

# Traits of Transformational Leader: *Durga Saptshati*- A Case Study

Surya Rashmi Rawat

Symbiosis Law School, Pune, Symbiosis International University

## **Abstract**

*Leadership is the ability of an individual to influence people to achieve desired goals. Different studies in this area have propounded various theories ranging from Trait theory of leadership to behavioral approach models to contingency models. Earlier people were of the opinion that individuals are born with leadership traits, either they are born leaders or are not. Then came a phase when people realized that these traits can be acquired too. But all these studies could not come up with any conclusive list of leadership traits. Various successful leaders may have similar traits but we are yet to come across the set of traits that every leader must possess. In nut shell we may say that, “which traits to acquire”, which specific traits make you a leader is still a question?*

*Now a day's increasingly, scholars are talking about transformational leadership as a tool to get better results in the organization. Transformational leaders influence the employee job satisfaction & morale in a positive manner.*

*Responding to this requirement of industry, in this paper the researcher has made an attempt to identify the traits which a transformational leader must possess.*

*The study is based on a descriptive analysis of Durga Saptashati - a Hindu religious text.*

*The study arrived at a conclusive summary of the traits of a transformational leader. Study revealed that the transformational leader has to be perceived as a mn with solutions rather than the man with problems.*

## **Introduction**

Transformational leadership can inspire positive changes amongst the followers. These leaders are generally full of energy, enthusiasm, passion and are keenly interested in the welfare of every single individual in the group to generate better performance. Transformational leaders are so well accepted by the organization that they (followers) literally worship their leader.

*Durga Saptashati* is a Hindu religious text. It describes Goddess *Durga's* victory over *Mahishasura* in 700 verses and thus gets its name *Saptashati*, meaning seven hundred. The author has tried to pick up the traits of transformational leaders from this great Hindu religious text.

## **Durga Saptshati -An Overview**

The classic is subdivided into 13 chapters and is considered auspicious when read during *Navratri* celebrations. It starts with the conquest of *Madhukaitabha* (*Madhukaitabha samhaara*) in the first Chapter and then progresses from chapter two to ten with a picturesque description of conquest of Ma *Durga* over *Mahishhasura*, *Dhummralochana*, *Chanda Mundavadha*, *Raktabijja* and *Shumbha Nishumbha*.

Rishi Markandeya has covered special prayers of *Mahamai Jagdambike* & *Phalastuti* in the chapter 11 & 12 respectively. Chapter 13 is about pronouncement of the Blessings to *Suratha* and *Merchant* the two lead characters around whom the story pivots.

The study in hand is restricted to chapter V of the great Hindu Classic. In this chapter *Rishi Markandeya* has cited the prayers enchanted by Gods for invoking *Ma Durga* to save them from the cruel hands of *Shumbha Nishumbha* the demons, who had dethroned *Devraj Indra* and forced Gods to quit heaven, the real home of Gods, and live like humans on the earth.

### Literature Review

According to Rawat (2015), Leadership is a process of finding the best fit between personality, age, experience and attitude of the leader and follower. Transformational leadership is a special kind of leadership which fuels positive changes in the organization. Transformational leaders are full of vigor, passion and zest for achieving the best. Their concern for every single individual generates better performance.

According to James MacGregor Burns (1978) it is a process where “Leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation”. The transforming tactics employed by such leaders restructure the attitude, thinking and approach of the followers finally changing the organizational culture. Such leaders have a positive impact over Employee morale and motivation. Author observed that various factors affect transformational leadership. These may be categorized as traits of leaders, followers & that of organization and the leader follower relationship. According to the study women leaders are more effective in the implementation of transformational leadership.

Chaoping Li et.al. (2015) observed that moral modelling and individualized consideration leads to employee creativity; and transformational leadership leads to psychological safety climate. But interestingly psychological safety climate seems to have no connection with employee creativity. Chinese employees generally expect their leaders to give them defined structure and instructions. This may be the reason for employee

creativity there. For them a transformational leader is a source of information for generating new ideas and means of coordination for dissemination of new creation.

