



In Praise of the Goddess: The Devimahatmya and Its Meaning

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About 16 centuries ago, an unknown Indian author or authors gathered together the diverse threads of already ancient traditions and wove them into a verbal tapestry that today is still the central text for worshippers of the Hindu Devi, the Divine Mother. This spiritual classic, the Devimahatmya, addresses the perennial questions of the nature of the universe, humankind, and divinity. How are they related, how do we live in a world torn between good and evil, and how do we find lasting satisfaction and inner peace?

These questions and their answers form the substance of the Devimahatmya. Its narrative of a dispossessed king, a merchant betrayed by the family he loves, and a seer whose teaching leads beyond existential suffering sets the stage for a trilogy of myths concerning the all-powerful Divine Mother, Durga, and the fierce battles she wages against throngs of demonic foes. In these allegories, her adversaries represent our all-too-human impulses toward power, possessions, and pleasure. The battlefields symbolize the field of human consciousness on which our livesâ€™ dramas play out in joy and sorrow, in wisdom and folly.

The Devimahatmya speaks to us across the ages of the experiences and beliefs of our ancient ancestors. We sense their enchantment at nature's bounty and their terror before its destructive fury, their recognition of the good and evil in the human heart, and their understanding that everything in our experience is the expression of a greater reality, personified as the Divine Mother.

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