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Twice in a year the religious custom of India observes a unique festive worship in the name of the great Mother of the universe, these two occasions being called the Vasanta Navaratri and the Sharada Navaratri festivals. These seasonal changes in spring and autumn are generally periods when the body of the living being cannot easily adjust and accommodate itself with the changes of nature. People often fall ill during spring and autumn, one of the reasons for this phenomenon being the inability of the physical organism to adapt itself to the conditions of natural seasonal changes. The great Bestower of bounty and the benefactor of all, the protective power of creation, is invoked as a remédier and a panacea for the ills of life, during these occasions especially.

These two periods of the year also happen to be an occasion of harvesting throughout India. In spring,
there is one kind of harvest, and in autumn, there is another kind. It is a symbol of Dhanya Lakshmi, the Divinity of prosperity, abundance, wealth and cattle, health and long life, and everything that we can consider as life’s magnificence. This is a natural and well-known reason behind the worship of the great Divine Power which is envisaged in religious devotion as something which is inseparably related to the protective forces that sustain all living beings.

It is very interesting to bestow some thought here on the very careful analysis which the ancients have made in this regard when they prescribed this worship of the Mother of all things as the sustainer, the protector, the guardian and the caretaker of everyone. There is something very specific about divine protection as distinguished from the security that we expect in human society and are accustomed to in our day-to-day life. The type of security and protection that we expect in this world of human beings is based on the humanly conceived notion of what is good and necessary for the welfare of all people. But God cannot be equated with human notions of any kind, and the human notion of welfare and good need not necessarily be the same as the divine vision of what is good and what is true well-being. Therefore, the insight of the
ancient masters visualised the great power of divine protection as a threefold activity, designated in religious parlance as Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati.

This is something very pertinent and appropriate when our worship has to be an inward attempt of our deepest recesses to be in communion with the ultimate Truth of all things. Our vision of life, the human concept of well-being, as I mentioned, need not necessarily be in harmony with the divine view of all things. Divine justice, impeccable and utterly impartial though it be, may not be appreciable to the whimsical notions of man in regard to his well-being and satisfaction. So in our worship, which is, of course, a worship of that which is truly there as the ultimate fact of existence, the ultimate in us has to be roused into action, and not merely our sentiments and social notions of welfare and security—because human beings have, very unfortunately, been shackled to the conditions of the human species, while the human species is only one of the species we can count in the vast creation of God.

We are told in our scriptures that there are perhaps eighty-four lakhs of species of living beings, out of which the human should be considered as one. But the human being regards himself as the
only valuable species and the only worthwhile living creature on Earth, as if other living beings do not exist at all and their welfare need not be taken into consideration. This is not the right vision of things.

Human justice is sometimes limited to mere national justice. It may not even extend itself beyond a particular geographical limitation which one calls one’s own country. Sometimes, with great effort, it tries to extend itself to the region of all mankind, but that is done with tremendous effort and not in a voluntary and spontaneous fashion. Even if this be considered as a possible success that the human mind can achieve—that is, the extension of its consideration to the whole of humanity—that would not be equal to divine vision because God creates, sustains and transforms.

The creation of the world is a threefold process taking place at the same time. Something originates, something is maintained in a particular position, and it gets transmuted into a condition which is the purpose of this very process. The universe is not a static, stale existence. It is a movement towards God. The universe is the path which living beings tread in the direction of the achievement of their union with the Maker of all things. The universe is a movement; it is a process, which, naturally, is not stasis, and
it is not merely dynamis. It is not mere activity or motion; it is not mere position in a particular spot of space. It is a balancing of these two processes, stasis and dynamis. In scientific parlance there is no concept of this balancing of stasis and dynamis. We have the science of kinetics, and the science of the fixity of things, called stasis, but these two terms correspond merely to what are generally known as *rajas* and *tamas*.

