

How to worship Goddess during Navratri?

1. Ghatasthapana

Taking a pitcher made of mud or copper, filling it with soil and sowing seven types of grains in it. In several families this vowed religious observance is undertaken as a family tradition of spiritual practice (*kulachar*). This vowed religious observance begins on the first day (*pratipada*) of the bright fortnight of *Ashvin*. In a sanctified place in the house a sacrificial fireplace (*vedi*) is constructed and the female deity with eight arms seated on a lion and the *navarna yantra* are installed. Beside the yantra a pot is installed and both the pot and the female deity are ritualistically worshipped. In the celebration of *Navaratra* according to the family traditions of spiritual practice one should install the pot (*ghatasthapana*) and tie a garland of flowers (*mala bandhan*) to it. Soil from a field should be brought home and spread out into a square making it as thick as the height of two phalanges of the fingers and food grains of five or seven types should be sown in it. Similarly water, sandalwood paste (*gandha*), flowers, *dūrva* (a sacred grass), consecrated rice (*akshata*), betelnut, five foliages, five gems or a gold coin, etc. should be put into an earthen or a copper pot (*kalash*). If one does not know the Vedic *mantras* for installation of the seven food grains and the pot (Varun, the deity of rain) then the *mantras* from the Purans should be chanted. If one does not know even these then one should say 'I offer (the name of the substance offered)' and chant The Lord's Name. The garland of flowers should be tied in such a way that it reaches inside the pot. This vowed observance continues till the ninth day of the bright fortnight of *Ashvin*.

2. Lighting of Akhand deep

Akhand means continuous and deep is an oil lamp; *Akhand* deep is a continuously burning lamp. An oil lamp symbolises absolute Fire principle. During Navratri the atmosphere is charged with a glow that is laden with absolute Fire principle. The frequencies emanating from this glow get attracted towards the flame of the *Akhand* deep resulting in their constant movement in the house. Hence it is important to light an *Akhand* deep during Navratri.

3. Establishing Goddess Ashtabhuja and Navarnav Yantra

A. Process of inviting the Goddess and establishing Her ritualistically: The first step in the worship of Goddess during Navratri is inviting Her and establishing Her ritualistically. Due to the resolve in the invitation the energy waves remain activated for a longer time at the site of worship.

B. Ritualistic establishment of the Goddess Ashtabhuja: Goddess Ashtabhuja is the destroyer form of *Shakti* (Energy principle). Navratri symbolises the actual existence of the primal *Shakti* which is absolute Fire principle laden. The weapons in the hands of the Goddess Ashtabhuja symbolise the pro-activeness of Her destroyer form. These weapons laden with the destroyer principle act as eight guardians of the eight

directions. With the help of the absolute Fire principle they protect the Universe by putting a check on movements of the evil spirits and by blocking their activities.

C. Establishing ritualistically the *Navarnav yantra* : The *Navarnav yantra* symbolises the ascending of the Goddess on Her throne established on the Earth. There is confluence and solidification of the destroyer frequencies of the nine forms of Goddess in the *Navarnav yantra*. Hence, this throne symbolises the presence of the attributeless form of Goddess. The 'with attribute' form of the Goddess that appears into the active motion of the Universe from this *yantra* is believed to symbolise the practical action oriented principle.

4. Malabandhan

Hanging garlands over the idol of the Goddess. Due to the colours and fragrance particles of the flowers, the energy frequencies of absolute Fire principle from the atmosphere get attracted towards these flowers and thereby move quickly to the idol and assists the activation of Goddess principle in the idol in less time. This Divine principle is transmitted to the house and thus helps in its purification. The embodied souls residing in the house also benefit from this.

5. Kumarika puja (Ritualistic worship of virgins)

5.1 How is the ritual of *Kumarika puja* performed?

A. During each of the nine days of Navratri, respectfully invite a *kumarika* (a young virgin) to your house. If this is not possible, the custom is to invite nine *kumarikas* on any one of the days in *Navratri*.

