



Bijaya Dasami-the Victory of Good Over Evil

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1. Introduction:

All Hindus celebrate this festival at the same time in different ways in different parts of India as well as around the world. In the northern part of the country, the first nine days of this festival, called *Navaratri*, is commonly observed as a time for rigorous fast, followed by celebrations on the tenth day. In western India, throughout the nine days, both men and women participate in a special kind of dance around an object of worship. In the south, Dussehra or the tenth day is celebrated with a lot of fanfare. In the east, people go crazy over Durga Puja, from the seventh till the tenth day of this annual festival. Although, the universal nature of the festival is often found to transcend regional influences and local culture, the Garba Dance of Gujarat, Ramlila of Varanasi, Dussehra of Mysore, and Durga Puja of Bengal need special mention.

2. Mythology :

Mahishasura, the king of Asuras, through years of austerities, was once granted a boon by Lord Brahma, that no man or deity would be able to kill him. The immense power filled in him the urge to rule over the world. He started to terrorize heaven and the inhabitants. He pervaded the world with his battalion of Asuras and plundered



and ruthlessly killed the people. Chaos and anarchy reigned. Gods were driven from heaven and Mahishasura usurped the throne. The Gods scared and unable to combat him requested Lord Shiva, Lord Brahma and Lord Vishnu to stop Mahishasura's tyranny. In answer, the three Gods combined their divine energy and summoned up a feminine form so brilliantly glaring that it illuminated the heavens. This combined power fell on the residence of Sage Kattiyana in the Krishna Chaturdashi (fourteenth day of new moon) in the month of Ashwin (*Sep-Oct*). From the glow emerged Devi Durga, a beautiful yellow woman with ten arms riding a lion. Despite her grace she bore a menacing expression, for Durga was born to kill. Fully grown and armed by the gods, beautiful Durga was named "Kattiyani" as she was born in the Ashram of sage Kattiyana. The



sage worshipped her during Suklasaptami, Asthami and Navami Tithi then on the Tithi of Dashami she killed Masishasura. She was sent forth against Mahishasura armed by symbols of divine power; Vishnu's discus; Shiva's trident; Varuna's conch shell; Agni's flaming dart; Vayu's bow; Surya's quiver and arrow; Yama's iron rod; Indra's thunderbolt; Kubera's club and a garland of snakes from Shesha and a lion as a charger from Himalayas.

2.1 History: The festival of Durga Puja comes with its own retinue of mythological stories. There are various legends associated with its origin but the most important and prevalent among them is the legend of Lord Rama (the incarnation of Lord Vishnu). When Lord Rama was fighting a battle with Ravana (the demon king) to rescue his wife Sita whom Ravana abducted and held as hostage in Lanka, his kingdom. That time a fierce battle ensued. In that battle Ravana could not be defeated. So Lord Ram decided to seek the blessings of Shakti (Goddess Durga) in order to defeat the demon. For that Puja, which Lord Rama was performing 108 blue lotus were needed for the worship of Goddess Durga but Rama could manage only 107. But without that one lotus his Puja would be incomplete, so he was on the verge of laying one of his eyes that was lotus-shaped and blue in colour at the Goddess's feet when Goddess Durga appeared and being satisfied with his devotion, granted her blessing and eventually he won the battle against Ravana. The time he worshipped was spring season so from that time onwards Durga Puja is being celebrated.

2.2 Legend: Another legend, which is associated with the celebration of Durga Puja, is the story of the defeat of the demon king, Mahishasura at the hands of Goddess Durga, the incarnation of Shakti (the power). This demon was almost invincible because of a boon granted by Lord Shiva

whereby no male could defeat him. So to find a solution to this all the God amalgamated their power and gave birth to Shakti (the power) in the form of Goddess Durga. She defeated the demon king and killed him. That's why she is called Mahishasuramardini (the slayer of Mahishasura). The holy battle symbolizes the victory of Good over Evil. However, according to another legend about Durga, she was a manifestation of Parvati, Shiva's wife.

The history of Durga Puja is dated back in the ancient period. However, there is much debate regarding the origin of Durga Puja. The most popular story is found in the Ramayana where Lord Rama of Ayodhya invoked the goddess Durga in his battle against Ravana. Although the goddess was traditionally worshipped in the spring, due to contingencies of battle, Rama had to invoke Goddess Durga in the autumn; hence the *Akaalbodhan* was performed by him. In fact, the term *Akaalbodhan* can be found in Kritibas' Ramayan and not in the Valmiki Ramayan (the original Ramayan). The term "Akal" means "untimely" and the term "Bodhan" means "awakening" or "invocation". Maa Durga was untimely awakened from her peaceful slumber by Lord Rama at the time of Ashwin (Autumn) which is considered as an inauspicious time in Hindu mythology.

According to Hindu mythology, the time period between 23rd December and 21st / 22nd June or Spring Equinox (Summer Solstice) is the perfect or the auspicious time for worshipping Gods and Goddesses as they remain awake and active during this time. This is the time of Uttarayan and is popularly known as the Days of the Gods. During this time the days are longer and nights are shorter. The actual worship of the Goddess Durga as stipulated by the Hindu scriptures hence



falls in the month of Chaitra, which roughly overlaps with March or April. On the other hand autumn or the time of Dakshinayan is the resting time for Hindu Gods and Goddesses. Scientifically speaking it is the time for autumnal equinox (Winter Solstice) or the time period between 22nd /23rd June and 22nd December when the sun shines in the southern hemisphere and so it is winter in the northern hemisphere. Days are shorter and nights are longer. It is popularly known as the Nights of the Demons. And since Goddess Durga is invoked at the wrong time, it is called “Akal Bodhan” in Bengali.

2.3 Dussehra: While most Hindus end their Dussehra celebrations by burning the effigy of Ravana to symbolise the victory of good over evil, the ten-headed demon king of Hindu mythology is worshipped in different places. When temples across the nation will resonate with prayers to Lord Rama, a small temple to Ravana in Vidisha district’s Ravangram village will echo with the prayer, “Ravana Baba Namah”. The temple has an ancient idol of Ravana in a reclining position believed to have been constructed between the ninth and fourteenth century. The villagers believe it would be a bad omen to have the ten-foot idol stand erect and say that whenever this was done, some unexpected incident had occurred in the district. In the village, the demon king has been worshipped as a symbol of prosperity for over 600 years by Kanyakubja Brahmins, a Brahmin sub-sect to which Ravana was believed to have belonged. He is regarded as a scholar and people worshipping him believe burning the learned king, who knew all the Vedas (ancient Hindu scriptures) and was a devotee of Lord Shiva, is not justified. This is not restricted to Ravangram village. Ravana is also worshipped in Ravana Rundi in Mandsaur district and Shajapur district’s Bhadkhedi.



