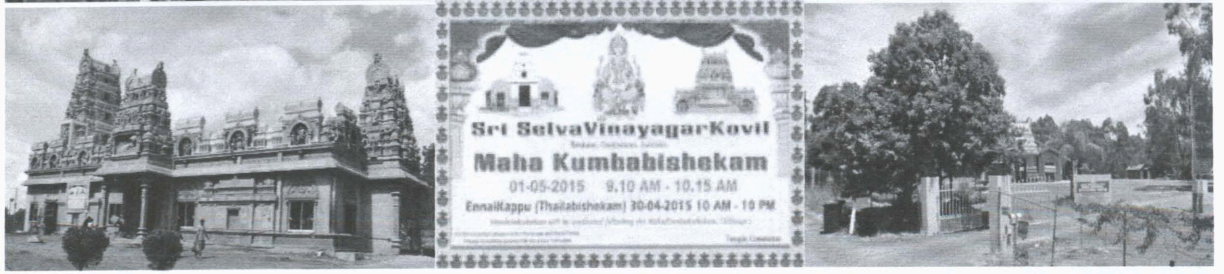
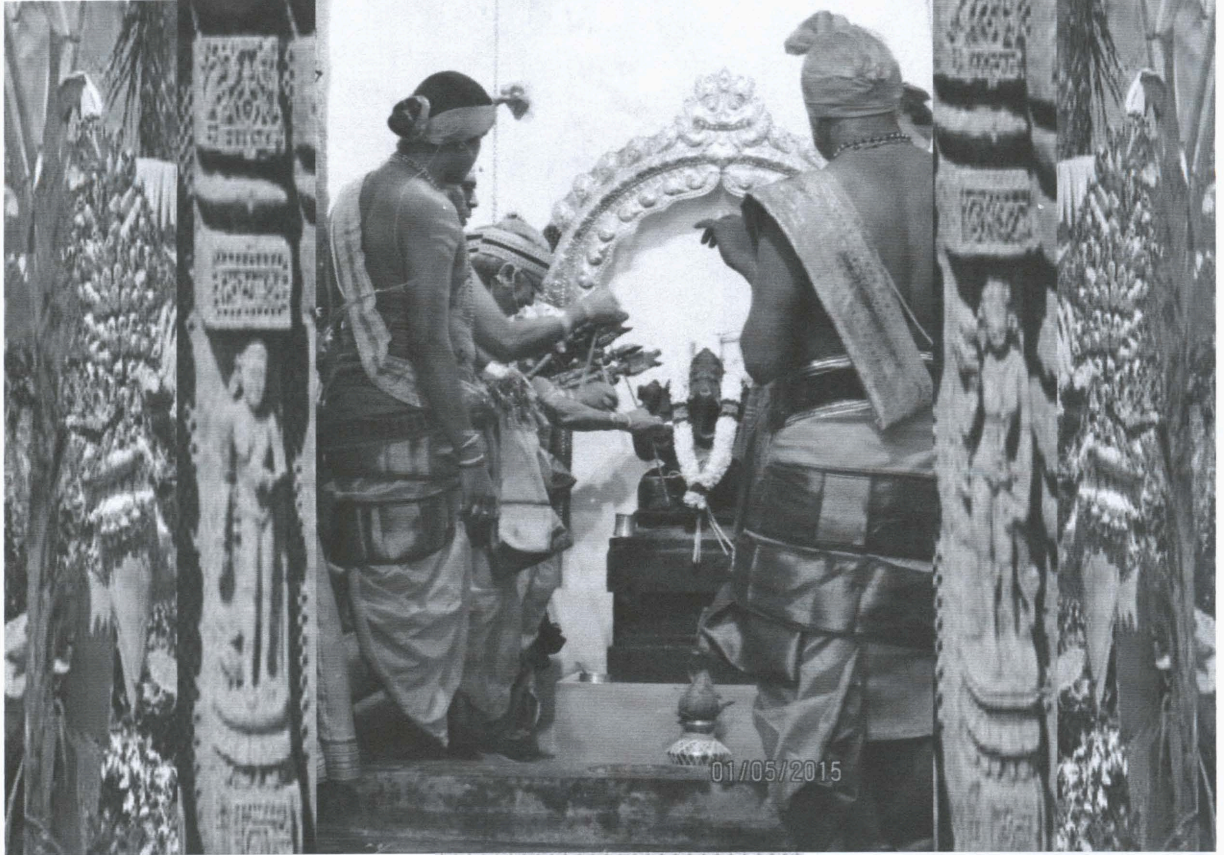
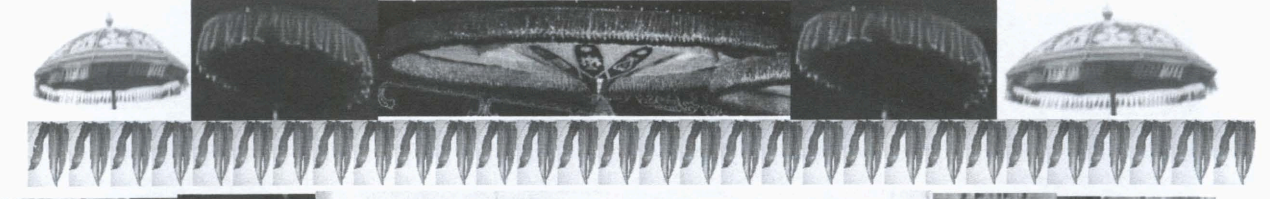


