

# DEEP DIVE!!CULTURE!!!

## FAST RELIGIOUS VOWS

Upvaas (Religious Vows) this Sanskrit word is really made up of 2 elements 'Up' meaning near and 'Vaas' meaning staying or residing. This means that staying near to god or rather experiencing continuously beatitude of God is known as Upvaas. One has to practice severe austerities while observing these vows. They are control over taking (speech), control over the body and control over the mind. Simultaneously it is important that others are not troubled because of our actions. It is important for the person who takes such a vow to constantly meditate and contemplate on god throughout the stipulated period.

Rules and regulations devised by our scriptures are known as vows to be followed and this itself is penance. Some important rules to be followed by the person who observes vows are as follows. Firstly the person should perform prayers (Sandhya) thrice a day and should also bathe thrice a day. He should have total control over his senses and should sleep on the floor. He should avoid talking to women and people of impure unmoral nature. It is important that sanctity is maintained and he should perform Yagna (religious sacrifices) everyday.

The person observing vows should not shave his head. If he does so he should repeat the same vow again. He should avoid eating of horse-beans, lentil, grams, kodo (a type of grain eaten by poor), alcohol and spinach like vegetables. He should avoid taking food in copper vessel and should also avoid food attended by others. Usage of flowers, ornaments, new clothes, incense perfumes, toothpaste and collyrium applied to eyes is not recommended. After taking Panchgavya (cow dung, cows milk, cows urine, curd and ghee) only should one observe such vows.

Eating more than once a day, eating of Paan (petal nut leaf), sleeping throughout the day and sex should be strictly avoided. Indulgence in either of above activity defeats the basic purpose of a religious vow. The ten common rules that apply to all religious vows are forgiveness, truthfulness, pity, offerings/donations, cleanliness/purity, control over sense, regular worshipping of god, religious sacrifices offered to the fire god (Yagya), contentment and abstinence from steady. Food taken once a day at the time of seeing the constellation is known as 'Nakta Vrata (Vow)', Food taken at night is not known as Nakta Vrata. Whilst observing the vow if women face problem of periods (menstruation) this does not lead to the dissolution of vow. In such cases women should get the worship of gods done or donation accomplished through someone else.

The greatness of religious vow lies in charity and alms giving and without charity never is a vow ever accomplished. After a vow is observed depending upon ones financial situations one should donate generously. In human life one should definitely donate their things i.e. gold, land and cows. Gold and land can never be destroyed, that is why it is beneficial. The greatness of a 'cow' is even the beyond the above two. A person who donates these three things is considered to be the donor of three worlds (Trailokya). As a result a person can be liberated from the cycle of life and death, and attains the highest level 'Moksha'. Our scriptures also speak of the greatness of offering of food as charity.

In this manner a person observing religious vows, fasting and charity attains the highest sublime stage and enjoys tremendous happiness for crores of year after which he takes a birth in a very noble clan and attains Moksha. According to scientific point of view for the efficient working of the body mechanism it is imperative that one fasts at least once a week. Rules conduct devised by our scriptures are known as Vows to be observed. Religious vows are basically brief forms or expressions of penance. Usually the main purpose of these vows are, attainment of mental and spiritual energy, purity of mind and soul, improving one's will, development of devotion and faith, cleaning or purity of ambience, sublimity of

thought, purification of the same and finally improving one's physical health.

### **THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RELIGIOUS VOWS AND FASTING**

Often the word Upvaas is used synonymously with fasting. Religious vows are observed with an aim to achieve a particular goal having specific procedure observed along with certain resolutions taken. Fasting is not in the real sense strict rule for observing a religious vow. The rules for religious vows and fasting are separate. One does not see different types of fasting. But one can see different demarcated methods of religious vows. A religious vow is basically practised for emotional, intellectual, spiritual and financial aspect of life. Fasting is basically, more extrovert on the other hand a religious vow is more introvert. This is the main difference between a vow and fasting.

### **MAUNI AMAVASYA:-**

Amavasya in the month of Magha is known as Mauni Amavasya. According to procedures one should not talk to anyone and remain mute and have a bath in the Ganga. Incidentally if Mauni Amavasya occurs on a Monday it is of special significance. During this month (Magha) many men and women build small huts near the (Prayag) Triveni Sangam and bath regularly in the Triveni. This vow is observed throughout the month. Whilst observing this vow one should sleep on straw mattresses, avoid application of oil to the body, should not decorate oneself and maintain restraint of all type. Bathing in the Triveni Sangam and Kalpavaas during this month (Magha) is of special importance.

### **SHEETALA SHASHTI :-**

To beget a child this vow is observed on the sixth day of the Shukla Paksha of the Magha month. After daily ablutions, Sheetla Devi is worshipped in 16 steps known as Shodhashopchar. Cold eatables are offered to the Goddess and stale food is eaten after this. After food religious rites are performed to appease the Goddess.

The story goes this way- A Brahmin woman had seven male children. On worship of Sheetla Devi all of them got male children. One day this woman forgot to observe this vow and she bathed with hot water. Then she ate hot food. As a result her seven children and husband instantly died. Seeing this she turned frantic and losing control over her senses, she ran towards the forest. There she saw an old lady in flames. This lady ordered this Brahmin woman to get her some curd. Because of the curd Sheetla Devi (old woman's) fire was extinguished and she was complacent. According to Sheetla Devi orders that Brahmin woman came home and applied that curd to her husband and her seven children. As a result all of them were rejuvenated.

### **ACHALA SAPTAMI:-**

On the seventh day of Shukla Paksha of the Magha month Achala Saptami this vow is observed. This is also known as Saur Saptami.

### **BHEEMASTHAMI:-**

The eighth day of the Shukla Paksha of the Magha month is known as Bheemashtami. It was this day when Bheesma Pitamah expired. That person who like Bheesma Pitamah sacrifices sesamum and performs rites to pacify ancestral souls is blessed with fortunate progeny/child. It is mentioned in the Padma Puran that a boy whose father is alive should also observe Bheesma Tarpan (Gratification).

### **MAHASHIVRATRI:-**

On the 13th day of the Krishna Paksha of the Phalgun month Mahashivratri vow is observed on this day. Observer of this vow, men and women worship Lord Shiva with Bilva leaves, Dhatura, flowers, rice, water, milk and Panchamrut (milk, curd, ghee, sugar honey). Staying awake through the night, Lord Shiva is worshipped. The next day in the morning religious sacrifice (Yagya) is performed with barley, sesamum, porridge, Bilva leaves and this way the vow is accomplished.

### **ARUNDHATI VATRA:-**

Arundhati was the wife of Maharishi Vashishta and daughter of Prajapati Kardam. Thus because of the

Saptarshis and Arundhati being the wife of Vashishta, this Vrata has become in existence. This vow is observed for good fortune of the woman (long life for her husband) and also said to destroy the problem of child widowhood. This begins on Chaitra Shukla Pratipada (1st day) and ends on the third day (Tritiya). On the Pratipada day after having a bath in the river or at home a resolution is taken. On the next (second) day a water pot is placed on paddy and gold idols of Arundhati, Vashishta and Dhruva are placed. After worshipping Ganeshji, the 3 idols are worshipped on the last and 3rd day. Shiv-Parvati is worshipped and the vow is accomplished. The gold idols are finally donated to a Brahmin.

## FAST

### GANGUAR VRATA:-

On Chaitra Shukla Tritiya (3rd day) this vow is observed. It is said that on this day Shivji blessed Parvati and in turn Parvati blessed all women for their good fortune. On this day all women (whose husbands are alive), in the afternoon an idol of Parvati is worshipped. They offer all their ornaments and Jewellery to this goddess. After completion of the story, all women who observe this vow apply the Sindoor (Vermilion) on their foreheads, which was offered to the idol of Gauri. After having food the vow is accomplished. The food offered (prasada) of Gangaur is not given to men.

### SHEETLA ASHTAMI:-

With an aim to cure small pox Bhagwati Sheetla Devi is worshipped and a vow is observed on Chaitra Krishna Ashtami. On this day of Sheetla Ashtami Sheetla Devi is worshipped ceremoniously. Stale food is offered to the Goddess and after doing this people eat the stale food.

### NAV SAMVATSAR PRATIPAD:-

In our country the new year begins on Chaitra Shukla Pratipada. That is the reason why it is also known as 'Nav Samvatsar Pratipada'. According to our religious scriptures, Brahmaji began creation of this entire Universe on this day. It is on this day that all the gods and goddesses started their work of maintaining the universe and that Lord Vishnu assumed Matsya Avataar (the fish Incarnation). The beginning of Vikram Samrat is also on this day. On this day after daily ablutions people spread a white cloth and make Ashtadal Kamal (A lotus with eight petals) of rice or turmeric of Keshar (Saffron) and place a gold idol of Brahmaji and worship it. They pray for the well being of them and their families for the year to come. On this day they wear new clothes and decorate their houses with flags and festoons. Tender leaves of neem are eaten and water distribution centres are established. Brahmins are also offered food on this day.

### PHAL SAPTAMI VRATA:-

This vow is observed on Bhadrapada Shukla Saptami. By observing this vow one does not get separated from his loved ones. On this auspicious one should meticulously take bath and worship the Sun God. 'Martana Priyantam' O Lord, please bless us saying this one should donate fruits to Brahmins. One should pray by saying, O Lord, may all my desires be fulfilled and by eating these fruits himself the fast should be broken. Because fruits themselves are donated and by eating fruits the fast is broken the vow came to be known as Phal Saptami.

### BUDDHASHTAMI:-

In the month when it is a Wednesday on the eight day of the lunar month especially when it is in Paush month. Buddhashtami is celebrated. The person who observes this vow is always prosperous. On this day. Bhagwan Buddha is worshipped in a lake by the 5 step procedure one should donate as much as possible cucumber and rice along with gifts. One should sacrifice lotuses, wheat and simultaneously recite the mantra

AUM BUM BUDHAYA NAMAHA. By observing all the above rules one can get his desires fulfilled.

### ASHOKASHTAMI VRATA:-

Shuklastami is celebrated on union of Punarvasu Nakshatra in Chaitra month and Shukla Ashtami (eighth day). Those who eat eight buds of Ashok creeper on this day he becomes free from sorrow. Whilst eating the buds one should recite the following mantra

TWAMSHOK HARABHISHTA MADHUMAAS SAMUDBHAVA  
PIBAANI SHOAK SANTAPTO MAAMSHOAKAM SADA KURU ||

Meaning : O beloved one to Shiva, blossomed in spring, grief stricken, I am eating you. O Ashoka, please free me from all sorrow and grief.

**MAHANAVMI VRATA:-**

The Mahanavmi is the Navmi (ninth day) which is a result of the union of Uttaraashaad Nakshatra in month of Ashwin and Ashtami in Shukla Paksha. If one, on this day takes a bath and donates, he /she can be blessed enormously. Even if it is a Navmi one should worship Goddess Durga. Because of its uniqueness one can be blessed tremendously. One should observe this vow, if one desires to vanquish his enemy. After performing sacrifices and Yagya unmarried girls should take their food. After making a beautiful Pandal one should worship Durga Devi and by reciting the Mantra.

'AUM DURGO DURGE RAKSHINI SWAHA |'

One should perform religious sacrifices.

**AKSHAYA TRITIYA:-**

Akshaya Tritiya is celebrated on Vaishakh Shukla Tritiya day. The time till mid-day is considered auspicious. This day is considered very auspicious. During the day bath, penance, religious sacrifices, self-study, rituals for liberation of deceased ancestor and charity are observed. Because of which one can be blessed tremendously. It is said that it was this day when Satyug began.

**WORSHIP OF AASMAYEE:-**

On a Sunday, that is in between Vaishakh, Aashad and Magha, Aasmayee is worshipped. It is usually performed to accomplish a particular task. Sometimes it is performed once, twice or even thrice a year. 12 Adityas (Sun's) and Aasmayee (Every one who fulfills all desires) are simultaneously worshipped. Usually the boy's mother performs this worship. With the help of white sandal wood paste a small idol is made on a leaf. Four shells are kept on the leaf and are prayed to and worshipped. On a small stool the water pot is placed and the idol of Aasmayee devi is also placed.

The Brahmin firstly worships the ephemeris and then worships the water pot (Kalash) and goddess Aasmayee. At the end of the worship, the Brahmin hands a '12' knotted string to the person who observes this vow. Only after tying this string to the hand and the offerings made to the goddess Aasmayee and Barajyot. After this all ends, the 12 Knotted string and rest of the things required in the worship are discharged in the water. Only the shells are kept and preserved. These can be used next time, at time of worship. If in any case one of the cowries is lost or misplaced a new one can be brought and replaced at time of worship.

**NRUSINGH CHATURDASHI:-**

Lord Nrusingh was born on Vaishakh Shukla Chaturdashi, day. That is the reason why this Tithi (day) is called Nrusingh Chaturdashi. This vrata (vow) has to be observed until dusk. Incidentally if on any day, for sometime the tithi is Trayodashi and after that Chaturdashi and if the day is Saturday, Nakshatra (star) is Swati. Yoga is Siddhya and Karam is Vanij, this day is considered most auspicious for the vow.

In the afternoon one should have a bath reciting Vedic mantras and one should worship the gold idol of Lord Nrusingh. One should according to one's financial condition donate and distribute gifts amongst Brahmins. The person who performs and accomplishes this vow meticulously is freed from all sins and he attains sublime state of Vaikuntha lok.

**VAT-SAVITRI VRAT:-**

Women (whose husbands are alive) observe Vat Savitri Vrat with the intention of preserving their good fortune. On the day of Jyestha Krishna Trayodashi in the morning, One should brush their teeth and afterwards in the afternoon women should apply paste of sesamum and amalaka and after that have a clean bath. After this women should eat the roots of VatVriksha (Banyan tree) along with water. Women who have just delivered a child or woman having a problem with periods (menstruation) can accomplish

this vow through a Brahmin who could worship and fulfil the vow. This vow should be observed from Traydashi to Poornima (full moon) or Amavasya.

One should go near the Banyan tree and sip water and pray "I, on this auspicious day of Jyestha, Krishna Trayodashi pray for the health and well being of my children and husband. Never should I ever become a widow and this is the main intention of this vow. In the roots of the Banyan Tree lies Brahma, in the stem/barks lie Janardan and in the above portion lies Shiva and in totality lies Devi Savitri. O Banyan tree! I water you, which is like elixir of life.

After saying this the Banyan tree should be tied by string and one should offer incense flower and rice and worship Vat Savitri. After this women should circumambulate the tree. After returning home, women should draw a Banyan tree using a paste made of turmeric and sandalwood. One should sit near the drawing and should pray and take a resolution. One should observe fast for 3 nights and on the fourth day one should offer water to the Moon God and worship Vat Savitri.

One should prepare delicious dishes and offer this to the Goddess. One should offer food to as many Brahmins as possible and then only take food. Finally praying to the goddess one should say, "Goddess Savitri may I accomplish this vow without any hurdles with your blessings.

After worshipping Vat (Banyan tree and Savitri Goddess) one should worship women whose husband is alive with Sindoor (vermilion) Kumkum and betel leaves. To accomplish this vow in totality women's should offer clothes, fruits, Sindoor (Vermilion) kumkum etc in a copper vessel to a Brahmin.

#### GANGA DASHEHRA:-

It was Jyestha Shukla Dashami when on the request of Bhagirath Ganga Devi incarnated on earth and freed 60,000 sons of king Sagar from the curse and liberated them. That is why this day is observed as Ganga Dashehra. On this day of Jyestha Shukla Dashami, which is important day of the year, One should have a religious bath and should donate generously.

Firstly it is mentioned that one should have a bath in the holy water of the river Ganga. If this is not possible then one should have a bath in sesamum water. If this day comes on Monday and if the Nakshatra is Hasta then this is a time when all sins can be vanquished. It is on this day when on a Wednesday, (Nakshatra Hasta) Ganga Devi incarnated from heaven. It is because of these reasons that this Tithi (day) is considered very fortunate and auspicious. One can be freed from 10 sins if one observes religious bath, donates and perform ceremony liberation for deceased ancestors. This is also called Dasshera, which means vanquisher of 10 sins.

#### NIRJALA EKADASHI:-

This is one of the most popular vows observed in the Hindu community. On the eleventh day of the every fortnight of every month this vow is observed. In this way in a year this vow is observed for 24 days. Amongst these 24 days the vow observed on Jyestha Shukla Ekadashi is considered to be the most beneficial, if one properly observes a vow on this day it is said to give the fruits of 24 Ekadashi observed throughout the year. It is said that Bhimsen would listen that Vyas Muni would observe Ekadashi without partaking food through out the day and one day humbly said that Arjuna and all my brothers observe Ekadashi fast but is simply isn't possible for me. That is why please direct me in such a way so that I observe a vow that gives me the benefit of 24 Ekadashi Vows.

