from the influence of Kali Yuga, Suta Maha Muni narrated this Purana to the sages led by Shaunaka Muni. This forest was sanctified because the Manomaya Chakra (Wheel of Mental Illusion) created by Lord Brahma came to rest there, unable to roll further—making Naimisaranya a timeless seat of purity and divine knowledge.

Revelation of the Purana

The Devi Bhagavatam was revealed by Krishna Dvaipayana Veda Vyasa, who proclaimed it as a Maha Purana, placing it above the eighteen principal Puranas such as the Vishnu Purana, Shiva Purana, and Skanda Purana.

It is vast in scope—

- 12 Skandas (Volumes)
- 300 Chapters
- 18,000 Verses

All dedicated to glorifying Devi Bhagavati, the Primeval Shakti who empowers Maha Purusha to create, sustain, and dissolve the universe.

The Five Themes (Pañca Lakṣaṇa)

Like other Puranas, it upholds the traditional five themes but places the Divine Mother at the center:

- 1. Sarga Primary creation of the cosmos by Maha Purusha, guided by Devi.
- 2. Pratisarga Secondary creation and cyclical renewal of worlds.
- 3. Vamáa Genealogies of Solar and Lunar dynasties.
- 4. Manvantara The reigns of the Manus, beginning with Svayambhu Manu.
- 5. Vamśānucarita Lives and deeds of kings and sages across the ages.

The Heart of the Text

The Devi Bhagavatam is not merely scripture—it is a cosmic hymn to the Supreme Mother. She is revealed as:

- The Source of all beings.
- The Sustainer of the universe.
- The Ultimate Goal of creation and liberation.

It presents the Divine Feminine not as secondary, but as the very foundation of existence, affirming the vision of Shakti and Shiva as inseparable.

Devi Bhagavata – Phala Śruti (Blessings of Reading & Hearing)
In the Devi Bhagavata Purana, it is said that when Maha Vishnu appeared as a toddler floating on a banyan leaf during the great dissolution (Pralaya), Maha Devi Bhagavati blessed Him with half a śloka:

"All that is witnessed is My Māyā — nothing else is eternal."

Lord Brahma expanded the remaining half into a crore stanzas, and Veda Vyasa, for the benefit of his son Śuka Muni, condensed this vast wisdom into eighteen thousand verses in twelve cantos — the Devi Maha Purana.

Blessings of Reading, Hearing, and Contemplating At the conclusion (Phala Śruti), Veda Vyasa assured that those who read (Pāṭhanam), hear (Śravaṇam), or deeply reflect (Mananam) upon the Devi Bhagavata receive:

Guidance & Wisdom for righteous living

- Prosperity and abundance
- Contentment and peace of mind
- Success in life and blessed offspring
- Enlightenment and expansion of outlook

He further declared that Lakshmi (wealth), Sarasvati (wisdom), and Parvati (energy) will permanently reside in the home of such a devotee.

Protection & Health

- No evil force can enter the home of a reader of the Devi Bhagavata.
- Even minor illnesses, as well as chronic ailments, are removed.
- Reading just a few pages brings purity of mind and body, improves digestion, and helps maintain health even preventing ailments like blood pressure and diabetes.

During Navaratri, reading it personally or listening from a noble Brahmana brings immense well-being and happiness.

A Prayer from Śrī Adi Śaṅkarācārya from the Devyaparādha Kṣamāpaṇa Stotram:

Na mantram no yantram thadapi cha na jane stutimaho na chāhvānaṁ dhyānaṁ tadapi cha na jane stutikathā na jane mudrāste tadapi cha na jane vilapanam paraṁ jane Mātaḥ tvad-anusaraṇaṁ kleśa-haraṇam.

"I do not know mantras, yantras, hymns, invocations, meditations, or stories of Your glories.

I do not know the sacred gestures or the ways of imploring You.

But, O Mother, I know that by simply following You, all my sorrows will vanish."

Navaratri Celebrations – Method & Rewards

Navaratri is celebrated twice a year — during Asvayuja (Autumn – Śarad Navaratri) and Chaitra (Spring – Vasanta Navaratri), each lasting nine days from Pratipad to Dashami.

Preparation

- Begins from Bhadrapada Amavasya with one sacred meal (Homa Anna).
- A central platform (Vedi) is prepared for the deity.
- On Pratipad Tithi, the sponsors arrive purified, perform daily Sandhyavandana, seek blessings of Brahmanas with clothes and dakṣiṇā, and begin the rituals.
- An idol of Durga Devi (4 or 18 arms) is installed along with a kalasha (pot of sacred river water) placed on a yantra.
- Worship begins with the mantra "Om Hrim Srim Chandikayai Namah".

Daily Rituals

- Ārati, music, dance, and devotional singing.
- Bala Kanya Bhog feeding and honoring young girls aged 2–
 10:
 - Kumari (2), Trimurti (3), Kalyani (4), Rohini (5), Kalika (5),
 Chandika (6), Sambhavi (7), Durga (8), Subhadra (9).
- Evening Sandhya Puja: Shodasha Upacharas (16 forms of worship), Naivedyam, Parikrama, bhajans, Purana discourses, and Harikathas.

Special Days

- Saptami Appearance of Devi to slay Mahishasura.
- Durga Ashtami Fierce battle with demons, including Mahishasura and the destruction of Daksha's yajna by Bhadra Kali.
- Maha Navami Victory over evil forces; restoration of cosmic balance.

 Vijaya Dashami – Celebration of Devi's victory; a day of gratitude and joy.

Rewards of Navaratri Worship

- Brings the four Purusharthas: Dharma (virtue), Artha (prosperity), Kama (fulfilment of desires), Moksha (liberation).
- Removes even the most severe sins (Pancha Patakas).
- Ensures protection, longevity, happiness, wealth, and health.

