

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF INDIA

# THE HINDU RELIGIOUS YEAR

BY

M. M. UNDERHILL, B.Litt.,

NASIK



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# THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF INDIA

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## EDITORIAL PREFACE

THE purpose of this series of small volumes on the leading forms which religious life has taken in India is to produce really reliable information for the use of all who are seeking the welfare of India. Editor and writers alike desire to work in the spirit of the best modern science, looking only for the truth. But, while doing so and seeking to bring to the interpretation of the systems under review such imagination and sympathy as characterize the best study in the domain of religion to-day, they believe they are able to shed on their work fresh light drawn from the close religious intercourse which they have each had with the people who live by the faith herein described; and their study of the relevant literature has in every instance been largely supplemented by persistent questioning of those likely to be able to give information. In each case the religion described is brought into relation with Christianity. It is believed that all readers in India at least will recognize the value of this practical method of bringing out the salient features of Indian religious life.

## PREFACE

A FEW years ago I published a small book under the name of *The Hindu Year: a Primer on the Hindu Calendar of Mahārashtra*. It consisted of the Calendar that forms Chapter VII of the present book, with very short comments in the form of footnotes.

It was pointed out by several readers at the time that there was room for a much fuller book on the same subject, which, while dealing in detail with customs in Mahārashtra, should describe the festivals common to the whole of Hindu India, and so prove useful to a much wider circle. An attempt to do this has been made in the present book.

A mere list of feasts is unsatisfactory. Some attempt to trace customs back to their sources is necessary. The study of Anthropology in India still leaves large fields untouched, and much yet remains to be done. But in Chapters III to VI, the existing feasts have been related in each case to what I believe to be their origins, whether Sun worship with resultant Seasonal feasts, Moon worship with resultant Monthly feasts, Planet worship, the worship of Śiva and Viṣṇu, or the worship of Animistic deities. Chapter I deals with the Hindu method of reckoning time, Chapter II with Auspicious and Inauspicious seasons, while Chapter VIII applies only to Mahārashtra, being a list, with notes, of the principal Religious Fairs of the country.

It would be interesting and useful if similar lists of local fairs, descriptions of local variations in the observance of the main Hindu festivals, and an account of purely local feasts could be drawn up for each province in India, and it is hoped that there may be forthcoming those able and willing to undertake these tasks.

Apart from such local details, the festivals, as described in the present book, are, I believe, common to the whole of Hindu India.

March, 1921.

Nasik, India. M. M. UNDERHILL.

## CONTENTS

### 1. ON ERAS AND OTHER DIVISIONS OF TIME

Kalpa-Pralaya Yuga Eras, Luni-Solar Year, Intercalary and Deleted Months, Formation of the Month, Lunar Days, Solar Days, Intercalary and Deleted Days, Eclipses Cycle of Jupiter ..... 6

### 2. ON AUSPICIOUS AND INAUSPICIOUS SEASONS

Uttarāyana and Dakṣiṇāyana, Light and Dark Halves of the Month, Vaishakha, Saṅkrānti Days, Intercalary Month, Days of the Week, Rainy Season. Other Occasions, e.g. Movements of Jupiter, Ardhodaya, Kapila Shaṣṭhi, Somavati, Eclipses, Akṣaya 3<sup>rd</sup> Various Tithis..... 16

### 3. ON SOLAR AND SEASONAL FESTIVALS

Sun Worship, Solar Festivals, i.e. Saṅkrānti Days, New Year's Day, Itu Pūjā, Sundays in Śrāvana, in Ashvina, Days in Rainy Season, Seasonal Festivals, i.e. Holi, Madana 13<sup>th</sup> Narali Pūrṇimā, Ganesha 4<sup>th</sup> Gaurī Pūjā, Dasara, Kojagari Pūrṇimā Dipavali, Yugādi, Chandana Yātra..... 22

### 4. ON LUNAR AND PLANETARY FESTIVALS

Moon Worship, Amavāsya and Pūrṇimā, Parvan Days, Vināyaki 4<sup>th</sup>, and Saṅkaṣṭa 4<sup>th</sup>, Somavati, Light Half 2nd Mondays, Star and Planet Worship, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Rishi 5th..... 42

### 5. ON VISHNU AND SHIVA FESTIVALS

Viṣṇu Worship, 10 Avatāra Anniversaries, 24 Ekadaśi Days, Śiva Worship, 24 Śivarātris, Mahā Śiva-rātri, Mondays, 4th and 8th Tithis, Skanda, Tripuri Pūrṇimā, Maunya vrata, Ghanta Karna Pūjā, Kāla Bhairava, Viṣṇu and Śiva Worship, Vaikuntha 14<sup>th</sup>, Harihara Yātra, Dattatreya Pūrṇimā..... 48

### 6. ON FESTIVALS ARISING FROM ANIMISTIC SOURCES

Goddess and Tutelary Deity Worship, Gaurī 3<sup>rd</sup>, Dasahara, Varum, Brahma-putra-snāna, Sita 9<sup>th</sup> Shaṣṭhi Devi, Aśoka 6<sup>th</sup>, Aranya 6<sup>th</sup>, Shaṣṭhi Khas 6<sup>th</sup> Śītalā Devi, Female Energy, Worship Rambha 3<sup>rd</sup> Rādhā 8<sup>th</sup>, Annapurna 8<sup>th</sup>, Kālī Pūjā, Jagaddhatri, Ambuvachi, Lakṣmi Durga, Haritalika and Uma 4<sup>th</sup>, Bhavanyutpatti Varada 4<sup>th</sup> Pithori Khandoba, Viśvakarma Pūjā, Vyāsa Pūjā ..... 65

**Spirit Worship**, Śrāddha, Mahālaya, Chautha Bharani, Avidhava 9<sup>th</sup>, Ghata 14<sup>th</sup>, Sarva- pitri pūrṇimā, Mataruaha Aṣṭaka Bhishma 8th Bhuta 14th.

**Animal Worship**, Cows and Oxen, Govatsa 12<sup>th</sup>, Gopa 8<sup>th</sup>, Bahula Vasu, Barasa Gopada Pola, Bendura, Pongal, Monkeys, Hanuman, Snakes, Nāga People, Legendary Snakes, Ananta 14<sup>th</sup>, Nāga 5th, Manasa Arādhanam.

**Worship of Plants and Inanimate Things**, Trees, Cocoanuts, Grasses, Vat Pūrṇimā, Aśoka 8<sup>th</sup>, Tulasi Wedding, Salagrāma, Knotted Threads, Śrāvana Purnima, Pavitraropana, Rakṣābandhana.

7. CHART OF FOREGOING MONTHLY FESTIVALS ..... 90

8. PRINCIPAL RELIGIOUS FAIRS OF MAHARASHTRA Religious Fairs and Pilgrimages Alphabetical List of Fairs Details of Fairs Dates by Months 160

INDEX. 180

### ABBREVIATIONS USED IN QUOTING AUTHORITIES

Sacred Books of the East..... S.B.E. , Hindus..... S.B.H.

Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.... E.R.E.

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# CHAPTER 1.

## ON ERAS, AND OTHER DIVISIONS OF TIME

IN order to understand the system of appointing feasts, fasts, and other religious ceremonies, for certain days, it is necessary to get a grasp of the Hindu method of reckoning time. Various measures of time are used, e.g. Age, Era, Solar and Lunar Year, Solar and Lunar Month, Solar and Lunar Day, and Divisions of a Day.

Again, one must understand the rules for adjusting solar and lunar time. Therefore these matters are first dealt with.

### **Kalpa and Pralaya.**

Hindus conceive the lapse of infinite time as broken into vast recurrent periods, known as Kalpa and Pralaya, i.e. Existence and Dissolution. During a Kalpa the world and all its inhabitants exist, while during a Pralaya the world and all beings are in a state of invisible and unconscious dissolution.

When the world is reproduced, at the beginning of a Kalpa, all beings and things are at their very best, but during the course of the Kalpa they gradually worsen and decay, until at the close nothing is possible but the blank dissolution of Pralaya. This steady process of degradation is then vividly represented by the division of the period into four ages, each succeeding age marking a great fall in virtue, capacity and happiness, as compared with the preceding age. These four ages, yugas, are named from dice, the first being the four, the 2nd the three, the 3rd the two, the last the ace; and the time each lasts is in proportion to these figures. The unit is taken as being 1,200 divine years. The relation of divine to human time is represented in this table:

1 solar year = 1 day and night of the gods.

30 days of the gods = 1 month of the gods = 30 solar years.

12 months of the gods = 1 year of the gods = 360 solar years.

Thus the original scheme of the Kalpa seems to have been:

The Ages	Years of the Gods	Solar Years
1. The <i>Krita yuga</i>	i.e. the 4 <sup>th</sup> = 4,800	= 1,728,000
2. The <i>Treta yuga</i>	i.e. the 3 <sup>rd</sup> = 3,600	= 1,296,000
3. The <i>Dvapara yuga</i>	i.e. the 2 <sup>nd</sup> = 2,400	= 864,000
4. The <i>Kali yuga</i>	i.e. the ace = 1,200	= 432,000

Each yuga is said to begin when the Sun, the Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus and Saturn are all at the initial point of the ecliptic.

Later, the scheme was further elaborated. The four ages taken together were called a *Mahāyuga* or Great Age; and a Kalpa was held to cover a thousand *Mahāyugas*; so that the length of a Kalpa came to be 4,320,000,000 solar years.

We are said to be living at present in the Kali yuga, hastening downwards in degradation to utter dissolution. The age is believed to have run some 5,020 of the 432,000 years of its total course.

## Eras — Yugas

There are several eras reckoned among Hindus at the present day, but the great majority follow one of two,<sup>1</sup> either the *Śāka* or the *Samvat* (or *Samvatsara*).

The *Samvat*<sup>2</sup> is popularly believed to have been established by one, Vikramāditya, King of Ujjain, to commemorate his victory over the Śāka kings in the year 3044 of the Kali yuga (57 B.C.). Hence the current year (A.D. 1921) is, according to *Samvat* reckoning, 1977. Professor Kielhorn<sup>3</sup> however, states that the era was known until at least the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. as "the *Malava* time, or era," and that no mention of any king Vikramāditya is met with earlier than A.D. 842, the 898th year of the era, and that, consequently, it cannot either have been established by, or invented to commemorate the memory of, any such king.

His theory is that, as the *Vikrama-samvat* year began in the autumn, at the time when kings renewed their campaigns, it became known as the "*Vikrama Kāla*," i.e. "the time of prowess," and was described as such by poets. Later on, the true origin having been forgotten, people invented a mythical king, Vikramāditya, to account for the name of the era.

Dr. Fleet<sup>4</sup> says the era started in 58 B.C., in the reign of the Kushan king, Kanishka, was established as an era by his successor, and accepted by the Malava people; but Dr. Vincent Smith<sup>5</sup> says that King Kanishka, from numismatic evidence, almost certainly may be placed from A.D. 120 to 125, and cannot therefore have been the founder of the *Vikrama* era.

On the other hand, Mr. K. P. Jayaswal,<sup>6</sup> writing as lately as April, 1918, insists on the historicity of *Vikrama*, who took captive, and ended the rule of Nahapana, the Śāka king of popular tradition, which the New Jaina datum places at 58 B.C. The question, therefore, of the origin of the *Vikrama-samvat* era cannot be said to be solved.

The Śāka era, again, is said to date from a king Sālivāhana,<sup>7</sup> ruler of the Śāka people, and founded in A.D. 78. Hence the current year (A.D. 1921) is Śāka 1843. But there

<sup>1</sup> Institutes of Vishnu, S.B.E., VII, p. 77, etc

<sup>2</sup> Book of Indian Eras, p. 47 ff. So also Molesworth,

<sup>3</sup> A., XX, p. 399.

<sup>4</sup> Imp. Gaz., II, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> I.A., XLVII, p. 112. .

<sup>6</sup> I Imp. Gaz., II, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Book of Indian Eras, p. 47

were more than one king of this name and possibly the era was not founded by any one of them. Dr. Fleet merely says that the Śāka era was founded in A.D. 78, by a king of Kathiavar and Ujjain, and Dr. Vincent Smith<sup>8</sup> describes the Śāka people as a tribe who immigrated into Seistan and North India, where they founded a dynasty between 100 B.C. and A.D. 50.

The common Hindu Panchāṅga, or calendar, follows the Śāka reckoning, but the use of the different eras to compute the date of any given year is not so confusing as might be supposed. The names, order, etc., of months and days occurring within the year are not affected, and it is a simple matter to affix the name of the era followed before any quoted date. For example, April 9, 1921, might be quoted either as “ Śāka 1843 Chaitra Śukla-pakṣa Pratipada,” or as “ Samvat 1977 Chaitra,” etc.

### **The Luni-Solar Year, or Samvatsara.**

From early years the Aryans appear to have reckoned time by both sun and moon. In the Institutes of Viṣṇu<sup>9</sup> and in Manu's Code<sup>10</sup> are found references to both sun and moon as determining days and hours for the observance of fasts and other religious rites. And it appears that two modes of computing the space of a year were recognised, one being measured by the time taken by the sun to pass through the twelve signs of the zodiac, the other being the somewhat shorter year, consisting of twelve lunar months (about 354 days).

The two systems were united into one, the present luni-solar or Samvatsara year, about 1181 B.C.<sup>11</sup> The first day of the solar year is the day of the entry of the sun into the zodiacal sign Meṣa (Aries) at the Vernal equinox, and the actual beginning of the civil and religious year is, in general, dated from the new moon immediately preceding that day. The old Vikrama-samvat year began with the autumn equinox.

The year consists of twelve lunar months, with an intercalary month inserted about every two and a half years (for which see below), so that, although no one year coincides as to the number of days with a year of the Christian era, the variation and periodical correction cause a close approximation to it.

The ecliptic is divided into twelve solar mansions, or *Rāśi*, identical with the signs of the zodiac known to the West; and also into 27 lunar mansions, or asterisms, known as *Nakṣatra*. Bentley<sup>12</sup> says the formation of these lunar mansions was the most ancient of Hindu astronomical calculations. The nakṣatras are not all equal in size, some consist of only one or two stars. Chitra the 14th consists of one star only, i.e. Spica. Each *rāśi* contains two or three nakṣatra. There is also a short interposed

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<sup>8</sup> Early Hist, of India, p. 225

<sup>9</sup> S.B.E., VII, pp. 77, 240, etc.

<sup>10</sup> S.B.E., I, pp. 64

<sup>11</sup> Chronology Tables, V, Tarlankar and Sarasvati.

<sup>12</sup> Historical View of Hindu Astronomy, p. 1.



interval, known as *Abhijit*,<sup>13</sup> between the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> nakṣatra, for the moon's duration in each nakṣatra is slightly in excess of one day. Abhijit gathers up the month's daily excess. Some old authorities give 27 nakṣatra, some 28.

The sun completes its (apparent) journey through the heavens in one year, passing through one rāśi and about two and a quarter nakṣatra each month. The moon's (apparent) journey through the heavens is much quicker, the whole being completed in a single month. It follows that the moon travels through just more than one nakṣatra every solar day, becoming full in a different nakṣatra each month, and the present names of the months are formed from the nakṣatra in which the moon was full in the year of the institution of the present luni-solar year.

Lunar names for the months are in more general use, although the solar names (from the zodiacal signs) are met with sometimes. The table given below shows the relation of solar and lunar months to the nakṣatra. The year begins with the new moon of Chaitra, which immediately precedes the entry of the sun into Meṣa, and which takes its name from the 14<sup>th</sup> nakṣatra, Chitra.

Solar	Lunar
1. Meṣa (Aries)	Chaitra
2. Vriṣhabha (Taurus)	Vaisakha
3. Mithuna (Gemini)	Jyeṣṭha
4. Karka (Cancer)	Aṣāḍha
5. Simha (Leo)	Śrāvana
6. Kanya (Virgo)	Bhādrapada
7. Tula (Libra)	Aśvina
8. Vriścika (Scorpio)	Kārttika
9. Dhanus (Sagittarius)	Margasīrṣa
10. Makara (Capricorn)	Pauṣa
11. Kumbha (Aquarius)	Magha
12. Mīna (Pisces)	Phalguna

### **Intercalary and Deleted Months.**

The nakṣatra are not all of the same extent, and the motion of the moon varies. Also the time taken by the sun in passing through a zodiacal sign varies. It, therefore,

<sup>13</sup> Thibaut, "Astronomic," E.I.A.R., p. 23.

sometimes happens that two new moons occur, or that no new moon occurs, within a solar month. The latter event is much more rare than the former, occurring only once or twice in a century, while the former occurs about once every two and a half years.

The entry of the sun into a zodiacal sign is called a Saṅkrānti. If a new moon occurs immediately after a Saṅkrānti, a 2nd new moon may occur immediately before the following Saṅkrānti. And since each solar month takes the name of the immediately preceding lunar month, a difficulty of nomenclature arises, for two new moons have occurred since the last Saṅkrānti. In such a case, the former of the two months under consideration is called an Adhika (extra) month, the latter taking the customary name.

## Adhika Māsa

The *adhika* month is sometimes called *Malamāsa* (unclean month), and is considered unpropitious. For all religious purposes it is considered a *mensis non*. The only cases in which a *malamāsa* is recognised as having a status of its own are:—

- (1) When it occurs as Adhika Chaitra. The year then begins with the new moon of Adhika Chaitra, not with that of Chaitra proper.
- (2) When it occurs as Adhika 2 Jyeṣṭha the Dasahara must be kept in Adhika, not in ordinary Jyeṣṭha.
- (3) The Kokila worship (Chap. VI, p. 117) is only performed in an Adhika Aṣāḍha month.
- (4) Alex Cunningham records that he has only met with one inscription in an intercalary month. Inscriptions relating to grants of land, etc., would bear the date of the day the grant was made, usually on a festival. The absence of such malamāsa dates points to the fact that festivals do not occur in such a month.

At rare intervals, the sun being in perigee, and a lunar month being at its longest, it may happen that a new moon immediately precedes a Saṅkrānti, and that the following Saṅkrānti occurs before the moon is again new. In such a case the name of the first of the two lunar months is deleted, and it is called a *Nija* or (more commonly) a *Kṣaya* month. It has been aptly said: “The lunar months are doors to the Indian calendar, but the solar months are hinges on which the doors move. In the year 1 B.C. there is no new moon between the two Saṅkrānti at 246’ 3192d. and 275’ 636d. (i.e. between Makara Saṅkrānti and Kumbha Saṅkrānti) and therefore the lunar month which has no hinge to turn on is shut; this fact is expressed by saying that Pauṣa lunar month is *Kṣaya*, or “suppressed!”

The diagram on this page illustrates the above.

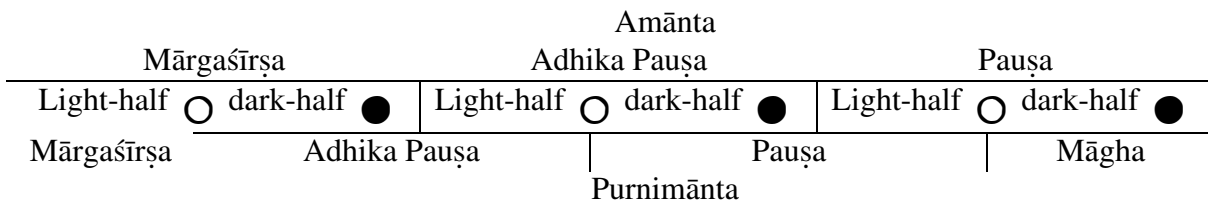
When a *Kṣayamāsa* occurs, the actual number of lunar months in the year is always completed to twelve or thirteen, as one, or two, intercalary months will occur in the same year.

## Formation of the Month.

From the earliest times the month has been regarded as consisting of two parts or Pakṣa, called the **Śuklapakṣa** (light half), and **Kṛṣṇapakṣa** (dark half). The word *pakṣa* means a wing, and calls up a mental picture of the new, or full, moon as the body of a bird, with the waxing and waning periods outspread on either side, as wings. In some parts of India the month begins with the light half, on the day following the new moon, and ends with the day of the following new moon, which closes the dark half. This is known as the **Amānta** system, and is current in South India, Bengal and Mahārashtra; this system is followed in the present book. In Hindusthan and Telingana the **Purnimānta** system is followed. This starts with the dark half, the day after the full moon, and ends with the day of the succeeding full moon.

One curious inconsistency arises from the use of the Purnimānta system. The month beginning with the dark half, the new moon occurs in the middle of the month. So that in the case of the month Chaitra, the first month of the year, its first half lies in the preceding year; for the Amānta system is used throughout India in reckoning the beginning of the Samvatsara.

The two systems are illustrated in the following diagram, which also shows the modern manner of reckoning an intercalary month:



○ = full moon    ● = new moon

It will be seen from the above that the light halves of the months are always known by the same names under both *Amānta* and *Purnimānta* systems, but that the names of the dark halves differ.

Ceremonies appointed for a certain day will be held on the same day all over India, but the name by which the day is designated will differ according to the system followed. For example, if Makara Saṅkrānti occurs on the 2nd of the light half of Pauṣa, it would be described in both systems as Pauṣa Śukla-pakṣa dvitiya, but if it occurred on the 2nd of the (*amānta*) dark half of Pauṣa, it would be described by followers of the *Purnimānta* system as Magha Kṛṣṇa pakṣa dvitiya.

The Surya Siddhanta, dealing with Aryan astronomy and believed<sup>14</sup> to have been known from the 4th or 5th century A. D., followed the Amānta system, but gave a

<sup>14</sup> Sanskrit Literature, A. A. Macdonell, p. 435 ; Imp. Gaz., II, p. 265.

curious method of placing the intercalary month, embedding it, as it were, in the middle of the normal month whose name it shared, as follows:

Chaitra	Vaiśākha	Adhika Vaiśākha	Vaiśākha
Light-half ○ dark-half ●	Light-half ○ dark-half ●	Light-half ○ dark-half ●	Light-half ○ dark-half ●

### **Lunar Days, or *Tithi*.**

A lunar month consists of 30 lunar days, or Tithi, subject to intercalation or expunging when related to solar days.

The moon<sup>15</sup> has an (apparent) path of 360 round the sun, hence one tithi equals 12, the amount of a tithi is therefore a constant, but owing to the elliptical form of the moon's orbit it takes a varying time to travel the requisite 12, and the duration of a tithi is therefore a variable, the variation amounting to about four and a half hours.

### **Solar Days, or *Divasa*.**

The Hindus recognise nine “planets” or Graha, viz. Surya, Ravi or Āditya (Sun), Chandra or Soma (Moon), Mangala or Bhauma (Mars), Buddha or Saumya (Mercury), Guru or Brihaspati (Jupiter), Sukra (Venus), Sani (Saturn), Rahu (ascending node), and Ketu (descending node).

The week of seven days named from the planets, which is in use in Europe, is also used in India. The origin of this institution is of considerable importance. The seven days week is a very old institution, being found in Israel, Babylonia and Egypt in pre-Christian centuries. India may, therefore, have known and used it. But the naming of the seven days of the week from the planets is not very old; for it arose in Egypt in the 2nd century B.C. from Greek astrology.

The order of the planets among the Greeks was as follows: (1) Saturn, (2) Jupiter, (3) Mars, (4) Sun, (5) Venus, (6) Mercury, (7) Moon, being the order of their seeming distance above the earth, beginning with the highest. When the planets were first used astrologically, they were applied to the hours of the day as Lords, Saturn being Lord of the first hour, Jupiter of the 2nd, and so on.

When this system became common in Egypt, where a seven days week was in use, someone, noticing that there were seven planets and seven days in the week, conceived the idea of making each planet the Lord of one day of the week. Necessarily Saturn, the first planet, became the Lord of the first day of the week. But being also Lord of the first hour of the day, he was Lord of the 8th, 15th and 22nd hours of the day as well. If then we reckon on, we find that the 25<sup>th</sup> hour, i.e. the first hour of the following day, falls under the rule of the Sun, and, therefore, Sun day

<sup>15</sup> Indian Calendar, Sewell and Dikṣit, p. 3 n.

follows Saturn-day. A similar calculation fixes the Lords of the other days, as is shown by the diagram. We thus reach a week which runs Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday.

The new planetary week, beginning with Sunday, came into use, in the Roman Empire, seemingly in the 2nd century A.D., and probably as a result of the popularity of Sun worship at the time. The order of the planetary days remained unchanged.

Here are the Indian names of the days of the week in accordance with the system:

Day	Planet	Sanskrit names	
Sunday	Sun-day	Ravi-vāsara	Āditya-vāra
Monday	Moon-day	Indu-vāsara	Soma-vāra
Tuesday	Mars-day	Bhauma-vāsara	Mangala-vāra
Wednesday	Mercury-day	Saumya-vāsara	Buddha-vāra
Thursday	Jupiter-day	Brihaspat-vāsara	Guru-vāra
Friday	Venus-day	Śukra-vāsara	Śukra-vāra
Saturday	Saturn-day	Sthira-vāsara	Śani-vāra

Fleet argues that the usage did not arise in India until about A.D. 400. For this conclusion he relies mainly on inscriptions. This view is combated by Indians; and Professor Keith believes these planetary names were known to the Buddhist writer, Aryadeva, who cannot be dated later than the 3rd century. It seems clear that we can say that no mention in Hindu literature is likely to be earlier than the 3rd century, but we cannot go further.

All of these Graha are believed to have a special influence on the days named from them, and on the lives of men born under them. Sunday, Saturday and Tuesday are considered very inauspicious days, Saturn being considered the son of the Sun. The remaining four days, under the influence of the Moon, Mercury (the son of the Moon), Jupiter and Venus, are auspicious.

A solar day is divided into eight watches, or *Prahara*, of about three hours duration, and into *Ghatika*, *Pala*, and *Vipala*, the relation of which to the Western hours, minutes and 2nds is given below:

60 prativipala (not used)	= 1 vipala	= .4"
60 vipala	= 1 pala	= 24"
60 pala <sup>16</sup>	= 1 ghatikā	= 24
60 ghatikā	= 1 divasa	= 24 hours = 1 day & night

The exact point of time for performing certain ceremonies at weddings, etc., has to be calculated with minute care, or the auspicious moment may be missed. The modern Hindu almost universally uses the Western system of calculating by hours and minutes, for the ordinary purposes of life, and a watch or clock is found in most well-

<sup>16</sup> From Pala = a straw, i.e. a very small thing

to-do houses. But for timing religious ceremonies the Hindu system is in general use, the equivalent for the clock, or hour-glass, being the metal bowl with a hole pierced in it, floating on water. As the water enters the bowl, the latter settles down lower and lower, until, at the exact close of a *ghatika*, the bowl sinks. "*Ghatika*" was originally the name of the bowl. Later it came to be applied to the period of time taken for the bowl to fill with water and sink.

## Intercalary and Deleted Tithi

Just as the Hindu calendar intercalates or deletes the names of occasional lunar months, owing to the impossibility of making lunar and solar time correspond, so, and for the same reason, intercalary and deleted tithi are met with. It should be borne in mind, however, that it is merely a matter of nomenclature. The 30 tithi of each month in reality run their full and consecutive course.

The civil day is a solar one, reckoned from sunrise to sunrise, and for ordinary purposes of life it is practically impossible to use any but the natural solar day. But the tithi is a lunar division of time, and occupies from day to day various spaces in the solar day or *divasa*. It may begin at 4.00 p.m., and end during the following afternoon. Temple priests or others wholly given up to following the observances of their religion can and do regulate their lives and actions by the tithi, but the ordinary man is obliged to regulate his by the solar day. A fairly satisfactory plan has been evolved by which the *tithi* and *divasa* may be made more or less to correspond. It is as follows:

The tithi beginning before, or at, sunrise, is coupled with that *divasa*, and the tithi beginning after sunrise (unless it ends before the next sunrise) is coupled with the following *divasa*. But if a tithi beginning after sunrise on one morning ends before sunrise on the following morning, it cannot be coupled with any *divasa* and is therefore deleted or *Kṣaya*.

