

# veergha puja



ଶ୍ରୀବତ୍ସରଂ

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**SRI SRI DURGA PUJA  
PROGRAMME 2012**  
[www.durgapujaglasgow.com](http://www.durgapujaglasgow.com)

**MAHALAYA**

Clarkston Hall, Clarkston Road, Glasgow G76 8NE (Tel: 0141 638 4050)  
FRIDAY, 19th October 2012  
Shri Chandi Paath & Ananda Bhojon: 6.30pm - 10.00pm

**SARBOJANIN DURGOTSAV**

Couper Institute, 86 Clarkston Road, Glasgow G44 3DA (Tel: 0141 637 2157)  
SATURDAY, 20th October - WEDNESDAY, 24th October 2012

**MAHA SASTHI**

SATURDAY, 20th OCTOBER 2012  
Kalparambha, Bodhan, Amontran, Adhibas,  
Arati, Bhog Bitron: 8.00pm - 10.00pm

**MAHA SAPTAMI**

SUNDAY, 21st OCTOBER 2012  
Puja, Puspanjali, Prasad: 6.00pm - 8.00pm  
Bhog Bitron: 8.00pm - 10.00pm

**MAHA ASTHAMI**

MONDAY, 22nd OCTOBER 2012  
Puja, Puspanjali, Prasad: 5.00pm - 8.00pm  
Sandhi Puja: 8.00 pm, Bhog Bitron: 8.00pm - 11.00pm

**MAHA NAVAMI**

TUESDAY, 23rd OCTOBER 2012  
Puja, Puspanjali, Prasad: 6.00pm - 8.00pm  
Bhog Bitron: 8.00 - 10.00pm

**BIJOYA DASAMI**

WEDNESDAY, 24th OCTOBER 2012  
Puja, Bisorjan, Santijal, Prasad: 6.00pm - 8.00pm  
Preeti Bhoj: 8.00pm - 10.00pm

**MAHA LAKSHMI PUJA**

Couper Institute, 86 Clarkston Road, Glasgow G44 3DA  
MONDAY 29th OCTOBER 2012  
Puja, Arati, Puspanjali, Prasad: 6.30pm - 10.00pm  
Bhog Bitron: 8.00pm - 10.00pm

**MAHA KALI PUJA**

Couper Institute, 86 Clarkston Road, Glasgow G44 3DA  
TUESDAY 13th NOVEMBER 2012  
Puja, Arati, Puspanjali, Prasad: 6.30pm - 10.00pm  
Bhog Bitron: 8.00pm - 10.00pm

# ଦୁର୍ଗା ପୂଜା



ରାମ୍ୟଂ ଦୈ ଜ୍ୟାଂ ଦୈ  
ସଂଶୋ ଦୈ ଦ୍ଵିଷୋ ଜାଈ ॥

ସ୍ତୋତ୍ରମାଳା





## ==== শারদ অঙ্গীকার ====

আজি শারদ প্রভাতে আসিছে ভাসিয়া  
আগমনি গান, শানাই এর সুরে  
করিছে ঘোষণা মা'র আগমন  
পূজা আয়োজন করিতে পূর্ণ ধরনী সেজেছে ঢালিয়া ।  
বিপণি ভর্তি পূজা উপহারে রঞ্জীন হয়েছে পৃথিবী ॥  
ভুলে গিয়ে সব ঘ্বেষ অভিমান  
সবাই মিলেছে বিশ্ব মন্ডে, মিলিত কণঠে  
গাহিছে সকলে মহামিলনের গান ॥  
অভিষেক আজি হবে গো তোমার  
তাই আনিয়াছি পীতি উপহার  
বোধনের আগে তোমার কণ্ঠপর্যবো আমার মালা  
অর্ঘ্য রাখিবো পদতলে তব হৃদয় ভরা ভালোবাসা ।  
শূচিবাস পরি যত পুরনারী, পুর সেবিকার দল  
পুরোহিত সাথে একমত হয়ে করিলো ঘোষণা  
অশূচি ও মালা পরানো যাবেনা, অর্ঘ্য যাবেনা চরণে  
পূর্ণ হবেনা পূজা আয়োজন খুঁত থেকে যাবে মনো  
বৃথা হ'লো মোর বাসনা মাগো, বৃথা হলো উপহার  
তোমার চরণ ছুঁতে মাগো মোর নেই কোন অধিকার।  
পনমি তোমায় দূর থেকে তাই অপরাধ ক্ষমা করো,  
যদি কোনদিন পাই অধিকার, মন্ত্র পড়িয়া চরণ ছোঁওয়ার  
সবাকার আগে আপনি আসিয়া  
ভকতি পূর্ণ হৃদয় তোমাকে দিয়ে যাব উপহার,  
বিদায়ের আগে ক'রে যাই আমি শারদ অঙ্গীকার ॥