Lord Rama's Example

As narrated by Veda Vyasa to King Janamejaya, Lord Rama was advised by Narada Muni to perform Navaratri Puja to gain the strength to defeat Ravana and rescue Sita. Following the worship, Rama received Devi's blessings and was victorious over Ravana, Kumbhakarna, and Indrajit.

Navaratri – Nine Nights of the Divine Mother Durga

Navaratri, meaning *nine nights*, is one of the most sacred periods in the Hindu calendar, dedicated to worshipping the Divine Mother in her three supreme forms. The nine days are divided into **three segments**, each devoted to one goddess:

- 1. **Kali** The Goddess of strength, protection, and valour.
- 2. **Lakshmi** The Goddess of wealth, prosperity, and abundance.
- 3. Saraswati The Goddess of knowledge, wisdom, and learning.

These three-day segments symbolise the discipline and training required at **three levels of personality**:

- Physical cultivating purity and self-control in actions.
- Mental mastering thoughts and emotions.
- Intellectual refining understanding, wisdom, and discrimination.

While Navaratri represents nine days of spiritual discipline, the transformation it signifies is a lifelong process, often requiring months or years of sincere practice.

Vijayadashami - The Day of Victory

The tenth day, **Vijayadashami**, marks the triumph of good over evil, the removal of ignorance, and the dawning of Self-knowledge. On this day, all *vasanas* (subtle desires and impressions) are said to be destroyed, leading the devotee from the state of **Jivahood** (embodied soul) to **Shivahood** (Godrealisation).

Vijayadashami represents:

- The triumph of spirit over matter.
- The victory of divine qualities over demonic tendencies.
- The illumination of wisdom dispelling the darkness of ignorance.

In a modern context, **Saraswati** can be seen as representing *pure science* — the search for truth and knowledge; **Lakshmi** as *applied science* — the use of knowledge for human welfare and prosperity. First comes the pursuit of knowledge (Saraswati), followed by its application in life (Lakshmi), all guided and protected by the moral strength of Kali.

The Legend of Goddess Durga

According to the scriptures, Goddess Durga was created to vanquish the demon Mahishasura. When the three supreme deities — **Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara (Shiva)** — saw the growing tyranny of the demons, a fierce light emanated from their mouths. This divine radiance united into one form — a brilliant, flame-throwing mountain of light — which took the shape of **Durga – Mahamaya**.

Each deity offered her divine gifts:

- Shiva Trident (Trishul)
- Vishnu Discus (Chakra)
- Varuna Conch (Shankha)
- Agni Spear (Shakti)
- Vayu Bow and Arrow
- Indra Thunderbolt (Vajra) and Bell
- Yama Staff (Danda)
- The Ocean Noose (Pasha)
- Brahma Rudraksha Beads
- Ascetics Water Pot (Kamandalu)
- Vishwakarma Various weapons and amulets
- The Himalayas A majestic lion as her mount

Adorned with these weapons and riding her lion, Durga let out a roar so powerful that it shook the heavens and struck terror into the hearts of demons everywhere.

Mahishasura, the buffalo demon — symbol of humanity's lower animal instincts in their most aggressive form — challenged the Goddess. In a fierce battle, Durga, embodying the higher, nobler forces of the universe in equally aggressive form, slew Mahishasura, restoring peace and dharma to the world.

Navaratri, therefore, is not just a festival of ritual worship — it is a celebration of the victory of truth over falsehood, discipline over chaos, wisdom over ignorance, and divine virtues over destructive tendencies. It is an inner journey where each devotee strives to conquer their personal "Mahishasura" and awaken the radiant light of the Self.

The Demoniacal Nature

Bhagavad Gita, Ch. 16

In the Yoga of the Division between the Divine and the Demoniacal, Lord Krishna describes the traits of those with a demoniacal disposition:

- Verse 4 Hypocrisy, arrogance, pride, anger, harshness, and ignorance.
- Verse 7 Ignorance of what ought to be done or avoided; no purity, right conduct, or truth.
- Verse 8 Denial of truth, morality, and God; belief that lust is the cause of creation.
- Verse 11 Obsessed with endless worries, seeking only sensual gratification.
- Verse 12 Bound by desire and anger, pursuing unlawful wealth for pleasure.
- Verse 17 Proud, stubborn, intoxicated with wealth, performing false sacrifices to show off, against scriptural rules.
- Verse 18 Egoistic, lustful, angry, and hateful toward God and others.

Essence:

Such tendencies bind the soul, leading it away from righteousness and towards self-destruction, until they are replaced by divine virtues.

Triple Gate to Hell –

Bhagavad Gita, Ch. 16 (Verses 21–24)

- Verse 21 The three gates to self-destruction are lust, anger, and greed.
 These must be completely abandoned.
- Verse 22 Freedom from these gates leads one to practise what is truly beneficial and attain the Supreme Goal.
- Verse 23 Ignoring scriptural guidance and acting out of selfish desire brings neither perfection, happiness, nor liberation.
- Verse 24 Scriptures must be the ultimate authority to decide what to do and what to avoid; they safeguard the path to eternal bliss.

Essence:

To walk the path of liberation, one must renounce lust, anger, and greed, live by the wisdom of the scriptures, and cultivate purity in thought, word, and deed.

How Navaratri is Celebrated

Navaratri is marked by ritualistic worship of the Divine Mother over nine days, filled with devotion, chanting, and spiritual discipline.

