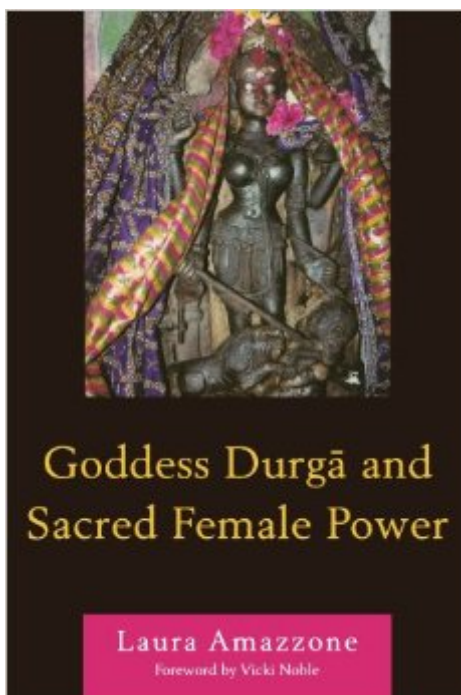


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Goddess Durga And Sacred Female Power



Synopsis

Goddess Durga and Sacred Female Power is an exploration of the many faces of the Goddess Durga in ancient and contemporary culture. This book takes us on a pilgrimage to goddess temples and natural shrines, to visit shamans and living goddesses in the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal, and to India for the annual ten-day Durga Festival. The mythology, rituals, philosophy, and spiritual practices of this distinctly female-centered and millennia-old tradition of Durga offer an alternative model of female potential and empowerment, focusing on peace, healing, spiritual liberation, and realization of inherent divinity.

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Customer Reviews

This well-researched, well-written book is accurate in its information on Durga worship in India and the author's personal narrative is wonderful and refreshing. However, as a Durga devotee myself, I must say that I feel like Miss Amazzone is projecting her own worldview onto the religion of Durga and using the Durga tradition to promote her own ruthless feminism. In fact, there are as many male followers of Durga as there are female - especially in India (I am a man, myself and an ardent follower of Durga for some time), yet she completely sidelines them and their role in the tradition. In addition, she seems to miss the point of Durga worship, which is ultimately to transcend one's own limited worldview - to include any type of "-ism", i.e., feminism - and unite with Lord Shiva, the transcendent divine consciousness and source of all reality (including Shakti, which arises because of the existence of Shiva). Through the manifest (Durga), we aim to unite with the unmanifest (Shiva). Of course, shakti is always characterized as feminine. However, this is largely an

abstraction and more for our ability to understand and progress spiritually than a literal, concrete representation of the underlying source of all manifest reality as a female. In truth, shakti transcends gender (gender arises out of shakti, not the other way around) and in fact is not even separate from divine consciousness (Shiva and Shakti are in fact one - there is no duality). It is easier, though, to approach divine shakti as separate and feminine, so we do - but this is for us to comprehend, not an accurate reflection of reality.

I read this book for the first time in 2011, when I was in a deep and intense state of spiritual searching. Since then it has become worn and dog-eared, underlined and highlighted, bent and curled and coffee-stained... so many times I have picked this book up off the shelf, flipped it open to a random page, and found exactly the passage I needed on that particular day. It's one of those books. When I first read it I felt such a resonance with the tradition and the festival that she described, and her experience of it, that I promised myself I would attend the Durga Puja in Nepal one day. Three years later, through an incredible series of coincidences and synchronicities, I found myself there with Laura as my guide. Her decades of intense practice, scholarship, and total devotion to the tradition and culture originating in the Kathmandu Valley, along with her connections formed over so many years of travel to Nepal, gave our group access to an extraordinary depth of experience at the festival that would not have been available without her guidance. It is not just that she has academic "knowledge" of the festival's origins, history, iconography, and rituals (though believe me, as a scholar she has that in spades - and all of it can be found in this book). It is also, and primarily, her depth of profound heart-connection to the lineage and tradition that only comes through years of committed & initiatory practice that really makes the festival come alive. Under Laura's auspicious leadership Durga revealed Herself in powerful, shocking, unmistakeable, awe-inspiring ways every day we were there and then some.

"Goddess Durga and Sacred Female Power" is a unique combination of exemplary scholarship and enthralling narrative. Amazzone invites the reader into her personal and sometimes heart-rending journey to discover the nature of consciousness and her own spiritual place in the universe. As that story unwinds, she simultaneously presents its historical, cultural and anthropological context, drawn from her scholarship and her journeying to the source of one of India's earliest and most potent religious traditions. Dispassionate observer becomes passionate devotee as one profoundly spiritual encounter after another explodes from the page. We realize, in the reading, that the two are inevitably one. One cannot describe religious or spiritual experience from the outside, only from

deep within. It takes strength and an unusual courage to present such intimately personal revelations for all to read. We are fortunate that the author has both, and the skill to write about them in a way that allows us to share them. This is an account of years of research. One might reasonably expect it to be filled with dry, dense prose, laden with footnotes and heavy with esoterica. There are notes, certainly, but the book is anything but dry. There are entire chapters where the palpable tension and thrill of discovery make for page-turning fascination and the "can't put it down" satisfaction of a great mystery novel. For there *are* mysteries here, and she explores them with courage, insight, compassion, and a marvelous talent for narrative. This is an unusual and a necessary book. It is at once as ancient as humanity and current as tomorrow. Women should read it to understand how very far displaced they have become from their central role in human affairs.

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