The diagram on page 26 will explain the foregoing. It illustrates the *Kṣaya* 7th of *Aṣāḍha* *Kṛṣṇa*- *pakṣa* *samvat* 1975 (July 19-20, 1919).

If, on the other hand, a tithi begins immediately before one sunrise and ends after the following sunrise, the name of the tithi is coupled with both *divasa* involved, so that two tithis of the same designation appear. The former of the two is known as *Adhika* or *Vridhhi*. The diagram on page 28 illustrates the *Adhika* 8<sup>th</sup> of *Bhādrapada* *Śukla*- *pakṣa* *samvat* 1975 (Sept. 2-3, 1919).

As the tithi is normally a trifle shorter than the *divasa*, *kṣaya* occurs more frequently than *vridhhi*. *Kṣaya* usually occurs about twelve times in a year, and *vridhhi* about seven times.

It will be seen at once that difficulties may arise as to the day of observance of certain rites prescribed for any particular tithi. If a tithi should extend from 10 p.m. on one *divasa* until 12.45 p.m. the next *divasa*, it becomes a nice point which of the two

*divasa* should be given over to festivities. Many and minute rules have been drawn up to guide the priests in determining what pronouncement to make in such a case. Popular opinion has decided roughly that if a tithi begins at any time before noon, the current *divasa* is the festive day, if after noon, the following *divasa*. But it is not uncommon to find part of the community keeping one *divasa*, and part the following *divasa* as a festival day, while the more well-to-do, who can afford it, will be keeping both.

It is customary for groups of men and women to gather on the day of the new year (Chaitra Śuklapakṣa pratipada), to listen to the recitation of the new Panchāṅga by an astrologer.

### Legendary Origin of Eclipses<sup>17</sup>.

When, in the beginning, gods and demons, having by churning the milky ocean produced immortality-giving Amrita, the gods were drinking it, a demon in the guise of a god made his way among them and began to drink likewise. The sun and moon discovered him and told Viṣṇu. The amrita had not yet descended the demon's throat, so that he had not yet become wholly immortal, when Viṣṇu severed his head from his trunk. The head became Rahu and the tail Ketu, both of whom proceeded to the planetary heavens, and have ever since been pursuing the sun and moon to have their revenge.

An eclipse marks the temporary success of Rahu and Ketu over their enemies; they have caught and swallowed them. But they are forced to disgorge again and the eternal chase is renewed.

### The Cycle of Jupiter.

It was realised in the Vedic period that a full solar year could not be made to correspond with a twelve lunar-month year, nor a thirty solar day month with a thirty lunar-day month. The *Paita-maha Siddhanta* gives five years as the yuga or cycle of the sun and moon, in which time the sun completes five years of 366 days, and the moon sixty-two months of 30 tithi, each tithi corresponding to 29 solar days; that is 60 ordinary months and 2 *adhika* months, arranged as follows:

<i>Months</i>	<i>Adhika month</i>	<i>Months</i>	<i>Adhika month</i>	<i>Months</i>
30 days	+1 day	+ 30 days	+ 1 day	= 62 days
885 16/31	+ 29 16/31	+ 885 16/31	+ 29 16/31	= 1830 days
	2 ½ years		2 ½ years	= 5 years

This five-year cycle, combined with the twelve-year cycle of Jupiter's progress through the zodiac, makes what is known as the sixty-year cycle of Jupiter.

<sup>17</sup> Adi Parva, of Mahabharata

## CHAPTER 2.

### ON AUSPICIOUS AND INAUSPICIOUS SEASONS

THE Auspicious seasons may be enumerated as under:—

1. The *Uttarāyana*, or northward progress of the sun, from the winter to the summer solstice, i.e. Pauṣa to Aṣāḍha.
2. The Light half of each month, from new to full moon.
3. The month of Vaisakha.
4. The *San̄krānti* days.
5. The Days under the rule of the Moon, Mercury, Jupiter, and Venus, i.e. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.
6. "The three and a half lucky times," i.e. *Dasara* (Aśvina Śukla 10<sup>th</sup>), *Dīpāvalī* (Kārttika Śukla 1<sup>st</sup>), *Varsha-pratipada* (Chaitra Śukla 1<sup>st</sup>), and *Nāga-pañcami* (Śrāvana Śukla 5<sup>th</sup>).

THE Inauspicious seasons, generally speaking, are as under:—

1. The *Dakṣināyana*, or southward progress of the sun, from the summer to the winter solstice, i.e. Aṣāḍha to Pauṣa.
2. The Dark half of each month, from the full to the new moon.
3. The Intercalary or Adhika month (See Chap. I, p. 26).
4. The Days under the rule of the Sun, Mars, and Saturn, i.e. Sunday, Tuesday and Saturday.
5. The Rainy season, i.e. the four months from Aṣāḍha Śukla 10<sup>th</sup> to Kārttika Śukla 10<sup>th</sup>.

#### 1. The *Uttarāyana* and *Dakṣināyana*.

It is the natural instinct of all men to welcome that half of the year when the sun's warmth and the length of the days are increasing; and to have a certain feeling of depression during the other half, when light and warmth are daily decreasing, and the sun appears to be withdrawing himself from the world. To this instinct is doubtless attributable the pronouncement that the *Uttarāyana* and *Dakṣināyana* were respectively auspicious and inauspicious seasons. The lucky period was known as a "god's day" and the unlucky as a "god's night." Again, the sun when moving northwards was said to "guard the gods," and when southwards to "guard the fathers." The path to the south was taken by the spirits of the dead.



Of course, the difference between the sun's position at the winter and summer solstices would be much more marked in the Aryans former home of a higher latitude than India than in Central and Southern India.

In the Bhishma and Anusasana Parvas of the Mahābharata is given the well-remembered story of the mortal wounding of the sage Bhishma, during the Dakṣināyana, and his determination to live until the sun turned northwards. He lived, although transfixed with arrows, for fifty-eight nights, and died just after the Uttarāyana had set in.

## **2. The Light and Dark Halves of the Month.**

As in the case of the sun, the period of the moon's waxing appeals to man's natural instinct as being a happier season than that of its waning. After the hot Indian day a man likes to sit out in the cool air and talk with his friends. Once the full moon day is past, the moon rises later and later at night, and very soon, as far as the ordinary man is concerned, it is a "moon less night," for the moon does not rise until after he has gone to sleep.

Manu's Code pronounces the dark half to be a day of the Manes (the dead), for work, and the light half to be their night for sleep.

Thus the spirits are most active, and likely to influence men during the dark half, the unlucky time. Possibly it was for this reason that the season set apart for performing the memorial service for the departed is in the dark half of the month Bhādrapada, and at every new moon, the darkest day of the month.

The Kaushitaki Upanishad says that the spirits of all who die go first to the moon, and that whereas those who die in the light half "delight the moon with their spirits," those who die in the dark half are sent on to be born again, and the Viṣṇu Purana<sup>18</sup> says that the moon "nourishes the gods in the light fortnight; the pitri in the dark fortnight." To this day men are apprehensive of dying in the dark half, and feel happier as to the state of their deceased relations if they died in the light half.

Very few festivals or religious fairs are held in the dark half of the month, the exceptions being almost entirely those in honour of Śiva, the Terrible, or of one of his manifestations.

## **3. The Month of Vaishakha.**

The whole of the month Vaishakha is considered auspicious, and is specially devoted to Kṛṣṇa worship. The Tulasi and Pippal trees should be watered daily, three baths should be taken, stories of Kṛṣṇa should be read and presents given to Brahmins.

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<sup>18</sup> H. H. Wilson's trans., II, p. 303

#### 4. The Saṅkrānti days

The Saṅkrānti days (when the sun enters a new sign of the Zodiac — see Chap. III) are very auspicious for giving alms and for bathing, especially those at the solstices and equinoxes.

#### 5. The Intercalary month.

The Intercalary month is also known as the “unclean month “ (see Chap. I, p. 20). This idea of the unlucky nature of these months dates back to Vedic times, when the ordinary months were called “deva” (gods), and the intercalary when it occurred “asura “ (demon). Marriages and thread ceremonies are not held in such a month.

#### 6. Days of the Week.

From very old times the Sun, Saturn (his son), and Mars have been believed to exert a malefic influence, while the Moon, Mercury, Jupiter and Venus exert a beneficent one over the days of which they are the lords. Varahamihira<sup>19</sup> in his *Brihajatakam* pronounced Mercury, in himself, a neutral, but malefic or benefic in his influence as he is in conjunction with the other planets. The common folk of India today prefer not to undertake any new enterprise on a Sunday, Tuesday or Saturday (see the Marathi proverb, “ The day not to do a thing is Saturday “).<sup>20</sup>

Monday is perhaps the most lucky day of all; while Saturday is the most unlucky. The legend of the infant Ganeśa losing his head from the glance of Saturn falling upon him is well-known, while Dr. Crooke<sup>21</sup> records that an epidemic of smallpox, which broke out at Jessore in A.D. 1817, was accounted for by its occurring in a month containing five Saturdays.

One puzzling circumstance is that Tuesday, one of the unlucky days, bears the name *Mangala* (fortunate). It has been suggested that this nomenclature may be due to the old-established fear of calling an unlucky thing by an unlucky name, the mere utterance of which may bring misfortune. Hence the covert reference to an ill-omened thing by the name “ the fortunate one,” well understood by the hearer.

The red colour of Mars, and his consequent traditional connection with the idea of war and bloodshed are sufficient to have established him as a planet of ill-omen. Nor is it difficult to understand why the slow-moving (“ lazy “) Saturn should be considered of ill-omen. But why the Sun, who is also worshipped as the vivifier and giver of good things, should share in this their unpopular characteristic is difficult to understand. Jupiter and Venus, by their brilliance and beauty, would establish

<sup>19</sup> H. P. Chatterjee’s trans., S.B.H., p. 40.

<sup>20</sup> Marathi Proverbs, Manwaring, p. 145

<sup>21</sup> Crooke, I, p. 130

themselves as beneficent, and the Moon<sup>22</sup> is believed to hold the seed of all life, from whom it is gathered by the gods and presented to mankind.

Most of the planets seem to be considered malefic towards women. According to tradition<sup>23</sup> in some parts of India, it is unlucky for a girl to come of age on a Sunday, Monday, Tuesday or Saturday, or she will either become a widow, lose her children, commit suicide, or become a bad character, according to the day. Wednesday and Friday are only partially lucky for her, as she will bear only daughters if she comes of age on either of these days. Her only really lucky day is Thursday. If she comes of age on that day she will become the mother of sons.

## 7. The Rainy Season.

This is reckoned from Aṣāḍha Śukla 10<sup>th</sup> to Kārttika Śukla 10<sup>th</sup>, and is known as the Chaturmāsa (four months). It is less a period of actual inauspiciousness than a season when it behoves men to walk very carefully and to be punctilious over their religious observances; for Viṣṇu is understood to have retired to the bottom of the ocean for a four-months sleep, leaving the world without his close protection. (The Kārttika Mahātmya says that the giant, Sankasura, carried away the Vedas to the bottom of the sea, and it took Viṣṇu four months to recover them). No marriages or thread ceremonies are performed during this period; brides of less than a year's standing return to their parents house, and many people leave the regions south of the Godavari river (the boundary of Ravana's kingdom), to live in Rāma's kingdom north of that river.

The probable explanation of the matter is that this is the season of heavy rain, unsuitable for travelling, or for holding the processions which accompany marriages and other ceremonies. The law<sup>24</sup> forbidding an ascetic to change his residence during this season probably had a connection with the inconvenience of doing so. Again, the tradition<sup>25</sup> in North India that it is unlucky to mend the roof thatch in the rainy season is easy to understand. It is also considered unlucky to eat certain things, as, for instance, lemons, many-seeded fruit, certain kinds of lentils and roots, also to drink any milk from a copper pot, or spilt water; which things have probably been found to be inimical to health during the wet season.

## 8. Other Occasions.

Besides the auspicious and inauspicious seasons enumerated above, a number of occasional days are noticed as being good or evil. For instance: —

<sup>22</sup> Kaushitaki Upanishad, S.B.E., I, p. 274.

<sup>23</sup> Bom. Gaz., XVIII, p. 240.

<sup>24</sup> Sacred Laws of the Aryas, S.B.E., II, p. 191.

<sup>25</sup> Crooke, II, p. 300. Sharma, p. 104.

- (i) The period between 11.00 p.m. and 3.00 a.m. is inauspicious for holy works; and is known as "the time of sin."
- (ii) If the planet Jupiter<sup>26</sup> is visible together with the full moon, it is an occasion of good omen. Merit acquired by almsgiving, or fasting, on that night is imperishable.
- (iii) *Simhastha*, or the year when Jupiter is in the sign Simha (Leo), is inauspicious for marriages and thread ceremonies, which must not be performed unless at a shrine of Sambhu, but auspicious for bathing in the Godavari.
- (iv) *Kanyagata*, or the year when Jupiter is in the sign Kanya (Virgo), is very auspicious for marriages, thread ceremonies and bathing in the Kṛṣṇa river.
- (v) The day of Jupiter's entry into the sign *Kumbha* (Aquarius) is auspicious for bathing in the Ganga and Yamuna rivers.
- (vi) *Ardhodaya*, or the occurrence of the five following events at one time, which only happens once in twenty to twenty-five years, is a time of great auspiciousness. All water is sacred, and all Brahmins as holy as Brahma. Therefore there is great merit in bathing and almsgiving. The five are:—
  - (a) Sunrise coinciding with a new moon,
  - (b) the sun being in Makara,
  - (c) the moon being in nakṣatra Śrāvana,
  - (d) on a Sunday,
  - (e) in the month Pauṣa.

Professor Kielhorn quotes an inscription referring to the very auspicious character of Ardhodaya:

*" At the auspicious time of the Ardhodaya in (the month) Pauṣa of the year Sadharana, which was the Śāka year 1352."*

- (vii) *Kapila Shaṣṭhi*, or the simultaneous occurrence of the six following events, is very auspicious for almsgiving. It only occurs about once in every sixty years, and is so rare that it has come to be used in a proverbial sense as an improbable event (cp. "a blue moon").

The six events are:

- (a) The month Bhādrapada,
- (d) the dark half 6th ,
- (c) on Tuesday,
- (d) joined with nakṣatra Rohini, (moon),
- (e) the sun in nakṣatra Hasta,
- (f) at the yoga Vyatipata, and all these must occur during the daytime. It last occurred on October 12, 1912.

<sup>26</sup> Institutes of Vishnu, S.B.E., VII, p. 157.

There is a legend to the effect that the sage Narada, longing for married happiness, was transformed into a woman, and bore sixty sons, one in every consecutive year. At the end of that time, having implored Viṣṇu for retransformation, he again became a man, and the sixty sons were appointed regents of the years of the sixty years cycle, at the beginning of which Kapila Shaṣṭhi occurs. This sixty years cycle synchronises with the cycle of Jupiter (see Chap. I, p. 29).

(viii) *Somavati* or the new moon falling on a Monday, is auspicious for almsgiving.

(ix) *Grahana*, or eclipse, whether of sun or moon, is very auspicious, while if a solar eclipse occurs on a Sunday, or a lunar eclipse on a Monday, the occasion is called *Chudamani* (crest-jewel), i.e. prominent, and the merit obtained is imperishable.

(x) *Akṣayya Tṛitiya* (Vaisakha Śukla 3<sup>rd</sup>), if it falls on a Wednesday and the moon is in Rohini, is especially auspicious.

11. Certain tithi also are considered auspicious for alms-giving, alms given on these days being productive of very great merit, i.e. the 4th Śukla or Kṛṣṇa, when falling on a Tuesday. The 7th Śukla, if it falls on a Sunday or coincides with sankranti. The 8th, if it falls on a Wednesday. The 11th, if it is joined with the nakṣatra Punarvasu. The 12th is auspicious under many conditions, e.g. if it follows two successive 11ths, if it precedes two successive 15ths, if it is joined with certain nakṣatra, etc.

Professor Kielhorn<sup>27</sup> quotes an inscription showing the cumulative force of many inauspicious periods coinciding in a single point of time:

*“In the evil year Kṣaya, in the wretched 2nd Vaisakha, on a miserable Tuesday, in the fortnight which was the reverse of bright, on the 14th day, the unequalled store of valour, Devaraj, alas! met with death. How, O Yama, can fate be averted? ”*

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<sup>27</sup> LA., XXV, p. 346.

## CHAPTER 3.

### ON SOLAR AND SEASONAL FESTIVALS

SUN worship was general in the Vedic period, and to-day it is found in India in the daily morning repetition of the Gayatri by the Brahmin, and of the phrase “Surya Narāyana” by the peasant; in the universal celebration of the Makara Saṅkrānti or winter solstice, and in certain other observances.

The sun appears in Vedic times as Surya, Āditya, etc. He rides in a chariot drawn by seven horses, or by one seven-headed horse, and he changes his chariot for a new one at the beginning of each year. The Puranic legend<sup>28</sup> of Viṣṇu, in his dwarf incarnation, covering the earth, sky and heavens in three steps, is generally believed to be a reference to the course of the sun through the divisions of the universe.

At the present day shrines<sup>29</sup> and images of the sun are rare, but temples exist in some places, the two most important being those at Kanarak, near Puri, and at Gaya.

In Sankaracharya’s time<sup>30</sup> (8th to 9th century A.D.) there were six recognised sects of sun worshippers, worshipping the rising sun as Brahma, the noon sun as Śiva, the setting sun as Viṣṇu, etc., but no such division is known at the present day; the pious Brahmin<sup>31</sup> meditates on all three gods as he repeats his Gayatri at sunrise.

The Solar Feasts and Observances in the present day are:

#### 1. The Saṅkrānti days.

More especially the Makara Saṅkrānti of the North and West of India, corresponding with the Pongal of the South.

At the entry of the sun into each zodiacal sign he is worshipped by some, by others only at his entry into the four signs, *Makara* (Capricornus), *Meṣa* (Aries), *Karka* (Cancer), and *Tula* (Libra), marking respectively the winter solstice, vernal equinox, summer solstice, and autumnal equinox; and of these four the first is by far the most widely observed.

#### The Makara Saṅkrānti.

This occurs about the 12th or 13<sup>th</sup> of January, and falls some time in the month Pauṣa. The holiday lasts for three days, and is a time of family reunions, feasting, bathing, and general rejoicing. Almsgiving is also practised, and a present is given to the family priest. It is most auspicious.

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<sup>28</sup> Vedic Mythology, A. A. Macdonell, E.I.A.R., pp. 37-39.

<sup>29</sup> Crooke, I, pp.5, 6

<sup>30</sup> Crooke, I, p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> Daily Practice of the Hindus, Srisa Chandra Vasu.

In Bengal it synchronises with the rice harvest, and special rice cakes are eaten, children wear necklaces of sugar birds, with which on the following day crows and other birds are fed. On the first day a shred of straw is tied to furniture and cooking pots to ensure prosperity.

A large fair is held at Allahabad, many pilgrims going to bathe there at the junction of the Ganga and Jamna rivers, many others going to the mouth of the Ganga, where offerings are also made to the ocean.

In Mahārashtra, besides almsgiving and bathing, the following practices are observed:

(a) Sugared sesame seed is given to all members of the family, and to friends, with the words: (“Eat sweet sesame and speak to me sweetly”), to ensure the absence of quarrelling through out the year. Sesame oil is burned in the lamps, offered to Sankara, and rubbed on the body before bathing.

This use of sesame may be due to the belief that it is able to ward off evil spirits. The following dictum on the use of sesame occurs in the Mahābharata<sup>32</sup>:—

*“ The gift of sesame seeds is a very superior gift. It produces everlasting merit.... The gift of sesame at Śrāddha is applauded.... One should, on the day of full moon of Vaisakha, make gifts of sesame unto the Brahmins. They should also be made to eat and to touch sesame on every occasion that one can afford.”*

(b) Women desiring children secretly drop a coconut into some vessel in a Brahmin house. This is known as “secret fruit”.

(c) Like the foregoing and following, another custom to secure children is to smear five pitchers with lime and red lead, and give them to five women of one’s married friends, especially to brides.

(d) A woman throws two coconuts into a neighbour’s house and begs for two in exchange, saying, (“ Take a toy and give a child “).

(e) Gifts of two lamps and two mirrors are made by women to Brahmins, and betel nut and spices to their wives.

(f) No handling of cow dung is permitted on the chief feast day, i.e. the middle one of the three, so, as this is the staple fuel of the country, all cooking must be done the previous day.

In Southern India this day is called *Pongal* (from a Tamil word, meaning “Is it boiling?”), the first day of the Tamil year. New pots are bought in which rice in fresh milk is boiled, and according as the milk takes a shorter or longer time to boil, the year will be prosperous or the reverse. Hence it is eagerly watched by the family.

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<sup>32</sup> Anusasana Parva, Pratap Chandra Roy’s trans., p. 348.

The South India cattle feast, called *Pola* in the West (see Chap. VI, p. 118), is held at Pongal, on the 3rd day. Cows and oxen are sprinkled with saffron water and worshipped by the men.

With this festival may be coupled that known as:

### (ii) **Makari Saptami, Bhāskara Saptami**

Also known as *Ratha Saptami*, which, according to some calendars, occurs on the 7th day after the entry of the sun into Makara (Capricornus), and according to others on a fixed day, namely, the 7th of the light half of Magha.

The chief rite for this day is to bathe (if possible in the Ganga) at sunrise, placing on the head a platter of seven arka leaves, with a small lamp upon it, while prayers are being said mentally to the sun. The platter and lamp are afterwards set afloat on the water, and gifts of food, clothing or money made to a Brahmin, while a picture of the sun in his seven horse chariot is made and worshipped with red sandal paste, red flowers, etc. This rite is to secure freedom from sickness or sorrow for the year.

Originally<sup>33</sup> the 7th of each month (both halves) was kept for sun worship. Now the 7th dark half has gone out of use. Sun offerings should be of eight kinds, viz. water, milk, curds, ghee, sesame, mustard seed, rice and kusa grass.

The legend runs that a former Kṣatriya king had a son who was weakly, and on consulting the sages he learned the cause to be that in a former birth his son had despised Brahmins, and not bestowed charity on them, nor worshipped the gods, especially the sun. If this were done in his present life, it would be accepted as expiation, and he would grow strong. Hence the custom arose. It is kept by both men and women.

### (iii) **Mahā-vishuva Saṅkrānti.**

(*Vishuva* = First point of Aries or Libra.) There are the vernal and autumnal equinoxes, when the sun enters the signs Meṣa (Aries) and Tula (Libra), in the months Chaitra and Aśvina. The Meṣa Saṅkrānti is largely observed in North India by bathing in the Ganga. Elsewhere it and the Tula Saṅkrānti are not very generally observed.

## (2). **New Year's Day, Dhvajāropana or Guḍhi Pāḍavā.**

This falls on the first day of the light half of Chaitra. As explained in Chapter I, the actual new year, beginning on the Meṣa sankranti, is not kept as the beginning of the civil year, as it does not necessarily coincide with a new moon day. The civil year begins from the new moon immediately preceding the Meṣa sankranti, and is a day of holiday making and rejoicing. It is marked by two customs in addition to the usual bathing and visiting friends, viz.

<sup>33</sup> "Religious Festivals of Hindus," H. H. Wilson, Miscell. Essays, p. 26.



- (i) The erecting of a pole (Dhvaja or Guḍhi). This is crowned by a new garment, usually a woman's bodice or robe, and a brass drinking pot, and may be thrust out from a window, or tied to a neighbouring tree or to the roof.
- (ii) The eating of leaves of the neem tree.

With regard to the first custom there is a legend that Indra gave a standard to one of his devotees, variously called King Vasu or Uparichara, wherewith to worship him, but the explanation seems to require as much elucidation as the custom.

Washburn Hopkins<sup>34</sup> places this festival at the end of the rains and beginning of that new year reckoned from the new moon of "Saumya masa," and others say it celebrates the birth of the first of Narada's sixty sons (see Chapter II, p. 36). Another explanation of the pole is that this day celebrates the return of Rāma and Sita to Ayodhya after the defeat of Rāvana, and his joyful reception by his subjects. This, again, is no real explanation. The popular idea is that it is done "to bring luck," and the origin has evidently been forgotten.

With regard to the 2nd custom, it is popularly believed to be very beneficial to the health to eat mm leaves. The tree is sacred to the disease goddesses, especially to Śītalā (the smallpox goddess), so that eating a few leaves on the auspicious first of the year would be considered a precaution against illness during the year.

### 3. Śrāvana Sundays.

Every Sunday in Śrāvana the sun is worshipped.

### 4. Sun in Hasta Nakshatra

The entry of the sun into the nakṣatra Hasta (or Gaja). This occurs about the month Aśvina, at the close of the rainy season. It can only be observed properly by the rich, as the correct ceremony includes the gift (to a Brahmin) of a golden elephant, on which are seated golden figures of Śīva, Gaurī his wife, and Ganeśa their son; also a golden image of Gaurī on an elephant should be worshipped. The ceremony is called Gaja-Gaurī vrata.

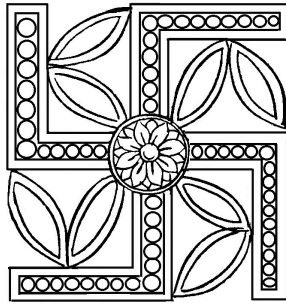
### 5. Svastika Vrata

On every evening during the four months of the rainy season some women draw a Svastika (an ancient symbol of good luck) and worship it; and at the close of the season they present a Brahmin with a gold or silver plate, on which the same symbol appears.

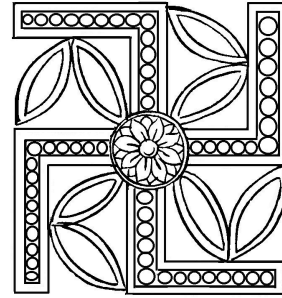
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<sup>34</sup> Epic Mythology, h.l.A.R., p. 125

Whether the svastika was, or was not, a sun-symbol has not been decided by scholars, but it certainly is connected with the sun in the minds of Mahārashtra women, and the above vrata is a form of sun worship.



LEFT HAND OR FEMALE SVASTIKA



RIGHT HAND OR MALE SVASTIKA

Note. The Left hand Svastika is that almost always used.  
[*Svasti-ka* = " may it be well"-agent for bringing to pass.]

We now come to the Seasonal Festivals, regulated by the sun, but in which objects other than the sun are worshipped.

## 6. The Holi, Holika, or Hutasani

This is a very popular festival which falls on the full moon of Phalgunā, and has its roots in the worship of the sun, now well on its northward course, and bringing the welcome burning heat. Any attempt to get to the real origin brings one up against a variety of legends, which by their very number and variation prove that they themselves are but the results of endeavours on the part of different people to explain an already existing custom. The following are some of these legends:

- (a) There was a demoness, Phundha or Holika, who used to eat the children of a certain village; and was eventually scared away permanently by the blowing of horns and the use of obscene language. (Note in this explanation there is no trace of sun worship.)
- (b) Tripurāsura's son Tārakāsura, growing powerful, so tormented the gods that they decided to send Kāmadeva, the god of love, to Śiva, to induce him to destroy their persecutor. Śiva, at his devotions, was so angry at the interruption that his glare of wrath burnt Kamadeva to ashes, whereupon the watching hosts of spirits burst into mocking and evil words.<sup>35</sup> (Here we get the reference to fierce heat, as in the three following legends.)
- (c) Hiranyakasipu, a demon, the father of Holika and Prahlāda, incensed by his son's devotion to Viṣṇu, commanded his daughter Holika to take her brother on

<sup>35</sup> Sharmā p. 266

her lap and burn him to death, but by Viṣṇu's interposition Holika was burnt and Prahlada escaped unhurt.

