

Lord Shiva's 16 Mondays of fasting...

The mighty Lord Shiva is said to be one of the easiest Deities to please and he resides in the mighty Himalayas. Of the trinity of Deities, he is the destroyer of life, but is easily pleased with devotees who pray for his grace and observe a fast on Mondays.

Sixteen Mondays Vrata: If you are seeking something specific from Lord Shiva, it's advisable to observe a vrat (religious ritual) of 16 Mondays to the Great man Himself. Observed in honour of Lord Shiva, it should be started from a Shukla Paksha (bright/waxing moon) Monday. Here are the Mondays dates for **2017...**

January:- 2nd , 9th , 30th

February:- 6th , 27th

March:- 6th

April:- 3rd , 10th

May:- 1st , 8th , 29th

June:- 5th , 26th

July:- 3rd , 24th , 31st

August:- 7th , 28th

September:- 4th , 25th

Pitar Paksha is from (7th – 20th September).

October:- 2nd , 23rd , 30th

November:- 20th , 27th

December:- 25th

A fast is observed on next 16 Mondays and the udyapan of the vrat (conclusion) is performed on the 17th Monday. Observe these simple rules, to please him and get your wish fulfilled.

This fast starts from sunrise MONDAY and ends on TUESDAY sunrise.

In the morning after bathing you should light your Lakshmi lamp first then offer water in a lota to Surya Narayana. 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.

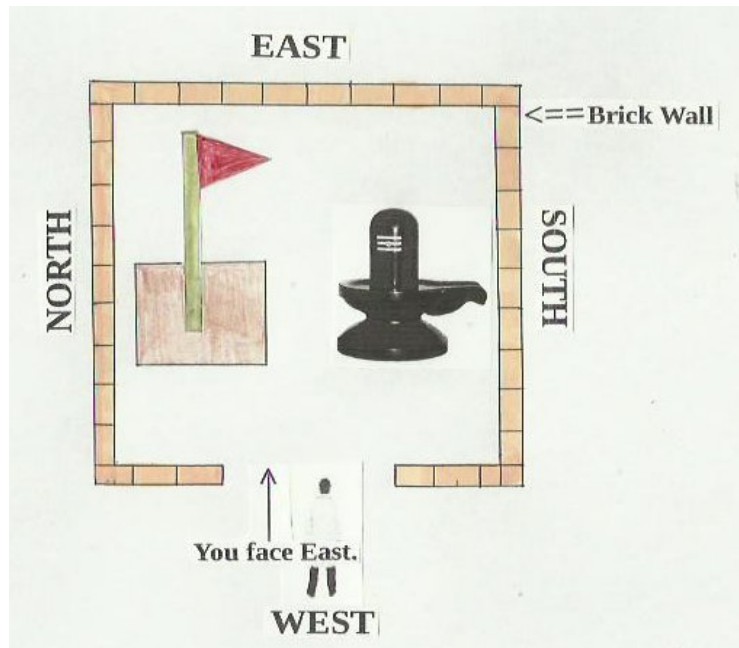
At your Jhanda place do make sure the place is washed and cleaned before commencing further. Now prepare a tray (thari/thamil thate) of the following ingredients... (next page)



Abhishek Ingredients:- 1 lota/chumbu normal tap water mixed with Gangajal, 1 lota/chumbu unboiled milk, 1/2 lota/chumbu Sugarcane juice and/or Coconut water. (Do note if you don't have the Sugarcane juice and/or Coconut water it's fine, as this maybe a problem to get in some places around the world).

Panchamrit:- In a standard size cup add 3/4 cup milk, 2 Tsp of yoghurt (maas), 1 Tsp of Sugar, 1 tsp honey, a drop of ghee. Mix this well and that's your Panchamrit. Water mixed with Ganges water in a lota/chumbu pot with Kusha grass for sprinkling and a cup with water and a spoon. 3 Incense sticks, 1 block Camphor, 1 lamp for camphor, 1 Ghee lamp, 1 tsp of Sandal paste on a saucer mixed with water, a pinch of Kungum, 1 clean unused face cloth, 1 box matches, 1 Tsp of white rice, a small garland of white flowers, On a tray (thari/thamil thate) have the following offerings – some sweets, a white cloth, 3 white flowers (break into petals), 3 types of fruits, 1 Betel nut, 1 Bael Patra (leaf), 1 Betel leaf, 1 Coconut.

