

दुर्गास्तोत्रं श्रीशिवकृतम्

{॥ दुर्गास्तोत्रं श्रीशिवकृतम् ॥}

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COMMENTS -

Some comments about Durga are provided here.

The following abbreviations are used in the comments that follow.

LS - Lalitha Sahasranamam.

BG - Sri Bhagavat Gita

DK - Durga Chandrakala stuti by Sri Appayya DikShita

DS - Durga Saptasati

The literal meaning of the word 'Durga' is unapproachable, unattainable, impossible to enter, un-understandable, and so on. It also implies, dense and narrow forest; the passage to cross the river; fort; obstacle; and the like. When these meanings are worked out, the term 'Durga' is taken to mean quintessentially the one who, like a fortress, protects men of virtue and dispels the darkness of ignorance of her devotees. Durga is known by numerous names. The Sanskrit lexicon Amarakosa gives these names.

उमा कात्यायनी गौरी काली हैमवतीश्वरी ।

शिवा भवानी रुद्राणी शर्वाणी सर्वमङ्गला ।

अपर्णा पार्वती दुर्गा मृडानी चण्डिकाम्बिका ।

आर्या दाक्षायणी चैव गिरिजा मेनकात्मजा ।

सती च कालरात्री च भैरवी गणनायिका ॥

In addition, we have (नामावलि) strings of Her names, both short and long. All are suitable for recitation and confer numerous benefits. One of the names given above requires our special attention – that is (शिवा) ShivA (long). The scriptures say that Devi's is another form of the Lord or Supreme Being. The following verses from Sri Rudram say that clearly.

या ते रुद्र शिवा तनूरघोरापापकाशिनी ।
तया नस्तनुवा शन्तमया गिरिशन्ताभिचाकशीहि ॥

One of the forms of the Lord is that of Shiva with which we are familiar – the one with matted locks, bearing weapons etc. The other form is described here. It is very auspicious, has no weapons in hand and so does not cause any fear in the minds of the devotees, confers both worldly pleasures and also liberation. अघोरा = does not cause fear in the minds of devotees as It does not bear weapons. अपापकाशिनी = confers bliss or mokSha by blessing the devotee with spiritual wisdom (ज्ञानम्।). गिरिशन्त = One who being the purport of the vedas blesses all with all that will give happiness. Again we see later on in the hymn:-

या ते रुद्र शिवा तनूः शिवा विश्वाहभेषजी ।
शिवा रुद्रस्य भेषजी तया नो मृड जीवसे ॥

This says – Oh Lord Rudra! By that form of Yours which is peaceful and auspicious, since it is a panacea for human ills like sickness poverty etc., for all days, more auspicious since by the grant of knowledge and illumination, it utterly uproots ignorance and the entire misery of samsara, by that gracious form of Yours make us lead a full and happy life. Here the word विश्वाहभेषजी means the form is auspicious because it cures, like a potent medicine, all sickness, poverty etc. The other aspect of the form is रुद्रस्य भेषजी – it confers spiritual wisdom or jnanam which is the only cure for the misery of cyclic birth and death or samsara. Sri Krishna says that to those devotees who worship Him with love, He gives that devotion of right knowledge (buddhi yoga) by which they reach Him. Out of compassion for them, He abides in their self and destroys the darkness born of ignorance by blessing them with right knowledge. BG(10-10,11)

तेषां सतत-युक्तानां भजतां प्रीति-पूर्वकम् ।
ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयन्ति ते ॥(१०)

तेषामेवानुकंपार्थं अहमज्ञानजं तमः ।

नाशयाम्यात्म-भावस्थो ज्ञान-दीपेन भास्वत ॥(११)

Accordingly, one who worships Durga with devotion is blessed with right knowledge or jnanam by which one attains liberation.

We saw in the beginning that Uma is one of the names of Durga. The name Uma is made of the same three letters A,U and M that make up the AUM the holy syllable Pranavam, but in a different order. Thus Uma (or Durga) represents the Supreme brahman represented by Pranavam. The Kena Upanishad

(Part 3) mentions Uma (the daughter of Himavan) to be the personification of Supreme Knowledge (Brahma VIdya). She appeared before the devas and their chief Indra and taught Indra the Supreme Knowledge.

स तस्मिन्नेवाकाशे स्त्रियमाजगाम बहुशोभमानामुमां हैमवतीं...

Thus, one should pray to Durga not only for freedom from domestic worries but also for freedom from samsara. Especially, one should pray to Her when in dire straits. The following verses says this.