There is another thing, called *sattva*, which balances all things. We maintain a position as identical individuals in our own personalities, notwithstanding the fact that we are continuous rivers that flow. We maintain ourselves in an apparent position, while we are a moving process. We have grown from an embryo to this adult condition of our mature bodily existence by a process of utter transformation and a perpetual rejuvenation, a coming and going of living cells in the body. The origination, the maintenance, and the destruction of many living organisms have gone to constitute this bodily personality of ours.

There is, therefore, a stasis and a dynamis. There is an activity perpetually going on in our psychophysical organism, which is the reason behind the growth of the personality, but it is not
a growth with the cutting off of the parts of the process called growth. There is a fixity and a stasis that is maintained. We may live and stay in one place continuously with a consciousness of self-identity, though we have been moving within ourselves in our organismic processional growth right from babyhood to this present condition of ours.

Thus, there is both activity and fixity, but there is also an awareness of this process. It is not merely mechanical action that is taking place in the universe. We are sometimes told, in the language of classical science, that the world is like a huge machine, and it works systematically, like a computer or a kind of arrangement of parts, which are modelled or patterned in such a way that the pattern of the arrangement of the machine’s parts can decide the nature of its activity and also the output of its operation.

Though, in its visible form, the world appears to work like a machine, and there is a connection of the past with the future through the present, there is a transcendent element in the world. It is non-mechanistic, finally. From the point of view of biological studies, our body may be determined by the laws of biology; thus, we may say our body is a machine and it is mechanistic. Also, from the
point of view of one type of psychological study, our mental activity also can be considered to be mechanistic in its operation. Nevertheless, we are none of us a machine. There is an element in us which surpasses the mechanical activity of the body as well as of the mind.

This description of the internal processes of the human individual mentioned in these few words also applies to the cosmical process, where there is the coming, the maintenance and the destruction of all things; and God is the superintending principle directing this process, for a purpose which is He Himself. There is a terror in this world. It is not all beauty. That is Durga, a relentless direction for action for the fulfilment of the only purpose that can be justified in the world, and any other purpose is to be subsumed under this final purpose.

This necessary action, which the power of God takes for the purpose of the fulfilment of the only aim of things, is the inexorable law operating in the world. It is relentless, and allows no exception in any way; therefore, it is a terror to the ego-bound human individual. There is a fear whenever a change takes place. There is a tendency in the human mind to resist every kind of change, to endeavour to maintain the status quo, whether or not it is going
to be towards the progress of the very same body in the future. But the law which inexorably operates in this manner has only one viewpoint before it, which is nothing but the justice of the cosmos. So like the sword of Kalki, which is said to come sometime in the future, the weapons of Durga operate like the knives of the surgeon and the medicaments of the physician.

These activities of the transforming power are not specially intended to look to the welfare of any particular individual or group of people in some corner of the world, to the exclusion of others. It is an impartial tendency to the prosperity of all: sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ (B.G. 5.25). Therefore, sometimes it is said that Lakshmi is fickle; she never stays in one place. Wealth moves from one possessor to another possessor. People generally say that nobody keeps Lakshmi, or wealth, under one’s control perpetually or perennially, for eternity, and there is perhaps some truth in it. No one can possess all prosperity, inasmuch as the thing called prosperity belongs to no individual person. It is a general well-being of all things which appears to shift from individual to individual on account of the subjection of individuals to the process of transformation and change during evolution. Lakshmi is really not fickle, but appears to
be moving from location to location on account of the human individual’s involvement in the process of evolution.

*Tamas* and *rajas*, fixity and action, are balanced by *sattva*, which is not actually one of the properties, as we are often told. It is a transcendent property. It balances the action and the operation of both *tamas* and *rajas*. Hence, it is inclusive of whatever is worthwhile and meaningful in the activities of *tamas* and *rajas*. The story of Saraswati in the Devi Mahatmya is, therefore, a transcendent description inclusive of all that is glorious and magnificent in the narrations concerning Durga and Lakshmi. So in our worships during the period of Navaratri, we worship the true God, and the untrue gods leave us one day or the other.