বিশ্বনাথ সিংহ

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Durga Puja Committee wishes to express their gratitude and thanks to the following for their kind support and contributions:

Sarajit & Anjana Sen (India)

Satya Ranjan & Uma Chakrabarti

Sandip & Kiron Ghosh

Haradhan & Shakuntala Datta

Arijit & Indrani Mukherjee

Gautam & Debjani Patra

Shankar & Supriya Bhaduri

Sanjeet & Sraboni Bhattacharya

Gobinda & Sudatta Chowdhury

Dhruba & Sudakshina Kundu

Sudipta & Madhumita Ray

Santanu & Saroni Acharya

Amit & Sunetra Deb

Goutamananda & Mohua Ray

Purnendu & Ira Das

Dipankar & Bronwen Datta

Sheela Mukherjee & Family

Amit & Shalini Datta

Rajdeep & Mousumi Routh

Sikhar & Susmita Sircar

Asoke & Mridula Chakraborty

Haraprasad Kushari

Dilip Chatterjee

Prabhakara Bhatt

Parthapratim & Meghomala Ghosh-Biswas

Strathclyde Police for assistance during the festival

ABP Anando

Education Services, Glasgow City Council

All the Staff at the Couper Institute and Clarkston Hall

Glasgow Life

Botanic Gardens, Glasgow

The management and staff of Printing Glasgow for their co-operation and assistance in printing this souvenir

**We are very grateful to the businesses and individuals who have helped our event become a success through their gracious sponsorship.**

**We also wish to thank the members of our local community, too numerous to name, who have given countless hours of service in helping to make our Puja a continued success.**



## EDITORIAL

We have once again come together to celebrate Durga Puja for the thirty-second year running, and its message of good over evil, peace and unity amongst mankind.

These celebrations enrich all our lives, both young and old, and serve to maintain and further our Bengali religious and cultural heritage.

Our appreciation and thanks go to the numerous public dignitaries who endorse our Puja through their messages of support.

Our thanks also go to Strathclyde Police and Education Services for their continuous help and support. Our thanks go to Glasgow City Council for their help in providing a safe place to store our images.

As always, the Puja would not be possible without the tireless efforts of the members of the community.

This souvenir helps us to raise funds for celebrating the Durga Puja. We are therefore grateful to all our advertisers and other patrons who have contributed financially.

We hope you all enjoy this year's celebrations.

*Sarva Mangal Mangalye, Shive Sarvarth Sadhike  
Sharanye Trambake Gauri, Narayani Namah Stute*

*Durga Puja Committee, Glasgow*

**ABP Anando will be providing TV coverage of  
the Saptami Puja on Sunday 21st October 2012**



## DURGA PUJA COMMITTEE 2012

### OFFICE BEARERS

CHAIRPERSON/ CONVENER Mrs Sheela Mukherjee  
SECRETARY JOINT Dr Santanu Acharya, Mr Dhruba Kundu  
TREASURER Dr Haradhan Datta  
AUDITOR Mr Mihir Mukherjee

### ADVISORS

Dr Satya Chakrabarti Dr Arijit Mukherjee Mr Shankar Bhaduri

### PUROHITS

Mr. Dilip Mukherjee - Durga Puja / Lakshmi Puja  
Dr Prabhakara Bhatt - Kali Puja  
Dr Babulayeb Mukhopadhyay - Saraswati Puja

### ORGANISING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Asha & Ashis Mallik	Kajal & Purnendu Chakrabarti
Ira & Purnendu Das	Molly & Dilip Mukherjee
Mridula & Ashok Chakraborty	Anita & Nirmal Dhar
Aditi & Mihir Palchoudhuri	Kalpana & Mihir Mukherjee
Anju & Dilip Chatterjee	Chhabi & Shyamal Majumdar
Moni & Kamal Mondal	Vimla & Arun Das
Jayanti & Ramen Kundu	Jaba & Nripen Ganai
Uma & Satya Chakrabarti	Maitraye & Pinaki Ghosh
Kamala & Bibhas Ray	Tripti & Gour Sarkar
Pratima & Shyamal Sengupta	Ruby & Josh Sarkar
Kalpana & Biswanath Sinha	Leena Mukherjee
Bharati & Tarapada Sain	Meena Dutta
Reba & Durga Rakhit	Ruma Majumder
Swati & Siddhartha Adhikari	Madhushri Burman Roy