2.4 Durgapuja: The festival of Durga Puja starts with Mahalaya, the first phase of the waxing moon in Aswin. Thousands offer prayers to their ancestors at the city’s river banks, a ritual called Tarpan. The inauguration of the Goddess idol starts on Mahashasthi. The main *puja* is for three days - Mahasaptami, Mahaastami, Mahanavami. The *puja* rituals are long and very detailed and complicated. Three days of Mantras, Shlokas, Arati and offerings - need an expert priest to do this kind of Puja. Because of these facts, the number of Pujas held in the family has reduced and Durga Puja has mostly emerged as a community festival.

2.4.1 Mahashasthi: On this day Goddess Durga arrives to the mortal world from her heavenly abode, accompanied by her children. She is welcomed with much fanfare amidst the beats of *dhak*. Unveiling the face of the idol is the main ritual on this day.

2.4.2 Mahasaptami: Saptami is the first day of Durga Puja. Nabapatika is given a pre-dawn bath. This is an ancient ritual of worshipping nine types of plants. They are together worshipped as a symbol of the goddess.

2.4.3 Mahaastami: The day began with a recital of Sanskrit hymns in community *puja* pandals as



thousands of devotees offered *anjali* to the goddess. Kumari Puja or the worship of little girls as the mother goddess was a special part of the rituals observed in a number of traditional and household Pujas. As the day wore on, it was time for the important Sandhi Puja, which marks the inter-linking of the Maha Ashtami and Maha Navami.

2.4.4 Mahanavami: This is the concluding day of Durga Puja. The main Navami *Puja* begins after the end of Sandhi Puja. The Navami Bhog is offered to the goddess. This is later partaken as *prasad* by the devotees.

2.4.5 Mahadashami (Bijayadashami): After the three days of Puja, in Dashami, in the last day, a tearful farewell is offered to the Goddess. Most of the community Pujas postpone the farewell as long as possible and arrange a grand send-off. The images are carried in processions around the locality and finally is immersed in a nearby river or lake. Vijaya Dashami is an event celebrated all over the country.

As the night of Mahanavami fades away, the morning of Bijaya Dasami makes one feel that it is time for Durga to leave earth and go back to her home in Kailash. A tinge of sadness is in the air, but it is also the time when a year long wait begins for the Mother Goddess to return next year same time. The week long celebration and festivity is finally going to get over today as the idol will be taken to the river Ganges and other water bodies and then immersed. Before immersing into the water the idol is worshipped by the women with sindur (vermillion powder). Sweets are distributed among each other to mark the mood of festivity and the occasion. The male of the species greet each other with warm embraces while the juniors of the family show

respect to elder by bending down to touch their feet.

3. Different forms of Durga:

As the ten-armed Goddess, Durga presents a radiantly beautiful form that is bewitching to behold. That special form is somehow simultaneously wrathful and benign and transmits profound spiritual teachings in an exacting manner. The nine-day period from the new moon day to the ninth day of Ashwina is considered the most auspicious time of the Hindu Calendar and is hence the most celebrated time of the year as Durga Puja. The nine different forms of Devi are worshipped over the nine days. These are the most popular forms under which she is worshipped.

3.1 Durga Shailaputri (Daughter of Mountains): She is a daughter of Himalaya and first among nine Durgas. In previous birth she was the daughter of Daksha. Her name was Sati - Bhavani. i.e. the wife of Lord Shiva. Once Daksha had organised a big Yagna and did not invite Shiva. But Sati being obstinate, reached there. Thereupon Daksha insulted Shiva. Sati could not tolerate the insult of her husband and burnt herself in the fire of Yagna. In other birth she became the daughter of Himalaya in the name of Parvati - Hemvati and got married with Shiva. As per Upanishad she had subdued the egotism of Indra and other Devotas. Being ashamed they bowed and prayed that, "In fact, thou are Shakti, we all - Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are capable by getting Shakti from you."

3.2 Brahmacharini: The second Durga Shakti is Brahmacharini. Brahma is who observes penance (*tapa*) and good conduct. Here "Brahma" means "Tapa". The idol of this Goddess is very gorgeous. There is rosary in her right hand



and Kamandal in left hand. She is full with merriment. One story is famous about her. In previous birth she was Parvati Hemavati, the daughter of Himvan. Once when she was busy in games with her friends. Narada came to her and predicted seeing her palm-lines that, "You will get married with a naked-terrible 'Bhole Baba' who was with you in the form of Sati, the daughter of Daksha in previous birth. But now you have to perform penance for him." Thereupon Parvati told her mother Menaka that she would marry none except Shambhu, otherwise she would remain unmarried. Saying this she went to observe penance. That is why her name is famous as Tapacharini - Brahmacharini. From that time her name Uma became familiar.

3.3 Chandraghanta: The name of third Shakti is Chandraghanta. There is a half-circular moon in her forehead. She is charming and bright. She is Golden colour. She has three eyes and ten hands holding with ten types of swords, weapons and arrows etc. She is seated on Lion and ready for going in war to fight. She is unprecedented image of bravery. The frightful sound of her bell terrifies all the villains, demons and Danavas.

3.4 Kushmanda: Name of fourth Durga is Kushmanda. The Shakti creates egg, i.e. Universe by mere laughing. She resides in solar system. She shines brightly in all the ten directions like Sun. She has eight hands. Seven types of weapons are shining in her seven hands. Rosary is in her right hand. She seems brilliant riding on Lion. She likes the offerings of Kushmanda (Pumpkin). Therefore her name "Kushmanda" has become famous.

3.5 Skanda Mata: Fifth name of Durga is "Skanda Mata". The daughter of Himalaya, after observing penance got married with Shiva. She had a son named "Skanda." Skanda is a leader

of the army of Gods. Skanda Mata is a deity of fire. Skanda is seated in her lap. She has three eyes and four hands. She is white and seated on a lotus.

3.6 Katyayani: Sixth Durga is Katyayani. The son of "Kat" is "Katya". Rishi Katyayan was born in this "Katya" lineage. Katyayan had observed penance with a desire to get Paramba as his daughter. As a result she took birth as a daughter of Katyayan. Therefore her name is "Katyayani". She has three eyes and eight hands. These are eight types of weapons in her seven hands. Her vehicle is Lion.

