



சஷ்டியப்த்தபூர்த்தி (மணி விழா)



PREFACE

There are as many as forty samskaras to be performed in the life journey of a man. Such rituals are aimed to protect and strengthen body and mind and add festivity and gaiety. Rites done with the chanting of mantras create benign vibration and are beneficial to all of us. In this booklet an attempt has been made to describe the rituals of Shashtiabdapoorthi celebration. Rituals described in this booklet cut across the barriers of community and are commonly performed for the welfare of the person and his family.

IMPORTANCE OF SHASHTIABDAPOORTHI

Shashti Abdam means 60 years and poorthi signifies completion. According to Indian belief the full span of a man's life is 120 years. Incidentally in Indian Astrology the aggregate period of influence of all the nine planets in the life time of an individual is 120 years. the completion of 60 years, (Shashti Abda Poorthi – sixty year completion) marks the end of the mundane existence of an individual and readies him for Vanaprastha. Stated simply, the onset of the second half is marked towards self realisation – the individual having by now met all his family obligations. Physical strength should now take the back seat, spiritual strength to the fore.

It is widely believed that the body and mind undergo transformation when an individual completes sixty years. It is time then to propitiate the Gods to protect, to guide and to lead the individuals through the second half of the journey.

The Shashtiabdapoorthi is a socio – religious function as most of the Hindu rituals indeed are. The importance of Bandhu and Mitras (Relatives and Friends) is the hall –

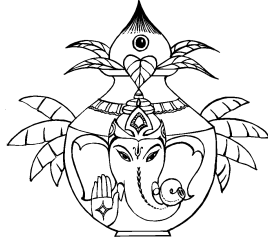
mark of Indian culture providing the necessary family and social ties to remain emotionally stable. This stability is further strengthened in this celebration.

The Indian culture emphasizes “Obligations” enshrined as Dharma to be followed and practiced by all members of the society. The underlying principle being that if each one meets his obligation as per Dharma every one’s right is protected. The Dharma covers desirable actions by an individual, bringing about a well ordered social structure under which each individual could evolve towards Godhead unhindered.

Shashtiabdapoorthi has a unique role play in the above plan as this ritual is obligatory on the progenies and relations to perform in honour of one who has lived a full life for their sake.



ஓம் த்ரியம்பகம் யஜா மஹே,
சுகந்திம் புஷ்டி வர்தனம்;
உருவாருகமிவ பந்தனான்,
ம்ரித்யோர் மோக்ஷியே மா அம்ருதாத்.



WHO COULD CELEBRATE ?

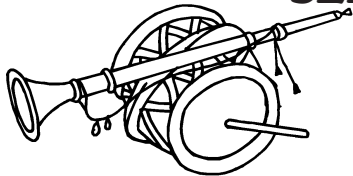
There is a general misconception that only married and living couples celebrate this function when the man completes 60. Truly, the obligation for this ritual is on the family as a social unit. Thus, this ritual is performed for a Brahamachari, Spinster, Widow or Widower. Even for ascetics the ritual is performed by the chief disciple as an obligation.

In the case of a married living couple this ritual is performed when the husband completes sixty and a wedlock is performed again for the man and woman who are but two bodies in one soul. A beautiful re-enactment takes place for the family and society to revel and regale. Having done this, no separate ritual is ordinarily performed for the woman again when she turns sixty.

The ritual is widely known as Mrithyu Dhosha

Nivarthi or Mrithyu Dhosha Shanthi. It is, therefore, applicable to everyone.

SELECTING THE DAY



Shashtiabdapoorthi falls on the birth star of a person in the month of his birth when he completes 60 years.

There are instances when in a month the birth star may come twice. In such a case the second date when the birth star falls in the month is the chosen date.

In certain cases the birth star may fall on two consecutive days. In such an event the day when at least a third of the extent of the star is seen at sunrise, that day is chosen. If less, the previous day becomes the birthday.

Those who go by the lunar calendar the paksham and the thithi of the birthday in the birth month becomes the chosen date this ritual.

The auspicious time for the main event is selected based on the planetary position of the individual and appropriate lagna is chosen like a marriage ritual for the main event.

PEEDA PARIHARAM

As a precursor to the Shashtiabdapoorthi celebration a special invocatory ritual is widely practiced at Tirukadayur Temple near Mayavaram. This is done when the individual completes fifty-nine years.