Path to Dharma

தர்ம நெறி (Dharma Neri)

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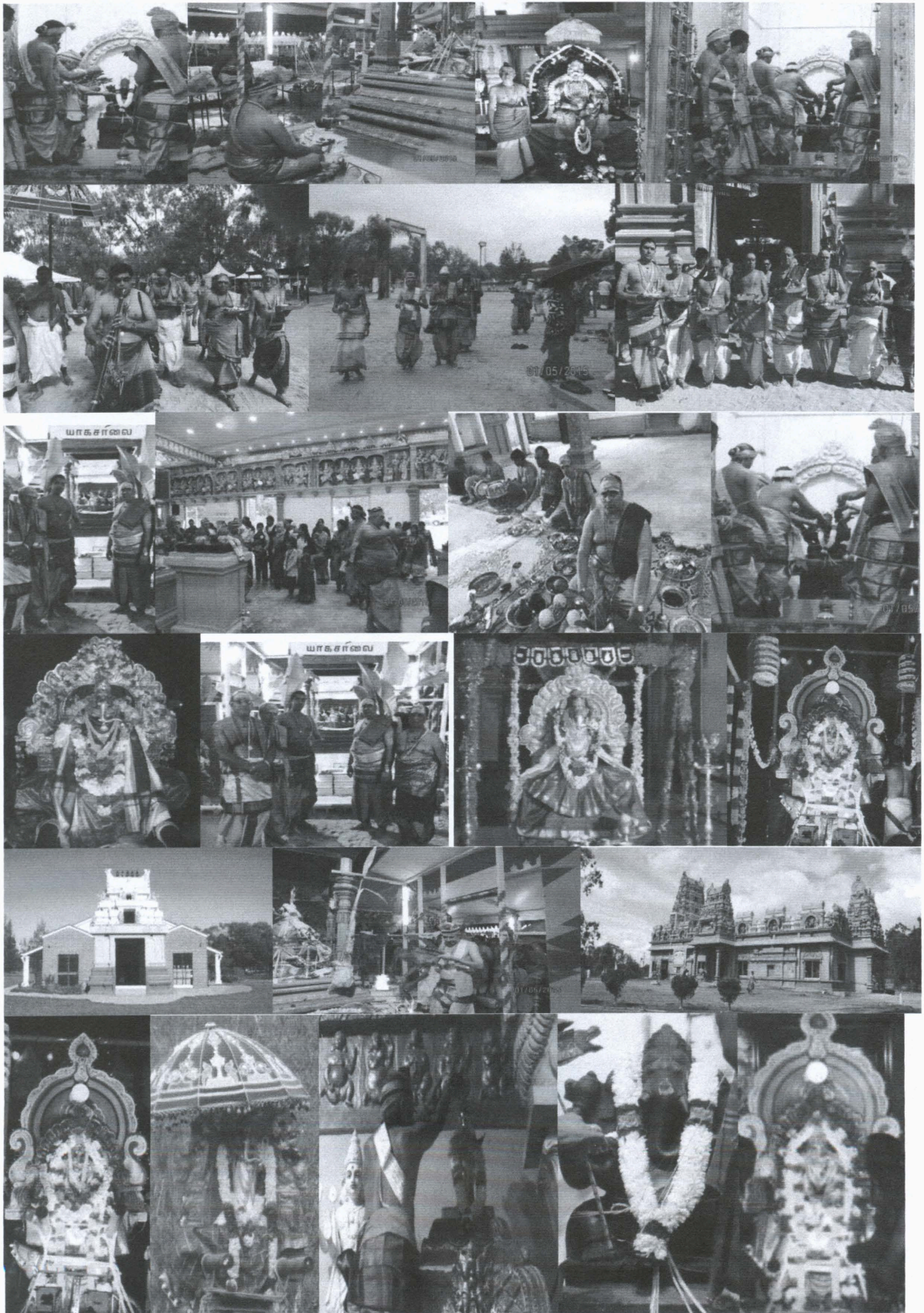


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June

2015

ஜூன்(சித்திரை/வைகாசி)



Sri Selva Vinayaka temple, Brisbane,Australia-Kumbabisheka ceremony-01-05-2015



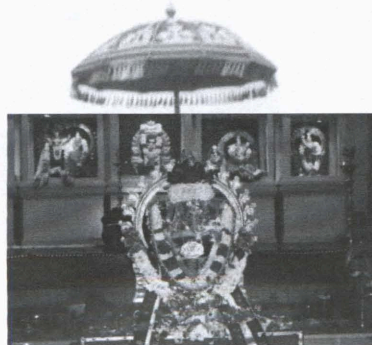
Sri Selva Vinayaka temple, Brisbane, Australia

Editorial.