Transformational leadership helps to establish emotional bonding with the followers and is very encouraging. It encourages innovation and builds an environment of sharing leading to best outcomes. Transformational leaders are known for their charisma, potential to inspire and encourage intellectual stimulation (Bass, 1999); Bass and Avolio, 2000; Conger, 1999). Charisma encourages followers to have faith and pride over their leaders and organization. Transformational leaders inspire their followers through communication of high expectations and promoting intellectual stimulation.

Shanker and Sayeed, (2012) established a clear relationship between transformational leadership styles and healthy organizational climate. Redefining Transformational Leadership, Sayeed & Shanker (2009) identified Resolute and Empowering Style, Nurturing Task-focused Style, Visionary Style, Futuristic Style, Unconventional and Innovative Style, and Achievement Focused Style as its six main components.

Leaders with superior skills in vision creation, articulation and communication are more instrumental in transforming their employees and organisation in the most effective manner (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Nanus, 1992). According to Dubinsky et al.(1995) many traits of effective leaders resemble that of transformational leader. Some of these include emotion handling, behaviour handling, intellectual positioning, openness to risk & novelty, sense of humour and experience.

Bass (1990) mentioned that a transformational leader must possess emotional as well as social intelligence to encourage employees and build up a cordial work environment with healthy employee-employer relationship.

According to Avolio & Bass (1997), transformational leaders become more behavioural and less emotional while dealing with stress and conflict. They own the responsibility for success as well as the failures they come across and are self-confident. They are very much receptive to changes and possess clear vision and mission. Priyabhashini and Krishnan (2005) observed that transformational leaders impart perfect clarity of vision, mission, role and position to their followers thus inspiring them to achieve more efficiently. It facilitates career planning of the employees.

### 3. Research Objective

The objective behind this study was to revisit *Durga Saptshati* and find out:

- The traits of transformational leaders who transform the culture of organization & also that of people for the benefit of origination
- The environmental factors that influence the process of transformational leadership

### 4. Research Methodology

The research in hand is based on secondary information primarily drawn from *Durga Saptashati*- a Hindu religious text. In addition to this some journals & books have also been referred to understand the concept of leadership & transformational leadership.

### 5. Findings and Discussion

Success of leadership depends upon the acceptance of leader, having faith on him and his abilities to sail the followers out of worst of every situation, to guarantee returns in the most efficient & effective manner.

#### 5.1 Traits of Transformational Leader as understood from *Durga Saptshati*

Let's now go through chapter V of *Durga Saptshati* for analysis and interpretation of traits of a

transformational leader who is accepted whole heartedly and is worshipped day & night by the followers.

This chapter has 129 verses in total, of which verses 8 to 82 are devoted to prayers & praises of Thee Almighty. Through these verses Gods have explained the traits of Goddess Durga who established eternal peace by conquering the demon King Mahishasura. In this section the author has quoted some of the *shlokas* from Holy *Durga Saptshati* & side by side tried to analyze & interpret it.

दुर्गायै दुर्गपारायै सारायै सर्वकारिण्यै ।  
ख्यात्यै तथैव कृष्णायै धूम्रायै सततं नमः ॥ १२ ॥

A leader must be knowledgeable and bear foresight to plan strategies for future and help his followers to overcome all odds. With perfect knowledge of the organization a leader will be able to perform managerial functions of the organization including planning, organizing, staffing, directing & controlling. He would easily be able to find answers to “what, when, where, who and how”, of a job.

अतिसौम्यातिरौद्रायै नतास्तस्यै नमो नमः ।  
नमो जगत्प्रतिष्ठायै देव्यै कृत्यै नमो नमः ॥ १३ ॥

Coconut fruit perfectly describes the personality of a Leader. Like the kernel of coconut, he must bear a gentle heart and should appear tuff from outside, again like the shell of a coconut. He must exercise both democratic as well as autocratic style of leadership according to the contingencies. As we are aware, that the choice of leadership style does not depend upon the personality of leader, but upon the personality of the followers. So the leader must know how and when to exercise both the styles.

