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PREFACE

Tvadeeyabhirwagbhisthava janani vacham stutiriyam

These sacred Navaratri Hymns shed light on the methods of worship during *Devi SaranNavaratri*s employed by Parampujya Avadhoota Dattapeethadhipathi Jagatguru Sri Ganapathi Sachidananda Swamiji. These priceless gems recount the various methods of external worship, used over the past few decades by our revered Satgurudeva, and they allow us to contemplate upon their inner meaning. Considering Her as omnipresent, supreme ruler, and *Parasakti*¹, these memoirs describe the hidden glory of the Mother. Let us see, feel and be absorbed into the methods of worship, blessed by the Divine Mother in her aspect of the *Guru*². Salutations to the Divine and merciful Objective of our infinitely compassionate and ever loving Pujya Satgurudeva, which has blessed us with teachings, prayers, speeches, divine hymns and other methods.

Avyajakarunamurthir Gnaanadhvantha

deepika

O! Mother! Pardon our transgressions; you are the lamp of knowledge that expels ignorance from our minds. There is nothing I can do other than my salutations to Thee.

¹ The Supreme Force or Great Power

² Preceptor

Navaratri Keertanas – Avatarika

In a year, the *purvabhaga*³ comprises of the seasons of spring or *vasant*, summer or *greeshma* and rains or *varsha*; whilst the *sisira*, *sarat* and *hemant* seasons constitute the *uttarabagha*⁴. After being cleansed by the rainy season, the immaculate *sarath ritu*⁵ makes its entry. The *sarath ritu* is an important *sandhikala*, where *sandhi* denotes union, for instance the daily dawn and dusk are the union of day and night; and *Ugadi*⁶ denotes the union of years.

This union denotes a propitious premonition for new beginnings. Hence, people undertake a vow to keep their mind and heart on the prescribed *dharmic*⁷ path, during this period. Accordingly, during this important union, at the beginning of *sarath ritu*, on the auspicious day of Asvayuja Sukla Padyami, people take the vow of SaranNavaratri. Such a vow is also undertaken at the time of *sandhikala*⁸ of Ugadi, when it is known as the vow of VasanthaNavaratri.

In this manner during the beginning of the two important phases of the year, namely, the *Purvartha*⁹ and *Uttarartha*¹⁰, people take a vow, lasting nine days. During this vow, they exercise control over their body, mind and speech and obtain all round health and the blessings of the Almighty. It should be noted that this tradition has played a central role in Indian culture.

The *SaranNavaratri* vow is undertaken in the month of *Asveyujamasa*¹¹, which is also known as *Aswinimasa* and *Ishamasa*. The *Aswini* star is also described by the name *Ashvayuk*. During the auspicious time of the *Aswini nakshatra*, if the full moon is totally visible, then that month is termed as *Aswina* or *Asvayuja*. During the *varsharitu*¹², there will be rains, which result in a harvest, and the latter denotes prosperity. Consequently, this month is known as the *Ishamasa*. Hence, the offering of prayers to the Goddess Parasakti, who is endowed with the form of nature, during this auspicious time; constitutes the *Devisarannavratra Diksha*¹³ of worshipping Her.

Diksha is not what commences on the very same day itself. The previous day the aspirant has to adopt some required stipulations, and he should resolve to continue with

³ The former part

⁴ The latter part

⁵ Season

⁶ New Year's Day

⁷ Righteous

⁸ Time of union

⁹ Previous Half

¹⁰ Subsequent Half

¹¹ October

¹² Rainy season

¹³ Vow

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that frame of mind. This is the requirement of the *Shastras*¹⁴. Therefore, in the srouthayajnas and istiyagas the process that is termed as *anvadhana*, and the *sradhas* and *vrata* worship procedures have to be started beforehand.

These procedures aim to welcome and attain the blessings of Goddess Parasakti, and are not intended to be a mere display of one's grandeur. Moreover, the absence of people or a shortfall in the required material should not bring about an interruption to these procedures. In addition, the Sastras enjoin that all possible precautions have to be taken beforehand to avoid mistakes. Accordingly, Sri Swamiji, explains in the evening, to a congregation of *ritviks* the method of worship and other details, in a brief manner, on the previous day itself, which is the *amavasa* or new moon day.

That resolve constitutes the first hymn. In this song Sri Swamiji explains the name of the goddess who is chiefly worshipped, contemplation of the goddess *Navadurga*, *Annarchana* or worship with rice, *Dravyarchana* or worship with materials, contemplation of the *navachakra* deities and the procedures to be adopted for conducting the *Navaratri* prayers.