The monthly publication 'Path to Dharma', by Kshethra Vinayaka Temple, Sri Munneswaram, Chilaw, Sri Lanka, is presenting the 90th number this month. The main imperative endeavor of this monthly magazine is to pass on the vision associated to Hindu dharma basically by replies to the issues put forward by the anxious readers. The comments and analysis of the readers are appreciated.

B.S. ivaramakrishnaSarma,

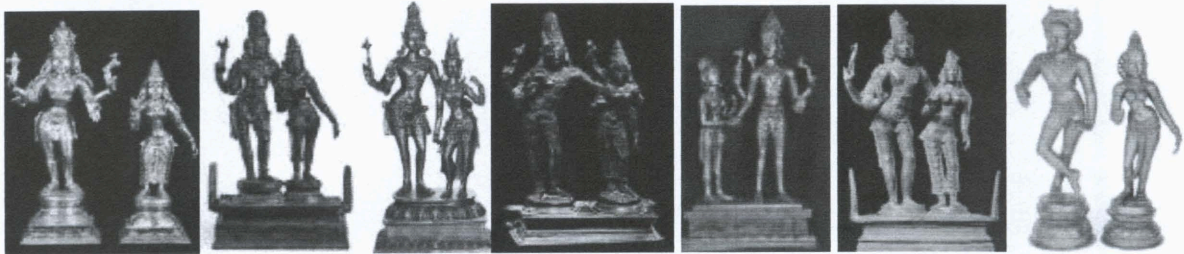
Kshethra Vinayaka Temple, Sri Munneswaram, Chilaw, Sri Lanka. June, 2015





Pradosha Pooja

Shiva Pradosham (Pradosha pooja) is one of the most holy and vital among the poojas performed by the devotees to the Graceful Siva. In Shukla Paksha (15 moon days from new moon to full moon) and Krishna Paksha (15 moon days from full moon to new moon) the evening of the Trayodasi (thirteenth moon day) between 4.30 pm to 6.00 p.m. is called Pradosham. It comes once in fifteen moon days. Pradosha time is to pray Lord Siva and invoke His Blessings. Praying in this time will free us from sins and gives Moksha (hence the name Pradosha). During Pradosha time, a special type of circumnutating called "Somasutra Pradakshinam.



Pradosha,(Pradosh/Shiva Pradosham), is a bimonthly religious ritual practiced or observed on the thirteenth day of every fortnight that is on Triyodashi thithi, in Hindu temples. The auspicious 3 hour period, 1.5 hours before and after the sunset is one of the optimum duration for worship of Lord Siva. The observation of fast(vow) carried out throughout the period is called "Pradosha vrata".

Normally the devotees bear 'rudraksha', while chanting religious hymns, performing 'abisheka' and archana with Bilva(wilva) leaves. At the end of the ceremony Fragrance, Deepa & Naivaedyaas (Food offerings) are carried out by the devotees to Lord Shiva.



According to puranic evidences it is believed that during Pradosha period all the universal beings and Gods come down to earth and attend the worship.

The significance of observing Pradosha vrata is described in *Pradosha Mahatmyam* of *Shiva Purana* and thus devotees observe Pradosha Pooja with elevated sacredness. Pradosha indicates the meeting of the Sun and the Moon in a horizontal line during their movement on their Axis.

Shani Pradosha, the pradosha falling on a Saturday corresponding to planet saturn is considered significant among other *pradosham*.

According to Hindu purans, Lord Siva swallowed the poison on a Saturday and this is called Sani Pradosh or Shani Pradosha. Sani Pradosham is classified into

1. Uthama Shani Pradhosham,
2. Mathima Sani Pradhosham, and
3. Athama Sani Pradhosham.

Uthama Sani Pradhosha is the Sani Pradhosham that falls during the Tamil month of Chithirai, Vaigasi, Aypasi and Karthigai during the waxing period. Mathima Sani Pradhosham occurs during the Tamil month of Chithirai, Vaigasi, Aypasi and Karthigai during waning period. All other Shani Pradhoshams come under this category **Athama Shani Pradhosha**.



Maha Pradhosham

Maha Pradhosha is a annual ritual which falls during February – March (Magha/ Kumbha in Sanskrit, and Maasi in Tamil) before Maha Sivarathri. Pradosham is carried out regularly in all Siva Temples.

