

Navratri - The 9 Divine Nights



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Nava – that also means 'new' – denotes 'nine' the number to which sages attach special significance. Hence, we have Nava-ratri (9 nights), Nava-patrika (9 leaves / herbs / plants), Nava-graha (9 planets), and Nava-Durga (9 appellations).

Here're the 9 manifestations of Goddess Durga. Each goddess has a different form and a special significance. Nava Durga, if worshipped with religious fervor, it is believed, lift the divine spirit in us and fill us with renewed happiness.

What's the Significance of Navratri?

During Navaratri, we invoke the energy aspect of God in the form of the universal mother, commonly referred to as "Durga," which literally means the remover of miseries of life. She is also referred to as "Devi" (goddess) or "Shakti" (energy or power). It is this energy, which helps God to proceed with the work of creation, preservation and destruction. In other words, you can say that God is motionless, absolutely changeless, and the Divine Mother Durga, does everything. Truly speaking, our worship of Shakti re-confirms the scientific theory that energy is imperishable. It cannot be created or destroyed. It is always there.

Why Worship the Mother Goddess?

This energy is a form of the Divine Mother, who is the mother of all, and all of us are her children. "Why mother; why not father?", you may ask. Let me just say that we believe that God's glory, his cosmic energy, his greatness and supremacy can best be depicted as the motherhood aspect of God. Just as a child finds all these qualities in his or her mother, similarly, all of us look upon God as mother. In fact, Hinduism is the only religion in the world, which gives so much importance to the mother aspect of God because we believe that mother is the creative aspect of the absolute.

Why Twice a Year?

Every year the beginning of summer and the beginning of winter are two very important junctures of climatic change and solar influence. These two junctions have been chosen as the sacred opportunities for the worship of the divine power because:

- (1) We believe that it is the divine power that provides energy for the earth to move around the sun, causing the changes in the outer nature and that this divine power must be thanked for maintaining the correct balance of the universe.
- (2) Due to the changes in the nature, the bodies and minds of people undergo a considerable change, and hence, we worship the divine power to bestow upon all of us enough potent powers to maintain our physical and mental balance.

Why Nine Nights & Days?

Navaratri is divided into sets of three days to adore different aspects of the supreme goddess. On the first three days, the Mother is invoked as powerful force called Durga in order to destroy all our impurities, vices and defects. The next three days, the Mother is adored as a giver of spiritual wealth, Lakshmi, who is considered to have the power of bestowing on her devotees the inexhaustible wealth. The final set of three days is spent in worshipping the mother as the goddess of wisdom, Saraswati. In order have all-round success in life, we need the blessings of all three aspects of the divine mother; hence, the worship for nine nights.

The Nava Durgas



SHAILAPUTRI

The embodiment of the power of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, she rides a bull and carries a trident and a lotus in her two hands.

BRAHMACHARINI

She is the one who practices devout austerity. Filled with bliss and happiness, she is the way to emancipation - Moksha.

CHANDRAGHANTA

She is the apostle of bravery; she rides a lion, and has ten arms. She drives away all evildoers and demoniac incarnation.

KUSUMANDA

Seated on a lion, she has a magnanimous presence, and possesses eight arms. Her abode is the Solar region.

SKANDAMATA

She is the Goddess of Fire. She has four arms and three eyes. She rides a lion.

KATYAYANI

The chosen goddess of Vrindavan, she is alluring in her golden form. She has four arms and three eyes, she is seated on a lion.

KAALRATRI

This four-armed form rides an ass. She dissipates darkness from amidst her devotees, and bestows freedom from fear and adversity.

MAHA GAURI

She is like an eight-year-old girl. She is intelligent and peaceful, possesses three eyes and four arms, and uses the bull as her vehicle.

SIDDHIDATRI

The bestower of accomplishments, this manifestation is worshipped as one blessed with glory. Seated on a lotus, she has four arms.

Durga Puja

To gain the grace of Mother Divine and receive Her blessings to remove ignorance, provide protection from adversity and eliminate suffering on an individual and cosmic level. Durga Pujas can be of various lengths, from two hours to six hours or more, and may be performed on a single day, or on consecutive days. The recitation of selections from the Durga Saptashati, a collection of beautiful hymns to Mother Divine, is an especially enjoyable part of this Puja.

