

FESTIVALS TO KNOW

Sra:vana (30th July to 27th August) *A:vani* (17th August to 16th September)

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The 5th month of the Vedic lunar calendar is called '*Sra:vanam*', and as per the solar calendar, is called '*A:vani*'. This month is considered as an auspicious time for performing religious ceremonies or social functions like marriages, house warmings, etc. There are more number of festivals and celebrations in this month than in any other time in the whole year. The following calendar lists all of the major festivals for this month and in order to include all of *A:vani*, continues into September, as well.

Go:da: De:vi Thiru Nakshathram - (August 1st)

This is a very holy day, when the star *Pu:rva Pha:lguni* is in ascension, it marks the birthday of *Go:da De:vi* or *A:nda:I*, an incarnation of the Divine Mother Earth, who became the foster daughter of the great *Vishnuchiththa* or *Periya:Iw:ar* of *Sri:villipuththu:r* in Tamil Nadu. Through Her penance, she awakened and reminded the Lord *Rangana:ttha* of our Eternal connection with Him, and also out of her love for Him, became His Bride. Her beautiful 30 verses called *Thiruppa:vai* are recited by devotees every day, and become especially important during the month long *Dhanurmasam* celebrations that takes place during the months of December and January.

Let us pray to Mother *A:nda:I* with the following invocation:

*karkate: pu:rva phalgunya:m
thulasi: ka:nano:dbhava:m |
pa:ndye: vishwambhara:m go:da:m
vande: sri:ranga na:yaki:m ||*

Badari Narayana Jayanthi- (Aug 3rd)

The date when the star '*hashta*' is in ascent during this month marks the appearance day of *Badari: Na:ra:yana*, the Lord who stays as a mountain in the Holy *Hima:layas*. Here the Lord

incarnated as the Guru, *Na:ra:yana*, and His disciple, *Nara*, to show us by example about the importance of the Guru, and how a student and Guru should be. He also imparted the greatest of all *Manthras*, the *Ashta:kshari Manthra*, for the benefit of all souls to contemplate upon the nature of the Lord, the nature of the Soul, and the eternal bond of love that connects us to Him. Here is His invocational verse:
*karkate: hashta nakshathre:
badari: nilayo:dbhavam |
ashta:kshara prada:tha:ram
na:ra:yana am bhaje: ||*

Varalakshmi Vratham – (August 8)

Many devotees, particularly those hailing from the states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka worship Divine Mother *Lakshmi*: on all Fridays of the month of *Sra:vana*. On this special Friday, ladies gather together for a very special *Puja* to offer adoration to the Divine Mother.

Hayagri:va Jayanthi - (August 12th)

Sri: Lakshmi: Ha:yagri:va is an incarnation of God *Sri:man Na:ra:yana* in the form of a horse necked one. He is the Lord of education and knowledge, who incarnated for the purpose of destroying a horse-headed demon who stole the *Ve:das* from *Bramha*. Meditating upon this Lord will provide us the right wisdom to do good. Consequently, this day has a special significance for the students of the *Ve:das*, to consecrate a new year of studies by performing a ritual called *Upa:karma*.

Let us pray to this Lord with His invocational verse:

*jna:na:nanda mayam de:vam
nirmala sapatika:kruthim |
a:dha:ram sarva vidya:na:m
hayagri:vam upa:smahe: ||*

This holy full-moon day is also celebrated as *Ra:khi Pu:rnima*. Sisters express their

affection towards their brothers by tying a decorative amulet, called a *ra:khi*, around their wrist with prayers for their long life.

HH Sri Pedda Jeeyar Swamiji's Thiru Nakshathram - (Aug 16th)

The appearance of the star 'uththara bha:dra' marks the occasion of the appearance day of Sri Sri Sri Tridandi Sriman Narayana Ramanuja Jeeyar Swamiji, popularly known as Sri Pedda Jeeyar Swamiji. This great spiritual master began the movement for sharing the universal message of the *Ve:das* in their true light with everyone. At a tumultuous time in the history of India, Sri Pedda Jeeyar Swamiji revived the Vedic culture through on-foot marches, fire oblations (*ya:gas*), inspiring speeches, scholastic meets and debates, and by sharing his profound teachings to his contemporaries and disciples. He constructed 108 pillars of *Sri: Ra:ma Krathu* and enshrined them throughout the length and breadth of India to sanctify the whole country with the vision of good thoughts and good deeds.

The Divine spark that Sri Pedda Jeeyar Swamiji lit for the world is kept burning today in the vision of his disciple and successor, Sri Chinna Jeeyar Swamiji.