On this request Vyas Muni told Bhimsen to observe fast on Jyestha Shukla Ekadashi. By observing fast on Jyestha Shukla Ekadashi. By observing this your sins of eating on all priors, Ekadashi's will be destroyed and absolved, and you will benefit from all the Ekadashi, which have passed in the year. Bhimsen very sincerely observe this fast, that is the reason why this Ekadashi is also named as Bhimsen Ekadashi.

Because one has to abstain even from water from sunrise of Ekadashi to sunrise of Dwadash this known as Nirjali Ekadashi. Severe austerities have to be practised to accomplish this vow properly. During the month of Jyestha the day is longer and one after feels thirsty. As a result it is difficult to observe this vow without drinking water. This vow can only be fulfilled by meticulously observing this vow, there is a custom

of donating gold and a water pot.

#### HARISHAYANI EKADASHI:-

Harishayani Ekadashi is observed on Aashad Shukla Ekadashi. It is on this day when Lord Vishnu hibernates in the Ksheer Shayya or the Ocean. According to the Puranas, from this day onwards Lord Vishnu stays for the next 4 months in the house of King Baali in the Patal Lok and returns back on Kartik Shukla Ekadashi. That's the moon why this Ekadashi is known as Harishayani and Kartik Shukla Ekadashi is known as Prabodhini Ekadashi respectively, Religion and other marriage ceremonies are not performed in these 4 months as Lord Vishnu hibernate in the ocean. The months from Aashad to Kartik are known as 'Chaturmaas'. During this period holy people, mendicants reside in one place and practice severe austerities, penance and sings Bhajans etc.

According to Brahma Vaivastya Purana a person who observes this vow is freed from all his sins and is blessed by Lord Vishnu. This Vow is fulfilled of all desires. This Ekadashi is also known as Padma Ekadashi.

#### VYAS / GURU POORNIMA:-

The poornima occurring in the month of Aashad is known as Vyas Poornima. On this day, Vyas or Guru (teacher) is worshipped. In early times students did not pay their Guru (teachers). Every year on this day they prayed and worshipped their Guru and accordingly gave gifts (Dakshina). But this worship is not limited to Guru's only but is also observed with parents and brothers also.

On this day after having a bath and completely daily ablutions one should go to ones Guru and should make him sit on a reign platform. One should worship him with a garland and should ceremoniously worship him. One should keep flowers and fruits at his feet and should seek his/her blessings. By doing so one is blessed with knowledge and the mind and heart gets cleansed and makes the disciple/students life prosperous.

#### MAGHA PANCHAMI :-

Serpents are worshipped on Shravan Shukla Panchami. This day is also called Naag Panchami. On this day, on both the sides of door 2 idols of serpents are made of cowdung. In this vow, on the Chaturthi day one should take food only once a day. One should fast on the Panchami day and should take food only in the evening.

One should make an idols of a 5 hooded serpents of silver, gold, mud or wood pens and using Turmeric and Sandal wood pastes as ink. On the Panchami day porridge, Panchamrut (milk, curd, ghee, honey and sugar), lotus flowers, incense etc are offered and the god is accordingly worshipped. In serpents, Ananta, Vaasuki, Shesh, Padma, Kambal, Karkolok, Ashvatar, Dhifrashta, Shankpal, Kaaliya, Takshak and Pingal these 12 serpent are the most important ones; Every month one serpent is prayed and worshipped and the (Brahman) person who performs the worship, should be offered food. On the day of Nag Panchami the Brahmin should be offered cows and gold. Some also offer a silver serpents on betel leaves. The person who performs worship of the serpents on Panchami day should not dig the ground. By observing this vow, one is freed from the fear of snakes and serpents and earns plenty of money.

#### SHRAAVANI:-

The Poornima in the month of Shravan is called Shravani Poornima. People should observe celibacy and Brahmins should go to a lake or river and should perform Shraavani Karma. Initially for purification of body one should partake Panch agavya (cows milk, ghee, curd, cowdung and urine). Perform religious sacrifice (Yagya) along with ghee, porridge, and sugar. This is known as Upakarma. After this one should stand in the flowing water of a river and should contemplate, pray and worship Lord Bhaskar (Sun).

After this one should worship Saptarshis and Arundhati and one should offer milk and Sattu (powder of roasted gram) as oblation to these deities. This is known as Utsarjana. This festival is of special significance to all of us. According to old scriptures, on the day of Shraavani Poorinama saints perform Upakarma and start inceptor of teaching and would stop teaching on Magha Krishna. After doing Utsarjana. In the following months-theoretical Knowledge was imbibed through contemplation and

meditation. In this way this day of Shraavani was the first day of study and learning.

#### KAJRE KI NAVMI:-

Shravan Poonima is also known as Kajri Poonima. One of the specialties of Shraavani Poonima in Bundelkhand is that there are processors of Kajri. On Shraavani Poonima day wheat or barley is allowed to bloat in water and are sown in conical vessels made up of leaves. These are kept in such a place, which is away from moisture and air. Because of lack of air the plants assume yellow colour and this itself is called Kajri. From the Navami day to the Poonima day the Kajri is worshipped in the evening with incense and by singing devotional songs. The colour of the Kajri is closely associated to auspicious and inauspicious events.

The day Navami when a Kajri is sown is known as Kajri Navami. Only women who beget male children observe Kajri Vrata (vow). On the Navami day the women folk of a village get some mud from a specific place to sow Kajri. The mud brought is filled in clothes or conical vessels made of leaves.

In the house where Kajri is kept, on the wall of that house a small doll is hung resembling Goddess Saraswati, just beside this picture, a small hut a home a cradle with a child, a baby mongoose and a woman are made of turmeric paste. It is on this Navami when women worship and sow Kajri. After this they listen to stories (fables) and sing songs of Kajri's. Woman observes this vow for all being of their male child and protection from insects and other creatures.

#### HAL SHASHTI / HAR-CHATH:-

This vow is observed on Bhadrapada Krishna Shashti. It was this day when Krishna's elder brother Balarama took birth. Balarama's prime weapons were the plough and the pestle that is the reason why it is known as Hal-Shashti. It is observed with the intention of begetting a male child. The woman who observes this vow brush the fruits of Mahua (bacia latifolia). For this vow one should not eat any food, which is sowed or planted, or even a fruit. Cows milk and curd should be avoided. Only buffaloes milk is permitted.

In the morning the woman after bathing, plasters the floor with cow dung and makes a small tank. They put one stem of strawberry, a type of reed and palaash each and tie them up to make a plough. After that they bury it and worship it. They worship it with Satavyaa (seven types of grams i.e. wheat, gram, jowar, centil, paddy, kidney beans (moong) and corn), dry mud, green Kajri's ashes of Holi (bonfire), or green grams and wheat awn. Other than these ornaments, cloth coloured with turmeric paste are also offered and kept near the plough. After the pooja ends, there is a religious sacrifice (Yagya) performed along with butter extracted from buffaloes milk.

#### JANMASHTAMI:-

Janmashtami is celebrated on Bhadrapad Krishna Ashtami. It was on this day that Lord Shri Krishna took birth. On this day, the night it is Rohini Nakshatra, it is also known as Krishna Jayanti. If there is no Rohini Nakshatra then it is plainly Janmashtami. On this day of Ashtami at night devotional songs, bhajans are sung and stories related to shri Krishna's birth are recited and heard exactly at 12'0 clock sharp. Shri Krishna is worshipped according to scriptural procedure and happiness, joy is expressed over his birth.

After this before fasting is broken on the Navami day, Brahmin are offered food and gifts.

#### HARTALIKA:-

This vow is observed on the day of Bhadrapad Shukla Tiritiyaa when in unison with Hasta Nakshatra it is said to give all material benefits. Those woman desires for long life and well being of their husbands should observe this vow. The procedure of this vow is as follows-

The house should be clean and tidy. A pandaal should be made with the help of banana leaves and its barks, and it should be very well decorated. One should play the conch, the cymbals, mridangam and sing beautiful songs. One should place the idol of Parvati along with a shivlinga made of sand. In the sixteen-step ceremony method both the deities should be worshipped (pooja) donation of clothes, gold,

cows, auspicious indicating commodities to Brahmins is recommended.

This way this vow protects women and keeps them fortunate, But that woman who gets lured and breaks the fast midway remain issue less for the next 7 lives and remains widow ever. Then that woman who does not fast or who fasts and leaves it midway is cursed badly.

If she by any cause cannot keep a fast at least, she should listen to the stories. By this she earns the blessing, which one earns, after performing a Ashwamedh Yagya.

**SIDDHIVINAYAK VRAT (VOW):-**

Siddhi Vinayak is performed or observed on Ganesh Chaturthi day itself. On this day Ganeshji is prayed and worshipped according to the scriptures. 21 malpuas are offered to Ganeshji along with 21 Durvas (a type of grass) and 21 modaks while reciting 21 names of Ganeshji. After that one should offer food to the Brahmins and then should partake food.

**KAPARDI VINAYAK VRATA:**

A person by eating one meal a day from Shravan Shukla Chaturthi to Bhadrapada Shukla chaturthi can observe Kapardi Ganesh Vrata. A person who does so gets all his desires fulfilled. The method of worship is alike the methods of vows above. The important aspect of this vow is that one should offer a handful of rice (28 times) and some sweetmeats to a person who has maintained celibacy (Brahmachari) after worship of the deity.

**DURVAASTAMI:-**

Durvaashtami Vrata is observed on Bhadrapad Shukla. Aashtami day. On this day the observer of this vow should fast and worship Gauri Ganesh with durva and should worship Shivji with fruits and flowers while reciting the mantra

||SAMBHAVE NAMAHA, SHIVAAYA NAMAHA ||

While reciting the mantra

Tram Durva One should worship Durva only after doing this is the Durvaashtami vow accomplished in the true sense and one gets all his desires fulfilled, it is said that in this vow one who eats raw foods is freed even from the sin incurred because of killing a Brahmin.

**VEER NAVAMI VRATA:-**

Veer Navami Vrata is observed on Ashwini Shukla Navami day. One this day one should partake meals only once a day and should worship the Brahmins, He should recite the Vedic Beej Mantra 'AUM AEM HREEM KLEEM CHAAMYUNDAYAE VICHCHEE' one lakh times.

**DAMANAK NAVAMI VRATA:-**

On the day of Chaitra Shukla Navami one should worship Goddess with flowers of Damanak. The person who does so is blessed with good health, prosperity and a long life. Moreover he vanquishes all his enemies and emerges as a winner.

**RISHI EKADASHI VRATA:-**

This vow is observed on the day Chaitra Shukla Ekadashi, On this day Rishi's (divine souls/(Saints) are worshipped. By observing this, one can get all his desires fulfilled and he becomes wealthy and begets a male child. Moreover he becomes a divine soul and assumes a significant place in Rishilok (land of saints) Maricha, Atri, Angira, Pulastya, Pula, Kratu, Pracheta, Vashishta, Bhrigu and Narad. These saints (Rishis) are worshipped with Damanak flowers and garlands made of these flowers.

**SHRAVAN DWADASHI VRATA:-**

On the day of Shravan Nakshatra when Ekadashi and Dwadashi come in unison on one day itself this day is called Vijaya Tithi. Especially if Bhadrapada Shukla Dwadashi is in unison with Shravan Nakshatra and it is a Wednesday, it is considered a very auspicious and beneficial time. If a person on such a day has a holy bath in the Triveni Sargam it is said to be very divine and blissful and is said to give great



fruits. One by worshipping Shri Hari on this day can be blessed tremendously. One should take meals only once a day. The observer of this vow, should abstain from copper vessels, non-vegetarian food, honey, lust, lies, exercise, sex, sleeping during the day, collyrium applied to eyes, kidney-bean and things prepared by rubbing on the floor or stone.

For the next ten days one should cover 2 water pots filled with jewels (Ratna), with white cloth and one should worship the gold idol of Waman along with the golden umbrella as well as the Paduka (footwear). One should perform the pooja (worship) by reciting the following mantra.

For the Head -

AUM NAMO BHAGVATE VASUDEVAYA

For the Face –

AUM SHRI DHARAYA NAMAHA

For the Neck –

AUM KRISHNAYA NAMAHA

For the Chest –

AUM SHRI PATAYA NAMAHA

For the Shoulders –

AUM SARVA STRA DHARINO NAMAHA

For the Lips –

AUM VYAAPKAYA NAMAHA

For the Stomach –

AUM KESHAVAYA NAMAHA

For the Genitals –

TRAILOKYA PATAYA NAMAHA

For the thighs –

AUM SARVABHOOTE NAMAHA

For the feet/legs –

AUM SARVATMANE NAMAHA

In this way one should worship different part of the body. One should offer ghee and porridge as oblation to the deity. One should give away/surrender the Kumbh (water pot) and should stay awake all through out the night. Next day early in the morning the observer of this vow should, take a religious bath and after sipping water (Aachamana) should worship the Lord again with flowers and by reciting the following mantra.

AUM NAMASTE GOVIND BUDH SHRAVAN SANGYAK |  
ADAUDYA SANKSHAYAM KRUTVA SARVA SAUKHYA PRADOBHAVA ||

Which means-

O Govind, named also as Shraavan, I pray and bow before thee. Please vanquish all my sins and bless me with all happiness and prosperity. After prayer, one should say PRIYANTAAM DEV DEVESH and donate the Kalash water pot the Brahmins. If one performs this pooja (worship) on the banks of a river or any other place which is holy or pure one can get all his desires fulfilled.

#### RAMBHA TRITIYAA VRATA:

This vow is observed on Mrigshira Shukla Tritiya. This vow is giver of fortune, wealth, male child and prosperity. One should fast on this day and by taking Kunshodak in one hand and by taking Bilva leaves in another. Then one should pray to goddess Mahagauri. One should use the bark of the Kadam tree while worshipping the goddess.

#### AKHAND DWADASHI VRATA:-

This vow is observed on Mrigshira Shukla Dwadashi day. One should take meals which should consist of cows milk, curd etc and the should worship Lord Vishnu. Between the months (Mrigshira to Aashad) the observer of this vow should donate to a Brahmin 5 pots full of 5 different type of grains and should worship Lord Vishnu in the following manner.

SAPTA JANMAANI HEY VISHNO YANMAYAADI VRANTAM KRUTAM  
BHAGVANSTYA PRAASADENA TAT AKHAND MISHASTU ME  
YATHA KHANDAM JAGATSARVAM TVAMEVA PURUSHOTTAM  
TATHA AKHILANYA KHANDANI VRATAANI MAM SANTUVAI||

Which means – O Lord Vishnu, I have observed this vow for the last seven times. Please accomplish this vow in this life of mine. O Purushottam in the same way as you are in every atom of this universe. May this vow, I am observing, be fulfilled and accomplished in totality. One should donate a pot full of Sathu to the Brahmin till Chaitra Aashad month and observer should offer a pot full of Ghee from month of Shravan to month of Kartik. In this way the observer who accomplishes this resolution of Dwadashi Vrata is blessed with a wife, children and at the end attains Swargalok or bliss.

#### ANANG TRAYODASHI VRATA :-

This vow is observed on the Mrigshira Trayodashi day. On this day one performs the Pooja (worship) of Shivji in the 16 ceremonial step method using the flowers and fruits of Dhatura. In this way one should worship Shivji till the year ends, on every Trayodashi of every month. After worshipping the Lord in the aforesaid method one should worship Lord Kamadeva and his wife Rati. One should offer 10,000 commodities as oblation during religious sacrifices and should stay awake through out the night. In the early hours of the morning one should once again worship the Lord and should donate a bed, vessels, umbrella, clothes, shoes and cows to the Brahmins. One should accomplish the observer of the vow by doing so, If one does this with faith, he is sure to be blessed with, wealth, male children, health, prosperity, fortune and at the end beatitude of bliss.