3.7 Kalratri: Seventh Durga is Kalratri. She is black like night. Her hairs are unlocked. She has put on necklaces shining like lightning. She has three eyes which are round like universe. Her eyes are bright. Thousands of flames of fire come out while respiring from nose. She rides on Shava (dead body). There is sharp sword in her right hand. Her lower hand is in blessing mood. The burning torch (mashal) is in her left hand and her lower left hand is in fearless style, by which she makes her devotees fearless. Being auspicious she is called "Shubhamkari."

3.8 Maha Gauri: The Eighth Durga is "Maha Gauri." She is as white as a conch, moon and jasmine. She is of eight years old. Her clothes and ornaments are white and clean. She has three eyes. She rides on bull. She has four hands. The above left hand is in "Fearless - Mudra" and lower left hand holds "Trishul." The above right hand has tambourine and lower right hand is in blessing style. She is calm and peaceful and exists in peaceful style. It is said that when the body of Gauri became dirty due to dust and earth while observing penance, Shiva made it clean with the waters of Ganges. Then her body became bright like lightning. Therefore, she is known as "Maha Gauri".



3.9 Siddhidatri: Ninth Durga is Siddhidatri. There are eight Siddhis, they are- Anima, Mahima, Garima, Laghima, Prapti, Prakamya, Iishitva and Vashitva. Maha Shakti gives all these Siddhies. It is said in “Devipurān” that the Supreme God Shiv got all these Siddhies by worshipping Maha Shakti. With her gratitude the half body of Shiva had become of Goddess and therefore his name “Ardhanarishvar” has become famous. The Goddess drives on Lion. She has four hands and looks pleased. This form of Durga is worshipped by all Gods, Rishis-Munis, Siddhas, Yogis, Sadhakas and devotees for attaining the best religious asset.

3.10 Durgatinasini : She is the mother of world. A small ray of her kindness is enough to remove all the sorrows and obstacles. She is the mother who is always there to remove all the worriness of the people of world, and those who worship her really never face any problem in their life, because the loving mother removes their problems by her smiles. Again at one time she is Maha Laxmi (The Goddess of wealth), Maha Saraswati (The Goddess of Knowledge) and Maha Kali (The Goddess of destruction), that means the goddess of creation, caring, and destruction. The Goddess is worshipped by the people as the Goddess to grant fortune. The goddess Durga is worshipped as the mother of all twice in a year that is in the month of autumn and in the month of spring. The worships which are done on these two occasions are called as Sharadiya Durga Puja and Basantika Durga Puja.

4. The Divine Story of Durga and Dasamahavidya:

Durga is a wrathful form of Parvati (consort of Shiva). She is represented with many arms with a weapon in each hand, shown sitting astride her mount, the lion, holding celestial

weapons. Though popularly She is depicted with ten hands, but other of her popular forms present her with four, six, eight, sixteen, eighteen, and even, a thousand hands. Her face always remains calm and gentle. As Durga, the Goddess is “beyond reach” or “inaccessible”. She is Devi Mahishasuramardini (Goddess Killer of the Buffalo Demon) who appears to her devotees as both *saumya* (gentle and mild) and *ghora* (frightful and terrible). According to Skanda Purana, she is none other than Parvati who takes on the role of warrior at Siva’s request to kill a giant demon. The demon cannot be killed by any of the gods because he is protected against the torments of any male by a special boon. Thus Parvati alone is able to kill him, and in doing so, the goddess is named Durga. The demon then takes the form of a buffalo, an apparition that again appears in the famous Devi-Mahatmya tale of the slaying of Mahishasura, the buffalo demon (Mahisha means buffalo).

Goddess Durga has been glorified by ten different aspects of the manifestation of her “Shakti” or ‘Power’, called “Dasha-Mahavidya” as also Her nine different forms called “Nava-Durga”, without knowing which, trying to know the real power and divinity of Durga will be in vain.

In Tantra, worship of Devi-Shakti is referred to as a Vidya. Of the hundreds of Tantrik practices, the worship of the ten major Devis is called the Dasa Mahavidya. These major forms of the goddess are described in the Todala Tantra. They are Kali, Tara, Maha Tripura Sundari (or Shodasi-Sri Vidya), Bhuvaneshvari, Chinnamasta, Bhairavi, Dhumavati, Bagalamukhi, Matangi, and Kamala. These ten aspects of Shakti are the epitome of the entire creation. There are several “levels” at which these Devis can be worshipped with the prescribed Mantra and Yantra. Like a



simple worship of the Yantra with the Mantra recitation, as a remedial astrological measure, elaborate worship with all Tantrik rituals for attaining various Siddhis associated with these Tantras and for spiritual salvation. Successful *sadhana* of these Vidyas gives several boons to the practitioner. The Tantrik-Yogi who has control over his senses and positively inclined uses the boons to guide people and for the benefit of mankind. The last chapter of Todala Tantra equates Vishnu's ten incarnations with the ten Mahavidyas as follows: "Shri Devi said: Lord of Gods, Guru of the universe, tell me of the ten Avataras. Now I want to hear of this, tell me of their true nature. Paramesvara, reveal to me which Avatara goes with which Devi." Shri Shiva said: Tara Devi is the blue form, Bagala is the tortoise incarnation, Dhumavati is the boar, Chhinnamasta is Nrisimha, Bhuvaneshvari is Vamana, Matangi is the Rama form, Tripura is Parashurama, Bhairavi is Balabhadra, Mahalakshmi is Buddha, and Durga is the Kalki form. Bhagavati Kali is the Krishna Murti". (Todalatantra, Chapter-10)

The Dasha-Mahavidya:-

4.1 Kali (The Eternal Night): The first Mahavidya is Kali. Seated on a corpse, greatly terrifying, laughing loudly, with fearful fangs, four arms holding a cleaver, a skull, and giving the *mudras* bestowing boons and dispelling fear, wearing a garland of skulls, her tongue rolling wildly, completely naked (digambara - clad in the directions), with just a garland of demon-hands round her waist, with heaped locks of a black cascade of hair. Thus one should meditate on Kali, dwelling in the centre of the cremation ground.