## DURGA PUJA COMMITTEE 2012

### ORGANISING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Anu Sarkar

Ruma Saraswati

Ranjana Chakraborty

Swapna & Ashok Roy

Sumana & Prasanta Roy

Usha & Priyo Sengupta

Dilip Ganguly

Ashim Datta

Baisali & Puspal Sengupta

Meghomala & Parthapratim Ghosh-Biswas

Supriya & Shankar Bhaduri

Sunetra & Amit Deb

Sudakshina & Dhruva Kundu

Moumita & Joydeep Dey

Debjani & Gautam Patra

Pamela & Arunava Ghosh-Roy

Arunima & Babulayeb Mukhopadhyay

Indrani & Arijit Mukherjee

Sraboni & Sanjeet Bhattacharya

Sudatta & Godinda Chowdhury

Kiron & Sandip Ghosh

Rashmi & Bishnu Routray

Chhabi & Bhajaman Singh

Sushmita & Tofan Sahoo

Mama & Debodutta Rath

Priyanka & Ashis Mishra

Anima & Nilokantha Rath

Soheli & Dev Mukherjee

Mohua & Goutamananda Ray

Poushali & Pramurta Majumdar

Mousumi & Rajdeep Routh

Saroni & Santanu Acharya

Sushmita & Shikhar Sircar

Madhumita & Sudipta Roy

Ankur Mukherjee

Robin Bhattacharya

Saibal Sen

Sthitodhee Sarkar

*The Organising Committee would like to express their gratitude to Alex and to Catherine and her team for all their help throughout our celebrations.*

*We are most grateful to all the children for their participation in the activities. It is clear that our festival will be in good hands in the future.*

*Our apologies if we have missed out anyone's name.*



## BANGIYA SANSKRITIK PARISHAD

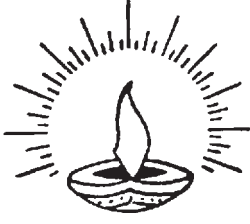
*(Established 1971)*

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2012-2013

PRESIDENT .....	Dr. Mridula Chakraborty
GENERAL SECRETARY .....	Mr. Gautam Kumar Patra
JOINT SECRETARY .....	Dr. Sanjeet Bhattacharya
TREASURER .....	Mrs. Ira Das
SOCIAL SECRETARY .....	Mrs. Aditi Palchoudhuri
PUJA CONVENOR .....	Mrs. Sheela Mukherjee
AUDITOR .....	Mr. Mihir Mukherjee
CO-OPTED MEMBER.....	Dr. Haradhan Datta

### SOCIAL CALENDAR FOR THE YEAR 2012-13

Saturday, 3rd November 2012	Bijoya Sammelani	Clarkston Hall
Saturday, 15th December 2012	Christmas Party	Thorntree Hall
Friday, 15th February 2013	Saraswati Puja	TBA
Sunday, 2nd June 2013	Annual Drama	Eastwood Theatre
Saturday, 8th June 2013	Picnic	TBA
Saturday, 22nd June 2013	AGM	Bearsden Hall



# **BANGIYA SANSKRITIK PARISHAD**

(BENGALI CULTURAL ASSOCIATION)

Estd. 1971

*“Yaa Devii Sarvabhuteshu Maatrirupena Sansthitah  
Yaa Devii Sarvabhuteshu Shaktirupena Sansthitah  
Yaa Devii Sarvabhuteshu Shaantirupena Sansthitah  
Namastasyaih Namastasyaih Namastasyaih Namoh Namah”*

Goddess Durga symbolises the power of the Supreme Being that maintains moral order and justice in the universe. Durga is also known as “Shakti”. Worship of the goddess Shakti is very popular among the Hindus all over the world. Durga stands for the unified symbol of all divine forces; Strength, Morality, Power, Protector.

Glasgow Durga Puja has been facilitated by the Bangiya Sanskritik Parishad, Glasgow, for the past 32 years, celebrating unification, spirit of togetherness and welcoming whole cross section of our society consisting of varied nationalities, religious beliefs and of varied social strata.

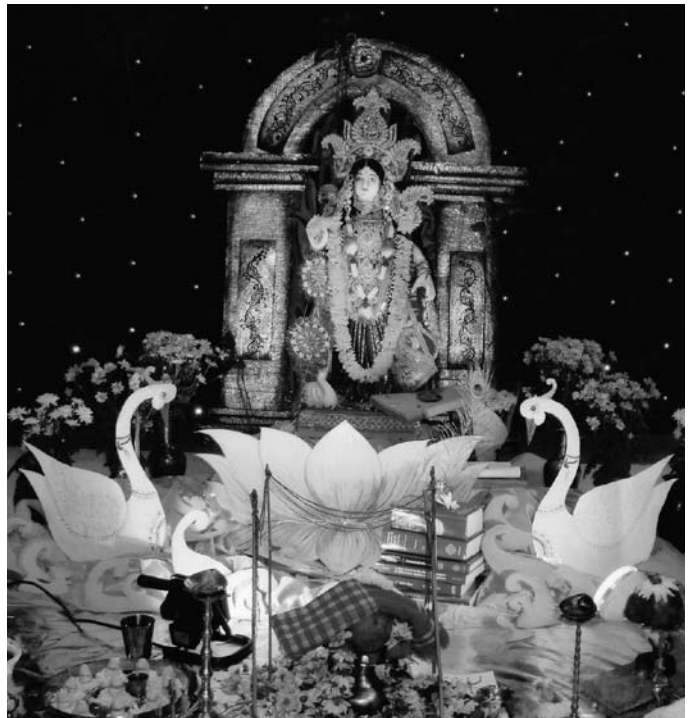
I feel proud that members of the Bangiya Sanskritik Parishad along with the wider community have sustained their zeal and enthusiasm for the past three decades in this mammoth undertaking. This has been possible due to the foresight of some very dedicated people within our community to start this ‘Flagship Programme’ in the early seventies, which is now being carried forward by others who have joined them.