1. Navarātri Pūjāvidhi (Khaṇḍagati 5 Mātra)

Pallavi: Ārirā - Dhayīṣāmi Dēvīm Parēśīm

Śrīmātaraṃ Bhāvayāmīha Bhaktyā

AnuPallavi: Āśvinē Māsē Śaradṛtau Dēvī

Navarātri Pūjā Vrata Dīkṣitōhaṃ

1. Śrī Śaila Putrīm Pratipaddinē Tām

Kṣīraudaṅkā Prītām Sugātrīm

Hāridrapūjyām Śrīgaurikām Tām

Trailōkya Mōhana Cakrēśvarīm Bhajē

2. Śrī Brahmācāriṇīm Dinakē Dvītīyē

Rājarājēśvarīm Harasundarīm Tām

Mudgāna Śāṭikā Paripūjanēna

Sarvēṣṭa Pari Pūra-Yitrīm Bhajāmi

3. Yā Candraghaṇṭēti Durgilakṣmīti

Divasē Tṛtīyē Kila Pūjyatē Ca

Sarṣapaudana Kuṅku-Mārcā Sutuṣṭā

¹⁴ Sacred scriptures

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Sarvasaṅkṣōbhīṅ Cakrēśīkāvyaṭ ...3

4. Kūṣmāṇḍa Dēvatē Mīnākṣi Dēvi

Tvaṃ Vai Caturthyāṃ Prasamijya Sēhi.

Śākāna Puṣpādi-Bhissēvyasē Tvaṃ

Sarvasaubhāgyadāṃ Tvāṃ Cintayāmi ...

5. Yā Stūyasē Parā Śaktiruttamā

Skandamātā Pañca-Mē Dinē Mahatī

Citrāna Tuṣṭāmla--Phalamārpya Dēvīṃ

Sarvārthasādhikāṃ Śirasā Namāmi

Pallavi: Ārirā---Dhayiṣāmi Dēvīṃ Parēśīṃ

Śrīmātaraṃ Bhāvayāmīha Bhaktyā

6. Mūlabhānvita Dinē Saptamē Ṣaṣṭhē

Hē Sarasvati Dēvi Kātyāyanīṭṭē

Nāgavallī Pūga Madhuraudanaistvāṃ

Sarvarakṣākarīṃ

Prasamarkayāmi

7. Saptamī Pūjanē Kālarātrīti

Tvaṃ Viśālākṣīti Saṃsēvyasē Hi

Āmlāna Māṣaca-Kraih Pūjyasē Yā

Sarvarōgān Handhi Mūlasaktē Mē

8. Durgāṣṭamī Pūja-Nē Mahāgaurī

Caṇḍikārādhyatē Sarvasakti Ssā

Gauḍāna Sauvarṇa Niṣkaissamarcyā

Sarvasiddhipradā Santrāyatāṃ Naḥ

Pallavi: Ārirā--Dhayiṣāmi Dēvīṃ

Parēśīṃ

Śrīmātaraṃ Bhāvayāmīha Bhaktyā

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9. Yā Mahānavamī Di-Nē Siddhidēti

Tōṣṭūyamāṇā Khalu Śaktidurgā

Dadhyanna Saktā Nārikēlējyā

Ānandadāyikā Hṛdi Bhāvyatē Sā ..9

10. Vijayākhyā Daśamī Di-Nē Parādēvī

Rājarājēśvarī Sakalārapūrṇā

Navacakravāsini Navadurgikā Mām

Śrī Saccidānanda Ghanarūpikāvyāt ...10

Pallavi: Ārirā-Dhayīśāmi Dēvīm Parēśīm

Śrīmātaraṃ Bhāvayāmīha Bhaktyā

**Method of Deeksha, Dravya (Ingredient) Devata(Presiding Deity) explanation,
Sankalpa**

1. Ārirā Dhayīśāmi Dēvīm Parēśīm

Pallavi: I offer my prayers to Sri Mata, thinking of her with due reverence. In this holy place, during the auspicious *Saradritu*, in the month of *asvayuja*, I undertake the vow of Devi Navaratri.

Charanam 1: On the first day of this vow, or the *Padyami*; I pray with offerings of Ksheeranna¹⁵ and turmeric to the *Aradhyadevatha*¹⁶, who is deemed to be *Gauri Devi*, and is invoked as *Sailaputridevi*, the first among the *Nava Durgas*; and as *Trilokya Mohanachakresvari* of the *Bhupura*, which is the first among the *Avaranas*¹⁷ of the *Sri Chakra*.

Charanam 2: On the second day or *vidiya*, the goddess *Srirajarajeswari* is worshipped as *Brahmacharini Devi* or *Durga*, and as the *Sarvasaparipurak Chakresvari* of the second *Avarana Shodasadala*¹⁸. She is worshipped with *Mudganna*¹⁹ and *Uttariya*²⁰.

¹⁵ Rice cooked in milk

¹⁶ Deity of worship

¹⁷ Area

¹⁸ Sixteen petals

¹⁹ A comestible prepared with green gram and rice

²⁰ A scarf-like piece of dress that descends from the back of the neck to curl around both arms, generally used to drape the upper half of the body.

