

The Benefits one accrues when one observes a Navaratri Vrat.



--- Srimati Adi Parashakti Devi Durga ---

The All-Powerful Mother Durga holding the nine planets (Navagrahas) in her 9 hands while Devi holds the lion's manes with Her 10th hand. Our divine mother in Her full glory riding thru the universe. Jai Mata Di.

“Om doom durga-yai namah”

Om and salutations to the bestower of compassion, fearlessness and patience.
May you Supreme Devi Durga bless me with Your protection and love.

The information below is rare and sacred knowledge that most of the Hindu populace are likely not aware of. The sacred information provided below has been kindly supplied by our divine Mothers esp. Mother Saraswati.

This article is rather lengthy as it expounds on many topics. Here is a list of the said topics:-

Pages 2-3) Introduction

Pages 4-6) Srimad Devi Bhagavatam on the Navaratri vrata (fast).

Pages 6-9) Srimad Devi Bhagavatam on the benefits one accrues when one observes a Navaratri vrat.

Pages 9-11) How to Observe a Navaratri vrat (fast).

Pages 11-12) What is acceptable to perform/observe in Navaratri.

Page 12) What is forbidden in Navaratri.

Pages 12-14) Bada Bandi Mochana on the hoisting of Devi's 9 Red Jhandi's (Flags)

Page 14) Other web-links pertaining to this article on www.dipika.org.za

Introduction

Every year when the main Navaratri (do note there are 4 Navaratri's observed during the year – one for each season) approaches many of the Mother (shakta) devotees just seem to go into a “Mata/Devi zone”. I am one of them. I so love this extremely rewarding period as so do many other Mother devotees as well. Mother Durga is especially merciful in this period and graciously blesses Her devotee who observed the Navaratra Vrat with faith, devotion and without any ego. In this period a devotee should humble oneself immensely as this is what this auspicious period teaches us. This period should teach one that **HUMILITY** is a prerequisite to seek the Supreme Devi's blessings. In the Durga Paath (a.k.a Durga Saptashati, Chandi Paath), Devi Durga (at times alone and then at times with her expansions like Mother Kali, Mother Varahi, et al) was time and time again fighting against evil forces because they were so arrogant and full of themselves due to their envy, ego, and their endless thirst for power. These demons was so full of themselves that they actually had the audacity of challenging Devi to a duel. Gosh that was a foolish thing to do, as there could only be one obvious winner in the end.

Like in the Durga Paath katha Mother Durga teaches Her devotee...

- * to honour one's vows or promises like She does for Her devotee.
- * “with great power comes great responsibility” - this is quite self explanatory.
- * to have full faith in Her to remove the negative tendencies of one's minds and hearts.
- * that a positive attitude brings success. Any thoughts one has make circles around one like honey bees around a flower. So thoughts are so very powerful. Think positively in these 9 days and that will set you up for a more positive outlook after the Navaratri period is over.
- * She will inspire Her devotee to remove one's evil qualities from one's inner-selves.
- * She blesses Her worshipper that they would not be harmed by malefic forces, they will not have any fears from enemies, fires, weapons, natural disasters, good health, removes stubborn karma et al. The Navagrahas (9 planets) are extremely appeased {do note the picture provided on the first page} when one worships Devi.

Whenever the negative and malefic forces and demoniacal and cruel people become powerful and start troubling the positive, benefic and righteous humans, the Goddess incarnates to reinstate Righteousness (dharma).

During Navaratra, Devi is a thousand times more active and powerful than usual. To obtain the maximum spiritual benefits during this period, one should chant “Om doom durga-yai namah” and offer worship to Devi as much as possible during the period of Navaratra. The word “asura” is derived from ‘the one who remains engrossed only in enjoying life and in the indulgence of pleasure of the objects is an asura (demon)’. Such a Mahishasura is present in each human heart and he has taken control over the

internal Divine qualities of the human being. It is necessary to perform puja of Devi in this period to become free from the trap of Mahishasura, by realising this illusory form.

In this period one should remember never to underestimate the power of a woman. In the Markandeya Purana, Durga Saptashati, chapter 5 verses 124-125 the demon Sugreeva said “All the devas cannot stand face to face with Shumbha and Nishumbha and the other asuras in battle. Why mention you, O Devi, a single woman? Indra and all the other devas could not stand in battle against Shumbha and the other asuras, how will you, a woman, face them?”. By abducting Mother Sita, the evil King Ravana lost everything and finally his life as well.

