

Shakti



- Shakti or Devi (the goddess) is one of the three main focuses of worship.
- Shakti means energy and in one sense refers to all goddesses, the 'energies' of their respective husbands. Specifically, Shakti refers to the consort of Shiva. In other words, the Supreme Lord is represented as Shiva and his power is represented by Shakti.
- Shakti represents mother nature and exhibits forms which are both kind and nurturing (such as Parvati) and warlike and fearful (such as Durga and Kali respectively)
- Parvati is depicted with two arms, holding a blue lotus in her right hand. She is often shown with her husband and her two children, Ganesh and Skanda. Some consider that Parvati and Shiva also have two daughters, Lakshmi and Sarasvati
- Durga is shown riding a lion or tiger and holding various weapons in her ten hands.
- Kali, the goddess's most terrifying aspect, is depicted with a black complexion, her tongue hanging out and wearing a garland of human skulls.
- Shakti has many other forms and incarnations, going by many names such as Sati, Uma, Gauri, Chandi, etc. She is often simply called Devi (Goddess) and addressed as Mataji (respected mother).
- Unmarried girls often worship the goddess in order to obtain a good husband. She is also adored by married women for maintaining a happy married life.
- The goddess is often worshipped with animal sacrifice.
- The main festivals associated with Devi are Navaratri and Durga Puja, both falling around September/October.
- At Navaratri, Durga is often worshipped in nine forms (Navadurga), one for each night of the festival.
- Perhaps the most famous story is of Durga slaying the buffalo demon called Mahishasura. Durga is known as Mahishasura Mardini (the killer of Mahishasura)
- Another central story is "The sacrifice of Daksha". After Sati was insulted by her father, Daksha, she quit her body by invoking the mystic fire from within, Shiva was aggrieved and incensed, and danced with her body until it was cut up by the disk of Vishnu. Wherever the parts of her body fell became the 51 Shakti holy sites. After this, Sati was reborn as Parvati, the daughter of the Himalayas.
- Further references: Teachers' Book: pages 49-52, 61, 63, 67, 71-72, 75, 113, 130, 132, 136, 137.

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http://www.hindunet.org/god/Goddesses/parvati_durga/