

## **Mahisasuramardini: The Symbol of Female Power**

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### **Abstract**

Mahisasuramardini is the very important form of Goddees Durga. She has been praised and eulogized by the ancient sages. After the annihilation of Mahisa by Her the gods praised and propitiated Her as the mistress of the world. When she is pleased, the creation takes place and when angered She destroys innumerable races within fraction of a second, as the vast army of Mahisa has been destroyed within no time as a result of Her anger. Many literary texts define the glory and power of this deity. The artist also depicted several images of Mahisasuramardini which plays a vital role in representing the female power. This paper reflects the popularity of Mahisasuramardini: the symbol of female power with the help of references and images in Ancient period.

**Keywords:** Mahisasuramardini, symbolic, combat, female power, images.

### **1. Introduction**

Goddess Durga is the most popular deities of Hindu pantheon, who is worshipped by millions of devotees in the country. Durga belongs to the group of Goddesses like, Kali, Saraswati, Gaytri etc. where they are worshipped as primordial female power of the mother as in the Shakti cult. She has manifested Her in various forms in different incarnations, She has taken from time to time for different purposes. She has Herself proclaimed that as and when demonic forces would obstruct the worldly order, She would appear in the world and destroys the enemies. Some of these incarnations are Mahakali, Ambika, Chandika, Bhimadevi, Mahisasurmardini etc.

## 2. Discussion

Mahisasuramardini is one of the most impressive and popular form of goddess Durga. The primary function of Mahisasuramardini is to combat demons who threaten the stability of the cosmos. In this role she is represented as a great battle queen with many hands each of which wields a weapon. She resides on a fierce lion and the demon she is most famous for killing Mahisasura, the buffalo demon.

The original Devi Mahatmya Section of the Brahmanda Purana illustrates the various early form of the Goddess such as Mahisasuramardini, Chamunda etc. Different literary works such as Vishnudharmottara Purana, Matsya Purana, Rupmandana, Shilpratna etc. defines the glory and power of this deity. The Shri Durgasaptashati describes Her that she possesses a shining body, has three eyes, is seated on a lion, she carries discus, arrow, mace, bow, chain, sword, shield in her hands. These descriptions, as usual in Hindu mythology are symbolic.<sup>1</sup> The lion represents energy or power. She possesses this form in order to kill the wicked and invincible demons.<sup>2</sup>

According to Durgasaptashati. Mahisha, the king of demons, defeated Indra, Then the gods along with Brahma approached Vishnu and Shiva who showed great anger over the demons. A mighty prowess emanated from out of the bodies of Vishnu, Brahma, Shiva, Indra and other gods joined together to form into one that looked like a dizzying mountain. The gods saw the flames of the great prowess spread in all directions and soon converted into a goddess with Her face emanating from the prowess of Shiva, Her hairs on the head from that of Yama, Her arms from that of Vishnu, Her breasts from that of the Moon Her three eyes from that of fire etc. The goddess derived other parts of Her body from the prowess of other gods. All the gods gifted various weapons to Her to prepare Her for killing the demon and the goddess embodies the source of power.

; k nsh I oBkr'Skq 'kfDr: isk I fLFkrkA  
ueLrL; SueLrL; SueLrL; SueksueAA  
&& nshl Dra ¼ kpok v/; k; ½

Then the goddess killed the demon by severing his head with a big sword.<sup>3</sup>

The Shilparatra describes. Her as having three eyes ten hands and should wear Jata mukuta. In her right hands she should carry the trisula, khadga, saktayayudha, chakra, bow and in the left hands pasa, ankusa, khetaka, parasu and a bell. The right leg of the Devi should be placed on the back of her lion and her left leg should touch the buffalo-body of Mahisasura.<sup>4</sup>

The Vishnudharmottara describes that Mahisasurmardani has twenty hands; the right ones carry respectively the sula, khadga, sankha, chakra, bana, sakti, vajra, abhaya, damaru and an umbrella; while the left ones are seen to hold the nagapasa, khetaka, parasu, ankusa, dhanus, ghanta, dhvaja, gade, a mirror and the mudgara. The Devi thrusts the trisula into the asura neck.

