



A Yogic Interpretation of Mahalaya

Dr. Kartik Chandra Das

Mahalaya is a combined word. It is formed by the combination of two words i.e *Maha* and *Alaya*. *Maha* means *Virat* (Grand), *Alaya* means *griha* (Abode). This Mahalaya is the body itself where the soul resides. This body is exposed to outside stimulations. The soul becomes impure which has a corresponding desecrating impact on all the actions. Man has a propensity to stoop to unrighteous enterprise in life which often turns him to beast and 'soils' his soul. Man's corporeal frame or physical body is a veritable *durga* or fort. The saviour of this *durga* is Durga.

Durga Puja starts from Mahalaya and continues till the 'Vijaya Dasami'. On the Mahalaya day we offer ablutions or *tarpan* to our *Pitru purusa* (forefathers). The *tarpan* commences ritualistically with the mantra, *Pitarah Trupyatu*. This body can not be fit for worship of Goddess Durga unless it is liberated from "Pasusamskar" and "Jiva Samskar". The evil qualities are always distracting man from his divine path. This is only one road that leads to God. The real significance of Mahalaya can be understood through "Kriya Yoga Sadhana" (re-integration through action).

We are the cause of our suffering. Sufferings originate from desire. The desire for material things should be converted to the desire for spiritualism. Matter is meaningless in the spiritual world. Kama (desire), Krodha (anger),

Lobha (greed), Moha (infatuation), etc invade this body and cause human suffering. To get rid of these vices we must cultivate firm determination. Firm determination can only bring about success. Success in every field will come when we unite ourselves with the divinity. We should welcome Goddess Durga to make our life blissful. Without oneness with Goddess Durga we can not enjoy our life. She is the source of all energy and all power. Sri Ram defeated Ravana, the mightiest king of Lanka by worshipping Goddess Durga. Sri Ram invited Ravana to "Ravana Maran Yajna". To annihilate demonic qualities, a Ravana is necessary who shall become the priest of Ravana Maran Yajna. To overpower evil we have to become the priest. No other person can remove evil from our body. We ourselves can rectify us. We can eradicate our own vices and amend our follies. For this, strong determination is imperative. The Mahalaya entails upon us to take a firm pledge for exonerating us from desecration.

'Susumna Nadi' is called the Durga Kshetra. It is the symbol of purity. Durga is being worshipped in 'Sad Chakra'. The six Chakras are- Muladhara (the parts about the pubis), Swadhisthan (the umbilical region), Manipura (epigastrium), Anahata (the root of the nose), Visuddha (the hollow between the frontal sinuses)



Fourteen handed Durga, Khambeswari Temple, Sonepur

and Ajna Chakra (the fontanelle) of union of the coronal and sagittal sutures). 'Akala Bodhan' of Devi means arousing the dormant Bodhi Sakti. The 'Bodhi Sakti' can only be aroused if all ignorance is dispelled. Only after making this body or Alaya pure we can meditate upon and be united with the divine Goddess. In the beginning of Durga Puja there is a 'Mahati Puja'. By this ritual we can understand the greatness of divine power. The purpose of Durga Puja is to sanctify oneself. Perceive Durga within yourself and realize her existence outside the body. She is the controller of our body and the light of our body.

On the 'Saptami day' (The 7th bright day) we worship Manomaya Durga. This Durga resides in the heart on a two-petalled lotus. On the right petal-*vindu-para* or *Satwika Prakriti* resides and on the left petal resides *vindu-apara* or *Rajasika* and *Tamasika Prakriti*. These are two folds of energies. The five senses are controlled by *Nikrista Prakriti*. The *Nikrista*

Prakriti is attracted by *Sparsa* (touch), *Rupa* (form) *Rasa* (taste), *Gandha* (smell), *Sabda* (Sound) etc. *Kama*, *Krodha* and *Lobha* are due to the play of this *Prakriti*. The union of the lower *Prakriti* with higher *Prakriti* occurs on the seventh day. Mind is a bird, and it is always in the dancing position. To perch it at fixed point is very difficult. Mind can be arrested by Yoga through proper mobilization of wind (*Vayu*) in body. *Vayu* in fact is the controller of all *indriyas* or senses. The power that controls the mind is the Durga Sakti.

The speedier the "Swasa-vayu" more active become our *indriyas* or senses to evil deeds. The moment the *indriyas* are controlled, all our actions become divine. Divinity will dwell in us and we shall feel the existence of divinity everywhere. Seeing Durga everywhere is our real achievements-the sole purpose of Durga Puja. On the Astami day (8th bright day) we worship Buddhirupa Durga i.e Kutastha Durga. Pure mind begets pure Buddhi (intellect). On the eighth day the priest worships 64-Yoginis. These Yoginis are 64-*Vrittis* (Modes of life or conduct). It is rightly said in Saptasati Chandi :

*Ya Devi Sarvabhutesu Vritti Rupena Sansthita,
Namasthasei Namastasei, Namastasei Namah.*

On the 'Ninth day' we worship Vindu Rupa Durga. Durga is realized in the Sahasrara. The 'Sadhaka' (Worshipper) feels Durga within and everywhere outside on the 10th bright lunar day. Finally the Sadhaka says " I worship you. I realize you. You are present within me-Your are present in the 'Sahasradala Padma' (thousand petalled lotus). "This place is the most suitable place of your abode. So long you are there, I will be realizing you. It is you who can bring me to life, who can glorify me, who can give me strength and who can bring good fortune for me."

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