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Charanam 3: On the third day or tadiya , I worship her as Chandraganta Durgadevi, as Sarvasankshobini of the third avarana Ashtadalapadmam, and make her happy with *Kayi Sasuve Anna* and *kumkum*. May the divine mother protect me.

Charanam 4: On the fourth day or Chaturti, O! Divine mother Meenakshi Devi you are worshipped as Kushmanda Durga. Sakannamu (vegetables mixed with cooked rice), flowers and other materials are used in your worship and I meditate on you as sarvasaubhagyachakra swamini in the the fourth avarana Chaturdasaram.

Charanam 5: On the day or Panchami, Mother durga is worshipped as Parasakthidevi Skandamata. This great goddess presides the Bahirdasaram and dispels selfishness. To the one who is pleased by Chitranna, I offer sour lemons and bow down my head in reverence.

Charanam 6 : O! Goddess Sarasvathi, during these Navaratri, you manifest as Katyayini Durga at the auspicious time of mula nakshatra which occurs on the sixth or seventh day. You are the Sarvarakshakarachakresvari presiding over the sixth avarana Antardasaram chakra, and we worship you with betel leaves and nuts, with sugar pongal and other sweetened rice dishes.

Charanam 7: On the seventh day or Saptami, O! Mula Sakti (the origin of all the saktis) , you are served as Kalaratri Durga and as Visalakshi. You are worshipped with pulihora and vadas by us on this day. Please rid us of our diseases for you are the Sarvarogaharachakresvari residing in the seventh circumference (chakra), which is termed the ashtakonaka.

Charanam 8: On the day of Durgashtami , the all powerful Chandi Devata in the form of Maha Gauri Durga, is worshipped with jaggery rice and gold coins. In the eight avarana trikona, the Devi radiates brilliance as Sarvasidhapradachakresvari and may she protect us.

Charanam 9: On the Mahanavami , being praised as Sidhidhatri, the Devi who likes dhadyanna, is offered coconuts for archana. She resides in the final dot as Sarvanandamaye Chakresvari, and She is being extolled in my mind.

Charanam 10: On Vijayadasami She is worshipped as Sri Rajarajeswari Devi, who has complete mastery in all the arts, and who dwells in all the nine avaranas of the *Sri Chakra* in the Satchidananda aspect of navadurga. May She protect me, out of her infinite kindness.

2. Morning Procession, Kumari Puja ,
Panchagavya Praasanam & Nityaarchana

Early in the morning, subsequent to taking the vow of Navaratri Deeksha, holy water is obtained from rivers and teerthas for the first day's worship. From the place of customary worship, the Divine Mother is taken in a procession to the *Navaratri Pujamantapa* .Just as the palanquin is taken on to the dais in the *Pujamantapa* , the *Shodasa Kumaripuja* commences.

In common parlance, the term *Kumari* denotes a small girl, or a female child that plays. Hence, it is customary to worship nine girls in the age group of 2-10 as an embodiment of the Navadurgas in the Agama Sastra. These girls are known by the names Kumari, Trimurthi, Kalyani, Rohini, Kalika, Chandika, Sambhavi, Durga and Subhadra. In the *Saktaye Agama Tantras* methods of worship (*shodasa puja vidhi*), girls whose age is less than sixteen years, have been specified.

In this method of worship, the names sandhya, sarasvathi, trimurthi, kaali , subhaga, uma , malini, kubja, sangharsha, aparajitha, bhairavi, mahalakshmi, hreemkaali, peethanaayika, kshetrajna, and annada are invoked by the sadhaka. The latter worships them and believes that the Sri Mata is manifested in all the *kanyas* of this world.

By the second method, Sri Swamiji performs *Kumaripuja* every day, and arrives on the *Pujavedika* or dais set aside for worship.

Panchagavya Prasana

Panchagavya Prasana is performed to completely obliterate the sins committed by the body, speech and mind; and to confer the worthiness of accepting the *deeksha* upon the acharya, despite his being a householder.

Just as the fire incinerates the fire wood, this *Panchagavya* being magical, should destroy my sins. This thought is reflected in the above *mantra*. The one who consumes the Panchagavya with due reverence, sixteen times, mixed in proper proportions with specified constituents, namely, milk, curd, ghee, and the dung and urine of a cow, is cleansed of his impurities and is rendered worthy of performing the worship of the Divine Mother.

After this, the Nitya Saligrama programmes begin.

Even though we are commencing a very great task, we should never forget to perform the *Nityakarmas*. We should remember that only by carrying out these *Nityakarmas*, we obtain this great opportunity and hence only after carrying out them meticulously, we should begin the *Visesha Pujas*. This message is conveyed by the second *kirtana*.