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु बुद्धिरूपेण संस्थिता ।  
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥ २०-२२ ॥

He should be intelligent and govern & direct his people the way the polestar does to the ships amidst the uncharted waters of deep sea. He should be so clear with the facts and figures that the followers trust him. For them his decisions should be their decisions.

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु निद्रारूपेण संस्थिता ।  
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥ २३-२५ ॥

A leader must relax and also let others relax so as to ensure that his followers are physically and mentally fresh & healthy. They are stress free. The stress free work environment & mind of the people allows them to perform their task in more effective & efficient manner and offers them better job satisfaction. This higher degree of job satisfaction leads to job involvement & hence the better productivity of the organization.

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु क्षुधारूपेण संस्थिता ।  
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥ २६-२८ ॥

Leader must ensure that his people are well fed i.e., they are given sufficient pay package and incentives to ensure that their demands are fulfilled. This primarily talks about the working environment also. Their needs and demands with respect to self, spouse and children must be taken care of fully.

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु छाया रूपेण संस्थिता ।  
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥ २९-३१ ॥

Like a shadow a leader must be there with his people always i.e., he should be approachable to them 24 by 7, so that people have a faith that here is

someone who would stand by us during odds and admire us for good things. This faith will encourage people to explore new opportunities without any fear as for such leaders every failure is a learning experience and not an opportunity for punishing the doer. The creativity when regarded like this leads to innovations in the organization, and when these innovations come from the followers, the implementation of change also become easy.

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु शक्तिरूपेण संस्थिता ।  
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥ ३२-३४ ॥

The leaders must be bestowed with authority. People should see him as a person with power; mere responsibility on the leaders would make implementation of task difficult. Lack of power will adversely affect the acceptance of leader as followers would know that this man has nothing to offer to us, neither a reward nor a punishment.

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु तृष्णारूपेण संस्थिता ।  
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥ ३५-३७ ॥

Leader must have strong passion for brilliance. He should not get satisfied by his petty gains. His quest for excellence should keep driving him for betterment every day. He should compete with none else but himself and his best.

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु क्षान्तिरूपेण संस्थिता ।  
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥ ३८-४० ॥

The leader must have patience. He must be a good listener too. He should listen to the problems and grievances of people and resolve them amicably rather than out rightly rejecting them. In the event of organization meeting with any uncalled for, the leader must keep his cool and then try to handle the



situation.

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु जातिरूपेण संस्थिता ।  
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥ ४१-४३ ॥

The leader must be accessible to all irrespective of status & class of employees. In an organization, too much of stratification & rigidity with respect to channel of communication restricts the free flow of information and causes delays.

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु लज्जारूपेण संस्थिता ।  
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥ ४४-४६ ॥

The leader must be a man with conscience who should think twice before hurting someone. He must introspect himself and must be ashamed of any wrong done by him if ever. This feeling of shame or guilt will guide him to correct his mistakes. Ignoring mistakes committed by self, increases the tendency of repeating it rather than correcting it.

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु शान्तिरूपेण संस्थिता ।  
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥ ४७-४९ ॥

The leader must be a man who loves peace, who is always calm & composed. He must create a cordial environment at the work place so as to allow his employees to give their best in a harmonious manner.

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु श्रद्धारूपेण संस्थिता ।  
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥ ५०-५२ ॥

If a leader wants his leadership to be accepted, then he must ensure that his acts generate faith & trust among the followers. It is possible only when he leads his team by examples.

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु कान्तिरूपेण संस्थिता ।  
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥ ५३-५५ ॥

A leader must be perceived by his followers as an intelligent person. His intelligence as reflected through his decisions will generate trust & confidence over his leadership in the eyes of his followers.