Now you should proceed with the trays to the Jhanda place where your Shiva-Lingam is placed. Place Lingam so that Yoni faces South and you are facing the West face of the Lingam and looking towards East. (Do view the picture provided below). You need to sit on a stool or chattai/grass mat which should have underneath that, Kusha/Dharbha grass. It's best to perform a Pooja of Lord Shiva while wearing Rudraksha Mala on your body as it's Lord Shiva's favourite bead.



Take a little water from a clean cup using a teaspoon. Each time put a little water in your right hand palm and sip it, chanting “OM VISHNU”. Wash your hands and repeat 2 more times. Now wash your hands one last time. Sprinkle water over all items of Puja.

Then place your two palms in the Namaste/Vanakkum position and chant:

"Om Gurubhyo Namaha
 Om Ganeshaya Namaha
 Om Kula Devatabhyo Namaha
 Om Ishta Devatabhyo Namaha
 Om Mata Pitribhyam Namaha"

Translation: I offer my humble obeisances to my guru, to Lord Ganesha, to my family deity, to my personal deity, and finally I offer my humble obeisances to my parents.

Now commence with the Abhishekam proper... Bathe the Lingam in the following order - with 1 lota/chumbu normal tap water mixed with Gangajal, 1 lota/chumbu unboiled milk, 1/2 lota/chumbu Sugarcane juice and/or Coconut water, then bathe the Lingam with 1 cup of Panchamrit and finally again with water. As you bathing the Lingam you must be chanting “**Om Namah Shivaye**” either silently or aloud. Thereafter wipe the excess liquids off the Lingam and place the Lingam back on his place (seat-asana) on the Jhanda place chanting:-

Om Avahanam Samarpayami Sri Shiva Maha Devaya Charana Kamalebhyo Namah
 Om Asanam Samarpayami Sri Shiva Maha Devaya Charana Kamalebhyo Namah
 Next mark the Lingam with Sandal Paste making a Tripunda (three stripes) on His Western Face (as depicted on the picture provided above). Dot the middle strip (on its centre) with Kungum while chanting:-

Om Chandanam Samarpayami Sri Shiva Maha Devaya Charana Kamalebhyo Namah

Place the white cloth over the Shiva-Lingam chanting:-

Om Vastram Samarpayami Sri Shiva Maha Devaya Charana Kamalebhyo Namah
Now garland the Lingam and offer the Bael Patra (leaf).

Sprinkle (not throw) the white rice on the Lingam chanting:-

Om Akshatan Samarpayami Sri Shiva Maha Devaya Charana Kamalebhyo Namah
Sprinkle (not throw) the white flower petals on the Lingam chanting:-

Om Pushpam Samarpayami Sri Shiva Maha Devaya Charana Kamalebhyo Namah
Light the 3 incenses and turn it in a clockwise direction 9 times while chanting:-

Om Dhupam Samarpayami Sri Shiva Maha Devaya Charana Kamalebhyo Namah
Light the ghee lamp and turn it in a clockwise direction 9 times while chanting:-

Om Deepam Samarpayami Sri Shiva Maha Devaya Charana Kamalebhyo Namah
Offer 3 drops of water on the Lingam chanting:-

Om Achamaniyam Samarpayami Sri Shiva Maha Devaya Charana Kamalebhyo Namah
On a tray offer the 3 kinds of fruits with the sweets in a clockwise direction 3 times while chanting:-

Om Naivedyam Samarpayami Sri Shiva Maha Devaya Charana Kamalebhyo Namah
Offer 3 drops of water on the Lingam chanting:-

