

Adore the Divine Mother Every Moment of Your Life

By Swami Jyotirmayananda

ALL CIRCUMSTANCES and relationships in daily life are fleeting, based on karma. However, the purpose behind all human experiences and relationships is to discover your relationship with God. Once you have developed that relationship and experienced that close proximity with the Divine Self, you do not need any more relationships. You are no longer on a “ship.” You have crossed the ocean. Your faith in God has produced deeply imbedded roots that provide a permanent security and inner peace during the storms of life.

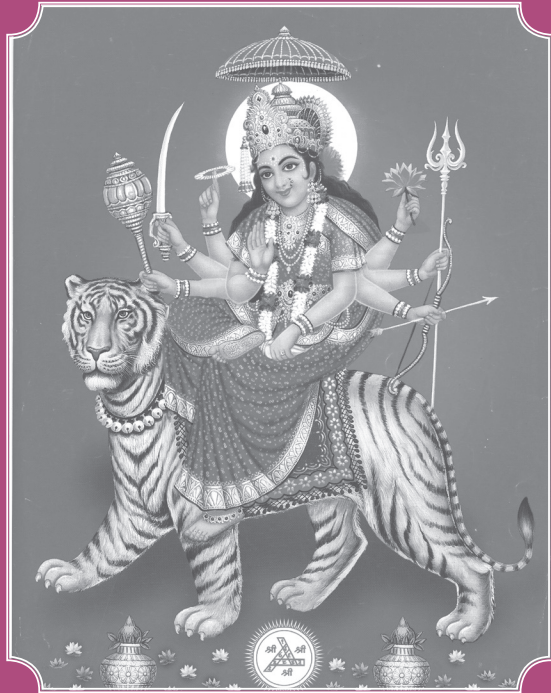
Although God is beyond all human concepts, neither father nor mother, adoring God as a loving Divine Mother has great significance. Because one generally feels an instinctive closeness with their mother, that love and trust form the basis of *Devi Puja*. Therefore, while you live in this complex world and experience its joys and sorrows, learn to make your life a perpetual celebration of *Devi Puja* and adore the Goddess within your heart in Her three aspects: Durga Devi, Lakshmi Devi and Saraswati Devi.

Durga Devi

IN THE COURSE of their life, everyone experiences frustrating situations, disillusionment, treachery, a sudden calamity, death or disease. Deceptions occur in families—fraud or hypocrisy. You feel abused by people who have broken your trust. People live together in a loving relationship and suddenly there is a breakup. A year after you thought someone was a friend, you realize that person was not a friend at all.

During these situations, Durga is conveying a deeper spiritual message: Never think that your life is ruined by adversity. This world can change at any moment, and the only thing that is genuinely reliable is God, the Divine Self. So focus on that ever-present Self within.

Change and destruction are natural to the world. When you trust in God when changes occur, you will begin to see that there is a Divine plan behind it. With a prayerful feeling, situations that cannot be avoided allow you to witness the miraculous power and grace of God.



Durga Devi

Thus, when a person is asleep to the infinite within their being, Durga, the destroyer of spiritual ignorance, creates the necessary difficult, even terrible situations to awaken them to their higher nature. Tragedies and difficulties serve the purpose of turning your mind inward towards the Divine Self. During hardships you are jarred. You begin to search deeply within yourself. You turn away from what is constantly shifting to what is permanent—the Divine within—for meaning, for genuine shelter. Turning to Devi with sincerity, you quickly discover inner peace.

When you see a surgeon cutting into a person, if you are not properly informed of what he is doing, you will be terrified. You will consider the surgeon a monster. If you do not have that mystical understanding of what Goddess is doing, you are terrified and you consider her to be a cruel monster.

Adversity viewed properly becomes a well-planned austerity to engender in your heart strong willpower, a resolve to attain a deeper understanding of life and ultimately Enlightenment. Rather than filling your mind with nega-

tive impressions, it continues furnishing your mind with strength, power, faith, and dispassion. It turns your heart and mind away from what is constantly changing—this world—to what is eternal and permanent—the Divine Self—Who is the essence of all.

Develop a philosophical understanding that everything has a spiritual meaning and, in these difficult situations, there is the hand of Goddess. By maintaining a devotional attitude towards Devi, you accumulate within your unconscious a special meritorious faith that gives you inner serenity in the midst of a tragedy. You increasingly develop a sense of being supported even when you are surrounded by negativity and chaos. Faith helps you to handle adverse circumstances with a sense of tranquility when difficulties cannot be prevented.

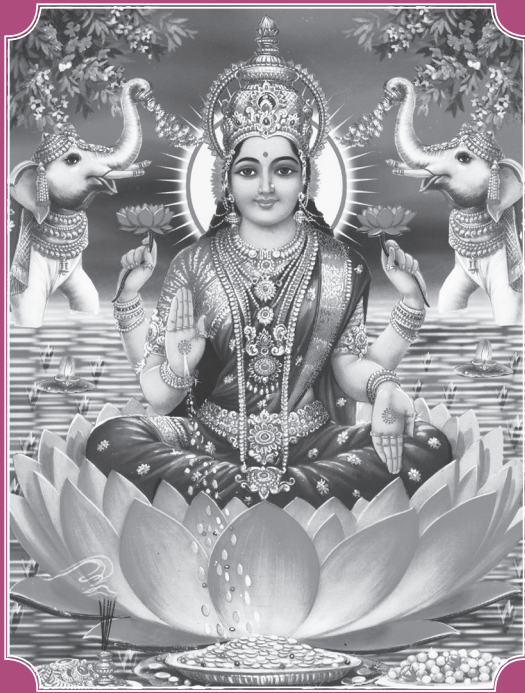
The world is a drama presented before every soul. It is only when you encounter a confounding and dramatic situation, and you are a witness to something that rescues you, that you experience the power of the Devi. When you actually live through adversity and difficult situations, you see a power sustaining you. Otherwise, theoretically, if you are told that the Goddess is omnipotent, that hardly means much!

