

INTRODUCTION TO THE DEVI MAHATMYAM



The *Devi Mahatmyam*, 'The Glory of the Goddess' reveals the Goddess as Shakti as the supreme power who creates, nourishes and dissolves the Universe. The *Devi Mahatmyam* recounts the battles of the Devi over the forces of evil. It extolls the greatness of the Devi, and inspires reverence and worship of the feminine aspect of God. It reveals how the Goddess manifests in the lives of Her devotees to bring them happiness, peace, protection and the fulfillment of their desires.

The *Devi Mahatmyam* is part of the large text of the *Markendeya Purana*, and is believed to have been written in the sixth century. It is considered one of the most definitive texts of Divine Mother worship, and on is a commentary on the evolution of consciousness on every level of existence. The *Devi Mahatmyam* is also called *Durga Saptashti*, *Chandi* and *Chandipaat*. The *Devi Mahatmyam* and the *Lalita Sahasranam* are the two essential texts of Devi worship in the Shakta tradition. It consists of 13 Chapters with 700 verses each invoking the Goddess and extolling the Devi's glory. In India, it is usually chanted during Navaratri, the nine night celebration of Durga every autumn.

The story of the Goddess' manifesting in the world to destroy evil and restore goodness in three battles with evil demons. The story of the three battles is framed by a sage teaching his disciples about the true identity of the Goddess. The battles make up the three sections of the text. The first section reveals how the Devi defeated the demons Madhu and Kaitabha, the second, the Goddess' defeat of the demon Mahishasura, and the third is the Goddess' defeat of the demons Sumbha and Nisumbha. These three sections contain different chapters and are unequal in length. The first section is chapter 1, the second consists of chapters 2-4, and the third spans chapters 5-14.

On the highest level, the *Devi Mahatmyam* is a secret technique of spiritual evolution. It brings you closer to the Divine Mother, understanding her the purpose of her different forms, tender or terrible. The story operates both on an outer level, the Goddess' battles to destroy negative forces and restore goodness in the world, and the battle an individual soul undergoes to transform the negative tendencies of the mind in their ascent to liberation.

After the Goddess destroys the demon Mahishasura, who had been terrorizing the world, the gods asked Her for the boon, "Oh Maheshwari, whenever we think of you again, destroy our calamities. O

Mother of spotless countenance, and whatever mortal shall praise you with these hymns, may you, who have become gracious towards us, be also for his increased this wealth, wife, and other fortunes together with riches, prosperity and life, Oh Ambika!”

“Be it so!” the Goddess replied as She disappeared before them.