Mother Durga is so understanding and reasonable and always willing not to provoke or start a war/duel/fight. Devi requested many-a-times that the demons should return what they had stolen from the devas and if they did that then there would be no war, yet the demons just sneered and outright refused to do so. This is mentioned in the Markandeya Purana, Durga Saptashati, chapter 8 verses 24-27 “And that invincible Devi, told Lord Shiva, 'Go, My Lord, as an ambassador to the presence of Shumbha and Nishumbha. Tell those two demons and the other asuras assembled there for battle. Let Indra obtain the three worlds and let the other devas enjoy the sacrificial oblations. If you demons do not heed to this request you shall go to the nether worlds if you wish to live. But if through pride of strength you are anxious for battle then lets battle. Let My jackals be satiated with your flesh”. So dear devotees as you may have noticed that the Deities aren't trigger happy just to start a war. They try to prevent a war at all costs.

Fasting is not just for spirituality, it makes one self-disciplined as well. Fasting trains ones mind and body to be prepare for any hardship in life and not to give up. Hence this Navaratri festival makes one learn that a positive attitude, peace and knowledge are of utmost importance in ones life. Navaratri teaches us that females are base of life. The Universe can not be functional without females. Devi Durga is the shakti (cosmic energy) and devotees receive positive energy during Navaratri vrat which helps them to overcome obstacles and attain prosperity, success, peace and wisdom in their lives.

Many famous personalities like Lord Raam, Shree Lakshman, Lord Shiva, Lord Narayana, Lord Indra and countless others observed this Navaratra vrat.

Over the many years of being a practising Purohita (Hindu Priest), I have noticed two periods that many Hindus really delve deeply in spirituality and that's for KAVADY, esp. Thai Poosam Kavady (end January-beginning February) and for Navaratri (the one that occurs now). It's no wonder that those who observes these periods with faith and devotion and strictly are very successful in their lives.

On an unfortunate note... I am well aware of some devotees who observe Navaratri to show to their family, friends and the world they are such a great devotee of the Mother. Do remember the popular 'new-age' quote “Less Is More”. Mother Durga is more interested in your faith and devotion rather than self promotion and pomp.

Srimad Devi Bhagavatam on the Navaratri vrata (fast).

Srimad Devi Bhagavatam Third Book, CHAPTER 26 states:- King Janamejaya (an ancient ruler of Bharata {India}) said:- “O Best of the Brahmins! What do people perform in the time of Navaratra? Especially in the Navaratra ceremony during the autumnal season (September-October) how is the ceremony to be performed? Kindly relate all this with the prescribed rules and regulations. What are the fruits therein of the Navaratra ceremony and what are the rules to be observed? Kindly describe all these to me.”

Srila Vyasadev (the compiler of all the Vedic Shastras) said:- O king! Hear about the vow of auspicious Navaratra. This has to be performed with loving devotion in the vernal season; but its special season is autumn. The two seasons, autumn and spring, are famous as the teeth of Lord Yamaraj (The Deity of Death); and these are the two seasons, it is difficult for people to cross over. Therefore every god-faring person should perform this Navaratra vow very carefully. People are quite afflicted with various terrible diseases in these two seasons autumn and spring and many lose their lives during these portions of the year. Therefore the wise should unquestionably worship with great devotion the Supreme Devi in these auspicious months of Chaitra (mid March to mid April) and Ashvin (mid September to mid October).

On the day previous to the commencement of the Navaratra vow, when the Amavasya (New Moon) tithi (Vedic day) commences, one should procure all the materials that will be required in the Navaratra worship and should eat only once in that tithi what is called Havishyanna (un-braised boiled rice and veg. with ghee – like during the 10 days when a person dies) and should on that day prepare Devi's place of worship for the following nine days. One should then invite, the Brahmins/priests, that observe fully the customs and usages, who are self restrained and versed in the Vedas, especially those who are skilled in the ceremony of worshipping the Devi.

Next, in the Pratipada tithi (the first Vedic day of the bright half of the moon i.e 13th October 2015), one should take one's morning ablutions, according to the rules. Afterwards one should appoint Brahmins/priests and give them water for washing their feet and Arghya (offerings of grass, rice, etc.,) and Madhuparka (an oblation of honey and milk, etc.) and gift, as one's means permit, clothings and ornaments to them. If one happens to be wealthy, one should never show one's miserliness here in making these gifts; for if the Brahmins are satisfied, they will try their best to make the ceremony a complete success. O king! The Chandi Paath (a.k.a Durga Paath, Durga Saptashati) are chanted/read on this occasion, for the satisfaction and pleasure of the Supreme Goddess; and either nine, five, three, or at least one Brahmin should be appointed for the purpose of this great Puja. All these being done, the able person is to perform the ceremony preparatory to the Devi worship, (in which the priest utters the Vedic mantra's).

O king! When the ceremony has been thus commenced, one should place on the Vedi/Bedi (a raised platform; an altar), a Murthi of Devi or a picture or one should place an earthen water-pot, on that throne, thoroughly purified by the Vedic Mantras, and

filled fully with the water. One should place on one's side all the materials of worship in their due places, and then have the music and other sounding drums played, for the good fortune and prosperity of the family.

