

HINDU

Festivals

REASONS FOR CELEBRATING
HINDU FESTIVALS
(BASED ON
PAURANIK KATHAEN)

DR YATENDRA SHARMA



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1.00 FOREWORD

Hindu festivals have significant importance in the lives of the followers of Sanatan Dharma. These festivals preserve Sanatan culture and refresh joyfully the mood of the participants from the routine monotonous daily lives. The religious ceremonies performed during Hindu festivals purify the soul, avert malicious influences and stimulate the vital powers of Nature. The festival is called ‘Utsav’ in Sanskrit, which is derived from ‘Ud-Soo-Up’ (उद्-सू-अप्) meaning joyous occasion for purifying the soul.

Each festivity is usually the combination of religious activities, such as prayers to Gods or Goddesses, followed by processions, music and dances, feeding the poor etc. Such religious and pleasure activities are enjoyed along with the whole community members, thus creating harmony among the various sects of the community. The Hindu festivals have been dedicated in whole or in part to the elimination of caste discrimination. These are guided by devotional (bhakti) sentiments. A major theme of bhakti movement throughout India has been to eradicate the evil social systems and to provide a platform for the etiquette of ritual purity to the souls.

There are numerous Hindu festivals, some celebrated in only some communities and some only in particular regional areas. There are 13 major Hindu festivals which are celebrated throughout India in all the communities, namely, Makar Sankranti, Maha Shiva Ratri, Holi, Shri Ram Navami, Maa Sita Navami, Guru Purnima, Onam, Raksha Bandhan, Krishna Janmashtami, Navratri, Dussehra, Deepawali and Govardhan Puja. Though one may find book/ books or literature in public domain specifying one reason or importance of individual festival, but there appears to be no one book collectively describing the reasons and importance of a given festival.

Besides, every major Hindu festival has several reasons to celebrate based on Shruti/ religious scriptures. There appears to be no single book describing all the possible reasons to celebrate a given festival. This book has been authored with an aim to provide all the possible reasons to celebrate a given Hindu festival. Lots of efforts and hundreds of man hours have been invested by the author to search all the possible Sanatan scriptures to find various reasons for the given Hindu festivals. The author believes that this book will serve as an authentic source of information for the community to know the exact reasons of celebrating various Hindu festivities.

The sources of information of Pauranik Kathaen (legendary stories) describing several reasons of celebrating each and every Hindu festival in this book are various Sanatan Dharm scriptures including Shri Vishnu Puran, Shri Vaman Puran, Shri Brahm Puran, Shri Shiva Puran, Shrimad Bhagvatam, Samhitas of Maharshi Goutam, Maharshi Vashisth, Maharshi Shrangi, Maharshi Bhardwaj, Shri Valmiki Ramayan, Shri Ram Charit Manas, Shri Adbhut Ramayan, Upanishads, and various regional folk stories. In addition, various information is also provided by different Sampradays of Sanatan Dharma.

Our sincere thanks to numerous friends who helped us in collecting all the data to author this book. Special thanks to Bhai Shri Kaushal Kant Shukla and Bhai Shri Sunil Garg for helping us in various ways.

Please enjoy reading and get the blessings of Gods and Goddesses.

Yours, in the service of the Lord,

Dr Yatendra Sharma
Shri Ram Katha Sansthan
May 2024

2.00 MAKAR SANKRANTI

The first Hindu festival of Gregorian calendar is Makar Sankranti which usually falls on 14th January each year. This festival is celebrated in all different states of India with different names.

State	Name of Makar Sankranti Festival
Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar	Makar Sankranti or Khichadi Parv
Tamil Nadu	Thai Pongal
Gujarat	Uttarayan
Punjab	Lohri
Bengal	Poush Songkranti
Karnataka	Suggi Habba
Odisha	Makar Chaula
Haryana and Maharashtra	Maghi Sankranti
Assam	Magh or Bhogali Bihu
Kashmir	Shishur Saenkraat

In Hindi speaking belt of North India, this festival is called Makar Sankranti. This means literally that Lord Sun transits into Capricorn (one of the 12 zodiac signs of Hindu astronomy). The Lord of Capricorn zodiac sign is Lord Saturn, which in Hindu philosophy is the son of Lord Sun. Hence, this day is considered a very important day for family reunion. The father Lord Sun goes to the house of His son Lord Saturn, Capricorn, to bless Him. This is a symbol of respect to elders in our society. Lord Saturn worships His father to get His blessings on His arrival at

His residence, Capricorn, on this day. Hence, this day of Makar Sankranti is dedicated to the worship and prayer of Lord Sun.

In Hindu scripture, Lord Sun is the master of ‘Respect’, ‘Honour’, ‘Energy’, ‘Status’, ‘Power’, ‘Soul’, ‘Wisdom’, ‘Knowledge’, ‘Health’ and ‘Medicine’. Shruti says that no one other than tridevas – Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Mahesh, is equal to the wisdom and knowledge of Lord Sun in this Universe. Even Lord Hanuman gained knowledge from Lord Sun when Lord Hanuman accepted Lord Sun as His Guru.

Lord Sun is the representative of Tridevas – Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Mahesh. Lord Sun is the creator of this Universe with Lord Brahma. Lord Brahmdev Himself has said this in Brahm-Puran Chapter 28. The Hindi poetic translation of Brahm-Puran by Dr Yatendra Sharma describes this as following.

**Hon Sab Srajit Krapa Sooryan, Ham Rinee Ravi Bhagwan.
Hetu Lok Jan Kayanana, Vaait Teer Chadrasritan .**

Lord Brahmdev said, ‘O Brahmins, we are indebted to the Lord Sun because this Universe is created with His blessings. For the sake of the welfare of the Universe, He resides on the bank of Chandrsarita river.’

**Pancham Roop Mein Hein Pooshan, Jo Sthit Madhy Ann Khaadyan.
Hein Yahee Hetu Satat Poshan, Nar Naari Sang Sab Bhoojan.**

Lord Brahma continues, ‘O Brahmins, Lord Sun’s 5th form is Pushan. He resides in the mid of all foods. He is the one who nourishes all the men and women of this earth.’

Ho Jab Sansaar Kaa Srajan, Hein Vishwa Vikaas Ke Sadhan.

Kal Pralay Ho Vighatan, Tab Vileen Jan Antarbhaagan.

Lord Brahma said, ‘When Universe is created, Lord Sun is the instrument to provide development. When there is an end of the Universe (Pralay), all the living beings enter into His core. (Lord Sun carries out the instructions/ orders of Lord Mahesh to destroy this world by means of natural disasters). ‘

Rigved has described Lord Sun as the prime Lord. In Yajurved, Lord Sun is described as the ‘Eye’ of Lord Vishnu, ‘चक्षो सूर्यो जायत’ (Lord Sun is the eye of Lord Vishnu). Chandogypanishad has stated that one can beget children and recover from even incurable diseases by worshipping the Lord Sun. Brahmvaivart Puran describes Lord Sun as the Lord of all Demigods. Famous Gayatri Mantra is also a form of worship of Lord Sun.

It is said in Hindu Holy scriptures that whomsoever worships Lord Sun, especially on Makar Sankranti day, he/ she will get health, happiness, prosperity, wisdom, honour and respect in the society.

Om Sooryay Namah.

There are several legendary tales describing the reasons to celebrate Makar Sankranti in different states of India. Some of these legendary tales are described below.

2.10 Liberation of Madhu Kaitabh Daityas

It is narrated in Hindu scriptures that on the day of Makar Sankranti, Lord Vishnu assassinated and liberated two daityas, Madhu and Kaitabh. These two daityas were making havoc in the Universe through their evil deeds.

This is the story of the Satyug era. Once Lord Saturn went to Vishnulok to see Lord Vishnu. Two security officers of Vishnulok, who were unfortunately drunk, did not recognise Lord Saturn, and did not allow Him to see Lord Vishnu on the pretext that Lord Vishnu was sleeping and not to be disturbed. They advised Him to come some other time to see Lord Vishnu.

Lord Saturn became very angry on this uncourteous behaviour of these two security officers. Seeing Lord Saturn in angry mood, these two security officers became afraid and stood aside. Then, Lord Saturn entered the place where Lord Vishnu was lying on Shesh Nag. He observed that Lord Vishnu was in deep meditation. He did not consider it appropriate to disturb Lord Vishnu in His deep meditation, hence



returned back after saluting Him. When these two security officers saw that Lord Saturn returned back without meeting Lord Vishnu, they laughed at Him. Lord Saturn again became very angry on these two security officers, and by turning them into tiny creatures, poked them into the ears of Lord Vishnu. After sometimes, these two tiny creatures came out of the ears of Lord

Vishnu. However, since they lived for some time in the ears of Lord Vishnu, ear wax of Lord Vishnu was attached to their bodies. This attachment of ear wax of Lord Vishnu made them very powerful.

Realising that they were very powerful now, they thought of conquering the Universe and rule it. However, they thought that it would be more appropriate if they might get divine powers too from any divine personality to help them to conquer the Universe easily. After some discussions, they concluded that they must meditate on Goddess Amba to obtain divine powers as Her blessings. They did not know the procedure to meditate on Goddess Amba. They remembered then Brahmishi Narad who could accept them as His disciple and teach them how to meditate on Goddess Amba. Coincidentally, to their luck, Brahmishi Narad also happened to be on His way to see Lord Vishnu, and met them. They clasped the feet of Brahmishi Narad and requested Him to accept them as His disciples.

Brahmishi Narad spoke, ‘O Madhu and Kaitabh, I am a wandering saint and do not stay at one place for long. How could it be possible for me to accept both of you as my disciples and give the knowledge of Brahm? Please find some other master and get knowledge from him.’

Madhu and Kaitabh, both, spoke then to Brahmishi Narad, ‘O best among Saints, we do understand your predicament. We do not want the whole knowledge of Brahm. We only want to learn from you the technique of meditating on Goddess Amba to please Her. Please give us a Guru Mantra so that we could meditate on the Guru Mantra and please Goddess Amba.’

Brahmrishi Narad felt honoured by this simple request, and said, “tathastu (so be it). Please memorise the Guru Mantra to please Goddess Amba:

**Yaa Devi Sarvbhooteshu Shakti-Rupen Sansthitaa.
Namatasaiy, Namastsaiky Namastssaiy Namoh Namah.**

After giving Guru Mantra to please Mother Goddess Amba, Brahmrishi Narad left to Saket Dham chanting ‘Narayan, Narayan’.

Now these two Daityas, Madhu and Kaitabh meditate intensely on Mother Goddess Amba chanting Guru Mantra given by Brahmrishi Narad. They gave up food and even water. They meditated intensely on Mother Goddess Amba for thousands of years. Pleased with their penance, Mother Goddess Amba appeared before them and asked for a boon.

Seeing Mother in front of them, they fell at the lotus feet of Mother Goddess Amba and said, ‘O Mother, if you are pleased with our devotion and penance, then grant us a boon that we die voluntarily at our will only. No one can kill us unless we desire to be killed.’

Mother Goddess Amba granted the desired boon to them and said, ‘Tathastu (So be it). Not any one from the clans of Aditi (Indra and other Devas resident of heaven), Diti (Daityas), Danu (Daanavs), Yaksh, transgender, human etc can ever kill you. You may only die on the thigh of any warrior.’ Saying this and granting desired boon to Madhu and Kaitabh, Mother Goddess Amba disappeared.

After obtaining desired boon of nearly being immortal, these Daityas made havoc in the Universe. One day, when they were teasing the creatures of ocean, they saw Lord Brahma sitting on Lotus and meditating. They challenged Him and said, ‘O Brahmdev, either fight with us or accept defeat and flee from this place. You have no right to sit on this seat of holy lotus.’

Lord Brahma knew about the boon granted to these Daityas by Mother Goddess Amba. He had no chance to win over them. Hence, he decided to flee the scene and go to take refuge in Lord Vishnu. At that time, Lord Vishnu was engrossed in deep meditation. Lord Brahmdev pleaded with Lord Vishnu to be awakened from His meditation. At last, He came out of the meditation and seeing Lord Brahmdev in this fearful condition, said, ‘O Brahmdev, please do not fear. I will soon invoke Mother Goddess Amba. With the help of Mother, I will mesmerise these Daityas, and ask a boon from themselves for their death.’

Lord Brahmdev then left for His abode, Brahmlok, and Lord Vishnu invoked Mother Goddess Amba. Mother Goddess Amba appeared before Lord Vishnu, and realising the desire of Lord Vishnu, proceeded to the place in the ocean where these two Daityas were causing havoc. She took the form of the most beautiful woman and approached Madhu and Kaitabh. Seeing Her beauty, both the Daityas were mesmerised and desired to get Her. At the same time, Lord Vishnu arrived on the scene in the form of a great Saint, and addressed to these two Daityas, ‘O Madhu and Kaitabh, I know your desire to get this most beautiful woman as your wife. She is a divine personality. You may not be able to attract Her attention. However, if you wish so, I can grant you a boon so that you can attract Her to wed you.’

These kind words of this Saint (disguised Lord Vishnu) actually hurt the pride of these two Daityas. Madhu said to the Saint, ‘O Saint, you do not know our power. We are capable of doing anything in this Universe. If we desire so, we can easily get this divine woman to be attracted and beg us to marry. Do not worry about us. However, we are touched with your magnanimity. We are so pleased with you that instead we wish to grant you a boon.’

The Saint then said, ‘Sure, I did learn about your nobleness. Of course, I take my words back to grant a boon to both of you. Indeed, I have become a laughing stock to ask both of you great personalities to grant a boon. Rather, I should ask a boon for myself from you. Will you really grant me a boon?’

Those arrogant Daityas looked mercifully to the Saint, and said, ‘O Saint, there is nothing in this Universe which we cannot grant you. Please ask unhesitatingly. We give you, our words.’

The Saint then said, ‘If you wish to grant me a boon, please grant me that I be able to kill you.’

Hearing these words of the Saint, Madhu and Kaitabh laughed at him and said, ‘O Brahmin, because of the boon granted to us by Mother Goddess Amba, only warrior who may have the capability to force us to sit on his thigh, may kill us. You look so fragile. How can you force us to be seated on your thigh?’

Hearing these words of Madhu and Kaitabh, the Saint (Lord Vishnu) extended His body to all the three worlds, sky, earth and haven. He then trapped both Madhu and Kaitabh into His thighs and killed them by His mace.

On hearing that Madhu and Kaitabh had been killed, there was a joy in the Universe. This was the day of Makar Sankranti. From that day onward, every year this joyful event is celebrated all over India as the festival of Makar Sankranti.

2.20 Self Immolation of Mother Goddess Sati by Yog-Agni

On the day of Makar Sankranti, Mother Sati self-immolated in the Yagn performed by Her father Prajapati Daksha because he insulted Her husband, Lord Mahadev. Lord Mahadev, then, punished Prajapati Daksh through Veerbhadra and later by Himself to cut off his head. Later, on the request of Lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma, He fixed head of goat on Prajapati Daksh. This festival is celebrated by Shaivites in the glory of Lord Mahadev to punish His critic Prajapati Daksh.



This story is narrated by Goswami Tulasi Das in Shri Ram Charit Manas.

Once in Treta era, Lord Mahadev went to the Ashram of Maharshi Agastya in Tamil Nadu region of South India. He was accompanied by His wife Sati. In the Ashram of Maharshi Agastya, He listened many stories describing the glory of Lord from the lotus mouth of Maharshi Agastya.

**Ek Baar Treta Jag Maanhee, Sanbhu Gae Kumbhaj Rishi Paaheen.
Sang Sati Jagjanani Bhavaani, Puje Rishi Akhileshwar Jaani.**

**Ram Katha Muni Baraj Bakhani, Suni Mahes Param Sukh Maani.
Rishi Puchi Hari Bhagat Suhai, Kahi Shambhu Adhikaari Paai.**

After listening many glorifying stories of the Lord from the lotus mouth of Maharshi Agastya, Lord Mahadeva departed to His abode Kailash with His consort Sati Devi. This was the time when Lord Vishnu took incarnation as human being in the form of Lord Ram on Bharat bhoomi, and was wandering in the forest for 14 years because of the orders of His Mother Kaikai, performing His Leelas. At this time, the king of Lanka Ravan kidnapped His consort, Sita. (Actually, Mother Sita kidnapped by Ravan was not real Mother Sita, but Her reflection as described by Goswami Tulasi Das). Lord Ram, performing His Leelas, was lamenting on the kidnapping of His wife like normal human beings. Lord Mahadev recognised Him instantly, and bowed to Him in His respect. He paid His obeisance secretly because He did not want to disclose the identity of Lord Ram.

Jai Sachidaanand Jag Paawan, As Kahi Chaleu Manoj Nasaawan.

When Sati Devi saw Her Husband Lord Mahadev bowing to an ordinary human being, a doubt arose in Her mind. She thought in Her mind, 'Lord Mahadev is the Master of the Universe. Everyone, Gods, Goddesses, Rishies, Maharshies, Human beings, Yakshs, Daitys, Danavs etc, respects and worships Him. Why did He pay respect to a human prince pronouncing him as Sachidananda (The Lord)? Why did He become so engrossed in the beauty and aura of this human being? What could be the reason of this?'

**Sati So Dasaa Shambhu Kai Dekhi, Ur Upajaa Sandehu Bisekhi.
Sankaru Jagat Bandya Jagdisaa, Sur Nar Muni Sab Naavat Sisaa.**

**Tinh Nrapsutahi Kinh Paranama, Kahi Sachhidaanand Pardhaamaa.
Bhaye Magan Chabi Taa s Biloki, Ajahun Preet Ur Rahati Bibeki.**

Even though Sati Devi did not show Her doubt to Lord Mahadev, omniscient Lord Mahadev understood it immediately. Lord Mahadev tried to explain to Sati Devi that Lord Ram was none other than Lord Vishnu who had incarnated on earth as human being. Sati Devi was not satisfied. Then, Lord Mahadev said, ‘O dear Sati, if you still have doubt on my words, then You may test as You may wish within the limit of dignity.’

Jo Tumhare Man Ati Sandehu, Tau Kin Jaee Pareechaa Leu.

Some Sanatan Dharm followers may have doubt here that Sati Devi was the consort of Lord Mahadev and an incarnation of Adi-Shakti and Adi-Prakriti. She was mother of the Universe, all pervading, omniscient and knower of past, present and future. Then, why such doubt arose in Her mind? Similar to Lord Mahadev, She would have also understood it immediately that Lord Ram was none other than the incarnation of Lord Vishnu?

There is a background behind this emerging doubt in Sati Devi’s mind.

We all know that when Lord Brahma created this Universe, He also established moral rules for His progeny. He composed four Vedas with the help of His sons and Maharshis which are in one way a ‘Constitution’ for all of His progeny - Gods, Goddesses, Daityas, Danavs, Yakshs, Nags, human beings etc. He appointed his son Daksh as Prajapati (Lord of Creatures) to manage His ‘Constitution’ and oversee that it is being followed religiously by all. However, He felt that unless blessings of Mother Adi-Prakriti were obtained, it would not be possible for His son Daksh to

carry out his duties as Prajapati. Hence, He ordered His son Daksh and his wife Prasuti to go to the forest and meditate on Mother Adi-Prakriti to get Her blessings so that She agrees to be born as their daughter.

On the orders of Bhrahmdev, Daksh and Prasuti did go to the forest, and for several thousands of years did great penance to please Mother Adi-Prakriti. Mother Adi-Prakriti, pleased with the tenacity of meditation, did appear before them and said, ‘O Daksh and Prasuti, I am very happy with your penance. Tell me what is in your mind, and I will grant you a boon.’

Daksh and Prasuti fell at the lotus feet of the Mother Adi-Prakriti and said, ‘O Mother, if You are pleased with our penance, then grant a boon to us. Please take birth as our daughter.’

Mother Adi-Prakriti then said, ‘O Daksh and Prasuti, I will be happy to take birth as your daughter, but I have one condition. If I felt insulted or neglected in anyway at any time, I will immediately return to My abode.’

Daksh and Prasuti accepted Her condition gladly, and returned back to their home waiting for Mother Adi-Prakriti to take birth as their daughter.

After sometime, Mother-Prakriti took birth as a daughter of Daksh and Prasuti. She was named as ‘Sati’. Considering then auspicious time, as Daksh had already got the blessings of Adi-Prakriti, Brahmdev decorated his son Daksh as Prajapati (Lord of all the creatures in the Universe). Now all Gods, Goddesses, human beings, Daitys, Danavs, transgenders, Yakshs etc, were under the rule of Prajapati Daksh. After getting this great honour

and immense power, Prajapati Daksh became very arrogant. He started considering him the greatest in the Universe other than Lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma. Goswami Tulasi Das has described this state of mind of Daksh as following.

**Bad Adhikaar Dacch Jab Paawaa, Ati Abhimanu Hradayn Tab Aawaa.
Nahin Koi As Janmaa Jag Maanheen, Prabhutaa Paay Jaahi Mad Naahin.**

No one is born in this Universe who does not become arrogant after getting unchallenged and immense power.

After Daksh was enthroned as Prajapati, Daksh organised a great gathering of all the Gods. He invited all the Gods including his father Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Mahadev. All the Gods, including Lord Brahma, Lords Vishnu and Lord Mahadev, took their assigned seats in the meeting. When Prajapati Daksh entered the meeting room, all the Gods stood up from their seats in respect of him and cheered him except Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Mahadev. Prajapati Daksh murmured, ‘Lord Brahma is my father, so it is OK for Him not to stand in my honour. Lord Vishnu is the Lord of the Universe, so it is also OK for Him not to stand in my honour. But this is not appropriate for Mahadev not to honour me and stand in my welcome.’

He became very angry with Lord Mahadev. Though he did not utter any single word at that time, but took this to his heart as his insult. After this incident, whenever he would have the opportunity to meet Lord Mahadev, he would not forget to insult Him by his words and deeds. Lord Mahadev never minded his insulting Him as He was above all the honours and insults.

Sati Devi was an incarnation of Adi-Prakariti. Adi Prakriti is consort of Lord Mahadev anyway. When Sati Devi became of matured age, Lord Brahmdev thought of reuniting Sati Devi with Lord Mahadev, hence, He sent Brahmishi Narad as His emissary to convey His message to Sati Devi. Brahmishi Narad followed the orders of his father Lord Brahmdev, and came to the palace of Prajapati Daksh. He conveyed the message of Lord Brahmdev. Brahmishi Narad then asked Sati Devi to go to the forest and do great penance to please Lord Mahadev so that He could accept Her as Her consort. Realising this, She immediately proceeded to the forest to meditate on Lord Mahadev to please Him. Prajapati Daksh and his wife Prasuti thought that their daughter had gone to the forest to do penance to please the Lord Vishnu to grant Her a boon of suitable groom.

Sati Devi meditated on Lord Mahadev for many thousands of years. Lord Mahadev, pleased with Her penance, appeared before Her. Omniscient Lord Mahadev, knowing the desire of Sati Devi to wed Him, accepted Her as would-be-bride and advised Her to return to the palace of Her father. Getting the desired boon, Sati Devi then returned to the palace of her father Prajapati Daksh. Both Prajapati Daksh and mother Prasuti were happy to be reunited with their darling daughter. Seeing the happiness on the face of Sati Devi, Prajapati Daksh thought in his mind that her daughter had been blessed with Her desire to get a suitable groom. Hence, without any delay, Prajapati Daksh organised Swayamvar (an event where bride may choose her husband by her free will). He invited all the Gods to take part in this event except Lord Mahadev. To insult Lord Mahadev further, he installed a statue of stone of Lord Mahadev on the entrance of his palace. This became the tradition and means later to insult a king

or a great personality by installing their statues on the entrance of their palace.

In Swayamwar, Sati Devi garlanded the statue of Lord Mahadev, and accepted Him as Her husband. Prajapati Daksh was shocked. At the same time, Lord Mahadev appeared and accepted Sati Devi as His consort. Prajapati Daksh was very angry and he ordered his army to capture Lord Mahadev. Sati Devi and Her mother Prasuti requested Prajapati Daksh to kindly take back his orders to the army to capture Lord Mahadev. But arrogant Daksh did not listen to them. Who could defeat the Lord of Lords, Lord Mahadev in this Universe? Lord Mahadev did not want to kill innocent soldiers, so he only used His specially powered chanted arrows to make them faint (moorchaa baan). When all the soldiers were fainted, Lord Mahadev disappeared with His consort Sati Devi and left to His abode Kailash. Brahmdev was waiting for Him and Sati Devi in Kailash. As soon as they arrived, Brahmdev married both of them according to Vedic scripture.

After this incident, Prajapati Daksh insulted Sati Devi and Lord Mahadev whenever he got opportunities. As stated above, when Adi-Prakriti accepted to take birth as daughter of Daksh after great penance of Daksh and Prasuti, She clearly told them that She would return back to the nature if at any time Daksh insulted Her. Now Daksh was insulting Sati Devi at every step. It became necessary for Sati Devi to return back to the Nature as per Her own promise. However, Sati Devi forgot Her promise in love of Lord Mahadev. In the eyes of Lord Vishnu, this was the breach of a promise. Such breach of promise was not permitted even by the Gods or Goddess. Hence, Sati Devi had to give up Her

present body. The mind of Sati Devi was thus confused by Lord Ram, so that a background to leave Her body could be prepared.

Also, Prajapati Daksh was insulting Lord Mahadev at every opportunity. Insult of Lord Mahadev was not accepted by Lord Vishnu. Goswami Tulasi Das said that Lord Ram Himself has said that whomsoever opposes and criticises Lord Mahadev, he/she can never be His devotee.

Shiv Drohi Mam Das Kahava, So Nar Mohi Sapnehun Nahin Bhava.

Lord Mahadev is a very kind God. He does not care whether He is honoured or insulted. Hence, he never took any notice of insults by Prajapati Daksh. He forgave him all the time. Daksh was son of Brahmdev. Knowing that His son was committing sin against Lord Mahadev by insulting him, though He tried many times to tell him not to do so, but did not punish him for that. Prajapati Daksh became so arrogant that he did not listen to the advices of his father Brahmdev. Lord Vishnu could not set a precedent for anyone to go unpunished by insulting Lord Mahadev. Hence, by confusing the mind of Sati Devi, He created a situation for punishment of Prajapati Daksh.

Lord Vishnu knew that Sati Devi loved Lord Shiva very dearly. She could accept Her insult, but not of Her husband. If anyone ever might try to insult Lord Mahadev in front of Her, and She might not be in a position to do anything about it, then She would leave Her body. Her death would be disaster for Lord Mahadev as Lord Mahadev also loved Sati Devi very dearly. Lord Mahadev, then, would be compelled to give desired punishment to Prajapati Daksh.

To honour the promise of Adi-Prakriti and also seeing a good opportunity to punish Prajapati Daksh, Lord Vishnu confused the mind of Sati Devi. Goswami Tulasi Das Ji said in Shri Ram Charit Manas that there is no one wise or fool. Given the situation, as Lord wants to happen, that will happen.

**Bole Biahsi Mahesh Tab Gyaanee Moodh Na Koi.
Jehi Jas Raghupati Karahin, Jab So Tas Tehi Chan Hoi.**

As stated above, when Lord Shiva was returning with Sati Devi to His abode Kailash from the Ashram of Maharshi Agastya, this was the time of Treta Yug when Lord Ram was in exile and His wife Sita Devi was kidnapped by the king of Lanka, Ravan. He was wondering in the forest searching for His wife. Of course, leela of the Lord.

The mind of Sati Devi was confused by Lord Ram due to the reasons stated above. As such, She could not recognise Lord Ram as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Even though She did not talk about Her doubt to Lord Mahadev, He understood all. Lord Mahadev tried to explain to Her that Lord Ram is none other than Lord Vishnu, but she did not accept the explanation of Lord Shiva. Then, Lord Shiva said, ‘O Sati, if You do not trust My words, then go and test, but do not cross the dignity.’

Confused Sati Devi now started thinking on a way to test Lord Ram. She thought of adopting an image of Sita Devi, and turned into Sita Devi instantly. Disguised as Sita Devi, She appeared before Lord Ram and Lord Lakshman. Both Lord Ram and Lord Lakshman recognised Sati Devi instantly and were surprised to see Sati Devi disguised as Sita Devi. Lord Ram bowed to Sati

Devi and smilingly said, ‘O mother Sati Devi, why are You roaming in this forest alone? Where is Lord Mahadev?’

Sati Devi was very ashamed and closed Her eyes. On closing Her eyes, She saw that Sita Devi was in the middle of Lord Ram and Lord Lakshman. She saw that Rishies, Maharshies and all the Gods and Goddesses etc were worshipping Lord Ram. When She opened Her eyes, She saw nothing. Then bowing to Lord Ram again and again, She returned to the place where Lord Mahadev was waiting for Her.

**Sati Dekh Kautik Mag Jaataa, Aage Ram Sahit Shri Bhraataa.
Phir Chitwaa Paanche Prabhu Dekhaa, Sahit Bandhu Siya Sundar Besha.
Jan Chitwahin Than Prabhu Aasinaa, Sewahin Siddh Munish Prabinaa.
Dekhe Siva Bidhi Vishnu Anekaa, Amit Prabhau Ek Ten Eka.
Bandat Charan Karat Prabhu Sewaa, Bibidh Besh Dekhen Sab Devaa.
Bahuri Bilokeu Nayan Ughaari, Kachu Na Deekh Tahn Dacch Kumari.
Puni Puni Naay Ram Pad Seesa, Chalin Tahan Jahn Rahe Girishaa.**

When She arrived at the place where Lord Shiva was waiting for Her, Lord Mahadev asked if She was satisfied, and also, how did She take the test?’

Sati Devi did not tell the truth to Lord Mahadev and smilingly just said, ‘O Lord, I did not take any test. I realised that You can never be wrong, so believed in Your words.’

Then Lord Mahadev mediated and instantly came to know that Sati Devi had disguised as Sita Devi to test Lord Ram. Lord Mahadev felt very sorry on this action of Sati Devi. For Lord Mahadev, Sita Devi was like His mother. Since Sati Devi had disguised as Sita Devi, He thought that now onwards He can no longer treat Sati Devi as His wife. When Lord Mahadev took this

vow not to treat Sati Devi as His wife onwards, a voice appeared from the sky (Akaashvaani), 'O Mahadev, You are great. Only a personality like Yourself can take such a vow!'

**Chaalat Gagan Bhe Gora Suhai, Jai Mahesh Bhali Bhagati Dradhai.
Aspan Tumh Bin Karai Ko Aanaa, Ram Bhagat Samarath Bhagwaanaa.**

Hearing this voice from the sky, Sati Devi was highly perturbed; She wanted to know about the vow Lord Mahadev had taken. But Lord Mahadev did not tell Her anything.

Lord Mahadev returned to Kailash, His abode with Sati Devi, and then engaged Himself in great penance. Sati Devi realised now that Lord Mahadev had abandoned Her.

Eighty-seven thousand years after this incident, Lord Mahadev came out of His meditation. When Sati Devi came to know that Lord Mahadev was now out of meditation, She sat close to the Lord. Then Lord Mahadev, realising that Sati Devi was very sad, told Her many stories to make Her cheerful.

This was the time when Sati Devi's father Prajapati Daksh was organising a very large festivity. He invited all the Gods and Goddesses except Lord Mahadev and Sati Devi because of his animosity towards Lord Mahadev.

Sati Devi saw that all the Gods and Goddesses were going in their respective vehicles in the direction of the palace of Her father. She asked Lord Mahadev for its reason. Lord Mahadev told Sati Devi about the great festivity being organised by Her father. Sati Devi desired to join Her father in this festivity. Lord Mahadev then said to Sati Devi, 'O Sati Devi, though there is no

harm to go to the homes of friends, parents and Guru even uninvited, but if any one there is not your well-wisher, then it is better not to go there.'

**Jadapi Mitra Prabhu Pitu Gur Gehaa, Jaaiu Binu Bolahin Sandehaa.
Tadapi Birodh Maan Jahn Koi, Tahaan Gaen Kalyaanu Na Hoi.**

Lord Mahadev tried to explain to Sati Devi that this was not in Her favour to go there. But She was adamant. Then Lord Mahadev gave permission to go to the palace of Her father with few of his followers to protect Her.

When Sati Devi arrived at the palace of Her father, no one other than Her mother welcomed Her. Then, Sati Devi looked at the Yagnshala. She found that Her husband was not included in the worship. No offerings were made in the holy fire of Yagn in the name of Lord Mahadev. This was a great insult of Lord Mahadev. Sati Devi could not tolerate insult of Her husband and said angrily, 'O Gods and Goddesses, listen carefully. Religious scripture says that if anyone insults Lord Mahadev, his tongue should be cut instantly. But if someone is not capable of doing so, he/ she should leave such unholy place immediately. You all have insulted the great Lord Mahadev; you should be punished for that. I would not curse my father, but I would leave this body given by him.'

Saying that, Sati devi self-immolated by creating fire through Her power of Yog-Agni.

On seeing that Sati Devi had self-immolated, the followers of Lord Mahadev became very angry and started destroying the Yagn. When Lord Mahadev came to know about this, He too

appeared on the site and punished Prajapati Daksh by cutting off his head.

However, on the request of Lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma, He attached head of a goat on Prajapati Daksh.

Sati Devi was reborn as Parvati and wed Lord Shiva again.

The day, when Sati Devi was self-immolated, was Makar Sankranti. This day an arrogant critic of Lord Mahadev, Prajapati Daksh, was punished by Lord Mahadev. So Shaivites celebrate this day as the victory of Lord Mahadev over an evil critic of Lord Mahadev, Prajapati Daksh.

2.30 Descent of Mother Ganga

Mother Ganga was brought to earth by Emperor Bhagirath on this day of Makar Sankranti. Hence, we do celebrate this auspicious day by dipping into Mother Ganga River, and praying Lord Sun for the welfare of the Universe.



When King Sagara of the Suryavansh clan was performing the Ashvamedha Yagna, his courtiers discovered the sacrificial horse had gone missing. The king therefore ordered his 60,000 sons to go and find the horse. The arrogant princes went about burning and destroying places in their quest to find the horse. They then came to the hermitage of Sage Kapil. They found him in meditation and the horse tied next to him.

They thought that Sage Kapil is the culprit, and set fire underneath. The bottom of Sage Kapil started heating up. Then, he opened his eyes. By the power of anger in his eyes, all the princes burnt to ashes.

In the capital of his kingdom, the king was thinking, ‘What happened to my children? Why have they not come back yet?’

Then, he sent his son, Amsuman to find his other brothers. Prince Amsuman met Sage Kapil and learnt of the whole event. Prince Amsuman begged Sage Kapil to give back the lives of his brothers. Then Sage Kapil, pleased with his modesty, advised him that if he wanted his brothers back to their lives, he must perform the cremation rites of washing the spot at the place where they were burnt to ashes with the holy water of the Mother Ganga River, now in heaven.

Price Anshuman followed the instructions of Sage Kapil and throughout his life, he struggled to bring holy Mother Ganga River down to earth from heaven. Unfortunately, he dies in this struggle.

His son Bhagiratha then took the vow to bring Mother Ganga to earth. He prayed to Mother Ganga who was stored in a big Kamandal in Brahmalok by Lord Brahma. He prayed to Lord Brahma to release Mother Ganga.

Lord Brahma, pleased with his penance, said, ‘I cannot release Mother Ganga at this stage. Only when Lord Narayana (Lord Vishnu) will reincarnate as Vamana Avatara and He will be known as Visvarupa, then only Ganga River will be released to wash His feet.’

King Bhagirath pleaded with Lord Brahma, ‘O Lord, it will be several births of human beings before Lord Vishnu will incarnate as Vaaman Avatar. My ancestors cannot get liberation unless Mother Ganga should descend to earth and wash off the place of ashes of my ancestors. Please have mercy on me, and release Mother Ganga.’

Lord Brahma then said, ‘O my son, I may release for sure Ganga River for you, but earth cannot bear Her flow. Only Lord Shiva can control the flow of Ganga River. So, if you can please Lord Mahadev with your penance, and He accepts to control the flow of Mother Ganga, then only I can release Her.’

On the advice and instructions from Lord Brahma, then King Bhagirath did great penance to please Lord Mahadev. Lord Mahadev was pleased with his devotion and appeared before him. Lord Mahadev then asked him to choose a boon.

King Bhagiratha prayed Lord Shiva and said, ‘O Lord, Lord Brahma is pleased to release Mother Ganga from His Kamandal. You are the only one who can control Her flow. Please take appropriate action to do so.’

Pleased with the prayer of Bhagirath, then Lord Shiva said, ‘O Bhagirath, let it be so. Let Lord Brahma release holy Ganga. I will hold Her in my Jataa (matted locks), and then release slowly to the earth.’

Once Lord Shiva agreed to hold holy Ganga into His matted hair, Lord Brahma released holy Ganga. Then, Lord Shiv released holy Ganga from His matted hair slowly, thus Mother Ganga came down to earth.

The day when Mother Ganga descended to earth, was the Makar Sankranti day. Hence, we celebrate this day with great joy.

2.40 Lohiri

Lohiri is a very important festival celebrated in Punjab region and among Punjabis all over the world on the day of Makar Sankranti. The word 'Lohri' is derived from the word 'Tilohri', composed of two words, Til + Rorhi. In Punjabi language, meaning of 'Til' is sesame and 'Rorhi' represents jaggery (gur). These



items are considered to be great stomach cleansers and a source of high energy and nutrients. It is considered auspicious to start a New Year with these food items for renewed energy. That is the reason why Lohri prasad mainly comprises food items made of jaggery and til like gajjak and chikki.

There are numerous legends associated with the celebration of Lohri. The most famous and interesting one is the story of Dulla Bhatti. The full name of Dulla Bhatti was Rai Abdullah Bhatti. He was considered hero in Punjab region who led a revolution against Mughal empire during the reign of the Mughal emperor Akbar. Though no historic evidence is found about Dulla Bhatti and his courageous deeds, however, there are numerous folk tales and folk songs in Punjab on his bravery and courageous deeds.

Rai Abdullah Bhatti was a Punjabi Muslim Rajput. He owned the estate in Pindi Bhattian village of Punjab. His father Farid was a rich landlord. His father Farid and grandfather Bijli led the first revolution against Mughal empire when emperor Akbar increased the land tax (lagaan) on the farmers. This was detrimental to the small poor farmers which were highly dependent on the earnings of their small farms. Unfortunately, both his father and grandfather, were executed by emperor Akbar for opposing the new and centralised land revenue collection scheme imposed by the Mughal emperor. At that time Rai Abdullah was not yet born. He was born to his mother Ladhi, wife of Farid, four months after his execution.

Coincidentally, Akbar's son, Shaikhu (later known as Jahangir), was also born on the same day. One may say it a blind belief, but a spiritual advisor to the emperor Akbar advised him that the bravery and success of his son Shaikhu would be ensured if the child was breast fed by a woman whose own son was also born on same day, which happens to be the birth day of Rai Abdullah Bhatti. The emperor Akbar ordered Ladhi, mother of Rai Bahadur Bhatti to breast feed his son Shaikhu, which Ladhi obliged. Emperor Akbar also saw this decision to mend with the family of Rai Abdullah Bhatti so that like his father and grandfather, he might not revolt against him.

Rai Abdullah Bhatti was given a status of 'Royalty'. However, later on, he refused to accept the strictures of the emperor Akbar that were intended to mould him into a so-called good citizen loyal to the emperor Akbar and objected to being a part of an establishment that was designed to produce elites. He left the royal school, and arrived in his village to be with his mother, family members and the persons loyal to his father and

grandfather. In the meantime, he also learnt that emperor Akbar executed his father and grandfather. This made him an anti-authoritarian and a rebellion against the Akbar empire.

Rai Abdullah Bhatti saw the plight of poor people in his region. He saw how the rich and elite people were exploiting the poor and helpless people. He decided to help these poor and helpless people, but did not have enough money to support them. So, he was engaged in a form of social banditry to collect funds. He used to rob the rich and elite persons and give money to the poor and helpless people. During that time, these rich and elite people were abducting beautiful girls and women of the region, and engaged in selling them as slaves. Rai Abdullah Bhatti stood against that. He rescued and prevented beautiful girls and women to be abducted. He arranged marriages for these rescued abducted women and provided their dowries.

Emperor Akbar was so terrified by the activities and revolution led by Rai Abdullah Bhatti that he sent his emissaries to have peace with Guru Arjun Dev, spiritual master of Sikh community. He assured Guru Arjun Dev that the farmers of Punjab region would be exempted to pay higher tax revenues (lagaan).

The army of emperor Akbar was always behind Rai Abdullah Bhatti to capture him. Finally, he was captured in 1599. On the orders of emperor Akbar, unfortunately, he was hanged in Lahore immediately after his capture. Emperor Akbar had hoped to make an example of him at the public execution, expecting that he would quake with fear, but Bhatti was steadfast in his resistance to the end. Shah Hussain, a contemporary Sufi poet who wrote a poem about him, recorded his last words as being "No honourable son of Punjab will ever sell the soil of Punjab".

The memory of Bhatti as a saviour of Punjabi girls is recalled at the annual Lohri celebrations in the region to this day, although those celebrations also incorporate many other symbolic strands. The song "Sundri-Mundri" is sung during the celebrations as a tribute to him. Among the significant modern literature inspired by his life is 'Takht-e-Lahore', a 1973 play written by Najam Hussein Syed. A novel based on the life of Rai Abdullah Bhatti has also been written by Shri Baldev Singh Sadaknama, a very famous novelist.

Sundri-Mundri Song

Sunder mundriye ho!
Tera kaun vicharaa ho!
Dullah Bhatti walla ho!
Dullhe di dhe vyayae ho!
Ser shakkar payee ho!
Kudi da laal pathaka ho!
Kudi da saalu paata ho!
Salu kaun samete!
Chache choori kutti zamidara lutti!
Zamindaar sudhayee!
Bade bhole aaye!
Ek bhola reh gaya!
Sipahee far ke lai gaya!
Sipahee ne mari itt!
Sanoo de de Lohri, te teri jeeve jodi!
Bhaanvey ro te bhaanvey pitt!
Beautiful girl!
Who will think about you!
Dulla of the Bhatti clan will!
Dulla's daughter got married!
He gave one ser of sugar!
The girl is wearing a red suit!

**But her shawl is torn!
Who will stitch her shawl?!
The uncle made choori!
The landlords looted it!
Landlords are beaten up!
Lots of simple-headed boys came!
One simpleton got left behind!
The soldier arrested him!
The soldier hit him with a brick!
Give us Lohri, long live your pair!
Whether you cry, or bang your head later!**

Lohri also has an important significance because it is the first festival of the New Year among Punjabis. Punjab region is one of the largest producers of agricultural products in India and depends heavily on its farming community for its economy and supplies. Lohri is also celebrated as ‘Harvest festival’ all over Punjab region.

The people celebrate Lohri by light bonfiring in the evening after the Sun set. Everyone gathers around the fire to sing the praises for the good harvest and the folk songs of Dulla Bhatti.

May honour come and poverty vanish!

They chant around the fire to pray for the people in poverty. People also dance together around the bonfire on the beats of the dhol.

Having a bonfire in the open space brings everyone together and lets them have a happy time. The tradition of feeding different food items in the bonfire is followed by everyone.

2.50 Pongal

Pongal is celebrated in South India on the same day of Makar Sankranti. This festival has great significance as ‘the day of giving’ in the South Indian community.

It is celebrated on the day of Makar Sankranti when the Lord Sun begins to move northwards, that is Sun moves to Uttarayan. In Tamil Nadu this festival is also called as Thai Pongal.



Pongal day is considered as the first day of the New Year in South India. Newly harvested grains are cooked for the first time on that day. The poor are fed and clothed. On the next day, the cows are worshipped, and birds and animals are fed. In short, one can say that Pongal is all about giving. It is a form of thanksgiving to the entire creation as that is the power that sustains life.

Pongal is a four-day celebration.

The first day, Bhogi, is celebrated on the last day of the month of Margazhi. On this day, people decorate their homes. New vessels are bought and old and unwanted things are burnt. Scholars have often compared Bhogi to the Indra Vizha celebrated by the Chola kings at Kaveripattinam, also known as Poompuhar. Indra Vizha was celebrated in honour of Lord Indra, also called Bhogi, the God of thunder and rain.

The second day is Perum Pongal. It is the most important day of Pongal festival. It is also called Surya Pongal because people worship Lord Surya, the Sun God and his consorts, Chaya and Samgnya on this day. Women decorate the central courtyard of their homes with beautiful kolams, done with rice flour and bordered with red clay. The Pongal dish is cooked exactly at the moment when the new month is born.

There are several legends associated with Perum Pongal. A sage named Hema prayed to Lord Vishnu on the banks of the PottRamrai tank in Kumbakonam. On Perum Pongal day, the Lord is believed to have taken the form of Sarangapani and blessed the sage. Yet another legend has it that Lord Shiva performed a miracle where a stone image of an elephant ate a piece of sugarcane.

The third day is Mattu Pongal, celebrated to glorify cattles that help farmers in a myriad way. On this day, the cows are bathed and decorated with vermilion and garlands and fed. In certain villages in southern Tamil Nadu, a bullfight called manji-virattu is held in the evening. Bags of coins are tied to the sharpened horns of ferocious bulls that are let loose in an open ground. The young men of the village vie with each other to subdue the bull and grab the bags tied to the horns.

In fact, in ancient Tamil literature, men had to subdue the bull in order to win the hand of a fair maiden. It is believed that even Lord Krishna defeated seven bulls before marrying Nappinnai. The bulls are never killed. Mattu Pongal has little significance to city folks. In most urban homes, the day is celebrated as Kannu Pongal. Special prayers are offered by women for the well-being of their brothers.

The Tamils also remember the poet Tiruvalluvar, who was born on this day.

The last day is Kaanum Pongal. It is that part of the festival when families used to gather on the river banks and have a sumptuous meal (kootanchoru). It is also time for some traditional dances such as kummi and kolattam. In recent years, that day is celebrated as Uzhavar Tirunal in honour of farmers.

**Shubh Din Makar Sankranti, Jaagaa Gyaan Door Hui Bhraanti.
Ravi Hue Uttarayan Vaasi, Jaage Devlok Ke Vaasi.
Surya Makar Rashi Mein Aae, Dradh Rakt Sambandh Dikhae.
Tyag Baimaty Hue Sukhare, Pita Putra Ke Ghar Hei n Padhare.
Madhu Kaitab Daity Prabhu Mare, Fenke Shav Mandira Kinare.
Adham Tej Asuranh Keenhe, Satya Vijaya Pratik Chinhe.
Var Deenon Bhagirath Maai, Maa Gangaa Tab Dharaa Par Aai.
Taare Sabhi Putra Saagar Ke, Nirmoolo Shraap Hue Kaapil Ke.
Gangaputr Var Iccha Mratyu, Tyaage Praan Isi Shubh Diwasu.
Poojen Ravi Jo Parinitaa, Paaen Sukh Vaibhav Aur Anita.
Sati Maa Tan Bhasmit Karaheen, Pitaa Uchit Dand Dehaheen.
Shi v Drohee Gato Kai Hohee, Jaanat Jag Poojen Shiv Sohee.
Shubh Din Makar Sankranti, Jaagaa Gyaan Door Hui Bhraanti.**

Makar Sankranti is a very auspicious day. It removes darkness of ignorance. Lord Sun moves to Northern hemisphere (Uttarayan) on this day. All the Gods are awake (As this is morning now of Heaven). Lord Sun enters into the sign of Capricorn, the home of his son Saturn. This is a symbol of reunion of father and son showing great bonding in relationship. Lord Sun and Lord Saturn embrace each other forgetting their differences of opinions. This is the day when Lord Vishnu killed two evils, Madhu and Kaitabh, and threw their bodies on Mandara mountain. Lord Vishnu established the win of righteous over evil by killing these

two daityas. This is the day when Mother Ganga descended to earth by penance of Bhagirath, thus liberating sons of king Sagar who were cursed by Maharshi Kapil. Ganga Putra Bhishma, having boon of death on his own will, left his body on this day. If ladies worship Lord Sun this day, they will be rewarded with wealth, prosperity and progeny. Mother Sati self-immolated this day to punish Her father (Prajapati Daksh) for being critic of Lord Shiva. She set an example of the end of critic of Lord Shiva. Makar Sankranti is a very auspicious day.

3.00 MAHA SHIVRATRI

Maha Shivratri, literally meaning ‘the great night of Lord Shiva’, is the second most important Hindu festival in the sequence of Gregorian calendar after Makar Sankranti. This festival is observed on the Chaturdashi Tithi Krishna Paksha (fourteenth day during the waxing phase of the Lunar cycle in the month of Magha (as per the Hindu calendar), usually falling in February month in the Gregorian calendar.

There are many legendary stories associated with celebration of Maha Shivratri. We will discuss few of them here.

3.10 Lord Shiva and Tandav Dance (Nratya)

As stated above in the first chapter of this book, ‘Makar Sankranti – Self Immolation of Mother Goddess Sati by Yog-Agni’, consort of Lord Shiva, Sati Devi self-immolated in the Yagn of Her father Prajapati Daksh as She could not bear insult of Her husband Lord Shiva. When Lord Shiva heard this sad news from his followers (Ganas), He appeared at the scene. A totally grief-stricken Lord Shiva, then carried Sati Devi’s charred body on His shoulders, and by roaming Universe, commenced performing Tandav dance, the celestial dance of destruction.