(d) Holika, the sister of Samvat, burnt herself on her brother's pyre.

(e) Holika was a goddess who could only be appeased by fire.

From the confusion of these and other legends two things emerge: firstly, that some one was burnt; and, 2ndly, that obscene language was used and a loud noise was made, and on these points may be noticed Dr. Crooke's conclusion<sup>36</sup> that the festival is probably very ancient, having been taken over by the Aryans from the aborigines, that it may signify the burning of the old year to usher in the new, and that the use of indecent words may be to repel the evil spirits who might check fertility in man, animals or crops. It seems to be established that evil spirits<sup>37</sup> were believed, in primitive times, to be warded off by indecent acts or words, or by horn-blowing, drum-beating, or other loud noise.

Five different practices are combined in the Konkan, between the Western Ghats and the sea, where the people are more devoted Holi-keepers than any others in India.

- (a) The burning of a bonfire on the full moon night after an all-day fast. From the first or 2nd day of the month boys begin collecting, begging or stealing wood, cowdung cakes, and any other fuel, and on the 15th day the bonfire is built round a branch of plantain or castor oil tree, towns will have a bonfire in almost every street, villages at least two or three, built by the different castes. The fire is kept up all night, and in some places is not allowed to die out until the 15th day of the dark half. Men and boys dance round it, smearing themselves with the ashes, and singing.
- (b) Singing of songs, celebrating Kṛṣṇa's love episodes with the herdswomen, beating of drums, and blowing of horns, shouting of obscene words to passers by, especially to women, and uttering a loud cry while beating the mouth with the hand. This is called "Bombne," and is peculiar to this festival. This particular side of the festival is confined chiefly to the lower castes, it is obnoxious to the educated and more refined, who are endeavouring with considerable success to suppress it. It is now possible for respect able women to go about without being insulted and molested, as it was not even ten years ago.
- (c) Throwing coloured liquid and powder over one another and passers by. This should really be confined to the *Ranga pañcami* day on Kṛṣṇa 5th, but, like the shouting and singing, it is carried on from before the full moon till about the 6th or 7th of the dark half. Small tin syringes and bamboo blow-pipes are used, and although indiscriminate colour throwing is being strongly suppressed, yet the custom is kept up by families in their own houses and courtyards.

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<sup>36</sup> Crooke, II, 321.

<sup>37</sup> " Spirit Basis of Belief and Custom," LA., XXIV, p. 263.

- (d) Dancing, by men and boys of the lower castes, a dance peculiar to this feast, resembling some of the old English folk-dances. A band of about two dozen will go round a town, on the days before the full moon, to collect money with which to keep the feast.
- (e) The practice of touching low-caste people by Brahmins and others of high caste. This is done on the day after the full moon, the day called (“ Touch, touch, Singa<sup>38</sup> or Phalguna”), and is believed to lead to immunity from disease. A purificatory bath must be taken after the defilement.

Sharmā quotes an ancient authority as follows:

*("By the touching of the low-caste on the 2nd day of Holi, followed by bathing, all kinds of illness are destroyed.")*

Mention should also be made of the necklaces of yellow and white sugar medallions given to children at the feast.

In Madras the bonfire is omitted, and both there and in Bengal the swinging of Kṛṣṇa's image, in a small swing, is substituted, to celebrate the return of spring and the vivifying power of the sun, and the season of love.

## 7. Madana trayodaśi, Kama Trayodaśi, or Ananga trayodaśi).

Another spring festival on Chaitra Śukla 13<sup>th</sup> is that of Madana and his wife, Rati, who are the god and goddess of love. Madana is the friend of Vasanta, the Spring, i.e. love is associated with the spring season. His banner bears the sign of Makara, the sea monster, which is considered to be the emblem of love, and he plays on the vina or lute. The pair are worshipped with flowers and dancing. This is a North India festival, not kept in Mahārashtra, where its place is taken by the revels of the Holi in the previous month. The reason for this may be that the hot weather begins nearly a month earlier in the West and South than in the North.

**Note.** The Vaisvadeva sacrifice, for producing and sustaining life, was performed in old times on the Phalguna full moon. A distinct connection can be traced between this sacrifice (and its object) and the modern spring festivals.

Another Seasonal festival is kept on the Malabar and Konkan coast:

## 8. Nariel Pūrṇimā

Cocoanut Full Moon, at Śrāvana full moon. From this date the south-west monsoon is supposed to abate, and coasting trade can be resumed. The Portuguese Government remits all customs on boats entering Goa harbour on this day. It is essentially a traders festival, and has become established through popular custom, not through any

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<sup>38</sup> An alternative name for the month

classic authority. At evening the worshippers assemble on the shore and worship the sea with mantras, throwing in offerings of cocoanuts, Sharma<sup>39</sup> says, as an offering to the “ Food-giving goddess of the water “; others<sup>40</sup> say to Varuna.

## 9. Ganeśa Chaturthi.

This holiday, on Bhādrapada Śukla 4th, has been included among the seasonal festivals, as there seems to be a distinct connection between Ganeśa and the harvest of the early crops, pointed out by recent writers. Sharma says that the fate of the later crops being uncertain, depending as they do on whether the latter rain is good or not, it is exceedingly important to worship the Remover of Difficulties at this time of year.

The older ideas about him are various. He had no place in Vedic literature, nor in the Rāmāyana or the older Puranas, and he only later became identified with the Ganas, or attendants on Śiva.

Bhandarkar<sup>41</sup> says the Ganeśa cult was established between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D., and offers no solution of the genesis of his elephant head. Crooke<sup>42</sup> believes he was imported into Hinduism from a primitive indigenous cult, possibly he was an ancient Dravidian sun-god.

Popular legends make him the son of Śiva and Gaurī, born to destroy an elephant-headed demon and free the human race from his tyranny. Some say he was born with an elephant’s head, others, more generally, that he was born a normal child, but lost his head through the glance of ill-omened Saturn falling upon him, the first animal who could be found to supply the deficiency being an elephant

His elephant head and his vehicle, the rat, are usually taken to be emblems of his prudence, sagacity and forethought. He is by nature malignant, but may be rendered benignant by propitiatory rites. His name is placed at the head of any writing, and he should be worshipped before beginning any new undertaking.

If a merchant becomes bankrupt,<sup>43</sup> he announces it by turning his Ganeśa image upside down, either as a sign that the god has deserted him, or in anger for his having done so.

He is worshipped by men, women and children, of all castes and sects, and has been adopted as the patron god of schoolboys and students, and also of a new cult of Nationalism.

Two distinct elements can be seen in his worship as practised in the present day:

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<sup>39</sup> P. 132. "Hinduism," E.R.E., p. 686 ff. P. 185.

<sup>40</sup> Religious Thought and Life in India, Monier Williams, p. 216.

<sup>41</sup> Bhandarkar, E.I.A.R., p. 147; E.R.E., II, p. 807.

<sup>42</sup> Crooke, I, p. 111.

<sup>43</sup> Myths of Hindus and Buddhists, Sister Nivedita and Ananda Coomaraswamy, p. 19.

(i) The whole family rises at dawn, anoints with oil and bathes, and then puts on holiday clothes, jewellery, etc. At noon an image of the god, either of gold, silver or clay, is brought and placed in a booth, or on a platform, decorated with lamps and mirrors. (A new plaster image is often bought annually, and consecrated, and is thrown into water at the close of the festival.) It is worshipped with offerings of durva grass, flowers and many mantras. At the close the officiating Brahmin priest is given his fee, and he and the whole family and neighbours sit down to a feast. In the evening lighted lamps are waved round the god's image, and hymns are sung before it. The holiday is prolonged for five, seven, ten, or even twenty-one days, according to the desire and the means of the family. Pūjā is done three times daily, and on the last day cocoanuts are broken before the image, and prayers for his blessing on the family are offered.

The image (if of clay or plaster) is then thrown into water, or (if of metal) restored to its place in the house. It is customary to keep an image of Ganeśa in a niche in the living room. This festival is unique in one respect the first day, rather than the last, is the greatest day.

(ii) Within recent years a new element has crept into Ganeśa worship in the towns of Mahārashtra. The growing interest of students in politics, and the adoption of Ganeśa as their patron god, have united to connect him closely with the national movement. This is strengthened by the fact that his worship is performed by all castes and sects. His name is derived from *Gana* = a crowd, hence "populace," and he is called "Lord of the people." The legend of his slaying the elephant-headed demon, *Gajasura*, is interpreted to the worshippers, who are coming to his temples in increasing numbers, as being the deliverance of the people from their national oppressor.

## 10. Gaurī festival

This falls on the 7th, 8th and 9th of Bhādrapada Śukla. This goddess, the wife of Śiva and mother of Ganeśa, is considered the goddess of harvest and protectress of women. Her festival, chiefly observed by women, closely follows that of her son, when the early crops are ripe and the later require rain. Although she is popularly sometimes confused with Durga or Kali, yet she is quite distinct, being the survival, from pre-Aryan times, of another deity.

Her festival, celebrated especially in Mahārashtra, consists of three parts:—

(i) On the first day a bundle of *aghada* (wild balsam) is brought into the house, and in the evening is wrapped in a silk cloth, placed in the lap of an unmarried girl and worshipped with mantras. Lucky marks, such as the svastika and Gaurī's footprint (origin of the "cone" pattern worked on Indian shawls, and from them introduced to England), are drawn in powder on the floor. The girl who carries the bundle representing Gaurī is regarded as her agent for movement and

speech, and is led by the women of the house from room to room, in each being seated on a stool, and having lamps waved round her.

In each room she is asked: "What have you brought"; and she answers, according to the nature of each room: "Treasure to fill a city," "Delicious food," "Beautiful children," and so on. The women reply: "Come on golden feet, and stay forever." This is believed to bring good fortune to each room. The bundle is then placed on a stool, offered sweets, milk, etc., and the night is spent by young girls in singing before her.

Her husband, Śiva, is supposed to have followed her secretly, and is represented by a pot of rice and a cocoanut hidden under a fold of her cloth.

On the 2nd day she is offered food, and worshipped, and at noon a big feast is held. At night again there is singing before her, and sometimes dancing in her praise.

On the 3rd day she is put into a *surpa*, or winnowing tray, and carried by a woman servant to a stream or tank. The woman is told not under any conditions to look behind her as she goes. At the stream the plants are taken from the cloth and thrown into the water, the *surpa* and cloth are brought home, and the festival is over.

- (ii) An important piece of ritual is this: the woman-servant must bring home from the bank of the stream a handful of gravel, which is thrown over the house to bring luck, and over the trees to protect them from vermin, after being worshipped.
- (iii) On the middle day of the festival women take lengths of cotton, sixteen times their own height, fold them into skeins, and lay them before the goddess for her to bless. Some castes put the skeins, with pieces of cocoanut and new grain, into new earthenware pots, and stack them up with an image of Gaurī in a tray on the top. On the 3rd day the skeins are taken up, folded into shorter lengths, tied with seven or sixteen knots (versions vary), worshipped, and fastened by each woman round her own neck, to be worn until Aśvina Kṛṣṇa 8th, or until a propitious day occurs.

The necklets are then removed, worshipped with offerings of sesame seeds and rice, and either thrown into water or buried in some field or other cultivated ground.

Sometimes lucky necklets are made out of durva grass, instead of cotton, and the day is known as Durvaṣṭami.

The customs connected with this festival are very old, and the legend which is told, purporting to be its origin, is less old than the customs, and is to the effect that a poor Brahmin, unable through poverty to keep it, by entertaining an unexpected guest, in the form of an old woman, was blessed by her with miraculous gifts of cows and food, and on her departure was told to keep this

festival each year to retain her favour. She was then discerned to be Gaurī herself.

Gupte suggests that the custom of bringing gravel from the river refers to the alluvial riverside soil as the original seat of the crops; that the old woman of the legend and the young girl of modern custom indicate the departure of the old and the coming of the new season; the lay figure of *aghada* indicates the dead body of the old season; and the sixteen knots, and other use of the same number in connection with the cotton skeins, points to the sixteen weeks of the growth to harvest of the rice crops.

## 11. The Navaratra, Durgā Pūjā or Dasara festival.

This festival lasts for the first ten days of the light half of Aśvina, occurring too at the time of the autumn equinox, and is really compounded of four separate feasts; i.e. (i) the Sarasvati feast from the 7th to 9th; (ii) the Lalita feast on the 5th; (iii) the Durga feast from the first to 10th; and (iv) the Victory feast on the 10th.

These four will be examined separately, although the distinctions between them are becoming confused in the popular mind; and the whole period is kept as though it were due to but one cause.

### (i) The Sarasvati pūjā.

(The same as the Bengal **Sri pañcami, Magha 5th.**) Sarasvati appears in the Rig-Veda as a river goddess,<sup>44</sup> in the Brāhmanas she is identified with Vach (speech), and in the later myths and to-day is considered the wife of Brahma, the patroness of letters, and the goddess of wisdom and speech, from which position she is being by degrees ousted by Ganeśa (see above, pp. 49, 50). But these three days are her own.

On the first day, Aśvina Śukla 7th, when the moon enters the nakṣatra Mula, all the sacred books in the house are collected, an image of the goddess is placed on the top of the pile of them, and her spirit is summoned into it with mantras.

On the 2nd day she is worshipped and on the 3rd her spirit is dismissed, after a gift of money has been offered to her and presented to the presiding priest.

So in Southern and Western India; in Bengal these days are given to Durga worship.

### (ii) Lalitā or Upāngalalita pañcami.

(Aśvina Śukla 5th.) This is hardly known outside Mahārashtra. The legend goes that Lalita was the patron goddess of a town, *Upāṅga*, and that by worshipping her on this day the inhabitants gained great prosperity. Her festival is confused in the popular mind with those of Durga and Sarasvati.

<sup>44</sup> Sharma, p. 215 f. Vedic Mythology, E.I.A.R., p. 87.



### (iii) **Durga pūjā.**<sup>45</sup>

(Aśvina Śukla first to 10th.) Durga has become identified with the pre-Aryan Kali of Bengal since Puranic times. She is considered the wife and female counterpart of Śiva, as Sarasvati and Lakṣmi are of Brahma and Viṣṇu.

In Bengal, animal sacrifices are offered to her, and it is well-known that human sacrifice would be offered except for the restraining hand of the law. Quoting from the Bhavishya Purana, Sir W. Jones writes: “ The head of a slaughtered man<sup>46</sup> gives Durga one thousand times more satisfaction than that of a buffalo.”

In other parts of India the conception of her is less fierce, and offerings of flowers, fruit, etc., are all that are made. She is worshipped during the first ten days of Aśvina, special days being the 8th (her customary monthly day), and the 10th, the day of Victory, the name Vijaya being applied alike to her victory over the buffalo demon Mahishasura and to Rāma’s victory over Ravana.

The legend goes that a demon so troubled the earth that the inhabitants appealed to the gods, who sent Durga, the eight-armed world-mother, to fight with him. She fought for ten days, and overcame and slew him on the 10th. Except on the 10th day no reference is made to this event in the daily worship offered to her, which is as under:

Each day, after anointing with oil, a ceremonial bath must be taken, both morning and evening. Only one meal is to be eaten, and the goddess must be worshipped three times in the day, with flowers, lamps and the recitation of mantras.

In Bengal, household images of Durga are used, but in other parts these are rarely seen, an earthenware jar being substituted, in which various grains are put. A thread is wound about it, and it is marked with a lucky symbol in red. A tray placed on the top receives the offerings. On the 8th day women perform a ceremony of burning incense in a saucer, placing it three times alternately in their palms and on their heads; and at midnight the goddess is worshipped with lamps.

In Mahārashtra it is chiefly a women’s festival, bands of women going daily to worship at a Durga temple, if one is accessible, otherwise they worship at home; but in Bengal it is as much a men’s as a women’s festival.

The celebrations on the 10th day are so mixed, in modern times, with those of the Rāma Victory festival, that it is almost impossible to disentangle them. It is doubtful whether any further ceremony than the final dismissal of the spirit of the goddess belongs properly to the Durga festival.

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<sup>45</sup> Sharma, p. 212 f. ; also F. & H., p. 20.

<sup>46</sup> Asiatic Researches, III, p. 257.

**(iv) Vijaya, dasami or Dasara.**

(Aśvina Śukla 10th) Several legends are given to explain the origin of this festival, of these the two most popular are: (a) That it was the day<sup>47</sup> on which Rāma, having propitiated Durga, who helped her devotee Ravana, by longer prayers and better offerings than his enemy's, won her over to his side, and was by her enabled to kill Ravana;<sup>48</sup> and (b) That the five Pāṇḍava brothers, having completed their year's service in disguise, unrecognised, in Virata's palace, took their arms from their hiding place in the Sami tree, and proceeded to battle against their cousins, the Kauravas, whom they ultimately defeated.

Both legends, therefore, point to this as a day on which to celebrate victory, and to make military Displays.

Four or five separate observances are followed on this day, which is a men's, not a women's, festival:—

- (a) The sami tree<sup>49</sup> (*Mimosa suma*) is worshipped, and its leaves are distributed to friends under the name of "gold," that is, the gift of such a leaf is supposed to be as valuable as a gift of gold, and is sometimes called a *putali* or medal. In many places, where the sami tree is not procurable, the more common *apta* (*Bauhinia*) is substituted. In some districts an ear of newly ripe grain is also given.
- (b) A bull buffalo is sacrificed, some say in memory of Durga's victory, some in memory of Rāma's, at a special spot outside the village, in the evening, to preserve the village from sickness. The animal is selected a month beforehand and fattened. The right to perform the sacrifice is hereditary. The head of the buffalo should be severed at a single blow, and the carcass should be buried at the spot.
- (c) The village bounds are visited by the men and boys, who cross into neighbouring territory, after which they return home with great rejoicings, to be greeted by their women on the house threshold, holding trays containing lamps, rice, betel nut, and red lead, which they wave round the heads of the men.
- (d) The implements of a man's trade or profession, or the insignia of his office, are worshipped by him. Hence, everything pertaining to war, e.g. cannon elephants, guns, horses, etc., are worshipped by the military castes, and incidentally war is glorified in the eyes of all.
- (e) In Mahārashtra, a Śivaji cult is developing. The Dasara day is kept in his memory, men and boys parade the roads crying: "*Śivaji ki jai*," and it is evident

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<sup>47</sup> Mahabharata, Vana Parva

<sup>48</sup> **Note.** The explanation given for commemorating this event in the autumn rather than at the spring Rāma festival in Chaitra, is that Rāma began praying to Durga in the autumn, but did not gain merit sufficient to kill Ravana until the following spring.

<sup>49</sup> Mahabharata, Virata Parva.

that this day is considered the one par excellence on which to celebrate the spirit of nationalism.

Writing in 1901, Washburn Hopkins<sup>50</sup> said that Śivaji was then developing into a god, his complete deification was only a question of time, and the Census Report of 1901 mentions a temple to Śivaji at Malvan, Ratnagiri district. It is safe to say that Śivaji has already become the patron god of war.

Now, probably, the unifying element, which binds into what is practically one festival the various sectional feasts in honour of the different deities described above, is its seasonal character.

The rainy season is practically over, the early crops are ripe for harvesting, and in ancient days kings were starting their winter campaigns, for roads were becoming dry and traversable. The present day harmless and rather pointless crossing of the village boundary into neighbouring territory, known as xxx, is doubtless the survival of (breaking boundary) of marauding chieftains; the home coming with presents of “gold,” that of the return with the spoils of the raid; and the joyful reception by the women, that of gratitude at their safe return.

The buffalo sacrifice, too, is a survival of ancient times, for it was a well-known custom to sacrifice some animal to propitiate the harvest gods who protect the villages. Hewitt considers it the celebration of the autumn equinox, which falls in Aśvina, the buffalo being a year-god, standing for the Indra of the Rig-Veda.

In Nasik (Bombay), about the year 1909, owing to a dispute between rival claimants for the right of performing the buffalo sacrifice, it was omitted on Dasara day. An outbreak of cholera the following hot weather was attributed to the omission, and much indignation was felt that a private feud had been allowed to lead to public suffering. A special sacrifice was made at the Holi festival, and representations of buffaloes heads, together with obscene words, were painted on walls all over the town. This points to the sacrifice as being unconnected with either Durga or Rāma, but with the propitiation of older, village gods. The later worship of Rāma, Sarasvati, and Durga was combined with the old seasonal sacrifice, and the story of the fight of the last-named with a demon in buffalo form was invented to fit in with the existing custom.

## 12. Kojagari Pūrṇimā

(Full moon — Asyina Śukla 15th.) This harvest festival is kept at Asvini full moon. It is also called *Navanna* (new food), and from this day the new grain of the recent harvest may be eaten. Since Lakṣmi, wife of Viṣṇu, has come to be regarded as the bringer of good fortune, and arbitrary in her bestowal of favours, she is to be

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<sup>50</sup> India Old and New, p. 105. Hewitt, pp. 224, 349.

worshipped this night, when she is believed to be abroad, and a light must be shown outside the house, otherwise she may refuse to pause and give her blessing. For the same reason everyone must keep awake all night, lest the careless man who sleeps fail to win her blessing. The rule that the night should be spent in playing dice (typical of the uncertainty of fortune), and that cocoanut milk (typical of fertility) should be drunk at midnight, are both, probably, precautions and aids to keeping awake.

There is a legend of a king who had an iron image of Alakṣmi (Ill-fortune, the reputed sister of Lakṣmi) in his palace. He grew gradually poor and troubled. Through the diligence of his wife's worship of Lakṣmi, at the Kojagari full moon, the iron image melted away, and good fortune returned. Hence the worship was established.

Here, again, the night of rejoicing at the harvest moon was the original feast, the introduction of Lakṣmi a later addition.

**Note.**

In North India a similar feast is held on Margasīrṣa full moon. ,

In South India on the Pauṣa full moon.

In parts of the Deccan it is held on the Magha full moon.

### **13. Lakṣmi pūjā and Dīpāvalī.**

(Aśvini Kṛṣṇa thirteenth to Kārttika Śukla 2nd.) This festival is, like Dasara, compounded of some five different festivals, viz.

- (i) Worship of wealth;
- (ii) The celebration of Viṣṇu's victory over the demon Naraka;
- (iii) Lakṣmi worship;
- (iv) The celebration of Viṣṇu's victory over the demon Bali; and
- (v) The expression of brotherly and sisterly affection. These will all be described separately.

#### **(i) Dhana trayodaśī (Wealth, thirteenth).**

This occurs on the thirteenth of Aśvina Kṛṣṇa, the first day of the Dīpāvalī festival. All must begin the day with bathing after anointing with oil. The special observances for this day chiefly concern merchants, who close their yearly accounts, sweep and tidy their shops and offices, and, having collected all their account books, together with a pile of silver coins, worship them and Lakṣmi, the giver of wealth. Turmeric and red lead are freely smeared over the coins, as the many stained rupees in circulation after the festival bear witness. The women are

engaged in scouring the house and cooking-pots, preparing cakes and sweet meats for the five days holiday, hanging garlands over doorways, elaborately decorating the ground before the door with lucky patterns in fine flour, etc.

Schools are closed from the preceding day, and boys let off squibs and crackers in the streets and courtyards, although this belongs properly to the following days of festival. Lamps are lighted from this evening and kept burning throughout the five nights.

(ii) **Naraka chaturdaśi (Hell 14th).** (See also Chapter VI, p. 116).

On this 2nd day of the festival is celebrated the destruction of Narakasura by Viṣṇu. One account says that in his Kṛṣṇa incarnation he fought with and killed the demon, and another, the Bhavishyottara Purana, gives as origin the well-known Bali story, as under:—

King Bali, by his devotion to Śiva, had gained so much merit and power that he used it to trouble gods and men. Therefore Viṣṇu became incarnate as a dwarf, Vāmana, and went to King Bali in the guise of a mendicant, asking, as alms, as much ground as he could cover in three steps. The boon being granted, he assumed a huge form, and took three strides, with the first covering the earth, with the 2nd the heavens, and with the 3rd treading Bali down into the nether regions (Naraka or hell). Thereafter, relenting for having treated Bali harshly, Viṣṇu granted him the kingdom of Naraka, and three days annually to reign on earth wherever no lamps were lighted.

Naturally, therefore, men light lamps in every building, to avoid falling again under Bali's power.

A connection evidently arose in men's minds between this Bali, King of hell, and Yama, Lord of the dead, for we find another legend attributing this festival to another cause, viz. the tradition that where lamps are shown, the deceased forefathers of that household will see the light, and, being released from Yama's clutches, rise and proceed to Heaven, i.e. Indra's abode. Therefore offerings are made to Yama.

**Note.** Sir W. Jones<sup>51</sup> says that the lights are to guide spirits of kinsmen who have died abroad, or in battle, to Yama's halls.

Again, a legend is told that once, on the birth of a son to King Haima, his death from snake bite was prophesied to occur on the 4th day after marriage. In order to cheat fate, the boy was carefully kept in a snake proof suite of rooms, built on an island in the river Yamuna.

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<sup>51</sup> Asiatic Researches, III, p. 25 f. Sharma, p. 223

But on the fateful day a snake was produced from King Haima's sneeze, and the boy was bitten and died. At so sorrowful an event even Yama's messengers, who came to carry away the boy's spirit, felt pity, and asked their lord if nothing could be done to avert such calamities.

Yama said that the lighting of lamps every evening, from Aśvina Kṛṣṇa thirteenth to Kārttika Śukla 2nd, would avert a violent death.

The ceremonies for this day are two, viz.

- (a) Very special bathing after anointing with oil, followed by putting on new clothes. A Mahārashtra saying ("On Naraka 14th Lakṣmi [i.e. beauty] dwells in oil and Ganga [i.e. cleanliness] in water.")

Even the poorest manage to obtain some new garment for this day.

- (b) Lighting lamps in every house and Vaishnava temple. The rich have costly illuminations, the poor at least one small lamp. Squibs, crackers and more elaborate fireworks are lighted.

It is a time for family reunions, rejoicing and feasting, a significant name for it in Mahārashtra being (vulgarly, "Chewing day").

**(iii) Lakṣmi pūjā.** (Aśvina new moon.)

On this 3rd and middle day of the festival Lakṣmi is worshipped in the evening, after an all-day fast. A small altar is prepared, and such images of gods as the household possesses are placed upon it, with Lakṣmi in the place of honour. Fruit and flowers are offered with mantras, and afterwards the family feast and continue the rejoicings of the previous day.

**Note.** In Bengal Kali is worshipped, with a clay figure, instead of Lakṣmi, whose place, and that of Sarasvati, she has practically taken.

Some, on this day, offer propitiatory worship, with black offerings, to Alakṣmi, goddess of adversity, to induce her to keep away.

**(iv) Dīpāvalī proper,** or Bali worship day. (Kārttika Śukla first.)

In some parts of India this is the first day of the year, and it is kept as such by traders all over the country, who open their new account books this day. Besides this custom four others are found, viz.

- (a) Bali himself is worshipped in Mahārashtra, in compensation, it is said, for having lost his kingdom. A representation of him is made and offerings of fruit, flowers, etc., are given, the following verse being sung: "*May all*

*troubles depart and Bali's kingdom come*".<sup>52</sup> The same verse is also sung by bands of men of the non-caste races, who go about begging. The wish expressed in this verse is not compatible with the rejoicings at Bali's defeat, and the lighting of lamps on purpose to keep clear of him, and, as it is more common among the low-castes, Manwaring<sup>53</sup> is probably right in ascribing it to the Sudras, whose champion, King Bali, was against the overbearing higher castes. If this is correct, we have the interesting sight of a festival kept by the descendants of two parties to a long-ago struggle, both camps celebrating both protagonists on successive days.