On the previous night, one should observe fasting, or on the previous day one should take only one meal of Havishyanna (un-braised boiled rice, with veg and ghee) and on the next day one should make a Sankalpa (an avowal of the purpose to perform a rite) and then begin worship. One should pray before the Goddess thus, "O Mother, Mother of the World! I will perform this excellent Navaratra vow; be pleased to help me in every respect."

One is to observe, as far as possible, all the rules enjoined in this vow and then utter the mantras and do the worship according to the prescribe rules guided by the Brahmin/priest.

First of all, one should worship duly the Goddess, presenting Her Chandan (sandal paste), Aguru (a fragrant wood, the aloe wood), Camphor, flowers, Dhoopa (incense) and lamps. Next one should present fruits like coconut, pomegranate (anar), bananas, oranges, ripe jack fruit, and various other delicious fruits and then, offering Devi Payasam (kheer/sweet rice) and other food preparations with a heart, full of devotion.

Now, for performing the Homa (havan) ceremony one should prepare, a triangular pit dug in the ground. Daily, one should worship the Devi with various lovely puja articles and finally make a great festivity with dancing, singing and music.

Those who want learning, victory, home and happiness, they should worship the Kalyani, the fructifier of all desires. Devotees should worship Rohini duly for the cure of diseases. For the destruction of enemies, the worship of the Kalika with devotion is the best. For prosperity and riches, Chandika is to be worshipped with devotion. O king! For the enchanting and overpowering of one's enemies, for the removal of miseries and poverty, and for victory in battles, Shambhavi (Parvati) worship is the best. For the destruction of terrible enemies and for happiness in the next world, the worship of Durga is the safest and best. People worship Subhadra when they want their desires to be fulfilled. She who saves from danger her devotees and who always delivers one from various difficulties and troubles, whom all the Devas are incapable to know, I worship with devotion that Durga Devi the destroyer of all calamities. Thus, in the mantras, above described, people should always worship the virgin girls (Kanya puja), gifting them clothings, ornaments, garlands, scents, and various other articles.

CHAPTER 27:- If one is unable to worship Devi on all nine days, then it is advised that one should perform the special worship on the eighth day (Ashtami tithi) in Navaratra.

In ancient times, on the eighth day, Devi Kali, appeared on that day, surrounded by hundreds and thousands of Yoginis (a type of high powered female spirit - female attendants of Devi Kali). Therefore one should worship Devi in particular on the eighth day with scents, garlands, and pastes and various offerings. On this day Payasa (a.k.a Kheer, sweet rice, sweet rice pudding) is to be especially offered to Devi. The Homa (Havan) ceremonies, feeding of the Brahmins or priests, and the worship of Devi are performed with various offerings as well as offerings of fruits and flowers and in liberal

quantities. O king! Those who are unable to observe the fasting in this Navaratra Puja, will reap the same fruits, if they observe fasting for the last three days - Saptami, Ashtami, and Navami tithis (20th – 22nd October 2015). On the seventh, eighth, and ninth Vedic days, in these three tithis (lunar days) if one worships Devi with devotion, one will acquire all the merits. When the Devi's worship, Homa, Kumari worship and the feasting of the Brahmanas, are completed, know that the Navaratri Puja is now completed.

Srimad Devi Bhagavatam on the benefits one accrues when one observes a Navaratri vrat.

O King Janamejaya! No worship or vow or charitable gifts extant in this world, can be compared to, as regards to their meritorious effects, with this Navaratri Puja. On observing this sacred Navaratra Vrat, one obtains riches, children, grand-children, prosperity, happiness, longevity, health and heaven and even the final beatitude (blessings). Those who are desirous of learning, riches, or children will obtain them all if they perform this most auspicious Navaratra ceremony with faith, which is also able to confer fortunes on a devotee. On the performance of this sacrifice, those who desire great intellect will obtain great intellect and one who is deprived of one's home will get back one's home.

Those who did not, in their previous births, perform this meritorious vrat, they become diseased, poor and devoid of children in their present births. Those who have not performed the Navaratra ceremony, how can they acquire riches in this world and acquire happiness and peace in the next?

One who has worshipped the Devi with young leaves of the Bel tree, besmeared with red sandal paste, it is that person that will undoubtedly become successful in this world. That person who has failed to worship the Goddess of the whole universe, who fructifies all the pursuits of human life, who destroys all the troubles, pains and miseries, who is all auspicious Bhagavati Bhavani (Durga), that person is sure to pass his/her days in this world, wretched, impoverished, and surrounded by his/her enemies on all sides.