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु लक्ष्मीरूपेण संस्थिता ।  
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥ ५६-५८ ॥

His followers must perceive him as a wealthy man with respect to health, wealth & intelligence. This perception will generate a faith in them that at the time of need they have someone whom they can bank upon. It will strengthen their faith and support towards him.

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु वृत्तिरूपेण संस्थिता ।  
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥ ५९-६१ ॥

A leader must have an un-satiated hunger for excellence, he must always keep striving for better & better every day. He must compare his performance with his own performance of the previous day. He must target his next day's goals based on his existing strengths & weakness and must position them against the opportunities & threats of the external environment.

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु स्मृतिरूपेण संस्थिता ।  
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥ ६२-६४ ॥

Leader must have sharp memory. He must keep an account of the good and bad things happening in the organization. Where on one side he must take corrective measures for every failure of his

employees at the same time he should also not ignore their good deeds. More than the bad deeds he must not forget to acknowledge and appreciate the good deeds of his followers.

**या देवी सर्वभूतेषु दयारूपेण संस्थिता ।  
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥ ६५-६७ ॥**

He must have compassion for others. He must realize the pains of others and should always be keen to help them out. He must treat the concerns and sufferings of his followers as his own sufferings and must try to resolve them as soon as possible. Since happy followers will help him achieve organization's target in the most effective & efficient manner.

**या देवी सर्वभूतेषु तुष्टिरूपेण संस्थिता ।  
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥ ६८-७० ॥**

Where on one side he must have a quest for excellence, on the other side he must be contented with whatever returns he gets out of his endeavors. It will help him improve day by day and at the same time will keep him away from adopting the unfair means to reach his goals. With such attitude the success won't intoxicate him and failures won't deter him.

**या देवी सर्वभूतेषु मातृरूपेण संस्थिता ।  
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥ ७१-७३ ॥**

A leader must be like a parent to his followers, who unconditionally take care of his children. He must save them from all sorts of external assailants and at same time should not spare them if they are wrong. One must note here that these corrective actions must be tried in person & not in public.

**या देवी सर्वभूतेषु भ्रान्तिरूपेण संस्थिता ।  
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥ ७४-७६ ॥**

The leader must always support truth, but that doesn't mean that he must not speak lies, even if the Truth is in danger! In the bid to protect innocents, in the drive to save truth, he should not desist from telling lies too. He must keep in his mind that the satisfied employees are the key to prosperous organization i.e., people & organization complement each other, no one can survive without each other. So one must value the human resources!

**इन्द्रियाणामधिष्ठात्री भूतानां चाखिलेषु या ।  
भूतेषु सततं तस्यै व्यास्यै देव्यै नमो नमः ॥ ७७ ॥**

He must be alert always. He must make use of all his five senses together rather than being governed by one of these. In the sense he should not simply trust whatever appears correct rather should try to find out what is actually correct. A leader who arrives at conclusions without employing all his five senses has every possibility of making wrong decisions.

**चित्तिरूपेण या कृत्स्नमेतद् व्याप्य स्थिता जगत् ।  
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥ ७८-८० ॥**

The leader must be aware & well informed of his job & the day today changes happening in the internal & external environment of the business. This awareness must be used to respond aptly to the changes happening in and around as we cannot ignore the fact that these changes in the environment strongly influence the business. For example one cannot dare to ignore the moves of competitors & consumers.

**स्तुता सुरैः पूर्वमभीष्टसंश्रया-  
त्तथा सुरेन्द्रेण दिनेषु सेविता ।  
करोतु सा नः शुभहेतुरीश्वरी  
शुभानि भद्राण्यभिहन्तु चापदः ॥ ८१ ॥**

Leader should always be looked upon as someone who can drive the team towards organizational objectives. Followers must love him, respect him and should follow his orders not because they are scared of him but because they respect & trust him. They must perceive him as someone who has remedy to all their worries & problems.