Special poojas are done at Tirukadayur temple, the hallowed place where Markandeya by the grace of Shiva achieved immortality. The poojas done here are considered as peeda pariharam and for longevity.

The poojas done in this temple are open to everyone. To one who has limited resources at affordable costs the essential homams are performed viz, Ayush Homam and Mrithunjaya Homam. Also pooja for Lord Shiva and Parvathi enshrined in this temple as Amruthagadeshwar and Balambika (Abhirami). Amrut represents the ambrosia of life. Bala means one who always remains “young”. Propitiating the Gods here brings about benefits of longevity and good health.

Pandits persuade all to perform the Peeda Pariharam in this temple as an essential part of the on coming Shashtiabdapoorthi.

Vaishnavites, could similarly visit Chakrapani Perumal Temple at Kumbakonam and perform Ayush Homam when one completes fifty nine.

THE DAY BEFORE THE EVENT

PUNYAJANA THIRTHA POOJA

Lord Ganesh is invoked in turmeric paste and invocation of Varuna is done in the Kalasam. This water is sprinkled to purify the place and the individuals present.

UDAKASHANTHI

Chanting of Vedas with correct intonation is undertaken to create the necessary aerobic vibrations to clear the atmosphere of negative energies and forces.

GANAPATHY HOMAM

Chanting the Moola Mantra of Ganesh, this homam is performed. Ganapathi, the remover of obstacles blesses and all impediments are kept away.



NAANDI DEVATA POOJA

There are several presiding deities for such auspicious function called the Naandi Devatas. These devatas are propitiated.

NAVAGRAHA HOMAM

This is performed by chanting the Nava Graha Gayatri to propitiate the nine astral planets that rule over man's destinies.

NANDHI SHRARDH

Man shall not forget his Pitru Devatas who had given one the gift of one's body to work out the Karma to evolve. No one would be happier than forefathers to be present for the function to see their progeny complete sixty. In this ritual however instead of the "Till Seeds", "coloured Rice" is used. And unlike the regular Shradh Ceremony, the order of the Pitru Devatas are reversed. In this ritual one starts with the great grand sire first, followed by the grand sire and the father. This is a ceremony to honour the Pitru Devatas and the hierarchy is maintained.

Three individuals are requested to take the role of the Pitru Devatas on whom Aavahanam of the Pitru Devatas are done. Symbolically this ritual represents the presence of the Pitru Devatas to shower benediction on the individual. Suitable gifts of dhoti, plantain and rice with coins are made and Aasheerwad is sought by the individual.

If the individual's father is living this pooja is not ordinarily performed. In that case the Pitru Devata is present in physical form ready to bless, wholeheartedly. In some instances the father completes this ritual to invoke the blessings of the forefathers.

EKADASA RUDRA PARAYANA

Rudram is chanted eleven times. And Chamakam is chanted once.

Chamakam was chanted by Dakshan with a goat's head in praise of Lord Shiva who gave him his life back. The symbolism is perhaps that all of us have a tendency to deride the universal truth and only when the ego is gone does one realize the truth. Chamakam ends with the syllable May representing the bleat of a goat, who has no great intellect to boast of, unlike man and yet Dakshan became a realized soul only in this form, having won over his ego

which is a product of the intellect.

This Parayanam brings the benediction of Rudra for longevity and prosperity.

ON THE PREVIOUS EVENING

Eleven Kalasams are made with threads running around it to represent the nerves in the body. With water filled and gold and precious stones put in inside and suitably scented a coconut is placed on the mouth on a sheaf of mango leaves.

Eight of these Kalasams to represent the eight directional devatas. One Kalasam to represent, Ashta Vidyeswar the God who gives the eight types of Knowledge. Two Kalasams represents Sakthi and Shiva.

After Kalasa Pooja, Mruthyunjay Homam is performed. The Moola Mantra chanted during this Homam is as below:

**Aum hum mrum
Mrdhodh Bhava**

**Mrudha Sanjeevini
Udhbhava Udhbhava
Mrutunjayaya hum bhat**

This is followed by chanting of

**Mrutunjayaya Mantra Parayana
Indrakshi
Shiva Kavacham
Nava Graha Stotram**

The day concludes by chanting of Vishnu Sahasranamam and offering of all one's endeavours to Lord Narayana as below:

**Kaayena Vaacha Mansendriairva
Budhyathmanva Prakritheha Swabhaavaath
Karomi Yadyath Sakalam Parammay
Sriman Narayanayethi Samarpayami**

For it is Narayana who liberates one from the bondage of life death by accepting one's karma in full when offered to Him with faith and love.