4.2 Tara (The Compassionate Goddess): Tara is the second of the Mahavidyas. She is described as seated in the *pratyaleerrha asana*, on the heart of a corpse, supreme, laughing horribly,

holding cleaver, blue lotus, dagger and bowl, uttering the *mantra* Hum, coloured blue, her hair braided with serpents, the Ugratara. She is bestowed with all supernatural powers. She is the Tantric form of the Goddess Saraswati.

4.3 Shorashi (The goddess who is sixteen years old): The third Mahavidya is Shorashi (16-year-old), also known as Tripura-Sundari and Lalita, among a string of other names. She is the zenith of the creative cycle when the entire universe, like a flower, is in full bloom. She is the chief deity of the Sri Vidya form of worship, and is contacted either in the central circuit of the Sri Yantra, or in her own Yantra, the Nava-Yoni Chakra. Her anthropomorphic qualities are brilliancy, manifestation, sweetness, depth, fixity, energy, grace, and generosity. She is seated on the lotus, that has bloomed out from the navel of Lord Shiva. She is a beautiful young girl of sixteen years with four arms. Her complexion is like molten gold and Her beauty is continuously being viewed by Lord Shiva. She is, at one point, being made one with Goddess Lakshmi, the consort of Lord Vishnu.

4.4 Bhuvaneshwari (The Creator of the World): Means the Queen of the Universe, Maya, power of love, peace within, as void. She is like the red rays of the rising sun, with the moon as her diadem, and with three eyes, a smiling face, bestowing boons, holding a goad, a noose and dispelling fears. On the right side of Bhuvaneshvari, who is in the heavens, on earth, and in the underworlds is known as the Adya. She is the fourth Mahavidya.

4.5 Chhinnamastaa (The goddess who cuts off her own head): The fifth Mahavidya, Chhinnamastaa, looks like the red china rose (*hibiscus*). Her left foot forward in battle, she holds her severed head and a scimitar. Naked,



she drinks voluptuously the stream of the blood nectar flowing from her beheaded body, along with her two female celestial companions. The jewel on her forehead is tied with a serpent. She has three eyes. Her breasts are adorned with lotuses. Inclined towards lust, she sits erect above the god of love - Madana, who shows signs of lustfulness, engaged in the act of love with his consort Rati. The image of Chhinnamastaa is a composite one, conveying reality as an amalgamation of sex, death, creation, destruction and regeneration. It is stunning representation of the fact that life, sex, and death are an intrinsic part of the grand unified scheme that makes up the manifested universe.

4.6 Bhairavi (The goddess of decay): Tripura Bhairavi is Supreme Energy, Supreme Goddess of speech, as Tapas, as woman warrior. Her head is garlanded with flowers, resembling the red rays of 1,000 rising suns, smeared with red, holding milk, book, dispelling fears and giving boons with her four hands, large three eyes, beautiful face with a slow smile, wearing white gems. Bhairavi embodies the principle of destruction and becomes present when the body declines and decays. She is an ever-present goddess who manifests herself in, and embodies, the destructive aspects of the world. Destruction, however, is not always negative, creation cannot continue without it.

4.7 Dhoomavati (The Goddess who widows Herself): The colour of smoke (“dhoom”), wearing smoky clothes, holding a winnowing basket, dishevelled clothes, deceitful, always trembling, with slant eyes, inspiring fear, terrifying, sitting in a chariot, with the symbol of a raven on her chariot-flag. Symbolically, she has devoured her own husband Lord Shiva in hunger, and hence, in the form of a lustreless widow. This symbolises the supremacy of the Devi (Nature) over all other

forces (even Shiva, who himself is the cosmic force of destruction). She is the great death of the death herself. She is the embodiment of “unsatisfied desires”. Her status as a widow itself is curious. She makes herself one by swallowing Shiva, an act of self-assertion, and perhaps independence.

4.8 Bagala (The goddess who seizes the tongue): Bagala or Bagalamukhi is the eighth Mahavidya in the famous series of the ten Mahavidyas. She is identified with the second night of courage and is the power or Shakti of cruelty. She is described as the Devi with three eyes, wearing yellow clothes and gems, moon as her diadem, wearing champaka blossoms, with one hand holding the tongue of an enemy and with the left hand spiking him, thus should you meditate on the paralysing of the three worlds. Bagalamukhi means “The Crane-Headed One”. This bird is thought of as the essence of deceit. She rules magic for the suppression of an enemy’s gossip. These enemies also have an inner meaning, and the peg she puts through the tongue may be construed as a peg or paralysis of our own prattling talk. She rules deceit which is at the heart of most speech. She can in this sense be considered as a terrible or Bhairavi form of Matrika Devi, the mother of all speech. According to Todala Tantra, her male consort is Maharudra. Seated on the right of Bagala is the Maharudra, with one face, who dissolves the universe. The pulling of the demon’s tongue by Bagalamukhi is both unique and significant. Tongue, the organ of speech and taste, is often regarded as a lying entity, concealing what is in the mind.

4.9 Matangi (The goddess who loves pollution): Dusky, beautiful browed, her three eyes like lotuses, seated on a jewelled lion-throne, surrounded by gods and others serving her, holding in her four lotus-like hands a noose and a sword, a shield and a goad. Texts describing



her worship specify that devotees should offer left over food with their hands and mouths stained with leftover food; that is, worshippers should be in a state of pollution, having eaten and not washed. This is a dramatic reversal of the usual protocols. She is the ninth Mahavidya.

4.10 Kamala (The goddess of creation, sustenance and prosperity): Kamala, the tenth, or the last of the Mahavidyas, is with a Kamala (Lotus), the tenth, or the last of the Mahavidyas, is with a smiling face. Her beautiful lily-white hands hold two lotuses, and show the *mudras* of giving and dispelling fear. She is bathed in ambrosia by four white elephants and stands upon a beautiful lotus. She is the real embodiment of Goddess Lakshmi, the consort of Lord Vishnu. The name Kamala means “she of the lotus” and is a common epithet of Goddess Lakshmi. Lakshmi is linked with three important and interrelated themes: prosperity and wealth, fertility and crops, and good luck during the years to come.

5. Divine powers/Forces associated with Durgapuja:

5.1 Kartik (The war lord): Kartik, the general of the divine army, the handsome bachelor god, is shown in some accounts as the off-spring of the union of Agni, the fire god, and Ganga, the river goddess. Ganga failed to go through with the pregnancy and expelled Agni’s burning seed from her body. The seed became a baby and was deposited on her banks from where six krittikas, or demi-goddesses, rescued it.