When Hari (Lord Vishnu), Hara (Lord Shiva), Brahma, Indra, Agni, Varuna, Kuvera, and the Sun when all these Devas possessing all the wealth and powers and filled with the highest felicities, when they meditate constantly the Goddess of the universe, Who is All Existence Intelligence, and Bliss, then what to speak of the human beings! How is it that persons do not worship that Devi, the One that leads all human pursuits to success! Why should not anybody worship that Devi, the awarder of all desires and wealth? And how is it, that a person desiring one of the four objects of human pursuits, dharma, wealth, desires, and the final beatitude, observes not the vow regarding that Deity. So much so, that even a person who has committed a heinous offence, five such are enumerated, viz. (1) killing a Brahman, (2) drinking liquor, (3) stealing gold, (4) adultery with the wife of a spiritual guide (5) associating with any such person, if that person performs the Navaratra vow, he/she will be absolved entirely from all such sins; of this there is no doubt.

O king! Once there lived in the country of Kosala (India), a trader, supporting many relations and dependants in his family, whose provisions he had to provide. He had many sons and daughters; when they were very hungry and distressed, then they used to get a little food and that in the evening, only once in twenty-four hours. That trader, too, worked under another, the whole day; and when it was evening, he used also to take his meals. Thus, being very much anxious and distressed, he maintained somehow or other his family members. This trader was of a quiet temper, of a good conduct, truthful, always ready to act religiously, devoid of anger, steady and contented, void of vanity and jealousy; daily he used to worship the Devas, Pitris, and the guests and used to take his meals after all his family members had taken their meals. Thus many days passed away when that good trader, named Sushila, being very much perplexed with poverty and hunger, asked a Brahmin “O Bhudeva! (deva incarnate on the earth) kindly tell me positively how this state of poverty can be got rid off! O holy minded! Kindly advise me such as preserves my honour; I do not want wealth, nor do I like to be a rich man; O Brahmin! I want just enough to meet with the expenses, incurred in maintaining my family; please advise so that I may be able to earn this much only. I have many children; I barely have food and it is sufficient enough to give them just a handful of rice. O Brahmin! What am I do? I have got no wealth; my heart is burning with grief and sorrow. My daughter has come to a marriageable age; I have no money. Her age has exceeded the marriageable age limit. Alas! What am I to do? O Brahmin! I am expressing my sorrow for all that. You are merciful, and all-knowing; tell me any means, be it asceticism, gifts, vow, or the reciting of any mantras by which I can maintain my family; I want wealth just sufficient for that purpose and nothing more. Kindly advise some means by which my family members can become happy in this world.”

Vyasa-dev said:- The Brahmin that used to practice vows when thus asked by the trader told him gladly “O trader! Observe now the Navaratri vow, the most auspicious, and worship the Devi Bhagavati, perform Homa (havan), and feed the Brahmins. Have the Vedas and Puranas recited and then recite the Shakti mantra (there are numerous Shakti mantras and one of the most widely chanted Shakti mantra is “Om Doom Durga-yai namah”) and try, as much as you can, to perform other concomitant (accompanying or associated) ceremonies; and your desires will thus be undoubtedly fulfilled. There is no other vow superior to this Navaratri vow in this world; this vow is very holy and will bring unto you untold happiness. This vow leads to wisdom and liberation; destroys enemies and increases posterity and prosperity.

In former days, Shree Raamchandra suffered very much owing to Him being deprived of His kingdom; and, then on account of His wife Sita-devi being abducted by the demon king Ravana. Subsequently Lord Raam performed this Navaratra vow in Kiskindhya. Though troubled very much, on account of the bereavement of Sita-devi, still Lord Raam observed the Vow of Navaratra and worshipped the Goddess according to the prescribed rules and rites. As a fruit of this worship Lord Raam was able to bridge the great ocean and dispense of the giant Kumbha Karna, Meghanada (Ravan’s son) and Ravan himself; and subsequently He was able to rescue His beloved Sita-devi. Lord

Raam installed Vibhasana on the throne of Lanka and at last returned to Ayodhya and reigned there without any enemies. O best of the Vaishyas! Lord Raam, of incomparable prowess, was able to obtain happiness in this world on account of the influence of this Navaratra ceremony. Vyasa-dev said:- O king! That Vaishya, hearing thus the Brahmin's words, made him his Guru, and without any laziness, recited the Shakti mantra for nine nights and worshipped the Devi, with great caution and with various offerings. Thus for nine consecutive years he devoted himself to the Japa of the seed mantra of Maya, till at last, when the ninth year was completed, the Great Goddess appeared distinctly before his eyes on the night of the great Astami tithi (the eighth Vedic day of the bright half) and gave him various boons and delivered the Vaishya from poverty and bestowed upon him wealth and his other desired things.