कान्तार-मध्य-दृढलग्नतया-ऽवसन्ना

मग्नाश्च वारिधि-जले रिपुभिश्च रुद्राः ।

यस्याः प्रपद्य चरणौ विपदस्तरन्ति

सा मे सदा-ऽस्तु हृदि सर्व-जगत्सवित्री ॥ DK(12).

The above verse says that those who have lost their way in the thick forests and so are distressed, those who are caught in the deep seas and are struggling to get out, those who are troubled by enemies get their problems removed by surrendering to the feet of Durga. She should reside in my mind all the time.

बन्धे वधे महति मृत्युभये प्रसक्ते
वित्तक्षये च विविधे च महोपतापे ।
यत्पाद-पूजनमिह प्रतिकारमाहु-
स्सा मे समस्त-जननी शरणं भवानी ॥ DK(13).

This verse says that great men have said that worshipping Goddess Durga will bring relief from all kinds of fears, such as, that of imprisonment, death, being killed, looss of wealth, thieves, snakes, other wild animals etc. I surrender to such Durga, the mother of all. Durga is one of the popular deities in the Hindu pantheon like Ganesha. She is worshipped regularly and especially on Fridays and certain special occasions. She is worshipped in the first three days of the Navaratri festival. She is sought by people who are afflicted by problems in the family or work place or beset by the adverse effects of malefic planetary aspects. She had been worshipped by people to get their wishes fulfilled. The Durgasaptasati states this clearly .

दुर्गे स्मृता हरसि भीतिमशेषजन्तोः
स्वथैः स्मृता मतिमतीव शुभं ददासि ।
दारिद्र्यदुःखभयहारिणि का त्वदन्या
सर्वोपकारकरणाय सदाऽऽर्द्रचित्ता ॥

The Durga Suktam also says this

तामग्निवर्णा तपसा ज्वलन्तीं वैरोचनीं कर्मफलेषुजुष्टाम् ।

दुर्गा देवीं शरणमहं प्रपद्ये सुतरसि तरसे नमः।

The mantra says that I surrender to Durga Devi who is glorious since She is well known in the scriptures. She is shining like fire, burns up Her enemies by Her radiance, is self-effulgent, is worshipped by those who seek fulfilment of the rites performed by them and Who is capable of helping people to get across the cyclic birth.

We see in Mahabharata that Yudhishtira was advised by sages to pray to Durga for the successful completion of the absence from the kingdom for fourteen years without being recognised, (ie) incognito and later on to gain victory in the ensuing KurukShetra war. He praised Durga with Durga NakShatramalika Stuti consisting of 27 verses that was taught to him by the sages. Pleased with the Stuti recited by Yudhishtira with great devotion Durga Devi appeared before him and blessed him with success in his endeavours and the war he will be waging against the Kauravas. Mahabharata also says that Arjuna - on being advised by Sri Krishna - prayed to Durga before the start of the war for success.

Srimad Bhagavatam mentions (BH-10-22-4) that the maidens of Gokula desirous of having Sri Krishna for their husband worshipped Her. They observd a month long ritual, woke up early in the morning, took bath in the Yamuna river and had only frugal meals consisting of oblations हेमन्ते प्रथमे मासि नन्दव्रज-कुमारिकाः ।

चेरु-हृविष्यं भुञ्जानाः कात्यायन्यर्चन-व्रतम् ॥

आप्लुत्यांभसि कालिन्द्या जलान्ते चोदितेऽरुणे ।

कृत्वा प्रतिकृतिं देवीमानर्चुर्नृप सैकतीम् ॥

गन्धै-माल्यैः सुरभिभि-र्वलिभि-र्धूपदीपकैः ।

उच्चावचैश्चोपहारैः प्रवालफलतण्डुलैः ॥

They chanted the following prayer.

कात्यायनि महामाये महयोगिन्यधीश्वरि ।

नन्दगोपसुतं देवि पतिं मे कुरु ते नमः ॥

It is said that Shri Krishna came and accepted them. This shows that one who prays to Durga with devotion will get their wishes fulfilled without any delay. The following verse emphasises this and points out that many sages had to practise severe austerities like fasting to get a brief vision of the Lord. But the gopis got to see Him after worshipping Durga for just one month. This again proves that worshipping Durga gives quick results.

