



Bharatha Samskruthi Prakashana

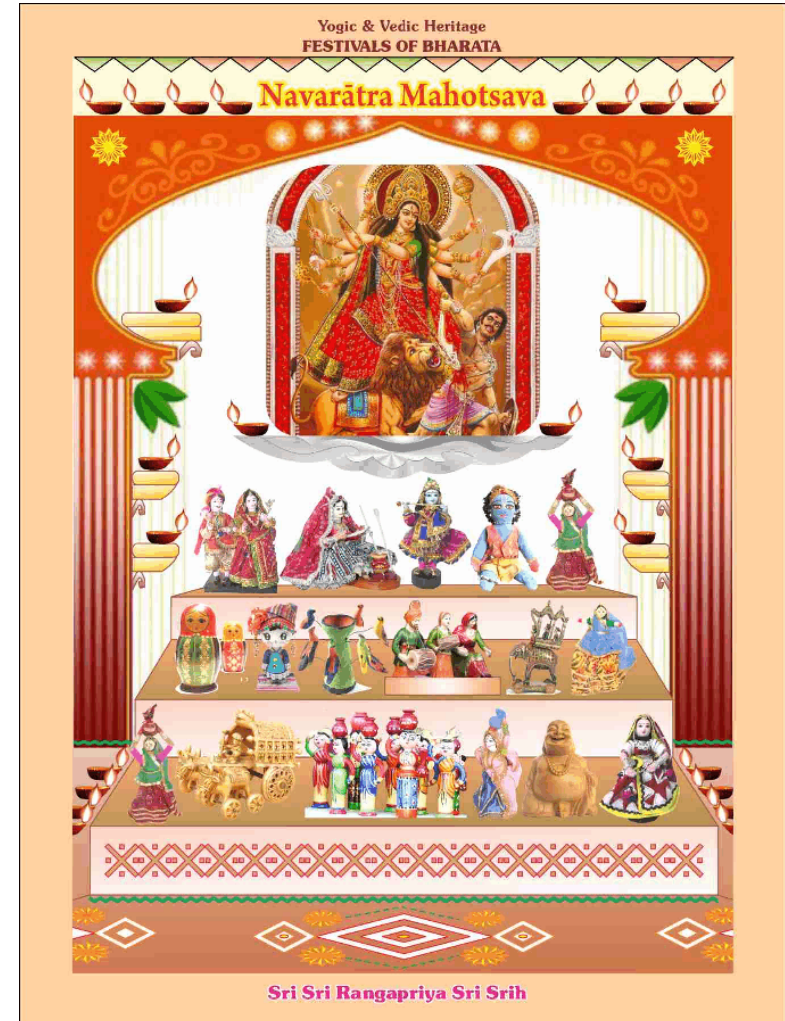
No.37/8, G4, Leesa Apartment, 4th Cross,

Lalbagh Road, Bangalore 560 027

Phone : 080-22278231, 26765381, Mobile : 9448078231

URL : www.bharathasamskruthi.com,

Email : bspllg@gmail.com



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We Dedicate this Sacred Treasure at the holy lotus feet of

Sriranga Mahaguru and SriMata

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URL : www.bharathasamskruthi.com,

Email : bspllg@gmail.com

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| अ | आ | इ | ई | उ | ऊ | ऋ | ॠ | ऌ | ॡ | ए | ऐ | ओ | औ | अं | अः |
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| क | ख | ख | ग | ङ | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| च | छ | ज | झ | ञ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ca | cha | ja | jha | ña | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ट | ठ | ड | ढ | ण | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| ya | ra | la | va | śa | sha | sa | ha | | | | | | | | |

Example:

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|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|------|----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|
| क | का | कि | की | कु | कू | कृ | क्लृ | के | कै | को | कौ | कं | कः |
| ka | kā | ki | kī | ku | kū | kṛ | klṛ | ke | kai | ko | kau | kam | kah |



Navarātra Mahotsava

Navarātra is a very important *parva* in the garland of festivals of the *Sanātana Āryabhāratīyas*. There is no doubt that this is the most important of all the festivals celebrated in the *Āśvayujamāsa*. This is a festival which is specially celebrated in all parts of India. People of all *Āśramas* can celebrate this and even the *Mlecchās* who do not fully come under *Āryadharmā*, are entitled (eligible) to celebrate this *parva*.

स्नातैः प्रमुदितैर्हृद्यैः ब्राह्मणैः क्षत्रियैर्नृपैः।

वैश्यैः शूद्रैर्भक्तियुक्तैः म्लेच्छैरन्यैश्च मानवैः॥

एवम् नानाम्लेच्छगणैः पूज्यते सर्वदस्युभिः ।

अङ्गवङ्गकलिङ्गैश्च किन्नरैः बर्बरैः शकैः॥

(भविष्योत्तरपुराण)

There are six different *darśanas* relating to *Bhaktadarśana*, viz - *śaiva*, *vaishṇava*, *śākta*, *saura*, *gāṇapatya* and *kaumāra*. People belonging to any of these paths can celebrate *Navarātra*. Because,

‘*Śakti*’ is the goddess who is specially worshiped in this *parva*. As all the *deities* of *bhakti pantha* are *Śaktisampannās* only, they will be pleased by the observance of this *parva*.

“परास्य शक्तिर्विविधैव श्रूयते स्वाभाविकी ज्ञानबलक्रिया च”

As both *Śvetāśvataropaniṣat* and *Śrīmadbhāgavata* say, the Lord is *Śaktiviśiṣṭa* only.

“सञ्जीवयत्यखिलशक्तिधरस्वधाम्ना”

This is the *parva* in which *Śakti* part of the Lord is worshipped specially. Thus, this is a *parva* which is acceptable to the people of all the *dharmas*. If it is not possible to observe this *parva* for all the nine days, it should be observed atleast on the last four days, or three days, or two days or atleast on the last day. Elders insist that at least *Mahāshṭamī* or *Mahānavamī* should be celebrated and the festival should never go uncelebrated. Such is this great *Parva* called *Navarātramahotsava*.

This festival is called by two famous names viz. *Navarātra* and *Durgotsava*. This is also called *Daśāha* of *Dasarā* by including the *Vijayadaśamī* which is the tenth day. The name ‘*Navarātra*’ matches this well as (the festival is) completed in nine nights, or nine days and nights. Even if it is not fully observed on all the nine days, or even if celebrated inclusive of *Vijayadaśamī* on the tenth

day, this festival is technically called *Navarātra* only. It is quite conforming to the *śāstras* to term the nine days beginning from the *Prathamā* of the *Caitramāsa śuklapaksha* as *Vasantanavarātra* and the nine days beginning from the *Prathamā* of *Śaratkāla* as “शरद्वसन्तयोस्तुल्य एव दुर्गोत्सवः कार्यः” But, as the *Navarātra* celebrated in the *śaratkāla* has special significance, the custom of calling that alone as *Navarātra* is in vogue. And as *Durgādevī* is worshipped in different forms viz., *Lakshmī*, *Sarasvatī* and *Durgā*, the name *Mahotsava* is also justified.

“*Navarātra* is a festival which brings in freshness to life. Worship the *Śuddha Prakṛtimāta* as *Lakshmī* in the first three days, as *Sarasvatī* in the next three days, and as *Gaurī* or *Durgā* in the last three days, and purify your dispositions. The sky outside will be clear without clouds and within also, it is a clear *Jnānākaśa*. Outside, lotuses are in full blossom and inside in the *Mānasa sarovara*, lotuses in the form of heart etc. blossom. Worship the goddess there, who is the *parāprakṛti* of the Lord and become *Śuddhasattvas*. Outside, it is plenty with *Dhana* and *Dhānya*. Inside it is the plenty of *Ātmadhana*. Outside, it is the expedition of the *Vīrakshatrīyas* for the victory of *Dharma*, and inside it is the expedition for *Ātmavijaya*. All these are combined in this *Mahāparva*” — **This was the**

great command of ŚrīRaṅgaguru given in the very best message proclaiming the significance of this Parva and we humbly remember it here. Though this period is excellent for the meditation and *Upāsana* of all deities, it is a time very helpful for the propitiation of *Śaktidevatā*. When suitable *tithi*, *vāra*, *nakshatra*, *yoga*, *karaṇa* etc can not found on other days, the custom of celebrating auspicious functions like marriage, *upanayana* etc during *Navarātra* is in vogue, without worrying much about those features like suitable *tithi*, *vāra*, *nakshatra*, *yoga*, *karaṇa* and *grahamaitri*, etc. Especially the day of *Vijayadaśamī* has that great *Mahimā*, people say. This greatness is associated with *Navarātra*, as it is blessed with the special presence of *Durgā Devī* who makes people cross all *durgas*. The etymology of the word *Durgā* is, the one who makes people cross *Durgas* or, the one who prevents people from *Durgati*”, they say.

तामग्निवर्णां तपसा ज्वलन्तीं वैरोचनीं कर्मफलेषु जुष्टाम् ।

दुर्गा देवी शरणमहं प्रपद्ये सुतरसि तरसे नमः ॥

अग्ने त्वं पारयानव्यो अस्मान्

स्वस्तिभिरति दुर्गाणि विश्वा

(दुर्गासूक्त)

दुर्गा दुर्गतिनाशिनीम्

(दुर्गार्चन पद्धति)

The goddess who is worshipped mainly during *Śarannavarātrī* festival is ‘*Śakti*’. *Jnānis* say that during those nine days, she should be worshiped in

the form of *Lakshmī* in the first three days, *Sarasvatī* in the next set of three days, and in the form of *Pārvatī* in the last three days. Of late we are coming across many arguments pertaining to that deity which bewilder one's mind and cause vexations in performing her *pūjā*. Here we shall discuss them briefly, and try to provide suitable answers to them.

1. "This *Durgi* is not at all an Aryan *devatā*. She was worshipped by Dravidas. The Aryans who came from outside, fought fierce wars with the Dravidians and occupied their land. In course of time the two cultures merged, and Aryans took some aspects and included them in their *Dharma* and *Samskr̥ti*. *Śakti* is one such goddess who was taken by the Aryans from the Dravidians.

Basically *Śakti* is not at all a deity of Aryans. Because, Aryans worshipped only male gods. Worshipping of *Matrdevatās* is a Dravidian practice.

The smaller deities now, called "*grāmadevatās*" belong to the Dravidian pantheon" This is one of the arguments put forward by critics.

2. This *Śakti devatā* has form and qualities which are ferocious. She is a deity who consumes liquor and meat.

सिंहारूढायुधधरा ह्यष्टादशकरावरा।

सुरापानरता काचिज्जानीमो न सभर्तृका ॥ (देवीभागवत V9-51)

रक्षसां वानराणां वा जग्ध्वा सा मांसशोणिते ।

रामरावणयोर्युद्धं सप्ताहं सा न्यवर्तयत् ॥ (कालिकापुराण 60-28)

"*Sāttvikas* should not worship her" is an another argument.

Let us examine these two arguments.

1. The argument that *Śakti* is the goddess of Dravidians and not that of Aryans is ridiculous. How can *devatās* be categorized as gods and goddesses of Aryans and Dravidians? They are forces residing inside of all the living beings and rule their lives. Can the wise say that they rule only the Dravidians and not Aryans?

The very classification such as Aryan deities and Dravidian deities is ridiculous and is akin to classifying the Sun as the Aryan Sun and the Dravidian sun. This theory of classification of deities has emerged from a wrong notion that the gods are the products of mere imaginations. But in reality, if *Dhyāna* and *Upāsanā* are done, all can have the visualisation of these *devatāviśeshas* is different parts of the body. This is the universal truth. The question that there are separate gods for Aryans, Dravidians and Negros does not arise here at all.

