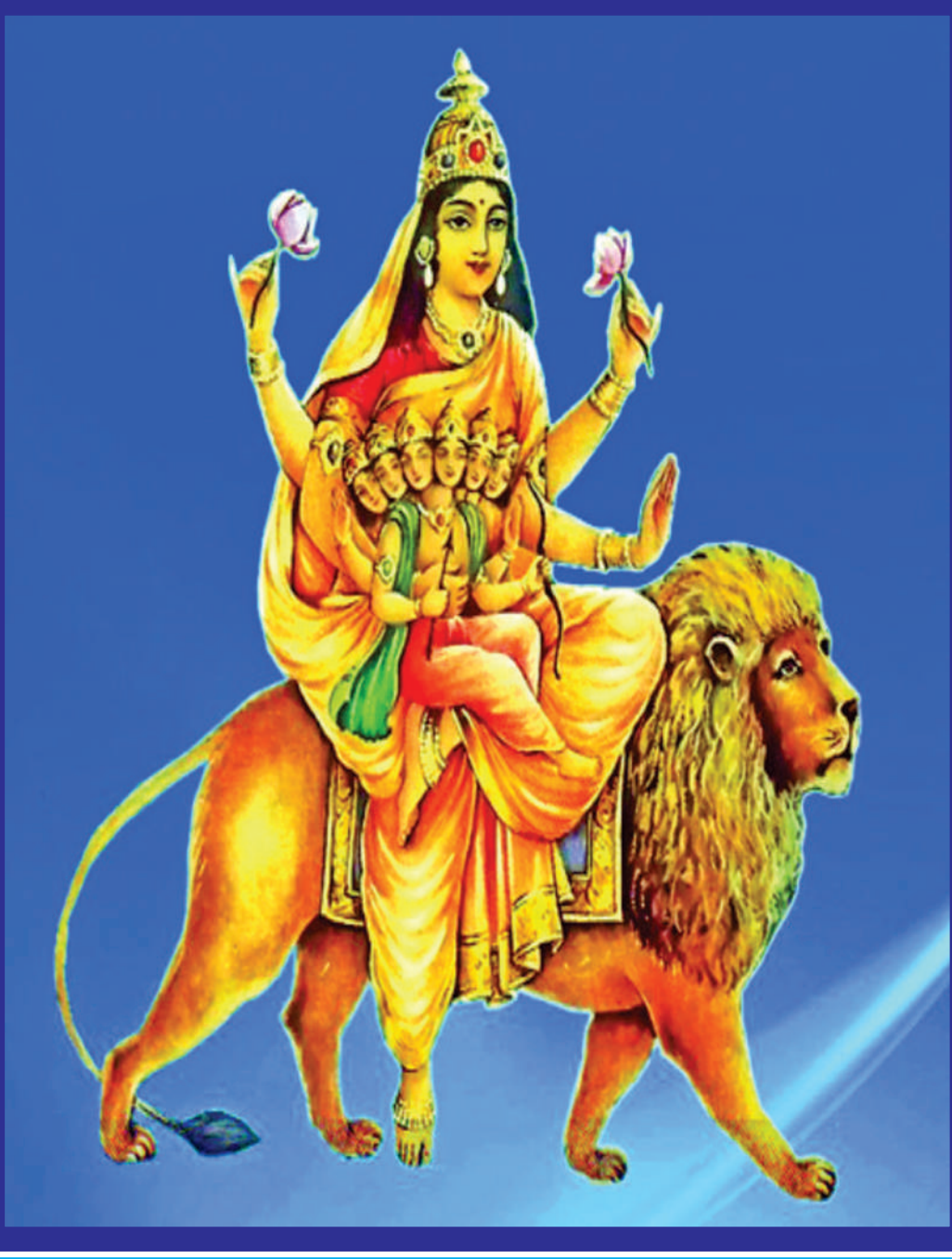


Maa Skandamata – Fifth Manifestation of Devi Durga

The fifth manifestation of Devi Durga is known as Maa Skandamata. She is fifth among Nava Durgas, thats why she is worshiped on the fifth Navratri. Devi Maa is the mother of Kumara Skanda or Kumara Kartikeya also called Lord Murugan in south India. Kumar Skanda was chosen by Gods as their commander in 'Deva-Sura Sangram' (the war of gods and demons) against the demons. Lord Murugan's glory has been narrated in the Puranas and he is referred to as Kumara and Saktidhar. His vehicle being peacock he is also called Mayuravahana. Thus being the mother of Skanda she is Skandamata. Worshipping Skandamata on the fifth day of Navaratra has very inportace for Yogis & Sadhaks. This day devotee's mind reaches Visuddha Chakra and stays therein. In her image the Lord Skanda in his infant form is always found. She holds him in her lap. Using a lion as a vehicle, Mother Goddess has four arms and three eyes. She holds Lord Skanda in her right upper arm and a lotus flower in her right lower hand, which is slightly raised upward. The left upper arm is in a pose to grant boon and in left lower hand, which is raised, she again holds lotus. She is of Golden colour. She is seated on lotus flower so she is called Padmasana. The scriptures are very eloquent in glorifying the fifth day of Navaratra period. As the mind of the aspirant, on this day, is in the Visuddha Chakra, so all his actions internal as well as external completely stop and the mind bereft of all thought-waves, is calm like a wave less ocean. It would be advancing towards the state of pure consciousness. It is completely submerged in the meditation of Mother Padmasana, quite devoid of worldly thoughts or coats of Maya. It is time when the aspirant should be most careful and cautious on the path of his Sadhana. By worshipping the Goddess in the form of Skandamata, the devotee gets all his desires fulfilled. He starts tasting the Supreme joy even in this very mortal world. The gateway for salvation to him is spontaneously opened. Her worship automatically includes the worship of Lord Skanda in his child form. Only she has got this pride of place. So the Sadhak should particularly be attentive to her worship. Being the presiding deity of Sm God, she bestows an uncommon luster and radiance on her devotee. He is always surrounded by an invisible divine halo, which always maintains his 'Yoga-Ksema'. Therefore, we should try very sincerely to take refuge under her. There is no better way to Moksha from this world. She is the Goddess of Fire. The daughter of Himalaya, after observing penance got married with Shiva. She had a son named Skanda. Skanda is a leader of the army of Gods. Skanda Mata is a deity of fire. Skanda is seated in her lap. She has three eyes and four hands. She is white and seated on a lotus. Some also depict her sitting on a lion with her son Skand (Lord Kartikeya) in her lap with two hands holding lotuses while the other two hands respectively display defending and granting gestures. It is said, by the mercy of Ma Skandmata, even the idiot becomes an ocean of knowledge. The great and legendary Sanskrit Scholar Kalidas created his two masterpiece works viz. Raghuvansh Maha Kavya and Meghdoot by the grace of Ma Skandmata. However some believe Kalidasa was also inspired and blessed by Maa Kushmanda.