या साम्प्रतं चोद्धतदैत्यतापितै-  
रस्माभिरीशा च सुरैर्नमस्यते ।  
या च स्मृता तत्क्षणमेव हन्ति नः  
सर्वापदो भक्तिविनम्रमूर्तिभिः ॥ ८२ ॥

The faith of followers on leaders should be the same as the children have over their parents. “My Daddy Strongest- he can protect me from all evils!”- To generate this kind of a faith, the leader must lead by examples; he should be intelligent, have knowledge of subject and must strive to find solution to every problem.

Further, the leadership lessons that can be learnt from closing verses of *Durga Shaptsati* are:

“Leader should not be mean, he must be generous i.e., should ignore petty mistakes of followers. He should concentrate more on what the person did than on what he did not do. An act of omission or commission against what is expected must be ignored once or twice, assuming that to be an accident but at the same time constant vigil must be kept. Frequent repetition of mistakes thereafter must be taken seriously and necessary steps must be taken to counsel & correction.”

Further,  
“He should focus on solving problems than merely finding, highlighting & creating problems. Where ever he sees a gap, he should at once repair it rather than aid to widen it. A leader should be known as the man with solutions rather than the man with problems.

A leader who is seen as a destroyer of all miseries, a

source of ecstasy, a dispenser of knowledge and dedication can best be accepted as the transformational leader.”

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

On the basis of above discussion we may conclude that to make transformational leadership a possibility we must have leaders with specific traits the list of which has been given hereunder. The study of *Durga Shaptsati* also concluded that the work environment must also be harmonious. The fact that the followers or the employees must hold a positive perception of their leader was also brought to the sight. Let us now summarize all these aspects one by one.

### 6.1 Personal traits

The analysis & interpretation of *Durga Saptshati* revealed that a leader must possess a set of inherent traits and present him in the manner as described here under.

A leader must be an intelligent & knowledgeable person with perfect clarity of subject in hand. He should be approachable, a good listener, patient, calm & composed, alert, generous and a man with conscience. He must bear a gentle heart and should appear tuff from outside. He must show extraordinary courage in decision making with the proper use of five senses, foresight and due compassion for others.

His success will depend upon the amount of authority entrusted upon him.

### 6.2 Behavior of the leader

Success of leadership depends upon the acceptance of individual by the followers and it is possible only if people have faith on him & his potential. Merely by virtue of possessing the above characteristics a leader may not be able to generate faith amongst its people.

He thus must introspect himself & his organization, compare his performance with his own earlier performances and accordingly apply his strengths & weakness for the well-being of the organization. He must have an un-satiated hunger for excellence. He must make a due notice & acknowledgement of the work of his followers.

He must find time for himself & relax as his fresh physical & mental state will keep him stress free & will motivate him to create a harmonious & peace full environment at the work place. He must support truth in an unbiased manner. He must lead by examples and value the human resources at work place.

**6.3 Work Place**

He must ensure that the work place is stress free and has a cordial environment which allows his employees to give their best. He must offer sufficient pay package and incentives to his employees. Grievances if any must be nipped amicably at the bud state itself. Ignoring grievances might turn them to big insurmountable problems affecting the organization adversely.