The argument that Aryans did not worship *Mātr̥devatās* is also not based on *śāstraic* truth. Because in *Sanātana Vaidic* literature, we come across praises of female deities also, like the praises of male deities such as *Indra*, *Agni*, *Varuṇa* etc. Both are welcome contextually. The argument that there was no prominence to female deities, just because of the fact that hymns pertaining to female deities are fewer, cannot be accepted either. Female deities such as *Aditi* and *Sarasvatī* are praised as *Parādevatās* indeed in vedic hymns.

All the worlds, all deities, all creatures and all relatives are *Aditi* herself. There is none else other than her.

अदितिर्द्यौरदितिरन्तश्चिरमदितिर्माता स पिता स पुत्रः ।
विश्वे देवा अदितिः पञ्चजना अदितिर्जातमदितिर्जनित्वम् ॥

(ऋक् संहिता 1-89-9-10, तै अ 1-13-2, ता.य 25-23, अथर्व 7-3-1)

"*Sarasvatī* is not just a flowing river. She is the inspirer of all beautiful words, and noble ideas. She is invited in *yajnas* conducted by *sukṛtis*, and receives the worship. She is the *parādevatā* who grants anything desired for"—These ideas are very clearly expressed in the *Vedamantras*.

अम्बितमे नदीतमे देवितमे सरस्वति
चोदयित्री सूनृतानां चेतन्ती सुमतीनाम् ।

यज्ञं दधे सरस्वति ॥
सरस्वतीं देवियन्तो हवन्ते सरस्वतीमध्वरे

तायमाने सरस्वतीं सुकृतो आह्वयन्त
सरस्वती दाशुषे वार्यं दात् ॥ (ऋक्संहिता-10-17-7, धर्म 18-141)

When the *Vedas* of the *Āryamaharshis*, the most ancient literature, clearly proclaim the prominence of female goddesses, arguments such as "Female deities belong to Dravidians. Aryans worshipped only male gods. Though some female deities are seen the *Vedas*, their place is only secondary" etc, amount only to the glorification of the height of ignorance.

2. Again, to argue that "*Śakti devatā* has a ferocious form and she is worshipped with wine and meat, and therefore *Sāttviks* should not worship her, are also not the words of the wise. Though the form of some deities appear ferocious to the external eyes, they are visualized as being beautiful and bestowing bliss and peace, in deep meditation. This is not the '*Rudrasaundarya*', stated by some modern literateurs. It is a divine form described by *yogis* as 'परमनयनोत्सव कारणम्' (a feast to the eys)

As a matter of fact, *Parādevatās* consume only the *Amṛtānanda*. Whatever the devotees offer according to their disposition, be it fruits or flowers, vegetarian or nonvegetarian food, they get transformed into *Amṛta* and only after that they become an offering to the deities.

Though *rākshasa* and *tāmasa* devotees worship *devī* with wine and meat, *sāttvikas* should worship her with *japa*, *yajna* and vegetarian *naivedya* only.

शारदी चण्डिकापूजा त्रिविधा परिगीयते ।

सात्त्विकी राजसी चैव तामसी चेति तां शृणु ॥

सात्त्विकी जपयज्ञाद्यैर्नैवेद्यैश्च निरामिषैः।

माहात्म्यं भगवत्याश्च पुराणादिषु कीर्तितम् ।

सारस्तस्य जपः प्रोक्तः पठेद्देवीमनाः प्रिये।

राजसी बलिदानेन नैवेद्यः सामिषैस्तथा॥

सुरामांसाद्युपाहारैः जपयज्ञैर्विना तु या।

विना मन्त्रैस्तामसी स्यात् किरातानां स संमतः ॥ (स्कान्द भविष्यपुराण)

Therefore the suggestion that *Sāttvikas* should not worship *Devi* stands to no reason.

So, how should the *Navarātra* of the *Śaratkāla* be celebrated? What do *śāstras* and traditions say about the religious austerities pertaining to that? We shall explain the matter briefly here.

The time of *Navarātra* of this *Śaratkāla* is the most auspicious time for the worship of God. It may be generally remembered that dispositions within and without will be most congenial for the pleasantness of the deities in this season. Much of this period should be mostly made use of for the worship of the deity in different modes such as *Dhyāna*, *japa*, *homa*, *Pārāyaṇa* singing of *stotras* etc. Who is the deity to be worshipped? Scriptural treatises say that it is one's *Kuladevatā* and

Jaganmāta, especially the one who is the form of *Lakshmī*, *Sarasvatī* and *Durgā*.

त्रिकालं द्विकालमेककालं वा स्वस्वकुलदेवतापूजनं सप्तशत्यादि जपः

इदं देवी पूजनात्मकं नवरात्रकर्म नित्यं, अकरणे दोष श्रवणात् (धर्मसिन्धुसार)

The *pūjākalpas* pertaining to the worship of *Devas* and *Devīs* during these days are many. The traditions and customs of worship have many variants in different provinces. We see that During *Navarātra* the following activities generally take place in all parts of the country and in all the traditions. They are—*ŚrīmadRāmāyaṇa Pārāyaṇa*, *Pārāyaṇa* of *Saptaśatī* and other texts which contain the praise and glory of *Devī*, *Śrī Sarasvatīpūjā* on the day of *Mūlānakshatra*, *Durgāpūjā* in *Ashṭami*, *pūjā* of *Hayagrīva* the god of learning, and *ŚrīSarasvatī pūjā*, worship of musical instruments, such as *Vīṇā*, *Veṇu* and *Mṛdaṅga* and *Āyudha pūjā*, and *gajāśva pūjā* on *Mahānavamī*, special worship of all these deities and performing *maṅgala* of *Pārāyaṇa* and beginning of *Adhyayana* afresh, and especially the worship of *Devī* in *Samī* by *Kshatriyas* and the journey for universal conquest by them (i.e. the *kshatriyas*) on the day of *Vijayadaśamī*.

A treatise by name *Dharma sindhu* briefly states the austerities pertaining to *Navarātra* thus:

Doing *Kuladevatā pūja* thrice, i.e. early in the morning, at noon and at *Pradoshakāla*, or twice, or atleast once, the *Pārāyaṇa* of *Saptaśatī* and other religious texts, lighting the lamp (*nandadīpa*) *mālābandhana*, fasting or taking food only at night, feeding *sumaṅgalīs*, feeding *kumārīs* and their worship, and chanting *saptaśatī* and other related *stotras* at the end, *mantras*, and *homas* — all these are prescribed. One should perform all these or at least a few according to *kulācāra*.

Kalaśasthāpana should not be done at night. If *Kalaśasthāpana* is intended to be done, a platform should be built with clean clay, and materials such as five holy sprouts, *dūrvā*, *Phalatāmbūla*, *kuṅkuma*, a lamp etc should be collected.

On *prathamā*, oil bath should be had in the morning and after wearing *punḍras* and *pavitra*, a *saṅkalpa* should be made during ten *Ghaṭikās* or in the *Abhijñ* *muhūrta* that the *śarannavarāatramahotsava* rituals are going to be taken up. Then again with a *saṅkalpa* the following should be done viz. installation of a *kalaśa*, *Śrī Gaṇapati pūjā* for warding off obstacles, *Puṇyāhavācana Japa* and choosing Brahmins for *Pārāyaṇa* etc. After this the *pratishṭhā* of the idol of *Kumbhadevatā* should be done on the *purṇakumbha* which is worshipped after invoking *puṇyatīrthas* in

that, God *Varuna* is worshipped. *Devī* should be invoked with the *ślokas*:—

“जयन्ती मङ्गला काली भद्रकाली कपालिनी । दुर्गा क्षमा शिवा धात्री स्वाहा
स्वधा नमोऽस्तु ते” ॥ “आगच्छ वरदे देवि दैत्यदर्पनिषूदिनि । पूजां गृहाण सुमुखि
नमस्ते शङ्करप्रिये,”

and *shoḍaśopacārapūjā* should be performed chanting *Rks* from *Purushasūkta* and *Śrīsūkta*. If *Balipradāna* is intended, *Bali* should be offered with blackgram rice or ashgourd, either every day or on the last day. The *Akhandanandādīpa* should be installed by chanting the *śloka*—

अखण्डदीपकं देव्याः प्रीतये नवरात्रकम्।

उज्जवालयेदहोरात्रमेकचित्तो धृतव्रतः ॥

and should be lighted. *Saṅkalpa* should be made that *Canḍī* *Saptaśatīpāṭha*, *Nārāyaṇahṛdayapāṭha*, *Lakshmī hṛdayapāṭha* etc will be done, and *Pārāyaṇa* should be begun after worshipping *Nārāyaṇa*, *Narottamanara*, *SarasvatīDevī* and *Śrī Vyāsamaharshi*. *Oṅkara* should be uttered at the beginning and at the end. The *Pārāyaṇa* book should not be held in hand and the *parayaṇa* should not be stopped in the middle of an *adhyāya*. The *Pārāyaṇa* should be done comprehending the meaning of the treatise, and with a clear pronounciation. *Pārāyaṇa* should not be speeded up and should not be done very slowly also; and should be done with *Rasa*, *Bhāva* and *Svara*. It

should be listened to also with devotion. The *Pārāyaṇa* of the glory of the treatise also should be done and it should also be listened to.

This should be followed by *Kumāri pūja*. One year old baby girls should not be worshipped. Nine girls aged between two and nine should be invoked with the nine names respectively viz. *Kumārī*, *Trimūrti*, *Kalyāṇī*, *Rohiṇī*, *Kālī*, *Candikā*, *Śāmbhavī*, *Durgā* and *Bhadrā* and (*pūjā*) should be begun. The *Pārāyaṇa* of *Bhavānī Sahasranāma* may be done.

Navarātra should not be performed in *Malamāsa*. If one happens to come under *Aśauca*, he should get the worship done by a Brahmin. Some experts opine that once the *vrata* is begun the devotee himself should complete it, even if he is touched by *Aśauca* in the middle.

Upāṅga Lalitādevī should be worshipped on the fifth day.

On the day of *Mūlānakshatra*, Goddess *ŚrīSarasvatī* should be invoked in books and worshipped. *Sarasvatī* is invoked in *Mūlānakshatra*, and worshipped in *Pārishāḍha*; *Bali pradāna* is done in *Uttarāshāḍha* and she is given a send off in *Śravaṇa*.

On *Mahāshṭami* a special *pūja* should be offered to *Durgā Devī*. If the day happens to be a

Tuesday it is specially auspicious. If one cannot perform the *pūjā* for some reasons, he should get it done by others. If one cannot offer *shodaśopacāra pūjā* in detail, at least the *pañcopacāra pūjā* should be performed with *gandha*, *pushpa*, *dhūpa*, *dīpa* and *Naivedya*.

Homa should be performed on *Mahānavamī*, either with the *Durgā navākshara mantra* “जयन्ती मङ्गलम्”, or with the *śloka* “नमो देव्यै महादेव्यै”, and hymns from *Dūrgā saptaśatī* etc. This *homa* should be performed with the *Pāyasa* which has ghee as an ingredient and which is mixed with white gingelly, or, with the *Pāyasa* that is mixed with materials such as only white gingelly, *Durvā*, *Muḷlumuttugada hūvu* (bastard teak), mustard, areca, *yava*, *bilva* fruit, pieces of red sandal etc. *Homa* should be performed in numbers equivalent to ten times the number of *Japa* done. Brahmins should offer *Bali* only with the following:-Cooked rice with blackgram, ashgourd, *Pishtapaśu* (Images of animals made of rice flour) etc. They should never sacrifice a live animal.