History of Shiva Pradosham Vrat

According to Hindu Puranas, the gods (Devas) and the demons (Asuras) were stirring the milky ocean to extract amritam (nectar), with Vasuki (the serpent king) as a rope. As Vasuki underwent severe scratches due to the churning, Vasuki emitted a powerful poison which was capable of destroying the entire world. The powerless celestials pleaded Lord Siva to save them. Consecutively, Lord Shiva swallowed the poison to save them. Goddess Parvati stopped the poison in Lord's throat and it is believed that his throat turned to blue. As a result of this, Lord Siva came to be known as **Thiruneelakandan or Neelakandan** (the one with Blue Throat).

The myth

Indra, the King of Devas (gods), once, whilst riding on his white elephant 'Airavatha, met Sage Durwasa. Sage Durwasa offered him a unique garland given to him by the Lord Siva. Indra accepted the garland, placing it on the trunk of the elephant as a test to prove that he was not an egocentric god. The elephant, knowing that Indra had no control over his own ego, threw the garland to the ground. This enraged the sage as the garland was a dwelling of Sri (fortune) and was to be treated as prasada. Durwasa cursed Indra and all devas to be bereft of all strength, energy, and fortune.



In battles that followed this event, the Devas were defeated and Asuras (demons) led by King Bali gained control of the entire universe. Later, Devas requisited help from God Vishnu. Vishnu advised them to treat asuras in a tactful manner. Devas formed an alliance with asuras to jointly churn the ocean for the nectar of immortality and to divide up the nectar among them. However, Lord Vishnu informed Devas that He would arrange that they alone obtain the nectar.

In the churning procedure of the Ocean of Milk, Mount Mandhara was made use of the churning rod, and the Vasuki the king of snakes, the churning rope. The demons demanded to hold the head of the serpent, the Vasuki, while the gods taking advice from Vishnu, agreed to hold its tail. As a result the demons were poisoned by vicious fumes emitted by Vasuki. In spite of this, the gods and demons pulled back and forth on the snake's body alternately, causing the mountain to rotate, which in turn churned the ocean. However, once the mountain was placed on the ocean, it began to sink. Vishnu, in the form of a turtle Kurma, came to their rescue and supported the mountain on his back. This incident mentioned in Athrva Veda (iv,5-1-17) Agni purana and other puranas. This event of the swallowing Halahal emitted from the mouth of the serpent king, the Vasuki by Lord Siva is mentioned in several Thevarams and in ancient Tamil literature works like Silapathikaram, Manimekalai etc.

The Samudra Manthan (Churning of the Ocean of Milk) procedure, discharged a large number of items from the ocean of milk. One product was the lethal poison known as Halahal emitted from the mouth of the serpent king, the Vasuki as the demons and gods churned. This incident frightened the gods and demons, as the poison was so powerful that it could wipe out all of creation. Instantaneously the gods came up to Lord Siva for protection. Siva consumed the poison in an act to protect the universe, and His consort Parwati pressed her hand on Siva's throat to save the universe. Due to this the color of neck of Siva turned blue. For this reason, Lord Shiva is also called Neelakanta. All types of precious herbs were cast into the ocean and fourteen kinds of 'Ratnas' (gems) were produced from the ocean and were divided between asuras and gods. Three groups of Goddesses which emerged from the ocean;

- i. Lakshmi, the Goddess of Fortune and Wealth - who accepted Vishnu as Her consort.
- ii. Apsaras, various divine nymphs like Rambha, Menaka, Punjisthaala etc. - chose the demigods as their companions
- iii. Varuni (Sura) goddess and creator of alcohol - taken - somewhat reluctantly accepted the demons.

Likewise, three types of supernatural animals appeared;

- i. Kamadhenu (kāmadhuk /Surabhi), the wish-granting divine cow - taken by Vishnu, and given to sages so ghee from her milk could be used in sacrifices.
- ii. Airawata (white elephant), and several other elephants, taken by Indra, leader of the devas.
- iii. Uchhaishrawas, the divine 7-headed horse - given to the demons.

There were three valuables;

- i. Kaustubha, the most valuable jewel in the world, worn by lord Vishnu.
- ii. Parijat, the divine flowering tree with blossoms that never fade or wilt - taken to Indraloka by the devas.
- iii. Sharanga, A powerful bow - symbolic of the demon's belligerence.

furthermore the following items were formed;

- i. Chandra, the moon which adorned Shiva's head
- ii. Dhanvantari, the doctor of the gods with Amrita the nectar of immortality. (At times, considered as two different Ratnas)
- iii. Halahala, the poison swallowed by Siva

This list varies from Purana to Purana and is also slightly different in the epics, the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Lists are completed by adding the following Ratnas:

- i. Shanka Vishnu's conch
- ii. Jyestha - the goddess of misfortune
- iii. the umbrella taken by Varuna
- iv. the earrings given to Aditi, by her son Indra
- v. Kalpaka vriksha plant
- vi. Nidra (sloth)



Lastly, Dhanvantari, the heavenly physician, emerged with a pot containing Amrita, the heavenly nectar of immortality. Fierce fighting ensued between Devas and Asuras for the nectar. To protect the nectar from Asuras, the divine Garuda took the pot, and flew away from the battle-scene. While Garuda was in his flight over planet Earth, it is believed that four drops of nectar fell at four places - Pravag (Allahabad), Haridwar, Ujjain and Nasik. This legend is the basis for the belief that these places acquired a certain mystical power and spirituality.