NAVRATRA SPECIAL RECIPE
PALAK MAKHANA



- Ingredients**
- 300 grams Spinach Leaves (Palak)
 - 2 Tomatoes, diced
 - 1 cup Lotus Seeds
 - 1 teaspoon Cumin seeds
 - 1 teaspoon Garam masala powder
 - 1/2 teaspoon Red chilli powder
 - 1/2 teaspoon Turmeric powder (Haldi)
 - 1 Cinnamon Stick
 - 2 tablespoon Milk
 - 1 tablespoon Ghee
 - Salt, to taste

Method:

We begin the Palak Makhana by washing the spinach thoroughly under running water. Drain the spinach and cook it in a pressure cooker with little bit of turmeric powder, cumin seeds and green chillies for 2 whistle. Once the whistle is done let it cool down till the pressure comes out naturally. Blend it into paste and keep it aside. Roast the makhana with ghee on a flat bottomed non-stick pan. Remove the makhana and in the same pan add little bit of oil and temper the cumin seeds and add the tomatoes. Cook until they loose all the liquids and add all the spice powders. Add little water and simmer it for 2 minutes. Add the blended spinach mixture along with milk and simmer it for 3 minutes again. Finally, add the makhana and bring it to a boil. You can serve your creamy Palak makhana with Ajwain puri or Jeera pulao to make a complete wholesome meal.

Shakti-peeths and their significance



The feminine divinity in Hinduism, Shakti, is considered to be the greatest creative force in the universe. Indians and Hindus across the world celebrate the power of Shakti through a number of festivals. Navratri, Durga Puja, Kali Puja are all such festivals. As the nation celebrates Navratri and Durga Puja this year, we take a look at the most famous Shakti peeths or pilgrim spots in the Indian subcontinent. Yesterday also we let you know about the Shaktipeeths.

Kalighat: Shakti Kalika, Body part–Right Toes
This Hindu temple is in Kolkata, West Bengal. Kalighat is the site where Maa Sati's toes of the right foot had fallen. The goddess resides here as Shakti Kalika.

Kalmadhav: Shakti Kali, Body part–Left Buttock
Left buttock of Goddess Sati fell in Kalmadhav, Amarkantak in Shahdol district of Madhya Pradesh. Devi appears in the form of Shakti Kali.

Kamakhyha: Shakti Kamakhya, Body part–Genitals
One of the fiercest incarnations of Goddess Sati is Maa Kamakhya. Situated in the hills of Neelgiri in Guwahati, Assam, it is one of the most famous Shakti Peeths. The Yoni (genital organ) of Sati had fallen here. During June/July the goddess's menstrual course takes place for three days. The doors of the temples are closed during this period, and Angabastra is used to cover the Yoni-stone of the Devi.

