

Importance of Shravan/Shraavana

Shravan month is an important period for devout Hindus and they consider it to be the holiest month of the year. In fact, every day in the month of Shravan month is considered auspicious. It is believed that one can win the special grace of Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu during this holy month. Shravan month, in particular, holds a lot of importance for the devotees of Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva is the God who bestows many boons.

Shravan month is synonymous with auspicious festivals and events. It is the best time to conduct all-important religious ceremonies, as almost all days in this month are auspicious for shubh arambh, i.e. good start. Shravan maas' ruling deity is Lord Shiva. One of the main purposes of Shravan fasting is to learn self-control and detoxify your body. The diet has to be planned to remain healthy and energetic throughout the day. There are some rules followed during Shravan month fasting. During the month, some eat a single meal during the day while others avoid foods that contain salt, garlic or onion. Eating a single meal during the day is called Eka Bhukta Bhojan and eating a light meal after sunset is called Nakhta Vratam.

In this month, each Monday is celebrated as Shravan Somvar across all temples with the Dharanatra hanging over the Shiva linga, bathing it with holy water and milk, throughout the day into the night. Devotees offer Bael leaves, flowers, holy water and milk, i.e. Falam-Toyam, Pushpam-Patram to Lord Shiva on every Shravan Somwar. They fast until the sun goes down and the Nandadeep, the Akhand Diya, burns throughout.

The word "Shiva" connotes Kalyan (welfare). Lord Shiva is the main God in the worship of Panchadev (Five Gods). Pushpadant has very well explained the glory of Lord Shiva in Shiv Mahima Stotra. He has said that in spite of being an eternal God, Lord Shiva has come to acquire the role of a creator, preserver and destroyer of this mundane world. Shiva is the cause of every living being's existence.

So, let us learn some interesting facts related to the holy month Shravan.

As per the traditional story, the daughter of Daksh had sacrificed her life and was reborn as Parvati in the home of a Himalayan King. Parvati wanted to marry Lord Shiva. That is the reason why she performed penance during Shravan month. Lord Shiva was pleased with the devotion of Parvati and he fulfilled her wish. Lord Shiva likes Shravan month very much as he got reunited with his wife during this period. During the holy Shravan month the Shivaling is worshipped and people pray to Lord Shiva for the entire night. All this is done to win the special grace of Lord Shiva. Any act which violates the religious principles is strictly prohibited during Shravan month. It's important to follow religion, to win the grace of God. It's also important to please the planets, who are the agents of God.

It is believed that worshipping Lord Shiva during Shravan is considered more powerful than worshipping during normal days. The fasts done on Monday are known as Shravan Somvar Vrat. It is believed that by observing Sravan Somvar Vrat all desires gets fulfilled. It is believed that if unmarried women keep fast on Mondays of the month they would get a good husband. Apart from Monday's women keep fasts on Tuesdays and Fridays of the month too. On Tuesdays newly married brides keep the Mangala Gauri Vrata to get rid of bad omens and married women keep Varalaksmi Vrata on Friday (Shravan Shukravar Vrata).

Each day in the month of Shravan has a special significance and other deities are worshiped too. Mondays are dedicated to Shiva, Tuesdays to Gauri, Wednesdays to Vithala, Thursdays to Mercury and Jupiter, Fridays to Lakshmi and Tulsi, Saturdays to Shani and Sundays to Sun. Many do Pujas of Lord Vishnu on Saturday. Those who have complications in their birth chart due to the **planet Saturn** observe fast on this day of Sampat Shanivar. Praying to Goddess Lakshmi is also considered auspicious in this month. Some other auspicious occasions in the month of Shravan are Hariyali Amavasi, Hariyali Teej, Nag Panchami, Tulsi Das Jayanti, Putradaikadashi, Shravani Purnima, Rishi Panchami, **Krishna Janmashtami** and Raksha Bandan.

According to a legend the churning of oceans or Samudra Manthan took place in the month of Shravan and it is on a Somvar that Lord Shiva drank the poison Hala Hala to save the world. In order to lessen the effect of poison the Devas had offered the Ganges water to Lord Shiva, because of this on Shravana Somvar in Shiva Temples the Shivalinga is bathed with holy water day and night. Devotees place Bel leaves on the Linga and flowers and fast until sunset. A 24 hour lamp also burns steadily in the temples. It is believed that one can please Lord Shiva in Shravan month by offering milk. It is considered highly auspicious to wear rudraksha beads in Shravan month.

The significance of Lord Shiva in Shravan (Sawan) Month

The Samudra Manthan is a very important episode as per the Puranas. The churning of the milky ocean, i.e. Samudra Manthan in search of the amrit, took place during the month of Shravan. During the churning, 14 different rubies emerged from the ocean. Thirteen rubies were divided among the devas and the Asuras, however, Halahal, the 14th ruby remained untouched as it was the deadliest poison which could destroy the whole universe and every living being. Lord Shiva drank the Halahal and stored the poison in his throat. Due to the impact of the poison, his throat turned blue and he came to be called Neelkantha

Such was the impact of the poison that Lord Shiva wore a crescent moon on his head and all the devas started offering water from the holy river of Ganges to Lord Shiva to reduce the effects of the poison. Both these events took place in the Shravan Maas and therefore, it is considered very auspicious to offer holy Ganga water to Lord Shiva in this month.

Importance of wearing Rudraksh in Shravan Month

Devout devotees of Lord Shiva consider it auspicious to wear Rudraksha in the month of Shravam. Mondays are dedicated to Lord Shiva as his the ruling deity of the day. However, Mondays in the Shravan maas as known as Shravan Somwar and are highly auspicious, and celebrated with all austerities.