- (b) A tug-of-war is held between high-caste and low-caste men, holding the ends of a pole wrapped in darbha grass. (This is another sign of the probability of an inter-caste feud as origin. It is not much observed now a days.)
- (c) In Bengal Bali worship is unknown, and in its place we have the launching, on a stream, by women and girls, at twilight, of small saucers containing each a lamp. If the lamp founders, or drifts ashore again, the year will bring misfortune; but if it floats safely downstream, the year will be happy.
- (d) Cow and bullock worship. The animals are washed, fed, and adorned with garlands, etc., then worshipped and led round the village, and on coming home lighted lamps are waved round them to ward off evil spirits. (See Pola and Bendura, Chap. VI, p. 118.)

**(v) Yama dvitiya or Bhaiya-duj** (Kārttika Śukla 2nd.)

This is the last day of the festival. The daily bathing, anointing with oil and lighting of lamps continues, but to-day's chief feature is the exchange of amenities between brothers and sisters, to celebrate Yama's dining with his sister Yamuna. Every man and boy must dine to-day in his sister's house; failing a sister a cousin is considered an equivalent. In exchange for the feast provided, he is expected to make a present of clothing, coin or jewellery, according to his means. Since Yama is believed to have shut up his house this day while visiting his sister, no one dying to-day will have to go to Yama's abode.

Besides this custom, some worship Yama at noon, making offerings to his image, and those who have the opportunity bathe in the river Yamuna.

With this day the festival ends.

The Dīpāvalī is considered the special festival of the Vaisya caste, as the Rakhi pūrṇimā, the Dasara and the Holi are of the Brahmin, Kṣatriya and Sudra castes.

<sup>52</sup> Marathi Proverbs, Manwaring, p. 137.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

It was the new year of former days,<sup>54</sup> referred by some to the King Vikramāditya round whom so much controversy rages (Chap. I, p. 15), and the beginning of the Samvat era called by his name. Some say it celebrates the crowning of Rāma on his return from Lanka. And as this same reason is one of those given for the rejoicings on the present new year (Chaitra first), it adds to the proof that this was a seasonal, i.e. a new year festival.

The modern Hindu considers it symbolic of the triumph of the light of knowledge over the darkness of ignorance.

## 14. The Yugādi.

(Anniversaries of the beginnings of the Yuga.) Four days in each year are appointed as anniversaries of the four Yuga of the present world-age (Chap. I, p. 14). These differ slightly in different parts of India. The days are as under: —

	<i>F &amp; H Lunar Year etc.</i>	<i>Bombay Pañcāṅga</i>
Satya (Krita) Yuga began	Vaisakha Su. 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Kārttika Su. 9 <sup>th</sup>
Treta began	Kārttika Su. 9 <sup>th</sup>	Vaiśakha Su. 3 <sup>rd</sup>
Dvapara began	Bhadra Kri. 13 <sup>th</sup>	Magha new moon
Kali began	Magha full moon	Bhadra kri. 13 <sup>th</sup>

On all of these days one should bathe in some sacred river, give alms to Brahmins, and offer sesame seed and water to the spirits of the departed. This water offering is called Tarpana.

The Treta and Dvapara Yugādi are not much observed. To keep the Treta properly an empty gourd should be filled with gold, silver, or jewels, and given to a Brahmin, to procure a place in heaven. The Kali Yugādi, on Magha full moon, is kept as a bathing festival throughout North India; but the greatest of the four is the Satya Yugādi, the beginning of the Satya Yuga, and consequently of the present world-age. This day is known as Akṣayya-tritiya, and is kept through out India on Vaisakha Śukla 3rd, even in Mahārashtra, where it is not counted as the anniversary of the Satya but of the Treta Yuga.

To bathe this day, and to give fans, umbrellas and money to Brahmins is believed to earn imperishable (*akṣayya*) merit. The performance of it is consequently very popular. If it occurs on a Wednesday, especially if the moon is in the Rohini nakṣatra, it is even more auspicious. Fresh cold water is put in a vessel, and in the water camphor, myrrh, betel nuts, coins, flowers, sacred rice and durva grass. A cocoanut is placed on the top, and the whole is garlanded, worshipped, and given to a Brahmin with a tulasi leaf. This ceremony is known as *Udakumbhadana* (myrrh- pot-gift).

<sup>54</sup> Gupte, I. A., XXXII, p. 237.



In Bengal and Orissa a flower festival is held at this time and lasts for three weeks. It is called Chandana Yātra, and flowers and fans, scented with sandal (*chandana*) oil are presented to Brahmins. At Puri, the image of Madanamohana, substituted for that of Jagannatha, is daily taken out to the Narendra tank, put in a boat, and taken round with music. It is also anointed with oil and bathed.

At the Śrāddha performed in the last half of Bhādrapada (see Chap. VI, p. 114), the meal and offerings are considered to be given less to the Brahmin, who acts as medium, than to the spirits of the departed. On Akṣayya 3<sup>rd</sup>, the person of the medium is much more to the fore. The cool water and sacred rice are given for the departed, but the fan and umbrella, and especially the coin in the water-pot, are for the living recipient. This day comes at the beginning of the hot season, and it is evidently believed that the dead still continue to feel heat and thirst.

The Gaurī celebrations, which began on Chaitra Śukla 3<sup>rd</sup> (see p. 100), end to-day; Gaurī is believed to return to her husband's house after a month's holiday in her parents home. Many women in Mahārashtra give a final party to their friends, when a present of *halad-kunku* (i.e. turmeric and red lead powder) is handed to each guest.

## CHAPTER 4

### ON LUNAR AND PLANETARY FESTIVALS

#### 1. MOON WORSHIP

MOON worship was as natural to primitive man as sun worship; and although the moon had not that effect upon the seasons and harvests which caused the sun to be recognised as so great an influence in human life, yet its greater visibility, its mysterious waxing and waning, and the variation in the time of its nightly appearance, all united to make it an object of study and reverence.

In Vedic and post-Vedic times the moon, as an object of worship, was inferior to the sun (Hopkins<sup>55</sup> says, it was “ never a god of much importance”), but some believe that in the yet earlier days of the Aryans, before the immigration into India, moon and star worship preceded sun worship, and the tracing of the moon’s path through the nakṣatra was the earliest developed side of Hindu astronomy.

During Vedic times,<sup>56</sup> and afterwards increasingly, the moon came to be identified with the plant Soma, from which was extracted the drink of the gods (itself immortalised). The grounds for this identification are not clear. They are indicated in passages in the Satapatha Brahmana, 4 in which the belief is expressed that on the night of new moon he visits the earth.

“When he is not seen that night either in the East or in the West, then he visits this world; and here he enters into the waters and plants.... Having collected him from water and plants [via the milk of cows who have eaten him] , he, being reproduced from libations, becomes visible in the Western sky.”

Again, the Petersburg Dictionary gives *bindu* = a drop (applied to *soma*) and fil spark (applied to the moon). Hence both were called by the same name, which possibly was one cause leading to their final identification.

As was to be expected, many legends grew as explanations of the monthly waxing and waning of the moon, and of its occasional eclipse.

With regard to the former, the two most popular are that in the Satapatha Brahmana, i.e. that the moon waxes till the full, while approaching the sun, when it is seized, eaten and sucked dry, and then thrown out to begin to swell again, and the later<sup>57</sup> one to the effect that the 27 nakṣatras were wives of the moon, of whom Rohini was his favourite. His devotion to her aroused the jealous anger of the other 26, who caused him to be attacked by consumption. Through austerities and worship he recovered, temporarily, from his sickness, only to be attacked anew every month, as soon as health is established.

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<sup>55</sup> Epic Mythology, E.I.A.K., p. 89. Hewitt, pp. 351-52.

<sup>56</sup> Vedic Myth, E.I.A.R., p. 104. S.B.E., XII, p. 176.

<sup>57</sup> Epic Mythology, E.I.A.R., p. 89.

## 1. Amavāsya (new moon) and Pūrṇimā (full moon).

In Vedic times the full moon, new moon, and eclipse days were ordained as whole-day fasts, or at most as one-meal days. On the full moon, sacrifices of rice, soma, sweet and sour milk were offered to Agni-Soma, and on the new moon to Indra-Agni, and there seems reason to believe these were originally animal or even human sacrifices, very elaborate and requiring two days for their observance.

Oldenberg says that these new and full moon sacrifices, both of which he connects with Indra, do not imply that Indra worship had any connection with the phases of the moon, which was merely a dial noting the hours at which honour should be paid to this most powerful of the gods. So that these bi-monthly sacrifices were not originally moon worship at all.

The reason for the fast is variously given. The Satapatha Brahmana<sup>58</sup> says that the performance of the sacrificial rite necessitates the presence of the gods: —

“Now, as it would even be unbecoming for him to take food, before men (staying with him as his guests) have eaten, how much more would it be so, if he were to take food before the gods (who are staying with him) have eaten; let him, therefore, take no food at all.” Apastamba 2 gives a different reason: “During the day the sun protects, during the night the moon. Therefore, on the new moon night one must protect oneself by rites, purity, etc., especially as the spirits of the Fathers, who live in the moon, awake on the new moon day and are most active, and likely to influence men.”

All who make any claim to orthodoxy, fast and worship the moon on new and full moon days at the present time. There is also a custom in Mahārashtra of plucking a thread from an old garment, and throwing it towards the new moon, as an offering, in the hope that he will grant a new garment. This is called the *Dasi vahana*, or new moon offering.

The origin of the name Amavāsya (from *Ama* = together, at home, and *vas* = to dwell) has been explained to mean, either that the sun and moon are dwelling together at that time, or that (see above) the moon is dwelling with water and plants on the earth. Many of the Seasonal and other festivals are held on new or full moon days.

## 2. Parvan days.

The 6th, 8th, and 10th of each half month were known as Parvan days, on which fasting and chastity were to be observed, but they are disregarded to-day by the ordinary Hindu.

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<sup>58</sup> S.B.E., XII, p. 5. S.B.E., II, p. 94.

### 3. Vināyaki Sankaṣṭa (Obstacle remover —Difficulty days.)

The moon is worshipped by some on the 4th of every light and dark half, a fast being kept all day until after dark. But this custom is becoming merged in Ganeśa worship, the devotees of whom fast on these same days, worshipping him in the dark half at moon-rise; the names too, “Obstacle Remover” and “Difficulty,” refer to him, not to the moon.

Another instance of the connection between Ganeśa and the moon is the fact that on Ganeśa chaturthi<sup>59</sup> (Bhādrapada Śukla 4th) it is thought most inauspicious to see the moon. If one sees it by accident, he throws stones on to the roof of a neighbour’s house, in order to draw abuse upon himself, and so avert the evil. This custom is so prevalent that the day is sometimes called “Stone-throwing 4th”, and the Marathi expression, “To see the 4th day moon”, is an equivalent for suffering calamity.

The legend is that the moon once laughed at seeing Ganeśa fall off his rat steed, which so much incensed the elephant-headed god that he cursed the moon and all who ever beheld it. Relenting later, he removed the curse, except for this one night in the year.

The object of drawing down abuse by stoning a house roof is that, being under a curse and liable to calamity, it is better to court a light one, deliberately, without delay, than to go in fear of a heavy one falling unexpectedly; also that bad language scares away evil spirits (see p. 45).

### 4. Somavati.<sup>60</sup>

A new moon falling on a Monday is a day specially to be observed by fasting and bathing, since great merit accrues from so doing. Besides bathing one should wear a silk garment, keep silence, and circumambulate a pippal tree one hundred and eight times. Gold, jewels and fruit should be offered to the tree, and afterwards given to a Brahmin. Cotton and radishes (both white) must not be touched. Ordinary people do not observe this last, but they will lay fruit at the foot of a pippal tree.

### 5. Light half 2nd.

This day in every month is sacred to the moon, and is to be worshipped on it.

### 6. All Mondays.

The moon, besides becoming identified with the plant Soma, became closely connected with Śiva, and both are worshipped on Mon days.

<sup>59</sup> Sharma, p. 80. 2 Gupte, p. 159 ; Hindu Year, p. 7.

<sup>60</sup> Gupte, pp. 48, 50-54 ; Bom. Gaz., XVIII, p. 241.

## 2. STAR OR PLANET WORSHIP

This is not very common and occurs chiefly in the month of Śrāvana. The pole star is, however, an object of veneration at weddings, by the bride and bride groom.

### 1 & 2. Mercury and Jupiter

Mercury and Jupiter are worshipped on all the Wednesdays and Thursdays respectively of Śrāvana, of which days they are the lords. They are worshipped in the morning with garlands. If grain is desired, figures of these planets are drawn on the corn-bin; if wealth, on the store-chest; and it is hoped the desire will find fulfilment.

### 3. Venus

Venus is worshipped on Fridays in Śrāvana. Although the planet Sukra is considered by Hindus masculine, not feminine, yet it is interesting to note that Sukra worship has become merged in Lakṣmi worship, and that the Śrāvana Friday fast (until 4.0 p.m.) is performed with a view to obtaining benefits from that goddess.

### 4. Saturn

Saturn is worshipped on all Śrāvana Saturdays, with the object of obtaining wealth. These days are known as *Sampat Sanivara* (wealth Saturdays), and a special rite is performed, i.e. a platform is erected at the foot of a pippal tree, and on it a picture of Saturn is drawn, resembling the traditional figure of Yama, with noose and cudgel, and seated on a buffalo. The tree is circumambulated, and black offerings are made, such as black salt, charcoal, or a buffalo. An iron ring may also be worn to propitiate the god.

The worship of Hanuman or Maruti, the monkey god, is becoming combined with that of Saturn. Enthoven<sup>61</sup> says, that in the *Konkan Sampat Sanivara* is kept as a whole-day fast, and offerings are made, with the object of gaining wealth, to Maruti, not to Saturn. (So also the Bombay Gazetteer.)

No trace is found of the Mars worship on the Śrāvana Tuesdays which would be expected, but Tuesdays are devoted to the worship of Gaurī. Again, all Mondays are devoted to the worship of Śiva more than to that of the moon.

The following table shows the trend at the present day to substitute other deities for those of the lords of the week days:—

Weekday	Worship	Modern Changes
Sunday	Sun	
Monday	Moon	(decreasing) Śiva worship (increasing)
Tuesday	Mars	(died out) Gaurī worship (established)
Wednesday	Mercury	

<sup>61</sup> Folklore of Konkan, L.A., XLIII, p. 21.

Thursday	Jupiter	
Friday	Venus	(decreasing) Lakṣmi worship (increasing)
Saturday	Saturn	Hanuman worship

**5. Rishi pañcami** <sup>62</sup> (Seers 5th), or **Prayaścita** (Atonement). Bhādrapada Śukla 5th.

On this day and on Śrāvana full moon (see p. 133) stars, other than the planets, are worshipped; the single survival (excepting the pole star worship at weddings, see p. 70) of what is likely to have been common in ancient days. In Vedic times the spirits of certain departed great seers of the earth were believed to inhabit certain of the stars, the most famous being the Seven of the North, i.e. the seven brightest stars of the constellation Ursa Major. Later, the seers became identified with the stars they inhabited.

The seven worshipped on Rishi 5<sup>th</sup> are as under: Kasyapa, Atri, Bharadvaja, Visvamitra, Gautama, Jamadagni and Vasiṣṭha<sup>63</sup> or Kratu, Pulaha, Pulastya, Atri, Angirasa, Vasiṣṭha and Marichi.<sup>64</sup> With whom is usually associated Arundhati, the wife of Vasiṣṭha (the fainter star close to the middle one of the "bear's tail").

This is a women's festival, and worship is offered to atone for unwitting sin committed by reason of impurity. At least two legends with regard to it are current.

- (i) A woman, through neglecting the laws regarding impurity, became reborn as a dog, her husband as an ox, for he also had sinned, although unconsciously, through having eaten food cooked by her. They lived in the home of their married son. The day on which the son was to perform their Śrāddha arrived, and the daughter-in-law was cooking the food to be offered to the Brahmin guests. While she was out of the room, a snake in the roof dropped poison in the cooking pot, and the dog, to save her son from the charge of murder which would attach to him if his guests ate the food and were poisoned, defiled the food. When the daughter-in-law returned and saw the dog with its head in the dish, she was very angry, and drove it from the house with blows and curses. The dog took refuge in the ox's stall, and, the cup of their suffering being now full, their plea to the gods for the gift of speech was granted, and they told their story to their son. He consulted a priest as to means for releasing his parents from their degraded condition. The priest explained the rites to be performed by the daughter-in-law, upon the observance of which the parents, becoming released, repaired to heaven. The daughter-in-law, fearful of incurring a similar fate, continued the rite annually, and the custom became established.

- (ii) The widowed daughter of a religious teacher, living with her parents, while resting one day after hard work, fell into a deep sleep, and was transformed into

<sup>62</sup> Hindu Year, pp. 18, 34 ; Molesworth

<sup>63</sup> Sharma, p. 194 ; Enthoven, I.A., XL, p. 26

<sup>64</sup> Colebrooke, Asiatic Res., IX, p. 323, etc.

a heap of worms. Her father, distressed, sought in meditation the cause of this transformation, and it was revealed to him that in her former life she had defiled the cooking pots, by using them when she should have remained apart, owing to impurity. The only possible expiation was for her mother to keep the Rishi 5th as ordained, on her daughter's behalf. This being done, the girl was released from the curse, and from the sin.

In both legends the cause of the drastic punishment was the same, and the dread of a similar fate is felt very really to-day; so that the rites are carefully observed. A woman, who is prevented from observing it on the appointed day, must do so on Vāmana Dvadaśī, a week later.

The ceremonies are performed at noon. A woman must offer a mantra to the aghada plant, clean her teeth with a twig one hundred and eight times, and bathe, if possible in a stream, dipping one hundred and eight times, otherwise at home, pouring one hundred and eight potsful of water over herself. The previous anointing is to be with sesame oil, dried myrobalan dust, and earth, and she must drink *panchagavya*.<sup>65</sup> Afterwards she should assemble with other women, and worship the seven seers as follows:—

Lucky symbols are drawn in colour on a board, on which is placed a copper vessel filled with clean water and wrapped in a new cloth. Then eight small heaps of rice are made (for the seven and Arundhati), and on each heap is put a betel nut or a pavitra, i.e. a ring made of darbha grass. Coins, perfume, flowers and rice are put in the pot, and all these are worshipped with mantras. Afterwards the officiating priest receives presents and his fee, and gives his blessing.

On this day nothing grown from bullocks labour must be eaten. An onion must be bitten into and then thrown into a stream.

Some say this should be repeated every year, others that it will suffice if performed for any seven successive years. The point which remains shrouded in obscurity is the connection between the seven seers and a woman's impurity.

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<sup>65</sup> The five products of the cow, viz. milk, curds, ghee, dung and urine.

## CHAPTER 5. ON VIṢṆU AND ŚIVA FESTIVALS

### I. VIṢṆU FESTIVALS

#### 1. The Avatāra (incarnations).

Viṣṇu was a Vedic god; and the legend of his covering earth and sky in three strides is more than once mentioned in the Rig-Veda. At a later date, he received the great epithet Narāyana, an early divine name connected with the creation. When the epic poems were turned into Vaishnava scriptures, probably in the 2nd century B.C., Kṛṣṇa, the hero of the Mahābharata, and Rāma, the hero of the Rāmāyana, were declared to be incarnations of Viṣṇu.

Thereafter the theory developed rapidly, many semi-divine beings found in the earlier literature being reinterpreted as incarnations of Viṣṇu. Even Buddha became an incarnation, sent into the world by Viṣṇu to deceive evil men into accepting the false faith Buddhism! All Hindus recognize ten incarnations of Viṣṇu, but among certain groups of Vaishnavas as many as thirty-nine are acknowledged and worshipped.

Festival days are appointed in honour of these incarnations; and those in honour of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are observed all over India. The days in honour of the Man-lion, Dwarf, and Rāma-with-the-axe are much less observed, while the three first and the two last are not noticed, except by priests and the ultra-orthodox.

Viṣṇu is considered the protector and preserver of men, beneficent and kind. The ten incarnations are as follows:

- (i) **Matsyavatāra** or Fish incarnation. Chaitra Śukla 3rd. The earliest form of this legend<sup>66</sup> occurs in the Satapatha Brahmana, where Manu, the ancestor of the human race, is drawn through the waters of the deluge in a boat, by a fish, to a place of safety. No mention is there made of the identity of the fish with Viṣṇu.
- (ii) **Kurmavatāra** or Tortoise incarnation. Vaisakha Śukla 15th. The Puranic story<sup>67</sup> goes that at the churning of the milky ocean by demons and gods, Viṣṇu, assuming the form of a tortoise, took Mount Meru, the churning post, on his back, as the earth was beginning to sink, and supported it. The Satapatha Brahmana<sup>68</sup> says that Prajapati assumed a tortoise form to create living beings. The figure of a tortoise, carved in the stone pavement, is not uncommon outside Viṣṇu temples.
- (iii) **Varahavatāra** or Boar incarnation. Bhādrapada Śukla 3rd. In the Rigveda both Indra and Viṣṇu are connected with the slaying of a boar, although neither is

<sup>66</sup> Myth. Studies in R. V., A. A. Macdonell, J.R.A.S., XXVII, p. 166

<sup>67</sup> Bhag. Pu., I, pp. 3-16.. 3 S.B.E., XII, p. 216.

<sup>68</sup> 61-7, and VIII, 77-10. S.B.E., XLIV, p. 451



identified with the animal. In the Satapatha Brahmana reference is made to a boar lifting up the earth, and “he was her lord Prajapati.” The incarnation theory appears in the Rāmāyana, and in several of the Puranas. The Puranic story is that the earth being in danger of destruction through a great deluge, Viṣṇu became a boar, and upheld it on his tusks. The modern interpretation is that the boar is Sacrifice personified, i.e. that by which the world is raised to a spiritual level from the ocean of evil.

- (iv) **Nrisimhavatāra** or Man-lion incarnation. Vaisakha Śukla 14th. The Puranic story<sup>69</sup> is that Prahlāda, son of Hiranyakasipu, a demon king, was an earnest devotee of Viṣṇu. His father tried in vain to turn him from his devotion, but he was preserved in all attempts on his life and continued his prayers, insisting on the existence and immanence of Viṣṇu. Eventually Hiranyakasipu challenged his son to prove the presence of Viṣṇu in a certain pillar, whereupon Viṣṇu, in a shape half man half lion, sprang from the pillar and killed him.

Those who observe this day must take only one meal on the thirteenth and bathe at noon on the 14th. In the evening the officiating priest must make a heap of rice, wheat, or other grain, placing on it a pot of water, and on that a tray containing a gold image of Nrisimha, which is to be worshipped. A vigil is observed all that night, next morning the image is again worshipped, and given to the priest, after the spirit has been dismissed from it.

The use of the golden image precludes the general observance of this rite, and the day is not very much remembered, although the legend is a favourite one, and constantly quoted as proof of the immanence of God in inanimate things.

At Puri the image of Jagannatha is covered with flowers, and wears a lion’s face mask on this day.

These first four incarnations are believed to have occurred in the first or Satya yuga of our present world-age.

- (v) **Vāmanavatāra** or Dwarf incarnation. Bhādrapada Śukla 12th. The legend of this incarnation has already been given (p. 60). Viṣṇu became Vāmana in order to destroy Bali. The story is found in the Rāmāyana, 2 and a slight reference to it is made in the Satapatha Brahmana (“Viṣṇu was a dwarf”). The modern explanation is that the merit Bali gained by piety and devotion was cancelled by the sin of pride. But popular sentiment is inclined to be on the side of Bali, and Vāmana is not a favourite god. The word “Vāmana” means, when applied to anyone, a cheat or deceiver.

Those who observe this day fast on the 11th and worship the god at noon. A water vessel, in which are flowers, rice, etc., is placed on a heap of grain, and covered with a tray containing rice in which is stood an image of Vāmana, in the dress of a mendicant. This is worshipped with mantras. A vigil must be kept all night, one

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<sup>69</sup> Bhag. Pu., VII, 8-12

must bathe at dawn on the 12th and repeat the previous day's worship; afterwards a feast is held. The observance, where followed, is chiefly by women, it may be seen among the Deccani Brahmins, and one feature is the inviting of a young Brahmin boy, whose thread ceremony has been performed but who is still unmarried, to the feast. He is considered the personification of Vāmana (probably on account of his short stature), and is given presents of a loin-cloth, shoes, an umbrella, and a mendicant's staff.

(vi) **Paraśu-rāmatāra** or Rāma-with-the-axe incarnation. Vaiśākha Śukla 3rd. The legend of this incarnation is found in the Mahābharata. He was the 5th son of the sage, Jamadagni, and his wife Renuka, and at his father's command killed his mother, who had fallen, through envy, from the high estate of her pious ascetic life. This murder was not considered a crime, but rather an act of filial piety, which was rewarded by Jamadagni's restoring Renuka to life, releasing her from her sin, and granting Parasurāma long life and invincibility. This double boon enabled him to carry out the purpose of his birth, viz. the extermination of the Kṣatriya race. Their king, Kartavirya, had made a raid on Jamadagni's forest dwelling, and carried off the calf of his cow which provided the milk for his oblations. Jamadagni killed Kartavirya, whose sons retaliated by killing Jamadagni. So the feud arose, and the whole Kṣatriya caste incurred Parasurāma's anger. With his famous axe " thrice seven times did he clear the earth of the Kṣatriya caste." Having exterminated them, and finding no place for himself and his Brahmins on the Konkan shore, he demanded land from the sea. On being refused, he strung his bow to shoot back the sea, but the arrow fell short and he reclaimed but a narrow strip of land. He is also credited with having cleft the Brahmakund gorge with his axe, to set free the Brahmaputra river.<sup>70</sup> He finally retired to the Mahendra mountain, where he still lives.

The legend probably commemorates an old feud leading to constant warfare between Brahmins and Kṣatriyas. Parasurāma's worship is not at all general, being chiefly observed in the Konkan, where his battles are reputed to have taken place. He is the special diety of the Chitpavana Brahmins (Konkanastha), and is worshipped at Chipluna, and wherever a temple is dedicated to him, on the evening of Vaisakha Śukla 3rd.

(vii) **Rāma-chandravatāra**. Chaitra Śukla 9th to 11th. The story of Rāma is too well known to need inclusion here. He was a popular epic hero before he came to be considered a Viṣṇu incarnation. Hermann Jacobi<sup>71</sup> points out that in Books II to VI of the Rāmāyana there is no suggestion of divinity about him. He was the human hero-prince, and only in Books I and VII, admittedly not earlier than the 2nd century A.D., is the theory of his divinity put forward. Rāma worship has thus existed from that date; and there is a fair amount of mediaeval Rāma literature,

<sup>70</sup> Anderson, J.R.A S., XXXII, p. 791

<sup>71</sup> Incarnation (Indian), E.R.E., VII, p. 193.

shewing that the god was continuously popular; but his great vogue in North India dates from Rāmananda of the 15th century, and from the poet Tulsi Das of the sixteenth century, who wrote his Rāmāyana in the Hindi tongue that all might read it. Since then Rāma worship has been very widespread; the places associated with his life are places of pilgrimage, and his birthday is a day of great rejoicing at all his temples. For the first nine days of Chaitra<sup>72</sup> readings from the Rāmāyana are given, and at noon on the 9th his birth is announced to the assembled crowds before the temple, and in some places the small image of a baby is displayed. On the 9th, called Rāmanavami, a fast is kept, and a vigil on the succeeding night. His image, with that of his wife Sita and his brother Lakṣmana, is worshipped in every home with mantras.

Rejoicing, bathing and feasting mark the 2nd day of the festival, which if kept aright will cleanse even from the sin of Brahminicide. The feast in Mahārashtra is prolonged until midnight of the 11th, car processions being held at the larger temples on that day at evening.

(viii) **Kṛṣṇāvatara.** Śrāvana Kṛṣṇa 8th. This is the only incarnation celebrated in the dark half of a month; the name of the god, the dark one, “ is probably the reason for this. As stated above, the identifying of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, the heroes of the Epics, with Viṣṇu and Narāyana, was the starting-point of the Viṣṇu incarnation theories.