Kankalitala: Shakti Devgarbha, Body part–Pelvis
Located on the bank of Kopai River, in the Birbhum District of West Bengal, this temple is locally known as Kankaleshwari. The Goddess is worshipped here as Devgarbha or Kankaleshwari.

Kanyashram: Shakti Sravani, Body part–Spine
This famous temple is located in Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu. Devi is in the form of Shakti Sravani.

Chamudeswari: Shakti JayaDurga, Body part–Both Ears
In the Chamundi Hills of Mysuru is the Shakti Peeth where both the ears of Sati had fallen. The devi resides here and is worshipped in the form of goddess Jaya Durga.

Kireet: Shakti Vimla, Body part–Crown
Crown of Sati had fallen in Kireet, near Lalbagh court road of Murishabad district in West Bengal. Maa is worshipped here as Goddess Vimla.

Ratnavali: Shakti Kumari, Body part–Right Shoulder
Locally known as the Anandamayee Temple, Kumari Shakti Peeth is situated on the bank of Ratnakar River in Khanakul, West Bengal. Here, right shoulder of goddess Sati had fallen. She is worshipped in the form of Shakti Kumari.

Trisrota: Shakti Bhraaamari, Body part–Left Leg
This Shakti Peeth is on the bank of Teesta River in Jalpaiguri of West Bengal, and is locally known as Bhranari Devi Temple. Sati's left leg had fallen here and she resides in the form of Shakti Bhraamari.

Manasa: Shakti Dakshayani, Body part–Right Hand
This Shakti Peeth is located near the foot of Kailash Mountain in Mansarovar, Tibet, China. It is in the form of a stone slab. The devi is in the form of Shakti Dakshayani. Here, Sati's right hand had fallen.

Manibandhi: Shakti Gayatri, Body part–Wrists
Situated near Pushkar at the Gayatri Hills in Ajmer, Rajasthan, this Shakti Peeth is where two manivediakas or wrists of Sati had fallen. The Goddess is worshipped here as Gayatri.

Mithila: Shakti Uma, Body part–Left shoulder
Near the Janakpur Railway Station on the border of India and Nepal lies Mithila, where the left shoulder of Sati had fallen. Here, Sati is in the form of

Shakti Uma.

Nainativu: Shakti Indrakshi, Body part–Anklets
This Shakti Peeth is in Nainativu, Manipallavam, 26 kms from the ancient capital Jaffna, Nallur in Sri Lanka. The idol of the goddess is believed to made by Lord Indra and was worshipped by both Lord Rama and King Ravan. The anklet of Maa Sati is said to have fallen here.

Guhyeshwari: Shakti- Mahashira, Body Part- Both Knees
Situated near to the Pashupati Nath Temple in Kathmandu, Nepal, this temple is where both the knees of Maa Sati had fallen. She is worshipped here as the Devi Mahashira. King Pratap Mallia built this temple in the 17th century.

Chandranath: Shakti Bhawani, Body part–Right Arm
Situated on the top of Chandranath hills near Sitakunda station, this Peeth is in Chittagong, Bangladesh. Goddess is worshipped as Devi Bhawani here. Sati's right arm had fallen here.

PanchSagar: Shakti Varahi, Body part–Lower Teeth
Located near Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, this Shakti Peeth is dedicated to "Maa Varahi". Devi Sati's lower teeth fell here.

Prabhas: Shakti Chandrabhaga, Body part–Stomach
It is believed that the stomach of goddess Sati fell in Prabhas-Khetra, near Somnath Temple in Gujarat's Junagarh district. Here, the devi is in the form of Chandrabhaga.

Prayag: Shakti Lalita, Body part–Finger
Fingers of both the hands of Goddess Sati fell in this Shakti Peeth. Goddess is worshipped here in the form of Lalita. There are three temples, namely, Akshaywat, Mirapur and Alopi.

Kurukshetra: Shakti Savitri, Body part–Ankle Bone
Maa Sati appeared as Savitri, also known as Bhadra Kali in Thanesar, Kurukshetra, Haryana. The ankle bone of Sati had fallen here.

Maihar: Shakti Shivani, Body part–Right Breast
Maihar is an amalgam of two words; Mai meaning mother and Har meaning necklace. According to the Hindu Mythology, Sati's necklace fell down in this city situated in Satna district of Madhya Pradesh, and hence people started calling it "Maihar". The temple is situated at the Trikoota hill. Devi is worshipped here.

Nandikeshwari: Shakti Nandini, Body part–Necklace
Located in Sainithia town in Birbhum district of West Bengal, this temple is where the necklace of Maa Sati had fallen. This Shakti Peeth is only 1.5 kms from the railway station. Devi is worshipped here Nandini.