Tandava is a Sanskrit word that means ‘violent dance’. When Lord Shiva commenced performing His Tandav dance, the Universe started collapsing. Several human days passed, but the anger of Lord Shiva was not subsiding. Lord Vishnu, then, came to the rescue of the world. There was only one way to save earth from destruction, and that was to destroy Sati's charred body. So, Lord Vishnu cut Sati's charred body with His Sudarshan Chakra into 51 parts.

When Lord Shiva was still continuing His Tandav dance, the 51 pieces of Sati's charred body fell at the 51 different locations in Indian sub-continent. Once there was no Sati Devi's body in the arms of Lord Shiva, then Lord Vishnu appeared before Him and pacified Him. This day, when Lord Shiva was pacified and became calm, is celebrated as Maha Shivratri.

The places where 51 parts of the charred body of Sati Devi fell, these places are called Shakti Peeths or Sati Devi temples. These 51 Shakti Peeths are significant shrines and pilgrimage destinations in ‘Shaktism’, the Goddess-centric denomination in Hinduism. The shrines are dedicated to the various forms of Mother Adi-Shakti. These ‘Shakti Peeths’ are scattered all over the Indian sub-continent. At present, there are 42 Shakti Peeths in India. 1 in Pakistan, 4 in Bangladesh, 1 in Shri Lanka, 1 in Tibet and 2 in Nepal.

1. Kirit Shakti Peeth: This is situated on the Lalbagh bank of Hooghly River in West Bengal. Kirit means Sar-Abhushan or crown of Mother Sati. The crown of Mother Sati was dropped at this place. This temple has idols of Devi as Vimala (Pure) and Lord Shiva as Sangbarta.

The previous name of Kiriteswari was Kireetkana. Kireetkana/ Kiriteswari is mentioned in the 'Vabisya Puran', a literature written in the medieval period. The present construction of the temple is estimated to be more than 1,000 years old. This shrine is also considered to be the sleeping place of 'Maha Maya'. The temple was unfortunately destroyed in 1405. As history describes, Mother Kiriteshwari temple was renovated by King Darpanarayana Roy during the 19th century. King Yogendranaryan Roy of Lalgola also had further renovated and taken care of the temple built by king Darpanarayan Roy.

In this complex 16 temples of different deities are at present surviving. Adjacent to the temple, 'Bhairav' is situated on the banks of the river Bhagirathi.

2. Katyayani Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is situated in Bhooteshwar in Vrindavan, Mathura, Uttar Pradesh. Here Sati Devi's hairs were dropped. This shrine of Sati Devi signifies power. This shrine also has an idol of Bhairav signifying Bhutesh (Lord of living beings).

The entire temple is made of white marble. The big pillars, made out of black stones, support the temple. There are two golden lion's statues just next to the steps leading to the main yard. These lions represent the vahana (carrier) of the Goddess Mother Katyayani. It's said that Gopikas of Braj wanted Lord Krishna to be their husband. The Gopikas worshipped Mother Vrinda Devi to fulfil their desire. Pleased with their devotion, Vrinda Devi appeared before them and suggested to pray Goddess Katyayani. The tradition is still continued since then.

The age of the original temple is not known. However, details are available that this Katyayani Devi Shakti Peeth was renovated and consecrated on a full moon day of February 1923 by a saint, His Holiness Swami Kesavanand Maharaj. He was an ardent devotee of Maa Katyayani. Swami Maharaj had a dream in which Katyayani Devi asked him to renovate and consecrate this temple. His Holiness Swami Kesavanand Maharaj also built an Ashram here, where he lived for the rest of his life.

3. Karvir Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is situated in Kolhapur, Maharashtra. Sati Devi's eyes fell here. This shrine has an idol of Devi as Mahishmardini and Lord Shiva as Krodhish.

This temple is located in Kolhapur at the confluence of five rivers, which are called Panchganga Rivers. The mention of Karvir Devi is also found in Puranas. Devigita states as follows.

Kolaapure Mahaasthaanan Yatr Lakshmeeh Sada Sthita.

According to a religious scripture 'Lakshmi Vijay', it is believed that a Kaushalusa giant was blessed by Mahadeva that he can only be killed by a woman. Hence, Lord Vishnu took Avatar in the form of Mahalaxmi, and killed this devil in Kolhapur. Before his death, the devil pleaded to the Goddess Mahalakshmi to bless him and to reside in this town. The Goddess Mahalakshmi blessed him, and as such Goddess Mahalaxmi resides with Mother Karvir in this shrine. According to Padam Puran, this shrine is also called Mahamatraka.

4. Shri Parvat Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is situated in Laddakh region. The 'Right Anklet' of Mother Sati's body fell

here. This shrine has an idol of Sati Devi as Shri Sundari and Lord Shiva as Sundaranand.

The overall art and architecture of this temple is great. On the premises, there are sculptures of various Gods and Goddesses. The idol of Maa Sati as Shri Sundari made of black stone is situated in the main sanctorum. It is always covered with red cloth. There is a gold dome around the idol which covers nearly 2/3 part of the idol.

Maha Shivaratri is the major festival of this shrine and celebrated with great devotion, fun and dedication. People keep fast on the day of Maha Shivratri which is considered highly auspicious.

5. Vishalakshi Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is situated in Meeraghat, Varanasi, UP. Here earrings (Kundal) of Sati Devi fell. The idols in this shrine are Vishalakshi for Sati Devi and Kala as Lord Shiva.

Vishalakshi is a Sanskrit word which means the one with large eyes. The Vishalakshi temple is located at Miraghat (Manikarnika Ghat) on the banks of River Mother Ganga, very close to Kashi Vishwanath temple of Varanasi. Varanasi is one of the seven holy cities of Hindus. Vishalakshi temple of Kashi is mentioned in Devi Purana.

6. Godavari Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Kabbur in Godavari coast of Andhra Pradesh. Sati Devi's left cheek fell here. The idols in this shrine are Vishweshwari (mother of the world) for Sati Devi and Dandapani as Lord Shiva.

Godavari Shakti Peeth is one of the ancient temples. Its architecture is spectacular and wonderful. The temple looks very spacious because the Gopuram of the temple is built on an elevation. This temple is situated on the banks of river Godavari, which is the second longest river after the River Mother Ganga in India.

7. Shuchindram Shakti Peeth: This temple is located in Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu. Sati Devi's upper teeth fell here. Here idols are Narayani for Sati Devi and Sanghar for Lord Shiva.

'Shuchi' is a Sanskrit word, which means 'to be pure'. Suchindram Shakti Peeth is also called 'Thanumalayan' or Sthanumalayan Temple.

This is a 7-storey temple. It's white gopuram is visible from far away. Though the date of building of original temple is not known, this was renovated in 17th century. The entrance of the temple is about 24 feet high with beautiful carvings on the door. This temple attracts a large number of Shaivaite and Vaishnavite devotees every year. There are about 30 temples for various deities in the temple premises. A big Lingam is in the garbh of the temple.

8. Panchasagar Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is situated at Manmandir Ghat, Varanasi, U.P. Sati Devi's lower teeth fell here. The idols in this shrine are Varahi for Sati Devi and Maha Rudra for Lord Shiva. Varahi is also described in the Puranas. The word Varahi is a Sanskrit word meaning 'Power'.

The Mother Goddess is worshiped in this temple in all three forms, Shaktism (Goddess is worshiped), Shaivism (Lord Shiva is worshiped) and Vaishnavism (Lord Vishnu is worshiped).

The architecture of this temple is adorable. The stones used in the construction of this temple shine in the Sunlight. The main feature of this temple is that the temple only opens for two hours in the morning. Other than this time, the temple is closed all day. It is believed that during the night the Goddess protects Varanasi.

9. Jwalamukhi Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Kangra, Himachal Pradesh. Sati Devi's tongue fell here. The idols in this shrine are Ambika for Sati Devi and Unmatta for Lord Shiva.

This temple is situated 35 km south of Kangra valley in the town of Jwalamukhi in Himachal Pradesh. The word Goddess Jwalamukhi represents for the Goddess of Light, also known as the Flaming Goddess.

The temple is situated overlooking the Dhauladhar range of mountains and set amidst undulating hills. It is believed that the Pandavas worshipped Goddess Jwalamukhi here to get power.

The temple consists of a copper pipe which emanates natural gas which is lit by the temple's priest to form a flawless blue flame. The flame is worshiped as the manifestation of the Goddess Jwalamukhi. Nine flames have been named after the Goddesses namely, Mahakali, Annapurna, Chandi, Hinglaj, Vidhya, Basni, Mahalakshmi, Saraswati, Ambika and Anji Devi, which burn continuously.

10. Bhairava Parvat Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is situated on the Bhairav Hills on the banks of River Shipra in Ujjain, MP. Here Sati Devi's upper lips fell. The idols are Avanti for Sati Devi and Lambakarna for Lord Shiva.

The architecture of this Bhairav Parvat Shakti Peeth is unique. Different coloured stones have been used in constructing it. In fact, the roof and walls of the temple have beautiful stone inscriptions. The idol of Devi Avanti is always adorned with a red sari as the colour red is considered sacred by married women in India.

11. Attahas Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Labhpur, West Bengal. Sati Devi's lower lips fell here. The idols in this shrine are Fullara for Sati Devi and Bhairabh Vishweshha for Lord Shiva.

Both the words, Atta and Has, are Sanskrit words meaning 'Extreme loud laughter'. Attahas Shakti Peeth is also known as Phulara Devi temple. This temple is a prominent place for the people to worship the form of the Shaktism.

Attahas Shakti Peeth's natural beauty is unique. This temple is located on the banks of the river Ishani, situated between the forest with different species of birds and trees.

12. Jansthan Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Panchavati, Nasik, Maharashtra. Sati Devi's chin fell here. The idols in this shrine are Bharmari for Sati Devi and Vikrakatakkha for Lord Shiva.

Bhrarmari Devi is a dark coloured Goddess identified as another form of Mother Kalika. It is said that She is as brilliant as a million Suns. She is surrounded by black bees and holds black bees in the fist of Her hands. Her other hands are considered as 'boon-granting' and 'fear-allaying' gestures. It is believed that She destroys egoistic demons while her bees by making the sound of mantra 'hring' destroys fear in persons. The statue of the Devi is huge, about 10 feet tall with 18 hands, holding various weapons like string of beads, battle axe, mace, arrow, thunderbolt, lotus, bow, water pot, cudgel, lance, sword, shield, conch, bell, cup, trident, noose, spinning disc (Sudarsana Chakra).

The idol is always coated with Sindoor, which is considered highly auspicious. She is also known as 'Mahishasur Mardini', the slayer of the demon Mahishasur. It is believed that She took the form of a buffalo to kill Mahishasur demon. One can see the statue of the head of a buffalo made out of the stone on the steps of the temple.

13. Amarnath Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is situated in Amarnath, Jammu and Kashmir. The part of Sati Devi's neck fell here. The idols in this shrine are Maha Maya for Sati Devi and Trisandhyasvar for Lord Shiva.

It is believed that this temple is about 5,000 years old. In the holy cave of Amarnath in Jammu and Kashmir, one can observe the snow-formed Shivlinga. The snow-formed Shakti Peeth is also naturally made near this Shivlinga. This Shakti Peeth is also called Parvati Peeth.

14. Nandipur Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Santhya, West Bengal. Sati Devi's necklace fell here. The idols here are Nandini for Sati Devi and Nandikishore for Lord Shiva.

In Nandipur Shakti Peeth, the Goddess is sitting in the form of a turtle shaped rock. This rock is painted completely using vermillion. The idol of Goddess is decorated with a silver crown and three golden eyes. There is a holy tree in this complex on which the devotees tie the red thread to fulfill their desires.

15. Shri Shail Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is situated in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh. The part of Sati Devi's neck fell here. The Idols in this shrine are Mahalakshmi for Sati Devi and Shambaranand for Lord Shiva.

This temple is located in Kurnool, 250 km from Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh. This temple is also called 'South Kailas' and 'Brahmagiri'. Mallikarjuna Jyotirling of Lord Shiva is also located along with Shri Shail Shakti Peeth.

In this temple, Shakti is worshiped as 'Mahalakshmi' and Bhairav is worshiped as ' Sambaranand ' and 'Ishwaranand'.

16. Nalhati Shaktipeeth: This Shakti Peeth is situated in Bolpur, West Bengal. Sati Devi's vocal pipe fell here. The idols in this shrine are Goddess Kalika for Sati Devi and Yogesh for Lord Shiva.

This temple is also known by the name of Nalateshwari. Nalhati Shakti Peeth is surrounded by beautiful hills and forests. It is believed that in the 252nd Bengali traditional calendar, Lord Kamdev (Hindu deity of love and desire) saw a dream on the

existence of this Shakti Peeth in Nalhati forest, and constructed this temple. It is observed in this temple that no matter how much water is being poured down the throat of the idol of Goddess Kalika, water never gets overflowed or dried up.

17. Mithila Shaktipeeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Mithila, Bihar. Sati Devi's left shoulder fell here. The idols in this shrine are Mahadevi for Sati Devi and Mahodara for Lord Shiva.

This temple has a huge structure which looks like a fort with four towers (Minar type structures) and a coloured fountain in front. The entrance looks magnificent during the night when light falls on it. Mithila Shakti Peeth remains open all day.

18. Ratnavali Shaktipeeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Ghanteswar, Krishna Nagar, Kanakul, West Bengal. Sati Devi's right shoulder fell here. The idols in this shrine are Kumari for Sati Devi and Bhairava for Lord Shiva.

The Ratnavali Shakti Peeth is located on the banks of the Khanakul-Krishnanagar Ratnakar river in Hooghly. Goat sacrifices are often made in this temple on the days of worship.

19. Ambaji Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Banaskantha, Girnar hills, Gujarat. Sati Devi's stomach fell here. The idols in this shrine are Chandrabhaga for Sati Devi and Vakratunda for Lord Shiva.

The correct time of building this temple is not known, but it is believed that twelve hundred years ago king Vallabhnbhai, a Suryavansh emperor, renovated this temple. Now, the state government of Gujarat has further renovated this temple. Gold is

also used in the rebuilding of the temple. At the peak of the temple, 358 gold kalashas are installed.

20. Jalandhar Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Shiv Nagar, Jalandhar, Punjab. Sati Devi's left breast fell here. The idols in this temple are Tripurmalini for Sati Devi and Bhisan as Lod Shiva.

This Shakti Peeth is also known as Stan Peeth. It is believed that idol of Sati Devi in the form of Tripurmalini have the powers of Mother Vaishno Devi, Mother Lakshmi Devi and Mother Saraswati Devi altogether. These three Goddesses fulfill all desires of devotees. A 'Diya' (lamp) is always kept burning here.

It is believed that whomsoever dies in the vicinity of Tripurmalini Shakti Peeth, goes to heaven after death. Even the birds or animals dying at this place get free from the cycle of births and deaths. According to another belief, all the Gods and Goddesses are present here to pray Mother Sati, hence worshipping here is considered extremely auspicious. It is believed that whomsoever worships at this Shrine, Mother Sati protects his/ her families.

21. Ramgiri Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Chitrakoot, U.P. Sati Devi's right breast fell here. The idols in this shrine are Shivani for Sati Devi and Chand Bhairav for Lord Shiva.

Chitrakoot is considered a highly sacred place. Lord Ram, Sita Devi and Lakshman spent their eleven and a half years of exile here. Several sages, such as Atri, Sati Anusuya, Dattatreya, Markandeya, Sarbhanga, Sutikshna etc had also meditated on this

holy land. Lord Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh also took their various incarnations here. Goswami Tulsidas had darshan of Lord Ram and Lakshman in Chitrakoot.

The art and architecture of this Shakti Peeth is great. The temple is made out of stones on which various idols of Gods and Goddesses are engraved.

22. Vaidyanath Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Deoghar, Jharkhand. Sati Devi's heart fell here. The idols in this shrine are Jaidurga for Sati Devi and Vaidyanath for Lord Shiva. It is also believed that Sati Devi was cremated here. Since the heart of Sati Devi fell here, the place is also called as Hridya Peeth.

The main temple is 72 feet tall. In this temple, Jaidurga is worshiped in two forms, the first one being Tripur Sundari / Tripur Bhairavi and the second one being Chinnamasta. Goddess Tripur Sundari is worshiped with Lord Ganesh as Rishi and Chinnamasta is worshiped with Ravansur as Rishi.

Jaidurga Shakti Peeth is also known as Chitabhumi. It is believed that when Lord Vishnu cut the body of Sati Devi into 51 pieces by His Sudarshan Chakra, Lord Shiva was at this place at that time doing His Tandav Nritya. Lord Vishnu pacified Him, and then Lord Shiva cremated the heart of Sati Devi here.

Vaidyanath Shakti Peeth is also considered an auspicious place where lepers get rid of the disease of leprosy.

23. Vakreshwar Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Santhya, West Bengal. Sati Devi's centre of the brows fell here.

The idols in this shrine are Mahishamardini for Sati Devi and Vakranath for Lord Shiva.

The Vakreshwar Temple lies on the banks of the Paphra River in Birbhum, 240 km from Kolkata. This Shakti Peeth is believed to be one of the most powerful Shakti Peeths.

There is a popular myth on how this place got its present name. It is believed that once there were two renowned Maharshies, Subrita and Lomas. Though both of them received invitations to participate in the wedding of Goddess Lakshmi to Lord Vishnu during Samudra Manthan in Satyug era, but Maharshi Lomas got it first. Maharshi Subrita did get his invitation later. Maharshi Subrita felt insulted. He was so ferocious with anger that he ended up twisting his nerves into eight folds. He was thus named as Maharshi Ashtavakra. Disfigured and disillusioned, Maharshi Ashtavakra then performed penance on Lord Mahadev to overcome his anger. Pleased with his penance, Lord Shiva granted him the boon that Maharshi Ashtavakra would be the wisest sage and be worshipped even before Lord Shiva.

24. Kanyakashram Kanyakumari Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu. Sati Devi's back fell here. The idols in this shrine are Sharvani for Sati Devi and Nimisha for Lord Shiva.

Dating back to more than 3000 years, this temple is not only religiously significant but also has great historical importance. This ancient temple of Kanyakumari also presents mesmerising scenic beauty by its location on the side of vast spread of ocean. Spiritual aura, breathtaking natural beauty and an ancient architecture makes this temple a rare site for devotees.

25. Bahula Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Katwa, Veerbhum, West Bengal. Sati Devi's left arm fell here. The idols in this shrine are Bahula for Sati Devi and Bhiruk for Lord Shiva.

Eight kilometres from Katwa in Burdwan, this Shakti Peeth presents the great manifestation of the spiritual energy of the Goddess. On the banks of the Ajay River at Ketugram this temple is an ancient temple which boasts of wonderful architecture. The temple has a large courtyard right in the front of the garbhagriha. Its flooring has been done in red stones. The temple has a serene environment that calms the senses. Spirituality can truly be attained in that environment when one hears the chiming of temple bells and the chanting of mantras fusing together with the faith.

26. Ujjain Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located on Rudra Sagar Lake, Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh. Sati Devi's elbow fell here. The idols in his shrine are Mangalchandi for Sati Devi Kapilambar for Lord Shiva.

It is believed that Goddess Mangalchandi was the Kuldevi of the great king VikRamditya.

There is very interesting legend associated with Goddess Mangalchadi. According to Skanda Puran, once demons Chand and Prachand tried to enter on Mount Kailash, abode of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati. Unhappy with this misadventure of these demons, Lord Shiva called up Goddess Mangalchandi to kill these demons. Goddess Magalchamdi killed both these demons. Lord Shiva praised Her and also gave a new name, Harsiddhi.

The idol of Goddess Mangalchandi/ Harsiddhi is painted in dark vermillion colour and placed in centre with idols of Maha Saraswati and Maha Lakshmi in temple premises. The presence of Shree Yantra, symbol of Shakti representing nine forms of Goddess Durga, is one of the main features of this temple. Along with main temple, one small shrine of Goddess Maha Maya is also located in temple premise. It is believed that Lord Shiva took the form of Bhairav for Goddess Mangachandi. Tantric tradition holds this seat as Siddha Peeth.

27. Manivedika Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Pushkar, Rajasthan. Gayatri Mandir is another name for this Shakti Peeth. Sati Devi's both wrists fell here. The idols in this shrine are Gayatri for Sati Devi and Sarvananda for Lord Shiva.

This temple is constructed on a hill and made out of stones on which various idols of Gods and Goddesses are engraved. The art and architecture of this temple are commendable. The huge pillars show the grandness of this holy structure.

28. Prayag Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Allahabad, U P. Sati Devi's ten fingers fell here. The idols in this shrine are Lalita for Sati Devi and Bhava for Lord Shiva.

Prayag Shakti Peeth is considered to be one of the 'Sapta Mokshapurash'. The art and architecture of this temple are very spectacular. There is a large idol of Lalita Devi with four hands and a glowing wheel behind the 'Mukut'. Adjacent to this idol are the idols of Lord Shiva and Mata Parvati.

29. Vidyakshetra Utkal Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Puri, Orissa. Sati Devi's navel fell here. The idols in

this shrine are Vimala for Sati Devi and Jagannath for Lord Shiva.

The Brahmamayala Tantra with hymn, ‘Aadya Stotra’, is dedicated to Goddess Vimala. Goddess Vimala was the Kuldevi of Utkala Kingdom (present day Odisha).

30. Kanchi Kamakshi Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Kanchivaram, Tamil Nadu. Sati Devi's skeleton fell here. The idols in this shrine are Devagarbha for Sati Devi and Ruru for lord Shiva.

It is believed that Kanchi Kamakshi temple has existed since time immemorial. In the documented history, Adi Shankaracharya set up the Sri Chakra at this temple, which is supposed to happen in 5th BCE. Again, about 1,600 years ago, the temple was renovated by Pallava dynasty.

31. Kal Madhav Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Amarkantak, MP. Sati Devi's right hips fell here. The idols in this shrine are Kali for Sati Devi and Asitananda for Lord Shiva.

Kal Madhav Shakti Peeth is listed among the ancient temples of India, which is believed to be established around 6,000 years ago.

Kal Madhava Shakti Peeth has unique art and architecture. The temple is made out of white stones. Adding to the beauty of shiny white stones, is the picturesque view of Son River and the nearby Kund. It is the most scenic view where two main ranges, Satpura and Vindhya, merge together and Narmada River flows.

32. Sona Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is also located in the district Amarkantak, MP, at the origin of Narmada River. Sati Devi's left hip fell here. The idols in this shrine are Narmada for Sati Devi and Vadrasen for Lord Shiva. This is also called Shondesh Shakti Peeth.

The sanctum sanctorum of the Shondesh Shakti Peeth temple is very adorable. The idol of Goddess Narmada is in the middle which is surrounded by the golden 'Mukut'. The platform of Goddess Narmada idol is made of silver.

33. Kamakhya Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in the Nilachal hills of Kamagiri, Assam. Sati Devi's Yoni (vagina) fell here. The idols in this shrine are Kamakhya as Sati Devi and Umananda as Lord Shiva.

The Kamakhya Shakti Peeth is considered as one of the oldest and most revered centres, especially for Tantric practices. The temple is the centre of the 'Kulachara Tantra Marg' and the site of the 'Ambubachi Mela', an annual festival that celebrates the menstruation of the Goddess. Structurally, the temple is dated to the 8th-9th century with many subsequent rebuildings. The final hybrid architecture defines a local style called Nilachal.

34. Jayanti Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Jayantia Hills, Assam. Sati Devi's left thigh fell here. The idols in this shrine are Goddess Jayanti (Maha Kali) for Sati Devi and Bhairav (Kramdishwar) for Lord Shiva.

The art and architecture of the temple are simple, but splendid. The temple is engraved in a hill and is surrounded by mountains, forests and rivers. The temple dome is covered with gold plated

sheet. The temple has a large courtyard. There are three caves around the temple. The first cave has the idols of the holy Trinity- Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. The second cave has the idol of Lord Shiva, and the third cave has the idol of Goddess Jayanti (Maha Kali).

35. Magadh Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Patna, Bihar. Sati Devi's right thigh fell here. The idols in this shrine are Sarvanandkari for Sati Devi and Vyomkesha for Lord Shiva. This temple is also called Patan Devi temple.

According to a Puranic reference, the right thigh of Devi Sati fell near Maharajganj and the pat (cloth) fell at Chowk from which three small deities, Goddess Maha Kali, Goddess Maha Lakshmi and Goddess Maha Saraswati emerged. The names of Goddesses 'Bari Patan Devi' and 'Choti Patan Devi' are derived from the word 'pat' (clothes) which fell at Maharajganj and Chowk. The Goddesses are believed to be the guarding deities who protected the founder of Pataliputra kingdom.

36. Tristota Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located on the banks of Tista River in Shalbari village in Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal. Sati Devi's left feet fell here. The idols in this shrine are BhRamri for Sati Devi and Ishwar for Lord Shiva.

There is a very famous legendary story associated with this Shakti Peeth. It is believed that once a very cruel and powerful demon called Arunasura lived in this land. His power grew so much that he fought a war with Lord Indra and won the kingdom of heaven. Then, all the Goddesses pray BhRamri. Pleased with their devotion, Mother BhRamri assumed the form of millions of bees and attacked the demon, thus killing him.

37. Tripur Sundari Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Kishor village, Tripura. Sati Devi's right foot fell here. The idols in this shrine are Tripur Sundari for Sati Devi and Tri-Puresh for Lord Shiva.

It is believed to be one of the holiest Hindu shrines and witnesses the highest number of devotees for a temple in North-East India after Kamakhya temple in Assam. The state of Tripura is named after this temple.

The exact time of construction of this temple is not known. The temple appears to be in ruins around 15th century. Historically, king Dhanya Manikya of Tripura in the 15th century saw a dream of Goddess Tripur Sundari. She instructed him to renovate the temple of the hillock and worship Her as Kuldevi of his clan. The king found out that this temple really existed, though was in ruins at that time. It was dedicated to Lord Vishnu. He was in a dilemma and unable to think how a temple dedicated to Vishnu could have an idol of Shakti too. The following night, Goddess gave divine vision to him. The king understood then that Lord Vishnu and Mother Shakti are only different forms of the same supreme deity (Brahman). Thus, he renovated this temple and installed Tripur Sundari idol. It is believed that the idol was already there, only people could not see Her. This legend is recounted as an example of solidarity between two sub-groups of Hinduism, the Vaishnavas and the Shaivites.

38. Vibhash Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Tamluk, Medinipur, West Bengal. Sati Devi's left ankle fell here. The idols in this shrine are Bhimarupa for Sati Devi and Sarvananda for Lord Shiva.

This temple is believed to be thousands of years old. Historically, it was renovated by the Maharaja of the Mayor dynasty approximately 1,200 years ago. The temple shows a great combination of three cultures - Hindu, Buddhism, and Oriya.

39. Devikup Bhadrkali Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Dwaipayan, Kurukshetra, Haryana. Sati Devi's right ankle fell here. The idols in this shrine are Savitri or Sthanu for Sati Devi and Aswanath for Lord Shiva.

This temple is also known as 'Shri Devi Koop'. It is believed that the Pandvas, along with Lord Krishna, prayed Mother Bhadrakali here for their victory in Mahabharat war. The tonsure (head shaving) ceremony of Lord Krishna and Lord Balram was also performed at this Shakti Peeth

40. Jogdaya Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Khirgram, West Bengal. Sati Devi's right toe fell here. The idols in his shrine are Jogdaya for Sati Devi and Khirakantha for Lord Shiva.

This Shakti Peeth has been the seat of tantriks for several thousands of years. This Shakti Peeth is mentioned in many Tantrik Purans such as Kujjika Tantra, Brihanil Tantra, Gandharbha Tantra, Tantrasaar, TantrachuRamni, Annada Mangal Tantra, Mahapith Nirapanam Tantra and Shiva Charitha Tantra. It is also believed that Mahi Ravan of Ramayan era was a great devotee of Goddess Jogdaya (a form of Bhadrakali). It is believed that after kidnapping Lord Ram and Lakshman, he was going to sacrifice them to Mother Jogdaya. Lord Hanuman rescued them before sacrifice.

41. Ambika Virat Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Vairat Nagar, Bharatpur, Rajasthan. Sati Devi's small toes of the feet fell here. The idols in this shrine are Ambika for Sati Devi and Amriteshwar for Lord Shiva.

The major festivals celebrated in this Shakti Peeth are Maha Shivratri, Navaratri, Deepawali, and Makar Sankranti. During Maha Shivratri festival, the idols of Mother Ambika and Amriteshwa are offered Abhishekam with milk and bail (bilva patra) leaf.

42. Kalighat Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Kalighat in Calcutta, West Bengal. This Shakti Peeth is also known as Kali Mandir. Sati Devi's four small toes from her right foot fell here. The idols in this shrine are Kali for Sati Devi and Nakuleesh or Nakuleshwar for Lord Shiva.

The exact date of construction of Kalighat temple is not known. It has been referred in 'Mansar Bhasan' composed in the 15th century, and 'Kavi Kankan Chandi' composed in the 17th century. Historically, this temple was renovated by Santosh Roy Chowdhury in 1798.

43. Manasa Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located near Manasarovar Lake, Tibet. Sati Devi's right hand fell here. The idols in his shrine are Dakshyani for Sati Devi and Amar for Lord Shiva.

It is mentioned in the ancient scriptures that anyone who takes a dip in the holy Mansarovar lake and pray Mother Dakshyani at the Manas Shakti Peeth, gets absolved of his/her sins for generations and attain salvation. The Kailash Manasarovar Lake

is believed to have healing powers because of the blessings of Mother Dakshyani. The site is extremely sacred to the Shakti sect of Hinduism. In the Vishnu Purana, a description of Mount Kailash states that the four sides of the Peeth are made up of crystal, ruby, gold and lapis-lazuli (deep blue semi-precious antique stones).

44. Lanka Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Sri Lanka. Sati Devi's feet bells (Nupur) fell here. The idols in this shrine are Indrakshi as Sati Devi and Rakshasheshwar as Lord Shiva. Mother Indrakshi is also known as Goddess Bhuvaneshwari.

Indrakshi Shakthi Peeth is Located 36 km from the ancient capital of the Jaffna kingdom, Nallur. The idol of the Goddess is believed to have been consecrated and worshipped by Lord Indra Himself.

It is believed that Goddess Indrakshi was the Kuldevi of the king of Lanka, Ravan of the Ramayana era. After killing Ravan, Lord Ram also paid obeisance to the Goddess Indrakshi.

45. Gandaki Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Muktinath, Nepal. Sati Devi's right cheek fell here. The idols in this shrine are Gandakichandi as Sati Devi and Chakrapan as Lord Shiva.

The temple has a unique architecture with 108 bulls facing the outer courtyard of the temple through which water is continuously poured. The divine water which flows from 108 pipes around the temple complex indicates the holy Pushkarini

water from the 108 Shri Vaishnava Divya Desams. Devotees take sacred bath here even in freezing temperatures.

46. Guhyeshwari Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located near Pashupatinath Mandir in Kathmandu, Nepal. Sati Devi's two knees fell here. The idols in this shrine are Maha Maya as Sati Devi and Kapali as Lord Shiva.

This temple is located about 1 km east of Pashupatinath temple on the southern bank of the Bagmati River. It is said that this temple is the Shakti chair of Pashupatinath temple.

The temple's name originates from the Sanskrit words Guhya (secret, hidden, or cave) and Ishwari (Goddess). Literally, the name "Guhyeshwari" stands for the Goddess of the cave. Its origin aligns with the Hindu legend of Sati Devi, her self-immolation when She turns into Adishakti, the Goddess of cosmic energy, at Daksha yagna. In Lalitha Sahasranama, the 707th name of the Goddess is mentioned as Guhyarupini (The uncanny form of Goddess intimates that She is beyond human perception, and the invisible location where She resides allows Her to render justice impartially).

47. Hinglaj Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Hinglaj, Pakistan. Sati Devi's brain fell here. The idols in this shrine are Kotari for Sati Devi and Bhimlochan for Lord Shiva.

The shrine is in a small natural cave. There is a low mud altar. There is no man-made image of the Goddess in this shrine. A small divine form of Goddess Hinglaj is worshipped. The stone is smeared with sindoor (vermilion) which possibly gives the

location its Sanskrit name Hingula. This is the root of the present-day name Hinglaj.

48. Sugandha Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located on the banks of the river in Khulna, Bangladesh. Sati Devi's nose fell here. The idols are Sunanada as Sati Devi and Traimbak as Lord Shiva.

The whole complex of the Sugandha Shakti Peeth is made out of marble stone, with images and statues of Gods and Goddesses engraved on them. The sculptures are mesmerizing. The marble of the temple has spectacular reflection on the water of the river Khulna.

49. Kartoyagat Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Bogra, Bangladesh. Sati Devi's some clothing fell here. The idols are Aparna for Sati Devi and Bhairava for Lord Shiva.

This Shakti Peeth is located in Bogra, which is about 28 kilometres from Sherpur. The temple complex comprises an area of around four acres. It has the one main temple and four other small temples surrounded by the main temple dedicated to Goddess Sati, Lord Shiva, Patal Bhairav and Lord Vaman.

50. Chattal Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Chatgaon, Bangladesh. Sati Devi's right arm fell here. The idols are Bhavani as Sati Devi and Chandrashekhar as Lord Shiva.

The age of this temple is unknown. Historically, it was renovated in the 18th Century. According to Hindu belief, the Goddess Bhavani of the temple is considered the guardian deity of the town Chittagong. This temple was damaged by Pakistani soldiers

during the Bangladesh liberation war in 1971. The temple was rebuilt by the Chakraborty family. The previous idol, which was made of neem wood, was destroyed during the war. After the war ended, a new statue made in Varanasi was established.

51. Yashor Shakti Peeth: This Shakti Peeth is located in Jessore, Bangladesh. Sati Devi's centre of the hands fell here. The idols in this shrine are Jashoreswari for Sati Devi and Chanda for Lord Shiva.

This Shakti Peeth was invisible in the beginning. A legend says that an army general of King Pratapaditya discovered a luminant ray of light coming from the bushes, and found a piece of stone carved in the form of a human palm. When he narrated this incident to the king Pratapaditya, he built a temple here and started worshipping Goddess Jashoreshwari as his Kuldevi.

3.20 Drinking Poison from Samudra Manthan

Lord Shiva drank Halahala (deadly poison) which was the first item as a result of Samudra Manthan being carried by Devas and Daityas to obtain Amrit (nectar). This deadly poison Halahala started injuring both the sides. No one was able to bear the lethal fumes emitted by the poison. Not only both Devas and Daityas began to collapse due to asphyxiation, but whole Universe was affected. They prayed Lord Shiva for help.



Lord Shiva, in order to save the Universe, chose to consume the entire poison and thus drank it. The poison turned his throat blue. Hence, He is also known as Nilkantha (the one with a blue throat).

This happened on the Chaturdashi Tithi Krishna Paksha (fourteenth day during the waxing phase of the Lunar cycle in the month of Magha (as per the Hindu calendar), the day of Shivratri. We celebrate Shivaratri in honour of Lord Shiva that He protected all of us at the risk of His own life.

The story of ‘Samudra Manthan’ is described in Purans.

Lord Vaman, in His three steps, took away all the kingdom of three worlds from the mightiest Daitya king Maha Bali, and then ordered him to go to Patallok and be its ruler. King Maha Bali was the great devotee of Lord Vishnu (original form of Lord Vaman). He accepted His command gladly and settled in Patallok with his family, friends, ministers, commanders and army. However, this was not well taken by his sons, especially by crown prince Vanasur. Crown prince Vanasur was very sad to lose the kingdom of heaven. He wanted to regain the kingdom of heaven from Lord Indra. So, on the advice of his Guru Acharya Swarbhanu, he went to the forest to mediate on Lord Shiva to get divine weapons and enough powers to defeat Lord Indra.

King Maha Bali then declared his younger son Agr as crown prince. Crown prince Vanasur was very dear to king Maha Bali. After his going to forest for penance, he felt very lonely. He left all the royal task to manage kingdom to crown prince Agr and went to live in the ashram of his Guru Acharya Swarbhanu with his wife queen Sudeshna.

When Lord Indra found out that crown prince Vanasur had left the kingdom of Patallok for penance, he thought this to be a good opportunity to completely annihilate the Daitya clan. Lord Indra thought that king Maha Bali had taken more or less retirement, and crown prince Agr was too weak to stand against him, hence a good opportunity for him to win a war against Daityas.

Lord Indra and his army of Devs started attacking Daityas on day-to-day basis. However, to the surprise of Lord Indra, crown prince Agr defended his kingdom very well. There were fierce fightings on day-to-day basis killing warriors from both the sides. The plan of Lord Indra to easily capture Patallok and annihilate Daityas forever failed. He was highly perturbed. However, his pride would not allow him to withdraw from the war.

Lord Indra went to Lord Brahma to find a solution for this. Lord Brahma, knowing the power of Agr and his commanders, advised him to go to Lord Vishnu for an advice. Lord Vishnu was very sad on the ambitious nature of Lord Indra which was resulting in deaths of thousands of warriors on both sides. He did not want to interfere. Lord Vishnu was also concerned that after king Maha Bali, there was no one in Daitya clan who had any sympathy with Himself or the Devs clan. Though Lord Vishnu was not in support of this act of Lord Indra of waging war against Daityas, He was worried about the welfare of Devs after King Maha Bali. Crown prince Agr was becoming more and more powerful every day. Lord Vishnu knew that crown prince Agr was planning to attack Lord Indra with his full powers and capture the kingdom of heaven. Crown prince Agr was so powerful at this stage that it might be difficult if not impossible to stop him. If it happened, it would be difficult to regain the kingdom of heaven from Daityas.

This would create anarchy not only in the heaven but in the whole Universe.

Lord Vishnu thought of a plan and addressed Lord Indra, ‘O Indra, surely there is a solution to this problem which will make Devs immortal, hence very powerful. You should obtain Amrit (nectar) from the ocean by churning it. If Devs drink Amrit, they will become immortal and cannot be defeated by anyone, including Daityas and Danavs. However, Devs alone have no capability to churn ocean. Devs will need help from Daityas and Danavs to churn the ocean. Let me think of a way to convince Daityas and Danavs to do so. Perhaps I can do it by convincing them that half of the Amrit will be given to them. They will then agree to churn ocean along with Devs in greed to get half of the Amrit. King Maha Bali, though semi-retired and now living in the Ashram of his Guru Swarbhanu, is still the king. Crown prince Agr has not been coronated yet. King Maha Bali is My devotee. If I send a message to him to co-operate with Devs on ocean churning, I am sure, he will agree. No one can dare to disobey his command.’

Lord Indra, with folded hands, then said to Lord Vishnu, ‘O Lord, if half of the Amrit is given to Daityas and Danavs, they will also become equally powerful. How will it be possible to defeat them then?’

Lord Vishnu smiled and told Lord Indra, ‘Indra, do not worry about that now. Leave it to me. All of you go now and get ready for churning of ocean. Let me work on this plan.’

After getting such assurance from Lord Vishnu, Lord Indra and all Devs returned to their kingdom.

Lord Vishnu now remembered Brahmishi Narad. Brahmishi got telepathic message from Lord Vishnu and presented himself immediately before Lord Vishnu chanting ‘Narayan. Narayan.’

Brahmishi Narad, with folded hands, then said to Lord Vishnu. ‘O Lord, I am very fortunate that you did remember me. There must be a reason that Lord remembered me. I am becoming impatient to hear that.’

Lord Vishnu spoke in very soft and sweet words, ‘O Brahmishi, I request you to go immediately to Satal, capital of king Maha Bali in Patallok and convey My message to him. Please remember that these days king Maha Bali is living in the Ashram of Acharya Swarbhanu.’

After hearing such polite words from the mouth of Lord Vishnu, Brahmishi Narad said, ‘O my Lord, Your request is an order to me. I wait for your instructions’.

Lord Vishnu then said, ‘O Brahmishi, tell king Maha Bali that I am fed up with fighting of Devs and Daityas on daily basis killing thousands of warriors from each side. I am looking for a permanent solution to this animosity. I do believe that if both Devs and Daityas may get Amrit (nectar), then both the clans will become immortal and their insecurity will vanish. Then they may not fight with each other. Amrit can only be acquired through churning of the ocean. Ocean cannot be churned alone either by Devs or Daityas. I am sure Devs will agree to My proposal. If you can instruct crown prince Agr and all the Daitya kings and commanders, they will follow your command. When Amrit is acquired from churning of the ocean, I will make sure that it is equally distributed among Devs and Daityas.’

Brahmrishi Narad had some curiosity and desired to ask a question, but Lord Vishnu asked him to keep quiet at this time.

Receiving such instructions from Lord Vishnu, Brahmrishi Narad arrived in Satal in the Ashram of Acharya Swarbhanu.

Acharya Swarbhanu heard the voice of Brahmrishi Narad, ‘Narayan, Narayan’ and ran to the gate of the Ashram to welcome him. Seeing Brahmrishi before him, he fell at the feet of Brahmrishi. Brahmrishi Narad embraced him and gave blessings.

King Maha Bali also heard ‘Narayan, Narayan’, and recognising that the visitor looked to be Brahmrishi Narad, also came out of his cottage to greet Brahmrishi. Seeing Brahmrishi, King Maha Bali also fell on his feet and got blessings from Brahmrishi.

With folded hands then Acharya Swarbhanu said to Brahmrishi, ‘O greatest among rishies, Brahmrishi, you look tired. Please go and take bath in the adjacent river and be fresh. Then, we will have some refreshment together and chat.’

Hearing polite and respectful words of Acharya Swarbhanu, Brahmrishi Narad went to the bank of adjacent river, took bath and returned soon. Brahmrishi, king Maha Bali and Acharya Swarbhanu had then refreshment together. After refreshment, Acharya Swarbhanu asked Brahmrishi to take rest. But Brahmrishi Narad told them that he had come to them with an important message from Lord Vishnu, and unless he delivered that message, he could not rest.

‘Lord Vishnu had sent a message’, hearing these words from the mouth of Brahmrishi Narad, King Maha Bali and Acharya Swarbhanu, both great devotees of Lord Vishnu, looked at each

other with great amazement and said to Brahmishi 'O great sage, a message from Lord Vishnu is an order to us. We are getting impatient. Please convey to us and it will be religiously followed.'

Brahmishi Narad then gave the message of Lord Vishnu to Daitya King Maha Bali and Acharya Swarbhanu. Brahmishi Narad said, 'O great Daitya King Maha Bali and Acharya Swarbhanu, Lord Vishnu is fed up with the fighting of Devs and Daityas on daily basis which kills thousands of warriors every day on each side. He wants to find a permanent solution to this problem. He proposes that Amrit be acquired by churning the ocean, and that be equally shared between Devs and Daityas. Once both of them become immortal, their insecurity will go away and there will be peace for ever. Ocean churning is not possible alone either by Devs or Daityas. It has to be a collaborative effort. Please instruct crown prince Agr and other Daitya kings, commanders and warriors to take part in this ocean churning with Devs.'

Acharya Swarbhanu nodded his head and said to King Maha Bali, 'O great king, I do think this is a great suggestion from Lord Vishnu. I fully agree to this. Please give your consent.'

King Maha Bali then said to Acharya Swarbhanu and Brahmishi Narad, 'Of course, I do fully agree too with this suggestion of Lord Vishnu. If Lord Vishnu would have given orders to Maha Bali as an individual person to churn the ocean with Devs, I would have immediately said 'yes' to the orders of my Lord. But as it looks to me, He wants all Daitya clan to be the part of this churning of the ocean. Both of you know that crown prince Agr as well as many of the kings and commanders of Daitya clan, do

believe that Lord Vishnu always takes side of Devs. In my opinion, we should try to convince them that following instructions of Lord Vishnu is in their favour rather than ordering them to do so. Acharya, please send a message to crown prince Agr to call an urgent assembly of all the Daitya kings and commanders. I will then personally address all of them and try to convince them to take part in this ocean churning willingly. Be assured that if all the Daitya kings and commanders do not agree willingly, I will be there to churn the ocean by myself to follow the orders of my Lord. I still have the power to churn the ocean from one side alone by myself.'

King Maha Bali's instructions were followed immediately by Acharya Swarbhanu. A message accordingly was sent to crown prince Agr in the palace.

Crown prince Agr immediately organised an urgent meeting of all the Daitya clan kings, commanders and noble persons. King Maha Bali addressed this meeting and conveyed the message of Lord Vishnu to all. He concluded the meeting by giving his opinion that he supported this proposal of Lord Vishnu.

All the Daitya clan kings, commanders and noble men supported the idea and agreed to the opinion of king Maha Bali. Everyone appeared to be happy on an idea of getting Amrit and immortality. The message of cooperation was sent to Lord Vishnu through Brahmrishi Narad.

Having received the affirmative answer for the cooperation of His proposal from both the Devs and Daityas for Samudra Manthan, Lord Vishnu commenced further planning to carry out Samudra Manthan, (ocean churning). He asked Brahmrishi Narad

to go first to Mandrachal Parvat to request him to be the churner. Then, he asked him to go to the Kailash Parvat to request Lord Mahadev to give permission to Nagaraj Vasuki to accept to become the rope for churning (Neti). Brahmurishi followed the instructions of Lord Vishnu, and returned with affirmative answers from both of them.

Lord Vishnu sent the message to both crown prince Agr and Lord Indra to ask their followers to put various herbs of medicinal importance in the ocean and get ready to churn the ocean. His orders were carried out immediately.

On the appointed time as per Muhurut (auspicious time), both the groups, Daityas under the leadership of crown prince Agr and Devas under the leadership of Lord Indra gathered at the selected site of the ocean, ready to churn. Lord Vishnu appointed Gurudev Acharya Shukra and Gurudev Acharya Brihaspati as the observers of this event. Acharya Swarbhanu was asked to assist both the Gurus in their duty.

Lord Vishnu wanted that Devas should churn the ocean from the side of the tail of the Nagaraj Vasuki. He knew that the poisonous fumes exhaled by the Nagaraj from his mouth during churning may harm Devas. But He also knew that if He proposed this, Daityas would never agree. So, He played a reverse psychology trick. He asked Daityas to churn from the side of the tail and Devas from the side of the mouth of Nagaraj Vasuki. This proposal was considered as an insult to Daityas by crown prince Agr. He thought that those asked to churn from the side of the mouth of the Nagaraj Vasuki were being honoured. He revolted against this proposal of Lord Vishnu and demanded that Daityas should be allowed to churn the ocean from the side of the mouth of the

Nagraj Vasuki. Lord Vishnu agreed to his proposal, and hence, Devas commenced churning from the side of the tail and Daityas from the side of mouth of Nagraj Vasuki.

The churning of ocean commenced. Lord Vishnu Himself took the form of turtle (Kurm Avatar) to stabilise the churning, Mandrachal Parvat.

All of a sudden, Halahal (mostly deadly poison) came out as a result of churning. The effect of this poison was deadly not only on the Devas and Daityas, but on the whole universe. No one was able to bear its fire. Lord Vishnu advised Acharya Shukra Dev and Acharya Brihaspati Dev to pray Lord Mahadev with all the Devas and Daityas to rescue them.

Pleased with their prayers, Lord Mahadev appeared. He then decided to drink this Halahal poison to save the Universe. He did so, but he did not allow this poison to go down from His throat. His throat became bluish because of the presence of this Halahal poison. He was named 'Neelkanth' after that.

This day was the Chaturdashi Tithi Krishna Paksha (fourteenth day during the waxing phase of the Lunar cycle in the month of Margh), the day Maha Shivratri. Hence, all the Universe commenced celebrating this day as the saviour day by Lord Mahadev.

After Halahal, 14 other gems came out from Samudra Manthan, including Amrit. Those gems were, Chandra, Parijata, Airavata, Kamadhenu, Madira/ Varuni, Kalpavriksha, The Apsaras, Uccaihsravas, Goddess Lakshmi, Panchajanya, Vishnu's mace/

magic bow, gems such as Kausthubha and Chintamani, Dhanvantari and finally the Amrit.

3.30 Wedding of Lord Shiva with Parvati

When Sati Devi self-immolated in the Yagn of Her father Prajapati Daksh as stated above in this book, She prayed to Lord Shankar from the core of Her heart that She should wed Him in Her next birth. She was born, thereafter, in Himanchal's palace, in the form of Parvati (meaning full of grace).



Fulfilling Her desire, Lord Mahadev wedded Her on this auspicious day of Chaturdashi Tithi Krishna Paksha (fourteenth day during the waxing phase of the Lunar cycle in the month of Margh). Hence this day is celebrated as Maha Shivratri.

**Sati marata hari sana baru maagaa.
Janama janama siva pada anuraagaa.
Tehi kaarana himagiri grha jaaie,
Janami Paarabati tanu paain.**

The story of the birth of Parvati Devi in the home of Himachal, and Her wedding to Lord Mahadev is very well described in Shri Ram Charit Manas by Goswami Tulasi Das.

When Brahmurishi Narad came to know that Sati Devi had taken rebirth in the form of Parvati in the house of Himachal, he came to visit her.

Himachal, the father of Parvati, welcomed Brahmishi by worshipping him. He asked Brahmishi to bless his newly born daughter.