Om Achamaniyam Samarpayami Sri Shiva Maha Devaya Charana Kamalebhyo Namah
Offer the betel leaf+nut in front of the Lingam chanting:-

Om Tambulam Samarpayami Sri Shiva Maha Devaya Charana Kamalebhyo Namah
Place half a cup coconut water next to the Lingam chanting:-

Om Shri Phalam Samarpayami Sri Shiva Maha Devaya Charana Kamalebhyo Namah
Next offer camphor lamp to the Lingam while chanting:-

Karpura Shivam Karuna Vataram Samsara Saram Bhuja-gendra-haram
Sada Vasan-tam Hridaya Ravinde Bhavam Bhavani Sahitam Namami

Translation:

“White as camphor and kindness incarnate, the very form of Brahman
consciousness, you Lord Shiva ever dwell in my heart.

I offer my most humble obeisances unto you”

Now you may chant (according to the time that's available to you) the
Mahamrityunjaya mantra 11, 21,28, 64 or 108 times with a Rudraksha mala.

“Om trayam bakkam yajaa-mahe sugan-dhim pushti-varadhanam
urvaa-rooka-miva bandha-naam mriytor mooksheeya maamritaam Om”.

If you don't know how to chant this mantra click this link and wait and it will play
the mantra. <http://www.astrojyoti.com/shankarsawhney.htm>

Offer prayers of forgiveness to Lord Shiva chanting:-

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

Shanti Paath Mantras:- Put your two palms together in the Namaste position and chant...

Om Dyauh Shanti
Ranta-riksha Gwam Shanti
Prithvi Shanti Rapah Shanti
Rosha-dhayah Shanti
Vanas Patayah Shanti
Vishva Devah Shanti
Brahma Shanti Sarva Gwam Shanti
Shanti Reva Shanti Sama Shanti Redhi
Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Then offer your personal prayers to Lord Shiva asking the Lord for whatever you desire and being Lord Ashutosh (The Most Merciful One) I'm pretty sure the Lord will grant that desire/s. But be careful what you desire for...

Many observe a saltless vrat (fast) for the duration of the day and only consume salt - vegetarian foods after Tuesday sunrise. This of course is optional due to one's health and the like. A 12 page article called "The Importance of Fasting Saltless and Saltless Recipes" is attached to this email.

THINGS TO DO DURING YOUR MONDAY FAST:-

Wear a Rudraksha Mala (do not sleep with it or wear it in the toilet, or during sex).
Use a Rudraksha Mala to chant the Maha Mritunjaya Mantra.
Offer Vibhuti (holy ashes) to Lord Shiva and then apply on your forehead.
Performing Abhishekam/offering like the procedure given above on Mondays.
Recite the Shiva Chalisa daily or any other Lord Shiva Mantras during the day.
Observing a saltless fast until the next morning (Tuesday).

Is it necessary to do "udyapan" after keeping fasts?

Yes, Udyapan is essentialAfter a puja is done over a length of time - say for 16 weeks or 6 weeks etc. it is concluded with udyapan to mark its conclusion. It's advisable to do udyapan as a measure of thanking God for allowing one to do puja for the required number of days....Udyapan is thanksgiving. It's the concluding ceremony after completing the fasts. It's necessary.

Udyapan – the Ritualistic End of a Vrat

Udyapan is strictly followed by many Hindu communities. It is the ritual performed on the day of the formal ending of vrats like Solah Shukravar Vrat, Solah Somavar Vrat and all important fasting that are observed for a period of year or month. The original Udyapan as per Hindu scriptures vary for each vrat but it is no longer strictly followed by majority of Hindus as it is almost impractical today. For example for most Udyapan it is asked to invite 21 brahmins and feed them, etc.

Today, people perform Udyapan as per their capacity. Some Hindus invite a priest and do a big puja and feed friends, relatives and neighbours. In such pujas all the rituals and how to end the vrat are explained by the priest.

Some perform pujas and prayers and feed the poor on the day. They also visit the temple of the deity to whom the vrat was kept. Another simple method that is gaining popularity is to invite a poor couple and feed them.