2. Prātaḥkāla Utsava- Kumārī Pūja (Caturasra Gati)

Pallavi Navarātrōtsava Sampūjyām

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Praṇamāmādyāṃ Śaktiṃ Tāṃ

Śārada Māsē Cāśvayujē

Ādima Jananī Marcāma

Anupallavi

Navaratnādibhi Rañcitē

Hiraṇyapīṭhē Saṃsthitē

Ōṃkuru Mātaḥ Pūjāṃ Mē

Pañcāyatanārādhitē.

1. Dēvi Prātaḥ Palyāṅkē

Śraddhēyē Tvāṃ Mahāmahē

Maṅgaḷavādyai Rvēdaravaiḥ

Pūjāmaṇḍapa Mānētum

Ūrīkurutā Nmāstvaṃ-

Dūrīkurutāt Duritaṃ Mē ...1

2. Kanyāssakalā Bhāvaṃ Tē

Prāpya Hi Lōkē Samāsatē

Iti Matvāhaṃ Giritanayē

Ṣoḍaśa Tā Ssaṃ - -Pūjayē

Ūrīkurutā Nmāstvaṃ

Dūrīkurutāt Duritammē ...2

3. Asthasu Carmaṇi Yadduritaṃ

Gavyaprasē Tannunnaṃ

Tataḥ Prapūtō Dēvīṃ Tvāṃ

Nityārcābhi Ssaṃsēvē.

Saccidānandē Kuru Karuṇāṃ-

Śaraṇaṃ Tēhaṃ Tvatha Karavai

Navarātrōtsava Sampūjyāṃ

Praṇamāmādyāṃ Śaktiṃ Tāṃ

2. Navaratrotsava Sampoojyaam

Pallavi: Let us offer our obeisance to the divine mother who is worshipped during the sacred *Navaratri Utsavas*. Let us also start the worship of the mother during *Sarathkala* in the month of *asveyuja*.

Charanam 1: O! Divine Mother! On these *utsava* days, please allow us to seat You on the palanquin and thereupon take you in a procession, accompanied by musical instruments and chanting from the Vedas, to the *Pujamantapa*. Let my sins be washed away in this way.

Charanam 2: Assuming that you manifest thyself in the sixteen kanyas; born as women which itself is great; I worship them. O *Girikumari* please bless me and do away with the imperfections in my heart.

Charanam 3: If there are any sins in my body's bones and skin, let them all be obliterated by *gavyaprasana*, and after thus being purified I will conduct the *Saligrama* and other acts of worship. After that I will construct your *Sadana*, namely the *Sri Chakra* and *Navachakras*. O Blissful One! Have mercy.

3. Sri Chakra Rachana

In this method of conducting the *Navaratri Vow*, the *nityaarchanas* are completed and afterwards, several methods of worshipping the *Sri Chakra* are initiated. First, the *Sri Chakra* is made from turmeric powder. Then, nine *avaranas*, signifying the nine *avaranaadhi* deities, who are also to be worshipped, are prepared. Many scientists have opined that the underlying fundamentals of the *Sri Chakrarchana* are closely related to the cosmic energy. The *SriChakra* is deemed to be of three types, namely, *Bhuprastha* , *Ardha Meru* and *Poorna Meru* or *Sumeru*. With the specified measures of length and width, the *Sri Chakra* is drawn on a metal sheet, paper or wood, and the circle so obtained is termed as *Bhuprasthara* . If in addition to the above measurements, the height is varied, the *Arthameru* and *Poornameru* are obtained.

If just half of the required height is present, then the resulting structure is termed as an *arthameru*. However, if all the measurements, corners, petals, lines and *peethas* are present, then the resulting object is known as the *Poornameru* or *Sumeru*. It is important to note that the worship of each type of *Sri Chakra* confers a different boon. However, the *saakteyas* declare that the worship of the *Purnameru* not only endows the blessings of the nine avarana deities, but also that of the Mother *Lalitha*.

Here a doubt may be expressed, namely that as a worshipper could construct just the *purnameru*, and worship it, what is the need for the other forms of the *Sri Chakra*? To this it could be replied that we should offer our *sevas* (*kainkaryas*) according to our capability. For example, a small boy requires a lesser degree of food, water, clothes, and space in comparison to an adult. Similarly, the worship of the *arthameru* as compared to *bhuprasthara*; and *purnameru* as compared to *arthameru* require higher procedures, *naivedyas*, *alankaras*, *aradhanas*. Hence, one should take the advice of a guru, who is well versed with this subject, and without ignoring his instructions, one should select an appropriate *Sri Chakra*, (hence it is unadvisable to purchase each and everything that catches our eye in a shop).

Furthermore, another misgiving may arise, namely, whether it is sufficient to merely have a *Sri Chakra* at home, or is it essential to offer *kainkaryas* to benefit from it? This doubt is cleared by the following example.

Whenever required, we can produce a spark from two flint stones (these days gas lighters are used) for lighting a fire. Upon rubbing them together energy is generated. According to the ancient principles, every atom is enriched with energy. Nevertheless, this state is passive and is accordingly known as *Jadasaktir Jadatma* in the *Lalitha Sahsranaama* .