The sage looked at the divine Parvati and smilingly told Himachal, 'O Himachal, you are very fortunate to be father of this divine girl. Your daughter is not only very pretty but mine of all virtues. She is amiable and intelligent by nature. She will be called Uma, Ambika and Bhavani. Adorned with all good traits, the girl shall win the unfailing love of Her husband. She shall remain ever united with Her husband and bring glory to you. She shall command the respect of the whole Universe. The one who will worship Her shall lack nothing. By the mere thought of Her name, women in this world shall be enabled to tread the path of fidelity to their husbands. Your daughter, O Himalaya, is endowed with auspicious marks. However, she will marry to a person who is free from pride, unborn, unconcerned and free from doubts, an ascetic with matted hair and a heart devoid of desires, stark naked and with hideous accoutrements. Uma will undoubtedly get such a husband; however, all these qualities are in Lord Mahadev. So, if She meditates on Lord Mahadev and please Him, She will surely get Him as Her husband. The great Lord Shiva is certainly difficult to propitiate, but He is quickly pleased when penance is undergone. If your daughter practises austerity, Lord Shiva will surely be pleased.'

After uttering these words, Brahmishi Narad left the house of Himachal. The girl Parvati sincerely thought about the words of Brahmishi and decided to go to the forest for penance to please Lord Shiva to seek His blessings to be His wife.

Cherishing in Her heart the feet of Her dear Lord Shiva, Uma went to the forest and began Her penance. Her delicate frame was little fit for austerities, yet She renounced all luxuries fixing Her mind on the feet of Her Lord Shiva. For a thousand years She lived on roots and fruits alone. Then for another hundred years She subsisted on vegetables only. For some days, Her only sustenance was water and air only; while for a few days, She observed a rigorous fast. Then, for three thousand years, She maintained Herself on the withered leaves of the Bela tree that dropped on the ground. Finally, She also gave up even dry leaves. Uma then came to be known by the name of Aparna (living without leaves). Seeing Her body emaciated through self-mortification the deep voice of Brahma (the Creator) resounded through the heavens.

There was an Akashvani, ‘O daughter of Himachal, Your desire will be accomplished soon. Cease all Your rigorous penance. Lord Shiva will soon be Your husband. When Your father comes to call You, give up all resistance and return home at once. When the seven sages will meet You, be assured of the veracity of this oracle.’

Lord Vishnu, Lord Brahma and all other Gods approached Lord Shiva and told Him about the rebirth of Sati Devi, and severe penance of Parvati to obtain Him as Her husband. They requested Him to accept Parvati as His bride.

Lord Shiva accepted the proposal and sent seven sages to Parvati to convince Her to go home now, and wait for the right moment. Seven sages went to Parvati and told Her the instructions of Lord Shiva. Parvati then returned back to her father and waited for the right moment.

After giving His consent to marry Parvati, when Lord Vishnu, Lord Brahma and other Gods left His abode, Lord Shiva went into deep mediation. Lord Indra had to request Lord Kamdev to awake Him. Lord Kamdev, though was successful in awakening Lord Shiva from His deep mediation, but in anger, Lord Shiva burnt him to ashes by His third eye. Rati, wife of Kamdev, on hearing that Lord Shiva had burnt her husband to ashes, approached Lord Shiva and begged for His mercy. Pleased with her devotion, Lord Shiva blessed her and said, ‘O Rati, your husband shall be called now by the name of Anang (bodiless). Now hear how you will meet him again. When Lord Vishnu will incarnate as Lord Krishna in Dawpar Yug, your husband will be born as His son by the name of Pradyumna.’

When Lord Brahma and other Gods learnt that Lord Shiva had come out of His mediation, they approached Him, and requested to get married with Parvati. Lord Shiva consented.

Lord Brahma, then, found an auspicious date, asterism and hour ascertained for marriage and without delay conveyed His message to Himachal through seven sages. The preparations for wedding of Parvati with Lord Shiva now commenced. All the Gods began to adorn their vehicles and aerial cars of various kinds. Happy and auspicious omens were visible and celestial damsels sang for joy.

The procession of bridegroom (Barat) started on the specified date. When it was heard that the bridegroom’s procession was close at hand, there was commotion in the capital city of Himachal, which added to its charm. Adorning themselves and decorating their vehicles of various kinds, a party proceeded in advance to receive the procession with due honour. They were

gladdened at heart to see the gathering of the immortals. They were all very happy to behold Lord Hari (Vishnu). But, when they looked at the procession of bridegroom Lord Shiva, they were frightened. They wondered if it was the bridegroom's procession or the army of death. They saw bridegroom as a maniac, riding on a bull, serpents, skulls and ashes were his ornaments. His body was smeared with ashes and adorned with serpents and skulls. He was naked, had matted hair on his head and was dreadful to look at. He was accompanied by ghosts and evil spirits, goblins and fairies and demons with a frightful countenance. The elders smiled for they knew Lord Shiva. They reassured everyone in many ways and asked them not to be afraid of.

The party which had gone ahead to receive the marriage procession returned with the procession and assigned beautiful lodgings to all the guests. Maina (mother of Parvati) kindled auspicious lights for waving round the bridegroom and the women accompanying her sang melodious songs of rejoicing. A salver of gold in her hands, she proceeded to welcome Lord Shiva with great delight. The women were seized with excessive fear when they saw Rudra (Shiva) in frightful accoutrements. They fled in great panic and entered the house. The great Lord Shiva went to the lodgings of the bridegroom's party. Maina was sore distressed at heart and sent for Parvati. With great affection She seated Her on her lap. Tears rushed to her eyes and thus spoke crying, 'How the Creator, who has made You so beautiful, has become so heartless to create such a raving madman for your bridegroom.'

All the ladies assembled there were also distressed when they saw the consort of Himachal Maina sad. Recalling the affection

of her daughter she wailed, wept and exclaimed, ‘What harm have I done to Narada that he should have ruined my home and tendered such advice to Uma as made Her undergo penance for securing a crazy husband? The sage is passionless and without affection. He has no wealth, no dwelling and no wife and is indifferent to all. That is why he destroys others’ homes. He has neither shame nor fear. What does a barren woman know of the pains of child birth?’

Seeing Her mother distressed, Bhavani addressed the following soft yet prudent words to Her mother Maina, ‘O mother, whatever is ordained by Providence, cannot be altered. Realizing this, be not worried. If I am destined to have a crazy husband, why should anyone be blamed for it? Can you alter the decree of Providence? Therefore, take no reproach on you unnecessarily and cease lamenting. This is no occasion for it. The amount of joy and sorrow that has fallen to My lot, I must reap wherever I go.’

Hearing the soft and polite words of Uma, all the ladies became sad. They blamed the Creator in many ways and tears flowed from their eyes.

On hearing the news that very moment Himachal came to his house along with Brahmishi Narada and the seven seers (Saptrishies). Then, Narada reassured them all, narrating to them the past birth of Uma.

Brahmishi Narad said, ‘O Maina, hear my true words. Your daughter is none else than Bhavani (the eternal Consort of Lord Shiva). She is the mother of the universe. She is unborn with imperishable divine energy. She has no beginning, no end. She

creates, maintains and then dissolves the Universe and assumes the semblance of a human form of Her own will. Before She was born as your daughter, She was born in the house of Prajapati Daksha. Sati was Her name. She was the incarnation of Adi-Prakarti. In that incarnation, Sati was married with Lord Shiva. The story is well-known throughout the world. One day, while She was returning home with Lord Shiva, She beheld Lord Ram, who was a Sun as it were to the lotus-like race of Raghu. Bewildered by His sight, She did not listen to the advice of Lord Shiva and was guiled into assuming the disguise of Sita (consort of Lord Ram). Lord Shiva repudiated Her because She had offended Him by assuming the disguise of mother Sita. Separated from Lord Shiva, She then visited the sacrifice undertaken by Her father and burnt Herself in the fire of Yoga-agni there. Now, reborn in your house, She has undergone terrible penance for the sake of Her lord. Knowing this, give up all your doubts. Girija (your daughter) is ever beloved of Lord Shiva.'

When they heard Brahmrishi Narad's explanation, the sadness of all was dispersed. In a trice, the news spread from house to house throughout the city. Then, Maina and her consort Himavan rejoiced and bowed at Parvati's feet again and again. All the citizens, including men, women and children, young men as well as elderly people, were immensely delighted. Festive songs began to be sung in the city.

When the time of Panigrahan ceremony (seven circumambulations) was approaching, the seven sages (Sapt Rishies) asked Himachal to send Parvati for the ceremony. Uma was brought in by Her girl companions richly adorned. Everyone was enraptured at Her beauty. The perfection of beauty that

Bhavani had, could not be adequately praised even with millions of tongues.

At the direction of the sages, Lord Shiva and Bhavani paid divine honours to Lord Ganapati. Let no one be puzzled to hear this. One should bear in mind that Gods have existed from time without beginning.

**Muni anusasana ganapatihi pujeu Shambhu bhavani.
Kou suni sansaya karai jani sura anaadi jiyan jaan.**

The great sages had the nuptial ceremony performed in all its details as laid down in the Vedas. Taking sacred Kush grass in his hand and holding the bride by Her hand, the mountain-king Himalaya made Her over to Bhava (Lord Shiva) knowing Her to be His eternal consort. When the great Lord Shiva took the hand of the bride, all the great Gods and Goddesses were glad at heart. The principal sages chanted the Vedic Mantra, while the Gods and Goddesses exclaimed, 'Jay to Lord Shiva'. The musical instruments of various kinds were sounded and flowers of different varieties were rained down from the heavens. The wedding of Lord Shiva and Girija was thus concluded. A spirit of rejoicing pervaded the whole Universe.

This wedding of Lord Shiva and Parvati happened on the Chaturdashi Tithi Krishna Paksha (fourteenth day during the waxing phase of the Lunar cycle in the month of Magha (as per the Hindu calendar), the day of Shivratri. We celebrate Shivaratri to celebrate this auspicious occasion.

4.00 HOLI

Holi is considered as one of the most revered and celebrated festivals of India. It is celebrated in almost every part of the world. It is also called as the “festival of colour and love” as on this day, the people get together forgetting all resentments and all types of ill feelings towards each other. The great Indian festival starts in the evening of the Poornima or the full Moon Day in the month of Phalgun. Festival celebration begins with ‘Holika Dahan’ (Burning of Holi Pyre) in the evening. The following day, it is celebrated with great joy by throwing colours on each other and hugging.

4.10 Sacrifice of Simhalika (Holika)

There are varying accounts of Holi’s origin mentioned in several ancient Vedic literatures (legendary and folk tales). According to one popular version of the story, an evil king Hiranyakashipu became so powerful that he forced his subjects to worship



him as ‘God’. But to the king’s ire, his own son Prahalad refused to accept his dictate and continued to be an ardent devotee of ‘Lord Vishnu’. When all his ways to mend his son Prahalad to worship him as God failed, he tried to kill him. Fortunately, he was not successful. Finally, the angry king plotted with his sister Simhalika to kill him. Simhalika, who had a blanket as a boon from her Guru Agni Dev (the Lord of Fire), was immune to fire. She took Prahalad on her laps and sat in pyre with him.

Incidentally, she was burnt to death but Prahalad was unscathed. Hence, this Holi festival is celebrated joyfully on the escape of Bhakt Prahalad from the fire.

On this day, before lightening the pyre, Simhalika (Holika) is worshipped like a 'Goddess'. Contrary to the common belief, Samhitas of many Rishies including version of Bhrahmrishi Narad described that Holika was not an evil person. She was the daughter of great Rishi Kashyap and Mother Diti. She was a sister to Daitya Vanshaj (clan) kings Hranyaaksh and Hiranyakashipu. The kings Hranyaaksh and his brother Hiranyakashipu were the reincarnation of Jay and Vijay (security chiefs of Lord Vishnu), who had to take birth as Rakshasas (evil persons) on earth due to the curse of the great Rishies - Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana and Sanat Kumara. Simhaliika, their sister, was a great devotee of the Lord of Fire. Lord of Fire gave her a blanket as a boon which gave her immunity to fire. Unfortunately, she could not become mother even after marrying for several years with Viprachitti, son of her aunt Danu and a king of Danava Vansh (clan) of Paatallok (Nether World). Her brother, mighty king Hiranyakashipu, obliged her by giving one of his sons, Ahalad, for adoption. She was indeed greatly indebted to his brother king Hiranyakashipu for this generosity. At one stage, when all the efforts of Hiranyakashipu to kill his own son Prahalad were in vain, he asked his sister Simhalika to help him in killing Prahalad. He knew that she had a boon of immunity from Lord of Fire; hence he wanted her to take Prahalad on her laps and sit in pyre to burn Prahalad alive. Simhalika loved Prahalad very dearly as her own adopted son Ahlad and never wanted to kill her young nephew Prahalad. Hesitatingly, she declined to oblige king Hiranyakashipu. An angry king Hiranyakashipu then threatened to kill her adopted

son Ahlad and her husband Viprachitti. Both, Ahlad and Viprachitti, were very dear to her. If her husband and son were to be killed by Hiranyakashipu, this was an end of her life too. She thought that if her sacrifice could save the life of her husband and adopted dear son Ahlad, why not to embrace a dignified death that can also save the life of her darling nephew Prahalad too, a great devotee of the Lord. She accepted the dictate of her brother Hiranyakashipu to sit in pyre with Prahalad on her laps. She did so, but she covered Prahalad with the blanket having fire immunity. Thus, Prahalad escaped from the fire, and she was burnt to death. Her sacrifice to save Bhakt Prahalad is admired and she is worshipped as ‘Holika’, the ‘Goddess of Pyre’, on Holi before the celebration begins.

A short story on the life story of Simhalika (Holika) is described below. Some may ask a question. If Simhalika was not an evil person then why her brothers Hryanakash and Hiryanakashipu were evils? The Shruti says that no person is born as an evil. His/her deeds make him/her a good or evil person. When any one of the four evil tendencies (Vikar) - arrogance, lust, anger and greed (Ahankaar, Kaam, Krodh and Lobh,) develops in a person, he/she tends to move towards evilness. While Simhalika was away from all these evil qualities, her both the brothers, Hryanakash and Hiryanakashipu, were filled with all these four evil qualities.

This was a Satyug era. Maharshi Kashyap was visiting his Ashram in Soron where his second wife Diti resided. Early in the morning when he was taking a dip in Holy Ganga, his female disciple Kadambini arrived at the scene and shouted in loud voice, ‘O Gurudev Maharshi, congratulations! Mother Diti is blessed with a girl.’

A girl! She would have borne by the blessings of Mother Prakriti (Nature). He remembered his son Lord of Fire from his other wife Aditi, telling him, ‘O father, aunt Diti will be blessed soon with a girl who will be my ardent devotee. She will be born with the blessings of Mother Nature (Mother Prakriti). She will be blessed by me as well as Lord Vaman, and one day she will protect the great devotee of the Lord Vishnu. Her name will become immortal forever.’

On hearing the voice of his female disciple Kadambini, Maharshi Kashyap was thrilled with joy and rushed to the hermitage where his darling wife Diti had just given birth to this divine girl. He took girl from her laps into his hands, and shouted loudly, ‘O Simhalika (Friend of lion/lioness), welcome to my family.’

Maharshi Kashyap remembered an old tale. When Lord Brahma decided to elevate his son Daksh to the status of ‘Prajapati’ (Lord of all inhabitants), He knew that it would not be possible for Daksh to discharge his duties of this great responsibility without the blessings of ‘Mother Prakriti’. He instructed Daksh that before the title of ‘Prajapati’ could be conferred on him, he should pray and mediate on Mother Prakriti. He should please Her by his devotion and get Her blessings that She be born in his family as his daughter. Accordingly, Daksh and his wife Prasuti went to the forests and meditated on Mother Prakriti. Mother Prakriti was pleased with their prayer and devotion, and blessed them that She would be born as their daughter soon. However, She put a condition that she would leave them the day they insulted Her in anyway. (This was the reason why Sati immolated Herself when Prajapati Daksh insulted Her husband Lord Shiva and Herself during a Yagn ceremony). After this promise was made by Mother Prakriti to Daksh and Prasuti, Brahmrishi Narad

also approached Mother Prakriti with another problem. Jay and Vijay (security chiefs of Lord Vishnu) were cursed by Sanat Kumars to take birth on the earth as demons. Both Jay and Vijay were very divine and powerful personalities and very dear to Lord Vishnu. It would not have been possible for an ordinary woman to keep them in their womb for nine months to give them birth. Brahmurishi Narad was sent by Lord Vishnu to Mother Prakriti to find a solution to this problem. Lord Vishnu had a desire that Mother Prakriti should bless an appropriate woman with such a strength and power that she could bear these two powerful personalities in her womb. Mother Prakriti bowed to the instructions of Lord Vishnu and called her friend Dhara. She requested her to take birth as Her sister in the family of Daksh, eventually to marry Maharshi Kashyap and to bear these two most powerful personalities Jay and Vijay in her womb. Mother Dhara was the only one who could have that ability and strength to do so. Mother Dhara accepted the instructions of Mother Prakriti and prepared herself to be born as sister of Mother Prakriti in Daksh family.

The carrier (Vaahan) of Mother Dhara, cow, was listening these conversations between these two friends. She prayed and requested Mother Prakriti and Mother Dhara to take her with them too as she could not bear the separation from them. Mother Prakriti obliged and blessed her saying that she would also be born as daughter of Dhara in the new life.

The cow, carrier of Mother Dhara, was a great friend of the carrier (Vahan) of Mother Prakriti, lioness, and was often called as Sihmmitra (friend of lioness).

As Mother Prakriti (Nature) blessed Daksh and Prasuti, she was born to them as their daughter and named Sati. Mother Dhara was also born to Daksh from another wife Panchajini as their daughter and named Diti (another name of Mother Dhara). When Diti married Maharshi Kashyap, she gave birth to reincarnation of Jay and Vijay as Hryanaaksha and Hirnyakashipu. She also gave birth to her carrier cow Simhmitra as her daughter, and she was named as Simhalika (another name of Sihmmitra/ friend of lioness) in this new life.

Soon after Simhalika was born, her father Maharshi Kashyap left for providing spiritual guidance to his disciples in other Ashrams. It was heard that he went to the North West towards Himalayas. He worked hard to establish a new Ashram there and called this Kashmir. One of his disciples, Rudra, was looking after and managing Maharshi Kashyap's Ashram in Soron on the bank of Mother Ganga. Simhalika was being grown up in this Ashram of Maharshi Kashyap by Mother Diti with her two older siblings, Hryanksha and Hirnyakashipu.

When Simhalika was four-year-old, her older brother Hirnyakashipu approached her and said, 'O Simhalika, my dear sister, I and brother Hryanaksha are leaving Ashram tomorrow early in the morning to the forest for meditating on Lord Brahma. We have to seek His protection and blessings for the welfare of us all. It is a necessity for us for our survival. The sons of aunt Aditi (Adityas), under the leadership of her eldest son Indra, have threatened to annihilate us so they could have supremacy over all of us. Unfortunately, our father Maharshi Kashyap is silent and neutral on this issue. He has left this matter to be decided by us only. Before sons of aunt Aditi do any harm to us, we should seek divine blessings and divine boons including divine weapons

from Lord Brahma to protect us. Lord Vishnu will not help us as He is siding with aunt Aditi. One of her sons, Vaman, is said to be an incarnation of His energies. Lord Shiva is in meditation after the self-immolation of aunt Sati, hence may not be approached. You know mother Diti and Sati were very good friends. In this hour of difficulties and trouble, we are missing her a lot. If she would have been alive, she would have stood for us, and sons of aunt Aditi would not have dared to do any harm to us. But alas, she is not there. Our only hope is Lord Brahma now. Hence, we are leaving Ashram to meditate on Him to get blessings from Him. You have now to look after mother Diti and the Ashram. However, if any trouble or difficulty arises which mother Diti and you cannot sort out, feel free to approach by sending a message to Vaman, son of aunt Aditi. Vaman is a very just person. He will not allow any wrong doing towards us by his other brothers in our absence. If you may not find Vaman, because most of the time He is in his meditation and roaming around the forests, then you can trust Lord of Fire (Agnidev), also son of aunt Aditi. He is a good friend of mine and will do his best to keep away his other brothers from our family till we return. I have sent a message to him to visit our Ashram as soon as possible and console you and mother Diti. I am sure he will come soon. You can trust him and approach him anytime.'

Child Simhalika, putting her head on the shoulders of her loving brother, sobbed for a long time. Brother Hirnyakashipu continued to show his love and affection to his darling sister and allowed her to sob. She did not know when she slept on his laps. When she woke up in the morning, she saw mother Diti crying. Both the brothers, Hryanaksha and Hirnyakashipu, had left to the forests for mediation.

The time passed on. One day when she woke up, she saw a young man talking to her mother. She had not seen this man before in the Ashram. She was curious to know who this young person was, and why he was talking with my mother? She went to the chamber of the Ashram where these two were engaged in talking. The man saw Simhalika, stood from his seat, and took her on his laps. ‘O Simhalika, you may not know me, but I am your half-brother Lord of Fire (Agnidev), friend of your brother Hirnyakashipu. My apologies, though I got message from Hirnyakashipu to come and see you and aunt Diti as soon as possible, I could not come immediately’, said the young man.

‘O Lord of Fire Bhaiyaa (Agnidev Brother), yes, Bhaiyaa Hirnyakashipu told me about you. I was waiting for you to come and console us. Look, how Ashram is having a feeling of emptiness without brothers Hryanaksha and Hirnyakashipu. Father Maharshi Kashyap has also not visited us for long. We heard that he is building a new Ashram in North West, and is very busy,’ said Simhlalika.

‘Now I am here, I will do my best to assist you and aunt Diti. I know I cannot fill the gap created by the absence of Hryanaksha and Hirnyakashipu, but sure, will give my love and affection to my sister. I will stay here till you feel safe and are well educated. I will accept you as my disciple and teach you all the knowledge a Guru can provide’, said Lord of Fire (Agnidev).

‘My humble Pranams to my brother and now my Guru Lord of Fire (Agnidev). Please accept me as your disciple and keep forgiving me considering your stupid young sister if I am not to your expectations as your disciple,’ said Simhalika.

Simhalika was very disciplined and obedient disciple. She would get up early in the morning in Brahm-Muhurat, and after completing her daily obligatory actions (nitya-karma), she would get herself sanctified by taking a dip in Mother Ganga and ready for taking lessons from her Guru Agnidev. She remained on strict fruit diet for the whole period of her education from Lord of Fire (Agnidev).

Lord of Fire (Agnidev) stayed in the Ashram of his aunt Diti for some time and continued to give education of Vedas, warfare, politics and management to Simhalika. Simhalika was very obedient, loyal, disciplined disciple and served the Guru Agnidev with her heart and soul. Lord of Fire (Agnidev) was very pleased with her devotion. When her education was completed, Lord of Fire decided to leave the Ashram and took permission from his aunt Diti for the same. Before departing from the Ashram, Lord of Fire (Agnidev) blessed Simhalika and gave her a blanket which was immune from the fire.

The time passed on. Simhalika was now an adult lady. Diti, her mother decided to get her married with Viprichitti, son of her sister Danu. She got consent from Maharshi Kashyap to get their daughter Simhalika married with Viprichitti.

As the date of marriage approached, Maharshi Kashyap arrived in the Ashram of Soron to get her daughter married with Viprichjitti. Then, the grand preparation for the marriage ceremony commenced.

Simhalika was married to Viprichitti with the blessings of her parents, father Maharshi Kashyap and mother Diti, and aunt Danu. She was missing blessings of her brothers Hiranyaksha

and Hiranyakashipu on this occasion. Next day, she left to Patallok with her husband and all the marriage party.

One day when she was in the royal court with her husband Viprichitti, a messenger came with news that her brother Hiranyakashipu had returned back after obtaining desired boons from Lord Brahma, and soon would come to meet her in Patallok. Simhalika was thrilled to hear this news and waited now for his brother Hiranyakashipu to come and see her. She wanted to know about Hryanaksha too, but messenger would not say anything.

Simhalika heard that Lord Brahma, pleased with the penance of her brothers Hryanaksha and Hiranyakashipu, gave them the kingdom of the Earth. Hryanaksha, being the elder brother, was coronated as the Emperor of the Earth. The sons of Aditi (Devs) were not happy with this boon of Lord Brahma to Hryanaksha and Hiranyakashipu, and wanted to recapture the Earth. Fearing that Indra would attack soon, Hryanaksha decided to take help from his half-brothers from Danav clan of Patallok. The sons of Aditi (Devs) challenged Hryanaksha, but were soon defeated. Mother Earth then prayed to Lord Brahma to rescue Her. Lord Brahma, along with the sons of Aditi (Devs) and few sages, prayed to Lord Vishnu, the Preserver of the Universe, to come to their rescue and redeem the Earth.

Lord Vishnu, pleased with the prayers of Lord Brahma, appeared as a minuscule creature from the nostrils of Lord Brahma. This miniscule creature looked like a flea in its appearance. It flew out with great speed and

began circumambulation of Lord Brahma gradually growing in size. It was no more a flea now, but a boar (Varah). The boar grew in size till it became massive, even larger than a full-grown elephant. Lord Brahma worshipped the boar realizing that Lord Vishnu had appeared in this form to rescue Mother Earth. They bowed their heads to Lord Vishnu in the form of the boar (Varah). Varah roared and blessed them. His voice acted like balm to their troubled minds.

The Varah leaped to the skies. He cleared the skies of all the clouds by lashing out his tail. The rays of the Sun can be clearly seen now with great brightness and warmth.

He galloped across the ocean in which Mother Earth laid submerged and waiting for Him to come and rescue. Lord Varah located Mother Earth soon who was waiting patiently to be rescued. Lord Varah held Mother Earth between His large and magnificent tusks and lifted Her above the ocean. Hiranyaksha saw this and screamed in fury. He hurled insults and expletives at Varaha, challenging Him to a duel. Varaha paid no heed to the roaring of Hiranyaksha and proceeded to return Mother Earth to Her assigned place in the Universe.

Hiranyaksha, stung by this insult, set out to kill Him. He had not to wait long when Varah came in front of him and accepted his challenge of duel.

The Varah had by now assumed an anthropomorphic form with four arms carrying His deadly mace,

Kaumodhaki (Gada). He had garland of flowers around His neck, and declared, ‘O Hriyanaksha, I have wedded the Earth. She is my wife now, and to protect her is my duty as a husband. You should respect this tradition, and love of husband and wife, and leave. I have no personal animosity against you and will spare your life. However, since I am the wedded husband of the Earth now, I am the ruler of the Earth. You are no more king of the Earth.’

Hiranyaksha could not bear this insult. Roaring demonically, he charged with all his might, swinging his heavy mace wildly at Varah, husband of the Earth (Bhoo-Pati). The Varah dodged his attack and dealt out a blow that knocked Hryanaksha off his feet. Both of them fought in the skies, on land and finally in the ocean. They swam and attacked each other. This battle continued for a long time. It appeared that Hiranyaksha would have the upper hand, and Varah was on the edge of being defeated. Then Varah crushed the weapons of Hiranyaksha. Varaha soon overpowered Hryanaksha and dealt him with a fatal blow on his cheek.

Hryanaksha’s massive body sank to the bottom of the sea and Varah roared in victory. He safely returned Earth to her designated place and returned to His Saket Dham.

Hearing the death of his older brother Hryanaksha, Hiranyakashipu was very sad and feared for his own life. He developed hatred and animosity with Lord Vishnu for killing his brother Hryanaksha and vowed to kill Him one day. However, as

an intelligent and learned person, he thought that if Lord Vishnu could kill his mighty brother Hryanaksha, his powers were no match to his older brother's. There was no way that he could challenge Lord Vishnu with the powers he currently had including those given by Lord Brahma. He decided in his mind that at an appropriate time, he would seek more powers from Lord Brahma to be able to kill Lord Vishnu. But this was the time for patience, and he would wait for the right moment to challenge and attack Lord Vishnu.

Fearing for his life, Hiranyakashipu approached Lord Brahma and begged for His mercy. Lord Brahma assured him fearlessness, and with the permission of Lord Vishnu made him king of a small part of the Mother Earth. He founded a new city in present Rajasthan state of India, Hiranyakashipu Ki Kher, (Hindaun), and made this city as his capital. Hiranyakashipu married Kayadhu, a daughter of Jambha from Danav clan.

After settling well in his newly founded kingdom with the blessings of Lord Brahma, Hryanakshipu decided to meet his darling sister Simhalika and her husband Viprichitti, ruler of Patallok. When Simhalika heard that his brother Hiranyakashipu was coming to meet her, Simhalika was very happy and thrilled on the prospect of seeing her brother Hiranyakashipu and Bhabhi (sister-in-law) Kayadhu soon. Sure, she felt some sadness on hearing the death of her older brother Hryanaksha in her heart, but as she was never close to him anyway, it did not move her to tears.

Hiranyakashipu arrived in the capital of Patallok with his wife Kayadhu and entourage. Both Simhalika and Viprichitti met them on the gate by touching their feet and with great respect took

them to the palace of mother queen Danu. After touching feet of aunt Danu and taking blessings from her, Hiranyakashipu and his wife Kayadhu returned to the private palace of Simhalika where they were lodged.

Both brother and sister met with great love and affection. There were tears in the eyes of Simhalika. They hugged each other for a long time and sat to remember their olden days memories. Kayadhu, being from Danav clan and a distant relative of Viprichitti knew him very well. While Hiranyakashipu and Simhalika were having emotional sibling reunion, Viprichitti and Kayadhu were busy in chatting about their past time together.

It had been several years since Simhalika and Viprichitti were married, but unfortunately Simhalika was yet to become mother of a child. Hiranyakashipu was very curious to know why an heir apparent to Patallok, and a child to Simhalika and Viprichitti was not yet born. Viprichitti himself told him a very unfortunate story of his younger days about a curse on him by aunt Tamara that he would never become a father.

‘As a young boy, I was very fond of collecting birds' eggs. I would go far in the forests in search of eggs of different birds, and used to take away from their nests. The birds were very disappointed with my behavior as they were deprived of their parenthood. They approached our aunt Tamara, the mother of Garuda. On hearing this, aunt Tamara got angry with me and cursed that as I had no respect for the parentage and did not understand the bond between parents and children by taking away the eggs of the birds from the bird parents, I have caused great distress and sufferings to them, I will never be a parent,’ said Viprichitti in a very sad voice to Hiranyakashipu.

'I am very sorry to hear that Viprichitti, but do not worry. I promise to give you one of my children to be adopted by you and Simhalika as your child,' said Hiranyakashipu in a consoling voice to Viprichitti. Viprichitti was thrilled and hugged his brother-in-law, Hiranyakashipu.

'Brother Hiranyakashipu, I can never repay this debt to you but I promise that I will always be faithful to you. I will lay my life on your instructions,' promised Viprichitti.

'Yes, brother Viprichitti, I may seek your help one day to kill Vishnu to avenge the death of older brother Hryanaksha. I plan to go for penance to please Lord Brahma in due course of time to get a boon of immortality from Him. Once I get that boon, I will challenge Vishnu, and kill him. When I am ready for that, I will send you a message and together, we will kill Vishnu and then all sons of Aditi. We will capture the kingdom of heaven and together rule the entire Universe forever,' said Hiranyakashipu in a very loving but authoritative tone to Viprichitti.

'Sure brother, anytime,' reassured Viprichitti to Hiranyakashipu.

After staying for few days in Patallok, Hiranyakashipu took leave of his aunt Danu, Simhalika and Viprichitti to return to his kingdom. With heavy heart, Hiranyakashipu, his wife Kayadhu and entourage, departed from Patallok.

The time passed on. The queen Kayadhu, wife of Hiranyakashipu, became pregnant with their first child. The fire of revenge with Lord Vishnu was continuously burning in the heart of Hiranyakashipu. He could take no more and decided to go to penance to worship Lord Brahma to give him a boon of

immortality before he could attack and kill Lord Vishnu. He left behind his pregnant wife Kayadhu in the care of his Generals.

The son of Aditi, Devraj Indra, saw this as a good opportunity to destroy the kingdom of Hiranyakashipu in an attempt to annihilate his greatest enemy forever and also to kill the demon child in the womb of his wife Kayadhu which could become a trouble to himself and his brothers later. He attacked his kingdom, killed the Generals and their army and kidnapped Kayadhu.

Devraj Indra forcibly took Kayadhu on his chariot and headed to Indralok (heaven). Reprimanding Devraj Indra in a highly pitiable voice, the chaste woman Kayadhu said, ‘O Devraj Indra, what purpose would it serve to you by kidnapping me? O Surendra, do you not see a sin you are committing in kidnapping a helpless woman like me?’

Coincidentally, Brahmishi Narad was passing by at that time. He heard these pitiable words of the queen Kayadhu and appeared before Devraj Indra. He stopped the chariot.

Brahmishi said to Devraj Indra, ‘O Mahendra, you are the king of the Heaven, son of Maharshi Kashyap and Aditi and brothers of mighty Devs (Gods). It does not fit your grace to kidnap a helpless woman. Set this chaste woman free at once’.

Devraj Indra, however, replied, ‘Brahmishi, this woman is nurturing the seed of the demon. I will destroy it before it germinates, then I will set this chaste woman free. I assure you that she will have no pain’.

Brahmrishi Narad said, ‘O Devraj Indra, you do not know that it is not in your powers to kill this unborn baby. You and your brothers should have no fear from this unborn child. He is rather going to be the cause of your welfare. In the womb of the queen Kayadhu, there is a supreme devotee of Lord Vishnu’.

Knowing that a supreme devotee of Lord Vishnu was present in the womb of queen Kayadhu, Devraj Indra respectfully went around Kayadhu, greeted her and asked for her forgiveness. He respectfully deboarded her from the chariot and handed over to Brahmrishi Narad, and went to his abode.

Brahmrishi Narad said to the queen Kayadhu, ‘O daughter, your kingdom is in ruins now. I will take you to the hermitage of my disciple Maharshi Anand where you will stay safe and be comfortable till your husband Hiranyakashipu returns from his penance’. Thus, queen Kayadhu came to stay at the hermitage of Maharshi Anand.

In the hermitage of Maharshi Anand, she served Maharshi and the residents of the hermitage with great faith. She used to clean the hermitage and smear it with cow dung and fetch water from the river for the residents. She even began to worship Lord Vishnu by following other Rishies and Rishi-Patnies (Wives of the Rishies) in the hermitage. She adopted a hermitic life, wore clothes of bark, slept on Khusha bed, observed difficult fasts and ate roots and tubers to satisfy her hunger. Thus, she was totally transformed to a great devotee of the Lord Vishnu. Devrishi Narad used to visit her too in the hermitage from time to time.

Addressing her fetus, Maharshi Anand preached her Yoga of devotion and cryptic knowledge of Mantras. Declaring the world as meaningless, he preached her Vairagya (detachment).

This divine knowledge was absorbed by the unborn child. In due course of time, a handsome baby boy was born to the queen Kayadhu. Maharshi Narad visited hermitage of his disciple Maharshi Anand at the time of the birth of this handsome baby boy and named him, Prahalad (an extremely joyful person).

As narrated in Scripture, Hiranyakashipu was able to please Lord Brahma by his penance. Lord Brahma appeared before Hiranyakashipu and offered him a boon of his choice. Hiranyakashipu asked for immortality. Lord Brahma declined to give him this boon as it was beyond His powers. Hiranyakashipu requested Lord Brahma to grant him boon as following.

Hiranyakashipu asked, ‘O my Lord, O best of the givers of benediction, if you will kindly grant me the benediction, I desire, please let me not meet death from any of the living entities created by you. Please grant me that I do not die within any residence or outside any residence, during the daytime or at night, nor on the ground or in the sky. Please also grant me a boon that my death be not brought by any weapon, nor by any human being or animal. Please also grant me that I do not meet death from any entity, living or nonliving. Please grant me further that I not be killed by any demigod or demon or by any snake from the lower planets. Since no one can kill me in the battlefield, I may have no competitor. Therefore, grant me the benediction that I have no rival. Please give me the boon of having sole lordship over all the living entities and presiding deities, and give me all the glories obtained by that position.

Furthermore, give me all the mystic powers attained by long austerities and the practice of yoga, for these cannot be lost at any time.'

Lord Brahma blessed him by granting these boons, Lord Brahma said, 'Tathastu (so it be)'.

After obtaining these boons of near immortality, Hiranyakashipu returned to his kingdom. He found that his kingdom was completely ruined. On hearing that Devraj Indra attacked his kingdom in his absence, ruined it and kidnapped his loving wife queen Kayadhu, he was very angry and immediately attacked Devraj Indra. For the fear of their lives, Devraj Indra and all his brothers fled from Heaven and hid at a safe place. Hiranyakashipu declared merger of the kingdom of Heaven into his own kingdom, and became emperor of both the worlds.

After gaining control of the kingdom of the Heaven, Hiranyakashipu, moved his chariot to the Ashram of Maharshi Anand. At that time, Maharshi Anand had gone to preside over a Yagn organized by Maharshi Atri. He challenged the residents of the Ashram, threatened to kill them and burn the Ashram. Guru Mata faced his challenge. Unfortunately, he killed Guru Mata and several residents of the Ashram. In spite of pleading by his own wife Kayadhu not to harm anyone in Ashram, he burnt and ruined the Ashram completely. Then, he brought his wife Kayadhu and his son Prahalad to his palace.

As the time passed on, Hiranyakashipu and Kayadhu were blessed with five more children. Of course, as said above, their first born was Prahalad. Their other children were, four sons, Sahlad, Ahlad, Shivi, Vaashkal and one daughter, Simhalika. As

promised by Hiranyakashipu, the couple gave their son Ahlad to Simhalika and Viprichitti for their adoption. For Simhalika, as if she got the world, her entire time now was revolving around Ahlad.

After getting boon from Lord Brahma, Hiranyakashipu now considered himself as immortal. He was now the ruler of Earth as well as Heaven. He also had direct influence on Viprichitti, the king of Patallok. He decreed to all the kingdoms (Earth, Heaven and Patallok) that he was the God and to be worshipped. Anyone who would not obey his decree would be killed instantly.

Viprichitti, the king of Patallok was great follower of Hiranyakashipu. He also felt indebted to Hiranyakashipu because he gave him his son Ahlad for his adoption. He supported the decree of Hiranyakashipu in his kingdom, and ordered all his citizens to worship Hiranyakashipu as God. Simhalika was the only one against this idea, but due to love towards her brother Hiranyakashipu and fearing that if she did not support the dictate of Hiranyakashipu, he might take away Ahlad from her, which was now her soul, did not oppose this decree.

The soldiers of Hiranyakashipu, on hearing the decree from their master, commenced tormenting the Saints and the followers of Sanatan Dharma. They commenced destroying the holy Yagns and the sacrificial rites conducted by holy persons. These Raakshasas were killing any holy person chanting the name of Lord Vishnu and not accepting the decree of Hiranyakashipu to accept him as God.

However, in the palace of Hiranyakashipu, his own first-born son Prahlad revolted on this decree. He had learnt in the Ashram of

Maharshi Anand during his childhood that there is only one supreme personality of Godhead, and that is either Lord Vishnu Himself or His incarnations. He tried to convey this message to Hiranyakashipu, who became very angry on this behaviour of his son. Hiranyakashipu tried many times to bring his own son to his path, which is worshipping him as God. Since Prahalad could not agree to this, he became great enemy of his own son and ordered him to be killed.

Hiranyakashipu tortured his own son Prahalad in many ways, but none of these ways had any effect on him. He ordered him to be trampled by an elephant. The enraged elephant also could not crush Prahalad.

Hiranyakashipu made several attempts to kill Prahalad. He ordered Prahalad to be thrown over a precipice. Prahalad continued to chant the holy name of Lord Vishnu during this attack. Surprisingly, he came down upon the Earth as gently as a flower drops upon the grass. All the possible methods such as poison him, starve him, throwing him into a well etc were also tried to kill Prahalad, but every time he escaped death.

Hiranyakashipu then ordered Prahalad to be tied with highly poisonous serpents, and then cast to the bottom of the ocean. Prahalad continued to pray his beloved Lord Vishnu, 'Salutation to Thee, Lord of the Universe. Thou beautiful Lord Vishnu'. Thus, meditating on Lord Vishnu, he began to feel that Lord Vishnu was near him and everywhere. As soon as he realised this, all the snake bonds snapped asunder. The mountains were pulverised. The ocean was upheaved. He was gently lifted up above the waves and safely carried to the shore. As Prahalad stood there, he forgot that he was a child of Daitya Vansh and

had a mortal body. He felt that Lord Vishnu was the Universe and all the powers of the Universe emanated from Him. There was nothing in Nature that could injure him when the Ruler of the Nature, Lord Vishnu, was with him.

When all the efforts to kill Prahalad failed then his Generals advised him that his sister Simhalika had a boon from Lord of Fire (Agnidev) of immunity from fire in the form of a blanket. Prahalad could be burnt to death by her help. Knowing this, Hiranyakashipu immediately summoned his sister Simhalika to his royal court.

A message was sent to Viprichitti in Patallok that Hiranyakashipu wanted to see both, Viprichitti and Simhalika, as soon as possible in his capital. On hearing this message, Simhalika was thrilled on a possibility to see his loving older brother and his family after a long time. She also thought in her mind that this might be a good opportunity for her to dissuade her brother Hiranyakashipu to kill his own son Prahalad.

Simhalika had great love towards Prahalad. Prahalad was the brother of Ahlad, her adopted son. She always dreamt that one day when Prahalad would be the king of Daitys and Ahlad, the king of Danavs, these two brothers would rule the Universe with great love among themselves. The peace will prevail in the Universe. She knew that her brother Hiranyakashipu did not like Prahalad, but she was always optimistic. Time is a big healer. One day my brother Hiranyakashipu would forgive his son Prahalad, and would decorate him with a title of ‘Crown Prince’ (Yuvraj).

Happily, Viprichitti, Simhalika and their royal entourage reached the capital of Hiranyakashipu. They were welcomed by Hiranyakashipu and queen Kayadhu on the gate of the palace. Simhalika then went with the queen Kayadhu to her palace and Viprichitti accompanied the king Hiranyakashipu to the royal court.

Simhalika wanted to see and meet his loving nephew Prahalad and hug him. She did not see Prahalad in the palace of the queen Kayadhu. Humbly, she asked her sister-in-law Kayadhu, 'Where is Prahalad, Bhabhi? He did not come to welcome me and pay his respects to me. This is not the way of my little lovely nephew Prahalad who is always very polite, obedient and respectful to his elders.'

Queen Kayadhu broke on hearing the name of Prahalad with such kind words for him from none other than the sister of Hiranyakashipu, her husband. She was of an opinion that like her husband, Simhalika would also speak ill words about her loving and kind son Prahalad. She started crying loudly by putting her head on the shoulders of Simhalika.

'My dear sister, your brother had tried all the possible ways to kill his own loving son Prahalad. The only fault of Prahalad is that he does not accept your brother as the God. He continues to pray Lord Vishnu and preaches that He is the only one as Supreme Personality of Godhead. Now your dear nephew is imprisoned. He is in prison with chains all around his neck and body. You have been summoned by your brother to help him to kill Prahalad, my loving innocent child. I beg you and will be indebted forever if you could kindly forgive my son, and do not

be a part to kill Prahalad’, begged queen Kayadhu with tears in her eyes, continually sobbing and falling at the feet of Simhalika.

‘Bhabhi, what are you talking about? I will help my brother Hiranyakashipu to kill my own loving nephew, brother of my son Ahalad, impossible! impossible! I cannot think this even in my wildest dreams. You know how much I love Prahalad. He is like Ahalad to me. I have rather been thinking that one day these two brothers will rule the Universe in harmony and peace’, Simhalika was stunned to hear this from her sister-in-law.

‘Bhabhi, also, I cannot understand that how brother Hiranyakashipu thinks that I may help him in killing Prahalad. What plan does he have for that? Please tell me in details so I am prepared to give him a befitting reply. Bhabhi, please be assured that I will protect Prahalad in a similar way as I will protect Ahalad from any danger even at the cost of my own life’, pleaded Simhalika to her sister-in-law.

‘Simhalika, my loving sister, you know your Guru Agnidev gave you a boon in the form of a blanket to provide you immunity from the fire. Your brother wants you to sit in the pyre with Prahalad covering yourself with this divine blanket, so that Prahalad is burnt to death, and you escape’, told queen Kayadhu to Simhalika.

‘Hum, so that is the plan of my evil brother. Please leave it on me now Bhabhi,’ said Simhalika without elaborating any on her plans if her brother Hiranyakashipu asked her to do so.

Next day, early in the morning Hiranyakashipu visited the palace of his queen Kayadhu where Simhalika was staying. He was

seated with great honour by his wife queen Kayadhu. He did not see Simhalika in the palace, so asked his wife where his dear sister was? Simhalika was busy in worshipping her Guru Lord of Fire (Agnidev). Interestingly, Hiranyakashipu did not get angry on his sister Simhalika worshipping Agnidev. He smiled and thought, ‘O my good sister had already understood me and now getting ready to take Prahalad into pyre with her, and seeking blessings from her Gurudev to burn Prahalad.’ He waited patiently till Simhalika finished rituals of her prayer.

When Simhalika finished her prayers, she was advised by a maid that her brother king Hiranyakashipu was waiting for her in the main hall of the palace. She rushed to the main hall. When she was bowing to touch the feet of her brother, he immediately took her into his arms and hugged her.

‘O Simhalika, how much I missed you! I am so happy to see you and Viprichitti after a long time. How is Ahalad doing? I understand he has grown to be a very handsome, obedient and learned child. I also learnt that he is taking part in the administration of the kingdom with his father Viprichitti. How lucky you are! Look at me. My first born and darling son Prahalad is just doing opposite to that. I have millions of dreams on the future of this young man. I defeated sons of Aditi and captured Heaven for him. I always thought that these two brothers, Prahalad and Ahalad, will rule the whole Universe. But he is behaving against me at every step. I tried all my possible ways to mend him, by persuading, by making him Crown Prince (Yuvaraj), by punishing, and by exploiting (Saam, Daam, Dand, Bhed). He never listened to me, his Acharyas and senior court advisors. As a proud and self-esteemed person, I could not take it anymore. I just do not want to see his face. I want to see him

dead. My court has already ruled the death penalty to him. However, I have tried all the ways to implement death penalty, but in vain. I know you respect the pride, self-esteem and honour of your loving older brother who has always thought of your welfare. I gave to you even my darling son Ahalad for adoption because you could not become mother. What else I could have done? I request you and beg your help to get death penalty implemented on Prahalad, so my words could be honoured.'

Simhalika was surprised to see his arrogant brother talking to her in such a soft and loving voice. She was expecting that he would just order her to carry out his orders. No request, no mercy. She collected courage and replied to his brother.

'Bhaiyaa, you know that I am your loving obedient sister. I and Viprichitti are so obliged to you for giving Ahalad to us for adoption. Sure, I will carry out your any order within my power,' said Simhalika.

Hiranyakashipu was thrilled to hear these sweet words from Simhalika.

'O my sister, that is what I expect from you to respect the orders of the court of your brother. I am very pleased. If my orders are carried out, I have already thought that I will make Ahalad Crown Prince (Yuvaraj) of my kingdoms (Earth and Heaven) too. Ahalad will now rule all the Universe,' said Hiranyakashipu.

'What can I do my brother to make you happy,' asked Simhalika as if she did not know any plans of her brother Hiranyakashipu.

‘It is very easy for you Simhalika. I know you have a boon from your Guru Agnidev in the form of a blanket which makes you immune from fire. Cover yourself with that blanket and sit in the pyre with Prahalad. Nothing will happen to you, but Prahalad will be burnt to death. The order of the ‘Royal Court’ will be honoured in this way easily, and your brother can raise his head with pride and self-esteem,’ said Hiranyakashipu in a very calm voice.

‘What! You ask me, his loving aunt, to kill her own nephew! You know Bhaiyaa, Prahalad is as dear to me as Ahlad. How can I get courage to carry out your orders to kill Prahalad? Ahlad has deep regards, love and affection to his older brother Prahalad. When he was hearing that you were trying all the possible ways to kill his loving brother Prahalad, he used to get very angry. I and Viprichitti were consoling him and trying to keep him calm. If he will learn now that I killed his loving older brother, he will hate me deeply and never forgive me. I cannot live without love and affection of Ahlad. Bhaiya. Please forgive me. I beg you not to ask me to do this. I will lay my life for you, but not for this task,’ said Simhalika in a very humble voice to Hiranyakashipu.

‘How dare you disobey my words? I have given you everything, including my son for your adoption. I could not have dreamt that you will ever behave in such a disobedient manner. I was trying to be humble and kind to you. You do not deserve my kindness. I order you to carry out the death penalty of Prahalad as said above,’ ordered Hiranyakashipu in an angry tone.

‘No Bhaiyaa please, please listen to me. Do not ask me to do which will take away everything from me which you gave. I beg

you humbly not to force me to do this ghastly task,’ again pleaded Simhalika.

‘I heard that you said that Ahalad was unhappy and angry on me when I was trying to kill his older brother Prahala. That is the training you have given to my other darling son! You have made up his mind too against me, your older loving brother. Shame on you. It looks now that even Ahalad is of no use to me. If you do not carry out my orders, I will kill both, Viprichitti and Ahalad, immediately. You are my sister, so I will not take your life. But I will leave you to die to live by taking away your most precious things, your husband and your son,’ said angrily Hiranyakashipu.

‘No, no, brother, you cannot do so. I beg you. Please do not touch my loving husband Viprichitti and my son Ahalad. I love both of them more than my own life. I will carry out your orders,’ said Simhalika fearing the death of her husband and son.

