

Essence of Dharma sindhu

Preface

In the process of Learning with the intense desire to experience the ripples of the endless Ocean of Hindu Dharma, a venture has been made to present a Summary of ❖Dharma Sindhu❖ so exhaustively scripted by Maha Panditha Kashinatha Upadhyaya in 1790 AD. The Pandita himself stated that while the doyens of Dharma Shastra should readily appreciate the nuances of his Treatise on Dharma, the Commoners and Students would have an opportunity to acquire the rudimentary know-how on the Subject. This Summary seeks to make an honest effort in that direction.

This swifty Digest on the Practice of Dharma opens up with the basics of ❖Kaalamaana❖ or Time Calculations ranging from Tritis to Yugas; the Tithi-Vaara-Paksha-Maasa-Ayana-Samvatsara Nirnayyas; the influence of Solar-Lunar-Planetary-Nakshatras on Humanity and the Highlights of the Occasions that all Hindus tend to observe. Such opportunities include Social-Family-Individual Occurrences; they are also outlets for recalling the Almighty by way of Stotra- Japa- Keertana- Vrata-Homa-Tirtha Yatra Practices as are enabled by Mantra- Tantra-Yoga means. The next Subject of Coverage deals with ❖Samskaraas❖ or Rituals signifying the milestones of Human Life from Births to Bereavements; these Ceremonials reflect the Character of the Society and normal compliance of Formalities as interpreted by distinct Sections of Hindu Dharma. The Samskaaras that constitute the way of Hindu Life range from Garbha Daana, Pumsavana, Janma Shanti, Nama Karana, Anna Prashana, Chooda Karma, Vidyaarambha, Upanayana and Vivaha. Brahmacharis and Grihastas enter into ❖Ahnika Karya Krama❖ from Sandhyopaasana, Homa Prakriyas, Tarpanaas, Prayaschittas, Vaishwa Devas, Yagnaas, Daanas, Nitya-Naimittika-Kaamyas Vratas, Murti Pratishtha Karyas for Societal Benefits and so on. In fact, these major components establish the Core of Dharma or the Unique Approach to Virtue, keeping in view the high pedestals of the foregone Yugas vis-a-vis the diluted and disillusioned Kali Yuga. The Uttara Bhaga handles the inevitable part of mortal Life and its Termination. Its coverage ranges from Preta Samskaraas, Antya Kriyas, Dina-Paksha-Maasa-Abdika Vithis etc. which need to be carried out in favour of the Pitru Devas as one expects that his / her sons should perform too for the Peace and Liberation to the Departed Souls like they did themselves. The Extra-Terrestrial Duties are strongly beholden as the Relieving Points to redeem the Departed Ones as also to bestow gratification to the Performers. Appropriately enough, the essence of Human Life leads to the final conviction of Vairagya or the Other-Worldliness and the chapter on ❖Sanyasa❖ fits in well as the last portion of Dharma Sindhu.

The thought of concising and editing Dharma Sindhu in English occurred since such works have not been identified easily. Also, this desire was overdue but the last few years of mine were over-crowded with the preparation of concising some twenty Puranas in English all of which were released by the website of Kanchi Shankara Matha viz. kamakoti.org/news in the Articles Section. Indeed I am highly indebted to the grace of HH Vijayendra Saraswati for his inspiration and pro-active guidance.

I dedicate my efforts in this venture to my parents Shri Vemuri Narayana Murti and Smt. Sita Ravamma and seek their blessings from Heavens.

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Chennai

Vedah Smrutih Sadaachaaraha swasya cha Priyamaatmanah

Etacchaturvidham praahuh sakshaat Dharmasya lakshanam/

(Veda-Smriti-Sadaachaara-and one's own Conscience constitute the four corner-stones of Dharma)

Drushtaa purva nibandhaatrirnaaya sindhu kramena siddharthaan

Praayena mula vachaannyujijitya likhvaami baalabodhaaya/

(Having studied various ancient Scriptures and strictly based on the rudimentary facts delineated in those Root-Grandhas that the essence of Dharma Nirnayaas /Regulatory Verdicts is sought to be described.)

Panditha Kashinaatha, a famed devotee of Bhagavan Panduranga in Pandaripura (1790 AD) scripted Dharma Sindhu, after digesting innumerable works of the yore. The Scriptures include Manu Smriti (200 BC-100 AD approx.), Yagnyavalka Smriti (during 100 -300 AD approx.) , Paraashara Smriti (some time during 100-500 AD), Narada Smriti (some time during 100-400 AD), Brihaspati Smriti (some time during 300-500 AD), Katyaayana (400-600 AD) , Vyavahaara Kaara-Nibandha Kaara (sometime during 400-600 AD), Bhava Deva Bhatta's Vyavahaara Tilaka (1100 AD) , Prakaasha Nibandha (1125 AD)), Govindaraja Smriti Manjari (1080-1100 AD), Lakshmidhara Kalpataru (1100-1130 AD) ; the Trio of Jeemutavaahana , Shulapaani and Raghunandana (1090-1130 AD) of Dharma Shashtraas); Apararka Nibandha (1115-1150), Shridhara Smrutyarthasaara Nibandha (1150 AD), Aniruddha's Dharma Shastra (1168 AD), King Ballalaseana's edited books of Vedacharya's Smriti Ratnaakara/ Aachaara Saagara, Chandeswara's Daana Ratnaakara and Todanaananda's Samhitaa Soukhya & Nirnaya Sindhu, Devana Bhatt's Smriti Chandrika (1090-1091AD); Hemadri's Vipulakaaya Nibandha (1260-70 AD) , Kulluka Bhatt's Manusmriti Vyaakhyas viz. Ashouycha Sagara, Vivada Sagara and Shraddhaa Sagara (1260-1270 AD); Shri Datta Upaadhyaya's Maithila Nibandha (1275-1230 AD), Chandeswara's Dharma Shastra (1300-1370 AD); Madhavaacharya's several Kaala -maana Grandhaas (1330-1385 AD); Vishweshwara Bhatta's Madana Paarijata Grandha (1360-1390 AD); Raja Madana edited Madana Ratna Prabandha of five Vidwans (1350-1500 AD) on Kaala, Aachara, Vyavahaara, Prayaschitta, Shaanti etc. ; Shulapaani scripted several Grandhas like Ekadashi Viveka, Dolayatra Viveka, Shradda Viveka, Pratishtha Viveka etc. (1365-1470 AD)); Rudradharo -paadhyaya's Shudda Viveka, (1425-1460 AD); Misuri

Mishraa's Vivadachandra (1400-1450 AD); Vachaspati Mishra's Vivada Chintamani (1425- 1490 AD); Nrisimha Prasad's Vishwa kosha (1490-1515 AD); Pratapa Rudra Deva's Saraswati Vilaasa (1500-1525 AD) ; Govindaananda's several Grandhaas like Daana-kaumudi, Shuddhi-kaumudi, Shraaddha-kaumudi and Varsha Kriyaa-kaumudi (1500-1540 AD); Raghunandana's Smriti Tatwa (1520-1575 AD); Narayana Bhatta's Anityeshtha paddhati, Tristhalisetu and Prayogaratna Nibandhus; Todaraananda/ Todaramul the Finance Minister of the Great Akbar's Vishwakosha (1520-1589 AD); Nandana Pandita's Vyakhya on Paraasara Smriti called Vidwan Manohara as also Keshavaijayanti (1590- 1630 AD); Kamalakara Bhatt , Narayana Bhatt and Ramakrishna Bhaatt of the progeny-link's made signal contributions on Nyaya-Vyakarana- Meemaamsa- Vedanata- Sahitya- Dharma Shashtraas and Vaidika Yagnaas besides Nirnaya Sindhu (1610- 1640 AD); Mitra Mishra's Veera Mitrodaya (1610-1640 AD); Ananta Deva's Smrita Koustbh Nibandha (1650-1680 AD); Nagendra Bhatt's authoritative writings like Aachaarendu-shekhara, Ashoucha Nirnaya, Tithindu shekhara, Teerthendushekhara, Praayataadichittendu shekhara, Shraaddhendu shekhara, Sapandika Manjari, Saapindika Deepika etc.(1700-1750 AD); and Bala Bhatt's Lakshmi Vyaakhya or Mitakshara para Bhashya (1730-1820 AD).

The Monumental Digest of Hindu Dharma so scripted by the illustrious Panditha Kashinaatha (1790 AD) was the outcome of his lasting and immortal gift to the posterity.

3 Kaala-Maasa-Paksha-Tithi Nirnaya

◆Kaalamaana◆ or the Calculations of Time are based (ref. Maha Bhagavata Purana) on Tritis-hundred Tritis or one Vedha-three Vedhaas one Lava-three Lavaas one nimesha-three nimeshaas one kshana-five nimeshas one kashtha or eight seconds - fifteen kaashthas one laghu or two minutes- fifteen laghus one danda-two dandas one muhutra and six/seven dandas one fourth of a day or night-four praharaas or yamaas [a day or night has eight yaamaas and each yaama has seven and half ghadis]- one Paksha has a fortnight-two Pakshas or fortnights one Maasa or month-six maasaas one Ritu or Season- two Seasons one Ayana viz. Uttaraayana / Dakshinaayana- two Ayanaas one Varsha/ Samvatsara / Year. Each Year has five methods of calculations viz. Chaandra-Soura-Saavana-Naakshatra-Baarhaspatya. In Chandra Varsha: Beginning from Shukla Pratipaada Tithi upto Amavasya (viz. Prathama- Dwiteeya, Triteeya, Chaturthi-Panchami-Shashthi-Saptami-Ashtami-Navami-Dashami-Ekaadashi, Dwaadashi-Trayodasi-

Chaturdashi-Amavasaya) and again from Prathama to Pournami, the Chaitraadi Maasaas (viz. Chitra-Vaishakha- Jyeshtha-Ashaadha-Shraavana- Bhadrpada- Ashvijuja- Kartika- Margashira- Pushya-Maagha- Phalguna approximately corresponding to March-April-May-June-July-August-September-October-November-December, January and February) would sum up to twelve months ie. 354 days ; in ❖Mala Maasa❖/ Kshaya Maasa or ❖Adhika Maasa❖(Extra Month) there would be thirteen months. In Chandra Varsha as also in other ❖Pancha Vidha Maasaa Prakarana❖ or the afore-mentioned month-wise calculations , there would be sixty years viz. Prabhava, Vibhava, Shukla, Pramodoota, Prajopatti, Aangirasa, Shrimukha, Bhava, Yuva, Dhaata, Ishwara, Bahudhaanya, Pramaati, Vikrama, Vrisha, Chitrabhaanu, Swayam -bhaanu, Taarana, Parthiva, Vyaya, Vrisha, Sarvajit, Sarvadhaari, Virodhi, Vikruti, Khara, Nandana, Vijaya, Jaya, Manmatha, Durmikhi, Helambi, Vilambi, Vikaari, Sharvani, Plava, Shubhakruth, Krodhi, Vishvaavasuu, Paraabhava, Plavanga, Keelaka, Saumya, Saadhaarana, Virodhi- kruth, Paridhaavi, Pramaadeecha , Ananda, Raakshasa, Nala, Pingala, Kaala yukti, Siddhaarathi, Roudri, Duyrmati, Dundubhi, Rudhiraodgaari, Raktaakshi, Krodhana, and Akshaya. In the context of Soura Varsha, as Mesha and other Rashis (viz. Mesha or Aries, Vrishabha or Taurus, Mithuna or Gemini, Karaka or Cancer, Simha or Leo, Kanya or Virgo, Tula or Libra, Vrishchika or Scorpio, Dhanu or Sagitarius, Makara or Capricon, Kumbha or Aquarius and Meena or Pisces) revolve a complete circle of a year, then 364 days are through. Saavana maana Varsha denotes time from one Sun Rise to another Sun Rise and thus the duration of Savana Varsha is 360 days. Naakshatra Varsha is 324 days based on the Nakshatra in which Moon would lie at the Sunrise of a day; the Nakshatraas are twenty seven in number viz. Ashwini, Bharani, Krittika, Rohini, Mrigashira, Ardra, Punarvasu, Pushyami, Ashlesha, Makha, Purva Phalguni, Uttara Phalguni, Hasta, Chitra, Swaati, Vishaakha, Anuradha, Jyeshtha, Moola, Purvaashaadha, Uttara Ashaadha- Abhijit a male Star for a very limited duration- Shravana, Dhanishta, Shatabhisha, Purvaabhaadra , Uttaraabhaadra and Revati. Abhijit-literally meaning Victorious- is stated to be Shubha Muhurta for any auspicious Kaarya, irrespective the impact of the previous or following Nakshatras. Barhaspatya Vatsara is calculated on the basis of time period of Brihaspati or Jupiter❖s motion through Madhyama(Mesha) Raashi thus totalling 361 days .However, all the Shrouta-Smaartha Karmaas are executed in the Chandra Varsha basis only.

Ayanaas are of two kinds viz. Dakshinaayana and Uttaraayana: Surya❖s passage through six Raashis from Karka to Dhanu is called Dakshinaayana and the passage from Makara to Mithuna Rashis is called Uttaraayana. Ritus (Seasons) are counted both Soura-maana or of Surya❖s passage and Chandra maana or Chandra❖s passage-wise. Commencing from Meena / Mesha Raashis the passage of Surya through the subsequent two further Raashis is called Vasanta Ritu or Spring Season of pleasant weather roughly coinciding with Chaitra/Vaishaaka or March last to May last weeks when festivals like Ugadi, Shri Rama Navami, and Baishaakhi are celebrated. The subsequent Ritus are as follows: Greeshma Ritu or Summer coinciding with Jyeshtha-Aashaadha or the last portions of May-June being Summer and hot when festivals like Ratha Yatra and Guru Purnima are

observed; Varsha Ritu or monsoon season coinciding with Shravana-Bhadrapada or the last portions of May-July being very hot observing Raksha Bandhana, Krishnma Ashtami, Ganesha Chaturthi, and Onam; Sharad Ritu or Autumn Season coinciding with Ashwin-Kartika Maasaas or last portions of September-November being mild weather celebrating Navaraatraas and Deepaavali; Hemanta Ritu or pre-winter Season coinciding with Margaseersha-Poushya of the last quarters of November-January celebrating Pongal and Samkranti; and finally Shishira Ritu or winter coinciding with Maagha-Phalguna Maasaas and the last quarters of January-March observing Vasanta Panchami, Shiva Raatri and Holi. The Chandra -maana procedure varies in the sense that the cycle of Seasons starts from the first day of Chaitra itself. In any case, the Shrouta-Smaarta Karmaas are re-emphasised and are better performed in Chaandra Ritus only.

