

Navarātri and Vijaya Daśami

Both Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī and Pūjya Swāmī Krishṇānandajī used to say that every verse of the Devī Māhātmyam is a *mantra*, full of teaching and symbolism for our spiritual life. That, of course, is also true of the entire period of Navarātri and Vijaya Daśami that we have just completed.

There is one central lesson that even the arrangement on the altar during this period teaches us. For the first three days, when we worship Mahākālī, the pictures of Mahālakṣmi and Mahāsarasvatī are not there. It symbolizes that when we are fighting the *tamas*, the *mala*, we have no idea of the problems of our mind and its tossing. We have no idea that there is a piercing of the veil. It is only when we have cleared up a certain amount of the *mala*, when certain victories have been won, that Mahālakṣmi and then Mahāsarasvatī come into the picture.

Even though the central three days are the worship of Mahālakṣmi and the battle against the tossing of our minds, the picture of Mahākālī is still very much there. Because although we have reached a point of evolution where we now fighting the tossing of our mind instead of concentrating on anger, lust and greed, that *mala* is still there; we still need to appeal to Mahākālī. And so it is with the three day worship of Mahāsarasvatī. We see in the Devī Māhātmyam how Devi had to produce Mahākālī out of Her own body to help in the battle against the armies of the final two *asuras*, Śumbha and Niśumbha.

This is a reminder to us that no matter how much we know, how steady our mind, how much we have advanced, we must always be aware that there is still *mala* hidden within. If, for example, Lord Buddha on the very edge of illumination could be tempted, if Jesus just before the climax of His life could be tempted, then, as Pūjya Swāmījī used to say, “If it can happen to great ones like them, then what about you and I?” Therefore, we should always remember the symbolism of the three goddesses on the altar—that we need all of them at all times.

Even on the day of victory they were not removed, because the day of victory is really a day of renewal. It happens when we have passed the barrier of *sattva*, when we have determined not to rest in the comfort and happiness of *sattva*; and we have seen what the goal really is, which

includes the destruction of all three *guṇa-s*—*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. Vijaya Daśami, the day of victory, is really the beginning of the final battle. All three images are left on the altar to support us. We gather together everything positive about the spiritual life that we know, every weapon we have, every scripture, our *mantra*. Everything we have ever learned about the spiritual life is brought together in the day of victory, which is really a day of recommitment.

It reminds us that we must take into this coming year every spiritual asset we have. Nothing should be left out. We must be prepared for anything. Otherwise, as has happened to so many others, just as we may seem to be approaching victory, we can have a terrible fall. Therefore Vijay Dasami is a victory in the sense that we see the final goal, but it is also, above all, a day of renewal and a day for humility.