#### AGASTA ARGHYA VRATA:-

Three days before the transition of the Sun through the Virgo Zodiac one should worship an idol of Agasta made of a type of seed named Kaash Pushpa at dusk and should offer water as an offering. One should stay awake all night should fast and should worship the deity with curd, rice, fruits and flowers. One should decorate the idol with curd and sandal wood paste. After this with seven types of grains filled pots with gold and silver and 5 Varna (offerings (oblations) should be offered to the deity. One should pray to the deity saying the following Mantra-

KAASH PUSHPA PRATIKAASH AGNI MARUT SAMBHAVA  
MITRA VARUNAYOHO PUTRA KUMBHA YONE NAMASTUTE ||

Meaning- To Agasta who is bright as a flower, Mitra who is born by Agni and Vaayu, son of Varuna, born in Kumbha Yoni, I bow before thee. After this the observer should donate a pot full of gifts and gold to the Brahmin. One should offer food to seven Brahmins. In this way the person who observes this vow through out the year in all ways, he is blessed.

#### RISHI PANCHAMI:-

Rishi Panchami is observed on Bhadrapada Shukla Panchami day. Women observe this. In some cases even men on behalf of their wives can observe this vow. On this day one is supposed to go by the river or

a near by lake in the afternoon and one should apply mud to ones body and have a bath. After this one should partake Panchgavya. One should come home and make a Sarvatobhadra Pandaal and place a water pot in that place. After this in the ceremonial 16 step (Shodashopchar) method one should worship Arundhati along with the Saptarshis. One should offer food to the Brahmins and take meal himself/herself after this. This vow is observed to free one from the sin incurred by touching grain or any other commodity during periods (menstruation).

#### SANTAAN SAPTAMI VRATA:-

This is observed on Bhadrapada Shukla Saptami day. This is also known as Muktabharana vrata. On this day in the afternoon one should according to the scriptures install an idol of Shiv-Parvati and perform the worship in the ceremonial 16 step (Shodashopchar) method. One should offer Porridge, Puris and Malpuas as oblation to the deities, One should also offer a string to Lord Shiva for protection and should pray by saying – O Lord! Giver of progeny and issues, Please accept this string.

One after praying and offering it to Lord Shiva should tie it to one's wrist. This vow is observed to free oneself or liberate oneself from sins and cursed during different lives and also for progeny and children.

#### ANANT CHATURDASHI:-

This vow is observed on Bhadrapada Shukla Chaturdashi day. After a religious bath one should meticulously pray to Lord Anant and should perform a religious sacrifice (Yagya) keeping in front a 14 Knotted Ananta. After this the Ananta is tied to the right arm. One should take meals only once a day. This vow is reliever from all miseries and pains.

#### JIVAT PUTRIKA VRATA (JEETIYA)

This vow is observed on Ashwini Krishna Ashtami day. This vow is observed by women to have male children. In this vow one should not drink water, keep a fast throughout the day and night and should break the fast the next day. This is giver of long life and health to the child.

#### MAHALAXMI VRATA:-

Worship of Goddess Mahalaxmi begins on Bhadrapada Shukla Ashtami and end on Ashwini Krishna Ashtami. On the first day i.e. Bhadrapada Shukla Ashtami woman go to a near by river or lake and take a religious bath.

There women who have their husbands alive carry a pot full of water (40 small pots filled with water are emptied in a big pot which is carried on the head) and these women give equal quantity of water as an oblation to the Sun God. But widows carry's pot full of water (16 small pots filled with water are emptied in a big pot which is carried on the head. And these women give equal quantity of water as an oblation along with Durva (a type of grass). After doing this Goddess Laxmi is worshipped. A 16 knotted string is offered to the goddess and perform the religious sacrifice. This worship continues for the next 16 days.

#### MAHALYA VRATA:-

Mahalya Vrata is observd on Ashwini Krishna Amavasya day. On this day worship is offered to the deceased ancestors, by doing Pind-daan (donation of pindas (ancestors) with the intention of liberating them from the cycle of life and death. Ashwin Krishna Paksha (fortnight) a child (boy) whose parents aren't alive,after a bath, one should offer sesamum, rice and kush (type of grass) to the deceased ancestor. This procedure should be repeated till Amavasya day. On this day (Amavasya) or on the day of death (an expiring) of the ancestors) one should perform the Mahalya Shraddha (pacifying the souls). One should offer food to the Brahmins along with gifts.

#### NAVRATRI VRATRA:-

The greatness and the divinity of goddess Bhagvati has been spoken of in Durga Saptashati. The synopsis of this is that when there was an emergence of evil such as Shumbh-Nishumbh or Mahishasura at that time all the gods were troubled. As a result all of them started praising the cosmic female energy Mahamaya and started meditating upon her, pleased with their devotion Mahamaya blessed all the gods and ordered them to observe vow and worship from Ashwin Shukla Pratipada to the Dashami day. From this day Navratri Mahotsav is celebrated. On the Pratipada day the water pot is placed and the idol of the

goddess is worshipped and after this Punvayaachan, Shodash Matruka, Vaishya Deva Sankalp, Mandi Shraddha is performed. One should perform pooja (worship) of the goddess for the nine days according to the scriptures through a Brahmin.

On the Dasshera day the oblation made to the tree is partaken. Girls from the age group of 2-11 years should also be worshipped. One should perform religious sacrifices on the Navmi and Dashami day and should do Visarjan (discharge) accordingly.

#### KARVA CHATURTHI VRATA:-

Kartik Krishna Chaturthi is known as Karva Chauth. Only women can observe this vow. The women who observe this vow, after completing her daily ablutions should sip water (Aachmana) and take a resolution for the accomplishment of the vow. After this she should make a drawing of the moon on the wall and below that one should make a drawing of Shiva, Kartikeya and Gauri. One should worship all these deities in the ceremonial 16-step method (Shodashopechar). After the worship one should donate a pot (copper-mud) full of Malpuas to the Brahmin. After moon rise one should offer water to the moon god and should listen to the stories (Vrata kratha). This vow augments children, fortune and wealth.

#### DHAN TEREAS:-

Dhantras is also known as Kartik Krishna Trayodashi. On this day Yamraj (Lord of Death) is worshipped. Mud ploughed by a plough is mixed with milk and applied to tender branches of a tree. Circumambulate this itself round oneself three times and apply this to the forehead as kumkum. After this have a kartik religious bath. In the evening, at dusk, one should keep a lamp in the house, in the temple, one on the well, on the ghat, in the garden, on the road and also the cowshed for 3 days continuously. If the sun is in Libra (Zodiac) it is custom to offer the deceased ancestor burnt wooden stick on Chaturdashi and on Amavasya evening. On the day of Amavasya after daily ablutions one should worship god one should break the fast having the meal and should perform Shraddh and Laxmipujan. After this only should take meals. The people who observe donation of lamp and this vow, do not meet untimely death.

#### NARAK CHATURDASHI:-

Narak Chaturdashi is also known as Kartik Chaturdashi. One should have a bath early in the morning (Brahmamuhurta). On this day, those who have a bath after sunrise do not reap fruits of all religious ceremonies performed throughout the year. One should have a bath after applying oil and should clean one's genitals. One should then offer oblation to Yamraj and worship him. One should donate lamps from the Trayodashi day to the Amavasya day. Goddess Laxmi always blesses the person who performs the Deepotsav and Mahotsav.

#### SOORYA SHASTHI (CHATH) VRATA:-

Soorya Shashti vrata is observed on the day Kartik Shukla Shashti. This is celebrated in the intention of a blessing for long life. One has to observe 3 days fast for this vow. The observer should have one meal on the Panchami day. On the next day one should not even drink water and should offer water to the Sun God before sunset. One should worship the Sun god with sweet meats, delicious dishes, coconut and fruits. After Sunset one should return home and remain awake throughout the night. On the third and final day one should in the similar manner go to the ghat and offer water to the Sun God. Thus concludes the observation of the vow.

#### DEVOTTHAMI EKADASHI:-

This Ekadashi is celebrated on Kartik Shukla Ekadashi. It is opined that Lord Vishnu woke from his sleep in the Ksheer Sagar (Ocean) on this day. The observer should perform the worship (pooja) of Lord Vishnu, very meticulously on this day and seek his blessings.

#### BHEESHMA PANCHAK:-

This Vrata begins on Kartik Shukla Ekadashi day and ends on the day of Poornima. That is the reason why it is referred to as Bheeshma Panchak. On the Ekadashi day one has to make a four-doored pandaal in the house or by the banks of a river. One should smear the Pandaal with cow dung and should make a Sarvatobhadra Mandal (A square). After this the observers should install a house made of sesamum in

that and should light a lamp, which continuously burns. One should also start Japa (name recitation) and should give 108 offering as an oblation. This Vrata is the destroyer of evil and sin and more over is a giver of Dharma, Arth, Kama and Moksha.

#### KARTIK POORNIMA:-

Kartik Poornima is also referred to as Tripuri Poornima. A bath in river Ganga and donation of a lamp hold special significance on this day. If on this day the Nakshatra is Bharani, Kruthika or Rohini then one can expect better fruits. It is said that, on this day that Lord Vishnu incarnated himself as a fish (Matsyavtaar). One who donates on this auspicious day is blessed with the fruits of 10 religious sacrifices (Yagya). One this day the observer should worship the 6 Kruthikas, Shiva, Sambhuti, Santati etc at time of moonrise. One who ceremoniously donates a buffalo at night, is blessed and achieves highest state of celibacy (Shivapad). One should observe a fast on this day and should contemplate upon God. On doing so one is blessed and he/she also attains the Suryalok. If one donate a ram made of gold on this day one is freed from problems of Grahadosh (problems and curses of planets). There is a custom even of donating of Ksheer Shayya (an ocean). One should fill the dish with milk and should disburse a fish made of gold or silver in the dish and donate it.

#### PRADOSH – VRATA:-

Pradosh Vrata is observed on the Trayodashi of both the fortnight (Shukla and Krishna Paksha). This is observed with the aim of achieving progeny, prosperity and fortune etc. In the evening it is a custom to perform pooja (worship) of Lord Shiv and also perform Japa (Name recitation) and religious sacrifices (Yagya). The fast is broken the next day.

#### VRATA FOR THE SEVEN DAY OF A WEEK:-

Woman who take a holy bath in Adhik maas and in the month of Kartik Usually observe this Vrata for seven days of the week. One can partake fruits milk etc on the days of Sunday and Tuesday Vrata.

**SUNDAY VRATA:-** One should avoid salty food and oily food for the observance of vow . One should break the fast and partake fruits, milk etc during the day time itself and on the second day one should partake fruits, milk etc after sunset. One should take meals only once a day. On the conclusion of this Vrata, after pooja (worship) the Vrata Katha (story) is heard.

**MONDAY VRATA:-** On this day one should worship Lord Shiva and Parvati. This vow is observed till afternoon and then should take meals only once. The Vrata Katha of Somvaari Amavasya is heard on this day.

**TUESDAY VRATA:-** (Mangal) Mars (planet) the lord of Tuesday likes Red Sandalwood, garlands, fruits, wheat dishes made with jaggery etc. Mars is worshipped with shoe flowers (Hibiscus), red cloth and red sandalwood. On the days of Vrata one should take meals only once a day. The observer if observes this Vrata for 21 Tuesdays is freed from Mangal dosh. (ill effects of the planet).

**WEDNESDAY VRATA:-** One should pray to Lord Shivji on this day and should take partake meals only once a day. One should preferably take meals of fruits, dishes of green colour, which is especially beneficial. Donation of green coloured commodities is also considered very auspicious.

**THURSDAY VRATA:-** On this day the Guru (Teacher) of all gods is worshipped. On this day Mahadevji is also worshipped. Brihaspati is worshipped with yellow flowers, Yellow Sandalwood, Yellow fruits, yellow pulses, and other yellow coloured commodities, One should also donate yellow coloured articles. One should avoid shaving and cutting hair on this day.

FRIDAY VRATA:- Shukracharya (the Guru of all Asuras/Demons) is worshipped on this day. Alike Pradosh Vrata one should also worship Lord Shiva.

SATURDAY VRATA:- On this day one prays to Shani (Saturn). This planet is adorned with black sesamum, black cloth, black moong, iron and oil. One observes this Vrata to lesson the ill effects of the planet Shani. One should also recite Shani Stotra on this day.

SHRI SATYA NARAYANA VRATA:-

This vrata can be observed on any desired day. It is considered auspicious to worship Lord Satyadev especially either of the following days i.e. Sankranti, Poornima, Amavasya.

One should observe this vow through out the day. After this one should worship Ganeshji. Gauri. Varuna., Navgraha (9 Planets) and finally Shri Satyanarayana Bhagwan. Ceremoniously, one should offer 1000 Tulsi leaves whilst reciting Vishnu Sahastra Namavali (1000 names of Lord Vishnu). After this one should listen to the Satyanarayana Vrata Katha, offer prasad (offering) to the deity and should perform 'aarti'. One should sing songs in praise of the Lord (Sankeertan) and should offer food to the Brahmins. Only after doing so should the observer of this Vrata and his family member partake meals. Observance of Satyadev Vrata in the Kalyug is considered very auspicious and beneficial.

MAASOPVAAS VRATA:-

It is custom to keep a fast on Ashwin Ekadashi day and after that observe this vow for the next 30 days. One should invoke and praise Lord Vishnu in the following manner before inception of this Vrata.

ADYA PRABHUTYAHAM VISHNO YAVADUTHANAKAM TAV  
ARCHAYE TVAAM NASHNANSTU DINAANI TRINSHDEV TU  
KARTIKA SHVANAYOORVISHNO DWADASHAYOHO SHUKLA YORAHAM  
MRIYE YADYAN VARALE TU VRATMANGO NA ME BHAVETA ||

Which means – O Lord Vishnu, From today to the final day you do not awake from your sleep (Shayanotthan), I will worship you without partaking meals/ O Lord, if I die between Dwadashi (Shukla Paksha) of Ashwin or Kartik to the next Dwadashi, then may my vow not be interrupted or broken.

After praying in the above method one should have holy bath in the morning, in the afternoon and in the evening and only after doing so should the observer worship the deity Lord Hari, But the observer of this vow should not apply aromatic paste etc. to the body. On the Dwadashi day and one should worship Lord Hari and offers food to the Brahmins. One should break the fast only after one month of regular worship of Lord Hari. If one becomes unconsciousness while observing this fast he should be offered milk. This in no way does break the Vrata. The observer of this Vrata is blessed with Bhoga (enjoyment), material happiness) and Mukti (bless, Spiritual happiness).

CHATURMASYA VRATA:-

This Vrata begins on Aashad Ekadashi or Poornima day. On this day Lord Hari is prayed and should be invoked by praying in the following manner.

EEDAM VRATAV MAYAA DEVA GRUHITAM PURASTASVA  
NIRVIGHNAM SIDDHI MAAPNOTU PRASANNE TWAYI KESHAVA  
GRIHITE ASMIN VRATE DEVA YADYAPOORNE PRIYAMYAHAM  
TANME BHAVATU SAMPOORNA TVATPRASAADA JANARDHAN ||

Meaning:- O Lord! I have taken a resolution to accomplish this vow before thee. O Keshava bless us so that we may fulfill the same without interruption and may I be blessed with siddhi consistently. O Lord! In case I meet untimely death in this period, may you bless me so that I can complete this vow O Janardan!.

In this method one should take a resolution of Vrata Poojan and Japa (name recitation) after worship of Lord Hari. The observer of this Vrata is freed from all sin and evil. The Sadhak (observer) should take a resolution of Japa, and worshipping (pooja), and related ceremonies to be followed after having a holy bath. One should observe this Vrata for 4 months (Aashad, Shravan, Bhadrapad and Kartik), whilst partaking meals once a day and regularly worshipping Lord Vishnu. The Sadhak of this Vrata attains the highest state of Vaikuntha lok.

#### KUKSHAPAAD VRATA:-

This Vrata is observed for 3 days. On the first and second day one should partake meals once a day and on the third day one should fast through out the night.

One should continuously worship Lord Vishnu ceremoniously and avoid eating non-vegetarian food, oil and drinking alcohol etc.

The observer who fasts through out the night attains the position of a Vaimanik Devta. (A God, who is seated on a divine vehicle, travels the universe). After observing fast for 3 nights one should partake food given, after requesting to some one or offered by someone. The Sadhak who does so attains a place in Shveta Dweep.

#### CHANDRAYANA VRATA:-

This vow is of many types. According to Manu one should have a bath thrice a day and should begin this vow on the Poornima day. One should take meals consisting of 15 morsels of food. After Poornima, from the Krishna Pratipada day one should reduce the no. of morsels one by one that i.e. 14, 13, 12 etc. and should have only one morsel food on chaturdashi day of Krishna Paksha. One should after that, observe total fast on Amavasya day. Again after Amavasya from Shukla Pratipada day one should increase the no. of morsel per days i.e. 1,2, 3... respectively and should have 15 morsels of food on the second Poornima day. In this way one completes the vow in one-month time. By doing so one can attain Vishnulok and one is liberated from this world without request or prayer.