Samkraanti Nirnaya : In the calculation of Mesha Samkranti, there occurs a Punya Kaala consisting of fifteen-fifteen ghadiyas before and after; there is an opinion that the Punya Kaala consists of ten ghadiyas. Before Vrisha Kaala Samkranti there would be a Punya Kaala of sixteen ghadiyas ; in Mithuna Samkraanti sixteen ghadiyas are counted before; thirty ghadiyas are counted before Karaka ; in Simha sixteen ghadiyas before; in respect of Kanya sixteen ghadiyas are counted after, in Tula there would be fifteen-fifteen Ghadiyas before and after; in Vrischika, sixteen ghadiyas are counted before; after Makara forty Ghadiyas; in Kumbha sixteen ghadiyas before; and for Meena the Punya Kaala is to be decided sixteen ghadiyas soon thereafter. Karka Samkraanti is stated to occur when the early morning hours ie. before two ghadiyas coincide with Vrisha-Simha-Vrischika- Kumbha and Karkaata Punya Kaala. If the Samkarana takes place before the mid night of that day then the previous day is taken as the Punya Kaala but if it is after the midnight, the Punya kaala is declared as on the following day. If Makara Samkranti takes place in the night then Punya kaala is observed as on the following day. Three ghadiyas after Suryaasta is called Surya Sandhya and if Makara Samkraanti occurs before that time then the Punya Kaala is reckoned as on the previous day. In case of Karka Samkranti, the Punya Kaala is slated for the next day. In Mesha Samkranti, daanas are to be offered in the form of sheep /goats; in Vrisha Samkranti, cows are offered; in Mithuna Samkraanti, Vasrta-Anna danaas are offered; in Karka ghrita-dhenu daana; in Simha Chhatra / Suvarna daana; in Kanyaa Samkramana, House/Vastra daana; in Tula Samkarana, cows or cow products like milk or ghee or curd besides Tilaas; in Vrischika Deepa daana; in Dhanu Samkranti, daana of Clothing- horse-bull-elephant carriages; in Makara, Agni or Indhana daana; in Kumbha, danna of cow-grass and water ; and in Meena Samkranti bhu daana or maalaa daana are prescribed. In respect of Ayana/ Mesha / Tula Samkrantis, fasting on three previous nights or at least the previous night and daanaas on the next morning are to be observed. Also, in respect of all Samkrantis, pinda-rahita shraaddha is prescribed. In both the Ayanaas viz. on Purnima and Amavasya days, nitya shraaddha and Annaadi daanaas are prescribed preceded by night-fastings. The Vrisha-Simha-Vrischika-Kumbha Sankrantis are stated to be of Vishnu Paada; Mithuna-Kanya-Dhanu-Meena are stated to be of ♦Shadsheeti Sanjna♦; Mesha and Tula Samkrantis are of Vishu-Naama; and Karka-Makara Samkrantis are of

Ayana-Naamaas. In respect of all these kinds of Samkrantis, observance of the prescribed regulations are stated of be of far-reaching significance. To undertake all Mangala Karyaas or Auspicious Deeds fifteen ghadiyas before and there after ought to be avoided. However, Raatrou samkramanopi , divaiva snaanaadikam na tu raatraaviti tu sarva sammataam/ (If Samkrantis take place in the nights, snana-daana-bhojanaadi karmas be performed on the following mornings.) In case, any person's Janma Nakshatra (Birth Star) coincides with Surya Samkranti, there are indications of loss of money and therefore he or she would better take bath along with lotus leaves . If Samkranti enters in Mesha-Tula-Makara Karkatakas on day time /Vishu - Ayana days, then Vedaadhyana or abstaining from reading or teaching Vedas be avoided on the specific days as also on the follownig and previous days; that is why this Samkraanti is called Pakshini Samkraanti.

Mala Maasa/ Adhika Maasa and Kshaya Maasa: Mala Maasa is of two types viz. Adhika Maasa and Kshaya Maasa. In Adhika Maasa there would be no Samkrantis of any kind where as in Kshaya Maasa, there are double Samkrantis. Following the first Adhika Maasa, the second Adhika Maasa occurs in the thirtieth month and again on the following eighth or the ninth month thereafter. Kshaya Maasa happens only one and forty one years subsequently. That too it occurs in Kartika-Maarga sirsha /Agahana-Poushya Maasaas only. When Kshaya Maasa occurs there would be two Adhika Maasaas in the same year.The examples as to how Adhika Maasaas occur are: if there is Mesha Samkraanti from Chaitra Krishna Amavasya and there would be no Samkranti from Shukla Praatipada to that Amavasya, then that Maasa is Adhika Vaishakha Maasa; again when Vrishabha Samkranti takes place then that Maasa would be called Shuddha Vaishaakha Maasa. The illustration of Kshaya Maasa is as follows: Suppose there is Kanya Samkraanti from Bhadrapada Krishna Amavasya- then Ashvyyuja maasa would be Adhika maasa- Tula Sankraanti from Ashwiyuja Shuddha Praadipada- Vrischika Samkraanti from Kartika Shukla Paatipada- Dhanu Sankraanti from Margasirsha Patipada- Makara Samkranti from the same month's Amavasya: in this illustration Kshaya Maasa is the combine of Dhanur-Makara Samkrantis. This combination of Margasirsha Pousha maasaas is like that of Artha Naareeshwara; those who die in this Kshaya Maasa (the Purvaartha Margasirsha Month and the Uttaraartha of Poushya Month) need to perform Pratyabdika Shraaddha. Then on Maagha Amavasya, Kumbha Sankraanti would occur which would be followed by Phalguna Adhika Maasa ; Meena sankraanti would take place on Shuddha Phalguna Shukla Pratipada. Thus, a year when a Kshaya Maasa happens between two Adhika Maasaas that year would have thirteen months short of a few days ie 390 days. The Adhika Maasa that preceeds Kshaya Maasa is called Samsarpa; this is the best time for performing all kinds of Karmas including Shubha karyas. The Adhika Maasa that follows the previous Kshaya Maasa called Samhaspati Maasa however is not good for any kind of Karmaas. Similarly, the Adhika Maasas occuring during the next three years also is not good for performing all kinds of Karmaas.

The Do's and Don'ts during Adhika Maasa and Kshaya Maasas are as follows: normal duties of performing nitya-naimittika-kaamyas should be

continued unless there are unvoidable exigencies; Sandhya, Agnihotra, and such other normal karmas are nitya karmaas while grahana snaanaas and such occasional karmas are naimittika karmas and kaamyas are those to ward off evils as also drishti-related tasks; indeed all such tasks should not be disturbed. However Jyotishtomas, Jyateshti and Putra Kaamekshi karmas should be postponed to Shuddha Maasaas. Naveena Karmaas (Fresh Initiatives) and Samaapti or Conclusive Karmaas be avoided in the Mala Maasaas. Yet, those tasks like Punah-Pratishtha of a Murti which need to be necessarily followed up by a Murti already set up as also tasks ranging from Garbhaadaana , Annaprasana, and such tasks need not be postponed. Jwara roga Shantis, Nitya-Unmaashika-Amavasya Shraddhas too should not be disturbed. However in respect of those who die in Mala Maasa , the Pratyabdhika be performed on the respective Tithis after the Mala Maasaas. The Shraaddha of those who die in Shuddha Maasaas should not be done in Mala Maasa but should be done in the following Shuddha Maasa only. But if the Prathamaabdhika falls in Mala Maasa, then it should be done in the Mala Maasa itself since the ♦Samvatsara Purthi♦ occurs then. The Dwiteeya Shraaddhas would however resume again on the concerned Tithis of the Shuddha Maasaas in the subsequent years. Again, twelve days after the death of a person requiring obsequies ought to be executed even in a Mala Masa. If the dwiteeya Maasika falls in Mala Maasa again, the same should be repeated twice over. In that case, the Unaabdhika be done and the dwiteeyaabdhika be pushed forward and the Saamvatsarika Shraddha be performed in fourteen Maasaas. In the Mala Maasaas, following tasks must not be resorted to viz. Upakarma, Utsarjana, Ashtka Shraaddha, Griha Pravesha, Chudaakarana, Yagnopaveeta, Vivaaha, Tirtha Yatra, Griha Nirmaana, Devataa Pratishtha, renovation of wells and gardens, wearing of new clothes and tasks involving decoration of self or surroundings, Mahaa Danaas, Yagna Karmaas, Darshan of Apurva Devata and Apurva Tirthaas, Sanyasa, Kaamyas, Vrikshotsarga, Rajaabhisheka, Annapraashana, Nama Karmaadi Samskara, Pavitraaropana, Damanaarpana, Shravanaakarma, Sarpabali, Shayana-Parivartaadi Utsavaas, Shapadha-Divyaadi karma etc.

Tithi Nirnaya in Saamaaya Paribhaasha: Tithis are of two kinds viz. Purna and Sakhandha. Purna Tithi is called what obtains upto sixty ghadis after Sun Rise. Sakhandha Tithi is what obtains less than that time. Akhandha is divided in two parts viz. Shuddhaa and Viddha. Shuddha is the period of time occurring from Suryodaya to Suryaastama; however on Shiva Ratris the time from Sun Rise to Midnight past Sun Set is noted as Shuddha Khanda. The rest is called Viddha. Now the term Vedha - which means protrusion of one Tithi into another-is also of two kinds viz. Praatah -Vedha and Saayam Vedha. The duration from Suryodaya upto six ghadis later is called Praatarvedha and the subsequent six ghadis after Suryaasta and before the commencement of the next Tithi is called Saayam Vedha. In respect of certain Tithis, the Vedha is of longer duration; for instance, Shashthi♦s Panchami Vedha is of twelve ghadis; Ekaashi♦s Dashami Vedha is fifteen ghadiyaas; Pournami♦s Chaturdashi Vedha is eighteen ghadiyas. Now, this Vedha is applicable to different karmas as they could be ♦nishiddhaas♦ or ♦graahyaas♦, ie. acceptable or not. In any case, application of approval for a

Karya is clear on Sampurna Tithis / Shubha Tithis.

Karma Vishesha Nirnaya: Karma is of two types: Daiva and Pitravya. Daiva Karma is related to six kinds of Bhojana viz. Eka bhukta (eating on mid-day once) Nakta (eating at the pradosha time in the night ie three muhurtaas following Suryasta), Ayaachita bhukta (unsolicited and unscheduled fasting or carry forward meal of previous day), Upavaasa (day and night fasting), Vrata or fasting on account of performing a Vrata and Daana (restraint of bhojan on account of providing charity). Additionally, fasting due to regular Ekaashi Tithi or on specified days is also observed by one's own volition; such fastings could be at the hours of individual choice say as per the five parts of a day viz. Pratah kaala, Sangava, Madhyahna, Aparahna and Pradosha. Eka Bhukta or one meal a day is relevant to Madhyahnika Tithi or of the Tithi of the half day past thirty Ghadiyas and thereafter the time upto Sunset is called Gaura kaala. Nakta vrata is to consume a single meal three muhurtas after Sunset called Pradosha kaala; after the Nakta Bhojana, and there after there would be no further eating, sleep, sangama and reading; this kind of Nakta Vrata is normally observed by Yatis, Putraheenaas, widows and widowers. Ayaachita bhukta is related to the different situations like Pitru-related fastings or bhojana as case that might be.

Upavaasa is restricted maximum to two nights for women. Without the permission of husband, no house wife can observe Vratas and Upavasa. On the days of Upavasa or the Shraddha days, house wives are forbidden of teeth-cleaning with kaashtha or ash of firewood as on normal days and danta dhaavana should be done with neem twigs or leaves. On the Upavaasa or Vrata days, Sankalpa or Invocation should be performed in the early morning using with water filled in copper vessels by Uttaraabhi mukha or facing northward. Newly initiated Vratas or Udayaapanas of Vratas should not be performed in Mala Maasaas, Amavasyaas, or khanda tithis or of carry forward thithis. Khanda Tithi is denoted by the same tithi of the pratha kaala which lasts at least upto the madhyaahna. Also, the commencement of a Vrata and its termination on the same Tithi is called Satya Vrata. The common and dharmas to perform a Vrata involve Kshama, Satya, Daya, Daana, Shoucha, Indriya nigraha, Deva Puja-Japa-Dhyaana-Kathaa Shravana-Samkeertana and Havana of that particular Deva targetted, Santosha, self-discipline and Bahyaantara Shuchi are normal expectations.

4 Tithi Prakaara Vratas

In Kanya Vrataas targetting specific Devataas particularly these regulations are a must. During the course of the Upavaasa, looking at the Anna (Bhojana), massages of cow related oils/ ghee, taamboola sevana, application of anulepanaas or body scents are forbidden. For Sowbhaagyavati Strees performing Soubhaagya Vratas however exempted : Sabhatrukeena Soubhaagya Vratebhya taamboolaadi na varjayam/ Ashtaitaanya Vrataghnaani aapo mulam phalam payah havir braahmaanakaamyaa cha guror vachanamoushadham/ (The Soubhagya Vrataas performed by Soubhaagyavatis need not be subjected to restrictions viz. Abhyangana or use of thaila or oils, taamboola, Jala, Moola, Phala, Ksheera, Havishya, Brahmana iccha or desireable instructions, Guru Vachana and Auashadhi Sevana).

However, if Vrata bhanga or major shortcomings on the part of persons observing the Vrata occur, the concerned persons should shave their heads, observe upavaas for three days; alternatively offer Brahmana bhojana or its Value or at least perform Sahasra Gayatri Japa and / or twelve Praanaayaamas by way of Prayaschitta or atonement. If the Vrata as per pre-determined decision is violated for some reason or another, the same be performed by the concerned person's wife, or son, or daughter, or a Brahmana Purohita or even a friend and the Vrata Phala would still accrue to the Karta. During the Upavaasa time, one should not take water too many times, should not chew betel leaves/nuts, should not leep, nor resort to Ashtavidha Mithuna ie. think of sex, hear procavative songs, viewing objectionable material, secret gossip, take vows and decisions and refrain from acts other than related to devotion. However, taking water once or twice in unavoidable situations is pardonable. But drinks, milk of any kind except of cows, masoor or lentils, Jambheera Phalam , Shakti churnaas etc. are avoidable. Tila or Sesame and Moong or Green gram may be eaten but Mulika, Kshaara Vastu, Honey, Meat etc. are prohibited. Tears, anger, desire infatuation of any kind, feelings of envy or sorrow, are to be refrained from. Wheat, barley, mango fruit,

coconut kernel, peepul, jeera, plantains, Amla, Imli, sea salt, cow-products like ghee, milk, curd, and such havishya vastus used for Agni Homa are consumable.