DIY Shiva Udyapan Puja.

Provided below is a very simple D.I.Y. Shiva puja proper. One will say hmmm, this is very easy and will it work, aren't I supposed to be engaging the services of a priest, etc. The whole idea about creating DIPIKA is to make my fellow humans self sufficient, and only be dependent on is the Supreme Lord Himself. Whether one performs an elaborate prayer or a simple prayer all that really matters is the faith that one contributes to that prayer... Another point to note is that many who seek my help and advice, are generally financially distraught, hence I am making everything simple and very cost effective.

After one completes one's Shiva salt-less fast for 16 Monday, on the 17th Monday, one needs to culminate the preceding disciplines by performing a Shiva Shanti Homam (Havan/Yajna).

This Homam (Havan/Yajna) should be performed on a MONDAY between 09h01 – 10h29 or 12h31 - 17h00. The duration of the puja is approximately half an hour.

On the Monday the observer of the fast must first bathe and wear fresh clean white coloured clothes, thereafter proceed to your prayer place. Have all the requirements for the Puja and the havan arranged beforehand on a tray.

For the Puja proper:-

On your tray you should have the following:- 1 large tray (to place all your puja items on that tray), 1 large rectangular tray, 1 banana leaf the size of your rectangular tray, 1 small Ganesh murti/picture, the laminated picture or murti of Lord Shiva, a laminated picture of Lord Vishnu picture, small bowl of sweet rice (use the same bowl for the havan), a small lota/chumbu/cup add water with a small spoon, 5 incense sticks, one incense holder, 2 blocks of camphor, 1 box matches, a small clay lamp which should be placed on a saucer, 10 betel leaves, 10 round betel nuts, 200g white rice, small bowl of white flower petals, 1 small hand towel, make one Kusha ring with kusha grass, 50g chandan powder (on a saucer and add water to make a paste). On a saucer keep a small clay lamp add, some ghee and a wick). Also make sure you have a set of 108 Rudraksha mala beads.

Place tray on the floor, and then place the banana leaf on top of the rectangular tray - (this is your bedi), place on the banana leaf the Lord Ganesh Murti and next to Lord Ganesh place a Lord Shiva Murti or picture. Place the clay lamp which is on a saucer (and which has the ghee and wick) next to Lord Ganesh, and on the lamp's right hand side place Lord Vishnu's picture. Now sit facing East or North. Pour a little water into your hand from your small lota and sip it three times chanting "Om Vishnu" (Wash your hands after each Om Vishnu chant). Now wipe your hands. Anoint your third eye (the place between your eyebrows) with a chandan dot, place your kusha ring on your ring finger of your right hand.

Next take 1 betel leaf, on top of that betel leaf add some red flower petals and some rice and say in English "O Supreme Lord on this Monday, English month (like January) and place (like Durban) where you performing this prayer, I (state your name and surname) am performing my Shiva Shanti Prayers. (Do note if you prefer having the correct Vedic names for the above then you have to consult and ask your pundit). Leave the betel leaf, flower petals and rice on the banana leaf by Lord Ganesh.

GANESH PUJA:- Take 1 betel leaf, on top of that betel leaf place 1 betel nut, few grains of rice and few red flower petals and pray to Shree Ganeshji chanting his mantra...

“Om ganapati devata aa-vaa-hayaa-mee sthaapa-yamee, Om ganapataye namah”

And then place the betel leaf (and its ingredients) on the banana in front of Lord Ganesh's murti/picture. Do note the tip of the betel leaf should be facing you. Now offer Lord Ganesh 4 drops of water, chandan dot, sprinkle rice and then flower petals, offer one stick of incense (turn the incense around the murti/picture 7 times in a clockwise direction, and place in the incense holder, next offer the clay lamp on a saucer (which has a small piece of camphor in it, light it) and turn the lamp around the murti/picture 7 times in a clockwise direction, offer a spoon of sweet rice on the betel leaf and then place a betel leaf with a betel-nut next to Lord Ganesh's betel leaf and then finally offer the clay lamp (7 times around the murti) to end.