But the more popular myth, based on Skanda Purana, makes Kartik a son to Shiva and Parvati. Once Surapadma, the demon king, became powerful by Shiva’s boon. He defeated and enslaved the gods. The humiliated gods

flocked to Kailash, Shiva’s abode. Shiva took pity on them. After all, it was according to his boon, that none but he could defeat Surapadma. He transformed himself into a six-headed figure and produced six glowing masses of light.

A divine pronouncement followed—the child born out of the glow would be the saviour of the gods. Shiva instructed that the balls of light be transported to Ganga, the river goddess, who would deposit them in the bulrushes near Mt Uday. As soon as the glowing balls reached the base of the mountain, they metamorphosed into six newborn babies.

They were spotted by six krittikas, who adopted them. But when the gods reached the river bank, the babies became a six-headed boy. Shiva named the boy after each of the agents who played a part in its creation. The name by which he is known today is Kartik, a derivation of Kartikeya, son of the krittikas. Soon after, Kartik was sent to war armed with Shiva’s spear he defeated the demon Surapadma in battle. In the throes of death, Surapadma expressed repentance and sought his protection. Kartik forgave him and accepted him as his mount, the peacock.

5.2 Ganesha (The giver of success): According to Shivapurana, Ganesha came into being as the result of a domestic squabble between Shiva and Parvati. Shiva let his rowdy followers into Kailash at ungodly hours. Parvati felt she had no privacy. So in consultation with her companions Jaya and Bijaya, she created a boy who would take orders only from her. The boy was put on duty at the gate with instructions to bar everyone. Soon, Shiva and company arrived but were stopped at the gate by the intrepid boy. They reasoned with him, they pleaded with him, they threatened him—all to no



avail. Instead, he beat up Shiva's henchmen, Nandi and Bhringi.

The news of the scuffle soon reached the other gods, who challenged the boy to combat. Yet so successfully did the boy parry the charges that the gods had to resort to mischief. Vishnu engaged him in direct combat while Shiva chopped off his head from behind. Parvati was overwhelmed with grief at the news of her son's death and wreaked havoc on Creation. In order to propitiate her, Shiva ordered his followers to collect the head of any creature they set eyes on in the northern direction. They came back with the head of a one-tusked elephant. The elephant's head was attached to the torso of the beheaded boy who sat up and all was well again. Shiva blessed him, saying that he would be worshipped at the start of all rituals and gave him the name Ganesha (lord of the masses).

5.3 Saraswati (The goddess of learning): The origin of the veena-bearing goddess is not as distinct as that of the other figures. In the Vedas, especially the Rig Veda, she is referred to as both a river and a river deity. The Saraswati river was a boundary of Brahmavartta, the home of the early Aryans, and was to them as sacred as the Ganga has been to their descendants. Gradually she became associated with the rites performed on her banks and started being regarded as an influence on the composition of the hymns that were an important part of the rituals. This might have led to her identification with yak, the goddess of speech. In later mythology she finds mention as the spouse of Brahma and the goddess of wisdom, eloquence and the arts.

The father of the universe prepared himself for Creation and sunk in deep meditation. The sublime quality of his spirit (sattvaguna) accumulated in his mind and was emitted from

his forehead as Speech or Saraswati. He ordained her to stay on the tip of everyone's tongue and exist on earth as a river. A part of her was also to stay in him.

5.4 Laxmi (The goddess of prosperity): During Creation, a beautiful female form emerged from the left side of Paramatma, the Supreme Being. At a command from Paramatma, she split herself into two enchanting figures, both equal in splendour and majesty. One was Laxmi and the other Radha. Both wanted Paramatma as their consort. So he divided himself into the two-armed Krishna and the four-armed Vishnu. While Radha chose Krishna and stayed on earth, Laxmi wedded Vishnu and left for the heavens.

5.5 Durga, the demon-slaying goddess:-

According to Hindu Mythology a demon named Durgamasura once went under continuous meditation. By his meditation he also became able to make Lord Brahma to grant him blessings. But the demon after getting the blessings of Lord Brahma became highly powerful and started disobeying the Gods of heaven. Again the idiot demon found it that the Gods of heaven are getting their strengths from the offerings in Yagna which are performed according to the norms of Veda. So he cleverly looted the Vedas. After the Vedas were stolen by him the condition of the living world became miserable. Droughts and lack of rain like situation happened in earth. So the living world started suffering and praying the Gods of heaven to save it. The Lords like Brahma, Bishnu and Shiva became unable to kill the demon and to get Vedas back from him. Finally all the lords came together and shared their power. From the sharing of all their powers the Goddess took birth. She killed the demon and saved the world. But as she killed the demon Durgamasura and saved the world by releasing the Vedas from the demon she got the name Durga.



Devi is the great goddess of the Hindus, the consort of Shiva and she is worshipped in various forms corresponding to her two aspects: benevolence and fierceness. She is Uma, “light”; Gauri, “yellow or brilliant”; Parvati, “the mountaineer”; and Jagatmata, “the-mother-of-the-world” in her milder guise. The terrible emanations are Durga “the inaccessible”; Kali, “the black”; Chandi, “the fierce”; and Bhairavi, “the terrible.”

Durga, a beautiful warrior seated upon a tiger, was the first appearance of the great goddess. The circumstance of her miraculous arrival was the tyranny of the monster-demon Mahishasur, who through terrific austerities had acquired invincible strength. The gods were afraid of this water-buffalo bull because neither Vishnu nor Shiva could prevail against him. It seemed that the joint energy of Shakti was only capable of vanquishing Mahisha, and so it was the eighteen-armed Durga who went out to do battle.

5.5.1 Durga in the Battlefield: She went to battle on her ferocious mount lion, armed with the weapons given to her by the other Gods. Durga is one of the angry and aggressive aspects of the goddess Shakti, whose role in Hindu mythology was to fight and conquer demons and also personify the Sakti or female aspect of any male deity. In the battle, she fought and killed the evil Mahishasura and restored heaven to the Gods. Since then the goddess is invoked for protection from the powers of evil. Durga Puja is observed in her honour, to celebrate her victory over evil.

5.5.2 Meaning of the divine name Durga: Durga, in Sanskrit means “She who is incomprehensible or difficult to reach.” Goddess Durga is a form of Shakti worshipped for her gracious as well as terrifying aspect. Mother of the Universe, she represents the infinite power of the universe and is a symbol of a female dynamism.