A Kumbamela is celebrated at the four places every twelve years for this reason. People believe that after bathing there during the Kumbha mela, one can get the primeval heaven and moksha (Sanskrit:mokṣha). devas appealed to Vishnu, who then took the form of Mohini and as a beautiful and enchanting damsel, Mohini distracted the asuras, took the amrita, and distributed it among the Devas, who drank it.

Asura Rahu and Kethu, disguised himself as a deva and drank some nectar. Due to their luminous nature, the sun god Surya and the moon god Chandra noticed the switching of sides. They informed Mohini. But before the nectar could pass his throat, Mohini cut off his head with her divine discus, the Sudharhana Chakra. Although the nectar had gone down his throat he did not die. From that day, his head was called Rahu and body was called Kethu. Later Rahu and Ketu became planets. The story ends with the rejuvenated Devas defeating the asuras.

According to Hindu cosmology, the **Ocean of milk** is the 5th from the center of the seven oceans that surround loka (directional space) and separate it from aloka (non-directional space). It surrounds the continent known as Krauncha. With reference to Hindu mythology the devas (gods) and asuras, (demons) worked together at one time to churn the ocean to obtain 'Amirta (the nectar of immortal life).

The Churning of the Cosmic Ocean (the Milky Way) is told in several ancient texts, notably in the Vamiki Ramayana (Canto 45) and in the Mahabharata

It is said that on the Trayodhasi (thirteenth moon day) day, the gods and demons realized that they had committed a sin of not praying the God and prayed for forgiveness. Lord Shiva Sankar forgave them and danced in between the horns of the Nandhi's (Celestial Bull) forehead.

This time is called Pradhosham. It is believed that if anybody prays Lord Shiva in that time, he fulfills their wishes and gives them mukthi.

Etymology of Pradosha - Pradosha is the son of Kalpa and Dhosha. He had two brothers namely Nishita and Vyustha. The three names mean beginning, middle and end of night. The days from new moon day to full moon day is called "Sukla Paksha" and days from a full moon day to new moon day is called "Krishna paksha".

During each month and during every *paksha*, the point of time when *triyodashi* (13th day of the fortnight) meets the end of *dwadasi* (12th day of fortnight) is called Pradosha. During Pradosha, Nandi (the sacred bull of Siva) in all the Siva temples is also worshipped. In the evening idol of Shiva with Parvathi in a seated pose on Nandi is taken in a procession clockwise (festival) in the temple complex.

In many puranic narrations, the Devas (celestial deities) approached Siva in the most propitious moments of Pradosha to get relief from Asurars, Danavas and Daityas. They ran around mount Kailasha, Siva's abode hitherto on a *triyodashi* evening and was aided by Nandi, Shiva's sacred bull. Shiva aided them in killing the *asuras* - the practise of worshipping Shiva on *triyodashi* along with Nandi emerged and continues in Shiva temples. Pradosha vratha" (vow) is performed on Pradosha with sacred ritual steps following the tradition.

According to legend, there was a ruler of Ujjain called Chandrasen, who was a pious devotee of Siva and worshipped him all the time. He was blessed with a celestial gem which could create miracles. Rivals of Ujjain, king Ripudaman and king Singhaditya of the neighboring kingdoms decided to attack Ujjain and take over the treasure. The king Chandrasena unaware of the impending war was worshipping Shiva. He was joined by a farmer's boy named Shrikhar, who was walking on the grounds of the palace and heard the king chant the Shiva's name. However, the guards removed him by force and sent him to the outskirts of the city near the river Kshipra.

Shrikhar continued to pray and the news spread to a priest named Vridhi. He was shocked to hear this and upon the urgent pleas of his sons, he started to pray Shiva inside the river Kshipra. The enemy kings chose to attack and it happened to be a Saturday and Triyodashi. With the help of the powerful demon Dushan, who was blessed by Brahma to be invisible, they plundered the city and attacked all the devotees of Shiva.

