

Perpetual Worship

By Sri Swami

Although the Mother Worship festivity is only celebrated once a year for ten days, worshipping God, the Divine Self, as Mother or Goddess is a profound feeling that can certainly continue at all times, throughout one's various experiences in life. Let us consider each of the three aspects of the Goddess—Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati—and reflect upon how one's devotional feeling towards God as Mother can be perpetually inspired.

Goddess Durga is worshipped during the first three days of the Mother Worship ceremony. She is an aspect of God whose awe-inspiring

Divine power destroys the unwanted negative qualities in an aspirant—impurities that express as lust, anger, greed, jealousy, pride and all their ramifications. When circumstances in your life do not go according to your ego's plan, that is God in the form of Goddess Durga working Her compassionate destruction in your life. Insults, inconveniences, thwarted desires and even the most terrible conditions are all expressions of Goddess Durga. These circumstances are all part of God's Divine Plan for your spiritual upliftment.

During adversity, if you have not developed philosophical insight into the challenges of life, you become bitter. Bitterness is an indication that one has mis-

understood the deeper meaning behind events. During these times, you nurture the idea that the people around you are the cause of your trouble, and you begin to develop hatred towards them. Relationships become disharmonious.

How, on the other hand, would a worshipper of Goddess Durga handle adversity? First, recognize that adversity is a type of Divine detour. Its purpose is to redirect your mind to God. That doesn't mean you should promote adversity consciously, but when it does manifest in your life, learn to handle it with the spirit of surrender. Wait and watch. Be patient. Do not allow your mind to default to old habits of bitterness, jealousy and hatred, which are completely degrading to human mind. Rather, discover the powerful dynamism of faith and prayer.

Further understand that your endurance of adversity is a wonderful accomplishment, a proof of inner strength. If you are driving a car uphill during the wintry days when all the roads are frozen, handling the car is extremely difficult. But the very fact that you are driving and not slipping backwards gives you a sense of accomplishment. Similarly, standing up to your adversity and enduring it with patience is, in itself, an accomplishment.

If you have certain illusions that are broken, there is always an impact on your heart. You expected too much from a person, object or situation. Suddenly you realize that your



When adversity comes, wait, watch and smile... you will catch the smile of Goddess Durga behind her terrifying mask.

of the Divine Mother

Jyotirmayananda

expectations cannot be fulfilled. The person or circumstance upon which you depended turns out to be totally disappointing. When that happens, instead of developing bitterness, follow the Divine detour and turn to the Goddess for answers. It is the Goddess that destroyed that illusion for a Divine reason.

An interesting analogy is given by devotees of the Goddess to illustrate her mysterious ways. A mother playfully puts on a scary mask, and her child is terrified when he sees the ghostly face. But suddenly the child decides to look behind the mask. When he does so, he sees the eyes of the mother gleaming with tenderness. Adversity is a mask. Do not be overwhelmed by it. Considering that adversity is a necessary part of life, look for the truth behind it. The moment you do, you will see the tender face of the Goddess and feel joyous. While handling adversity, do not allow the mind to become bitter. Rather, understand that some negative karma is being exhausted by adversity. As you reflect, your willpower becomes more intensified, and a deeper insight into life unfolds. If you do so, then you are adoring God in the form of Durga.

The next aspect of God in the form of Mother is Goddess Lakshmi, the Goddess of Prosperity. One aspect of Lakshmi manifests as congenial circumstances, health, fulfillment of desires, wealth, etc. Each of these forms of prosperity is a gracious occasion given to the soul for its evolution.

Everything you acquire should become a means for you to serve humanity in a selfless way. However, after attaining success and enjoying prosperity, most people become very proud and conceited. If a person with whom you have been friends for a long time suddenly shuns your company because they have become conceited about their social status, that behavior is an insult to the Goddess. If prosperity arouses the arrogant feeling that "This is mine. I worked for it. Nobody can take it from me," you are being gripped by terrible illusion. If, on the other hand, you develop a sense of humility and gratitude when there is prosperity and do not allow your mind to become imbal-

anced, you are using prosperity in a worshipful manner.

To truly adore Goddess Lakshmi, an aspirant must realize that real prosperity lies not in the material world but in the spiritual plane. It consists of developing Divine impressions—impressions known as *shubha samskaras*. *Samskaras* are the foundation of your personality. What you are, the conditions you draw to yourself, the direction in which you are going—all depend upon the subtle impressions operating in your unconscious. Instead of entertaining impressions of a negative nature, learn the art of developing positive

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impressions. Learn to transform hate into love and pride into humility. Change the very structure of the unconscious, and fill it with vibrations of fearlessness. All this is a tremendous assignment, but success is well worth the true prosperity it renders.

Just as a miser continues counting his gold coins day in and day out, a wise person who knows the authentic value of inner wealth constantly calculates his gain of inner treasure. Every night before going to sleep, ask yourself, "What treasure of Divine qualities have I collected today? Have I helped someone, avoided an argument, encouraged a person or an animal?" If the answer is, "No," do not be frustrated. Nature provides boundless opportunities for transformation. Merely assert, "Tomorrow I will be better. I am going to discover more inner treasure." Continue to assert the positive as your reality and the negative as illusory.