Earth<sup>73</sup> identifies Kṛṣṇa with an “Indian Hercules,” whose worship Megasthenes found in the Ganges valley in the 3rd century B.C., and agrees that he is probably the most ancient of the incarnations. The story of Kṛṣṇa’s birth and childhood is, like that of Rāma s, too well known to need insertion here. It is found in the Mahābharata<sup>74</sup> and some of the Puranas, and numerous legends have grown up about him. Bhandarkar<sup>75</sup> says that the stories of his boyhood in Gokula were unknown until about the beginning of the Christian era.

Kṛṣṇa worship has existed continuously in the Vaishnava sects from the 2nd century B.C., but was immensely strengthened by the great popularity of Vaishnava Bhakti from A.D. 900 onward. The Marathi poets, from Jnanadev (thirteenth century) to Tukaram (seventeenth century), in Western India; Nimbarka, in the North; Vallabha (15th century), in the South; and Chaitanya, in Bengal, all developed Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa- Radha or Kṛṣṇa-Rukmini worship, of which the purest form was the last, Rukmini being regarded as his wife, Radha as his mistress. He is believed to have lived at the close of the 3rd or Dvapara yuga of our present world-age; the beginning of the Kali yuga dating from the day of his death.

<sup>72</sup> Hindu Year, p. 8 ; Sharma, p. 20.

<sup>73</sup> Religions of India, trans. Wood, p. 168.

<sup>74</sup> Vana Parvan, V

<sup>75</sup> Bhandarkar, E.J.A.R., pp. 36, 37.

To keep the festival aright,<sup>76</sup> on the 7th of the dark half an elaborate presentation of the birth-room should be made, with images of Devaki and the infant Kṛṣṇa, in gold, brass, plaster, etc., also one of Yasoda with her girl baby, who was exchanged with Kṛṣṇa to preserve the latter from death at the hands of his uncle Kamsa. At midnight Kṛṣṇa is to be worshipped with mantras. A complete fast is to be kept, during the whole of the 8th tithi, irrespective of the hour of the solar day or night at which it begins or ends.

On the morning of the 8th one should bathe in cold water, if possible in a stream, after anointing with oil. At the close of the fast the image is thrown into water, if of clay, etc., or returned to the image cupboard of the house if of metal, the spirit having been dismissed from it. This festival is more popular in the North than the South.

Other Kṛṣṇa festivals, besides that of his birthday, are kept, especially at Puri, the site of the famous temple to him under the name of Jagannatha. The largest and best known is:—

(a) **Ratha yātra** or Chariot festival. Aṣāḍha Śukla 2nd.

The preparation for this festival begins in the previous month with the bathing festival, known as the Snāna yātra, on Jyeṣṭha full moon, when the images of Jagannatha (Kṛṣṇa), his brother, Balabhadra Balarāma, and sister, Subhadra, are taken from the temple to a high platform outside, where they can be seen from the road. One hundred and eight pitchers of water from a special well, drawn only on this day, are brought and used in bathing the images before sunrise. This celebrates the descent of the Jagannatha image to earth.

The chariot procession celebrates the setting out of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma to Mathura from Gokula, to kill their uncle, Kamsa. The three images mentioned above are taken in procession from the temple to the garden house, one and a half miles away. It is believed that whoever catches a glimpse of Jagannatha on the way will be saved from rebirths. Immense crowds attend, and the question of whether death beneath the wheels of the car is due to self-immolation or accident, is still an open one.

The images remain at the garden house until Aṣāḍha Śukla 10<sup>th</sup>, when the return procession (*Punar-yātra* or *Uttararathayātra*) takes place. Car processions are held at this time wherever there is a Jagannatha temple.

(b) **Jhulana Yātra**

Swinging festivals are also held in honour of Kṛṣṇa, in different parts of India, at different times. The Hindola or Jhulana yātra is held from Śrāvana Śukla 11th to 15th in North India. A swinging platform is made for the

<sup>76</sup> Sharma, p. 148. \* F. & H., p. 68.

occasion, and decorated with flowers and hangings. Every night Kṛṣṇa and Radha are placed on it and swung, to dancing and singing of a special metre the “hindola.” The object is to please Kṛṣṇa, and therefore gain from him merit, wealth, and pleasure.

The *Pushpadola* is a swinging festival, held in Orissa, in the month Phalguna, coinciding with the Holi festival in other parts of India.

**(c) Govinda dvadaśī.**

On Phalguna Śukla 12th, celebrates Kṛṣṇa’s life as a cowherd. He is worshipped this day in Bengal under his name of Govinda.

**(d) Govardhana pratipada,**

On Kārttika Śukla first. (In Konkan on Aśvina Kṛṣṇa 14th.) On this day Kṛṣṇa is believed to have held up the Govardhana mountain to protect the cowherds from Indra’s wrath in the form of torrential rain. Hence he is worshipped, by the Vallabha sect, by their making on this day a large heap of rice, or cow dung, or vegetables, representing the mountain, in memory of him.

**(e) Rasa yātra,**

from Kārttika Śukla 10th to 15th. During these days his life with the herds-women, or Gopis, is celebrated.

**(ix) Buddhavatāra.**

Asvini Śukla 10th. Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, which was originally a reform sect of Hinduism, has been given a place among the ten incarnations, as a great religious teacher, who could not be overlooked. Hinduism did not, however, succeed in retaining Buddhism within its borders, and this incarnation day is wholly disregarded, and only noted in calendars.

**(x) Kalkyavatāra.**

Śrāvana Śukla 6th. This incarnation, known also as *Niṣkalaṅkavatāra* (Stainless), is yet to come, although the month and day is already determined. In the Vana Parvan of the Mahābhārata the coming of Kalki is foretold as a time when righteousness shall be re-established, and men shall reform from the depravity of the present Kali age, giving way to a race which shall follow the laws of the Satya yuga.

“ *When sun and moon and Tishya (nakṣatra Pushya) and Jupiter are in one mansion, the Krita age shall return.* ”

Although this day is not celebrated, and not even always noted in calendars, there exists a real expectation of a coming incarnation who shall be a reformer of religion and society. These two last avatāra are in the 4th, or Kali yuga, of the present world-age.

## 2. The Ekadaśi days.

Sometimes called **Haridini** (Hari's days). Besides the ten days appointed (but not all regarded) for worship of Viṣṇu under the form of his various incarnations, two days in every month, viz. the 11th of each half, are appointed as strict fasts in his honour, preceded by a partial fast on the 10th, and followed by an all-night vigil. These fasts should be kept from a man's 8th to his eightieth year, i.e. during his whole life from initiation. Women may keep the fasts provided they do so with their father's or husband's consent.

Attention is directed, on each of these twenty-four days, to some reason why the fast should be kept, or to some benefit accruing from it, and failure to observe it is considered a sin. It has been suggested that, as Saivism grew in strength and popularity, several days in each month being kept in honour of Śiva or of his wife Durga, the Vaishnavas, to strengthen their position, appointed these two days monthly for Viṣṇu worship.

Professor Wilson<sup>77</sup> points out that the extravagant veneration in which the fast is held "demonstrates its sectarian character, and consequently its more modern origin." The Mahābharata<sup>78</sup> notes the merit gained by fasting on the 12th tithi, combined with Viṣṇu worship, and the Viṣṇu Purana<sup>79</sup> gives both the 8th and the 12th tithi as sacred to Viṣṇu. The former day has now been dropped, and the 11th has been substituted for the 12th.

The popular idea as to the origin is as follows:— Śiva,<sup>80</sup> being propitiated by the worship of a demon, Mridumanya, promised him invincibility in battle and immunity from death except at the hands of a woman not born of woman. Whereupon Mridumanya began to harass the gods, who appealed to Viṣṇu, Śiva and Brahma for help. The three retired to a cave on a mountain, where, through fasts and meditation, they hoped to devise a means of helping without breaking Śiva's oath. As rain was falling at the time, their fast was also accompanied by an involuntary bath. Crowded as they were in the cave, from their breath was produced a woman, who joined battle with the demon and slew him. The grateful immortals worshipped her and inquired her name, which she gave as Ekadaśi ([the spirit of] the 11th), saying that everyone who bathed and fasted on all 11th tithi should be delivered from sin and sorrow. This institution dates from Puranic times.

The 11th day of the light halves of Aṣāḍha and Kārttika (the beginning and end of the four months rainy season) are especially important, being known as Mahāikadaśi (great 11ths).

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<sup>77</sup> Miscellaneous Essays, p. 29.

<sup>78</sup> Anushasana Parva.

<sup>79</sup> Wilson's trans., I, xx, 67.

<sup>80</sup> Sharma, p. 100, etc.

On the 11th of Aṣāḍha, Viṣṇu is believed to retire below the ocean for his four months sleep, and on the 11th of Kārttika to awake and return.

The whole twenty-four days are very generally kept throughout Mahārashtra, where the barrier between Vaishnava and Saiva being very slight followers of Śiva are not uncommonly found to be keeping the same fast in his honour.

The names of the twenty-four Ekadaśi days, and the legends attaching to them, are as under:

1. **Kamada-ekādaśi** (Wish-granting 11th)— Chaitra light half. Lalita Gandharva was changed by his Nāga lord into a demon, for failing to sing properly. His wife, Lalita, learned from a sage that by propitiating Viṣṇu by fasting on Chaitra Śukla 11th, she could acquire such merit as, being transferred to her husband, would effect his release. She observed it and gained her desire.
2. **Varuthini-ekādaśi** (Equipped [with merit] 11th). — Chaitra dark half. Whoever will keep the fast of this day, will gain as much merit as the gift of a thousand cows would procure; i.e. he is fully equipped with sufficient merit to balance all possible sins.
3. **Mohini-ekādaśi** (Temptation 11th) — Vaisakha light half.. Dhristabuddhi, son of Dhanapala Vaisya, squandered all his money on evil living. He was turned out of doors by his father and finally banished by the king. Wandering desolate in a forest, he found a sage who showed him how, by observing this fast, to become free from his former temptations and regain his lost wealth.
4. **Apara-ekādaśi** (Unequaled 11th). — Vaisakha dark half. The merit which can be gained by keeping this fast is equal to all that can come from purificatory bathing and giving of alms. Hence it is unequalled in value.
5. **Nirjala-ekādaśi** (Waterless 11th).— Jyeṣṭha light half. Bhimasena, one of the five Pāṇḍava brothers, was a great eater, and found it impossible to keep the ekādaśi fasts. The sage Vyāsa told him for his comfort that if he would keep this single fast once, rigidly abstaining even from water, either for drinking or bathing, he could gain as much merit as by observing the whole twenty-four. He is reported to have fasted only this once in all his life, in order to gain success in the battle against the Kauravas.
6. **Yogini-ekādaśi** (Austere 11th). — Jyeṣṭha dark half. Kubera, lord of wealth, and devotee of Śiva, had a gardener whose duty was to supply him with flowers for his worship. One day, the flowers not being forthcoming, Kubera found his gardener neglecting his work in order to spend time with his beautiful wife. For this fault the wretched man was cursed to become a leper. After much suffering, he learnt from a sage the merit obtainable by keeping this fast, and through practising austerities on this day he was freed from the curse.
7. **Sayini-ekādaśi** (Sleeping 11th). — Aṣāḍha light half. In King Maghata's reign a severe famine came on the earth, no rain having fallen for three years. The

king and all his subjects gathered together and asked advice from a sage. He advised them to keep this day's fast, praying for Viṣṇu's help. As a result of following this advice, heavy rain fell and the famine was over.

This day celebrates Viṣṇu's retiring beneath the ocean for his four months sleep, and is one of the two great ekādaśī, which must be observed by all Vaishnavas as follows. A strict fast must be kept from noon on the 10<sup>th</sup> until the early morning, before sun rise, on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Both intervening nights should be spent in meditating on Viṣṇu and singing his praises. Early on the 11<sup>th</sup> one should bathe, if possible in a sacred river, and worship some form of Viṣṇu. In the evening an image of Viṣṇu must be worshipped with flowers and water, with mantras, and then arranged in a recumbent position, as if for sleep. Presents, according to one's ability, must be given to Brahmins.

- 8. Kamika-ekādaśī** (Wish-granting 11<sup>th</sup>). — Aṣāḍha dark half, If anyone, having a great desire unfulfilled, will observe this day's fast, keeping the desire constantly in mind, the merit obtained will be sufficient to grant the desire.
- 9. Putradaikadaśī** (Son-giving 11<sup>th</sup>). — Śrāvana light half. King Mahijit was sonless, and consequently he, his wife, and his subjects were much distressed. They all went to consult a sage who, by most rigorous austerities, had come to know past, present and future. He told them that the lack of a son was due to the king, in his former birth as a Vaisya merchant, having once drunk water on a Jyeṣṭha Śukla 12th. This demerit could, however, be cancelled if in the present birth he fasted on Śrāvana Śukla 11th. He did so, and a son was born.

Note. This points to the transition from the 12th to the 11th day, and also suggests that the twenty-four days were not instituted simultaneously as fasts. The Jyeṣṭha fast was older than the Śrāvana one.

- 10. Aja-ekādaśī** (unborn 11th). — Śrāvana dark half. This deals with the well-known story of King Harischandra, who fell upon evil days, lost his wife and son and kingdom, and was condemned to wash the burial clothes of corpses at the burning ghat. In depression and despair, he was meditating suicide when Gautama found him, and told him of the merit obtainable by keeping this fast. Following Gautama's advice, he overcame his ill fate, finally regaining wife, son and happiness.
- 11. Parivartini-ekādaśī** (Turning 11th) — Bhādrapada light half.. Viṣṇu, after two months sleep, turns from one side to the other, and continues his slumbers. He is worshipped at sunset, his image being turned from lying) on the left to the right side. The observances for this day merge into those of Vāmana dvadaśī (see p. 77).
- 12. Indra-ekādaśī** (Indra's 11th). — Bhādrapada dark half. King Indrasena was a devotee of Viṣṇu. One day the sage Narada appeared, bearing a message from Indrasena's father in Yamaloka (i.e. in the first abode of the dead after death, not



necessarily a place of suffering). The message was to the effect that, though not unhappy, he wished to go on to greater happiness in Svarga (i.e. Indra's heaven), which could be managed through his son Indrasena's help. Narada proceeded to say that, by the king's keeping a fast on this day, bathing at dawn and at noon, and watching at night, Viṣṇu would be sufficiently propitiated to grant merit sufficient to effect the desired transfer. King and subjects kept the fast, with the wished-for result.

- 13. Pasankusa-ekādaśī** (Noose and goad 11th) — Aśvina light half. Yama, lord of the departed, comes to fetch the dying with a noose and goad to snare their spirits. But whoever will keep this fast will be enabled to escape him and proceed straight to Indra's heaven.
- 14. Rāma-ekādaśī** (Joyful 11th). — Aśvina dark half. Sobhana, the son-in-law of King Muchukunda, at his wife Chandrabhaga's wish, abstained from food and water on this day, in spite of much suffering, and attained to great joy in Svarga.
- 15. Prabodhini-ekādaśī** (Awaking 11th). — Kārttika light half. This day marks the end of Viṣṇu's four months sleep, and is the 2nd of the two great ekādaśī. The celebrations are closely connected with those of the Tulasi marriage on the following day (p. 129), and are not completed until then, but a special custom is practised in Mahārashtra, called the Avalibhojana or Vanabhojana (picnic under an Avail tree or in a wood). The Avail or Emblica myrobalan is sacred to Viṣṇu. On this day, or any day between the 10th and the 15th, the members of a family, and friends, will assemble, and go (sometimes with music), to an Avail tree, possibly in a grove outside the town or village. Arrived there, they sprinkle the roots with water, wind a thread about it, and worship it with mantras and circumambulation. After this, they sit under it for a picnic meal, and return home in the evening. This is a popular festival among women and children. Those who have laid their Viṣṇu image to rest, restore it to-day to an upright position. The image from some temples is carried to a tank or river and invoked to awake. It is then carried back with rejoicings. This day marks the end of the rainy season, and the return to a more open-air life.
- 16. Utpatti-ekādaśī** (Creation- celebrating 11th). — Kārttika dark half. The legend attaching to this day is so similar to that given in explanation of the institution of the ekādaśī fasts, that it suggests a common origin. Viṣṇu created a female manifestation of himself, in order to slay the demon Mura, and gave her as a boon the honour of becoming the guardian spirit of the 11ths, saying that whoever would serve her, i.e. fast on the day bearing her name, should have his favour.
- 17. Mokṣada-ekādaśī** (Release- giving 11th. — Margasīrṣa light half. King Vaikhanasa dreamed that his father was in Naraka (hell), beseeching his son to release him. The king consulted some sages, who confirmed the story of his father's present suffering as a result of evil done during his lifetime. They

advised the king and his subjects to observe a fast on this day, and use the accumulated merit obtained to release the former king from his present state. This was accomplished successfully.

**18. Saphala-ekādaśī** (Fruitful 11th). — Margasīrṣa dark half. Lumpaka, the ne'er-do-well son of King Mahishmat, was banished from court and took up his abode in a forest. Becoming exhausted one day, he was unable to rise to procure food or water, and so kept an involuntary fast. He found some fruit, but, being unable to eat it, he laid it at the foot of a pipal tree, i.e. he made an offering to Viṣṇu. The day happened to be Margasīrṣa Kṛṣṇa 11th, and all unknowingly he had kept the law. Therefore Viṣṇu accepted him, his sufferings became fruitful, and he attained to Svarga.

**19. Putrada-ekādaśī** (Son-giving 11th). — Pauṣa light half. Similar to the Śrāvana Śukla 11th legend, is the one connected with this day. King Suketu, virtuous though sonless, observed this fast, and was, in consequence, blessed with a son.

**20. Shattila-ekādaśī** (Six Sesame 11th). — Pauṣa dark half. On this day sesame should be used in six ways, viz. (i) thrown into water used for bathing, (ii) pounded and rubbed on the body, (iii) eaten (six only), (iv) thrown into one's drinking water, (v) given as alms to Brahmins, (vi) sacrificed to the gods.

The Brahma Purana says that Yama created sesame seeds this day, after long penance, to obtain purification for sin.

**21. Jaya-ekādaśī** (Triumphant 11th). — Magha light half. At Indra's court a Gandharva (semi-divine singer), Pushpavan, failed to please him by his dancing and singing, as most of his attention was directed to his wife, Pushpavati. Indra became so angry with them both that he condemned them to roam as demons in the under-world. There they endured great sufferings, and were unable, one Magha Śukla 11th to take any food, being much exhausted. Viṣṇu accepted their fast, and delivered them from the curse. Indra met them as they rose triumphantly to heaven, but had no power to enforce his curse against Viṣṇu's blessing.

**Note.** Here is interesting evidence of the supersession of Indra by Viṣṇu. The power of the latter had become greater than that of the former when the above legend was established.

**22. Vijaya-ekādaśī** (Victorious 11th). — Magha dark half. When Rāma gained the news that his lost wife, Sita, was in Lanka, he set off to rescue her, but reaching the sea could find no means of getting across. He took advice and was told to keep this day's fast, by which he gained the power of effecting a crossing.

**23. Amalaki-ekādaśī** (Amalaki 11th). — Phalgunā light half. King Chaitraratha once kept a fast and worshipped Parasurāma under an Amalaki or Avail tree. This being on this day was added to his list of merit.

**24. Papamochani-ekādaśī** (Sin- freeing 11th). — Phalguna dark half. A beautiful Apsara, Manjughosha, in Kubera's garden, once distracted the thoughts of the sage Medhavi from his devotions by her beautiful singing. For this he cursed her. She was freed from the curse, and from the sin of which it was the cause, by keeping this fast.

## 2. SIVA FESTIVALS

We now come to the days dedicated to Śiva. He is the post-Vedic development of the Rudra of the Rig-Veda,<sup>81</sup> and has many of Rudra's attributes, e.g. he is associated with mountains, is blue-throated, clothed in a skin, has a fierce and terrible side to his nature, etc. Rudra was the storm-god, and the blue throat probably refers to the blue-black thunder cloud of the advancing storm. In the Śiva legends it becomes the result of drinking the poison, churned from the milky ocean, which otherwise would have destroyed the human race. He is considered both the Creator and Destroyer of men, and is a god to be feared. He is known under various names, the chief being Sankara, Sambhu and Mahādeva.

He is believed to have appeared on earth in man's form from time to time, his best-known manifestation being that of Kāla Bhairava (q.v., p. 96). But there is no such well-defined or well-developed theory of successive incarnations as in the case of Viṣṇu. Villagers will, not infrequently, describe a local deity, perhaps unknown throughout the rest of India, as "Mahā-deva's avatāra."

There seems to have been a certain amount of rivalry between worshippers of Viṣṇu and Śiva in early days, although Hopkins<sup>82</sup> believes the earlier passages of the Mahābharata show that at first they were not very antagonistic; but in later times a great spirit of enmity grew up between the two sects, each trying to establish precedence over the other; and occasionally, even to-day, feeling runs high, although the tendency now is towards greater amity.

Dr. Farquhar<sup>83</sup> draws attention to an interesting sect, the Bhagavatas, who worshipped both gods, insisting on their equality. Inscriptions show that the sect existed in the first half of the 6th century A.D., and members of it are still to be found in South India. Traces of this Harihara worship are noted in Chap. VIII (pp. 152, 159, 160).

Although pictures and images of Śiva are not uncommon, yet they are practically never used for worship. All his temples and shrines contain instead his emblem, the Linga, and almost invariably the image of a bull is found outside the shrine, and is

<sup>81</sup> Vedic Mythology, E.I.A.R., pp. 4, 74, etc.; Bhandarkar, p. 155.

<sup>82</sup> Epic Mythology, E.I.A.R., p. 221.

<sup>83</sup> Outline of Religious Literature of India, p. 142 ff.

venerated only less than the emblem itself. The bull is regarded as the symbol, above all others, of generative power, hence his association with Śiva.

Bhandarkar<sup>84</sup> believes the use of the linga, as an emblem of Śiva, was introduced after the Aryan immigration into India, being taken from aboriginal worship. Gradually becoming adopted by the lower castes, who were in closer touch with the aboriginal tribes, it became finally accepted by all classes as the emblem of Śiva. The earlier passages in the Mahābharata<sup>85</sup> do not refer to Śiva as a phallic god, but in later passages he is said to be pleased with the offering of phallic worship.

The special Śiva days are:

**1. Pradoṣa** — The 13<sup>th</sup> tithi of each half-month. The light half 13<sup>th</sup> is called *Pradoṣa* (late evening). The evening is sacred to Śiva, who is worshipped at sunset. A fast must be kept until the stars appear. The dark half 13<sup>th</sup> is called Śiva-rātri (Śiva's night), and the same rule applies as to Pradoṣa. Both are observed throughout Mahārashtra. They correspond to Viṣṇu's ekādaśī days.

The Śivarātri of Magha is the chief day in the year for his worship. It is called Mahāsivarātri (the great night of Śiva).

The legend attached to it is very popular, as follow: A hunter, a man of bad character, going out to hunt one day, which happened to be Magha Kṛṣṇa 13<sup>th</sup>, passed a Śiva temple, and saw a number of people worshipping the linga, singing, calling out "Śiva, Śiva," etc. Mockingly the hunter imitated their cries, and without his knowledge, or desire, the very utterance of the god's name on that holy day removed some of his sins. He killed nothing that day, and had to keep an involuntary fast. As night came on, through fear of wild beasts, he climbed into a tree, which happened to be a bel tree (the wood-apple, sacred to Śiva), but was unable to sleep, owing to the cold; thus keeping an involuntary vigil. Not only so, but shivering and shaking, he dislodged a number of bel leaves, which fell, together with moisture, from the tree, on to a stone Śiva linga beneath, i.e. he involuntarily offered bel leaves and cool water to the god. The cumulative merit of all these involuntary acts not only released him from past sins, but caused his reception into Śiva's abode of Kailasa.

This legend, while not offering any solution of the origin of the fast and worship, which was already accepted as established, furnishes very substantial reasons why it should be persisted in, and is always quoted to show the very real and great benefits accruing to the man who keeps it.

To keep this Śivarātri<sup>86</sup> properly, a fast must be observed for a complete tithi, not during the day only, as in the ordinary Śivarātris; and at every 3rd hour during the night the linga must be worshipped, with offerings of ketaki flowers and bel

<sup>84</sup> Bhandarkar, E.I.A.R., p. 115.

<sup>85</sup> Epic Mythology, E.I.A.R., p. 221

<sup>86</sup> F. & H., p. 75 ; Sharma, p. 262.

leaves, and bathed in succession with milk, curds, ghee and honey. On the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup> one must bathe, after anointing with sesame oil, worship the linga with mantras and with recitations of Śiva's thousand names and offerings of one thousand or one hundred and eight bel leaves. Afterwards the fast may be broken.

Fairs are held at this festival at the twelve great linga temples of India. Lists vary, but the following are usually given:

- i. Rameśvara (near Cape Comorin).
  - ii. Mahākāla (Ujjain).
  - iii. Kedaranātha (Gharval).
  - iv. Viśvanātha (Benares).
  - v. Omkaranātha (on river Narmada).
  - vi. Vaidyānātha (Bengal).
  - vii. Bhīmaśankara (source of river Bhima, near Poona).
  - viii. Somanātha (Kathiavar).
  - ix. Tryambaka (source of river Godavari, near Nasik).
  - x. Mallikārjuna (Karnatic).
  - xi. Nāganātha (Nizam's Territory),
  - xii. Dhrishmeśvara
2. **Somavara** — Each Monday is devoted to Śiva worship by the orthodox. Women desiring children sometimes fast every Monday for a year.
  3. **Aṣṭhami** — The 8<sup>th</sup> tithi of each half is indirectly dedicated to Śiva, in that the light half 8th is Durgaṣṭami (Durga's 8th), she being Śiva's wife, and the dark half 8th is Kālaṣṭami (Kāla's 8th), Kāla or Kāla Bhairava being a manifestation of Śiva.
  4. **Chaturthi** — In the same way the 4<sup>th</sup> tithi of each half is indirectly dedicated to Śiva, being days for propitiating his son Ganeśa. The light and dark 4ths being called, respectively, *Vināyaki* and *Sankashta chaturthi*. The latter, especially, is regarded as a day for fore boding evil, an unlucky day. Bhandarkar<sup>87</sup> considers Ganeśa worshippers a Saiva sect, established very late, between the 5th and 8th centuries A. D. But the god of the 4th tithi, although now identified with Ganeśa of the elephant head, seems to have had originally a connection with the moon, as these were moon worship days. Is it possible that, on account of the feud between Ganeśa and the moon no one dare worship the latter without also propitiating the former, who is known to be malicious ?
  5. **Shaṣṭhi** — Skanda or Karttikeya, the patron of war, another son of Śiva, is worshipped on Kārttika Śukla 6<sup>th</sup>, or new moon. He was extensively worshipped in ancient times. Now we find him but rarely mentioned. His day is observed in Bengal, where a twenty-four hours fast is kept, and he is

<sup>87</sup> Bhandarkar, E.I.A.R., p. 147

worshipped at each of the four night watches; but his cult is chiefly to be met with in the South.

6. **Tripuri pūrṇimā.** Kārttika full moon. This day is, next to Mahāsivarātri, the greatest day in the year for Śiva worship. The legend attached to it has various forms, the earliest of which seems to be that in the Mahābharata<sup>88</sup> which says there were three demons, lords of three cities, of gold, silver and iron, respectively, who united in harassing the gods. The gods appealed to Rudra, who defeated the demons and burnt their cities. The popular account is that there was but one demon, Tripuri, lord of three cities of gold (heaven), silver (earth), and iron (hell), whose ruler he had become through the power of his austerities, and whose inhabitants he tormented.