Chandi Homa

This is a more elaborate Yajna that is understood to have powerful effects on the cosmic, global and individual levels. It is traditionally performed to alleviate the adverse affects of the planets, liberate man from all troubles, restore friendships, gain blessings of wealth and beautiful children, and to overcome enemies and evil planetary influences. Performance of the Chandi Homa includes Puja two to three hours long and a Homa (fire ceremony) that lasts approximately four hours. It includes the recitation of all 700 verses of Durga Saptashati, a collection of beautiful hymns to Mother Divine.

How to fast for Navaratri?

Strict fast is observed in Navaratri only Fruit and Liquids are allowed. No Grain or Flour is allowed. One meal should be taken.

If for health reasons you are unable to fast in the above manner than you can have one meal but try to avoid grains.

Puja

1. Commence worship and fast on the first day of Navaratri (morning and evening).
2. An Akanda deep should be kepted burning all the time throught the whole Navaratri.
3. Puja should be done as follows.

Recite the following mantra:

Aum Namo Bhagvaty Maha Durgaye Namha.

(Puja to be done on a mutie or in front of a picture of Mother Durga.

1. Offer water thrice.
2. Offer pancha Amrit six times
3. Offer water twice
4. Cleanse murtie or sprinkle water on the picture
5. Offer Kum Kum (red) rice and Flowers Agarbatti Prasad (Fruit) all should be done reciting the following mantra.
6. Conduct Aarti using wicks dipped in Ghee

Jap Mantra

AUM AIM HRING KLEENG CHAMUNDAYE VICHHEY

This mantra should be recited 108 time to gain the greatest Benefit from the Fast.

Mantra to offer Dhaar

***Aun Jayanti Mangala Kali Badra Kali Kapalini Durga
Kshana Shiva Dhatri Swaha Swadha Namostute***

On the tenth day Vijay Dhashmi/ Day of Victory Visarjan to mother Durga is done and the fast is complete and salt can be eaten.

The above fast is based on the scriptures and should be followed according to your means and capabilities.

Durga Chalisa

Namo Namo Durge Sukh karani,
Namo Namo ambe Dukh harani.

Nirakar hai jyoti tumhari,
Tihun lok pheli ujayari.

Shashi lalat mukh mahavishala,
Netra lal bhrikutee vikarala.

Roop Matu ko adhika suhave,
Daras karat jan ati sukh pave.

Tum sansar shakti laya kina,
Palan hetu anna dhan dina.

Annapurna hui jag pala,
Tumhi adi sundari Bala.

Pralaya kala sab nashan hari,
Tum gauri Shiv-Shankar pyari.

Shiv yogi tumhre guna gaven,
Brahma Vishnu tumhen nit
dhyaven.

Roop Saraswati ko tum dhara,
De subuddhi rishi munina ubara.

Dharyo roop Narsimha ko amba,
Pragat bhayin phar kar khamba.

Raksha kari Prahlad bachayo,
Hiranyakush ko swarga pathayo.

Lakshmi roop dharo jag mahin,
Shree Narayan anga samihahin.

Ksheer sindhu men karat vilasa,
Daya Sindhu, deeje man asa.

Hingalaja men tumhin Bhavani,
Mahima amit na jet bakhani.

Matangi Dhoomavati Mata,
Bhuvneshwari bagala sukhdatta.

Shree Bhairav lara jog tarani,
Chhinna Bhala bhav dukh nivarani.

Kehari Vahan soh Bhavani,
Langur Veer Chalat agavani.

Kar men khappar khadag viraje,
Jako dekh kal dan bhaje.

Sohe astra aur trishoola,
Jase uthata shatru hiya shoola.

Nagarkot men tumhi virajat,
Tihun lok men danka bajat.

Shumbhu Nishumbhu Danuja tum



mare, Rakta-beeja shankhan
samhare.

Mahishasur nripa ati abhimani,
Jehi agha bhar mahi akulani.

Roop karal Kalika dhara,
Sen Sahita tum tin samhara.

Pan garha Santan par jab jab,
Bhayi sahaya Matu tum tab tab.