Worship of Durga Devi implies that you do not permit your mind to become bitter, but you allow your mind to be reverent. To worship God as Durga is to develop *vairagya* or dispassion: “I have been sleeping. Let me wake up.”

Lakshmi Devi

THE SECOND aspect of God as the Divine Mother is Lakshmi Devi. Goddess Lakshmi bestows prosperity, which manifests in two forms: external and internal. Internal prosperity is your state of mind: peace, serenity, contentment, freedom from stress. External prosperity does not need to be explained: money in the bank, security, and a roof over your head.

But suppose you have an abundance of wealth and internally you are restless and miser-



Lakshmi Devi

able. Then, you are not really prosperous. You have not received the grace of Lakshmi.

If prosperity swells your ego, perverts your vision, robs you of your humility, that is A-Lakshmi. When you acquire wealth, and you say goodbye to people who were your friends—“Did I ever know you? How can I be friends with you?”—and you begin associating only with people who you consider “high society,” then you are insulting Lakshmi, and the karmic results are severe. You are not grateful for the prosperity Goddess has given you. Though in the eyes of the world you may be considered extremely prosperous, and people may be jealous of your success, in your own heart an ugly cancer of discontent and hollowness is developing. You have nothing really to be proud of. Even a humble farmer somewhere is more content than you.

To honor Lakshmi in day-to-day life is to remember that every prosperous development is an act of Divine grace, and therefore one should remain humble. Do not be deluded. Learn to respect Lakshmi. If you have an abundance of

prosperity, rather than accumulating more and more, use your prosperity for spiritual advancement—for yourself and others. Use your prosperity for relieving people of their misery, for promoting goodwill, peace and harmony and disseminating knowledge. Reverence the blessings God has given to you. Utilize whatever material possessions you have. Design a lifestyle that frees you from the pressure of money so that you can meditate.

Direct your thoughts in such a way that they will not feed your ego, but rather will lead you to humility. With the grace of Lakshmi, you think clearly. Your ideas become effective, and therefore you attain success in whatever task you undertake.

There is a Sanskrit saying that states, “*Namanti phalino vrikshah*”—“When the tree is laden with fruit, it bows down!” That’s the nature of true prosperity. If you have true prosperity, you are humbler than before. If you have prosperity and you become quite conceited, that is not prosperity at all! That’s adversity in the making!

Saraswati Devi

THE THIRD ASPECT of God in the form of the Divine Mother is Goddess Saraswati—the Devi presiding over your intellect. If by your intellect, you plan to hurt others, you are disrespecting Saraswati. If you continue to sustain thoughts and sentiments of jealousy and hate, then you are insulting the Goddess. If you are prone to misunderstanding, looking at things in a pessimistic way, you are disrespecting Saraswati within you. On the other hand, if by your intellect you promote harmony and peace in others and send out vibrations of goodwill, you are worshipping the Goddess.

Saraswati is also the presiding deity over speech. If you are not careful in what you say, if the words that you utter hurt others, then you are insulting Goddess Saraswati. Whatever knowledge you gain, whether it is academic, practical, or spiritual should not make you vain. Utilize



Saraswati Devi

that knowledge to help others. Then you are honoring the Goddess.

REALIZE that all three of these aspects of the Divine Mother are interwoven in daily life. If certain things are being destroyed before you, or circumstances do not happen according to your expectations, that is the essentially compassionate Hand of Durga. When positive situations occur, then that is the grace of Lakshmi. At the times you have an upsurge of insight, or you discover a talent or wisdom within yourself, those are the blessings of Saraswati. Honoring profoundly these developments that occur every day in your life is true adoration of the Devi—and perpetual celebration of Devi Puja!

When you have perfected this spiritual art, you will not come back to the world—returning again and again in different relationships and in different situations, returning repeatedly to experience birth and death. You have attained *Vijaya*—the Victory in life that is Self-realization, the Victory that is never followed by defeat!



FROM SWAMIJI'S KITCHEN

Suji Halwa (As served in Devi Puja)

- 1 cup of semolina (Indian Suji)
or American cream of wheat
- 1 cup of sugar
- 1 cup of melted butter
- 1/2 teaspoon of saffron twigs
(optional)
- 4 green cardamoms, shelled, crushed

In a pan heat 2/3 pint of water with sugar and cardamom. Crush the saffron in a tablespoon of hot water and blend it with the syrup. Simmer on low heat.

Using a deep pan, pour in half of the melted butter and gently fry the semolina stirring constantly.

After about five minutes of frying on low heat the suji will begin to give a pleasant aroma. Be careful not to burn the suji. Stir in the syrup. The suji will swell up and the water will be completely absorbed. Add the remaining butter. The halwa is ready.

You may add roasted pistachios or almonds to enhance the flavor and nutritional value of the halwa.

Halwa is widely served in India as temple prasad and as a breakfast item. A cup of halwa followed by a cup of warm milk is a favored combination.