- Durga Saptashati Recitation Central to the celebrations is the daily chanting or recitation of the *Durga Saptashati* (*Devi Mahatmya*), often accompanied by discourses explaining its meaning.
- Mantra Japa Devotees take up the Navarna Mantra —
 "AIM HREEM KLEEM CHAAMUNDAAYAI VICHCHE"
 - or the mantra of their own chosen deity (*Ishta Devata*), chanting it with sincerity and focus throughout the festival.
- Three Phases of Worship –

- First three days: Mata Durga for strength and protection.
- Next three days: Mata Lakshmi for prosperity and abundance.
- Last three days: Mata Saraswati for wisdom and knowledge.
- Sacred Verses & Kirtans Devotional singing, *Devi Jagran* (overnight bhajans), and scriptural recitations fill the atmosphere with spiritual fervour.
- Fasting & Discipline Earnest devotees observe fasts on milk and fruits for all nine days, or at least one day in each of the three phases.
- Kanya Puja On Navami or Vijaya Dashami, nine girls under the age of ten are worshipped as living embodiments of the Divine Mother. They are honoured, fed sumptuously, and gifted new clothes and offerings.
- Grand Havan On the final day, a sacred fire ritual (havan) is performed with the chanting of Durga Saptashati and hymns in praise of the Mother, marking the conclusion of the festival with prayers for peace, prosperity, and spiritual upliftment.

<u>Durga – The Goddess of Righteousness</u>

In Hinduism, worshipping God as Mother reflects Her tenderness and unconditional love. Among Her many forms, Durga is revered as the Goddess of righteousness, destroyer of evil, and protector of devotees. The name "Durga" comes from her slaying of the demon Durg.

Mythological Significance:

According to the Puranas, the demon Mahishasura, blessed by Lord Shiva with invincibility against man or god, terrorised heaven and earth. The gods combined their powers to create Goddess Durga, who, riding a lion, defeated and beheaded Mahishasura. In the Ramayana, Lord Rama worshipped Durga before his battle with Ravana, an event remembered as Akal-Bodhan. Another legend tells of Uma, daughter of King Daksha, whose self-sacrifice and rebirth gave rise to the Shakti Peeths—sacred sites across India.

Durga Puja:

Celebrated grandly in Bengal during autumn (Sharodotshob), it begins with Mahalaya, marking the end of Pitri-Paksha. Clay idols depict Durga slaying Mahishasura and are worshipped for nine days. On Vijayadashami, the idols are immersed, symbolising her return to Lord Shiva. The festival signifies the victory of good over evil and honours divine womanhood.

Triguna Mayi Devi - The Goddess of the Three Gunas

The *Kenopanishad* teaches that God's supreme power manifests as **knowledge, activity, and strength**. The *Bhagavad Gita* describes these as the three **gunas**—Sattwa (purity), Rajas (passion), and Tamas (inertia)—each linked to an aspect of Mata Durga:

- Sattwa (White) Purity, harmony, and knowledge, represented by Goddess Saraswati. It binds through attachment to joy and wisdom.
- Rajas (Red) Activity, ambition, and desire, represented by Goddess Lakshmi. It binds through attachment to action and worldly pursuits, but when directed to the divine, brings Daivi Sampat—the 26 divine qualities.
- Tamas (Black/Dark Blue) Ignorance, lethargy, and delusion, represented by Goddess Kali. She destroys ignorance, egoism, and vice, guiding the devotee's spiritual path.

The *Devi Mahatmya* personifies these inner foes as demons like Mahishasura (ignorance and egoism), Raktabij (multiplying desires), and Chanda-Munda (fierce forms of ego). Durga, the cosmic energy (*Shakti*), annihilates them, symbolising the victory of divine consciousness over lower nature.

<u>Durga – The Sole Refuge in Distress</u>

In the *Mahabharata* (Virata Parva, Section VI), Yudhishthira praises Divine Durga, the Supreme Goddess who grants prosperity, protects the three worlds, and rescues devotees from danger—whether from sin, wilderness, robbers, oceans, or enemies.

She is Kali, slayer of Mahishasura, worshipped by the gods and revered as the giver of blessings, offspring, wealth, knowledge, and courage. Remembering her removes fear, ignorance, loss, and misfortune. Those who recite her glories or call upon her in times of peril are never overcome, for she is the unfailing refuge and bestower of all boons.

Maya - The Divine Power of Illusion

Scriptural Foundations

The Śvetāśvatara Upanishad (4.10) declares:

Prakriti—Nature—is Maya, and God is the Lord of Maya; all beings are His parts.

The Bhagavad Gita (18.61) teaches:

The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings, directing them through His Maya, as if mounted on a machine.

Maya is thus the **divine force** that sustains the cosmic play—veiling the truth while manifesting the universe under God's will.

Sri Shankaracharya - Establishing the Existence of Maya

According to *Sri Shankaracharya*, the **Supreme Self**—pure, non-dual consciousness—first experienced "I"-consciousness, giving rise to duality. This is symbolically expressed as **husband** (Consciousness) and **wife** (Creative Energy). This Creative Energy, both the material and efficient cause of creation, manifests the universe of multiplicity.

Maya arises like a dream in deep sleep—an inscrutable power, neither real nor unreal, dependent on the Supreme Self, composed of the three *gunas* (Sattwa, Rajas, Tamas). Though beyond sense perception, it produces the visible universe, just as an unreal dream can cause a real physical effect.

In individuals, *Avidya* (ignorance) plays a similar role—linking Consciousness to matter through the mind, creating the sense of individuality (*jiva*), like space seeming divided by pots or walls. Just as clouds—born of the sun's own rays—can hide the sun without negating daylight, ignorance can veil the Self. Upon liberation, *Maya* and *Avidya* dissolve, revealing the self-luminous Reality.

Maya's Two Powers - Veiling and Projecting

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad* (II.v.19) states that the Lord, through *Maya*, appears manifold. In *Vivekachudamani*, Sri Shankaracharya identifies two principal powers:

- 1. **Avṛti-śakti** (*Veiling Power Tamas*): Conceals reality, causing ignorance, wrong judgment, doubt, and repeated transmigration.
- 2. **Vikṣepa-śakti** (*Projecting Power Rajas*): Creates the illusory world and mental modifications such as attachment, grief, lust, anger, greed, egoism, envy, and jealousy, binding beings to worldly life.