'kɔ/kfɪ 'kʰ-[kpØkf.k ck.k'kfDri ohufi A  
 vHk; aMeja pδ Nf=dka nf{k.ks djAA  
 Å/okɪn Øe; ksɔ folkrh I k I nk 'kɪkkA  
 ukxai k'ka rFkk [kVa dβjkʰd 'kdkedɛA  
 ?k.Vk/otxnkn'kz epɔja oke ,o pA  
 rnAks efg'kf' NUuekkiz ifrr eLrd'A  
 'kL=ksj rdjLLrC/kLrnxbok I kko% i epkuAA<sup>5</sup>

These literary works illustrate various, iconic types of the deity. The difference primarily lies in the number of hands and ayudhas. The earliest representation of Mahisasurmardini terracotta image recovered from Rajasthan, now preserved in Amber Museum. The period of this terracotta image is I.C.A.D.<sup>6</sup> and the earliest iconic stone relief of two armed Durga engaged in war with Mahisasura recovered from Bhita by Sir John Marshal which is of Gupta period.<sup>7</sup>

Likewise the beautiful brass image of the four armed goddess of the time of Meruvarman has an inscription in which she is shown uplifting the hind part of the Demon in the shape of a buffalo by holding its tail with her front right, while she tramples on its neck with her right leg. This standing attitude of goddess exactly corresponds to the Devimahatmya description.<sup>8</sup>

Another fine relief of this Devi is carved on the facade of the Chandra Gupta II cave at Udayagiri. In this relief Devi is endowed with twelve arms, with many weapons and attributes.<sup>9</sup>

In the fine image of Gangaikonda Cholapuram the Devi has twelve arms but the lion is present on the left side.<sup>10</sup> At Mahabalipuram and Ellora panels Mahisasuramardini has eight armed riding on her lion mount attacking Mahisasura, a full scale man of her stature with buffalo horns, other demons, some fallen and other still fighting, are shown below and in the two uppermost rows in the panel are the divine onlookers of the fight.<sup>11</sup>

The Aihole relief shows the eight armed goddess piercing the upturned neck of the Buffalo demon. Likewise the Haripur image shows the eight-armed goddess in a more aggressive pose killing the demon. Here lion is also taking part in the battle.<sup>12</sup>

In Orissa there are several images of Mahisasuramardini in most Siva and Sakta temples. The six armed Mahisasuramardini image found in the Parasurameshwar temple is very fine. Here the deity is seen holding a sword in upper left hand, while in the upper right hand she is pressing the face of the demon buffalo. The stylistic and flamboyant exposition of the deity is marvelous. Several such images are also depicted in Uttareswara temple, Mohini temple, Vaital temple etc.

It seems that the Chalukyan artist appears to lay stress on the easy and effortless grace with which the divine act of retribution was carried out, while the Orissan images portrays with success the dynamic vigour underlying the act.

One fine image of Mahisasuramardini which is found in Peshawar in which she is killing the demon. Her face is aggressive and the upper part of her body is clear.

The unique image of Mahisasuramardini is recovered from Dinajpur which has eighteen arms. Likewise the very interesting thirty-two arms of the goddess riding on a lion and engaged in combat with demons shown with the miniature figures of Ganapati, Brahma Saurya etc. recovered from North Bengal.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. Conclusion

From the above account it is clear that Mahisasuramardini is one of the significant form of Durga depicted in literature and art representing the female power. Combining with Herself the function of Creation, sustenance and destruction of the Universe. The main purpose of Mahisasuramardini is to glorify Shakti. Shakti is the dynamic aspect of the ultimate reality known as 'Brahman'. Mahisasuramardini shows, how much power women can wield, how they act independently, and face the worst challenges of life boldly without unduly depending on men.

### References

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