The ritual on this day belongs to the individual whose Shashtiabdapoorthi is being performed, just before the portals of the new day opens to beckon one for a new life.

THE DAY OF THE FUNCTION

Naadaswaram is played. Festoons of Mango leaves and screw pipe petals are hung. Full grown plantain leaves decorate the gate posts. It is festive mood now. The younger members of the family join together to perform this day's ritual.



KALASAM

The Kalasams of the previous day left undisturbed are brought to focus once again. Pooja are performed to the Devatas enshrined in the Kalasam. Agni, the eternal witness of our action, is propitiated. Poornaahoothi is offered.

The couple or individual whose Shashtiabdapoorthi is being performed seek the blessings of the Gods for good health, longevity and prosperity and happiness of their progenies and family. And of course for Lakashemam too.

MANGALA SNANAM

The couple or individual is seated facing east. Holding a sieve containing gold and precious stones, the family members empty the water from the Kalasam for the ritual bath, cooling as it were the mind and body of the individual or the couple.

MANGALYA DHARANAM

Wearing new clothes presented by the family members, the couple is seated and a new Mangalyam is tied by the man on his wife who has travelled with him through thick and thin of life. Indeed a new life blossoms. The Mangala Sutra now contains only two beads of gold on either side unlike the earlier wedding when four beads adorned; two each oneither side of the Mangalyam.

✦ As per tradition the Koorai Saree and Mangalyam are gifted by the lady's brother to express continued sibling support.

The symbolism is that during Grahastashramam the wife fulfilled the four fold support viz. of a mother,

friend, minister and dassi. With Vanaprastha, only the first two viz. the role of a mother and friend to the man is necessary. The man acknowledges this change by this ritual to lead a different type of life from now on.

DHAMBATHI POOJA

The new couple now requests a couple elder to them to be seated in a decorated seat and perform Pooja seeking, long and peaceful life. Thus venerating Senior Citizens is made part of everyday life and rituals.

PAADA POOJA

The family members perform Paada Pooja for the couple and seek refuge in them at their feet, symbolizing supplication to them to give advice to lead their lives in Dharma, enriched by the experience of the older generation.

ASHEERVADAM

After seeking the blessings themselves and completion of Paada Pooja the revered couple are now ready to

receive the family members and generously bless them by sprinkling coloured rice (akshathai) with their heart full of joy and dedicate the full benefit of the ritual to the family members.

ARATHI

Mangala Arathi is taken for the couple to ward off evil eyes. Also to symbolize that in human form the divine has descended to bless us as Shiva and Sakthi and as Narayana and Lakshmi Devi.

IN CASE THE RITUAL IS MISSED....

Saivites should visit the temple at Tirukadayur near Mayavaram and Vaishnavites should visit Chakrapani Perumal Temple at Kumbakonam and perform the rituals with Homams as prescribed at the next birthday to fulfill the religious obligations.

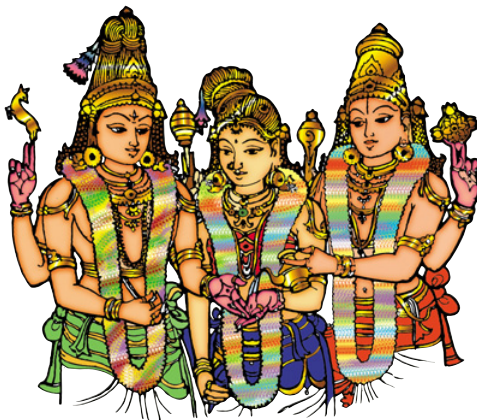
MORE CELEBRATIONS

The rituals for successful healthy living as a senior citizen are continued. When one attains the age of 70,

Bhimarata Santh is performed. When an individual turns 80, Sathabishekam is performed. The individual is venerated as an embodiment of the divine at this age as he has seen thousand full moons. He is conferred the title Sahasra Chandra Darishi.

CONCLUSION

In the Hindu culture, ageing is not to be shunned. Ageing is accepted as an active part of living. The senior citizens provide guidance and profound wisdom through their experience for the younger generation to assimilate and benefit. Elders just don't add years to life; but add Life to years.



ருன்றி.

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