

NAVRATRI PUJA GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

Navratri (literally 9 nights) is a period dedicated to the worship of Durga Mata. The two most popular Navratri periods coincide with the beginning of Spring (Chaitra Navratri) and the beginning of fall (Sharad Navratri). These two periods mark the more significant changes in climate in the environment and prayers are offered to Devi as the Universal Mother for Her protection.

Common practices in a Navratri observance at home include -

1. Dhaar offerings
 2. Puja to Durga Mata
 3. Havan
 4. Japa to Devi
 5. Reading of Devi Scriptures
 6. Kanya Puja
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DHAAR ARTICLES

Customs vary but the most common articles used in making Dhaar for Devi are turmeric, camphor, rice, cloves, nutmeg, neem, milk, honey, sindhoor in a water base. These are all symbolic of good health and long life. The solid articles are ground to a fine powder/paste and stirred into the water in a lota and a little milk added with a red flower. This is offered on the earth in a sacred spot in the yard, eg by the jhandi, tulsi plant, etc. A piece of camphor or a lighted diya is placed on the spot with prasad and the Dhaar offered while reciting a Devi mantra of one's choice.

PUJA ARTICLES: Your Checklist of Items Needed:

1. Flowers
2. Lota of water
3. Thaali
4. Panchamrit mix of – Milk, dahie, ghee, sugar, honey, tulsi leaf .
5. Cotton
6. Perfume
7. Chandan
8. Doob grass, mango leaves and neem leaves
9. Haldi
10. Sindoor

11. Rice
 12. Agarbati or Incense
 13. Deeya
 14. Prasad (usually Lapsie and Soharie).
 15. Supari
 16. Coins/Gifts
 17. Havan Kund
 18. Murti of Durga Mata
 19. Camphor
 20. Mango Wood for havan
 21. Ghee for havan
 22. Matches
 23. Dhaar prepared as above
 24. Murti of Lord Ganesh
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SET UP

All preparations will be made in a way that you and your family will face East or North during the offerings. Prepare a bedi, a simple flat surface nicely decorated will do. Place the murtis of Lord Ganesh and Durga Mata on top of the bedi. Your Havan Kund will be next to the bedi. Have a container with ghee and a spoon to offer the ghee during the Havan. Have also a lota of water with mango leaf and basket of flowers. Lastly, have all the other ingredients from your checklist next to you.

PROCEDURE - PREPARATORY STEP

Now you are ready to start: Follow the steps below:

Om Sri Ganeshaaya Namah, Sri Saraswatyai Namah, Sri Gurave Namah

a. Sprinkle water east, west, north, and south and repeat:

Om Apavitrah Pavitro Vaa
Sarvaasthaang Gato-pi Vaa
Yah Smaret Pundari-Kaaksham
Sa waa hyaa Bhyaantaroh Suchih

Meaning: One who remembers Lord Vishnu becomes pure both externally and internally.

b. Meditate on Lord Ganesh: take flowers in your hand and repeat:

Om Gajaa Nanam Bhuta Ganaadi Say Vitam
Kapitha Jambu Phaala Saara Bhakshitam
Uma Sutam Shoka Vinaasha Kaaranam
Namaami Vighneshwara Paada Pankajam

Meaning: I bow to the feet of Lord Ganesh, with the face of the elephant, who is served by the Ganas, who partakes of the fruits of the Kapitta and Jambu, the son of Uma Devi, who removes all obstacles.

Offer flowers to the murti of Lord Ganesh.