‘Good. Now you understand and respect me. Get ready to obey my orders tomorrow,’ said authoritatively Hiranyakashipu, and left the palace of Kayadhu.

It was a shock to Kayadhu. She talked to Simhalika yesterday only and begged her to spare the life of her dear son Prahala. Now she agreed to obey the orders of her brother to kill her loving son Prahala. She could not believe her ears. With tears in her eyes, she approached Simhalika and once again begged Simhalika to change her decision.

‘Bhabhi, I will do whatever is the best for Prahala, Ahalad, you and Viprichitti. I can only say this now. Please wait for the right time and leave me alone now,’ said Simhalika to her sister-in-law

and left the hall to her private room. She closed the door from inside and commenced meditating on her Gurudev Lord of Fire (Agnidev).

She went into trance. Lord Fire appeared to her in dream and blessed her, 'My daughter, I pray that Almighty give you every strength to carry out your wishes.'

She did not know when she fell asleep. She was awakened by a loud bang on the door of her room. Someone was shouting loudly that the king Hiranyakashipu was waiting for her. A pyre had been organised and Prahalad was present there too.

She woke up hurriedly. She told the person banging the door to convey to the king Hiranyakashipu that she would soon be there.

She got refreshed, took her fire immune blanket and hurried towards the pyre place. She saw Prahalad after a long time. The young boy was standing before her with a mesmerising smile. He looked just like Ahalad. For a moment she forgot that she was at the palace of Hiranyakashipu and it was Prahalad who was standing before her. She thought Ahlad was standing there and smiling on her mother inviting her to take him into her arms. Simhalika ran towards Prahalad and immediately took him into her arms. She commenced kissing him intensely on his cheeks and forehead. Then she heard a hoarse voice of his brother Hiranyakashipu.

'Enough exhibition of love Simhalika. Now carry out my orders,' ordered Hiranyakashipu.

‘Yes, Bhaiya. For sure, I will carry out your orders, but I have one request. I do not want that the world sees my cruelty that I am taking my dear, young, smiling nephew to the fire pyre. So, no one should look at me including yourself when I move towards the pyre’, requested Simhalika to her brother Hiranyakashipu.

‘Oh, that is all. No problems. I am going to my palace anyway, and order all my soldiers to leave both of you alone. I will wait for you in my private chamber to see you soon there returning alive and happy and giving me good news that the death penalty to Prahalad has been carried out,’ saying this Hiranyakashipu proceeded to his palace. Slowly all the soldiers also left the pyre place obeying the orders of their master.

She took Prahalad into her laps and started moving slowly to the pyre. She was looking all around to see if there was no one to see her and Prahalad jumping into pyre. Once again, she had a close look at Prahalad.

‘O my loving nephew Prahalad, please look after my son and your brother Ahalad. He is a very nice, kind and loving child and always loves you. Please promise me that you will forgive him even if he is on a wrong path and you will instruct him to do the right thing,’ saying this, Simhalika covered Prahalad with fire immune blankt, and jumped into the pyre.

Simhalika was burnt to death, thus sacrificed her life and saved Prahalad. Brahmurishi Narad appeared on the scene and started singing glory of Simhalika.

‘O Simhalika, Lord Vishnu will never forget your sacrifice. You will not be re-born. Lord Vishnu is waiting for you in His Saket Dham. In the memory of your great sacrifice, you will be called as Holika (the Goddess of Pyre) from today. Whomsoever will pray and worship you on this day of Phagun Shukla Poornina, will be blessed by Lord Vishnu Himself and will get peace, prosperity, name, fame and success in this world and after death, will attain Saket Dham of the Lord Vishnu,’ blessed Brahmishi Narad. He took the fire immune blanket with him and left the pyre place singing glory of Holika.

Brahmishi gave a new name ‘Holika’ to Simhalika. In Sanskrit, Holika is made up of two words – Hol + Ika. Hol means pyre and Ika means Goddess. Holika means the Goddess of Pyre.

When several ghadies (hours) passed and Simhalika did not return from pyre, Hiranyakashipu became anxious and ran towards the pyre. He was surprised to see that Prahalad was standing before the pyre alive with smiling face. He saw that his sister was burning to death. There was no blanket anywhere.

‘O, this so-called God of Fire, after all proved that he is the son of Aditi. He took away his boon from my sister and burnt her. What a wretched person! Why did I not realise this and trusted that God of Fire will stick to his boons. Sons of Aditi are not trustworthy anyway. My poor sister, I am very sorry. Please forgive me’ lamented Hiranyakashipu on the death of her loving sister. He declared a period of mourning for one month in his kingdom on the loss of his loving sister. He ordered to take Prahalad once again to the Acharyas so that they try to mend his ways.

Queen Kayadhu now understood the words of Simhalika. She thanked her in her heart for saving the life of her son and prayed for her salvation.

This happened on the day of Poornima or the full Moon Day in the month of Phalgun. We celebrate Holi festival on the day when Holika burnt herself to celebrate life of Prahlad and appreciate Holika for her sacrifice. We pray her for her blessings.

4.20 Putana and Lord Krishna

Kansa was a powerful king of Mathura in Dwapar era. He had a cousin sister Devaki to whom he loved most. She was married to Vasudev. Unfortunately, in a prophecy, Kansa was told that the eighth child of Devaki would kill him. Kansa imprisoned both his cousin sister and her husband Vasudev, and ordered them that as soon as their children were born, they would hand over to him.

Vasudev kept his promise. He handed over their children to Kansa as soon as they were born. Kansa kept killing them. Thus, their seven children were killed. When their eighth child was born, which was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, Vasudev was able to bring Him to his friend Nand Baba in Nandgaon of Braj Bhumi.

Kansa came to know the eighth child of Devaki and Vasudev has survived and is being grown in Braj Bhumi. He continued his efforts to find him to kill Him.

Once, he sent his supporter Putana, a female demon, to kill Krishna.

Putana was very skilled in disguising herself as beautiful woman and killing children by breast feeding them through deadly poisonous breasts. She followed the same trick and came to Nandgaon disguised as a beautiful woman. Her beauty was so mesmerising that the



residents of Nandgaon were captivated. The innocent cowherd women thought that she was a Goddess of fortune appearing in their village with a lotus flower in her hand. It seemed to them that she had personally come to bless Kanhaiya. Because of her innocent looking face, no one checked her movement, and therefore she freely entered the house of Nand Baba. She found baby Kanhaiya lying on a small bed. Lord Krishna understood immediately her intentions and extended His leela.

Seeing Putana, Kanhaiya closed His eyes as if He was sleeping. Putana took Him on her lap. Putana had smeared a very powerful poison on her breasts, and immediately after taking the baby on her lap, she pushed her breast nipples into His mouth. She was expecting that as soon as He would suck her breast, He would die. But baby Krishna sucked the milk-poison along with the life of the demon Putana. Putana fell down on the ground, spread her arms and legs and began to cry, 'O child, leave me, leave me' She was crying loudly and perspiring. Her whole body became wet.

By killing Putana, Krishna ended the nightmare of this female demon. After dying, her body revealed her true self. Her fierce mouth was wide open with long arms and legs. The long hair on

her head was scattered all over her body. It is said in the scripture that her fallen body extended up to twelve miles and smashed all the trees to pieces. Everyone was struck with wonder upon seeing this gigantic body. Her teeth appeared just like ploughed roads, and her nostrils appeared just like mountain caves. Her breasts appeared like small hills, and her hair were like vast reddish bush. Her eye sockets appeared like blind wells. Her two thighs appeared like two banks of a river. Her two hands appeared like two strongly constructed bridges and her abdomen seemed like a dried-up lake. All the cowherd men and women became struck with awe and wonder upon seeing this. The tumultuous sound of her falling shocked their brains and ears and made their hearts beat strongly.

When the Braj residents saw little Krishna fearlessly playing on Putana's dead body, they quickly came and picked Him up. Mother Yashoda and other elderly Gopies immediately performed the auspicious rituals to purify Krishna and pay their gratitude to Almighty for saving Krishna.

The Braj residents then cut Putana's body into several pieces and burnt the body. Interestingly, the fragrant smoke rose out of the flames as Putana was cleansed of all sin by breast feeding Krishna. She attained Moksh (liberation).

The Garga Samhita (authored by Maharshi Garg, Guru of Nand Baba and Lord Krishna in His childhood) explains the reason of liberation of Putana by Lord Krishna. In her previous birth, Putana was princess Ratnamala, the daughter of great Daitya clan king Maha Bali. She was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu like her father, the great king Maha Bali. When Lord Vaman came to the yagn of her father, king Maha Bali, she was mesmerised by His

aura and beauty. She desired to have him as her son. However, when Lord Vaman asked for three steps of land from the king Maha Bali in alms, and King Maha Bali obliged Him to give three steps of land, He took all of his kingdom. On seeing destruction of her father, she became furious and changed her mind. She became so angry on Lord Vaman that she desired to kill Him. Lord Vaman (an incarnation of Lord Vishnu) understood her both the desires and accordingly she was born as Putana in her next birth. He gave her opportunity to be His foster mother by allowing to suck his breast as a son, and then killed her to liberate her from the cycle of deaths and birth.

This incident happened on the day of Purnima or the full Moon Day in the month of Phalgun. We celebrate Holi on this day also in happiness that the life of Lord Krishna was saved.

4.30 Radha and Krishna

It is said in the scripture that when baby Lord Krishna killed Putana, because of the effect of poison from her nipples of the breast, the complexion of Krishna became dark. When Lord Krishna grew bit older, he



used to complain to mother Yashoda about His dark complexion. He used to argue with mother Yasoda that Radha Rani, to whom He loved most, did not like Him because of His dark complexion.

Mother Yashoda gave Him an idea. On Holi day, the day of Purnima or the full Moon Day in the month of Phalgun, when

Braj residents celebrate this festival, He should smear the face of Radha Rani with colours so that she becomes of same complexion as His. The mischievous Lord Krishna, fascinated by this idea, immediately brought this idea into action and thus introduced the festival of colours on this day of Purnima or the full Moon Day in the month of Phalgun. The Holi in Braj is still celebrated as it was during Lord Krishna's time, with the same intimacy and love.

4.40 Kamadeva and Lord Shiva

According to the Hindu scripture, Lord Shiva's wife, Sati Devi, self-immolated Herself by jumping in the Yagna Kunda (holy pyre where a fire is worshipped to impress the gods) because her father Prajapati Daksha insulted her husband. Lord Shiva, who was immensely hurt by this event, renounced His worldly duties and went into a deep meditation.

Since Lord Shiva completely ignored His worldly duties, complications began to arise in the matters of the world. Gods, who were afraid and worried, sought the help of Kamadeva to bring Lord Shiva back to his original self. Kamadeva knew he was committing a serious mistake and he would surely pay for it but for the sake of the world, he decided to make the sacrifice. Meanwhile, reincarnation of Sati Devi, the daughter of the Himalaya, Parvati Devi also started meditating to win over Her love, Lord Shiva.

Kamadeva shot his fragrant arrows at Lord Shiva while He was meditating. Lord Shiva was awakened from His meditation. Furious, Lord Shiva opened His third eye and burnt Kamadeva to ashes. Kamadeva's fragrant arrows did the job as Lord Shiva was

awakened from His meditation and then decided to marry Devi Parvati.

The day when Kamadeva was burnt to ashes, the day of Purnima or the full Moon Day in the month of Phalgun, is celebrated as Holi in the southern regions of India in honour of his sacrifice for the good of the world. The whole story of Kamadev's sacrifice is described by Goswami Tulsi Das in Shri Ram Charit Manas.



Sati Devi was reborn as Paravati as the daughter of Himalaya and Maina. On the advice of Brahmurishi Narad, She did great penance to get Lord Shiva as Her husband. Pleased with Her devotion, Lord Shiva agreed to wed Her. However, immediately after His consent to wed Parvati Devi, Lord Shiva Himself went into deep meditation.

In the meantime, a demon Tarak flourished in those days. His strength of arm, glory and majesty was great as he had boons from Lord Brahma. He conquered all the spheres as well as the guardians of those spheres. All the Gods were robbed of their happiness and prosperity. Knowing neither age nor death, he was invincible. The Gods fought many battles with him and lost them. They then went to Lord Brahma and told Him their grievances. The Creator Lord Brahma found all the Gods miserable. Lord Brahma reassured them and said, 'The demon shall die only when a son of Lord Shiva is born. He alone can subdue the demon in battle. Now hear what I say carefully. Sati Devi who

left her body at the sacrifice performed by Prajapati Daksh, has been born again in the house of Himalaya. She has undergone penance for winning the hand of Lord Shiva. However, Lord Shiva has renounced everything and is sitting absorbed in contemplation. Approach Cupid (Kamadeva) and send him to Lord Shiva. Let him disturb the serenity of Lord Shiva's mind. Then, we shall go and bow our heads at His feet and convince Him to marry Devi Parvati. In this way alone may the interests of the Gods be served.'

The Gods then prayed with great devotion to Kamadeva, who appeared before them armed with his fragrant weapons.

The Gods then told him all their distress. Hearing their tale, the God of love (Kamadeva) pondered and spoke thus with a smile, 'I expect no good results for myself from hostility to Lord Shiva. However, I shall do your work because the Veds say benevolence is the highest virtue.'

So saying, Kamadeva (the God of love) bowed his head to all and departed with his associates and the bow of flowers in hand. While leaving, God of love thought within himself that hostility to Lord Shiva would mean sure death to him. He then exhibited his power and brought the whole world under his sway. When the God of love showed his anger, all the barriers imposed by the Veds were swept away in a moment. The whole army of Vivek, religious vows, self-restraint of many kinds, fortitude, piety, spiritual wisdom and the knowledge of qualified divinity both with form and without form, morality, muttering of prayers, Yoga (contemplative union with God), dispassion and so on, fled in panic.

This wonder lasted for an hour or so till Kamadev (the God of love) reached at the place where Lord Shiva was in deep mediation. The God of love was struck with terror at the sight of Lord Shiva who was impossible to conquer and difficult to comprehend. He felt shy in retreating. Ultimately, he resolved upon death and devised a plan. He forthwith manifested the lovely spring, the king of all seasons, rows of young trees laden with flowers appeared so charming. Woods and groves, wells and ponds and all the quarters of Heaven assumed a most delightful aspect. Everywhere Nature overflowed with love as it were. The sight aroused passion even in dead souls.

The God of love with his army of followers exhausted all his numberless stratagems. Lord Shiva's unbroken trance, however, could not be disturbed. This made Cupid angry. In a mood of frustration, he joined his five arrows to his bow of flowers. Casting an angry look, he drew the string close to his ears. He discharged the five sharp arrows which smote the breast of Lord Shiva. The trance was now broken and Lord Shiva awoke. The Lord's mind was much agitated. Opening His eyes, He looked all around. When He saw Cupid hiding behind, He flew into a rage. That made all the three spheres tremble. Lord Shiva then opened His third eye. The moment He looked at the God of love with His third eye, the latter was reduced to ashes.

Rati (wife of the God of love) fainted as soon as she heard of the fate of her husband. Weeping, wailing and mourning in various ways, she approached Lord Shiva. She worshipped Lord Shiva. Pleased with her devotion, the benevolent Lord Siva blessed her and said, 'O Rati, your husband shall be called by the name of Ananga (bodiless) from now onwards. He shall dominate all even without a body. Now hear how you will meet him again. When

Lord Vishnu will descend in the line of Yadu (as Lord Krishna) to relieve the earth of its heavy burden, your husband will be born again as His son, Pradyumna.'

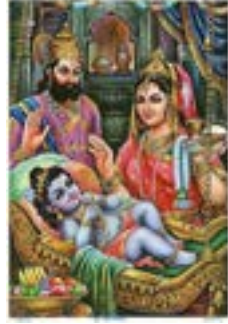
Satisfied with the blessings of Lord Shiva, Rati left the scene. Now, when Lord Brahma and other Gods came to know that Lord Shiva had come out of the trance, they assembled all in front of Lord Shiva and prayed Him. They requested Him to get married with Parvati Devi, for which Lord Shiva agreed.

Eventually, Lord Shiva got married to Parvati Devi. A son Kartikeya was born to them, who killed the demon, Tarak.

This day when Lord Shiva burnt God of Love (Kamadeva) to ashes, and then gave blessings to Rati, was the day of Purnima or the full Moon Day in the month of Phalgun. We celebrate Holi on this day to remember the sacrifice made by God of Love (Kamadeva) to save this earth from the wrath of the demon Tarak.

5.00 RAM NAVAMI

Lord Vishnu was incarnated in the form of Lord Ram on Chaitra month, Shukla Paksh Navami Tithi. This day is celebrated as Ram Navami, the birth day of Lord Ram.



The Lord Vishnu incarnates on the Earth from time to time to eradicate the sins of His devotees, to remove their troubles and to develop their devotion. The Lord fulfils the desires of His devotees to attain salvation by taking incarnation in human form on this Earth.

Goswami Tulasi Das says that the very reason of the Lord to incarnate on the Earth is to provide eternal happiness to His devotees by removing all their obstacles, whether materialistic or spiritual. Why these materialistic and spiritual hinderances are developed and responsible to take away happiness? Goswami Tulsi Das says that when the four disorders (Vikar), the arrogance, the desire of sensual pleasures, the wrath and the greed, are developed in the personality of a person, he/ she is led towards unhappiness. The Lord incarnates to guide to relinquish these four disorders from His devotees and give them salvation. Also, when the love and devotion of a devotee to the Lord reaches the climax and he desires to see (Darshan) the Lord physically, the Lord incarnates in human form to fulfil the desire of His devotees.

Goswami Tulsi Das says that whenever there is decline of the religion, and irreligious people give troubles to the honest,

religious and saintly people, the Lord incarnates on the Earth in human form to eradicate them and give peace to His devotees.

**Jab jab hoy dharam ki hani | Badhen asur adham abhimani ||
Tab tab prabhu dhar vividh sarira | Haray kripamidhi sajjan pira ||**

Similarly, Lord Shri Krishna had also said in Shrimadbhagwad Gita.

**Yada yada hi dharmasy glanirbhavati bharat |
Abhyutthanamadharmasy tadatmanan srijamyahamh ||
Paritranaaya sadhunam vinashaya cha dushkritam |
Dharma sansthapanarthaya sambhavami yuge yuge ||**

‘O descendant of Bharata, whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice and a predominant rise of irreligion takes place, at that time, I continue to descend Myself in every age for the upliftment of the good and virtuous, for the destruction of evil, and for the re-establishment of the natural law.’

To fulfil the objects as narrated above, the Lord incarnates on this Earth from time to time. There is not just any one special reason for the incarnation of the Lord, there may be several reasons for that. Goswami Tulasi Das has described in details few of the reasons of incarnation of the Lord Ram.

Goswami Tulsi Das said that one of the most important reasons for the Lord to incarnate on the Earth is to eradicate the feelings of arrogance among His devotees. Arrogance takes the person to the lowest status and becomes the reason of his/ her downfall. Arrogance is the gateway of the hell. The Lord loves His

devotees and never allows to fall in such a pit. So, he descends on Earth to remove arrogance from His devotees.

Goswami Tulasi Das has described the reasons for incarnation of Lord Vishnu as Lord Ram in Shri Ram Charit Manas.

Lord Vishnu loved His two great devotees, Jai and Vijay, who were His security chiefs. Once they became very arrogant. They considered themselves highly superior and all others trivial persons. Though Lord Vishnu was ever available for His devotees and Saints, but these arrogant security chiefs would only allow those to have Darshan of the Lord who would pray to them and touched their feet.

**Nahin koi as janmaa jag maanhee ।
Prabhutaa paahi jaahi madi naaheen ॥**

‘No one is born in the Universe who does not become arrogant after getting superior authority.’

On getting telepathic message from Lord Vishnu, the sons (Manas-Putra) of Lord Brahma - Sanak, Sanandan, Sanaatan and Sanat Kumar, arrived in Vaikunth Dham to see (Darshan) Him. When they arrived at the gate of the Vaikunth Dham, these two chief security officers, Jay and Vijay, did not allow them to go inside and see the Lord. Jay and Vijay argued that Lord Vishnu was taking rest at that time and no one was allowed to disturb Him. Hence, none of you might enter inside the Vaikunth Dham.

Though these four Rishies were of matured age, but because of the effect of their penance, they looked like children. Jay and Vijay could not recognise and thought them as ordinary children.

The sons (Manas Putra) of the Lord Brahma tried all their ways in their humblest way to give an explanation to Jay and Vijay that they had come to see (darshan) the Lord on His invitation only. But arrogant Jay and Vijay would not budge and continued their stubbornness. They did not allow these Rishies to enter into Vaikunth Dham.

Though Rishies tried a lot to convince Jay and Vijay, but they would not listen. Then the Rishies lost their temper and cursed in anger, ‘O fools, both of you call yourselves as devotees of Lord Vishnu, but do not understand that the doors of the Lord are always open to any of His devotee no matter how small or big he/she is. You are keeping us away from seeing the Lord due to your wickedness. Such wicked people do not deserve to be the inhabitants of the Vishnu Dham. Hence, we curse you that your divine status be over immediately, and both of you take birth on Earth as demons. Both of you then would reap the fruits of your ill-deeds there.’

Dvaarapaal hari ke priya dou | Jaya aru bijaya jaana saba kou ||

Bipra shraap ten doonau bhai | taamas asura deha tinha pai ||

‘Lord Vishnu has two favourite gate-keepers Jaya and Vijaya, who are known to everybody. Due to the curse of Brahmanas (Sanaka and his three brothers) both these brothers were born in the accursed species of demons.’

After hearing the terrible curse of the sons (Manas Putra) of Lord Brahma, Jay and Vijay fell at their feet and begged for their mercy. On hearing the noise, Lord Vishnu also appeared on the scene. Jay and Vijay now fell at the feet of Lord Vishnu and

requested Him to please seek forgiveness of the great Rishies on their behalf so they could kindly reverse their curse.

Lord Vishnu then told to Jay and Vijay, ‘the curse of the Great Rishies cannot be reversed. Both of you have to take birth on the Earth as demons. You have to reap the fruits of your arrogance. However, after enduring the results, both of you will return to Saket Dham and get back to your present divine status. You may have one of the two choices for your return to Saket Dham. If you chose to take birth on the Earth as my devotees, you have to take birth for seven lives. However, if you decide to take birth on the Earth as my enemies, then you will get salvation only in three lives. So, tell me how you may like to endure the fruits of your curse?’

Jay and Vijay did not want to be away from Saket Dham for a long time. Hence, they did choose the second option, to be born on Earth as the enemy of the Lord Vishnu.

Lord Vishnu said, ‘Tathastu (So it be). I promise both of you that in all your three lives, I will incarnate on Earth to give you salvation’.

Jay and Vijay thus had to take birth on the Earth for three lives.

In their first lives, they were born as Hryanaksh and Hryanakashipu in Satyug. Hryanaksh was given salvation by the Lord Vishnu in Varah incarnation. Hryanakashipu was given salvation by Narsingh Avatar.

In their second lives, they were born as Ravan and Kumbhkaran in Tretayug. Lord Vishnu incarnated in the form of Lord Ram to give salvation to both of them.

In their third lives, they were born as Shishupal and Dantvakra in Dwaaparyug. Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Krishna gave salvation to them.

Goswami Tulasi Das gave another example of the reasons of the incarnation of Lord Ram on Earth to annihilate the desire of lust and anger among His devotees. We all know that Brahmrishi Narad is very dear to Lord Vishnu. When a desire of lust developed in his heart and was not fulfilled due to the intervention of Lord Vishnu, he cursed Him in anger to incarnate on Earth as human being. Lord Vishnu accepted the curse of Brahmrishi and incarnated on Earth as Lord Ram.

Naarada shraap dīnha eka baaraa | Kalapa eēka tehi lagi avataaraa ||
Girijaa chakita bhaī suni baanī | Naarada biṣnu bhagata puni gyaani ||
Karana kavana shrap muni dīnhaa | Kaa aparaadha Ramapati kīnhaa ||
Yah prasanga mohi kahahu purarī | Muni mana moha acharaja bhaarī ||

‘(Mahadev said) On one occasion Brahmrishi Narad cursed the Lord. This also became a reason of His birth in one particular time. Girija was taken aback to hear these words and said, "Narad is a votary of God Vishnu and enlightened soul too. How could the great Sage curse his own God? What offence did Lord Vishnu commit against him? Tell me the whole story, O Lord Shiv. It is very strange that the Sage should have fallen prey to such delusion."

Lord Shiva then narrated the story to Parvati.'

Once Brahmishi Narad was influenced by pride. He thought that he is a Mahayogi. Even Kamdeva could not influence him.

In the Himalaya mountains, there was a most sacred cave. The beautiful heavenly stream of Ganga was flowing nearby. The sight of this most holy and charming hermitage highly attracted the mind of the celestial sage Brahmishi Narada. Seeing the mountain, the river and the forest glades, his heart developed love for the feet of Lord Vishnu. The thought of the Lord broke the spell of the curse pronounced by Daksh (that did not allow him to stay at one place). His pure and sinless mind fell into a trance. Seeing the sage's condition, Indra became apprehensive. Summoning Lord Kamdeva (the God of love), he instructed him to break the penance of Brahmishi Narad. Kamdeva tried his best but could not break his penance. Then, in dire dismay, he acknowledged his defeat and fell at the feet of Brahmishi Narad with deep humility.

Brahmishi Narad did not become angry on trying to break his penance by Kamdeva. He forgave him. However, Brahmishi Narad became proud of his achievement. He wanted to tell this glory to his beloved friend, the great Lord Shiva. He reached Kailash, the abode of the Lord Shiva and narrated Him the whole tale. Lord Shiva listened the whole story attentively, and then advised Brahmishi, 'O sage, I request you never to repeat this story to Lord Vishnu. Even if the topic ever comes up before Him, please hush it up.'

Brahmrishi Narad was not pleased with this advice of Lord Mahadev. He thought that this was his great achievement. Why should he not narrate this story to the Lord Vishnu?

Ignoring the advice of Lord Shiva, he went to the abode of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu rose to greet him with great joy and shared His seat with the sage. He said to the sage with a smile, "It is after a long time that you have showered Me this favour, Brahmrishi."

Brahmrishi Narada then told the whole story to Lord Vishnu on his achievement that how he did win over Lord Kamdeva.

With an impassive look, yet in coaxing accents, said the Lord, 'By your very thought self-delusion, lust, arrogance and pride disappear. O Brahmrishi, you are steadfast in your vow of celibacy and resolute mind. Sure, you can never be defeated by Kamdeva.'

Brahmrishi Narad replied with a feeling of pride, "Lord, it is all due to Your grace."

The compassionate Lord pondered and saw that a huge tree of pride had sprouted in his heart.

Lord Vishnu thought in His mind, 'I should tear this pride of Brahmrishi. It is My vow to serve the best interest of My devotees. I must come out with a plan which may do good to the sage.'

Bowing his head at the feet of Lord Vishnu, Brahmishi Narad departed. The pride in his heart had swelled. The Lord, then, set up His Maya.

The Lord created a city with an area of eight hundred square miles in the way of Brahmishi Narad. The manifold architectural beauties of that city excelled even those of Lord Vishnu's own abode Vaikuntha. It was inhabited by graceful men and women. A king, Silanidhi, ruled over that city. He had the most beautiful daughter, Vishvamohini. The princess was about to marry by Swayamvaram (self-choice), hence Silanidhi invited all the kings from the Universe to take part in Swyamvaram. When Brahmishi Narad entered this city, he inquired about the celebration. Hearing all that had been going on there, he went to the palace. The king paid his respect to him. The king then asked his daughter to bow to Brahmishi and said, 'O Great Rishi, you are omniscient. Please tell me the future of this girl.'

Brahmishi was smitten with the beauty of the girl and said, 'the one who will wed this girl will be immortal. No one will ever be able to conquer him in battle. He will be loved by the entire Universe.'

Brahmishi Narada then left the palace with a desire to wed this princess. He thought in his heart that only Lord Vishnu can help him in this difficult hour. So, he started praying Him to come to his rescue. The merciful Lord Vishnu appeared before him.

Brahmishi Narad fell at His feet and humbly requested, 'O Lord, be gracious to me and be good enough to help me. Bestow on me Your own beauty so this princess Vishwmohini marries me.'

The Lord smiled and said, 'O Brahmrishi, I will surely do the needful which is good for you. My words can never be untrue'.

After that, the Lord disappeared. Brahmrishi Narad then arrived at the Swayamwaram. He thought within himself that his beauty is so surpassing that the princess will never commit the error of choosing for her husband anyone else than him.

Lord gave him face of a monkey. But no one other than Vishwmohini could see Brahmrishi as monkey. Others saw him in his original form as Brahmrishi Narad and greeted him with great respect. Two of Lord Shiva's attendants too happened to be there disguised as Brahmins. With the power of Lord Shiva, they could also see Brahmrishi Narad as monkey.

Vishwmohini did not even look at Brahmrishi Narad. Lord Vishnu too arrived in Swayamvaram in the form of a king, and the princess joyfully placed the necklace of flowers on the Lord Vishnu and thus wedded Him.

Brahmrishi Narad felt much perturbed. He felt as if a gem had dropped from a loosened knot in the end of his garment. The attendants of Lord Shiva then smilingly said, 'O Brahmrishi, just look at your face in a mirror.'

After uttering these words, both ran away with fear of curse of Brahmrishi Narad. Then, sage looked at his reflection in water. His fury knew no bounds when he saw his face. He then first cursed the attendants of Lord Shiva, 'O you sinful impostors, go and be reborn as demons. You mocked me, therefore, reap its reward.'

When he looked again in the water, he saw that he had regained his real form. Yet his heart found no solace. His lips quivered and he was very angry at the Lord. He murmured that either he would curse Him or die at His door.

Lord Vishnu met him right on the way. He was accompanied by Goddess Lakshmi and the princess Vishwamohini. The Lord spoke to Brahmishi, ‘O Brahmishi, why are you in so much anger and where are you going?’

Listening these words of the Lord, Brahmishi Narada was filled with rage. He said, ‘O Vishnu, You cannot bear to look upon the good fortune of others. You are richly endowed with jealousy and fraud. While churning the ocean, You gave poison to Lord Shiva and took nectar for yourself. You have ever been selfish, perverse and treacherous in Your dealings. You are absolutely independent and subordinate to none, therefore, You do whatever pleases You. You have this time played with fire and shall reap what You have sown. You made me look like a monkey. These monkeys will be your friends in Your next reincarnation as a human being. As You have grievously wronged me and caused suffering of separation from my beloved, so shall You suffer the separation from Your beloved wife in your next incarnation.’

Gladly accepting the curse, the compassionate Lord praised Brahmishi Narad and withdrew the irresistible charm of His Maya. When Lord lifted the spell of His Maya, there was neither Mother Lakshmi nor the princess Vishwamohini to be seen by His side. Brahmishi Narad understood all the happenings now. Sage then clasped the feet of Lord and said, ‘O Lord, save me. Let my curse prove ineffectual.’

‘Do not worry about this Brahmrishi. It all happened due to My will,’ replied the Lord.

Then Bhramrishi Narad replied, ‘O Lord, I abused You so much. How will my sins be forgiven?’

Lord replied, ‘Go and pray Lord Shankara. He will give you peace. No one is so dear to Me as Lord Shiva. O sage, he who does not love and pray Lord Shiva, shall never attain true devotion of Me. I assure you that now My Maya shall not haunt you anymore.’

Having thus reassured the sage, Lord then disappeared. Brahmrishi Narada then proceeded to Satyalok chanting the name of Lord Shiva.

When the attendants of Lord Shiva saw the sage moving along free from delusion and greatly delighted at heart, they approached him in great alarm. Claspig his feet, they spoke to him in great humility, ‘We are the servants of Lord Shiva and no Brahmins, O great sage. We have committed a great sin and have reaped its fruit. Now please rid us of your curse, O benevolent sage’

Brahmrishi Narada was now full of compassion to the humble servants of Lord Shiva and replied, "Both of you go and take the form of the demons. You shall possess an enormous fortune, grandeur and strength. When Lord Vishnu takes a human form, you will die at His hands in battle and be liberated. You will not be reborn then."

Bowing their heads at the Sage's feet, both departed and were reborn as demons in due course.

This was also one of the reasons why Lord Vishnu reincarnated in a human form.

Goswami Tulasi Das also described another reason of birth of Lord Ram in human form in Shri Ram Charit Manas. This was to provide salvation to one of His devotees, king Pratapbhanu, who was fallen due to greed and had to take birth as a demon because of the curse of Brahmins. King Pratapbhanu was a pious king and a great devotee of the Lord Vishnu. Somehow, he developed greed in his heart to become immortal and invincible. Lord Ram killed him and gave him salvation during Lanka war.

Sunu muni kathaa punīta puraānī | Jo Girijaa prati Sambhu bakhaanī ||
Bisva bidita eka Kaikaya desu | Satyaketu tahaom basai naresu ||

Maharshi Yagyvalkya told to Maharshi Bhardwaj, ‘Listen, O sage, to an old and sacred legend story which was narrated by Lord Shambhu to Girija. There was a kingdom known by the name of Kaikaya, which was celebrated throughout the world. A king named Satyaketu ruled there.

King Satyketu had two gallant sons who were repositories of all virtues and most staunch in battle. The elder of the two and the heir to the throne was Pratapabhanu. He was enthroned by the king Satyketu before retiring to the forest by accepting Vanprasth Ashram. He looked after his subjects with utmost care according to the precepts of the Veds and there was not a speck of sin anywhere in his kingdom. The king was a man of great

intelligence and wisdom. Whatever meritorious act he performed in thoughts, words or deeds, the wise king dedicated it to Lord Vishnu.

One day the king went for hunting in a forest of his kingdom. He saw a wild huge boar. On seeing this huge boar, which resembled a purple mountain peak, the king whipped the horse and advanced rapidly towards the boar. When the boar saw that the horse was following him, he ran very fast like wind. The king tried to kill the boar by his arrows, but the boar saved itself by its wiliness. The beast rushed on, sometimes hiding and again emerging. The king continued to follow him in much excitement on the track of the boar. The boar went afar into a dense forest. Even though the king was all by himself and was faced with untold hardships in the forest, still he would not abandon the chase. Seeing the king so determined, the boar slunk away into a deep mountain cave. When the king perceived that there was no access to the cave, he returned very disappointed. However, he lost his way to his kingdom. Exhausted with much exertion and oppressed by hunger and thirst, the king kept searching for a stream or pond and almost fainted for want of water. While wandering in the forest, he saw a hermitage. In that hermitage, there lived an exiled king disguised as a hermit, who was defeated by the king Pratapbhanu. He was waiting for an opportune time to fight with the king Pratapbhanu to regain his kingdom. King Pratapabhanu went to him thinking him as a saint. This exiled king recognized king Pratapbhanu, but king Pratapbhanu could not recognise him. King Pratapbhanu made obeisance to him. The king Pratapbhanu was, however, too astute to disclose his name. Seeing king Pratapabhanu thirsty, he showed him a lake nearby. The king Pratapbhanu took bath in the lake, got refreshed and came back to the hermitage.

The hermit gave him a seat with great respect, and then spoke to him very politely, 'Who are you, and why do you risk your life by roaming in the forest all alone? As you are so young and handsome, I can see that you may belong to a royalty.'

King Pratapbhanu, hiding his real identity, then spoke to the hermit, 'O great sage, there is a king named Pratapbhanu. I am his minister. I came to the forest for hunting, but have lost my way. This is my great fortune that I saw your hermitage. It is my great pleasure to see you. It leads me to believe that something good is about to befall on me.'

The hermit then said, 'O son, it is now dusk and your city is far away from here. The forest is dense and trackless. It is not safe for you to travel back to your kingdom at this time. You take rest now and may depart next morning.'

"Very well, sir," the king replied.

He then spoke to him in soft and endearing terms, 'O saint, you are like father to me. Looking upon me as your son, O great sage, please tell me your name.'

Though the king did not recognize him, but the disguised hermit recognized king Pratapbhanu as said above. Though the king had a pure heart, this disguised hermit was a fraudulent. Since he was an enemy of the king, he thought this to be an opportune moment to take revenge from the king. He uttered the following soft yet false and artful words, 'O, minister, my name is now Bhikhari (a mendicant) as I am penniless and homeless person.'

The king was moved by his softness and replied, "O saint, I know that those who are repositories of wisdom and free from pride like yourself, always keep their reality concealed even though proficient in every way. They prefer to remain as mendicant in tattered clothes. O respected hermit, the penniless and homeless persons like you fill the minds of even Vairagies. Whomsoever you may be, I bow at your feet. Please bless me."

Listening such kind words of the king Pratapbhanu and considering him in his spell, the hermit spoke with a still greater affection 'Listen O king, I tell you sincerely that I have dwelt here for long. No one has come to me so far nor do I make myself known to anyone. The popularity and fame are like a wild fire which consumes the forest of penance, so, I keep away from this. I have nothing to do with anything other than Lord Vishnu. Now, my son, if I were to keep anything from you, I shall incur the most severe blame. My name is Ektanu.'

Hearing this, the king bowed his head and asked further, 'kindly explain to me the meaning of this appellation recognizing me as your faithful son.'

The disguised hermit replied, 'my birth took place at the first dawn of creation. Since then, I have never taken another body, that is why I am called Ektanu (one body). Believe me my son, I have achieved this through penance. By dint of penance, Brahma creates the Universe. By dint of penance, Lord Vishnu assumed the role of its protector. By dint of penance, again, Lord Shambhu destroys the world. There is nothing in this world which cannot be attained through penance.'

Further said the hermit, 'O king, I know you very well even though you tried to hide your identity from me. However, I appreciate this move on your part. O king, this is a political requirement that the kings should not disclose their names to strangers in such situations. I know that your name is king Pratapbhanu. The king Satyaketu was your father. O king, by the grace of the Lord and Guru, I know everything but foreseeing my own harm, I refuse to tell everything which I may know. When I saw your natural straightforwardness, affection, faith and political wisdom, I conceived a spontaneous affection for you, and that is why I told you my own story on your request. I am now pleased with you and will provide you anything you may wish.'

Hearing these kind words, the king rejoiced and clasping the hermit's feet, he said, 'O gracious sage, you are so kind. I would ask a boon which is though impossible to attain otherwise, but will surely be possible with your grace. Let my body be free from old age, death and suffering. Let no one vanquish me in battle and let me enjoy undisputed sovereignty over the globe for a hundred Kalpas (repetitions of creation) and let me have no enemies.'

The hermit replied, 'So be it, O king. But there is one difficulty. Listen it carefully. I promise you that the 'Death' shall bow at your feet. The only exception shall be the Brahmins. The Brahmins are ever powerful by virtue of their penance. No one can deliver from their wrath. If you can reduce the Brahmins to your will, O king, even Brahma, Vishnu and the great Lord Shiva shall be at your command. Might is of no avail against the Brahmins. I tell you this truth. Listen, O king, if you may escape

the Brahmin's curse, you shall never perish. I will help you to win the Brahmins. Please do not tell anyone about this meeting."

'For sure, I will not disclose this meeting to anyone, my Lord. Now tell me O great sage, how can I be delivered from any wrath of the Brahmins?', asked king Pratapbhanu.

Knowing that the king was completely under his influence, the hermit, who was clever at deception said, 'Listen O king. I tell you the truth. For me, there is nothing hard to obtain in this Universe. I will surely accomplish your object. The power of Yoga (contemplation), planning, penance and mystic formulas work only when secrecy is maintained about them. O king, if I cook food and you serve it, and if nobody comes to know my identity, then whomsoever will eat that food shall become amenable to your orders. O king, when you go back home, then work on this scheme. For the following one year, invite every day a new set of a hundred thousand Brahmins with their families for feast. In this way, O king, all the Brahmins shall be forced to accept your will. The Brahmins in their turn will offer oblations into the sacred fire, perform big sacrifices and practise adoration. Through that channel, the Gods shall be easily won over. I give you one more sign. I will not come to you in this hermit form. By my delusive power, O king, I will come to you as your family priest. By my Yogic powers, I will keep your priest here for a year, while O king, I will take his form and manage everything for you. The night is far gone, so you had better retire now. On the third day from now, we will meet again. By my divine Yogic powers, I will now send you to your home with your horse, even while you are asleep. I will come in the form as I have told you, and you will recognize me when I call you aside and remind you of all this."

The king then went to sleep in obedience to the hermit, while the counterfeit sage returned to his seat and sat down there. Deep sleep came upon the weary monarch, but the false hermit was waiting for his friend, the demon Kalketu. This was his friend Kalketu, who took the form of a boar to bring king Pratapbhanu to the hermitage of this exiled king.

Kalketu, a great friend of this false hermit, was skilled in manifold ways of deceit. He had a hundred sons and ten brothers who were great villains, invincible and annoying to the Gods. Seeing that the Brahmins, Saints and Gods were in distress due to these sons and brothers of Kalketu, the king had killed them in a battle. Recalling the old grudge, the wretch conspired with the hermit and contrived a plot for the extermination of the enemy.

Kalketu arrived in the hermitage. The hermit was delighted to see his ally and rose to meet him. In an instant he conveyed Pratapbhanu to his palace with horse. Putting the king to the bed beside of his queen, he tied up the horse in the stall in the proper way. He carried off the king's family priest and kept him in a mountain cave.

As planned, on the third day of this meeting between king Pratapbhanu and the hermit, assuming the form of the family priest, the hermit arrived at the palace of the king Pratapbhanu. When the king saw his family priest, he understood the plan of the hermit. The king was delighted to recognize his preceptor in the priest's form. His mind was too clouded to have any sense left. At once, he invited a hundred thousand chosen Brahmins with their families for feast.

The priest cooked four kinds of foods with six different tastes as mentioned in the Veds. He prepared an illusory banquet and a variety of seasoned dishes more than one could count. Dressing the flesh of a variety of animals, the wretch mixed with it the cooked flesh of Brahmins. All the invited Brahmins were then called for the feast. Their feet were duly washed, and they were respectfully shown to their places. The moment the king began to serve the food, a voice from the sky (Akashvani) came, ‘Stand up Brahmins and return to your homes. Do not eat this food. It is most harmful. The dishes include the flesh of the Brahmins.’

Hearing this voice from the sky (Akashvani), the Brahmins stood up immediately from their seats believing the voice from the sky. The king lost his nerve. His mind was bewildered with infatuation. As fate would have it, he could not utter a word.

Then the Brahmins in wrath cursed the king Pratapbhanu, ‘O foolish king, you have tried to pollute us. We curse you that you and your family take birth as demons. O king, thank God that He preserved our sanctity. In a year, you will perish with your family. Not a soul shall be left in your family to offer water to gratify your spirit.’

Hearing the curse, the king was sore stricken with fear.

Again, a voice was heard from heaven, ‘O holy Brahmins, you have uttered this curse without careful thought. The king has committed no sin.’

The Brahmins were astounded when they heard this second Akashvani. The king hastened to the kitchen. There was neither any food there nor the Brahmin cook. The king returned in deep

thought. He related the whole story to the Brahmins and threw himself on the ground frantic with fear.

‘Even though you are guiltless, O king, what is inevitable fails not. Brahmin's curse is very terrible. No amount of effort can counteract it,’ said the Brahmins. Saying so, all the Brahmins dispersed.

Now, the disguised hermit made preparations for the battle with king Pratapbhanu. He invited all the kings on the Earth which were defeated by the king Pratapbhanu. The battle was fought every day. However, as a result of the curse of Brahmins, the king with all his brothers and sons were killed. The ladies of the palace took their own lives in sacrificial fire. They became Sati. Having vanquished the foe, king Pratapbhanu, and re-inhabiting the city, all the kings returned to their own capitals enriched with victory and fame.

In due time, this king was born as a demon with his family. The king as demon was a formidable hero and a companion of the king of Lanka, Ravan. (Some scripture says that actually this king was reborn in the spirit of Ravan with the soul of Jay, the security chief of the Lord Vishnu who was cursed to take birth as demon by the sons of Lord Brahma). He, his brother and his sons were all wicked, monstrous and devoid of sense and were ruthless, bloody and sinful. They were a torment to all creation beyond what words can tell. These demons did penance to please Lord Brahma and asked boon not to be killed by anyone other than human and monkeys. They were very powerful and no one can dare to face them. Lord Vishnu incarnated in the form of Lord Ram in human form to kill them with the help of monkeys.

Lord Vishnu also incarnates on Earth to fulfil the desire of those of His devotees who wish to see (to give Darshan) Him in person. When there is an intense love in the hearts of His devotees and they can no longer bear the separation from the Lord, then Lord appears before them to fulfil their desire. Goswami Tulasi Das gave the narration of such an intense love of God by the great king Manu and his queen Satrupa in Shri Ram Charit Manas.

Svaayambhu manu aru satarupaa | jinha ten bhai narasraṣṭi anupaa ||
Dampati dhaRam aacharana nikaa | ajahun gaav shruti jinha ke likaa ||

The king Swayambhuva Manu and his queen Satarupa were the great personalities of Satyug. When they became old, they enthroned their son as the king of their kingdom and left to the forests to meditate on the God. They prayed and meditated to attain the Darshan (to see the God in person) of the Lord for several thousand years. Lord Vishnu was pleased with their penance. He spoke through sky (Akashvani), ‘O Manu and Satrupa, I am very pleased with your love to me. Please ask for a boon.’

Jo bhusuṃḍi man manas hansa | sagun aguna jehi nigama prasansaa ||
Dekhahim ham so rup bhari lochan | kṛpa karahu pranatarati mochan ||

Then Manu and Satrupa with folded hands spoke thus, ‘O friend of the forlorn, if You have any affection for us, be pleased to grant this boon to us. The form which dwells in the heart of Lord Shiva and is sought by the sages, which sports like a swan in the lake of Bhusundi's mind and is glorified by the Veds as both with and without attributes, please be gracious to us and let us feast our eyes on Your form.’

Listening such kind words with full of devotion, Lord Vishnu appeared in person before both of them, and asked for a boon.

Daani siromani kṛpaanidhi naath kahun satibhaau I

Chahanu tumhabi samaana sut, prabhu son kavan duraa I I

Then Manu spoke to the Lord, ‘O crest jewel of donors, O gracious Lord, I tell You my sincere wish. I would like to have a son like You. There is nothing which is not known to You.’

Dekhi prīti suni bachan amole I evamastu karunanidhi bole I I

Aap sarisa khojaun kahaom jāi I nṛpa tava tanaya hob main aai I I

Listening the desire of Manu, the Lord spoke thus, ‘Tathastu (So it be). Where shall I go to find My equal? O king, I Myself shall be born as a son to you. O king Manu and queen Satrupa, after sometime you will be born in Ayodhya and will be the king and queen of this great kingdom. Then, I shall take reincarnation as your son and fulfil your desire.’

Thus, Lord Vishnu incarnated in the form of Lord Ram due to the boon granted to king Manu and queen Satrupa.

Lord Shiva, continuing the story of Lord Shri Ram, spoke to Mother Bhavani, ‘O Bhavani, in Tretayug, lots of demons took birth. They were making havoc on the Earth under the leadership of Ravan, his brother Kumbhakaran and son Meghnad. There was great disrespect for religion. Mother Earth was extremely alarmed and perturbed. She said to Herself, ‘the weight of mountains, rivers and oceans is not so oppressive to me as of him who is malevolent to others.’

She saw all goodness perverted, yet for fear of Ravan and his companions, She could not utter a word. After great deliberation, She took the form of a cow and went to the spot where all the Demi-Gods and sages were in hiding. With tears in her eyes, She told them Her sufferings, but none of them could be of any help to Her. Then, on the advice of Lord Shiva, all of them started praying Almighty Lord Vishnu.

Jaya jaya suranaayaka jana sukhadaayaka pranatapaala bhagavaataa ।
 Go dvija hitakaarī jaya asuraarī sindh sutaa priya kantaa ॥
 Paalana sura dharanī adbhuta karanī maRam na aañnai koi ।
 Jo sahaja kṛpaalaa dīnadaayālā karau anugraha soi ॥
 Jaya jaya abinaasī saba ghaṭa baasī byaapaka paRamanamdaa ।
 Abigata gōṭitaṃ charita punītaṃ maayaarahita mukumdaa ॥
 Jehi laagi biraagī ati anuraagī bigatamoha munibṛndaa ।
 Nisi basara dhyaavahi guna gana gaavahiṃ Jayati sacchidaanamdā ॥
 Jehiṃ shrṣṭi upaā tribidha banaā sanga sahaaya na dujaa ।
 So karau aghaarī chint hamaarī jaania bhagati na pūjaa ॥
 Jo bhav bhaya bhanjana muni mana ranjana ganjana bipati barūthaa ।
 Man bach kRam baanī chaadi sayaanī saran sakala sura jūthaa ॥
 Sarad shruti sheṣaa riṣhay asheṣaa jaa kahu kou nahi jaanaa ।
 Jehi deen piaare beda pukaare dravau so shrībhagavaanaa ॥
 Bhav baaridhi mandara sab bidhi sundar gunamandira sukhapunjaa ।
 Muni siddh sakala sura paRam bhayaatura namat naatha pada kanjaa ॥

‘Glory, all glory to You, O Lord of immortals. O delight of the devotees, O protector of the suppliant, O benefactor of cows and the Brahmins, O slayer of demons, O beloved consort of Lakshmi (daughter of the ocean), glory to You. O guardian of Gods and the Earth, mysterious are Thy ways. Their secret is known to none. Let Him who is benevolent by nature and compassionate to the humble, show His grace. Glory, all glory to the immortal Lord Mukunda (the bestower of salvation and love), who resides

in all hearts, and is supreme bliss personified, omnipresent, unknowable, and super-sensuous, whose acts are holy and who is beyond the veil of Maya (illusion). Glory to Him who is truth, consciousness and bliss combined. Glory to the God who is most lovingly meditated upon day and night, and whose praises are sung by multitudes of sages who are full of dispassion and entirely free from infatuation. Let the slayer of the sinful Agha bestow His care on us who brought forth the threefold creation (dominated by satwa, rajas and tamas) without anyone else to assist Him.'

