

NAVARATRI: - An Exposition by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.



Navaratri

Meaning:

"Navaratri means nine nights. Darkness is associated with night. What is this darkness? It is the darkness of ignorance." Sai Baba, SS, 11/92, p. 267

"Navaratri means 'nine nights'. What does the nine signify? There are nine 'Grahas' (planets according to astrology). The human body has nine openings. If a deep inquiry is made, it will be found that mankind is dependent on the planets (Grahas). Although astrologers speak about nine, in reality, there are only two planets that matter. They are 'Raga' (attachment) and Dwesha (hatred)." Sai Baba, SS, 11/94, p. 289

"The six enemies of man are eating into his vitals, embedded in his own inner consciousness. They are the demons to be killed. They are lust (Kama), anger (Krodha), greed (Lobha), attachment (Moha), pride (Mada), and malice (Matsarya). They reduce man to the level of a demon. They have to be overpowered and transmuted, by the Supreme Alchemy of the Divine Urge. Then, the nine (Nava) nights (Ratri) of struggle will become new (Nava), a new type of night, devoted to the

purification of the mind, illumination of the soul - the night described in the Gita as "the day of the worldly". What is clear and attractive to the ordinary man is uninteresting and unknown to the Yogi. What is clear and attractive to the Yogi is uninteresting and unknown to the worldly man. This is the nature of this topsy-turvy world." Sai Baba, SSS, Vol. VIII, dis dtd 12-10-69, p. 107

Shiridi Sai Baba Was Born on "The First Night of Navaratri"

"All festivals have been designed to teach men how to lead a godly life while carrying out worldly activities. It is to teach this truth to mankind that Avatars and saints made their advent on earth from time to time. This day (the first day of Navaratri) has another special significance. Shiridi Sai Baba was born on 27 September 1838. He was born in a poor Brahmin family in a village of Aurangabad District".

Sai Baba, SS, 11/92. P.255. Discourse date: 27 September 1992

Purpose

'The Navaratri is a festival to commemorate the victory of the good over the evil. The Embodiment of Divine Power (Para-Shakti), in its various manifestations, Satwic (as Maha- Saraswathi), Rajasic (as Maha-Lakshmi), Tamasic (as Mahakali) was able to overcome the forces of vice, wickedness and egoism, during the nine days' struggle and finally, on Vijaya Dasami (Dasara, the tenth Day commemorating victory), the valedictory worship is done". Sai Baba, SSS, Vol. VIII. Discourse on 12-10-69, p. 107

The purpose of the Navaratri celebration is to enable man to get rid of nine types of darkness, which have taken hold of him. Sai Baba, SS, 11/92, p. 267

"The Navaratri festival is observed by contemplating on God for ten days, cleansing one's self of all the impurities to experience the Divinity within." Sai Baba, SS, 11/94. p. 291

"This festival (Navaratri) is intended to make man realise his true worth as the most precious object in creation. All things in the world derive their value from the labour and skill of man." Sai Baba. SS, 11/94. p. 289

"It is a festival of thanksgiving. Gratitude is Divine. Ingratitude is demonic. But while offering the homage of gratitude, you must also try to discover who was killed, who was saved, and why." Sai Baba, SSS, Vol. VIII, discourse on 12-10-69, p. 107

"The Navaratri celebration is an occasion for revering nature (Prakriti) and considering how natural resources can be used properly in the best interest 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 Nagar Sankirtan and Bhajans is to fill the atmosphere with sacred vibrations and holy thoughts. The inauguration of the Navaratri celebrations means that you should use this occasion for offering worship to nature and resolving to make sacred use of all natural resources." Sai Baba. SS, 11/92, p. 269