To experience this energy some effort and practice are required, and its effect can be experienced upon awakening this inactive power. (Analogously, in yoga, it is taught that the *Kundalini Sakti*, which is considered to in a state of deep sleep, can be awakened by practicing *Pranayama*).

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Hence even though it is beneficial to have a *Sri Chakra* (and other *yantras*); worship and other rituals have to be performed, in order to awaken their latent energy. These methods are to be implemented, only after practicing them under the guidance of a preceptor. In addition, the different methods of *Sri Chakra* worship are unusual and arduous. This method yields result only for those, or only when performed, with strong faith, intelligence, concentration, devotion to the *guru*, and skill.

The *Tantra Granths* specify nine areas in the *Sri Chakra*, and these are known as the nine circles. Four of these are *Siva Chakras* and the remaining five are known as the *Sakti Chakras*. The first of these circles the *Bhupura*, the second, the *Shodasadala Padma*, the third one, the *Ashtadala Padma* and the last the bindu, are attributed to Lord Shiva.

The fourth circle is termed the *Chaturdasara*, the fifth circle as the *Bahirdasara*, the sixth circle as the *Antardasara*, the seventh circle as the *Ashtakona* and the eight circle as the *Trikona*, these five chakras or circles are associated with *Sakti* and are hence described as *Sakti Chakras*.

In the first three regions of the *Sri Chakra*, the *Siva Sakti* exists in a dormant form. The subsequent five areas contain the *Sakti Tatva* and the last region or the pinnacle of the *Sri Chakra* houses the enriched *Sakti*. It shines with great vibrancy and from this it is established that *Lord Siva* does not make a single move without *Sakti*. That is why the *maharishis* describe the *Sri Chakra* as the confluence of Lord *Siva* and the Goddess *Kameswari*.

Such *Sri Chakras*, are prepared from different materials. The *sakteya* tradition states that with each type of material used, a different boon is conferred. As such, *Sri Chakras* fashioned from stone or *sila*, silver, gold, alum, crystal or *sphatika*, gem ruby or *manikyam*, emerald or *marakatam*, and other gems give the best results.

However, as mentioned earlier, the Divine Mother or *Parasakti* is all pervading. Her presence is inherent in every molecule and atom, and this energy is beyond detection by our senses. The brilliant life force that exists in every object and person is a sign of the power of the Divine Mother, but these earthly forms are not everlasting. The life force in organic matter is the essence of the supreme power and is a replicate of the latter. To explain this eternal truth to us our *Pujya Sadgurudeva*, though he worships the golden *Srichakra* and the ruby or *Maanikya Sumeru*; chiefly fashions the *Sri Chakra* from turmeric paste and worships it. He establishes the *navaavaranas*, their angles and designs on that *Sri Chakra*. The supreme power does not have any form or shape, and *Sri Swamiji* performs worship to that formless power through the *Sumeru Sri Chakra*. *Sri Swamiji* makes us realize that creation, organization and destruction are the acts of the Goddess *Jaganmatha*, and as a part of the worship procedure he abandons the turmeric *Sri Chakras* of that day at the end of the worship.

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These are the methods by which the *Sri Chakra* is worshipped by *Sri Sadgurudeva*. Such, worship maintains the relationship between the shapeless and physical forms, and grandeur and simplicity. The third *Keertana* describes these contrasting factors.

(Miśragati 7 Mātra)

Pallavi: Tvam Vibhāsi Ja - gaddhitaiṣiṇi

Śrīyutē Paracakrakē

Aṣṭa Sampada Iṣṭa Kāmam

Yacchasiḍyē Janani Mē.

Stanza 1 Jagati Nikhilē Vastu Yadyat

Dṛśyamānam Śōbhatē

Naiva Śaśvadrūpa Mētat

Kēvalam Sat Śiṣyati (Sacchiṣyati)

Bōdhamētam Kalpayantī

Vidyasē Paramāṇugā

Saiva Hāri- Drē Su-Mērau

Bhāsi Māṇikyē Samam...1

Bindu Kōṇa Tritaya Vasu Daśa

Daśa Caturdaśa Śōḍaśa

Kōṇa Dharaṇī Sadana Saṃyuta

Cakramāracayē Tava.

Svarṇa Mērau Marakatē Ca

Sthāpyasē Paripūjyasē

Kaula Samayācāra Mārgai

Rarcitē Paradēvatē. ...2

Kanaka Tāṭāṅkē Kirīṭa Su -

Karṇapatrayugam Tatō

Hāra Nūpura Bhūṣaṇādi

Samarpya Vandē Śarmadē

Rājasē Nīrājītā

Vandyasē Paradēvatā

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Saccidānandātmikā

Vijayatām Paramēśvari... 3

Explanation

Pallavi

O! Divine Mother! You are the mother of the universe and its well-wisher. The various worlds and spheres are your substantial macro body, which is circular in shape. You exist in that circular plane as a tiny dot, which is your micro body.

