

## **Sharad Navaratri Celebrations – a report**

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of October, Pujya Acharya Sri Prem Siddharth arrived at India from his trip to China, Hongkong and Thailand, where he blessed the devotees of Shenzhen by celebrating Vinayaka Chaturthi and delivering lectures, and paid homage to the Buddhist monks by visiting ancient Buddhist monasteries and temples. After resting for a day, Pujya Acharya commenced the Devi Navaratri celebrations on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October.

Every evening, under the guidance of Pujya Gurudev, devotees begin the celebrations by performing Ganapati puja accompanied by the chanting of Ganapati Atharvasirsha Upanishad and other Vedic hymns praising the glory of Lord Vinayaka and Haarathi is offered to Lord Ganesha while the devotees seek his blessings for the successful completion of the Devi Puja. This is followed by the Shodasa Upachara Puja of Durga Devi. The resplendent Idol of Simha Vahini is adorned with various flowers and Abhishekam is performed while the atmosphere vibrates with the joyous chanting of Upanishad mantras, Sri Suktham, Durga Suktham, Devi Khadgamala and Durga Ashtottharam. As a part of the Puja, Mahanaivedyam is offered to the Goddess followed by Haarathi.



As Pujya Acharya instructs, though Jnana is the only path to attain Moksham, it is through Guru-seva and ritualistic Saguna Brahma Puja that the Sadhaka attains the qualification for pursuing this Atma Bodha and understand the essence of the teaching. With the absence of Bhakti in the heart of the Sadhaka, the pursuit becomes academic in nature and the seeker might understand and argue on Logic but would not abide in the Self. He would "Know about Brahman" but not The Brahman.

Satvika Puja enhances the understanding of Vedanta Bodha because it brings the mind nearer to God and blesses the seeker with Sadhana Chatusthaya Sampada, and the desire to know the true nature of Jeeva, Jagat and Ishwara strengthens. Thus occasions such as Sharad Navaratri should be used to soak the mind with the glory of the Shakti swaroopini and realize the Paramarthika Satyam that her true nature is the Brahman.



As a part of the Durga Puja celebrations, from the third day of the Navaratri (10<sup>th</sup> of October), Pujya Acharya commenced the lectures on "Upanishad Parichayam".

For any scriptural study, the sound understanding of Anubandha Chatustayam (Adhikari, Vishayam, Sambandham and Prayojanam) is very essential. Without this, one can never succeed in the pursuit of Brahma Vidya. Scripture explains these four aspects as Adhikaari – the person with the qualifications essential for the study of the scripture, Vishayam – the subject that the scripture deals with, Sambandham – the relation between the scripture and the subject and Prayojanam – the objective of scriptural study. In this series of lectures, Pujya Acharya will explain in brevity the the 10 Upanishads (Isa, Kena, Katha, Prasna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Taittereya, Aitreya, Chandogya and Brihadaranyaka) as a preliminary introduction that will enable a deeper study of the Upanishads at a later stage.

Along with the divine blessings of Pujya Acharya, the devotees partake of the Devi Prasadam bringing an end to the celebrations of the evening.

*Harih Om...*