#### PRAJAPAYYA VRATA:-

This Vrata is observed for 12 days. On the first 3 days one should take meals only once a day in the morning and on the following 3 days one should take meals once at nights.

After this one should partake what one gets without requesting only once a day. On the last 3 days one should observe total fast and worship Lord Vishnu, The Sadhak of this Vrata attains Vishnulok.

#### PARAK VRATA:-

In this Vrata one should only drink water for 12 days. One can get blessings of Lord Vishnu and liberate oneself on observance of this Vrata.

#### THE HOLY BASIL (TULSI)

The holy basil plant has a very important place as per the scriptural and scientific considerations. This is the reason why its mention has been made not only in the scriptures and mythological texts, but also in the Ayurvedic texts. The holy Basil is as holy as Lord Vishnu, because she is also known as 'Vishnupriya', 'Vishnukanta' and 'Keshavpriya'. The holy basil originated from the hairs of Tulsi who in her previous life was blessed by Lord Narayan.

According to the mythological point of view, a place is considered to be the most sacred pilgrimage where exists the holy basil plant. This is the reason why every Hindu tries to have it in the house. Women have been worshipping it with the desire for good fortune and well beings of her lineage.

It is believed that the lord of death does not dare to enter a place, where exists a holy basil plant. Worshipping god with the new sprout of basil plants give salvation. Such a man is freed from the cycles of birth and death. Even the deities are desirous of attaining salvation, with the help of basil plant. Taking

bath with water, in which basil leaves have been mixed, gives virtues similar to that of all the pilgrimage.

The deities and all the places of pilgrimages have their dwelling places in whole of the basil-plant from its root to the shade. Any ceremony, which is performed in the vicinity of a basil plant, enables a man to attain salvation and God.

Even the soil underneath the holy basil plant is of such great importance, that if it is applied on the forehead, all the sins of a man gets destroyed and he attains happiness, prosperity and benediction. Wearing a string of beads consisting of basil-seeds makes a man free from the fears of death. If chanting is done with the help of basil beads, then it helps in the attainment of accomplishment.

The use of the leaves of holy basil in the ceremonies like 'Shraddh' and 'Tarpan' gives indestructible virtues to the dead ancestors. The tradition of offering the leaves of basil plant, to the person approaching death has been continuing since time immemorial. This act of offering basil-leaves terrifies the messenger of 'Yama' and helps the person is attaining to the abode of Lord Vishnu, after his death. If the last rite of a dead person is performed in the wood of basil plant, it helps his soul to attain to the abode of Lord Vishnu. Not only this, if even a single wood of basil plant is kept on the burning pyre then all the sins of that person get destroyed.

Although the use of stale flower and stale water is prohibited in the worship but this is not applicable to the leaves of basil plant, however there are some days on which selection of basil leaves are prohibited - Sunday, last day of dark lunar phase (Amavasya), twelfth day of every Hindu month (Dwadashi), 'Sanskranti' and till the three hours after mid night. Therefore the leaves should be collected, well before the above mentioned days and times.

The holy basil, which is also called 'Tulsi' in India, its birth and marriage ceremony is celebrated in the Hindu month of Kartik every year. This celebration gives great virtues and benediction. The holy basil has the same importance in the Ayurvedic field as it has in the spiritual and religious fields. It has miraculous curatory effects on numerous physical and mental ailments.

The holy basil plant keeps away the germs capable of causing diseases from its vicinity. It also helps in the purification of mind by purifying the whole atmosphere around it. This pure atmosphere helps us to attain physical and mental health.

All the parts of holy basil plant such as leaves, sprout, stem, soil underneath the plant have great medicinal properties.

#### PEEPAL

'The holy Fig Tree' The concept of divinity even in vegetation's, trees etc has been prevalent in Indian civilization since time immemorial and have been accepted as a tradition.

Lord Sri Krishna has said in Bhagawad Gita that the holy fig tree personifies his own glory. The five-trees (Pancha-vat) are considered as very sacred in India, they are:-

Fig tree,

A wild fig (Sycamore) tree (Gular),

Banyan tree,

Pakar (citron-leaved), Indian fig tree,

Mango tree.

Among these the holy fig tree is considered as the most sacred. A man who plants this tree goes to the abode of almighty God after his death. He can neither be tormented by the miseries of 'Yama-loka' nor



has to face miseries in this world.

Lord Vishnu dwells in the roots of this tree, 'Keshav' (Krishna) in the trunk, Narayana dwells in the branches, Lord Shri Hari in the leaves and all the deities dwell in the fruits of the holy fig tree. This tree is the personification of Lord Vishnu. Great men serve the 'Virtuous roots of this tree. Protection of this tree liberates a man from all his sins and help in the accomplishment of every desire.

The cutting of a holy fig tree without a proper reason is similar to cutting one's own ancestors. By doing this, one destroys his descent. But cutting of this tree for sacred activities like 'Yagya' (sacrificial fire) is not sinful, on the contrary it helps in the attainment of Heaven. The mere worship of this tree is worship all the deities. (Parikrama) moving around a holy fig tree is reverence and pouring water on it daily destroy all kinds of inauspiciousness. Pouring water on the roots of this tree in the month of May (Vaishakh) gives immense virtues, thus worshipping it with devotion gives long life.

There is a rule of making three circumambulations of a holy fig tree. Planting this tree on any auspicious day one should nurture it with water for eight years, just like his own son. After that, performing the sacred-thread (yagyopavita) ceremony of this tree and worshipping it with proper methods give undiminishing wealth and fortune, the lineage continues without any hitch, gives long life, and the dead ancestors attain salvation by getting liberation from the hell.

Hindu girls perform many fasts connected with this tree right from their childhood. A girl who has a probability of becoming a widow according to the inauspicious combination of planets in her horoscope must worship the holy fig tree. After taking bath she should purify the soil around the holy fig tree by cow dung paste, decorate the tree with threads and Ochre and worship it with the help of a Brahmin. She should invoke Lord Vishnu and Laxmi who dwell in the holy fig tree and worship them by chanting 'Purusukta' Mantras and by performing 'Havana' and 'Tarpana'. After that she should circumambulate the holy fig tree for 108 times and tie a white thread around it.

The holy fig tree has medicinal properties too. According to Ayurveda this tree has both sweet and bitter taste and has a cool property. Intaking the bark, fruit and buds with different Combination of things cures the diseases related with Phlegm, bile, inflammation swelling and indisposition etc. The soft bark and the bud of this tree cures 'Prameha' (a disease in which sperms emanate through urine).

The powdered form of the fruit of this tree increases appetite and cures numerous diseases. So the holy fig tree holds a very important place in Indian civilization i.e. religious point of view, medicinal and social point of views, and hence it is worth being worshipped.

## AMLA TREE

### It's Origin and Importance

Once, when the whole earth was submerged into the water and Lord Brahma was immersed in the meditation of Parbrahma (Almighty Vishnu). He became so full of emotion that tears started rolling down from his eyes and fell down on the earth. The Amla tree germinated from those tears.

The Amla tree had many branches, and it was full of Amla fruits. Since the Amla tree was the first tree to manifest itself on the earth, therefore it is also known as ADIROHA (Pre-eminent tree).

This Amla tree was very much liked by Lord Vishnu and all the deities alike. One day while the deities was looking at this pre-eminent Amla tree, they heard a voice from the sky: "This Amla tree is the supreme among all the trees because it is dear to Lord Vishnu. A mere remembrance of this tree gives the virtues attained by seeing this Amla tree are twice than donating a cow and the virtues attained by eating an Amla fruit is thrice as compared to donation of a cow. So efforts should be made for its preservation.

Eating the fruits of Amla is very nutritious for the body. Taking bath by the water mixed with the juice of Amla fruit has great curative values. The performance of 'Pindadana' under the Amla trees gives salvation to the souls of dead ancestors. Ghosts and other evil spirits do not trouble a house where Amla fruits are kept. One who is desirous of acquiring wealth should take bath by water mixed with the juice of Amla fruits daily.

A person who washes his hairs with the juice of Amla mixed with water, attains 'Vishnuloka' by destroying all his sins of this Kaliyuga.

A person who has his food under an Amla tree in the Hindu month of Kartik, becomes free from the defects of the food (annadosha) for one year.

All the above-mentioned benefits of the amla tree and amla fruit has been described by sage Vyasa in 'Skanda Purana'.

Collected and forwarded by..Ravindran Govinda.

#### HANUMANCHALISA

SHRI GURU CHARANA SAROJA RAJA|  
NIJA MANU MUKURU SUDHAARI  
BARANAUN RAGHUVARA VIMALA JASU  
JO DAAYAKU PHALA CHARI

Having cleansed the mirror of my soul with the dust of the guru's lotus-feet, I describe Raghuvara's spotless glory, the bestower of life's four fruits.

BUDDHIHIINA TANU JAANIKE  
SUMIRAUN PAVANA-KUMAARA  
BALA BUDHI VIDYAA DEHU MOHIN  
HARAHU KALESA BIKAARA

Realizing that I am void of all wisdom, I meditate on the son of the Wind, may he bless me with strength, wisdom and knowledge and rid me of my sufferings and sins.

JAYA HANUMAANA GYANA GUNA SAAGARA  
JAYA KAPIISA TIHUN LOKA UJAAGARA  
RAAMA DUUTA ATULITA BALA DHAAMAA  
ANJANIPUTRA PAVANSUTA NAAMAA

Glory to you, O Hanuman, ocean of all knowledge and virtue! Glory to the Monkey lord, enlightener of the triple worlds; you are Rama's envoy of might incomparable Anjani's son called Pavansuta.

RAATIHUN DIVASA RAAMA DHUNA JAAHIIN  
MAGANA RAHATA MANA, TANA DUKHA NAAHIIN  
RAAMA SANEHA JAASU URA HOII  
MAHAA BHAAGYASHAALII NARA SOII

Wherever people chorus the glory of Rama throughout the night and day and have their minds fully absorbed in it, they are cured of all bodily suffering. Highly fortunate is only that person whose heart brims with love of Rama.

MAHAABIIRA BIKRAMA BAJARANGII  
KUMATI NIVAARA SUMATI KE SANGII  
KANCHANA BARANA BIRAAJA SUVESAA

KAANANA KUNDALA KUNCHITA KESAA

You are mighty, valiant, radiant as the thunderbolt, banisher of wickedness, of the wise befriender, golden-hued and brilliant and charmingly bedecked, with pendants sparkling in your ears and curly hair on the head.

HAATHA BAJRA AU DHVAJAA BIRAAJAI  
KAANDHE MUUNJA JANEUU SAAJAI  
SANKARA SUVANA KESARIINANDANA  
TEJA PRATAAPA MAHAA JAGA BANDHANA

In your hands flash the thunderbolt and banner and across your shoulder the sacred thread of munja. O Shankara's son, the delight of Keshari, the greatness of your glory is adored all the world over.

BIDYAAVAANA GUNII ATI CHAATURA  
RAAMA KAAJA KARIBE KO AATURA  
PRABHU CHARITRA SUNIBE KO RASIYAA  
RAAMA LASHANA SIITAA MANA BASIYAA

Learned, accomplished and exceedingly wise, ever eager to carry out Rama's behest you delight in listening to the Lord's ambrosial acts, with Rama, Lakshmana and Sita dwelling in your heart.

SUUKSHMA RUUPA DHARI SIYAHIN DIKHAAVAA  
VIKATA RUUPA DHARI LANKA JARAAVA  
BHIIMA RUUPA DHARI ASURA SANHAARE  
RAAMACHANDRA KE KAAJA SANVAARE

You appeared before Sita in a subtle form, burnt Lanka in a form awesome to behold; you slew the demons by assuming a gigantic form and thus accomplished Rama's mission.

LAAYA SANJIVANA LAKHANA JIYAAAYE  
SHRII RAGHUBIIRA HARASHI URA LAAYE  
RAGHUPATI KIINHII BAHUTA BADAII  
TUMA MAMA PRIYA BHARATAHI SAMA BHAAII

You brought the life-giving herb, which resuscitated Lakshmana; joyously then Rama clasped you to his bosom and praised you again and again. 'You are as dear to me as Brahma' he said.

SAHASA BADANA TUMHARO JASA GAAVAIN  
ASA KAHII SHRIPATI KANTHA LAGAAVAIN  
SANAKAADIIKA BRAHMAADI MUNIISAA  
NAARADA SAARADA SAHITA AHIISAA

The thousand-headed Serpent hymns your glory! So saying, Sita's lord fondly embraces you. 'So also Sanaka, his brothers, Brahma and the other high sages, Narada, Sarada and the Serpent king'.

JAMA KUBERA DIGPAALA JAHAN TE  
KAVI KOBIDA KAHII SAKE KAHAN TE  
TUMA UPAKAARA SUGRRIIVAHIN KIINHAA  
RAAMA MILAAYA RAAJA PADA DIINHAA

Yama, Kubera and all the guardians of the directions, poets and scholars cannot sing your glory. You rendered great service to Sugriva when you brought him to Rama, who crowned him king and gave him sovereignty over Kishkindhaa.

TUMHARO MANTRA BIBHISHANA MAANAA

LANKESHWARA BHAE SABA JAGA JAANAA  
JUGA SAHASRA JOJANA PARA BHAANUU  
LILYO TAAHI MADHURA PHALA JAANUU

Vibhishana heeded your advice and became Lanka's lord, which the whole world knows. Considering him to be a sweet fruit, you swallowed the sun from a distance of two thousand yojnas.

PRABHU MUDRIKAA MELI MUKHA MAAHIIN  
JALADHI LAANGHI GAYE ACHARAJA NAAHIIN  
DURGAMA KAAJA JAGATA KE JETE  
SUGAMA ANUGRAHA TUMHARE TETE

No wonder you leapt across the ocean, carrying the Lord's ring in your mouth. All the tasks of the world, however difficult are rendered easily possible by your favour.

RAAMA DUAARE TUMA RAKHAVAARE  
HOTA NA AAGYAA BINU PAISAARE  
SABA SUKHA LAHAI TUMHAARII SARANAA  
TUMA RACCHAKA KAAHUU KO DARA NAA

You are the sentinel posted at Rama's gate which none can enter unless you let him in. He who seeks refuge in you enjoys all blessings and with you as protector experiences no fear.

AAPANA TEJA SAMAHAARO AAPAI  
TIINONH LOKA HAAKANTEIN KAAPAI  
BHUUTA PISAACHA NIKATA NAHIN AAVAI  
MAHAABIIRA JABA NAAM SUNAAVAI

When you remember your blazing splendour (which you alone control) and roar aloud, your thunderous voice causes tremor in the three spheres; when your name Mahavira is incessantly repeated, ghosts and goblins dare not make their visitation

NAASAI ROGA HARAI SABA PIIRAA  
JAPATA NIRANTARA HANUMATA BIIRAA  
SANKATA TEIN HANUMAANA CHUDAATAVAI  
MANA KRAMA BACHANA DHYAANA JO LAAVAI

Constant repetition of your name, O valiant Hanuman, destroys all illness and dispels all suffering. If one meditates on you with thought, word and deed, you rid one of every calamity.

SABA PARA RAAMA TAPASVII RAAJAA  
TINA KE KAAJA SAKALA TUMA SAAJAA  
AURA MANORATHA JO KOII LAAVAI  
SOII AMITA JIIVANA PHALA PAAVAI

Though Rama himself is a supreme ascetic, Lord of all, yet you, Hanuman, fulfilled all his missions successfully. Whoever expresses a longing to you is rewarded with countless fruits of life.

CHAARON YUGA PARATAAPA TUMHAARAA  
HAI PARASIDDHA JAGATA UJIYAARAA  
SAADHU SANTA KE TUMA RAKHAVAARE  
ASURA NIKANDANA RAAMA DULAARE

Your glory is famed through all the four ages, shedding its lustre on the terrestrial sphere. You are the protector of every saint and sage, destroyer of the demons and Rama's pet.

ASTA SIDDHI NAU NIDHI KE DAATAA  
ASA BARA DIINA JAANAKII MAATAA  
RAAMA RASAAYANA TUMHARE PAASAA  
SADAA RAHO RAGHUPATI KE DAASAA

Be thou the bestower of the eight siddhis and the nine nidhis such is the boon Mother Janaki bestowed on you. You possess Rama-the philosopher's stone-and Raghupati's servant you ever remain.