The manifestation of Goddess Durga is said to emerge from Her formless essence and the two are inseparable. She is also called by many other names, such as Parvati, Ambika, and Kali. In the form of Parvati, She is known as the divine spouse of Lord Shiva and is the mother of Her two sons, Ganesha and Karttikeya, and daughter Jyoti. Destroyer of demons, she is worshipped during an annual festival called Durga puja.

5.5.3 Appearance: There are endless aspects of Durga described in the Puranas. She is usually pictured as having ten arms holding Sword, Conch, Discus, Rosary, Bell, Winecup, Shield, Bow, Arrow, and Spear. She is most often shown riding a lion from which comes Her august name, Simhavahini, “She who stands astride the king of beasts”. She is gorgeously dressed in royal red cloth and has several ornaments decorating Her personage. Her hair is dressed up in a crown which then flows out in long luxuriant tresses that are darkly luminous and soothing to the eye. The various tools reflect the eminent supremacy that helps in controlling the universe and obey Her will.

5.5.4 Weilding Energy: Goddess Durga exists eternally, always abiding in her own sweet nature and inhabits the hearts and minds of her ecstatic devotees. As Shakti, she shapes, nurtures, and dissolves names and forms, while as subtle spiritual energy called Kundalini, She lights the lotuses fo the seven centres of awareness in the sacred human body. Goddess Durga killed the powerful demon Mahish and all his great commanders. When demonic forces create imbalance all gods united become one divine force called Shakti or Durga.

5.5.5 Goddess Durga: This festival is devoted solely to the Mother Goddess — known variously as Durga, Bhavani, Amba, Chandika, Gauri, Parvati, Mahishasuramardini — and her other



manifestations. The name “Durga” means “inaccessible”, and she is the personification of the active side of the divine “shakti” energy of Lord Shiva. In fact, she represents the furious powers of all the male gods, and is the ferocious protector of the righteous, and destroyer of the evil. Durga is usually portrayed as riding a lion, and carrying weapons in her many arms.

5.5.6 Genesis of the form Durga: Each of the figures in Durga’s entourage has a story of origin. Often, there is more than one account of the birth. Sometimes, for the whole picture to emerge, pieces have to be stitched together from a number of myths revolving round separate gods or goddesses. This is because in Hindu mythology, divine power is manifest in myriad figures with different names. Individual myths emphasise one aspect of the god or goddess while assuming it is linked to many others. The details vary from region to region and from text to text.

5.5.7 Durga-The unity of power: Though Laxmi and Saraswati are seen as two daughters of Durga, there are no specific myths describing them as such, as there are for Ganesha and Kartik. Rather, the scriptures often refer to them as other forms of the one Female Power. ‘Shree Shree Chandi’, the section of Markandeya Purana, which dwells at great length on Durga, sees this power manifested in three faces—Mahakali (the great Kali), Mahalaxmi (the great Laxmi) and Mahasaraswati (the great Saraswati). Here Mahalaxmi is the one who takes on Mahishasura.

That all the female forms are one is clearly stated by the Devi herself in the Shumba-Nishumba myth. Locked in combat with demon-king Shumba, she was conducting raids on the enemy’s army in multiple female forms. The demon complained that there was no glory in victory gained with help from so many quarters.

She told him that there was no power in the Universe other than her. The demon king beheld with amazement how all the female forms with different appellations and appearances, that were so long waging war separately, melted into her one by one.

5.5.8 Importance of the name Durga: The Durga Puja which is done in autumn is called as the Sharadiya Durga Puja. Again there is also a reason behind it. Because according to Hindu mythology when the demon Ravana kidnapped Goddess Sita at that time lord Sri Ram planned to worship Goddess Durga to remove her troubles and to win over the demon Ravana. But that was not spring. So, Sri Ram worshipped the Goddess in autumn. The Goddess was pleased with him, and blessed him, which finally made him to win over the demon.

6. Demons associated with Durga Puja:-

6.1 Madhu and Kaitabha: Once Lord Vishnu withdrew His power of Maya and went into a Yoga Nidra (sleep). The whole Universe at that time was dissolved in the causal waters. Brahma, the creative power of the Lord had also gone to sleep. The earth had been broken up and was floating around in the causal waters. These pieces of dirt lodged themselves in the ears of the Lord. He swept these out with His fingers. That dirt, because of the Lord’s touch sprang into life and became enormous demons ‘Asuras’. They were called Madhu and Kaitabh. They attacked Brahma. The latter invoked the Divine Mother to wake Vishnu. The Lord took the Asuras and placed them on His thighs and cut their heads off. The Lord then created the earth with the fat (Medas) of the demons. That is the reason for the earth being called ‘Medini’. It is believed that the earth is situated in the thighs of the Cosmic Body of the Lord. It is interesting to note that the



earth was created again from the fat of the same demons, Madhu and Kaitabh.

6.2 Mahishasura, the buffalo-demon:

According to the Bhagabat Purana, the brothers Rambha and Karambha were both childless. Aspiring for a child, they started a long and rigorous meditation. While Rambha sat amid blazing flames, Karambha immersed himself in neck-deep water. Indra, the king of the gods, became worried at the intensity of their meditation, lest they win the right to rule the heavens by their piety. So he took the garb of a crocodile and devoured Karambha. Rambha went on with his ascetic rites but when nothing yielded fruit, he tried to chop his own head as sacrifice to the fire. This appeased Shiva who appeared and offered Rambha a boon. Rambha prayed that Shiva himself be born as his son in three successive births. The son would be conquerer of the gods, more spirited than fire, celebrated, truthful, long-living, and possessor of all treasure. Shiva agreed and Rambha returned, joyful at having gained immortality through an illustrious line. On the way, he saw a handsome, healthy buffalo. This buffalo was Mahismati, daughter of the sage Biprachitti. A willful girl, she had taken the guise of a buffalo and scared sage Sindhudweep so much that his long meditation was disturbed. The angry sage had cursed Mahismati that she be locked in the buffalo's body. This is the buffalo that Rambha saw wandering in the forest. He fell in love with Mahismati and married her. Mahishaasura was the product of their union.

Mahishaasura was a buffalo-headed demon. He was granted a boon whereby he would be protected from anyone. Intoxicated by the above gift, he set out to conquer the world. Mahishaasura defeated Indra, the king of the gods. Indra implored Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh to help him. The Divine Trio amalgamated their

shakti (power) and created Durga. Maa Durga fought Mahishaasura for nine days and beheaded him on the tenth day. The nine days are those of Navratri and the tenth victorious day is called Vijaya Dashami.