While *Sattwa* can lead to clarity and liberation, only realisation of Brahman—like recognising the rope instead of the snake—destroys the bondage of Rajas and Tamas.

Maya - The Cause of Multiplicity

Vedanta explains the appearance of the One Absolute as many through *Maya*—the inscrutable power of ignorance that causes the infinite, eternal Spirit to identify with material forms (*upādhis*). Under its influence, the soul forgets its real nature, just as in sleep one dreams, or in a mirage sees water where none exists.

Through *Maya*, the birthless, deathless Self appears as finite beings subject to pleasure and pain, birth and death. These are merely superimposed attributes, without ultimate reality—like the desert remaining unchanged despite the illusion of water. When *Maya* ends, the Self is realised as ever-free, infinite, and blissful.

Maya - The Cosmic Mother

In Vedanta, *Maya* is also the **Divine Mother**, the womb of all beings. As Śvetāśvatara Upanishad affirms: "Know nature to be Maya, and the Lord the ruler of Maya." Swami Vivekananda explains that Maya is neither absolute reality nor absolute non-existence—it is a **mixture of both**, the field of dualities within which the mind operates: joy and sorrow, birth and death, good and evil.

The *Bhagavad Gita* reveals *Maya* as **Prakriti**, composed of the three *gunas*, the **material cause** of creation, while the Lord is the **seed-giving Father** (*Gita* 14:3–4). Spirit (*Purusha*, Shiva) is the *knower of the field*, and matter (*Prakriti*, Shakti) is the *field* itself (*Gita* 13:26). All beings arise from their union.

The Lord declares:

- "I am the father of this world, the mother, and the dispenser of the fruits of actions" (Gita 9:17).
- "All actions are performed by nature alone; the Self is actionless" (Gita 13:29).
- "I am the source and dissolution of the whole universe" (Gita 7:6).

Thus, *Maya* is both the **veiling force** that hides the Absolute and the **creative power** that manifests the relative universe. She is the eternal Mother through whom the Father gives life to all beings.

Liberation from Maya

In Advaita Vedanta, liberation (moksha) is freedom from the binding influence of Maya. This is achieved not by destroying the world, but by realising its true nature—as a dependent, transient appearance upon the changeless Self.

Through discrimination (*viveka*), dispassion (*vairagya*), self-discipline, and meditation, the seeker pierces the *Avṛti-śakti* (veil of ignorance) and dissolves the *Vikṣepa-śakti* (projection of illusion). With the dawn of knowledge (*jnana*), the false identification with body and mind ends, and the Self is known as eternal, actionless, and blissful.

In this state, the world may still appear, but like a mirage to one who knows the desert, it no longer deceives. The knower of Truth abides in the realisation:

Brahma satyam jagat mithya jivo brahmaiva naparah – "Brahman alone is real; the world is an appearance; the individual soul is not other than Brahman."

Maya / Shakti

From the Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa

The great saints of India have declared that the ultimate truth spoken of in the Vedas, Puranas, and Tantras is one and the same — **Satchidananda** (Existence–Consciousness–Bliss). The Vedas call it *Brahman*, the Puranas call it *Rama*, and the Tantras call it *Shiva*.

God is both **formless** and **with form** — like a boundless, still ocean which, when stirred, sends forth waves. This cosmic activity manifests as creation (*Brahma*), preservation (*Vishnu*), and dissolution (*Shiva*). Brahman is beyond mind, reason, and speech; it is the infinite reality into which all distinctions dissolve, just as a salt doll melts into the sea.

The universe and all beings are expressions of this same Satchidananda through **Shakti**, the divine power — also called **Maya**. Vedanta teaches that this Shakti brings forth the phenomenal world, sustains it, and finally withdraws it, just as a spider spins its web from itself and then rests in it.

Though the highest truth is non-dual Brahman, beyond attributes, the relative world cannot be experienced without Shakti. *Brahman and Shakti are one*, like fire and its power to burn, or the sun and its rays. When inactive, it is called Brahman; when active in creation, it is called Kali or Shakti.

Maya is this mysterious power which makes the Absolute appear as the relative. It binds souls in worldliness, yet by the same grace liberates them. Just as the blue of the sky is an illusion, the separateness we perceive is due to Maya. By turning the mind towards God — through prayer, holy company, and repetition of His name — the heart is purified, and one draws closer to the truth.

The Upanishads declare the Supreme to be beyond sense and intellect, "without beginning and without qualities," yet dwelling within all.

The *Gita* affirms that the Self, though in the body, remains untouched by action. The bridge between the Supreme and the manifest universe is **Adyashakti** — the Divine Mother — eternally at play in creation, preservation, and dissolution.

In truth, the Absolute and the relative, the eternal (*nitya*) and the cosmic play (*lila*), are but two ways of seeing the one indivisible Reality. Through understanding Maya, one learns to see all forms as God's manifestation, and to rest in the bliss of Satchidananda.

Kali, the Mother of Time, and the Unity of Shiva-Shakti

The *Mahanirvana Tantra* declares that to aid concentration and fulfil aspirations, the formless Kali — the Mother of Time — is given forms that express her attributes and activities. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (11.32), the Lord reveals: "I am mighty Time, the world-destroyer, now engaged in destroying the worlds."

The Significance of the Shiva Emblem

Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa explained that the Shiva emblem symbolises both fatherhood and motherhood. In worship, the devotee prays: "O Lord, grant that I may not be born again, that I may never again have to pass through a mother's womb." It is thus a prayer for liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

Shankaracharya on Consciousness and Creative Energy

According to Sri Shankaracharya, the Supreme Reality is Pure Consciousness. Its primal manifestation is the *I-consciousness*, which introduces duality. This duality appears as the two complementary aspects of existence: husband and wife — representing Pure Consciousness (*Shiva*) and its creative energy (*Shakti*).