"So, the Navaratri is to be dedicated by all for the propitiation of the outer as well as the inner divinity, so that the outer and the inner worlds may have peace and joy. By means of systematic Sadhana, it is possible to tap the inner resources that God has endowed on man, and elevate yourselves to the purer and happier realm of the Reality. That is the message of Navaratri, the Nine Day's Festival celebrating the victory of the Primal Energy. That energy, when it is manifested in its quiet aspect (Satwic), is delineated as the Great Teacher and Inspirer, Maha-Saraswathi; when it is active and potent (Rajasic), the great Provider and Sustainer, Maha-Lakshmi; when it is dull and inactive, but latent and apparently quiet (Tamasic), as the Great Dark Destroyer and Deluder, Mahakali. Since Shakti is all-pervasive, omni-potent, infinitesimal as well as all-comprehensive, it can be contacted everywhere, in outer nature or inner consciousness. Prahlada told his doubting father: 'Why doubt, discuss and delay? Seek it anywhere; you can see It.' It is near and far, before, behind, beside and inside, everything in the known and the unknown world. People dare describe Her or Him, as thus and thus; that reveals only their faculty to guess. No description can portrait in full." Sai Baba, SSS, Vol. VI, discourse on 4-10-67, p. 83

"Our Vice-Chancellor described Swami's love as that of a thousand mothers. But, one who cannot understand the love of one mother, how can he understand the love of a thousand mothers? So, first and foremost try to understand and experience the

love of your physical mother. Go on adding to the physical mother's love a millions times. The divinity principle of the God lies in this love, which is your life principle. Experience this love and understand the significance of mother worship in Navaratri." Sai Baba, SS, 7/99. p. 186

Three Phases of Navaratri Celebrations

"The Navaratri has been divided into three parts. The first three days are dedicated to the worship of Durga, next three days to the worship of Lakshmi and last three days to the worship of Saraswathi. All Hindu festivals have a sacred purpose. Unfortunately, now-a-days 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." Sai Baba. SS, 11/92, p. 268

Purpose Of Devi Worship

"Ichcha-Shakti (the Will Power) arises from thoughts. This 'Ichcha-Shakti' is the source of several other potencies like intellectual power, the discriminating capacity and others. To develop this 'Ichcha-Shakti' (Will Power), one has to worship Devi. This calls for the cultivation of renunciation or detachment. For instance, if one has a desire for various drinks, he can bring the desire under control by giving up, to begin with, the desire for some of them. Thereby the Will Power (Ichcha-Shakti) is developed, and in due course, it becomes easier to give up other desires. In Vedantic parlance, this is described as 'Vairaagya' (renouncing all attachments). Vairaagya is not abandonment of hearth and home and retiring to a forest. It means developing godly thoughts and reducing worldly feelings. It is when this balanced development takes place that one acquire-control over the powers of nature (Praakrita Shakti). When these powers are got, the mental power in a person increases." Sai Baba, SS, 12/92, pp. 304 & 305

"The Devi Puja performed during Navaratri is intended to get rid of worldly attachments and divert-the mind towards God." Sai Baba, SS, 12/92, p. 305

-

Devi Is Sathya-Swaroopini

"You worship Devi (goddess) in these nine days of Navaratri. You consider Devi as your Divine Mother. This Devi is called 'Sathya Swaroopini', which means she is the embodiment of truth. So, worshipping Truth amounts to worshipping Devi. If you understand and follow this truth, you will be successful in every field. The Vedas also proclaim this Principle of Truth." Sai Baba. SS. 11/98, p. 283

Symbolism of Devi Worship

"The world is a manifestation of three Gunas (Satva, Rajas and Tamas qualities). The Divine is worshipped as "Devi". The term "Devi" refers to the feminine aspect. The term "Stree" is used to denote a woman. There are three syllables in this term: "Sa", "Ta" and "Ra". "Sa" symbolizes the Satwic aspect of a person. The Satwic quality is the very first quality that manifests in man. The feeling of love develops from the mother. It is impossible to describe the nature of maternal love. The mother converts her own blood into love and gives it as milk to feed the child. Therefore, the first quality represented by "Sa" is the Satwic quality. The second syllable is "Ta". This does not represent "Tattwa" or "Thamas" as eating and sleeping. In the term "Stree", the syllable "Ta" represents bashfulness, modesty, self-esteem and other such traits which are the characteristics of women. Shyness is a predominant trait in women. They attach great value to their honour and reputation. It is because of these sacred qualities that her "Tamasic" aspect is significant. The common view regarding the "Tamasic" quality does not apply to them. The third quality symbolized by the syllable "Ra" is Rajas. Such qualities as sacrifice and high-mindedness in women reflect the Rajasic aspect of their nature. When necessary, women will be prepared even to sacrifice their lives to safeguard their honour. Without regard to the difficulties and troubles they may encounter, women are ready to make any sacrifice to protect their honour and self-respect. When the "Tamasic" elements attempt to subvert the Satwic qualities, they are ready to combat and vanquish them.

