

## ***Navaratri – Celebrating Change***

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India is a vast land with an ancient culture. It has a range of colourful festivals. *Navaratri* is one among these festivals. This festival is not celebrated for a day, but for nine nights as the term *Navaratri* suggests.

### **Honouring Feminine Forces**

While the period and date of festival is common across the land, it is celebrated in different ways across the land, but is still the same festival and spans across the same time window. The spirit is the same, that of honouring the feminine forces in Nature in the form of the three Goddesses Durga, Lakshmi, and Sarasvati, which finds expression in the place of honour given to women and girls during this festival.



***Navaratri Celebrations across the land***

## Celebrated with Different names in different ways

In Tamil Nadu and other parts of South India, it is celebrated as *Kolu*, festival of dolls, ending with *Sarasvati Puja*. In Mysore, it is celebrated as *Dassera* with *Devi Chamundi* as the primary divinity. In Bengal, it is called *Durga Puja*. In Central India and Northern India, *Dassera* is celebrated with the *Dahana*, burning of the effigy of Ravana to symbolize the victory of good over evil.

How is it that the same festival is celebrated in different ways in the same culture, in the same religious milieu and still accepted across the land by the same name, *Navaratri* and *Dassera*?

The connecting bond for all these festivals is the culture, which is called *Samskriti*. The word *Samskriti* itself means “that which is well done” as *Kriti* means “to do well”.

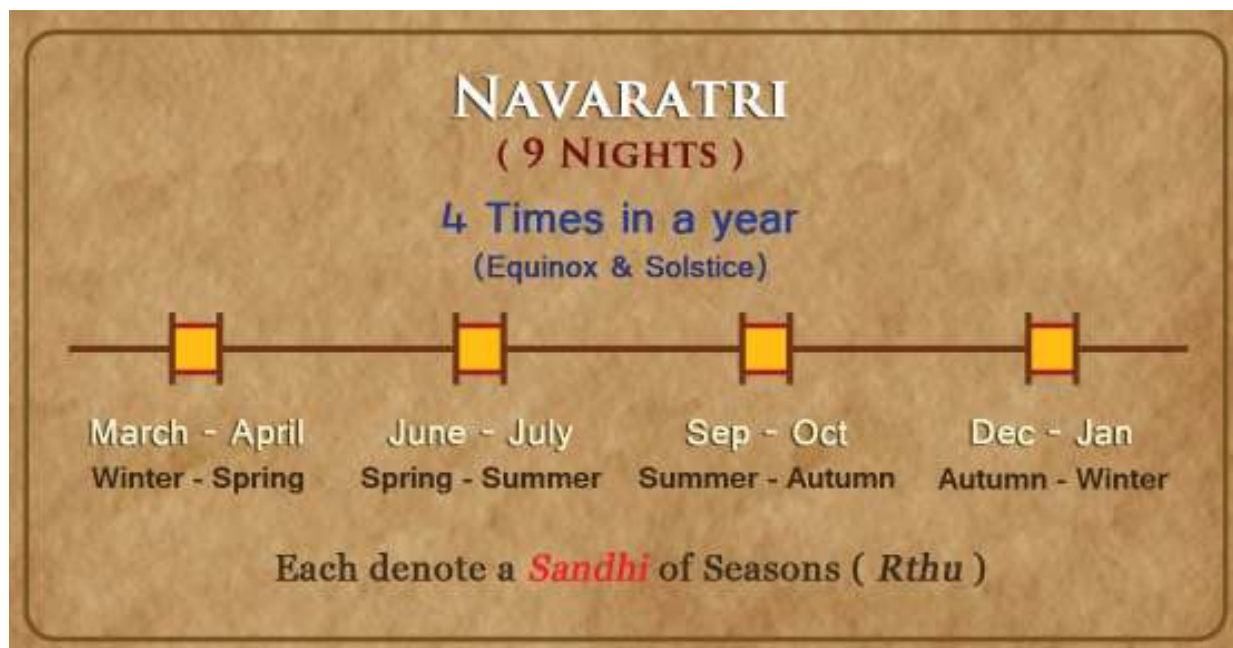
This is said so for, over time, the civilization in India had learnt, understood and perfected the ways of living. It is a way of living which is in sync with Nature as reflected in the timing of the festivals in India which are mainly based on seasons and the scientific principles of Nature.