Why We Use Concrete Forms in Worship

In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (4.14), Maitreyi, wife of Sage Yajnyavalkya, remarks: "Constituted as we are, we need something concrete to fix our minds on and stir our imagination before we can think of subtler ideas." Thus, for aspirants not yet established in higher meditation, the scriptures provide tangible symbols and forms as stepping stones to the formless Absolute.

Ardhanarishwara

The Unity of Masculine and Feminine

At the human level, the power of Shakti manifests through speech, thought, and action. An idea in one mind becomes reality by being communicated — through the

grace of *Vak Devi* (Mother Saraswati) — to others who then manifest it into tangible form. The same principle operates at the cosmic level:

- · Shiva is the changeless, sentient substratum.
- Shakti is the dynamic, creative force.

They are inseparable, like heat in fire or light in the sun. Without Shakti, Shiva has no expression; without Shiva, Shakti has no existence. This eternal union is symbolised in Ardhanarishwara — half male, half female — revealing that creation is a blend of the sentient and the insentient, spirit and matter.

The Gita on Spirit and Matter

The Bhagavad Gita (13.29) teaches: "He truly sees who sees that all actions are performed by Nature (Prakriti) alone, and that the Self (Purusha) is actionless."

- Kshetra: The body or field (*Prakriti*, matter) insentient.
- Kshetrajna: The knower of the field (Purusha, spirit) sentient.

True knowledge (*Para Vidya*) is the understanding of both — recognising the changeless Self while engaging with the changing world.

The Grace of the Divine Mother

Durga, Kali, Lakshmi, Saraswati, and countless other names express the same Divine Mother. She permeates and energises the universe, bestowing both material and spiritual wealth, removing difficulties, and destroying evil. Her compassion is infinite, her splendour beyond description.

Approach her with humility and faith. Surrender the heart without reservation. Worship with steadfast devotion — for through her grace, one realises the unity of Shiva and Shakti, the timeless dance of spirit and matter, and the eternal bliss of liberation.

Introduction to Sri Lalitambika

Sri Vidya is the sacred worship of **Srimad Lalita Mahatripurasundari**, one of the revered *Dasa Maha Vidyas*. She is the **Universal Spiritual Energy**—ever-active in the creation, sustenance, and dissolution of the universe—and the compassionate force lifting devotees from the endless cycle of birth and death (*samsara*). Omniscient, omnipotent, and infinitely benevolent, she is

adored as the Divine Mother by countless devotees and guided by the blessings of great Masters.

Though addressed as *Mother*, **Lalita Mahatripurasundari** is beyond gender distinctions and even beyond personality. She receives devotees exactly as they approach her. In truth, **Shakti** (Lalita) and **Shiva** (Mahadeva Tripurasundara) are inseparable—two aspects of the same reality, the Cosmic Whole that also transcends all limitation.

The Sri Chakra and Its Significance

The **Sri Chakra** is the symbolic and geometric representation of the unity of Shiva–Shakti and their cosmic manifestations. At its center lies the *bindu*—representing Srimad Lalita Mahatripurasundari herself. In three-dimensional form, it is called **Sri Meru**.

Worship of the Divine Mother in the Sri Chakra is the highest form of devotion to the ultimate divine energy, moving the aspirant from external idol worship to the subtle and abstract worship of the *Ideal*.

Aavarana Puja — The Path Beyond Duality

In most forms of worship, there remains duality between the worshipper and the worshipped. In **Aavarana Puja**, this duality dissolves—the worshipper, worship, and worshipped become one. The ritual involves:

- 1. Recognizing the *mahashakti* (kundalini shakti) within the heart.
- 2. Installing this energy onto the Sri Chakra or Meru through the breath.
- 3. Performing the puja.
- 4. Returning the energy back into the heart after completion.

This symbolic act reveals that the worshipper is not separate from the Divine Mother. In time, the devotee realizes the complete unity of Self and the Ultimate Reality. Unlike *Hatha Yoga*, this process requires no forceful awakening of kundalini; the Divine Energy rises naturally through devotion.

Universal and Inclusive Practice

This puja is free from barriers of caste, creed, color, or religion. The only requirement is a sincere will to reach the ultimate truth. Worship is never done on an empty stomach—signifying that spiritual realization must be rooted in physical well-being. The essence of this path is captured in the motto:

"Love All, Serve All."

Through Sri Vidya, the seeker moves steadily from form to formlessness, from the outer to the innermost core, where the Divine Mother and the Self are experienced as one and the same.

The Dasa (Ten) Mahavidyas

In the tradition of Tantra, the worship of the Divine Mother (*Devi Shakti*) is known as a *Vidya*—a specific path of spiritual knowledge and practice. Among the countless Tantric forms, the Dasa Mahavidya ("Ten Great Wisdom Goddesses") are regarded as the highest manifestations of Shakti, each embodying a unique cosmic function and spiritual power.

The Ten Mahavidyas

According to the Todalā Tantra, the ten principal forms are:

- 1. Kali The transcendent power of time and transformation.
- 2. Tara The compassionate guide and saviouress.
- 3. Maha Tripura Sundari (Shodashi / Sri Vidya) The supreme beauty and harmony of the three worlds.
- 4. Bhuvaneshvari The queen and sustainer of the universe.
- 5. Chinnamasta The self-sacrificing, self-liberating force.
- 6. Bhairavi The fierce power of divine discipline.
- 7. Dhumavati The void, the wisdom of renunciation.
- 8. Bagalamukhi The power to still and paralyze negativity.
- 9. Matangi The goddess of inner wisdom and speech.

10. Kamala – The lotus goddess of abundance and grace.

These ten forms together represent the entire spectrum of creation, from the most terrifying to the most benevolent, from fierce dissolution to nurturing abundance.

Worship and Practice

The *Mahavidya* sadhana may be performed at different levels:

- Basic Simple mantra chanting and yantra worship.
- Remedial As an astrological measure for planetary harmony.
- Elaborate Tantric Rituals Performed under a qualified *Siddha Guru* to attain siddhis (spiritual perfections) and ultimately liberation.