TUMHARE BHAJANA RAAMA KO PAAVAI  
JANAMA JANAMA KE DUKHA VISARAAVAI  
ANTA KAALA RAGHUBARA PURA JAI  
JAHAN JANMA HARI BHAKTA KAHAII

By hymning your praises the aspirant attains Rama and forgets the sufferings of all transmigratory births. At last your votary goes to the city of Raghuvara, where taking birth, he is called Hari's devotee.

AURA DEVATAA CHITTA NA DHARAI  
HANUMATA SEII SARBA SUKHA KARAI  
SANKATA KATAI MITAI SABA PIIRAA  
JO SUMIRAI HANUMATA BALABIIRAA

He who does not cherish any other god but serves only Hanuman enjoys all bliss. If one constantly repeats the valiant Hanuman's name, all calamities disappear and all sufferings end.

JAI JAI JAI HANUMAANA GOSAIIN  
KRIPAA KARAHU GURUDEVA KII NAIIN  
JO SATA BAARA PAATHAKARA KOII  
CHUUTAI BANDHI MAHAASUKHA HOII

Glory, glory, all glory to the Lord Hanuman! Be gracious to me like my own guru. He who recites this a hundred times is freed from bondage and enjoys supreme bliss.

JO YAHA PADHAI HANUMAANA CHAALIISAA  
HOYA SIDDHI SAKHII GAURISAA  
TULASIIDAASA SADAA HARI CHERAA  
KIJJAI NAATHA HRIDAYA MAHAN DERRAA

He who reads this Hanumanchalisa attains perfection, to which the Lord Shiva testifies. Says Tulasi, 'O Lord, make my heart your dwelling-place, you who are forever in Rama's service.'

DOHAA

PAVANATANAYA SANKATA HARANA,  
MANGALA MUURATI RUUPA  
RAAMA LAKHANA SIITAA SAHITA,  
HRIDAYA BASAHU SURA BHUUPA

O Son of the wind, dispeller of all calamities, the very embodiment of all blessings! O king of the immortals, dwell in my heart with Rama, Lakshmana and Sita.

RISHI VALMIKI

Rishi Valmiki (who composed Ramayana) was a Dacoit by profession Valmiki was not the name that his parents chose for the poet. His real name was Ratnakara. The word 'Valmika' in Sanskrit means an ant-hill. Since he came out of an ant-hill, he got the name of Valmiki. But how strange! How did he come out

of an ant-hill? Now, that is a wonderful and delightful story. Valmiki by birth was actually a son born to a great sage Prachetasa.

One fine day while Ratnakara was playing around his fathers hermitage near the Ganges he lost himself in the forest & his parents assumed that Ratnakara had become prey to some beasts but then a hunter and his wife found Ratnakara crying and hence adopted this young baby as their son there after Vamiki forgot his parents took the profession of the hunter & he became an avatara of YAMA to the beasts and animals of the forest. His foster father searched for a bride and celebrated his marriage with a beautiful girl from a hunters family. In a few years she gave birth to some children. Thus Ratnakara's family grew in size. It became very difficult for him to provide food and clothing to his large family. So he took to robbery. He began to attack people going from one village to another, frighten them and took away all that they had. If they opposed him, he killed them.

One day Ratnakara was sitting by the side of a road waiting for a victim. It happened that the great sage Narada was passing that way. Narada had his favorite musical instrument, a Veena, in his hands. As he played on the Veena, he was singing a song in praise of God. When he was thus lost in joy, suddenly Ratnakara rushed at him. He lifted the stout staff in his hands and shouted, "Look here! Hand over all you have or else I'll break your head."

But Narada was not an ordinary man. He was a divine sage, and one who wandered all over the Earth, the Heaven and the Underworld. He was not frightened by the loud shouts of Ratnakara. He smilingly, "My dear man, all that I have only this old Veena and the rags I we; If you want them, you can certainly take them. Why should you break my head for these?"

Ratnakara was astonished at these words. He looked up at Narada's face. There was neither fear nor anger; there was only peace. And how bright was that face! He was surprised to see a face tender and innocent like that of a child. He had never seen such a lovely face. As he gazed, his cruel mind melted into tenderness.

Narada sat beneath a tree and as played on the Veena, sang a song in praise of God. It was sweet like the song of cuckoo. Ratnakara was deeply moved. Noticing the change, the sage Narada paused in his song and said, "Brother, stealing is a sin. Killing animals is also sinful.

Why do you do such evil?"

"Sire, what can I do Ratnakara replied, I have a large family. There are my old parents and my wife and children, They partake of my happiness and my troubles. I have to provide them with food and clothing. Hunting and stealing are all I know. What else can I do?" The sage smiled and said, "My friend, will any member of your family partake of your sin also ? Go and ask them, and bring back their reply."

Ratnakara thought that Narada was trying a trick to make his escape. Narada understood it and again said, "Well, child, if you do not trust me, you can tie me to this tree and then go."

Ratnakara thought that was all right. He tied Narada to a tree and went home.

On reaching home, he first went to his father and said, "Father, I rob people to get food and clothing for you all. It seems that is a sin. Do you not share in that sin?"

His father was angry and said, "You sinner, you should not do such bad things. Am I to share your sins? No, never. You have to suffer for what you do."

Ratnakara went to his mother and said, "Surely, mother, you will share my sin, won't you?" But she also scolded him and sent him away. He then went to his wife and said, "Do you know how I earn to provide you and your children with food and clothing? It is by robbery. But I steal for your sake. Therefore you are also partners in my sin. Isn't that so?"

The wife was displeased and said, 'What are you saying? What have we to do with your sin? You are my husband, and my children are your children. It is your duty to look after us and give us food and clothing.'

Ratnakara's eyes were opened. He realized that he alone was responsible for all his sins no one else would share his sin. As soon as it was clear to him, he ran to Narada. He untied the sage and amidst weeping, narrated to him all that had happened in his home. Falling at Narada's feet he asked the sage,

"Oh, sire now what of me? How can I atone for all the sins I have committed? You are my only savior."

Narada lifted him up and wiped his tears. He consoled him saying, "Do not be afraid. I shall teach you a way to wash off your sins." So he taught Ratnakara the sacred name of Rama - 'Rama Nam'. He made him sit beneath a tree and asked him to go on repeating the sacred name of Rama. He said, I shall come here again, Till then you should not get up and go away." Then the sage departed.

Ratnakara continued his 'tapas' chanting the name of Rama. His eyes were closed. His whole mind was concentrate on the chanting of the name of the Lord He forgot his existence. He had neither food nor sleep for days and days. And in this way quite a few years passed. An ant hill grew all around and above him. He could not even be seen by anybody.

At last one day the sage Narada again came that way. Of course, he knew that Ratnakara was inside the anthill. Very carefully he cleared that anthill still Ratnakara was wholly lost in his 'tapas' and did not wake up to the world around him. Narada chanted the name of Rama in his ears. Then he opened his eyes and saw the sage standing before him. He saluted him from where he was sitting. Narada helped him to get up. He also gently touched him all over. Ratnakara felt new life flowing through him. He touched the sage's feet; Narada lifted him up and embraced him. He said to him, "Ratnakara, you are blessed. God is pleased with your 'tapas'. You are now a sage of the highest order, a Brahmarshi. As you are now reborn from a Valmika (the ant-hill), will here after be famous as Valmiki."

Tears of joy welled up in Valmiki's eyes at these words. He prostrated before Narada again and said, "Sire, all this is your kindness. The company of good men uplifts man. I am myself a proof of this." Narada blessed him and went his way.

The sage, Valmiki, now formed his ashrama or hermitage near the river Ganga. His fame spread every - where Many other sages went with their families and settled down in his ashrama. This sons became the disciples of Valmiki.

#### JAMBVAN : THE URSINE KING

Once Brahma realized that being engaged in the work of creation, he was unable to devote time in the service of God. So creating a form of himself, he arrived on earth as Jambvan, the ursine king. Serving the God, reflecting his plays and meditating on the God were the routine of Jambvan.

In Satya yuga, the god had arrived in Vamana form. At that time, King Bali was ruling the southern country of the great Jambudwipa. He was very benevolent. But Devaraj Indra began to feel threatened by Bali's benevolence. So he insisted Lord Vishnu to keep a check on Bali. Thus at the insistence of Indra, Lord Vishnu appeared in Vamana(dwarf) form to test Bali's benevolence. Bali was performing a grand oblation then. Seeing a dwarf Brahmana (Vamana), he greeted him and asked him what he wanted from him. Vamana replied that it will be sufficient for him to have 3 steps of the land. Bali gladly agreed to give him the 3 steps of land and asked the Vamana to measure as much land as he could in his 3 steps. Thus taking his supreme form, Vamana measured the whole of the earth and the heaven in just 2 steps. Now there was no room for his third step. So Bali offered his own head to put the third step. So Vamana put his third step on Bali's head and crushed him down. Seeing the incarnation of God, Jambvan was the most exhilarated person. He went in every direction and heralded the news of God's arrival. Then in no time, he went around God seven times.

In Treta yuga, Jambvan became the minister of Sugreev. being superior in intelligence, strength and policies. He always used to give the proper advice to Sugreev. During Sita's search, when the simian party reached the seashore and sat there in desperation, it was Jambvan who reminded Hanuman of his powers and inspired him to go to Lanka. Lord Rama always consulted Jambvan before taking any decision. During the battle, Jambvan proved to be very helpful to Lord Rama. Ultimately, Rama emerged victorious and they all returned to Ayodhya. After the crowning ceremony of Lord Rama was over ,it was time to part. But Jambvan was very reluctant to leave. He parted with God only on one condition, that he would give him a sight of himself again in Dwapar yuga. In Dwapar yuga, one Satrajit had worshipped

Surya and got Syamantak Mani(gem). One day Shri Krishna asked him to give that gem to Ugrasena. But out of greed, Satrajit did not accept the proposal. Then, by chance, Satrajit's brother Prasanjit wore that gem around his neck and went out on a hunting expedition. In the forests, a lion killed him. The lion took the gem to its cave. There, Jambvan killed the lion and gave the gem to his children to play with.

Back in Dwarka, when Prasanjit did not return from hunting, Satrajit began to worry and suspected Shri Krishna of foul play. Rumour spread slowly. To avoid the blemishes, Lord Krishna himself set out to search for the gem. In the forest, he first found a horse and then the dead lion. So he entered the cave of Jambvan. Seeing a stranger, Jambvan's children began to cry out of fear. Hearing their cries, Jambvan arrived there and saw Krishna. Thus Jambvan began to fight with Lord Krishna. Their duel lasted continuously for 27 days without rest. At last Jambvan could no longer bear lord Krishna's blows. Jambvan thought: " He who can defeat me cannot be a God or demon. Indeed, he might be my lord Shri Rama himself. Thinking thus, Jambvan gave up fighting and as soon as he stopped, Lord Rama appeared before him with a bow and arrow. Jambvan fell flat at his feet .Stroking his head, Lord Krishna did away with all of his pain, fatigue and suffering. Then and there, Jambvan gave his daughter Jambvati to the service of the Lord and also the gem. Thus, Jambvan dedicated all of his life at the feet of the God.

**G A R U D A !!!**There are many Garuda related legends, some are derived from the Pali and Sanskrit literatures. The major Sanskrit literatures are the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Puranas. The main Pali source is the Tripikata.

In the Sanskrit literature, Garuda is a son of Kasyapa. Legends says that Kasyapa was a powerful sage. He had many wives, two were his favorites. These two were sisters, Vinata and Kadru respectively. Kadru request a blessing from her husband that she should have a large number of children, eventually she gave birth to 1,000 Naga sepents. The Nagas chose to live underworld in the ocean depth. Vinata requested from her husband that she should have only two sons and should be more powerful than the children of Kadru. In time, she laid 2 eggs. Vinata waited for 500 years, but the eggs showed no sign of change. Vinata grew impatient to know what's inside and broke one of the eggs herself.

Inside the egg was a boy with a well-developed upper body but has no limbs below his torso. Knowing that his mother was the cause of his premature birth and the reason of his deformity, the boy was furious. He cursed his own mother that she should become a slave of her sister, Kadru, for 500 years. After casting the curse, he rose up high in the sky and flew away, and finally settled down as the charioteer of the Sun God, Surya (Suriya). He was later known as Aruna (Arun).

Vinata's second egg finally hatched 500 years later, and out came Garuda. The body of Garuda expended so large in all directions. His top most part reached the sky. His body shone with brilliant lustre that many gods mistaken him for an incarnation of the god of fire, Agni.

The curse of Aruna on his mother finally came true. At the time, Vinata and Kadru were having a quarrel about the color of the horse produced from the churning ocean ceremony. (The main purpose of the ceremony was to produce the Amarita or the elixir of immortality.)

Vinata believed the horse was pure white in color. Kadru said it was grayish in color, hence the horse should have some strands of black hairs. Their quarrel led to a wager by which the loser would become a slave of the winner for 500 years.

The horse was in fact pure white. Kadru knew it and didn't want to lose the bet, she then ordered her Naga sons to assume the shape of horse's hairs black in color and stick themselves alternating the real hairs to make the horse appear grey. The innocent Vinata lost the bet and became Kadru's slave and was kept in custody underworld among the Naga population.

Garuda found this out later from his mother about the cunning trick. He made up his mind to free his mother. Garuda negotiated with Nagas by bringing them the Amarita (elixir of immortality) in exchange for his mother's freedom.



He fought a troop of gods led by God Indra. But Garuda's too powerful, even the lighting bolt, the most powerful weapon of Lord Indra, was broken. Garuda eventually obtained the elixir of immortal. The fight's intervened by the great God Vishnu (Narayana). The two are very powerful and no one can defeat another. The two then came to terms. Lord Vishnu gave Garuda a boon which made Garuda immortal, and promised him a higher seat than his own. In turn, Garuda agreed to become the vehicle of Vishnu. Garuda planned a trick by asking Lord Vishnu to follow him secretly and take away the elixir after Nagas have released his mother.

It's the boon which Garuda obtained from Lord Indra (Some legends said from Lord Vishnu) that makes Nagas the natural food of Garuda. Generally, Garuda catches a Naga by holding the Naga with his talons and beak by Naga's tail then split open the belly, eat only the fat and drop the body back to the sea.

Garuda has 2 sons; Nok Sumpatee, and Nok Sadayu.

### Maarkandeya - Conqueror of Death

Once there was a Brahmana couple who were issueless for a very long time. They practiced severe austerities and penances directed towards Lord Shiva. At last the Lord appeared before them and asked them to state their desire. They asked for a son to give purpose to their lives. Shiva offered them two choices, a son who would be wealthy, powerful and long lived, but of ill character, or a son who would be virtuous, but who will die when he turns sixteen. The Brahmana asked for a son who would be virtuous. The Lord granted the boon and disappeared.

In due course of time, a male child was born to this couple. They named him Maarkandeya. Maarkandeya showed early signs of spirituality. He was always interested in the worship of Lord Shiva and demonstrated an awesome mastery of difficult philosophical constructs at a very early age. Years flew by and the day on which he would turn 16 and die approached.

At last the Brahmana decided to tell the truth to his son and told him about the boon of Shiva and his preordained death on his sixteenth birthday. He advised Maarkandeya to spend the remainder of his time in worshipping the Lord. Accordingly, Maarkandeya commenced a puja (prayers, worship) to Lord Shiva in front of a Shiva-Linga (a representation of Shiva).

Yama arrived on the spot the moment the boy turned eighteen. Due to his constant devotion, Maarkandeya was able to spot the lord of death immediately. He embraced the Shiva Linga and continued his puja. Now Yama was in a quandary. He typically takes a soul to the abode of death by lassoing it with his Pasha (noose). But there was no way now to cast the noose around Maarkandeya without including the Shiva-Linga. However, his duty was clear, the time appointed for Maarkandeya's death had arrived and so he lassoed both the boy and the Linga in one go. He tried to drag both of them away, but was not able to budge the Shiva-Linga.

Lo and behold! Shiva appeared in person when his Linga was being pulled. He stopped the fool hardy attempt of Yama. Yama remonstrated that he was only doing his duty as the lifetime of the boy was up. Upon which, Shiva granted the boon of eternal youth the boy, who would always be on his sixteenth birthday. This way, Maarkandeya became immortal. [See Satyavan for another occasion on which Yama fails to collect the soul of a man whose time was fated to end.]

As one of the eternal sages, he appears in many stories in the Mahabharata and other minor works.

### Arjuna - The Peerless Archer

Arjuna was the third Pandava, born to Kunti, the wife of Pandu, by the grace of Indra. He rivalled his

divine father Indra in his prowess in arms. It was said that none of the mortals and few of the Gods could stand up to him in battle, such was his skill with his bow, Gandeeva. His guru is Drona, who had taught all the Pandavas and Kauravas.

