

30. Inner Significance Of Navarathri Festival

Navarathri means nine nights. Darkness is associated with night. What is this darkness? It is the darkness of ignorance. The purpose of the Navarathri celebration is to enable man to get rid of nine types of darkness which have taken hold of him. When a reference is made to Devi, it signifies the unified form of Dhurga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi. The three together represent *Shakthi*. *Shakthi* is the energy that accounts for all the phenomena of *Prakruthi* (Nature). Nature is energy and the controller of that energy is the Lord.

Prakruthi (Nature) is made up of the three qualities, *Sathwa*, *Rajas* and *Thamas*. Saraswathi represents the *Sathya Guna*. Lakshmi represents the *Rajo Guna* and Parvathi represents the *Thamo Guna*. As *Prakruthi* (Nature) is made up of these three qualities (*Sathwa*, *Rajas* and *Thamas*), to get control over Nature, man has been offering worship to Dhurga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi. These are not goddesses but deified symbols of the three qualities.

The role of Nature in the creative process

To acquire the grace of the Lord, man has to offer worship at the outset to *Prakruthi*. On the one hand you need human effort and on the other you have to acquire the grace of the Divine. *Prakruthi* (Nature) and *Paramaatma* (the Omni-Self) are like the negative and positive poles in electricity. However powerful the Lord may be (as the positive pole), there can be no creation without *Prakruthi* (representing the negative pole). The basis for creation is *Prakruthi*. For instance, however good the seeds you may have with you, without planting them in the ground you cannot reap the fruit. The role of Nature in the creative process is similar.

When man forgets God and desires to enjoy the benefits of Nature, he becomes ultimately a demon like Ravana who brought about his own destruction. To secure the grace of the Lord, one has to have purity of the heart, purity in speech and purity in action. This triple purity is described in Vedantic parlance as *Tripurasundari*. Lakshmi, who is the embodiment of all prosperity, is represented by the heart. The mouth represents Saraswathi. *Kriyaa Shuddhi* (Purity in action) is represented by Dhurga. The observance of the Navarathri celebration is to get rid of the darkness in which man is enveloped, by cultivating the triple purity of thought, word and deed.

The human body emerged from Nature. Nature has two forms: *Aparaa Prakruthi* and *Paraa Prakruthi*. *Aparaa Prakruthi* includes *Ashta Aishwaryas* (eight forms of wealth), and *Kaama*, *Krodha*, *Moha*, *Lobha*, *Mada*, *Maatsarya* and the three mental faculties in man: *Manas*, *Chitta* and *Ahamkaara*. *Paraa Prakruthi* (the higher Nature) represents the consciousness in man. Without the *Praana* (life force) and *Chaithanyam* (consciousness) man is only a corpse. True humanness consists in controlling the five elements which make up the *Aparaa Prakruthi* (lower Nature) and merge in the higher Nature represented by the life force and *Chaithanyam* (consciousness).

Maintain steadiness of mind during worship

The Navarathri has been divided into three parts the first three days being dedicated to the worship of Dhurga, the next three days to the worship of Lakshmi and the last three days to the worship of Saraswathi. All Hindu festivals have a sacred purpose. Unfortunately, nowadays the festivals are observed only with external rituals without understanding their inner meaning. In

the performance of all forms of worship there should be steadiness of mind and body. Only then concentration can be achieved. Today men are unable to maintain steadiness of body and mind.

(At this stage Swami referred to the advent of Shirdi Sai and described incidents from his early life. This part of Swami's discourse is published separately in the next chapter. Towards the end of His discourse, Swami again reverted to an exposition of the inner significance of the Dashara festival).

The basic significance of Devi Navarathri is the adoration of *Prakruthi* (Nature). Devi refers to *Bhudevi* (Mother Earth). All the vital requirements of man can be found in the earth. Those who travel to the moon have to carry with them the oxygen, water and food they need from the earth. None of these can be found on the moon.

Adoration of Nature

Students! The progress of modern technology, by polluting the atmosphere with Carbon dioxide smoke, is causing a threat to life on earth. This smoke has already created a hole in the ozone ring above the earth which has been serving as a protecting cover against harmful radiation from the sun. If the ozone layer is destroyed, the effect of the sun's rays may be disastrous. All nations are now worried about this threat. All that needs to be done to avert this danger is to reduce the pollution of the atmosphere caused by automobiles and industrial effluents. The uncontrolled development of industries has to be checked. Development should be in the common interest, to promote the welfare of all.

The Navarathri celebration is an occasion for revering Nature and considering how natural resources can be used properly in the best interests of mankind. Resources like water, air, power and minerals should be used properly and not misused or wasted. Economy in the use of every natural resource is vital. Pollution of the air has many evil consequences. The inner significance of observances like *Nagarasankirtan* and *bhajans* is to fill the atmosphere with sacred vibrations and holy thoughts.

The power of *Manthra*

Today we know how radio and television broadcasts are transmitted to all parts of the world by radio waves. Is it unbelievable that Krishna was able similarly to appear in the homes of *Gopikas* simultaneously? If a *Yantra* (machine) could achieve such a result, how much more power should be attributed to *Manthra*? The power of the divine name and form is all pervading. The electromagnetic waves in the atmosphere can preserve sounds and forms for all time.

When Swami was recently in Hyderabad, His activities there were seen on the TV in various parts of the country. If a mechanical contrivance could achieve this, is it incredible that much more could be done by the divine power of *manthras*? What is needed is the power to tune in to the Spirit just as appropriate tuning is needed to receive a radio or TV broadcast. Regard your heart as a radio receiver. Your concentration is the tuning device. You will experience the Divine when you tune your heart properly. This calls for firm, unwavering concentration.

The inauguration of the Navarathri celebrations means that you should use this occasion for offering worship to Nature and resolving to make sacred use of all natural resources.

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The mere removal of hate from the heart will not ensure Ananda. Love too should be cultivated. That is to say, uproot hate and plant love. If the absence of hate ensures Bhakthi, hill and anthill, tree and twig, mud and mountain--what do these hate ? They have no dislikes. But for this reason, do we ascribe Bhakthi to them at all? We do not, for that would be absurd. The Bhaktha must first be free from hate and full of Love.

Hate breeds fear, hate is the seedbed of anxiety, scandal and falsehood. It drains your mind of peace. You may have light without oil, fire without smoke, breeze without a bearer fanning you, a chilliness in the air of your room in the sizzling heat of summer--but, unless you are at peace with yourselves and with those around you, your pulse will be quick and your blood will be racing in rage and rancor. Love alone can alleviate anxiety and allay fear.

Sathya Sai Baba