

## Durga: Avenging Goddess, Nurturing Mother Norton Simon Museum



by Annie Buckley

**T**he Durga Puja, a ten-day celebration in honor of the Hindu goddess, is traditionally celebrated in autumn. This fall, the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena has a celebration as well. *Durga: Avenging Goddess, Nurturing Mother* is a lovely and informative exhibition of approximately seventy works of art from India, Nepal, Tibet and Southeast Asia. The sculptures, carvings, paintings, and photographs on display date from the second century BC through the present and depict the goddess in her dual forms as mother and as warrior.

The earliest images in the exhibition are stone and terracotta sculptures of the goddess in the form of universal mother from the first through fifth centuries BC. "Serpent Goddess (Nagina)" is a sandstone sculpture from the first century BC in which the beautiful face is worn away, while elaborate jewelry and anklets remain in place. The rounded stomach and graceful ankles have a surprisingly fluid quality. A more contemporary sensibility is present in "Durga and Shiva," a watercolor from the nineteenth century in India, Calcutta, that uses shape and line to communicate the figures' power. The red matte rectangle of Durga's body is surrounded by the swirling gray lines of her arms, and is contrasted by the dark form of her husband, the god Shiva. They are linked in an intimate gaze.

*Durga: Avenging Goddess, Nurturing Mother*, both educational and a joy to see, is well worth the trip to Pasadena. But be sure to leave time to relax in the museum's outdoor patio where the sunlit pond and garden provide a perfect complement to this exhibition. For more information about this exhibit, visit the museum's website at [www.nortonsimon.org](http://www.nortonsimon.org).