You are the basis of the universe and you exist as its cause. With the macro and micro bodies you depict the existence of the universe as the supreme power. O! *Para Sakti!* Your supreme power is radiant in the *Sri Chakra*. Due to satisfaction with my worship, You grant me prosperity and fulfil all my desires.

Charanam 1:

You enlighten us with the reality that the earth is impermanent and that the earthly things like beauty, prosperity and power are transient and will be destroyed one day. *Sanmathra* is the only thing that remains forever on the earth, and You provide this knowledge. Moreover, You exist in the *Manikya Sumeru*, *Swarna Sri Chakra* and in the *Haridra Sri Chakra*. This establishes Your omnipresence.

Charanam 2:

I am building this turmeric *Sri Chakra*²¹ with *bindu*²², *konathraya*²³, *ashtakona*²⁴, *dasakona*²⁵, *chathurdasakona*²⁶, *shodasa dala*²⁷, *ashtadala*²⁸, three circles and three cones. This will become your abode. O! *Para Sakti!* You are worshipped with the appropriate customs and rites. You are established by me in the *marakatha* and *swarna meruvu*. I am worshipping you with the chant of *mantras* that contain Your *bijakshara*.

Charanam 3:

O! Bestower of comfort – *Parameswari!* I offer unto Thee ornaments like the crown, golden ear rings, toe rings, anklets and *mangalya*²⁹; and my salutations. Glowing with the light of the lighted camphor, *Para Devata!* You are accepting our prayer and

²¹ Haridra Sri Chakra

²² A dot or small circle

²³ Three angles

²⁴ Eight angles

²⁵ Ten angles

²⁶ Fourteen angles,

²⁷ Sixteen leafs

²⁸ Eight leafs

²⁹ A gold ornament suspended by a sacred cord worn by women, which signifies that they are married

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providing us with the final liberation, which is the *Paramardha*³⁰. O! *Satchidananda Swarupini*! My salutations to Thee!

4. Navavarana Puja

The entire world is a combination of the five elements or the *panchabhuta*. These *panchabhuta* and the world formed by them are termed as nature. The world that is visible is to be worshipped as the power of nature. This method of worship is called *Navavarana Puja*. There are several precise methods, mentioned in the *Puranas* and *Sastras* for conducting such worship. Some of these techniques are *Varasiddi Vinayaka Vrata*, *Rudrabhisheka*, and other *Yajna* methods.

The methods adopted in *Puja*, can be broadly classified as meditation or *Aavahana*³¹. These methods apply both to worship with and without form. In the form based worship, the idol of the principal deity is to be installed as per the procedure prescribed in the *Agama Sastras*. Then the *Para Devata* has to be invited to enter the principal idol. Prior to this, the *Anga Devata* of the principal deity and other attendant deities, like the *Avarana Devata* and other related minor deities are also to be invoked.

Thus, this type of worship requires vast resources of money, time and devotion. Those who cannot afford such vast expenditure can set up the chief deity and imagine that the attending deities are also present in the main deity. In this manner, the worship can be conducted, and even the affluent conduct this type of worship. This type of worship is centred on the idols that are established for that purpose. The deities are to be invited to occupy the idols made of gold, silver, copper, brass, or mud. After having set up the idols, the worshipper invites the deities to enter the idols and offer his services to them.

In the case of non idol based *puja*, worship is conducted by chanting *mantras* and the *japa* of *bijaksharas*. This type of worship can only be performed by only the highest devotees. Although it seems to be easy, it is very difficult. Therefore, only the yogis who have total control over their mind can perform such worship. Consequently, this method of worship is not befitting for all and sundry. Therefore, the maharishis had exhorted the common people to perform an easy method of prayer, namely idol – based *puja*. This method of *puja* leads its practitioner to the worship of the formless God. In this form of worship some object has to be identified as the representation of the deity. The import of this method of worship is that the *Para Sakti*, despite her various forms, has an underlying power that is unchanging. In addition, it is important to realise that the *Para Sakti* resides in each and every form. That is why, in *panchayatana puja* methods, the use of *saligrama*, *sivalinga*, crystal, installation of *kalasa* and the designing of *yantras* represent this fact.

³⁰ Highest truth of life

³¹ Inviting the deity

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If there is no symbol, then it becomes difficult or impossible to concentrate. An increase in the number of such symbols will divert the mind to their decoration and other such related issues. In order to overcome these problems, it has become the tradition to worship deities with betel nuts, coconuts, sacred grass and *kalasa*. The establishment of *kalasa* indicates this procedure.