Vishweshwari: Shakti Rakini, Body part–Cheeks
This Shakti Peeth is located at Kotilingeswar temple on the banks of Godavari River. Sarvashail is a famous Shakti Peeth where the cheeks of Goddess Sati fell. Maa Sati is worshipped here as Rakini.

Shivaharkaray: Shakti Mahisha-Mardini, Body part–Eyes
This Shakti Peeth is situated near the Parkai Railway Station, near Karachi in Pakistan. Goddess Sati's eyes fell here and she is worshipped as Mahisha-Mardini.

Shondesh: Shakti Narmada, Body part–Right Buttock
At the source point of Narmada River, at Shondesh in Amarkantak of Madhya Pradesh fell the right buttock of Goddess Sati. Here, the devi is in the form of Narmada.

Sri Sailam: Shakti Sundari, Body part–Right Anklet
Located in Tripurantakam, Sri-Sailam in Andhra Pradesh, this Shakti Peeth is where the right anklet of Maa Sati fell. The goddess is worshipped here in the form of Sundari and Srisundari.

ARIES



MAR 21 - APR 20

A number of invitations to social events could come your way today, some from people you really don't know well. Don't pass them up, however. You could make some fortunate contacts or even some new friends at these parties. You enjoy being around people, Aries, but today you might find it a bit tedious. Your heart is with your family.


LIBRA



SEP 24 - OCT 22

You, along with a significant other in your life, could be very busy trying to make time to see each other today, Libra. Later, when you're finally alone, your phone could be ringing nonstop, further intruding upon your time together. Don't be afraid to turn it off! If a call is particularly important, they'll call again later.


TAURUS



APR 21 - MAY 20

Visitors could come to your home tonight, Taurus, possibly for an informal get-together of some kind. Dear friends might be involved in some way. You're likely to be very busy during the day, perhaps tying up loose ends. Your mind is probably going a thousand miles an hour, so you'll need to wind down before going to bed tonight. You don't want to lose any sleep.

SCORPIO



OCT 23 - NOV 22

Today you could be faced with a bunch of people from out of town that you've never met before. You're likely to find this exciting and stimulating, but you could also feel a bit flustered. You might also not be at your most outgoing right now. This could be a better day to listen than to try to talk. Sometimes that impresses people more than anything you might say, Scorpio.


GEMINI



MAY 21 - JUN 20

You may appear to have your head in the clouds today, Gemini. The truth is, you've got a lot of important things on your mind. Others might be offended or even amused at your distance. Try not to worry about this too much. You need to take care of resolving those problems you've been ruminating on before worrying about everyone else's reaction.


SAGITTARIUS



NOV 23 - DEC 22

Information received today excites your imagination and encourages you to start a new artistic or creative project. Sagittarius. Stories, pictures, abstract concepts - all could come together in your mind and form an inspired idea that could change your life. Gird your loins, write down your thoughts, and see where it all takes you. You might be surprised by what you produce!

CANCER



JUN 22 - JUL 23

You might feel that money is flowing out of your bank account all too quickly lately, and this might be a cause of worry for you. You could feel you've spent too much on decorations for your home or on entertaining family and friends. Don't worry! You'll make up for it, and besides, you can't take it with you, you know. Watch your spending, Cancer, but don't turn into a miser.

PISCES



DEC 23 - JAN 20

It may not be easy for you to convince someone today. No matter how profound your idea or how convincing your explanations, the other person just isn't ready to believe it yet. Don't be pushy. Maybe this person needs to sleep on it for a couple of nights, or maybe they just need to do their own research.


LEO



JUL 24 - AUG 23

This will be a good day for you, Leo. You should be feeling happy, excited, enthusiastic, and optimistic about the future. Relations with family, friends, and neighbors are likely to be warm and congenial. Today could involve a lot of time on the phone or out running errands. Expect a surprise encounter with someone you haven't seen in a long time.


AQUARIUS



JAN 21 - FEB 23

A trip by air could be very much on your mind today. Perhaps you're planning a vacation with your family or a romantic partner. You could well be caught up in the excitement that seems to be the driving emotion today. Friends could offer advice. Aquarius, but you aren't in the space to accept it, as your self-confidence is high. Expect to spend the evening in the congenial company of friends.


VIRGO



AUG 24 - SEP 23

A rush of humanitarian spirit and a desire to do some real good might find you looking into various charities in order to find those you might want to help. However, money could be flowing out for other purposes a bit too quickly for your tastes. Virgo, it perhaps would be best to find one group that suits you and give only to that one.

PISCES



FEB 20 - MAR 20

You've got a lot on your mind right now, Pisces, and others might be interpreting your quiet behavior as your being aloof. Go right ahead and let them think whatever they want. You've got some real issues to think through, and decisions with important consequences to come up with. You'll be able to smooth their ruffled feathers later. Right now, just focus on taking care of yourself.