Amarpuni aru basava loka,
Tava Mahirna sab rahen asoka.

Jwala men hai jyoti tumhari,
Tumhen sada poojen nar nari.

Prem bhakti se Jo yash gave,
Dukh-daridra nikat nahin ave.

Dhyave tumhen jo nar man laee,
Janam-maran tako chuti jae.

Jogi sur-muni kahat pukari,
Jog na ho bin shakti tumhari.

Shankar Aacharaj tap keenhon,
Kam, krodha jeet sab leenhon.

Nisidin dhyan dharo Shankar ko,
Kahu kal nahini sumiro tum ko.

Shakti roop ko maran na payo,
Shakti gayi tab man pachitayo.

Sharnagat hui keerti bakhani,
Jai jai Jagdamb Bhavani.

Bhayi prasanna Aadi Jagdamba,
Dayi shakti nahin keen vilamba.

Mokon Matu kashta ati ghero,
Tum bin kaun hare dukh mero.

Aasha trishna nipat sataven,
Moh madadik sab binsaven.

Shatru nash keeje Maharani,
Sumiron ekachita tumhen Bhavani.

Karo kripa Hey Matu dayala,
Riddhi-Siddhi de karahu nihala.

Jab lagi jiyoon daya phal paoon,
Tumhro yash men sada sunaoon.

Durga Chalisa jo gave,
Sab sukh bhog parampad pave.

Dev das shran nije jane karhoo
kripa jadamba bvani

Translation of Durga Chalisa

I bow to You O Goddess Durga, the bestower of happiness!
I bow to You O Goddess Amba, who Ends all miseries.

The radiance of your light is limitless and all pervading and all the three realms (Earth, Heaven And the Nether World) are enlightened by Thee.

Your face is like the moon and mouth very huge. Your eyes shine with a red glow and You have a Frightening frown.

O Mother! Your look is enchanting, the very sight of which ensures welfare of the devout.

All the powers of the World repose in Thee and it is You who provide food and wealth for the World's survival.

Like the feeding Mother Annapoorna, You nurture the whole universe and You are the one Who appear like the timeless Bala Sundari (young girl of extreme beauty).

At the time of dissolution, it is You, O Mother, who destroys everything. You are the beloved Consort of Lord Shiva, Gauri (Parvati).

Lord Shiva and all yogis always chant your praise
Brahma,
Vishnu and all other Gods ever meditate on You.

You appear in the form of Goddess Saraswati too, to grant wisdom to the sages and thus ensure their Welfare.

O Mother Amba! It was You who appeared in the form of Narsimha, sundering the pillar.

Thus You saved Prahlad and Hiranyakashyap also went to Heaven as he was killed by your Hands.

In the form of Goddess Lakshmi, O Mother, you appear in this world and repose by the side of Shree Narayan.

Dwelling in the ocean of milk, O Goddess, with Lord Vishnu, please fulfill my desires.

O Bhavani, the famous Goddess of Hingalaja is no one else but You Yourself. Illimitable is your Glory, defying description.

You are yourself Matangi and Dhoomavati Mata. It is You who appear as Shuvaneshwari and Bagalamukhi Devi to bestow happiness to all.

It is You who redeem the world, appearing in the form of Shree Bhairavi, Taradevi and Chhinnamasta Devi, and end its sorrows.

Reposing gracefully upon your vehicle, O Goddess Bhavani, You are welcome by the brave Langour (Lord Hanuman).

When You appear in the form of Goddess Kali, with sword in one hand and a cupel in the other, Even Time flees in panic.

Beholding You, well armed, with a Trident in your hand, the enemy's heart aches with the sting Of fear.

You also repose in the form of Devi at Nagarkot in Kangara. Thus all the three realms shudder in the might of your glory.

You slayed the demons like Shumbh & Nishumb and massacred the thousand forms of the dreaded Demon Raktabeej.

When the earth was severely distressed bearing the load of the sins of the arrogant Mahishasur.

You assumed the dreadful form of Goddess Kali and massacred him along with his army.
Thus, whenever the noble saints were distressed, it is You O Mother, who came to their rescue.

