

In the beautiful and colorful celebration of the festival of Navaratri, we celebrate and offer prayers of gratitude to the Divine Mother and seek her blessings for strength, power, prosperity, knowledge, and wisdom. In celebrating the festival of Navaratri we enrich our spirit by our prayers, humility, and gratitude, and our cultural self with all the colorful traditions with our family, friends, and community, in the presence of the Divine.

Devi Navaratri / Sarad Navaratri

"Nava-ratri" means "nine nights." The festival of Navaratri or Dusshera (meaning Ten Days) is observed twice a year, once in the beginning of summer and again at the onset of winter. As the name suggests, Sharad Navratri is celebrated during the Sharad Ritu, or the commencement of the winter season. This festival usually comes during September-October period. It commences on the first day and ends on the tenth day of the bright half (sukla paksha) of the lunar month of Aswayuja/Ashwin. The Navaratri celebrated at the onset of summer in March/April around Rama Navami is called Vasanta Navratri or Chaitra Navaratri.

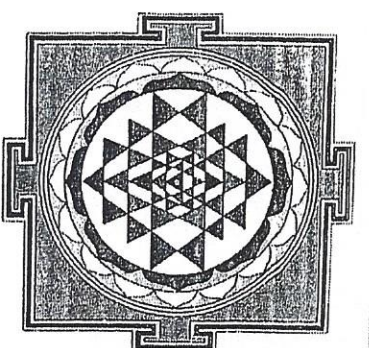
What's the Significance of Navaratri? In our tradition paramatma or parabrahma, the creator is

looked upon in both male and female aspects in the manifest form of the creation. The male aspect is called the Purusha and is the efficient cause and the female aspect of the Creator is called prakti or Shakti and is the material cause. Both are required for any form of creation. The male aspects of the creator are worshipped as Brhama, Vishnu and Siva and the female aspects are propitiated as Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati. During Navaratri, we invoke shakti in the form of the universal mother, commonly referred to as "Durga," meaning the remover of miseries of life. She is also referred to as "Devi" (goddess) or Chandi. The shakti is manifest in the creation in the form of capacity to desire (iccha shakti), capacity to know (jnana shakti), and capacity to act (kriya shakti). In order for us to function in the world and be successful we need the blessing of the Divine mother in all of these aspects. These three aspects are propitiated in the forms of Goddess Durga, who is all power and strength, Goddess Lakshmi, who is all forms of wealth and prosperity, and Goddess Saraswati, who is all knowledge.

Navaratri is divided into sets of three days dedicated to the three aspects of the goddess. On the first three days, the Divine Mother is invoked as Durga in order to destroy all our impurities, and negative tendencies

and we pray to Her to bless us with all forms of strength and skills. The next three days, the Divine Mother is invoked as a giver of all forms of wealth, Lakshmi. We thank her for all the blessings we have received and pray for Her continued blessings for all forms of wealth and resources and all that is auspicious. The final set of three days is spent in worshipping the Divine Mother as the goddess of wisdom, Saraswati. We thank her and pray to Her to bless us with all forms of knowledge including the ultimate spiritual knowledge and wisdom.

The **Sri Chakra** or **Shri Yantra** is a yantra formed by nine interlocking triangles that surround and radiate out from the central (bindu) point, the junction point between the physical universe and its unmanifest source. It represents the Hindu goddess Sri Lakshmi, the goddess of abundance on all levels, in abstract geometric form. It also represents the goddess in her form of Tripura Sundari, "the beauty of the three worlds". Four of the triangles point upwards, representing Shiva or the Masculine. Five of these triangles point downwards, representing Shakti or the Feminine. Thus the Sri Yantra also represents the union of Masculine and Feminine Divine. Because it is composed of nine triangles, it is known as the *Navayoni Chakra*.



The Shri Chakra is also known as the *nava chakra* because it can also be seen as having nine levels. "Nava" means "nine" in Sanskrit. Each level corresponds to a mudra, a yogini, and a specific form of the deity Tripura Sundari along with her mantra. These levels starting from the outside or bottom layer are:

1. *Trailokyā Mohana* or *Bhupara*, a square of three lines with four portals
2. *Sarva Asa Paripura*, a sixteen-petal lotus
3. *Sarva Sankshobahana*, an eight-petal lotus
4. *Sarva Saubhagyadayaka*, composed of fourteen small triangles
5. *Sarva Arthasadhaka*, composed of ten small triangles
6. *Sarva Rakshakara*, composed of ten small triangles

7. *Sarva Rogahara*, composed of eight small triangles
8. *Sarva Siddhi prada*, composed of 1 small triangle
9. *Sarva Anandamaya*, composed of a point or *bindu*

GAYATRI SHLOKA

OM BHUR BHUVAH SWAH
TAT SAVITUR VARENYAM
BHARGO DEVASYA DHEEMAHİ
DHIYO YO NAH PRACHODAYAT

MEANING

O God, Thou art the giver of life, the remover of pain and sorrow, the bestower of happiness;
O Creator of the Universe, may we receive thy supreme, sin-destroying
light; may Thou guide our intellect in the right direction