



Sacred Month of Shravan



In the Hindu calendar the month of Shravan is dedicated to Lord Shiva. The whole month is considered auspicious to seek blessing of Lord Shiva. Devotees keep various fasts during Shravan month to please Lord Shiva.

Shravan month is also known as Sawan month in North Indian states. All Mondays or Somwar which fall during Shravan month are considered highly auspicious for fasting and known as Shravan Somwar or Sawan Somwar Vrats. Many devotees observe sixteen Mondays or Solah Somwar fasting from first Somwar of Sawan month.

All Tuesdays or Mangalwar in Shravan month are dedicated to Goddess Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva. Tuesday's fasting during Shravan month is known as Mangal Gauri Vrat. Sawan Shivaratri and Hariyali Amavasya are other auspicious days during Shravan month.

There is fifteen days difference in starting time of Shravan month depending on the followed lunar calendar in the region. In Purnimant calendar, usually followed by North Indian states, Shravan month starts fifteen days before Amavasyant calendar.

In Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, Amavasyant Lunar Calendar is followed while in North Indian states Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Bihar Purnimant Calendar is followed. Hence half of the Sawan Somwar dates differ in both calendars.

All important religious festivals and ceremonies like Bodh Chaut, Nag Panchami, Randhan Chat, Shitla Satam, Janmastami and Raksha Bandhan fall in the month of Shravan. From Shravan Sudh Ekam to Shravan Shudh Atham, 'Hindola' festival is celebrated. A swing is made and is decorated with flowers, fruits and dry fruits. Every night the idol of Lord Krishna is placed on it and swung. By chanting the following mantras the devotees offer their prayers.

The Holy Month of Shrivana

Many Hindus fast for the entire month living on fruit, nuts and milk during day and breaking the fast with a vegetarian meal after sunset. Those unable to fast during this month usually abstain from meat, eggs, tea, coffee and alcohol during this month.

All days of Shrivana month are considered auspicious, but, Mondays or Somvars of Shrivana month are especially observed with austerity and women generally fast on this day. All Mondays are devoted to the worship of Shiva as this day is sacred to Lord Shiva. No other Mondays of other months are so greatly honoured. Tuesdays are devoted to the worship of Gauri and Fridays are for Lakshmi. Saturn is worshiped on all

continued on page 8 ►



Sawan Somwar Vrat Dates for Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Bihar

23	July	(Tuesday)	First day of Shrivana Month
29	July	(Monday)	Sawan Somwar Vrat
05	August	(Monday)	Sawan Somwar Vrat
12	August	(Monday)	Sawan Somwar Vrat
19	August	(Monday)	Sawan Somwar Vrat
21	August	(Wednesday)	Last day of Shrivana Month

Sawan Somwar Vrat Dates for Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu

07	August	(Wednesday)	First day of Shrivana Month
12	August	(Monday)	Sawan Somwar Vrat
19	August	(Monday)	Sawan Somwar Vrat
26	August	(Monday)	Sawan Somwar Vrat
02	September	(Monday)	Sawan Somwar Vrat
05	September	(Thursday)	Last day of Shrivana Month



◀ continued from page 7

Shravana Saturdays, with the objective of obtaining wealth and these Saturdays are known as Sampat Sanivara (wealth Saturdays). Wednesdays (Mercury or Buddh) and Thursdays (Jupiter or Guruvara) are also days for worshiping Buddh and Guru. Saturn's Fast also begins in the month of Shravana annually.

Sun was worshiped on a daily basis in the Vedic period and continues to be now. During Shravana, every Sunday it is essential to worship the Sun. The 'Chudi' Puja is also performed by married women on Fridays and Sundays through worshiping the Tulsi plant (Holy Basil) by offering the 'chudis' or tiny bouquets of flowers, vermilion and other puja items. The 'chudis' are then offered to elderly married women and their blessings are sought. Women in India take this Holy month of Shravana very seriously and observe it as strictly as their situations allow.

Some of the days of particular significance are outlined below:

Nag-Panchami: Naga-Panchami falls on the fifth day of Shravana and is held in honour of Nagas or snakes. Hindus worship snakes and regard them with the same veneration given to other deities. The King of serpents Vasuki adorns the neck of Lord Shiva forming a crest over the Lord. This day is dedicated to snakes and they are worshiped with milk and fruits.

Rishi Panchami: is celebrated on the Shravana full moon and Shulka Panchami tithi of the month of Bhadrapada, one day after Ganesha Chathurti. Rishi panchami is the day of atonement. Stars or nakshatras (not the planets are worshiped). In Vedic times it was believed that the spirits of certain departed great sages of the earth were believed to inhabit important stars, the most famous being

the constellation Ursa Major i.e. the seven brightest stars of the north (The Great Bear). Later, the seers became identified with the stars they inhabited. The seven great sages worshiped on both the Shravana purnima and the Bhadrapada Panchami are -

1. Kashyapa
2. Atri
3. Bharadvaja
4. Visvamitra
5. Gautama
6. Jamadagni
7. Vashishta.

Putra-Ekadashi: falls on Shravana shukla Ekadashi (11th lunar day of the waxing moon). King Mahijit was sonless due to which all were distressed. The King consulted a learned sage who told him that in his previous birth the King was a merchant and had committed a sin. The sage advised the King to observe a fast on Shravana shukla Ekadashi day by which the sin would be cancelled. The King obeyed the sage and completed the fast and was son blessed with a son. This is an important day to fast if you want progeny.