Procedure for installing the *kalasa*

In every type of worship, including the *Navaratri* ceremonies, the establishment of *kalasa* is very important. It promotes the concentration and devotion of the chief practitioner of the ceremonies. In common parlance, installing a *kalasa* denotes the placing of a pot. However, a deep enquiry into this procedure, discloses several important matters. Prior to inviting the deities, the required arrangements are made and the *kalasa* is installed. This installation is accompanied by the chanting of the appropriate mantras. The procedure to be adopted for the installation of the *kalasa* is as follows:

1. Bhuprarthana:

Bhuprarthana connotes prayer to the earth. Since, the earth forms the basis for all the creatures and their existence, it has to be worshipped first and its permission has to be obtained, in order to perform the worship. This is the salient feature of Indian tradition.

2. Oshadhi Prasthara:

Oshadhyaha phala pakantaha

On ripening, the grains of rice and wheat fall to the ground. Such grains are called oshadha. They provide the life force in the five elements to humans and other creatures. These grains have to spread out on the seat where the Par Devata is to be installed. As the mind is nurtured by this life force, in the same manner, the place where the Para Devata is to be installed is to be infused with energy and consciousness. This is the objective of this procedure.

3. Kalasa Asadhana:

The term *kalasa* denotes a pot. The worshipper can prepare it from mud, copper, silver or gold, depending on the means at his disposal. This pot is placed on the rice or wheat grains, accompanied with the chanting of mantras. Before doing so, thread is wound around it. This process is called *thanthuveshtana*. The consciousness of the deity to be installed chief resides in the coconut and holy grass³². While the coconut and the holy grass constitute the primary place for the deities, the *kalasa* represents the body of the deities. It is wrapped around with nine stranded thread, which symbolises the inner and outer garments of the deities. The objective of this process is to safeguard the consciousness of the deities.

³² Darbha koorcha

4. Sapta Mrithika:

Generally, the soil does not have any value. However, the Vedic tradition recognized the importance of the soil and the life force in it. The soil from different places has different powers. The Sapta mrithika are to be collected from chatuspada³³, Aswasala, Gaja Sala, putta, the confluence of river with the sea, thata, ondru, and fields.

5. Dhanya:

The nine types of food grains are wheat, paddy, red gram, green gram, Bengal gram, sesamum seeds, black gram, and horse gram. They represent the nine powers of nature and the nine planets. These are placed in the *kalasa*. In some procedures, fourteen varieties of pulses that are found in forests are used.

6. Panchthvaka:

Thvak connotes the skin, and also the bark of a tree. The latter, after the depletion of the life essence, remains on the outer layer of the tree and protects the new tree trunk. This bark has medicinal value and for this reason five types of bark are obtained for use in worship.

7. Pancha Pallava:

The new leaves of a tree are good examples of this life essence. They represent new consciousness. New changes are indications of evolution, and new leaves represent the life essence of the trees. May the vital essence of the Para Sakti be bestowed upon us during these Navaratri ceremonies, with this thought and objective, the five types of tree leaves are placed upon the kalasa. The newly grown leaves from the fig tree, juvvi tree, medi tree, banyan tree, and the mango tree are placed on the kalasa.

8. Navaratna:

The term Argha denotes value. Sometimes it may not be possible to correctly assess the value of things that are most precious and valuable. Such objects are considered to be invaluable. To enhance the value of the place where the gods are installed, invaluable diamonds and other priceless stones are employed in the decorations. It is the usual practice to place nine types of such invaluable stones at that place.

9. Sapta Dhatu:

Dhatu are essential elements that constitute the universe and also the human body. They are important physical elements, and seven types of these elements, namely, gold, silver, copper, asbestos, tin, lead and iron are placed in the kalasa.

³³ Junction of four roads.

10.Pavitra Teertha:

Avo pa idam sarvam, means that the water flows through the seven most sacred and holy things. Water is the essence of life. The Vedas described water as the embodiment of all the deities. For this reason, water taken from the sacred rivers such as the Ganga, other holy rivers and the seas, is placed in the kalasa, after duly recollecting their presiding deities.

11.Vastra Alankara:

The kalasa is wrapped with a cloth, which not only decorates it but also enhances the sanctity of the place of worship.

12.Narikela Darbha Koorcha Sthapana:

The place where the deities are to be installed is prepared through the above processes. Then a coconut that has not been split open and the *koorcha*, which is composed of 27 holy grasses, are placed inside the kalasa. After that the primary mantras of the related deities are chanted. The deities are invited and it is to be assumed that they have arrived and are present in the coconut placed on top of the kalasa.

Narikela samudbhoota trinetra hara sambhava

Sikhayaa duritam sarvam papam peedancha me nuda//

This mantra is chanted when the coconut is placed on the kalasa. The coconut has three markings on its reverse, which resemble the three – eyed Lord Siva. The mantra is chanted, in order to ward of suffering, destroy our sins and to eliminate the tendency of committing sins during the time of worship. Moreover, this mantra construes the removal of the husk around the coconut as the elimination of our sins.