CHAPTER 30:- Lord Raam I will now tell how Ravana can be killed. Perform, in this very month of Ashwin, this vow with devotion. Fasting for nine nights, the worship of the Devi, and repeating the Mantra silently and performing the Homa ceremony, observing all the rules, will certainly fulfill one's all the desires. You should offer prayers before the Goddess, perform Japa and Homa ceremony. If You do all this, You will certainly be able to release Sita. In days of yore, Lord Vishnu, Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma and the other Devas in the Heavens all performed this worship of the Great Goddess. Therefore, Lord Raam every person desiring happiness, specially those that have fallen under great difficulties, ought to observe this auspicious ceremony, without the least hesitation. Great Rishi's observed this worship before. When some stole away the wife of Brihaspati (the planet Jupiter), the Guru of the Devas, he, too, by the force of this Navaratra worship, obtained his wife back. Therefore O king! celebrate the Puja for the destruction of Ravana.

This Navaratra vow was practised before by Lord Indra for the destruction of Vritra-asura, by Lord Shiva for the destruction the demon Tripura-asura, by Lord Narayana for the destruction of the powerful demons Madhu and Kaitava (the original bad boys of the universe); so you should also firmly resolve to perform duly this vow with your whole heart.”

Shree Raam replied:- “O Ocean of Knowledge! Who is that Devi? What is Her influence; whence has She appeared? What is Her Name? And how is that vow to be duly observed? Kindly describe all these to Me in detail.”

Srila Narada Muni answered:- “Listen, O Lord Raam! That Goddess is Eternal and the Ever Constant Primordial Force. If You worship Her, all Your difficulties will be removed and all Your desires will be fulfilled. She is the source of the Universe and all living beings. Without Her force, no one would be able even to move their limbs. That Supreme Auspicious Goddess is the preserving energy of Lord Vishnu, is the creative power of Lord Brahma, and is the destroying force of Lord Shiva. Whatever there exists in this infinite Universe, whether Temporal or Eternal, She is the Underlying Force of all.

Lord Raam replied:- “O best of the Munis! Describe briefly all the rules and regulations as to how that vow and worship are to be performed. With My heart, full of devotion

and faith, I will worship Devi today.”

Srila Narada Muni said:- “O Raghava! On a clean plot of ground, prepare an altar. Place the Goddess there and observe a fast for nine days. O king! I will be Your priest and I will, with great energy, carry out this yajña to fulfil the work of the Devas.”

Srila Vyasa-dev said:- Then the All-powerful Shree Raam, after hearing all from the great Muni, and on the approach of the month of Ashvin, prepared the altar on the top of a hill and placed the Auspicious Goddess, the Mother of the Universe and, observing all the rules, performed the vow and worshipped the Great Goddess. Observing a fast for nine days, Lord Raam celebrated the vow and duly offered sacrifices, performed the worship and Homa ceremonies. When, on the grand night of the eighth lunar day (Ashtami), the two brothers completed the vow as advised by Srila Narada Muni, the Supreme Devi was very pleased with Their worship to Her and appeared before Them, mounted on a lion, and remaining there on the mountain top, addressed Lord Raam and Shree Lakshmana, in a sweet grave tone, like the rumbling of a rain cloud, thus:- “Lord Raam and Shree Lakshmana, I am satisfied with Your worship towards Me; so now You may ask from Me what You desire. Lord Raam replied “O Devi You are sent by the Deva's for the destruction of Ravana”. Devi replied “You Lord Raam now appeared on this planet as the son of Maharaja Dasharatha, at the request of the Devas, harassed by Ravana. This powerful ape race (Varanas), born as Deva incarnates, all endowed with great power by Me, will help You Lord Raam. Your younger brother Shree Lakshmana is the incarnate of Shesha-Naaga serpent; and He will kill Indrajit, the powerful son of Ravana. You will destroy Ravana; then You would worship Me, with great devotion, in the vernal season and then enjoy Your kingdom according to Your liking. For full 11,000 years You will reign on this earth.”

Srila Vyasa-deva said:- O king! Thus saying, the great Devi disappeared. Lord Raam became very glad and, completing that most auspicious ceremony, performed the Puja on the tenth day and gifted many presents to Srila Narada Muni and proceeded towards the ocean towards Lanka. O king! Thus stimulated by the Supreme Energy, Lord Raam went to the shores of the ocean, accompanied by Shree Laksmana and the apes/monkeys. Then He erected the bridge across the ocean and destroyed Ravana. His unparalleled fame spread everywhere throughout the three Lokas (worlds). He who hears with devotion this excellent account of the Supreme Devi, will obtain the greatest happiness in this world, and, in the end, will get the final beatitude (blessings). There is no doubt in this.

How to Observe a Navaratri 9-day vrat (fast)

Navaratri fasting rules varies from community to community and the same fasting rules applies for fasts like Ekadashi, Janmashtami and Shivaratri. So the vrat varies from person to person according and depending on their current state of health, comfort and desire. Try to keep your body, mind and soul clean (as far as possible) and focus on Devi for the 9 days. One may during the 9 days perform some special puja and havan for Devi and chant Devi mantras. It is highly recommended to visit Devi temples

during this period. Also one may also play and hear Devi mantras on their mobile phone or on a CD player.

(kindly Ctrl-click [\[HERE-1\]](#), [\[HERE-2\]](#), [\[HERE-3\]](#), [\[HERE-4\]](#), [\[HERE-5\]](#) to download these mantras I personally selected from the Internet). Fasting for Navaratri when the mother is so generous and merciful is a very good time to make progress in one's spiritual practice/path or to invoke the energy of Devi and to purify one's body and mind of so many impurities and on so many different levels.

There seems to be many unfortunate misconceptions about observing fasts. When one read the kathas on Ekadashi, Shivaratri and the like, the heroes and characters of the kathas derive enormous benefit from accidentally (or unconsciously) observing holy Vrats/fasts. If one receive that kind of punya karma (blessings/merits/mercy) from unconsciously fasting, surely people who knowingly attempt this vrat can't be worse off? Isn't it? Everyone needs to start somewhere, you can't start observing every vrat strictly and immediately, it often takes time and sometimes devotees are never able to follow it up. But rather than the Navaratri fast being projected as impossible to observe, we should make clear the BASICS and urge individuals to perform the vrat/fast correctly. Many websites seem to simply demoralize individuals by publishing long lists of prohibited foods (I am better than you? nana-nana type of syndrome). This is so unfortunate that when we think after reading about the benefits of fasting for Navaratri so many benefits are bestowed upon the individual but apparently eating say Brinjal (Eggplant) which is not a meat derivative (including onion, garlic, et al) is catastrophic. Hmmm...

The essence of this Navaratri fast is to decrease eating and sleeping so that one can spend as much time as possible on hearing, chanting and remembering Devi in Her many forms. There are some practitioners whose diet in this period is much more strict than others. Those who fully observe this fast strictly do not eat, drink or sleep much in these 9 days. Others consume only fruits and milk and spend more time being absorbed in chanting and serving Devi. To increase the austerity means to increase the benefit of this fast! So some follow a stricter regime, but one should not impose it on anyone else. That's so not cool. Basically your mind, body and soul should be fixed on Devi in this period. To elaborate on this point further in the Srimad Bhagavatam Maha Purana Canto 9 chapter 4 relates how Maharaja Ambarish use every part of his body in the service of the Supreme Lord Shree Krishna. "He would fix his mind upon the lotus feet of Krishna, to use his words to describe the qualities of the Lord, to use his hands for matters as cleaning the Lord's temple and to engage his ears in listening to the transcendental talks about the Lord. He used his eyes to look at the deities, the temples and buildings of the Lord, he used his nose to smell the fragrance of the tulsi leaves on the lotus flower formed by His feet and used his tongue to relish the food that is offered to Him. By using his legs to walk to the Lord's holy places, by using his head to bow down to the feet of the Lord and by engaging his senses more in being a servant of Him than a servant of his lusty desires. Thus he exercised all the different forms of devotional service and ruled. This is the best way to serve Devi in this period – of course within reason.

There are no hard and fast rules recommended for any fasting in Sanatan Dharma (a.k.a Hinduism). Hinduism isn't "in your face" or dogmatic in its approach, rather Hinduism is a "way of life". One is not forced or compelled to perform any pujas and fasting et al. Many Hindus are aware of karma - where one is the master of one's own destiny – so the onus is wholly upon an individual. There is always scope for flexibility.

SO:-

- * One may have just one vegetarian meal during the day or after sunset.
- * One may only live on fruits and liquids for the 9 days.
- * One may abstain from all grains like one observes on Ekadashi.
- * One may abstain from your favourite foods meaning if you like fruits abstain from that.
- * One may abstain from salt. If you are abstaining from salt then DIPIKA has compiled an article to assist with the foods you may prepare in these 9 days. Kindly Ctrl-Click ([HERE](#)).
- * Some devotees abstain from non-sattwic, non vegetarian foods, as well as cigarettes and alcohol and drugs (prescription drugs are acceptable).
- * Some devotees read holy books esp those shastras relating to Devi (like Durga Paath, Bandi Paath, et al).
- * Some devotees chant Mata's chalisa daily.

So there are many many ways to approach and please Devi in this auspicious period.