Kings should worship the royal insignia like *chatra* and *cāmara*, weapons, elephants, horses and musical instruments like drums etc. Those who breed horses, even if they do not happen to be the rulers, perform *Vājinīrājana* to the horses starting from the day in which the star *svāti* prevails, or

from *Dvitiya*, and conclude it on *navamī*. (Some, however, bathe and worship the horses only on *Vijayadaśamī* day)

(The divine horse) *Ucchaiśravas* should be invoked in an idol and after worshipping the deities, the horses ahead should be worshipped and offered *Upacāras*.

Kshatriyas should pray the horses saying—"You are born in the *gandharva* clan. Therefore do not betray your tribe. Multiply your progeny by the power of the words of *Brahma*, *Soma* and *Varuṇa* and by the influence of *Agnideva*. In battles defeat the enemies and live happily with your master"

The *Vrata* should be concluded on *dasamī* with *Pāraṇa* on *daśamī*.

On the day of *Vijayadaśamī*, the following should be performed:- *Aparājitā devī pūjā*, crossing the boundary of three villages or cities, *Simollaṅghana*, *śamīpūja*, and going out for travelling abroad, and the Journey of conquest.

In the afternoon, *Aparājita pūjā* should be done in a clean place in the northeast part of the village. *Aparājitadevī* should be invoked in the middle, and to her right and left, *Jayādevī* and *Vijayādevī* should be invoked with the *mantras*

“क्रियाशक्त्यै नमः” and “उमायै नमः” respectively, and all the three should be offered *shoḍaśopacāras*.

After that, all should proceed to the *Śamī* tree which is outside the village in the north eastern direction and worship it. *Simollaṅghana* should be done either before or after *Śamīpūjā*.

If *Śamī* tree is not available, the *Aśmantaka* tree (*Keṅgāñcālada mara*) should be worshipped.

The *pūjāmantra* of *Śamī* is

“अमङ्गलानां शमनीं शमनीं दुष्कृतस्य च ।
दुःखप्रणाशिनीं धन्यां प्रपद्येहं शमीं शुभाम्”

"O! *Śamīdevī*! You are the one who wards off all inauspiciousness.

"You are the redeemer of sins. You are the one who puts an end to all sorrows. You are virtuous and you bring auspiciousness. I surrender to you." After the *pūjā* is over, a prayer should be uttered as follows:—

(शमी शमयते पापं शमी लोहितकण्टका,
धरित्र्यर्जुनबाणानां रामस्य प्रियवादिनी,
करिष्यमाण यात्रायां यथाकालं सुखं मया,
तत्र निर्विघ्नकर्त्री त्वं भव श्रीरामपूजिते’)

"*Śamī* redeems all the sins. She is adorned with red thorns. She is the tree who safely kept and guarded *Arjuna*’s weapons. She spoke lovingly to *ŚrīRāma*. Let there be happiness at proper times in the journey I am going to make. Please ward off

all obstacles. O! *Śamī Devi* you were worshipped by *ŚrīRāma*." If *Śamī* tree is not available and if *Keṅgāñcāla* tree is to be worshipped, it should be prayed with the *śloka*

“आश्मन्तकमहावृक्ष महादोषनिवारण,
इष्टानां दर्शनं देहि शत्रूणां च विनाशनम्”

(O great *Aśmantaka mahāvṛksha*! you are the redeemer of big blemishes. Bless me so that the dear ones are seen and the enemies are destroyed) After this, it is generally seen that some lay persons cut the branches of *Śamī* and take them home. This has no consent in the *Śāstras*. And then, only the wet bed soil of *Śamī* tree mixed with *Akshatā* should be taken home along with *Maṅgalavādyas*. New clothes should be put on with relatives and friends, and *ārati* should be had. Those going abroad, should start their journey in the *muhūrta* called ‘*Vijaya*!’

There are two types in the *Vijaya muhūrta*. (1) The time a little after dusk when stars appear in the sky and (2) The Eleventh *muhūrta*. Both are auspicious, but the day should not be an *Ekādaśī*. It should be *daśamī* only. If there is *Śravaṇa nakshatra*, it is still more auspicious. This is the most auspicious time for all endeavours and especially to begin a journey.

“अश्वयुक् शुक्लदशमी विजयाख्याखिले शुभा ।
प्रयाणे तु विशेषेण किं पुनः श्रवणान्विता” ॥

If *Navarātra pūjā* is intended to be begun on *Pādya*, *Sankalpa* should be made on the same day and the *kalaśa* should be installed. It should be filled with pure water and sprouts of great trees like Mango should be placed inside, and *Devī* should be worshipped with *Shoḍaśopacāras*. Sandal paste, *Āmalaka* and comb should be offered to *Devī*. And to the extent possible cosmetics and jewels etc such as Silk thread, *Agaru*, turmeric, *kuṅkuma*, *Madhuparka*, *tilaka*, *Añjana*, *Śrīgandhalepa*, and *aṅgarāga* and jewels should be offered. If the *pūja* is to be begun on the sixth day, installation of the *kalaśa* should to be done near a *bilva* tree in the morning and, that tree itself should be worshipped as *Durgādevī*. (A prayer should be uttered as follows:-

"O holy *bilva* tree, in order to bless *ŚrīRāma* who had destroyed *Rāvaṇa*, Lord *Brahma* awakened *Devī* in you at an odd time. In the same way I am also chanting *suprabhāta* to you. You are born in *ŚrīŚaila* and you are the abode of *ŚrīDevi*, O! *Śrīphala*!, Now I have to take you now and worship you in the form of *Durgā*."

ऐं रावणस्य वधार्थाय रामस्यानुग्रहाय च ।

अकाले ब्रह्मणा बोधः देव्या त्वयि कृतः पुरा ॥

अहमप्याश्विने षष्ठ्यां सायाह्ने बोधयाम्यतः।
 श्रीशैलशिखरेजात श्रीफल श्रीनिकेतन।
 नेतव्योसि मया गच्छ पूज्यो दुर्गास्वरूपतः॥

Afterwards, the holy abode of *Devī* should be prayed in good clay, *Śrīgandhalepa*, stone, coriander seeds, *dūrvā darbhā*, flowers, fruits, curds, ghee, *svastika*, *candana*, *śankha*, *añjana*, *gorocana*, mustard, gold, silver, copper, *cāmara*, mirror and plate should be prayed. Then reaching the *Durgā pūjā manṭapa*, *acamana* should be done and nine leaves from the trees of plantain, pomegranate etc should be tied with the *aparājitā* creeper.

Then worship should be offered to the bundle of those nine leaves and the idol of *Durgā. Devī* should be installed in the *Bilva Vṛksha* along with *Śrīgandha* and other holy things. Then the idol of *ŚrīDurgā* and a twig of *bilva* should be taken home and worshipped.

On the seventh day, reaching that *bilva vṛksha*, *pūjā* should be performed and a prayer should be made thus: O! tree! you are very dear to Lord *Śankara*, I am worshipping *Durgā* in the twig I took from you. Do not suffer pain because I have cut a twig from you. O king among *vṛkshas*, Salutations to you." Then a twig not well grown, either on the south western side or on the north westernside of

the tree, and not laden with flowers and fruits should be cut and brought home, and coming to the *Manṭapa* it should be placed on the *Pīṭha*. white mustard seeds should be scattered there to driveout evil *bhūtas*. Then black gram with cooked rice should be offered to *Kalidevī* who is surrounded by *Bhūtas*. The bundle of nine leaves should be worshipped and *Cāmunḍādevī* should be worshipped in that *Bilva* branch also. (*Kadalī*, *daḍimī*, *dhānya*, *haridrā*, *Māṇaka*, *kacu*, *bilva*, *aśoka* and *jayantī* are the nine leaves.) The *kalaśa* should be installed, and the bundle of leaves and the five deities should be worshipped. Now the idol of *Devī* should be placed on the *pīṭha* to the tune of music and the bundle of leaves should be placed to its right. The *bilva* twig should placed in a copper vessel and the *prāṇapratishṭhā* of *Devī*, *Gaṇeśa* and other *parivāra devatās* should be performed. Then, holding flowers and *akshatā* in hand, the divine form of goddess should be meditated upon as follows:—

"She has matted hair, the crescent moon is an ornament on her head, *Devī* has three eyes, her face is brilliant like the lotus and moon. Like refined gold, she is shining with radiance. She is effulgent with rich beauty, beautiful eyes, the lustre of fresh youth and with the adornment of all the divine ornaments. Her very looks are beautiful. She shines

with noble and breasts. She is endowed with the imposing *tribhaṅgi* posture. The *Jaganmātā* has ten soft and long arms which look like lotus stalks. Among those, She has the trident on her right hand and below that she is holding a sword and a discus respectively, She holds sharp arrows and the weapon *Śakti*. In the left hand she has the shield, a bent bow, *pāśa* and *aṅkuśa* at the top, and below them she is holding a bell and an axe". Beneath her, demon *Mahisha* with his head cut and the part of the body which holds a sword, should be meditated upon. That demon should be supposed as pierced in the heart by the trident, with protruding teeth, his body drenched in blood and red eyes. He is bound by the *Nāgapāśa* and is seen having knotted eyebrows. *Durgādevī* holding a *Pāśa* in her hand is seizing him by his tuft. The lion, her vehicle, is sucking the demons' blood and spewing it. Devī's right foot is placed evenly on the back of the lion. Her left toe is placed on *Mahishāsura* just above that.

The worshipper wearing a flower on his head and holding flowers and *akṣhatā* in his hand, should invoke *Devī* in the twig of *Bilva* and pray her for long life, health and progeny. *Upacāras* such as *āsana*, *arghya*, *pādya* etc should be offered. She should be worshipped in the bundle of nine leaves also. She should be offered *upacāras* in the *kalaśa* also and should be offered a black male buffalo as a

bali. The animals to be offered as *bali* to *ŚrīDurgā* and *Bhairava* are - a male buffalo, tortoise, crocodile, fish, five types of deer and he-goat, etc. Female animals should not be offered as *bali*. The animal offered as *bali* should not be a one which is physically handicapped. Male buffaloes and he-goats are the main sacrificial animals. Liquor should be offered to God. A *Brāhmin* should not offer *Paśubali*. He can offer ashgourds and such other objects instead of animals. Instead of liquor, he should offer tender coconut water, or honey in a bronze vessel. All can offer worship to the goddess with these *sāttvik* things only.

On the day of *Mahāshṭami*, after doing *Ācamana*, *Prāṇāyāma* and *Mantranyāsa*, the worshipper should sprinkle *śankha tīrtha* on himself and *pūjādravyas*. After that, *Devī* should be meditated upon in the abovesaid manner, and then the *Mānasapūjā* should be offered. Then the external worship should be offered. Her retinue deities should also be worshipped to one's capability, and *aṅgapūjā* should be offered. *Mahāshṭamī* is a day of fasting. But an *upāsaka* having sons should take *haviṣyānna* etc in the night, instead of fasting.

On that day *pūjā* should be offered to Brahmins and unmarried girls. If it is not possible to worship them every day, they should be worshipped at least

on *Durgāshṭami*. The age of the girls should be from two to ten years in a progressive order. These nine girls should be worshipped as the forms of *Navadevīs* viz *kumārikā*, *Trimūrti*, *Kalyāṇī*, *Rohiṇī*, *Kālī*, *Caṇḍikā*, *Śāmbhavī*, *Durgā* and *Subhadrā* respectively. These girls should not have any blemish such as defective limbs etc.