B. Offer them a mat made of wool to sit on.

C. Perform their *padyapuja* (Ritualistic worshipping of their feet) with a *bhav* (spiritual emotion) that the Goddess principle in them is activated.

D. Offer them a meal of their liking on a banana leaf. The Goddess likes *kheer* (a sweet made of milk and rice) and *puris* (type of fried Indian bread).

E. Offer all *kumarikas* new clothes, consider them to be representative of *Shakti* and pay obeisance with utmost *bhav*.

5.2 Significance and science underlying the worship of *kumarika*

A *kumarika* symbolises *Shakti* in unmanifest form. Worshipping a *kumarika* activates the *Shakti* present in her and helps attract the absolute Fire principle frequencies from the Universe. Later, this principle is transmitted very easily to the atmosphere through the medium of the *kumarika* in the form of frequencies carrying *chaitanya* (Divine consciousness) and benefit the people. To accumulate the frequencies of the Goddess principle active during *Navratri*, the *kumarika* is worshipped with utmost *bhav* and efforts are made to appease her. The degree of manifestation of impressions on subconscious mind of the *kumarika* is less

too and this helps in deriving maximum benefit of the 'with attribute' form of the Goddess; hence the importance of *kumarika puja* during *Navratri*.

6. Offering *Naivedya* (consecrated food) to the Goddess all the nine days

During *Navratri* prepare *sattvik* dishes for the Goddess, as is customary. Apart from the regular food items include *puran* (a sweet made of gram and jaggery) and *varan* (an item made of toor-dal)in the meal. The *Naivedya* which includes *puran* and *varan*, radiates activated raja component and the energy laden absolute Fire element frequencies from the Universe get attracted to it in less time. When one consumes the *Naivedya* as prasada, he benefits from the energy frequencies which are absolute Fire element oriented and thereby purification of his gross and subtle bodies takes place.

7. Playing 'Garba' (a dance form) during Navratri

7.1 What is the significance of playing 'Garba'?

In Hindu *Dharma*, playing 'Garba' implies singing devotional songs showing praises on the Goddess, accompanied by rhythmic clapping. 'Garba' awakens the Goddess from her meditation and is a prayer unto Her to assume Her destroyer form for the benefit of the Universe.

7.2 While playing the Garba should one use a rhythm of two claps or three claps?

The destroyer principle of Goddess Durga is activated gradually, in stages during *Navratri*. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are the three main levels of the Supreme God. To activate the destroyer principle of the Goddess on all the three levels, devotees clap thrice and activate the will of the Goddess. Hence it is more beneficial to play 'Garba' with a rhythm of three claps. The three claps symbolise the following.

1. The first clap is related to Brahma principle, meaning energy of desire. Because of the first clap, the desire frequencies from the Universe are activated and they back the wishes of embodied soul depending on his *bhav*.
2. Through the medium of second clap, the action frequencies that are Lord Vishnu principle oriented impart energy to the embodied soul to actually perform the actions.
3. Through the medium of the third clap, the knowledge frequencies actually make the task happen and give the embodied soul the desired fruit.

Impact of the claps generates absolute Fire principle and this makes it possible to awaken the destroyer principle of the Goddess. Clapping indicates the worship of the absolute Fire element. Singing devotional songs that appeal to the Goddess principle, supported by rhythmic clapping and moving on a circular path helps awaken *bhav* towards the Goddess.

8. Performing the *Lalita Puja* on the fifth day of Navratri

A fragrance that is Shakti oriented is called Lalita. The *manomaya kosh* (mental sheath) of the devotee is purified by the fragrance present in the Universe on the fifth day of Navratri.