Rituals to following Shravan (Sawan) Month

- Offer milk to Lord Shiva in Shravan Month leads one to earn a lot of punyas.
- Wear Rudraksha and use it for japas.
- Bhibhuti is considered very important if offered to Lord Shiva. Some of it should be smeared on the forehead as well.
- Offer panchamrit (a mixture of milk, curd, butter or ghee, honey and jaggery) and bael leaves to Shiva linga.
- Chant the Shiva Chalisa and perform regular aarti of Lord Shiva.
- Chanting the Mahamritunjay mantra is very auspicious.
- Fast on all Shravan Somvars. This is important for young women seeking good husbands.

Significance of Shravan Maas:

Spiritual Activities during Shravan

One must engage in devotional activities such as worship, Sadhanas, meditaion or bhajans at home or in Shiva temples. One must visit Shiva temples during this month. Each day of this month carries spiritual significance:

- **Monday:** is the day to worship Lord Shiva.
- **Tuesday:** women worship Gauri for the better health of their family.
- **Wednesday:** is dedicated to Vithala, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu or Krishna.
- **Thursdays:** are for worshipping Buddh and Guru.
- **Friday:** for worshipping Lakshmi and Tulsi.
- **Saturdays:** are for Saturn (Shani Dev). These days are also known as Shravan Saturdays or Sampat Sanivara (wealth Saturdays) as one can pray for obtaining wealth.
- **Sundays:** are for the Sun god. Sun worship was common practice in the Vedic period and it is followed even now. Especially in Shravan, every Sunday the Sun is worshipped.

Things to do in Shravan Maas

Since Shravan Mass is highly auspicious as per Vedas, you can engage in activities that add to your devotion to Shiva.

Rudra Abhishek And Homa:

Rudra' means the one who is terribly infuriated, which is one of the divine qualities of Lord Shiva who displays it while performing His cosmic dance, Tandava for the annihilation of creations. Shiva, by the virtue of this quality, is called Rudra. Abhishek means a method of worship offered to the Divine for cleansing all the misgivings, sins of the worshiper.

Performing Shiva Abhishek includes the offerings of Panchamrit (mix of milk, honey, sugar, ghee and curd, Ganga jal, ghee, Bael Patra (Bilva leaves), Dhatura and other sacred items dear to Lord Shiva.

Rudra Abhishek and Homa purifies your mind and body, offers peace, fulfills your desires and enlightens your soul.

Mantra Chanting

You may chant the following Shiva Mantras using a Rudraksha rosary or silently in mind. Chanting may be done at specified time and with specific number of counts (108 times or multiples of it) in the morning or evening, or you may do ajapa-japa, a silent repetition of the mantra throughout the day.

“I am None other than Shiva who is the supreme reality. Na-ma-Ha, means None other than”

Om tryambakam yajāmahe sugandhim pushtivardhanam |
urvārukamiva bandhanān mrityormukshīya mā'mratāt ||

“OM! We worship the Three-eyed Lord Who is fragrant and Who nourishes and nurtures all beings. As the ripened cucumber (without the intervention of the gardener) is freed from its bondage (to the creeper), may He liberate us from death for the sake of immortality.”

Om Tatpurushaya Vidmahe Mahadevaya Dhimahi
Tanno Rudrah Prachodayat ||

“OM! Let me meditate on the great Purusha, Oh, greatest God, give me higher intellect, and let God Rudra illuminate my mind.”

Also you can read stories of Lord Shiva, read the Shiva Purana and meditate on His holy form. This is true Bhakti.

Fasting For Shiva on Mondays during Shravan Maas:

According to Shiva Purana, those who observe fast during Shravan Maas have their desires fulfilled and are blessed with the grace of Shiva. Shravan Maas Somvar is very important for the devotees of Lord Shiva.

There are two ways in which fast can be observed and they are:

Austere Fast: In this type of fasting, a person does not eat anything for an entire day except for drinking water. The fast is broken in the evening after sunset and regular food without onion and garlic is consumed.

Partial fast: In a partial fast one can eat fruits and permitted foods like sabudana and nuts in the day and eat one time meal in the night.

The fast is broken after sunset, although in some cases it continues till next day. Devotees offer their prayers to Lord Shiva and then consume normal food.

Another type of fasting is that you can keep a maun vrat (Silence) on one whole day in this month and remember Shiva in your mind.

Benefits of Fasting on the Somvar (Monday) in Shravan Maas:

- Devotees are blessed with spiritual bliss
- Improves physical and mental health
- Increases willpower and memory
- Women who fast on Shravan Mondays (Somvars) get their perfect husband
- Fasting removes obstacles by expelling negativity

Rudram Chamakam Yagna Puja

Shri Rudram is one of the oldest names of Lord Shiva. Through the chanting of Sri Rudram, Lord Shiva's various attributes and aspects are invoked and worshipped. By the power of Shri Rudram sick become well, the unmarried find the ideal mates, debts are removed, wealth and power are showered and all the ills are kept at bay. The Vedic hymn that extols Lord Rudra is called the Rudra Prashna.

Rudra Prashna is also called the Rudradhyaya, the Shatharudriyam or Sri Rudram. This Sri Rudram is found in the mid portion of the Taittiriya Krishna Yajur Veda. Namakam literally means the hymn which is made of Namaha. Namaha in Sanskrit has two meanings. One is Salutations and the other is not mine. Every time when you utter the word Namaha, actually the patterns and karmas get detached from you and get rid of the spell of patterns and karmas. It is said that chanting of Sri Rudram is a direct way to Enlightenment.

Benefits of this puja:

- Divine grace and blessings of Lord Shiva
- Removal of malefic effects of various Planets
- Health, wealth and prosperity
- Success in career, job, business and relationships relief
- Protection against various diseases and ailments
- Spiritual upliftment