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Observance of Tithi prakara Vrataas:

[In Narada Purana, Maharshi Sanatana enumerated various ♦Vratas♦ (religious rites) to invoke specific Deities on particular days in each month through out the year for special purposes. On the Pratipada day of Chaitra month Shukla ♦Paksha♦, Shouri Vrata and Vidya Vrata are scheduled, while on the same day of Shravana Shukla fortnight, Rotaka Vrata is performed for Goddess Lakshmi. Mahattama Vrata is observed in Bhadrpada Shukla, Ashoka Vrata and Navarathra Vrata are important on Ashvin Shukla and Dhana Vrata in Marga Sirsha. On Dwiteeya day, Netra Vrata is held in Vaishakha Shukla, Bhaskara Vrata in Jyeshtha Shukla, Jagannatha-Balarama-Subhadra Vrata in Aashaadha Sukla and Yama Dwiteeya Vrata in Kartika Shukla. Akshaya Vrata, Rambha Vrata, Swarna Gauri Vrata and Brihat Gauri Vrata are performed on the Triteeya day in Vaishakha, Jyeshtha, Shravana, and Ashvin Shukla Pakshas respectively. One of the most significant Vratas is held on Bhadrpada Krishna Chaturthi viz. Ganesha Chaturthi. Twenty specified Leaves are to be utilised for the Puja on this day by reciting the very popular Mantras coordinating Ganasha ♦s names and specific Leaves viz. Sumukhaayanamah Shami patram pujayami,

Ganaadheeshaya namah bhargaraiyaka patram pujayaami, Uma putraya namah bilwa patram pujayami, Gajamukhaaya namah Durvadalam pujayaami, Lambodarayanamah ber param pujayami, Harasunavey namah Dattura patram pujayai, Surpakanthayanamah tulasi dalam pujayami, Vakra tundaaya namah semaka patram pujayami, Grahagrajaayanamah Apaamarga patram pujayami, Ekadantaayanamah Banabhantaa patram pujayami, Herambaayanamah Sindura patram pujayami, Chaturhotreynamah Tejapatrm pujayami and Sarvewarayanamah Agasthya patram pujayaami; This puja is then followed by the Shodasha Upacharas and so on. On the Panchami ❖Tithis❖, Matsya Vrata is held in Chaitra Shukla, Naga Vrata in Vaishakha Shukla Paksha, Anna Vrata in Shravana Krishna Paksha, Upanga Lalita Vrata in Aswin Shukla, and Jaya Vrata in Kartika Shukla. On the Shashthi days, Kumara Vrata is performed in Chaitra Shukla, Skanda Vrata in Ashaadha Sukla, Lalita Vrata in Bhadra Krishna Paksha, and Chandana Shashti Vrata in Bhadrpada Shukla in the name of Devi. Saptami is the day for Surya Deva Vratas on Chaitra Shukla, Vaishakha Shukla, Jyeshtha Shukla, Aashada Shukla, and Sharvana Shukla; Shakha (Mitra) Saptami in Kartika Shukla, Abhaya Vrata in Pousha Shukla, and Achala Vrata (Ratha Saptami) in Magha Shukla are significant. Ashtami is an important ❖Tithi❖; Chaitra Shukla Ashtami is stated to be the birthday of Devi Bhavani and as such Mahashtami is a significant day. Similarly Jyeshtha Krishna Paksha Ashtami is earmarked for Trilochana Puja, Ashadha /Shravana Shukla Ashtamis, meant for Turmeric Puja and Dashaphala (Ten Fruits) Vrata in favour of Devi. Krishna Janmashtami in Shravana Krishna Paksha is a very essential day for Krishna Puja when day long fasting is observed and the ten Tulasi leaf- worship is performed by reciting Krishnaya Namah, Vishnavey Namah, Anantaaya namah, Govindaya Namah Garudadhwaajaaya Namah, Daamodaraaya namah, Hrishi keshaya namah, Pama naabhaya namah, Haraye Namah, and Prahavey Namah. Aswin Suddha Ashtami is observed as the famed Durgashtami destroying Mahishasura during the Dussera Navaratri commencing from the Prathama day of the month. Shri Rama Navami Vrata in Chaitra Shukla Paksha is observed as a fast day for self-purification followed by the Puja as described erehier. During Vaishakha month both the Pakshas are earmarked for UmaVrata on the Navami day; but observed most importantly as the popular Maha- Navami during Aswin Shukla Paksha worshipping Devi Parvati. Bhadrpada Shukla Navami is known as Nanda Navami to worship Devi Durga and Kartika Shukla Namvami is Akshaya Navami when a devotee should perform ❖Tarpana❖ to Devas, Rishis and Pitras. As regards Dashami Tithi, Chaitra Shukla is stated to be a day which Dharma Raja is fond of and after fasting till the evening, worship of the Deity with flowers, fruits, ❖Gandha❖ etc. should be observed and at the end of the Vrata, bhojan and dakshina is to be provided to fourteen Brahmanas. Jyeshtha Shukla Dashami is the day of ❖Gangavataran❖ and is reckoned as ❖Dasahara❖ or destroyer of Ten Sins when Ganga Snaan is highly recommended; this is the day when ten yogas coincided viz. Jyeshtha Maasa, Shuka Paksha, Hasta Nakshatra, Budha day, Dashami Tithi, ❖Gara❖ karana, Ananda Yoga, Vyatipaata, Kanya Rashi❖s Chandra and Vrisha Raasi Surya. Shravana Shukla Dashami is marked for Shankara Puja when Nakta Vrata, Japa, Brahmana Bhojana and suvarna daana are commended. Bhadrpada Shukla Dashami is to observe Dashavatara Vrata to worship the Ten Incarnations of Vishnu viz. Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Nrisimha, Trivikrama /Vamana, Parashu Rama, Rama, Krishna, Buddha and Kalki by day-long fasting and

Brahmana Bhojana etc. Ashwayuja Shukla Dashami is the much-celebrated Vijaya Dashami when the Dussehra Festival of Nava Rathras get terminated to mark the killing of Mahishasura by Devi Durga as also to symbolise the Ramleela celebration as Shri Rama killed Ravana and brought back Devi Sita from Lanka. Margasirsha Shukla Dashami is the Arogya Vrata day when ten Brahmanas are to be treated with bhojan and dakshina, while ten Vishwa devas viz. Kratu, Daksha, Vasu, Satya, Kaala, Kaama, Muni, Guru, Vipra, and Rama are to be worshipped. Magha Sukla Dashami is the Day for Angira Vrata to meditate ten Angira Devas, viz. Atma, Vayu, Manah, Daksha, Mada, Praana, Barhishmaan, Gavishtha, Dutta and Satya, where as Phalguna Shukla Dashami, fourteen Yama Devas are worshipped viz, Yama, Dharma Raja, Mrityu, Antaka, Vaivaswata, Kaala, Sarva Bhuta Kshaya, Aoudumbara, Dadhna, Neela, Parameshthi, Vrikodara, Chitra and Chitragupta. Ekadashi has a special significance among all the Tithis as the Shukla and Krishna Paksha Ekadashis are invariably observed with Upavaasa, Japa, Homa, Pradakshina, Stotra Paatha, Dandavat-Pranama and Ratri-Jaagaranas followed by Dwadashi's Brahmana Bhojanas and dakshinas. Chaitra Shukla Ekadashi is called Kamada or the Fullfiller of Purusharthas and Sin-destroyer. Vaishakha Shula Ekadashi is known as Mohini and Krishna Ekadashi is known as Varuthini when Purushottama and Madhusudhana are worshipped. Jyeshtha Krishna Ekadashi is called Aparaa to worship Trivikrama, whereas the Jyeshtha Shukla is Nirjala which is observed with fasting without water from dawn to dusk, and thereafter treat Brahmanas with Bhojan. Ashadha Krishna Ekadashi is called Yogini and is observed with day-night fast / puja and bhojan to Brahmanas on the following Dwadashi. Ashadha Shukla is Shayani Ekadashi, Shravana Krishna is Kamika Ekadashi, Shravana Shukla is Putrada Ekadashi, Bhadrpada Krishna is Aja Ekadashi, Bhadrpada Shukla is Padma Ekadashi, Aswin Shukla is Papankusha Ekadashi, Aswin Krishna is Indira Ekadashi, Karik Krishna is Rama Ekadashi, Kartik Shukla is Pabodhini, Margasirsha Krishna is Utpanna Ekadashi, Margasirsha Shukla is Moksha da Ekadashi, Pousha Krishna is Saphala, Pousha Shukla is Saphala, Magha Krishna is Shat Tila Ekadashi observed with full penance including Snaana, Daana, Tarpana, Havan, Puja, fast unto Dwadashi Brahmana Bhojan and dakshina. Like-wise, Eakadashis are performed on Magha Shukla as Jaya, Phalguna Krishna as Vijaya, Aamalki on Phalguna Shukla and Papamochini on Chaitra Krishna. As regards Dwadashis, details of Vrata Pujas worshipping Vishnu Rupas viz. Keshava, Narayana, Madhava, etc. have been described from Marhasirsha to Kartika Months (Shukla Pakshas) along with the Puja-Vidhana. Following is gist of Vratas as follows): Madana Vrata is performed on Chaitra Shukla Dwadashi to dedicate it to Kaama Rupi Shri Hari. On this very day, Bhartru Dwadashi is also observed by worshipping Lakshmi and Vishnu too. Similarly, Vratas aiming at various forms/ names of Vishnu are observed on the Dwadashis herebelow: Vaishakha Shukla/ Madhava, Jyeshtha Shukla/ Trivikaram, Shravana Shukla/ Shridhara, Bhadrpada Shukla/Vamana, and Aswin Shukla/ Padmanabha. The Kartika Krishna Vrata called Govatsa Dwadashi Vrata is addressed to Mother Cow reciting the Mantra: Ksheerodarnava Sambhootey Suraasura namaskrutey, Sarvadeva mayey Devi Sarva devailankrutey/ Maatarmaatargavaam Maatagruheenaarghyam namostutey/ (Mother! Gomata! You manifested from the

Ocean of Milk, ornamented by all Devas, worshipped by Devas and Danavas alike; kindly accept this ❖Arghya❖ followed by Puja and ❖Nivedana❖. On this day of Govatsa Dwadashi, devotees should avoid oil-fried items, Cow-milk, curd, ghee etc. On Margasirsha Shukla Dwadashi, ❖Sadhya Vrata❖ is performed by assuming the Twelve Sadhya Ganaas, Viz. Manobhava, Praana, Nara, Apaana, Veeryavan, Chiti, Haya, Naya, Hamsa, Narayana, Vibhu and Prabhu. The Ganaas are invoked into a rice spreading and worshipped, after which request Lord Narayana to be pleased. On this very day, a ❖Dwadasha -aditya❖ Vrata be also performed by doing Puja to Dhata, Mitra, Aryama, Pusha, Shakra, Amsa, Varuna, Bhaga, Twashta, Viviswaan, Savita and Vishnu. Trayodashi Tithis are well-known for ❖Maha Vaaruni Vrata❖ in Chaitra Krishna paksha, if possibly coinciding with Saturdays/ Shatabhisha Nakshatra and if lucky further along with a bath in River Ganga. On Jyeshtha Shuka Trayodasi, a Vrata for ❖Dourbhagya Shamana❖ (pacifying the trends of misfortune) is performed with the Puja of Mandara, Karaveera and Arka flowers to Narayana, while ❖Goraatra Vrata❖ is observed on Bhadrapada Shukla Trayodashi by performing ❖Pradakshinas❖ and giving away charity to Veda Pandit. The Pradakshina should accompany the recitation of: Gavo mamaagratah santu gaavo may santu pustatah, Gaavo mey paasravatah santu Gavaam Madhey vasaamyaham/ (Cow is ahead of me, behind me, by my side and I reside among Cows!). On Ashwin Shukla Trayodashi, a three-night long ❖Ashok Vrata❖ is performed by praying to Shakara Maha Deva kept under an Ashoka Tree; the person who performs the worship gives away a Pratima as daan, along with dakshina. ❖Nrisimha Vrata❖ is well known on Vaishkha Shukla Chaturdashi, when a devotee requires to keep day-long fast and worships the Deity with ❖shodasho-pacharas❖ and recites the Kshama Prarthana Mantra again and again: Taptahaataka kashaanta Jalatpaavaka lochana, Vajraadi nakha sparsha Divya Simha Namostutey/ (Divya Simha! Your mane is shining like molten gold and eyes are glowing like fire balls; the slightest touch of your diamond-strong nails are excruciating; my salutations to you!). After the Puja, the devotee should sleep on bare earth, with full control of body parts. The Vrata is to be performed a few years to secure high contentment and fulfillment of earthly desires as also salvation after life's termination. On this very date of Vaishakha Shukla Chaturdashi, Omkareshwar Linga Vrata is to be observed for demolition of all past sins. On Jyeshtha Shukla Chaturdashi, ❖Rudra Vrata❖ is to be performed for securing unimaginable results by observing ❖Panchagni Yogic Tapasya❖. Bhadrapada Shukla Chaturdashi is earmarked for executing Ananta Vrata, while Kartika Shukla Chaturdashi, observance of Pashupat Vrata has far reaching impact. However the most outstanding Vrata of the day/night is stated to be on Shiva Raatri on Phalguna Krishna Chaturdashi, when Nirjala Upavas, Bilwa patra puja, high concentration, Night-long Jaagaran, Stotra-Paath, three-hourly Abhisheka and detailed Puja and japa, purifies a devotee with fulfillment and Shiva Darshan. On Purnimas, Anna-daana would please Chandra Deva in Chaitra month and any kind of charities on Vaishaka purnima would have multiplier-effect; Dharmaraja Vrata on the latter Purnima would please him with Go-Daan, Swarna Daan and Bhojan Daan. ❖Vata Savitri❖ Vrata would certainly please Devi Savitri who conquered Lord Yama for the sake of her husband with the prayer of a devotee by reciting: Jagat pujye Jagan -matah Savitri pati devatey, patya sahayiyogam mey vatasthey kuru tey namah/ (Jaganmata Savitri, You are

worshippable to the entire Universe as you are the unique Pativrata. You reside in the Vata Vriksha and as such, I pray to the Vata Tree; do bless me to ensure that I am never separated from my husband). Any woman who prays to Savitri and worships her and treats virtuous women with food and gifts would never lose her husband till she dies herself. Shravana Purnima is the day of Upa Karma of Vedas, when Yajurvedi Brahmanas should perform Tarpana to Devas, Rishis and Pitras; the Rishis whom Tarpana are to be offered would be of one's own Shakha. Rigvedis on Chaturdashi day of Shravana month and Sama Vedis on Bhadrapada Hasta Star should observe Raksha Vidhana. Uma Maheswara Vrata is scheduled on Bhadrapada Purnima, which requires total abstinence, Upavas on the previous and on the day proper, Jaagaran on the previous night and fast till the dusk time of the day, Pujas on the previous night, on the day and night proper would be compulsory as per shodasopacharas as described in the previous pages of this write-up. This Vrata is expected to be performed for fifteen years, whereafter the Udyapan function should be concluded with full formalities of Mantras, homas, and celerbrations. Shakra Vrata is also scheduled on the same day of Bhadrapada Purnima addressed to Indra Deva for Dhana-Dhanya Vriddhi or all round prosperity. Kartika Purnima Vrata is intended to attain/ retain Brahmatva in the next birth as also to demolish enemies and the Deity to be worshipped is Kartika Deva. On this day of Kartika Purnima at the Pradosha Time, organisation of Tripurotsava and Deepa Daana are considered propitious; display of illuminations, especially in the vicinity of a river or a water-body would help light up krimi-keetas, flies, mosquitos, trees, water, etc and would enable Punarjanmas (rebirths) as human beings since the upgradation of such Praanis would indeed be a welcome step for such praanis. As regards, the Amavasya Vratas, Sanatana Kumara explained to Narada Maharshi that Chaitra and Vaishakha Amavasyas were extremely significant since these days were very dear to Pitras for their Puja, Shraddha by way of offering Pindas (cooked rice) prepared by the paarana vidhi, Brahmana Bhojana, especially daanas of cows etc. In Jyeshtha month Brahma Savitri Vrata was stated to be imperative on Amavasya. In Ashaadha, Shravana, and Bhadrapada months, Amavasyas are essential for Pitru shraddas, Daanas, homas, and Deva Pujas. On Ashwin Amavasya, it would be good to perform Shraadha Tarpan to Pitaras in River Ganga or more ideally at Gaya. On Kartika Amavasya Deepa daan given in a temple, or home, near a river, a garden, go-shaala or at a public Place is commendable; on this very day, Lakshmi Puja would be beneficial. Organising Brahmana Bhojan on a Margasirsha Amavasya or better still performing Shraddha on that day would be useful. In fact, Pitru Shraaddhas on Pousha, Magha and Phalguna Amavasyas would be effective].