9. On the eighth day of Navratri, an idol of Goddess in standing posture is worshipped

The all accommodating destroyer waves of Sri Durgadevi present in vast measure on the eighth day of Navratri are imbibed in the face mask made of rice flour and that benefits the devotees. Celebrating Navratri is worshipping the destroyer form of primal *Shakti*. During Navratri, the intensity of destroyer principle of Sri Durgadevi increases gradually. On the eighth day, the proportion of red colour absolute Fire element frequencies amongst the destroyer waves of the Sri Durgadevi is higher. These waves are related to the absolute Air and Ether elements. Hence, the idol prepared on *Ashtami* (with a face mask made of rice flour) is draped in a red saree. Rice has the quality of being all accommodating and responds with equal intensity to the 'with attribute' frequencies as well as attributeless frequencies. This quality attracts the frequencies dominant with absolute Fire principle.

10. Worship of Goddess Saraswati during Navratri (8th and 9th night)

On the previous day of Vijayadashami i.e. 9th day, Goddess Saraswati should be worshipped through the mediums associated with Her origin. But on the day of Vijayadashami the Saraswati principle becomes active in a larger proportion, adopts a 'with attribute' existence and then dissolves to a dormant state. So it is desirable that Goddess Saraswati be worshipped on that day prominently.

Thus on Vijayadashami, first the rite of Her worship and then that of immersion are carried out ceremoniously. From the *Ashthami* (8th day) to *Vijayadashami* (10th day) the Energy form of Goddess is adorned with all Her knowledge-filled genius. When Goddess Saraswati's saviour frequencies touch the devotee, his soul-energy is instantly activated and is transformed into a flow of genius. As he is linked with the knowledge-facet of the Goddess, he gets a spiritual experience of bliss.

Which specific flower should be offered to a specific Goddess and why?

Science in the act of offering a specific flower to a specific Deity

One prominent objective of worshipping a Deity is that the devotee should derive optimum benefit for his spiritual progress from the *chaitanya* (Divine consciousness) in the idol of the Deity. Specific flowers have better ability to attract the subtlest particles of a specific Deity's principle. Naturally, when these flowers are offered to the Deity during worship, they help awaken the idol and the devotee benefits from the *chaitanya* in the idol. Hence, the importance of offering specific flowers to specific Deities. Accordingly, which flowers should be offered to which Deity is given in the table here.

| Goddess | Flowers to be Offered |
|----------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Sri Durga | Jasmine |
| 2. Sri Laxmi | Rose |
| 3. Sri Saptashrungi | Magnolia |
| 4. Sri Sharada | Nightqueen |
| 5. Sri Yogeshwari | Michelia |
| 6. Sri Renuka | Bakuli |
| 7. Sri Vaishnodevi | Tube-rose |
| 8. Sri Vindhyavasini | Lotus |
| 9. Sri Bhavani | Ground-Lotus |
| 10. Sri Amba | Coral |

In reality it is the specific fragrance from the flower that attracts the Deity's principle. The same benefit can be obtained by using incense sticks of the same fragrance.

Significance of *bhav* (spiritual emotion)

1. When a devotee fully understands the science underlying various actions which are a part of ritualistic worship, he is able to perform them with required concentration. Such an effort awakens *bhav* (spiritual emotion).
2. A mother-child relationship begins to evolve with the Goddess. Such *bhav*, helps attain oneness with the '*Shakti*' Principle. The bliss derived at this point is unparalleled; it makes him forget his own identity, one that is beyond description. While worshipping the Goddess with such intense *bhav*, the worshipper does not even realise when he crosses the barrier of duality to enter the state of non-duality. He then becomes recipient of Divine Grace. Blessings showered upon him as a result of this Grace, fulfill the motive of his human birth.

What is importance of 'offering a sari and a blouse-piece' for the Goddess?

Note: Ritual of 'offering a sari and a blouse-piece' is called as 'Oti bharane'.

1. What is the importance of performing 'Oti bharane' in Goddess worship?

Invariably offering Her a sari and a blouse-piece concludes the ritualistic worship of a Goddess. Offering this to a Goddess is akin to praying to Her attributeless form to work for one's spiritual progress and welfare

through the medium of 'with attribute' form. Panch-opachar puja (worship by 5 characteristic sub-rituals) in any ritualistic worship is related to the attributeless form of God. The prayer to the Goddess to become functional, with the offering of a sari and a blouse piece helps the attributeless form of the Goddess to manifest in 'with attribute' form in the sari and the blouse-piece.