6.3 Dhoomra-lochana and Chanda & Munda:

Dhoomra-Lochana was a powerful general of the terrible Asura, Sumbha. The Goddess uttered the sound 'Hum' and the demon turned to ashes by the powerful vibration of the sound. The form of Ma Kali who emerged from the forehead of the angry face of Ambika (form of Durga) killed the Asuras Chanda and Munda. Chanda means a person who is short-tempered and Munda means a shaven-headed man. Together they imply the anger of a champion fighter. Because of this victory over Chanda and Munda, Kali Mata is known as Chamunda.

6.4 Raktabeej: Hearing the news of the death of Chanda and Munda, the infuriated King Sumbha mobilised the Asuric forces and surrounded the Mother from all sides. Then, from the Great Devas (Spiritual Beings) emerged Powers which entered the form of the Mother. From Lord Vishnu emerged the power of Vaishnavi, and subforms from His 'avatars' - Vaaraahi and Naarasimhi... from Brahma, emerged the power called Brahmaani. .. from Lord Shiva, emerged Maheshwari and Veer Bhadra... from Lord Shiva's son Kartikeya (or Kumar), emerged the power of Kaumari ...from Indra emerged the power of Aindri.

Raktabeeja was the son of Krodhaavati, the sister of Shumbha and Nishumbha. Krodha means anger. Raktabeeja was an Asura who enjoyed a unique blessing. If a drop of blood were to drop from his body and touch the earth, then a demon of his might and form would spring from it. So if he were to get wounded during battle, the



drops of blood would give rise to a thousand demons like himself. It is for the above reason that Kali spread her tongue so that she could suck Raktabeeja's blood before it touched the earth. Raktabeeja fell on the ground dead as his body was completely drained of blood.

6.5 Shumbha and Nishumbha: Finally Sumbha and Nisumbha were slain by Devi Mahasaraswati. Mahasaraswati stands for knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge and Wisdom are forever victorious over ignorance and delusion. The first three days of 'Navratra' are dedicated to 'Maa Kali' to annihilate the enemies within. The next three days are dedicated to 'Maa Laxmi' and the last three days are dedicated to Ma Saraswati. After nine days of struggle, Maa Durga beheaded Mahishaasura on the tenth day. This victorious day is called Vijaya Dashami. On this day Shri Ram killed the ten headed Ravana. This day is known as Dassehra.

7. Divine occasions during Durga Puja:-

7.1 Kumari Puja: Goddess Durga arrives to her earthly abode with her two children - Kartik and Ganesh, and her two other forms - Laskhmi (wealth & prosperity) and Saraswati (knowledge). We worship her as the Goddess of Shakti who overpowered the evil to establish peace and prosperity on earth. She is also the daughter making her yearly visits at her parent's place.

The Goddess is worshipped in various forms during her stay here. One of those forms is the "Kumari", the virgin form. This mould is the most powerful form of Mahashakti. A girl aged between one to sixteen, symbolising the Kumari form of Devi is worshipped in front of the idol of Goddess Durga. The Kumari form of the Goddess was emphasised as the most dynamic form by

the devotees since long as Kumari Shakti is the basis of all creations. Our scriptures have emphasised Kumari Puja particularly to evolve the purity and divinity of the women of the society. Diminishing the larger than life stature of the Goddess to someone much nearer and closer is the real reason for this form of worship. Sri Ram Krishna had said that Kumari is another form of Devi Durga and he himself worshipped Sarada Maa as Kumari. To imagine the Goddess in the mould of a Kumari is an age old concept. In Mahabharata Arjuna had performed Kumari Puja. The Puranas mention the Kumari form of Chandika. This is also vividly and specifically mentioned in the "Kubjika Tantra".

7.1.1 Selection of Kumari: The scriptures mention the great care with which the Kumari is selected to be worshipped as the earthly representative of Devi Durga. The qualities required in the girl has to match the dynamism, purity and serenity of the Goddess. A calm, serene and an unmarried girl with a bright disposition between one to sixteen years, who has not yet reached her puberty and is bereft of desire, worldly pleasures and anger is the right requisite for the Kumari Puja. Depending on the age of the girls they are worshipped in the various forms of the Goddess. A one year old girl is worshipped in the Sandhya form of the Devi while a two year old is worshipped in the Saraswati mould of the Devi. A three year old girl is worshipped in the Tridha form of Durga and a four year old is worshipped in the Kalika mould of the Devi. Subhaga and Uma are the forms of Durga for a five and a six year old girl respectively. Malini form of the Goddess represents a seven year old while Kujjika represents a eight year old girl. Kalsondarbha and Aparajita stand for a ten year old girl and an eleven year old girl. Bhairavi is represented by a twelve year old girl and



Mahalakshmi by a thirteen year old girl. Pitnayika, Khetrageya and Ambika are represented by a fourteen, fifteen and sixteen year old girl respectively.

7.1.2 Worshipping the Kumari: Kumari Puja is held on Ashtami or sometimes Nabami. Kumari Puja is performed in Annapurna, Jagatdhatri and even Kali Puja as without Kumari Puja, the yagna remains incomplete. In the dawn of Ashtami or Nabami, the Kumari is bathed in Ganga water and is clad in a red Benarasi *saari*. She is then adorned with flowers and jewellery, alata is applied to her feet and a 'tilak' of *sindur* on her forehead. The young Kumari fasts the whole day until the *puja* is over. On a decorated chair she is made to sit before the goddess and a flower from the Devi's hand is placed in her hand. Placed before her are flowers, bel (wood apple) leaves, incense sticks, lamps, 'naividya' and other things required for *puja*. The priest then chants the *mantras* and the sound of *Dhaks* fill the atmosphere. After the *puja* the divinity of the Goddess Durga is said to be seen in the girl. It is customary to gift the girl with gold, silver and clothes. To gift the Kumari is considered to be a pious act. Kumari Puja is very much prevalent in Belur Math. In 1902, Swami Vivekananda performed Kumari Puja for the first time in Belur. In the premises of the Math, in the Mandap, in the presence of Sarada Ma, Swamiji worshipped nine Kumari girls. He offered pushpanjali at their feet, gave them sweets and 'dakshina' (gift). He touched their feet after the completion of the puja. Later with meditation and mantras he worshipped Sarada Maa as Goddess Durga. Kumari Puja, somewhere, is celebrated on the Ashtami, yet somewhere, on the Nabami.