It gives me a great pleasure in welcoming you all to the Durga Puja celebrations this year and offer my best wishes to all those who are attending the pujas. Glasgow Durga Puja is truly based on multicultural Scotland, which has enabled us Bengalis to maintain our heritage and pass it on to our younger generations and the wider community.

I would like to offer my best wishes to the Durga Puja Committee for a successful Durga Puja this year and thank them for their tireless endeavours.

Dr Mridula Chakraborty  
*President, Bangiya Sanskritik Parishad*

# PAST MEMORIES







# DURGA PUJA COMMITTEE

**Bangiya Sanskritik Parishad  
Glasgow**

[www.durgapujaglasgow.com](http://www.durgapujaglasgow.com)

*Namo namo Durge sukh karani*

*Namo namo Ambe dukh harani*

*Chant the name of Goddess Durga, the bestower of happiness*

*Chant the name of Goddess Ambe, who ends all miseries.*

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to our thirty-second year celebrations of Durga Puja in Glasgow.

In 1981, a small group from our community had a vision to celebrate Durga Puja in Glasgow in order to keep our customs and traditions alive particularly with the younger generation and also to share our beliefs with other communities in multi-cultural Scotland. Our enthusiasm, emotion and pride that marked those very first celebrations continue to grow stronger with every year's festivities. More and more people from all over Scotland are joining us to make these celebrations a success.

Durga Puja is celebrated with fanfare on all five days of the festival and recalls the power of the female Shakti symbolised by the Goddess Durga who slays Asura to re-establish peace and sanctity on earth again.

Durga Puja symbolising victory over evil is an experience evoking a wide range of thoughts and emotions. It offers the chance for personal prayer, meditation and reflection and the offering of bhog and sindur to Ma Durga. Bengalis all over the world rejoice to their heart's content with friends and relatives.

Swami Vikenanda best explained the worship of the image of Durga, "the Hindu does not worship an idol made of clay and wood, he sees consciousness within the earthiness and loses himself in it."

Our deep rooted belief is that religions can work together for a better world. Through our faith and celebrations, we endeavour to create a caring, compassionate community that engages and embraces people of all cultural, ethnic and spiritual backgrounds. It also builds social cohesion that promotes affirmation of, and respect of diversity and celebration of the rich heritage of humanity.

A special mention must go to Strathclyde Police, Education Services and Glasgow Life for their continuous help and support. Our thanks also go to Glasgow City Council for their help in providing a safe place to store our images.

I am very grateful to all our advertisers and all other patrons who have generously contributed financially. My sincere thanks and gratitude go to the Durga Puja Committee for volunteering their time, hard work and commitment in serving our community. My thanks go to all the children and parents who have helped to make this Puja enjoyable and successful.

I hope you enjoy this year's Puja and thank you for your support.

*Sheela Mukherjee  
Chairperson & Convener*

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First Minister of Scotland

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG  
T: 0845 774 1741



I'm delighted to extend to you the greetings of the Scottish Government and the people of Scotland as you celebrate the 32nd annual Durga Puja festival in Glasgow.

This colourful festival provides the opportunity to celebrate over a period of five evenings of rich feasting and dancing the triumph of good over evil, and to reflect on the enduring values of your faith.

It is also an appropriate time for us to acknowledge and welcome the significant contribution that the Hindu community continues to make to enriching Scotland socially, culturally and economically.

It's my pleasure therefore to convey my best wishes to you all for a successful and enjoyable Durga Puja 2012.