While the boons gained through sincere worship can be used selflessly for the welfare of all, the scriptures warn that ego-driven misuse leads to spiritual downfall.

Association with Vishnu's Ten Avatars (*Todalatantra*, Ch. 10)

The *Todalatantra* draws a parallel between the Mahavidyas and Vishnu's ten incarnations:

- Kali Krishna
- Tara Matsya (blue form)
- Bagalamukhi Kurma (tortoise)
- Dhumavati Varaha (boar)
- Chinnamasta Narasimha
- Bhuvaneshvari Vamana
- Matangi Rama
- Tripura Sundari Parashurama (Jamadagni)
- Bhairavi Balabhadra
- Mahalakshmi / Durga Buddha / Kalki

Planetary Correspondence in Astrology

The ten goddesses are also worshipped as remedies for the planets and Lagna:

Planet/Lagna Mahavidya

Saturn Kali

Jupiter Tara

Mercury Shodashi (Sri Vidya)

Moon Bhuvaneshvari

Rahu Chinnamasta

Lagna Bhairavi

Ketu Dhumavati

Mars Bagalamukhi

Sun Matangi

Venus Kamala

काली तारा महाविद्या षोडशी भुवनेश्वरी। भैरवी छिन्नमस्ता च विद्या धूमावती तथा। बगलासिद्धविद्या च मातंगी कमलात्मिका। एताः दशमहाविद्याः गुप्तविद्याः प्रकीर्तिताः॥

Kali Tara Mahavidya Shodashi Bhuvaneshwari Bhairavi Chhinnamasta cha vidya Dhumavati tatha Bagala Siddha Vidya cha Matangi Kamalatmika Etaah Dasa Mahavidyaah Gupta Vidyaah Prakeertitaah. – Todalatantra (Ch. 10):

These goddesses are revered as Gupta Vidyas—hidden wisdom paths—meant to be approached only with devotion, purity of intent, and under the guidance of an enlightened master.

Maa Durga Aarti'

sarva mangala maangalye, shive sarvaartha saadhike | sharaNye tryambike gauri, naaraayaNi namoastute ||

JAI AMBE GAURII MAIYAA, JAI SHYAAMAA GAURII NISHADINA TUMAKO DHYAAVATA, HARI BRAHMA SHIVAJII

Glory to you, O divine Mother Gauri, glory to you, O Parvati, who are so rich in maiden grace (virgin beauty), the object of daily meditation by Vishnu, Brahma and Shiva!

MAANGA SINDUURA VIRAAJATA, TIKO MRIGA MADAKO UJJVALASE DAUU NAINAA, CHANDRAVANA NIIKO

O Ambe! On your forehead is a resplendent mark of vermilion along with a mark of musk (signifying good luck). Your twin eyes are bright and your face beautiful as the moon.

KANAKA SAMAANA KALEVARA, RAKTAAMBARA RAAJE RAKTAPUSHPA GALAMAALAA, KANTHAHAARA SAAJE

Your body with a tinge of gold is splendidly dressed in red attire; on your throat lies a wreath of red blossoms like a beautiful necklace.

KEHARI VAAHANA RAAJATA, KHADAGA KHAPPARA DHAARI SURA NARA MUNIJANA SEVATA, TINAKE DUKHA HAARI

Your vehicle, the lion, is, O Mother in keeping with your splendid form; you bear a sword and a skull in your hands, and on you attend the gods, men, hermits and your votaries whose grief you drive away.

KAANANA KUNADALA SHOBHITA, NAASAAGRE MOTII KOTIKA CHANDRA DIVAAKARA, SAM RAAJATA JYOTII

You are adorned with rings on your ears and with pearl on the tip of your nose, your radiance looks as splendid as that of myriad of suns and moons.

SHUMBHA NISHUMBHA BIDAARE, MAHISHAASURA GHAATII DHUUMRA VILOCHANA NAINAA, NISHADINA MADAMAATII

O slayer of the demon Mahisha, you tore apart the bodies of Shumbha, Nishumbha and Dhuumravilochana. (In the battle waged against them) your eyes reflected a frenzy of fury everyday and night.

BRAHMAANII RUDRAANII, TUMA KAMALAA RAANII AAGAMA-NIGAMA BAKHAANII, TUMA SHIVA PATARAANII

You are the beloved consort of Brahma, Rudra and Vishnu. The Vedas and the Shastras describe you as the queen consort of Shiva,

CHAUSATHA YOGINII GAAVATA, NRITYA KARATA BHAIRON BAAJATA TAALA MRIDANGA, AURA BAAJATA DAMARUU

Sixty-four Yoginis chorus your praise and glorify you, while Bhairava (Shiva) dances in tune to the accompaniment of the sound of tambour (mridanga) and drum (damaru).

TUMA HO JAGA KII MAATAA, TUMA HII HO BHARTAA BHAKTANA KII DUKHA HARTAA, SUKHA SAMPATI KARTAA

You are mother of the universe, its sustainer, reliever of your devotees' affliction and bestower of happiness and prosperity.

BHUJAA CHAARA ATI SHOBHITA, VARA MUDRAA DHAARII MANAVAANCHITA PHALA PAAVATA, SEVATA NARA NAARII

The four arms you have adorned your person, while the hand raised in benediction reveals your benign aspect. Those among men and women who wait on you and worship you have all their cherished wishes ever fulfilled.

KANCHANA THAALA VIRAAJATA, AGARU KAPUURA BAATII BHAALAKETU MEIN RAAJATA, KOTIRATANA JYOTII

In a golden platter are beautifully laid aloe and camphor, both of which have lighted (to be waved before you); in he radiance of your forehead is reflected the splendour of a myriad gems.

Shri Durga Chalisa.

Namo Namo Durge Sukh Karani! Namo Namo Ambe Dukh Harani!!