The selfishness of man is so very inveterate in its possessiveness and attitude of controlling all things for one’s own self that it permits not an equal welfare of other people also. There is a secret urge in every individual to have everything for one’s own self, and there is a secret impulse in every individual to be the ruler of the whole world, which means to say, to subject everybody else to oneself. This tendency is not going to be finally sanctioned by the law of nature because no one can be subjected
to another, inasmuch as everyone is subjected to a central operation. There is a mutual cooperative action among individuals. In that sense of mutual servicefulness and charitableness of feeling and action we may be subservient to one another, but we are not possessors of one another. No one is a belonging of somebody else. Hence, this attitude is not permitted by Durga. She will destroy its very root.

But the great prosperity that will be awaiting us one day or the other is Moksha-Samrajya-Lakshmi, the prosperity of liberation from bondage. To have the capacity to subject everyone else to one’s own self as an emperor of the world cannot be considered as liberation from bondage, because a king is a bound soul in the sense that he is bound to the necessity to keep others under his subjection. Individually, he is like anybody else. The subjection of the people whom he is said to rule is the power that he wields, so naturally he cannot be a real power.

In the divine sense at least, prosperity, Lakshmi, is not mere mortal gold and silver, though God is not in dearth of even gold and silver. Everything is abundant there. Even that will be showered upon us, as Bhagavan Sri Krishna showered it upon Sudama, and we have instances of that kind galore.
God can rain down gold and silver upon us if He feels the need for it and has the will to do that. He can shower upon us anything that we need, but our needs are paltry. They are a child’s desires, and the wise parent, who is the Almighty, knows very well the futility of our askings. Therefore, the power of sustenance, which is the real caretaker, comes into action and puts an end not only to our possessions but even to the body itself. Death takes place. Thus, the action of Durga is a complete transformation of not only what we seem to possess as our belongings, but even of ourselves as false individualities in this world of interrelationship and a mutual fraternity of a kingdom of ends.

There was a great insight indeed in this institution of worships by the ancient masters, who created occasions at different periods of the year when we will be in a position to search our own hearts, to be true to our own selves, and thus be able to be true to others also. When we are true to ourselves—really true to our own deepest self—we shall be able to be true to other people in a similar spirit. Then we shall be true to the Almighty God because God is the sustaining link between ourselves and everybody else. The world outside and the seer of the world—you yourself and myself, the seer
and the seen—are brought together by the universal linkage of God-existence. Therefore, he who is true to himself can also be true to others and, at the same time, be true to Almighty God.

Therefore, in these worships we search our hearts, and bring our roots to the surface of our consciousness. We begin to see ourselves face to face as if in a mirror, and root out any hypocritical tendency that may be within us because Durga shall see them and destroy them for the sake of the coming in of Lakshmi, the prosperity which is true and sustaining, which can be possible only on illumination, which is equated with the coming of Saraswati, the goddess of learning—learning not in an academic or bookish sense, but in the sense of true wisdom and insight into the Truth of all things.

Also, we are accustomed to read a great meaning into this drama of the nine days of worship as an endeavour of the soul of man to overcome his bondage as involved in the processes, or *gunas* of *prakriti*—*tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*. We fight, as it were, in this arduous sadhana which the whole of life is, and disentangle the soul from its involvement in the coming and going of things, *samsara chakra*, which is the process of birth and death, transmigration or metempsychosis. Whoever is involved in these
gunas of prakriti shall have to come and go, and it cannot be avoided.

