

VIJAYADASAMI (DASARA)

Vijaya Dasami is considered to be a very auspicious day. It is celebrated with joy and enthusiasm for ten consecutive days. The first nine days are spent in elaborate worship of Goddess Durga and these nine nights came to be called "Navarathri". This festival falls in the month of Aswin. The tenth day is Dussehra (Vijayadasami) in honour of Goddess Durga who is the presiding deity of Navarathri. It is customary to begin any new venture on this day. It is on this day, after performing Saraswathi Pooja. Vidhyabhyas for young children is undertaken. Most elementary educational institutions are kept open on this day and admissions to kindergarten classes go on briskly.

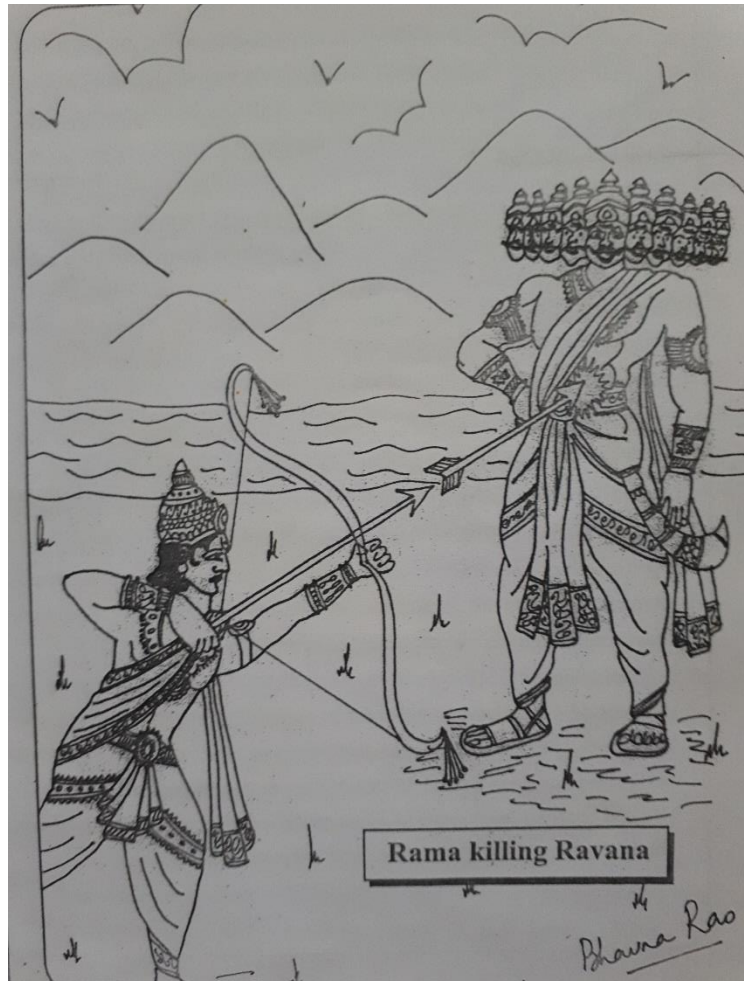
Pooja procedure : During the ten days, Goddess Durga is worshipped in one of her various forms, Chamundi, Mahishasuramardhini, Kali, Bhavani and in some regions, all the three primary deities, Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi worshipped each for three days of Navarathri.

Story of Vijayadasami

Mahishasura, the demon king, became all powerful, by defeating all the Gods, seizing their weapons and declaring himself Indra of the three worlds. To kill this all powerful demon, all the Gods in heaven decided to create an all powerful Goddess. A dazzling lightning emerged from the mouth of the Trinities which turned into a beautiful, at the same time all powerful woman with ten hands. All the Gods gave their special weapons to her. She emerged as Durga, a symbol of shakthi (power) and the eternal mother. Single handed she fought with Mahishasura and killed him. The Gods were overjoyed and praised her in "Devistuthi". There is a temple dedicated to her on Chamundi hills near Mysore where she is known as Chamundi.

There are two versions of the origin of Durga worship. They are :

1. As per our epic, Mahabharatha, the Pandavas, after wandering in exile for twelve years hung their weapons on a shami tree before entering the



court of King Virata to spend the last one year (thirteenth) incognito. After completion of this year, on Vijayadasami, they brought back their weapons from the Shami tree and declared their identity. Vijayadasami thus became a symbolic day of victory.

2. It is believed that Lord Rama performed 'Chandi pooja' invoking the blessings of Durga Devi to kill the ten headed Ravana, the King of Lanka. Goddess Durga divulged to Rama the secret of how to kill Ravana. After vanquishing Ravana in battle, Rama returned to Ayodhya along with his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana to a celemonial welcome on Vijayadasami day. This is celebrated as Ramlila in the northern part of India.

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