**ALEX SALMOND**  
**First Minister of Scotland**

Nicola Sturgeon MSP  
Deputy First Minister of Scotland

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG  
T: 0845 774 1741



I'm very pleased to send my greetings for this year's Durga Puja celebrations. The underlying message of peace and unity among all peoples is one that resonates for us all, though of course this great festival means so much to our Hindu community. Scotland is made a richer and more diverse country by the contribution of our minority ethnic and faith communities. As we grow closer to the Commonwealth Games in 2014, it is a pleasure to celebrate the enduring links between the Commonwealth family of nations and Scotland. I wish you all the best for the coming celebrations and congratulate all those involved in the organisation and delivery of a festival which I am sure the Hindu community will be proud of.

Nicola Sturgeon MSP,  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities





The Rt Hon The Lord Provost of Glasgow  
Councillor Sadie Docherty



As the Lord Provost of Glasgow it is a privilege for me to offer my best wishes on behalf of the city to everyone involved in the Durga Puja celebrations.

Glasgow is known around the world as being ‘the friendly city’. It is a place of cultural diversity, home to the largest Asian population in Scotland, and I’m delighted that the links between the people of Glasgow and those from other countries continue to grow.

The Durga Puja festival is enjoyed by people of diverse faiths and backgrounds. It is a great opportunity to see the valuable contribution and positive influence the Hindu community has on life and culture in Glasgow.

I am delighted to extend my warmest congratulations and wish you all a very successful celebration.

With best wishes,

Councillor Sadie Docherty  
RT Hon the Lord Provost of Glasgow



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because I’m  
different from  
you”**

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### **Message from the Chief Superintendent Grant Manders, Crime & Safer Communities Directorate, Strathclyde Police**

It gives me great pleasure to once again offer the best wishes and support of Strathclyde Police to the Hindu Bengali Community at their celebration of Durga Puja.

I am delighted that we enjoy such good relations with our vibrant and active Hindu Bengali community and as Scotland moves toward a single police service I look forward to building upon our strong foundations of trust and mutual respect in the future.

I am delighted to extend my congratulations to all concerned and to wish every success for the celebration of this important event.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



# महिशसुरमर्दिनी

## **Cultural Co-ordinators:**

Uma Chakrabarti

Kamala Ray

## **Participants:**

Megan Roy

Anusha Patra

Ahona Routh

Ashmi Deb

Anuradha Roy

Kamala Ray

Aditi Palchaudhuri

Debjani Patra

Uma Chakrabarti

Sudatta Chowdhury

Madhumita Roy

Mahua Ray

Mousumi Routh

Sraboni Bhattacharya

Mridula Chakraborty

Anu Sarkar

Babulayeb Mukhopadyay

Goutamananda Ray

Shankar Bhaduri

Sanjeet Bhattacharya

Sudipta Roy

Sthitodhee Sarkar

## **Stage Decoration:**

Jayanti Kundu

## **Sound Engineer:**

Duncan Reid - Pro Sound Services



# Mahalaya

The traditional six day countdown to Mahasaptami starts from Mahalaya. Goddess Durga visits the earth for only four days but seven days prior to the Pujas, starts the Mahalaya. The enchanting chant of 'chandi path' fill up the predawn hours of the day thus marking the beginning of "devipaksha" and the countdown of Durga Puja. It's a kind of invocation or invitation to the mother goddess to descend on earth - "Jago Tumi Jago". This is done through chanting of mantras and singing devotional songs.


The story element is captivating. It speaks of the increasing cruelty of the demon king Maheswara against the gods. Unable to tolerate his tyranny the gods plead with Vishnu to annihilate the demon. The Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara (Shiva) come together to create a powerful female form with ten arms - Goddess Durga or 'Mahamaya', the Mother of the Universe who embodies the primeval source of all power.

The gods then bestow upon this Supreme creation their individual blessings and weapons. Armed like a warrior, the goddess rides a lion to battle with Mahisasura. After a fierce combat the 'Durgatinashini' is able to slay the 'Asura' king with her trident. Heaven and earth rejoice at her victory. Finally, the mantra narration ends with the refrain of mankind's supplication before this Supreme Power:

"Ya devi sarbabhuteshshu, sakti rupena sanksthita Namasteshwai Namasteshwai Namasteshwai namo namaha."

This day bears immense significance for the Bengalis. It is according to the myths that Sree Rama hastily performed Durga Puja just before he set for Lanka to rescue Sita from Ravana. According to Puranas, King Suratha, used to worship the goddess Durga in spring. Thus Durga Puja was also known as Basanti Puja. But Rama brought the Puja forward and worshiped Durga in autumn and that is why it is known as 'Akal Bodhon' or untimely worship. It was considered untimely as it is in the myths that puja was performed when the Gods and Goddesses were awake i.e. "Uttarayan" and was not held when the Gods and Goddesses rested i.e. "Dakshinayan". It was on the day of Mahalaya, the beginning of "devipoksha", the Gods and Goddesses woke up to prepare themselves for Durga Puja.