But the sadhana of the true spirit that is within us, the deepest soul that is in us, is and has to be a piercing endeavour to break through the fortress of gold, silver and iron—the Tripuras, as it is sometimes known in the Puranas, which were shot through with a single arrow by Rudra, Siva, who is known as Tripura Samhari. Many a name is given to this kind of involvement: avidya, kama, karma, granthi, tamas, rajas and sattva. We may call it the gold fort, the silver fort and the iron fort of the Tripuras, or Brahma-granthi, Vishnu-granthi and Rudra-granthi, or by any name. There seems to be a threefold involvement, which philosophers call the entanglement of the soul in prakriti—purusha involved in prakriti. This is shot through by the arrow of Rudra, and Rudra did not act singly. Brahma and Vishnu also combined with him in this action. We can read the story in the Siva Purana, and also in the Mahabharata, of how the Tripura Samhara took place, how Brahma, Vishnu and Siva jointly broke through the threefold fortress of the Tripuras, and there was the rejoicing of the gods. The gods regained their position, which means to say, the gods in our senses enter the Virat instead of getting
locked up in our physical bodies, and liberation is attained. That is the success, the victory, the *vijaya* which is the tenth day, called Vijayadasami. *Dasami* is ‘the tenth day’, and *vijaya* is ‘victory’; therefore, it is the day of victory of the seeking spirit.

Many other connections are brought about in our narrations of the nine days’ worship and the tenth day’s Vijayadasami as having been the saga of the Ramayana, the destruction of Ravana by Rama, and many other things we read in the Puranas, all which finally focus upon a single truth and purpose, namely, the ardent march of the soul of man to the realisation of Godhead.

The Tantra Shastra is an elaborate description of these processes through which the soul has to pass in the practice of sadhana, whereby the creation of God is recognised as a part of God only, not something outside God. God could not have made this world out of material external to Himself. “Where is the wood and the timber, where is the iron and the cement with which God could have manufactured this great cosmos?” says one Sukta in the Veda. There was no material. God had no cement factory to manufacture huge structures. Therefore, the creation which we call this universe could not have been outside the body of God Himself.
Sometimes religions say that God Himself appears as this world because nothing else can appear as the world, inasmuch as outside God nothing can be. Sometimes it is said that God created the world out of nothing. The biblical story of Genesis perhaps makes out that God did not transform Himself into this world, nor was there a material. “Let there be light,” God declared, and there was light. But from where did it come? It came from nowhere. So the world is nothing, finally. It is a kind of hollow balloon. The substance of the world is zero. This is one interpretation of mortal existence. Basically it is a hollowness. Everything in the world is tinsel, a meaningless substance. The world is a vale of sorrow. It is a tragedy finally, where everyone weeps and goes. This is one way of looking at things.

But the other way around is, it is God resplendent, splashing Himself forth as this Viratsvarupa, and the radiance of the Almighty is seen with our own physical eyes in the form of these substances that stand before us as mountains and trees, and the sun, the moon and the stars.

Therefore, the sadhana of the soul, according to the Tantra Shastra particularly, is that there is nothing to reject in this world, inasmuch as God could not have created anything which is undivine.
If He created anything undivine, there must be something other than God, which cannot be. Therefore, the world is divine. It is the power of God; it is Shakti. Therefore, Shakta, the owner of Shakti, is reached only through Shakti. The Almighty, the Creator, is reached through the creation. Narayana is reached only through Lakshmi, Siva can be seen only through Parvati, and the great God of the universe, the Creator, the Protector, the Sustainer, is capable of communion and encounter only through His creation. Nature evolves through a graduated step-by-step process, and the meticulous calculation of the details of these steps or processes of graduated ascent is the beauty of the Tantra Sadhana. It is not a sudden jump to the skies.

All these ideas I have placed before you in honour of this glorious occasion of Durga Puja, Lakshmi Puja and Saraswati Puja, which is a vast religious field of contemplation for us. The more you think about it, the more glorious will it appear before you. Thus be our humble adoration to Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati. God bless you all! Om Namo Narayanaya.
VIJAYADASAMI MESSAGE

With the conclusion, the purnavati of the glorious worship of the Universal Mother of things, Adi Shakti, the Supreme Power of the Absolute—Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati—we, humble followers of Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, on the bank of holy Ganga, at this auspicious moment, seek to surrender our spirits at the altar of God the Almighty for universal welfare, for the salvation of all beings, for the solidarity of humanity, for the peace, health and fulfilment of the life of everyone in this world. May the Divine Grace be upon everyone, is our humble prayer at this sacred moment.

