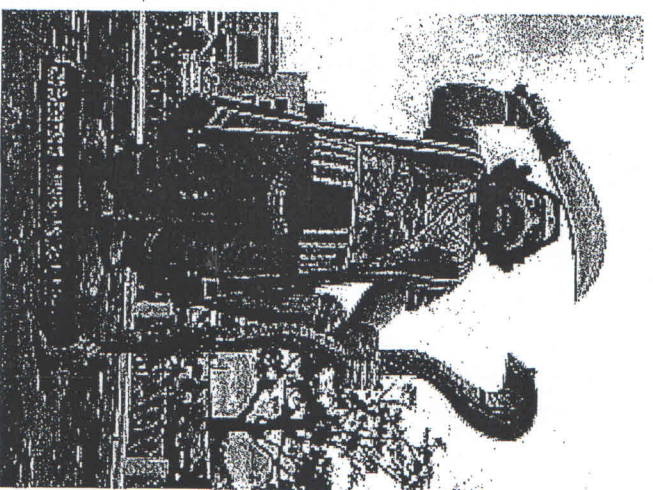


# NAVRATRI



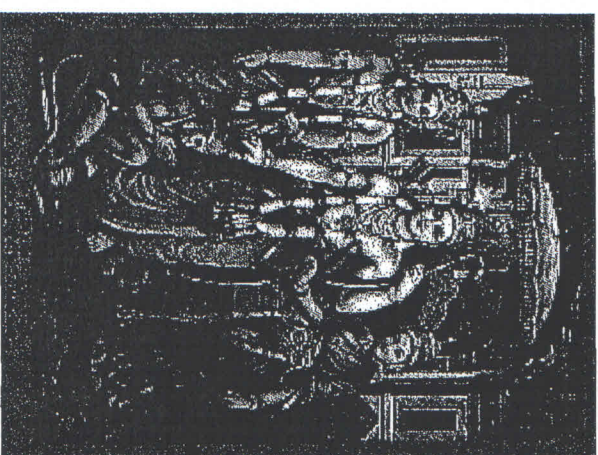
- Mahishasura defeated the gods and the demons. The gods led by Brahma approached Vishnu and Shiva and appraised them of the situation. **Durga** is the brilliance of all the gods. She merged from Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. When the goddess was seen by Mahishasura, he fell in love with her and sought to marry her. The goddess promised to marry him, if he defeated her in the battle. A terrible combat ensued and continued for nine days. Finally, Durga assumed the terrifying form of **Chandika** and pinned Mahishasura down with her foot and pierced his neck with her spear and she cut his head off with her sword. This how we celebrate the **navratri. Victory of good over the evil.** Goddess Durga is known as "**Mahisasurardini**" too.

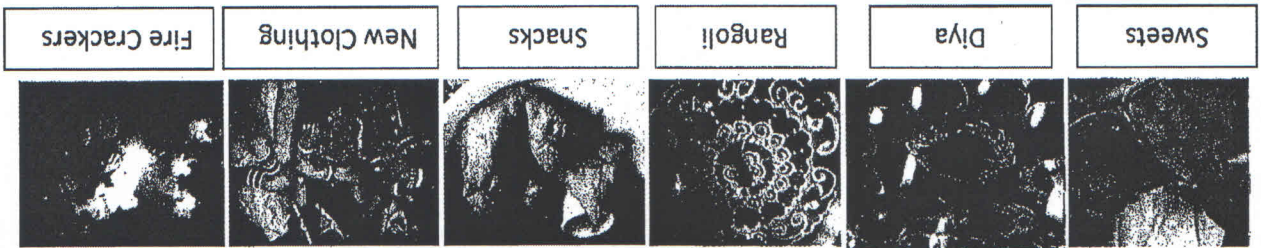


Ram, Sita and Laxman went to forest for fourteen years to keep the promise, given by his father to his mother Kaikeyie. While they were in exile one day, Ravan the Demon king of Lanka abducted Sita by being in disguise of a saint and took her to Lanka and kept her in Ashokvan. Ram sent Hanuman in search of Sita. Hanuman was able to locate Sita in Lanka. He went back and gave this good news to Shri Ram. All the monkeys with the help of Shri Ram built a bridge of stone on the ocean between India and Lanka and fought with Rawan for nine days and on tenth day killed Rawan. so we celebrate Navaratri. On 10<sup>th</sup> day we celebrate Dashera or Vijaydashmi as Ram (good) got victory over Ravan (evil). This teaches us that we also need to remove evil from our heart, action and thoughts and get victory over it give promise to ourselves to think good, speak good and act good.

According to our scriptures, we are supposed to do Sandhya in the morning, afternoon and in the evening. What is Sandhya?

Sandhya is a sandhi kal, transition like dawn and dusk. Usually the divine powers are flowing in the air all the time but during this transition time it is maximum. So our seer sages made a rule that we have to atleast light a lamp at this time to take advantage of this energy. Same way when the transition of seasons happen, the sandhikal is usually of 9 days which is known as Navratri. Just like the daily sandhyakal, during the 9 days also the divine powers are maximum in the atmosphere. There are 6 small changes in the seasons through out the year but the biggest ones are, Ashwin (summer to fall) and Chaitra (winter to spring). So these days are considered very auspicious. Now everything has a particular time to ripen, e.g. Milk takes particular time to boil, our food gets digested in particular time the same way Gayatri Sadhana has a particular time also which is called Gayatri Anusthan. In a regular Gayatri anusthan you have to do 1.25 lakhs Gayatri Jap in 40 days with particular disciplines. Since these 9 days are considered so auspicious, you can have the same benefits of anusthan by doing a laghu anusthan (24000 Jap in 9 days with proper disciplines) during this time.





Diwali, or Deepavali, is a Hindu festival celebrated worldwide by Indians. Diwali is also known as the "Festival of Lights". *Diyas* and clay lamps are lit to remove the darkness. Diya or light is a symbol of divine knowledge that removes our ignorance and all negative qualities like anger, jealousy, greed, fear, suffering and violence. In other words, Diwali is a celebration of victory of good over evil.

As per Hindu tradition, Diwali is celebrated with grand splendor, welcoming the New Year. For Diwali celebration...

...sweet and savory snacks are prepared.

...every home is lit with diyas to remove darkness.

...every doorstep is decorated with Rangoli to welcome guests with great honor.

...Wear new clothing to thank Goddess Lakshmi for providing prosperity

and good fortune.

...when the sun sets, firecrackers light up the streets.

It is on Diwali that every face is adorned with a smile.

There are several legends about the origin of Diwali. One goes back to the Hindu Epic of the Ramayana.

Over a thousand years ago, there was a kind, humble and much beloved Prince named Rama who was soon to be named King. Instead, his jealous stepmother found a way to have Rama banished to the forest for 14 years. His wife, Sita, and brother, Lakshman, went with him because they did not want to leave his side. One day, a demon king named Ravana saw Sita and fell in love with her beauty. He hatched a plan and eventually kidnapped her. Rama went in pursuit of Ravana and fought a great war to win his beloved Sita back. After their reunion and completing their 14 year exile, Rama, Sita and Lakshman returned home to Ayodhya where the people rejoiced and lit lamps all over the kingdom to welcome them back. Shortly after, Rama was crowned King of Ayodhya. -By Courtesy of HAF.