PROCEDURE - PUJA FOR DURGA MATA

Now the Shodasha Upchaar Puja (16 steps) to Durga Mata

1. OM SRI DURGA DEVYAI NAMAHA AAWAAHANAM SAMARPAYAAMI
Offer a few rice grains on the murti to welcome Durga Mata.
2. OM SRI DURGA DEVYAI NAMAHA AASANAM SAMARPAYAAMI
Offering of flower to symbolize a divine seat.
3. OM SRI DURGA DEVYAI NAMAHA PAADHYAM SAMARPAYAAMI
Offer water to wash the feet of the murti.
4. OM SRI DURGA DEVYAI NAMAHA PANCHAAMRIT SNAANAM SAMARPAYAAMI
Bathing with a mix of milk, dahi, ghee, sugar and honey. (3 small spoonfuls).
5. OM SRI DURGA DEVYAI NAMAHA JAL SNAANAM SAMARPAYAAMI
Bathing with water. (3 small spoonfuls),
6. OM SRI DURGA DEVYAI NAMAHA VASTRAM SAMARPAYAAMI
Offer clothing or cotton symbolic of clothing.
7. OM SRI DURGA DEVYAI CHANDANAM GANDHAM CHA SAMARPAYAAMI
Beautification of the Deity with tilak and perfume.
8. OM SRI DURGA DEVYAI NAMAHA PUSPHAM SAMARPAYAAMI
Offer flowers as a symbol of beauty
9. OM SRI DURGA DEVYAI NAMAHA DURVAM SAMARPAYAAMI
Offer doob graas symbolic of health and long life
10. OM SRI DURGA DEVYAI NAMAHA HARIDRAM SINDOORAM CHA SAMARPAYAAMI
Offer haldi and sindoo to symbolize health

11. OM SRI DURGA DEVYAI NAMAHA NEEM PATRAM SAMARPAYAAMI

Offer neem leaves for health and long life.

12. OM SRI DURGA DEVYAI NAMAHA DHOOPAM SAMARPAYAAMI

Wave Incense around the murti to glorify Her

13. OM SRI DURGA DEVYAI NAMAHA DEEPAM SAMARPAYAAMI

Perform Aarti as further glorification

14. OM SRI DURGA DEVYAI NAMAHA NAIVEDYAM AACHAMANIYAM CHA
SAMARPAYAAMI

Offer Prasad and water, as food and drink

15. OM SRI DURGA DEVYAI NAMAHA TAAMBULAM SAMARPAYAAMI

Offer paan and supari for health and mouth cleansing after meal

16. OM SRI DURGA DEVYAI NAMAHA DAKSHINAM SAMARPAYAAMI

Offer coins and gifts to appreciate Her blessing

PROCEDURE - JAPAM (CHANTING THE LORD'S NAME)

Using a mala with 108 beads recite a few rounds of your favorite Durga Mantra - for example OM AIM HREEM KLEEM CHAAMUNDAYAI VICHE, or whichever you know like JAYANTI MANGALA KAALI..., Durga Gayatri, etc.

PROCEDURE - READING OF SCRIPTURE.

An important aspect of the puja is the study of scriptures related to Devi. A common practice is to read the entire Durga Saptasati in the 9 nights of Nauratri. Many like to read and narrate kathas of the Devi Bhagwat especially those relating to the destruction of Madhu/Kaitahba, Mahisasur/Ratabeej and Shumbha/Nishumbha which symbolize overcoming the negative tendencies of our minds.

PROCEDURE- KANYA PUJA

Usually on the 8th night (Ashtami) of Nauratri, Kanya Puja is done. At home one may invite young girls (9 or as many as practical) as manifestations of Devi and a young boy (as manifestation of Lord Shiva) and worship them as Goddesses and Gods in the community. Their feet are washed, chandan, malas and arti are offered to these children and they are fed with sweets and prasad. They are given gifts and dakshina to represent our thanks to God for blessings during this auspicious time. This is elaborately done in temple celebrations and one can attend and participate there if it is not practical in the home situation.

PROCEDURE - HAVAN

A simple havan can be done with ghee offerings into the sacred fire. Or a mix of some of the prasad with samagri, cloves, til, gogul and ghee made if practical to burn completely.

The names of the dieties form the mantras themselves with the use of SWAAHAA accompanying the offering (or SWADHAA for ancestors).