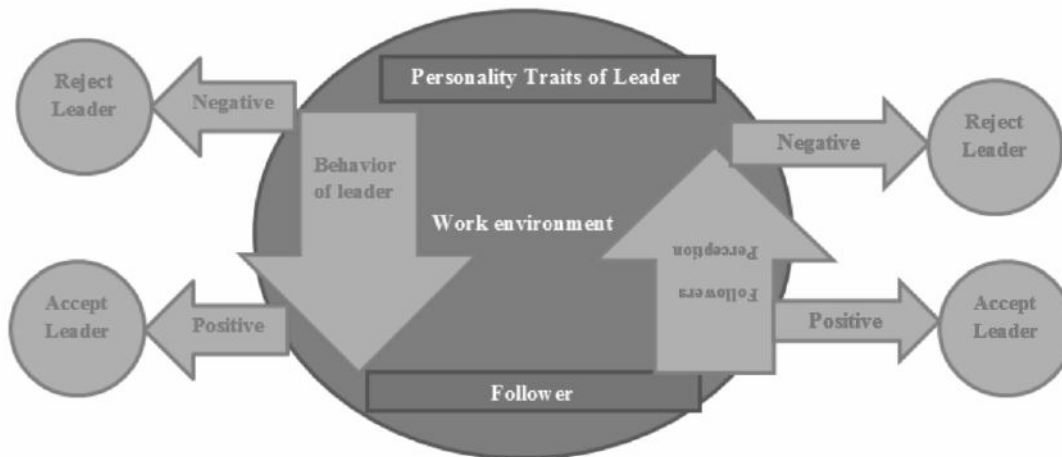
Too much of stratification is not a welcome thing as it may simply cause loss of information and delays

due to ambiguity. Informal channel of communication must be allowed as it fastens the process; helps generate faith & trust of the followers on the leader as both parties know each other well.

**6.4 Perception of followers**

The success of leadership does not depend upon the leadership traits alone, in fact it depends more upon how your people perceive you. A leader may be an intelligent person but if followers don't perceive him intelligent, they are not going to trust him. They must consider the leader wealthy & rich with respect to health, wealth & intelligence. The physical & mental fitness will add the trust quotient of the followers over him. Sound capital backup of the leader offers financial security of the employees and thus the faith is obvious. With all these expectations once met, they love, respect and follow his orders happily without questioning the authority.

A leader who is seen as a person who destroys all miseries, a source of ecstasy, a dispenser of knowledge and dedication can best be accepted as the transformational leader. And only such leaders can govern & motivate people to achieve organization's objective in most effective and efficient manner.



**Fig 1: Acceptance & rejection of Transformational Leadership**



## References

- Avolio, B. J., & Bass, B. M. (1997). *The full range of leadership development: Manual*. Redwood City, CA: Mind Garden.
- Bass, B. M. (1990). From transactional to transformational leadership: Learning to share the vision. *Organizational Dynamics*, 18, 19-31.
- Bass, B.M. (1999). Two decades of research and development in transformational leadership. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 8(1), 9-32.
- Bass, B. M. and Avolio, B. J. (2000). *MLQ Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire*. Redwood City: Mind Garden.
- Bennis, W. and B. Nanus (1985). *Leaders; the Strategies for Taking Charge*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Nanus, B. (1992). *Visionary leadership: Creating a compelling sense of direction for your organization*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Dubinsky, A.J., Yammarino, F.J., and Jolson, M.A. (1995). An Examination of Linkages between Personal Characteristics and Dimensions of Transformational Leadership. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 9(3), 315-335.
- Priyabhashini, A., and Krishnan, V. (2005). Transformational Leadership and Follower's Career Advancement: Role of Pygmalion Effect. *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, 40(4), 482-499.
- Li, C, Zhao, H., and Begley, T.M. (2015). Transformational leadership dimensions and employee creativity in China: A cross-level analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, 68 (2015) 1149–1156
- Conger, J. A.(1999). Charismatic and transformational leadership in organizations: an insider's perspective on these developing streams of research. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 10(2), 145–179.
- Shanker, M. and Sayeed, O.B. (2012). Role of Transformational Leaders as Change Agents: Leveraging Effects on Organizational Climate. *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, 47(3), 470-484
- Rawat, S. R. (2015). Impact of Transformational Leadership over Employee Morale and Motivation. *Indian Journal of Science and Technology*, 8(S6), 25-34.
- Sayeed, O.B & Shanker, M. (2009). Emotionally Intelligent Managers and Transformational Leadership. *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, 44 (4).
- Note: In this paper, author has referred Durga Saptashati- a Hindu Religious Vedic Mahagrath printed by Gita Press, Gorakhpur.*