LORD SHIVA'S PUJA:- Then take another betel leaf, on top of that betel leaf place 1 betel nut, few grains of rice and few white flower petals and pray to Shiva chanting his mantra...

“Om Mahadevaya devata aa-vaa-hayaa-mee sthaapa-yaamee, Om shivaya namah”, and then place the betel leaf (and its ingredients) on the banana leaf in front of Lord Shiva's Murti/picture. Do note the tip of the betel leaf should be facing you. Now offer Lord Shiva 4 drops of water, chandan dot, sprinkle rice and then flower petals, offer one stick of incense (turn the incense around the murti/picture 7 times in a clockwise direction, and place in the incense holder, next offer the clay lamp on a saucer (which has a small piece of camphor in it, light it) and turn the lamp around the murti/picture 7 times in a clockwise direction, offer a spoon of sweet rice on the betel leaf and then place a betel leaf with a betel-nut next to Lord Shiva's betel leaf and then finally offer the clay lamp (7 times around the murti) to end.

Light the wick of the clay lamp which is on a saucer (and which has the ghee and wick). Once lit pray to Mother Lakshmi for Her blessings for your puja.

VISHNU PUJA:- Then take another betel leaf, on top of that betel leaf place 1 betel nut, few grains of rice and few red flower petals and pray to Lord Vishnu chanting His mantra...

“Om Vishnu bhagavaan aa-vaa-hayaa-mee sthaapa-yamee, Om Vish-nave namah”,

And then place the betel leaf (and its ingredients) on the banana leaf in front of Lord Vishnu's picture. Do note the tip of the betel leaf should be facing you. Now offer Lord Vishnu 4 drops of water, chandan dot, sprinkle rice and then flower petals, offer one stick of incense (turn the incense around the murti/picture 7 times in a clockwise direction, and place in the incense holder, next offer the clay lamp on a saucer (which has a small piece of camphor in it, light it) and turn the lamp around the murti/picture 7 times in a clockwise direction, offer a spoon of sweet rice on the betel leaf and then place a betel leaf with a betel-nut next to Lord Vishnu's betel leaf and then finally offer the clay lamp (7 times around the murti) to end. The havan proper now commences.

HOMAM (HAVAN)

For the Havan proper:-

On your tray you should have the following:- One packet havan wood; 100g Navadhan (9 grains), 100g wheat (Hindi-Gehu//Tamil-Godhumai), 100g ***{Guggal} (a brown-ish resin), 100g{Sugar/Gur/Jaggery}, 100g of Lobhan (Samarani), 100g Til; 100g Barley (Jau) grains, a medium size bowl for the havan samagheree ingredients, 100g ghee in a small bowl with a Table spoon, 3 pieces of Sandalwood sticks.

The Havan kund should be placed on a metal rectangular tray. Place 4 equal length Kusha (Kush grass/Darbha grass) on the outside of the four sides of the kund, add about 3 hands-full of clean sand in the havan kund (this is done so that the ghee wouldn't leak from the Kund), place the wood neatly in the kund. On top of the wood sprinkle some red sindhur powder. Now in your samaghree bowl add the remaining white rice (that you have from the puja), the Navadhan, wheat, Til, 1 Tsp of sweet rice, Guggal, Gur, barley, Lobhan, 2 Tsp's of ghee... Mix the ingredients well. This is your Havan samaghree, I would advise to refrain from adding the ready made (store-bought) havan samaghree as these days that samaghree is just powder and mass produced.

Place a camphor tablet on a table spoon and (light and) kindle the camphor tablet and place in the havan kund while you chant "Om Bhoor Bhuvah Swaahaa", repeat twice more times i.e. two more camphor tablets.