All the realms including the Amarpuri (divine realm) remain sorrow-less and happy by Your Grace. O Goddess!

It is the symbol of Your glory that is burning brightly at Shree JwalaJi. All men and women Ever worship You, O Mother!

He who sings Your glory with devotion, love, and sincerity remains beyond the reach of grief And poverty.

He who meditates upon Your form with concentration goes beyond the cycle of births and deaths.

All the yogis, gods and sages openly declare that without your favour one can't establish communion with God.

Shankaracharya had performed once a special penance called Aacharaj and by virtue of which he had subdued his anger and desire.

He ever worshipped Lord Shankar and never for a moment concentrated his mind on You.

Since He did not realise your immense glory, all His powers waned and then He repented hitherto.

Then He sought refuge in You, chanted Your glory and 'victory, victory, victory to Thee, O Jagadamba Bhavani'.

Then, O Primal Goddess Jagadamba Ji, You were propitiated and in no time You bestowed Him with his lost powers.

O Mother! Severe afflictions distress me and no one except Your Honoured Self can provide relief please end my afflictions.

Hopes and longings ever torture me. All sorts of passions and lust ever torment my heart.

O Goddess Bhavani! I meditate only upon you Please kill my enemies O Queen!

O Merciful Mother! Show me your favour and make me feel happy by bestowing me with all sorts of riches and powers.

O Mother! May I be receptive of Your grace as long as I live, ever recounting the feats of Your Glory to all.

This way, whoever sings this Durga Chalisa shall ever enjoy all sorts of pleasures and shall attain the highest state in the end.

32 Names of Mother Durga

Whoever will recite this garland of the names of Durga the reliever of difficulties, for me, will be freed from every type of fear without a doubt.

1.	Durga	The Reliever of Difficulties
2.	Durgatirsamini	Who puts difficulties at peace
3.	Durgapadvinivarin	Dispeller of difficult adversities
4.	Durgamacchedini	Who cuts down difficulty
5.	Durgasadhini	The performer of Discipline to expel difficulties
6.	Durganasini	The Destroyer of Difficulty
7.	Durgatoddharin	Who holds the whip of difficulties
8.	Durgenihantri	Who sends difficulties to Ruin
9.	Durgamapaha	Who measures difficulties
10.	Durgamajanada	Who makes difficulties unconscious
11.	Durgadaityalokadavanala	Who destroys the world of difficult thoughts
12.	Durgama	The mother of difficulties
13.	Durgamaloka	The perception of difficulties
14.	Durgamatmasvarupin	The Intrinsic Nature of the soul of difficulties
15.	Durgamargaprada	Who searches through the difficulties
16.	Durgamavidya	The knowledge of difficulties
17.	Durgamasrita	The Extrication from difficulties
18.	Durgamajanasamsthana	The continued existence of difficulties
19.	Durgamadhyhanabhasini	Whose meditation remains brilliant when in difficulties
20.	Durgamoha	Who deludes difficulties
21.	Durgamaga	Who resolves difficulties
22.	Durgamarthasvarupin	Who is the intrinsic nature of the object of difficulties
23.	Durgamasurasanhantri	The annihilator of the egotism of difficulties
24.	Durgamayudhadharin	Bearer of the weapon against difficulties
25.	Durgamangi	The refinery of difficulties
26.	Durgamata	Who is beyond difficulties
27.	Durgamya	This present difficulty
28.	Durgamesvari	The empress of difficulties
29.	Durgabhima	Who is terrible to difficulties
30.	Durgabhama	The lady to difficulties
31.	Durgabha	The illuminator of difficulties
32.	Durgadarin	Who cuts off difficulties

Saraswati

Saraswati is the embodiment of Mother Divine that is responsible for the enlivenment and spread of Pure Knowledge, as well as progress in areas of study and of the arts. By honoring Saraswati, the qualities of wisdom, intelligence and good memory are enhanced in the individual and the environment. Wpeship for Saraswati help gain blessings and support of Mother Divine in the areas of spiritual study, other educational activities, or in the arts, including writing, public speaking, visual arts and music.