During *Navarātri* the worshipper himself should do *vedaPārāyaṇa*, *caṇḍīpāṭha*, *japa* and *homa*. Or he must get it done by others. At the end of the *pūjā*, members of his family and relatives and friends should receive the *prasāda*. *Homa* should be done after the *pūjā*.

On *Mahānavamī*, *pūjā* should be performed on the lines of the precepts for *Mahāshṭamī*. But on that day the number of *balis* is more. If possible, *homa* with one hundred and eight *āhutis* should be performed. A special *nīrājana* to *Devī* should be done. *Ṛtviks* should be given the necessary *dakṣhiṇā*. The *Jaganmātā* should be prayed to pardon for any *apacāras* committed during the *pūjā* knowingly or unknowingly. Then the *Kanyās* and Brahmins should be worshipped and their blessings should be obtained.

On *daśamī*, *Devī* should be specially worshipped with *shoḍaśopacāra pūjā*. And the idol of *devī*, the *bilva* twig and the bundle of nine leaves should be placed in a different place and worship

should be offered to them separately there. To the accompaniment of music and *vedaghosha*, they should be taken to a river or a lake and the idol of *Devī* should be immersed in water. She should be prayed with the words "O *Durgā Devī*, O *Jaganmātā*! please go to your original place. Come back again for the *pūjā* of next year."

Vijayadaśamī is one of the most auspicious days in a year. *Sarasvatīpūjā* and *Vidyārambha* are done on that day. The most important *pūjās* done on that day are *Aparājitāpūjā*, *Śamī pūjā*. *Sīmollaṅghana* etc. Putting on new clothes and worshipping of elephants and horses are also there. *Vijayadaśamī* is auspicious for all classes of people. It has special significance to *Kshatriyas*.

Aparājitā Devī should be worshiped at a purified place in the north eastern part of the village. *Vijayā* and *Jayā Devīs* should be worshipped on her left and right. Those *devīs* are called *Kriyāśakti* and *Umā*.

Later the *Śamī* tree which is in the north eastern part of the village should be reached and worshipped. There is a custom of worshipping *Rāma* and *Sītā* also on that day.

Śamī should be prayed with the words

"I surrender to *Śamī* which drives away inauspicious forces, which redeems sins and destroys all bad dreams"

“अमङ्गलानां शमनीं शमनीं दुष्कृतस्य च ।

दुःस्वप्ननाशिनीं धन्यां प्रपद्येहं शमीं शुभाम्” ॥

“This (tree) redeems our sins. It is brilliant with red thorns. It is the holy tree which bore (i.e. safeguarded) *Arjuna's* weapons for a year. It is the tree which spoke pleasantly to *ŚrīRāma*. It is a great tree. Let it remove all the hurdles on the way of my universal conquest journey and make me happy. This tree is worshipped by *ŚrīRāma*. O *Śamī Devi*, I prostrate before you.”

शमी शमयते पापं शमी लोहितकण्टका।

धारिण्यर्जुनबाणानां रामस्य प्रियवादिनी॥

करिष्यमाणयात्रायां यथाकालं सुखं मया।

तत्र निर्विघ्नकर्त्री त्वं भव श्रीरामपूजिते॥

If *Śamī* tree is not available, the *ashmāntaka* should be prayed and worshipped.

A small quantity of mud should be taken from the bottom of that tree and (holding it) with *Akshatā*, it should be brought home to the accompaniment of music and dance, and after the *Ārati* is done to it; and new clothes should be put on.

Kshatriyas sometimes resort to *abhicāra prayoga* (*maddu-māṭa*) (setting evil forces) on their enemies on that day. *Śamī* leaves and *mṛttika* (the

soil on which the tree stands) are sentimentally considered as gold and are distributed among themselves are *prasāda*. In the festival of *Navarātra*, the glory of *ŚrīRāma* is praised for all the ten days, and joy is experienced with *abhinaya* etc also. On the last day the evil demon, *Rāvaṇa's* effigy is burnt symbolising his slaying.

We have to give a satisfactory explanation regarding an important question which is raised pertaining to those various forms of worship.

Now regarding the *Paśubali* prescribed in *Devipūjā* during *śarannavarātra*.

Animal sacrifice is prescribed not only in *Durga pūjā* but also in *yajnas* and *gṛhya karmas* which are stated in the *Kalpāsūtras*. For example, in the *Āśvamedha yajna* the *yajnaśva* is sacrificed and it is well known that in certain marriages *madhuparka* with meat are prescribed by the *śāstras*. But we see that the *paśubali* is specially proclaimed during the *Durgapūjā*, which is evident in the *pūraṇas* and *Āgamatantrās*.

They declare that offering of the following is very dear to the deity:—

Fish, Crocodiles, rams, he goats, buffaloes, male buffaloes, rhinos, *Śarabhās*, lions, tigers, pigs, deer, birds, one's own blood and lastly even human beings offered as bali.

न तथा बलिदानेन पुष्पधूपविलेपनैः।
 यथा सन्तुष्यते मेध्यैर्महिषैर्विन्ध्यवासिनी ॥
 अजश्च महिषश्चैव नरश्चैव यथा क्रमात्।
 बलिर्महाबलिश्चातिबलिश्चेति प्रकीर्तिताः॥
 पक्षिणः कच्छपा ग्राहाः मत्स्या नवविधा मताः।
 महिषो गवयश्चैव छागो बभ्रुश्च सूकरः ॥
 खड्गश्च कृष्णसारश्च गोभिका शरभो हरिः ।
 शार्दूलश्च नरश्चैव स्वगात्ररुधिरं तथा॥

It is natural that some compassionate pious people, touched by this, revolt against injustice and say— "How cruel it is! that Slaying of animals and bloodshed are prescribed in the worship of Gods! What an *Adharma*!"

"Sir, If *Paśubali* is performed, those *Paśus* obtain *Sadgati*. For their own good they are given as *bali* to Gods" - Some say.

न वा एतन्म्रियसे नरिष्यसि, देवा, इदेषि पथिभिः सुगेभिः (ऋ I-112)

ओषध्यः पशवो वृक्षास्तिर्यञ्चः पक्षिणस्तथा ।

यज्ञार्थं निधनं प्राप्ताः प्राप्नुवन्त्युत्तमां गतिम् ॥ (मनु V-42)

एष्वर्थेषु पशून् हिंसन् वेदतत्त्वार्थवित् द्विजः।

आत्मानं च पशुं चैव गमयत्युत्तमां गतिम्॥

मधुपर्के च यज्ञे च पितृदैवतकर्मणि।

अत्रैव पशवो हिंस्या नान्यत्रेत्यब्रवीन्मनुः॥ (मनु V-48)

Those who defend the *Vaidika Yajnas* try to reply as follows: "The *śrutis* and *smṛtis* approve it. Therefore compassion is hidden in this *Paśubali*

indeed" But that reply is met with ridicule and derision.

"What is the proof to show that the sacrificed animals reach heaven? Instead of showing compassion to some animals let them show that compassion on their aged parents, sacrifice them and send them to heaven."

‘स्वपिता यजमानेन हन्यताम्’

"Your gods have an eye on poor animals only. because horses are not sacrificed in *yajnas*. Elephants are not sacrificed. Tigers, will never be sacrificed. Alas! The lamb, a dumb and harmless animal is given as *bali*!"

अश्वं नैव गजं नैव व्याघ्रं नैव च नैव च।

अजापुत्रं बलिं दद्यात् देवो दुर्बलघातकः॥

Thus also, some people attack the animal sacrifice (They have not taken note of the fact that there are *yajnatatantras* also in which horses, lions and tigers are sacrificed.

There are scriptural statements which are quite contradictory. Sometimes the animal sacrifice is enjoined. Sometimes it is totally barred. Some people may do it and some others may not. On some occasions it may be done and on other occasions it should not be done. This increases the confusion. For example "*Uparicaravasumahārāja* performed an *Aśvamedha yāga*, and there was no animal

sacrifice in it at all, because he was a lover of nonviolence, he was pure, large hearted and unattached."

तस्य यज्ञो महानासीत् अश्वमेधो महात्मनः।

न तत्र पशुघातोऽभूत् स राजैवं स्थितोऽभवत् ॥ शान्तिपर्व 336/10-12

"This is the best *kr̥ta yuga*. Animal sacrifice should never take place in this *yuga*. How can killing of animals be *dharma*, O *devatās*?"

नैष धर्मः सतां देवा यत्र वध्येत वै पशुः ।

इदं कृतयुगं श्रेष्ठं कथं वध्येत वै पशुः ॥ शान्तिपर्व 337-5

Again, the *Mahābhārata* says: "He-goats and rams should not be sacrificed in *Yajnas*" Then how is that the *Śrutis* say that *yajnas* have to be performed with he-goats?. Here *aja* does not mean a he-goat. It means old seeds which have lost the potency to germinate. They are called '*ajas*'. The correct meaning of that *Śrutivākya* is that *homa* should be performed with them. It is not proper to sacrifice he-goats and rams without understanding the correct meaning." And, the *Mahābhārata* clearly prohibits *Paśubali* in *Yajnas*.

बीजैर्यज्ञेषु यष्टव्यं इति वै वैदिकी श्रुतिः ।

अजसंज्ञानि बीजानि छागं नो हन्तुमर्हथ॥ (शान्ति 337-4)

"Only in a *yajna* one can consume meat and not in other occasions."

यज्ञाय जग्धिर्मांसस्येत्येष दैवो विधिः स्मृतः ।

अतोऽन्यत्र प्रवृत्तिस्तु राक्षसो विधिरुच्यते ॥ (मनु [v-3])

मधुपर्के च यज्ञे च पितृदैवतकर्मणि।

अत्रैव पशवो हिंस्याः नान्यत्रेत्यब्रवीन्मनुः॥ (मनु [न-48])

(Some *smṛtis* say that violence on animals is permitted in *Madhuparka*, *yajna*, *pitṛkarma* and *daivakarma* only, and it should never be done on other occasions.)

According to *Kālikāpurāṇa*, only some people are permitted to sacrifice certain chosen animals.

न कदाचिन्महादेव्यै प्रदद्याद्धयहस्तिनौ ।

सिंहव्याघ्रनरान् हत्वा ब्राह्मणो नरकं व्रजेत्।

स्वगात्ररुधिरं दत्त्वा आत्मवध्यामवाप्नुयात् ।

मद्यं दत्त्वा ब्राह्मणस्तु ब्राह्मण्यादेव हीयते ॥

न कृष्णसारं वितरेत् बलिं तु क्षत्रियाधिकः॥

(Elephants and horses should never be offered as *balis* to *Mahādevī*. If lions, tigers and human beings are sacrificed, Brahmins go to hell. If one gives blood from his own body in a sacrifice, he subjects himself to the sin of committing suicide. If a Brahmin offers liquor (in a sacrifice) his brahminism itself gets destroyed. *Kshatriyas* and others should not sacrifice a breed of deer called *Kṛshṇasāra*.)

The *Devipurāṇa* says that no female animal, be it a beast or a bird, should be offered as sacrifice to *Devī*. If one does it, he is sure to go to hell.