He is an incarnation of Nara, one of the primeval twins. He won the hand of Draupadi, the Panchala princess, by his feat of marksmanship and she became the common wife of all the five Pandavas. In addition to her he married many other women during his voluntary exile. One of his wives is Subhadra, the sister of Krishna, through who he had a valiant son Abhimanyu. Abhimanyu was slain treacherously by the great warriors on the Kaurava side, who could not defeat the young warrior in fair combat.

Since Jayadratha, the son-in-law of Dhritrashtra was chiefly responsible for his son's death, Arjuna vowed to kill before sun-down the next day. He accomplished this feat with the help of a little trickery from Krishna.

He was the best archer in the world. He was known as Savyasachi, since he was ambidextrous. Another of his names was Bibatsu, or 'one-who-shirks-from-doing-an-ignoble-act'.

He had obtained the knowledge of many divine missiles from his his Guru Drona. While the Pandavas were serving their thirteen years of exile, he obtained more divine weaponry by praying to Lord Shiva. He also visited his father Indra's court at this time, where the dancer Urvashi fell in love with him. Arjuna rejected her advances, as she had been married to Puroorava, an ancestor of his. Angered, she cursed him to become a eunuch, but Indra modified the curse so that it would take effect for just a year, to be chosen by Arjuna himself. This curse came in handy when the Pandavas had to spend a year incognito. Arjuna disguised himself as Brihannala, a eunuch, and taught the ladies of the Virata Royal family in dance and music.

Arjuna's friendship with Krishna is legendary. Krishna is both his friend and his teacher. Krishna was Arjuna's charioteer in the great battle of Kurukshetra. The principal rival of Arjuna was Karna, whose skill with the bow came close to matching Arjuna's. So evenly matched were these two warriors, that Arjuna had to resort to an ignoble stratagem to slay Karna, killing him with a missile when Karna was attempting to move his chariot that had gotten stuck in the mud. This shameful act was against the laws of combat prevailing at that time.

Names

Savyasachin Ambidextrous

Phalgun Dark hued

Vibhatsu One who shirks from an ignoble act

Vijaya Victorious

Partha -

Uttara - The Wife of Abhimanyu

Uttara was the daughter of King of Virata of Matsya. It was in this kingdom that the Pandavas spent the thirteenth year of their exile, which they were required to spend incognito. Arjuna who had been cursed to be an eunuch for a year by Urvashi, was the dance teacher for the ladies in the Virata palace, where he taught Uttara also.

When the exile was over, the King Virata wanted to marry his daughter to Arjuna, who declined this proposal, as she was like a daughter to him. Instead he offered to marry her to his son Abhimanyu. This offer was accepted and Uttara and Abhimanyu were married.

She was pregnant with Parikshit at the time of her husband's death at Kurukshetra. Her son was born

dead due to the effect of the Brahmastra launched by Ashwatthama, but Lord Krishna tested the stillborn child for signs of life by pressing him with his foot (Parikshit = one who has been tested). By the grace of Krishna, the baby was brought back to life.

## Types of P R A Y E R S

### Morning Prayers

karaagre vasate lakshmiH karamadhye sarasvatii.karamuule tu govindaH prabhaate karadarshanaM..  
samudravasane devi parvatastanamaNDale .vishhNupatni namastubhyaM paadasparshaM kshamasva  
me ..

The front part of the hands (the finger tips) are ascribed to Goddess Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth, the middle part (the palm proper) to Goddess Saraswati - the Goddess of learning and the root (the part of hand near the wrist) to Govinda (God). Therefore, every morning, one should have a respectful look at one's hand which symbolizes honest labor.

O! Mother Earth, who has the ocean as clothes and mountains and forests on her body, who is the wife of Lord Vishnu, I bow to you. Please forgive me for touching you with my feet.

Morning Prayers  
karaagre vasate lakshmiH karamadhye sarasvatii.karamuule tu govindaH prabhaate karadarshanaM..  
samudravasane devi parvatastanamaNDale .vishhNupatni namastubhyaM paadasparshaM kshamasva  
me ..

### While Taking a bath

Gange cha Yamune chaiva Godavari Saraswati,Narmade Sindhu Kaveri jalesmin sannidhim kuru

In this water, I invoke the presence of holy waters from the rivers Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Saraswati, Narmada, Sindhu and Kaveri

### While Lighting a Lamp

shubhaM karoti kalyaanaM aarogyaM dhanasaMpadaa .shatrubudhdivinaashaaya diipajyoti namo.astute  
..

I salute the One who is the lamplight, that brings auspiciousness, prosperity, good health, abundance of wealth, and the destruction of the intellect's enemy

### Bedtime Prayer(KaracharaNa..)

karacharaNa kR^itaM vaakkaayajaM karmajaM vaa .shravaNanayanajaM vaa maanasaM vaaparaadhaM  
.vihitamavihitaM vaa sarvametatkshamasva .jaya jaya karuNaabdhe shriimahaadeva shambho ..

Oh Lord kindly forgive my wrong actions done knowingly or unknowingly, either through my organs of action (hand, feet, speech) or through my organs of perception (eyes, ears) or by my mind.Glory unto Thee O Lord, who is the ocean of kindness.

### While Eating (Bhojan Mantra)

brahmaarpaNaM brahma haviH brahmaagnau brahmaNaa hutam.h .brahmaiva tena gantavyaM  
brahmakarmasamaadhinaa ..

A process of offering is Brahman, the oblation is Brahman, the instrument of offering is Brahman, the fire to which the offering is made is also Brahman. For such a one who abides in Brahman, by him alone Brahman is reached.

### New Year Greeting

Surya Samvednapushpayeh Deeptih Karunyagandhane, Labdhva Sham Navvarshesmin Kuryatsarvasya mangalam

As the sun gives light, sensibility brings compassion, flowers give pleasant fragrance, may the new year

be auspicious

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FROM THE WEB SITE..

....<http://www.astrojyoti.com/venkateswara.htm>

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Lord Venkateswara of Tirupati, also known as Venkataramana Murthy, is regarded as the last incarnation of Lord Vishnu. It is hard to find a household in south India where the hymns in praise of the lord are not recited. The Tirumala Tirupati temple in Andhra Pradesh attracts millions of visitors every year. It is also one of the most well maintained and managed temples with online reservations for visits and Poojas. The offerings and donations by the devotees amount to several hundred crores of Rupees every year. A well-managed temple trust runs the "Venkateswara" hospitals, schools, colleges and a university with the money.

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Sri Venkateswara Suprabhatam

\*\*\*\*\*

Kowsalya supraja Rama poorva sandhya pravarthathe  
Uthishta narasardoola karthavyam daivamahnikam  
Uthishtoishta Govinda uthishta garudadhvaja  
Uthishta kamalakantha thrilokyam mangalam kuru  
Mathassamasta jagatham madukaitabhare:  
Vakshoviharini manohara divyamoorthe  
Sree swamini srithajana priya danaseele  
Sree Venkatesadayithe thava suprabhatham  
Thavasuprabhathamavindalochane  
Bhavathu prasanna mukhachandra mandale  
Vidhisankarendra vanithabhirarchithe  
Vrishasaila nathadavithel davanidhe  
Athriyadi sapharushayssamupasyasandyam  
Aakasa sindhu kamalani manoharani  
Aadaya padhayuga marchayithum prapanna:  
SeshadriSekhara vibho! Thava suprabhatham  
Panchananabja bhava shanmukavasavadhya:  
Tryvikramadhi charitham vibhudhasthuvanathi  
Bhashapathipatathi vasara shuddhi marath  
Seshadri sekhara vibho! thava subrabhatham  
Eeshathrapulla saraseeruha narikela  
Phoogadrumadi sumanohara Balikanam  
Aavaathi mandamanilassaha divya gandhai:  
Seshadri shekara vibho! thava suprabhatham  
Unmeelya nethrayugamuththama panjarasthaa:  
Paathraa vasishta kadhaleephala payasani Bhukthvaa  
Saleelamatha keli sukha: patanathi  
Seshadri sekhara vibho! thava suprabhatham  
Thanthreeprakarshamadhuraswanaya  
Vipanchyaa Gayathyanantha charitham  
Thava naradopi Bhashasamagrama sakruthkara sararammyam  
Seshadri sekhara vibho! thava suprabhatham  
Brungavaleecha makaranda rashanuvidda  
Jhankara geetha ninadaissa sevanaya  
Niryathyupaantha sarasee kamalodarebhyaha

Seshadri sekhara vibhol thava suprabhatham  
Yoshaganena varadhadni vimathyamaane  
Ghoshalayeshu dhadhimanthana theevraghoshaha  
Roshathkalim vidha-dhathe kakubhascha kumbhaha  
Seshadri sekhara vibho! thava suprabhatham  
Padmeshamithra sathapathra kathalivargha  
Harthum shriyam kuvalayasya nijanga Lakshmya  
Bheree ninadamiva bibrathi theevranadam  
Seshadri sekhara vibho! thava suprabhatham  
Sreemannabheeshta varadhakhila lookabandho  
Sree Sreenivasa Jagadekadayaika sindho  
Sree devathagruha bhujanthara divyamurthe  
Sree Venkatachalapathe! thava suprabhatham  
Sree swamy pushkarinikaplava nirmalangaa  
Sreyorthino hara viranchi sanadadyaha  
Dware vasanthi varavethra hathothamangaha:  
Sree Venkatachalapathe! thava suprabhatham  
Sree seshasaila garudachala venkatadri  
Narayanadri vrishabhadri vrishadri mukhyam  
Akhyam thvadeeyavasathe ranisam vadanthi  
Sree Venkatachalapathe! thava suprabhatham  
Sevaaparaashiva suresa krusanudharma  
Rakshombhunatha pavamana dhanadhi nathaha:  
Bhaddanjali pravilasannija seersha deSaha:  
Sree Venkatachalapathe! thava suprabhatham  
Dhateeshuthevihagaraja mrugadhiraja  
Nagadhiraja gajaraja hayadhiraja:  
Swaswadhikara mahimadhika marthayanthe  
Sree Venkatachalapathe! thava suprabhatham  
Sooryendhubhouma bhudhavakpathi kavya souri  
Swarbhanukethu divishathparishathpradanaa:  
Twaddhasa dasa charamavadhidaasa daasa:  
Sree Venkatachalapathe! thava suprabhatham  
Thwathpadadhulibharita spurithothha manga:  
Swargapavarga nirapeksha nijantharanga:  
Kalpagamakalanaya kulatham labhanthe  
Sree Venkatachalapathe! thava suprabhatham  
Thvadgopuragra sikharani nireekshmana  
Swargapavarga padaveem paramam shrayantha:  
Marthyaa manushyabhuvane mathimashrayanthe  
Sree Venkatachalapathe! thava Suprabhatham  
Sree bhoominayaka dayadhi gunammruthabdhe  
Devadideva jagadeka saranya moorthe  
Sreemannanantha garudadibhirarchithangre  
Sree Venkatachalapathe! thava suprabhatham  
Sree Padmanabha Purushothama Vasudeva  
Vaikunta Madhava Janardhana chakrapane  
Sree vathsachinha saranagatha parijatha  
Sree Venkatachalapathe! thava suprabhatham  
Kandarpa darpa hara sundara divya murthe  
Kantha kuchamburuha kutmialola drishte  
Kalyana nirmala gunakara divyakeerthe  
Sree Venkatachalapathe! thava suprabhatham  
Meenakrute kamatakola Nrusimha varnin  
Swamin parashvatha thapodana Ramachandra  
Seshamsharama yadhunandana kalki roopa

Sree Venkatachalapathe! thava suprabhatham  
Elaa lavanga ghanasaara sugandhi theertham  
Divyam viyathsarithi hemaghateshu poornam  
Drutwadhya vaidika sikhamanaya: prahrushta:  
Thishtanthi Venkatapathe! thava suprabhatham  
Bhaswanudethi vikachani saroruhani  
Sampooryanthi ninadai: kakubho vihangha:  
Sree vaishnavassathatha marthitha mangalasthe  
Dhamasrayanthi thava Venkata! subrabhatham  
Bhramadayassuravarasamaharshayastthe  
Santhassa nandana mukhastvatha yogivarya:  
Dhamanthike thavahi mangala vasthu hasthaa:  
Sree Venkatachalapathe! thava suprabhatham  
Lakshminivasa niravadya gunaika sindo:  
Samsarasagara samuththaranaika setho  
Vedanta vedya nijavaibhava bhakta bhogy  
Sree Venkatachalapathe! thava suprabhatham  
Itnam vnsnacnala pamerlna suprabhatham  
Ye manava: prathidinam patithum pravrutha:  
Thesham prabhatha samaye smruthirangabhajam  
Pragnyam paraartha sulabham paramam prasoothe  
Venkateswra Stotram  
Kamalakucha choochuka kunkumatho  
Niyatharunithathula neelathano  
Kamalayatha lochana lokapathe  
Vijayeebhava Venkatasaila pathe  
Sachadhurmukha shanmukha panchamukha  
Pram ukakhila daivatha mouli mane  
Saranagatha vathsala saranidhe  
Paripalayamam vrishasailapathe  
Athivelathaya thava durvishahai  
Ranuvella Kruthairaparada sathai:  
Paritham thvaritham vrishasailapathe  
Paraya krupaya paripahi Hare  
Adhivenkata saila mudaramather  
Janathabimathadhika danarathath  
Paradevathaya gathithannigamai:  
Kamaladayithanna param kalaye  
Kalavenuravavasa gopa vadhu  
Sathakoti vrithath smarakoti samath  
Prathivalla vikabhimathath sukhadhath  
Vasudeva suthanna paramkalaye  
Abhirama gunakara dasarathe  
Jagadeka danurdhara dheeramathe  
Raghunayaka Rama Ramesa vibho  
Varadho bhava deva daya jaladhe  
Avaneethanaya kamaneyakaram  
Rajaneechara charu mukhamburuham  
Rajaneechara raja thamo mihiram  
Mahaneeyamaham Raghuramamaye  
Sumukham Suhrudam Sulabham sukhadam  
Swanujam cha Sukhayamamogha—  
Saram Apahaya Raghudwaha manyamaham  
Na kathnchana kanchana jathu bhaje  
Vinaa Venkatesam nanatho nanatha:  
Sadaa Venkatesam smarami smarami

Hare Venkatesa Praseeda Praseeda  
Priyam Venkatesa Prayachha Prayachha  
Aham doorasthe padamboja yugma  
Pranamechaya gathya sevam karomi  
Sakruthsevaya nithyasevapalam thvam  
Prayachha prayachha prabho Venkatesa  
Agnanina maya doshaanaseshan vihithan Hare  
Kshamasvathm kshamasvathvam  
Seshasailasikhamane  
Venkateswra Prapatti  
Eesanam jagothosya Venkatapathe  
Vishno paraam preyaseem  
Thadhwakshasthala nithyavasarasikam  
Thath kshanthi samvardhineem  
Padmalankrutha pani pallavayugam  
Padmasanasthaam Sriyam  
Vathsalyadi gunojwalam Bhagavatheem  
Vande jaganmatharam  
Sreeman krupajaianidhe krithasarvaloka  
Sarvagna Saktanathavathsala sarvaseshin  
Swamin susheela sulabhasritha parijatha  
Sree Venkatesa charanow saranam prapadhye  
Aanupurarpitha sujatha sugandhi pushpa  
Sowrabhya Sowrabhakarow samasannivesow  
Sowmyow sadanubhavanepi navanu bhavyow  
Sree Venkatesa charanow saranam papadhye  
Sadyo vikasi samudithvara saandra raga  
Sourabhya nirbhara saroruha soumya vaartham  
Samyakshu sahasa padeshu vilekhyanthow  
Sree Venkatesa charanow saranam prapadhye  
Rekamayadwaja sudhakala saathapatra  
Vajraamkrusamburuha kalpaka sankha chakrai  
Bhawyai ralankruthathalow parathathva chinnai  
Sree Venkatesa charanow saranam prapadhye  
Thamrodara dyuthi parajitha padmaraagow  
Baahyairmahobhi rabhi bhootha mahendra neelow  
Udhyannakhamsubhi rudastha sasaanka bhasow  
Sree Venkatesa charanow saranam prapadhye  
Saprema bheethi kamalakara pallavabhyam  
Samvahanepi sapadiklamamada dhanow  
Kantha vavaangmanasa gochara sowkumaryow  
Sree Venkatesa charanow saranam prapadhye  
Lakshmeemaheetha dhanuroopa nijanubhava  
Neeladi divyamahisheekara pallavanam  
Aarunya sankramanatha kila saandra raagow  
Sree Venkatesa charanow saranam prapadhye  
Nithyanamadvidhi sivadi kireetakoti  
Prathyupthadeepta navarathna mahaprarohai  
Neerajanavidhi mudaramupada dhanow  
Sree Venkatesa charanow saranam prapadhye  
Vishnopade parama ithyuditha prasamsow  
Yow madhwa uthsa ithi bhogyathayapyupaaththow  
Bhooyasthathethi thava paanithala pradishtow  
Sree Venkatesa charanow saranam prapadhye  
Parthaaya thatsadrusa saarathina thvayaiva  
Yow darshithow swacharanow saranam vrajethi