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Observance of Tithi prakaara Vrataas:

[In Narada Purana, Maharshi Sanatana enumerated various Vratas

(religious rites) to invoke specific Deities on particular days in each month through out the year for special purposes. On the Pratipada day of Chaitra month Shukla ◈Paksha◈, Shouri Vrata and Vidya Vrata are scheduled, while on the same day of Shravana Shukla fortnight, Rotaka Vrata is performed for Goddess Lakshmi. Mahattama Vrata is observed in Bhadrapada Shukla, Ashoka Vrata and Navarathra Vrata are important on Ashvin Shukla and Dhana Vrata in Marga Sirsha. On Dwiteeya day, Netra Vrata is held in Vaishakha Shukla, Bhaskara Vrata in Jyeshtha Shukla, Jagannatha-Balarama-Subhadra Vrata in Aashaadha Sukla and Yama Dwiteeya Vrata in Kartika Shukla. Akshaya Vrata, Rambha Vrata, Swarna Gauri Vrata and Brihat Gauri Vrata are performed on the Tritheeya day in Vaishakha, Jyeshtha, Shravana, and Ashvin Shukla Pakshas respectively. One of the most significant Vratas is held on Bhadrapada Krishna Chaturthi viz. Ganesha Chaturthi. Twenty specified Leaves are to be utilised for the Puja on this day by reciting the very popular Mantras coordinating Ganasha◈s names and specific Leaves viz. Sumukhaayanamah Shami patram pujayami, Ganaadheeshaya namah bhargaraiyaka patram pujayaami, Uma putraya namah bilwa patram pujayami, Gajamukhaaya namah Durvadalam pujayaami, Lambodarayanamah ber param pujayami, Harasunavey namah Dattura patram pujayai, Surpakanthayanamah tulasi dalam pujayami, Vakra tundaaya namah semaka patram pujayami, Grahagrajaayanamah Apaamarga patram pujayami, Ekadantaayanamah Banabhantaa patram pujayami, Herambaayanamah Sindura patram pujayami, Chaturhotreynamah Tejapatrm pujayami and Sarvewarayanamah Agasthya patram pujayaami; This puja is then followed by the Shodasha Upachaaras and so on. On the Panchami ◈Tithi◈, Matsya Vrata is held in Chaitra Shukla, Naga Vrata in Vaishakha Shukla Paksha, Anna Vrata in Shravana Krishna Paksha, Upanga Lalita Vrata in Aswin Shukla, and Jaya Vrata in Kartika Shukla. On the Shashthi days, Kumara Vrata is performed in Chaitra Shukla, Skanda Vrata in Ashaadha Sukla, Lalita Vrata in Bhadra Krishna Paksha, and Chandana Shashti Vrata in Bhadrapada Shukla in the name of Devi. Saptami is the day for Surya Deva Vratas on Chaitra Shukla, Vaishakha Shukla, Jyeshtha Shukla, Aashada Shukla, and Sharvana Shukla; Shakha (Mitra) Saptami in Kartika Shukla, Abhaya Vrata in Pousha Shukla, and Achala Vrata (Ratha Saptami) in Magha Shukla are significant. Ashtami is an important ◈Tithi◈; Chaitra Shukla Ashtami is stated to be the birthday of Devi Bhavani and as such Mahashtami is a significant day. Similarly Jyeshtha Krishna Paksha Ashtami is earmaked for Trilochana Puja, Ashadha /Shravana Shukla Ashtamis, meant for Turmeric Puja and Dashaphala (Ten Fruits) Vrata in favour of Devi. Krishna Janmashtami in Shravana Krishna Paksha is a very essential day for Krishna Puja when day long fasting is observed and the ten Tulasi leaf- worship is performed by reciting Krishnaya Namah, Vishnavey Namah, Anantaaya namah, Govindaya Namah Garudadhwaajaaya Namah, Daamodaraaya namah, Hrishi keshaya namah, Pama naabhaya namah, Haraye Namah, and Prahavey Namah. Aswin Suddha Ashtami is observed as the famed Durgashtami destroying Mahishasura during the Dussera Navarattras commencing from the Prathama day of the month. Shri Rama Navami Vrata in Chaitra Shukla Paksha is observed as a fast day for self-purification followed by the Puja as described erehier. During Vaishakha month both the Pakshas are earmarked for Uma Vrata on the Navami

day; but observed most importantly as the popular Maha- Navami during Aswin Shukla Paksha worshipping Devi Parvati. Bhadrapada Shukla Navami is known as Nanda Navami to worship Devi Durga and Kartika Shukla Navami is Akshaya Navami when a devotee should perform ❖Tarpana❖ to Devas, Rishis and Pitras. As regards Dashami Tithi, Chaitra Shukla is stated to be a day which Dharma Raja is fond of and after fasting till the evening, worship of the Deity with flowers, fruits, ❖Gandha❖ etc. should be observed and at the end of the Vrata, bhojan and dakshina is to be provided to fourteen Brahmanas. Jyeshtha Shukla Dashami is the day of ❖Gangavataran❖ and is reckoned as ❖Dasahara❖ or destroyer of Ten Sins when Ganga Snaan is highly recommended; this is the day when ten yogas coincided viz. Jyeshtha Maasa, Shuka Paksha, Hasta Nakshatra, Budha day, Dashami Tithi, ❖Gara❖ karana, Ananda Yoga, Vyatipaata, Kanya Rashi❖s Chandra and Vrisha Raasi Surya. Shravana Shukla Dashami is marked for Shankara Puja when Nakta Vrata, Japa, Brahmana Bhojana and suvarna daana are commended. Bhadrapada Shukla Dashami is to observe Dashavatara Vrata to worship the Ten Incarnations of Vishnu viz. Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Nrisimha, Trivikrama /Vamana, Parashu Rama, Rama, Krishna, Buddha and Kalki by day-long fasting and Brahmana Bhojana etc. Ashwayuja Shukla Dashami is the much-celebrated Vijaya Dashami when the Dussehra Festival of Nava Rathras get terminated to mark the killing of Mahishasura by Devi Durga as also to symbolise the Ramleela celebration as Shri Rama killed Ravana and brought back Devi Sita from Lanka. Margasirsha Shukla Dashami is the Arogya Vrata day when ten Brahmanas are to be treated with bhojan and dakshina, while ten Vishwa devas viz. Kratu, Daksha, Vasu, Satya, Kaala, Kaama, Muni, Guru, Vipra, and Rama are to be worshipped. Magha Sukla Dashami is the Day for Angira Vrata to meditate ten Angira Devas, viz. Atma, Vayu, Manah, Daksha, Mada, Praana, Barhishmaan, Gavishtha, Dutta and Satya, where as Phalguna Shukla Dashami, fourteen Yama Devas are worshipped viz, Yama, Dharma Raja, Mrityu, Antaka, Vaivaswata, Kaala, Sarva Bhuta Kshaya, Aoudumbara, Dadhna, Neela, Parameshthi, Vrikodara, Chitra and Chitrugupta. Ekadashi has a special significance among all the Tithis as the Shukla and Krishna Paksha Ekadashis are invariably observed with Upavaasa, Japa, Homa, Pradakshina, Stotra Paatha, Dandavat- Pranama and Ratri-Jaagaranas followed by Dwadashi❖s Brahmana Bhojanas and dakshinas. Chaitra Shukla Ekadashi is called ❖Kamada❖ or the Fullfiller of Purusharthas and Sin-destroyer. Vaishakha Shula Ekadashi is known as ❖Mohini❖ and Krishna Ekadashi is known as ❖Varuthini❖ when Purushottama and Madhusudhana are worshipped. Jyeshtha Krishna Ekadashi is called ❖Apara❖ to worship Trivikrama, whereas the Jyeshtha Shukla is ❖Nirjala❖ which is observed with fasting without water from dawn to dusk, and thereafter treat Brahmanas with Bhojan. Ashadha Krishna Ekadashi is called ❖Yogini❖ and is observed with day-night fast / puja and bhojan to Brahmanas on the following Dwadashi. Ashadha Shukla is ❖Shayani❖ Ekadashi, Shravana Krishna is ❖Kamika❖ Ekadashi, Shravana Shukla is ❖Putrada❖ Ekadashi, Bhadrapada Krishna is ❖Aja❖ Ekadashi, Bhadrapada Shukla is ❖Padma❖ Ekadashi, Aswin Shukla is ❖Papankusha❖ Ekadashi, Aswin Krishna is ❖Indira❖ Ekadashi, Karik Krishna is ❖Rama❖ Ekadashi, Kartik Shukla is ❖Pabodhini❖,

Margasirsha Krishna is Utpanna Ekadashi, Margasirsha Shukla is Mokshada Ekadashi, Pousha Krishna is Saphala, Pousha Shukla is Saphala, Magha Krishna is Shat Tila Ekadashi observed with full penance including Snaana, Daana, Tarpana, Havan, Puja, fast unto Dwadashi Brahmana Bhojan and dakshina. Like-wise, Eakadashis are performed on Magha Shukla as Jaya, Phalguna Krishna as Vijaya, Aamalki on Phalguna Shukla and Papamochini on Chaitra Krishna. As regards Dwadashis, details of Vrata Pujas worshipping Vishnu Rupas viz. Keshava, Narayana, Madhava, etc. have been described from Margasirsha to Kartika Months (Shukla Pakshas) along with the Puja-Vidhana. Following is gist of Vratas as follows): Madana Vrata is performed on Chaitra Shukla Dwadashi to dedicate it to Kaama Rupi Shri Hari. On this very day, Bhartru Dwadashi is also observed by worshipping Lakshmi and Vishnu too. Similarly, Vratas aiming at various forms/ names of Vishnu are observed on the Dwadashis herebelow: Vaishakha Shukla/ Madhava, Jyeshtha Shukla/ Trivikaram, Shravana Shukla/ Shridhara, Bhadrapada Shukla/Vamana, and Aswin Shukla/ Padmanabha. The Kartika Krishna Vrata called Govatsa Dwadashi Vrata is addressed to Mother Cow reciting the Mantra: Ksheerodarnava Sambhootey Suraasura namaskrutey, Sarvadeva mayey Devi Sarva devailankrutey/ Maatarmaatargavaam Maatagruheenaarghyam namostutey/ (Mother! Gomata! You manifested from the Ocean of Milk, ornamented by all Devas, worshipped by Devas and Danavas alike; kindly accept this Arghya followed by Puja and Nivedana). On this day of Govatsa Dwadashi, devotees should avoid oil-fried items, Cow-milk, curd, ghee etc. On Margasirsha Shukla Dwadashi, Sadhya Vrata is performed by assuming the Twelve Sadhya Ganaas, Viz. Manobhava, Praana, Nara, Apaana, Veeryavan, Chiti, Haya, Naya, Hamsa, Narayana, Vibhu and Prabhu. The Ganaas are invoked into a rice spreading and worshipped, after which request Lord Narayana to be pleased. On this very day, a Dwadasha -aditya Vrata be also performed by doing Puja to Dhata, Mitra, Aryama, Pusha, Shakra, Amsha, Varuna, Bhaga, Twashta, Viviswaan, Savita and Vishnu. Trayodashi Tithis are well-known for Maha Vaaruni Vrata in Chaitra Krishna paksha, if possibly coinciding with Saturdays/ Shatabhisha Nakshatra and if lucky futher along with a bath in River Ganga. On Jyeshtha Shuka Trayodasi, a Vrata for Dourbhagya Shamana (pacifying the trends of misfortune) is performed with the Puja of Mandara, Karaveera and Arka flowers to Narayana, while Goraatra Vrata is observed on Bhadrapada Shukla Trayodashi by performing Pradakshinas and giving away charity to Veda Pandit. The Pradakshina should accompany the recitation of: Gavo mamaagratah santu gaavo may santu pustatah, Gaavo mey paasravatah santu Gavaam Madhey vasaamyaham/ (Cow is ahead of me, behind me, by my side and I reside among Cows!). On Ashwin Shukla Trayodashi, a three-night long Ashok Vrata is performed by praying to Shakara Maha Deva kept under an Ashoka Tree; the person who performs the worship gives away a Pratima as daan, along with dakshina. Nrisimha Vrata is well known on Vaishkha Shukla Chaturdashi, when a devotee requires to keep day-long fast and worships the Deity with shodasho-pacharas and recites the Kshama Prarthana Mantra again and again: Taptahaataka keshaanta Jalatpaavaka lochana, Vajraadi nakha sparsha

Divya Simha Namostutey/ (Divya Simha! Your mane is shining like molten gold and eyes are glowing like fire balls; the slightest touch of your diamond-strong nails are excruciating; my salutations to you!). After the Puja, the devotee should sleep on bare earth, with full control of body parts. The Vrata is to be performed a few years to secure high contentment and fulfillment of earthly desires as also salvation after life's termination. On this very date of Vaishakha Shukla Chaturdashi, Omkareshwar Linga Vrata is to be observed for demolition of all past sins. On Jyeshtha Shukla Chaturdashi, Rudra Vrata is to be performed for securing unimaginable results by observing Panchagni Yogic Tapasya. Bhadrapada Shukla Chaturdashi is earmarked for executing Ananta Vrata, while Kartika Shukla Chaturdashi, observance of Pashupat Vrata has far reaching impact. However the most outstanding Vrata of the day/night is stated to be on Shiva Raatri on Phalguna Krishna Chaturdashi, when Nirjala Upavas, Bilwa patra puja, high concentration, Night-long Jaagaran, Stotra-Paath, three-hourly Abhisheka and detailed Puja and japa, purifies a devotee with fulfillment and Shiva Darshan. On Purnimas, Anna-daana would please Chandra Deva in Chaitra month and any kind of charities on Vaishakha purnima would have multiplier-effect; Dharmaraja Vrata on the latter Purnima would please him with Go-Daan, Swarna Daan and Bhojan Daan. Vata Savitri Vrata would certainly please Devi Savitri who conquered Lord Yama for the sake of her husband with the prayer of a devotee by reciting: Jagat pujye Jagan -matah Savitri pati devatey, patya sahayiyogam mey vatasthey kuru tey namah/ (Jaganmata Savitri, You are worshippable to the entire Universe as you are the unique Pativrata. You reside in the Vata Vriksha and as such, I pray to the Vata Tree; do bless me to ensure that I am never separated from my husband). Any woman who prays to Savitri and worships her and treats virtuous women with food and gifts would never lose her husband till she dies herself. Shravana Purnima is the day of Upa Karma of Vedas, when Yajurvedi Brahmanas should perform Tarpana to Devas, Rishis and Pitras; the Rishis whom Tarpana are to be offered would be of one's own Shakha. Rigvedis on Chaturdashi day of Shravana month and Sama Vedis on Bhadrapada Hasta Star should observe Raksha Vidhana. Uma Maheswara Vrata is scheduled on Bhadrapada Purnima, which requires total abstinence, Upavas on the previous and on the day proper, Jaagaran on the previous night and fast till the dusk time of the day, Pujas on the previous night, on the day and night proper would be compulsory as per shodasopacharas as described in the previous pages of this write-up. This Vrata is expected to be performed for fifteen years, whereafter the Udyapan function should be concluded with full formalities of Mantras, homas, and celebrations. Shakra Vrata is also scheduled on the same day of Bhadrapada Purnima addressed to Indra Deva for Dhana-Dhanya Vriddhi or all round prosperity. Kartika Purnima Vrata is intended to attain/ retain Brahmatva in the next birth as also to demolish enemies and the Deity to be worshipped is Kartika Deva. On this day of Kartika Purnima at the Pradosha Time, organisation of Tripurotsava and Deepa Daana are considered propitious; display of illuminations, especially in the vicinity of a river or a water-body would help light up krimi-keetas, flies, mosquitos, trees, water, etc and would enable Punarjanmas (rebirths) as human beings since

the upgradation of such ◆Praanis◆ would indeed be a welcome step for such ◆praanis◆. As regards, the Amavasya Vratas, Sanatana Kumara explained to Narada Maharshi that Chaitra and Vaishakha Amavasyas were extremely significant since these days were very dear to Pitras for their Puja, Shraddha by way of offering ◆Pindas◆(cooked rice) prepared by the ◆paarana vidhi◆, Brahmana Bhojana, especially ◆daanas◆ of cows etc. In Jyeshtha month Brahma Savitri Vrata was stated to be imperative on Amavasya. In Ashaadha, Shravana, and Bhadrpada months, Amavasyas are essential for Pitru shraddas, Daanas, homas, and Deva Pujas. On Ashwin Amavasya, it would be good to perform Shraadh Tarpan to Pitaras in River Ganga or more ideally at Gaya. On Kartika Amavasya ◆Deepa daan◆ given in a temple, or home, near a river, a garden, go-shaala or at a public Place is commendable; on this very day, Lakshmi Puja would be beneficial. Organising Brahmana Bhojan on a Margasirsha Amavasya or better still performing Shraddha on that day would be useful. In fact, Pitru Shraaddhas on Pousha, Magha and Phalguna Amavasyas would be effective]

6 DWITEEYA PARICCHEDA

In the earlier Chapter, common Tithi Nirnayaas were outlined but specific details of Maasa-Tithi Nirnayaas were not described in detail. It is possible that there might have been some repetition but the following pages provide explanations in details and highlight certain facts more comprehensively.

