

Sashti Vrata Puja - To conceive a child.

The Sashti Vrata Puja is very powerful Lord Muruga Puja for couples who desires to conceive a child. Shasti, or Sashti, is an important day in a Hindu calendar and is associated and dedicated to Lord Muruga/Kartikeya also known as Subramanian or Skanda or Kanda. The Sashti occurring after Amavasya (new moon night) is the one meant for observing this Vrat. In simple terms, the Sashti occurring during the increasing or growing phase of the Moon. Shashti falls on the sixth day of every lunar fortnight in traditional Hindu calendar. The Shasti falling during the waning phase of the moon is chosen for fasting by Lord Muruga devotees. Below are the Sashti fasting days for **2017**.

Based on South African times...

03 January	(Tuesday)	Skanda Sashti
02 February	(Thursday)	Skanda Sashti
03 March	(Friday)	Skanda Sashti
01 April	(Saturday)	Skanda Sashti
01 May	(Monday)	Skanda Sashti
30 May	(Tuesday)	Skanda Sashti
28 June	(Wednesday)	Skanda Sashti
28 July	(Friday)	Skanda Sashti
27 August	(Sunday)	Skanda Sashti
25 September	(Monday)	Skanda Sashti
25 October	(Wednesday)	Soora Samharam
24 November	(Friday)	Subrahmanya Sashti
24 December	(Sunday)	Skanda Sashti

*** Please note that depending on the lunar and solar calendar followed in a particular region, occasionally, the Shasti day can be a day earlier from the above dates.

One should perform this Vrata for 6 consecutive days. Hmmm what do I mean you may ask? For example, if you start on the 5th May 2016, then the 5th May 2016 is the first day and then the 6th day will be on the 10th May 2016.

How to observe Sashti Vratam?

Before starting the Vrata one should cleanse ones house and Puja place. One should remain calm and peaceful. The Sashti fasting begins with sunrise. The fast is broken on

the next day morning after praying to Lord Surya (Sun-Deity). In the morning after bathing you should offer water in a lota/chumbhu to Surya Narayana (the Sun Deity). In the lota add a few grains of white rice, sindhur and flowers petals. Stand in front of the Sun and stretch your arms forward and block the Sun with the lota. Close your eyes and offer the water – still with your eyes closed on Suryadevas' feet. Now open your eyes. Pray to the Lord to remove any obstacles on your path for your fasting and prayers. Just before sunset have a bath and put on clean clothes. Now proceed to your prayer place.

Performing the Sashti Vrata Puja:-

Firstly offer an agarbatti, lamp or flower (or all three) to Shree Ganeshji (turn seven times clockwise around the murti), and pray to Shree Ganeshji and praying to him to remove all obstacles in the path of this prayer.

A Deity of Lord Muruga is now invoked and worshipped. Pray to Lord Muruga asking the Lord to please accept your prayers. Now chant the following:-

1) Om swagatam su swagatam – Om Muruga-ye namah

(Swagatam means O Lord Muruga I welcome you.)

Now garland the Deity

Then offer flower or flower petals.

2) Om idam pushpam – Om Muruga-ye namah. (Pushpam = flowers)

Then offer incense

3) Om tato dhoopam aghraa-payaami – Om Muruga-ye namah. (Dhoopam =incense)

Then offer lamp

4) Om prat-yaksha deepam darshayaami – Om Muruga-ye namah. (Deepam = lamp)

You offer the above items by turning the items seven times around the Deity.

5) Om naivedyam samar-payaami – Om Muruga-ye namah

Offer cut fruit or sweets like gulab jamum, jalebi, and so forth)

(Naivedyam = food)

6) Offer prayers for forgiveness

Om yaani kaani cha paapaani janmaantara kritaanee cha, taani sarvaani vinashyanti pradakshinaa pade pade //

Now keep Milk in a small glass cup before Lord Muruga and recite/or play the mantras of Lord Muruga on a CD. I would prefer you hear or chant the 108 names of Lord Muruga. After that offer flowers to the Deity. Then offer your personal prayers to Lord Muruga. Ask the Lord for whatever you want and the Lord being so merciful will grant what you desire. But be careful what you desire for...

You can chant (or play on a CD/cassette player) the Subramanya Ashtakam, Subrahmanya Karavalambham and Murugan Pancharatnam or any mantras of Lord

Muruga. THESE ARE GIVEN BELOW...

Offer Lord Subrahmanya fruits, or any sweet foods according to your desire and complete the Puja with Aarti.

Shree Subramanya Astakam - Invoking courage, Lord Murugan

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJETgCEf-OULord>

Muruga's Mantra (Om Sharavanabavaaya Namaha)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2KAh27atlo>

Sri Subramaniya Moola Mantra

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zq9jozuSGFw>

This vrat is a complete fast in many places. But this might not be quite possible for many people due to circumstances like their job, health and other reasons. So many people take some sort of vegetarian food on this day – this is usually a single meal in the afternoon or night. Many people opt for a fruit diet on the day. Some avoid solid food. Fasting is not just abstaining from food but it also an attempt to instill positive thoughts. Many people use fasting as a means to fight against anger, lust, impatience and other negative tendencies. All Vratas associated with Hindu religion is an attempt to realize the Higher Goal. So it's quite flexible. The point is to have the proper intent. The method of fasting differs from region to region. But all non-vegetarian food is avoided on the day.

There is no common method of Skanda Sashti fasting. Different devotees observe it differently. But there are some basic rules followed by all the devotees. Non-vegetarian food is completely avoided during the period.

Some avoid garlic and onions.

Those who are observing the fast make it a point to read scriptures related to Lord Muruga or recite the Kanta Sashti Kavasam or Subramaniya Bhujangam. Most devotees also visit Skanda temples during the period. When it comes to Kanda Sashti fasting, some devotees only take a single meal a day. Some take the meal at noon and others at night. Some devotees confine to fruits and juices during the 6-day period. There are several Skanda devotees who see the Vratam as an opportunity to clean the body and get rid of unwanted toxic elements. Such devotees confine to water, coconut water and other fruit juices.

The fasting ends on the Sixth day.

It must be noted that 'Vrat' or 'Vratam' in Sanskrit means 'vow.' Vratam should not be misunderstood as mere fasting. By observing a Vratam a person is trying to purify his mind through meditation, worship and by sticking to some 'vow' that he/she has taken. Now, this vow can include fasting, not telling lies, not getting anger etc. A vratam

should be seen as a deliberate attempt on your part to bring back discipline into your life. Fasting should be voluntary and it should not be done unwillingly. If you are taking medicines, do not observe intense fasting and stick to the routine suggested by your doctor.

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Compiled for the upliftment of Sanathan Dharma
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