पशूनां पक्षिणां वापि नराणां च विशेषतः ।

स्त्रियं न दद्यात्तु बलिं दत्त्वा नरकमाप्नुयात्॥

Why is this exception to females? - this is the question here. The *Kalikāpurāṇa* says —

"Instead of offering animals as sacrifices, ashgourd, sugar cane staffs, liquor or *āsavas* can be offered. Animal images made of flours may be offered. Imagined forms of *Paśus* can be offered. Coconut water or even honey can be offered instead of liquor."

कूष्माण्डमिक्षुदण्डं च मद्यमासवमेव च ।
एते बलिसमाः प्रोक्ताः तृप्तौ छागसमास्सदा॥
छागैश्च महिष्यैश्चैव कूष्माण्डैरपि भावतः ।
कृत्वा पिष्टमयैर्वापि बलिना तं समर्पयेत् ॥
नारिकेलैर्बोजपूरैः जम्बीरैर्निम्बुजातिभिः ।
महार्घैरर्पयेच्चैनां न वन्ध्यां तां निशां नयेत्॥

"Can we offer animals as sacrifice to gods? *Śāstras* offer various kinds of opinions; some in favour of the practice and some against it. And, some concessions are offered to some people. Why is this so?" - To this question, some reply as follows:-

"It was common among ancient Aryans to offer meat as *naivedya* to gods. They were under the impression that *tiryak* animals (the ones which walk horizontally unlike humans who walk straight) like sheep, buffaloes etc. have no *cetana*. And only humans are *cetanas*. Therefore if this *tiryak* animal is killed it won't be a sin." Later, by the influence of Buddhism and Jainism, the

samskāra of nonviolence spread in them also. And they started preaching that *yajnas* should be performed with grains, fruits and cow produces only. This is the Hindu literature of the Post *Jaina Bauddha* period."

This explanation is not correct. Because, Vedic *Maharshis* knew very well that even birds, beasts and plants are *cetanās* and *Vedas* themselves provide evidence for this. The *Rgveda* says that the cow is the mother of *Rudra* and the daughter of *vasus*. (माता रुद्राणां दुहिता वसूनाम्). *Yajurveda* makes the following prayer addressing the *darbhas*:—

(“मात्वान्वक्, मा तिर्यक् पर्वतेराध्यासमाच्छेत्ता ते मारिषम्”) "I shall do not cut you crosswise, I shall not cause pain to your knots. I shall collect you as per precepts, for the purpose of *yajna*. Please do not cause my destruction" *Smṛtis* have set procedures for collecting *darbha* and *Tulasi*. One has to salute them before collecting them, get their permission and collect only the quantity necessary for the *yajna* or *pūja*. Therefore the argument that the Aryans were under the impression that *tiryak* animals have no *cetana* at all is not correct. There was no need for Hindus to learn the concept of non-violence from Buddhists and Jains who came at a later time. The *Vedas* themselves proclaim

(न च हिंस्यात्सर्वाभूतानि’)

"No animal should be subjected to pain." This very idea was preached with emphasis in the *Jaina* and *Bauddha matas* which came later. *Jains* are 'ahimsāsūras'. They over argue the case. Even though *Buddhists* condemn the killing of animals in sacrifices and make heroic vows in this regard, they are non-vegetarians in practice.. They argue "We do not kill animals. We eat the meat of the animals killed by others and it is not a sin." They have forgotten the ordinary truth that those who eat meat cause the killing of animals (at least) indirectly though not directly. Thus, it is only in vedic culture the matter of violence and non-violence is given a discerning thought and norms which are practicable have been preached.

The *Manusmṛti* says "One has to live a life without causing pain to any animal. If it is not possible, violence should be limited to the minimum and violence may be resorted to only when it is unavoidable. "अद्रोहेणैव भूतानां अल्पद्रोहेण वा पुनः" As is evident from "जीवो जीवस्य भोजनम्" no creature can live without consuming another as food. Whether the food consumed is vegetarian or nonvegetarian, life cannot go on without violence. This is because even plants are *cetanas*. But this *caitanyaŚakti* will be more in animals than in plants. It will be still more in human beings. Among men it will be very high in *jnānis*. Therefore violence on animals is

more sinful than violence on plants. Violence on human beings is still more sinful. And it becomes clear that causing pain to a *brahmajñāni* is the worst type of a sin. Therefore *maharshis* preached that vegetarian food is better than non-vegetarian food. which is obtained by killing *tiryak* animals.

Our sages knew that even while preparing vegetarian food, pain was definitely being caused to living beings. To offset this, they prescribed the *pañcamahāyajñās*. Worship of gods and serving guests also come under *pañchamahāyajñās*. (A stone mortar, a stove, a grinding stone, sweeping, cleansing the ground and collecting water—At these five places unavoidable pain is caused. These are called *Pañcasūnāsthānas*. In order to get relieved of this *Sūnādosha*, the *grhasthas* have prescribed the performing of *Brahmanyajñā*, *Devayajna*, *Pitryajna*. *Bhūtajajna* and *Manushya yajna* (*atithi pūjā*) by the *śāstras*). Thus, preparing food in this *yajnarūpa* and consuming it causes no sin. As all the things used in this process are offered to God, *sadgati* shall be there say the *śāstras*.

"यज्ञार्थं पशवः सृष्टः" It is the good fortune of *dravyas* if they happen to be of use in a *yajna*.

It is already stated above that vegetarian food is better than non vegetarian food. But there will be

not blemish if non-vegetarians offer to God the food they eat before consuming it.

On the other hand, if they do not do so, more blemish is caused. Whatever is the food for a person, the same will be the food for his deities also.

“यदन्नःपुरुषो भवति तदन्नास्तस्य देवताः” It is propitious for him to consume (it as) *devatāprasāda*.

Eating meat is not a great sin, but to give it up is most great, says *Manu*.

न मांसभक्षणे दोषः न मद्ये न च मैथुने।
प्रवृत्तिरेषा भूतानां निवृत्तिस्तु महाफला ॥

Among *vaidika maharshis* not all were non-vegetarians. There was a large number of vegetarians also among them. Even with regard to the non-vegetarians, there was a rule that *brahmacāris*, *vānaprasthas* and *sanyāsis* should not eat meat. Even those who ate meat, were bound by certain rules which stated that they should not eat meat on certain days of a week; Even while eating they should do it in the form of a *yajna*, and that they should eat only after *devatā pūja* and the offering of *dānas*. On the whole, when we study the *śāstras*, we understand that our *maharshis* as a rule favoured the conduct of totally abstaining from meat, or partially abstaining and restricting its consumption.

In the *Itihāsa* and *purāṇas* we read the description of the great *yajnas* that were performed by our *jnāni-maharshis*. Some of them did involve animal sacrifice. “Wasn’t violence caused to animals on such occasions?”—This question comes up naturally. If violence is going to be caused to *YajnaPaśus* in a sacrifice by the performers, such persons should not take up a *yajna* at all. If they perform *yajna* in that way, they will become sinners even if they chant *vedamantras*, *śāstras* say. This is because, *yajna* is also called ‘*adhvara*’ which means non-violence. So, any activity which causes violence can never be a *yajna*. A *yajna* will be acceptable to *śāstras* only if both i.e. the *yajamāna* who performs the *yajna* without causing any violence, and the *yajnadravya* (i.e. the animal sacrificed) are led to *sadgati*.

How can a *yajnaPaśu* like a horse or a goat can attain *sadgati*? As they are not endowed with *jnāna* like men, they cannot obtain *Sadgati* by their own accomplishments. But if the person who performs a *yajna* happens to be a *brahmajñāni*, he can help the animal attain *Sadgati* by the power of his penance. If a person without such a power claims that he can provide *sadgati* to the animal he sacrifices in a *yajna*, it is like a man promising others to take them across a river, while he himself remains unable to cross it.

“स्वयं तस्मिन्मक्षमः किमितरानसौ तारयेत्”. The *yajna* he performs will only be a *Yajna* in name only culminating only in the violence of killing the animal.

"Let us assume for a moment that a *maharshi* who is a *jnāni* can make the *yajna**Paśu* obtain *sadgati* by the power of his penance. But, does not the animal suffer from pain when it is being sacrificed?" No. Because he possesses a power by which he can provide a divine state to that animal in which no pain is caused. **ŚrīRaṅgamahāguru used to give the analogy of (a doctor) conducting a surgery after administering chloroform to the patient.** By this, not only the person undergoing surgery does not experience any pain, but also regains energy after the surgery.

If persons who do not possess such powers happen to offer a *Paśubali*, it will end up only as a mockery of a *yajna*. Instead of ‘*Adhvara*’ it becomes a ‘*dhvara*’ and instead of *Sadgati*, only *durgati* is caused (to the animal).

We have thus given a long explanation to the *Paśubaliyajna* that was being performed by a few *Mahātmās* in the past. Even then, *jananis* say that a *yajna* performed with a *Paśu* in the form of a *Sasyadravya* is better than a *yajna* done with *Paśu*,

and *jnānyajna* is better than *dravyayajna*. “श्रेयान् द्रव्यमयाद्यज्ञात् ज्ञानयज्ञः परन्तप”

Even in a *Paśubali yajna*, a *Paśu* selected randomly cannot be selected. The *Paśu* which has the capacity to procreate is forbidden. It should not be taken by force. It should come happily on its own. If an animal without these features is forcibly brought and sacrificed, it will lead to only undesirable results.

The *Paśu* used in *Devī pūjā*, be it an bird or an animal, should always be a male. It should never be a female, say the *śāstras*. “स्त्रियं न दद्यात् बलिं दत्त्वा नरकमाप्नुयात्” What is the reason for this rule? Some people put forth the argument saying that *Devī* is a female deity and so it amounts to an offence against her if a female animal is offered as a *bali*. It is not right. Because, this leads to the conclusion that a male animal should not be sacrificed as a *bali* in the (*yajna* of a) male deity, and only a female animal should be given as a *bali*. Only the rules in the *śāstras* can provide the discrimination to decide which animal’s body (male or female) is *Bhogya* to a particular deity and the disposition that is caused thereby to obtain the grace of a particular deity.

One more important thing has to be noted here. There is no hard and fast rule that all should offer a *Paśubali* in the worship of *Durgādevī*. Animal

sacrifice is done only in *Rājasa* and *Tāmasa pūjās*. In a *sāttvika pūjā*, worship gets accomplished with mere *Sasyadravyas*. *Sāttvika pūjā* alone is the best.

सात्त्विकैर्जपयज्ञाद्यैः नैवेद्यैश्च निरामिषैः।

माहात्म्यं भगवत्याश्च पुराणादिषु कीर्तितम् ॥

पाठस्तस्य जपः प्रोक्तः पठेद्देवीमनाः प्रिये।

राजस्य बलिदानेन नैवेद्यैः सामिषैस्तथा॥

सुरामांसाद्युपाहारैः जपयज्ञैर्विना तु या।

विना मन्त्रैस्तामसी स्यात् किरातानां च सम्मताः॥ (स्कान्द-भविष्य)

In *sāttvika pūjās*, deliberations like *japa yajna* etc will be more. *Naivedya* will be only of vegetarian items. Here *japa* means *Pārāyaṇa* of *Devīmāhātmya* with devotion and concentration as stated in the *purāṇas*. In *Rājasa pūjās*, *Paśubali* will be there. The *naivedya* offered will be some items with meat. In *Tāmasapūjās* it is all liquor and meat. There will be no *japa yajnas* in it.