Chaitra Maasa

Chaitra Shukla Pratipaada heralds the New Year. In Mesha Sankranti, the first and previous ten ghadis are considered as Punyakaala. If the Samkramana starts before the previous midnight, then the Punyakaala is stated to commence on the previous night and otherwise then the Uttaraartha Punya kaala is considered as on the following day. In case the Sankramana is exactly on the midnight then both the days are deemed as of Punyakaala. Even if Chaitra Maasa happens to be an Adhika Maasa / Mala Maasa, then also the 'Tailaabhyangana' / oily head bath and other formal duties need to be performed and the New Year is declared as has begun. Each house-hold would then have a festive look and the Praatipada Morning should witness freshness with Nimba Patra Bhakshama with gud /jaggery and raw Mango pieces signifying equanimity of the mixed tastes of the New Year. That indeed announces the Vasanta Nava Rathris or the Devi Sharannava Raatris (Nine Nights). [Parameswari is stated

to assume **NINE SWARUPAS OF DEVI** viz. Brahmi / Devi Sharada as 'Hamsavaahini' / seated on a Swan with Kamandalu, Aksha Maala, Pustaka, Paasha and Chinmudra; Maheswari-Vrishabha Vaahini / seated in a bull, wearing a Crest Moon and Trishula /Trident; Koumaari as Mayura Vaahini / riding a Mayura or peacock with Shakti as her Aayudha / weapon; Vaishnavi as Garuda Vaahini with Shankha-Chakra-Gadaa (conchshell, disc and mace); Indrani with Vajraayudha; Sharada with Veena bestowing knowledge; Mohini with Amrita Kalasha distributing Nectar to Devas and denying to Asuras; Raja Rajeswari / Kameshwari seated on a lotus with Paasha, Ankusha, Pushpa Baana and Chaapa bestowing wealth, food, happiness and contentment; Devi Chamundi the Simha Vaahini /seated on a lion and destroying the most potent Demons like Chanda-Mundas and protecting the virtuous and the wise from their torment and finally as Gajalakshmi seated on a lotus with elephants geeting her with their trunks aloft and providing happiness to her devotees. The Nava Swarupas of Jagan Maata signify the assurance to the Universe the truism: *Ekaivaaham Jagatyaatraa dwiteeyaa kaa mamaaparaa*/(I am the eternal and unique Shakti and none else!]

Chaitra Shukla Paksha Vrata Pradaana: On *Pratipa Tithi*, Prapeya (Pousala or Water supplying rest houses) daana is observed to satisfy Pitru Devataas; if one is unable to do so every day in the Month pots of water are given as Daana to Brahmanas; the relevant Mantra is: *Esha Dharma ghato datto Brahma Vishnu Shivaatmakah, Asya Pradaanaatsakalaa mama santhu manorathaahl* (This dharma ghata or pot of Dharma representing Brahma-Vishnu- Maheshwara is being given as charity so that my 'manoratha' or menal desires be fulfilled). This type of Daana is not only done on Pratipada Tithi of Chaitra Maasa, but on Chaitra Shukla Panchami, Vaishakha Shukla Triteeya, Maagha Shuka Trayodashi, Kartika Saptami, Maargaseersha Navami and Phalguna Krishna Triteeya; these are the days when Pitru Shraadha is to be performed. Some persons believe that Matsya Jayanti is also observed on Chaitra Shukla Pratipaada. On Chaitra Shukla Patipaada, Gouri Vrata is also observed by performing 'Dampati Puja' or worship of respected couples signifying Gouri Puja and by avoiding Ksheera-Ghrita-Madhus or Milk-Curd-Honey. On the Chatra Shukla *Dwiteeya* Pradosha (Sun-set time), Chandra Vrata is observed by worshipping Bala Chandra. On Chaitra Shukla *Triteeya*, Andolini Vrata is executed after worshipping Shiva-Parvatis; if trititeya has commenced on the previous day itself, then too this

Vrata has to be observed on the next day itself. On the Triteeya itself Shri Ramachandra 'Dolotsava' should begin and the Puja should continue till the end of the entire Chaitra Maasa. On the Chaitra Shukla Triteeya itself the Manvaadis or the beginning of reign of Fourteen Manus; in fact the Manvaadis are celebrated on Chaitra Shukla Triteeya and Purnima, Jyeshtha Purnima, Ashadha Shukla Dashami and Purnima, Shraavana Krishnaashtami, Bhadrapada Shukla Triteeya, Ashvayuja Shukla Navami, Kartika Shukla Dwadashi and Pournamaasi, Pousha Shuklaikaadashi, Maagha Shukla Saptami and Phalguna Purnima and Amavaashya. Incidentally, the **Fourteen Manus** are: Swayambhu, Swarochisha, Aouttama, Tamasa, Raivata, Chakshusa, *Vaiwasvanta*, Savarni, Daksha Savarni, Brahma Savarni, Dharma Savarni, Rudra Savarni, Rouchya, and Indra Savarni. On all these Manvaadis, one is required to perform Pindarahita Shraaddhas. In fact in each year there are ninety six Shraaddhas to be performed and these are: twelve Amavasyas, four yugaadis, fourteen Manvantaraas, Twelve Kranthis, Twelve Vaidhritis, twelve Vyatipaataas, Mahalayaas fifteen, Ashtaka-ashaadhas as five, Anvashtakas five, Purveddha shraaddhas five, totalling 'Shannavati' Shraaddhas. **Dashaavatara Jayantis**: On Chaitra Shukla Triteeya there was the Origin of Matsya-Avatara; at the evening of Vaishakha Purnima was of the Kurmaavatara; Varahaavataara at the Aparahna of Bhadrapada Shukla Triteeya; Nrisimaavataara at the evening of Vaishakha Shukla Chaturdashi; Vaamanaavataara in the Madhyaahna of Chaitra Shukla Dwaadashi; Parashu Rama at the Madhyaahna on Vaishakha Shukla Triteeya; Chaitra Shukla Madhyaahna Shri Rama; Shri Krishna at the midnight of Shraavana Krishnaashtami; Buddhaavataara in the evening of Ashvini Shukla Dashami; and on Kalkyaavataara on Sharavana Shukla Shashthi on the evening.

Ganesha Damana Puja is performed all over Bharata Varsha on Chaitra Shukla *Chaturthi* for *Vighna naasham Sarvakaamaapnuyaat* or for overcoming all difficulties and fulfilling all kinds of desires. Any Puja or auspicious tasks should be initiated only after Ganesha Puja always. *Panchami naaga Puja* is observed in Chaitra Shukla Paksha by offering Ksheera- Ghrita to Naaga Devataas / Serpent Gods. Also this Panchami is the day of re-incarnation of Goddess of Wealth Lakshmi Devi pursuant to the 'Ksheera Mathana' or the churning of the Ocean of Milk by Deva-Daityas as also of the emergence of 'Ucchaishravaas' or the Divine Horses and thus Lakshmi worship and Haya Vrata are observed on the same day. Chaitra Shukla *Shashthi* is the Skanda Shashthi and worship of

Shiva Kumara Skanda. Chaitra Shukla *Ashtami* is the day of Bhavani Devi's Puja. On the same day, if Punarvasu Nakshatra coincides too that auspicious day is to be observed as of the worship of Ashvatha (Peepal) Tree by consuming eight tender buds of the flowers of the tree for fulfillment of human desires. Again, *Punarvasu Budhopetaa Chaitrey Maasi sitaashami, Praatastu Vidhivatsnaatvaa Vaajapeya phalam labhet/* (If formal bathing is done on the early morning of Wednesday coinciding with Punarvasu Nakshatra of Chaitra Shukla Ashtami followed by the worship of 'Ishta Devata', then that auspicious act would bestow the fruit of executing Vaajapeya Yagna!)

Shri Rama Vrata on Chaitra Shukla *Navami*: Lord Shri Rama assumed the incarnation of Bhagavan Vishnu on Chaitra Shukla Navami's Madhyaahna, during the Punarvasu Nakshatra in the Karkataka Lagna when Surya Deva was in Mesha Raasi as five Grahas / Planets were in ascendancy or predominance. As such, persons dedicated to Shri Rama Vrata should initiate their Upavaasa's morning on the presumption of Navami extending upto the afternoon but if Navami arrived on the previous day and extends on the next afternoon, then the Sankalpa of Upavasa should be on the previous day itself and the Upavasa would be for two days. The Vrata Sankalpa commences with Shri Rama Pratimaa Daana to the Acharya, by reciting the Shloka: *Shri Rama Pratimaa Daanam -kareshyam Dwijottama, Tatraachaaryo Bhava preeta sshreemaarosi twamevamey/* (I pray to Shri Rama and offer the Shri Rama Pratima presuming th Acharya is Shri Rama himself); the Karta should further take a vow: *Navamyaa anga bhutena eka bhuktana Raghavaa! Ikshwaaku Vamsha Tilaka preetobhava bhavapriya/* (As part of the Navami Vrata, I do resolve hereby that I will fast till the end of the Vrata; Shri Ragava! The jewel of the Ikshwaku Vamsha! Shiva Priya!). There after, Puja Vedika / Platform is made, take the vow to keep fast for eight yaamas, and recite :*Shri Rama Navami Vrataangabhuta Shodashopachaara Pujaam karishye/* and initiate the Puja comprising sixteen services like Aavahana- Shuddhodaka Snaana-Vastra- Gandha-Pushpa-Phala-Naivedyaadis. Then invoke Devi Kousalya with the Mantra: *Raamasya jananichaasi Raamatmakamidam Jagat/* Then worship Dasharatha saying *Om Namo Dasharadhaaya./* This would be followed by Shanka Puja with the recital:*Dashaanana Vadhaarthaaya Dharma Samshaapanaaya cha, Daanavaanaam Vinaashaaya Daityaanaam nithanaaya cha/ Paritraanaaya Saadhunaam jaato Raamasswayam harih,*

Grihaanaarghyam mayaa duttam bhraatrubhissahitonagha/ (Shri Rama! You are indeed the incarnation of Shri Hari who has descended to earth to destroy the powerful Ten-headed Ravana and other Daitya-Daanavaas and re-instate Dharma in the Universe; may offer this obeisance to you along with your brothers). This Puja would be followed by night long 'jaagarana' and Purnah Puja next morning along with Agni Homa and Mula Mantra Pathana hundred times. On conclusion, Patimaadi daanaas, Dakshina Pradaana and Prasaada Sweekaarana Paarana / Brahmana Bhojana.

Shri Krishnaandolanotsava on Chaitra Shukla Ekaadashi (Celebration of Baala Krishna in cradle): *Dolaarudham prapashyanti Krishnam Kalimalaapaham, Aparaadha sahasraistu Muktaastey dhoonaney kritey/ Taavatthishthanti paapaani janmakotikritaanyapi kreedantey Vishnunaasaardham V aikunthey Deva Pujitaah/* (Mere vision of Bala Krishna playful in a cradle is enough to destroy the sins of Kali Yuga; if the cradle is swung, thousands of misdoings are forgiven and 'Janmaantaraaparaadhaas' or sins of previous births are destroyed at once and if the Pratima of Krishna is played with in full faith and devotion, Vishnu Saayujya is assured).

Damanotsava (Festival of Damana Devata) on Chaitra Shukla *Chaturdashi*: Damana literally means self- restraint and conquering Evil Forces. Observing Upavasa and Nitya Puja on this occasion, the Karta of Festival enters the Damana Sthaana, cleans it up with 'Pancha Gavyas' (Five products of Cow viz. milk, curd, ghee, dung and urine), decorates it with Chandana-Pushpa-Phalaas, initiates puja with the invocation of *Shri Krishna Pujaartham twaam nesheye*, meditate Sarva Devatas and performs Puja to Kama Devata with the Mantra: *Namostu Pushpa baanaaya Jagadaahlaadakaariney, Manmathaaya Jagannetreya Rati preeti priyaayatey/* (I greet Manmatha Deva-the carrier of Flowery Arrows to bestow happiness of the entire Universe, the Saviour of all Beings in the Lord's Creation and the beloved of Rati Devi). Then at the Damana Sthaana, instal a 'Kalasha'/ vessel in the center of a Square over a white cloth and propitiate Damana Devata with the Prayer: *Pujaartham Deva Devasya Vishnorlakshmi patey Prabho, Damanatwamihaagaccha saannidhyam kurutey namah/* (May I greet Lakshmi Pati Vishnu before I invoke Damana Devata from the 'Ashta Diks' or the Eight Directions) with

the Mantras: *Kleem Kama Devaaya Namah, Hreem Ratyai Namah, Kleem Bhasma Shareeraaya Namah, Hreem Ratyai Namah, Kleem Anangaaya Namah, Hreem Ratyai Namah, Kleem Manmadhaaya Namah, Kleem Vasanta Sukhaaya Namah, Kleem Smaraaya Namah, Kleem Ikshu chaapaaya Namah, Kleem Pushpa Baanaaya Nama etc.*and Gayatri Damana Mantra viz. *Tatpurushaaya Vidmahey, Kaama Devaaya dheemahi, Tannanangah prachodayaat.* Subsequently, the Karta greets Bhagavan Vishnu as follows: *Ksheerodadhi Maha Naaga shayyaavasthita Vighraha, Praatastwaam pujayishyaami sannidhou bhavatey namah/* (Parameswara who is resting on the 'Sesha Talpa'! May I offer my Morning Puja; do provide my nearness to you!) and observes 'Ekaadasha Jaagarana' or Night Vigil all through the Ekaadashi. Next Morning after performing Nitya Puja , execute worship to Damana Devata and after reciting 'Mula Mantra', pray to Paramatma with the Stanza: *Deva Deva Jagannatha vaanchitaartha pradaayaka, Hruthpaan purayamey Vishno kaamaan Kameshwari Priya/ Idam damanakam Deva grihana madanugrahaat, Imaam Saam vatsaram Pujaam Bhagavan Paripuraya/* (Deva Deva Jagannaatha! Parameswara! As you always fulfill every body's desires, do grant my wishes too and accept my Damana Puja over the Year) .