On holy Sri Vijayadasami, a very auspicious day, the time has come for not only people like us here in the Ashram, but for people in general everywhere to assess their own situations—to recognise where they actually stand in this world, and cast a retrospective outlook on their past, analyse with a probing analysis the present, and be aware of the future also, at the
same time. This is a part of the wisdom of man to assess the value of life, connecting it with the past, relating it to the present, and apprehending the future at the same time, in a correlative synthesis.

It is now the moment when mankind has to wake from its deep slumber of complacency. All the kings and emperors were in a state of complacency, imagining that everything is milk and honey in the world. It was all a bed of roses and velvet, and they had nothing to fear. This is what Napoleon thought, and what all persons of that stature thought. By ‘Napoleon’, I mean everyone who was self-sufficient, self-complacent, and imagined everything is self-complete.

Nothing in this world that is finite can be self-complete. “There’s a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will” (Hamlet 5.2). So is the truth slowly descending on our heads today like a Damocles sword, and not permitting us to sleep anymore, since we are rudely being shaken by the transitions of time and the consequent effects that are being produced by these transitions of the movement of history in the form of the time process.

That God exists is a great solace to everyone, and nothing can be a greater solace to us than that our Father exists, Who has the strength to take care
of us. Nothing can make us more happy than this conviction that our Parent is alive and He has the power to take care of us under every circumstance, in every condition, at every moment of time. This gives us satisfaction, and this must give us satisfaction. But, at the same time, we must also be vigilant in the sense that we do not play a double role in our own selves in our recognition of the presence of this Almighty power immanent in the whole universe. Simultaneously with the recognition of the presence of the Almighty’s greatness, magnificence and glory, there is the little mischievous weakness of man, crawling like an insect and disturbing man’s glorious heritage in his capacity to accept the greatness of the Almighty. Man is mischievous, simultaneously with his greatness that he can invoke God’s presence. The mischief is in the mind of man, and nothing can be more mischievous than that.

Our devotion to God is hypocritical, and we must also accept that God must be aware of this state of our minds. I always remember the very humorous, touching and most illustrative example given by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa Deva. He gives an example by a very humorous story. Our devotion to God, says Sri Ramakrishna in a homely example, is like the sorrow of a woman whose
husband is dead, and who strikes her head down on the ground before all people, as if the whole world is cracking under her feet because she has lost the most beloved object, which is her husband; but simultaneously, she has the consciousness that the ornament in her nose should not be affected by the striking of her head on the ground. She is aware of this ornament in her nose because, if she strikes her head in too violent a manner, the ornament may be broken. So this is the love that she has got for the husband which goes together with this *nath*, as it is called, an ornament which women wear in the nose.

This is not a story, this is not an anecdote, this is not something at which we laugh, but something that explains every one of us. We are all in the position of this lady. We have a great love for our relations, and when we have lost them, we strike our heads down with great devotion, but we are conscious that we have a large bank balance, we are ministers, we are chief secretaries, we are presidents, and we have very dear values in this Earthly existence. We may have even a little tape recorder, which is enough to pull us down to this Earth. Why go to big things? There are small things—a walking stick, a *kamandal*, a transistor radio, a costly wristwatch—that will pull us down.
It requires a little bit of hard searching. Do we really want God? As Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to say, it is all a question of demand and supply. God’s constitution emphasises the principle of demand and supply. When there is a demand, a supply has to come. If there is no demand, how can there be a supply? Do we want the protection of God, or are we also strong? We feel that we also have a strength. We cannot deny this little bit of crochet, a kink in our heads that has crept into our hearts, which can explain our own disadvantages and our failures in life. Man does not want God. He may be a spiritual pundit, he may be a well-advertised mahatma with international yoga centres, but all these will not cut ice before the vigilant eye of God.

All this I am saying because today the Earth is shaking, as it were, with the burden of man’s ignorance, and I do not know when the Earth will descend to such an extent that an Avatara like Sri Krishna has to come. Such an Avatara descends when the Earth cannot bear this burden anymore and she cries before the great Lord. She bears the burden to a certain extent, like a donkey that carries the weight of bricks, but a time comes when it cannot bear this weight. It will crack. The donkey
will fall down with the weight of the bricks that have been put on its back too much, beyond its capacity.