'We know neither devotion nor worship, my Lord. You disperse the fear of transmigration. You are the delights of the minds of sages and put an end to hosts of calamities. We, the demigods betake ourselves to Him in thoughts, words and deeds, giving up our wonted cleverness. The Lord, who is known neither to Sharada (the Goddess of learning), nor to the Veds, nor again to the Shesh (the serpent God), nor to any of the sages, who as the Veds proclaim loves the lowly, let Him moved to pity. The sages, siddhs (a class of celestials naturally endowed with supernatural powers) and all Demigods, grievously stricken with fear, bow at the lotus feet of the Lord who serves as Mount Mandara for churning the ocean of worldly existence, and who is an abode of virtues and an embodiment of bliss.'

Jaani sabhaya surabhumi suni bachan samet saneha I

Gaganagiraa gambhīra bhāi harani skka sandeha II

Knowing that the Demigods and the Earth were terror stricken and hearing their loving entreaties, a deep voice came from heaven (Akashvani), which removed all their doubt and anxiety.

Jani đarapahu muni siddh surasa |Tumhahin laagi dharihau nara besaa ||
Ansanh sahita manuja avataaraa | Le hau dinakara bansa udaaraa ||
Kasyap Aditi mahatapa keenha | Tinha kahu maim poorab bar dinha ||
Te Dasaratha Kausalyaa roopaa | Kosalapurin pragađa narabhoopaa ||
Tinha ke grha avatarihau jaai | Raghukula tilaka so chaariu bhaai ||
Narad bachan satya saba kariho | PaRam sakti sameta avatarihun ||
Harihau sakala bhūmi garuaaī | Nirbhaya hohu deva samudaaī ||

‘O sages, siddhs and Indra (the chief of Demigods), do not fear. I will assume the form of a human being for your sake. I shall be born as a human being along with My part manifestations in the glorious Surya Vansha (Solar clan). The sage Kashyap and his wife Aditi (in their incarnations as Manu and Satrupa) did severe penance. I have already given them a boon. They have appeared in the city of Ayodhya as king Dasaratha and queen Kausalya. In their house, I shall take birth with other three brothers. I shall fulfil the words of Brahmrishi Narad and shall descend to Earth with My supreme energy. Thus, I shall relieve the Earth of all its burden. Be fearless now, O Demigods.’

As the divine voice from heaven reached their ears, they returned to their homes with their heart soothed.

Now, Goswami Tulasi Das describes the story further.

In the city of Ayodhya, there ruled a king who was a jewel of Raghu's race. His name was Dashratha. He was a champion of virtue, a repository of good qualities and a man of wisdom. He was a sincere devotee of God Vishnu. He had three wives,

Kaushalya, Kaikai and Sumitra. They all were leading holy life devoted to the Lord.

One day the king was sad at his heart that he had no children. He went to his Guru, Maharshi Vashistha and fell at his feet. He told the Guru his sorrow of not having any children. Mahrishi Vashistha comforted him in many ways and said, ‘O king, have patience. You will have four sons, who will be known throughout the Universe. I will organise Putra Kameshti Yagn for you.’

Then, Mahrishi Vashistha sent a messenger to Mahrishi Shringi to conduct this Putra-Kameshti Yagn.

**Shṛaṅgī riṣhi Basiṣṭha bolaavaa | Putrakaama subha jagya karaavaa ||
Bhagati sahita muni aahuti deenhe | Pragaṭe Agini chauṁ kara leehen ||
Jo Basiṣṭh kachu hṛdaya bichara | Sakal kaju bha siddha tumhara ||
Yaha habi baanti dehu nṛap jaaī | Jathaa jōga jehi bhaaga banaaī ||**

Mahrishi Shringi came with his wife Shanta and performed the Yagn. When the sage devoutly offered oblations into the sacred fire, the Lord of Fire appeared with an offering of rice boiled with milk (Kheer) in his hand. The Lord of the Fire said, ‘O Mahrishi Shringi, whatever Mahrishi Vashistha has contemplated for you to perform this Yagn, that object is fully accomplished. Take this oblation and give it to the king Dashrath. He should divide it in appropriate proportions as he thinks fit, and give each portion to his wives.”

Often, people ask. Mahrishi Vashistha himself was a great pundit of ‘Reality/ Truth’ (Tattva Gyaataa) and Maanas Putra of Lord Brahma who composed several verses of Veds. Who could be

more able sage to perform this ‘Putra Kameshtri Yagn’ than himself? Why did he not perform this Yagna for king Dashrath himself and rather invited Mahrishi Shringi to be the head priest of this Yagna?

It is important to understand here that success of such Yagn depends upon getting blessings of all the close family members. For this reason, Sanatan Dharma preaches the presence of all family members during performing any religious activities.

The king Dashratha had an older daughter by the name of Shanta who was married to Mahrishi Shringi. The presence of Shanta and Mahrishi Shringi was necessary for the success of this Yagn. Mahrishi Vashistha knew that if an ordinary invitation was to be sent to Mahrishi Shringi to participate in the Yagn ceremony with his wife Shanta, and bless King Dashrath, it might be a possibility that he might not be able to come because of his social, religious and teaching responsibilities. Mahrishi Shringi was the head of his own Gurukul with hundreds of disciples. However, if he was to be invited as the Chief Priest of the Yagn ceremony, then, keeping the tradition of the Sanatan Vedic Dharma, it would be impossible for him to decline the invitation. It was considered against the Vedic Dharma tradition for a Rishi to decline an offer of invitation, if he is requested to be the chief (Acharya) of the ceremony. Hence, Mahrishi Vashistha extended an invitation to Mahrishi Shringi to come with his wife Shanta to lead the Yagn and bless the king Dashrath.

On an invitation of Mahrishi Vashistha, Mahrishi Shringi then came to Ayodhya and successfully performed the ‘Putra Kamesthi Yagn’ to please the Lord of Fire to grant king Dashrath a boon for the birth of son/sons. When Maharshi Shringi devoutly

offered oblations into the sacred fire, the Lord of Fire appeared with an offering of rice boiled with milk (Kheer) in his hand. Lord of the Fire then said to Maharshi Shringi, "O great sage, whatever Maharshi Vashishtha contemplated, that object is fully accomplished. Take this oblation (Kheer), and give it to the king Dashrath. He should divide it in appropriate proportions as he thinks fit, and give to all his three queens, Kaushalya, Kaikai and Sumitra. He will be blessed with four sons".

King Dashrath then took this Prasad of Kheer and divided appropriately into four portions and gave to his wives. Thus, all his wives, Kaushalya, Kaikai and Sumitra became pregnant.

Gurudev says that it is very important to note here why the Lord of Fire (Agnidev) presented Kheer (Rice Pudding) as Prasadam to be given to the queens of the king Dashrath to give birth of the four sons? Kheer, principally, is made out of three ingredients, milk, rice and sweet. Milk is given to us by Mother Cow (Gau Mata), and is the symbol of love and reverence. Rice is obtained by us from the Mother Earth (Bhoomi Ma) after hard labour and patience, hence is the symbol of good deeds and patience. Sweetness is the symbol of devotion. So, when these elements, love, reverence, good deeds, patience and devotion are combined, then Lord manifests to us.

Goswami Tulasi Das says that in due course of time, king Dashrath became father of four sons.

Naumi tithi madhu masa punitaa | Sukala paccha abhijita hariprītaa ||
Madhyadivasa ati sīta na ghaamaa | Paavana kaal loka biśraamaa ||

It was the ninth day of the bright half of the sacred month of Chaitra. The moon had entered the auspicious asterism named Abhijit. The sun was at its meridian. The day was neither cold nor hot. It was a holy time which gave peace to the whole world.

Sītala manda surabhi baha baau | Haraṣhit sura santan mana chau ||
Ban Kusum girigana maniarāa | Shravahin sakala saritamṛtadhaaraa ||

A cool, soft and fragrant breeze was blowing. The Demigods were feeling exhilarated and the saints were bubbling with enthusiasm. The woods were full of blossoms. The mountains were resplendent with gems and every river flowing a stream of nectar.

So avasara biranchi jaba jaanaa | Chale sakala sura saaji bimaanaa ||
Gagana bimal sankula sur joota | Gavahiṃ guna gamdharba baooaahā ||

When Brahma perceived that the time of Sri Ram's birth had approached, all the Demigods came out with their carriers (Vaahan) duly equipped. The bright heaven was crowded with their hosts and troops of Gandharvas chanted praises and rained down flowers held in their beautiful palms.

Baraṣahiṃ suman suamjali saaji | Gahagahi Gagana dumdubhī baaji ||
Astuti karahiṃ naaga muni dēa | Bhubidhi laavahiṃ nija nija sēvaa ||

The sky resounded with the beat of kettle drums. Nagas, sages and Gods offered praises and tendered their services in manifold ways.

Bhae pragaṭ kṛpalaa dīnadyaalaa kausalyaa hitakaarī |
 Haraṣhi mahataarī muni mana haarī adbhuta rupa bichaarī ||
 Lochana abhiraamaa tanu ghanshyaamaa nija aayudha bhuja charī |
 Bhooṣana banamalaa nayan a bisaalaa sabhaasindhu kharaarī ||
 Kaha dui kara jōrī astute tōri kehi bidhi karaun anantaa |
 Maayaa guna gyaanaatit amaanaa beda purana bhanantaa ||
 Karunaa sukh saagara sab gun aagara jahi gaavahin shruti santaa |
 So mam hit laagi jana anuraagī bhayau pragaṭa shrikantaa ||
 Brahmaanḍa nikaayaa nirmita maayaa rom rom prati beda kahe |
 Mam ur so baasī yaha upahaasī sunata dhīra mati thir na rahe ||
 Upajaa jab gyaanaa prabhu musakaanaa charit bahut bidhi kīn kahe |
 Kahi kathaa suhaaī maatu bujhaaī jēhi prakaar suta prema lahe ||
 Maataa puni bolī so mati ḍaulī tajahu taat yaha roopaa |
 Keeje sisulīlaa ati priyaseelaa yaha sukha paRam anupaa ||
 Suni bachana sujaanaa rodana ṭhaanaa hōi baalaka surabhūpaa |
 Yah charit je gaavahin haripad paavahin te na parahin bhavakoopaa ||

The gracious Lord, who is compassionate to everyone and the benefactor of Kausalya appeared. The thought of His marvellous form, which stole the hearts of the sages, filled the mother with joy. His body was dark as a cloud which was the delight of all the eyes. In His four arms, He bore His characteristic emblems (a conch-shell, a discus, a club and a lotus). Adorned with jewels and a garland of sylvan flowers and endowed with large eyes, the slayer of the demon Khar was an ocean of beauty. Joining both her palms the mother said, 'O infinite Lord, how can I praise You! The Veds as well as the Purans declare You as transcending Maya, beyond attributes, above knowledge and beyond all measure. He who is sung by the Veds and holy men as an ocean

of mercy and bliss and the repository of all virtues, the same Lord of Lakshmi, the lover of His devotees, has revealed Himself for my good. The Veds proclaim that every pore of Your body contains multitudes of Universes brought forth by Maya. That such a Lord stayed in my womb, this amusing story staggers the mind of even men of wisdom.'

When the revelation came upon the mother, the Lord smiled. He would perform many a sportive act. Therefore, He exhorted her by telling her the charming account of her previous birth so that she might love Him as her own child. The mother's mind was changed. She spoke thus, 'O Lord, give up this superhuman form and indulge in childish sports, which are so dear to a mother's heart. The joy that comes from such sports is unequalled in every way.'

Hearing these words, the Lord of immortals became an infant and began to cry. Those who sing these verses, says Goswami Tulsi Das, will attain to the abode of Lord Vishnu and never fall into the well of mundane existence.

Thus, Lord Ram was born with his three brothers. His other brothers were named as Bharat, Lakshman and Shatrughan.

6.00 SITA NAVAMI

Sita Devi, consort of Lord Ram, was born on 9th day of Vaishakha month, Shukla Paksha, one month after the birth of Lord Ram. Sita Navami is celebrated on this occasion.



The story of the birth of Sita Devi is as following according to the holy Hindu scripture ‘Adhyaatm Ramayan’ composed by Maharshi Valmiki, Chapter 8.

As described in this book above, Jay and Vijay, security chiefs of Saket Dham, took birth on earth first as Hiranyaaksh and Hiranyakashyapu in Satyug. Lord Vishnu, by His incarnation in the form of Varah, killed Hiranyaksh, and in the form of Narasingha Avatar killed Hirnyakahyapu. Jay and Vijay took rebirth as Ravan and Kumbhkaran in Tretayug. Lord Vishnu incarnated in the form of Lord Ram to kill them as per His words given to them.

Jay and Vijay were divine personalities. It would not have been possible to bear them in the womb by an ordinary woman. As described above in this book, Dhara, a close friend of Mother Nature (Adi-Prakriti) took birth with Mother Adi-Prakriti as the daughter of Prajapati Daksh. Dhara took birth as Diti, who became wife of Maharshi Kashyap, and gave birth to Hiranyaksh and Hiranyakashyapu. As known to all, Adi-Prakriti took birth as Sati Devi, sister of Dhara.

Lord Vishnu was thinking on the lady who could be the mother of Jay and Vijay in Tretayug, capable to bear the energy of these great divine personalities. He came to the conclusion that Keshani, daughter of Daitya clan General Malyawant, was the appropriate lady who could give birth to Jay and Vijay. Keshani was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. Pleased with her devotion, Lord Vishnu appeared before her and blessed her to have great warrior sons who would rule the Universe.

In the meantime, tired and exhausted Daityas, on having unfruitful war with the Devas where they were constantly defeated by them, continued to try to find a solution to this problem. Unfortunately, their Guru Acharya Shukradev was now residing with his Guru Mahadeva at Kailash Parvat. The disciple of Acharya Shukradeva, Acharya Swarbhanu, Guru of king Maha Bali, also after drinking nectar (Amrit), was serving chief justice Shani Dev in the form of Rahu and Ketu. After lot of deliberation, they decided to go and meet Acharya Shukradev at Kailash Parvat to find a solution to this problem. They arrived at Kailash Parvat and met Acharya Shukradev.

Acharya Shukradev welcomed them and listened to their problem attentively. Then, he said, 'O Daityas, it is true that it will be impossible for you to defeat Devas as they are now immortal by drinking nectar. However, there is a way. If you can convince one of your young girls who is lustrous, energetic, gifted, brilliant and devotee of Lord Vishnu to marry a Brahmin rishi, then sons born from her womb will be capable to win over the Devas. I can see that Keshani, daughter of General Malyawant, has got all these qualities. I can also see through my divine sight that Lord Vishnu has blessed her to have such great warrior sons. I suggest that you request Keshani to lure Maharshi Vishrawa, son of

Maharshi Pulastya and grandson of Brahma, to marry her and give birth to such illustrious sons from this matrimony. These sons of Keshani and Maharshi Vishrawa will save you from the agony of Devs.'

All the Daityas, including General Malyawant, then, approached Keshani and requested her to lure Maharshi Vishrawa and marry him. For the sake of survival of her Daitya clan, she agreed to this suggestion of Acharya Shukradev and approached Maharshi Vishrawa in his Ashram. She introduced herself to Maharshi Vishrawa as daughter of General Malyawant of Daitya clan, and a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. She offered herself to Maharshi Vishrawa in marriage. Maharshi Vishrawa was mesmerised by her beauty and accepted her marriage proposal. Maharshi Vishrawa, then, invoked his father Maharshi Pulastya and grandfather Lord Brahma. They appeared before the couple. Lord Brahma, then, conducted their marriage with full Vedic rituals.

Keshani was completely devoted and fully surrendered to her husband Maharshi Vishrawa. She was always in his service with her body, soul and mind. Maharshi Vishrawa was very pleased with her service and devotion, and asked her if she had any desire. She then narrated the story of Lord Vishnu giving her blessings to have great warrior sons. She requested Maharshi Vishrawa to fulfil the boon of Lord Vishnu. Pleased with her devotion to Lord Vishnu, Maharshi Vishrawa said, 'Tathastu (so be it).'

In due course of time, with the blessings of her husband Maharshi Vishrawa, she gave birth to three sons, Ravan, Kumbhakaran and Vibhishan, and one daughter Suparnkha.

When Ravan, Kumbhakaran and Vibhishan became adults, Keshani ordered them to go to the forest for penance to please Lord Brahma, their great grandfather. She asked them to seek a boon from Lord Brahma for divine weapons and powers to be able to defeat Devas.

Ravan, Kumbhakaran and Vibhishan followed the orders of mother Keshani and proceeded to the forest to perform penance devoting to Lord Brahma. They performed intense penance to please Lord Brahma for several years.

Pleased with their intense penance, Lord Brahma appeared before them. First, He offered Ravan to seek a boon from Him. Ravan got up from his seat and fell at the feet of Lord Brahma and said, 'O Lord Brahma, if You are pleased with me, please grant me immortality.'

Lord Brahma politely said to Ravan, 'O Ravan, granting immortality is beyond my powers. Please seek some other boon.'

Ravan, then, asked for invincibility and immunity from all Devas (Gods), Rakshas (demons), heavenly spirits, serpents, and wild beasts. He, however, did not include humans in his prayer.

Lord Brahma granted this boon to Ravan, leading him to believe that he was now absolutely invincible.

Lord Brahma, then, turned towards Kumbhakaran. He blessed him and asked to seek a boon from Him.

All the Gods including Lord of Heaven Indra were terrified at the very thought of Kumbhakaran asking a boon from Lord Brahma.

They knew that Kumbhakaran would be unconquerable if he received divine powers from Lord Brahma. They prayed to Goddess Saraswati, who is not only the giver of knowledge but also the bestower of speech. The Gods prayed to Goddess Saraswati to manipulate Kumbhakaran's speech while asking for a boon from Lord Brahma.

Kumbhakarn desiring to ask for Indrasana (throne of Indra), ended up asking for Nidrasana (state of sleep); and instead of asking for Nirdevatvam (non-existence of Devatas), he asked for Nidraavatvam (continuous sleep). The boon was granted by Lord Brahma. It was, then, Kumbhakarn realized his mistake and requested Lord Brahma to undo the boon. But once granted, the boon could not be reversed. Hence, Kumbhakarn got the boon to sleep for six months and then to awake only for one day. This cycle was to be repeated till he would be alive.

Lord Brahma, then, turned towards Vibhishan and asked him to seek a boon from Him. Vibhishan, clasping the lotus feet of the Lord Brahma said, 'O Lord Brahma, the only thing I ever want is to have my mind unwaveringly fixed on the Lord Vishnu's lotus feet.'

Pleased with the devotion of Vibhishan to Lord Vishnu, Lord Brahma granted him the boon and said, 'O my son, you will ever remain in the heart of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu will soon incarnate on earth as Lord Ram. You will get His ever-loving blessings.'

Giving boons to all the three, Ravan, Kumbhakaran and Vibhishan, when Lord Brahma was about to return to His abode Brahmlok, He saw a young lady, Lank-Lakshmi, standing with

her folded hands. Lord Brahma came close to her and asked if she had any desire. Lank-Lakshmi, a great devotee of Lord Shiva, knew that Ravan and Kumbhakaran were the reincarnation of Jay and Vijay and would be killed by Lord Vishnu Himself. She grasped the feet of Lord Brahma and said, ‘O Lord, please bless me that I always continue to be the devotee of Tridevs (Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh). I know Ravan and Kumbhakaran will be killed eventually by Lord Vishnu Himself. Please tell me the timing of this event.’

Lord Brahma smilingly told her, ‘O Lank-Lakshmi, sure, you will always remain a devotee of Tridevs and will have their blessings all the time. On the timings of death of Ravan and Kumbhakaran, when you become unconscious by a blow of a monkey, who will be none other than Lord Hanuman, an incarnation of Lord Shiva, then understand that time for the death of Ravan and Kumbhakaran is nearby.’

Saying this, Lord Brahma departed from the scene.

After obtaining desired boons from Lord Brahma, all the three sons of Maharshi Vishrawa, Ravan, Kumbhakaran and Vibhishan, returned to the Ashram of their parents. Both the parents, Maharshi Vishrawa and Keshani welcomed them in their Ashram. Then, Maharshi Vishrawa enthroned his elder son Ravan as the king of Lanka. Lanka was given as a gift to Maharshi Vishrawa by Lord Shiva.

After becoming king of Lanka, Ravan married Mandodari, daughter of May Danav. Queen Mandodari, fully dedicated to her husband Ravan, was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. To her dismay, she soon realised high ambitions of Ravan, and his

cruelty towards religious and saintly people. She was also very much frustrated by debauchee and lewd nature of her husband Ravan.

King Ravan of Lanka continued to seek more and more powers to win over the Universe. He was advised by his spiritual councillor that if he could obtain the blood of several Maharshis without killing them, and could drink that after a ritual to mother Goddess Maha Kali, he will become immortal. As such, king Ravan started his journey to Dandakaranya van (the forest of Dandakaranya) to collect blood of the Maharshis for his ritual to become immortal.

He met first with Maharshi Gratsamad who had Ashram on the entrance of Dandakaranya van (forest). At that time, Maharshi Gratsamad was engaged in meditation with a desire to have a daughter like mother Lakshmi. He was sitting before Yagn kund offering ghee and continuously chanting holy Mantras. Few drops of ghee with enchanted Mantras were put by him in an earthen pitcher. He had a strong belief that once his meditation/prayer was completed, he would offer this enchanted holy ghee to his wife to drink, and then she would give birth to a daughter like Goddess mother Lakshmi.

Ravan, with a sword in his hand, asked Maharshi Gratsamad to give him few drops of his blood. Omniscient Maharshi Gratsamad, realising the aim of Ravan for taking his blood, declined to oblige him. Ravan was furious. He tried to take his blood by force. In scuffle, unfortunately the sword of Ravan cut the throat of Maharshi Gratsamad, and he was killed instantly. Ravan saw the pitcher in which Maharshi Gratsamad was collecting enchanted sacred ghee. He took that pitcher and

collected few drops of Maharshi Gratsamad's blood in that pitcher. After collecting blood of Maharshi Gratsamad, he continued his journey to the Ashrams of other Maharshis to collect their blood.

The news of Ravan killing Maharshi Gratsamad did spread like a wild fire in Dandakaranya van. Fortunately for Ravan, no Maharshi then objected to give blood to Ravan for fear of his life. Ravan continued to collect blood of Maharshis in the same pitcher which he took from the Ashram of Maharshi Gratsamad.

It took nearly six months for Ravan to collect blood of all the required Maharshis in that pitcher. Considering himself victorious and now in hope to be immortal, he returned to his capital in Lanka. His spiritual councillor then looked at the astronomical situation for offering this blood of Maharshis to Mother Maha Kali, and advised him that the auspicious time for his ritual would be a year from that time. Ravan, then, decided to take rest for one year in his rest house at Mandar and Sahya mountains where he was keeping beautiful women kidnapped from various clans of Devs, Danavs, Yakshs and Gandharvs.

Before leaving for his pleasure trip to Mandar and Sahya mountains, Ravan gave that pitcher containing blood of Maharshis to his queen Mandodari saying her that it contained deadly poison and she should keep it in safe custody. This would be offered to the Gods and Goddesses eventually for him to get immortality after his return from Mandar and Sahya Mountains.

Queen Mandodari, fully realising the aim of visit of Ravan to Mandar and Sahya mountains, was very disappointed. She felt gravely neglected. She was so depressed with such a behaviour of

Ravan that decided to take her own life. She thought sincerely that there was no use of living when her husband was chasing other women. As Ravan told her that pitcher contained deadly poison, she drank the blood from the pitcher to commit suicide.

After drinking enchanted sacred ghee mixed blood from the pitcher, queen Mandodari became pregnant with a divine life in her abdomen. Mandodari thought herself, 'Instead of killing me, this poison has made me pregnant. My debauchee husband has gone to Mandar and Sahya Mountains for one year to enjoy his life with other women. I cannot make love with my husband for one year. When he returns back after one year, he will find out that I am mother of a child. How will I explain to him the birth of this child?

After deliberating a lot on this issue, queen Mandodari found a solution. She decided to go for pilgrimage with her close friend for one year. She immediately proceeded for pilgrimage to North of Bharat. During 9th month of her pilgrimage trip, coincidentally or providentially, her chariot entered in the territory of Mithila kingdom. In the triyama pahar (midnight to 3 am) of the night, she had labour pains. With the help of her best friend who was accompanying her in this pilgrimage, she gave birth to a divine girl. She could not take child with her because of dishonour she might face for giving birth to an illicit child. However, she was a mother and developed intense love towards newly born baby girl. She prayed to her Kuldevi Nikumbha Devi to protect her newly born baby girl. Goddess Nukumbala Devi (a form of Goddess Paravsti) appeared before her and instructed her to put the baby girl in a golden pitcher and buried in nearby ground. She assured her to protect the baby girl. Mandodari proceeded, then, to Lanka.

Now Goddess Nikumbala Devi spread Her Maya. As soon as this divine girl was buried in the ground by queen Mandodari and her best friend, king of Mithilapuri Janak, as well as his spiritual purohit Acharya Satananda, saw a dream. In their dream, Goddess Nikumbala Devi, in the form of Goddess Kali, ordered them to go to the designated place immediately in Usha kal (between 3 am to 6 am) and plough the land to get rid of the severe famine which Mithila kingdom was facing those days. Acharya Satananda rushed to the palace of king Janak and told him about his dream. King Janak also confessed to see similar dream. Without any delay, they approached Ashram of Maharshi Ashtvakra and told him of their dream. An omniscient Maharshi Ashtvakra, through his divine sight, immediately recognised that mother Goddess Lakshmi had come to Mithilapuri disguised as child buried under ground. He did not disclose this to king Janak and Acharya Satanand, but ordered them to carry out the instructions given in dream by Goddess Kali immediately. King Janak, then, ordered his minsters to organise a golden plow and bring it to the designated place indicated by Goddess Kali immediately. King Janak, accompanied with his wife Sunaina, Acharya Satananda and Maharshi Ashtvakra, reached to the indicated place and started ploughing the field in Usha Kal. Acharya Satananda was continuously chanting the sacred Mantras during this time.

As said above, this was the time when Mithila kingdom was in the grip of a severe famine. There was no rain in the kingdom for 12 years. King Janak did all his best including several Yagns etc to please Lord of Rain, Indradeva, but in vain. This dream of Goddess Lakshmi was a great consolation to him.

It would have been few minutes of ploughing in the designated land as indicated by Goddess mother Kali to him, the plow of king Janak and queen Sunaina bumped into a metal object. The king and queen stopped ploughing and dug that place. They found a golden pitcher buried at that place. When they opened the golden pitcher, to their surprise, they found a baby girl inside the pitcher.

The baby girl was immediately taken out of the golden pitcher. As soon as the baby girl came out of this golden pitcher, there was shower of flowers from the sky with an Akashvani (a message from the sky).

‘O king Janak, adopt this divine baby girl as your own daughter. This girl will bring great fortune to you, your queen and your kingdom like Lord Sun. The Earth and its residents will benefit tremendously in many ways by the virtues of this divine girl. Since this girl is born by ploughing the land by plow, name her Sita (girl born out of the nib of the plow).’

Kasaaraam Tu Sitaasaaram Naivaidyam Bhaskaray Ve (Bhavishya Puran)

As soon as this Akashvani was completed, the dark clouds in the sky appeared. There was profound raining all over. King Janak, queen Sunaina and Acharya Satanand, then, worshipped the baby girl under the directions of Maharshi Ashtavakra.

**Udbhav Sthiti Sanhaar Kaarinee Klesh Haarineem.
Sarvshreyaskareen Settam Natoaham Ram Vallabham.**

Millions of salutations to the lotus feet of the mother of infinite Universe, mother Sita, on Her birth.

Everyone prayed, ‘O Mother, we all are indeed grateful for Your incarnation on Earth. Please continue to bless us.’

Goswami Tulasi Das in Ram Charit Manas describes this incident of birth of mother Sita as following.

**Janaksutaa Jag Janani Jaanki, Atisay Priy Karunanidhaan Ki.
Taaake Jug Pad Kamal Manaavaun, Jaasu Krapaan Nirmal Mati Paavaun.**

I salute to the lotus feet of the daughter of the king Janak (mother Goddess Sita) who is very dear to the Lord. O Mother, give us pure wisdom.

King Janak and queen Sunaina, then, arrived at their palace with the baby girl. Both king and queen announced that they were now parents of a baby girl, and this great event of birth of Sita would be celebrated throughout the kingdom for ten days.

Mithilapuri was decorated with flags and banners with the pictures of Gods and Goddesses everywhere. The women and children of the capital were overjoyed. While carrying jars of sacred articles, they entered the royal palace singing glory of the Gods and Goddesses. Waving sacred Arti lights over baby girl, all of them were praying this divine personality again and again. Bards, minstrels, panegyrist and songsters were chanting solemn praises of the baby girl. Every citizen of the city gave their wealth in donation to the poor. All the lanes of the city were muddy with pastes of musk, sandal and saffron. Sacred bhajans (devotional songs) with melodious music were sung by happy citizens everywhere. All the men, women and children of the city were full of joy.

Swami Shri Rampriya Sharan has described this celebration of the birth of mother Sita as following.

**Pur Ki Yuvati Aain Yuth Ki Yuth Hain.
Mugdha Madhya Prodhaa Amit Varuth Hein.
Koi Shyaamal Koi Gaur Manohar Bhraajheen.
Jaahi Nirashi Surnaari Rati Shat Laajheen.
Harit Shyam Aru Laal Peet Rang Chundari.
Pahiren Manin Jaraavik Bhushan Mundareen.
Kanchan Manimay Thaar Lasat Kar Arti.
Amit Vesh Dhar Naachati Gaavati Bhaarati.
Vividh Vadhaavaa Lai Lai Bhaamini Aain Hein.
Gaaen Hein Mangal Geet Amit Sukh Paain Hein.
Sakal Prajaa Prem Son Aalaavaheen.
Naachahin Dehn Asheesh Sumangal Gaavaheen .
Raajdwaar Par Raajat Saajat Saahani.
Atihin Sohaavan Bhraajat Vaahan Vaahaneen.**

All the ladies of the city, young, adults and old, continued to come to the royal place in the groups to greet and bless the baby girl. They were of all complexions, dark and fair. They were beautiful, even greater than Goddess Rati (wife of the Lord of Love – Kaamdeva). They decorated themselves with scarfs of various colours such as green, black, red, yellow etc. They were wearing the ornaments of gold and precious stones. They came with golden plates in their hands with burning sacred lamps for Arti (worshipping). They were dancing and singing while giving greetings and blessings to the baby girl. All the citizens of the city assembled at the gate of the royal palace and were singing the glory of mother Sita, and giving their greetings and blessings.

This way, the birth day of mother Sita was celebrated in Mithilapuri by king Janak, queen Sunaina, Acharya Satanand and all the citizen. We continue to celebrate the birthday of mother

Sita on Sita Navami day, 9th day of Vaishakha month, Shukla,
and seek Her blessings.

7.00 GURU PURNIMA

Spiritual master (Guru) has the highest place in Sanatan Dharm, after mother and father. There is an age-old Sanskrit phrase – Mata Pita Guru Daivam. It means that in one's life, the mother holds the first place, the father holds the second, the



Spiritual Master (Guru) holds the third, and the fourth place is held by God. One may observe that our Rishies have awarded higher place to spiritual master (Guru) than even God. Spiritual master (Guru) is given the highest importance and respect in one's life. It is the spiritual master (Guru) who has shown us the right path in life, and has moved us in the direction of seeing the God. Without a spiritual master (Guru), our lives would become dark. Hence, we celebrate Guru Purnima in the honour of our spiritual master (Guru). Guru Purnima is the most important Hindu festival observed on the full Moon Day (Purnima) in the Hindu month of Ashadha.

Purnima of Asadha month is also the birth day of Maharshi Ved Vyas. Hence, this day is also called as 'Vyasa Purnima'. Not only Sanatan Dharm followers, but Buddhists and Jains also celebrate this day in honour of their respected spiritual masters. Buddhists worship and honour Lord Buddha on this Guru Purnima Day. As per the part of Jain religious custom, Jains celebrate Guru Purnima as Treenok Guha Purnima in the name of Ganadhara becoming Treenok Guha.

Shaivites celebrate this day to worship and honour Lord Shiva which is considered as the first spiritual master (Adi-Guru) of the Universe. According to Shaivite scripture, Lord Shiva is denoted as first Guru who had two disciples, Shani Dev and Bhagwan ParashuRam. It is further scribed that Lord Shiva introduced civilization and religion in the Universe. Later on, knowledge was passed by Lord Shiva to Saptarishis (seven sages) namely, Maharshi Atri, Maharshi Bharadwaj, Maharshi Gautam, Maharshi Jamadagni, Maharshi Kashyap, Maharshi Vishwamitra and Maharshi Vashistha. Saptrishies passed this knowledge to Guru Brihaspati, Guru Shukracharya, and Maharshi Ved Vyas. Maharshi Ved Vyasa is represented as the Guru of Dattatreya, hence Adi-Guru for the people on Earth.

The Sanatan Dharm scripture says:

**Gurur Brahma Gurur Vishnu Gurur Devo Maheshwaraha.
Guruh Saakshaat ParaBrahma Tasmai Sri Gurave Namaha.**

Guru is the Creator (Brahma). Guru is the Preserver (Vishnu). Guru is the Destroyer (Maheshwara). Guru is the absolute Lord himself., Salutations to Shri Guru.

Spiritual master (Guru) is the only one who destroys darkness in our lives. Guru is a Sanskrit word made out of the two words, Gu + Ru. Gu means darkness, and Ru means destroyer, that is Guru is the destroyer of the darkness.

Sanatan Dharm scripture states that Guru is the form of Tridevs, Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. Guru is the form of Brahma as he provides us knowledge. By the knowledge Guru provides, we sustain our lives, hence he is the form of Vishnu. Guru is the

form of Lord Shiva who opens our worldly eyes and shows the path to live in peace, harmony and happiness. Guru is the supreme power who provides nectar to our lives. Other than parents, he is the only one who always thinks about our welfare. Hence, on this day of Guru Purnima, we show our respect to him and offer obeisances at his lotus feet. O' Gurudev, millions of salutations to you.

Importance of Guru

Sanatan Dharma scriptures such as Veds, Upanishads, Purans, Ramayana, Shrimad Bhagwadgita, Gurugrantha Sahib, etc, have shown the importance and necessity of Guru. The scriptures say that there is no difference between Guru and God. Guru himself is the Anant (God).

No knowledge or skill may be fructified unless blessed by the Guru. Even in performing Yagn, meditation, prayer, donation, charity etc, the guidance of the Guru is essential. Scripture says that without the guidance of the Guru, such noble deeds may not bring the desired beneficial effects. If such noble deeds are performed with full of pride, they may lead to the downfall of the person. So, even in materialistic world, it is essential to seek guidance from the Guru.

Adi-Guru Shankaracharya says in Vivek Chunmamani:

**Pundit Gyaani Sab Granthaa, Poojat Dev Vikasit Sandha.
Chahe Karat Sada Shubh Karma, Brahmhin Saman Vraksh Urma.**

One may be a learned person having knowledge of all the scriptures; he/she might have established good relations with all

the demi-Gods and Goddesses through his/ her prayers; he/ she would always have been performing noble deeds, if that person has not attained self-realisation, he/she is like a tree of date (who does not provide shadow to the tired guests, and fruits are too far to be plucked).

**Jab Tak Ho Na Atmbodhan, Paa Na Sake Mukti Sau Padan.
Aatmbodh Jas Amrataa, Yukti Any Sam Paay Vishayataa.**

Till one gets self-realisation, he/ she cannot attain salvation (Moksh) even in hundred births. Self-realisation is like nectar, while other ways are expedients only to get materialistic gains, such as money, fame, progeny etc.

**Karm Na Saadhan Mukti Hetu, Aatm-Gyaan Adwiteey Bhavsetu.
Guru Samarpit Buddhimaanaa, Arjit Guyaan Paaen Nirwaanaa.**

One does not get salvation by performing duties only. Self-realisation is the only means to attain salvation (Moksh). That is why, the wise people surrender themselves to their Gurus and get self-realisation. Guru is the only one to give the knowledge of self-realisation.

On the importance of Guru, Goswami Tulasi Das has said in Shri Ram Charit Manas:

Guru Binu Bhavnidhi Taray Na Koi, Jon Biranchi Sankar Sam Hoi.

Someone may be as wise as Lord Brahma and/ or Lord Mahadev, he/she cannot attain salvation without the blessings of the Guru.

Sant Shiromani Goswami Tulasi Das has said further in Shri Ram Charit Manas:

**Bandaun Guru Pad Kanj Krapaa Sindhu Nar Roop Hari.
Mahaamoh Tam Pinj Jaasu Bachan Rabikar Nikar.**

Guru is the God in the form of human. I worship his lotus feet. As darkness vanishes when Sun emerges, similarly, my ignorance vanished by his teachings.

Lord Ram narrated the importance of Guru when He gave teachings of Nav-Vidha-Bhakti to Mother Shabri.

Guru Pad Pankaj Sewa Teesari Bhagati Amaan.

Serving the lotus feet of the Guru is the third kind of devotion (out of nine types of devotion, Nav-Vidha-Bhakti).

The literature of the great Bhaktiyug (Devotional Era) Saint Shri Kabir Das is full of admiring the importance and worshipping Guru.

**Teerath Gae To Ek Phal, Sant Mile Phal Chaar.
Sadguru Mile To Anant Phal, Kahe Kabir Vichaar.**

Sant Shiromani Kabir Das says that if one goes to pilgrimage, he/ she may be rewarded with only one result, fulfilling his/ her materialistic desire. If one has a good fortune to have company of a Saint, he/she may be rewarded by getting rid of four evil tendencies (vikaras) - lust, anger, attachment and greed (Kaam, Krodh, Moh, Lobh). But, if someone can be blessed by Sadguru (Spiritual Master), he/she attains self-realisation (finds God).

Sant Kabir Das says that the ultimate pilgrimage is to serve the lotus feet of the Guru. One gets everything in his/ her life by the blessing of Sadguru. Ambrosia coming from the feet (Charanamrit) of the Guru is like Ganges holy water which provides salvation. This body is like a plant of poison, which is eradicated by the nectar of the blessings of the Sadguru. One should feel lucky if he/ she can get the blessings of Sadguru even at the cost of offering his/ her head to him.

**Yeh Tan Vish Ke Belari, Aur Guru Amrat Ki Khan.
Sheesh Diya n Jo Guru, Mile To Bhee Sastaa Jaan.**

Without the blessings of Sadguru, one cannot gain knowledge of self. Without gaining the knowledge of self, one cannot attain salvation. This is Sadguru only, who can teach us the path of truth, which can then eradicate the darkness of ignorance from us.

**Guru Bin Gyaan Na Upajai, Guru Bin Mile Na Mosh.
Guru Bin Lakhe Na Satya Ko, Guru Bin Na Mite Dosh.**

The place of Sadguru is higher than Lord Himself.

**Guru Gobind Doi Khade Kake Lagoon Paayn.
Balihaari Guru Aapne, Gobind Diyo Bataay.**

Saint Shri Kabir Das says that if Guru and Lord, both, appear before you, you should pay respect to Guru first. Please do remember that this is the Guru who showed you the path to be blessed by the Lord. If Lord is angry with you that you did not pay respect to Him first, never mind. Guru will teach you how to please Lord. But if Guru is angry with you, Lord will not appear before you to teach how to please Guru.

Sadguru Sai Baba of Shirdi had also taught importance of Sadguru in his teachings. Sai Baba says that this world is like dark and dreadful forest where there are lots of dense trees, potholes, and wild and predator animals. There is every chance that you may miss your path in this dark and thick forest if you endeavour to go alone. The wild and dangerous predators are ready there to end your life. But if you have blessings of Sadguru, he/ she will show you the right path to save you from potholes, dense nature of the forest and also from wild and dangerous predators. Thus, you will reach safely to your destination. Even Lord Ram and Lord Krishna, who were the incarnations of Lord Vishnu Himself, had to take the blessings of their respective Sadgurus, Maharshi Vashistha and Maharshi Sandipani.

The great Guru and Lord Krishna devotee of the 18th century Mother Saint Sahajo Bai had shown the importance of Guru in very simple vernacular language.

**Raam tajaan pai guru na visaaroon, guru ke sam hari k o na nihaaroon.
Hari ne janm diyo jag maanhin, guru ne aavaagaman chhudaai.
Hari ne paanch chor diye saathaa, guru ne lai chhudaay anaathaa.
Hari ne kutumb jaal mein gheri, guru ne kaatī mamtaa beri.
Hari ne rog bhog urjhaayo, guru jogī kari sabai chhudaayo.
Hari ne karm maram bharmaaayo, guru ne aatam roop dikhayo.
Hari ne mosoon aap chhipaayo, guru dipak de taahi dikhayo.
Phir hari bandh-mukti gati laae, guru ne sabhī bharam mitaae.
Charandaas pa tan man vaaroon, guru na tajaan hari koo taji Daaroon.**

Saint Sahajo Bai said to the Lord, ‘O Lord, forgive me. It is true that the devotion and respect which I have for my Guru, I may not have the same feelings towards You.’

In the next stanza, Sahajo Bai pleaded to the God and explained Him that why she had special feelings for the Guru.

Sahajo Bai said, ‘O Lord, you gave me birth in this world, and thus entangled me in the cycle of birth, death and re-birth. Guru, through his teachings, moved me towards the direction of salvation (Moksh), so I am not re-born again’.

‘O Lord, after taking birth, I was entangled in five evil tendencies – lust, anger, greed, attachment and jealousy. I got rid of these evil tendencies through the teachings of Guru.’

‘O Lord, I became attached to the family members after taking birth. Guru showed me the right path, and removed these attachments from my mind.’

‘O Lord, I was subjected to the sickness, sorrows and troubles in human body form. Guru taught me to get rid of all these evils by meditation.’

‘O Lord, I was entangled in worldly affairs through this body. Guru showed me the path to achieve You through self-realisation.’

‘O Lord, it was not easy for me to have your Darshan. Guru, through his teachings, enlightened me so that I could attain you.’

‘O Lord, I was very confused and bewildered. I could not see the true path of the life. Guru, by his teachings, cleared all my confusions.’

‘O Lord, I have offered my mind, body and soul to Guru Saint Shri Charan Das. Please forgive me for my feelings towards Guru which I may not have for You.’

When Guru accepts a disciple, his/ her spiritual uplifting commences immediately. Shruti says that whosoever doubts on the knowledge and ability of his/ her Sadguru to provide self-realisation descends in ignorance.

Sadguru is such a great power that it not only protects the disciple from any materialistic troubles, but clears the path for spiritual progress to attain self-realisation. Thus, getting the knowledge of self-realisation, the disciple gets the Darshan of the Lord and attains salvation (Moksh).

Sadguru helps in realising the feeling of bliss supreme. The materialistic pleasures may provide some bodily comforts, but not mental peace. It is necessary to surrender to the lotus feet of Sadguru to get knowledge to get mental peace and bliss supreme. Surrender to the holy feet of the Sadguru makes the disciple uttam purush (best among men), and he/ she commences a feeling of supreme freedom.

Shruti says that Brahm (Lord) is Niraakaar (formless). It becomes very difficult to concentrate and meditate on Niraakaar. By surrendering to the lotus feet of the Sadguru, Niraakaar Brahm turns into Saakaar (with form) Brahm (Lord), as Sadguru himself is the Brahm (Lord). Lord Krishna, as Guru of Arjuna, has said Himself in Shrimad Bhagwad Gita, Chapter 18 verse 66:

**Sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja.
Aham tvam sarva-papebhyo moksaisyami ma sucah.**

Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear.

Sometimes people ask, ‘how to recognise Sadguru?’ Shruti says that when by mere presence of a divine personality, one feels mental peace and happiness, whose face is filled with divine glow and one feels attracted towards him/her like a magnet, he/she is the Sadguru.

**Brahmanandam paRam sukhadam kevalam jnaanamurtim.
Dvandvaateetam gaganasadrusham tatvamasyadi lakshyam.
Ekam nityam vimalamachalam sarvadheesaakshibhuutam.
Bhaavaateetam triguna rahitam sadgurum tam namaami.**

I prostrate myself before that Guru, the Bliss of Brahman, the bestower of supreme happiness, who is knowledge absolute, transcending the pairs of opposites, expansive like the sky, the goal indicated by the great sayings like “Thou art That”, the one eternal, pure, unchanging, the witness of functions of the intellect, who is above all Bhavs (mental conditions) and the three Guns (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas). Salutations to that Holy Guru.

Sanatan Dharm scripture says that one gets the body of the human being after doing lots of good deeds in many past lives. Hence, one should not waste this human body. The ultimate aim of the soul is to get salvation (Moksh). Human form is the only way to get Moksh. Hence, by surrendering to the holy feet of the Sadguru, one should strive to attain the aim of life, that is Moksh, rather than wasting it on materialistic pleasures. Goswami Tulasi Das said in Shri Ram Charit Manas:

**Bade bhagya manush tan pawa, Sur durlabh sad granthahin gawa.
Sadhan dham moksha kar dwara. Paye na jehi parlok sanwaraa.**

A soul gets a human body only through great good fortune. Even Gods and Goddesses pray to the Almighty for it. A human body is just right for meditation which is the gateway to salvation.

There is a general belief that Guru is the means of getting materialistic objects. This is completely a misconception. Guru is there to give the knowledge of self-realisation to attain Lord, and thus getting salvation, not a medium to get materialistic objects. The directions/ teachings received from the divine and siddh (self-realised soul) personalities are for the welfare of the Universe and promotion of virtues. These blessings are not to get name, fame, properties and wealth etc. Always keep in mind the relationship established between Guru and disciple, such as Paramhans Shri Ramkrishna Maharaj and Swami Vivekanand, Samarth Guru Swami Shri Ramdas Maharaj and emperor Kshatrapati Shivaji, Acharya Chanakya and emperor Chandragupt, Mahatma Buddha and emperor Ashok. The blessings received from Sadguru Maharaj in all the above and similar cases were not for any materialistic gains, but for general Universal welfare. If anyone accepts a Guru only to have some miracles from him/ her to give him/ her materialistic pleasures, this relationship is established on false grounds.

Great Saint Jagadguru Shri Chinmayananda Maharaj used to say, 'O my loving children, surrender yourself to the lotus feet of Sadguru as Swami Dayananda surrendered to his Guru Swami Virajananda Maharaj, and as swami Vivekananda surrendered to his Guru Paramhans Shri Ramkrishna Maharaj. Lord Hanuman, on the direction of His Guru Surya Dev, went to protect and be

with Sugriva. This later resulted in Lord Hanuman meeting and completely surrendering Himself to His Lord Shri Ram without any selfishness. Because of His total surrender to Lord Shri Ram, He was able to cross the ocean, He could burn down Lanka, the great city of gold of Ravan, and He could bring the huge mountain with Sanjeevani Booti from Himalays to Lanka. Just think that before He could get the blessings of His Lord Ram, He was not even able to defeat an ordinary king Bali so that His friend Sugriva might get justice. Lord Hanuman's action was for illustrative purposes only, emphasising the importance of surrender to Guru and God.

Sadguru Swami Chinmayananda Maharaj said further, 'O my children, do not pay any attention to materialistic people. Turn your face away from such selfish people and move to the direction of your goal which is none other than getting self-realisation and eventual salvation. Continue to strive to become a purushottam (best among men/ women). This way you will achieve holiness and divinity, leading to attain the knowledge of self-realisation, and ultimately Moksh.

It is very essential for us, the human beings, to get Deeksha (Ordination) from a Sadguru. Deeksha makes disciple one with Guru, and thus all the divine powers of the Guru are passed on to the disciple according to the 'Sanatan Dharm Guru Parampara' (tradition). Guru-Gita Chapter 2 verse 131 says:

**Gurumantro Mukhe Yasy Tasy Sidhyanti Naanyathaa.
Deekshyaa Sarvkarmaani Siddhyanti Guruputrake.**

To the person who has the Guru Mantra on his tongue, all acts become fruitful but not for others. By the power of initiation, disciples attain success in all actions.

The meaning of Deeksha (Ordination) in Sanatan Dharm has been described as following.

Deeksha is a Sanskrit word, which is made up of two consonants and two vowels:

“D, Ee, Ksh, Aa”

The meaning of D (द) is ‘Suppression’ (दमन). With the knowledge gained from Sadguru, one learns to control/ suppress the materialistic desires such as lust, anger, greed, pride, jealousy etc.