Shoyopi mahyamihathow karadarsithowthe  
Sree Venkatesa charanow saranam prapadhye  
Manmoordhni kaaliyapane vikataataveshu  
Sree Venkatadri sikhare sirasi srutheenaam  
Chithepyananyamanasam samamahithowthe  
Sree Venkatesa charanow saranam prapadhye  
Amiana hrushyadavaneethala keernapushpow  
Sree Venkatadri sikhharabharanaya manow  
Aanandithaakila manonayanow thavaithow  
Sree Venkatesa charanow saranam prapadhye  
Praya prasanna janatha prathamavagahyow  
Mathusthanaviva sisoramrtuhayamanow  
Prapthow parasparathulamathulantharowthe  
Sree Venkatesa charanow saranam prapadhye  
Sathvotharaissathathasevya padambujena  
Samsaratharaka dayadruganchalena  
Soumyopayanthru munina mamadarshithowthe  
Sree Venkatesa charanow saranam prapadhye  
Sreesa sriya ghatikaya thvadupaya bhava  
Prapye thvayi swayamu peyathaya spuranthya  
Nithyasrithaya niravadya gunayathubhyam  
Syam kinkaroo Vrishagireesanajathumahyam  
Venkateswra Mangalam  
Sriyah kanthaya kalyana nidhaye nidhayerthinam  
Sri Venkata nivasaya Srinivasaya Mangalam.  
Lakshmi savibhramaloka-subhru vibhrama chakshushe  
Chakshushe SarvaloKanam Venkatesaya Mangalam.  
Sri Venkatadri Sringagra-Mangalaha bharananghraye  
Mangalanam nivasaya Venkatesaya Mangalam.  
Sarvavayava soundarya Sampadha Sarvachethasam  
Sada sammohanayasthu Venkatesaya Mangalam.  
Nithyaya niravadhyaya Sathyananda chidhathmane  
Sarvantharathmane Srimad Venkatesava Mangalam.  
Swathassarvavide sarvasakthaye Sarvaseshine  
Sulabhaya Suseelaya Venkatesaya Mangalam.  
Parasmai Brahmane Poorna Kamaya Paramathmane  
Prayunje Parathathvaya Venkatesaya Mangalam.  
Akalathathva masrantha mathmanamanu-pasyatham  
Aipthya mritha rupaya Venkatesaya Mangalam.  
Prayah swacharanow Pumsam Saranyathvena Panina  
Kripaya dhisathe Srimad-Venkatesava Mangalam.  
Dhayamritha tharanginya-Stharangairiva Seethalaih  
Apagaissinchalhe viswam Venkatesava Mannalam.  
Sragbhushambara hetheenam Sushamava hamurthaye  
Sarvarthi Samanavasthu Venkatesaya Mangalam.  
Sri Vaikunta virakthaya Swami Pushkarineethate  
Ramaya Ramamanaya Venkatesaya Mangalam.  
Srimad sundarajamathru manimanasavasine  
Sarvaloka Nivasava Srinivasaya Mangalam.  
Mangalasangana paraih madacharya Purogamaih.  
Sarvaischa Purvairacharyaih Sathkrithayasthu Mangalam.  
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Jagannath temple-Some facts

The celebrated Temple of Lord Jagannath now existent at Puri was constructed by Raja Ananta Varman



Chodaganga Dev in 12th century A.D. The wooden images of Jagannath Balabhadra and Subhadra were installed in that temple. The management of the temple continued under the Hindu rulers till 1558, when the State of Orissa was conquered by the Afghan Nawab of Bengal and the temple was attacked by the Afgan General 'Kalapahad'. Then, an independent Khurda kingdom was established by Ramachandra Deb, who assumed the management of the temple. He consecrated the temple and reinstalled the deities. Raja Mansingh, a General of the Mughal King Akbar, defeated the Afghans and annexed Orissa in to the Mughal dominion. It remained under the Mughals till 1751 A.D. Till 1760, the temple continued under the Khurda Raja, who was paying tribute to Mughals and Marhattas. Marhattas took up direct management of the temple till 1803. The Britishers annexed Orissa into British empire in 1803 and allowed Puri Raja to manage the temple. The position continued till 1947.

## The Deities

Lord Jagannath, the symbol of universal love and brotherhood is worshipped in the Temple along with Balabhadra, Subhadra, Sudarshan, Madhaba, Sridevi and Bhudevi on the Ratnabedi or the bejewelled platform. The Deities, Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Chakra Sudarshan are made of margosa wood. When one lunar month of Ashadha is followed by another lunar month of Aashadha, the deities change their bodies during such a leap month. This is known as Navakalebar or New Body Ceremony. Last four new body ceremonies of the Lords were celebrated in the year 1950, 1969, 1977 and 1996. On such occasions, Puri witnesses the largest crowd in her fold.

## History of the deities

The deities of the Puri temple are generally known as the Trimurti(Trinity) though, to the scholars, they are Chaturdhaa murtis (or images, 4 in number). Some think that originally there was only Jagannath as the object of worship and when Neela Madhava disappeared, King Indradyumna fabricated the body of Jagannath out of a log of wood that was picked up from the sea, as per a divine direction received by the King. Scholars holding the view that originally the Present-day Trinity was not there, cite the example of a Temple found in the Cuttack District in Orissa (belonging perhaps to the seventh century A.D.) where the images only of Jagannath and Balabhadra have been carved and Subhadra is not to be seen there.

It is, therefore, believed that when there was a great resurgence of Saktism from the 7th century onwards, there was a successful attempt to install an image of the Mother Goddess (Durga or Sakti) in the Puri Temple by the side of Jagannath. According to some others, installation of the image of Durga or Sakti (who is also known as Bhadraa, Mangalaa etc.) might have taken place during the visit of Sankaraachaarya to Puri. In the Konarka Temple built in the 13th century A.D. (about a century later than the Puri Temple), there is a panel of three images. Jagannath is seen in the middle and to His left is the Mother Goddess, while to His right is a Linga (phallus). From this, it is deduced by some that this might have been the "Trio" of the Puri Temple, indicating the equal importance of Vaishnavism, Saktism and Saivism.

There is another hypothesis that Bhadraa or Mangalaa (Durga) came to be called as Subhadra and at the time of Vaishnavite preponderance, she was introduced as Srikrishna's sister, whose name also is Subhadra. Similarly one of the names of Lord Siva is Veerabhadra. Somehow, at a time of Vaishnavic efflorescence, He was transformed into Balabhadra. (The second half of this name i.e., 'Bhadra' was retained and the first half was substituted by Bala). When HE was thus called Balabhadra, He, was introduced as the elder brother of Srikrishna.

## The costumes (Veshas)

The Deities are adorned with cotton and silk fabrics, Gold Ornaments studded with precious stones, flowers of different varieties, Tulsi leaves, sandal paste, camphor. These articles are used in the daily and periodical rituals. Some important Veshas or costumes of the deities are mentioned below.

### 1. Abakasha (Tadapa uttari) Vesha

This Veshha is done everyday after Mangal Aarati for the Abakash rituals. The clothes which are worn by the deities for this purpose are known as "Tadapa" and "Uttariya".

## 2. Sadha Veshha

This Veshha are the normal costumes of deities which they wear five times in a day, especially after each food offering. This Veshha comprises silken clothes and flower garlands.

## 3. Bada Sringer Veshha

This the last Veshha of the deities done everyday before the night "Pahuda". Bada Sringer Veshha is mostly of flowers of different colours and species. The deities wear silk clothes called 'Khandua'.

## 4. Chandan Veshha

This veshha is done for 42 days starting from Akshayya Tiritiya day.

## 5. Ganapati or Hathi veshha

On the full moon day in the month of Jyestha, after the bathing ceremony is over, the deities are dressed like elephants. Lord Jagannath and Lord Balabhadra appear like Ganesh(the Elephant God).

## 6. Suna(gold) veshha

On the 11th day in the bright fortnight of Ashada, Suna Veshha takes place, when the deities are in their respective chariots near the Lion's gate of Sree Jagannath temple. The deities are decorated with many gold ornaments. This veshha is also known as 'Bada Tadhau' veshha and Raja Veshha is also done on Dashahara, Kartik Purnima, Pousha purnima and Dola purnima.

## 7. Banabhaji Veshha

It is done on the 10th day of the dark fortnight of Bhadraba. The deities are dressed as if going for a picnic, like cowherd boys.

## 8. Kaliyadalana Veshha

On the 11th day of the dark fortnight of Bhadraba, Lord JAGANNATH is dressed like Lord Krishna killing the Kaliya Serpent.

## 9. Pralambasura Badha Veshha

It is done on the 12th day of the dark fortnight of Bhadraba(September), Lord Balabhadra's killing of the demon Pralambasura is depicted in this Veshha.

## 10. Krishna Balarama Veshha

This Veshha is done on the 13th day of the dark fortnight of Bhadraba. Lord Jagannath and Balabhadra

are dressed like Lord Krishna and Balaram.

#### 11. Bali Baman Vesha

On the 12th day of the bright fortnight of Bhadraba, Lord Jagannath is dressed like "Bamana"(dwarf). Bamana is the fifth incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

12. Radha-Damodara Vesha From the 11th day of the bright fortnight of Ashwina to the 10th day of the bright fortnight of Kartika, this vesha takes place.

#### 13. Thiakia(Laxmi-Narayan) Vesha

It is done on the 11th day of the bright fortnight of Kartika.

#### 14. Bankachula Vesha

It is done on the 12th day of the bright fortnight of Kartika.

#### 15. Adakia(Tribikrama) Vesha

This is done on the 13th day of the bright fortnight of Kartika.

#### 16. Dalikia Vesha

On the 14th day of the bright fortnight of Kartika, this is also known as Laxmi-Nrisimha Vesha.

#### 17. Nagarjuna Vesha

This vesha is occasionally done in the month of Kartika, when there are six days of "Panchaka". The lords are dressed like warriors. In the recent past, this besha has been done on 16.11.1994. The previous four dates were 26.11.1993, 3.11.1968, 16.11.1967 and 26.11.1966.

#### 18. Ghodalagi Vesha

During the period from the 6th day of the bright fortnight of Margasira to the 5th day of the bright fortnight of Magha(Basanta Panchami), the deities wear winter clothes.

#### 19. Jamalagi Vesha

From Basanta Panchami to Dola Purnima, the deities wear modified Ghoda(Winter dress).

#### 20. Padma Vesha

This vesha is done on any saturday or Wednesday between the new moon day of Magha and Basanta Panchami. "Padma" means lotus. The dress materials made of lotus, "Sola" lace and paper,gum etc.

## 21. Gaja Uddharana Vesha

This Vesha is done on the full moon day of Magha. This Vesha depicts a story in the puranas as to how Lord Vishnu saved an elephant from the attack of an Alligator.

Besides these, there are other veshas like Shradha and Chacheri veshas are done in the month of Margasira and Falguna respectively. The sevaks of temple who dress the deities with clothing and flowers are known as Puspalaks or Singharis.

### Legend

Legendary account as found in the Skanda-Purana, Brahma Purana and other Puranas state that Lord Jagannath was originally worshipped as Neela madhab by a savaer king(tribal chief) named Viswavasuu. Having heard about the Deity, King Indradyumna sent a brahmin priest, Vidyapati to locate the Deity, who was worshipped secretly in a dense forest by Viswavasuu. Vidyapati tried his best but could not locate the place. But at last he managed to marry Viswavasuu's daughter Lalita. At repeated request of Vidyapati, Viswavasuu took his son-in-law blindfolded to a cave where Neelamadhab was worshipped. Vidyapati was very intelligent. He dropped mustard seeds on the way. The seeds germinated after a few days, which enabled him to find out the cave later on. On hearing from him, King Indradyumna proceeded immediately to Odra desha (Orissa) on a pilgrimage to see and worship the Deity. The king was disappointed at the sudden disappearance of the Deity. The Deity was hidden in sand. The king was determined not to return without having darshan of the Deity and observed fast unto death at Mount Neela, when a celestial voice cried 'thou shalt see him'. Afterwards the king performed a horse sacrifice and built a magnificent temple for Vishnu. Narasinmha Murti brought by Narada was installed in the temple. During sleep, the king had a vision of Lord Jagannath. Also anastral voice directed him to receive the fragrant tree on the seashore and make idols out of it. Accordingly the king got Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Chakra Sudarshan made and installed them in the temple.

G A N E S H A!!

The concept of a community Ganesh Festival was introduced to us by one of India's foremost patriot and leading social worker Lokmanya Tilak. The General public was swept away in the splendor and devotion of this 10 day festival which brought in its wake 'Kirtans', meetings, mela and cultural programme, the echo's of which could be heard in every nook and corner of the city.

This festival led to awareness of the masses through the channels of entertainment. Donations from the public were channelised into religious, cultural and community works. Once the younger generation realised that they could ride the vehicle of the Ganesh Festival to improvement. Scores of youth stepped forward to offer their services.

The community Ganesh Festival as it is celebrated in Maharashtra today has created a history of sorts with its success in multiplying, blossoming and maintaining Maharashtra's culture.

### A festival of the Masses:

The community Ganesh Festival, first introduced by Lokmanya Tilak has undergone a sea change since its inception. This once strictly homely festival has gained enormous popularity and following. This is evident in the enthusiasm and religious fervor with which it is celebrated. This Festival is distinguished by its diverse novelty drama as well as its links with historic and mythological incidents. This festival brings with it pomp, birght lights, a glimpse into the diverse cultures of India, famous sculptures and palaces.

The decorations depict varied contemporary topics such as ban on dowry, de-addiction, corruption, school, admissions, superstitions etc.

This festival has become a medium to bring to the foremost a wide range of topics and issues that touch and change our lives today. A way to fight against injustice, progress in education and science are just

some of the topics highlighted by this festival.

The festival encompasses in its arms unity, vastness, comradeship and patriotism and forwards the cause if the same. The 107 year old Shrimant Dagdusheth Halwai Ganesh Festival is the jewel in the crown of Maharashtra's long history of community Ganesh festival. It is distinguished by its endeavour to uphold Maharashtra's cultural heritage. The vastness and splendour with which it is celebrated and its concerted efforts to keep the torch that Lokmanya Tilak lighted, burning bright.

The Ganesh festival acts as an inspiration to scores of youth and is homeground of social work. It acts as the wheel that moulds fresh minds and gives them a certain direction in life. It is a medium that encourages art, sport, religion, culture, and knowledge of history, music and dance. There is a constant effort to ensure that the vulgarity that has become a part of certain community festivals does not touch the Ganesh Festival. Instead impetus is given to creative pursuits and social work. With the grace of Lord Ganesh there has been a positive change in the outlook of the volunteers of this Ganesh festival and it is increasingly becoming a society-oriented festival.

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The Puranas chronicle the history of the Chardhaam (the four centres of pilgrimage) and the Four Yugas (eras). According to them Badrinath belongs to the Satyug, Rameshwaram to the Tretayug, Dwarka to the Dwaparyug and Jagannath to the Kalyug.

Lord Narayan himself used to practice his sadhana (penance) here but Indra and his apsaras would often create obstacles in his meditation. Over a period of time this region grew very famous and too many people started visiting it. Since by the end of the Dwaparyug people's minds veered towards tamasic and rajasic attitudes and were losing their sattvic qualities, so the Lord Narayan disappeared from this place. Those great sages to whom Lord Narayan was visible since Satyug were also deprived of the Darshan. Those great souls along with other gods, sages and ascetics sought audience with Lord Brahma and asked him.

"Dwapareya samanu praaptey vishalayaa vishal dhee

Bhagwan drishyate naive tatra ki kaaran vad"

"O Lord Brahma! unlike the past yugas, in this Dwaparyug we are deprived of the darshan (audience) of Narayan! Has the lord abandoned Badrikashram? If so where does he reside now?"