When the fire is nicely alight, put your two palms together and pray to Agni-deva inviting Agni-deva to enter into the kund and kindly accept the grains that you will be offering shortly, chanting... "Om Agni-devata aa-vaa-hayaa-mee sthaapa-yamee, Om Agni-deva namah". Now offer one stick of incense (turn the incense around the fire 7 times in a clockwise direction, and place in the fire, next offer the clay lamp on a saucer (which has a small piece of camphor in it, light it) and turn the lamp around the fire 7 times in a clockwise direction, offer a spoon of sweet rice on the betel leaf into the fire, offer some flower petals into the fire and then finally offer the clay lamp (7 times around the fire) to end. Next sprinkle, water around the havan kund 3 times in a clockwise direction.

Take 3 pieces of Sandalwood sticks, dip the three sticks in the ghee, and then offer one stick into the fire while chanting "Om Bhoor swaahaa", the second stick with the mantra "Om bhuvah swaahaa" and the third and final stick with the mantra "Om svah swaahaa"...

Place the havan samaghree bowl in front of you. Do remember that at every swaahaa offer samaghree and/or ghee. Now you can commence with the Havan proper...

Chant:-

Om ganapataye swaahaa x 1

Om agnaye swaahaa x 1

Om somaya swaahaa x 1

Om praja-pata-ye swaahaa x 1

Om indraya swaahaa x 1

Om bhuh swaahaa x 1

Om bhoovah swaahaa x 1

Om svah swaahaa x 1

Om bhoor bhuvah svah swaahaa x 1

Om Hraam Hreem Hraum Saha Sooryaaya swaahaa x 1

Om Shraam Shreem Shraum Saha Chandraaya swaahaa x 1

Om Kraam Kreem Kraum Saha Bhaumaaya swaahaa x 1

Om Braam Breem Braum Saha Budhaaya swaahaa x 1

Om Graam Greem Graum Saha Guruve swaahaa x 1

Om Draam Dreem Draum Saha Shukraaya swaahaa x 1

Om Praam Preem Praum Saha Shanaish-charaaya swaahaa x 1

Om Bhraam Bhreem Bhraum Saha Raahave swaahaa x 1

Om Shraam Shreem Shraum Saha Ketve swaahaa x 1

Om aim hreem kleem chaamun-daayai vich-chai swaahaa x 9

Om trayam bakkam yajaa-mahe sugan-dhim pushti-wardhanam
urvaa-rooka-miva bandha-naam mrityor mooksheeya maamritaata swaahaa x 108

Om Hanumate swaahaa x 1

Om Shreem Mahaa-lakshmi-yai swaahaa X 1

Om Vishnave swaahaa X 1

Sprinkle water around the havan kund three times.

Offer samaghree 21 times with the Maha Mantra “ Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna
Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare “ to atone for any
mistakes committed during the havan.

Lastly - the final offerings (Purna-Ahuti):- Place the remaining betel leaves on a tray and on
that betel leaves place the balance of the samaghree on top of the leaves, on top of this place
the rest of the betel nuts, some ghee and chant the following mantra

“Om sarvam vai poornam swaahaa”

And place this in the middle of the fire. Offer the rest of the ghee into the fire.

Shanti Paath Mantras:- Put your two palms together in the Namaste position... and chant...

Om Dyauh Shanti
Ranta-riksha Gwam Shanti
Prithvi Shanti Rapah Shanti
Rosha-dhayah Shanti
Vanas Patayah Shanti
Vishva Devah Shanti
Brahma Shanti Sarva Gwam Shanti
Shanti Reva Shanti Sama Shanti Redhi
Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Now take the 4 kusha grass around the Kund and your kusha grass ring and mix with the
final remains of the ghee in the ghee bowl and offer into the fire.

Once this is complete, kindly request Lord Shiva, Lord Ganesha, Lord Vishnu and the rest
of the Devi's and Devas to forgive you for any shortcoming committed while you performed
the puja and havan and then request them to kindly return to their divine abodes, and
chant the Maha Mantra (above) once to end. Bow down to the bedi and havan kund.

A word of note:- The puja items used in the puja above, put that into the havan kund and
make sure everything is fully burnt and I would advise instead of disposing the remains into
a local river, you should bury the burnt samaghree in the 4 corners of your yard... This is
DIPIKA'S stance on taking care of Mother Earth. Jai Hind.