Upon hearing the pleas of his helpless devotees, Shiva appeared in his Mahakal (form of light) and destroyed the enemies of king Chandrasen. Upon the request of his devotees Shrikhar and Vridhi, Shiva agreed to reside in the city and become the chief deity of the kingdom. From that day on, Shiva resided in his light form as Mahakal in a Lingam that was formed on its own from the powers of the Shiva and his consort, Parwati. It is believed that people worshipping Siva on a **Shani Pradosha** would be free from the fear of death and diseases. They would also be granted worldly treasures.

The Significance of Pradosham

The term "Pradosham" means to the holy period of time of sundown on the 13th lunar day, or "trayodasi tithi." Trayodasi occurs twice each lunar month, once in the waxing phase and once in the waning phase of the moon, so Pradosha Puja is performed twice each month in the Temple.

The word "pradosham" itself refers the removal of any kind of subtle or energetic uncleanness. Religious leaders have shown that these impurities, which are gathered owing to our events of actions and attitudes in prior births, are the cause of our suffering and confusion. They have shown the paths that by undertaking special types of pujas on Trayodasi, these impurities can be washed away.

When we wash away these karmic impurities, we will experience inner peace, radiant health, and spiritual delight. When these subtle impurities are removed away, our true divine character will begin to come into sight. Thereby qualities like kindness, compassion, honesty, and the desire to give selfless service to others.

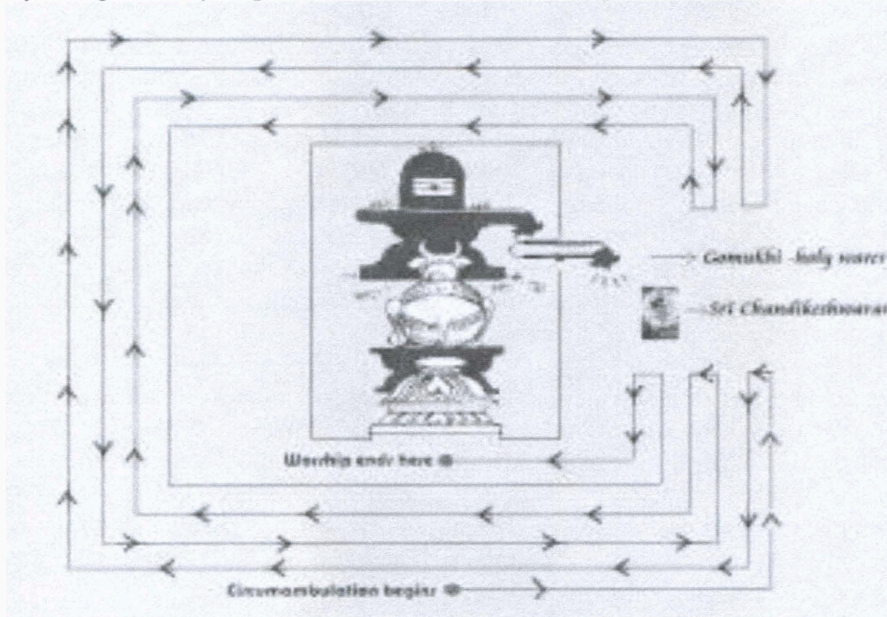
Significance of Worshipping a Lapis Siva Lingam

The pujas endorsed by the ancient scripts of rituals focus on Lord Siva, who removes all types of negative energy or impure patterns. Pujas are performed in several ways like chanting religious hymns given in Vedas, abisheks, aradana, etc. Normally in performing puja on Pradhosham day Sri Rudram, and Chamakam hymns are chanted by the performing priests.

Milk	Gives Long Life
Ghee	Gives Moksha state
Curd	Gives Good Children
Honey	Gives Melodious Voice
Rice Powder	Frees from Debts
Sugar Cane Juice	Gives good health and removes enmity
Pancha-amrutham	Gives Wealth
Lime Juice	Removes fear of Death
Tender Coconut	Gives enjoyment and full satisfaction in life
Cooked Rice	Gives Majestic life
Sandal	Gives Lakshmi's grace
Sugar	Removes enmity

Somasutra pradakshinam during shiva pradosham

During the Pradhosham time Somasutra pradakshinam is the suggested way of circumambulating Sivalingam. In some of the temples this is followed always. A point to note here is that the Gomukhi is never crossed. Gomukhi is the place where the water after anointing (abhisheka tirtham) would be flowing northwards out. By doing this way of pradakshinam one does not step over this holy water.



SomaSutra Pradikshinam

“vrusham chandam vrusham saiva soma sutram punavrusham
chandam cha soma sutram cha punachandam punavrusham”

First saluting the Rishabha devar (Holy Bull) go anti-clockwise and salute chandishwar (not crossing the gomukhi). Now return in the clockwise manner salute Rishabham and continue clockwise till the Gomukhi (not cross it again). Then return in anti-clockwise direction salute the Rishabham again and proceed towards chandishar. From there return back clockwise without worshipping Rishabham and reach the gomukhi. Finally

return back anti-clockwise from there to salute Rishabham and continue to chandishwar and return back to Rishabham and worship the shiva lingam (at the altar) by viewing through the space between the two horns of the Holy bull. This is one pradakshinam. Three such times pradakshinam to be done. If you carefully observe the curve traced by doing the pradakshinam is very similar to the periphery of the crescent. Hence this way of circumambulating is called SomaSutra Pradikshinam.

Siva Pradosham kalam

Everyday between 5.30 to 6.00 pm in the evening is called Dina Pradosham. Every thirteenth day of a Paksha (15-day cycle, making it two Pakshas every month – Krishna Paksha and Shukla Paksha) is called Maha Pradosham. The time between 5.30 to 6.30 pm in the evening is called Pradosham (Dina Pradosham). During the Pradosha period, it is significant to worship Lord Shiva, as He performs the Holy Dance in Kailashparvatam. (Mount Kailash) , all Devatas assemble there to watch this holy event, offer their Prayers to HIM. Thinking and meditating during Pradosha Kalam is considered most sacred by Hindus and helps derive benefits of having worshipped all Devatas at one go.



Pradosham is a day of importance for Shiva and is an opportunity given to mankind to remove negative karma. Praying to Lord Shiva sincerely during this auspicious time is believed to free a person from his sins; hence the name Pradosha has an inner meaning. 'Pra' means remover 'Dosha' means inauspicious things or Karma.

There are many auspicious Pradosham such as Shani Pradosham (Pradosham that occurs on Saturday) and Somavara Pradosham (Pradosham that occurs on Monday). Saturn pradosham and Somavara Pradosham are also called Maha Pradosham.

Saturn Pradosham implies:

Saturn is one of the most powerful Planets. He moves slowly through the zodiacs. He remains in each zodiac for a period of 2 1/2 years, so His influence on that particular zodiac or house is felt very intense. The grace of Saturn can change the destiny of a person. He can make a pauper into a king and vice versa. Saturday is the day ruled by Saturn and He is another form of Siva. When Pradosham falls on a Saturday which is quite rare, helps a person to remove his karma that is caused by the negative infliction of planets and at the same time bestows a person with the grace of Lord Saturn and Lord Siva.

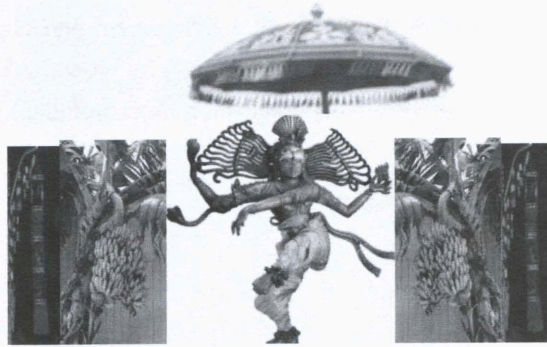
Somavara Pradosham:

One of the names of Lord Shiva is Soma, Lord Someshwara means the one who adores the Crescent Moon (the Soma) on His matted hair. Soma means – Saha Uma (Goddess Parvathi). Somavara (Monday) is not only very auspicious for Lord Shiva but for Goddess Parvathi too. Hence offering poojas on all Monday Pradosham not only helps a person to gain abundant blessings of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvathi but also enables a person to negate the malefic effects caused by Chandra Dosha (afflicted or debilitated Moon).

Another fierce form of Shiva is Rudra. The grace of Rudra can eliminate disease, enemies and destroy negative force or energy or karma within a person and from outside elements. In order to obtain the blessings of Rudra the rituals done on a Saturday Pradosham or Monday Pradosham is said to be extremely auspicious.

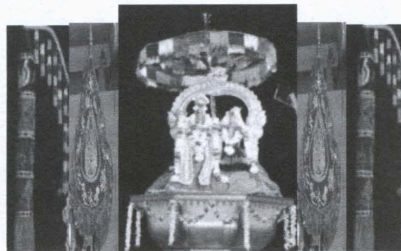
Time to observe Pradosham Vrat

A person's deadly enemy is his tongue which is the cause of all miseries and the mind which does not allow a person to think of Shiva. So by observing a fast on Pradosham both body and mind comes under control and the thought of divine enters into the consciousness which helps a person to remove the negative karma and make him pure.



There is an important way to worship Lord Shiva (circumbulating the Prahara or Corridor) called Soma Sutra Pradakshina. When a person follows some small method of worship thus would melt the heart of Shiva who is always finding a way to bless His devotee.

The Bhagavata Purana, the Mahabharata and the Vishnu Purana narrate the well-celebrated episodes of Hindu mythological event, Samudra Manthan or Churning of the Ocean of Milk.



What is the significance in using of camphor as an abhisheka substance in temples?

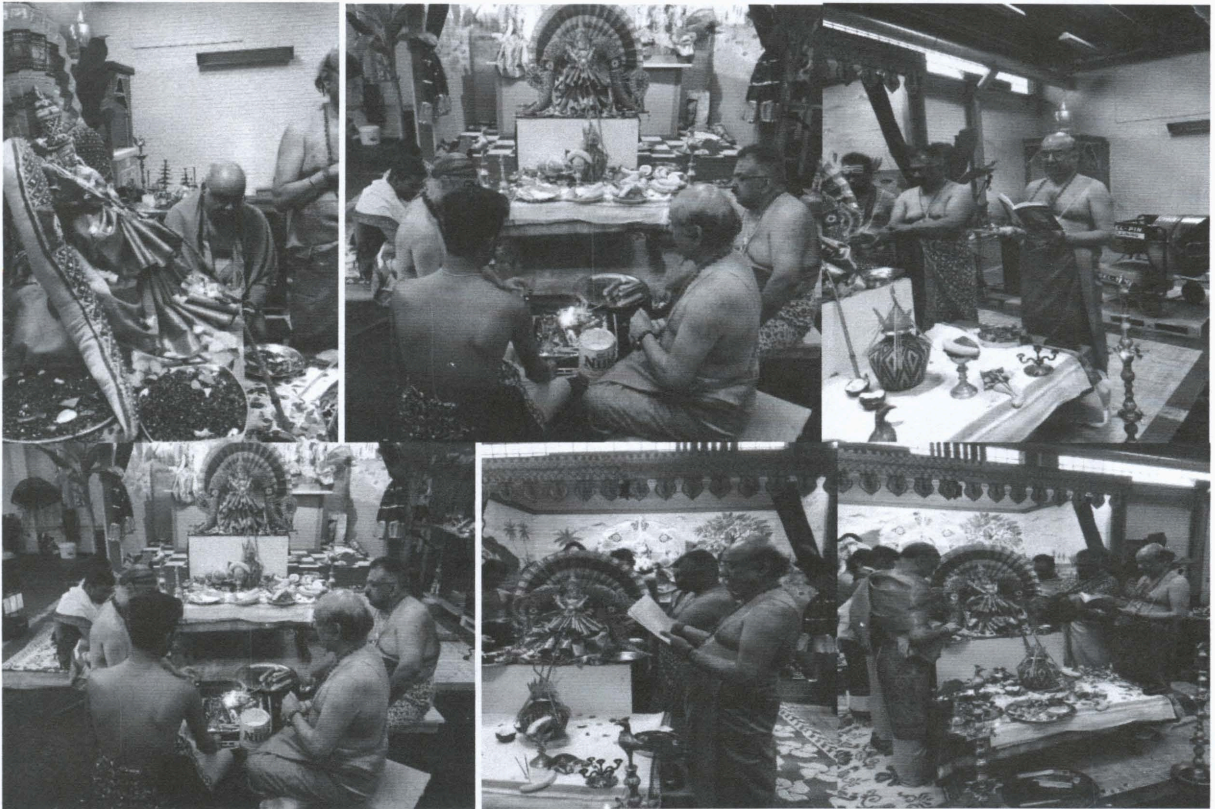
Camphor is a white crystalline substance, obtained from the tree *C. camphora*. Camphor has been used for many centuries as a medicine and as a culinary spice, a component of incense. It is also an insect repellent. It is used as a substance in conch (sangu) filled with water for abhisheka which is later given to the devotees as theertha to drink.

Cinnamomum camphora (camphor tree, camphorwood or camphor laurel) is a large evergreen tree that grows up to 20–30 m (66–98 ft) tall. The leaves have a glossy, waxy appearance and smell of camphor when crushed. In spring, it produces bright green foliage with masses of small white flowers. It produces clusters of black, berry-like fruit around 1 cm (0.39 in) in diameter. Its pale bark is very rough and fissured vertically.

Camphor laurel contains volatile chemical compounds in all plant parts, and the wood and leaves are steam distilled for the essential oils. Camphor laurel has six different chemical variants called chemotypes, which are camphor, linalool, 1,8-cineole, nerolidol, safrole, and borneol.

The chemical variants (or chemotypes) seem dependent upon the country of origin of the tree. In India and Sri Lanka, the high camphor variety/chemotype remains dominant. *C. camphora* grown in Madagascar, is high in 1,8 cineole. The essential oil from the Madagascar trees is commercially known as *ravintsara*.

The production of camphor, in a solid, waxy form, primitive stills were set up in the mountainous areas in which the tree is usually found. The wood was chipped; these chips were steamed in a retort, allowing the camphor to crystallize on the inside of a crystallization box, after the vapour had passed through a cooling chamber. It was then scraped off and packed out to government-run factories for processing and sale.



Denmark, aabenraa, Sri Nagabushani amman temple, 5th year Eaka dhina Laksharchana

