

## **SRI NAVA CHANDI MAHA HOMAM** **Greatness & Significance**

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“KALOW CHANDI VINAYAKOV”

It is said that in the Kali Yuga, worshipping Goddess Chandi and Vinayaka are of great importance. Goddess Chandi is the most powerful Universal Mother. She is the combination of Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswathy. Like the god Rudra, she has two forms. In Her fierce form, she destroys the evil demons, whereas in Her resplendent and benevolent form she is most compassionate. Mother Rajamathangi, who has a special place in our temple, is a form of Sri Chandi. It is interesting to note that Rajamathangi herself assumes different forms at different times of daily puja – MahaShodasi and Bala at dawn and early morning, Bhuvana and Gowri in mid-morning, Shyamala at noon, Mathangi in evening and Panchadashi and Shodashi at night.

Among the sacred texts that laud the glory of the Mother, Devi Mahatmyam is considered extremely auspicious and powerful. Devi Mahatmyam, or the Glory of the Goddess, describes the victory of the Chandi over the asuras Madhu-Kaitabha, Mahishasura and Shumbha-Nishumbha. It comprises of 700 mantras and hence is called Saptashati. Though the Devi Mahatmyam consisting of 13 chapters is part of Markandeya Purana, it is not merely treated as a purana, but is considered a full-fledged scripture by itself. The place where the slokas are recited becomes flooded with waves of vibration, purifying the entire place, and invoking the presence of the Supreme Devi.

The greatness of the Devi Mahatmyam is extensively explained in several ancient texts. The Devi Mahatmyam has the ability to grant the fruits according to the upasana (worship). At one level, the Devi Mahatmyam chronicles the battle between the Devi and the asuras. At another level it deals with the battle of life. At yet another level it deals with the inner battle between the divine and the demoniac forces within the human psyche. The battlegrounds represent our own human consciousness, and its events symbolize our own experiences. The demons are symbolic of the psychic forces within the shadow. The Divine Mother is our own true being, our inherent divinity and wholeness. Her clashes with the demons symbolize the outward and inward struggles we face daily. The Devi, personified simultaneously as the one supreme Goddess and also the many goddesses, confronts the demons of ahamkara or ego (our mistaken notion of who we are or what we identify ourselves with), of excessive tamas and rajas, that in turn give birth to other demons of excessive craving, greed, anger and pride. In the ultimate sense the dichotomy between the bad and the good is also a false one. There is no duality. Both are part of one single paradoxical reality. Devi Mahatmyam drives home this truth so beautifully.

We may not realize this, but many of the well-known slokas such as the ones below, appear in Devi Mahatmyam:

Sarva Mangala Mangalye, Shive Sarvartha Saadhike  
Sharnye Tryambake Gowri, Narayani Namostute

Ya Devi Sarva Bhutheshu Mathru Rupena Samsthitha,  
Namasthasye Namasthasye, Namasthasye Namaha

The Nava Chandi Maha Homam is a very elaborate puja that includes many rituals requiring priests with special skills and knowledge. With our own highly knowledgeable priests as well as a few visiting priests, we are proud to conduct this great puja and homam. The highlight of the event is the recital of the 700 mantras from the 13 chapters of Devi Mahatmyam (Saptashati Parayanam) and the Homam. Other important pujas included in the program are Kalasa Puja, Vilakku Puja, Lalitha Saharanama Archana, Bhairavar Puja, Kanyaka Puja and Sumangali Puja by Dhampathis.

An event of such greatness, divinity and magnificence does not happen very often. In fact, we are very fortunate that we are conducting the Nava Chandi Maha Homam at our Sri Meenakshi Temple, after nearly 15 years. This is a great opportunity for the Houston area devotees, as well as those from outside to participate and receive the blessings of the Supreme Mother. All monetary contributions will benefit the Kalayana Mandapam Renovation project which is dedicated to Saraswathy Devi, one of the prime aspects of mother Chandi, the Goddess of learning, knowledge, arts and music.