Lord Brahma said that inspite of all his meditative energy he was unable to find out where Narayan was and directed them to Lord Shiva for a solution. Lord Brahma and the sages then sought Shiva at the Kailash Parbat and asked him where Narayan could be found but he too had no answer to where Narayan had disappeared. He suggested that they all go to Vaikuntha as only Lord Vishnu himself would be able to tell them the whereabouts of Narayan.

Thus Lord Brahma, Lord Shiva and all the sages went to meet Lord Vishnu in Vaikuntha Lok (paradise, the abode of Lord Vishnu). They recited stotras (chants) and invoked Lord of Vaikuntha -Lord Vishnu himself. The Lord did not reveal himself but communicated through his divine voice-The Akashwani and he said:

"Bhalloi na darshanam yami sav dharma bahishkritye"

O sages! It is not just the truly devoted who come to Badrikashram, those who pretend to be bhakts(devotees) but do not really revere me have also started coming to the Badrikashram.

"Yadi vo darshane sharaddha mandpsth sureshwara

Gruhadhwam mamkin moorti shaili narad kundanam"

Those people who do not have the Bhakti and Shraddha (devotion) shall not have the privilege of my Darshan as I will not be visible though I will continue to reside in the Badrikashram. For those devotees who have Bhakti(faith) and Devotion I am present in the form of a stone in the Narad Kund (a pond or lake near Alaknanda river)

If you feel devoted you can worship me in the form of a deity in the temple, you can remove the Idol of Lord Narayan from the Naradkund, create a temple around it and experience the punya (blessings) that others have experienced through my Pratyaksh Darshan (actual audience) in the past yugas."

All of them including Lord Brahma, Lord Shiva and the sages as well as devotees were very pleased for having found the answer to their question and accepted the command of Lord Vishnu and returned to Badrikashram with great enthusiasm.

The divine Moorti (idol) was extracted from the Naradkund by Lord Brahma himself and was placed for the worship by common people nearly 6500 years ago. It was addressed as Bhagwan Badrinath, Vishaladhish and such other names and respectfully consecrated in the temple.

Everyone the Gods, the sages, the ascetics, the suras and the asuras (demons), the yakshas, the gandharvas, the kinnars received the darshan of the Lord. No group was considered superior to the other. But over time this changed and a few people caught in false sense of pride thought they were privileged and started fighting for priority in darshan. In order to resolve the conflict Lord Brahma then decided that six months of winter would be for the Gods to receive Lord Narayan's darshan and the six months of summer would be for the sages, ascetics and common people. Thus from the month of Vaishakh to Kartik the humans/mortals would receive the Lord's darshan and worship him and from Margashish to Chaitra the Devas (gods) would receive darshan and worship him. Thus Lord Badrinath received both Narpuja (worship by mortals) and Devpuja (worship by Gods).  
Badrikashram has been known by different names in different times:

In the Satyug it was called the Muktiprada because in this era Lord Narayan himself resided in the Badrikan (the forest of Badri Trees), his devotees could see him whenever they wished to.

In the Tretayug Lord Narayan was only visible to those who had acquired the vision after great sadhana (penance) and those who were yogamukt. Since Lord Narayan could only be seen by the few, who had meditated, the place came to be known as Yogasiddhit.

In the Dwaparyug this region became very well known. Its fame spread far and wide, as a result large number of people flocked to see Lord Narayan and so the place came to be known as Vishala, which means very large.

Badri trees grew in abundance in this region, so in time this place came to be known as Badrikashram

The Hinyaan did not believe in idolatry. On the other hand the Mahayaanis were idol worshippers. The road to the Tibet based Kailash Mansarovar passed through Badrikashram in those days. The people of the Mahayaan sect looked upon Lord Badrinath as another form of Buddha and paid their obeisance to him with reverence and faith. But the Hinyaan who were not idol worshippers started disturbing the peace

of the Badrikashram. The situation worsened to the extent that the devotees found it difficult to protect the Lord's idols. They came to the conclusion that since the earth is never seedless it will produce another great soul at some time. They put the idols of Lord Narayan back in the Naradkund. People of the mahayana sect fled from the Badri region to other places.

Wherever the ascetics of the Badri region lived also came to be known as the Panch Badri. As a result the actual location of Badri region became doubtful. When the divine bodied saadhakas (ascetics) could not see the idols of Lord Narayan in the Naradkund they were saddened and expressed their sorrow to Lord Shiva. They lamented that one could not receive darshan of the lord even in Badrikashram now and wondered at the cause. Lord Shiva meditated on this question and then told them what was revealed to him. He said that the trouble was not only in Badrikashram but in entire Bharat (India). The people of Bharat (India) had forgotten the ways of the Vedas. To re-establish Vedic thought and to revive the lost significance of the pilgrimage centres he said he would have to take birth as a mortal. After reassuring them he asked them to leave.

"Vipra bhairav datsya gehe gatva sa ve shiva

Tatputro bhumiloke shankronama: vishruta"

Thus Lord Shiv took birth in Southern Kerala in a village called Kaladi in the family of the Brahmin Bhairavdatta.

When Adi Shankaracharya was 11 years old he and his fellow disciples arrived at Badrikashram. When he reached there early in the morning the fresh and divine breeze of Sushmaand Gandhmadna mountain moved him greatly and he spontaneously started reciting the Ashtapadi. After a few days he started looking for the divine idols of Badrinath along the southern part of the Alaknanda river. As he excavated along the left bank of the river he felt certain that the Naradkund also known as the Narayankund was between the Naradshila and the Varahshila. With this belief he dived into the pond. He found an idol. On bringing it out of the water and closely inspecting it he felt that it did not have any distinctive features to indicate it was a divine idol. He put it back into the water and again dived into the Narayankund and again found an idol but did not find anything distinctive about it. He dived the third time and again found an idol and just when he was about to put it back into the water a voice stopped him, which said that

'I am Badrinath and have been consecrated by Brahma once before,'

The voice asked him to give this divine idol its rightful place.

Thus about 2500 years ago Badrinath was consecrated and worshipped by Adi Shankaracharya. The rituals and procedure of worship as laid out by Adi Shankaracharya is being practised at Badrinath till today. Srimad Bhagvad Gita has explained the significance of the temple and glory of Lord Shri Badrinarayan.

## The Temple

The temple's present structure was built by the Kings of Garhwal about two centuries ago. The temple has three sections - Garbhagriha (Sanctum), The Darshan Mandap, and Sabha Mandap. The Garbhagriha (Sanctum) houses Lord Badri Narayan, Kuber (God of wealth), Narad Rishi, Uthavar, Nar & Narayan.

Lord Badri Narayan (also called as Badri Vishal) is armed with Shankh (Conch) and Chakra in two arms in a lifted posture and two arms rested on the lap in Yogamudra. The principal image is of black stone and it represents Vishnu seated in meditative pose. The temple also houses Garuda (Vahana – vehicle of Lord Narayan) and Goddess Mahalaxmi. Also here are the idols of Adi Shankar, Swami Desikan and Shri Ramanujan Guru-Shisya parampara is supposed to have its roots here. The principal image is of black stone and it represents Vishnu seated in meditative pose. The temple also houses Garuda (Vahana – vehicle of Lord Narayan) and Goddess Mahalaxmi.

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There is famous Rigvedic Verse that says "Ekam Sat " that is "There is one Being ,the sages call Him by many names." The God (Parmeshwar) has three deities who carry on the world .This is Known as Holy Trinity. Brahma- the creator, Vishnu - the perpetuator of life and Shiva (Mahesh ) -the purifier and perpetuator of good and destroyer of evil. Rig Veda refer Shiva as Rudra as in its following verse . "We Worship Tryambaka (Rudra) , Who spread Fragrance and Increases Nourishment , May He release me ,like the cucumber from its stem , From Mortal Life , But not From Immortality . "(Rig Veda Mandal VII Sukta 59 and Mantra 12)

The Yajurveda describes Shiva as ascetic warrior Whose robe is of Deer Skin and He carries Trishul . According to the verse Satyam, Shivam ,Sundaram ,the life is described as having three facets Truth (Satyam), Good (Shivam) and the Beautiful (Sundaram).

Shiva is a living God. The most Sacred and ancient books of India, the Rig Veda narrates His presence in the hymns. Vedic myths, rituals and even astronomy testifies to His existence from the dawn of time .The Mohindaro and Harapa findings confirm Shiva worship in the ancient India. According to the older scriptures, He has three places of His residence. One is Kailash Parvat another is Lohit Giri under which Brahmaputra flows and third is Muzwan Parvat . The Amarnath Cave has special significance .

The Legend about the importance of Amarnath Cave is as follows :-

This is The Cave which was chosen by Bhole Shankar for narrating the secrets of immortality and creation of Universe to Maa Parvati ji . The story goes like this . Centuries ago Maa Parvati asked Shiv ji to let her know why and when He started wearing the beads of heads ( Mund Mala) . Bhole Shankar replied when ever you are born I add one more head in my beads . Maa Parvati said , " My Lord, my body is destroyed every time and I die again and again, but you are Immortal. Please let me know the secret of this ." Bhole Shankar replied that it is due to Amar Katha ."

Maa Parvati insisted that she may be told that secret. For long Shiva ji continued postponing . Finally on consistent demand from Maa Parvati He made up his mind to tell the immortal secret . He started for lonely place where no living being could listen it . He choose Amarnath Cave . In preparation to that He left His Nandi ( The Bull which He used to ride ) at Pahalgam (Bail gaon) . At Chandanwari He released Moon from his hairs (Jataon). At the banks of Lake Sheshnag He released the snakes . He decided to leave his Son Ganesh at Mahagunas Parvat (Mahaganesh Hill) . At Panjtarni, Shivji left the Five Elements behind (Earth , Water, Air , Fire and Sky) which make living being . He is the Lord of these elements. It is believed that as a symbol of sacrificing the earthly world , Shivaji and Maa Parvati had Tandav Dance . After leaving behind all these, Bhole Shankar enters the Holy Amarnath Cave along with Parvati Maa . Lord Shiva takes his Samadhi on the Deer Skin and concentrate . To ensure that no living being is able to hear the Immortal Tale , He created Rudra named Kalagni and ordered him to spread fire to eliminate every living thing in and around the Holy Cave . After this He started narrating the secret of immortality to Maa Parvati . But as a matter of chance one egg which was lying beneath the Deer skin remained protected . It is believed to be non living and more over it was protected by Shiva -Parvati Asan (Bed) . The pair of pigeons which were born out of this egg became immortal having listened the secret of immortality (Amar Katha).

Many pilgrims report seeing the pair of pigeons when they trek the arduous route to pay their obeisance before the Ice-Lingam (the phallic symbol of Shiva).

Discovery of Holy Cave

The story narrated by people about the discovery of this Holy Cave is of a Gujjar ( shepherd) Buta Malik . He is given the credit of discovering this Holy Cave . Story goes like this , that a saint gave Buta Malik a bag full of Coal. On reaching his home when he opened the bag , to his utter surprise the bag was full of gold coins . This made him overwhelmed with joy. He ran to thank the Saint . But, what he found was that the Saint had disappeared . Instead , he found The Holy Cave and Shiv Lingam there in . He announced the discovery of this to the Villagers. Then onwards this has become the sacred place of Pilgrimage .

The ancient epics narrate an other story which goes like this. The valley of Kashmir was under water .It was a big lake. Kashyap Rishi drained the water through number of rivers and rivulets . In those days Bhrigu Rishi came that way on a visit to The Himalyas. He was the first to have Darshans of this Holy Cave . When people heard of the Lingam, Amarnath for them became Shiva's abode and a Centre of pilgrimage . Since then Lacs of devotees perform the pilgrimage through tough terrain and avail eternal happiness.

The trek to Amarnath, in the month of sharavan ( July–August) has the devout flock to this incredible



shrine, where the image of Shiva, in the form of a Lingam, is formed naturally of an Ice Stalagmite, which waxes and wanes with the Moon's cycle . By its side are fascinating, two more Ice Lingams, that of Maa Parvati and of their son, One of the holy trinity, Shiva is a living god. The most sacred and most ancient book of India, the Rig Veda evokes his presence in its hymns. Vedic myths, ritual and even astronomy testify to his existence from the dawn of time. But Shiva, the destroyer, the mendicant, is undefinable: he is the great yogi, the guardian of the absolute. His actions are the themes of the myths in which his nature unfolds.

Shiva, he of the opposites and the absolute, is known to have made his home in the Himalayas. He built no house nor shelter, not for himself nor for his bride. He was an ascetic, and yet married; he could be both for "he was the wild god sporting in the forest or taking his ease on a cloud." Legend has it that Shiva recounted to Parvati the secret of creation in a cave in Amarnath. Unknown to them, a pair of mating doves eavesdropped on this conversation and having learned the secret, are reborn again and again, and have made the cave their eternal abode. Many pilgrims report seeing the doves-pair when they trek the arduous route to pay obeisance before the ice-lingam (the phallic symbol of Shiva).

The trek to Amarnath, in the month of Shravan (July-August) has the devout flock to this incredible shrine, where the image of Shiva, in the form of a lingam, is formed naturally of an ice-stalagmite, and which waxes and wanes with the moon. By its side are, fascinatingly, two more ice-lingams, that of Parvati, and of their son, Ganesha.

According to an ancient tale, there was once a Muslim shepherd named Buta Malik who was given a sack of coal by a sadhu. Upon reaching home he discovered that the sack, in fact, contained gold. Overjoyed and overcome, Buta Malik rushed back to look for the sadhu and thank him, but on the spot of their meeting discovered a cave, and eventually this became a place of pilgrimage for all believers. To date, a percentage of the donations made by pilgrims are given to the descendants of Malik. and the remaining to the trust which manages the shrine.

Yet another legend has it that when Kashyap Reshi drained the Kashmir valley of water (it was believed to have been a vast lake), the cave and the lingam were discovered by Bregish Reshi who was travelling the Himalayas. When people heard of the lingam, Amarnath for them became Shiva's abode and a center of pilgrimage.

Whatever the legends and the history of Amarnath's discovery, it is today an extremely crucial centre of pilgrimage, and though the route is as difficult to trespass as it is exciting, every annum, millions of devotees from the subcontinent come to pay homage before Shiva in one of his Himalayan abodes.

Situated in a narrow gorge at the farther end of Lidder valley, Amarnath stands at 3,888 m and is 44.8 km from Pahalgam and 141 km from Srinagar. Though the original pilgrimage subscribes that the yatra be undertaken from Srinagar, the more common practise is to begin journey at Pahalgam, and cover the distance to Amarnath and back in five days. Pahalgam is 96 km from Srinagar.

The trek from Pahalgam to Amarnath cave is on an ancient peregrine route. The 45-km distance is covered in four days, with night halts at Chandanwari, Sheshnag (Wawjan) and Panchtarni. The distance from Pahalgam to Chandanwari (12.8 km) is covered in about five to six hours, and the trail runs along the Lidder river. Pilgrims camp here on the first night out. A major attraction here is a bridge covered, year round, with ice even though the surroundings are free from it.

The next day's trek, of 13 km, is through spectacular, primeval countryside, and the main centre of attraction is Sheshnag, a mountain which derives its name from its seven peaks, resembling the heads of a mythical snake. The journey to Sheshnag follows steep inclines up the right bank of a cascading stream and wild scenery untouched by civilization. The second night's camp at Wawjan overlooks the deep blue waters of Sheshnag lake, and glaciers beyond it.

There are legends of love and revenge too associated with Sheshnag, and at the camp these are recounted by campfires, to the stillness of a pine-scented, Himalayan night.

The third day's 13 km trek steadily gains height, winding up across Mahagunas Pass at 4,600 m and then descending to the meadow-lands of Panchtarni, the last camp enroute to the holy cave.

From Panchtarni to Amarnath is only 6 km, but an early morning's start is recommended for there is a long queue awaiting entrance to the cave. The same day, following darshan, devotees can return to Panchtarni in time for lunch, and continue to Wawjan to spend the fourth night out; or continue further to Zojibal, returning to Pahalgam on the fifth day.

Entrance to the cave is regulated, and darshan a hasty affair for there are many others waiting outside to pay homage before the awesome Shivalinga. The devotees sing bhajans, chant incantations, and priests perform aarti and puja, invoking the blessings of Shiva, the divine, the pure, the absolute. For those who journey with faith, it is a rewarding experience, this simple visitation to a cave-shrine, the home of the Himalayan mendicant who is both destroyer and healer, the greatest of the Hindu deities.

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