This is the katha of the worship to be performed on sixteen consecutive Mondays. One day
Bhagawan Bhutanath, Lord Shiva, as the Lord of all Beings, went to tour the sansar (the
world of objects and relationships) along with his beloved wife Parvati. They were traveling,
seeing many different lands, when they came to the city of Amaravati. There they saw a
great shining city, and they took shelter in one particular Shivaloya, a temple of Lord Shiva.
One day Parvati had a desire to play "chalsar", an Indian dice game. While Shiva and
Parvati sat enjoying this game, a Brahmin pujari walked into the temple. Parvati stopped
and asked the priest, "Who will win this game?" Without hesitation or much thought the
pujari immediately responded, "Shankarji. Shiva will win."

After a short time Parvati did in fact lose the dice game and she became very angry. She thought that it was because of the Brahmin's prediction that she had lost the game. Shiva advised Parvati to remain calm and to control her anger, but Parvati would not be easily appeased. Her anger grew into a great rage and she cursed the Brahmin who had said she would lose the game. Parvati cursed the Brahmin that he would suffer from leprosy. The Brahmin priest was immediately attacked by the disease, and he became very sad and was filled with great pain from the leprosy that developed. Many days passed and the priest suffered a great deal. He thought, "For what karma have I received such a curse from the Divine Mother? What will I ever be able to do to get her grace once again?" In this way his mind was extremely agitated, and his body pained. One day that Brahmin priest went into the Shiva temple, where he saw a most beautiful heavenly nymph. This beautiful and shining angelic lady was an Apsara, a celestial maiden who serves the Gods. Standing before the pain stricken priest, she gave him the following instructions: "With all of your energy and devotion to the greatest extent of your capacity, perform the vow of Shiva's worship on sixteen consecutive Mondays. All of the pain and suffering that now afflict you will completely dissolve if you worship Lord Shiva with pure devotion." The radiant Apsara then proceeded to tell the poor afflicted Brahmin exactly how to perform the puja. "In the early morning of each Monday you will bathe and wear a pure white cloth on your body. At the time of cooking you will take a pound of pure white wheat flour, mix with gur and ghee and fry. Offer this 'Churma' along with a ghee lamp, as well as gur, beetle nut, a sacred thread, sandal paste, some grains of rice and flowers. With these items especially, you will worship Lord Shiva. You will adorn the blessed Lord Shiva with three lines horizontally and with one mark in the centre, and after this you may also take prasad just as you have offered to Shiva. Recite his mantras, sing His songs, perform the fire sacrifice, and other forms of worship for the Lord. "Completing your worship to Lord Shiva in this way for sixteen Mondays, on the seventeenth Monday you will take ten pounds of pure wheat flour, mix with ghee and gur and fry. Offer this 'Churma' to the great Lord Shiva with all of your devotion and love. You may then partake of the prasad, sharing in the blessings of Lord Shiva. If you observe all that I have instructed, you will certainly be freed from all pain and suffering, and you will soon attain the highest graces and good fortune."

Finishing her discourse, the Apsara rose up and ascended into the heavens. The Brahmin was completely amazed by this vision, and with full faith, he observed the sankalpa of sixteen Mondays in every detail. Every Monday he wore a pure white cloth, and chanted the worship of Lord Shiva, offering the appropriate offerings. Following this vow, he was freed from his disease and sorrow. He became a well known, wealthy man and loved and respected by all of the people of the kingdom. He taught the worship of Lord Shiva to many people, and continued to inspire the people of his community to serve the Lord with truth and joy. One day that Brahmin priest returned to the temple where Parvati had first cursed him. Parvati was amazed to see that the Brahmin was healed of his disease. When Parvati learned of the power of the vow of sixteen Mondays, she quickly went to her son Kartikeya to share with him this wonderful secret of the regular worship of Lord Shiva. Kartikeya shared the secret of this worship with his friend. This friend had no wife and desiring to marry, he at once made the sankalpa, or spiritual promise, to observe the vow of sixteen weeks, praying for the blessing of a good marriage. After completing his vow of worship for sixteen Mondays, the man left his native land and travelled to another Kingdom. Arriving at this new land, he heard that the King had made a very strange public declaration. That King had promised his daughter's hand in marriage to the one who be chosen by his elephant. The King's elephant would place a garland of flowers around some man's neck, according to divine understanding, and that man would become the husband of the princess.

