

Goddess Durga Slaying the Demon Buffalo Mahisha

India / South Asia Collection

Accession Nr.:	50.127.1 
Type:	statuette
Date of production:	18th - 19th century
Place of production:	India
Materials:	bronze; silver
Dimensions:	height: 37.5 cm width: 37.5 cm
Acquisition:	donation of Imre Schwaiger

Elaborately detailed, dynamic statuette. The sculpture represents the myth in which the goddess Durga slays the demon buffalo Mahishasura, thus symbolizing the victory of good over evil. Durga is the fearful / punishing aspect of Siva's wife, Parvati.

Beside the central figures, the goddess and the demon, Durga's children are portrayed: on her left is the elephant-headed Ganesha, while on her right Kartikeya, the god of war. In the background two goddesses, Lakshmi and Sarasvati are visible.

According to the myth, the demons (asuras) attacked the gods under the leadership of the Buffalo demon, Mahishasura. Indra led the gods, but Mahishasura had received a boon that no man can destroy him so the gods could not defeat him. The gods withdrew and synthesized their powers so a new goddess, Durga was born who manifested the gods' coalesced power. It was only her who could defeat Mahishasura thus save the world from the fearful demon.

One of the most important Hindu festivals, the ten-day long Navaratri, held in September or October, celebrates this victory.

The sculpture shows the characteristic iconography of the great rite of the goddess, the Durgapuja. Contrary to the usual material at these occasions, clay, this statue is made of permanent material, bronze and silver.