Hindola: A swing is made and is decorated with flowers. Every night idols of Lord Krishna and Radha are placed on the swing and swung by devotees with dancing and singing of the 'hindola'. This festival is believed to please Lord Krishna and gain his blessings.

Vara Lakshmi Vrata: This is a Vrata which implies the worship of Goddess of Wealth. The Vrata is observed on the Friday immediately preceding the full moon day of the month of Shravana. Maha Lakshmi is the embodiment of prosperity and auspiciousness. It seems the glory of this Vrata is eulogized in the Skanda Purana by Lord Shiva Himself. The worship of Maha Lakshmi is performed by married ladies to obtain good progeny, and for the long life of the husband. Since Mahalakshmi as Vidya Lakshmi bestows divine wisdom also, great prophets have worshiped her for success in their spiritual work.

Janmashtami: This is the birthday of Lord Krishna and falls on the eighth day of Shravana Krishna (Waning eighth tithi). The day is celebrated in honour of Lord Krishna, the eighth Divine incarnation of Vishnu. A twenty-four hour fast is observed on this day which is broken only at midnight because Lord Krishna was born at midnight. This is one of the greatest of all Hindu festivals.

Pithori: is a propitiatory festival observed on the Shravana new moon i.e. Amavasya or the last day of Shravana. The seven chief goddesses and the sixty-four yoginis or divine attendants on Goddess Durga are worshiped by married women for gaining progeny and happiness. The name is derived from Pitha (flour), from which the images of the goddess are made and worship. In Bhavishottar Purana, Goddess Parvati (wife of Lord Shiva) advised Devi Sachi/Indrani (the wife of Lord Indra) to observe this fast in order to be blessed with sons and good fortune.

continued on page 9 ▶



In the Hindu calendar the month of Shravan is dedicated to Lord Shiva. The whole month is considered auspicious to seek blessing of Lord Shiva. Devotees keep various fasts during Shravan month to please Lord Shiva.



◀ continued from page 8

The following four festivals all fall on the Full Moon in Shravana Nakshatra

Narali Purnima: On full Moon day of Shraavan is celebrated by worshiping the ocean with mantras and offerings of coconuts. The name Narali comes from 'naral' which mean coconut, so Narali Purnima mean the full moon on the coconut day. From this day the south-west monsoon is supposed to abate, and fisher-folks resume their trade. According to some throwing of coconuts into the sea is an offering to the "Food-giving goddess of the water" whereas others say the offering is made to Varuna the Vedic God of Ocean.

Shravani Purnima: On this day all Brahmins renew their sacred thread which they wear. It is also called Rig-Yaju Shravani as it appears only students of Vedas would renew the cord. But, actually all Brahmins who have been initiated and wear the thread renew it. There is an elaborate ceremony where the family priest begins the function by worshiping Lord Ganesha and lights a sacrificial fire reciting mantras and prayers.

Eight supari betelnuts or eight Darbha (sacrificial grass) rings are placed on a tray representing the seven Rishis and Arundhati which are worshiped with flowers etc. Tarpan or libations of water in the name of the departed spirits are offered. Then the old thread is cast off in the sacrificial fire and a new thread with a three-fold twist is worn after reciting the Gayatri Mantra. Lastly follows the worship of Brahma by an offering of rice and flowers in the fire and distributing of gifts to Priests and Brahmins.

Raksha Bandhan or Rakhi Purnima: Is a sentimental of festivals which also falls on Purnima day. A Rakhi or amulet is usually

made of silk thread and is tied round the wrist of brothers by their sisters to protect brothers from harm and in return seeking protection from brothers when the sister is in trouble.

The Rakhi name derives from the word 'raksha' which means to protect. It symbolizes the abiding and chaste bond of love between the brothers and sisters.

Sitala Saptami: Sitala devi (the cool one) is the goddess who is associated with disease particularly smallpox and there are many temples and shrines in her honour. One of the days she is specially worshiped is on Shravana Krishna (Waning seventh tithi), in Gujarat.

Sitala devi worship ensures that she accepts the prayers and offerings of widows and of mothers on behalf of their children. During the day of Sitala worship one is supposed to abstain from all hot, or cooked, food and drink. The reason may be to avoid hot thing and is more likely to be the longing for cold water on the part of smallpox patients. ■



Dr. Ravi Rao celebrating Hindola festival

All important religious festivals and ceremonies like Bodh Chaut, Nag Panchami, Randhan Chat, Shitla Satam, Janmastami and Raksha Bandhan fall in the month of Shraavan. From Shraavan Sudh Ekam to Shraavan Shudh Atham, 'Hindola' festival is celebrated. A swing is made and is decorated with flowers, fruits and dry fruits. Every night the idol of Lord Krishna is placed on it and swung.