Ee (ई) means ईश्वर (God). Sadguru teaches the penance/ meditation through which one attains Godhead.

Ksh (क्ष) means क्षय (dilapidation). With the teachings of Sadguru, one learns to delapidate and burn all the human desires.

Aa (आ) means आनंद (pleasure/ happiness/ supreme bliss/ecstasy). When the disciple is able to get rid of materialistic desires and attains Godhead through the teachings of Sadguru, he/she attains the state of ecstasy. He/ she becomes free of all bondages and merges with the God.

A most revered Sanatan Dharm scripture “Swayambhoo Agam’ states:

**Yathaa Marg Patim Drashtwaa Bheeto Yaati Vane Gajah.
Adhiksheeto Archaye Lingam Tathaa Bheetpo Maheshwari.**

As an elephant (although a giant animal) is always fearful of a lion in the forest, similarly a person who is not deekshit (ordained), is always fearful of his surroundings in this world. He/ she can never attain peace of mind.

Shruti states that without getting an ordination from a Sadguru, one cannot expect fruits of his/ her spiritual deeds. Any type of penance/ meditation/ prayer etc will not bring desired fruits. The one who dies without taking ordination from Sadguru goes to ‘Raurav hell’ after death. The persons who may try to get knowledge by reading scriptures themselves without the blessings of Sadguru may never be able to practice them successfully to attain Godhead and self-realization.

Sadguru transforms the life of a disciple to provide eternal happiness. The disciple attains a state of self-realisation and Godhead through the knowledge given by Sadguru. Hence, we celebrate Guru Purnima to offer our gratitude and respect to the lotus feet of the Sadguru.

8.00 ONAM

Onam is an important festival celebrated by the followers of the Sanatan Dharma in Kerala state and



other parts of the world mainly by by Keralites. This festival is celebrated to mark the annual return of the great Daitya Vanshaj (clan) king Maha Bali of Satyug era from his current abode in Saket Dham to his capital on earth, Thrikkakara, Kerala. Onam is an official festival of the Kerala state. This festival continues to be celebrated for ten days, perhaps the longest celebration among Hindu festivals. The 10 days of Onam are Atham, Chithira, Chodi, Vishakam, Anizham, Thriketa, Moolam, Pooradam, Uthradom, and Thiruvonam, the last day of the celebration, is the most important day of the festival.

Based on the Malayalam Hindu calendar, Onam is celebrated on the Panchangam, which falls on the 22nd nakshatra in the month Chingam. According to Gregorian calendar, this falls mostly in August.

According to Hindu scriptures, king Maha Bali of Daitya Vanshaj (clan), grandson of the great devotee of Lord Vishnu and mighty king Prahlad of Satyug era, was very powerful, extremely generous and was cherished by his Subjects. He was so mighty that he defeated the Gods and took over the kingdom of all the three worlds, Earth, Heaven and Nether World. The Gods were helpless. All the Gods under the leadership of their king Indradev

requested Lord Vishnu to help them to get back their kingdom, Heaven. Lord Vishnu, through His Vaman Avatar, appeared in a Yagn performed by the king Maha Bali and requested him to give three steps of land to set up His Ashram in his kingdom in alms. King Maha Bali agreed to give three steps of land to Lord Vaman Avatar. Lord Vaman extended His energies and size. He acquired Heaven and Earth in just two steps. Lord Vaman, then, asked king Maha Bali that where could He now put His third step? The King Maha Bali offered his head to Lord Vaman for the third step. Lord Vaman, thus, became owner of the king Maha Bali. Lord Vaman was, however, so impressed by the generosity of the king Maha Bali that he gave him the kingdom of Nether World (Patallok). The Subjects of the great king Maha Bali fell at the feet of Lord Vaman, and prayed Him to allow king Maha Bali to reside in his capital Thrikkakara. Lord Vaman, though, did not allow king Maha Bali to reside permanently in his capital Thrikkakara, ordered him to go to the capital of Netherworld, Satal, but allowed him to return to his capital Thrikkakara once in a year to be with his Subjects in Thrikkakara. This Onam festival is the time when king Maha Bali returns to his capital on Earth, Thrikkakara, which is celebrated as Onam.

The followers of Sanatan Dharm in Kerala state of India, and Keralites living all over the world celebrate these ten days festival with great passion and devotion. People clean their houses, decorate with flowers and make designs at the entrance of the houses with rice paste to welcome the great king Maha Bali. On the day of Thiruvonam, which is the 10th day of the celebration, people wake up early to get ready and give donations to the needy. Sadya, a grand food platter is served on banana leaves which is the main highlight of Onam. The dishes include banana chips, yam chips, pappad, pickles, khichdi and sweet

dishes. In the evening, various games including boat races and cultural events are performed.

The detailed story described in ‘Brahm Puran’ is as following.

Emperor Maha Bali was the grandson of emperor Bhakt Prahalad and son of prince Virochan (son of emperor Bhakt Prahalad). After prince Virochan gave his life as alm to disguised Indradev in the form of Brahmin, emperor Bhakt Prahlad declared young prince Bali as crown prince. Young crown prince Bali was very intelligent student. He gained all education of Sanatan scripture and armoury at a very young age. When he was 15-years-old, he realised that the education given by his grandfather Bhakt Prahalad and Guru Shukracharya was not enough to be a powerful emperor. He should gain blessings of Lord Brahma by penance to please Him. He obtained permission from his grandfather emperor Bhakt Prahlad and his Guru Shankaracharya to go to the forest for penance. He meditated several thousand of years on Lord Brahma. Lord Brahma was pleased with his penance and appeared before him. Lord Brahma asked for a boon. Crown prince Bali fell at His feet and requested him to grant a boon that he may never be defeated by anyone. Lord Brahma obliged him with his desired boon and left for His abode, Brahmlok.

After obtaining the desired boon from Lord Brahma, crown prince Bali returned to his kingdom. His grandfather emperor Bhakt Prahlad and Gurudeva Shankaracharya welcomed him from the bottom of their hearts. His subjects too opened their hearts and welcomed their crown prince Bali with flowers throwing in his way.

Crown prince Bali got involved in administrative work of the kingdom and was soon appointed as chief of the military by his grandfather emperor Bhakt Prahalad. As chief of military, crown prince led several battles against revolted kings and evil administrators. Several years passed and now crown prince was matured enough to take charge of the kingdom as an emperor. Emperor Bhakt Prahalad decided to retire and go the Saket Dham, abode of Lord Vishnu. He enthroned crown prince Bali as emperor of the kingdom, and left to Saket Dham as desired by him.

The news that emperor Prahalad had enthroned his grandson Bali as emperor and had left for Saket Dham spread quickly like a wild fire in all the three planets (Heaven, Earth and Nether). The kings who were wicked and never liked the kind and just rule of emperor Prahalad because he forced discipline on them, saw this great opportunity to free themselves from the sub-ordination of now young inexperienced emperor Bali. They united against emperor Bali and attacked his kingdom. Not knowing that emperor Bali has received a boon from Lord Brahma not to be ever defeated by anyone, they dared to attack him. Emperor Bali fought with the army of these united wicked kings and easily defeated them. He then established a rule of justice in the kingdoms of these kings.

Emperor Bali, now called as Maha Bali was a very kind, successful and able administrator under the guidance of Guru Shukracharya. He had standing orders to all his administrators and sub-ordinate kings to carry out their duties towards Subjects as described in the Sanatan scripture. Anyone not following his Orders would be punished severely by the decree of the emperor.

As a result of this, soon very just and fair administration was established all over the world under his leadership.

Gurudev Shukracharya now advised emperor Maha Bali to perform 100 Rajsuya Yagns. If he was successful in performing these 100 Rajsuya Yagns, he would be a declared emperor of all the three worlds - Heaven, Earth and Nether worlds. Emperor Maha Bali accepted the instructions of his Guru Shukracharya and commenced performing 100 Rajsuya Yagns.

When Indradev, king of heaven heard about this, he was greatly worried. He thought that emperor Maha Bali would now soon acquire his kingdom of Heaven. He decided to destroy the kingdom of emperor Maha Bali and weaken him.

Indradev stopped rains in the kingdom of Maha Bali. As a consequence of this, there was a great famine in the kingdom of Maha Bali. Maha Bali opened his granary and treasure to his Subjects. After knowing the reason of this famine from his Guru Shukracharya, he got very angry with Indradev and declared war against Indradev.

Under the leadership of emperor Maha Bali and Guru Shukracharya, his army arrived in Amravati (kingdom of Indradev). Soon he captured the capital Amravati. Indradev was defeated and fled. Indradev took shelter in Vishnulok, and requested Lord Vishnu to help him to regain his kingdom. Though Lord Vishnu was very angry on the action of Indradev to incite emperor Bali by stopping rains in his kingdom and responsible for his defeat, but agreed to help him. Lord Vishnu asked him to wait for an appropriate time.

After victory and capturing heaven, emperor Maha Bali enthroned Lord Sun as the acting king of Heaven, and returned back to his kingdom on Earth.

Emperor Maha Bali continued to perform 100 Rajsuya Yagns as instructed by his Guru Shukaracharya under Guru's spiritual guidance. Ninty nine Rajsuya Yangs were performed successfully. He was now ready to perform 100th Rajsuya Yagn, and that too he performed successfully. The Yagn was not considered successful unless the final ritual of giving alms to the Brahmins and poor was performed. Hence, emperor Bali was now ready to give alms to Brahmins and poor. Then suddenly, a dwarf Brahmin arrived at the site of Yagn and asked emperor Maha Bali to give him an alm. However, before dwarf brahmin would accept alm from the emperor, he should promise to fulfil his words by chanting acceptance mantra taking water in his hand. This was a very strange but small request by a Brahmin. Emperor Maha Bali was about to grant this alm, but Guru Shukracharya realised this dwarf Brahmin was none other than Lord Vishnu. He instructed emperor Maha Bali not to listen to the words of dwarf Brahmin, and decline alm to him. But emperor Maha Bali was highly pleased and happy to know that Lord himself had come to his capital and asking for an alm. He gladly chanted acceptance mantra with water in his hand, and fell at the feet of dwarf Brahmin. The dwarf Brahmin then requested the emperor Maha Bali to give him a piece of land in his kingdom which he could occupy by his three footsteps to set up his hut. Emperor Maha Bali said, 'so it be'. As soon as emperor Maha Bali uttered these words, dwarf Brahmin expanded his body. He was now a giant personality. With one leg step, he occupied Heaven and Earth. With another leg step, he occupied

Nether world. Still third leg step was left. Emperor Maha Bali offered his head to the Lord to put His third leg step.

Lord Vishnu was highly pleased with emperor Maha Bali. He again took form of dwarf Brahmin and said to Maha Bali, ‘O Maha Bali, you have successfully completed 100 Rajsuya Yagns, and now are unconquerable. I give you a boon that you will be immortal. There will be seven immortals in the universe, and you will be one of them.’

**Aswatthamaa Balivryaaso Hanumaansch Vibhishnah.
Krapah Parshuramshchev Saptaita Chiranjeevinah.**

(There will be seven immortals – Ashwathama, Bali, Vyas, Hanuman, Vibhishan, Kripacharya and Parshuram.)

The Lord continued, ‘now listen to me. I will give back the kingdom of Heaven to Indra. Kingdom of Earth will be appropriately divided among Surya Vanshi and Chandra Vanshi royals. I grant you boon to be the emperor of Nether world. Now go there with your family and rule peacefully there. I am always with you.’

The emperor Maha Bali fell at the feet of the Lord, and accepted his Order. However, his Subjects were very disappointed and all fell at the ground in front of the Lord and commenced praying to Him. They requested Lord Vishnu to allow emperor Maha Bali to reside in his kingdom. Lord Vishnu pleased with devotion and prayers of the Subjects, though did not allow emperor Bali to live permanently in his kingdom, but gave a boon that once in a year, emperor Bali would return to his capital to be with his Subjects.

This is the day of Onam when emperor Bali returns to his kingdom once in a year and his Subjects celebrate his return.

9.00 RAKSHA BANDHAN

Raksha Bandhan festival is celebrated on the full moon day (Purnima) of the month of ShRavan. Raksha means 'protection' and bandhan means 'to tie'. Girls and married women from Hindu Sanatan Dharm families tie a 'rakhi' (amulet) on the right wrists of their brothers, wishing them protection from all



sorts of evil influences of various kinds. The brothers in return promise to protect their sisters and offer them gifts and sweets. This ritual not only strengthens the bond of love between brothers and sisters, but also reinforces the unity of the family.

Rakhis are traditionally simple, colourful bracelets made of interwoven red and gold threads. Some of them feature precious silk, beautifully crafted with gold and silver threads, embroidered with sequins and studded with semi-precious stones.

Raksha Bandhan is a grand festival among Hindus which is marked by happiness and excitement, especially among young girls and women. Preparations for the festival begin well in advance. On the Raksha Bandhan day, the festivities start at day break. Everyone in the family gets up early, purify themselves with bath and putting on new cloths and then gather for the worship of the Gods and Goddesses. After invoking the blessings of the Gods and Goddesses, the sister (s) honours brother (s) by performing an Arti and placing a Tika on his (their) forehead (s). Then sister (s) tie (s) rakhi with praying the Lord and Kuldevi

(family deity) to look after her (their) brother (s). This is followed by offering sweets to brother (s). The brother (s) accepts her (their) prayers and vow (s) to protect sister (s) at all time. As a token of love and appreciation, brother (s) give (s) sister (s) a return gift and sweets. The family reunion is a great reason for celebrations, marked by, tasty dishes, sweets, gifts, song and dances to follow.

Raksha Bandhan festival is celebrated all over India in every State. However, all the parts of India have different ways to celebrate this grand festival.

Raksha Bandhan Celebration in North India

The Hindus of North India have a unique and diverse culture with different customs and traditions to celebrate Raksha Bandhan. Haryana State also celebrates this as the festival of Salano. In addition to the sister (s) tying Rakhi to brother (s), the priests also tie Rakhi to their Yajmans as a sign of good luck and to fend off evils from their lives. The youngsters in the families fly kites which adds colour to the festive atmosphere.

In Jammu and Kashmir region, the leading custom is kite flying, and the string used in kite flying is known as "Gattu Dor." During the festival, people also compete in kite-flying contests.

Raksha Bandhan Celebration in West India

In West India, Gujaratis commence celebration on this day with the worship of Gods and Goddesses, especially Lord Shiva's family. It is believed that anyone who worships the family of Lord Shiva on this day will be freed of all sins. This prayer is

done by a unique method by making sacred 'Pravitra' thread to tie Gods and Goddesses.

Pravitra thread is prepared on the fourteenth day of the bright fortnights in the month of Shravan (August-September).

This sacred thread is prepared for the worship of the Lord Fire, Brahmdev, Mother Ambika, Lord Ganesh, Nag Dev (Lord of serpents), Skanda, Soorya Dev, Lord Yama, Lord Indra, Lord Krishna, Kamdev (God of love), Lord Shiva and other family or Sampraday deities.

The thread is usually made to contain eighty-one or thirty-eight strings having binding knots at equal intervals. The breadth of the thread is usually twelve or eight or four finger lengths or else it should be equal to the breadth of the deity of Gods and Goddesses. In length, it should be touching the pedestal of the image or should be equal to a quarter of the length of the deity as a whole. The thread is washed by holy water from a sacred river, preferably Ganges water.

While the sacred thread is being prepared, during binding every knot, the mantra of Lords Vishnu is chanted to purify. After that, the thread is dyed with the paste of saffron, sandal, musk, yellow pigment, camphor, turmeric or red chalk. Usually there are ten knots or equal to the number of strings.

The inter-space between the knots is kept at one, two or four finger lengths in such a way as to make it elegant. The knots are known as Sadāśivā, Manonmanī, Prakṛti (Nature), Pauruṣī (relating to the Puruṣa), Vīrā (valorous), Aparājitā (invincible),

Jayā (victorious), Vijayā (victorious), Ajitā (unconquered) and Sarvamukhi (omniscient) which confer good.

The thread is also purified using the sacred water (preferably Ganges water) and the Pañcagavya (the five things obtained from a cow).

Lord Sun is worshipped first by sacred thread followed by worshipping of other deities. After the deities have been worshipped with flowers, incense etc, the devotee moves close to the feet of the preceptor and offer the sacred thread with devotion.

In Maharashtra, Goa, and some parts of Gujarat, the auspicious festival of Raksha Bandhan is also celebrated as "Nariyal Purnima". This adds to the solemnity and importance of this momentous occasion.

Raksha Bandhan Celebration in South India

In South India, the festival of Raksha Bandhan is known as "Avani Avittam". Brahmins bath in the holy waters of the river and change their sacred thread (Janeyu) on this day. On this day, the old Janeu is replaced with a new one. Prayashchit, or penance for past wrong doings is symbolized by the change of the Janeu. This marks the beginning of scholars' new study of the Yajur Ved.

In Karnataka State, the residents also celebrate Nag Panchami festival by tying the Rakhi thread.

In Telugu State, the residents celebrate Raksha Bandhan by taking a swim in the sacred water of a river or pond on this day. While performing this ceremony, they seek atonement for their past wrong doings.

In Tamil Nadu State, this festival is called 'Kaanum Pongal'. The sister (s) tie (s) the Rakhi thread on the wrist of beloved brother (s). It is customary in all State to prepare and serve lavish meal during the celebration.

Raksha Bandhan Celebration in East India

In the Eastern Region of India, West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam, Tripura, and Orrisa, Raksha Bandhan festival is celebrated with the same cultural depth and diversity as in North India. Sister (s) tie (s) the Rakhi around brother's wrist. Sister (s) express (es) love for brother (s). In return, the brother (s) give (s) sister (s) a gift as a token of love.

Raksha Bandhan Celebration in Central India

In Central India, Raksha Bandhan festival marks the beginning of the wheat and grain planting season. Hence, this is very important festival for farmers. Raksha Bandhan is an important celebration for ranchers. The priests collect soil in a cup made of leaves and then venerate it for seven days in a dark room before immersing it in a lake or waterway. People pray to Goddess Bhagwati for family prosperity and a plentiful harvest.

In addition to this, usual celebration of this great Raksha Bandhan festival is similar to the celebration of festival in Norht India. Sister (s) tie (s) the Rakhi around brother's wrist. Sister (s)

express (es) love for brother (s). In return, the brother (s) give (s) sister (s) a gift as a token of love.

There are several legendary stories associated with the origin of this grand festival Raksha Bandhan. Few of them are described below.

9.10 Emperor Maha Bali and Mother Goddess Lakshmi

It has been narrated above in the story of Onam that Lord Vaman (incarnation of Lord Vishnu) ordered emperor Maha Bali to go to the Nether world to rule this kingdom.



On the orders of Lord Vaman, emperor Maha Bali settled with his family in the kingdom of Nether world. He was enthroned there as an Emperor and resided in the capital city of Nether world, Satal. Guru Shukracharya (spiritual master of emperor Maha Bali), then, decided to retire and live with his Guru Mahadeva in Kailash. Before his departure to Kailash, he appointed his disciple, Acharya Swarbhanu as new Guru (spiritual master) of emperor Maha Bali.

Like his Guru Shukracharya, Acharya Swarbhanu was also an ascetic. Though emperor Maha Bali requested him to reside in palace in the capital city Satal, but he declined. He set up an Ashram few koshs (miles) away from the capital city Satal in a hilly area. However, he made it sure to participate in the royal assembly every day on time to guide the emperor and his cabinet.

One day when Acharya Swarbhanu approached the gate of royal assembly, he saw a new gentleman there as a gate keeper/

security officer. This gate keeper/ security officer appeared to be a divine personality with glow and radiance on his face like God Sun. Acharya Swarbhanu had never seen this gentleman in the capital city Satal before. This gentleman did not appear from either Danav or Daitya clan. He was alarmed. As Guru of emperor, this was his duty to keep an eye on any suspicious person/ persons and not to allow them near the emperor. He thought in his mind on a possibility of a conspiracy by Indradev to assassinate emperor Maha Bali through this gentleman. Fortunately, because of blessings of his Guru Shukracharya, he possessed divine eyes. He opened his divine eyes and was surprised to observe that this gentleman was none other than Lord Vishnu Himself. When he was about to bow to Lord Vishnu to touch His feet, Lord Vishnu smiled and gave him an indication to keep this as secret. In a very low voice, He said to Acharya Swarbhanu that He would come to his Ashram and tell all the story by Himself.

Acharya Swarbhanu entered the royal assembly. Emperor Maha Bali immediately stood from his throne and greeted his Guru by touching his feet. Acharya Swarbhanu spoke to the emperor, ‘O emperor, it appears to me that you have appointed a new security officer.’

Before Acharya Swabhabhanu could speak further, emperor Maha Bali interfered in between and fell at the feet of his Guru apologising for appointing new security officer without his permission. Acharya smiled and patted the emperor, ‘O emperor, you are a person of great intelligence. I have no doubt that you would have observed some good qualities in this person, and so appointed him as your security officer. I am fine with that. However, till you make proper arrangement of his stay in your

palace, I want to take him to my Ashram. This way, I will be able to know more about this person’.

‘Sue, sure, Gurudev,’ exclaimed emperor with a relief on his face that his Guru is not annoyed with him.

At the close of the session of royal assembly for that day, Acharya Swarbhanu approached the new gate keeper/ security officer, and requested Him to accompany him to his Ashram.

As soon as Acharya Swarbhanu reached his Ashram with new gate keeper/ security officer, he went straight to the prayer room with this guest. He instructed one of his disciples not to allow anyone to enter in the Prayer room till he would permit.

In the prayer room, Acharya Swarbhanu fell at the feet of the Lord and performed His Arti. He offered fruits as Naivaidya to the Lord and sat before Him to listen the story.

Lord Vishnu, disguised as security officer of emperor Maha Bali, spoke to Acharya Swarbhanu, ‘Swarbhanu, you know that I adore you in the similar way as I adore your Guru Shukracharya. I do not keep any secrets from my dear ones. On the orders of Mother Aditi (Aditi and Maharshi Kashyap are the parents of Lord Vaman), I took away the kingdom of Heaven from Maha Bali to return to Indradev and ordered him to rule the Nether world. From the bottom of my heart, I know this was an unfair act to a great emperor like Maha Bali who has been so devoted and faithful to Me always. I love Maha Bali very dearly. I could not bear his separation from Me. I also have to atone for My unfairness. So, I decided to come to Satal and serve Maha Bali as his loyal servant security officer. I will continue to do so till I am

able to complete atonement of My unfairness. No one other than yourself and Brahmishi Narad know about this. Not even Lakshmi knows about it. Keep this secret. I will reveal myself one day at appropriate time.'

Acharya Swarbhanu again fell at the feet of the Lord, and said politely, 'as Lord wish.'

Several thousand human years passed. Goddess Lakshmi now started to worry about whereabouts of Lord Vishnu. It was usual for Lord Vishnu to go away from Saket Dham for few days of Saket Dham (several thousand human years), but this was unusual to be away for that long. She tried to locate Lord Vishnu through Her divine eyes, but failed due to leela of Lord Vishnu. Then, she remembered Brahmishi Narad. Nothing is secret from Brahmishi. He would be knowing for sure, the whereabouts of Lord and the reason for being away.

As soon as Mother Lakshmi remembered Brahmishi Narad, Brahmishi appeared before Mother Lakshmi in Saket Dham by uttering 'Narayan, Narayan'. Mother Lakshmi, then, asked whereabouts of the Lord Vishnu and reason behind His disappearance. Brahmishi Narad narrated all story to Mother Goddess Lakshmi. Once she came to know that Lord Vishnu was serving as security officer of Maha Bali, Mother Lakshmi immediately got ready to go there to bring Lord Vishnu back to Saket Dham. Brahmishi Narad fell at the feet of Mother Lakshmi, and requested her to wait till Purnima of Shravan month because by that time atonement of Lord Vishnu would be completed. Brahmishi gave a plan to Mother Lakhmi. He asked Her to go as a poor lady resident of Nether world on the Purnima of Shravan month, and to request audience of the emperor Maha

Bali. When Maha Bali would see Her, She should request him to release Her husband from his services.

As told by Brahmurishi Narad, Mother Goddess Lakshmi, disguised as poor old lady resident of Nether world, approached the palace of emperor Maha Bali. She saw her husband Lord Vishnu as gate keeper and bowed to Him. Smilingly, Lord Vishnu said to Her, 'O lady, just wait here. I will inform emperor that you want to see him. On obtaining his permission, you may see him'.

Lord Vishnu, disguised as gate keeper, then went to emperor and requested him to see this poor old lady. Emperor Maha Bali immediately instructed gate keeper to bring this old poor lady to him.

Mother Lakshmi, disguised as poor old lady, approached the emperor, and said, 'Victory to the great emperor. Emperor, I am your poor Subject. As it is an auspicious day today, Purnima of Shravan, I wish to tie a band in your hand to show my respect to you as my brother and protector of the land.'

Emperor Maha Bali, smilingly, agreed to Her request, and came down from his throne. The lady then tied band in his hand. As the emperor has to give Her a return gift, he asked the lady to kindly tell him that he could offer to Her.

The lady smiled and said, 'O emperor, my husband left home long ago and is in your service now. I request you to kindly release him from your services so he may return home with me.'

Emperor Maha Bali smiled and asked his chief minister to find Her husband and release Him from royal services immediately.

The lady said again, 'O emperor, no need for your chief minister to go and find this man. He is here with you as your gate keeper/ security officer. Please release Him.'

Emperor Maha Bali was surprised to hear that, and ordered this gentleman to leave royal service immediately and return home with His wife. He asked chief minister to appropriately compensate this couple so rest of their lives they could live comfortably.

Lord Vishnu disguised as gate keeper, spoke thus, 'O emperor, your orders will be followed.'

Acharya Swarbhanu could not keep his silence any more. He stood from his seat and fell at the feet of Lord Vishnu, who was disguised as gate keeper and requested Him to show his true Swaroop.

Both Lord Vishnu and Mother Lakshmi appeared in their own Swaroop then. Emperor Maha Bali and all his royal assembly ministers fell at their feet and asked for their blessings. Lord Vishnu and Mother Lakshmi blessed them all and returned to Saket Dham.

From that day onwards, this day, Purnima of Shravan month, is celebrated as mark of respect to sisters by brothers as Raksha Bandhan.

9.20 Sachi (Indrani) and Indra

According to a legend from ‘Bhavishya Puran’, there was a long war between the Gods and the Demons. The army of Gods was led by Indra and the army of demons was led by great virtuous demon who had immense spiritual powers, Vritrasur.



Indra, the God of Heaven, had always been very arrogant. Once he was seated on the throne with Shachi, his wife, by his side. All the heavenly attendants were surrounding him and his glories were sung by the Gandharvas. Apsaras were entertaining him with their dances. The court of Indra was glowing with beauty and music, the dances of the Gandharvas and the Kinnaras.

Guru Brihaspati, the divine preceptor of the Gods, arrived at the court of Indra at this time. In his arrogance, Indra did not get up from his seat to honour his Guru. Guru Brihaspati was enraged from this insult. Without speaking a word, he stood for a long moment staring at the arrogant Indra on the throne, and then walked away from there. When Guru left the court, Indra did realise the magnitude of his impertinence. He chided himself with the words, ‘In my pride, I have insulted my Guru. I must go to him at once and fall at his feet. I must crave his pardon.’

Indra rushed to the home of Guru Brihaspati. But the Guru, anticipating this move from Indra, made himself invisible. Indra could not find him. He was at a loss as to what he should do.

The news spread like wild fire all over the three (Heaven, Earth and Nether) worlds. Daitya and Dananva clans thought this to be the right moment to take revenge from Devs because now Guru Brihaspati was not there to help Indra and his army.

Taking advantage of helplessness of Indra, the Asuras (Daitya and Danava clans) headed by their Guru Shukracharya, waged war on Indra. Indra and his army, unfortunately, lost the war. The Devs were defeated shamefully. Hurt by their defeat, the Devs went to Lord Brahma and told him their misery. They asked him to advise them so they could regain kingdom of Heaven.

Lord Brahma, taking pity on the Devs and Indra said, ‘Indra, you have, in your pride, insulted a great man, your Guru Brihaspati. You are without Guru now. No one can help a person or an army without Guru. I do not think Guru Brihaspati will forgive you. I advise you Indra to go now and request Vishvarupa, the son of Twashta, to be your Guru. He is a great divine personality and fit to be your Guru. Being an Asura himself, his sympathies may, however, be with the Asurs. You should be able to overlook that and ask him to be your Guru. I am sure he will help you.’

Hearing the advice from Lord Brahma, the Devs went to Vishvarupa and fell at his feet. Indra, in a humble voice, said to him, ‘O great Acharya, we have come to beg to you with a request to help us. You are the personification of the Veds themselves. We humbly request you to accept us as your disciples, and accept to become our Guru.’

Vishvarupa smiled at them and said, ‘O Indra, I know that to accept the role to be your Guru is not good for my clan, Asur. It is a big sacrifice which you are asking me to undertake.

However, you are in trouble. It is Dharma for a religious person to help those who are in trouble. I cannot decline this request. I will accept to be your Guru.'

Vishvarupa thus became their Guru. He gave Indra 'Narayan Kavach'. Thus, Indra became unconquerable for one time, and was able to recapture his kingdom of Heaven by defeating Asurs.

Sometime after this incident, Visvarupa was performing a Yagn for Asurs. He made it possible to get the fruit of offerings of Yagn (the Havis) to benefit Asurs. Indra was enraged on this act as it would make Asurs powerful and able to defeat him and his army again. He rushed to the Yagn site of Vishvarupa and cut off his three heads (The sage Vishvarupa had three heads).

Sage Twashta, father of Vishvarupa, was very angry with Indra for killing his innocent son. He performed a great Yagn and invoked 'Indrashatru' to kill Indra. When the Yagn was over, there arose out of the fire a dreadful form. He was dark and huge and glowed like a cluster of clouds at close of day. His hairs were copper red and so were his eyes. They were hot and burning like the Sun at its' zenith. He held a trident in his hand. Looking at him, people fled in sheer terror. Because of his fearful form, voice and roar, he was called 'Vritra'.

Vritra led the army of Asurs against that of the Devs. Indra could not withstand his prowess, and fled from the kingdom of Heaven. Indra, with his wife Shachi, rushed to Lord Narayana. Seeing Indra and Shachi in fear, Lord Vishnu consoled them and said, 'O Indra, be without fear. I advise you away which will destroy Vritra. I advise you to approach the great Rishi, Maharshi Dadhichi. He is the one who taught Brahmavidya to the twin

Ashvini brothers. As Guru Dakshina, the Ashvini Kumars granted him immortality. You request Maharshi Dadhichi for his strong and powerful bones. From his bones, you request the great architect Vishvakarma to construct a dreadful weapon, 'Vajrayudh'. I will help you with my glory and for sure, you will be able to kill Vritra with this Vajra.'

Shachi, then fearing for the life of Indra till he was able to kill Vritra, requested Lord Vishnu to protect him. Then, Lord Vishnu gave a thread to Shachi enchanted with Mantra to tie on his wrist. Lord Vishnu said to Shachi, 'O pious lady, do not be afraid. Tie this thread on the wrist of your husband on the Purnima day of Shravan month.'

On Purnima day of Shravan month, as instructed by Lord Vishnu, Shachi tied the thread on the wrist of Indra. This day is celebrated as Raksha Bandhan from that time.

Later at appropriate time, Maharshi Dadhichi gave up his body on the request of Indra. A vajra was constructed by Vishwakarma, and Indra was able to kill Vritrasur by that Vajra.

9.30 Yam and Yamuna

Another legend says that the Lord of death, Yama, was not able to visit his sister Yamuna for a period of 12 years. Yamuna was missing her brother Yam and was very sad. She approached Ganga. Mother Ganga, then, went to Yam and



narrated the condition of sadness of his sister Yamuna. She requested Yam to go and see his sister Yamuna as soon as he could. Realising his mistake, Yam immediately went to his sister Yamuna and apologised to her for not being able to visit her.

On seeing her brother Yam at her doorstep, Yamuna became very happy and performed hospitality of her brother, Yama. She tied a thread on his wrist as a symbol of respect.

Yam was very happy on the honour and respect given by his sister. He asked Yamuna for a gift of her choice. She expressed her desire to see her brother again and again. On her request, Yam granted a boon to his sister Yamuna to be immortal so that she could see him again and again.

This particular day was Purnima of ShRavan month. From this day onwards, this day was celebrated as ‘Raksha Bandhan’, when sisters tie thread to the wrists of their brothers for their health, happiness, longevity and prosperity.

9.40 Krishna and Draupadi

According to another legend, during Ashwmedh Yagn of Samrat Yudhishtir, Lord Krishna held the Sudarshan Chakra to kill Shishupala, son of Damaghosha, to punish him for his many wrongdoings and sins. The Lord threw the celestial Sudarshan Chakra at Shishupala, soon after which he was beheaded. Because of force used by Lord Krishna to throw Sudarshan Chakra, Lord Krishna’s finger started to bleed. Draupadi, who was the Lord’s keen devotee, rushed to tie a



bandage around His finger. She tore a small portion from her sari and covered Lord Krishna's finger with it. Lord Krishna was so moved by Draupadi's love and affection that He promised to act as her saviour and protect her whenever she needed it. Lord Krishna asked Panchali for a boon. She requested Lord Krishna to grant her a boon of always having unwavering love and devotion towards Lord Krishna. She asked that Lord Krishna should always protect her and her family. Lord Krishna showered His blessings on Draupadi. Lord Krishna uttered the word 'Akshyam', which was a blessing signifying 'unending'.

Raksha Bandhan is celebrated for this unwavering love of Draupadi, who was like a sister to Lord Krishna, to her adopted brother Lord Krishna, and for a boon by brother Lord Krishna to protect her and her family all the time.

Of course, we all know that how Lord Krishna protected Daruapadi and her family numerous times including 'Cheer Haran' during Mahabharat kaal.

9.50 Birth of Goddess Santoshi (Santoshi Maa)

We all know that Santoshi Maa is believed to help in fulfilling the desires of Her devotees. She is the daughter of Lord Ganesh. She is also a unique incarnation of the Mother Goddess Parvati.



There is an interesting story that narrates the birth of Santoshi Mata. Legend has it that once on Punima day of Shravan month, Ashok Sundari, sister of Lord Ganesh,

came to visit Him in Kailash. A special function was organized by Gans of Lord Shiva and Lord Ganesh on this joyous occasion.

Kshema and Labha, the two sons of Lord Ganesh, also enjoyed this joyous function. However, they became sad also that they do not have any sister of their own. Thy pleaded to their father, Lord Ganesh, to give them a sister.

Lord Ganesh was moved by the humble request of His sons. He could not ignore the pleading of His sons.

To fulfill the wishes of His sons, a divine light emerged from the body of Lord Ganesh, and his wives Goddess Riddhi and Goddess Siddhi, and took a form of a young girl.

This young girl, then, went to her brothers, Kshema and Labha, and tied a thread around their wrist. Bot the brothers were extremely happy and promised their sister to protect her always.

Sage Narada witnessed this event and named this young girl as Santoshi.

Goddess Santoshi became a very loving Mother and wish fulfilling to all of us. We celebrate Raksha Bandhan as the birth day of Goddess Mother Santoshi.

10.00 KRISHNA JANMAMASHTMI

The great Hindu festival, Janmashtami, is celebrated to honour the birthday of Lord Krishna. It falls on the eighth (Ashtami) day of the dark fortnight (Krishnpaksh) of the month of Bhadrapada. The number eight has another significance in the Krishna legend in that he was the eighth child of his mother, Devaki.

Lord Krishna, the eighth avatar of God Vishnu is worshiped as a supreme God in Hinduism. Born in Mathura city of Uttar Pradesh, Northern India, Lord Krishna's life marks the passing of the Dvapara Yug and beginning of the Kali Yug.

The story of incarnation of Lord Krishna is given in several epics such as Mahabharata, Bhagwat Puran etc.

According to a narration in Bhagwat Puran, there were lot of sins on the Earth and the demons made life difficult for everyone in the Dvapara Yug (approx 5,000 years ago). At that time, Mother Earth was very distraught and upset. Taking the form of a cow, she went to Lord Brahma for her salvation.

Lord Brahma listened the grief of Mother Earth attentively. He said to Mother Earth. 'O Earth, only Lord Vishnu can find solution to your troubles. Let us go to Him.'

Lord Brahma, accompanied with Mother Earth, then went to Lord Vishnu in the Ksheer Sagar. They prayed Lord Vishnu. Seeing the Lord Brahma with Mother Earth, Lord Vishnu honoured them, and asked for the reason to come to Ksheer Sagar. Mother Earth then said, 'O Lord, you know the sins

occurring on Earth. I can no long bear these atrocities. Please give me salvation.’

Hearing the grief of Mother Earth, Lord Vishnu spoke, ‘O Earth, be fearless. Do not worry. I will reincarnate soon as the eighth son of Devaki. You go now and wait for the right moment for me to take birth. I will incarnate in the form of Krishna. I will kill these demons and relieve you from this burden.’

Satisfied with the words of Lord Vishnu, Mother Earth and Lord Brahma returned to their respective Loks.

The Story of Birth of Lord Krishna

During Dvapara Yug, prince Kans was the crown prince of Mathura kingdom. He was very greedy and cunning person. He wanted to acquire throne even though his father, Ugrasena, was still living and was the king. So, he imprisoned his father and became the king by deceit. It was difficult for the people of Mathura to face this evil and strong personality. As a new king, he was a very unfair and evil.

Kans had a cousin sister Devaki, to whom he loved most. She was to get married with Vasudev, prince of Yadu clan. Kans was very happy with this marriage because he could see great alliance with powerful kingdom of Yadu clan, which would make him more powerful. Once Devaki and Vasudev were married, Kans decided that he would drive their chariot to take them home. As Kans was charioteering, he heard a voice from the sky (Akashvani) that said, ‘O evil Kans, your end is near. The eighth son of Devaki will kill you.’

Hearing this divine voice, Kans became very scared. Soon, his fear turned into anger. He decided to kill Devaki. If there would be no mother, how could she give birth to a baby? So, he took out his sword to kill her.

Vasudev was horrified when he saw that Kans was about to kill his wife Devaki. He fell to his knees and begged Kans not to kill Devaki. He said to Kans, ‘O my dear brother-in-law Kans, please do not kill your cousin sister. I promise to deliver you personally all the babies born from the wombs of Devaki.’

Kans thought for a while and said, ‘OK, in that case, you will have to be my prisoners and live in the prison of my palace.’

Vasudev agreed to this. Kans then put both of them in the dungeons of his palace prison. Each time Devaki gave birth to a baby in the dungeon, Vasudev would hand over the baby to Kans and he would immediately kill him. This way, he killed seven babies born from the womb of his cousin sister Devaki.

For the next nine years, Devaki had no more babies. After nine years, she became pregnant and was about to give birth to her eighth baby. Kans was very scared to hear this.

The day when eighth baby was to be born, which happened to be the eighth (Ashtami) day of the dark fortnight (Krishnpaksh) of the month of Bhadrapada, there was a terrible storm and rain in Mathura. At midnight, the eighth son of Devaki was born. As soon as this baby was born, suddenly climate became very quiet.

The divine voice that had spoken to Kans earlier now spoke to Vasudev. ‘O Vasudev, take your baby to the Nandgaon village,

headed by your friend Nand. Yashoda, his wife, has just given birth to a baby girl. Exchange the babies and come back immediately with the girl. No one will know about the birth of your eighth son.'

Vasudev did as he was told. To his surprise, he found that the guards at the gates seemed asleep, and the prison gates opened on their own. When he reached the river, he realised it was filled with big waves due to a storm. But the moment he stepped inside, the river became calm.



Suddenly, he saw a huge black snake rise up from behind him. Vasudev was very scared and thought he would die along with the baby. But the snake spread itself over Vasudev like a hood to shield the baby from the rain. Soon Vasudev reached Nandgaon village, exchanged the babies and was back to prison.

As soon as he placed the baby on the prison floor beside Devaki, the baby started crying. Kans came rushing in, ready to kill the eighth baby of Devaki. Devaki was unconscious all this time. It was only now that she returned to her senses. Kans was not ready to spare the baby. He loved himself more than anything else in the world.

He snatched the baby and threw her against the prison wall, but the baby did not die. It flew up towards the prison ceiling and a bright light filled the prison. Once the light grew dimmer, Kans realised the baby had taken the form of Goddess Durga. The baby spoke, 'O foolish Kans, you cannot kill me, and the one who will

kill you is already born and alive. One day he will find you and kill you no matter what you do.’

Meanwhile, there was a lot of celebration in Nandgaon on the birth of the new baby boy. The village leader Nand named the baby boy as Krishna, and everyone came to offer blessings and gifts to the baby boy.

Thus, Janmashtami celebration is held for two days, one on the day when Krishna was born in prison, and second day when Baba Nand celebrated birth of Krishna in Nandgaon.

Festivities on the day

On the first day of the celebration of Krishna Janmashtami, activities culminate in a ‘Krishna Puja’, a devotional form of worship using a form or an image, such as an idol of Krishna. After midnight, statues of Krishna are bathed in milk and water, dressed in new clothes and venerated in homes and temples. Devotees enjoy a celebratory meal after breaking the day long fast.

In addition to fasting during the holy day, Krishna’s devotees sing Bhajans and Kirtans,” dedicated to Krishna, re-enact episodes from mythology about his life, known as ‘Krishna Lilas,’ and perform folk dances, or ‘garbas.’

Next day, a number of young men, dressed in yellow shorts, forming a human pyramid, break a dahi-handi, or curd pot, suspended from a rope. Young men and boys imitate the childish pranks of ‘Makhan Chor’, an epithet given to Krishna in his beloved form during his childhood as a ‘butter thief’.

11.00 NAVRATRI

Navratri is a post-monsoon autumn festival also called 'Shraddha Navratri'. The Hindus celebrate this festival for the victory of good over evil. Navratri, or Shraddha Navratri, starts on the 1st day of Shukla paksh of Ashwin month and continues for 9 days.



Navratri is an auspicious festival observed in many ways at various places in India.

As stated above, Navratri is celebrated for the victory of dharma (good) over evil on the Earth. Whenever evil suppresses Dharma, it is believed that God or Goddess takes incarnation in this world and protect religious and righteous people from evil. In North and Western parts of India, the tenth day of Shukla paksh of Ashwin month (immediately after Navratri festival) is celebrated as the Dussehra festival as a victory of Lord Ram for killing ten-headed evil Ravan, for destroying the evil on the Earth. Navratri is observed as Durga Pooja in Eastern parts of India, where Goddess Durga battles and wins over the demon Mahishasur, a buffalo-headed Demon. In southern states of India, Navratri is celebrated for destroying evil and spreading Dharma and peace in this world by different Gods and Goddesses.

The legend of the Navratri festival is associated with the battle between Goddess Durga and the demon Mahishasur. The history of the Navratri festival involves around the conflict between Devs (Gods) and Asurs (Evils) which has been never-ending.

Mahishasur, an Asur, is a buffalo-headed demon who is an expert in changing his physical form. He meditated on Lord Brahma to seek a boon from Him to be immortal. Pleased with his penance, Lord Brahma appeared before him. On asking a boon of immortality, Lord Brahma declined and asked for another boon. Then, he asked for immense powers and not be killed by any man, which Lord Brahma granted.

After gaining invincible powers from Lord Brahma, Mahishasura waged war against Devas (Gods). In the fight between Gods and demons, Mahishasura defeated Indra, king of Heaven.

The defeat in the war resulted in loss of self-pride of the Gods. They prayed Mother Parvati. She appeared before them and gave Her word that She would protect them from Mahishasur, and restore the Dharma. The boon given by Lord Brahma on killing him does not mention women. Thus, his faith was sealed to be assassinated by a woman. Mothers Parvati, Lakshmi, and Saraswati incarnated in human form and led the army of Devas against the army of Mahishasur. The war continued for nine days and finally, on the tenth day of the battle, the incarnation of Goddess Durga, known as Adi Parashakti, killed the demon Mahishasur with Her Trishul. Hence, She is also called Mahishasuramardini, that means killer of Mahishasura.

Importance and Significance of Navratri

Celebration of Navratri is associated with getting blessings of Goddesses for health, wealth and wisdom. Navratri's nine days are dedicated to nine Goddesses who are Navadurga. These all nine forms of Goddess are believed to be the incarnations of Goddess Durga.

The nine days of Navratri festival are always celebrated with full of lights, colours, excitement, and having a great time with family and friends. The first three days are devoted to the Goddess Parvati, the next three days to the Goddess Lakshmi and the last three days to the Goddess Saraswati.

During Navratri days, the people prepare varieties of food and snacks every day of nine days. They share the food, dresses, and other holy objects with the people who visit their homes, especially with young girls. It is believed that the Goddess Durga visits their homes in the form of young girls to bless them.

As stated above, Navratri is a 9 days-long festival, each day symbolising one incarnation of Goddess. Mainly, it is to seek blessings of Goddess Durga and her 9 forms. Goddess Durga is also synonymous with Adishakti. Adishakti means energy, power, and empowerment of the female energy of the Universe. This energy brings equilibrium and balance in the Universe.

The nine forms of Devi Durga, which are nine Goddesses of Navratri are Maa Shailaputri, Maa BhRamcharini, Maa Chandraghanta, Maa Kushmanda, Maa Skandamata, Maa Katyayani, Maa Kaalratri, Maa Mahagauri, and Maa Siddhidatri.

Day 1: Maa Goddess Shailputri

Goddess Maa Shailaputri is worshipped on the first day of the nine-day long festival of Navratri. Shailaputri means the daughter of the mountain. It is believed that Shailaputri is the reincarnation of Mother Sati, the daughter of Daksha Prajapati.

The legend according to Shri Ram Charit Manas is that Mother Sati (Adishakti) was destined to marry Lord Shiva (Lord of Adishakti), but Her father Daksha Prajapati was absolutely against this marriage as he had animosity against Lord Shiva. However, Sati married Lord Shiva against the wishes of Her father. She moved to Kailash Mountain to reside with her husband Lord Shiva.



After several thousands of years of Her marriage to Lord Shiva, She came to know that Her father Daksha Prajapati was organizing a great Yajna in which all Gods and Goddesses were invited. She was very much excited to participate in this great Yajna. She was missing Her family. It was a good opportunity to see them all. Lord Shiva tried to dissuade Her to participate in this Yajna as they were not invited. But Sati insisted, and Lord Shiva relented.

When Sati arrived at the Yajna site, She was excited to meet Her family members but Her father gave a cold shoulder to Her. To Her surprise, She could not find part of Yajna offering (Havish) for Her husband Lord Shiva. This did upset Her so much that in anger She self-immolated Herself.

Sati took re-birth as the daughter of the Himalaya and came to be known as Shailputri, which means daughter of the Himalaya. In this birth too, she was married to Lord Shiva.

Shailputri is considered to be one of the most powerful forms of Durga and we pray to her on the first day of the Navratri festival.

She is immensely powerful. She rides on a bull Nandi and carries a trident and a lotus.

Day 2: Maa Goddess Brahmacharini

Goddess Brahmacharini is a form of Goddess Durga. She is worshipped on the second day of the Navratri festival.



As stated above, after self-immolation by Goddess Sati in the Yajñ of Her father Prajapati Daksh, She took birth as daughter of Himalaya. Before She was married to Lord Shiva, She did severe penance to seek a boon from Lord Shiva Himself to be His wife. She was named as BhRamcharini during that period. ‘Brahm’ word is referred to divine knowledge and also penance and ‘charini’ means a female devotee.

On the second day of Navratri, we pray to Goddess Brahmacharini to give us great strength to be focused on penance and love towards God, and also peace, prosperity, and happiness. In this form, She carries a rosary in one hand and a Kamandal (oblong water pot) in the other hand.

Day 3: Maa Goddess Chandraghanta

On the third day of the auspicious celebration of the festival of Navratri, Goddess Chandraghanta is worshipped. Goddess Chandraghanta’s forehead is bedecked with a crescent-shaped Moon that also appears like the bell (ghanta) of a temple.

According to a legend, when Lord Shiva came as a groom to wed Paravati, He appeared very scary. He had matted hair. His body was covered with ashes. The snakes were all over His body. The groom's party was comprised of ascetics, ghosts, etc. The residents of Himalaya were scared to see Him.



Seeing this form of Lord Shiva, Parvati also took a scary form. She appeared to be huge in size, sitting on a lion with ten arms. She was carrying different weapon in each nine hands, trident, mace, arrow, bow, sword, lotus, goad, bell and kamandal. Her tenth hand was empty in a position to bless the devotees. With this form, She approached Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva tried to pacify Her and requested Her to return to Her original form. Mother Paravati obliged Lord Shiva and transformed into Her original form. However, She also requested Lord Shiva to change His form to be more pleasant one.

Lord Shiva too obliged Her and at once transformed into very handsome form. The marriage ceremony was then celebrated with great pomp and show. On the third day of Navratri, we worship this huge form form of Mother Paravati riding on lion with ten hands as stated above, and named Chandraghanta.

When we pray Maa Chandraghanta with pure heart, She eradicates all negative energies from our lives. All our sins, ghostly tribulations, depression, mental anxiety and troubles are wiped out.