Koorchagrai raakshasan ghoraan chhindhi karma vighaatinaha/

Tvaa marpayami kumbhesmin saaphalyam kuru karmani//

The koorcha of 27 holy grasses is placed inside the kalasa, while chanting this mantra. This koorcha represents the deities. The darbhas or holy grasses are sacred, and control our behaviour during the time of worship. This is because most of the obstacles to the conduct of homas and other forms of worship arise from the thoughts of these performers. As such, it is their mind that creates those obstacles. Hence the darbhas effectively control the thoughts of the performer. The instability of the mind is caused due to the uprising of rajo guna. This rajo guna destroys the mental tranquillity of the performer. The other contributor is tamo guna. These two gunas are termed the devious and dangerous powers. Most of the time during the worship, the performer will be in physical contact with the darbhas. The performer seats himself on these darbhas. He wears the koorcha on his finger, and during the process of the worship, the performer

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will use these Darbhas for several purposes. The constant touch with the darbhas eliminates the abnormal behaviour of the performer, by controlling the factors that effect change. He will attain the satvika nature, which makes him mentally stable and enables him to perform the worship without any obstacle. The attainment of mental tranquillity and stability is the ultimate goal of the ceremony.

Therefore, all the above materials are essential for the establishment of the kalasa. In addition to them, it is also necessary to include agents that produce pleasant odours, like camphor, cloves, saffron, and perfumes. These substances eliminate bad smells from the place of worship, and hence they are placed with the flowers.

The Number 9

In the Navaratri ceremonies, the number 9 plays a significant role. Amongst the single digit numbers, 9 is the largest number.

Nava means nine, and also new or fresh. This number is used in the sense that the worship would provide us results of great value that are also new.

During the ceremony, in a span of nine days, the performer has to worship nine gods. He uses nine kalasas and the powders of nine types of grains every day. The worshipper has to mix these nine grain powders with nine materials such as panchamruta, turmeric, saffron, camphor powder and water. Thereupon, he has to install nine chakras at the place of worship, and worship nine gods with nine circumambulations per god. The procedures adopted in this worship show a relationship to the number nine.

Furthermore, the internal process includes nine homas, nine archanas, pujas to nine women whose husbands are alive, pujas to nine young girls, nine categories of offerings, nine types of worship to food, chanting of nine keerthans and nine stotras. This clearly indicates that the number nine plays a significant role in the Navaratri ceremonies. The greatness of this navavaruna puja are described by the nine stanzas of the keertana.

Navāvaraṇapūja (9 Mātra Saṅkīrṇagati)

Pallavi: Bhadrāṃ Kuruṣē Hi	-	Lōka Tritayasya
Hē Durgē Māta	-	Rārādhyā Svātha
1. Dēvī Navarātra	-	Pūjārambhē Tu
Nava Saṅkhyākēṣu	-	Navadhānyāsanna
Kalaśēṣvāvāhya	-	Varivasyā Marpa-Yai
Gōdhūma Vrīhi	-	Mudgādhaka Caṇaka
Tila Māṣa Kuḷuttha	-	Kavidhānya Haridra

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Kuṅkuma Karpūra - Cūrṇā Nyabhimiśrya

Pañcāmṛta Yukta - Nava Cakrānyarca-Yai

2

Kōṇānālikhya - Vastrairābhūṣya

Saṅgrhyaikaika - Mapacēṣīyātha

Nava Nava Kṛtvaśca - Paritaḥ Krāmyan Hi

Dhyāna Snāna Pra - Dīpān Vinivēdya

Nīrājayitum Tva - Murarī Kurvarca- Yai

(Khaṇḍagati)

Ēvaṃ Navāvaraṇa - Pūjāṃ Nidhāya

Sarvēśvarīṃ Pratyā - Haṃ Bhāvayāmi

Nava Navākāriṇīṃ Durgā Bhavānīṃ

Saccidānandinī - Miha Bhāvayāmi

Bhadraṃ Kuruṣē Hi -Lōka Tritayasya

Hē Durgē Māta - Rārādhyā Svātha

(Prītyē Māṃ Dēvi -- Pūjāṃ Gṛhṇīṣya)

Meaning

Pallavi: O! Durga Devi! You are the embodiment of the NavaDurgas. You are worshipped by us to provide welfare to the three worlds.

1. In the vow of Devi Navarathra, first I invite you to enter into the nine kalasas, which are kept on nine types of grains. I also offer my worship to you in the form of the embodiment of Nava Devata.
2. I offer the nine chakras by mixing the panchamrutha with the powders of wheat, paddy grains, red gram, green gram grains, Bengal gram, tree barks, gingilly grains, black gram, ulava, turmeric, saffron and camphor.
3. Prior to perform the Archana, I design the angles on the nine chakras and decorate them with clothes. I take each chakra into my hand and perform nine circumambulations around this hall. I worship you with my services, such as