

**Prayer Guide<sup>1</sup>**  
**with detailed explanations of several**  
**Mantras, Stotras, Kīrtans, and**  
**Religious Festivals**

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<sup>1</sup> Published by Arsha Vidya Gurukulam. Edited by Krishnakumar (KK) S. Davey and Jayshree Ramakrishnan. Available at <http://books.arshavidya.org/>

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## ***Sarasvatī pūjā***

When you worship Īśvara, it is the power of Īśvara, the *īśvara-śakti*, that is worshipped, not Brahman. It is the *sarvajña*, the all-knowing Lord that is invoked and not the *satyam jñānam anantam brahma*. In order to know the *satyam jñānam anantam brahma*, you are invoking the *sarvajña*, the all-knowing Lord. Similarly, the Lord is invoked in various aspects. On *Gaṇeśa-caturthī* day, the Lord is invoked as one who removes obstacles. On *Sarasvatī-pūjā* day, the Lord is invoked as all *jñāna*, knowledge.

### ***Worshipping of books and tools***

Goddess Sarasvatī is worshipped on the ninth day of the Dasara or Navarātri festival by creating an altar of books. It is amazing that you can create an altar of books and worship it. You will find not only books, but also musical instruments such as the *vīṇā* or the flute.

The tenth day is Vijayadaśamī, when all the work tools are worshipped. It is called *āyudha-pūjā*. No one likes to visit a blacksmith. However, you should visit him on the Vijayadaśamī day. The place will be absolutely clean. You will find sandal paste, flowers and garlands everywhere. Even the bellows will be cleaned up and there will be no ashes. On that day, all

the buses are adorned with lots of *kuñkuma* or vermilion, sandal paste and flowers. In all cities, the drivers do the *pūjā* in the morning before they start work. Even in government undertakings, any *sādhana* or tool such as a typewriter is worshipped. There is *jñāna* involved in every tool, even in a simple spanner. On the *Sarasvatī-pūjā* day, we worship knowledge; books and musical instruments are worshipped. Vijayadaśamī day is the day of technology or applied knowledge.

### *Everything is sacred*

It takes a certain heart, a certain way of looking at things, to worship books and tools. The concept of Īśvara makes it unique. Nothing is separate from Īśvara. All the *śaktis* are worshipped.

All that we require is some symbol of knowledge. Any book contains certain knowledge, even if there are mistakes. Mistakes also imply *jñāna*, because to understand a mistake, you must have knowledge. Otherwise, you cannot know. To understand a mistake as being a mistake is *jñāna*. If you know the truth as it is, then it is true. If you mistake an untruth for the truth, it is a mistake. If what is untrue is understood to be untrue, then that is knowledge. What is the knowledge of *mithyā*? It is *jñāna*. For the unreal, *asat*, there is never any being, *nāsato vidyate bhāvah*

[*Bhagavadgītā* 2-16]. To understand what is not true, *asat*, is true, *sat*; this is *jñāna*.

It does not matter what the book is. When you see your own books as an altar, your attitude towards them is different. It is based on the *śāstra*. What we call Hindu religion is this Vedic vision. All prayers are connected to this vision and based on this view. These things are not possible unless you get your concept of Īśvara straight. You cannot worship a dumb tool! That is what we think about tools, but there is nothing dumb about them. There is *jñāna* or order involved. If the spanner is too small or too big versus the hole, then it won't work! There is law and order involved and all of this is *bhagavān*. All of life is thus, a process of sanctifying. From childhood, you learn to appreciate and look upon things as sacred. There is nothing profane in this world. This is how you are taught from childhood. This is so for all Hindus. They may not know Vedānta, but they certainly do know that everything is sacred. Everyone will say “*sab bhagavān hai*”, or everything is *bhagavān*. They may not know how and they may not have all the answers, but their attitude reflects this.

#### *Navarātrī festival in Tamil Nadu*

In Tamil Nadu, many homes organize a *golu* during the *Navarātrī* festival. They assemble nine steps

and on those steps, they display various forms made of clay, china, etc. You will find the whole world there. You will even find a doll of an Englishman on those steps. They make it out of clay and paint it. All forms are represented.

The top step is for *devatās* like Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. On the next step you will see Gaṇeśa etc. Then you will have the *yakṣas*, *kinnaras*, angels, etc. that are described in the books. Then you will find all types of human beings; people from different countries and cultures. You will find all kinds of costumes. You will then find different kinds of animals, trees, and fruits. The whole *jagat* is there. It is the *jagat-rūpini-śakti*. In some houses, they will bring in modern technology with a train track and trains running, water fountains, etc. All the ingenuity of man is employed!

Women call each other to visit their home. “Please visit my home and make it sacred”. Both unmarried girls and married women come, dressed in their silk saris and beautiful ornaments. Girls are asked to sing. They sing in praise of the Lord. As boys, we would go behind the girls and women and wait for *prasāda* distribution, then go on to the next house for their *prasāda*, and then the next house, and so on. We would then compare to see which house distributed the best *prasāda*, and visit them again to collect *prasāda*, a

second time! This is the popular festival of nine nights, Navarātrī.

*Festivals and other cultural expressions help maintain values and attitudes*

There are many festivals. I consider some of these to be very relevant to our life, to our outlook, to our attitudes and to our values. How do you bring this relevance out? You create a situation like this and through it, you demonstrate your attitudes. It is like sending flowers or a card for a birthday. In every culture, there are a few expressions like this. If these expressions and customs are removed, life will be empty. Life will be robotic. These things demonstrate and re-establish certain values and attitudes. Such actions bring out the sanctity of these festivals.

“It takes a certain heart, a certain way of looking at things, to worship books and tools. The concept of Īśvara makes it unique. Nothing is separate from Īśvara.”