7.2 Sandhi Puja: An integral and important part of Durga Puja, Sandhi Puja, is performed at the juncture of the eighth and ninth lunar day. Sandhi

Puja lasts from the last 24 minutes of Ashtami till the first 24 minutes of Nabami. During this juncture (the "Sandhikshan"), Durga is worshipped in her Chamunda form. Devi Durga killed, Chanda and Munda, the two *asuras* at "Sandhikshan" and thus acquired the name of "Chamunda".

7.2.1 Myth behind Durga being worshipped as Chamunda: While the Goddess and Mahishasura were engaged in a fierce battle, the two generals of Mahisha, Chanda and Munda attacked the Devi from the rear. Durga appeared to them, a brilliantly glowing woman with her hair knotted on her head, a crescent moon above her forehead, a 'tilak' on her forehead and a garland around her neck. With golden ear-rings and clad in a yellow *saari* she emitted a golden glow. Her ten hands possessed ten different weapons. Though she appeared beautiful her face turned blue with anger when she faced Chanda and Munda. Though she appeared beautiful her face turned blue with anger when she faced Chanda and Munda. From her third eye then emerged a Devi with a large falchion and a shield. She had a large face, bloody tongue and sunken blood shot eyes. She was Chamunda. With a blood curdling shriek she leapt forward and killed them. This moment was the juncture of the eighth and ninth lunar day.

7.2.2 Ashtami & Nabami: Long back devotees in order to perform the Sandhi Puja at the exact juncture used a number of methods. With the last 24 minutes of the Ashtami Puja still left, a bronze bowl with a tiny hole was placed in a bucket full of water. The bowl with the tiny hole was made in such a way that it took exactly 24 minutes for the bowl to submerge in the water. The moment the bowl submerged in the water cannon balls were fired announcing this moment of Sandhi Puja. This yardstick for measuring the "Sandhikshan" was very popular ages ago in many "Rajbaris".



7.3 Mahalaya: The traditional six day countdown to Mahasaptami starts from Mahalaya. Goddess Durga visits the earth for only four days but seven days prior to the Pujas, starts the Mahalaya. Sarat in its bloom, mingled with the festive spirit of Durga Puja reaches its pitch on the day of Mahalaya. From this day starts 'Devipaksha' and marks the end of 'Pitri-paksha'. It is the day when many throng to the banks of river Ganga, clad in *dhotis* to offer prayers to their dead relatives and forefathers. People in the pre-dawn hours pray for their departed relatives and take holy dips in the Ganges. This ritual is known as 'Tarpan'. This day bears immense significance for the Hindus. It is according to the myths that Sree Rama hastily performed Durga Puja. Sree Rama had performed this in "Uttarayan" and the Puja was not held when the Gods and Goddesses rested called "Dakshinayan". It was on the day of Mahalaya, the beginning of "devipaksha", the Gods and Goddesses woke up to prepare themselves for Durga Puja.

7.4 Navratri: 'The Festival of Nine Nights', is celebrated during the first nine days of the Hindu month of Ashvin (*Sep-Oct*). The festival is dedicated to the worship of Mother Goddess or Shakti and her nine forms. This season is considered to be an auspicious one as it is generally associated with the sowing of seeds. People sow seeds on the first day, consecrate the plants, watch the sprouting and worship Goddess Durga during this festival. The last three days are especially considered most important. The nine-day is equally divided in worshipping three Goddesses. The first three days are dedicated to Goddess Durga. The next three days are spent in worshipping goddess Lakshmi and the last three days are dedicated to Goddess Saraswati. The day after Navratri, the festival of Dussehra is celebrated.

7.5 Ramlila: Dussehra, as the name suggests occurs on the "tenth" day following the Navratri. It is a festival to celebrate the triumph of good over evil, and marks the defeat and death of the demon king Ravana in the epic *Ramayana*. Huge effigies of Ravana are burnt amidst the bangs and booms of firecrackers. In northern India, especially in Varanasi, Dusshera overlaps with "Ramlila" – traditional plays in which scenes from the epic saga of the mythical Rama-Ravana strife are enacted by professional troupes. The Dussehra celebration of Mysore in southern India is a veritable extravaganza ! Chamundi, a form of Durga, is the family deity of the Maharaja of Mysore. It's a wonderful scene to watch the grand procession of elephants, horses and courtiers wending a circuitous way to the hilltop temple of Goddess Chamundi !

8. Symbolic synergy (Bahana):-

8.1 Lion: Durga's mount was a gift from Himalayas when she went to war with Mahishasura. It fought ferociously on its own in the deciding battle. The lion stands for power. In the pose in which she is worshipped, the Devi has her right foot firmly planted on the lion's back.

8.2 Owl: The mount of Laxmi is a nightbird. While men are busy with their worldly pursuits through the day, it is deep in a sleep of disinterestedness, it chooses to stay up and meditate in the calm of night, and guard its store of spiritual wealth. The choice of such a mount for goddess of prosperity sends out the strong message that spiritual attainment is as important as material acquisitions for a person to prosper.

8.3 Swan: The feathered mount of the fair goddess Saraswati is said to have a unique gift. It can separate milk from water when the two are mixed. Hence it symbolises the power to distinguish between good and evil, and choose the pure over



the impure. This is a quality that wisdom is supposed to bestow on one.

8.4 Mouse: There are two accounts that explain why the mouse is the mount of the elephant-headed god. Yajurveda writes how Agni, the fire god, was once terrified of Shiva's rage and metamorphosed himself into a mouse to hide underground. Therefore, the mouse has a fiery quality. Like the flames, it can yield many benefits if it is in harness, but will wreak havoc if it spins out of control. In another account, a curse had transformed a Gandharva (one of a semi-divine race) to a mouse. As it was scampering about in the abode of the sage Parashar, Ganesha threw a dice at it and brought the restless creature in his grip. This gave the god of prosperity the power to rein in fickle-minded Fate. The puny creature also makes a virtue of accumulation and storage, another necessity for commercial success.

8.5 Peacock: Kartik's mount is as beautiful as its Lord. Yet it stands for control over the six inherent vices in man-passion, anger, greed, wine, infatuation, vanity and envy. No wonder, the war lord is himself a bachelor.

Every year during the lunar month of Ashwin (*Sep-Oct*), Hindus observe ten days of ceremonies, rituals, fasts and feasts in honour of the supreme mother goddess. It begins with the fast of "Navaratri", and ends with the festivities of "Dussehra" and "Vijayadashami."

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