The term "Devi" thus represents the Divine Power which has taken the Rajasic form to suppress the evil forces and protect the Satwic qualities. When the forces of injustice, immorality and untruth have grown to monstrous proportions and are indulging in a death dance, when selfishness and self-interest are rampant, when

men have lost all sense of kindness and compassion, the Atmic principle, assuming the form of Shakti (energy/ power), taking on the Rajasic quality, seeks to destroy the evil elements. This is the inner meaning of the Festival. When the Divine Goddess is in dreadful rage assumes a fearful form, to pacify the dreaded Goddess, her feminine children offer worship to HER with red kumkum (sacred powder). The Goddess seeing the blood-red kumkum at HER feet, feels assured that the wicked have been vanquished and assumes Her benign form. The inner meaning of the worship of "Devi" with red kumkum is that thereby the Goddess is appeased. During the ten days of the (Navaratri and) Dasara, the demons in the form of wicked qualities have been routed. Rakshasas (demons) do not mean demonic beings. Arrogance is a demon. Bad thoughts are demons". Sai Baba. SS, 11/91, pp. 284 & 285

Forms and Manifestations of Shakti

"During these sacred nine days (Navaratri), people go through the sacred texts such as Devi Bhagavatham, Ramayana and Mahabharata. People also worship the deities Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi. Goddess Gayathri is the presiding deity of our senses. Savitri is the presiding deity of speech. All these three are within the same Principle of Truth. Gayathri Mantra begins with 'Om Bhur Bhuvah Svah'. 'Bhuh' means materialization (Body); 'Bhuvah' means Vibration (Life Principle); Svaha means Radiation (Atma).

During these nine days, Goddess Shakti (Energy Principle) is worshipped. Truth, righteousness, peace, forgiveness are all expressions of the Principle of Shakti. Truth is the primal cause. There is nothing other than this. All faculties of energy are present in this Truth. So, consider Truth as your mother and follow it. The Vedas proclaim, 'Satyam Vada; Dharmam Chara', which means speak the truth and follow the righteousness. Unfortunately, today people do not follow this. On the contrary they follow Asatya (untruth) and Adharma (unrighteousness)" Sai Baba. SS, 11/98, p. 284

Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi Symbolize Three Potencies

"Bharatiyas (people of India) have been celebrating the Navaratri festival from ancient times as a mode of worship of Devi (the Divine as Mother). They worship Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi during these nine days. Who are these? They are three forms, which have fascinated man. Their esoteric significance is represented by three potencies (Shaktis). They are Karma (action), Upaasana (worship) and Jnana (wisdom). Their potencies have been given other names". Sai Baba. SS. 11/94, p. 282

"The significance of Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi has to be rightly understood. Three represent three kinds of potencies in man. Ichchaa Shakti (will power), Kriyaa Shakti (the power of action) and Jnana Shakti (the power of discrimination). Saraswati is manifested in man as the power of speech (Vaak). Durga is present in the form of dynamism (the power of action). Lakshmi is manifested in the form of will power. The body indicates "Kriyaa Shakti". The mind is the repository of "Ichchaa Shakti". The Atma is "Jnana Shakti". "Kriya Shakti" comes from the body, which is material. The power that activates the body, which is inert and makes it vibrant, is "Ichchaa Shakti". The power that induces the vibrations of 'khchaa Shakti' is "Jnana Shakti" which causes radiation (of energy). These three are represented by the Mantra "OM Bhur-Bhuvah-Svah". "Bhu" represents Bhu-loka (earth). "Bhuvah." represents the life-force (also means conscience of man), "Svah" represents the power of radiation. All the three are present in man. Thus, Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati dwell in the human heart." Sai Baba. SS. 11/94. pp. 283 & 284