Saraswatee mantra

Yaa Kundendu tushaara haaradhavalaa, Yaa shubhravastraavritha|
Yaa veenavara dandamanditakara, Yaa shwetha padmaasana||
Yaa brahmaachyutha shankara prabhritibhir Devaisadaa Vanditha|
Saa Maam Paatu Saraswatee Bhagavatee Nihshesha jaadyaapahaa||

Translation

"May Goddess Saraswati, who is fair like the jasmine-colored moon, and whose pure white gariand is like frosty dew drops; who is adorned in radiant white attire, on whose beautiful arm rests the veena, and whose throne is a white lotus; who is surrounded and respected by the Gods, protect me. May you fully remove my lethargy, sluggishness, and ignorance."



Jaikara's

- Jai Mata Di
- Saanche Darbar Ki Jai
 - Sachiyen Jotan Vaali Mata Teri Sadaa Hee Jai
 - Unche Pahado wali Mata Teri Sadaa Hee Jai
 - Bol Saanche Darbar Ki Jai
 - Garb jun wali Mata Teri Sadaa Hee Jai
 - Sarvatra Da Bhalaa Karan Vaali Mata Teri Sadaa Hee Jai
 - Sare Sansaar Vich Shanti Deyn Vaali Mata Teri Sadaa Hee Jai

ॐ सर्व मंगलमंगल्ये शिवे सर्वार्थ साधिके ।
शरण्ये त्र्यम्बके गौरि नारायणि नामोऽस्त ते ॥

Why do we ring the bell in a temple?



Is it to wake up the Lord? But the Lord never sleeps. Is it to let the Lord know we have come? He does not need to be told, as He is all knowing. Is it a form of seeking permission to enter His precinct? It is a homecoming and therefore entry needs no permission. The Lord welcomes us at all times. Then why do we ring the bell?

The ringing of the bell produces what is regarded as an auspicious sound. It produces the sound Om, the universal name of the Lord. There should be auspiciousness within and without, to gain the vision of the Lord who is all-auspiciousness.

Even while doing the ritualistic aarati, we ring the bell. It is sometimes accompanied by the auspicious sounds of the conch and other musical instruments.

An added significance of ringing the bell, conch and other instruments is that they help drown any inauspicious or irrelevant noises and comments that might disturb or distract the worshippers in their devotional ardour, concentration and inner peace.

As we start the daily ritualistic worship (pooja) we ring the bell, chanting:

**Aagamaarthamtu devaanaam
gamanaarthamtu rakshasaam
Kurve ghantaaravam tatra
devataahvaahna lakshanam**

I ring this bell indicating
the invocation of divinity,
So that virtuous and noble forces
enter (my home and heart);
and the demonic and evil forces
from within and without, depart.



Prayer when lighting the lamp



**Subham Karoti Kalyanam
Arogyam Dhana Sampadah
Shatru Buddhi Vinashaya
Dipa Jyotir Namostute**



Translation: I salute the One who is the lamplight that brings auspiciousness; prosperity, good health, abundance of wealth, and the destruction of the intellect's enemy.

Origin of Durga - The Mythology

Devi is the great goddess of the Hindus, the consort of Shiva and she is worshiped in various forms corresponding to her two aspects: benevolence and fierceness. She is Uma, "light"; Gauri, "yellow or brilliant"; Parvati, "the mountaineer"; and Jagatmata, "the-mother-of-the-world" in her milder guise. The terrible emanations are Durga "the inaccessible"; Kali, "the black"; Chandi, "the fierce"; and Bhairavi, "the terrible."

Descent of the Goddess

Durga, a beautiful warrior seated upon a tiger, was the first appearance of the great goddess. The circumstance of her miraculous arrival was the tyranny of the monster-demon Mahishasur, who through terrific austerities had acquired invincible strength. The gods were afraid of this water-buffalo bull because neither Vishnu nor Shiva could prevail against him. It seemed that the joint energy of Shakti was only capable of vanquishing Mahisha, and so it was the eighteen-armed Durga who went out to do battle.