Light fire

OFFER WATER AROUND FIRE 3 TIMES

Om Sarva Tirtha Samaayuktam Sugandhim Nirmalam Jalam

Aachmaniyam Mayaa Datam Grihaana Parameshwara

HAVAN MANTRAS

Om Agnaye Swaahaa

Om Soamaaya Swaahaa

Om Prajaapatye Swaahaa

Om Indraaya Swaahaa

Om Sri Ganashaaya Swaahaa

Om Sri Gowri Divyai Swaahaa

Om Sri Suryaaya Swaahaa

Om Sri Chandraayaa Swaahaa

Om Sri Bhowmaaya Swaahaa

Om Sri Budhaaya Swaahaa

Om Sri Brihaspataye Swaahaa

Om Sri Shukraayaa Swaahaa

Om Sri Sanaischaraaya Swaahaa

Om Sri Rahave Swaahaa

Om Sri Ketawe Swaahaa

Om Sri Shivaaaya Swaahaa

Om Sri Krishnaaya Swaahaa

Om Sri Hanumate Swaahaa

Om Sri Raamaaya Swaahaa

Om Sri Durgaa Divyai Swaahaa

Om Sri Lakshmi Divyai Swaahaa

Om Sri Saraswati Divyai Swaahaa

Om Sri Graam Devata Bhyo Swaahaa

Om Sri Staan Devataa Bhyo Swaahaa

Om Sri Kula Devataa Bhyo Swaahaa

Om Bhu Swaahaa

Om Bhuwah Swaahaa

Om Swah Swaahaa

Om Tat Savitur Varenyam Bhargo Devasya Dhimahi Dhiyo YoNah Prachodayaat
Swaahaa (3 times)

Om Sarva Devataa Bhyo Swaahaa
Om Sarva Devi Bhyaam Swaahaa
Om Sarva Pitri Bhyo Swadhaa

While standing:

Om Purnamadah Purnamidam
Purnaata Purnamudachyate
Purnsaya Purnamaadaaya
Purnam Eva Vashisyatay

Om Sarvam Vai Purna Gwam Swaahaa (3 times)

OFFER WATER AROUND FIRE

Om Sarva Tirtha Samaayuktam Sugandhim Nirmalam Jalam
Aachmaniyam Mayaa Datam Grihaana Parameshwara

PROCEDURE - FINAL STEPS

1. Aarti – Perform Aarti around the bedi, Havan, Puja Room, throughout the entire house, and to your Mother, Father, Grandparents, etc. Can sing or play arti bhajans as this is being done.
2. Closing Mantra:

Twameva Maata Cha Pitaa Twameva
Twameva Bandhu Cha Sakhaa Twameva
Twameva Vidya Dravinam Twameva
Twameva Sarvam Mama Deva Deva

Om Shanti, Shanti, Shantih.

COMMON QUESTIONS ON NAVRATRI WORSHIP

Q. Do I have to do all 9 nights?

A. Ideally puja is done for all 9 nights, if not practical usually odd numbers of days are chosen, eg., 1, 3, 5 or 7 depending on circumstances.

Q. Are only married women allowed to offer Dhaar?

A. No, all members of the family can participate.

Q. Do I offer Dhaar once each day or all 9 on 1 day?

A. Ideally once per day, but if only a 1-day observance can do all 9 on that day.

Q. Can I use the pre-made Dhaar powder purchased at the puja store?

A. Yes, absolutely. This makes it more convenient.

Q. I live in a condo, how can I do the Dhaar offerings?

A. A small pot with dirt and a little lota with the minimal amount of Dhaar will suffice nicely.

Q. Can I do Latchmi Ma and Saraswati Ma pujas too or just Durga Ma?

A. Customs vary per family. Some do Durga puja for all 9 nights, some do 3 night of Durga puja, 3 nights of Latchmi Puja and 3 nights of Saraswati puja. Both traditions are perfectly acceptable.

Q. Why is Nauratri sometimes referred to as a 10 day observation (Dasera)?

A. The 10th day is called Vijay Dashmi. On this day the victory of the destruction of the negativities is celebrated after the tapasya of the 9 nights.

Q. In the calendar I see sometimes only 8 days for Nauratri, why is that?

A. The festival follows the Hindu calendar, some lunar days are shorter than others, hence the difference.

Q. I can't make Lapsie/Sohari, is that an issue?

A. All deities have their special prasad, but if not practical to make that, a thali of fruits is just fine.

May we enjoy the blessing of Durga Mata on this auspicious occasion.