But, in a *tāttvika* sense, *Paśubali* will be very much there even in all *Sāttvika devatā pūjās*. Inside us, well fed beasts in the form of *Kāma* and *Krodha* etc are roaming freely. Those who sacrifice them and please the deity shall become *Mahātmās* indeed endowed with *Ātmaḡuṇas*. To put in a nutshell, it is best to perform *Devīpūjā* without *Paśubali*.

But if the non-vegetarians offer a *Paśu* endowed with suitable features in the prescribed manner with faith and devotion, it won't be a sinful

act. But everyone has to sacrifice the beasts of *kama* and *Krodha* etc. in the worship of *Devī*. Otherwise *Devī* will not be pleased. *Yajna* performed of that kind which pleases *Jaganmātā* is the best. Because, it makes us qualified for the *Jnānayajna* itself.

"It is true that in *Rājasa pūjās* offered to *Devī*, animal sacrifice is prescribed. It is not proper to ridicule — "Does *Devī* eat meat and such other items like sediment offered to her?" Certainly she does not eat them. She does not eat *laddus* or *jilebis* either. She is always full of bliss and blesses the devotees with their desires. The devotees of *sāttvika*, *Rājasa* and *tāmasa* dispositions worship her in a way natural to them. The type of *Bali* prescribed above is decided on what should be the *Naivedya* and the appropriate *prasāda* for a particular form worship, and what fosters the accomplishment of desires. This should be noted with discernment. What authority do we have to make a rule that all devotees should do only *sāttvika pūjā*.

This discussion regarding *Paśubali*, though a little elaborate and digressive, has been presented here with a view that it will be useful in understanding the science of similar *vaidik* and *tāntrik* worships.

As part of this *Vrata*, the *vrksha pūjā* is an important aspect which has been criticized much. And so, we would like to discuss it here,

Question 1: "The *ĀryaBhāratīyamaharshis* were mainly worshippers of nature. They were influenced by the thunder, lightning, rains, wind, light etc. which occur in nature and stir up feelings like fear, wonder, jubilation etc. and so, attributing divinity to them, they began to worship them with prayers and sacrifices. The worship of trees also comes under this category. Gigantic trees attracted them. They were attracted by their produce such as shade, flowers, fruits and medicines and furniture, and firewood made from their timber. The houses of *Vaidik* Aryans were generally built with timber only. In the *Viśvakarma Sūkta* in the *Vedas*, we come across a sentence.-

“किङ्गस्विद्वनं क उ स वृक्ष आसीद्यतो द्यावापृथिवी निष्पतक्षुः”

which means—"from which forest and from which trees did *Viśvakarma* build this world?"

Thus, the vedic *R̥shis* began to worship the trees which made an impact on their hearts as deities. The same tradition continues in Indians even in this twentieth century" This is the opinion of most of the western critics. Many Indian scholars who are their *mānasaputras* proclaim the same theory. Is this interpretation correct?

Answer: This interpretation appears well reasoned superficially. But it is actually without any substance. The reason is, our great *Maharshis* were *ātmopāsakas*. They worshipped *caitanya*. They never worshipped *jadaprakṛti* separate from that.

“आत्मैव मह्यः आत्मत्वेवतु उपगच्छन्ति”

Question 2: Aryans used to worship wind, light, stones, soil, trees and water. Are these not forms of inert nature?

Answer The *Maharshis* used these forms of inert nature and also living beings like men, birds and beasts as a medium for worship of God and worshipped God alone through them.

Question 3: What is the basis for this explanation?

Answer: Their (i.e. the *Maharshis*’) very experience is the supreme proof. Their *śāstravākyas* also proclaim this opinion. *Paramātmā* is the *ātmavarūpi* for everything. All the *cetanas* and *acetanas* are like his body of God.

“ऐतदात्म्यमिदं सर्वम्” जगत्सर्वं शरीरं ते। ”

—Proclaim the *Upanishads* and *Itihāsas* indeed!

Question 4: The world which consists of *Cetanas* and *acetanas* may be like the body of God. How can the worship of these please God?

Answer: Doesn't the *ātman* feel happy when the sandal paste is anointed on the body? In the same way, if mother nature who is like the body of God, and infinite creatures are worshipped with *viveka* and *saṅkalpa*, God feels happy. This itself is proclaimed in the *Ahīrbudhnyā samhitā* thus-

चराचराणि भूतानि सर्वाणि भगवद्भुः।

अतस्तदानुकूल्यं मे कार्यमित्येव निश्चयः॥

(All *bhūtakoṭis* form the body of *Bhagavān*. Therefore we have to worship them. This is indeed the conclusion.)

Question 5: In that case only humans could be taken as the *dvāra* and be worshipped, isn't it? Why then these viz. fire, wind, water, light, plants, and creepers were taken as *dvārās*?

Ans: There is also a system of worshipping god through humans. They have called it *manushya yajna* and have prescribed it as an obligation. And, as fire, wind, the sun, water, trees etc are the great *vibhūtis* of God, they worshipped the Lord of the universe through them also and preached the same to the world also. This is indeed another important form of worshipping *caitanya*, and not the worship of *jaḍaprakṛti*.

Question 6: Plants, trees and creepers are *acetanās*. What is special about in taking them as *dvārās* for the worship of God?

Ans: They are not *acetanās*. They also are living beings like humans, birds and animals. They too have *dharma*s like eating, natural growth, capacity to procreate etc. Not just that. They too have feelings of pleasure and pain. They also have emotions like gratitude, anger etc. This is confirmed by some recent scientific research.

Question 7: It is a fact proven by modern research. Did the ancient *Rshis* who prescribed the worship of trees and *vanaspatīs* know this?

Ans: Yes, certainly they knew this. "Plants have consciousness inside They can sense happiness and pain"

अन्तस्संज्ञा भवन्त्येते सुखदुःखादि संयुताः”

—says the *manusmṛti*. We come across *vedamantras* which very clearly address the trees and plants as follows:-

“अच्छेत्ता ते मारिषम् । शतवल्शं विरोह सहस्र वल्शाः” states a *yajurvedamantra* in the beginning chapters. It is addressed to *darbha*, a *vibhūti* of the Lord in the plant form.

"O *Tulasī*, your origin is divine. You are very dear to *Keśava*. I am picking a few leaves of yours to offer to him. Please forgive me."

“तुलस्यमृतजन्मासि सदा त्वं केशवप्रिये” “आराधनार्थं पुरुषोत्तमस्य लुनामि पत्रं तुलसि क्षमस्व” is the prayer of the *Āgamas* to *Tulasīmātā*.

Question 8: They could be poetic words in which the *cetanatva* has been attributed to *acetanas*, isn't it?

Ans: Certainly no. If they were just poetical words, *Smṛtis* would not lay down rules such as "*Sanyāsis* should not pick flowers from plants and trees, and if they do so they will be gripped by *himsādosha*. Even others should collect them only for the purposes of *yajnas* and *pūjas*. A *yati* who is *jnānanishṭha* should never pick flowers and leaves from plants." Like birds and animals, plants are also *janmaviśeshas*. But they are *tāmasayonis*. It should be noted that the *smṛtis* proclaim "One who commits the worst possible sin will be born as a tree in a cemetery." "Trees whose flowers and fruits are used for *pūjas* and *yajnas*, will get *sadgati* or will be born as a good being." So, it is clear that trees and *vanaspatīs* are *cetanās* only and the *cetanatva* in them is not attributed by poets.

Question 9: Even then, trees and *vanaspatīs* belong to a lower category among living beings. They are *sthāvaras* and *Tāmasa yonis*. Then why should they (or God through them) be worshipped?

Ans: *Śāstras* have not prescribed the worship of all plants, and trees. *Jnānis* have preached to treat only such trees as *dvāras* for the worship of God, which have in them an exceptional presence of

divinity, which are bestowed with a special grace of their presiding deities, and those which possess an extraordinary power to remedy the three *tāpas* viz *Ādhibhautika*, *Ādhidaivika* and *Ādhyātmikatāpas*, and bless with *Purushārthas*. They have recommended to worship them as *Mahavibhūtis* of God. As the *bilva*, *Śamī* and *aparājitā vṛkshas* which are worshipped in the *Navarātra vijayadaśamī* festivals belong to this class of sacred trees, *jnānis* have prescribed their worship as a part of the worship of gods and goddesses.

Question 10: It is said above that *ŚrīJaganmātā* should be invoked in the *bilva* tree and worshipped. A twig of it is to be brought home and worshipped. What are the great qualities this tree possesses, to make it revered?

Ans: When viewed from the *ādhibhautika* aspect, *bilva vṛksha* can control the *tridoshas*. "It is *Balakara*, *rucikara*, *dīpaka*, *tāpanāśaka* and removes *pittajvara* and *atisāra*" says *Rājanighanṭu*. Among these even the sight of *bilva vṛksha*, its shade and the inhalation of air around it, can cure *pitta* and a few other ailments partially.

The other names of this tree such as *Śiva*, *Vishṇu*, *Vijaya*, *puṇya*, *Śivapriya*, *Devāvāsa*, *tīrthapada*, *pāpaghna*, *trinayana*, *śuddhavarṇa*,

samyamī and *śrāddha devatā* etc emphasize the divine association and sacredness of this tree.

"*Kāmadhenu* is called *Śrīh*, and *Lakshmīh*. This divine tree was born from the *gomaya* (dung) of *Kamadhenu* that incarnated on earth. *ŚrīDevī* was born in this tree."

भृगो लक्ष्मीश्च सा धेनुः गोरूपा या गता भुवम् ।
तद्गोमयभवो बिल्वः श्रीश्च तस्मादजायत॥

—Says the *Vishṇupurāṇa*.

"O *ŚrīDevī*, effulgent as the Sun, this *vanaspati* by name *bilva* which was born as a result of *tapas*, is yours."

“आदित्यवर्णे तपसोऽधिजातो वनस्पतिस्तव वृक्षोऽथ बिल्वः” - says *Śrīsūkta* addressing the *Jaganmātā*. Hence this is a *ŚrīVriksha*. The following *śloka* also expresses the above said idea of *Vahnipurāṇa*.

उत्थितो बिल्ववृक्षस्तु गोमयाम्बु निषेचनात् ।
तत्रासौ वसते लक्ष्मीः श्रीवृक्षस्तेन चोच्यते॥

This tree is a confluence of all the *tīrthas*. This *ŚrīVrksha* is an abode of not just *Śrīdevī*, but a home of the trinity, and a dwelling place of all the gods.

ŚrīMatrkātantra (*patala* 55) says:-

"This was born on the top of the *Śrīśaila* mountain. It is the abode of *ŚrīDevī* who bestows *Śrīphala*. This is always dear to myself i.e. *Śiva* and also to *Nārāyaṇa*. It's bottom is equal to the

Siddhapīṭha. *Brahma*, *Vishṇu* and *Śiva* adorn its leaves. Its stalk is a form of *Śakti*. Any one of its triplet leaves can be used to worship *Śiva* or *Vishṇu*. That will help one to reach *Kaivalya*. *Śakti pūja* should be done especially using this."

श्रीशैलशिखरे जातः श्रीफलः श्रीनिकेतनः ।

विष्णुप्रीतिकरश्चैव मम प्रीतिकरस्सदा॥

ब्रह्म-विष्णु-शिवाः पत्रे वृन्तं शक्तिस्समाश्रिता ।

त्रिजटापत्रकैकेन हरं वा हरिर्मर्चयेत्॥

कैवल्यं तस्य तेनैव शक्तिपूजा विशेषतः ।

बिल्ववृक्षतलं प्रोक्तं सिद्धपीठसमं सुधीः॥

सर्वतीर्थमयो देवि सर्वदेवमयस्सदा ।

श्रीवृक्षः परमेशानि अत एव न संशयः॥

"One who inhales the fragrance of this *ŚrīVrksha* and comes out (after circumambulating) will get all his *siddhis* fulfilled. He will be protected by *Sudarśana* from above and *Pāśupata* from below", opine the *śāstras*.