Neither Brahma nor Viṣṇu was strong enough to overcome him, but Śiva eventually, after three days fight, killed him on the full moon of Kārttika, which was thereupon instituted as a day of triumph.

One should bathe this day, if possible in the Ganga, and give presents of lamps to Brahmins. At sunset lamps are lighted and placed in all Śiva temples, and in the houses of all who keep this festival. Prayers are made, chiefly by women, before the lamps, which are kept burning all night. The day is sometimes called Kārttika Diparatna (The jewelled lamp of Kārttika).

Note. A sacrifice, known as *Śākamedhah*, was performed in ancient times, on Kārttika full moon, in order to gain victory over enemies, and may have been the origin of this festival.

7. Many a vrata (silent worship) is paid to Śiva on Bhādrapada Śukla first. Men alone perform the worship, in silence, but the whole family remains silent throughout meals, and the women when cooking.
8. **Ghanta-karna-pūjā,** on Phalguna Kṛṣṇa 15th, is allied to Śiva worship. This is a Bengal festival. Ghantakarna, one of the attendants on Śiva, is worshipped under the form of a water-jar, with fruit and flowers. This is believed to be a prevention of disease.
9. Kāla Bhairava is worshipped, as a manifestation of Śiva, on every dark 8th, and particularly on the dark-8th of Kārttika. Some class him among the pre-Aryan gods,<sup>89</sup> Crooke identifying him with Kṣetra-pala (Protector of fields), which hardly seems compatible with his fierce, terrible nature. He is believed to be black, riding by night on a black horse, accompanied by a black dog. His chief temple is at Benares, and those of his devotees who die there are believed to undergo expiatory punishment, known as Bhairavi yatana, and then proceed immediately to final bliss; such are known as Rudra pisacha (Rudra's spirits).

<sup>88</sup> Drona Parva.

<sup>89</sup> Bom, Gaz., XVIII, p. 289 ; Dravidians, E.R.E., V, p. 1.

Other men, on dying, fall into Yama's hands, and have to return to the earth in successive births.

Three festivals now remain under the Viṣṇu-Śiva head, of which two are in honour of both gods, and the 3rd in honour of the Triad.

### 1. **Vaikuntha-chaturdaśi.** Kārttika Śukla 14th.

The legend attached to this day is that in the Kṛṣṇa incarnation, Viṣṇu went to Kasi (Benares), to bathe in the Manikarnika pool, and to worship Visvesvara by the offering of one thousand lotus flowers. Śiva secretly stole one of the flowers, and Kṛṣṇa, unable to find it, or procure another, and unwilling to leave his worship incomplete, took one of his own eyes to replace the lost lotus and finished his worship. This devotion so pleased Śiva, that he appointed this day to be observed by all, worshipping Viṣṇu and bathing in the Manikarnika pool in the morning, and himself in the evening. Those who worship Viṣṇu will attain to his heaven, i.e. Vaikuntha.

Hence it is a day when both sects worship both gods, a large pilgrimage attended by many taking place in the sacred pool in Benares.

### 2. **Harihara yātra.**

Kārttika full moon. *Hari* = Viṣṇu, and *Hara* = Śiva. The Hariharanatha temple at Sonapur, at the junction of the Gandaki with the Ganga, is one of the oldest temples in India, said to have been built by Rāma on his way to win his bride. At this festival many pilgrims assemble for bathing and worshipping both great gods.

### 3. **Dattatreya pūrṇimā.**

Margasīrṣa full moon. The birth of this god is recorded as follows: Viṣṇu, Śiva and Brahma determined to test the virtue of Anusuya, wife of the Rishi Atri, went to her house during her husband's absence, as mendicants, and demanded a meal. When she brought it they imposed impossible conditions on her as the price of their eating it, saying that if she refused to comply they would starve, and the guilt of murder would lie upon her. The poor woman felt that the laws of hospitality compelled her to comply, but the power of her virtue was such that at the moment of her appearance before them they were changed into three infants. On Atri's return she told him the whole story, and his wisdom discerned in the babies the three gods of the trinity.

At his prayer they appeared in their original forms, and declared themselves satisfied alike with his devotion and his wife's virtue, granting as a reward the gift of the three babies to the childless couple. The Brahma baby was named Chandra, but soon left them to go and live in the moon; the Śiva baby was named Durvasa,

and left home to lead a wandering pilgrim's life. The 3rd baby, Viṣṇu, was named Dattatreya,<sup>90</sup> and became the representative of the three.

Some say that as only the Viṣṇu 3rd of the trinity, remained in Dattatreya, he cannot rightly be regarded as representing the three, but the usual practice is to fast on this day, and to worship Dattatreya in the evening, as representing the three great gods in his own person.

Worshippers may belong to any caste or sect. His temples are few and he is not much known outside Western India. Monier Williams<sup>91</sup> believes the story to have become attached to a holy Brahmin living about the 10th century A.D., who became deified after his death. Various tales about him are current, e.g. he became a mendicant, travelling daily to Benares for his morning ablutions, to Kolhapur for his afternoon food-begging, and to the Sahyadri range for his rest at night. Hence two Marathi proverbs have arisen: "Dattatreya's pilgrimage", meaning the movements of a person who is constantly travelling; and "To come, having played Dattatreya", meaning to appear in time to profit by the fruits of others labours.

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<sup>90</sup> Adopted son of Atri.

<sup>91</sup> Religious Thought and Life in India, p. 267.



## CHAPTER 6.

### ON FESTIVALS ARISING FROM ANIMISTIC SOURCES

A GOOD deal of the worship in modern India is traceable to very ancient pre-Aryan sources, or, where not actually traceable, the reasons for believing it originated in Nature or Animistic worship are sufficiently strong for considering it a survival of animism.

In this chapter such worship is dealt with under four heads: (1) Goddess and tutelary deity worship; (2) Spirit worship; (3) Animal worship; and (4) Worship of plants and inanimate things.

#### I. GODDESS AND TUTELARY DEITY WORSHIP

Lecturing before the British Association in 1919, Dr. Crooke spoke of the widespread "mother" cults in India, viz. Mother Earth (with which snake worship is closely connected; see p. 121), the Jungle Mothers, Deified Women, and Elemental Deities. Most of the modern Hindu goddesses seemed to have originated from these primitive deities of the aboriginal inhabitants of India.

And we find to-day that all over India some "mother" is the tutelary deity of the village. Some of these, as the Mariāi, Jokhāi, etc., of Mahārashtra, are still worshipped locally under their ancient names; some of them, as far back as the Epic Period, became identified with the wives of the greater gods, and much of the Lakṣmi, Durga, etc., worship of to-day is derived from the worship formerly offered to some "mother."

Major West 1 identifies the present-day Mahālakṣmi worshipped at Kolhapur under the name of Ambabai, with a pre-Aryan goddess.

In Vedic times the wives of the gods were of but slight importance, and in the Rig-Veda were not objects of worship, but towards the end of that period, as the immigrant Aryans became better acquainted with the aboriginal goddesses of the country, they increased in popularity. Hermann Jacobi<sup>92</sup> dates the identification of the Bengal mother goddess with Durga, wife of Rudra-Śiva, at the end of the Vedic period. And Yudhisthira's song of praise to her, in the Mahābharata,<sup>93</sup> calling her also Kali, the slayer of the buffalo demon, shows that she had won her place as Śiva's wife at the time when that was composed. By deriving the name Kali from Kāla (time), Brennand<sup>94</sup> believes her to have been originally the goddess of Time, the

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<sup>92</sup> Durga, E.R.E., V, p. 119.

<sup>93</sup> Virata Parva.

<sup>94</sup> Hindu Astronomy, p. 140

Insatiable, the Devastator of countries, and the Bringer of famines, wars and pestilence.

Again, Sita, wife of Rāma, who was born of a furrow, is said by Jacobi to have (apparently) been “ a chthonic deity before she became an epic heroine,” and she only finally became regarded as an incarnation of Lakṣmi, because her husband Rāma had become so of Viṣṇu.

To come now to the actual festivals held in honour of these “ mothers “ and other goddesses.

**(1) Gaurī tritiya.** Chaitra Śukla 3rd to Vaiśākha Śukla 3rd. Gaurī, the giver of harvest, has been already mentioned in a previous chapter (p. 50), but this festival celebrates her as the patron goddess of women, who alone observe it. She is believed to spend a month now at her parents home. (See Chap. III, p. 65.)

These two aspects of Gaurī indicate two former deities, both of whom have come to be identified with Śiva’s wife.

The feast is commonly kept among Mahārashtra Brahmin women. It is less observed in the North, and unknown in Bengal. On the 3rd, or some following day, the unwidowed women of any household clean the house, bathe, and erect in the best room a platform, or a series of platforms, in pyramidal form, at the top of which is placed an image of Gaurī, while on the tiers below her are gathered all the ornaments the house contains, such as images of other deities, pictures, religious or secular, shells, even English dolls and cheap china. Invitations are sent to neighbours, who on their arrival receive a present of turmeric, fruit, flowers, etc., and the red lead mark of happiness is made on their foreheads, and scented oil is rubbed on their hands.

No worship is at this time performed, the function is purely social, but at night prayers for an unwidowed life are offered before the platform, also sometimes there is singing and dancing.

Gaurī, again, is worshipped every Tuesday in Śrāvana, by girls, for five successive years after marriage. The girl bathes at dawn, and then proceeds to worship her Gaurī image with flowers, fruit, scent, and holy grass, with mantras, to preserve the life of her husband, i.e. to preserve her own happiness as an unwidowed woman till death. She also gives cocoanuts and toilet articles to her mother (if unwidowed), and she must fast all day and keep a vigil all the following night.

**(2) Dasahara or Gangotsava.** Jyeṣṭha Śukla first to 10th. The “ Destroyer of ten,” or Ganga festival, if observed according to rule, will destroy the ten chief sins of the one who observes it. These ten are: Harsh speech, false speech, slander, clamour, theft, injury, adultery, covetousness, evil thoughts, foolish obstinacy.

(This festival, through similarity of sound, is often confused with the *Dasara*. The two are quite distinct, and should not be so confused.)

The observance consists chiefly of bathing at dawn, on each of the ten days, if possible in the Ganga, but otherwise in some other sacred river, such as the Kṛṣṇa, Veni, Godāvāri, Narmada, etc. At the time of bathing mantras must be said, and the bather, standing up to the waist in water, must dip ten times. Those who can afford it are also expected to worship a gold or silver image of Ganga, also to give ten measures of grain and ten cows to ten Brahmins, and feast them and their wives.

Some people make flour images of river-dwellers, fish, frogs, crocodiles, etc., also of geese and crane, and send them floating down the river. It is unmistakably an ancient festival to the river goddess, and takes place immediately before the rainy season, when it is hoped she will be replenished. The favourite places of pilgrimage are Hardvara and Prayaga (Allahabad).

The legend<sup>95</sup> purporting to explain the festival is that one, Sagara, had performed so many horse sacrifices to Viṣṇu, and had gained so much merit thereby, that the performance of a single one more would have made him dangerously powerful. Indra, therefore, stole the horse prepared for the next sacrifice, to prevent its being performed. In searching for the horse, one of Sagara's 60,000 sons falsely accused the sage Kapila of having stolen it. The sage in anger sent fire out of his eyes and burnt them all to ashes. Later, repenting, he said they could be restored to life by Ganga water falling on them.

For two generations Sagara's descendants worshipped Ganga, until in the 3rd generation she became appeased by the prayers of Bhagiratha, and consented to descend to the earth from her dwelling in the Himalaya mountains. And, lest her fall should rend the earth, Rudra- Sankara received her on his head, from which, after ten days, she descended to earth, passing Hardvara, Prayaga, and other places, and making them holy. As she reached the spot where the ashes of Sagara's sons were lying (the mouth of the Ganges), they immediately received life.

This festival is exceptional, in that if it occurs in a year with an Adhika Jyeṣṭha month, it is to be held in the Adhika, not in the normal, Jyeṣṭha month. (See Chap. I, p. 20.)

- (3) **Varuni**. Chaitra Kṛṣṇa thirteenth, or Phalgunā Kṛṣṇa thirteenth. This is another Ganga bathing festival, to be observed, in order to acquire merit, when the moon enters the Satataraka nakṣatra. If the Ganga is not available, another sacred river may be substituted.
- (4) **Brahmaputra Snāna**. Chaitra Śukla 8th. A similar bathing festival<sup>96</sup> is held in connection with the Brahmaputra river. It is held all along the north bank,

<sup>95</sup> Mahabharata, Vana Parva and Ramāyana.

<sup>96</sup> F. & H., p. 11. F. & H., p.73.

especially at Nangalbandha in Dacca. The story goes that Parasurāma (see p, 78) bathed in this river, to cleanse himself from the sin of killing his mother, Renuka, and then cut a way for it to flow through the mountains. But it united with the river Sitalakṣya, which aroused his anger, and he took away its holiness except for this one day of the year. The spirit of this river is male, which is very unusual.

(5) **Sita Navami.** 2 Vaisakha Śukla 9th. This festival is very little observed, which is strange, seeing that Sita is the most popular heroine in India. The day is kept in Bengal, and as she is by tradition born of the earth, her worship on this day is productive of equal merit with the giving away of land in charity.

(6) **Shaṣṭhi Devi.** Shaṣṭhi (the 6th) is considered a malevolent female deity, who injures new born infants and their mothers, unless propitiated, about the 6th day after a birth. Now, the incidence of puerperal fever in the mother, or of tetanus in either mother or child and both diseases are very common in India occurs about the 6th day after a birth. There can be, therefore, little doubt of the origin of the dreaded goddess.

She is always propitiated with gifts and prayers by all women and their female friends after the birth of a child, but certain days are set apart as well, varying in different parts of India, but always on a 6th tithi, for her special worship, viz.

(7) **Aśoka ṣaṣṭhihi**<sup>97</sup> (Sorrow-free 6th). Chaitra Śukla 6th. Northern India. The goddess is invoked to ensure the well-being of children. Women drink water in which six flower-buds of the Aśoka tree have been steeped.

The legend<sup>98</sup> says that a certain sage found an infant at his door, whom he adopted and brought up. At her marriage to a prince, he gave her some Aśoka seeds, telling her to scatter them on the ground as she went to her husband's house, and an avenue of trees would grow up, down which she could come to find him, if at any time she needed help. Later on, disaster befell her family: one morning all the sons and their wives were found dead. The queen remembered the promise, and fled down the Aśoka avenue, at the end of which she found the sage, who gave her some holy water, which, being sprinkled on the dead bodies, restored them all to life.

(8) **Aranya shaṣṭhi**<sup>99</sup> (Forest 6th). Jyeṣṭha Śukla 6th. Bengal and South India. Women walk in the woods to-day, eating only fruit, and taking fans and other offerings to a Shaṣṭhi shrine, in the hope of having strong and beautiful children.

(9) **Shaṣṭhi.** Jyeṣṭha Śukla 6th. Western India. The legend<sup>100</sup> runs that a woman stole food in her father-in-law's house, and blamed the cat, who, in revenge, carried off all her children as soon as they were born, to Shaṣṭhi. The woman appealed to the

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<sup>97</sup> F. & H., p. 7.

<sup>98</sup> Gupte, p. 211

<sup>99</sup> Lunar Year, p. 283 ; F. & H., p. 70.

<sup>100</sup> Gupte, p. 212.

goddess for mercy, and was told to make an image of the cat, with rice-flour and water and a charm of thread. The cat and the goddess were to be worshipped, and the charm bound on the child's wrist, and it would be safe. She must eat only fruit and drink only milk on the day of worship. A black cat is always associated with *Shaṣṭhi*, and must never be beaten.

- (10) **Khas shaṣṭhi**. Pauṣa Śukla 6th. A fast is kept on this day, followed by worship of the goddess who is so much feared, in order to preserve the life of children.
- (11) **Śītalā Devi** (The cool one). This is another disease goddess, particularly associated with small-pox, and her images and shrines are among the commonest in India. Whether through a similar mental process to that which led to naming the unlucky planet Mars, "The lucky one" (see Chap. II, p. 33), or some other cause, her name stands in contrast to the burning fever she brings to her victims. During small-pox epidemics she is propitiated by anxious mothers, but, as in the case of *Shaṣṭhi* (with whom she is occasionally identified), there are special days appointed for her worship, i.e.
- (12) **Śītalā shaṣṭhi**, on Magha Śukla 6th, in Bengal.
- (13) **Śītalā saptami**, on Śrāvana Kṛṣṇa 7th, in Gujarat.
- (14) **Śītalāṣṭami**, on Phalguna Kṛṣṇa 8th, in Northern India. And a big fair to her, on Vaisakha full moon, at Kelve, Thana district (Bombay).

Her worship is unusual in one particular. She will accept the prayers and offerings of widows, if mothers, on behalf of their children. During the day of her worship one must abstain from all hot, or cooked, food and drink. One reason given for this is that she comes and rolls on the hearth, and must not get burned, so that no cooking can be done. The real reason is more likely to be the longing for cold water on the part of small-pox patients.

Worship of Female Energy under differing names.

The worship of woman, as such, is general all over India, degenerating sometimes, as in the Radha worshipping Vallabhacharya sect into obscene rites, but under other conditions less objectionable. A number of minor festivals, and some of more importance, can be gathered together under this heading, i.e.

- (1) **Rambhatritiya**. Jyeṣṭha Śukla 3rd. Northern India. This goddess was the beautiful woman who, like Lakṣmi, was produced at the churning of the milk ocean. She is worshipped in Northern India by women on this day.
- (2) **Radhaṣṭami** — Bhādrapada Śukla 8th. Bengal. Radha, the favourite mistress of Kṛṣṇa, is worshipped by men on this day as the *Ichchha* sakti (Energy of desire). It is believed that to worship her with flowers, fruit, and jewels, at noon, fasting, is pleasing to Kṛṣṇa. Esoteric explanations of her name and history are given.

- (3) **Annapurnaṣṭami.** — Chaitra Śukla 8th. Northern India. Annapurna (Wealth of food) is worshipped as the giver of food, and therefore sustainer of life. The centre of her worship is her famous temple at Benares, where her image is regarded as representing Primeval Energy.
- (4) **Kali-pūjā** — Kārttika new moon. Bengal. She is worshipped to-day as representing Primeval Energy. This day commemorates her dance, which was destroying the earth, until Śiva threw himself under her feet, and she found herself treading on her husband and stopped in shame. The story is explained esoterically as the awakening of the human soul to the realisation of its origin from God, forgotten in the tumult of human emotions.
- (5) **Jagaddhatri** — Jagadamba, or Kumari pūjā — Kārttika Śukla 9th. Bengal. On this day woman is worshipped as “World mother,” the destroyer of armies of giants, who threaten to extirpate the human race. Jagaddhatri is summoned into her image in the morning, worshipped at noon, and again in the evening, after which her spirit is dismissed, and the image consigned to water in the usual way.
- (6) An Unmarried Brahmin girl<sup>101</sup> is worshipped as Female Energy, in Mahārashtra, on the 2nd or 3rd day of the Navaratra (Aśvina Śukla first to 10th). Offerings of oil, ribbons, clothes, flowers, etc., are made to her. This is kept chiefly by women.
- (7) **Ambuvachi.** — Jyeṣṭha or Aṣāḍha Kṛṣṇa 10th to thirteenth. Bengal. “Mother Earth” is considered to be unclean during these four days. No ploughing, sowing or cooking is to be done, nor a journey undertaken. On the 4th day stones, representing her, are set up, bathed and garlanded, and the earth is again clean.
- This occurs immediately before the rainy season. The rain is understood to cause Mother Earth to become pregnant, and in due course she brings forth grain crops.
- (8) and (9), Lakṣmi and Durga worship, in connection with the seasons, has already been dealt with in Chapter III, but besides the special days devoted to their worship by both sexes, they receive much worship from women at different times, the worship offered being probably a survival of that given to female deities in primitive times.
- (10) Lakṣmi is worshipped besides Dīpāvalī new moon and Kojagari full moon, in the bright halves of Chaitra, Bhādrapada and Pauṣa, in Bengal on the Thursdays, and in Mahārashtra on the Fridays. On these days no money is parted with. A corn measure or a basket is filled with grain, garlanded, covered with a cloth and worshipped.
- On Aṣāḍha new moon she is worshipped by women under the form of lamps. The legend is that a young girl found a ring lost by the king, and asked as her reward that on this new moon night all houses in the city should be darkened, save only hers, in which she and her family lighted all the lamps they could muster. That

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<sup>101</sup> 1 Sharma, p. 213.

night Lakṣmi, looking for shelter, went straight to the house whence all the light proceeded, and lavished on the inmates the whole of her gifts.

Women collect all the lamps in the house, and worship them in the name of Lakṣmi. This night is sometimes called "The Little Dīpāvalī."

**Note.** No bells may be used in Lakṣmi worship, nor bamboo flute in that of Durga.

(11) Under the head of Durga worship may be classed the women's feast of (a) Haritalika on Bhādrapada Śukla 3rd for Parvati worship, which has the same origin as, and may be classed with, the Bengal festival of Umā chaturthī. Jyeṣṭha Śukla 4th.

The legend<sup>102</sup> from the Bhavishyottara Purana, is as follows:

Parvati, also known as Uma, the daughter of Himachala, had from a child vowed to marry none other than Śiva. When, therefore, on coming of age, she was told that her father, on Sage Narada's advice, had promised her to Viṣṇu, she was very indignant. Taking one companion she ran away into the forest, and on a river bank made three sand lingas, which she worshipped, remaining all night awake, singing the praises of Śiva. Being gratified, the great god appeared to her, and promised to grant her any request she might make. She asked that she might become his wife, to which he agreed, and again became invisible. After their night of vigil, Parvati and her maid lay down to sleep in the morning, and were found by her father, who was so much relieved to find her safe, that he consented to let her have her wish.

This very human story makes a great appeal to Indian women, most of whom are married in childhood, some against their inclination; and the observance of this day, by unmarried girls, is very general.

Married women, too, keep it, not with the hope of securing the most acceptable husband, which is their young sisters object, but in order to secure un widowed happiness. To neglect it is to court widowhood, loss of sons or wealth, and finally hell.

A woman keeping this festival must bathe at dawn, after anointing with oil, then, having brought sand from a stream of clean water, she must make four lingas, i.e. three for Śiva as Parvati did, and one for Parvati herself. These must be worshipped with flowers and mantras. At the close, an offering must be made to some unwidowed woman. No water must be drunk all day, and only plantains eaten. A vigil must be kept at night, and the ceremony is closed at sunrise next morning by a gift of flowers, turmeric, etc., to the god.

(12) **Bhavanyutpatti.** — Chaitra Śukla 8th. The birthday of Bhavani, or Parvati, is kept on this day by women. They bathe, and worship her image. A similar festival to the above.

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<sup>102</sup> 1 Sharma, p. 166.

(13) **Varada chaturthi.** (Boon-giving or Husband- giving 4th.) Magha Śukla 4th. The goddess Varada is sometimes identified with Uma, or with Gaurī, and is worshipped in Bengal, chiefly by women, to secure offspring. Flowers, lights, scarlet or saffron threads, and gold bangles are offered.

**Note.** “Vara“ may mean either a boon or a husband. Some take one meaning, some the other.

(14) **Pithori Śrāvana** new moon. This is a propitiatory festival to the seven chief goddesses and the sixty-four yoginis or divine attendants on Durga, kept by unwidowed married women, to gain children and to preserve their unwidowed state. It is not kept as regularly as some of the other goddess-worshipping festivals, but a woman who has lost children will keep it, to gain other children who shall be long-lived. The name is derived from Pitha (flour), of which the images are made.

The legend belonging to it is as follows: A woman, named Videha, gave birth to a child every Śrāvana new moon, which was also the anniversary of the death of her parents-in-law, when their Śrāddha was to be performed; and each year, owing to the impurity of child-birth occurring in the house, the Śrāddha was unavailing, and, owing to the destruction of the Śrāddha, the new-born child died.

At last, the family, growing tired of the annual occurrence, drove Videha from the house one year with her new-born child, which died in her arms in the forest the same day. She took shelter in the shrine of a goddess, to which the sixty-four yogini also came at dusk, bearing offerings of jewels, fruit and betel nuts. When they had offered their gifts at the shrine, they asked: “Is there any other guest (*atithi*) present?” At this Videha came forward, and announced herself as an Atithi, but unclean owing to the birth and sub sequent death of her child. She also told of the death of all her former children, and pleaded for the boon of long life for any others which might be born to her. The yogini took pity on her, and granted her request, and she went home comforted.

In course of time she became the mother of eight sons, who all attained to manhood.

The woman who keeps this festival must fast on the new moon day, and having bathed must take a cloth, on which are drawn lucky symbols, and place on it eight water pitchers (representing Videha’s eight sons). Upon the pitchers she must place a tray containing images (of gold, if possible) of the seven great goddesses, viz. Brahmi, Mahesvari, Kaumari, Vaishnavi, Varahi, Indrani and Chamunda, and near these, on the ground, sixty-four rice-flour images or betel nuts (representing the sixty- four yogini), whom she invokes by name.

Then she worships water pots, goddesses and yogini, with mantras and the usual offerings of flowers and fruit. After doing so she must ask: “Is any other guest present ? “ and a boy of the family must answer:



“I (name) am present”; whereupon she gives him cakes and other food. The ceremony ends with a present to the priest, and a meal with one or more unwidowed Brahmin women,

This rite is not always performed with the completeness described above. Many women are satisfied with writing the names of the sixty-four yogini on the house wall, worshipping them, and giving a feast to the children.

(15) **Khandoba or Khanderao pūjā** — Margasīrṣa Śukla first to 6th. This is the guardian god of the Deccan. Monier Williams 1 believes him to have been “probably a deification of some powerful rāja or aboriginal chieftain, who made himself useful to the Brahmins.” The legend is that a giant, Manimalla (or two, Mani and Malla), formerly troubled the earth, and that Khandoba or Śiva taking his form after a six days battle, overcame and slew him. Hence, one of his names is Mallari (Malla + ari = Enemy of Malla). His chief temples are at Jejuri and Gudguddapur (see Chap. VIII, p. 154), where his devotees assemble for this festival, especially on the last day, known as Champa ṣaṣṭhi. Boys, called Vaghya, and girls, Murali, were formerly dedicated to him, and even now the practice of marrying girls to him is not unknown, although it has been made illegal to do so. He is worshipped with offerings of turmeric, bel fruit, onions and other vegetables.

Hook-swinging was formerly practised during the festival, but the custom has now been stopped by law.

(16) **Viśvakarma, pūjā**. — Bhādrapada new moon. Bengal. Visvakarma is the tutelary god of artisans, being the architect of the gods, and also the repairer of their weapons injured in battle. He is worshipped in the form of a pitcher, before which are placed the tools and other implements of work of his worshipper. The day is an artisans holiday, and is spent in games and feasting.

(17) **Vyāsa pūjā** — Kārttika full moon. Vyāsa, the reputed compiler of the Vedas, is to be worshipped to-day, and in his name all regular expounders of the Puranas also. A similar day is Aṣāḍha full moon, known as Guru pūjā, when every student worships his own teacher, and in villages, if a Guru is non-existent, the chief Brahmin living there is regarded as a suitable substitute.

## 2. SPIRIT WORSHIP

This custom, in the form of offerings to the dead, or rather, offerings to the living in the name of the dead, is of great antiquity in India. It probably arose from the custom, almost universal among primitive people, of providing food and clothing for the spirits of the dead. The recently dead are spoken of as *Preta* (ghosts; literally, “One who has gone before”). Due offerings made by their heirs raise them to the status of Pitri (fathers) by providing them with a body, until they gain an earthly one again, in their next re-birth.

