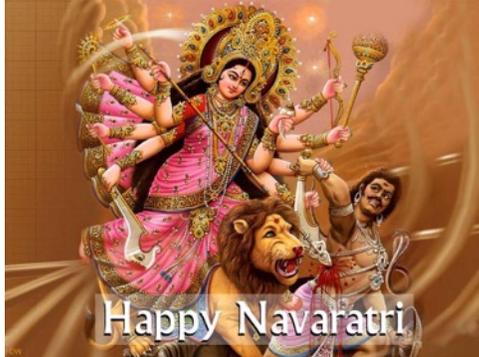


The Spiritual Significance of Vijayadashami (Dassehra)

Navaratri is a nine-day festival culminating into the tenth day, Vijayadashami (also known as Dassehra). Dassehra honors the victory of devas over asuras—the forces of righteousness over the forces of evil. They were able to win because Paraashakti (the dynamic aspect of divinity) the power that has elaborated God into all this variety and beauty—came to succor them and fight on their behalf. India also had to meet invasion by unrighteous forces and the same Paraashakti saved it from loss and



dishonor. Therefore, this festival is celebrated with added significance. Again, it was on Vijayadashami (Dassehra) that Lord Rama vanquished the demon Ravana in battle. It is for these reasons that this day is considered a day when one can easily conquer the evil forces within us with the help of our own indwelling divinity.

Navaratri is celebrated in memory of the nine days when Mother Durga, the motherly aspect of God, defeated and destroyed the evil forces; she is propitiated and easily pleased during these nine days. The whole creation has emerged from truth and merges back into it. In reality, truth is the real mother for the entire creation. The Goddess Devi is called Sathya Swaroopini, the embodiment of truth. During Navaratri, devotees read sacred texts, such as Devi Bhagvatha, Ramayana, and Mahabharata. Durga, Lakshmi, and Saraswati, the three incarnations of Devi, are also worshipped during these nine days. This trinity is also present in the principle of truth. Worshipping truth thus amounts to the worship of the divine mother.

Goddess Gayatri symbolizes three forces; these are Gayatri, Savitri, and Sarasvati. Gayatri is the presiding deity over the senses; Savitri, the life principle; and Sarasvati, the presiding deity of speech. All these three are present within the principle of truth. The Gayatri mantra begins with “Om Bhur Bhuvah Suvah”. ‘Bhu’ means materialization (body); ‘Bhuvah’ means vibration (life principle); ‘Suvah’ means radiation (atma). Truth, righteousness, peace, forgiveness are all expressions of the principles of Shakti. The Navaratri worship has been started in order to foster sacred qualities in us. Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati symbolize the three attributes, Satwa,

Rajas and Thamas. Satwic qualities emerge out of ‘Hridaya’ (heart), ‘Rajasic’ out of throat, and ‘Thamasic’ out of the tongue. ‘Hridaya’ is the center of Love and Peace.

Sthree symbolises the three gunas in women. The world is a manifestation of the three gunas, (Satwa, Rajas and Tamas). The Divine is worshipped as “Devi”. The term Sthree is used to denote a woman. There are three syllables in this term: Sa, Tha, and Ra. “Sa” symbolises the Satwic aspect of a person. The Satwic quality is the very first quality that manifests in man. The feeling of love develops from the mother. The mother converts her own blood into love and gives it as milk to feed the child. Therefore, the first quality represented by “Sa”, is the Satwic quality.

The second syllable is “Tha”. This does not represent thathva or thaamasa. In the term Sthree, the syllable “tha” represents bashfulness, modesty, self-esteem, and such traits which are characteristics of women. Shyness is a predominant trait in women. They attach great value to their honor and reputation. It is because of these sacred qualities that their Tamasic aspect is significant. The common view regarding the Tamasic quality does not apply to them. The third quality, symbolized by the syllable “Ra”, is Rajas. Such qualities as sacrifice and high-mindedness in women reflect the Rajasic aspect of their nature. When necessary, women will be prepared even to sacrifice their lives to safeguard their honor. Without regard to the difficulties and troubles they may encounter, women are ready to make any sacrifice to protect their honor and self-respect. When the Tamasic elements attempt to subvert the Satwic qualities, they are ready to combat and vanquish them.

Inner meaning of Dassehra festival. The term “Devi” thus represents the Divine power which has taken the Rajasic form to suppress the forces of evil and protect the Satwic qualities. When the forces of injustice, immorality and untruth have grown to monstrous proportions and are indulge in a death-dance, when selfishness and self-interest are rampant, when men have lost all sense of kindness and compassion, the Atmic principle, assuming the form of Shakti, taking on the Rajasic quality, seeks to destroy all the evil elements. This is the inner meaning of the Dassehra festival.

When the Divine Goddess is in dreadful rage to destroy the wicked elements, She assumes a fearful form. To pacify the dreaded Goddess, Her feminine children offer worship to Her with red kumkum



(sacred red powder). The Goddess, seeing the blood-red kumkum at her feet, feels assured that the wicked have been vanquished and assumes Her benign form. The inner meaning of the worship of Devi with red kumkum is that thereby the Goddess is appeased.

During the ten days of Dassehra, the rakshasas (demons) in the form of wicked qualities have been routed. Rakshasas do not mean demonic beings. The bad qualities in men are the demons. Arrogance is a demon. Bad thoughts are demons. Ravana is depicted as the king of Rakshasas. He is said to have ten heads. Who is this Ravana and what are his ten heads? Kama (lust), Krodha (anger), Moha (delusion), Lobha (Greed), Mada (pride), Maatsarya (Envy), Manas (the mind), Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (Will) and Ahamkara (the Ego)—these ten constitute the ten heads. Ravana is the one who has these ten qualities.

Rajasic and Satwic qualities of Rama. Rama is the destroyer of bad qualities. When engaged in this act of destruction of bad qualities, He manifests His



Rajo-guna. But His Rajasic quality is associated with His Satwic quality. Even in cutting off Ravana's ten heads, Rama showed His love. This was the only way Ravana could be redeemed. When the Lord metes out a punishment, it may appear harsh. But what appears externally as Rajasic is in reality Satwic. In a hailstorm, along with rain there will be hailstones. But both the rain and hailstones contain water. Likewise, there is Satwic quality even in the Lord's Rajasic actions. Similarly there may be Satwic quality even in Tamasic actions. These depend on the time, place and the circumstances in which the Lord acts. Butter can be split with a finger. But a powerful hammer is needed to break a piece of iron. The Lord deals with Satwic persons in a Satwic way. He applies the Rajasic weapon against Rajasic persons.

All the festivals of Bharatiyas have been designed to promote divine love among the people. It is to confer such love on people that the Lord incarnates on earth. He Himself demonstrates how love should be expressed. He showers His love and teaches everyone how to love. Hence, experience this love and joy in your life and live in peace. Wish you all a Very Happy Dassehra!

www.omsaimandir.org