Battlefield

She went to battle on her ferocious mount lion, armed with the weapons given to her by the other Gods. Durga is one of the angry and aggressive aspects of the goddess Shakti, whose role in Hindu mythology was to fight and conquer demons and also personify the Sakti or female aspect of any male deity. In the battle, she fought and killed the evil Mahishasura and restored heaven to the Gods. Since then the goddess is invoked for protection from the powers of evil. Durga Puja is observed in her honor, to celebrate her victory over evil.

Revered Mother

She has been worshiped from about 400 AD, but probably earlier, to the present. Her literary references are chiefly the Ramayana and Mahabharata, epic and Puranic texts, and she is mentioned by name in Vedic literature. In general, Durga is regarded in northern India as the gentle bride epitomizing family unity while in southern India she is revered more in her warrior aspect.

Dussehra

The festival of Dussehra, also known as Vijaydashmi, is one of the fascinating festivals of India and is celebrated with joy and enthusiasm. According to the great Hindu scripture, the Ramayana, Lord Rama performed chandi-puja (holy prayer). This was carried out in order to invoke the blessings of Durga Maa for the killing of Ravana, the ten-headed demon king of Sri Lanka who had abducted Seeta, wife of Lord Rama.

Durga Maa divulged the secret to Rama on how he could slay the great Ravana. Hence upon vanquishing the demon Ravana, Lord Rama with Sita and younger brother Laxmana, returned victorious to his kingdom of

Ayodhya on the day which is called 'Diwali'. Revelers across northern India re-enact the legend at sundown in a performance called the Ramlila, featuring actors dressed as Rama shooting flaming arrows at effigies stuffed with firecrackers.

Dassera day is considered a most auspicious day. It is a time-honored belief that if any new venture is started on this day, it is bound to be successful. Hence, all the undertakings be it laying-in of foundation of a new building, opening of a new commercial establishment or even initiating a child into the world of learning- are started on this day. Also on this day implements of agriculture, manufacturer's machines, the intellectuals pens, the household articles, the children's school books are placed before the idol of Durga and worshiped.

The Bengali Belief

Sati, the consort of Shiva was the daughter of Daksha Prajaapati a descendant of Bhrama. Sati had married Shiva against the wishes of her father. Daksha was sponsoring a sacrifice and attendees came from various parts of the universe. He invited all of the gods and goddesses except his son in law Shiva. Against Shiva's wishes, Sati attended this sacrifice and was insulted by her father. Unable to bear this insult, Sati immolated herself.

Enraged at the insult and the injury, Shiva destroyed Daksha's sacrifice, cut off Daksha's head and when pleaded by other gods, replaced it with that of a goat and restored him to life. Still berserk with grief, he picked up the remains of Sati's body, and danced the dance of destruction throughout the Universe. The other gods intervened to stop this dance, and the disk of Vishnu cut through the corpse of Sati, whose various parts of the body fell at several spots all through the Indian subcontinent and formed the sites of what are known as Shakti Peethas today.

Shiva was finally pacified when the last piece fell off from his shoulder. Narayana revived sati as Uma for a new life. Ever since peace was restored, Uma, with her children, Ganesh and Kartick, and with her two 'sakhis' - Jaya and Bijaya, comes to visit her parent's home each year during the season of 'Sharat' or autumn when Durga Puja is celebrated.

Mahalaya

Mahalaya ushers in the aura of Durga Puja. The countdown for the Durga Puja begins much earlier, from the day of 'Janmastami'. It is only from the day of Mahalaya that the preparations for the Durga Puja reaches the final stage. The midnight chants of various hymns of 'Mahishasura Mardini' reminds one of the beginning of Durga Puja.

Mahalaya is an auspicious occasion observed seven days before the Durga Puja, and heralds the advent of Durga, the goddess of supreme power. It's a kind of invocation or invitation to the mother goddess to descend on earth - "Jago Tumi Jago". This is done through the chanting of mantras and singing devotional songs.

The day of Mahalaya is also the day of remembrance. On this day, people offer 'tarpan' in memory of their deceased forefathers. The banks of River Ganga becomes a sea of humanity. Priests are seen busy performing 'Tarpan' for devotees in groups. The rituals start from early dawn and end during the midday. Devotees and worshipers buy clothes and sweets to offer to their forefathers. 'Tarpan' is to be performed in empty stomach. After offering 'tarpan', people eat at the same place.

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