What is acceptable to perform/observe in Navaratri:-

- * Offering of Surya jal, lighting of deeyas, performing aartee and other forms of daily puja which constitute one's nityakarma (daily worship) should continue.
- * Japa (chanting the holy names of God).
- * Performing charity liberally.
- * Reading of shastras (scriptures).
- * Attending satsanghs and visiting temples esp. Devi temples.
- * Performing ceremonies relating to DEATH (viz a funeral, 10th day, 13th day, 6th month and 11 and half months Shraddha pujas and BIRTH OF A CHILD (like chatti, etc).
- * Commencement of Studies.
- * Upanayanam Samskara (The Sacred thread/Jeneo ceremony).
- * Entering a new house (Griha Pravasha) or signing of any papers pertaining to the house.
- * Munda Samskara (Hair cutting ceremony generally performed in the 3rd or 5th year for a boy).
- * Vivah Samskara (Wedding ceremony).
- * Commencement of a Pilgrimage.
- * Commencement of a Graha (planetary) fast or performance of a Graha Shanti Puja/Havan.
- * Commencement of construction of a new building.
- * Purchasing of a vehicle (vahan).
- * Signing of any important papers.

*** A common question would be asked what happens if a female has her monthly cycle before or during Navaratri? Can she still continue offering her Dhaar to Devi and

observe the entire Navaratri period? The answer would be a resounding **YES**. For more information on this controversial topic kindly follow this link to this article on DIPIKA called "[Hinduism's views on Menstruation](#)" Ctrl-Click ([HERE](#)).

What is forbidden in Navaratri:-

- * Consuming any meat, alcohol or smoking.
- * Any type of animal sacrifice prayer.
- * Should there be a death in the family and the deceased belongs to the family lineage "Kul" (for example one's paternal grandfather then the son and his family is affected) then one is forbidden (for 10 days after cremation) to observe the Navaratri vrat. This is as per the Garuda Purana Preta Khanda chapter 13 verses 20-21.
- * Onion and garlic (mushrooms as well) are generally avoided. Vrat recipes make use of curd (yogurt/paneer) and ginger instead. Do note this is **NOT** the "Hare Krsna" way.
- * Common (table) salt is not used as it's processed. Instead rock salt (sendha namak/ fasting salt) is used. I personally recommend "Himalayan Pink Salts".
- * Coitus should be avoided if one is observing this vrat strictly. For more information on this controversial topic kindly follow this link to this article on DIPIKA called "[Hinduism on sex when observing a particular fast](#)" Ctrl-Click ([HERE](#)).

The hoisting of Devi's 9 Red Jhandi's (Flags)

In the Bada Bandi Mochana's Vindhyeshvari Chalisa, the following appears, "Bowling again and again to Vindhyeshvari Devi (Mother Durga), repeatedly bowing to the Mother of the three worlds, the One who never delays in helping Her devotee. Whosoever feeds the brahmanas in the Navaratri, Devi surely becomes pleased with that person and bestows a meritorious child to that person. One should make an offering of Dvaja (flag/banner) and a coconut (it must contain water); and one should also perform puja to Devi as well, observing all the requisite rites to Her."

As such, one can read from the above information, the reason behind many devotees of the Mother offering the Mother in her 9 different expansions small red flags (Jhandi's) on the first day of Navaratri (13th October 2015). Kindly note this is an optional offering. (An example of an offering of 9 flags is depicted in the picture next page).

If one desire to make this offering – i.e. hoist these 9 little red flags (Jhandi's), then one can follow the method outlined below. One should have the following prepared before the start of the hoisting of the Dvaja's (flags). 1 large pot, clean sand to fill the pot, 9 thin bamboo sticks or 9 one metre long sticks, 9 little red flags (15cm by 15 cm, triangle in shape - the cloth can be plain, or have a printed picture of the Mother). Wash the bamboo sticks with turmeric water. Let the sticks dry. Add the sand to the pot. Smear each of the sticks with red sindhoor, while chanting "Om doom durga-yai namah". Then tie one Jhandi (red flag) per bamboo stick.



As you place each bamboo stick into the sand in the pot, chant the following mantras – one for each of the 9 Devi expansions of Mother Durga viz... Chant :

Sabse bole Shreemati Shailputri devi kee Jai (plant the 1st bamboo stick), then chant...
Sabse bole Shreemati Brahma-charini devi kee Jai (plant the 2nd bamboo stick), then chant..
Sabse bole Shreemati Chandra-ghanta devi kee Jai (plant the 3rd bamboo stick), then chant...
Sabse bole Shreemati Kushmanda devi kee Jai (plant the 4th bamboo stick), then chant..
Sabse bole Shreemati Skanda-mata devi kee Jai (plant the 5th bamboo stick), then chant...
Sabse bole Shreemati Katyayani devi kee Jai (plant the 6th bamboo stick), then chant...
Sabse bole Shreemati Kalaratri devi kee Jai (plant the 7th bamboo stick), then chant...
Sabse bole Shreemati Mahagauri devi kee Jai (plant the 8th bamboo stick), then chant...
Sabse bole Shreemati Siddhidatri devi kee Jai (plant the 9th bamboo stick).