Nrisimha Dolotsava again on Chaitra Shukla Chaturdashi is a Damana Puja to Parama Shiva, Ekaveera Devi and Bhairava. This Chaturdashi has to extend upto the noon if commenced on the previous day itself. If not, it should be considered as Chaitra Purnima in which case, Damana Puja has to be performed to all Devas. If Chaitra Purnima coincides with Chitra Nakshatra, Chitra Vastra Daana would bestow excellent prosperity. If that day falls on Sunday-Thursday- Saturday then Praatahsnaana-Shraaddaas would grant the Punya of performing Ashwamedha yagna.

Vaishaakha Maasa

Vaishakha Snaanaas are scheduled during Chaitra Shukla Ekaadashi to Purnima with the arrival Mesha Samkraanti: *Vaishaakham sakalam maasam Mesha sankraman Raveh, Praatassnnimaya-ssnaassy preeyataam Madhu Sudanah/ Madhu hantuh prasaadena Brahmanaamanugrahaat, nirvighnamastu mey Punyam Vaishaakha snaanamanvaham, Maadhavey Meshagebhaanow Muraarey Madhusudana/ Praatassnaanena mey Naatha*

Phalado Bhava Paapahan/ (During the entire Vaishaakha Maasa when Mesha Sankranti occurs, I resolve that I shall take formal baths by which Madhusudana would be pleased; give my devotion to Him and the blessings of Brahmanas, may the series of the Snaanas be completed without hindrance and break; in the exception of a break if need be, at least three Snaanas be performed from Tayosashi onward. As stated earlier, Manvaadis are on Purnimas; in case, Chaitra Krishna Trayodashi coincides with Shatabhisha that day is reckoned as a 'Vaaruni' and is worthy of Snaanas on the days of 'Grahana'. If there is Shubha Yoga or auspicious coincidence of a Saturday and Shatabhisha Nakshatra, then that day is called Maha Vaaruni. Further, there is a belief that Snaanas in Ganga on Chaitra Krishna Chaturdashi on a Tuesday in the presence of a Shiva Temple could even get rid of a person from Pishaachatwa! In Vaishakha Maasa's Vrishabha Sankranti time i.e. sixteen Ghadiyas before the First day, Tila Tarpana and Ghata Daana are stated to be significant. Vasanta Puja to Brahmanas with Sandalwood paste (Gandha)-Jaggery water and Plantain fruits is also of great value. In Vaishakha Maasa (as also in Jyeshtha) when summer gets intense, then after Nitya Puja keep a full vessel of Sandalwood water and Tulasi leaves with 'Panchopachaaraas'to Vishnu and perform 'Maarjana' or sprinkle drops to purify 'Griha Dwaaraas' and on retaining the same Tirtha pour around an Ashwatta (Pipal) Tree by doing Pradakshinas on the next morning then several Pitru Devataas are stated to redeem their souls; also the skin-itches of cows are believed to be cured. In the Vaishakha Maasa, voluntary 'Nakta Bhojanas' are stated to fulfill longstanding desires of the persons concerned. Shiva Lingaarchana with continuous pourings of Sacred Water as Abhishkaas along with Namaka-Chamaka Mantras would bestow far reaching Punya. Similarly Chhatra-Paada raksha daanaas would yield Maha-Phala.

Observance of Akshaya Triteeya in Vaishakha Maasa: The fruits of virtuous deeds on this day should yield far reaching ; *Asyaam Yatkinchitjapahoma Pitru tarpana daanaadi kriyatey tatsarvamakshayam, Iyam Rohini Budha Yogey Mahaa Punyaa/ Asyaam Japahomaadi krityepi Vakshyamaana yugaadivan –nirayah, Iyam kritaugasyaadih/*(On this Akshaya Triteeya, whatever little is performed by way of Japa-Homa- Pitru Tarpana-Daanaadi Dharma karyaas would never be wasted; especially when these Karyaas are done on Wednesdays coinciding Rohini Nakshatra would bestow 'Mahaa phala'. Such Japa-Homa and such acts are as good as those performed at

the Yugaadis. Yugaadi Shraaddha should be Pinda rahita or without resorting to offer of Pindaas. If Shraaddha is not possible on these lines , tila tarpana would suffice. However, Kumbha daana is stated to be essential; a Kumbha (pot) has to be covered with a cloth and filled up with 'Gandhodaka' before giving away as a kumbha daana by reciting: *Esha Dharma Ghato dutto Brahma Vishnu Shiaamakah, Asya pradaanaatrupyantu Pitarassapitaamahah/ Gandhodakatilairyuktam snaanam kumbham phalaanvitah Pitrubhyas- sampradaasyaami Akshayyamupatishthatu/* (I am giving away this 'Kalasha' filled with tila-phala-Gandhotakas through you Brahmanas in favour of my Pitru Devataas; may this daana bestow to me endless benefits. At the Yugaadis like this Akshaya Triteeya, 'Samudra Snaana' and 'Upavasa' are stated to be immense 'Punya'. On this Triteeya, Parashu Rama Jayanti is also observed; on this day's 'Pradosha' Time, Parashu Rama puja is performed by offering 'Arghya' or Sacred Water to Parashu Rama with the Mantra: *Jaamadagnya Mahaa Vira Kshatriyaantakara Prabho, Grihaanaarghyam mayaa duttam kripayaa Parameswara!* (Parmeswara Parashu Rama who uprooted the entire Kshatriya Vamsha! Do accept the offer of the Arghya from me and safeguard me always!) In the Vaishakha Maasa *Saptami*, Ganga Devi was brought down from Heavens by Bhagiradha to purify the ashes of his great grand parents and Ganga Puja had been observed eversince. On Vaishakha Shukla *Dwadashi* Madhusudana Puja bestows Agnishtoma Yagna Phala.

Nrisimha Jayanti on the *Chaturdashi*, especially if coincides with Swati Nakshatra and a Saturday would be of great consequence. The Narasimha Vrata should actually commence on the preceding Trayodashi itself as 'Eka Bhukta' or on a single meal and after the Nitya Karmaas on the morning of Chaturdashi and on its afternoon the Karta should take bath with Tilaas and the dried powder of Amla (goosebury) fruit. In the Evening, instal a Golden Pratima of Nrisimha Deva on a 'Purna Kumbha Paatra' or a Vessel filled up with Sacred Water and offer 'Arghya' along with 'Shodashopachaaraas' to Nrisimha Deva reciting : *Paritraanaaya saadhunaam jaato Vishnurnrukesari, Grihaanaartghyam maya duttam sa Lakshmiruharey swayam/* (Lakshmi yuta Vishnu's Avataara Nrisimha Deva! You assumed the Incarnation of Vishnu to save Sadhus and punish the Evil Forces; do kindly accept the Sacred Water and the Sixteen Services of Abhisheka, Vastra, Yagnopaveeta, Gandha, Pushpa, Phala, Deepa, Dhupa- Naivedyaadi). Affter

the offerings, the Devotee should pray to say: *Mad Vamshey ye Naraa jaataa ye janishyanti chaaparey, Taan Samuddhara Devesha dusshaad bhava Saagaraat/ Paatakaarnava magnasya vyaadhi duhkhaambu Vaaridheyh, Neechaischa paribhutasya Mahaa Duhkhagatasyamey/ Karaavakambanam dehi Sesha shaayin agatpatey, Shri Nrisimha Ramaakaanta bhaktaanaam bhaya naashana, Ksheeraambudhi nivaasastwam Chakrapaney Janaardana Vratenaanena Devesha Bhukti Muktiprado bhava!* (Sesha shaayi! Jagannatha! Shri Nrisimha! Lakshi Priya! and the Resident of the Ocean of Milk ! Do please save and protect those who were born or would be born in future in my Vamsha from the tortures of Samsara- Samudra from their sins, diseases, and banes as they are often subjected with insults and annoyances; do always lend them with your helping hand, accept my Vrata and bestow to me fruits of Bhoga-Mokshaas). The following steps in the Nrisimha Vrata include Paarana/ brahmana Bhojana and daanas of Kumbha- Go- Suvarna- Krishnajina and Bhu Daana ; Madhu- Tila Taila and Ghee etc. Also TilaSnaana, Tila Homa; Tilataila Deepa Daana, Tila Pitru Tarpana, Tila-Madhu Daana and so on are executed to secure Maha Phala.

Vaishakha 'Snaanaas' (popularly called AKAAMAVAI SNAANAS viz. the Snaanaas of Ashwiyuja-Kaartika- Maagha-Vaishakha) are concluded on Vaishakha Purnami or even earlier on the previous Shukla Dwadashi itself. On the occasion of the 'Snaana Udyapaanas', Go- Paduka- Chharta- Vyajana Daanaas are commended.

Jyeshtha Maasa Karyaas

Mithuna Sankranti Punya kaala is stated to arrive sixteen ghadiyas after the Jyeshtha Shukla *Pratipada*. In case the Punya Kaala commences on that night, Brahma Deva's Pratima is made of Wheat flour and worshipped with Vastra-Pushpaas to reap Suryaloka Prapti. In this Jyeshtha Maasa, Jala Dhenu daana is prescribed. On this Pratipada Tithi, Karaveera Vrata is scheduled. On Jyeshtha Shukla *Triteeya*, Rambha Vrata is an important Vrata which is observed only those men and women performing Panchaagni Tapas are qualified; they make a Swarna Pratima of Devi Parvati and

execute formal worship by way of Homaas and offer the Pratima finally donate it to a virtuous Brahmana couple to whom a self-contained house is to be given away as Daana. Jyeshtha Shukla *Chaturdashi* happens to be the birth day of Uma Devi and hence her worship is significant on that Tithi. On that *Ashtami* Shukla Devi is to be worshipped and on the following Navami Upavaasa is prescribed and repeat puja is to be performed on *Dashami*.

Gangaavataarana and worship on Dwaadashi: The most auspicious time that the most Sacred River Ganga was born was stated to possess ten Yogaas: *Jyeshtha Maasi Sita Pakshey Dwadashyaam Budhahaspatayoh Vyateepaatey garaanandey Kanyaachandrey Vrusho Ravou!* These yogaas are Jyeshtha-Shukla Paksha- Dashama Tithi- Budha Vaara-Hastaa Nakshatra-Vyateepaata-Gara Karana-Ananda Yoga- Kaanyaa's Chandra- and Vrisha's Surya. Even if this happens to be an Adhika Maasa, there is no objection to observe the 'Gangaa Vrata'. Those who are fortunate to reach Ganga on this day, especially in Varanaasi make the Sankalpa after stating the Desha Kaala and recite as follows :*Mamaitatjanma janmaantara sumudbhuta trividhakaayika Chaturvidha vaachika trividha maanasika swarupa Skaandokta dasa vidha paapaniraasatraya strimshacchata Pitruddhaara Brahma lokaavyaaptaadi phala Praaptyhardham Jyeshthamaa Shukla Paksha Dashami Budhavaasara Hastaanakshatra Gara karana Vyatipaataananda yoga Kanyaastha Chandra Vrishastha Suryeti Dasha Yoga Parvanyasyaam Mahaa Nadyaam Snaanam Tirtha Pujanam pratiyaamaam Jahnvi pujaam Tilaadi daanam Mula Mantra Japamaajya homam cha Yathaa shakti Karishye!* (I have the great satisfaction to bathe in the Holy River of Ganga and seek to wash off the cumulative sins of this and previous birth on account of three kinds of Physical ailments, four kinds of vocal problems and three kinds of mental agonies as described in Skanda Purana. The 'Snaana' is also to redeem three thousand thirty three Pitru Devataas besides attaining Brahma loka. This type of Sacred Snaana is ideal in Jyeshtha Shukla Paksha-Dashami Tithi- Wednesday-Hasta Nakshatra- Gara Karana-Vyatipaata and Ananda Yoga as also in Chandra in Kanya Raashi, and Surya in Vrisha Raashi- all totalling ten Yogaas when Ganga was materialised. It is in such Most Illutrious and Highly Sacrosanct River that Snaana- Tirtha Pujana-Tila and other Daanas, Mula Mantra Japa and Homaas would be performed by me as per my capacity!) After making this Sankalpa or Determination, the devotees concerned should dip in Ganga ten times, render Stotraas, wear dry

clothing, perform Nitya Karma, Tirtha Puja, Pitru/ Tila Tarpana by taking ten handfuls of Ghee and jaggery mixed Pindas in favour of Pitru devataas and finally invoke Ganga stating: *Namo Bhagavatyai Dasha Paapa haraayai Gangaayai Naraayanyai Revathai Shivaayai Dakshaayai Amritaayai Vishwa Rupinyai nandinyai tey Namoh/* After the invocation as above, render 'Aavaahana' Mantra viz. *Om Namasshivaayai Narayanyai Dasha Paapa haraayai Gangaayai swaaha*, thus inviting Narayana, Rudra, Brahma, Surya, Himavan, Bhagiratha and execute 'Shodashopachaaraas'. 'Pujaanantara Stotra' addressing Ganga as given in Skanda Purana after the Puja is as follows: *Namasshivayai Gangaayai Shivadaayai Namoh, Namaste Rudra Rupinyai Shaankaryetey Namoh/ Sarva Deva Swarupinyai Namoh Bhashajaya Murtaye, Sarvaswa Sarva Vyaadheenam Bhashak Shreshthyai Namoh namoh/ Sthaanu jangama sambhutaVisha hantrai namonamah, Bhogopabhoga daayinyai Bhogha Vatyai namonamah/ ---* (Devi Ganga! You are the auspicious Form of Rudra, Vishwa Swarupa, Brahma Murti and Sarva Deva Swarupa, the Curer of all kinds of ailments and diseases; the destroyer of pousons of animate and inanimate beings; the bestower of all kinds of happiness; Bhogavati! Mandakini! 'Swarna Daata' or the giver of gold and precious Stones; you are the Triloka Maata! Your unique presence at Gangaa Dwaara, Prayaga and Saagara Sangama grants immense joy to us; I greet you with several titles as Nanda, Loka Dhatri, Linga Dharini, Narayani, Vishwa Mukhya, Revati, Brihati, Tejovati, Vishwa Mitra, Prithvi, Shiva, Amrita, Suvrusha, Shanta, Varishtha, Varada, Usra, Sukhadrogi, Sanjeevani, Brahmishtha, Brahmada, Duritaghni, Pranataarti bhanjani, Jaganmata, and the extinguisher of all possible difficulties and Mangala! Devi Ganga! Kindly stay secure and firm always by my sides ahead and behind as my very existence in your waters is solely due to your courtesy; in fact, your presence in Srishti-Sthiti-Laya is a known realism as you are the Mula Prakriti, Narayana, Shiva, Paramatma. Those who recite your Stotra with faith and devotion by the means of hearing or pronouncing or by mental concentration should definitely extinguish all kinds of sins and fulfill any type of desires.) Among the tangible sins the ten prominent ones are: acceptance of other's material without permission; commit acts of violence disapproved by Shastras and other Scriptures; and desire for other women : these are by way of Physical acts; Parusha Bhashana or Utterances of Unsavoury language, lies, gossip, etc. are of 'Vaachaka' or vocal-based; 'Paradravyaabhilaasha' or interest in other's money-property-belongings; thinking of and doing acts that hurt others; and useless ego problems which are all mind-based. Devi Ganga! You have the unique distinction of redeeming the Souls of Three thousand thirty three Pitru

Devaas! You are seated on a white Crocodile, hold a 'Kalasha' with a 'Kamala' by your hands, wear a white silk Vastra; and is a Brahma-Vishnu-Rudra-Rupini. You are the Sacred Water in Brahma's Kamandulu utilised for "Srishti"; the Water with which Bali Chakravarti washed the consecrated feet of Vamana Deva; and the hallowed water of Ganga retained in the 'Jataajuta' or the curled and twisted coarse hairs of Parama Shiva a strain of which was released in response to the earnest prayers of Bhagiratha to redeem the Souls of the latter's ancestry. Such indeed is the illustrious history of Ganga that even a 'Smarana' or thought of the River from hundreds of yojanas would suffice to wash off sins and Vishnu Loka Prapti!