Autumn in its bloom, mingled with the festive spirit of Durga Puja reaches its pitch on the day of Mahalaya. From this day starts 'Devipaksha' and marks the end of 'Pitri-paksha'. It is the day when many throng to the banks of river Ganga, clad in dhotis to offer prayers to their dead relatives and forefathers. People in the pre-dawn hours pray for their demised relatives and take holy dips in the Ganges. This ritual is known as 'Tarpon'.



We are pleased to be associated  
with this event

With Best Wishes  
from

# **Dalmellington Care Centre**

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EAST AYRSHIRE,  
KA6 7SW

TEL: 01292 550555



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## Gayatri Mantra

*Om Bhur Bhuva Svaha  
Tat Savitur Varenyam  
Bhargo Devasya Dheemahi  
Dhiyo yo nah Prachodayat*

We meditate upon the adorable effulgence of the divine Sun. May that unfold our intellects.

The one-lettered word symbol \ (Om or AUM) called pranava represents the supreme Reality beyond the three worlds of the waking, dream and deep sleep. Om is a symbol of the supreme Brahman. Om is an 'idol' representing the divine ideal. It is considered the most powerful word-symbol used for meditation. Brahman is the ultimate Reality sought by all spiritual practitioners (sadhaks). It cannot be reached directly through human equipment. Brahman is not something you can perceive with your sense organs. Nor is it an emotion that you can feel with your mind. Nor a concept you can comprehend with your intellect. Brahman is the ideal unknown to you. You need a 'known' idol to reach the 'unknown' ideal. An idol takes you to the ideal. Of all sounds Om is the most potent, most natural.

Bhur bhuvah svaha - are called the vyahritis. They represent the three worlds experienced by man. It could be taken in the subjective sense as the waking, dream and deep sleep states of consciousness or in the objective sense as the higher (heaven), middle (earth) and the lower (hell) worlds. In either case it is meant to represent the whole universe. When man conceives this first he understands his relative insignificance in the vast universe. Man is only an infinitesimal speck in the universe. Yet he asserts his ego and arrogance. The part of the prayer is meant to humble him. He goes through the initial preparation necessary for his mind to lift itself to the realisation of the supreme Self in him.

The prayer is directed to the Sun (savithur). In Manu Smriti it is said that the Gayatri japa is to be chanted twice in a day at samdhya time. There are two samdhya in a day - dawn and dusk. Samdhya literally means holding together, union, junction. The meeting point of day and night that is twilight in the morning and evening. At this time the Gayatri mantra is repeated - 'We meditate upon the adorable effulgence of the divine Sun. May that unfold our intellect'.

The structure of the Gayatri has three distinct parts. The first part is the first line consisting of the pranava and the maha vyahritis. The purpose of the first part is to prepare the seeker's mind for prayer, meditation and realisation.

The second part consists of the second and third lines. It is directed to intensify the seeker's aspiration or determination to reach the goal of realisation. To develop an intense desire for liberation which is called mumukshutwa in Sanskrit.

The first two parts involve effort on the part of the seeker (sadhak) while the third part consisting of the last line brings about an attitude of self-surrender, the stage of no-effort.

A beautiful metaphor compares these three stages to shooting a target with a bow and arrow. The first stage of preparing the seeker's mind is compared to making the bow by bending a tough flexible rod and tying its ends with a string. The second stage of developing mumukshutwa is comparable to positioning the arrow in the bow and pulling the string to its maximum tension. These two aspects of preparation involve effort. The last stage of self-surrender is similar to the release of the arrow when effort has ended. The result of all this is the striking of the target which is the realisation of the supreme Self.

The Gayatri mantra is said to be one of the oldest of the divine hymns. It is referred to as the mother of the Vedas. Gayatri has a compelling charm of its own to millions of Hindu hearts. The repetition of this mantra with the right understanding of its sacred meaning is believed widely to have the power to dispel all the negative tendencies in the human mind and thereby unfold the supreme Self within.

The greatness of the Gayatri is that it has both the power of mantra and the power of prayer. The pure mantra has an inherent effectiveness called mantra shakti that is the power contained in inarticulate or intonational sound. It may or may not have any meaning. But Gayatri has both. It has a philosophical meaning. It has the advantage of articulate sound. That is, it has the power of prayer as well. When the power of prayer is combined with the power of mantra the seeker is fully equipped with the most effective instrument for the unfoldment of the spiritual potentialities. That is the uniqueness of the Gayatri.



Gayatri is the mantra that is given to the boy at his spiritual initiation called upanayanam. Upanayanam is the thread ceremony performed to Hindu boys at a very early age generally between 6 and 8 years. The Guru (preceptor) initiates the boy to spiritual study by giving him the sacred Gayatri mantra. The boy is then considered dwijah which means twice born. The first birth of the gross personality is when the physical body emerges from the mother's womb. The second birth now is that of the subtle body when the mind and intellect are fully grown and ready to receive the knowledge of the supreme Reality.