The traveller went to witness this betrothal ceremony, as he had never heard of such a curious way of fixing a marriage. The elephant looked at all the men assembled for the occasion, and then put the garland around his neck. The king happily gave his daughter in marriage, and the traveller became a member of the Royal household.

It was some years later, that the King's daughter found out that her husband had been chosen for the marriage after he had performed the vow of Lord Shiva's worship for sixteen Mondays for that purpose. She was eager to have a son, and decided to perform the vow of Lord Shiva's worship for sixteen Mondays in order to have a beautiful son who could become a king. The wife did this vow with such devotion and love that Shiva was pleased, and she gave birth to a wonderful son. When the child grew up, he desired to become the king of a nation, and therefore, he also took the vow of Lord Shiva's worship for sixteen Mondays to become a good king. When his vow was complete, a messenger came from another King asking whether he might like to join with his daughter to become his wife. He was very happy when he heard of this proposal, and he immediately consented, and the King performed the marriage in a gay fashion. The King was delighted to have completed his responsibility to his daughter, and being an old man, he left his body just a short time following the marriage. The young man then inherited the throne. Immediately after taking over the duties of the kingdom, the new King asked his wife to gather together all of the ingredients for Shiva's puja. But his wife passed this order to one of her servants, who prepared everything for the worship. While doing the puja, the King received a message which was as follows: " If the King would not leave that insolent wife, then his lineage would be finished." Upon hearing this message, the King was extremely pained and filled with wonder. He asked the ministers what was the matter, and what should he do? The ministers advised him to leave the wife or he would face ruin. Because the wife had not obeyed the King's order to get ready his puja, but instead had asked her servant to do this, such a wife would only cause him problems. The King again asked the ministers what he should do, and they quickly told him, "Leave the Queen!"

The queen was very sorry when she was exiled from the palace. She wandered on her way, but no one would give her shelter. By this time her status was reduced to a beggar. Her cloth was torn and she had no shoes. She tried to seek refuge with an old man, but she was chased away. Then she asked for help from an old servant who was washing dishes, but she was scared away. The queen had no place and was cold and frightened. A milk man took her to a nearby Shiva temple, where she told the priest her whole story. He had deep compassion for the poor woman, and he gave her refuge in his temple. But whatever the queen touched became ruined. Worms came into all of the food that she touched, and at this the priest was extremely pained. Then he told the queen to appease Lord Shiva by observing the vow of sixteen Mondays. He explained to her the entire process, and with great faith and devotion the queen followed this advice of the priest. On the seventeenth Monday, the King heard a divine voice telling him to search for his wife. Then he sent ambassadors to search everywhere for the exiled queen, and finally they came to the temple where she was residing. Learning the whereabouts of his beloved wife, the king immediately went to that temple to find her. When the King learned how the queen had performed the vow of Shiva's worship for sixteen consecutive Mondays, then he was very happy, and he went to the temple priest to do him service and honor in thanks. The priest listened to the King's story, and blessed them both.

When the King and Queen returned to the capital all of the subjects of the kingdom welcomed them both with great love and devotion. Then the king gave the people many gifts, and always worked hard at their service. With the grace of Lord Shiva the King and

Queen had beautiful children, enjoyed many years of comfort and happiness in their Kingdom, and ultimately went to the Shiva-loka. This is the story of the vow of Lord Shiva's Worship. Whoever will read it with devotion, or listen to it with one pointed attention, at the time of worship on Monday, will be blessed with health, wealth, the cessation of all disturbances, and the fulfillment of all desires. This is the promise of Lord Shiva. OM NAMAH SHIVAAYA.

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