Day 4: Maa Goddess Kushmanda

Maa Goddess Kushmanda is also known as the 'Smiling Goddess'. The name Kushmunda is made out of three words. 'Ku' means little. 'Ushma' means smiling and 'Anda' means egg which translates into a cosmic egg. It is believed that Maa Goddess Kushmanda created the universe. In the beginning of the Universe, there was only darkness. Maa Kushmanda using Her cosmic and divine energy produced a small cosmic egg, which was transformed into the Universe where we do live now.



It is believed that Maa Kushmanda resides in the core of the centre of the Lord Sun. She provides direction to the Lord Sun. Through Her, Lord Sun provides energy and warmth to the Universe. She is believed to have created three forms from Her eyes. From Her left eye, She created a fierce Goddess, Maa Mahakali. From Her middle eye on the forehead, She created a loving Goddess Mahalakshmi and from Her right eye, She created a benevolent and smiling Goddess, Maa Mahasaraswati.

These three forms, Mahalakshmi, Mahakali and Mahasaraswati, are considered the first three life forms on the Earth. From Her Mahakali form, a male and a female were born. The male had 5 heads and 10 arms and named as Lord Shiva. The female has one head and 4 arms, and named Saraswati. From Her Mahalakshmi form too, a male and a female were born. The male had 4 heads and 4 arms and named Brahma. The female had 1 head and 4 arms, and named Lakshmi. From Her Mahasaraswati form also, emerged a male and a female. The male had 1 head and 4 arms

named as Vishnu. The female too had 1 head and 4 arms and named Shakti. It is believed that She presented Shakti to Shiva, Saraswati to Brahma, and Lakshmi to Vishnu as their consorts. These three couples then went on to create the rest of the Universe. During Pralay time, Maa Kushmanda absorbs all the three forms back into Herself.

We pray Maa Goddess Kushmanda on the fourth day of Navaratri so that She removes all the obstacles from our lives.

Day 5: Maa Goddess Skandamata

Maa Skandamata is worshipped on the fifth day of the festival of Navratri. 'Skanda' means Kartikeya, who was the first-born child of Lord Shiva and Mother Parvati and 'mata' means mother. Hence Skandamata means mother of Lord Kartikey.



The legend is that after self-immolation of Mother Sati in the Yajñ of Prajapati Daksh, Lord Shiva became ascetic and went into trance.

During that time, two demons, Surahpadman and Tarakasura, were born. They prayed severely to Lord Brahma and obtained a boon from Him that only a son of Lord Shiva can kill them. They were practically immortal as Sati, wife of Lord Shiva died due to self-immolation and Lord Shiva was without consort to have a son.

However, as we all know that Mother Sati was reborn as Mother Paravati, and Lord Shiva wedded Her. A son was born to them and named Skand (Kartikey). Skand killed these two demons.

Maa Goddess Skandamata has four hands. In one hand, She carries Kartikeya as a baby, in Her second and third hands, She carries lotus flowers, and from Her fourth hand, She blesses the devotees. Maa Skandamata rides on a lion and She sits on a lotus.

When devotees pray Maa Skandmata, It is believed that She annihilates their enemies.

Day 6: Maa Goddess Katyayani

Maa Goddess Katyayani is worshipped on the sixth day of the festival of Navratri. Maa Katyayani is one of the most popular forms of Goddess Durga. It is believed that Maa Katyayani killed the demon Mahishasura and freed Gods from his fear.



Mahishasur was a very powerful demon who also had a boon from Lord Brahma that he might only be killed by a woman. On the request of the Gods, Lord Shiva, Lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma combined their energies and created a female form. This female form was extremely powerful and as radiant as combined thousands of Suns. She had 18 arms, fierce eyes, and rode on a lion. The trinity gave Her blessings to defeat and kill Mahishasura in the battle, and named Her Katyayani. The battle between Katyayani and Mahishasura went on for several days. Finally, she defeated and killed him by chopping off his head. Therefore, Katyayani is also

known as Mahishasura Mardani, the one who killed Mahishasura. Her victory is celebrated on the sixth day of Navratri. She is prayed to free us from our enemies.

Day 7: Maa Goddess Kalratri

On the 7th day of Navratri festival, Goddess Kalratri is worshipped. Goddess Kalratri is also known as Shubhankari. Kalratri is believed to be the fiercest form of Goddess Durga. She is the destroyer of evil. The complexion of Maa Kalratri is black as dark night. She has three luminous eyes. She exhales fire. She has four hands. In one of Her hands, she holds a thunderbolt and in other a sword. Her other two hands are in special mudras, one in ‘abhay’, symbolising fearlessness, and the other in ‘varada’, symbolising benevolence.



The legend is that two Asuras (demons) Shumbha and Nishumbha invaded Heaven and defeated Indra and his army. These two Asurs had a boon from Lord Brahma that no man or God could kill them. After his defeat, Indra did seek asylum of Mother Goddess Parvati and pleaded Her to save him and his kingdom Heaven. Mother Parvati sent Chandi, also known as Kali or Kalratri, to fight and kill these demons. Knowing this, these two demons, Shumbha and Nishumbha created two powerful forms, Chanda and Munda, and sent them to the battle to fight with Chandi. Chandi killed these demons and earned herself the name Chamunda. She then faced another demon called Raktabeej. Raktabeej had a peculiar and powerful boon. If

Raktabeej's blood was to be shed and came in contact with the ground, a new Raktabeej would emerge. This infuriated Maa Kali. When She was striking this demon, She would bent low and drink his blood before it could come in contact with the ground. That was the end of Raktabeej.

Maa Kaalratri, then, went on to kill Shumbha and Nishumbha, restoring peace in Devlok. Her prayer destroys the enemies.

Day 8: Maa Goddess Maha Gauri

On the eighth day of the festival of Navratri, we pray Maa Goddess Maha Gauri. 'Maha' means great and 'Gauri' means fair. This name symbolises a most beautiful Goddess.



The legend is that Maa Parvati took the form of Kali (Kaalratri) to fight the demons as described above. Her complexion was very dark. She could not get rid of Her dark skin after the battle was over. Her husband, Lord Shiva, made a little fun of her. He teased Her and called Her 'Black'. This infuriated Her. She went to Lord Brahma and requested Him to help Her to get rid of Her dark skin. Lord Brahma obliged Her. He asked Her to go to Mansarovar lake in the Himalayas for a dip to get fair skin. Kali followed the instructions of Lord Brahma. As soon as She stepped into the Mansarovar lake, Her dark skin disappeared and was replaced with a very beautiful soft fair skin. She was then named as Maha Gauri.

Maa Maha Gauri has thus a very fair skin glowing like thousands of Suns together. Maa Maha Gauri has four arms. She carries a trident in one hand and a damaru in the other. She rides on a white bull. She is a symbol of kindness and morality.

We pray Maha Gauri on the eighth day of Navratri to have healthy and pleasant life.

Day 9: Maa Goddess Siddhidatri

On the ninth day of the festival of Navratri, we worship the ninth form of Devi Durga, Maa Siddhidatri.



As said above, in the beginning of the Universe, there was nothing there, only darkness. Maa Goddess Kushmanda created the Universe with Her radiant smile. Maa Kushmanda also created the holy trinity, Lord Shiva, Lord Brahma and Lord Vishnu. Once She created this holy trinity, Lord Shiva prayed to Maa Kushmanda to bestow him with lots of blessings in the form of Shakti. On the request of Lord Shiva, Maa Kushmanda created a Goddess, Maa Siddhidatri to live with Lord Shiva.

Maa Siddhidatri blessed Lord Shiva with 18 siddhis (perfections). Maa Siddhidatri then merged with Lord Shiva to give a form, half female and half male, and then was called as Ardh-Nareeshwar.

It is believed that Maa Goddess Siddhidatri also blessed Lord Brahma and Lord Vishnu with eight siddhis (perfections) named as the 'ashtasiddhis'. These eight Siddhis (perfections) are:

Anima: The ability to become as small as an atom.

Mahima: The ability to become infinitely large.

Garima: The ability to become infinitely heavy.

Laghima: The ability to become infinitely light.

Prapti: The ability to become omnipresent.

Prakamya: The ability to make all that you desire come true.

Ishitva: Lordship.

Vashitva: The power to conquer all.

Maa Siddhidatri is worshipped on the ninth day of the Navratri to bless us with Ashtsiddhies.

Maa Siddhidatri sits on a lotus and She rides on a lion. She has four hands. In one of Her hands, She carries a gada, in second hand a chakra, in third hand a lotus, and in fourth hand a shankh.

Celebration of Navratri

There are different ways how people in different parts of the country celebrate Navratri. However, in general, people perform the following activities.

- a. Sustaining only on fruits and milk for the entire fasting period.
- b. Involving in prayer or 'prarthana' of Gods and Goddesses and long meditation sessions.
- c. Keeping awake all night and participating in 'Bhajans' along with family members.

- d. Keeping the mind focused on spiritual activities by reading 'Durga Shaptashati' and listening to 'Vrat Katha' or stories/episodes relating to the nine forms of Maa Durga.
- e. Wearing cloths of different colours each day to honour Maa Durga's nine forms as described above.
- f. Tying a garland of fresh flowers every day to the idols/ photographs of Maa Durga.
- g. Doing charity which includes donating food to the needy.
- h. Having pure thoughts during the auspicious period. Eating only one meal a day, a vegetarian preparation without onion and garlic.
- i. Lighting 'Akhand Jyot' or a constantly burning 'oil lamp' in front of Goddess Durga's idol or picture for the entire period.
- j. Planting nine varieties of food grains to appease the nine planets.
- k. Performing 'Arti' in front of the idol/ photograph of Maa Durga.
- l. Abstaining from wearing leather shoes, shaving, paring nails or cutting hair during this period.
- m. Avoiding wearing black coloured clothes.
- n. Honouring Durga Maa's nine forms by worshipping nine girls and preparing special meal for them.
- o. Coinciding the day of starting new ventures or new purchases with Ashtami (eighth day) /Navami (ninth day).
- p. Choosing to fast only on the first, fourth and seventh day of Navratri festival.

Besides the above, a devotee can choose to not continue fasting during Navratri if for some reason he/she is not able to do so.

12.00 DUSSEHARA

The festival Dussehara is celebrated on the 10th day of the month of Ashwin after Navratri celebration.



The name 'Dussehara' is derived from two words: "Dasha" meaning ten and "hara" meaning defeat. It commemorates the victory of Lord Ram, the seventh Avatar of Lord Vishnu, over the demon king Ravan. According to Shri Ram Charit Manas, Lord Ram embarked on a heroic journey to rescue his wife, Sita, who was abducted by Ravan, the ten-headed demon king of Lanka. After a long and arduous battle, Lord Ram vanquished Ravan on the tenth day of the war, which is known as Dussehara.

Dussehara signifies the ultimate triumph of righteousness, truth, and justice over evil and wrongdoing. It serves as a reminder to uphold moral values and confront the negative forces within and around us. The festival instils the belief that eventually, good shall prevail even in the face of overwhelming adversity.

In addition to the celebration of Lord Ram's victory, Dussehara is also associated with various other mythological and historical events. For instance, the Pandavs, heroes of the Hindu epic Mahabharata, are said to have returned from exile on this auspicious day. Several regions in India also cherish the mythological triumphs of Goddess Durga and defeat of the buffalo demon Mahishasura, as depicted during the nine-day festival of Navaratri leading up to Dussehara.

The festivities of Dussehara include vibrant processions, fairs, and performances, known as 'Ram Lila', in which scenes from the Ramayana are re-enacted. These plays culminate with the burning of effigies, representing Ravan, his brother Kumbhakarn and his son Meghnad, symbolizing the eradication of evil from our lives.

Besides its religious significance, Dussehara also holds social and cultural significance. It brings people together, strengthens community bonds, and fosters harmony among diverse groups. It showcases the rich cultural heritage of India, with each region celebrating in its distinct way, adding to the country's cultural tapestry.

Dussehara reminds us of the importance of virtue, righteousness, and upholding moral values. It inspires individuals to combat their own inner demons, such as anger, greed, ego, and selfishness. By celebrating this festival, people reaffirm their commitments to leading a life characterized by goodness and truthfulness, thereby spreading joy and positivity in society.

In brief, Dussehara is a festival of immense significance, symbolizing the victory of good over evil, righteousness over wrongdoing, and knowledge over ignorance. The celebration of Dussehara fosters unity, cultural richness, and the belief in the ultimate triumph of good.

The story of killing Ravan by Lord Ram has been described in Shri Ram Charit Manas by Goswami Tulasi Das.

**Kāṭata baḍhahiṃ sīsa samudāi. Jimi prati lābha lōbha adhikāi.
 Marai na ripu śRam bhayau bisēṣā. Rāma bibhīṣana tana taba dēkhā.
 Umā kāla mara jākiṃ īchā. Sō prabhu jana kara prīti parīchā.
 Sunu sarabagya carācara nāyaka. Pranatapāla sura muni sukhadāyaka.
 Nnātha jiata rāvanu bala tākēṃ. Sunata bibhīṣana bacana kṛpālā.
 Haraṣi gahē kara bāna karālā. Asubha hōna lāgē taba nānā.
 Rōvahiṃ khara ṣṛkāla bahu svānā. Hōlahi khaga jaga ārati hētū.
 Pragaṭa bhaē nabha jahaom tahaom kētū. Dasa disi dāha hōna ati lāgā.
 Bhayau paraba binu rabi uparāgā. Maṃdōdari ura kaṃpati bhārī.**

No sooner were Ravan's heads cut off than a fresh crop grew like covetousness, which increases with every new gain. The enemy could not be killed in spite of the prolonged struggle; Shri Ram then looked at Vibhishan. Lord Shiva continued narrating story to his wife Uma, 'Uma, the Lord whose will causes the death of death itself thereby tested the devotion of His servant.' Vibhishan then said, 'Listen, all-wise Ruler of the animate and inanimate creation, protector of the suppliant, delight of the Gods and sages, nectar abides in the depth of his navel. By virtue of it, my Lord, Ravan survives.' The all-merciful rejoiced to hear the words of Vibhishan and took terrible shafts in His hands. Many ill-omens manifested themselves at that time. Donkeys, jackals and dogs howled in large numbers. Birds too screamed, and thereby portended a world calamity. Comets appeared in every quarter of the Heavens. There was a preternatural and unusual glow in the horizon on all sides and a Solar eclipse occurred even without the day of the new Moon (when the Sun and the Moon are in conjunction). Mandodari's heart beat wildly and idols shed tears from their eyes.

**Pratimā rudahiṃ pabipāt a nabha ati bāta baha ḍōlati mahi.
 Baraṣahiṃ balāhaka rudhira kaca raja asubha ati saka kō kahī.
 Utapāta amita bilōki Nabha sura bikala bōlahi jaya jāē.**

Sura sabhaya jāni krpāla raghupati cāpa sara jōrata bhaē.

Idols wept, lightning flashed with thunderclap in the air, furious winds blew, the Earth quaked and the clouds dropped blood, hair and dust. Who could recount the great ill-omens? The Gods in Heaven were dismayed at the sight of the boundless portentous phenomena and shouted ‘Victory! Victory!!’ Perceiving the distress of the Gods, the gracious Lord of the Raghus set an arrow to His bow.

Khaici sarāsana śRavan lagi chāḍaē sara ēkatīsa.

Raghunāyaka sāyaka calē mānahu kāla phanīsa.

Drawing the bow-string right up to His ear, the Lord of the Raghus let fly thirty-one shafts, which flew forth like the serpents of death.

**Sāyaka ēka nābhi sara sōṣā. Aparā lagē bhuja sira kari rōṣā.
Lai sira bahu calē nārācā. Sira bhuja hīna ruṇḍa mahi nācā.
Dharani dhasai dhara dhāva pracamḍā. Taba sara hati prabh u kṛta dui khamḍā.
Garjēu marata ghōra rava hārī. Kahāom rāmu rana hatauṃ pacārī.
Dōlī bhūm girata dasakamḍhara. Chubhita simḍhu sari diggaja bhūdhara.
Dharani parēu dvau khamḍa baḍhaāī. Cāpi bhālu markāṭa samudāī.
Mandōdari āgēṃ bhuja sisā. Dhari sara calē jahāom jagadīsā.
Prabīsē saba niṣaṃga mahu jāī. Dēkhi suranha dūṃdubhīm bajāī.
Tāsu tēja samāna prabhu ānana. Hīyā jaya dhuni pūrī brahmaṃḍā.
Jaya raghubīra prabala bhujadaṃḍā. Baraṣahi sumanadēva muni bṛmḍā.**

One arrow sucked up the depths of the navel, while the rest struck his ten heads and twenty arms with impetuosity. The arrows carried off with them all his heads and arms, while the headless and armless trunk danced on the battle-field. The Earth sunk under the weight of the trunk as it rushed violently on, till the Lord struck it with His arrow and split it in two. While dying he shouted with a loud and terrible roa, "Where is Ram, that I

may challenge and slay Him in battle?" The Earth reeled as the ten-headed monster fell. The ocean, the rivers, the elephants guarding the quarters, and the mountains were shaken. Expanding the two halves, he dropped to the ground, crushing under their weight a host of bears and monkeys. After depositing the arms and heads before Mandodari, the darts returned to the Lord of the Universe and all found their way back into the quiver. Seeing this, the Gods sounded their kettle-drums. His soul entered the Lord's mouth in the form of effulgence. Lord Shambhu and the four-faced Brahma (the Creator) rejoiced to see the spectacle. The whole Universe resounded with cries of "Victory! Victory!!, Glory to the Hero of Raghu's line, mighty of arm !!!" Gods and sages rained down flowers, shouting "Glory, glory to the All-merciful! Glory to Mukunda (the Bestower of liberation) !!!"

Celebration of Dussehara in Different Parts of India

The Dussehara festival is celebrated across India, though each state has its own unique way of celebrating it, and different communities follow their own traditions for it. In some parts of India, it is celebrated as the end of the nine days of fasting observed during Navratri, while in other parts, it is the day of bidding adieu to Goddess Durga.

Mysore's Dussehara or Dasara Mysuru (erstwhile Mysore)

Mysore Dussehara in Karnataka has one of the most spectacular Dussehara celebrations for over 400 years. The Mysore Dussehara has been celebrated with great pomp and show for centuries. Mysuru got its name from Mahishasur, the demon who was killed by Goddess Chamundeshwari on the 10th day of the

Navratri, that is Vijayadashmi. Mysore Dussehara is famous among devotees and tourists for the grandly lit Mysore Palace, elephant ride, military processions and different cultural shows. The Dussehara celebrations at the Mysore Palace are a feat of beauty. Located in the heart of the city facing the Chamundi Hills, the palace showcases great architecture that also shows elements of Rajput, Hindu, Mughal, and Gothic styles.

Chhattisgarh's Dussehara

A 600-year-old ritual is celebrated in Chhattisgarh's Bastar district with the world's longest Dussehara. In the tribal district of central India, the festival of Dussehara spans over 75 days, which makes it the longest celebration in the country. It takes place wherein the Goddess 'Kachhin' bestows permission to the 'Raj Parivar' of Bastar to initiate the festivities. A girl, deemed as Goddess 'Kachhin', grants the 'Raj Parivar' permission to celebrate Dussehara by swinging on a swing of thorns. Unlike the other parts of the country where effigies of Ravan are burnt, here in Bastar, the community of tribal people pay tribute to the Mahishasur Mardini Adishakti.

Telangana Dussehara

In Telangana, the famous flower festival takes place during the ten days of Navratri. Bathukamma festivities are about worshipping the 'Goddess of life' in the villages bordering Telangana and Andhra Pradesh in South India. The flower arrangements are an attempt to invoke the Goddess and seek Her blessings. Each year, this festival is celebrated as per the Shalivahana calendar for nine days starting Bhadrapada

Amavasya (also known as Mahalaya Amavasya) till Durgashtami.

Dussehara in Maharashtra

In Maharashtra, gifting of “gold” or apta leaves is a central practice during Dussehara. The leaves of Apta tree are gifted to family members and elders, and these leaves are referred to as ‘sona’ (gold). According to the legend, on this day, the God of wealth ‘Kubera’ himself converted millions of Apta leaves into gold to help an honourable scholar ‘Kaustya’ to pay ‘Guru-Dakshina’ (fees). Kaustya accepted only the ones he needed and the rest were distributed among residents of Ayodhya. Apta leaves represent gold and people present them to friends, relatives, and neighbours and wish them on the occasion.

Dussehara in Uttarakhand

Dussehara celebration in Uttarakhand is characterised by age-old traditions and customs. In this hill state, every household plant barley seeds in earthen pots on the first day of Navratri and the nine-day sprouting of the seeds is considered as symbols of luck and prosperity. There are Ram Lila performances in all the towns of the State. One of the unique aspects about the Ram Lila is that apart from burning Ravan’s effigy, there are other effigies of many of his family members that are burnt in the evening. Uttarakhand also has Ganga Dussehara festival or Dasar Festival which is held in the period of May-June. The celebration is held for ten days where the Ganga River is venerated. According to Hindu folklore, on this day, the river Ganga plummeted from Heaven to Earth. This celebration in Uttarakhand begins on the

Amavasya night (waxing moon) of Hindu calendar and closes on Dashami tithi (tenth day).

Dussehara (Dashain) in Sikkim and Assam

Dussehara (Dashain or Dassain) is the main festival of the Hindus of Sikkim and Assam. The Puja of Goddess Durga is performed from the first day (Prathama) to the ninth day (Navmi) of Ashwin month. On the tenth day, the elders in every family apply 'tika' on the young ones and bless them. Cash or gifts in kind are also given by the elders. The very next day, the statue of Goddess Durga is taken in a colourful procession for its immersion in a lake or river. This marks the end of Dassain.

Dussehara in Bengal

Durga Puja takes place all over the State of West Bengal during Navratri. Here, Dussehara celebrations are not quite tied to the epic battle of the Ramayana unlike the other parts of the country; rather they celebrate the victory of Goddess Durga over buffalo king Mahishasur. There is a five-day long extravaganza that starts from Shashti (sixth day of Navratri) and goes on till the last day known as Vijaya Dashmi. The preparations begin months in advance, from setting up pandals and organising various cultural activities. People feast on some good biryani, ghugni or kosha with pooris along with a lavish bhog consisting of traditional delicacies that is served in pandals. On the tenth day, people bid a tearful goodbye to Goddess Durga.

13.00 DEEPAWALI

Deepawali or Diwali is the festival of lights celebrated across the world. Deepawali is celebrated on 15th day of Kartik month and lasts five days, starting from Dhanteras, followed by Narak Chaturdashi (Chhoti Deepawali), Lakshmi Pujan (Badi Deepawali), Govardhan Puja and Bhai Dooj.

Deepawali originates from Sanskrit words deep (lamp) and vali (row). It literally means "row of lights". The festival is celebrated by lighting lamps. Deepawali symbolises the spiritual victory of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance. The lights of Deepawali signify a time to destroy all our dark desires and thoughts, eradicate dark shadows and evils and give us the strength and the zeal to carry on with our goodwill.

There are several legends (Pauranic Kathaen) on the origin of Deepawali festival. Some prominent ones are described below.

13.10 Lord Vishnu Marrying Goddess Lakshmi

Lord Vishnu married Goddess Lakshmi on this day who emerged from the Samudra Manthan as eighth ratna (jewel). Samudra Manthan (Churning of Ocean) was carried out by Gods and Danavs during Satyug era. The story of Samudra Manthan is described in Vishnu Puran as following.



The story of origin of Samudra Manthan has been described in the section 3.20 Drinking Posion from Samudra Manthan of this book.

Fourteen ratns (jeweals) came out as result of this churning of the ocean. The eighth ratn, which came out from this churning, was Goddess Lakshmi. As Goddess Lakshmi was none other than the new form of Lord Vishnu's wife 'Shri', She was offered to Lord Vishnu and He married Her. As a matter of fact, Lord Vishnu remarried His own wife 'Shri', now in the new form of Goddess Lakshmi. His own wife Goddess Shri was actually transformed into Goddess Lakshmi. This story of transformation of Shri to Lakshmi is narrated in Vishnu Puran as following.

Lord Vishnu was married to Shri, daughter of Maharshi Bhrigu. At one time, there were some arguments and disagreements between Lord Vishnu and Goddess Shri. Because of this disagreement, Goddess Shri became angry with Lord Vishnu and left Saket Dham. She went to the Ashram of her father Maharshi Bhrigu. She hoped that with time, Lord Vishnu would regret for His disagreement with Her and would come to the Ashram of Her father to appease Her. However, Her father Maharshi Bhrigu was not happy with his daughter on this so-called disagreement with Her husband Lord Vishnu and said to his daughter, 'Shri, if you would have come with my son-in-law Lord Vishnu, I would have welcomed both of you dearly. This is not the right way to be annoyed with Your husband on some minor issue and take shelter in the Ashram of Your father. I order You to go back to Lord Vishnu and seek His forgiveness.'

Shri was very disappointed with Her father. Her self-pride was not allowing Her to go back to Her husband. So, She decided to give up Her life by jumping into ocean.

She jumped into ocean to die accordingly. However, when Lord Ocean, who is the brother of Maharshi Bhrigu, saw that his niece had jumped into ocean to kill Herself, he came to Her rescue. He tried to console Her and requested Her to return to Lord Vishnu on the similar way as Maharshi Bhrigu. Shri did not agree to him. Lord Ocean thought that with time, Her anger will subside and She would surely go back to Her husband. He respected the wishes of Shri and allowed Her to stay with him.

Several years passed. Now Shri's anger was no more towards Her husband. She loved Her husband Lord Vishnu dearly and wanted to return to Saket Dham, but only when Lord Vishnu would come to take Her. Lord Vishnu did not come to take Her. Her condition was worsening day by day. Lord Ocean could not see Her in this sad situation, so he went to Lord Vishnu and requested Him to kindly come and take Her. Lord Vishnu then told Lord Ocean that soon Gods and Danavs would be churning ocean to obtain Amrit (nectar). He should present Her as eighth ratna. She would be renamed as Lakshmi, and He would marry Her then. She would not remember any of these incidents.

As such, Lord Ocean presented Goddess Shri in the form of Goddess Lakshmi, as eighth ratn. Lord Vishnu married Her. This was the 15th day of Kartik month. From that day onwards, this marriage of Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi is celebrated. We worship Goddess Lakshmi with Lord Ganesh to give us wealth and success. Lord Ganesh is Pratham Poojya (to be worshipped first). No worship or prayer can give good results unless Lord

Ganesh is worshipped. He has this boon from His parents, Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati. So, both Goddess Lakshmi and Lord Ganesh are worshipped on this day.

13.20 Return of Lord Ram to Ayodhya from Exile

According to Shri Ram Charit Manas, Lord Ram with his consort Sita and brother Lakshman returned to Ayodhya after 14 years of exile, killing Ravan. He was coronated to the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya on this day. Their



return and the grand event of Ram's coronation is celebrated as Deepawali, famed as the Festival of Lights. It is said that the denizens of Ayodhya lit ghee lamps to light their paths in darkness.

The story narrated in Shri Ram Charit Manas by Goswami Tulasi Das is as following.

Haraṣi Bharata kōsalapura āē. Samācāra saba gurahi sunāē.
Puni maṇḍi ra mahaom bāta janāī. āvata nagara kusala raghurāī.
Sunatasakala jananīṃ uṭhi dhāīṃ. kahi prabhu kusala Bharata samujhāī.
Samācāra purabāsinha pāē. nara aru nāri haraṣi sab a dhāē.
Dadhi durbā rōcana phala phulā. nava tulasī dala maṅgal a mūlā.
Bhari bhari hēma thāra bhāminī. Gāvata caliṃ siṃdhu siṃdhuragāminī.
Iē jaisēhiṃ taisēhiṃ uṭi dhāvahiṃ. bāla bṛddha kahaom saṃga na lāvahiṃ.
Eka ēkanha kahaom būjhahiṃ bhāī. tumha dēkhē dayāl a raghurāī.
Avadhapurī prabhu āvata jānī. bhaī sakala sōbhā ka i khānī.
Hahai suhāvana tribidha samīrā. bhai sarajū ati nirmala nīrā.

(After Shri Hanuman broke news to Shri Bharat that Lord Ram was returning to Ayodhya) Shri Bharata returned with joy to Ayodhya (from his Ashram) and broke the news to his Guru (the sage Vashistha) that Lord Ram is returning to Ayodhya after 14 years of exile. He, then, informed the palace that the Lord Ram was approaching Ayodhya safe and sound. On hearing the news, all the mothers were excited. Shri Bharata eased their mind by telling them that Lord Ram, Mother Sita and Lakshman all are well. When the citizens of Ayodhya got this good news, all men and women ran out in their joy (to meet their Lord). With gold plates full of curd, Durva grass, the sacred yellow pigment Gorocana, fruits and flowers and young leaves of the sacred Tulsi (Basil), the beautiful ladies ran forth singing the glory of the Lord. All came out to see Lord Ram in the same state as they were. They did not bother to take children and old folks with them. People were asking each other if they had seen the gracious Lord Ram. The city of Ayodhya became a mine of beauty. Cool and fragrant air was flowing. The Sarayu River had crystal clear pure water.

**Baraṣita gura parijana Anuja bhūsurā bṛṇḍa samēta.
Calē Bharata mana prēma ati sanmukha kṛpānikēta.
Hahutaka caḍhaī aṭārinha nirakhahiṃ Gagana bimāna.
Dēkhi madhura sura haraṣita karahiṃ sumamgala gāna.
Rākā sasi raghupati pura siṃdhu dēkh i haraṣāna.
Haḍhayō kōlāhala karata janu nāri taraṃga samāna.**

Accompanied by the Guru (Sage Vashistha), kinsmen, younger brother (Shatrughan) and Brahmins, Shri Bharata set forth to receive the all-merciful Lord with joy in their hearts. Many women climbed up their attics to look at Puspak Viman in the sky which was carrying Lord Ram and others. As soon as they saw the Viman, they began to chant jay jaykar with joy and

commenced singing festal songs in melodious tunes. As the sight of the full Moon brings joy to the ocean and swells it, the news of Lord Ram returning made city of Ayodhya joyful. All of them were rushing to meet Lord Ram. The women of the city were appearing like waves in the ocean.

Avata dēkhi lōga saba kṛpāsīṃdh u bhagavāna.
Nagara nikaṭa prabhu prērēu utarēu bhūm i bimāna.
Utari kahēu prabhu puṣpakahi tumha kubēra pahīṃ jāhu.
Prērīta rāma calēu sō haraṣu birahu ati tāhu.

When all-merciful Lord saw the people coming to greet Him, He ordered Pushpak Viman to halt near the city. After alighting from the Viman, the Lord ordered Puspak Viman to return to Lord Kubera (the actual owner of Pushpak Viman). Thus, ordered by Lord Ram, the Pushpak Viman departed with full of joy.

Aē bharata saṃga saba lōgā. kṛṣa tana śrīraghubīra biyōgā.
Hāmadēva basiṣṭha munināyaka. dēkhē prabhu mahi dhari dhanu sāyaka.
Dhā i dharē gura carana sarōruha. Anuja sahita ati pulaka tanōruha.
Bhēṃṭi kusala būjhī munirāyā. hamarēṃ kusala tumhārihiṃ dāyā.
Sakala dvijanha mili nāyau mātā. dharma dhuraṃdhara raghukulanāthā.
Gahē bharat puni prabhu pad paṃkaj. namat jinhi sur muni saṃkara aja.
Parē bhūmi nahīṃ uṭhata uṭhāē. bara kari kṛpāsīṃdhu ura lāē.
Syāmala gāta rōma bhaē ṭhāḍhaē. nava rājīva nayana jala bāḍhaē.

Shri Bharata and all other Ayodhya citizens came together to greet Lord Ram. They were sad because of separation from the Lord. When Lord Ram saw the great Sages - Vamadeva, Vashistha and others, He dropped His bow and arrows on the ground and ran with His brother (Lakshman) to clasp their lotus-feet. Sage Vashistha (the chief of the Sages and Guru) embraced Lord Ram and enquired about His welfare. Lord Ram replied, 'Our welfare lies in your grace, Gurudev.' The Lord Ram of

Raghu's race, the champion of righteousness, then met all other Brahmins and bowed His head to them. Then, Shri Bharata clasped the Lord's lotus-feet, which were adored by Gods and Sages including Lord Shankara and Lord Brahma. He laid prostrated on the ground and would not rise even though being asked by the Lord Ram. All-merciful Lord Ram then forcibly lifted him up and embraced him. Every hair on His body stood erect and His lotus eyes were flooded with tears.

**Kaṃcana kalasa bicitra saomvārē. sabahiṃ dharē saji nija nija dvārē.
 Haṃdanavāra patākā kētū. Sabanhi banāē maṃgala hētū.
 Hīthiṃ sakala sugaṃdha siṃcāi. Gajamani raci bahu cauka purāi.
 Nānā bhāomti sumaṃgala sājē. haraṣi nagara nisāna bahu bājē.
 Jahaomtahaom nāri nichāvara karahiṃ. dēhiṃ asīsa haraṣa ura bharahiṃ.
 Kaṃcana thāra āratī nānā. Jubatī sajēṃ karahiṃ subha gānā.
 Karahiṃ āratī āratihara kēṃ. Raghukula kamala bipina dinakara kēṃ.
 Pura sōbhā saṃpati kalyānā. Nigama sēsa sārādā bakhānā.
 Tēu yahacarita dēkhi ṭhagi rahahiṃ. Umā tāsu guna nara kimi kahahiṃ.**

All the householders placed vases of gold picturesquely decorated and equipped with necessary articles on their door steps. Everyone prepared and set festoons, flags and buntings. This made the event great. All the streets of Ayodhya were sprinkled with perfumes and scented water. A number of mystic squares were drawn in each house and filled with scarce pearls usually found on elephant's foreheads. All kinds of festive preparations were carried out. Ladies showered flowers and other auspicious offerings on the Lord, and invoked His blessing with their hearts full of joy. Groups of young women sang festal songs. The gold plates with lamps were ready in their hands for pooja. The splendour and the prosperity of the city were sung by the Veds, Sheshnag (the Serpent God) and Sharada (the Goddess of speech and learning). Lord Shiva says, 'O Uma, even these

personalities were dazed to see this spectacle. How can any mortal recount His virtues?’

**Nāri kumudinīm avadha sara raghupati biraha dinēsa.
Asta bhaēom bigasata bhaīm nirakhi rāma rākēsa.
Hōhiṃ saguna subha bibidha bidhi bājahiṃ gagana nisāna.
Pura nara nāri sanātha kari bhavana calē bhagavāna.**

The women looking like water-lilies growing in the lake blossomed near Lord Ram, who resembled the full Moon. The grief of separation (like setting Sun) was now over. Auspicious omens of every kind were occurring. The kettledrums were making noise in the sky as the Lord proceeded to the palace after blessing the men and women of the city with His sight.

**Kkrpāsīṃdhu jaba maṃdira gaē. Pura nara nāri sukh ī saba bhaē.
Gura basiṣṭa dvija liē bulāi. Āju sugharī sudina samudāi.
Saba dvija dēhu haraṣi anusāsana. rāmacaṃdra baiṭhahiṃ siṃghāsana.
Muni basiṣṭa kē bacana suhāē. sunata sakala bipranha ati bhāē.
Kahahiṃ bacana mṛdu bipra anēkā. jaga abhirāma rāma abhiṣēkā.
Aba munibara bilamba nahim kijē. mahārāja kahaom tilaka kartjai.**

When all-merciful Lord entered the palace, every man and woman of the city felt gratified. The Guru, Sage Vashistha, then called the Brahmins and said to them, ‘The day, hour and all the other factors are favourable now. Therefore, all of you Brahmins be pleased to order that Lord Ramchandra may be enthroned on royal throne.’

All the Brahmins warmly welcomed these sweet words of the Sage Vashistha. Brahmins spoke in endearing terms, ‘Lord Ram's coronation will bring delight to the whole world. Please do not delay any more, O good Sage, apply the sacred mark on the

forehead of His Majesty as a token of sovereignty as soon as possible.’

**Tab a muni kahēu sumamtra sana sunata calēu haraṣāi.
Ratha anēka bahu bāji gaja turata saomvārē jāi.
Jahaom tahaom dhāvana paṭhai puni maṃgala drabya magāi.
Haraṣa samēta basiṣṭa pada puni siru nāyau āi.**

The Sage thereafter instructed Sumantra (Chief Minister) to make preparations for coronation of Lord Ram. As soon as Sumantra received the orders of the Sage, he proceeded happily and instructed his ministers accordingly. The ministers were ready with chariots, horses and elephants to collect desired articles for coronation from various sacred parts of the world. There were good omens all around. This gladdened the hearts of all. Everyone bowed at the feet of Sage Vashistha.

**Avadhapurī ati rucira banāi. Dēvanha sumana br̥ṣṭi jhari lāi.
Rāma kahā sēvakanha bulāi. prathama sakhanha anhavāvahu jāi.
Sunata bacana jahaom tahaom jana dhāē. sugrīvādi turata anhavāē.
Puni karunānidhi bharatu haomkārē. nija kara rāma jaṭā niruārē.
Anhavāē prabhu tīniu bhāi. bhagata bachala kṛpāla raghurāi.
Bharata bhāgya prabhu kōmalatāi. sēṣa kōṭi sata sakahiṃ na gāi.
Puni nija jaṭā rāma bibarāē. gura anusāsana magi nahāē.
Kari majjana prabh u bhūṣana sājē. aṃga anamga dēkhi sata lājē.**

The city of Ayodhya was decorated beautifully. All the Gods showered continuously flowers on the Lord from the sky. Lord Ram called His servants and said, ‘Go and arrange bath for all my comrades first.’ As soon as they heard the command of the Lord, the servants carried out orders of Lord promptly. They gave bath to Sugriva and others. All merciful Lord Ram then called Shri Bharat and disentangled his matted hair with His own hands. The gracious and almighty Lord Ram, who was so fond of

His devotees, then gave bath to all His three brothers. The fortune of Shri Bharata and the Lord's graciousness were far beyond than even Sheshnag could sing. After that, Lord Ram disentangled His own matted hair with Guru's permission and took bath. After bath, the Lord Ram decorated Himself with royal dress and jewels. The beauty of Lord was far superior to the hundreds of Cupids.

**Prabhu bilōki muni mana anurāgā. turata dibya siṃghāsana māgā.
Rabi sama tēj a sō barani na jāi. baiṭhē rāma dvijanha siru nāi.
Janakasutā samēta raghurāi. pēkhi praharaṣē muni samudāi.
Bēda maṃtra taba dvijanha ucārē. nabha sura muni jaya jayati pukārē.
Prathama tilaka basiṣṭa muni kīnhā. Puni saba bipranha āyasu dīnhā.
Suta bilōki haraṣīm mahatārī. bāra bāra āratī utārī.
Hipranha dāna bibidha bidhi dīnhē. jācaka sakala ajācaka kīnhē.
Siṃghāsana para tribhuana sāi. dēkhi suranha duṃdubhīm bajāīm.**

Sage Vashistha was astonished to see the beauty of Lord Ram. He asked at once for a divine throne. The throne was shining like the Sun. Its beauty cannot be described in the words. Bowing His head to the Brahmins, Lord Ram then took His seat on the divine throne. All the Sages were overjoyed as they looked upon Lord Ram and Mother Sita, His consort. Then, the Brahmins recited the Vedic hymns, while the Gods and Sages shouted, 'Victory! Victory to the Lord.' The Sage Vashistha applied the sacred mark on the forehead of the Lord Ram for coronation first, followed by others as directed by him and other Brahmins. The mothers were full of joy at the sight of their son, and waved lights on His head again and again (performed Arti of the Lord Ram). They gave variety of gifts (Dans) to the Brahmins. The beggars got so much in charity that they were no more beggars. The Gods sounded their kettledrums in happiness.

**Nabha duṃdubhīm bājahīm bipula gaṃdharba kiṃnara gāvahīm.
Nācahīm apacharā bṛṃda paramāṇaṃda sura muni pāvahīm.
Bharatādi Anuja bibhīṣanāṃgada hanumadādi samēta tē.
Gahēṃ chatra cāmara byajana dhanu asi carma sakti birājatē.
Sṛī sahita dinakara baṃsa būṣana kāma bahu chabi sōhāī.
Nava aṃbudhara bara gāta aṃbara pīta sura mana mōhāī.
Mukūṭaṃgadādi bicitra bhūṣana aṃga aṃganhi prati sajē.
Aṃbhōja nayana bisāla ura bhuja dhanya nara nirakhaṃti.**

Large number of kettledrums were giving divine sound from the heavens. The Gandharvs and Kinnars (the celestial musicians) were singing and heavenly nymphs were dancing to the supreme delight of the Gods and Sages. Bharat, Lakshman and Shatrughan with Vibhishan, Angad, Hanuman and the rest were standing side by side to the Lord, each holding the royal umbrella, chowrie, fan, bow, sword with shield and spear etc. With Mother Sita (Lakshmi) by His side, the jewel of the solar race (Sooryvanshi Lord Ram) was shining with combined beauty of several Cupids. He was looking beautiful in yellow robes. His beauty enchanted even the Gods. A diadem, armlets and other marvellous ornaments adorned the various parts of His body. He had lotus-like eyes, a broad chest and long arms. Blessed indeed were those who beheld Him in such a form.

This Deepawali festival is continued to be celebrated since Treta Yug as described above when Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya after 14 years of exile, and was coronated.

13.30 Lord Krishna Killing Narakasur

Lord Shri Krishna also killed the demon Narkasur on this day. Hence Deepawali is celebrated on this joyful occasion to celebrate that too. After burning the effigy of the demon Narakasur, people take bath and pray to Lord Yam. They pray by lighting lamps with four wicks at various places. Lord Yam is invoked through prayers to overcome the dangers of death and for a long life.



The story of Narkasur is well documented in Mahabharat epic, composed by Maharshi Ved Vyas.

Lord Vishnu, in his incarnation as Varaha (boar), rescued Mother Earth (Bhoomi Devi) from the demon Hiranyaksha and killed him. Born from Varaha and Bhoomi Devi was Narakasura, who had invincible powers at his command.

Narakasura was the king of Pragjothispura (South of Nepal). He was very powerful and demoniac in nature. He invaded the three worlds and took 16,000 women in his captivity. He took pleasure in inflicting torture to the beings of the three worlds through constant raiding and plunders. He imprisoned sages and Gods too.

He attacked the Heaven ruled by Indra to seize thousands of divine elephants to include in his army. He seized the glittering earrings of Mother Aditi, mother of all the Gods. Mother Aditi was a relative of Sathyabhama, one of the wives of Lord Krishna.

Narakasur mercilessly killed the army of the Gods. Being unable to bear the torture and shame inflicted by Narakasur, Indra sought the help of Lord Krishna to avenge his defeat.

Lord Krishna with his wife Sathyabhama (who is regarded as the incarnation of Bhoomi Devi) was enraged to hear the atrocities committed by Narakasur. Sathyabhama vowed to fight him to rescue the women in captivity, to secure the confiscated earrings of Mother Aditi and to relieve the Gods and sages held captive by the cruel Asur.

Narakasur was under the spell of a curse to meet his death at the hands of a woman. Knowing this, Lord Krishna took Sathyabhama along with Him to fight the battle with Narakasur. Lord Krishna was the charioteer to Sathyabhama in the fierce battle that ensued between Lord Krishna and Narakasur.

Narakasur's fort was impenetrable with a barrier of magical mountains. Unperturbed, Lord Krishna used his mace to destroy the mountains and headed to defeat him. The fortress was guarded by the five headed demon, Mura, who attacked Lord Krishna and His troops with countless weapons. All powerful Lord Krishna defeated and killed Mura by hurling His Sudarshan Chakra to gain entry into the fortress and hence He is called 'Murari,' killer of Mura). It is believed that just by hearing and reading this divine story of Lord Krishna of killing Mura, one would be able to destroy all his/ her sins by the power of His compassion and mercy.

In the war that followed, Sathyabhama killed Narakasur as ordained by the divine will. She was the mother of Narakasur in the previous incarnation and destined to put an end to his life

On the day of Chaturdasi, Lord Krishna returned to his palace and had a bath to cleanse himself of the blood stains and the sin of slaying the demon. Since then, it has become the practice to take bath with scented oil before Sunrise.

Mother Earth or Bhoomi Devi declared that the death of Her son should be rejoiced as victory over evil. Narakasur, before his last breath, prayed to the Mother that people should celebrate his death by lighting lamps all over and bursting firecrackers to rejoice the occasion. He repented for his innumerable sins committed against innocent people due to his dark ignorance.

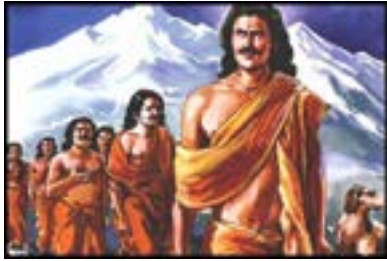
Mother Bhoomi Devi sang the glory of Lord Krishna. Gods from heaven showered flowers and sang glory of Lord. Gods and sages held in captivity were released. Mother Aditi's earrings were restored to her. The kingdom was brought under the control of Narakasur's son, Bhagdatta, who pleaded for Lord Krishna's protection. The 16,000 women captivated by Narakasur were set free.

This is also one of the reasons for the celebration of Deepawali, triumph of good over evil.

13.40 Return of Pandavas to Hastinapur from Exile

Pandavas returned to their capital Hasinapur after 13 years of exile on this holy day. People of Hastinapur celebrated this occasion.

The epic Mahabharata narrates the story of the Kauravas and Pandavas and their continuous struggle for gaining the throne. The five brothers or the Pandavas were defeated in the gambling game by the



Kauravas and as a punishment they have to serve a term of 13 years in exile. On a New Moon day of the Karthika month, they returned to Hastinapur, their hometown after completing those severe 13 years. They were honest, modest, caring, loving, and gentle and commoners respected them. To welcome them back in Hastinapur, people decorated their home with bright lights or diyas.

14.00 GOVARDHAN POOJA

Govardhan Pooja is an important Hindu festival celebrated next day to Deepawali on the first day of Shukla Paksha in the Hindu month of Kartik. This day is considered as a of thanksgiving ceremony to Lord Krishna, the Govardhan Hill and Gau Mata (Cow).

On this day of Govardhan Pooja, Lord Krishna and Nature are worshipped. It is believed that those who worship the Govardhan Hill (Giri) and Lord Krishna's favourite, Cows on this day, get the blessings of Lord Krishna.



The Bhagavata Purana narrates the story of Govardhan Pooja. Lord Krishna lifted the Govardhan hill on this day to save the villagers of Vrindavan from the torrential rains showered by Indra. The Govardhan hill served as a shelter for all the residents of Vrindavan. Lord Krishna is also called Giridhari because of this incidence of Him lifting the Govardhan hill, which is known as Giriraj (king of hills). The incident indicates how the Lord protects all of His devotees who surrender and take singular refuge in Him, which is an important sign of Govardhan Puja.

The residents of Vrindavana used to worship Indra and offer sacrifices too. Once Lord Krishna (when He was young and residing in Nandgaon with Nand Baba and Yashoda Maiya) asked His mother, Yashoda, 'O Maiya (mother), why everyone is preparing to worship and perform sacrifices for Indra?'

Mother Yashoda explained that because Indra showers ample rain for food grains, crops and fodder for the cows. Young Lord Krishna replied that instead of worshipping Indra, the Govardhan hill should be worshipped as our cows grazed on the grass which grows there. This not only nourishes us but provides our bread and butter. The Lord Krishna convinced His father, Nand Baba, to forgo the sacrifice to Indra and instead worship Govardhan hill.

He explained to Nand Baba and the villagers that it was the grace of Mother Nature that rain showers and everyone benefits from it. Lord Krishna further explained that it is Mother Nature who creates, nurtures and destroys. Indra did not have any part to play. He requested everyone to stop performing sacrifices for Indra and worship Govardhan hill instead.

On the behest of Lord Krishna, the residents of Vrindavan stopped performing ritualistic sacrifices to Indra. Indra got angry when he saw that the sacrifices in honour of him had ceased. Indra brought forth heavy rains to punish the residents. This made residents very fearful and frightened. The villagers turned to Lord Krishna for help. Seeing the plight of the villagers, Lord Krishna lifted the Govardhan hill with His little finger and held it to provide shelter to all of them against the torrential rain.

Lord Krishna stood lifting the Govardhan hill for seven days as Indra continued his revenge with devastating rainfall all over Vrindavana. Fortunately, no person or creature was hurt due to the divine umbrella of the Govardhan hill created by Lord Krishna. Finally, Indra realised that it was Lord Krishna Himself who was holding up the hill. He was advised by Brahmishi Narad that Lord Krishna was none other than the incarnation of

Lord Vishnu. Indra came to Vrindavan and fell at the Lord's feet and apologised for his blunder. Thus, Lord Krishna shattered the arrogance of Indra and showed that He was the source of power for all and He would always save those who surrender on His lotus feet.

All over India, Govardhan puja is celebrated in different ways by worshipping Lord Krishna, Govardhan hill and the cows. In the Braj region, Vrindavan, Mathura, Gokul, Nandgaon and Barsana, this festival is celebrated with great pomp and show. Lord Krishna temples are decorated with flowers and light decorations. Lord Krishna's idols are adorned with jewellery, new clothes and flower garlands. On this day of the Annakut festival, a special wide spread of vegetarian food, fruit and sweets, the 'Chappan Bhog' (56 different dishes of food) are offered to the Lord Krishna, and presented to the Lord by stacking them up like a hill. It is said that since Lord Krishna stood with the Govardhan hill held as a shelter for seven days without eating or drinking water, the women cooked 56 dishes to offer to Lord Krishna. The Govardhan hill story is heard and recited. Devotees participate by singing devotional bhajans/kirtans and being a part of the divine Govardhan Pooja Arti. It is a day to chant the name of Lord Krishna and sing His glory.