'Nirjala Vrata' on *Jyeshtha Shuklaikadashi*: This Vrata is observed by avoiding water except for the 'Nityaachamaniya' purposes or of formal sippings of water for Pujas. Such Nirjala Vrataas on twelve successive Ekaadashis would indeed qualify for far reaching phala. After observing the Upavaasa and Vrata on the Ekaadashi there should be daana of '*Sahiranya Sharkarodaka Kumbha* or charity of Potful of sugar water with Gold Dakshina. In fact, Puja of Trivikrama Vaamana Deva on the following Dwadashi and a Gavaamaya Kratu are of immense benefits. 'Tila Darpana' on Jyeshtha Purnima" is stated to yield Ashvamedha Phala. In the Jyeshtha Nakshatra, Chhatra-Paada Raksha Daanaas bestows superiority. 'Bilva Ratri Traya Vrata' / Vata Savitri Vrata from Trayodashi to Purnima Tithi -with atleast Trayodashi Nakta Bhojana- is observed in the Jyeshtha Shula Paksha. However women folk normally observe the Vrata without fasting; those women in menstrual circle might opt for Brahmanas to carry out the Vrata on their behalf although there is a strong opinion that the concerned women must not perform the Vrata in that state. On Jyeshtha *Pourmami*, if there is a conjunction of Brihaspati and Chandra with Jyeshtha Nakshatra or Surya with Rohini Nakshatra, that specific Tithi is called *Mahaa Jyaishti*; that day is extremely appropriate for Snaana-Daanaas; as that Tithi is also significant as the 'Manvaadi' and Pinda Rahita Shraaddha is to be performed. In fact, the entire Jyeshtha Maasa is of Trivikrama 'Preeti' or of great fondness of Vamana Deva and Daanas of '*Chandanodaka Kumbha*' and such other Daanaas are stated to have far reaching consequence.

Ashaadha Maasa Vratas

Dakshinaayana / Karkataka Sankranti occurs in Ashaadha Maasa. Some thirty ghadiyas before that is reckoned as Punya kaala; that too those ghadiyas nearing the specific time is supposed to be the most auspicious Punya kaala. If Karkataka Sankramana takes place at mid night or nearabout, then the Punya kaala is stated to have arrived as on the previous Tithi, but the Sankramana is after Sunrise within two ghadiyas then the Punya kaala is reckoned as on the same day and Daana-Upavaasaas are to be observed then. In case Surya is in Karkataka Raashi, or Kanya, or Dhanush or Kumbha, then Chudaa karmaadi are prohibited. In the Ashadha Maasa, observance of 'Eka Bhukta' or single meal a day would yield generous money, grains and progeny. In this month, Vamana Deva is propitiated by daanaas of footwear, umbrellas, salt and Amla fruit. On Ashaadha Shukla *Dwiteeya*, preferably in Pushya Nakshatra, Shri Rama Rathotsava is popular. *Ekaadasahi* is notable as ' Vishnu Shayanotsava' or when Vishnu Pratima is placed in a swing resting on a soft bed and pillow as though on the high tide of Ksheera Sagara fully ornamented with his four hands wearing Shankha-Chakra- Saranga and Gada while Devi Lakshmi pressing his feet; then elaborate puja is performed and a devotee's prayer would be : *Twayi Suptey Jagannatha Jagatsuptam bhavedimam, Vibuddhey twayi Buddheta tat sarvam sa charaacharam/* (Jagannatha! If you resort to sleep, then the Universe is put to sleep. As you are awake, the Universe is woken up too). On the Dwadashi day, Puja would continue followed by 'Jaagarana' or night vigil well spent with songs, music and dances and on the early morning of Trayodashi again, Punah Puja is executed ; thus this 'Utsava' or celebration is a three- day long affair.

Chaaturmaasa Vrata: This Vrata is not to be initiated on Thursday and Fridays, preferably at the beginning of Ashaadha Shukla Dwadashi evening after 'Paarana'. This Vrata could be accomplished by Shaivaites also. This is initiated by Jaati-Pushpa Maha Puja with the 'Sankalpa' commencing with the same above Prayer viz. *Twayi Suptey Jagannaadha-----* and as follows: *Chaturo Vaarshikaan Maasaan Devasyothaapanaavadhi, Shraavaney varjayecchaakam dadhi Bhaadrapadey tatha/ Dugdhamaaswayujey maasi Kartikey dwidalam thyajet, Imam Karishyenyamam nirvighnam kurumechyuta/ Idam Vratam mayaadeva gruheetam puratastawa, Nirvighnam Siddhimaayaatu prasaadaatey Ramaa patey/ gruheetesmin Vratey Deva panchatwam yadimey bhavet, Tadaa bhavatu sampurnam prasaadaattye Janardana/* (Jagannadha! If you resort

to sleep, the whole Universe falls in slumber and if you are out of your 'yoga nidra' the World is active too. Be kind to me! I resolve hereby to observe the regulation of 'Chaturmaasya' as follows: *Chaturo Vaarshikaan maasaan devasyotthaapanaavadhi, Shraavaney varjyaye shaakam dadhi Bhadrapadey tathaa/ Dugdharmaashwayuje maasi Kartikey dwidalam tathaa, Imam Karishye niyamam nirvighnam kurumeychyuta!* (In the Year's four months, I will not eat vegetables during Shravana Month, nor consume curds during Bhadrapada month, milk on Aswayuja, and 'dwidalam' (Pulses) during Karthika maasa; may I be blessed to observe the regulations as above and be ensured that no obstacles should stop me from being strictly adhered to). Bhagavan! in the event of my death during this Chaaturmaasya Vrata, then may I be considered as eligible to have successfully completed the Vrata; so saying the Karta would offer Shankhu Tirtha to Bhagavan. On the same lines as the Chaaturmasya Vrata, similar resolutions could be made in other Vrataas as well. For instance, resolves be made about 'Gudaanna'dharana or Varjana and so on as applicable in relevant resolutions: *Varjayashey gudam Deva Madhura swara siddhaye, Varjyayishye tailamaham sundaraangatwa siddhaye/ Yogaabhaasi Bhavishyaami praaptum Brahma padam param, Mounavrati bhavishyaami swaagnaapaalana siddhaye/Ekaantaropavaasi cha praaptum Brahma putam param/---Iti sankalpah/* (There might be similar Resolutions: Avoiding Jaggery eating would improve sweet voice; evading oil consumption would enhance physical charm; Yogaabhyaasa will be observed to facilitate Brahma pada prapti; Mouna Vrata will be followed to enable me self control; fasting of alternate days should help secure Brahma pada and so on). There are also some nishiddha or avoidable materials and actions in the course of Chaaturmaasa Vrata: no material should be offered as Naivedya as water in leather sachets, the burnt ash of dead animals or flies collected from Agni, Yagna's left over cooked rice, burnt food, Masura or Meat products, seedless or of too many seed vegetables, Mulaka or Mulis, Kushmanda / pumpkin , sugar cane, black gram, brinjal, snake gourd, tamarind , salt , honey etc. are strictly forbidden. *Vrintaaka bilvodumbara kalinga bhissataastu Vaishnavaih sarvamaaseshu varjyayaah/* (Brinjal, bilwa, udumbara, Kalinga, bhissata are forbidden by Vaishnavaites always.) Milk and products of any animal excepting cows, buffalos or goats are not worthy of offering as Naivedya to Bhagavan. During the entire Chaaturmaasaas, those who consume Havishya bhोजना are commended. Those who refrain from eating jaggery would have soft voices; avoiding oils would help develop attractive body parts; refrain from eating 'taamboola' would possess sweet voice; ghee consumption spoils skin; avoiding milk and curd leads to Vishnu loka; those

who sleep on mats on ground become the beloved of Bhagavan. Eating by squatting on the ground would bestow royalty. Ridding of 'Madhu Maamsa' or honey and meat makes a person a Muni / hermit. Eating on alternate days paves the way to Brahmaloaka. Growing hairs and nails yields Ganga Snaana phala. Silence is like giving instructions to others. Vishnu Vandana yields Go-daana phala. Vishnu paada sparsha is 'kritartatwa or a life well spent in fulfillment . Cleaning 'Devagriha' provides kingship. Hundred 'pradakshinaas' or circumambulations of Bhagavan bestows ' Vishnu Sayujya'. 'Ekabhuktaashana' or a meal a day provides 'Agnihotra karma phala'. Construction of wells or water bodies confers fame and 'Punya'. Eating at the sixth part of days together as habit grants 'Swargavaasa'. Eating on leaves gives Kurukshetra Vaasa phala. Bhojana squatted on rocks endows Prayaaga Snana. On these lines, if Chaturmaas Vrata is observed from Ashaadha Ekaadashi /Dwadashi to Shravana Maasa, a person is stated to have made a significant accomplishment!

Chaturmaasa Vrata is stated to have terminated on Shravana Purnima. For those Grihastis observing The Vrata as also to Yatis / Sanyasis, Vyasa Puja is scheduled on the Purnima's Sunrise presuming that the Tithi is valid at least upto six ghadis thereafter. Vyasa Puja commences after the Kshura Karma or shaving the head-hair and beard. During these four months or atleast a mimum of two months, the Yati is required to stay at the same place. After the shaving of head, the Karta or Yati has to perform twelve 'Mrittikaa Snaanaas' followed by Vyasa Puja. The Sankalpa is :*Chaaturmaasya Vaasam kartum Shri Krishna Vyasa bhaashyakaaraanaam sapaarivaaraanaam pujanam karishye/* In this Sankalpa, thePlacements of the 'Sapaarivaaraas' are: Shri Krishna in the Centre along with Vaasudeva- Sankarshana- Pradyumna- Aniruddha are invoked first; to the South of Krishna be Vyasa-Sumantu- Jaimini- Vyashampaayana-and Paila; to the left of Krishna and others be the Bhashyakaara Adi- Shankara and Padmapaada- Vishwarupa-Trotaka-and Hastaaala; to the sides of Shri Krishna would be Brama and Rudra; and on the four sides would be Sanaka-Sananaa- Sanaatana-Sanatkumaaraas; BrahmapVasishtha-Shakti-Paraashara-Vyaasa-Shuka-Goudapada- Govindapaada and Shankaraachaarya; then Ganesha in Agneya, Kshetrapaala inIshana, Durga in Vaayavya, Sarasvati in Nirruti, and staring from the outer East the Ashtapaalakaas. After the Avaahana Puja, Narayanaashtaakshara Mantra and Omkaara Namasshabda mantras be

recited. After Lakshmi-Narayana worship is performed, there must be prayers in favour of married Grihastis to mean that the Chaturmaasa Vrata should now terminate successfully and there should not be mutual absence from each other. At the end of the Nakta Bhojana, the couple should perform the Krishna-Lakshmi 'Shayya' (bed) and Pratima daana and the Brahmanas should bless the couple observing the Vrata successfully that the Vrata should bestow them 'Akshya Daampathya Sukha', 'Putra-Dhana-Vidya yoga' and 'Sapta Janma Sukruta Phala'!

Shraavana Maasa

The Punya kaala in Shraavana Maasa is stated to occur sixteen ghadiyas later than Simha Sankramana. In this Maasa the basic requirements are Eka Bhukta / Nakta Vrata and Abhishakaas of Vishnu and Shiva. In case, a cow gives birth when Surya is in Simha Sankramana, the owner of the cow is to perform thousand homas and give it away as Daana to a Brahmana. If the cow cries in the night, there is a need to perform Mrityunjaya Homa and Shanti. Hence the saying: *Maaghey Budhecha Mahishi Shraavaney badabaa Diva, Simhey Prasuyantey Swamino Mrithyu daayakaah!* (If a buffalo gives birth on Budha Vaara of MaghaMaasa, a horse gives birth in Shraavana Maasa, or if a cow gives birth in Simha Sankranti, the concerned owner risks his/ her own life. The 'Shaanti' or the way of appeasement for the occurrence in Shraavana Maasa is to execute Soma Vaara Vrata formally as per laid procedure and if unable to do so, at least Nakta Bhojana must be observed. On Shraavana MangalaVaaraas, *Mangala Gauri Vrata* is definitely prescribed especially by the newly married 'Grihinis'. Shraavana Shukla *Panchami* is popularly called *Naaga Panchami* and is observed upto six ghadiyas after Suryodaya when serpents are worshipped in Snake Pits or in Temples to Subrahmanya Kumara by offering milk and Pushpa-Gandha-Dhupa-Deepa-Phala Naivedyas. On Shraavana Shukla *Dwadashis*, Shaakha Vrata is observed when 'Shaakaas' or vegetables are donated by the 'Sankalpa' saying *Brahmanaaya Shaaka daanam karishye/* Then after worshipping Brahmana, recite the Mantra: *Upaayanamidam Deva Vrata Sampurti hetavey, Shaakantu Dwija Varyaya sahiranyam dadaamyaham!* With this Mantra, cooked or raw vegetables in good stock be donated along with 'dakshinaas'.

Pavitraaropana: On the Paarana day of *Shravana Dwadashi* or *Trayodashi* or *Purnima*, 'Pavitraadhiropana' or providing spun cotton Sacred Threads on Vishnu Idol is observed. Shiva Pavitraaropana is done in the Shravana Shukla Paksha on Chatudrashi, Ashtami or Pournamaasi. In respect of Devi Ganesha or Durgaadi Devatas, Pavitraaropana is accomplished on any of the Tithis viz. Charurdasi, Chaturthi, Triteeya or Navami as per one's own 'Kulaachaara'. If not, this is performed on Shravana Purnima. Cotton threads are in the clusters of nine with twenty four grandhis (knots) each and are called *Nava Sutris* (or nine threads) representing hundred eight Devataas and this option is stated to be the best. The medium alternative has fifty four Nava Sutris with twenty four grandhis and these cover upto the thighs of Bhagavan's idol. The minimum option is of twenty seven Nava Sutris with twelve grandhis covering upto the navel of the idol. In the case of Shiva Linga, the length and width of the Sutris are taken into account to cover the Linga. The Pavitras are all treated by Pancha Gavyaas and the Pranavaakshara OM. Then Kumkuma (Safron) is applied over the Grandhis of the Sacred Threads while reciting the Mula Mantras hundred eight times and cover up Vastras and pray to Bhagavan seeking pardon for lapses in the observance of the formal procedure: *Kriyaalopa vidhaanaardham yatwayaa vihita Prabho, Mayaitatkriyatey Deva tava thushtai pavitrakam/ Na vighno bhaveddeva kuru Naatha dayaammayi, Sarvatha Sarvadaa Vishno mamatwam paramaa gatih/*

(Deva! May deficiencies in the Procedure be taken care of by the Pavitra as ordained for your pleasure; do very kindly ensure that there should be any obstacles in our worship as you are the Ultimate Refuge to us). After the Prayer , Sankalpa be made for sanctifying the Samvatsara Puja, invoke the Tri Sutri with Brahma-Vishnu-Maheswara and the Nava Sutri with Omkaara, Vahni, Brahma, Nagesha, Surya, Shiva and Vishwa Deva with the Mula Mantra, and perform 'Panchopa –chaaraas' to the Pavitraas and and thus accomplish Pavitraaropana to Vishnu or Shiva as the case may be.