"The Vedas declare that whenever the mind wanders, the three worlds will be perceived. What are these three worlds? All are familiar with the pronouncements in the Gita and in the Gayathri Mantra. The three worlds are: Bhu, Bhuvah, Svah (the Bhu-loka, Bhuvan-loka and Swarga). These three are present in man: Aadibhoutika, Aadidaivika and Aadhyatmik). These three worshipped by our ancients are: Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi. Every form is that of Durga, the deity that is associated with energy (Shakti). There is infinite power within man, power that is beyond comprehension and which is divine. But he makes no effort to recognise it. What is the power that makes the earth revolve round itself? It is not any machine or mantra. The power is within the earth itself. This energy, present in man and other objects,

has been characterized as cosmic power. The sun derives its energy and effulgence from this cosmic source. It is the same cosmic source that accounts for the power of the human mind and the marvellous power of the eye to see the most distant stars." Sai Baba, SS, 11/94. p. 287 & 288

"The energy in man is a primordial power (Adi Shakti). It is termed 'OM'. This power permeates the physical world (Prakriti) of matter. There is another power, which animates this material substance. This is the power of vibration. It is termed 'Prana Shakti (the Life-force)'. It is this Life-force which activates every part of the human body. This is termed 'Bhuvah'. Lakshmi symbolizes this power. Lakshmi is the embodiment of that power, which enables a human being to see, to hear and to do many things. Lakshmi represents the power to see what is good, to hear what is good, to speak sweet words, to entertain good thoughts and to do good deeds. The Lakshmi principle accounts for the good, happy, auspicious happening in the world. The third form of energy is symbolized by Saraswathi. She is regarded as the Goddess of Speech (Vaak Devata) Lakshmi is Prana Swaroopini (the embodiment of the life-force) Durga is Shakti -Swaroopini (embodiment of physical energy). (These) three in their unified expression represent the Atmic Principle." Sai Baba, SS, 11/94, p. 288

Durga, Lakshmi & Saraswathi Symbolize Three Qualities

"Men are prone to exhibit Rajasic qualities like anger and hatred. They are menacing manifestations of Durga. The extolling of the Divine in song and poetry and the pleasing vibrations produced by them indicate the power of Saraswati. The pure qualities that arise in man such as compassion, love, forbearance and sympathy are derived from Lakshmi. When people worship Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati externally in pictures or icons, they are giving physical forms to the subtle potencies that are within them. The unfortunate predicament of man today is that he is not recognising the powers within him and developing respect for them. He goes after the external, attracted by the physical forms. The relationship between the material and the subtle has to be understood." Sai Baba, SS, 11/94, p. 284

Durga, Lakshmi & Saraswathi Natural Powers

"During the Dasara festival, three goddesses - Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi -are worshipped according to certain traditional practices. Durga represents the prodigious power of nature (Prakrit-shakti). As against this power of nature is the Paraa-Shakti (the power of the spirit). When spiritual power is predominant, the power of nature is kept under control. When spiritual power is weak, the power of nature becomes predominant. This is illustrated by the example of smoke and fire. When smoke is predominant, the fire is suppressed. When the fire is blazing, the smoke vanishes. Hence, to enhance the power of spirit and limit the power of nature, man has to cultivate detachment (Vairaagya). To the extent that power of nature is under control, to that extent spiritual power grows. "Ichchaa-Shakti" is one of the of several other potencies like intellectual power, the discriminating capacity and others. To develop this "Ichchaa-Shakti" (will power), one has to worship "Devi". This calls for the cultivation of Tyaaga (detachment or renunciation). For instance, if one has a desire for various drinks, he can bring the desires under control by giving up, to begin with, the desire for one of them. Thereby the Will Power (Ichchaa-Shakti) is developed and in due course, it becomes easier to give up other desires. In Vedantic parlance this is described as "Vairaagya" (renouncing attachments). Vairaagya is not abandonment of hearth and home and retiring to a forest. It means developing godly thoughts and reducing worldly feelings. When this balanced development takes place, one acquires control over the powers of nature (Praakrita-Shakti). When these powers are got, the mental power in a person increases. Durga represents the Praakrita-Shakti and Lakshmi represents the Thought Power (Sankalpa Shakti). Vaak-Shakti (the power of speech), is represented by Saraswathi. In order to acquire these three powers, various forms of worship are performed during the Navaratri festival. But prayers alone are not enough. Prayers should not be just from the lips. They should emanate from the heart. The heart (Hridaya) symbolizes the Ocean of Milk (Ksheera-saagara). When Lakshmi emerges, purity of speech follows. Whatever you speak should conform to truth." Sai Baba, SS. 12/92. pp.304 & 305.