The Gayatri is chanted both at dawn and dusk facing the sun. The devotee carries a little water in his folded palm and at the end of each chant of the mantra he offers the water to the sun. As the water is offered the devotee says 'Asavadyow Brahma' which means 'This sun is Brahman (God)'. While saying so he performs the Atma pradakshina by turning himself round from his right side. The Gayatri is chanted generally a minimum of ten times during each samdhya but one could chant more according to one's personal capacity.

In the Taittiriya Aranyaka there is a story built around this ritual of the daily chanting of the Gayatri. It has the typical Vedic mysticism about it. The story describes an island where a tribe of devils called mundehas lived. These devils gathered in hordes every morning and approached the sun threatening to destroy him. At that time the water offered by the Gayatri chanters struck them like lightning and they retreated to their island. This happened everyday.

This simple story has a deep philosophical significance. Mun means mind and deha means body. The devils of mundeha therefore signify the desires, passions and cravings of the body and mind. These desires cover the pure Self. They prevent the divinity from flowing out of your Self. These desires are eradicated by the subtle intellect which is charged with the Gayatri mantra. Then the inherent brilliance of the Self emerges out of the personality of such a man.

The invocation of the sun signifies the invocation of the Self, the Atman within. The Atman is the illuminator of all perceptions, emotions and thoughts just as the sun is the illuminator of all the planets around it of the solar system. The Gayatri mantra is an appeal by the seeker to the divine sun within to emerge out of the cloud of desires and shine forth its resplendent light.

*From 'The Symbolism of Hindu Gods and Rituals'*



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# The Spiritual Significance of Navaratri

(From the lectures by Swami Tejomayananda)

Let us first discuss the values of the Indian culture and the subject matter of the Vedas in terms of the Navaratri festival.

Even though Hindus celebrate this festival every year, most have no idea of the significance of Navaratri.

*Ratri* means 'night' and *nava* means 'nine'. At Navaratri (nine nights) the Goddess is worshipped in Her various forms as Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi. Though the Goddess is one, She is represented and worshipped in three different aspects. On the first three nights of the festival, Durga is worshipped, Lakshmi is worshipped, and then Saraswathi Devi on the last three nights. The following day, the tenth day of the festival, is called Vijayadasami. *Vijaya* means 'victory', the victory over our own minds that can come only when we have worshipped these three Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi.

## *Durga*

To gain noble virtues, all evil tendencies in the mind must be destroyed. Goddess Durga represents the destruction. Durga is *durgati harini* – meaning She who removes our evil tendencies. This is why She is called Mahishasura Mardini, the destroyer of *Mahisha* (buffalo) *asura* (demon). The destroyer of animal tendencies in all of us.

The buffalo stands for *tamoguna*, the quality of laziness, darkness, ignorance and inertia. We have all these qualities in us. We love to sleep. Although we may have a lot of energy and potential inside us, we prefer to do nothing – just like the buffalo that loves only to lie in pools of water. In the Puranic story, Durga Devi's killing of this demon is, symbolically, the destruction of the *tamoguna* within us that is very difficult to destroy. In the Durga Devi *Havana* (sacrifice) we invoke that divine Power within us to destroy our animalistic tendencies.

## *Lakshmi*

For knowledge to dawn within us, we have to prepare our minds. The mind must be pure, concentrated and single-pointed; this purification of the mind is obtained through worship of Lakshmi Devi.

In our society today, however, when we think of Lakshmi, we think only of money and gold! This is why if one goes to a Lakshmi temple one will find a crowd. Everybody likes Lakshmi *Puja* (worship) because they think She represents material wealth. But what is real wealth? Even if we have material wealth but have no self-discipline or self-control, nor the values of love, kindness, respect, and sincerity, all our material wealth will be lost or destroyed. The real wealth is the inner wealth of spiritual values that we practise in our lives, by which our minds become purified. Only when we have these noble values will we be able to preserve our material wealth and make good use of it. Otherwise, money itself becomes a problem.

In the Upanishads, the *rishis* (sages) never asked for material wealth only. In the *mantras* of the Taittiriya Upanishad, they first asked to have all the noble virtues fully developed in them. 'Having gained the noble virtues, thereafter Lord please bring wealth to us'. The *rishis* express here that in the absence of right values and good qualities, all our money will be wasted. We know this is true because, for example, if we give money to a drug addict or an alcoholic, he will drink or smoke it away in no time.

