

**Hindu Temple and Cultural Society of USA Inc.**  
**Sri Venkateswara Temple (Balaji Mandir) and Community Center**  
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### Devi Navaratri:

Navaratri literally means 'nine nights'. This nine day period (Prathama to Navami) of the first half of Aswayuja/Purattasi (Sep-Oct) month is considered a very important time of the Hindu calendar. During Navaratri, the three manifestations of the Goddess in the form of Lakshmi, Sarasvati, and Durga are worshiped for three days in sequence. All these three manifestations represent the three Cosmic aspects – namely, the sustenance, creation and dissolution. This festival is celebrated in various styles in different parts of India. In Bengal, this is referred to as Durga Puja. It is also known as Dassera in some parts of India. However, all of them worship Devi (Shakti) in different ways. The daily activities of this celebration range from a special group dance (garba) to golu (display of dolls) festival or processions of the Deity of Devi. This festival merges the cultural heritage with the religious worship.

Nine different manifestations of Devi are worshipped during this festival. These are: Durga; Bhadrakali; Amba; Annapurna; Sarvamangala; Bhairavi; Chandi; Lalitha; and Bhavani. The tenth day is celebrated as Vijaya Dasami - victory day. Devi fought nine days to destroy evil elements from earth. The victory of Sri Rama over Ravana is also celebrated as “ Ram Leela” during this period. During the Navaratri period devotees observe special fasting and chant Devi stothrams every day. Friends make house visits to pray and enjoy different Golu displays. It is also a tradition to sing devotional songs in front of Golu.

In our Temple, different alankarams (decoration of God/Goddess) are made for Shakti Devi during Navaratri celebrations. The alankarams include: Bala Tripurasundari; Kanaka Mahalakshmi; Parvati Sivapuja; Kasi Visalakshi; Maha Kali; Saraswati; Sri Kanaka Durga; Mahishasura Mardini; and Sri Raja Rajeswari. Daily prayers during this period include Lalita sahasranama (chanting of 1000 names of Devi) puja, Chandi (saptasati) parayanam, veda parayanam and Kalasa aradhana. A special Chandi Homam is also performed in our Temple as part of Navaratri celebrations. As shakti is associated with Devi, who is worshipped a lot during Navaratri, women participate more in these celebrations. During Navaratri, a Beautiful Golu is also on Display in our Temple.

May The Blessings of Lord Sri Venkateswara and Sri Mahalakshmi be with you and your family.

HTCS