A man should make these offerings, by the rite called Śrāddha, to his ancestors, up to, and including, the 3rd generation. “ After three generations (the preta) loses its identity and is named no more at the sacrifice, becoming simply one of the Fathers.”<sup>103</sup> The Dharmasindhu<sup>104</sup> gives 96 occasions in the year upon which Śrāddha should be performed regularly, including the 12 new moons, 12 sankranti, and four Yugādi, also the 15 days of the dark half of Bhādrapada, the 5 Aṣṭaka, and 48 other occasions. The Markandeya Purana<sup>105</sup> makes most of these optional, retaining as compulsory the 12 new moons and three Aṣṭaka. The Satapatha Brahmana<sup>106</sup> gives, as the reason for performing Śrāddha on new moon days, that the moon has come to earth, i.e. that Soma, the food of the gods and the departed, is unobtainable on that day, therefore the spirits will be without food unless the worshipper provides it. Popular custom at the present time rules that a man must perform the rite on that day in the dark half of Bhādrapada corresponding to the day of decease, and on the anniversary of the decease, to which the more devout add four Aṣṭaka. The low castes perform it only on the last day of Bhādrapada, and for one generation only.

There is, besides the idea of giving aid to the spirits of the departed, some hope of reward for the living in the performance of this rite, for we read: The Pitris<sup>107</sup> when delighted with Śrāddhas, bestow long life, wisdom, wealth, knowledge, svarga, final emancipation from existence, and joys and sovereignty.” Again, we find that Śrāddha performed on different days will be productive of differing benefits to the performer.<sup>108</sup> There is, therefore, every inducement to keep this memorial of the dead.

Only a Brahmin may eat the meal provided for the spirits, so that, in the case of the lower castes, a Brahmin cook must be employed to prepare it. It is not considered very becoming to the dignity and position of a Brahmin to attend as guest at a Śrāddha, except among relations. People of Brahmin caste, therefore, when possible, arrange the performance of the rite within the limits of their own family clan. Those of lower caste invite some Brahmin who is not over punctilious about matters of good form.

The ceremony is performed as follows:— Invitations are sent to as many Brahmin men as correspond to the number of the dead it is desired to commemorate, and, a meal being prepared, a leaf plate is laid for each guest. Darbha grass is spread about each seat and plate. The after part of the day (as the latter half of the month) belongs particularly to the spirits, therefore the meal must take place after noon. When all are seated, the sacrificer invokes the gods, and then per mission being obtained from the chief Brahmin guest the spirits. The spirits now being present are offered sesame and

<sup>103</sup> Hopkins, India Old and New, p. 102.

<sup>104</sup> Quoted in Mandlik, What India Can Teach Us, p. 296

<sup>105</sup> XXXI, 20.

<sup>106</sup> S.B.E., XII, p. 362.

<sup>107</sup> Markandeya Pu, XXXII, 38.

<sup>108</sup> Sacred Laws of Aryas, S.B.E., II, p. 140; Institutes of Vishnu, S.B.E., VII, p. 24, etc.

water, to which kusa grass, flowers and fruit are sometimes added. As the offerings are held up, each spirit in turn is named as recipient.<sup>109</sup>

The meal is then brought in and served to the guests, both serving and eating being conducted in silence, the sacrificer meanwhile mentally repeating mantras. It is believed that the spirits receive food and nourishment through the medium of the actual partaker.

The meal finished, balls of rice are offered to the spirits. These balls are not eaten by the guests, but are thrown into fire, or given to a cow. The spirits are then dismissed, afterwards the gods, and the ceremony is complete. The meal usually consists of rice, curds, etc., cooked with plenty of ghee, for “the satisfaction of the manes, if food is mixed with fat, is greater and lasts a longer time.”<sup>110</sup>

**Note.** The sacred cord, usually worn over the left shoulder and under the right arm, is shifted to the right shoulder during the performance of Śrāddha.<sup>111</sup> It will be seen that the rite consists of two distinct parts: (i) The offerings of water, sesame seeds and rice, which are not partaken of by the guests, and (ii) a substantial meal, which is.

The sixteen days on which Śrāddha for personal ancestors is performed are as follows:

(i-xv) Bhādrapada Kṛṣṇa first to 15th inclusive. This period is known as the Mahālaya, Pitripakṣa or Aparā-pakṣa. The sun at this time is in the Rāśi Kanya (Virgo), and the belief is that at the moment of the entrance, the spirits leave the house of Yama, and come down to occupy the houses of their descendants. Every Hindu should make at least one visit to Gaya, to perform Śrāddha there, but, for the sake of the many who cannot do this, it has been decreed that a Mahālaya Śrāddha is equal in merit to one performed at Gaya.

During this fortnight special days to note are:

- (a) **Chautha bharani** or **Bharani pañcami**, being the 4th or 5th day. On this day the rite is done for one who has died within the past year.
- (b) **Avidhava navami** (Unwidowed 9th), in memory of a woman who has died before her husband. Widowers invite one or more Brahmin women as their guests.
- (c) **Ghata chaturdaśi** or **Ghayala chaturdaśi** (Violence 14th), in memory of one who has died, in battle or otherwise, a violent death.
- (d) **Sarva-pitri amavāsya** (All Fathers new moon), the greatest of the fifteen days, upon which it is imperative that a Śrāddha be performed, with at least one Brahmin guest, by all who have not previously done so. All ancestors are remembered on

<sup>109</sup> Crooke, I, p. 180, etc.

<sup>110</sup> Sacred Laws of the Aryas, S.B.E., II, p. 141.

<sup>111</sup> Satapatha Brahmana, S.B.E., XII, p. 361, etc., etc.

this day. The very low castes give balls of flour or rice to the crows, who are believed to be the spirits of the departed.

(e) **Matamaha or Dauhitra** (Mother's father, or, conversely, Daughter's son). The dark half celebrations are closed with a Śrāddha on this the first day of the succeeding month, Aśvina. A boy must perform it in memory of his maternal grandfather.

Besides the above, on four days known as the four Aṣṭaka (8th days) offerings are made, but there is much confusion as to who are supposed to be the recipients.<sup>112</sup> Visvadeva, the Sun, Agni, Prajapati, Night, the Nakṣatra are all mentioned. These four days are:

- (i) Margasīrṣa Kṛṣṇa 8th.
- (ii) Pauṣa Kṛṣṇa 8th, known as Pushpaṣṭaka, as flowers (*pushpa*) are offered.
- (iii) Magha Kṛṣṇa 8th, known as Māṃsāṣṭaka, as the flesh (*māṃsa*) of goats or deer is offered.
- (iv) Phalguna Kṛṣṇa 8th, known as Śākaṣṭaka, as green herbs (*saka*) are offered.

On two other days Śrāddha are performed for other than personal ancestors, viz.

(i) **Bhishmaṣṭami** — Magha Śukla 8th. This is the anniversary of the death of Bhishma, one of the great heroes of the Mahābharata, and kinsman alike of the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas. He had made a vow of celibacy, in order that his stepmother's children should have no rival but succeed to their father's inheritance. But the stepmother proved child less, and therefore there were no descendants to perform Bhishma's Śrāddha, which they would have done in place of the sons whom he had so nobly forgone.

So the whole nation, including men of all castes, were enjoined to perform this rite to his memory, at noon, on the anniversary of his death, offering water, sesame and boiled rice.

Reflexly, the sins of a whole year committed by a man who observes this command will be expiated thereby.

This custom is dying out, but still exists in places.

(ii) **Bhuta or Naraka chaturdaśi**. (Ghost or Hell 14<sup>th</sup>.) Aśvina Kṛṣṇa 14th. (See also Chap. III, p. 59). On this day offerings of water and sesame are made to Yama, after bathing at dawn; fourteen sorts of herbs are eaten, and fourteen lamps are lighted in the evening, to deliver from the fear of hell.

Yama or Pitripati (Lord of the Fathers) was in early times believed to be the first of mortals to die, and to him in his abode of Yamaloka in the South the spirits of all proceeded. All who died went first to him, afterwards going on to heaven or

<sup>112</sup> F. & H. and Hillebrandt, Ritual Literatur, E.I.A.R., p. 95.

hell. Yamaloka was not necessarily a place of suffering, see e.g. the legend of Indra (Chap. V, p. 88), but in later mythology he became more closely associated with the terrors of death, and Yamaloka became synonymous with Naraka (hell). By propitiating him on this day it is hoped to escape from suffering when one's spirit goes to him.

### 3. ANIMAL WORSHIP

The chief animals worshipped in India to-day are cows and oxen, monkeys and snakes. Horses are worshipped on Dasara day in the Deccan (see p. 57), but this is more for their connection with war than for themselves. Again, dogs are worshipped in connection with Kāla Bhairava, but this is only a local custom. Also, when an intercalary Aṣāḍha occurs, women daily during the intercalary month worship the kokila (a species of cuckoo), but this is in memory of Sati, wife of Śiva, who destroyed herself in the sacrificial fire of her father, Dakṣa, having quarrelled with him, and for defiling the holy fire was changed into a kokila. There is nothing sacred about the bird itself.

The worship of the first-named three classes is common throughout all India.

#### (1) Cow and Ox Worship.

Originally cattle were not considered sacred. In Vedic times they were killed for food. In the Aitareya Brahmana instructions are given for celebrating the visit of a king by eating beef.

But their usefulness and value to an agricultural people became the cause of their first being considered too valuable, then too sacred, to be killed, and they became, by easy stages, objects of worship. By Manu's time they were established as sacrosanct, and their worship has not decreased with time.

At the same time the bull has come to be considered the symbol of fertility, and his worship is closely connected with that of the Śiva emblem.

Most Brahmin households possess at least one cow, which is regarded almost as a member of the family.

To touch her in passing is purifying, and to mark her forehead with the red circle denoting the happy unwidowed state is very common. Cow's milk may be drunk from the hands of one of lower caste, its purity being beyond defilement.

Certain days are appointed for cow-worship, and certain others for that of the farm and draught bullocks, as under:

- (a) Govatsa dvadaśī, Aśvina Kṛṣṇa 12th; Śrāvana Kṛṣṇa 4th; Gujarat. Gopashtami, Kārttika Śukla 8th; Bahula, Śrāvana Kṛṣṇa 4th; Bengal. Vasu barasa, Vaiśakha Śukla first and Jyeṣṭha Śukla 2nd;

On these days cows and their calves are worshipped, chiefly by women, offerings of food are made to them, and their foreheads are marked with the red lead circle. No woman must touch wheat, milk, curds, whey or ghee on the day of worship.

- (b) Cow's footprints, called Gopada, are drawn on the earth near a temple or tank, and worshipped by women daily during the four months.

- (c) Pola, Śrāvana or Bhādrapada new moon; Deccan. Bendura, Aṣāḍha Śukla thirteenth or Kārttika Śukla first; Konkan. Pongal, Makara Samkranti; Southern India.

On these days bullocks are given a rest from work, and are feasted, as a thanksgiving for their labour. They are also worshipped. Details of the ceremony vary with the district, but a procession of bullocks, adorned with tassels, garlands, paint, etc., is a feature in all.

This festival is not of great antiquity, and is not mentioned in Vedic or post-Vedic literature. It is chiefly a farmers festival, held at the harvesting of the staple grain of the district, which explains the variation in the date at which it occurs. Pious Brahmins, however, will sometimes make earthen images of bullocks and worship them at this time. The connection- with the harvest is shown in the Marathi proverb, (In Magha water [at the roots!, at Bendura fruit).

The Mahārashtra custom is to wash the animals and anoint them with oil in the morning, paint their horns and adorn them with gilt, or coloured paper, and put tassels and brass ornaments on the tips. Hand prints are marked on their bodies and marigold garlands put round their necks. The sara or horn-encircling rope is renewed. Each family worships its own animals, at home, sometimes by circumambulations. They are then taken out in the evening to join the others in a procession through the village, led by the headman's bullocks.

## (2) **Monkey Worship.**

This worship is in the popular mind due to the help given by the monkey tribe to Rāma, in his search for, and rescue of Sita.

It is evidently a relic from very ancient times, earlier than the epic legend which to-day is believed to account for it. The aboriginal tribes who helped King Rāma in his battles became, later, identified with the monkeys, who were already worshipped, possibly on account of their strange likeness to men.

With regard to Hanuman, the monkey-hero of the Rāmāyana, Crooke<sup>113</sup> says he is the survival of a Dravidian god; Monier Williams<sup>114</sup> says he is a “poetical deification “ of some aboriginal tribe-leader, who helped Rāma in his wars against Ravana; and Sir Alfred Lyall<sup>115</sup> writes: “ It seems as if hero-worship and animal- worship had got mixed up in the legend of Hanuman.”

Throughout India monkeys are considered sacred, and are worshipped, monkey temples existing in many places, but one special day is devoted to Hanuman, viz. Hanumān jayanti (Hanuman’s birthday), Chaitra full moon.

This day is very generally observed throughout Mahārashtra, especially by members of the Ramdas sect. Temples and isolated shrines and images are common all over the Deccan, where he is usually called Maruti, from a legend to the effect that his father was the wind- god, Maruta. His mother was Añjanī, and her son was given as a boon by Uma for prayers made to her.

The favourite legend about Hanuman, related to his worshippers on this day, is that of his leap from India to Lanka (Ceylon), and his discovery there of Sita in Ravana’s palace garden; and of his building the rock- bridge to enable Rāma and his army to cross the channel.

Another legend, equally well known, is that at his birth he saw the red sun, newly risen, and leaped up to reach it, thinking it a fruit. He soon discovered his mistake, but was able to strike down Rahu, whom he found about to swallow the sun. Pictures of this leap in mid air are very widespread, and are worshipped in the house on his birthday.

Worship is also offered at any one of his shrines, in the morning, the worshipper having risen before dawn, and -bathed.

Note. Hanuman is one of the seven Chiranjiva, i.e. Immortal ones.<sup>116</sup>

### **(3) Snake Worship.<sup>117</sup>**

Much has been written on this subject, and general modern opinion is that it was, probably, not known to the Aryan immigrants. There is no trace of it in the Rig-Veda, where Ahi is a noxious animal, slain by Indra. But the Aryans found it all over the land, and by degrees incorporated it into Hinduism; for the Yajurveda teaches reverence for snakes; Manu grants them the honour of descent from himself; and in

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<sup>113</sup> Dravidians, E.R.E., V.

<sup>114</sup> Religious Life of the Hindus, p. 220.

<sup>115</sup> Asiatic Studies, p. 13.

<sup>116</sup> LA., XL, p. 55.

<sup>117</sup> Religion des Veda, Oldenberg, trans. Henry, p. 57 f. ; Code of Manu, I, 37 (S.B.E., XXV, p. 15); Brahmanism and Hinduism, Monier Williams, p. 323; Bom. Gaz., XVIII; Imp. Gaz., II, p. 217 ; " Snake and Tree Worship," Fergusson ; S.B.E., XXIX, pp. 129, 201.

the Puranas and Epics we find them installed as a semi- divine race. Arjuna, the most famous of the five Pāṇḍava brothers, married Ulupi, a snake-woman, and Kṛṣṇa, in the Bhagavadgita, identifies himself with Ananta.

There still exists a very persistent belief in a race of Nāgas or snake-people, who lived in Epic times and earlier, and whose women were of great beauty, intermarrying with gods and men.

Certain tribes and castes to-day, i.e. the Nhavis of the Deccan, the Kurs of Chota Nagpur, and some of the Mysore princely families, claim descent from the Nāgas, holding themselves, in the case of the first- named, superior to any other caste on the strength of it. This claim to superior rank is not, however, allowed by members of other castes. Some think the origin of this belief lies in the former existence of a race of Scythians with a snake as their national emblem, who settled in India either before or after the immigration of the Aryans.

The first mention of these Nāga people is found in the Sutras. The Grihya Sutra enjoins the worship of “Celestial, Aerial and Terrestrial serpents” by a householder on Śrāvana full moon.

There is a close connection between snakes and “earth-mothers,” as is natural, seeing that snakes live chiefly in holes in the ground; and many people consider them guardians of hidden treasure.

Their worship is also connected with the desire for longevity and fertility, as is seen from certain legends and customs, e.g. that quoted by Monier Williams, that earth from a snake hole, if put into the mouth daily, will cause fertility.

Crooke traces the evolution of a snake into a deity through three stages, from the natural fear and aversion in which they were first held, to the harmless house snake’s becoming identified with the spirit of an ancestor, returned in another form to live in the familiar spot, then snake-charmers became regarded as wizards, then as priests, and but a short step was necessary to the identification of snakes with gods. Most Hindus will not kill even a poisonous snake, they fear revenge from the rest of its tribe.

Some dozen snakes are known to legend and are worshipped to-day, including, among the best known, Sesha, the thousand-headed, living below the world, on whom Viṣṇu reclines during his four months sleep; Ananta (the Endless), who encircles the earth, and symbolises eternity, and is sometimes looked upon as a manifestation of Viṣṇu; Vasuki, who became the churning-rope at the churning of the milky ocean by gods and demons; Takṣaka, the lord of the snake-people, against whom Janamejaya waged a war of extermination; Kaliya, the river snake, subdued by Kṛṣṇa after several days of struggle in the depths of the Yamuna; but older than all these, and more worshipped, is Manasa, “ the mother snake-goddess of the early village founders.” Snake images, usually representing cobras, are found under trees



and by the roadsides everywhere, and the passers-by bow to them. Besides this occasional worship, special snake festivals are held, as under:—

(a) **Ananta chaturdaśi.** — Bhādrapada or Aśvina Śukla 14<sup>th</sup>. On this day the snake Ananta is worshipped as symbolising Viṣṇu, with offerings of flowers. It is a man's festival only, and is rapidly losing its character of a snake worship day and becoming a Viṣṇu worship day. The legend attached to it is about a certain Susila, who was taught a means of obtaining any desire she might have by worshipping pitchers of water, while dressed in red garments, afterwards binding a red silk cord on her wrist. This ceremony is supposed to have been taught to the Pāṇḍavas by Kṛṣṇa, to enable them to gain their great desire of overcoming the Kauravas, and it is practised to-day by those who have some personal wish which they desire fulfilled.

The ritual prescribed is as follows: The worshipper must bathe in the morning and fast. At noon a copper vessel must be filled with clean water, and draped with garments, and darbha grass must be taken and twisted into the form of a snake. In a clear space a square altar of rice must be made, upon which the copper vessel is placed, with the grass snake image before it.

Both are then worshipped with lengthy mantras and offerings of fourteen kinds of fruit. A red silk cord, composed of fourteen threads and in which fourteen knots are tied, is then taken, worshipped and fastened round the right wrist.

This ceremony, if performed for fourteen years in succession, will give long life and fulfil any desire. Every year a new cord is assumed, the old one being given, with a fee and presents, to the officiating priest.

(b) **Nāga pañcami** — Śrāvana Śukla 5th, or, less commonly, Margasīrṣa Śukla 5th. This day celebrates the return of Kṛṣṇa from the Yamuna after having overcome the big river snake Kaliya. Kṛṣṇa had fallen into the river from a tree overhanging the bank, into which he had climbed to fetch a ball which had lodged there while he was playing with the herds people. His return with the snake was received with joy, the herds men offering Kaliya milk in gratitude for his not having harmed their favourite, Kṛṣṇa. And so the festival was instituted.

Another legend says that a man, ignorant of the festival, while ploughing on this day killed a nest of young snakes. The mother snake, in revenge, in the night bit the man and all his family, except one married daughter living in another village. Having killed all but this daughter, the mother snake set out for that village to kill her also. But the girl, knowing of the festival, had put out a dish of appetising food, which the snake tasted, and which gratified her so much that she not only refrained from killing the girl, but gave her a healing lotion to sprinkle on the bodies of the parents and other children, whereby they were all restored to life. After this, the festival became general.

It is observed by keeping a fast from noon on the 4th, and bathing at dawn on the 5th, after which either an earthen image of a cobra or a picture must be worshipped; by placing saucers of milk near known or suspected snake holes, as an offering; and by rigidly abstaining from digging, ploughing or otherwise disturbing the earth, whereby snakes might be injured. Women also abstain from grinding, pounding rice, and even from slicing vegetables. In the after part of the 5th feasts are held, and giving of presents and holiday-making are general.

If, within a month of this festival, a snake bites anyone who has kept the law of offering milk, etc., on this day it may be killed without mercy or fear of retaliation. Its life is forfeit, on account of its ingratitude.

In Mahārashtra the festival is a favourite one with the women of the agricultural castes. They meet in bands, and dance in rings, afterwards worshipping the earthen snake image made for this occasion and set up in the village.

(c) **Manasa, pañcami** — Aṣāḍha Kṛṣṇa 5th. Bengal, Northern and Southern India.

Manasa is the 3rd of the legendary snake deities which have special days appointed for their worship. Manasa combines in herself the properties of one of the mother-earth-guardians, and of the snakes. She is not found in the classic list of the nine big snakes, viz. Vasuki, Ananta, Sesa, Takṣaka, Kaliya, Padmanabha, Kambala, Sankhapala, and Dhritarashtra, but she is even more popular than they in Northern India. She is not worshipped in Mahārashtra.

There are no less than four legends about her, which are repeated to worshippers on this day:

(a) While Viṣṇu and the other gods were sleeping, during the four rainy months, Manasa kept watch in a sruhi tree to protect men as the legend adds from snake bite.

Here we see her guardian-mother nature uppermost, and it possibly gives a clue to her becoming identified with the snakes. She was the protectress of mankind, guarding them from their most dangerous enemy during the rainy months. Hence she became the queen of snakes, able to control their actions, hence the snake-queen-goddess.

(b) In Southern India the story goes that a boy, gathering ketaki flowers for his sister, was bitten by a cobra and died. His sister, by worshipping Manasa on this day, was able to persuade her to restore the boy to life, so that the day which began in mourning ended in joy and feasting.

(c) A certain merchant refused to worship Manasa, who in revenge killed all his sons in turn, by allowing her subjects to bite them. The last son was bitten on the day of his marriage to a pious girl, named Vehula. The bride refused to give up the body for burning, but put it on a raft, and, crouching beside it, pushed out into the stream of a big river. Here they drifted for many days, the girl exposed to cold and heat, hunger and thirst, but never ceasing to implore

Manasa to relent and restore her husband. Her prayers and austerities proved too powerful to resist, and at length Manasa took pity on the poor little bride, and restored her husband to life on an Aṣāḍha Kṛṣṇa 5th.

In both of these two last legends we have the belief that persons dead from snake bite can be restored to life. There are probably instances, giving rise to such legends, of apparent death from this cause, which prove to be cases of suspended animation only, the bitten person ultimately recovering.

- (d) A girl, unpopular with her husband's family, was carried off by Manasa to her underground palace, where she lived for some time in great happiness and prosperity with the Nāga people, who adopted her as one of themselves.

On her return to the upper earth she was not ashamed of her snake kindred, but acknowledged them. This so much gratified them, that they loaded her and her husband's family with treasure, and guaranteed their prosperity as long as snake worship was regularly observed by them. Needless to add, the girl became a great favourite and her future happiness was insured.

Here we see the connection traced between the snake tribe and buried treasure discovered by a girl. It was assumed that she must have been given treasure by the guardians of it, and so the legend was evolved.

The observances for this day are similar to those in the Deccan on Nāga pañcami, with the addition, in the United Provinces, of the following custom: For seven days before the festival, i.e. from Aṣāḍha Śukla 14th, gram, pulse and wheat are steeped in water. On the Kṛṣṇa 5th a wisp of grass is taken, twisted into snake form, dipped into the water in which is the grain, and given as an offering to the snakes.

Here the connection between the snake tribe and the fertility of the crops is obvious. Another day for Manasa worship is Arandhanam. Bhādrapada (or Aśvina) new moon. Bengal. On this day no cooking may be done. The oven is painted with rice powder, and a branch of the hedge plant called Manasa is put in it. The snake goddess is worshipped. This rite connects snake worship with household prosperity. In some parts of India<sup>118</sup> Manasa worship appears to have a place in the Dasahara observances.

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<sup>118</sup> F. & H., p. 71 ; Sharma, p. 67 ; Hindu Year, pp. 12, 32.

## 4. WORSHIP OF PLANTS AND INANIMATE THINGS

Many trees and other plants are objects of worship. The Pippal, in which the ghosts of young Brahmin boys are believed to live, and which is considered a symbol of Viṣṇu; the Bel, or wood-apple, sacred to Śiva, and not to be used for firewood except by Brahmins; the Sami, worshipped at the Dasara; and the Coconut, often used in worship as the symbol of fertility.

Besides these, the Kuśa, Durva and Darbha grasses are all sacred, and used in many ceremonies. Of the last named the Pavitra or ring is made, worn by a priest and worshippers during certain rites; and Durva is used in the Durvaṣṭami rite on Bhādrapada Śukla 8th (Chap. Ill, p. 52).

But a few trees have a special day set apart for their worship:

### (1) **Vata pūrṇimā**

Jyeṣṭha full moon (new moon). Western (Northern) India. This day, sometimes called Vat Savitri, is kept over a good part of India, being observed very strictly in the Deccan, where frequently three days, the thirteenth, 14th and 15th, are kept.

The legend giving rise to it, according to popular belief, is the well-known story from the Mahābharata<sup>119</sup> of Savitri and Satyavan, which is more loved by the women of India than any other, saving perhaps that of Sita.

Savitri chose as her husband the ill-fated Satyavan, son of a king who had been driven into exile on account of blindness. Having been told that her husband would die a year after marriage, Savitri spent the last three days of that year in fasting and prayer. On the last day she accompanied Satyavan on a woodcutting expedition.

When he became overcome with weariness and approaching death, she sat down under a Vat (banyan) tree, with his head in her lap, and awaited the coming of Yama with his noose to catch and bear away her husband's spirit. Then follows the story of how she leaves her husband's body to the care of the tree, and persistently follows Yama, over rough ground, through forests and across mountains, in his journey with Satyavan's spirit to his abode in the South.

Time after time Yama tries to make her turn back, offering one boon after another, viz. her father-in-law's restored sight and kingdom, the prosperity of her own parents, etc. But nothing will induce her to leave her husband's spirit. Finally, Yama promises her the boon of one hundred sons, whereupon she claims her husband's restoration to life as the only possible means of the boon's fulfilment, and Yama is forced to consent. Then comes the sudden finding of herself and the sleeping Satyavan again

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<sup>119</sup> Pativrata Mahatmya.

under the friendly Vat tree, his awakening to life, and the fulfilment of all Yama's promises.

The tree does not play an important part in the tale, but is the principal object of worship at the memorial festival, which is observed by married women only, men, widows and children having no part in it.

A fast is ordained, and very religious women keep it for three days, as Savitri did; all must keep it for at least one day. In the house a picture of a Vat tree, Savitri, Yama and Satyavan is drawn with sandal paste and rice flour on the floor or wall, and, where possible, gold images of the prince and his wife are set in a tray of sand. The pictures and images are worshipped, with mantras and offerings of Vat leaves. Outside the doors the tree is worshipped with mantras, and a thread is wound about it, while offerings of copper coins and fruit are made. The due performance of these rites is believed to insure long life to one's husband. Women greet each other with, "Become as Savitri!".

Gupte<sup>120</sup> believes the festival to be a Nature myth, typifying the annual marriage of Earth (Satyavan) to Nature (Savitri). The Earth dies every year, but is revived by the powers of Nature.

The choice of a Vat tree is likely to be due to ancient worship of this tree, typifying, by its aerial roots which finally take root in the ground, becoming new tree trunks while still part of the parent tree, the continuity of life.

## (2) **Aśokaṣṭami.**

Chaitra Śukla 8th. This day coincides with the Brahmaṣṭami bathing festival (see p. 103), but the Aśoka tree worship is quite distinct from the river worship, and is confined to women only.

It also appears to be quite distinct from the Aśoka 6th, two days earlier, for securing the welfare of children (see p. 104), in connection with which there is no tree worship, the use of the flowers being apparently due to the name Aśoka the Absence of Sorrow (the same as the Adukhya 9th on Bhādrapada Śukla 9th given in some calendars.)

