

# NAVRATRI- The meaning



Nav' means 'nine' and 'ratri' means 'night', thus, 'Navratri' means 'nine nights'.

Dassera : means the Tenth Day, being the 10th day of the bright half of Ashwin.

This day is also known as Vijaydashmi, or Victory Tenth. It is a festival which is devoted to the Mother Goddess Shakti known variously as Durga, Kali, Bhavani, Amba, and Chandika in Her aspect as Power, to bestow upon man all wealth, auspiciousness, prosperity, knowledge (both sacred and secular), and all other potent powers.

Navratri has been celebrated in its most unique and different nature in various parts of India and abroad with devotional songs, bhajans and cultural programs. In West Bengal, Navratri is celebrated as Durga Pooja, where beautiful idols of the Goddess are decorated and adorned, and worshipped for a period of nine days and immersed on the tenth day. The first three days of Navratri are dedicated to Goddess Durga (Warrior Goddess) dressed in red and mounted on a lion, next



three to Goddess Lakshmi (Goddess of Wealth and Prosperity) dressed in gold and mounted on an owl and finally, last three to Goddess Saraswati (Goddess Of Knowledge) dressed in milky white and mounted on a pure white swan.

In the northern parts of India, Ram Lilas are conducted from the epic, the Ramayana, to bring the life

and times of Lord Rama back to the common folk through dramatic representations. On the tenth day (Dassera) giant effigies of Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Meghnad (Lord Rama's enemies), are publicly burnt. In the state of Punjab, people usually fast during this period, for seven days, and on Ashtami, the eighth day, devotees break their fast by



worshipping young girls who are supposed to be representatives of the Goddess herself.

In southern India celebrations constitute a display of images of God and toys at home for nine days amidst much pomp and gaiety with poojas and archanas conducted for Goddess Durga. This display is called 'Kolu'.

The festival of Navratri acquires quite a fascinating and colorful dimension in the region of Gujarat (Western India). The Garba or Dandiya Raas which is the traditional and folk dance of the state is the most significant feature of the festival. This dance is performed around a pot containing a lamp. The lamp in the pot, symbolically represent life within a womb. Another prevalent practice is of sowing pulses, cereals and other seeds on the first day of this festival in a pot, which is watered for nine days at the end of which the seeds sprout. This pot is worshipped throughout the nine days.. The dances start after 10 p.m. and many a times they continue up to the small hours of the morning. It adds a fascinating and colorful dimension in this region.

Although every region has its own myths and reasons to celebrate Navratri, it is celebrated with great enthusiasm as the conquest of good over evil. The mood of Navratri is very colorful & unique and is a festival of pure happiness.