घ्राणं गृहीत्वा यो गच्छेत् सर्वसिद्धिमवाप्नुयात् ।

ऊर्ध्वं सुदर्शनं रक्षेदधः पाशुपतस्तथा॥

Of the triplet leaves of this tree, the top one is *Śiva*, the left one is *Brahma* and the right part is *Nārāyaṇa*, according to the *Vishṇuvacana* found in *Bṛhaddharmapurāṇa*.

ऊर्ध्वपत्रं हरो ज्ञेयः पत्रं वामं विधिः स्वयम् ।

अहं दक्षिणपत्रश्च त्रिपत्रदलमित्युत॥

The statement that the *tridaḥas* of the *bilva* are *BrahmaVishṇuŚivātmaka* is not just a eulogistic remark. ***Mahāyogeśvara Śrī Raṅga Gurudeva in a pūjā pravacana at a Sudharmāsabhā at the Ashtaṅgayoga Vijnāna Mandira in Bangalore demonstrated scientifically how each of the three leaves in the tridala touches the corresponding mūrti, how they produce the particular reaction in the realm of the nādi of each deity, and how they make the respective deity-centres blossom.*** That was a thrilling experience and it is still green in our memory. And so, we have not an iota of doubt in this regard.

Though it is very dear to all gods and goddesses, it is exceptionally dear to *Śiva*.

प्रियो हं सर्वदेवानां त्रिनेत्रस्य विशेषतः

There is a tradition to offer *bilva* mixed with *Tulasi* in the worship of *Nārāyaṇa* also. In *Tirupati*, Lord *Venkaṭeśvara* is offered *bilva* along with *Tulasi*. *Śrī Śaṅkarabhagavatpāda* in his work '*Bhagavanmānasa pūja*' which is a *SriKṛṣṇa mānasa pūja stuti* says “बिल्वतुलसीयुतैश्चैवं पुष्पाञ्जलिमजित ते मूर्ध्नि निदधे” extolling the combination of *Bilva* and *Tulasi*.

As this is the dearest *Śrīvṛksha* to *Śrīdevi*, *Śrīvaishṇavas* customarily store the sacred *Śrīcurna*, a powder which is yellow or saffron in

colour used for wearing on the forehead, in a small container made from the *bilva* fruit.

Thus *Śrī Bilva Vṛksha* being an abode of the deities, helps one to have good health, removes mental agony and creates *dhāthu sāmāya*, happens to be a *mahāvibhūti* of the almighty. It is very relevant to invoke and worship *Śrīdevi* in this in *śarannavarātra mahotsava*, and to take home a branch of it and worship it. Here the worship is not for the external form, but to *Śrīdevi* who is the presiding deity, and to the Almighty. If this *tattva* is kept in mind, there will be no room for any ridicule.

Question 11: We have seen earlier that people worship *Śamī Vṛksha* on *Vijayadaśamī*, and take a twig and some soil from the bottom of the tree to their houses. This practice is very significant among *kshatriyas* who subsist on weapons. What are the great qualities of this *vṛksha* that make it exceptionally worshipful in the festival of *Vijayadaśamī*?

Answer: This also is a tree like *bilva* which is a form of the *Mahāvibhūti* of God. This tree is highly commended for *yajnas*. It is a tree which has *Agni* inside. The *samskṛita* equivalent for the word *Banni* in Kannada, is the word '*Vahni*' itself. *Maharshis* used to churn the sticks of this tree to produce sacred fire, from which they were performing

Yajnas. For this reason this tree has come to be called "*Agnigarbha*"

अवेहि तनयां ब्रह्मन्निगर्भा शमीमिव''

(शाकुन्तल)

The divine *agni* who dwells in it is called *Durga* and the feminine form of *Agnirudra* itself is *Durgādevī*. The *MahāNārāyaṇa* or the *Yājñikī Upanishad* which belongs to the *Taittirīya shākhā* praises this *Durgādevī* and *Durgāgni* who make one cross *Durgas* and misfortunes.

“तामग्निवर्णां तपसा ज्वलन्तीं वैरोचनीं

कर्मफलेषु जुष्टाम् । दुर्गां देवीगम्

शरणमहं प्रपद्ये सुतरसि तरसे नमः”

“अग्ने त्वं पारया नव्यो अस्मान् स्वस्तिभिरति दुर्गाणि विश्वा ।

पूश्च पृथ्वी बहुला न उर्वी

भवा तोकाय तनयाय शंयोः।

विश्वानि नो दुर्गहा जातवेदस्सिन्धुं न नावा दुरिताऽतिपर्षि।

अग्ने अत्रिवन्मनसा गृणानोऽस्माकं बोध्यविता तनूनाम्॥

This part of *Durgāsūkta* describes how *Durgādevī*, blazing as a result of her *tapas*, is indeed *agnirūpiṇī*, and how she helps one to get over difficulties.

Śrī Śamī Vrksha is a tree which is the abode of the fiery effulgence of *Durgā Devī* the *Śaktisvarūpiṇi*. It is natural the devotees worship her at the beginning of the journey of universal conquest, in which the wicked enemies are

vanquished with the help of effulgent weapons that are obtained by her grace.

The *pāṇḍavās* had deposited all their divine weapons in a *Śamīvrksha*. just before they entered *ajñātavāsa* (living incognito). This great tree, i.e. the *Śamīvrksha* earned the gratitude of the *pāṇḍavas* by returning the deposit in time, ably safeguarding it by its *ĀgneyadurgāŚakti*. We read in the *purāṇas* that *ŚrīRāma* also, just before launching his campaign against *Rāvaṇa* offered salutations to *Devī* who was in the form of this *Śrīvrksha*, and, feeling pleased by her words of *abhaya*, proceeded for the journey of conquest. At the time of *Śamīpūjā* the very remembrance of those great souls who, remained loyal to *Dharma* and obtained victory, bestows upon us an exceptional *Dharmanishthā*, on entering our mind, and provides inspiration for the accomplishment of victory. *Agni* is known as *pāvaka* i.e. the remover of sins. Likewise, this *Agnīvrksha* also is a redeemer of sins. It ousts the evil impressions opposed to *dharma* (dwelling in us) and creates an enthusiasm towards *Dharma*.

The following *ślokas* of prayer recited at the time of *Śamīpūjā* sums up the above purports.

शमी शमयते पापं शमी लोहितकण्टका ।

धरित्र्यर्जुनबाणानां रामस्य प्रियवादिनी ॥

According to *Āyurveda*, it relieves one from ailments such as trembling, cough, fatigue, leprosy, piles and worms. All these cures are necessary for *kshatriyas* on their conquest journey. Therefore it is very appropriate for them to worship this *agnimayavr̥ksha* which bestows upon them all these, before they set out on the journey.

From the *ādhibhautika* point of view, it is an antidote to a number of diseases and enhances lustre (in the body). From the *Ādhidaivika* angle, it is the abode of gods and brings in the grace of *Durgāgnidevatā*. Looking at it from the spiritual angle, it is a tree which is an abode of *paramātmāgni* that makes one to cross the hurdles to *yoga*, and the one that helps in attaining *Samādhi* through *Upāsana*. Overall, it is highly appropriate to worship this tree on *Vijayadaśamī*.

Question 12: It has been stated earlier that a tree by name *Aparājitā* can be worshipped in lieu of *Śamī* tree, if the latter is not available. Does this tree also possess such worshipful qualities?

Ans: Certainly yes. The great sages have not named just some tree as an alternative. This tree also being a *mahāvibhūti* of *Devi*, possesses the great qualities like the *Śamī* trees and is worshipful.

It is also called by other names such as *Jayantī*, *Vijayā* and *Arśaparnī*. It should be remembered that the first two names are the name of *Jaganmātā* also. Even *Aparājitā* is an other name of *Durgādevī*. The *Devī purāṇa* says that as *Śrī Devī* defeated the invincible demon king by name *Padma* and remained unconquerable by anyone, she is called *Vijayā* and *Aparājitā*.

विजित्य पद्मनामानं दैत्यराजं महाबलम् ।

विजया तेन सा देवी लोके चैवापराजिता ॥

Thus, in addition to having the name of *Devī*, this *Aparājitā* tree remains an abode of exceptional presence of *Devī*, and so is suggested as a representative of *Śamī*. Some say it is just another genre of *Śamī*.

From the Ayurvedic point of view, it is a medicine for *pitta* hassles and toxins. It also helps in getting over *tridoshas*. It is an eye coolant.

When viewed from the *Ādhidaivika* angle, *Aparājitā* is (indeed) the abode of *Durgā Devī*. By worshipping her, one can achieve *ātma vijaya* and *lokavijaya*, says the *Skāndapurāṇa*.

दशम्यां च नरैः सम्यक् पूजनीयाऽपराजिता ।

मोक्षार्थं विजयार्थं च पूर्वोक्तविधिना नरैः ॥

Thus, the worship of the trees *Bilva*, *Śamī* and *Aparājitā* prescribed in the *Navarātra* and

Vijayadaśamī festivals is not at all the worship of any inert nature.

Thus, one can understand by discernment that this is indeed a variety of worship of that *Paramachaitanyarūpī Paramapurusha* who presides over *Prakṛti*, and of *Jaganmātā* who commands the inert nature.

Question 13: *Vishṇu*, *Śiva* and *Durgā Devī* take to sleep in *Ashāḍha*. We come across precepts which state that the *Lokamātā* should be woken up during *Navarātra mahotsava* and worshipped.. What is the significance of this? Do these divinities really sleep.? If that is the case, who looks after the huge establishment of running the world?

Ans: Actually speaking Gods and goddesses do not have even an iota of inertia of sleep. They are ever watchful, and keep overseeing the five duties such as *Śrīshṭi*, *Sthiti*, *Laya*, *Anugraha* and *Tirodhāna*. They always keep awake.

Question 14: If so, why do the *śāstras* mention the states of wakefulness and sleep pertaining to them?

Ans: It is just an offer of the *upacāras*. The service of sleep should be offered to them on a particular day in the *Ashāḍhamāsa* as a part of *Cāturmāsyapūjā*. It is not at all the wordly sleep. It is the *yoganidrā* that is full of (divine knowledge)

jnāna and (divine bliss) *ānanda*. One has to have the *darśan* of the sleeping pose of the enchanting divine forms (of those gods and goddesses). During the four months of *cāturmāsyā* all of us have to reduce the quantum of wordly activities and should engage ourselves in *Dhyāna* and *pūja* at the place of our stay. And then, on the stipulated day in *Śaratkāla* we should offer the service of *suprabhātamaṅgala* and then start our routine with enthusiasm. This aspect has been dealt with in detail in the chapter of *Prathamaikādaśī*.

Question 15: When should we offer the *upacāras* of sleep and awakening to *Śrīdurgādevī*, among the prominent gods and goddess mentioned above?

Ans: The *nidropacāra* should be offered to *Śrī Durga Devī* on *Ashāḍha śukla Ashṭami* and the *suprabhātamaṅgala* should be offered in the *Śarannavarātra* festival in the *śuklapaksha* of *Āsvayujamāsa*. Sometimes, it is during the last part of the previous *Kṛshṇa Paksha*.

Question 16: What do the *śāstrās* state in this regard?