The pot, which now has the bamboo sticks with red flags placed in it, is kept at your Devi Thaan (a place designated for offering Devi prayers and dhaar in your yard). A question will be asked by some “I live in an apartment, what should I do?” In this case if your flat has a balcony then you place the pot outside in the balcony. If you don't have a balcony then place the pot next to your prayer place by your Lakshmi lamp. Do use your discretion. What do you do with these 9 poles/sticks and flags for next years Navaratri. You may burn the sticks and flags in the havan kund after your next Navaratri puja is completed. I have an uber environmental friendly outlook on life and this is what I advise you should do. When the Havan contents is totally burned out and cooled down, divide the contents into 4 parts. Place a quarter of the burnt contents on a red cloth (20 cm by 20 cm). Bring together the four corners and it then becomes like a pouch (potli) tie the middle with a rubber band or thin red cloth. Mark it with a swastika sign with a marker like the picture depicts in the next page.



--- A Potli ---

Make 4 of such potli's and then bury (dig a hole in the ground of about 20cm deep) them in the 4 corners of your yard. When this happens Mother Earth gets rejuvenated and blesses the yard and family. Isn't this method much more sensible than disposing the contents into the sea/ocean, dam or river. This is www.dipika.org.za take on protecting Mother Earth from further abuse.

Do note that www.dipika.org.za has released other articles w.r.t Navaratri . The following links are the direct web-links to these articles on DIPIKA

1) Navaratri 2015 (13th – 22nd October).

Quick web-link to DIPIKA <http://dipika.org.za/?p=755>

2) The Nine Colours of Navaratri.

Quick web-link to DIPIKA <http://dipika.org.za/?p=751>

3) Sarasvati Puja and Havan (20th) and Durga Ashtami Puja and havan (21st).

Quick web-link to DIPIKA <http://dipika.org.za/?p=748>

4) Shakambhari Devi (the Mother of Nourishments).

Quick web-link to DIPIKA <http://dipika.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Shakambhari-Devi.pdf>

5) The Importance of Fasting Saltless and Saltless Recipes.

Quick web-link to DIPIKA <http://dipika.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/The-Importance-of-Fasting-Saltless-and-Saltless-Recipes.pdf>

6) Hinduism on sex when observing a particular fast.

Quick web-link to DIPIKA <http://dipika.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Hinduism-on-sex-when-fasting-.pdf>

7) Hinduism's views on Menstruation.

Quick web-link to DIPIKA <http://dipika.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Hinduism-s-views-on-Menstruation.pdf>

Kindly note:- Some the information above may portray the Celestials as adharmic, but you should remember much information that one reads in our Shastras is totally inconceivable to us mere mortals. To truly understand our Vedic Scriptures can be quite an effort indeed hence It requires a Guru to explain the intricacies and the secrets it has in It. Every event conveys some noble secrets in some direct or indirect way. You have to understand It with one's inner self and not like a novel. The personalities in our Vedic Scriptures are of course not worthy of comparison to the characters we come across in a novel. In each personality in our Vedic Scriptures, are there to convey message(s) to us. But let me state here categorically, when the Supreme Personality of Godhead Shree Krishna (a.k.a Lord Raam, Shree Lakshman) and His devotees like Lord Brahma, Lord Shiva, Mother Durga, Lord Indra, the 9 planets, and so forth performs an act, it should NEVER be questioned. Yes, this will not go down well with many so called “new-aged” “ I want the truth” people out there, but honestly what right does one have to question the Lord and his elevated servants? God can do what ever He pleases and He is not accountable to no being... BUT His servants are. The Lord has a reason for everything He does, and who gives one the right to question our Dear Lord... His Lila (pastime) is beyond human comprehension but I have humbly tried to explain a little (with my minuscule intelligence) above as to why the Lord or His devotee acted in this regard.

DISCLAIMER:- Do note that Dipika is not affiliated to any Hindu group or organization. We at Dipika choose to remain an independent repository of spiritual advice. We appreciate that there are variances between organisations and humbly request that if our views differ from yours that you respect our decision not to conform to the prescripts of your particular organisation. We remain committed to spiritual advice which is based on scripture.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this article. We pray that this article will assist you in some way and we also pray that it helps you to appreciate the beauty and remarkable foresight of our ancient Hindu culture. We wish to educate all readers and demystify the path of Hinduism (Sanatan Dharma). Please feel free to share these articles with friends and family who do not have direct access to our website or articles. If you use the articles in any form including blogs and/or as part of other articles kindly credit our website as a source. We hope that the articles serve as a reference to you and your family when you need clarification of certain topics. Jai Hind... Jai Mata Di.

Compiled for the upliftment of Sanathan Dharma
Narottam das & Arjun Nandlal
Email info@dipika.org.za