Similarly, the Earth can bear the ignorance of man to some extent, and God can give us a long rope, but there is a limit for everything. Humankind today is attempting to demonstrate that the Earth should cry from the bottom of her heart and summon God’s force. I do not know whether it is essential for man to descend to such a level to bring about such a catastrophic situation in humanity by behaving like an animal or worse than an animal, with devastating feelings in our hearts, hatred gone to the core, and love totally absent in the vitals of human beings.

Are we interested in sinking our spirits to such a low level that the Earth should crack under our feet and God should descend with His wrath? I do not think that we should summon the wrath of God. When Sri Krishna comes, He comes with a double role: to establish the kingdom of God—*dharma-saṁsthāpanārthāya* (B.G. 4.8)—but God will also perform an operation like a physician, like a surgeon, and that aspect may not be a palatable and happy thing. While God plays a positive role of establishing the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven, He also plays the role of bringing into a subjection of
transformation everything that is contrary to the enlightening effect of this kingdom of God.

So my humble request at this moment before all the seekers, humble servants seated here in this sacred precinct of the Ashrama, is that each one of us has to find a little time to collect our spirits into a focus of concentration, which has to work a miracle in its own manner. Nobody can work a miracle so instantaneously as God Himself, and everybody who is united with God sincerely, honestly, from the bottom of one’s heart, can also work this miracle. So while, on the one hand, it appears as if we are in a terrible condition today in every field of existence, there is no need for despair because the strength of God is unthinkable, unimaginable, beyond space, beyond time, and instantaneous in action.

Thus, on the one hand, we have to be very vigilant about our own weaknesses and pitiable condition of existence; on the other hand, we must also be happy that some element of memory still remains in some people in this world. Dharma is not completely dead, and with this little memory of the glorious capacities and potentialities in man, we can invoke God’s presence. Thus is my humble prayer. May God triumph—*satyameva jayate*—and peace be to His creation.
DIPAVALI: WORSHIP OF MAHALAKSHMI, THE GLORY OF GOD

The worship of Mahalakshmi, which is the theme of all these celebrations on this blessed occasion known as Dipavali, is actually the form religion gives to the adoration of the glory of God. The face of God is beautiful. Inasmuch as no one has beheld the face of God, religious prescriptions give us representations of the various types of glory manifest in the world. The glory of God as such cannot be conceived, of course, as everyone knows, but that which gives satisfaction, that which looks attractive, that which is prosperity in its very nature, that which is magnificence and exuberance, that which is robust and grand in every manner—these features can be attributed only to the majesty of God.

Mortal, ephemeral things cannot have that beauty in them. Perishable objects have within them the sting of the perishable nature to which they are subject. Even when perishable objects
are born, their death is inscribed in large bold letters on their faces. Death follows birth—not as a sequence in time, but as a manifestation of the process beginning with birth itself. Hence, nothing in the world can be regarded as comparable with the majesty of God’s beauty.

But religion has applied every means to portray at least a modicum of this masterly majesty of God, which can be deciphered even in this world, because behind the wretchedness of apparently visible physical existence, there is a grandeur at the core, which has to be brought up to the surface of cognition and aesthetic appreciation. This is the function of religious worship and any kind of adoration that goes by the name of religious performance.

Mahalakshmi, who is adored on this auspicious occasion, is represented as the power and the glory of Bhagavan Sriman Narayana, the Supreme Being. As beaming, scintillating rays jet forth from the great glory of the orb of the sun, so the power of God, known as Shakti in religious parlance, manifests itself in this universe of creation that God appears to have made. Though there is a distortion in all things in this world, which passes understanding at every stage of our trying to grasp its meaning, there
is, nevertheless, as we have to accept, the presence of God Himself in what He has created. God has also to be immanent in order that the creation can be sustained. The world cannot be sustained even for a moment if God’s presence is not there.