Durga, Lakshmi & Saraswati Symbolize Mother

"Recognising one's mother as the very embodiment of all divine forces, one must show reverence to her and treat her with love. This is the true message that the

Navaratri festival gives us. The Supreme Shakti manifests herself in the form of Durga, Lakshmi, and Saraswati. Durga grants to us energy - physical, mental, and spiritual. Lakshmi bestows on us wealth of many kinds, not just money, but intellectual wealth, the wealth of character, and others. Even health is a kind of wealth. She grants untold riches to us. Saraswati bestows on us intelligence, the capacity for intellectual enquiry and the power of discrimination. The Navaratri festival is celebrated in order to proclaim to the world the power of these goddesses. One's own mother is a combination of all these divine beings. She provides us energy, wealth, and intelligence. She constantly desires our advancement in life. So, she represents all the three goddesses that we worship during the Navaratri festival. If the Pandavas were able to become so dear to Krishna and make their lives worthy by serving Him, it was not on account of their own merit or austerities. It was Kunti Devi's love for them that brought to them such a great fortune. Even when they had to live in the forest or in the House of Wax, she always stayed with them and prayed for their welfare. The Pandavas also reciprocated her love, and that accounts for their final victory. Lakshmana, likewise, was able to dwell in the forest with his brother Rama, serving ceaselessly, only because of his mother Sumitra's blessings". Sai Baba, SS, 11/88. p. 290

"There is no need to propitiate Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi for material prosperity, energy and worldly knowledge. If we love and adore the mother, we shall be showing our love and devotion to all these goddesses. One's mother is greater than heaven itself. Sri Rama himself declared that one's mother and motherland are greater than even heaven. The Navaratri festival teaches this profound truth. One must remember that reverence to one's own mother is one's paramount duty. If one's mother is unhappy, all expenditure one incurs and all the worship one offers in the name of Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi in the Navaratri festival will yield no fruit". Sai Baba, SS, 11/88. p. 291

Durga, Lakshmi & Saraswathi Symbolize “The Supreme Divine”

"The Navaratri festival should not be observed as a festival for worshipping the consorts of Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma. These goddesses symbolize divine potencies. All these potencies are derived from Vishnu. The entire cosmos is a manifestation of the myriad forms of Vishnu. People must recognise this oneness

underlying the different forms. All beings breathe the same air as their life-breath. Likewise all the five basic elements are the stuff of nature. But in the Para-Tatwa (the Supreme Principle, the Divine), these do not exist. The elements are mortal. The Divine is immortal. To proceed from the mortal to the immortal, the easiest means is the cultivation of the Divine Love (Prema). The heart is like a sky wherein the clouds in the form of thoughts hide the Buddhi (the intellect) and the mind representing the sun and the moon. Vairaagya (detachment) is the means to get rid of thoughts and desires arising from them. The Devi Puja performed during Navaratri is intended to get rid of worldly attachments and divert the mind toward God. There are four different qualities in man: humanness, the animal nature, demonic nature, and divine nature. When man follows the dictates of the body, he is a prey to his animal nature. When he is subject to the vagaries of the mind, he becomes demonic. When he is following the Atma (conscience), he is manifesting his divinity. When he is governed by all the three- the body, the mind and the Atma, he is human". Sai Baba, SS, 12/92, p. 305

"Vishnu pervades the cosmos as His body. All things in the cosmos are limbs of the body of Vishnu. Hence, no one should have any aversion to anything in the universe. He should not hate anyone, because the same Divine is present in you and in everything in the universe. The cosmos has three forms: the gross, the subtle and the casual. The physical universe represents the gross form. The subtle form is the mind, and subtler than the mind is the Atma". Sai Baba, SS. 11/92. p. 270

Lakshmi Puja

"Let me tell you frankly, I do not like this Lakshmi Puja, which people do, expecting to grow rich and accumulate wealth. They even speak of Dhana-Lakshmi and special Stotras to propitiate her. Lakshmi or wealth accrues by fair means as well as foul. Money is earned by gambling, by various forms of deceit, by highway robbery itself, by high and low, by all and sundry. Worship Lakshya (goal), I shall appreciate you. Keep the Lakshya, the goal of expanding your love till it embraces all beings, till it sees every being as your own self. Keep it ever steady before your mind's eye, then Lakshmi will, other own accord, favour you to the extent necessary for realising the goal. Never doubt that. Never falter at that." Sai Baba. SSS. Vol. III. p. 35

Significance of Tripura-Sundari Puja

"During the Navaratri festival, Tripurasundari is worshipped. Unfortunately, from ancient times people have been observing only the external forms of worship without understanding the inner significance of these festivals. The entire cosmos is a temple. The Lord pervades the cosmos. Nature (Prakriti) teaches the spiritual truth about Navaratri. Realise the love of Sai through spiritual practice (Sadhana). The Lord has to be realised through Sadhana. Sadhana does not mean adoring God in a particular place or in a particular form. It means thinking of God in all that you do wherever you may be. It may be asked whether this is possible. The answer is that it is possible by dedicating every action to God". Sai Baba, SS. 11/92. pp. 270 & 271

Significance of Anga-Arpana Puja

"During Navaratri there is a form of worship called Angaarpana Puja. In this form of worship, all the limbs of the body are offered to the Divine in a spirit of surrender (Sharanagati). Surrender means offering everything to the Divine and giving up the idea of separation between oneself and the Divine. There can be no true surrender if there is a sense of separation. There must be conviction that it is the same Divine who dwells in all beings (Ekam Vasi Sarvabhuta-antaraatma). In the performance of Anga-Arpana Puja, there is a form of self-deception. When a devotee says: "Netram Samarpayaami"(I offer my eyes to the Lord) and offers only a flower to the Lord, he is indulging in a kind of deception. The proper thing would be to say that he is offering a flower. Actually Mantras like "Netram Samarpayaami" are intended to indicate that one is using his eyes only to see God. The real significance of the Mantra is that you think of the Divine whatever you see or do. Therefore, the true meaning of Anga-arpana puja is to declare that you offer all your limbs in the service of the Lord. This means that whatever work you do should be done as an offering to God. Now-a-days selfishness is rampant among devotees and they love God, not for God's sake but to get their selfish desires fulfilled. As long as selfishness prevails, the Divine cannot be understood". Sai Baba, SS, 11/92. p. 271

Significance of Ayudha Puja

"The Navaratri festival is observed by contemplating on God for ten days, cleansing one's self of all the impurities to experience the Divinity within. The penultimate day of the festival is dedicated to what is termed 'Aayudha Puja' (worship of weapons). The weapons to be worshipped are the divine powers in man. When the Divine is worshipped in this way, one is bound to progress spiritually." Sai Baba, SS, 11/94, p. 291

"Today is Ashtami. Ayudha Puja is performed on this day. What is the significance of this Ayudha Puja? After Mahishasura and other demons were slain by Chamundeshwari, there was no more use other weapons. So, the weapons were kept aside and worshipped. The Ayudha Puja is being celebrated since ancient times. But of what use are such weapons to us? In fact, our weapons are Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema. Prema is more powerful than hydrogen and atom bombs of today. Why worry when such power is within us." Sai Baba, SS, 6/2001. p. 191

Significance of Using Kumkum for Worship

"During the Navaratri festival, for the purpose of eradicating one's demonic tendencies, the deities are worshipped with Kumkum (sacred red powder). The red powder is a symbol of blood. The meaning of this worship is offering one's blood to the Lord and receiving in return the gift of peace from the Lord." Sai Baba, SS, 11/94. p. 290

Devi' Compassion and Grace

Among the many lessons driven home to the students in Brindavan by Bhagavan Baba in His evening discourses in April, 1997, in 'Trayee Brindavan', one was concerned with the need for firm determination on the part of a devotee to earn the grace of the Lord. Bhagavan related an episode from the life of Adi Shankara as a young lad.

"The great Acharya was barely four years old at the time. His father, a devout scholar, used to offer daily worship to Goddess Raajeshwari every morning.

Meditating before the Goddess with closed eyes, he would offer a bowl of cow's milk to her. When he opened his eyes after meditation, he would find that bowl was only half-full, the other half having been accepted as an offering by the Goddess. One day, he had to go to a neighbouring village for three days. He told his wife to arrange worship of the Goddess in the customary manner with the offering of milk, with the young Shankara deputizing him in the worship. In accordance with his father's instructions, the young lad sat in front of the Goddess in the sanctum and performed the prescribed ritual. After meditation, when he opened his eyes, he was astonished to see that the bowl of milk offered to the Goddess remained full. He felt sad and cried out: 'Divine Mother! What wrong have I done? I cannot bear this punishment. Please show your grace on me as you did for my father.' He prayed intensely for some time with closed eyes. When he opened his eyes he saw that the bowl was now totally empty. All the milk had gone. He was in distress again and cried out: "Devi! You have consumed all the milk. Where is our share of the Prasadam? If we are denied this, what mother will say and what will others think? I will not leave this place till the bowl is refilled.' In response to fervent prayers, the Goddess spoke: "Dear child! When the river has joined the river, how can it be redirected? Shankara said: 'Nobody will believe me when I say that no milk was left in the bowl after my worship. They may think that I drank all of it. I cannot face them. Devi! Without your Prasad, I will not leave this place. I will lay down my life at your Feet." Swami concluded this moving account of the episode with the following finale: "Devi Raajeshwari's heart melted on hearing the young boy's appeal. She took the bowl and poured her Divine breast-milk into it and gave it to the young devotee.' The compassion of the Divine, Swami said, has no limits." Sai Baba. SS. 6/97. p. 153

How to Celebrate Navaratri?

"The Navaratri festival should be used as an occasion to examine one's own nature whether it is human, animal, or demonic, and strive to transform the animal nature into the human, and divinise the human nature. Wisdom cannot be acquired from outside. It has to be got through inward Sadhana". Sai Baba, SS, 11/92, p. 271

Sai's Message on Navaratri

"The Navaratri festival should not be observed as a festival for worshipping the

consorts of Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma. These goddesses symbolize Divine potencies. All these potencies are derived from Vishnu. The entire cosmos is a manifestation of the myriad forms of Vishnu. People should recognise the oneness underlying the different forms. All beings breathe the same air as their life-breath. Likewise, all the basic elements are common to all. These elements are the stuff of nature. But in the Paratatwa (the Supreme Principle, the Divine), these do not exist. The elements are mental. The Divine is immortal. To proceed from 'the mortal to the Immortal, the easiest means is the cultivation of the Divine love." Sai Baba, SS, 12/92, p. 305

"It is essential to celebrate festivals in a sacred spirit. It is not enough to do this for only 10 days during the Navaratri festivals. It should become the rule throughout one's life, even as one draws one's life-breath till the end." Sai Baba, SS, 11/94, p. 291

Glimpses of Navaratri Celebrations at Prasanthi Nilayam

"To celebrate the Navaratri, new (Nava) as well as nine (Nava), at Prasanthi Nilayam, is indeed a rare chance, replete with wonder and joy. For, this is the Abode of Peace, the peace that ensues when six enemies are destroyed forever. The Prasanthi Flag, which now will be hoisted, is the symbol of this consummation - the conquest by man of the six enemies and the illumination within him of the flame of wisdom installed in the Lotus of Heart. It is the Flag of Swaraj, dominion over oneself, the true independence, when you genuinely claim to be Master of the Realm most related to you." Sai Baba, SSS, Vol. VII, discourse on 12-10-69, p. 108

Compiled from Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Divine Discourses