On this day, in the villages of India, cows are also worshipped. The cows are bathed and decorated with flower garlands and worshipped.

At a suitable muhurta, on this day, Govardhan Pooja Aarti is performed.

Arti Shri Govardhan Maharaj



Shri Govardhan Maharaj, O Maharaj.
Tere Mathe Mukuta Viraja Raho.
Tope Paan Chadhe Tope Phoola Chadhe,
Tope Chadhe Dudha Ki Dhar.
Teri Saat Kosa Ki Parikamm.
Chakaleshwara Hai VishRam.
Tere Gale Mein Kantha Saja Raho.
Thodi Pe Heera Laal.
Tere Kanana Kundala Chamaka Raheo.
Teri Jhanki Bani Vishala.
Giriraj Dharana Prabhu Teri Sharana.

Arti Lord Krishna (Kunj Bihari)



Aart i Kunj Bihari Ki, Shri Girdhar Krishna Murari Ki.
 Gale Mein Baijanti Mala, Bajave Murali Madhur Bala.
 Shravan Mein Kundal Jhalakala, Nand Ke Anand Nandlala.
 Gagan Sam Ang Kanti Kali, Radhika Chamak Rahi Aali.
 Latan Mein Thadhe Banamali, BhRamr Si Alak.
 Kasturi Tilak, Chandra Si Jhalak.
 Lalit Chavi Shyama Pyari Ki.
 Shri Girdhar Krishna Murari Ki, Aarti Kunj Bihari Ki.
 Shri Girdhar Krishna Murari Ki.
 Kanakmay Mor Mukut Bilse, Devata Darsan Ko Tarse.
 Gagan So Suman Raasi Barse, Baje Murchang,
 Madhur Mridang, Gwaalin Sang.
 Atual Rati Gop Kumaari Ki.
 Shri Girdhar Krishna Murari Ki, Aarti Kunj Bihari Ki.

Arti Gau Mata



Aarti Shri Gaiya Maiya Ki, Aarti Harni Viswadhayia Ki.
 Arthkaam Saddharm Pradaayini, Avichal Amal Muktipadyaini.
 Sur Maanav Saubhagyavidhayini, Pyaari Pujya Nand Chaiya Ki.
 Akhil Vishwa Pratipaalini Maata, Madhur Amiy Dugdhanan Prabdaata.
 Rog Shok Sankat Paritrata, Bhavsagar Hit Drid Naiya Ki.
 Aayu Oj Aarogyavikaashini, Dukh Dainya Vivek Budhi Daiya Ki.
 Seva k Ho Chahe Dukh Daayi, Saa Pay Sudha Piya Vati Maayi.
 Shatru Mitra Sabko Sukhdaayi, Sneh Swabhaav Vishwa Jaiya Ki.

15.00 OTHER HINDU FESTIVALS

There are few other important Hindu festivals which are celebrated in various regions of India. Brief descriptions of these festivals are provided below.

15.01 Ugadi Festival

Ugadi festival marks the first day of the Chaitra month, which is considered a 'New Year' from Hindu calendar. It is considered that Lord Brahma created the world on this day, so, it is celebrated as the first day of the Hindu calendar.



The festival marks the onset of spring and the milder weather after the harsh winter. This joyous occasion is celebrated with happiness and togetherness with near and dear ones. People buy gifts such as new clothes for their loved ones, give alms to charity, prepare special dishes, and visit temples to pray.

The day begins with a ritual oil bath followed by prayers. Oil baths, hoisting a flag at home, making rangolis, and eating tender Neem leaves are significant rituals followed by Hindus.

15.02 Gangaur Festival

Gangaur is one of the most important festivals in Rajasthan state of India. 'Gan' is a synonym for Lord Shiva and Gauri' or 'Gaur' stands for Goddess Parvati, the heavenly consort of Lord Shiva. Gangaur celebrates the union of the two and is a symbol of

conjugal and marital happiness. Gangaur is celebrated in the month of Chaitra, the first month of the Hindu calendar. This month marks the end of winter and the onset of spring. This festival is celebrated especially by women, who worship clay idols of 'Gan' and Gauri in their houses. These idols are worshipped by unmarried girls to seek the blessings of Gan and Gauri for a good husband, and by married women to pray for good health and long life of their husbands. This worship starts on the first day of the Chaitra month and continues for 18 days. On the 18th day of Gangaur festival, women decorate their palms and fingers with henna. The idols of Gan and Gauri are immersed in a pond or in a nearby lake on the 18th day of the festival.



15.03 Akshay Tritiya

Akshaya Tritiya or Akha Teej is celebrated once in a year when Sun and Moon are exalted and are at the extreme point of brightness. This rare event takes place on the third day of bright fortnight of Hindu month Vaishakha.



The literal meaning of the word Akshaya is never decreasing joy, hope, success and prosperity. Tritiya stands for third, which is third day of Shukla Paksha of Vaisakha.

There are many legends associated with this spring festival. Akshaya Tritiya is the birthday of the sixth Avatar of Lord

Vishnu, Parasuram. In some regions, the festival is celebrated as Parasuram Jayanti. He is a revered deity of Vaishnavs. Another legend suggests sage Ved Vyasa started reciting the Hindu epic Mahabharata to Lord Ganesh on this day. It is also believed that river Mother Ganga descended to earth on this day.

People observe a day-long fast during Akshaya Tritiya. Devotees perform puja and prepare 'Akshat' (unbroken rice coated with turmeric and kumkum) to offer to Lord Vishnu. Bhog (Prasadam) for Lord Vishnu, Lord Ganesh and other deities is also prepared. Many individuals buy gold, silver, properties and other valuable items on this day as this day is considered highly auspicious.

15.04 Jagannath Puri Rath Yatra

This holy festival is organised every year on the second day of the bright fortnight in the month of Ashadha. The festival is celebrated with huge joy and fervour across the coastal city of Orisha.



On this day, Lord Jagannath, which also means 'Lord of the Universe', is taken out of the temple from Jagannath Puri temple on beautiful chariots. Along with the idol of Lord Jagannath, idols of Lord Balaram and Goddess Subhadra are also taken out on different chariots and given a tour of the whole city before

being taken to the Gundicha temple. The three idols stay there for few days and then return to the main temple.

This is a nine-day festival celebrated in Jagannath Puri and other Lord Krishna temples all over the world. The grand 'Rath Yatra' begins after the three deities are established on the decorated chariots. Lord Jagannath's chariot is called Nandighosha. Lord Balaram's chariot is called Taladhwaja. Goddess Subhadra's chariot is called Darpadalan. These chariots are pulled by a large number of devotees. These idols are taken to Gundicha temple which is situated few kms away from the main Jagannath temple in Puri. Both the Lords, Jagannath and Balram with sister Goddess Subhadra take rest for few days and then taken back to the main Lord Jagannath temple. The journey to return back to the main temple is called Bahuda Yatra. It takes place at the end of the ten-day celebration.

15.05 Haryali Teej

Hariyali Teej or Kajari Teej or Hartalika Teej, is an important festival among women folk. It falls on the Tritiya (3rd day) of the Shukla Paksha (bright fortnight) in the month of Shravan.



Married women observe the Hariyali Teej fast to ensure the well-being and longevity of their husbands.

The festival falls during Monsoon season when the surroundings are covered with greenery all around, hence the name Hariyali Teej (Green Teej) is given. The festival of Hariyali Teej holds the same significance as Karwa Chauth observed by the married Hindu women.

The festival of Hariyali Teej is dedicated to Goddess Parvati and Her union with Lord Shiva. It was on this auspicious day that Lord Shiva accepted Goddess Parvati as his wife. For this reason, Goddess Parvati is also referred as 'Teej Mata'.

Hariyali Teej is observed with great pomp and show in North India. In Punjab, it is known as Teeyan. In Rajasthan, it is called Shingara Teej. The celebrations of Hariyali Teej may vary slightly from region to region, but the spirit and enthusiasm is same everywhere.

Hariyali Teej brings forth a tradition where married women are gifted with embellishments like traditional clothing, bangles, henna, sindoor, and sweets by their in-laws.

The women dress up in green colour lehengas or saris. These shringar items are symbolic of marriage and hold great significance for married women. Wearing them is considered to be auspicious. As per the Hindu traditions, it is believed that by wearing all the 16 adornments, a woman can keep her husband protected from all evils. This custom of gifting 'Sindhara' is particularly significant for the newly-weds. As a part of the ritual, women go to their parent's house for celebrating Hariyali Teej. Delicious food items are prepared and enjoyed by all.

Hariyali Teej sees women engaging in the rigorous 'Nirjala Vrat,' refraining from both food and water during the entire day. This fast, observed by both married and unmarried women, culminates with Moon worship followed by breaking the fast. Women express devotion to Teej Mata (Goddess Parvati) for their husband's prosperity and well-being. The occasion also involves worshipping idols of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati, accompanied by heartfelt songs.

The festival of Hariyali Teej celebrates the nuptial bond of marriage. The observance of this festival by Indian women signifies their devotion towards their respective families and how they are always prepared to protect them from all the evils.

15.06 Nag Panchami

Nag Panchami festival is celebrated on the fifth day of the waxing Moon (Shukla Paksha) during the month of Shravan. This is an auspicious festival on which snakes are worshipped. People worship even live snakes at some places and offer milk to them as well. Most of the people visit the temples of Lord Shiva or Nag Devta and offer milk, flower and rice as well.



In Hindu religion, snakes are known for their secret wisdom and knowledge as well as for their mortal nature too. By worshipping snakes, they get blessings from the snake to be wise. Also, they believe if some wrong is done during their lives, worshipping and offering milk to the snakes on this day help them to seek

forgiveness. Their apologies are accepted for their known and unknown wrong doings.

It is important to note that most of Hindu Gods have connection with Nags (snakes). Lord Vishnu rests on Sheshanag. Lord Shiva has snakes all round his neck. Lord Ganesh wears a snake in place of belt. Hence people respect their deities by worshipping snakes.

Usually, women do fast on this day. They break their fasts with pure vegetarian food avoiding any kind of fried food that day. Kheer and milk are offered as Prasadam.

15.07 Ganesh Chaturthi

Ganesh Chaturthi is a 10-day most auspicious festival marking the birth of the elephant-headed deity Lord Ganesh, the God of prosperity and wisdom. It begins on the fourth day (Chaturthi) of the month of Bhadrapada.



During Ganesh Chaturthi, clay representations of Lord Ganesh are placed in pandals or private residences where they are worshipped for up to ten days before submerging in a water body. During this festival, Lord Ganesh is believed to give Darshan to all of His devotees with His physical presence on Earth.

There are many legends surrounding the celebration of Ganesh Chaturthi. The most well-known of these are related to Lord Shiva and Mother Parvati. According to this legend, Mother

Parvati created Lord Ganesh from sandalwood when Her husband Lord Shiva was away. She designated Lord Ganesh to watch over Her house's entrance while taking a bath. When Lord Shiva returned, Lord Ganesh blocked Lord Shiva from entering the house. This caused the two of them to fight. Lord Shiva initially made vain attempts to persuade the boy Lord Ganesh to allow Him to enter the house. When the boy Lord Ganesh did not relent, Lord Shiva, the God of destruction, cuts off His head.

When Mother Parvati caught sight of this scene, She transformed into the Goddess Kali and declared that She would end the world. All Gods were concerned about this and prayed to Lord Shiva to find a solution and subdue Goddess Kali's rage. Lord Shiva, then, commanded His followers to run off and find a child whose mother was neglectful and turning her back on her child to bring his head. The followers saw the first child as an elephant, so they cut off his head and brought it to Lord Shiva as instructed.

The head was immediately placed on Lord Ganesh's body by Lord Shiva. He then revived the body of Lord Ganesh. Maa Kali's rage subsided. Lord Ganesh or Ganapati, the chief of the ganas or the attendants of Lord Shiva was given a warm welcome into the family. Lord Ganesh became the most important God in the Hindu religion.

At the start of the festival, idols of Lord Ganesh are placed on raised platforms in homes or in elaborately decorated outdoor tents. The worship begins with the pranpratishta, a ritual to invoke life in the idols, followed by shodashopachara, or the 16 ways of paying tribute. Amid the chanting of Vedic hymns from religious texts like the Ganesh Upanishad, the idols are anointed with red sandalwood paste and yellow and red flowers. Lord

Ganesh is also offered coconut, jaggery, and 21 modaks (sweet dumplings), considered to be Lord Ganesh's favourite food.

At the conclusion of the festival, the idols are carried to local rivers in huge processions accompanied by drumbeats, devotional singing, and dancing. The idols are immersed, a ritual symbolizing Lord Ganesh's homeward journey to Mount Kailash, the abode of His parents, Lord Shiva and Mother Parvati.

15.08 Radha Ashtmi

Radha Ashtmi festival is celebrated to mark the birth day of Radha Rani. It is celebrated on the eighth day (Ashtami) of the waxing (Shukla Paksha) month of Bhadrapada, which falls fifteen days after Krishna Janmashtami.



On this day, devotees observe fast, and offer special prayers to Lord Krishna and Radha Rani. It is believed that worshipping Lord Krishna and Radha Rani on this day helps in removing all the sins and sorrows. On Radha Ashtami, married women observe a fast and perform a special form of worship, which includes offerings and Arti of Radha Rani. This helps provide a happier married life and also removes financial obstacles. Fasting on this day also brings prosperity to one's life.

15.09 Karawa Chauth

Karwa Chauth is a festival celebrated by Hindu women of North and West India on fourth day after the full moon in the month of Kartik.



On this day, married Hindu women observe a 'Nirjala Vrat', or fast, by not having food or even a single drop of water after Sunrise for the entire day. They mark this tradition for the prosperity, safety and long life of their husbands. Women break their fast by looking at the Moon and their husbands' faces through a sieve.

While 'Karwa' means earthen pots, 'Chauth' means the fourth day. This day is celebrated with the belief that it emulates Goddess Parvati, who observed a fast to obtain Lord Shiva as her husband. Therefore, married women keep this fast to ensure the longevity of their husbands and an enduring marriage. The fast is also believed to bring good luck and prosperity to the family.

During the Karwa Chauth Puja, women wear traditional clothes, don the traditional symbols of a married woman (like sindoor, bangles, bindi etc), and apply henna on their hands as these are considered auspicious. Many also sing Bhajans and read the story of Karwa Chauth in groups.

15.10 Dhan Teras

Dhanteras festival marks the first day of 5 day-long Deepawali festival celebration. It is celebrated on 13th (Triyodashi) Lunar day of Krishna Paksha of Kartik month.



It is believed that Lord Dhanvantari, the divine physician and an Avatar of Lord Vishnu, was born on this day during Samudra Manthan (churning of milk ocean). He appeared with Amrit Kalash (pot filled with immortality nectar) in one hand and Ayurved scripture on the other hand. He is considered the God of health, healing, and Ayurvedic medicine. He invented and spread the knowledge of Ayurveda to the world. Hence Dhanteras is also celebrated as ‘Ayurved Day’.

Lord Ganesh, Goddess Lakshmi, and Lord Dhanvantari are worshipped along with Lord Kuber on this day.

As stated above, Lord Dhanvantari appeared with an Amrit Kalash in his one hand during Samudra Manthan (churning of milk ocean), hence a tradition started to buy new utensils on this auspicious day.

The evening of Dhanteras day is considered to be the most auspicious time to worship Goddess Lakshmi. Post Sunset, Lakshmi pooja is performed. Dhanteras Katha, a sacred story that relates the legends of appearing of Lord Dhanvantari on this day, is recited and after the pooja, oil lamps are lit to decorate the house doors to welcome Goddess Lakshmi.

A rangoli using vermilion and rice flour is also made to draw the impressions of Goddess Lakshmi at the entry of the home.

15.11 Bhaiya Dooj

Bhaiya Dooj festival is also part of 5-day long Deepawali festival and is celebrated on the second Lunar day of the Shukla Paksha (bright fortnight) of the Kartika month, that is second day after Deepawali. It is also celebrated as "Yam Dwitiya" in South India.



This festival has similarity with Raksha Bandhan festival.

There are many legends on how this festival was originated. According to the one legend, Lord Krishna visited His sister Subhadra after killing demon Narkasur. His sister gave a warm welcome to Him and made the occasion very special by decorating the house with flowers and preparing several types of sweets. His sister Subhadra also applied the ceremonial 'tilak' on the forehead of her brother, Lord Krishna to celebrate His victory., From that time onwards, the festival of Bhaiya Dooj was originated.

Another legend revolves around the story of Yam, the God of Death and his sister Yamuna. It is believed that he met his beloved sister on Dwitiya, the second day after the new Moon in the month of Kastik. His sister Yamuna celebrated this day as 'Yamadvitiya'.

The festival of Bhaiya Dooj has a literal meaning attached to it. It is made up of two words namely, 'Bhaiya' meaning brother and Dooj meaning the second day after the new Moon which is a day of its celebration.

The day holds the special significance into the lives of brothers and sisters. It is an auspicious occasion that celebrates the strong bonding between two opposite sex siblings. Sisters invite their brothers to visit their homes and prepare the beloved dishes for them. Sisters also pray to God for the well-being and longevity of their brothers against all the evils and bad fortune. In return, brothers follow their responsibilities of caring and loving their sisters.

15.12 Chhatt Festival

The word Chhatt' means sixth in Hindi. Since this festival is celebrated on the 6th day of the Shukla Paksh of Kartik month, it is named as Chhatt festival.



Chhatt festival or Chhatt Pooja is considered one of the oldest festivals among Hindus. Rigveda contains hymns of worshipping the Sun and some similar rituals as followed in this festival. It is stated in Veds that worshipping Lord Sun eradicates problems of lives of human beings. Lord Sun is the God of health and medicine. Worshipping Lord Sun keeps persons healthy, and if sick, eradicates sickness.

It is also stated in Hindu scripture that worshipping Lord Sun helped our Rishies to remain without food for months as they

used to absorb energy from the rays of the Lord Sun. This method of absorbing energy from Lord Sun is also known as Chhatt Method. Maharshi Valmiki had stated in Ramayan that Lord Ram and Goddess Sita kept fast and offered pooja to Lord Sun every year in the Shukla Paksha of Kartika month during their 14 years exile, and after coronation.

Chhatt festival is celebrated mostly in the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, and Eastern Uttar Pradesh in India and the Madhesh region of Nepal.

As stated above, this festival is dedicated to Lord Sun and his younger wife Usha as an acknowledgment for their boon to grant lives to us on Earth.

The rituals of the festival are arduous and observed over a period of four days. The rituals are - holy bathing, fasting and abstaining from drinking water, standing in water for long periods of time and offering Prasad (prayer offerings) and Arghya to the setting and rising Lord Sun. Some followers also perform a prostration march as they head for the river banks.

15.13 Vasant Panchami

Vasant Panchami festival is celebrated every year on the fifth day of the bright half of the Hindu Lunisolar calendar month of Magha. The day of Vasant Panchami is dedicated to Goddess Saraswati, the Hindu Goddess of knowledge, music, arts, wisdom and the learning. Vasant Panchami is known as Shri Panchami as well as Saraswati Puja especially in West Bengal.

On this day, Goddess Saraswati is worshipped during Purvahna time which is the time before midday as per Hindu division of the day. Devotees adorn the deity with white clothes and flowers as the white colour is believed to be the favourite colour of Goddess Saraswati.



Usually, the sweets made of milk and white sesame are offered to Goddess Saraswati and distributed as Prasad among friends and family members. In north India, yellow flowers are offered to Goddess Saraswati on the auspicious day of Vasant Panchami due to the abundance of blossomed mustard flowers and marigold (Genda Phool) at this time of the year.

The day of Vasant Panchami is significant for ‘Vidya Arambha’, the ritual of introducing young children to the world of education and formal learning. Most schools and colleges arrange Saraswati Puja on the day of Vasant Panchami.

16.00 JAYANTI CELEBRATIONS

Hindus celebrate Jayanti (birth anniversaries) of deities, saints, sages, or a significant historical figure. The Jayanti celebrations are an expression of reverence to these revered figures.

Jayanti celebrations are an opportunity for devotees to reflect on the lives and teachings of the great personalities. They provide inspiration to follow the path of righteousness, morality, and spirituality, as exemplified by the deities, saints or sages. Jayanti celebrations often bring communities and devotees together. They foster a sense of unity and shared faith among followers of the deities or individuals being honoured. Jayanti celebrations usually include discourses, lectures, and discussions about the lives and teachings of the person/ persons being celebrated. This helps educate people about the individual's significance and the values they upheld. Many Jayanti celebrations have cultural and historical significance. They help preserve cultural and religious traditions by commemorating the lives of historical figures who played a crucial role in shaping religious and cultural practices. The devotees also express their gratitude and devotion to the deities or saints by participating in Jayanti celebrations. They offer prayers, perform rituals, and make offerings as a symbol of their reverence. Jayanti celebrations often serve as an occasion for devotees to renew their faith and commitment to their spiritual or religious practices. They rekindle their dedication to the values and principles associated with the individual being celebrated.

Jayanti celebrations of certain prominent figures of Hinduism are described below.

16.01 Tailang Swami Jayanti

Tailang Swami was a great yogi born on Paush Shukla Paksh Ekadasi, in Holia at Vizianagaram, Andhra Pradesh, hence his Jayanti is celebrated on this day. His birth name was Shiv Ram.



For most of his life, Tailang Swami stayed in Varanasi, India. It is believed that Tailang Swami was an incarnation of Lord Shiva. At the age of 40, he abandoned materialistic life, as well as his wealth and became a reclusive. On the direction of his mother, he practised Kali Sadhana. His mother initiated him to the Kali mantra and performed deep meditation on a Kali temple. His mother died in 1669. Shiv Ram kept her ashes for meditation. He would meditate near a crematorium. After a severe and deep penance for 20 years, he met Bhagirathananda Saraswati. Shiv Ram then moved to Varanasi and led the life of a monk and was called Tailang Swami. It is believed that Tailang Swami lived a very long life of about 280 years.

16.02 Swami Vivekanand Jayanti

Swami Vivekanand Jayanti is observed on the Paush Krishna Saptami, that is seventh day after the Purnima in the month of Paush. According to English calendar, he was born on 12 January 1863 in Kolkata. This day is declared as 'National Youth Day'. Swami Vivekananda was power and energy personified. He was the disciple of Shri Paramhans Ramkrishna.



He founded Belur Math, Ramkrishna Math and Ramkrishna Mission.

16.03 Bhagwan Ramnandacharya Jayanti

Bhagwan Swami Ramnandacharya was a 14th-century Vaishnava devotional poet saint, born on Krishna Paksha Saptami of Magh month. He is considered as an Avatar of Lord Ram by his followers. He founded the Ramnandi Sampradaya, the largest monastic Hindu renunciant community in modern times.



An early social reformer, Bhagwan Swami Ramnanda accepted disciples without discriminating anyone by gender, class. His disciples included Bhakti movement poet-saints such as Kabir, Ravidas, Bhagat Pipa and others.

16.04 Saint Raidas (Ravidas) Jayanti

Saint Raidas (Saint Ravidas) was born in 1377 CE at Mandhuadhe in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh on Magh Purnima day. His Jayanti is thus celebrated on Magh Purnima. He was disciple of Swami Bhagwan Ramndacharya. He was a mystic saint, philosopher, poet, social reformer and initiated Bhakti movement with his Guru Swami Ramndacharya. He was Guru of Saint Meera Bai.



He was born in a cobbler family. He is also said to be the founder of Ravidassia religion (a Sikh sect). He wrote various devotional

songs and verses. 41 of his popular bhajans and poems are also included in Guru Granth Sahib.

He played a pivotal role in preaching social harmony and stood against caste discrimination and social injustice.

16.05 Shirdi Sai Baba Jayanti

Though there are lots of discussions on the exact date of birth of Shirdi Sai Baba. However, most of them believe that he was born on Krishna Paksh Saptami of Phalgun month, hence his Jayanti is celebrated on this day.



Sai Baba's early years are a mystery. Most accounts mention his birth as a Hindu Brahmin and his subsequent adoption by a Sufi fakir, or mendicant.

Sai Baba had a considerable following among Hindus and Muslims attracted by his compelling teachings. He is said to have been involved in granting the wishes of his devotees and the healing of the sick. He wore a Muslim cap and for the better part of his life, lived in an abandoned mosque in Shirdi, where he daily kept a fire burning, a practice reminiscent of some Sufi orders. Yet, he named that mosque Dwarakamai, abode of Lord Krishna. It is believed that though practising Sufism, he had substantial knowledge of the Sanatan Dharm and the Bhagavad Gita. Sai Baba's teachings often took the form of paradoxical and his empathy for the poor and diseased.

16.06 Shabari Jayanti

Shabari Jayanti is observed on Krishna Paksha Saptami in the month of Phalguna. Devotees pay tribute to the old tribal woman Shabari, who showered unconditional love on Shri Ram and melted His heart with her sincere devotion. She waited for years with the hope of meeting Him during her lifetime.



Shabari, a seeker of wisdom, wanted to understand the true meaning of Dharm and chose Sage Matang as her Guru. His Guru was so happy with her devotion and told her that Lord Ram would come to her hut one day to give Darshan. Inspired by her Guru's vision, Shabari would clean her humble abode to ensure it was tidy enough to give Lord Ram shelter. One day, her genuine devotion yielded results. Lord Ram visited Shabari during His exile of 14 years when His consort was abducted by the king of Lanka Ravan. Besides playing a host to Lord Ram, Shabari also helped him by guiding him to Sugriva's (the leader of the Vanar Sena) abode, who played a pivotal role in rescuing Mother Sita from Ravan's captivity.

16.07 Shri Ramkrishna Paramhans Jayanti

Shri Ramkrishna Parmhans was born on Shukla Pakash Pratipada Phalgun month in a poor but devoutly religious Brahmin family of the village Kamarpukur, Hooghli, West Bengal, India. He became a priest of the Dakshineshwar Kali Temple, dedicated to the Goddess Kali. His full name was Gadadhar Chattopadhyay.



He was married to Sarada Devi, who later became his spiritual counterpart. Swami Vivekananda was one of his famous disciples. In honour of his Guru, Swami Vivekananda founded Ramkrishna Math which works for the welfare of humanity and spread the spiritual movement known as Ramkrishna Movement worldwide. Belur Math is the headquarters of Ramkrishna Math and Mission.

16.08 Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Jayanti

Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was born on Phalgun Purnima in Mayapur, India. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu propagated the message of Lord Krishna. He suggested that chanting Hare Krishna mantra is the simplest method to get the grace of the Lord.



Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu taught the philosophy that Moksha is attained by chanting the sacred name of the Lord. He taught that the holy name of the Lord is the Lord's sonic incarnation, and since the Lord is the absolute whole, there is no distinction between His holy name and His transcendent form. Thus, by chanting the sacred name of the Lord, one can directly associate through sound vibration with the Supreme Lord. He was the founder of Gaudiya Vaishnavism. His followers are known as Gaudiya Vaishnavas.

16.09 Sant Tukaram Jayanti

Sant Tuka Ram was born on Krishna Paksh Dwitiya of Chaitra month in village Dehu, Pune, Maharashtra.



Sant Tuka Ram belonged to a Kshatriya family. His family was involved in doing a small business for living. However, he decided to follow the path of spiritualism.

He was a great poet and author. He dedicated all his poems and hymns to Lord Vithoba (Lord Vishnu). His several poems are included in Guru Granth Sahib. Throughout his life, till he breathed last, Sant Tuka Ram maintained a very simple life by sacrificing all the worldly luxuries in a perfect manner.

Sant Tukaram is considered as a legend in modern Marathi literature. Sant Tuka Ram instilled a highly spiritual thought in the minds of his followers that God lives in simplicity alone and not in luxury and other things.

16.10 Bhagwan Swaminarayan Jayanti

Bhagwan Swaminarayan was born on Chaitra Shukla Paksha Naumi (on Ram Navami Day) in Chhapaiya, a town near Ayodhya, in Uttar Pradesh. Bhagwan Swaminarayan said, ‘The earlier Avatars incarnated to serve a specific purpose, but My incarnation is to Brahmanize the Jivas and grant them ultimate liberation. For



this, I, Purushottam transcending Akshar, have taken human form. I am manifested to destroy Maya and to destroy avidya.’

Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s life and work had a lasting impact on society. Kishorilal Mashruwala, a renowned scholar and author, summarized Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s life and purpose in Sahajanad Swami Athawa Swaminarayan Sampraday as following.

‘At a time when Gujarat- Kathiawad was steeped in darkness, with His power, Sahajanand Swami enlightened infinite hearts, inspired thousands to sacrifice themselves on His commands, subjugated the looting instincts of scores of Kathis and Kolis, reestablished the extinct brahmacharya ashRam, enlightened the ascetic order which had become uncontrolled and wanton, laid down the ideals of self-control for the Gurus and Acharyas who had lapsed, gave women a well-defined status in society and the Sampraday, thus uplifting them, accepted non-Hindus into the Hindu Dharma, taught purity of character to the Shudras (lowest class), boosted literature, music and arts, propounded Ahinsa yagnas, became a teacher of the values of forgiving, was a founder of character and purity of life, was a proponent of the paths of pure Bhakti and pure Gyan, and was a teacher of Bhagavat Dharma and extoller of the principles of Ved Vyas.’

16.11 Samarth Guru Ramdas Jayanti

Samarth Guru Ramdas was born on Shukla Paksh Navam of Chaitra month (Ram Navami Day) in village Jamb, Jalna, Maharashtra. Samarth Guru Ramdas was an Indian Marathi Hindu saint, philosopher, poet, writer, and



spiritual Guru. He was a devotee of the Hindu deities Ram and Hanuman. He constructed several Maths (Monasteries). He was the spiritual Guru of Chatrapati Shivaji.

His contributions to society and literature are immense. His Dasbodh is highly revered by followers of Sanatan Dharm. Dasbodh may be considered as a guide to organizing one's spiritual and materialistic lives. He is fondly remembered for popularising the devotional chant of 'Sri Ram, Jaya Ram, Jay Jay Ram'.

16.12 Hanuman Jayanti

Hanuman Jayanti is observed on the Purnima of Chaitra month. Lord Hanuman is an ardent devotee of Lord Ram and He is the central figure of Hindu epic Ramayan. As per some scriptures, Lord Hanuman was born approximately 1 crore and 85 lakhs years ago. Hanuman Jayanti is observed in



all parts of India. It is believed that by worshipping Lord Hanuman, one can revitalize his spirits, bestow relief from sufferings and the adverse effects of enemies, and fill him with

unconquerable courage and strength to achieve success in their pursuits.

16.13 Bhagwan Parashuram Jayanti

Bhagwan Parshuram Jayanti is the appearance day of Bhagwan Parshuram. It is celebrated on Shukla Paksha Tritiya of Vaishaka month. The day is also called Akshaya Tritiya. Parshuram Bhagwan got his name Parshuram because He used a Parshu (an axe) to kill all the evil Kshatriyas on earth. Parshuram means the bearer of an axe.



Lord Parshuram is the sixth Avatar (incarnation) of Lord Vishnu. The legend of Parshuram dates back to the Treta Yuga. Bhagwan Parshuram is widely worshiped all over India in every State. People celebrate this day by taking a bath in holy river, and performing Pooja. On this day, people also do charity, kirtan and read holy scriptures.

16.14 Adi Guru Shankaracharya Jayanti

Adi Guru Shankaracharya was born on Shukla Paksha Panchami of Vaisakh month in Kalpi, Kerala, hence this day is celebrated as Adi Shankaracharya Jayanti. Adi (means first) Guru Shankaracharya was a Sanatan Dharm Guru and a philosopher. He is considered as an incarnation of Lord Shiva.



Adi Guru Shankaracharya expanded the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta. He interpreted and reinterpreted the primary principles of the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Brahmasutras. He established four monasteries (four Mathas) in the four corners of India to revive Hinduism. These monasteries are considered the most sacred and authentic institutions of Hinduism, whose names are respectively, Jyotirmath, Badrinath, Vedant Gyanmath or Sringeri Peeth, Sharda Math, Dwarka and Govardhan Math, Jagannath Dham.

16.15 Bhakt Surdas Jayanti

Bhakt poet Surdas was born on Vaisakh Shukla Paksha Panchami, same day when Adi Guru Shankaracharya was born. Bhakt Surdas is renowned for his poems and songs in praise of Lord Krishna. He was born blind.



His Jayanti is celebrated mostly in the Northern part of India. Lord Krishna is worshipped on this day and devotees observe a fast in honour of the poet. Several music communities come together to celebrate the day by organizing music and poetry sessions. Vrindavan holds special events on this day.

Bhakt Surdas was the disciple of Sri Vallabhacharya. Inspired by the stories narrated by Sri Vallabhacharya, Surdas composed several poems on the life of Lord Krishna. The poetic collection ‘Sursagar’ is the most recognized work of Surdas. Sursagar means the ocean of melodies.

16.16 Bhagwan Ramanujacharya Jayanti

Bhahwan Ramanujacharya was born on Shukla Paksha Panchami (5th day) of Vaisakh month. This day has a great significance among South Indian Hindu community.



Shri Ramanujacharya was born to mother Kanthimathi and father Asuri Kesava Somaya at Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu. His birth name was Lakshman, but later he came to be known as Ramanuja.

He was a South Indian Brahmin and a great devotional thinker of Hinduism. He was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu and dedicated all his life to worship Lord Vishnu. He founded a Vaishnava sect of Hinduism. He followed a path of Bhakti. He gave importance to temple worship and founded several centres to propagate the devotion of Lord Vishnu and his consort Mahalakshmi.

The renowned philosopher Shri Ramanujacharya studied 'Advaita Vedanta' at Kanchipuram. After finishing his studies, he became a priest in Vardharaja Perumal Temple which is dedicated to Lord Vishnu. Shri Ramanujacharya was always against discrimination on the basis of caste and helped the people of all castes to follow the Vaishnavism and Bhakti movement. He authored several books, important one are: Vedartha Sangraha, Shri Bhashya, Bhagwat Gita Bhashya.

16.17 Bhagwan Narsimha Jayanti

Bhagwan Narasimha Jayanti is celebrated on Vaishakha Shukla Purnima. Bhagwan Narasimha was the 4th incarnation of Lord Vishnu. On Narasimha Jayanti day, Lord Vishnu appeared in the form of Narasimha, a half lion and half man, to kill Demon Hiranyakashipu.



Bhagwan Narasimha Jayanti is celebrated similar to Ekadashi fasting. All type of grains and cereals are prohibited during Narasimha Jayanti fasting. Parana, which means breaking the fast, is done next day at an appropriate time.

On Narasimha Jayanti day, devotees take Sankalp during Madhyahna (afternoon period) and perform Bhagwan Narasimha Pujan before Sunset. It is believed that Bhagwan Narasimha appeared during Sunset while Chaturdashi was prevailing, and Purnima was to commence.

16.18 Swami Chinmayananda Jayanti

Swami Chinmayananda was born in a devout Nair family on Krishna Paksha Tritiya of Vaisakh month in Ernakulam, Kerala. He founded Chinmaya Mission which has over 250 centres in India and almost 50 centres abroad.



Swami Ji is popular worldwide as a spiritual master (Guru) and was an authority on the ancient Indian scriptures, especially the

Bhagwad Gita and the Upanishads. He authored over 30 books, dedicated to the philosophical belief behind religion. He is credited with the revitalization of spirituality and cultural values in India. Swami Ji also worked ceaselessly for spreading the philosophy of 'Advaita Vedanta' expounded by Adi Shankaracharya all over the world. Swami Ji made Vedanta accessible to everyone regardless of age, nationality or religion.

16.19 Bhagwan Buddha Jayanti

Bhagwan Buddha Jayanti is celebrated on Purnima of Vaisakh month, which is also known as Buddha Purnima. Bhagwan Buddha was born as Prince Siddharta in Nepal who later went on to become known as Bhagwan Buddha, the founder of Buddhism.



Buddhism gain popularity due to the teachings of non-violence, respect for life, and a more equal approach to the role of women. This concept is very much in keeping with both tradition and modern ideas of progress. Thus, many countries around the world began to follow teachings of Buddhism. However, Buddhism itself has branched into many sub-sects in modern society.

16.20 Brahmishi Narad Jayanti

Brahmrishi Narad Jayanti is celebrated on Krishna Paksha Dwitiya of Jyesth month. Brahmishi Narad is the son of Lord Brahma, the creator of the Universe and one of the three supreme Gods (The Tridevs – Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh). Brahmishi Narada is considered as the divine messenger of Gods and an affectionate devotee of Lord Vishnu. Wherever he goes, he chants, ‘Narayan, Narayan’.



Brahmrishi Narada is a great musician and always carries Karthal and Veena with him. He is a wise storyteller and full of wisdom to enlighten others. There are many stories of Brahmishi Narada in the epics of Mahabharata and Ramayana. He played an important role in the life of Lord Vishnu’s Bhakt Prahlad by giving him Deeksha and making him great devotee of Lord Vishnu.

16.21 Sant Kabir Das Jayanti

A disciple of Bhagwan Swami Ramnandacharya, Sant Kabir was born on Purnima of Jyesth month in Varanasi. According to a legend, he was given birth by a Hindu mother, but she abandoned him on the ghats of Ganga River in Varanasi. He was then adopted by a local Muslim weaver and his wife. They named him Kabir, meaning the great one. He is a religious saint (Sant) and great poet. A number of his poems are included in Shri Guru Granth



Sahib. He was part of Bhakti Movement started by his Guru Bhagwan Swami Ramanandacharaya; however, his teachings gave emphasis on the worship of the formless God, also known as the Nirgun Bhagwan. He did not believe in adhering to any rituals as practised by religious people during those days.

16.22 Sant Gyaneshwar Jayanti

Sant (Saint) Gyaneshwar was born on Shukla Paksha Panchami of Shravan month in Maharashtra. He revolutionized the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra. At the age of sixteen, Sant Gyaneshwar composed a poetic collection, Gyaneshwari, the first and the most popular Marathi commentary on Shrimadbhagavad Gita.



During the time of Sant Gyaneshwar, the teachings of Sanatan Dharma were considered to be the prerogative of certain castes and sects only. Sant Gyaneshwar unleashed a silent revolution against the religious monopoly and orthodoxy of the narrow-minded priestly class.

Gyananeswari is the most widely read Marathi version of Shrimadbhagavad Gita. The original Shrimadbhagavad Gita contains 700 Sanskrit verses but Sant Gyananeshwar's Gyaneshwari contains 9,000 Marathi verses. He goes deep into the philosophy and teaching of Shrimadbhagwad Gita by giving simple examples from daily life so that common man may understand the message of Shrimadbhagwad Gita.

16.23 Goswami Tulsi Das Jayanti

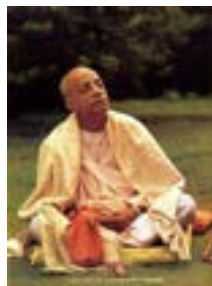
Goswami Tulsidas was born on Shukla Pakasha Saptami of Shravan month in Rajapur (Chitrakoot), Uttar Pradesh. Legend says that Tulsidas was born with all thirty-two teeth in his mouth after staying in the womb of his mother for twelve months. He was as healthy as a five-year boy when he was born and did not cry at the time of his birth but uttered Ram instead. Goswami Tulsi Das devoted his entire life in worshipping Lord Ram. It is believed he was a disciple of Guru Baba Narharidas, in Ramanadi Samraday.



He spent most his life in Chitrakoot, Kashi and Ayodhya. He was a great poet and composed several poetic collections such as Ramcharitmanas, Ktiwali, Janakimangal, Vinayapatrika, Geetawali, Hanuman Chalia, Barve Ramayana etc.

16.24 Shrila Prabhupad Jayanti

Abhay Charanaravinda Bhaktivedanta Swami, known popularly as Shrila Prabhupad, was born on Krishna Paksha Navami of Bhadrapad month in Bengal. He was a Sanatan Dharm spiritual Guru and the founder-preceptor of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON).



On the orders of his spiritual Guru Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, he left India in 1965 to spread the teachings of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in English countries. In 1947, the

Gaudiya Vaishnava Society recognised his scholarship and honoured him with the title Bhaktivedanta

16.25 Gayatri Jayanti

Gayatri Jayanti is observed as the birth anniversary of Goddess Gayatri, the Goddess of Veds on Purnima of Shravan month. Being the Goddess of all Veds, Goddess Gayatri is also known as Ved Mata.



It is believed that Goddess Gayatri is manifestation of all phenomenal attributes of Brahman. She is also worshipped as the Goddess of Hindu Trimurti. She is considered as the mother of all Gods and an embodiment of Goddess Saraswati, Goddess Parvati and Goddess Lakshmi.

Devotees observe Gayatri Jayanti by making special prayers to Gayatri Mata and by repeatedly chanting Gayatri Mantra.

16.26 Samrat Agrasen Jayanti

Samrat Agrasen Jayanti falls on the first day of the Shukla Paksha in the month of Ashwin. Samrat Agrasen was a legendary king of Agroha and also the founder of Agrahari and Agrawal communities. He was a notable and revered king who was looked upon with great respect by the people of his kingdom. He was very dear to Lord Krishna. Maharshi Garg was his Guru.



On the occasion of Agrasen Jayanti, Agrawal and Agrahari community worship Samrat Agrasen with dedication. They also offer prayers to Goddess Lakshmi to seek Her blessings for peace and prosperity. Devotees visit the temples of their respective 'Kuldevi' to seek Her blessings. Processions are held in honour of Samrat Agrasen at various places. The procession displays images of Samrat Agrasen and his family. On this day, descendants of Samrat Agrasen perform social welfare activities, organise free food distribution and medical camps. Various cultural programs and functions based on the life of Samrat Agrasen are also organised.

16.27 Saint Madhavacharya Jayanti

Saint Madhavacharya Jayanti is observed on the Vijayadashami or Dussehara day, 10th day of the Shukla Paksha of Ashwin Month.



Saint Madhavacharya is an exponent of the Dvaita School of philosophy, also known as Vaishnavism. According to his teachings, Lord Vishnu is the Supreme Being and resides in Vaikunta with His consort Lakshmi. Lord Vishnu is the only independent reality. All living and non-living beings are dependent on Lord Vishnu.

16.27 Maharshi Valmiki Jayanti

Maharshi Valmiki Jayanti falls on Purnima of Ashwin month. He authored the epic Ramayana in Sanskrit along with many other epics.

Maharshi Valmiki is known as Adi (first) Kavi (poet) of Sanskrit. It is believed that he composed the first verse or Shloka which set the foundation of Sanskrit poetry.



Maharshi Valmiki was a contemporary of Lord Ram. It was Valmiki where Mother Sita resided after She left Ayodhya on the orders of Lord Ram. He was Guru to Her both the sons, Luv and Kush.

16.28 Bhakt Meera Bai Jayanti

Bhakt Meera Bai Jayanti is celebrated on the Purnima of Ashwin month (on the same day of Maharshi Valmiki Jayanti). Bhakt Meera Bai was a 16th-century Hindu mystic poet and impassioned devotee of Lord Krishna. Meera Bai was the queen of Mewar state, Rajasthan.



Meera Bai was married to prince Bhoj Raj in 1516, the son of king Rana Sanga of Mewar. Her husband was, unfortunately, injured in 1518 in a conflict with the rulers of the Delhi Sultanate and died in 1521. Within a few years of her husband's death, her father and father-in-law were also killed in a battle with Akbar of Mughal Empire.

After the death of her husband, her devotion to Lord Krishna increased day by day. She was considered a rebel by her brother-in-law who became ruler of Mewar after the death of her

husband. He forced her to leave Mewar. It is believed that she spent considerable time of her life in Vrindavan and then went to Dwarka in 1547 where she was absorbed within Lord Krishna

16.29 Sant Jalaram Bappa Jayanti

Sant Jalaram Bappa's Jayanti, is celebrated the seventh day of Shukla Paksha in the month of Kartik.

It is said that Jalaram Bappa withdrew from worldly pursuits at the age of 18 to become the disciple of Bhoja Bhagat of Fatehpur. His teachings and miracles have left an indelible mark, reaching every corner of the world.



Sant Jalaram Bappa's life was marked by selfless service and devotion. He initiated the Sadavrat feeding centres, offering free meals to sadhus, saints, and those in need. The miraculous aspect was the inexhaustible nature of his grain stores.

Sant Jalaram Bappa's teachings transcended religious boundaries. His disciples included not only Hindus but also Muslims, who followed him with unwavering devotion.

16.30 Guru Nanak Jayanti

Guru Nanak Jayanti is celebrated on the Purima of Kartik month. He was the founder of the Sikhism religion and the first Sikh Guru.

Guru Nanak's Jayanti celebrations commence with 'Prabhat Pheris' (early morning processions). These processions start from the Gurudwaras (a place of assembly and worship for Sikhs) and proceed around the localities singing hymns. This is followed by singing 'Asaa-Ki-Vaar' (morning hymns), katha and kirtan (hymns from the Sikh scriptures). After that, Langar (a special community lunch) is served to all those present. Night prayer sessions are also held in some Gurudwaras, which begin around Sunset when Rehras (evening prayer) is recited, followed by kirtan until late at night.



16.31 Geeta Jayanti

Gita Jayanti is the day when Lord Krishna revealed the knowledge of Bhagavad Gita to Arjuna. This falls on the 11th day (Ekadashi) of Shukla Paksha of Margshirsh month.



Bhagavad Gita is the transcendental dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna spoken at the battlefield of Kurukshetra during Mahabharat war. The Bhagavad Gita is organized in 18 chapters and contains 700 verses. It refers to the process of linking ourselves and our activities to the Supreme Lord. Bhagavad Gita answers questions regarding the existence of the body and soul, material and spiritual world, duties of man and much more. Anyone who reads the Bhagavad Gita daily is assured of spiritual advancement and knowledge.

16.32 Lord Dattatreya Jayanti

Lord Dattatreya Jayanti is celebrated on the Purnima of the Margashirsha month. As per the scriptures, Lord Dattatreya symbolises the fusion of the three Gods (Trimurti), namely Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (the Nurturer) and Mahesh (Lord Shiva, the Destroyer).



Lord Dattatreya has three heads and six arms. On Dattatreya Jayanti, His child form is worshipped. The day is celebrated with a lot of joy and fanfare in Lord Dattatreya Temples in many States including Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Gujarat.

It is believed that if one worships Lord Dattatreya with complete devotion and fasts on Dattatreya Jayanti day, all his/her wishes get fulfilled.



OBJECTIVES OF SHRI RAM KATHA SANSTHAN PERTH

- Shri Ram Katha Sansthan Perth (Inc) is a Vaishnav non-profit religious organisation based on the principles established by Bhagwan Swami Shri Ramananda Ji Acharya (14th century).
- Shri Sansthan is non-discriminatory to any religion, caste, sex and social status of the devotees. Its main principle is, 'Hari Ko Bhaje, So Hari Ko Hoi', the one who worships the Lord, is dear to the Lord.
- Shri Sansthan believes that the worship of the Lord with pure heart and unselfish attitude is very dear to the Lord. All the devotees of the Lord are brothers and sisters.

Concept of Brahman (Supreme)

- Lord Ram, Mother Sita and their incarnations are the 'Supreme Brahman'. They are omnipresent and preserver of the Universe.

Concept of Jiva (Soul)

- The existence of Jiva (Soul) is dependent on Brahman. Lord Ram, Mother Sita and their incarnations (Brahman) are the means to achieve salvation (Moksha). Their eternal and omnipresence help Jiva to move forward towards the achievement of salvation (Moksha).

Concept of Maya (Illusion)

- Maya is the cause of Prakrati (Nature/ World). Prakrati is the combination of three Gunas (Qualities) - Sat, Raj and Tamas. By these three Guns, Prakrati creates the world. Maya is controlled by Brahman. Brahman (Lord Ram, Mother Sita and their incarnations) alone can provide salvation from Maya.

Concept of Moksha (Salvation)

- The abode of Lord Ram, Mother Sita and their incarnations is 'Saket-Dham'. By meditating on and praying Lord Ram, Mother Sita and their incarnations, the devotees get salvation (Moksh) and never come back into this world. The cycle of birth and death is eradicated forever.
- Shri Sansthan continues to publish religious books, booklets, magazines etc to fulfil these objectives. Time to time, Shri Sansthan also organises Shri Ram Katha and other religious Kathaen (stories) of the great Sanatan Rishies, Devs, Devis and great devotees.



Dr. Yatendra Sharma

Dr Yatendra Sharma was born in a Sanatan Dharma Hindu family having Sanskar of Shri Ramnandi Sampraday. He developed an interest in reading, listening, and narrating religious scriptures since his childhood. He is having a Master's degree from AMU Aligarh and a PhD in Chemical Technology from the Technical University of Graz, Austria. He is serving the mining and mineral industry of Australia for more than three decades. In 2016, he founded a religious organisation 'Shri Ram Katha Sansthan' based on the teachings of Shri Ramnandi Sampraday. He has authored and published more than 30 books/ booklets on Sanatan Dharma.