That immanence of God’s glory is the beauty of things in the world, and to carry this perception of beauty to the highest point of religious exaltation would be to divinise this form of God and regard it as Brahma-shakti, Vishnu-shakti, Siva-shakti, and other such names—that is, the glory associated with every performance of God, generally known as creation, sustenance and transformation. The life-giving, sustaining power of God is said to be manifest in the religious worship, adoration and conception of Mahalakshmi—who is veritably, in Her essential nature, God manifest in the world in its purest form.

Prosperity is Mahalakshmi. She is sometimes also called Moksha-Samrajya-Lakshmi: the prosperity which is ultimate Liberation itself. The prosperity of Liberation is also often associated with Mahalakshmi, who is not to be confused with the power of wealth—gold and silver—as many people think. Mahalakshmi is the inner connotation of anything that we can regard as excellent.
We have a verse in the Bhagavadgita where the Lord proclaims His presence in anything which has excellence in it. *Yad yad vibhūtimat sattvaṁ śrīmad ūrjitam eva vā, tat tad evāvagaccha tvam mama tejom’śasambhavam* (B.G. 10.41): Wherever you see prosperity of any kind in its exalted form, there you may see God’s hand operating abundantly.

The worship of Mahalakshmi is not merely an external ritual act. It is not just garlanding and waving a holy light. Though it can be that also, there is much more about it. Our heart has to adore the glory of God. Where the heart is not present, the worship is also not there. The adoration of God in His aspect of beauty and magnificence is not a performance with our hands and feet, but is a deep recognition of our profundity of feeling, where we surrender the limitation of our own personality to the perfection which is God Almighty.

So, in a way, we worship God Himself when we worship Bhagavati Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati—principally Lakshmi on an occasion of this kind when we light up the atmosphere with a series of illuminating lamps. We call this beautiful occasion Dipavali—a line, a series of illuminations which represents the emergence of the goodness, brilliance and excellence we perceive in people, which is
also present everywhere in spite of the ugliness characteristic of human nature, generally speaking, in order to bring forth the beauty in human nature above the surface of its ugliness and distortion, and see beauty, glory, health, vigour, perfection, completeness and inexpressible satisfaction. Such an occasion of the rise of human nature from its deepest bottom—the soul rising in its majesty, we may say—is actually the act of worship of Mahalakshmi, who Herself is the exteriorised conceptualisation of the soul of God operating in things.

There are beautiful verses, *stotras* such as the Mahalakshmi Ashtaka, etc., which people recite every day to bring their minds to a focus of attention on all success in life. Success is not merely the material accumulation of physical comforts. It is, truly speaking, the adventure of the spirit within to expand its dimension towards its ultimate glory, which is direct perception of God in His supreme glory where Lakshmi is inseparable from Narayana, where God is one with His creation and His power. It is this deep significance that is behind this religious performance—which people generally, in an ignorant and innocent manner, observe with firecrackers, noises, gifts, cards and many other
things, making it merely a kind of outer show, a gesture. Rarely do they manifest this beauty that is within themselves, and rarely are they prepared to see the beauty present in the hearts of other people also.

Thus, to briefly say, this is the worship of the beauty present in all things and the prosperity that is at the core of all things, which gradually rises to the perfection of God-realisation. God bless you!
It is very interesting to bestow some thought here on the very careful analysis which the ancients have made in this regard when they prescribed this worship of the Mother of all things as the sustainer, the protector, the guardian and the caretaker of everyone. There is something very specific about divine protection as distinguished from the security that we expect in human society and are accustomed to in our day-to-day life. The type of security and protection that we expect in this world of human beings is based on the humanly conceived notion of what is good and necessary for the welfare of all people. But God cannot be equated with human notions of any kind, and the human notion of welfare and good need not necessarily be the same as the divine vision of what is good and what is true well-being. Therefore, the insight of the ancient masters visualised the great power of divine protection as a threefold activity, designated in religious parlance as Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati.