



S.K.S. SWAMINARAYAN TEMPLE (LONDON) – BAL YUVAK MANDAL

Westfield Lane, Kenton, Harrow, Middlesex, HA3 9EA Est. 1966 Charity Reg. No. 271034

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Navratri

Definitions:

Nav means nine and Ratri means night, hence making the word Navratri. Navratri begins on Aso Sud and is celebrated from the first to the ninth date of Ashwin Shukla Paksha.

These nine days are divided and devoted to the Trinity;

1. Durga (Goddess of Valor), Who is the wife of Shiv Bhagwan
2. Lakshmi (Goddess of Wealth), Who is the wife of Narayan
3. Saraswati (Goddess of Knowledge and Art). Who is the daughter of Brahma

The significance of this order is that first Durga destroys all the evil propensities lurking in the minds of her devotees; then Lakshmi implants divine qualities in the devotees' minds and finally Saraswati bestows true knowledge to her devotees.

Basic outline of the nine days:

- First three nights are dedicated to the Goddess of action and energy. Her different manifestations Kumari, Parvati and Kali are worshipped during these days. They represent the three natures/ classes of womanhood. The three classes of womanhood are considered as the virgin young girl, the auspicious wife/ mother and an old aged woman.
- The next three days are for Lakshmi (Goddess of Wealth), for Her various aspects as the Goddesses of peace, plenty and bliss. Lakshmi is not just the Goddess of wealth but she also aids us in basic things, e.g. family, friends etc. In these three days we must remember that fulfillment is more important than wealth itself.
- The next three days are for Saraswati (Goddess of Knowledge and Art). She is there to guide us on how to live a better life and also to help us better our spiritual knowledge. Knowledge or Gnaaan is more important to recognise the Lord and through such scriptures recommended by our Lord we must ensure we can further develop.



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Story behind Navratri:

Due to the harassment from Demon Mahishasoor, the Devas requested Brahma, Vishnu and Shiv (otherwise known as the Tridevs) to help them. These nine days are divided and devoted to God. Born out of the anger of the Tridevs was Shaktimaa. Shaktimaa fought with the demon for nine consecutive days. On the ninth night the demon was killed.

From a Swaminarayan Satsang prospective:

Swaminarayan Bhagwan was asked about whether a Satsangi should partake in the Navratri festival. Bhagwan replied that devotees should take up the Navratri vrat and poojan if they would like to. In Satsangi Jivan prakran 2 adyai 17, Swaminarayan Bhagwan teaches everyone about the rituals to please the Goddesses. The rituals being the havan(holy fire) related offerings. Swaminarayan Bhagwan has not said not to partake in Navratri and has not commanded his followers to. Bhagwan has left it as an open option to males and female if they want take up the rituals of Navratri.

How Navratri should be celebrated:

Swaminarayan Bhagwan clearly stated that Navratri is a Satva-gun festival for Satva-gun devi's. Satva-gun means state of truthfulness. The Devi's that are worshipped will only accept your offering if it is of a truthful motive to please her.

If you go to these Satva gun Devi's festival with motive of Raja-gun(sense-desire) or tama-sun(state of ignorance) then you will be offending a dev. Offending a dev is a big sin and should be feared by all who have respect for Bhagwan.

In India around 200 years ago people would offer meat on the days of Navratri. This act is strictly forbidden in the veds and scriptures. In the story of Jad bharat once the Devi came out of the Murti and attacked those people who had a motive to sacrifice live beings. In offending a Devi you are offending Bhagwan's servant and therefore Bhagwan will not forgive you easily. In the current times, at Navratri festivals, we see people dance around the Devi's outside the proscribed rules. As standard in the Hindu religion, Males and females should never dance together or have the motive to see such act. Devotees of the lord should understand that if Navratri is performed with the motive of pleasing Lord, that act should be carried out according to Lord's wishes.

If anyone chooses to go to a Navratri festival they can go to a place and dance among their own gender and to songs of Lord's praise. The mind will in many cases find the wrong path more appealing but it is ideal for the sake of the soul that rules and regulations of the lord are adhered to.