On this day, let us honor our great Paramacharya:

*ve:da:ntha dwaya thaththvajnam
manthra manthra:rtthadam gurum |
sri:manna:ra:yana:cha:rya
ra:ma:nuja yathim bhaje: ||
uththara:bha:dra nakshathre:
sra:vane: saumya vathsare: |
a:vira:si:th guruhu sri:man
na:ra:yana yathi:swaraha ||*

Sri: Krishna Ja:yanthi- (August 21st)

During the ascension of the star "Ro:hini", eight days after the full moon of *Sra:vanam*, the Lord incarnated in His complete form as the son of *De:vaki:* and *Vasude:va*, only to be adopted as the son of *Yaso:da* and *Nandago:pa:la* on the same night.



This Lord was none other than *Sri: Krishna*, the most beloved form of *Sri:man Na:ra:yana*. His Divine Play (*li:la*) as a young child brings joy to young and old alike. On one hand, He was a simple, innocent child in a community of cowherds, stealing butter with his friends, mischievously teasing young girls, and receiving scoldings from his foster mother. At the same time, He was a doer of great deeds in protecting those who sought His care, and punishing those who committed evil acts. Along with all this, He was the bestower of the greatest wisdom of our Vedic culture, *Sri:mad Bhagavad Gi:tha*, which is universally acclaimed to be the essence of all *Ve:da:ntha*, the art of attaining liberation and a scientific document of how to "Serve Him through service to all beings".

Throughout the world, devotees celebrate this holiday with all festivities, hearing and singing about the pastimes of the Lord, and by partaking of delicious *Prasa:dams* that are prepared in numbers of 16, 24, 36, 48, 108, and so on.

Let us pray to Lord *Sri: Krishna* with a simple *slo:kam* and accept Him as our guru, friend, philosopher and guide.

*simha ma:se: asithe: pakshe:
ro:hinya:m ashtami: thitthau |
charama:rtha prada:tha:ram
krishnam vande jagadgurum ||*

Vighna Niva:raka Chatthurdhi- (remover of obstacles) (Aug 31st)

On the 4th day of the Lunar calendar month of *Bha:drapada*, devotees worship *Vishwakse:na*, the army chief of Lord *Sri:man Na:ra:yana*, who removes obstacles that stand in the way of our serving the Lord. This Servant of the Lord is so strong in his abilities, that he is able to remove such obstacles simply through the posture of his hands, the *Mudras*. Our *Sa:sthras* say that *Vishwakse:na*, commands a force of elephant-headed troops, who simply look at him and obey his very command to protect the devotees

of the Lord.

Vishwakse:na is so important in our Vedic culture, that every auspicious act begins with prayers to him. Indeed, the Lord Himself rests the regular day-to-day functioning of this Universe on the shoulders of **Sri: Vishwakse:na** so that He can enjoy the company of His devotees. It is our duty to remember and pray such a great administrator of this universe, *Vishwakse:na*, by whose grace all our daily activities continue without any difficulty.

There is also a tradition that some people worship *Gane:sa*, the elephant-headed, single-tusked commander of Lord **Siva** on this day. But, as it is *Vishwakse:na*, who is the leader of all such powers, our prayers to Him are all that is necessary to remove the obstacles that stand in the way of our service to God. Let us pray Lord *Vishwakse:na* with the following *slo:kam*:
yasya dvirada vakthra:dya:h
pa:rishadya:h parassatham |
vighnam nighnanthi sathatham
vishvakse:nam thama:sraye: ||

Jai Sriman Narayana !



Do you know ?

There are three types of elephant faced gods. One is **Vishwakse:na** who is the closest personal secretary of the Lord Narayana who is also the commander-in-chief of all the battallions of Lord Narayana which control all the forces in this entire Universe. There are a number of groups of elephant faced gods in the battallions of *Vishwakse:na*. They all will have 2 tusks. The other one is the son of Parvathi called **Vinayaka** has only one tusk, who is more popular these days !

Reason for different Bodies

We do many sins. We commit some sins with our body, some with our talk, others with our mind (*manas*) .

Manusmruthi (12-9) says:

va:chikaih pakshi mrugatha:m
ma:nasihi anthya ja:thitha:m!
sari:rajaih karmado:shaischa !
ya:thi sttha:varatha:m
naraha!!

Sins committed by speech result in taking birth as dumb animals or birds, sins committed by the *Manas* result in one taking birth as a barbarian, sins committed by the body result in one taking birth as a tree, or some inanimate object.