Therefore, to adore Goddess Lakshmi with genuine sincerity, utilize your prosperity well day by day. Never miss an opportunity to develop the inner wealth of virtuous qualities, and never allow yourself to hurt others because of jealousy, greed or pride. If you misuse any form of internal or external wealth and hurt others, you are insulting the Goddess, and thereby, you may see your treasures slip away.

The third aspect of the Goddess is Saraswati, the Goddess of Wisdom. She is the giver of knowledge, inspiration, psychic powers and creativity. If you are able to discover something wonderful in the spiritual plane, it is through the grace of the Goddess. If you are practicing meditation and suddenly become aware of a mystic revelation or an insight within yourself, it is because of Goddess Saraswati.

When you discover a certain creative talent within yourself, develop humility. That humility and inward surrender to the Goddess is the source of boundless talents. The spirit has endless potential; nothing is impossible for you. Never think, "These are the only things that I can learn. I cannot learn anymore." That is called becoming psychologically old. Though your physical body may age, you can always remain psychologically young, because the spirit knows no aging. Worship the Goddess by cultivating the understanding that you are a life-long student who

can develop boundless talents for serving the Divine Self in others.

There is another aspect of worshipping Goddess Saraswati in practical life that is of great importance for an aspirant. Goddess Saraswati is described as the Goddess of speech, and She presides over your tongue. That tongue does not belong to you, but is an instrument given to you to enhance your intellect. Speech and intellect are so closely linked together that, in order to possess purity of intellect, speech must be well utilized and under control. If you do not handle your tongue

If you are inspired to discover something wonderful in either the spiritual or material world, be humble—your creativity is a gift of Goddess Saraswati.



with foresight, if your words are constantly hurting others, beware of insulting the Goddess.

Although you may lack material wealth, you can serve others generously with your speech. A few words can encourage others, remove their illusions, even enlighten them. But if, due to uncontrolled mind and temper, you misuse the tongue, there can be severe consequences. You can be struck dumb, or your intellect can be rendered dull. To be dull-witted is a most adverse situation for the human personality, for all problems dissolve on the basis of keen intelligence, insight and understanding. Therefore, it is important that speech be under control.

Speech and listening are also interrelated. Condition your mind in such a way that you listen to things that promote understanding and enlightenment. Do not listen to gossip. Do not draw to yourself those words that are going to create unnecessary agitation in your mind. Shun such vibrations. Listen to glorious things, speak of positive things, and reflect upon the truth. In doing so, you will serve humanity more and more, and will worship Goddess Saraswati in a truly advanced manner.

Learning to worship the three aspects of Goddess—Durga, Lakshmi, and Saraswati—in your daily life is a powerfully transforming art. It does not make any difference to the Divine Self if you call God “Goddess” or Goddess “God.” What is important is developing the understanding that you can approach God with the inward trust, tenderness, and total surrender with which a child approaches his mother. The understanding that you are ever most lovingly enfolded by God transforms life into a perpetual stream of infinite sweetness and joy.

RECIPE: ANANDAMAYI MA KITCHURI

(Delightfully prepared for Swami Jyotirmayananda
by Swami Sadasivananda)

- 6 Tbs. ghee
- 4 Tbs. green chili, chopped (more or less according to taste)
- 1 cup onion, (optional), if not used substitute 1 tsp. hing
- 1 ½ tsp. tumeric
- 1 tsp. cumin
- 1 tsp. ginger
- 1 tsp. anise
- 1 tsp. fenugreek
- ½ tsp. ajwan
- 1 cup raw rice
- 2 cups tomato, fresh or canned cut in large pieces
- 4 cups assorted vegetables, cut in large pieces
- 2 cups potato, cut in large pieces (parboiled but not fully cooked)
- 1 ½ tsp. salt
- 3 cups boiling water (if canned tomato is used, use their juice as part of the water measure)

Heat the ghee and fry the chili and onions (if used), not allowing them to brown. Add all the spices except the hing (if used) and quickly fry for about 20 seconds. If hing is used, add it in for the last 5 seconds of frying the spices. Add the rice and stir well into the spice mixture. Immediately add the vegetables and again quickly stir well until all are coated with spices. Add potato, tomato, salt and water. Bring to a simmer and cook covered until rice is done, stirring occasionally. The cooking time will vary depending on the type of rice used. When done, remove from the fire and add more ghee according to taste.

TIPS:

1. Some cooks like to use all powdered spice, others use all whole seed.
2. To increase the chili heat, do not fry them but rather add them with the vegetables.
3. Some like to add 1 tsp. chopped garlic, though not traditionally used.
4. A variation can be to use ½ tomato juice and ½ water for the liquid measure.
5. If the dish seems wet toward to end of cooking, uncover for the remaining cooking time.