

CHAMPA SASHTI NAVARATHRI

This falls on Margasirsha suddha sashti, the sixty day of the bright half of Margasirsha month. This festival though not common all over India, is celebrated in Maharashtra. In Jejuri (Maharashtra), where there is a temple dedicated to Lord Khandoba, this utsav is celebrated with great éclat.

Pooja procedure : This is a six day festival ending on the Champa sashti. The first five days pooja is performed and fast is observed and on the sixth day fast is broken and feast is arranged. During the six days Akhanda deepa is kept lighted. There is a tradition to eat those items of food which were prohibited during the month of Chaturmasya on Champa sashti Navarathri.

Story of Champa sashti Navarathri

Champa sashti navarathri is a festival dedicated to Khandoba, the presiding deity in JEJURI at Maharashtra. Khandoba and his Consort, Mhalsa are Swayambhu lingas in Jejuri temple. In the Garbha Griha there are several pairs of Khandoba Mhalsa images. Khandoba is represented with a sword, Trishul, a damaru and a bowl, while Mhalsa is seen holding a lotus in the hand. One of these images is supposed to have been gifted by Chhatrapathi Shivaji Maharaj.

Various festivals celebrated in this place are extremely colourful. Every year, festivals are conducted during the months of Chaitra, Shravana, Pushya and Margasirsha. The Margasirsha festival has some peculiarities. It is known as 'CHAMPA SASHTI NAVARATHRI' although, the festival is celebrated for six days only. Commencing on Margasirsha shukla pratipada and concluding only on the sixth day, "Champa sashti".



On the evening of the fifth day, a huge "HUNDA" (a brass vessel) is taken out in procession from the temple, with the accompaniment of music. It is taken through the various parts of the town and oil is collected, which is poured on the image on the fifth day end. Certain families known as "MARAkaris" occupy a special position. The Hunda procession, specially stops at the doorstep of every Marakari household. On the third call of the drum, the head Marakari comes out and pours his store of oil. At the end, a decorated stick is placed in the Hunda to signify the end of the collection of oil. The Hunda is carried back to the temple and all the oil is poured on the image of the deity as abhisheka.

The next day (Champa Shashti) is the sixth day. Every family offers special neivedya consisting of milk, curd and banana fruits and with this the festival concludes.

The Marathi School and the Maharashtra Association Building Trust, Chennai.