Nirakar Hai Jyoti Tumhari ,Tihu Lok Pheli Ujayari!!

Shashi Lalat Mukh Mahavishala , Netra Lal Brikutee Vikrala!!

Roop Matu Ko Adhik Suhavey , Darash Karat Jan Ati Sukh Pavay!!

Tum Sansar Shakti Laya Kina ,Paalan Hetu Anna Dhan Dina!!

Annpoorna Hui Jag Paala , Tum Hi Aadi Sundari Bala!!

Pralay Kaal Sab Naashan Haari , Tum Gauri Shiv Shankar Pyari!!

Shiv Yogi Tumharey Guna Gaven , Brahma Vishnu Tumhe Nit Dhyaven!!

Roop Saraswati Ko Tum Dhaara ,De Subuddhi Rishi Muni Ubaara!!

Dharyo Roop Narsimha Ko Amba , Pargat Bhayee Phaad Kar Khamba!!

Raksha Kari Prahlad Bachayo , Hiranakush Ko Swarg Pathayo!!

Lakshmi Roop Dharo Jag Mahi , Shri Narayan Anga Samahi !!

Ksheer Sindhu Mein Karat Vilaasa , Daya Sindhu Deejay Man Aasa !!

Hingalaaj Mein Tumhi Bhavani , Mahima Amit Na Jaat Bakhani !!

Maatangi Dhumavati Mata , Bhunvenshwari Bagla Sukh Daata !!

Shri Bhairav Tara Jag Taarini , Chinna Bhaal Bhav Dukh Nivarini !!

Kehar Vaahan Soh Bhavani , Laangur Veer Chalat Agavaani !!

Kar Mein Khappar Khadag Virajey ,Jaako Dekh Kaal Dar Bhaajey !!

Sohay Astra Aur Trishula ,Jate Uthata Shatru Hiya Shoola !!

Nagarkot Mein Tumhi Virajat , Tihu Lok Mein Danka Baajat !!

Shumbh Nishumbh Daanav Tum Maarey , Rakt Beej Shankhan Sanhaarey

!!

Mahishasur Nripa Ati Abhimaani, Jehi Agha Bhaar Mahi Akulani!! Roop Karaal Kali Ko Dhaara, Sen Sahit Tum Tihi Sanhaara!! Padi Bheed Santan Par Jab Jab , Bhayee Sahay Maatu Tum Tab Tab !! Amar Puri Aru Basava Loka , Tab Mahima Sab Raheyn Ashoka !! Jwaala Mein Hai Jyoti Tumhari ,Tumhe Sada Pujey Nar Nari !! Prem Bhakti Se Jo Yash Gaavey, Dukh Daaridra Nikat Nahi Aavey!! Dhyavey Tumhe Jo Nar Man Laai , Janam Maran Taako Chhuti Jaai !! Jogi Sur-Muni Kahat Pukari, Yog Na Ho Bin Shakti Tumhari!! Shankar Aacharaj Tap Keenhon, Kaam Krodh Jeet Sab Leenhon!! Nishdin Dhyan Dharo Shankar Ko, Kaahu Kaal Nahi Sumiro Tumko!! Shakti Roop Ko Maram Na Paayo, Shakti Gayee Tab Man Pachtaayo!! Sharnagat Hui Kirti Bakhaani , Jai Jai Jai Jagdamb Bhavani !! Bhayi Prasan Aadi Jagdamba, Dayi Shakti Nahin Kin Vilamba!! Moko Maatu Kasht Ati Gero, Tum Bin Kaun Harey Dukh Mero!! Aasha Trishna Nipat Sataven, Moh Mahadik Sab Binsaven!! Shatru Naash Keejay Maharani, Sumiro ekachita Tumhen Bhavani!! Karo Kripa Hey Maatu Dayala, Ridhi Sidhi De Karahu Nihala!! Jab Lagi Jiyoon Daya Phall Paoon, Tumharo Yash Mein Sada Sunaoon!!

Durga Chalisa Jo Koi Gaavey , Sab Sukh Bhog Param Pad Paavey !! Devidas Sharan Nij Jaani , Karahu Kripa Jagdamb Bhavani !

Durga Dvātrimsat Nāmāvalī

1.	Om	Durgāya	ai namaḥ l
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- 2. Om Durgatāriņyai namaķ I
- 3. Om Durgapārişadyai namah I
- 4. Om Durgamacchedinyai namah l
- 5. Om Durgasādhinīyai namaļ I
- 6. Om Durganāśinyai namah l
- 7. Om Durgatoddhāriņyai namaļ I
- 8. Om Durganihantryai namah I
- 9. Om Durgamāpahāyai namah l
- 10. Om Durgamajñāyai namah I
- 11. Om Durgadaityāriśoşiņyai namah |
- 12. Om Durgamānandadāyai namaļ I
- 13. Om Durgamadhvāntanāśinyai namaļ I
- 14. Om Durgamāpahāyai namaļ I
- 15. Om Durgamajñānadāyai namaļ I
- 16. Om Durgamajñānahantryai namaḥ l

17. Om Durgamavyādhināśinyai namah I

- 18. Om Durgamāsurasanghinyai namaņ l
- 19. Om Durgamāyudhadhāriņyai namaļ |
- 20. Om Durgamāngyai namaņ I
- 21. Om Durgamatyantadāriņyai namaļ I
- 22. Om Durgamādhārāyai namaḥ l
- 23. Om Durgamālokadāyinyai namaļ I
- 24. Om Durgamārgapradāyai namaļ I
- 25. Om Durgamānandadāyinyai namah l
- 26. Om Durgamānandavāsinyai namaļ I
- 27. Om Durgamānandavardhinyai namaļ I
- 28. Om Durgamātmapradāyinyai namaļ I
- 29. Om Durgamāmohinyai namaļ I
- 30. Om Durgamacchedyāyai namaļ I
- 31. Om Durgamāpahāyai namaļ I
- 32. Om Durgāyai namah I

108 divine names of Mother Durga.