Upaakarma Vidhi: Among the formal and initial 'Veda Karmas' is the Upaakarma . Bhavishya Purana stated: *Sampraaptey Shravanasyaantey Pournimaasyaam Dinodaye, Snaanam kurvaanti Matimaan Smriti Shruti Vidhaanatah/ Upaakarmaadikam proktamrusheenaam chiva Tarpanam, Shudraanaam Mantra rahitam snaanam daanam cha shyaashyatey/ Upaakarmaani kartavyamrusheenam chaiva pujanam/* (On the arrival of

Shraavana Maasa Pournami's Sun Rise, Wismen perform Upaakarmaadika Karmaas including Tarpanam as per the Intructions ofVeda Shastraas. After the Upakarma, the duty is to perform Puja).

To Rigvedis, 'Upaakarma Kaala' is determined on Shravana Shukla Paksha Purnima in Shravana Nakshatra and Panchami's Hasta Nakshatra; rather the former option. Upaakarma is performed during the period when there is no Grahana or Samkranti and this principle is followed by both Rigvedis and Yajurvedis. Otherwise, during Hasta-Panchami Yoga or atleast Hasta or Panchami seperately is allowed. In case, Shravana Nakshatra is on two days of Pournami and the next, then the earlier day's Suryodaya and upto the next day's Suryodaya, there could be a carry forward of three muhurtas to allow the Upakarma on the Pournami (broadly stated from sunrise to midday) . Even otherwise, ie. even if the Shravana Nakshatra is over on the day, the next Nakshatra of Dhanishtha is allowed. However, the 'Sesha' of the previous Nakshatra to Shravana viz. of Utraraashaadha is not suitable.

To Yajurvedis also, Upaakarma Kaala is suitable to Shravana Purnami's Shravana Nakshatra. In case there is a Khanda Purnima ie. if Purnima entered after the Sunrise of the previous day and extends to the next day upto six muhurtas then all Yajurvedis would consider the suitable time for Upakarma as on the next day. However there are different opinions based on the number of Ghadis extended after Sunrise of the Khanda Purnima on the subsequent day; in case both the days happen to extend beyond Sunrise, then all the Yujurvedis agree that the Upaakarma Kaala is on the previous day. In case Purnima occurs on the previous day's Muhurtha and extends to the next day by two or three muhurtaas but by less than six muhurtaas, then Taittireeyas consider that the Upaakarma Kaala would be on the next day's Purnima; but Yajurvedis other than the Taittiriyas consider the Kaala in favour of the previous day's Purnima. Hiranyakeshi Taittireeyas consider the 'Aavaraniya (extended) Purnima as the Upaakarma Kaala. Other wise, they might consider Shraavana Maasa Hasta Nakshatra. , Apastambha Sutrasthaas no doubt prefer Shraavana Purnima but alternatively could consider Bhadrpada Purnima. Bodhayanaas too prefer Shravana Purnima or as an alternative Ashaadha Purnima be considered. Kanva/ Madhyam Dinaas or Katyaayanaas feel that either ' Shraavana sahita Purnima' or Hastaayukta Panchami or since Shravana Maasa is full of controversies

Bhadrapada Purnima or Panchami would be suitable. The short point however is that Shravana Pournami is the appropriate tithi for the Upaakarma, while taking into account the different permutations of muhurtas at or after the Sun Rise of the Khanda Pournami Tithi. If Shravana Pournami for any reason or interpretation is not fully satisfactory, then another alternative would be either Bhadrapada Pournima or Panchami.

As regards Saama Vedis, the decision is as follows: *Saam Vedinaam Bhadrapada Shukley Hastaa Nakshatram Mukhyakaalah, Sankraantyaadi doshana tatraa sambhavey Shraavana aasey Hastograahya iti Nirnaya Sindhuh/* (To Saama Vedikaas, Bhadra pada Shukla Paksha Hastaa Nakshatra is the best option for performing Upaakarma; in case however there is a Sankraanti Dosh then, Shravana Shukla Hasta Nakshatra as stated by the Nirnaya Sindhu.) Another School of Thought is that while Upakarma is performed on Sharvana Pourami but should be activated till Bhadrapada Hasta! If there is a Hastaa Nakshatra Khanda carried forward to the next day then the remainder Hasta must extend up to Aparahna, since to Saama Vedis, Upakarma kaala is Apaarahna.

To Atharva Vedis, both the options of Shraavana Purnima and Bhaadrapada Purnima are equally acceptable. Purnima however has to be Udaya Vyapini or should span upto Sun Rise next.

[In sum, Upaakarma by Rig Vedis prefer Shravana Nakshatra on Shraavana Purnima spanning atleast from Sunrise to mid day or Panchami's Hasta Nakshatra. Sama Vedis prefer Shravana Purnima's Hasta Nakshatra or Bhadrapada Shukla Hasta. Yajur Vedis basically approve of Shravana Purnima but for interpretations of Purnima's extensions after Sun Rises on the next day as detailed above]

Upaakarma Saamaanya Nirnaya: The normal practice of performing Upaakarma to 'Sarva Shaakhaas' is in Shravana- Bhadrapada Maasaas- Shukla Panchami or Pournamis as per their own Home-Rules, subject

however to limitations such as Grahana-Sankranti, Ashuchi and such exigencies. But those in the North of Narmada give consideration to Panchami etc. of Surya in Simha Raashi in Shravana while those in Dakshina Desha pay attention to Surya in Karka Raashi in Shraavana on Panchami-Pournamis.

Prathama Upakarma to new Yagnopaveetis: The first Upakarma to new Yagnopaviti Brahmacharis should not be performed on Guru-Shukraastaas, Mala Maasaas, and when Guru Graha is in Simha Raashi. First Upakarma is to be observed with Swasti Vaachana and Nandi Shraadha. Those who are 'Nutana Yagnopaveetis' or newly inducted to the Sacred Thread and Gayatri Mantra should initiate Upakarma in Shraavana Maasa on Panchami-Hasta /Shravana Kaala-Guru Shukraasta Samaya; if this is not possible then another alternative would be Bhadrpada Panchami-Shravana Nakshatra. The required paraphernalia are: *Mounjeem Yagnopaveetam cha Navam dandamcha dhaarayet, Ajinam Katisutram cha navam Vastram tathaiva cha/ Iti Brahmacharino visheshah Prativarsham dhyeyah/*

(Mounjee or String of Darbha /Kusha grass, Yagnopaveetam or the Sacred Thread, Navam Dandam or Palasha Danda or New Stick; Mriga Charma or Deer-Skin, Ajinam Kati Sutram or waist-band and Navam Vastram or new clothing; these are the Annual Specialities of a Brahmachari). Learning of Vedas invariably begins in Shraavana Maasa with Upakarma; the learning process is terminated temporarily in 'Makara Raashi' with the Utsarjana Ritual but would be revived in Shraavana Maasa again. Both in the case of Upakarma and Utsarjana , Brahmacharis as also Grihasthis and Vanaprasthas are required to follow the procedure and Nirnaya Sindhu Grandha mentioned that there would be 'Prayaschitta' or atonement by way of 'Praajaapatya Kruccha' or atleast Upavasa Prayaschitta. However the practice has been otherwise since both Upakarma and Utsarjana are performed at the same time; the relevant Sankalpa states: *Adheetaanaam Chhandasaamaapyaayana dwaaraa Shri Parameshwara preetyarthamupaakarmaa diney adhyotyasarjanaakhyaam Karma karishye /* (As per the Vedaas studied, I shall now perform on the Upakarma day itself the Utsarjana Karma also). However, Dharma Sindhu states that the Karmaas are apparently observed as per one's own family traditions.

Rakshaabandhana: The task of 'Rakshaabandhana' is observed on Shaavana Purnima from morning till Aparahna or Pradosha provided Bhadra Nakshatras are not in predominance; otherwise if Purnima is short of three muhurtas on that day then Rakshabandhana be observed on the previous day upto Padoshakaala if Bhadra is not present. The Sankalpa of 'Rakshaabandhana' or tying of the Security Band on the Right Wrist is: *Yena baddho Bali Raaja Daanavendro Maha Balah, Tenatwaamabhi badhnaami Rakshamaachalamaachala/* (Raksha Bandhana! I am tying this to you as was tied by King Bali of Vamana Avataara fame; be steady and firm)/.

Shraavana Krishna Ashtami: The Ashtami is of two kinds viz. Shudda and Viddha. When there is no Saptami Yoga then Ashtami is Shudda and it could occur during the day or night. But the Viddha is determined by the extent to which Ashtami Yoga is affected by the Saptami sesha. Again the permutations of Rohini Nakshatra and Krishna Ashtami are several and Dharma Sindhu offers hair- splitting juxtapositions of Saptami-Ashtami and Krittika-Rohini. Added to this is the interpretation by Koustubha Grandhas as per Madhwaacharya followers that Krishnaashtami by itself is the Janmaashtami and the one with Rohini Nakshatra is Krishna Jayanti. Other followers of Madhwacharya assert that Janmaashtami on Shukla Ashtami is significant for the Vrata and if there is no coincidence with Rohini, Jayanti need to be observed. Another interpretation is that if need be both the Vratas be duplicated or observed twice. *Vrata Vidhana:* In any case, the Janmaashtami Vrata be performed on a day when Ashtami is predominant. In the morning of that main Ashtami after Nitya Karmaas, the Kartha should resolve: *Shri Krishna preetyartham Janmaashtami Vratam karishye/* Alternatively the Sankalpa might be *Janmaashtami Vratam/ Jayanti Vratam karishye/* Then sip spoonful water thrice from a Copper Vessel and state: *Vaasu Devam samuddisya Sarva Paaoa prashantaye, Upavaasam karishyaami Janmaashtamyam Nabhasyaham;* in case of incompetence of observing fast, then one might imply *Phalaani bhakshaishyaam/* Afterwards, perform 'Aachamana' and take the Vow: *Aajanmamaranam yaavadyanmayaa dushkrutam kritam, Tatpranaashaaya Govinda praseeda Purushottama* (Purushottama! Do destroy the sins that got accumulated in the past from my birth and might be committed in my future till my death as I am now observing the Sacred Vrata on this most propitious day of your mortal birth and save me). Then after purifying with a bath at midnight, the Karta who pre-arranged - as per one's own capacity and devotion, a Platform

made of gold-silver-metal-or earthen with a large swing with Baby Krishna on bed cushions and design an appropriate background with Pratimas of Devaki-Vasudeva, Yashoda-Nanda Gopa , Balarama-Revati and groups of Gopa-Gopikas along with Lakshmi at Krishna's feet. Then the Puja commences reciting: *Shri Krishna preetyartham saparivaara Shri Krishna pujaam karishye*/This would be followed by the "Nyaasaas" by way of Anganyaasa and Karanyaasa, worship of Shankha- Chakra- Gadaa- Sarangaas and perform 'Dhyaana' as follows: *Paryankasthaam Kinaaraadyairyutaam dhyaayettu Devakim, Shri Krishna baalakam dhyaayetparyankestanapaayinam/ Shri Vatsa vaksha samshaantam neelotpala dalacchavim, Samvaahayanteem Devakyaah paadou dhyaayecchataam Shriyam/* (May I now meditate 'Neelotpala Shyaama-Shri Vatsaanka- Shri Krishna Baalaka!' as you are engaged in enjoying the breast-milk of Mother Devaki and experiencing the soft pressings of your tender feet by Devi Lakshmi!) Then the Puja is initiated with concentration by the Mula Mantra and 'Purusha Sukta Ruks' as follows: *Shri Krishnaaya Namah, Devakyaai Namah, Vasudevaayai Namah, Yashodaayai Namah, Nandaaya Namah, Shri Ramaaya Namah, Chandikaayai Namah* and so on and *Sakala -parivaara Devataabhyo Namah---Atraavaahita DevakyaadiParivaara Devataa sahita Shri Krishnaaya Namah/* There after Worship would continue by the offerings of Aasana- Paadya- Arghya- Aachamaniya- Abhyanga Snaana-Panchaamrita Snaana- Chandana lepana- Vasstra-Yagnopaveeta-Gandha-Pushpa-Dhoopa-Deepa along with the Mantraas viz. *Visveshwaraaya Vishvaaya tathaa Vishvodbhavaaya cha, Vishyasya pataye tubhyam Govindaaya Namoh namah/* The various Upachaaraas /Services performed, Naivedya is offered to the Lord with the Mantra: *Jagannaatha Namastubhyam Samsaara bhaya naashana, Jagadeeshvaraaya Devaaya Bhutaanaam Pataye Namah/* Then, Taambula-Pradakshna- Namasaaraa- Pushpaanjalis are proposed. Finally 'Udyaapana' of the Vrata is accomplished with repeat Puja and Samasta Raajopachaara- Mantropachaara-Bhagavat Kathaa Pathana/ Shravana, Geeta -Nritthya and various Services along with Shadrasopeta Bhojana- Brahmana Puja-Dakshina and so on.

Kusha Sangrahana: Yet another Sacred Deed that is executed on 'Shraavana Maasa Krishnaamavaasya' is reaping and preserving Darbhaas for repeated usages for Yagnaas, Homaas, Vrataas, Pitru Karyaas and so on. *Nabho maasasya darshey tu Shuchirbhaanupaaharet, Ayaatayaamaastey darbhaa*

viniyojyahah punah punah/ Some opine that the 'Kusha Sangrahana' is to be effected on Bhadrapada 'Krishnaamavaashya'. Kushaas are ten varieties :*Kushaah kaashaa yavaa durvaa Vusheeraascha sa kundakaah godhumaa vreehayoMunjaa Dasha Darbhaassabalajaah/*

(The ten varieties of Darbhaas are Kusha, Khasha or a kind of dried grass flower used for mats and house-roofs, Yava truna, Durva, Vusheera or the grass providing relief from heat, Kundaka, Godhuma graas, Rice / dhanya grass, Munja grass and Ulapa truna). *Virinchinaa sahotpanna Parameshthi nisargaja, Nuda sarvaani paapaani darbha swasti karobhava/* (Darbha! You are the one born along with Brahma or Srishti Prarambha thus imbibing the Sacred Nature of Brahma Himself; hence destroy all kinds of Sins and bestow propitiousness). *Yevam mantram samucchaarya tatah purvottaraamukhah, Humphat kaarena mantrena sakrucchitwaa samuddaret/* (With this Mantra one should face Ishana Disha and cut the darbhaas in one go) and pronounce the Mantra again saying *Hum Phat/* Such four darbhaas make a PAVITRA.