

Pradosh Vrat

Pradosh vrat is dedicated to God Shiva and Goddess Parvati. Pradosh vrat is also called as Pradosham or Pradosha Vrat. This is observed on the tridushi (13th day of Hindu calendar). So Pradosh vrat occurs twice in a Hindu month – once each during the Krishna Paksha and Shukla Paksha. Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati are worshipped in the evening on this day (1.5 hours before sunset and 1 hour after sunset). Some people worship Shiva in the form of Nataraja. The fasting on this day is observed for success, peace and fulfillment of one's desires.

The popular belief is that Shiva and Parvati are in a very generous and happy mood during the period and therefore fulfills the wishes of their devotees. It is believed that mere darshan of any form of Shiva fulfills the desires of the devotees.

Myth behind Pradosh Vrat

The story behind the pradosh vrat is mentioned in the Puranas which narrate the origin of the Pradosh Fasting. This vrat is associated with Samudra manthana or Churning of the ocean and subsequently drinking of the poison (Halahala) by God Shiva to save the mankind and the earth. To get Amrita holy water of life and moksha, Devas and Asuras started the Samudra Manthana or churning of ocean on the advice from Lord Vishnu. The churning of the ocean produced the terrible poison which had the capacity to destroy the universe.

Lord Shiva came to the rescue of the Devas and Demons and he drank all the poison and his throat become blue with the effect of the poison. So Lord Shiva is also known as Neelkanth. The demons and gods continued the churning of the ocean and finally they got the Amrit on the twelfth day of lunar fortnight. The Devas and Asuras thanked Lord Shiva on the thirteenth day of the lunar fortnight (paksha). Pleased with the devotion, Lord Shiva is believed to have danced between the horns of Nandi – the bull. The time when Shiva was extremely happy was the Pradosham period. So it is believed that Lord Shiva is extremely happy during this period and blesses all his devotees and fulfills their wishes during the Pradosh period on Trayodashi day.

How to observe Pradosh Vrat:

The importance of Pradosha Vrata and how to observe it is narrated in the Skanda Purana. There are two methods of fasting on the day. Some people observe a 24-hour fast which includes not sleeping during night. Another method is fasting from sunrise till sunset and after Shiva puja in the evening the fast is broken. In the evening one pehar (8th part of the day) before sunset and one hour after sunset, pujas and prayers are performed. Many people during this period spend the time in a Shiva temple or listening to the glory of Shiva.

One should take bath in the evening, an hour before sunset and should perform prayers for Lord Shiva, Goddess Parvathi, Ganesh, Kartik and Nandi. After the initial prayers, Lord Shiva is worshipped in the form of a Kalasha (sacred pot). The Kalasha filled with water is covered with darbha grass and a lotus is drawn on the pot.

Another form of worship is the puja of Shivaling. The shivaling is bathed with water and Belpatra are offered. If some one can't go to the temple he may use a painting or picture of Shiva for worship. After this one should read or listen the Pradosha Vrata Katha from Shiva Purana. There are seven Vrat stories depending upon the var (day) the vrat is observed. Then the Maha Mrityunjaya Mantra should be recited 108 times preferably with a rudraksha mala.

After this the water used in the puja ceremony is given as 'Prasad' along with sacred ash. The ash is applied on the forehead. It is said that just lighting a single lamp during Pradosham period is enough to please Lord Shiva and the act is highly rewarding. Majority of Shiva

devotees have a darshan of Shiva during Pradosham in a nearby temple.