- 1 Om Durgayai namah
- 2 Om Shivayai namah
- 3 Om Maha-lakshmyai namah
- 4 Om Maha-gouryai namah
- 5 Om Chandikaye namah
- 6 Om Sarva-gynayai namah
- 7 Om Sarva-lokeshayai namah
- 8 Om Sarva karma-phala-pradayai
- namah
- 9 Om Sarva teerdha-mayai namah
- 10 Om Punyayai namah

- 55 Om Shastra-mayyai namah
- 56 Om Nityayai namah
- 57 Om Shubhayai namah
- 58 Om Chandhrardha-mastakayai namah
- 59 Om Bharatyai namah
- 60 Om Bramaryai namah
- 61 Om Kalpayai namah
- 62 Om Karalyai namah
- 63 Om Krushana-pingalayai namah
- 64 Om Bramhai namah
- 65 Om Narayanyai namah

11 Om Deva-yonaye namah

12 Om Ayoni-jaayai namah

13 Om Bhume-jaayai namah

14 Om Nirgu-nayai namah

15 Om Aadhara-shaktyai namah

16 Om Aanee-shvaryai namah

17 Om Nirgu-nayai namah

18 Om Niramham-karayai namah

19 Om Sarva-garva-vimar-dhinyai namah

20 Om Sarva-loka-priyayai namah

21 Om Vaanyai namah

22 Om Sarva-vidyadhi-devataayai namah

23 Om Parvatyai namah

24 Om Devamatre namah

25 Om Vanee-shayai namah

26 Om Vindya-vasinyai namah

27 Om Tejo-vatyai namah

28 Om Maha-matre namah

29 Om Koti-surya-sama-prabhayai namah

30 Om Deva-tayai namah

31 Om Vahni-rupayai namah

32 Om Sate-jase namah

33 Om Varna-rupinyai namah

34 Om Guna-shayayai namah

35 Om Guna-madhyayai namah

36 Om Guna-traya-vivarji-tayai namah

37 Om Karma-gynana-pradayai namah

38 Om Kantayai namah

39 Om Sarva-samhara-karinyai namah

40 Om Dharma-gynanayai namah

41 Om Dharma-nistayai namah

42 Om Sarva-karma-vivardhi-tayai namah

43 Om Kamakshmai namah

44 Om Kama-samhartyai namah

45 Om Kama-krodha-vivarji-tayai namah

46 Om Shan-karyai namah

47 Om Sham-bhavyai namah

48 Om Shan-tayai namah

49 Om Chandra-suryagni-lochanayai namah

50 Om Suja-yayai namah

51 Om Jaya-bhumi-shtayai namah

52 Om Jaahnavyai namah

53 Om Jana-puji-tayai namah

54 Om Shastrasyai namah

66 Om Roudryai namah

67 Om Chandra-mruta-pari-srutayai namah

68 Om Jyeshtayai namah

69 Om Indirayai namah

70 Om Maha-mayayai namah

71 Om Jagat-grushtya-dhika-rinyai namah

72 Om Bramhanda-koti-samsdha-nayai namah

73 Om Kaminyai namah

74 Om Kamalaa-layayai namah

75 Om katya-yanyai namah

76 Om Kalaa-teetayai namah

77 Om Kala-samhara-karinyai namah

78 Om Yoga-nishtayai namah

79 Om Yogi-gamyayai namah

80 Om Yogi-dyeyayai namah

81 Om Tapa-svinyai namah

82 Om Gynana-pupayai namah

83 Om Niraka-rayai namah

84 Om Bhakta-bhishta-phala-pradayai namah

85 Om Bhutatme-kayai namah

86 Om Bhuta-matre namah

87 Om Bhute-shyai namah

88 Om Bhuta-darinyai namah

89 Om Svadhayai namah

90 Om Naree-madhya-gatayai namah

91 Om Shada-dharadi-vardhinyai namah

92 Om Mohitam-shubha-dayai namah

93 Om Shubhrayai namah

94 Om Sukshmayai namah

95 Om Matrayai namah

96 Om Nirala-sayai namah

97 Om Nimna-gayai namah

98 Om Neela-samka-shayai namah

99 Om Nitya-nandayai namah

1010m Harayai namah

102 Om Paraayai namah

103 Om Sarva-gynana-pradayai namah

104 Om Anamtayai namah

105 Om Satyayai namah

106 Om Durlabha-rupinyai namah

107 Om Sarasvatyai namah

108 Om Sarva-gatayai namah

109 Om Sarva-bheeshta-prada-inyai namah

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु विष्णुमायेत्यभिधीयते ।नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥१॥ या देवी सर्वभूतेषु चेतनेत्यभिधीयते ।नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥२॥ या देवी सर्वभूतेषु बुद्धिरूपेण संस्थिता ।नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥३॥ या देवी सर्वभूतेषु निद्रारूपेण संस्थिता ।नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥४॥ या देवी सर्वभूतेषु क्षुधारूपेण संस्थिता ।नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥५॥ या देवी सर्वभूतेषु छायारूपेण संस्थिता ।नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥६॥ या देवी सर्वभूतेषु शक्तिरूपेण संस्थिता ।नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥७॥ या देवी सर्वभूतेषु तृष्णारूपेण संस्थिता ।नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥८॥ या देवी सर्वभूतेषु क्षान्तिरूपेण संस्थिता ।नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥९॥ या देवी सर्वभूतेषु जातिरूपेण संस्थिता ।नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥१०॥ या देवी सर्वभूतेषु लक्ष्मीरूपेण संस्थिता ।नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥११॥ या देवी सर्वभूतेषु दयारूपेण संस्थिता ।नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥१२॥ या देवी सर्वभूतेषु श्रद्धारूपेण संस्थिता ।नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥१३॥