## 4 Navaratri

Even though most people celebrate just one *Navaratri* festival during September – October every year, there are actually 4 *Navaratri* festivals in a year, each lasting for 9 nights and days.

Why are there 4 *Navaratri* festivals in a year?

India has 4 seasons and so *Navaratri* is celebrated 4 times in a year.



The prime ones are celebrated in the months of March-April, the transition from Winter to Spring and in the months of September-October, the transition from summer to autumn. If you note, these are the windows close to the two equinoxes as well, the period when days and nights are equal and balanced.

### Why does each celebration last for nine nights and days?

*Navaratri* festival celebrates the transitory nature between the four major seasons in Nature, they being summer, winter, spring and autumn. The transition from one to the other season does not take place in just one day but in fact was considered in Indian thought, to be a full span of 9 to 10 days. So this transitional nature of Nature was earmarked as a period of time which is 9 days and 9 nights. From such practices, it comes out clear to us that, in the traditional Indian thought, while there was a definite calendar with days, hours, minutes and finer divisions of time, equal importance was also given to transitory periods – transition from day to night, from month to month, from season to season and so on.

## Change in Season, Change in life pattern

When seasons change, life pattern also changes. The body which is a part of Nature, changes with changing surroundings, change in seasons. There is a change in diet pattern, sleep, metabolism etc. with the change in season. In a society closely in tune with Nature, it also affects occupations, work undertaken, dressing and overall behavior. *Navaratri* is such a transition from one season to another and is a celebration of this change.

Whenever there is a change, one can either resist it or accept it. With resistance comes hardships. With acceptance comes mellowness. Celebrating is one way of yielding to and accepting a change wholeheartedly. And where there is wholehearted acceptance, contentment will follow and so will happiness.

*Navaratri* is the expression of such a celebration where we recognize there is going to be a change, understand the change that is to follow and accept it willingly.

## Alignment of Energies

There is a saying in the *Sanskrit* language, “*Yatha Pinde thatha Brahmande*” – “As in Microcosm, so in Macrocosm”. This phrase brings forth the relationship between our body, the body of earth and body of cosmos.

The gross world, the Macrocosm, is filled with varieties of astral bodies such as the earth, sun, planets, comets, stars, nebulae and galaxies. All these bodies are in continual motion, which brings about continuous change not only in the huge cosmos but all the way in every tiny living and non living being all the way on earth.

As these bodies keep moving and causing change in the cosmos, they keep aligning and realigning amongst themselves. These alignments bring in an interplay amongst the forces of Nature.

All these alignments have their effects on each of the bodies in space including the body that is us.

## The Trinity of Energy

Our mind too, the Microcosm, is constantly under the interplay, alignment of 3 subtle forces or energies.

- *Ichcha Shakti* – desire or will to act and manifest
- *Kriya Shakti* – potential to act and manifest
- *Gnana Shakti* – knowledge power for the manifestation

An alignment of these energies denotes the culmination of their interplay, leading to a balanced state of mind and individual. This knowledge, *Gnana Shakti*, should lead us, the people, civilizations and human race as a whole, to use our potential and faculties, i.e. *Kriya Shakti*, for aligning our subconscious desire and will, *Ichcha Shakti* to be in sync with the Cosmos.

It is these 3 energies in the form of the three Goddesses, Durga, Lakshmi and Sarasvati that the Indians from time immemorial have been invoking and realigning themselves with, during the seasonal transition festival called *Navaratri*.



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