Ans: If the eighteen armed form of *ŚrīDurga* is to be worshipsed, then the *suprabhātamaṅgala sevā* should be offered on the *Bhādrapada Kṛṣṇanavamī*. If the ten armed *Devi* is to be

worshipped, then it should be done on *Āśvayuja Śhuklashashṭhī* (During *Śarannavarātra*)

नवम्यां बोधनमष्टादशभुजायाः

षष्ठ्यां बोधनं दशभुजायाः।

इति कालिका पुराणे विशेष्याभिधानम्

Some say that the ten armed *Devī* should be offered *Suprabhātamaṅgala* on *Bhādrapada Krshṇanavamī* or *Āśhvayujaśukla shashṭī*.

We feel the first opinion is right. Because, the *śāstras* have clearly prescribed different days of worship corresponding to the different forms of *Devī*. The *Kālikapurāṇa* has separately enjoined *Bhādrapadakṛshṇavamī* for the *Āshṭādashabhujamūrtī* and *Āśvāyujaśuklaprathamā* for the *daśabhujamūrtī*.

Question 17: At what time of the day the *pūja* of *Devī* should be done during *Navarātra* celebrations?

Ans: It should be done three times a day—in the morning, noon and at night. The *pūja* at night is given greater importance.

प्रातःस्नायी जितद्वन्द्वः त्रिकालं शिवपूजकः

त्रिकालं पूजयेद्देवीं जपस्तोत्रपरायणः (देवीपुराण)

“प्रातर्मध्याह्नयोः सङ्क्षेपपूजनाङ्गम्, विस्तरपूजनं तु प्रधानभूतं रात्रावेव”
(कालतत्त्वविवेक)

Question 18: Which is more important for the *Navarātramahotsava*? The *pūjā* —*tithi* or *Nakshatra*?

Ans: If both the specified *tithi* and *nakshatra* coincide, it is greatly auspicious. When they do not coincide, *tithi* itself should be taken as more important. The very names of the *utsavas* i.e. *Durgāshṭamī*, *Mahānavamī* and *Vijayadaśamī* which are in vogue, are associated with *tithis* only. The specified *tithi* and *nakshatras* for them are as follows:

Bilvavr̥ksha abhimantraṇa should be done on *shashṭh* with *jyeshṭhā nakshatra*.

The *patras* should be brought home on *Saptamī* with *Mūlā nakshatra*. *Pūja*, *homa* and fasting should be done on *asṭamī* with *Purvāshāḍha*. *Devī* should be offered *balinaivedya* on *Navamī* with *Uttarāshāḍha*. *Devī Visarjana* should be done on *daśamī* with *Śravaṇa nakshatra*.

ज्येष्ठानक्षत्रयुक्तायां षष्ठ्यां बिल्वाभिमन्त्रणम् ।

सप्तम्यां मूलयुक्तायां पत्रिकायाः प्रवेशनम् ॥

पूर्वाषाढायुताष्टम्यां पूजाहोमाद्युपोषणम् ।

उत्तरेण नवम्यां तु बलिभिः पूजयेच्छिवम् ॥

श्रवणेन दशम्यां तु प्रणिपत्य विसर्जयेत्॥ (देवी पुराण)

Suprabhāta to *Sarasvatī* should be done in *Ārdṛānakshatra*. The *Āvahana* in *mūlā nakshatra*, *pūjā* in *Uttarāshāḍha* and *visarjana* should be done in *Śravaṇa*.

आर्द्रायां बोधयेद्देवीं मूलेन तु प्रवेशयेत्।

उत्तरेणार्चनं कृत्वा श्रवणेन विसर्जयेत्॥

मूलेनावहयेदेवीं श्रवणेन विसर्जयेत् (व्यासः)

तिथिः शरीरं तिथिरेव कारणं तिथिः प्रमाणं तिथिरेव साधनम् ।

Question 19: Precisely on which *tithi* should *Navarātri mahotsava* be begun?

Ans: It is on *Āshvayuja śuddha prathamā*. But if *prathamā tithi* has *amāvāsyā* or *dvitīyā* touching it, we have to deliberate on when it should be begun. If *prathamā* is mixed with *amāvāsyā*, and if the following day does not have *prathamā*, then *Navarātra mahotsava* should begin on *prathamā* itself. If *prathamā* happens to prevail at sunrise and extends to less than three *muhūrtas* the next day, then the celebration should begin on the *pūrṇa prathamā* day only. "If *amāvāsyā* continues for a period of one *muhūrta* (on the following day of *amāvāsyā*) and *prathamā* that sets in after that happens to continue for less than three *muhūrtās* of time the next day, then, from the next day i.e. from the day of *Prathamā* which is mixed with *dvitīyā*, *Navarātra* festival should begin" - This is the discernment taught by some *Kālamīmāṃsakas*.

The *Devipurāṇa* says "If there is *Vedha* of *Amāvāsyā* on *Prathamā*, it should be given up. And if *Prathamā* persists for even one *muhūrta* the next day (i.e. on *dvitīyā*), *Navarātra mahotsava* should begin on that day (i.e. on *dvitīyā*) only"

अमायुक्ता न कर्तव्या प्रतिपत्पूजने मम।

मुहूर्तमात्रा कर्तव्या द्वितीयादि गुणान्विता॥

Contrary to this advice, we come across statements such as " If one begins *Navarātra* on *Prathamā* mixed with *dvitīyā* either because of the passion for *devipūjā* in *Navarātra* or by the advice of someone, then he would lose his son"

द्वितीयाशेषसंयुक्ता प्रतिपच्चण्डिकाचने।

मोहादथोपदेशाद्वा कृतं पुत्रविनाशकम् ॥

No doubt, these contradictory statements do create a confusion. Some say *Devī* would not agree to her beginning *pūjā* on *Prathamā* with *amāvāsyā Vedha*. "If it is done on *prathamā* with *dvitīyā* touching it, one would lose his son," say some others. Actually speaking there is no contradiction in these two statements. The purport is, householders who desire fortunes such as sons, grandsons etc. should begin *Navarātrapūjā* on the day when *prathamā* prevails for a long time, even if it has the *vedha* of *Amāvāsyā*. *Virkatas* i.e. those who desire *Moksha* only, should not begin the *pūjā* on *Prathamā*, which has *vedha* of *amāvāsyā*.

They should begin the *pūjā* on the second day even if *prathamā* prevails for a very short time and *dvitīyā* is for a long time. That means, those who have a desire for *dharmārthakāmas* should not begin if there is *vedha* of *dvitīyā*. Those who desire

moksha only should avoid *amāvāsyā*. This is the purport.

If it is a pure *Prathamā tithi* without any *Vedha*, then there is no scope for *vikalpa* at all.

Question 20: What direction do the *śāstras* give about the time for the celebration of *vijayadaśamī*?

The *daśamī* of *Āshvayuja śukla* is called *Vijayadaśamī* or *Vijayādaśamī*. *Vijayadaśamī* should be celebrated on that day.

Question 21: Should the *daśamī* at sunrise be considered for this or at sunset?

And: If it is *śuklapaksha*, the *daśamī* at sunrise is to be considered. If it is *kṛṣṇapaksha* it is *daśamī* at sunset.

शुक्लपक्षे तिथिर्ग्राह्या यस्यामभ्युदितो रविः।

कृष्णपक्षे तिथिर्ग्राह्या यस्यामस्तमितो रविः॥

According to this rule, as it is *śuklapaksha*, the *tithi* at sunrise also should be considered for *Vijayadaśamī*, some say. But as the situation here unlike the other *māsas* and *pakshas*, is one which relates to *Vijayadaśamī*, it is not possible to arrive at a conclusion by merely applying the above said rule.

Like the *daśamī tithi*, *Śravaṇnakshatra* is also excellent for *devatāpūjā* on that day. If both happen to occur, it is best and there can be no doubt about it. Here, like *Janmāshṭamī*, *tithi* is more important

than *nakshatra*, but still *nakshatra* is also considered at times.

A *Śāstramīmāṃsaka* by name *Hemādri* says—"Vijayadaśamī should be observed on the day of *Śravaṇa nakshatra*, if there is any *Vedha* on the day of *daśamī*; otherwise, it should be observed on the day of *navamī tithi*."

Some more opinions are as follows:

1. If *daśamī* is touched by both *navamī* and *Ekādaśī*, and, if there is no *Śravaṇa nakshatra* on the next day, then *Vijayadaśamī* should be observed on the day of *Navamī tithi* only.

2. *Aparājitā Devī* should be worshipped only on the day when *daśamī* is touched by *navamī* in the afternoon.

3. *Aparājitā devī* should never be worshipped on *Ekādaśī*.

4. Afternoon is the most auspicious time for *Devī pūjā*. *Pradoshakāla* is the secondary option. If *daśamī* prevails in the afternoon on both the days, then the previous day itself (with *navamī*) should be considered for *Vijayadaśamī pūjā*. If *daśamī* prevails during the time of *pradosha* both the days (but not in the afternoon), then the second day, (i.e. the day of *Ekādaśī*) should be considered for *Vijayadaśamī pūjā*. If *daśamī* does not prevail in the afternoon on both the days, then the first day

(i.e. the day with *navamī*) should be considered for *Vijayadaśamī*. But if *Śravaṇa nakshatra* prevails in the afternoon of the next day, then that day (i.e. *daśamī* with *Ekādaśī*) should be considered for *vijayadaśamī pūjā*.

5. If on a day *daśamī* prevails at least for a short time at sunrise, and the rest of the day is *Ekādaśī*, and *Śravaṇa nakshatra* prevails in the afternoon, then that day should be called 'Vijayā'. Since *ŚrīRāma* launched his journey of conquest against *Rāvaṇa* on the day of *Śravaṇa nakshatra*, *Vijayadaśamī* should be celebrated on the day of that *nakshatra* only.

6. The time of the rising of stars just after dusk on *Aśvayujaśukladaśamī* is called 'vijaya'. Endeavours begun at that time shall become fruitful.

7. If fifteen *muhūrtas* happen to occur on any day, then the eleventh *muhūrta* is called 'vijaya'.

When such a *muhūrta* occurs on a day, such an auspicious *daśamī* is called *Vijayadaśamī*.

If pure *daśamī tithi* occurs without the touch of any other *tithi*, then *Vijayadaśamī* should be observed on that day without any *vikalpa*. If *Śravaṇa nakshatra* also occurs on that day, it is more auspicious. If the day happens to be a pure *daśamī tithi*, then even in the absence of *Śravaṇa*

nakshatra, *Vijayadaśamī* should be observed on that day.

When pure *daśamī tithi* is not available then *dasāmi tithi* joined with *navamī* is preferable to *Ekādaśī*. But if that *Ekādaśī* has the *Śravaṇa nakshatra yoga*, we think it is auspicious for *vijaya daśamī pūjā*, even if happens to be an *Ekādaśī*.

Here, we would like to humbly interpret this matter on the strength of the impressions provided by *Śrīgurūpadesa* as follows: "For those who desire *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kama*, *daśamī* touched with *Navamī* is best, if pure *daśamī* is not available. For those who desire *Moksha*, *daśamī* touched with *Ekādaśī* is best, and for those who desire all the *Purushārthās*, *Ekādaśī* with *Śravaṇa* is best."

The abovesaid *Kālamīmāmsa* may sound unnecessary to the lay man. But when some doubts arise in that regard, it becomes very necessary to provide a satisfactory and critical clarification to the *jīgnāsus*. Therefore, we have discussed the matter briefly here.