2. The correct method of 'Oti bharane' while worshipping a Goddess

A. The sari offered to the Goddess should preferably be made of cotton or silk fabric, because when compared to other fabrics, these fabrics have a better capacity to attract and retain the *sattvik* frequencies emanating from the Goddess.

B. Stand in front of the Goddess holding the sari with open palms, at chest level; place the blouse-piece on top of the sari and then a coconut and some rice grains over the blouse piece. The tuft at one end of the coconut should be towards the Goddess.

C. Pray with utmost *bhav* (spiritual emotion) to the Goddess to bless you with *chaitanya* and for your spiritual progress. This helps manifest the 'with attribute' Goddess principle.

D. After offering all the ingredients of 'Oti' at the feet of the Goddess, offer some rice grains on them.

E. If possible, the lady offering the 'Oti' (only a married lady is permitted to offer an 'Oti' to a Goddess) should wear the sari offered to the Goddess as *prasad* (holy sacrament) and partake of the coconut too as *prasad*.

3. The subtle process in performing the ritual of 'Oti bharane' and its merits

A. The Goddess principle is attracted towards the tuft of the coconut. The coconut helps the principle permeate into the sari and the blouse-piece. Consequently the frequencies emanating from the tuft of the coconut form a protective sheath around the body of the embodied soul performing the worship.

B. Through the cloth, with the help of absolute Earth element, frequencies with Sattva attribute get transmitted. These frequencies along with the help of absolute Water element present in coconut water, gain momentum and become functional. As a result a protective sheath of these frequencies is formed around the body of the embodied soul performing the worship. Similarly, the *sattvik* waves which permeate the sari and the blouse-piece help in purifying the *prandeha* (vital body) & the *pranmayakosh* (vital sheath) of the embodied soul.

C. The posture of standing while holding the palms together at the chest level helps in activating the *chandranadi* (the subtle lunar channel). It also helps in increasing the particles of the Sattva attribute in the *manomaya kosh* (mental sheath), resulting in mental peace. This posture is very helpful in the embodied soul surrendering to the Goddess. The *sattva*-laden frequencies emanating from the Goddess enter and spread into the body of the embodied soul through his palms. This in turn results in activation of the *anahat chakra* (the energy centre at the level of chest) and helps in awakening the *bhav* of the embodied soul

towards the Goddess. It further helps in purification of the gross and subtle bodies of the embodied soul. When *bhav* of a embodied soul towards the Goddess is high, it helps in longer retention of the *sattva* attribute gained from the ritualistic worship.

4. What is the benefit in specific colour selection of the sari and blouse-piece offered to the Goddess?

The objective of offering a specific object to a specific Deity has been explained earlier. Similarly, offering a specific colour sari and a blouse-piece that attracts the Goddess principle the most in least time, helps activate the principle of that Goddess for the embodied soul. The table ahead gives the names of the Goddess and the colour that attracts Its principle in the least time.

| Goddess | Color % (Tarak + Marak) |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Sri Durga | None + Red 100% |
| 2. Sri Mahalaxmi | Orange 40% + Red 60% |
| 3. Sri Laxmi | Yellow 60% + Red 40% |
| 4. Sri Mahasaraswati | White 60% + Red 40% |
| 5. Sri Saraswati | White 100% + None |
| 6. Sri Mahakali | Purpule 80% + Red 20% |
| 7. Sri Kali | Purple 100% + None |

Note 1: In this table, if the Incarnation of the Goddess is related to only one principle, then only one colour is given. If the Incarnation is related to two different principles, two colours attracting both are given. E.g. Sri Durgadevi is related to the destroyer (*Marak*) principle, hence the colour related to that principle i.e. only the red colour is mentioned against Her name.