The legend is that Ravana, having carried off Sita, wife of Rāma, imprisoned her in a grove of Aśoka trees, where she continually prayed for deliverance and restoration to her husband. Hanuman, the monkey-god, searching for her, saw her praying under an Aśoka tree on this day, and took the news of her whereabouts to Rāma, so that he was able to rescue her. In memory of this event women now worship the tree on this day, embracing it, and eating its leaves, to secure immunity from sorrow, especially that of becoming widows. Both festivals, on the 6th and the 8th, are probably due to the name of the tree.

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<sup>120</sup>Bom. Gaz., XVIII, p. 253 ; Sharma, p. 235 ; Hindu Year, pp. 22, 35.

### (3) Tulasi Vivaha (Tulasi Wedding.)

Kārttika Śukla 11th and 12th. The tulasi plant is to be found growing in the courtyard of most Brahmin houses, in a brick or plaster pedestal, called the Vrindavana. It is worshipped every evening by the women of the house, who circumambulate it, carefully water it, place a lamp at its foot by night, etc. All Hindus, of whatever caste, venerate it where they do not actually worship. No gardener will cut or uproot it, but the leaves may be plucked by day (not after dark) for offerings.

The day set apart for its special worship is the day of, or following, the close of Viṣṇu's four months sleep, when he is married to the tulasi plant. The legends referring to it are two:

- (a) Lakṣmi averted trouble from mankind by slaying a demon, and remained on earth in the form of this plant to be a tangible object -of man's worship.

The favourite legend is, however, the following:

- (b) Vrinda, wife of Jalandhara, was renowned for her beauty and virtue, the latter being so great that it gave power to her husband, insomuch that Śiva, who wished to kill him, could not obtain the mastery over him. Finding his only hope of overcoming the husband was to destroy the wife's virtue, Śiva persuaded Viṣṇu to betray her, which he was only able to compass by going to her in the likeness of her husband.

When she found she had been deceived, Vrinda built a pyre and immolated herself upon it. Jalandhara also was killed by Śiva. But Viṣṇu had fallen in love with Vrinda, and was so much distressed at her death that he refused to be comforted until the gods planted a tulasi shrub, and summoned her spirit into it. Since then she is believed to come into the shrub every evening, for the night, leaving it in the morning. This is the reason why the leaves must not be plucked after sunset.

On the day preceding that of the festival (which may be celebrated on any day between the 11th and the 15th, though usually on the 12th) the vrindavana is cleaned and painted and garlanded, while fruit and flowers and all things necessary for the ceremony are made ready. On the wedding day a fast is kept till evening, when, having bathed and assumed white garments, the officiating priest brings some emblem of Viṣṇu to the plant. This may be an image of Viṣṇu, Balarāma, or Kṛṣṇa, but is frequently the salagrāma stone (see p. 131).

Both the emblem and the plant are washed with warm water and the five amrita (a mixture of milk, curds, ghee, honey and sugar). Men's clothing, a sacred cord, and sandal paste are offered to Viṣṇu, and turmeric, red lead, the marriage neck-thread, etc., to Vrinda, with mantras. Then, as in actual marriages, a shawl is held between the two, the officiating priest repeats mantras, and, at a signal, the shawl is dropped

and rice showered upon the pair. The Viṣṇu emblem is made to touch the plant, a lamp is waved round them for luck, and the marriage is complete. The priest receives a wedding fee and a feast is held.

This festival is observed chiefly, but not entirely, by women.

Note. Monier Williams<sup>121</sup> quotes the following verses, showing the very great reverence in which the tulasi plant is held:

*" I adore that tulasi in whose roots are all the sacred places of pilgrimage, in whose centre are all the deities, and in whose upper branches are all the Vedas."*

#### **(4) The Śālāgrāma**

Śālāgrāma is a black stone found in the river Gandaki in Nepal, sometimes pierced with holes, believed to be the work of a legendary worm known as Vajakita. Some say the real stone should be an ammonite, others that it may merely bear the impression of one.

It is sacred to Viṣṇu, as he is believed to live in it. No orthodox Vaishnava house is without one as an object of worship. It takes the place of a Viṣṇu image at the will of the worshipper, and is frequently used in the marriage with the tulasi plant (as above).

One authority states that it was Vrinda's hair only which became that plant, her body became the river Gandaki, which gives the connection between the plant and the stone.

The use of the stone to represent Viṣṇu was not known even as late as Epic times, but it has come to be more than a symbol of him. He is believed to be immanent in it.

#### **(5) Knotted Thread Worship.**

Three festivals remain, all kept on Śrāvana full moon, when knotted threads are the object of reverence and worship. The wearing of threads as charms, on neck or wrist, enters into many ceremonies (see Ananta 14th, p. 122; Kāla Bhairava, p. 96, etc.), and, as is well known, the wearing of the sacred cord by members of the three upper castes dates back to Vedic times. Directions as to initiation and the subsequent wearing of the cord are met with frequently in Vedic literature.

Students of folklore trace the custom back to fear of evil spirits, the sacred thread, like the magic circle known to many primitive people, being believed to form a barrier which demons cannot cross. Campbell<sup>122</sup> states that knots are tied for the same purpose, as a knot is circular in shape. In support of this theory a few customs may be quoted:

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<sup>121</sup> Religious Life of the Hindus, p. 333.

<sup>122</sup> Spirit Basis, etc., LA., XXIV, p. 131

A thread is wound round a pippal tree believed to be inhabited by the spirit of a Brahmin boy. The Kayats<sup>123</sup> of Khandesh remove their sacred cord when they wish to get drunk, resuming it when they are again sober. In both these cases the thread is considered a barrier: in the first it is used to prevent the ghost from leaving the tree to annoy women (its favourite objects of torment), and in the 2nd it is removed so that the spirit inhabiting the intoxicating drink may not be prevented from entering the man's body, or from leaving it afterwards. Again, the marriage neck-string is broken when a woman's husband dies, not to signify the breaking of the marriage, which is still considered real and binding, but possibly that her husband's spirit may not be prevented from visiting her.<sup>124</sup>

When a thread or cord is held in so much veneration as has been indicated above, it is but a short step to the actual worship of the thread itself, which is the result in the India of to-day.

(a) **Śrāvaṇi pūrṇimā**<sup>125</sup> On this day all Brahmins must renew the sacred cord which they constantly wear. The ordinance appears to be that only students of the Vedas should renew the cord, as the day is sometimes called Rig-Yaju Śrāvaṇi, but as a matter of custom all who have been initiated and wear the cord do so.

Rising at dawn, the Brahmin must bathe and don white garments, then join a company of others in a temple court, or other wide, convenient place. Each is attended by his family priest, but the prayers and ceremonies are conducted in the name of all, by one leading priest, sitting on an earthen platform before them. He begins by worshipping Ganeśa, to ensure success, and then builds a sacrificial fire and performs the daily sacrifice enjoined on all Brahmins. Later he places eight betel nuts, or eight darbha grass rings, on a tray, representing the seven Rishis and Arundhati (see Chap. IV, p. 72), and worships them with mantras and offering of flowers, the assembled men and boys bowing before them.

Each then eats two balls of flour and milk, takes off his old cord, and casts it into the sacrificial fire. Then each gives the new cord (of cotton, in a three-fold twist), with which he has come provided, to his own priest, repeating ten Gayatris over it. It is then put on. There follows the worship of Brahma, the casting of scented flowers and sacred rice into the fire, and the giving of presents to the priests, and the ceremony is over.

## (6) **Pavitraropana.**

On the same day Pavitras or Pohvates are made. These are rings, wristlets or necklets made from strands of cotton thread, of varying lengths, with a varying number of twists and of knots, e.g. the best Ponvate is nine- stranded, with one hundred and

<sup>123</sup> Bom. Gaz., XII, p. 55.

<sup>124</sup> Cp. Spirit Basis, etc., LA., XXIV, p. 131.

<sup>125</sup> Hindu Year, p. 16; Sharma, p. 127



eight twists and twenty-four knots, and reaches to the knees, another may have twelve twists and twelve knots, etc.

The required number having been made, they are collected and sprinkled with Panchagavya (see p. 73 footnote) , washed, and consecrated with mantras.

They are then worshipped, and afterwards offered to different gods. One is usually wound round a Śiva linga; another laid at Viṣṇu's feet, a 3rd given to the family priest, etc. Vaishnavas of all castes and both sexes are required to offer a pohvate every year to Viṣṇu. A vigil should be kept all the succeeding night, and sometimes the ceremony is repeated on the following day.

### **(7) Rakṣa<sup>126</sup> or Rakhi bandhana.**

Closely allied to the preceding ceremony, and possibly a popular form of it among the commoner people, is the custom of binding a silk thread, with tinsel ornament, on to the wrist of another, to preserve him from evil. Mothers frequently bind them on their children's arms, wives on their husbands, sisters on their brothers.

The legend is that, while men and gods were still under Bali's tyranny, before Viṣṇu took the Vāmana incarnation, Indrani, wife of Indra, procured such a thread from Viṣṇu, and tied it round Indra's wrist, whereby he became protected from Bali.<sup>127</sup> While tying it one should say the following mantra:

*" That by which the great, strong, demon-king Bali was bound, with that I too bind thee. Oh ! amulet, do not slip off."*

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<sup>126</sup> Hindu Year, pp. 16, 33 ; Sharma, p. 132.

<sup>127</sup> See Chap III, p. 60.

## CHAPTER 7.

### CHART OF FOREGOING MONTHLY FESTIVALS

#### CHAITRA

Śukla-pakṣa — Waxing Fortnight	
1	(a) Dhvajaropana or Nava- varsharambha — Standard raising or New Year (b) Vasanta navaratra arambha (c) Ghaṭa-sthapana (d) Brahma Pūjā
3	(a) Gaurī tritiya Gaurī's 2nd Gana-gaur Vrata. (b) manoratha tritiya (c) Matsya jayanti Fish birthday
4	Vināyaki chaturthi — Vināyaka's 4th
5	Sri pañcami (see Magha Su. 5th) Goddess 5 <sup>th</sup>
6	(a) Skanda shaṣṭhi — Skanda's 6th (b) Aśoka shaṣṭhi — Sorrow-free 6th (c) Yamuna jayanti — Birth of Yamuna Devi
8	(a) Durgaṣṭami — Durga's 8 <sup>th</sup> (b) Bhavanyutpatti — Bhavani's creation (c) Annapurna — Harvest -mother (d) Aśokaṣṭami — Sorrow-free 8 <sup>th</sup> (e) Brahmaṣṭami — Brahmāputra bathing
9	Rāma navami or Rāma jayanti — Rāma's birthday
10	(a) Dharmarāja Daśami (b) Navaratrotapanam
11	Kāmadaikadaśi — Wish-granting 11 <sup>th</sup>
12	Madana dvādaśi (Damanotsava)
13	(a) Ananga pūjā — Love-god's 13 <sup>th</sup> (b) Pradoṣa Evening fast
14	Mahāvīra jayanti
15	(a) Hanuman jayanti Hanuman's birthday (b) Baisakha Snāna (Jain) (c) Pūrṇimā — Full moon

On all Thursdays worship of Lakṣmi (Bengal).

On all Fridays (Mahārashtra).

## VAIŚĀKHA

<b>Kṛṣṇa-pakṣa — Waning Fortnight</b>	
1	Vasantotsava
4	Samkashta chaturthi.. Difficult 4th
7	Bhānu Saptami
8	Kālaṣṭami Black 8th
11	Aparaikadaśi — Unequaled 11th
12	Pradoṣa
13	Śivarātri Śiva's night
15	Amavāsya New moon

## VAIŚĀKHA

<b>Śukla-pakṣa — Waxing Fortnight</b>	
1	Vasu barasa Cow worship
3	(a) KṛitaYugādi (or Treta- Yugādi) Anniversary of Kṛita Treta yuga (b) Akṣayya tritiya — Unperishing 3rd (c) Parasurāma jayanti — Rāma-with-the axe birthday V (d) Gaurī pūjā samapti — End of Gaurī worship
4	Vinavaki chaturthi Vināyaka's 4th
7	Kṣaya Tithi Ganga-saptami
8	Durgasṭami Durga's 8th
9	Sita jayanti Sita's birthday
11	Mohini-ekādaśi
12	Pradoṣa Evening fast
14	Nṛsimha jayanti — Man-lion birthday
15	(a) Kurma jayanti — Tortoise birthday (b) Pushpadola — Flower swinging (c) Buddha Jayanti (d) Pūrṇimā — Full moon

## JYEṢṬHA

<b>Kṛṣṇa-pakṣa — Waning Fortnight</b>	
1	Ekalinga Patotsava
8	Kālaṣṭami
10	Ambuvachya-arambha — Beginning of Mother Earth's impurity
11	Yogini-ekādaśī
12	Madhusudana Dvadaśī
13	(a) Śivarātri Śiva's night (b) Ambuvachisamapti End of Mother Earth's impurity
14	Sanaiscara jayanti
15	(a) Vata Savitri (N. India) — Savitri's Vat day (b) Amavāsya New moon

## JYEṢṬHA

<b>Śukla-pakṣa — Waxing Fortnight</b>	
1	Dasahara or Gangotsava- Beginning of Dasahara or rambha Ganga festival
2	Vasu barasa Cow worship
3	Rambha tritiya Rambha's 3rd
4	(a) Vināyaki chaturthi Vināyaka's 4th IV (b) Uma Uma's 4th
5	Sruti Panchami
6	(a) Shaṣṭhi devi Goddess of the 6th (b) Aranya shaṣṭhi Forest 6th
8	Durgaṣṭami Durga's 8th Dhumavati Jayanti
10	Dasahara or Gangotsava samapti — End of Dasahara or Ganga festival
11	(a) Nirjala-ekādaśī — Waterless 11th (b) Kṛṣṇa-Rukmini Vivaha
13	(a) Pradoṣa Evening fast (b) Savitri pūjārambha — Beginning of Savitri worship
15	(a) Vat pūrṇimā or Vat Savitri Vat tree full moon, or Savitri's Vat day (b) Snāna-yātra of jagannatha (c) Pūrṇimā — Full moon

## AŚĀḌHA

<b>Kṛṣṇa-pakṣa — Waning Fortnight</b>	
1	Narada Jayanti
4	Sankashta chaturthi
5	Manasa/Nāga pañcami
8	Kālaṣṭami
10	Ambuvachyarambha — Beginning of Mother Earth's impurity VI
11	Kamikaikadaśi — Wish-granting 11th
13	(a) Śivarātri (b) Ambuvachi samapti — End of Mother Earth's impurity VI
15	(a) Dīpa pūjā — Lamp worship VI (b) Amavāsya — New moon

## AṢĀḌHA

<b>Śukla-pakṣa — Waxing Fortnight</b>	
1	Gupta Navarātri prarambha
2	Ratha yātra — Jagannatha's Chariot festival
3	Pitri Divasa
4	Vināyaki chaturthi — Vināyaka's 4th
5	Skanda Panchami
8	Durgasṭami Durga's 8th
9	Gupta Navarātri samapti Nāga-pūjā
10	Punaryātra Chariot return festival
11	(a) Chaturma-asarambha — Beginning of the Four Months rainy season (b) Sayani-ekādaśi — Sleeping 11th
13	(a) Pradoṣa Evening fast (b) Bendura Cattle festival
15	(a) Vyāsa pūjā — Vyāsa worship (b) Pūrṇimā — Full moon

## ŚRĀVANA

<b>Kṛṣṇa-pakṣa — Waning Fortnight</b>	
2	Asunya Sāyana Dvitiya

4	(a) Samkashta chaturthi.. Difficult 4th (d) Govatsa and Bahula chaturthi.. Cow and calf worship
5	(a) Gaurī Pūjā (b) Nāga Panchami (Bengal)
7	Śītalā saptami (Orissa)
8	(a) Kālaṣṭami — Black 8th (b) Kṛṣṇa jayanti — Kṛṣṇa's birthday, Gokulaṣṭami, or Janmastami — Birth 8th
11	Aja-ekādaśi — Illusion 11th
13	(a) Śivarātri — Śiva's night (b) Mangala Gaurī Pūjā
15	(a) Pithori — Flour-image day (d) Pola — Cattle holiday (c) Amavāsya — New moon (d) hariyali Amavāsya

All Sundays, worship of the Sun

All Mondays — Śiva

All Tuesdays — Gaurī

All Wednesdays — Mercury

All Thursdays — Jupiter or Guru

All Fridays — Venus or Lakṣmī

All Saturdays — Saturn or Hanuman

## ŚRĀVANA

<b>Śukla-pakṣa — Waxing Fortnight</b>	
4	(a) Vināyaki chaturthi (b) Jivantika Pūjā (c) Mangala Gaurī Pūjā
5	Nāga pañcami
7	(a) Kalki jayanti (b) Śītalā Saptami (c) Bhānu Saptami
8	Durgāṣṭami
11	(a) Putradaikadaśi — Son-giving 11th (b) Jhulana or Hindola yātrarambha — Beginning of the swinging festival
13	Pradoṣa — Evening fast
15	(a) Narail pūrṇimā — Coconut full moon

	(b) Jhulana yātra samapti End of swinging festival (c) Rakṣa or Rakhi bandhana — Worship of threads (d) Śrāvāṇi Pavitraropana — Tying on lucky threads (e) Upakarma — Renewing of sacred cord
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## BHĀDRAPADA

Kṛṣṇa-pakṣa — Waning Fortnight	
4	(a) Sankashta chaturthi — Difficult 4th (d) Chautha Bharani — Recently deceased's 4th
5	(a) Bharani pañcami (b) Rakṣa Panchami (orissa) (c) Jivantika Pūjā
6	Hala-ṣaṣṭhi — Balarāma's Birthday
8	Kālaṣṭami Black 8th
11	Indraikadaśi — Indra's 11th
12	Vāmana jayanti — Vāmana's birthday
13	(a) Śivarātri — Śiva's night (b) Dvapara (or Kali) Yugādi Anniversary of the Dvapara (or Kali) Yuga
15	(c) Arandhana Snake worship (d) Visvakarma pūjā — Visvakarma worship (e) Amavāsya — New moon

## BHĀDRAPADA

Sukla-pakṣa — Waxing Fortnight	
1	Mauna vrata — Vow of silence
3	(a) Varaha jayanti — Boar birthday (b) Haritalika teej — Parvati's festival
4	VINĀYAKA CHATURTHI — Vināyaka's 4th
5	Rishi pañcami or Prayaschit — Rishi's 5th or Atonement day
6	Lalita Shashti
7	Santana saptami — Offspring 7th Gaurī Avahana — Invocation of Gaurī
8	(a) Durgaṣṭami — Durga's 8th (b) Gaurī pūjā

	(c) Durvaṣṭami — Durva grass 8th (d) Radhaṣṭami — Radha's 8th (e) Mahālakṣmi Vrata begins (16 days)
9	(a) Gaurī visarjana navami — Gaurī's valediction 9th (b) Bhagavat Saptaha Begins
11	Parivartini or Parsvaikadaśi — Turning 11th
12	Vāmana jayanti — Vāmana's birthday
13	Pradoṣa Evening fast
14	Ananta chaturdaśi — Ananta's 14th
15	(a) Uma-mahesvara Vrata (b) Pūrṇimā — Full moon (c) Mahālaya Begins

All Thursdays, worship of Lakṣmi (Bengal) on Fridays in Mahārashtra

## AŚVINA

### Mahālaya

<b>Kṛṣṇa-pakṣa — Waning Fortnight</b>	
3	Shraddha
4	Sankashta chaturthi — Difficult 4th Shraddha
5	Shraddha
8	Kālaṣṭami Black 8th
9	<a href="#">Mahālakṣmi Vrata ends</a>
11	Rāma-ekādaśi — Joy 11th
13	(a) Dhana trayodaśi — Wealth thirteenth (b) Śivarātri — Śiva's night
15	(a) Sarva Pitri Shraddha (b) Deva-pitru-karya amavāsya

## AŚVINA

<b>Śukla-pakṣa — Waxing Fortnight</b>	
1	a) Matamaha or Dauhitra Mothers fathers day (b) Durga pūjārambha or Navaratrarambha —Beginning of Durga pūjā or nine nights festival



4	Vināyaki chaturthi Vināyaka's 4th Sarasvatyavahana — Sarasvati invocation
5	Sarasvati pūjā Sarasvati worship
6	Sarasvati visarjana — Sarasvati valediction
7?	Lalita or Upaṅgalalita pūjā Lalita worship
8	Durgas̥tami Durga's 8th
9	Durga pūjā samapti End of Durga worship
10	Dasara or VIJAYA DASAMI — Victory 10th
11	Pasankusa-ekādaśi — Noose and goad 11th
13	Pradoṣa Evening fast
15	(a) Bauddha jayanti — Buddha's birthday (b) Kojagari pūrṇimā — First fruits full moon (Lakṣmi Pūjā) (c) Pūrṇimā — Full moon

## KĀRTTIKA

<b>Kṛṣṇa-pakṣa — Waning Fortnight</b>	
4	Samkashta chaturthi
8	(a) Kālas̥tami (b) Kālabhairava jayanti.. Black Bhairava's birthday
11	Utpattye kadai Creation 11th or <a href="#">Rāma Ekadaśi</a>
12	(a) Govatsa dvadaśi — Cow and calf 12th (b) Guru dvadaśi — Teacher-worshipping 12th
13	(a) Śivarātri Śiva's night (b) Dhana Teras
14	(a) Naraka or Bhuta chaturdaśi — Hell or Demon 14th
15	(a) Deepavali (b) Kali pūjā (Bengal) (c) Amavāsya — New moon (d) Arandhana Snake worship

All Sundays, worship of the Sun (Bengal).

## KĀRTTIKA

<b>Śukla-pakṣa — Waxing Fortnight</b>	
1	(a) Govardhana pūjā

	(b) Baliraja pūjā (c) Annakuta
2	(a) Bhaiya duj (b) Yama dvitiya
4	Vināyaka chaturthi
5	(a) Skanda pañcami (b) Saubhagya pañcami
6	Surya Shashti — Sun worshi
8	(a) Durgashtami Durga's 8th (b) Gopashtami Cows 8th
9	(a) Treta_ ( or Satya) Yugādi Anniversary of Treta or Satya yuga (b) Jagaddhatrl or Jagadamba (Bengal) World-mother's day (c) Kushmanda navami (Mahārashtra) Gouri 9th
10	Rasa yātrararabha Beginning of Rasa festival
11	(a) Prabodhinyekādaśi Awakening 11th (b) Bhishma panchaka begins
12	(a) Tulasi vivaha TulasT wedding (b) Chaturmāsa samapti.. End of the Four Months (c) Kalidasa Jayanti
13	Pradoṣa Evening fast
14	Vaikuntha chaturdaśi Viṣṇu's heaven 14th
15	(a) Rasa yātra samapti End of Rasa festival (b) Tripuri pūrṇimā Tripuri's full moon (c) Harihara yātra Viṣṇu-Śiva festival (d) Vyāsa pūjā Vyāsa worship (e) Itu pūjārambha Beginning of Itu worship (f) Pūrṇimā Full moon (g) Bhishma Panchaka ends

## MĀRGAŚĪRṢA

<b>Kṛṣṇa-pakṣa — Waning Fortnight</b>	
1	Asunya Sāyana
4	Sankashta chaturthi
8	(a) Kālashtami (b) Aṣṭaka First of the 8th days

10	Dattatreya jayanti
11	Saphalaikadaśi Fruitful 11th <a href="#">Vaitarani Ekadaśi</a>
13	Śivarātri Śiva's night
15	Amavāsyā — New moon

## MĀRGAŚĪRṢA

Śukla-pakṣa — Waxing Fortnight	
4	Vināyaka chaturthi
5	(a) Nāga pañcami (b) Sri Rāma-janaki vivaha
6	Champa shaṣṭhi
8	Durgāṣṭami
11	(a) Mokṣadaikadaśi /Vaikuntha Ekadaśi — Release-giving 11th (b) Gita jayanti
13	Pradoṣa Evening fast
14	(a) Pishacha mochini (b) Tripura Bhairava jayanti
15	(a) Itu pūjā samapti End of Itu worship (b) Dattatreya jayanti — Dattatreya's birthday (c) Pūrṇimā — Full moon

All Sundays, worship of the Sun (Bengal)

## PAUṢA

Kṛṣṇa-pakṣa — Waning Fortnight	
4	Sankashta chaturth
8	(a) Kālaṣṭami Black 8th (b) Aṣṭaka 2nd of the 8th days (c) Rukmini asthami
11	Shattilaikadaśi — Six sesame 11th <a href="#">Saphala Ekadaśi</a>
13	Śivarātri Śiva's night
15	Amavāsyā — New moon

## PAUṢA

Śukla-pakṣa — Waxing Fortnight	
4	Vināyaki chaturthi
6	Champa shaṣṭhi
8	Durgāṣṭami
11	Putrada Ekadaśi
13	Pradoṣa
15	Pūrṇimā — Full moon

On all Thursdays, worship of Lakṣmi (Bengal) on Fridays in Mahārashtra

## MAGHA

Kṛṣṇa-pakṣa — Waning Fortnight	
4	Sankashta chaturthi
8	(a) Kālashtarni Black 8th (b) Aṣṭaka 3rd of the 8th days
11	Vijayaikadassi Victorious 11th
13	Mahā-Śivarātri Great night of Śiva
15	(a) DvaparaYugādi (Mahārashtra) Anniversary of Dvapara yuga (b) Amavāsya — New moon (Mauni amavāsya)

## MAGHA

Śukla-pakṣa — Waxing Fortnight	
4	(a) Vināyaka chaturthi Vināyaka's 4th (b) Varada Husband (or boon) granting 4th
5	(a) Sri pañcami (Bengal) Sarasvati's 5th (b) Vasanta pañcami
6	Śītālā shaṣṭhi
7	Makari, Bhaskara or Ratha saptami — Sun's chariot 7th
8	(a) Durgāṣṭami Durga's 8th (b) Bhishmaṣṭami Bhishma's 8th
11	Jaya-ekādaśi Triumphant 11th
12	Varaha jayanti — Boar birthday
13	Pradoṣa Evening fast
14	Kali Yugādi — Anniversary of Kali yuga
15	(a) Maghi Pūrṇimā — Full moon

	(b) Teppotsava
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## PHĀLGUNA

Kṛṣṇa-pakṣa — Waning Fortnight	
1	Chandala sparsha — Touching the untouchables
4	Sankashta chaturthil.. Difficult 4th
5	Raṅga pañcami Colour throwing 5th
8	(a) Kālaṣṭami Black 8th (b) Sitalashtaml Śītalā's eight (c) Aṣṭaka 4th of the 8th days
11	Papa-mochini ekādaśi.
13	(a) sivarātri Śiva's night (b) Varum Bathing festival
15	(a) Ghantakarana pūjā.. Ghantakarana worship (b) Amavāsya New moon

## PHĀLGUNA

Śukla-pakṣa — Waxing Fortnight	
4	Vināyaka chaturthi
7	Holaṣṭaka — Holi begins
8	Durgasṭami
11	Amalaki Ekadaśi
12	Govinda dvadaśi
13	Pradoṣa
15	(a) Holi Holika-dahanam — Bonfire festival III (b) Pūrṇimā — Full moon

## CHAITRA

Kṛṣṇa-pakṣa — Waning Fortnight	
2	Chitragupta Pūjā
4	Samkashta chaturthi — Difficult 4th Aṅgaraka Chaturthi
5	Raṅga Panchami
8	Kālaṣṭami Black 8th

	Śītalāl aṣṭhami
11	Varuthinyekadas- — Equipment 11th
13	(a) Varum (see also Phil, kri. thirteenth) (b) Bathing festival. (c) Śīva-rātri — Śīva's night
15	Amavāsya — New moon