यद्ध्यानजं सुखमवाप्यमनन्तपुण्यैः

साक्षात्तमच्युतपरिग्रहमाश्वावापुः ।

गोपाङ्गनाः किल यदर्चनपुण्यमात्रा-

त्सा मे सदा भगवती भवतु प्रसन्ना ॥ DK(16).

Similarly, Srimad Bhagavatam says (BH-10-44, 45, 46, 47) in the story of Sri Rukmini's marriage that she prayed to Devi to get Sri Krishna as husband.

आसाद्य देवीसदनं धौतपादकरांबुजा।
उपस्पृश्य शुचिः शान्ता प्रविवेशांबिकान्तिकम् ॥

तां वै प्रवयसो बालां विधिज्ञा विप्रयोषितः।
भवानीं वन्दयांचक्रुः भवपत्नीं भवान्विताम् ॥

नमस्ते त्वांबिकेऽभीक्षणं स्वसन्तानयुतां शिवाम्।
भूयात् पतिर्मे भगवान् कृष्णस्तदनुमोदताम् ॥

अद्भिर्गंधाक्षतैर्धूपैर्वासःस्रङ्माल्यभूषणैः।
नानोपहारबलिभिः प्रदीपावलिभिः पृथक् ॥

The verses in the Stotra show that Durga is indeed the Supreme Being (Brahma), Its power of Maya also. She alone appears as Sarasvati, Laxmi and Parvati. Thus, by worshipping Durga one may get all the benefits of worshipping the three devis. We may see the names of all the three Devis in the Lalitha Sahasranama and in their namavalis also. So it is

clear that the names may be different, but the power behind the names is one and the same.

The verses also reveal the fact that Durga is every object in the creation and as the result any power or glory we notice in everything in the creation really a reflection of Durga's glory only. This recalls to what Sri Krishna said in the Gita.(CH 10-41).

यद्यद्विभूतिमत् सत्त्वं श्रीम-दूर्जितमेव वा ।

तत्तदेवावगच्छ त्वं तेजोऽश-संभवम् ॥

Thus the verse 14 says that Durga is the heat in the fire, chillness in the water, brightness in the sun . This is an echo of what Krishna said in BG(7-8).

रसोऽहमप्सु कौन्तेय प्रभास्मि शशि-सूर्ययोः ।

प्रणवः सर्ववेदेषु शब्दः खे पौरुषं नृषु ॥

We may find many similar statements in the verses that may be found in the Bhagavad Gita and upanishads. The conclusion to be drawn is that what is called here by the name Durga is none other than the Supreme Being or Brahman. One may choose to worship It by any name or form and get one's desires fulfilled. The Lord said this in Gita. (7-21).

यो यो यां यां तनुं भक्तः श्रद्धयार्चितुमिच्छति ।

तस्य तस्याचलां श्रद्धां तामेव विदधाम्यहम् ॥

This shows that one who may be worshipping God in any other form can worship Durga also without any hesitation since names and forms cover one and the only supreme Being only.

One fact that may intrigue the readers is the name of this stotram. It says that it is in praise of Durga by none other than Siva, who according to our Puranas is Her husband! How can this be? The answer is simple. As said above, Durga is not different from Siva. She is just another form of Siva only and both are forms and names of the Supreme Being. These names and forms are there for us to worship. The Supreme Being is without name or form or any other attributes cannot be worshipped directly. So the many forms with names are provided in the scriptures for us to choose one that appeals to us (called Ista Devata) and worship. As pointed out earlier, these forms being those of the Supreme Being only, their worship amounts to the worship of the Supreme Being and as a result confers all benefits. These benefits flow from the Supreme Being only. BG (7-21, 22).

यो यो यां यां तनुं भक्तः श्रद्धयार्चितुमिच्छति ।

तस्य तस्याचलां श्रद्धां तामेव विदधाम्यहम् ॥

स तथा श्रद्धया युक्तस्तस्याराधनमीहते ।

लभते च ततः कामान् मयैव विहितान् हि तान् ॥

We also hear that Devi Kamakshi (Durga only) worshipped Siva in

Kanchipuram and in Chennai in the Kapaleeswara temple. We may come across stories of Siva praising Vishnu and the other way also. Thus there is nothing wrong in the seemingly contradictory stories. Each one is meant to highlight the glory of a particular form in a deity. The idea is that one who feels attracted to a particular form may use the hymn to sing the praise of the deity. Ultimately he will go up in the spiritual ladder and realise that names and forms are superficial only and really make no difference. All the glories narrated in all the hymans refer to the one Supreme Being that masquerades as so many deities.

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