Our wealth of virtues is our true Lakshmi. Its importance is shown by the fact that Adi Shankaracharya himself, in *Vivekachudamani* describes the *sat sampathi*, or six forms of wealth (calmness of mind, self-control, self-withdrawal, forbearance, faith and single-pointedness) that are to be cultivated to attain wisdom. These virtues are important because our goal is victory over the mind – a victory such that every change that takes place in our lives does not disturb us. This victory comes only when the mind is prepared, and this mental preparation is the symbolism of the Lakshmi Puja.

### *Saraswathi*

Victory over the mind can be gained only through knowledge, through understanding, and it is Goddess Saraswathi who represents this highest knowledge of the Self.

Although there are many kinds of knowledge in the Vedas – phonetics, astronomy, archery, architecture, economics and so on – the real knowledge is spiritual knowledge. Lord Krishna Himself says in the *Bhagavad Gita*: ‘The knowledge of the Self is *the* knowledge’; and He adds, ‘it is My vibhuti, My glory’. In other words, we may have knowledge of many other subjects and sciences, but if we do not know our own Self, then that is the greatest loss. Therefore, the supreme Knowledge is the knowledge of the Self that is represented by Goddess Saraswathi.

Thus, at Navaratri, Goddess Durga is invoked first to remove impurities from the mind. Then Goddess Lakshmi is invoked to cultivate the noble values and qualities. Finally, Goddess Saraswathi is invoked for gaining the highest knowledge of the Self. This is the significance of the three set of three nights, and when all these three are gained subjectively, then there will be Vijayadasami – the day of true victory !

Why is the Navaratri festival celebrated at night rather than in the daytime? This is another interesting question. Night-time is generally the time when we go to sleep, so the spiritual message of night-time worship is: ‘You have lived long enough in the sleepy ignorance of *tamoguna*. It is time to get up now. Please wake up!’

### *The importance of Ritual*

Not everyone, it is true, will be of the intellectual type to appreciate everything philosophically. Therefore, philosophy or spiritual truth must be demonstrated visually in some ritualistic form. In this way, when children are first introduced to it, they enjoy a dance or a festival, and then later on begin to question, ‘what is this dance? Why are we doing this Puja? What is the meaning of Navaratri?’ So the purpose of the concretised ritual is fulfilled when these questions begin to arise in the minds of our children.

Unfortunately, when we take our children to functions at the temples and they begin to ask questions about what they see, we cannot answer them. Yet when the children revolt later as teenagers, we say, ‘what happened to the children? These kids are terrible. We never used to question our religion!’

We take pride in the fact that we never used to question anything, but it would have been better if we had asked questions and found out. Why did we not ask? Because of intellectual inertia. Inertia is of different kinds. Physical inertia is not as bad because it is usually temporary. There are also mental or emotional stupors that some people remain in, but the intellectual inertia is the worst kind because under its influence, we do not want to think at all. It is said that people can live without air for two minutes, without water for a few days, without food for a month or so, and without thinking for *generations!* Some people just do not want to think. This is our inner Mahisha that needs to be destroyed.

As we can see, the theme of the entire Vedas is reflected in the Navaratri festival. Purify the mind and remove all negativities; cultivate positive virtues; gain spiritual knowledge and transcend limitations. This is the real victory – the dance of joy, the dance of realisation – *Raas* -, which Sri Krishna and the *gopis* performed.

*Sarva mangala mangalye Shive Sarvartha Sadhike  
Saranye Thrayambike Gowri Narayani Namosthute*

Sarve janaa Sukhino bhavantu – Sarve janaa Sujano bhavantu

*Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti*





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*Om Dyauh Shantír Antaríkshagum,  
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*Shantír Apah, Shantír Oshadaya,  
Shantí Vanaspathaya*

*Shantí Vishvedeva, Shantí Brahma,  
Shantí Sarvagum*

*Shantí Reva, Shantí Sama,  
Shantí Rethí*

*Om Shantí, Shantí, Shantihi*

*“Ahimsa - “love-force” or “non-violent force” - involving reverence for all life, is a notion with a long religious history and has been interpreted to mean either that men and women should avoid evil by withdrawing from the world or that they should fight evil by doing good deeds in the world.”*

**Mahatma Gandhi**

*Om is the akshara, or imperishable syllable. OM is the universe, and this is the exposition of OM. The past, the present and the future, all that was, all is, all that will be, is OM. Likewise all else that may exist beyond the bounds of time, that too is OM.*

**Mandukya Upanishad**

“The term Dharma is one of complex significance. It stands for all those ideals and purposes, influences and institutions that shape the character of man both as an individual and as a member of society. It is the law of right living, the observance of which secures the double object of happiness on earth and salvation. It is ethics and religion combined. The life of a Hindu is regulated in a very detailed manner by the laws of Dharma. His fasts and feasts, his social and family ties, his personal habits and tastes are all conditioned by it.”

**Dr. S. Radhakrishnan**

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