

Salt and Its Importance in Hinduism...

After many years of confusion and traditions, SALT has been given a rather disreputable name. This article will explain why SALT is so important to humans, especially to us awesome Hindus.

Many, many years ago a person gave salt and consequently she lost most of her valuables in her life. Also, her "luck" seemed to have disappeared, and she felt that this was due to the giving of her salt to her neighbor. Unfortunately, after this, the news spread like wildfire and SALT thus became the "villain". To evolve as Hindus we at DIPIKA have decided to release this pertinent and much needed article on the importance of SALT in Hinduism.

What does salt represent? Salt emanates from the body (sweat) of Lord Vishnu. In the **Garuda Purana Preta Khanda chapter 29 Verse 30-33** states "Salt is on par with everything divine. It yields everything the person wishes for himself. No dish tastes without salt. Hence, salt is the favourite with the Pitrs (ancestors). The gift of salt leads them to heavens. Salt originated from the body of Lord Vishnu, hence yogins praise a gift of salt. Whenever a person is on their deathbed salt should be given as a gift. It opens the door way to the heavens."

DOES ONE ADD SALT IN THE SEEDHA TO YOUR PUNDIT?:- The two most important items when giving/donating to your pundit Seedha is Akshat (uncooked rice) and Lavana (Salt). The other items is left upon the Yajmaan (the person performing the puja). Without the gifting of Salt the Seedha remains incomplete. Salt is very dear to one's ancestors (Pitrs) and to Lord Vishnu, and, when donating salt to a brahmin, Lord Vishnu becomes immensely pleased as Cows and Brahmins are very, very dear to the Supreme Lord.

SALT AND GO-DAAN:- Go means the cow and Daan means gift. So Go-daan is giving the gift of a cow to a Brahmin. This is an extremely important prayer that one performs in one's lifetime. What items should be gifted in the Go-Daan puja? Sesame seeds, iron, gold, cotton, **SALT**, seven types of grains, earth (land) and a cow. The dying person should gift these 8 precious gifts to a brahmana. The wise have prescribed the gift of salt to be given freely and it opens the doorway to the other world. (Garuda Purana Preta Khanda chapter 4 verses 7-8,14).

From the above given information one can deduce that salt is one of the 8 items that must be donated to the priest who is officiating this important puja.

SALT AND DAS MAHA DAAN:- The 10 most important items a person can donate in one's lifetime are 1) Donate a Cow (Go Daan), 2) Donate Land (Bhumi Daan), 3) Donate Sesame Seeds (Til Daan), 4) Donate Gold (Swarna Daan), 5) Donate Ghee (Ghrita Daan), 6) Donate Clothes (Vastra Daan), 7) Donate Cereals {Grains} (Dhaanya Daan), 8) Donate Jaggery {Sugar} (Gur Daan), 9) Donate Silver (Rajat Daan), **10) Donate SALT (Lavana Daan)**

From the information given above, one can deduce that salt is one of the 10 items that should be donated to the officiating priest/Brahmin.

SALTLESS FASTING:- In all religions fasting is considered very important. In Hinduism, it's the essence of life. All religious ceremonies are preceded by a period of fasting. The meaning of fasting is to reach the heavens and also to fulfill one's desires. By fasting, one's inner self is purified and one enjoys sound health, removes impending difficulties and incidents that can be avoided. There is a type of fasting called KAAIKA VRATA (Physical fasting) which entails abstaining from any food for the entire day. The whole idea about fasting is to abstain from salt. Why, you may ask??? Fasting in Hinduism indicates the denial of the physical needs of the body for the sake of spiritual gains. Salt is an integral part of our diet. Abstaining from salt is a huge sacrifice. It's common knowledge that excess salt (sodium-chloride) causes hypertension or elevation of blood pressure. Since the point of a fast is to make things better, and not worse in one's life, one should fast according to one's capacity and circumstances. The best fast is to abstain from everything, including from water, but if one's physical condition will not permit this, then one should rather not try this method. The next best is to consume water only, and the next on fruits only. Thereafter we enter the realm of mono-diets; some of these are inclusive (e.g. milk only), while others are exclusive (e.g. no salt). In this day of age it's very difficult for most to abstain from water so the next best thing is to abstain from table-salt.

The whole idea about fasting for a particular planet (Graha) is to abstain from something that is very important and dear to our body viz. **SALT**. When one consumes ******* "added salt" on a day that a particular planet is malevolent towards one (due to one's past karma), then that deity becomes like a magnet to create obstacles on that person's path and that Deity of that planet has all the reason to send his malefic rays to that individual and thus creating many obstacles in that person's life. On the other hand if one doesn't have "added salt" in his foods on that particular day that, that planet is malefic towards him/her, then that planet cannot harm that person in any way. So now you can deduce how important it's not to

consume salt on that planet's day. Hence "added Salt" in foods are avoided as far as possible.

*** What is "added salt"?

In a bid to assist those aspirants who are undertaking a specific vrat (fast) to abstain from salt or those who simply for health reasons have chosen to decrease or eliminate table salt from their diets we have provided a list of ingredients which are table salt free. Most of our recipes are free from onion and garlic but this is optional and if you choose so, you can add them. So "Added Salt" is adding salt to one's ingredients while cooking. These saltless recipes are found in the NAVAGRAHA Submenu articles on our website www.dipika.org.za.

The question will be raised by some or maybe many, it's not possible to totally eradicate salt from one's diet as many foods has Natural Salts? Yes this is correct, it would be ideal for the aspirant to refrain from any foods or even liquids, but in this modern fast-paced hectic lifestyles that many lead it's not possible for the majority of the populace to follow. Sodium occurs naturally in most foods. The most common form of sodium is sodium chloride, which is table salt. Table salt consists of 40 percent sodium; the amount of natural sodium in foods varies.

DO NOTE:- Sodium alone is **NOT SALT**, but Sodium-Chloride (table salt) is.

Havishyana (Boiled food with no spices)

Havishyana is an extremely important word when it comes to death because this word is used for the food to consume during the 10 days after the funeral of a deceased... So let us see what our Shastras say about this.

"If one's mother, father or spouse dies one should fast for three days, or if that's not possible, then one should consume only fruits. From the 4th day to the 10th day one should only consume havishyana {boiled food}". (Page 147 Sat Kriya Sara Dipika.)

Havishyana means food fit for oblation (offerings) - consists of things that are considered very pure and fit to be consumed during certain period of fasts, (i.e.) is food with no masala or spices... When a person expires in a family, there is a period of 10 days prescribed in shastras that impurity has to be observed and by consuming havishyana food for 10 days one become cleansed from that impurity. Another way to explain this simply is that if one visits another country, lets say Australia and if you have yellow jaundice the authorities will quarantine you for an X amount of days until you are cleared from that impurity. So in the same way consuming boiled food cleanses one and the duration is 10 days as per the guidelines from the Garuda Purana.

Ingredients for Havishya as mentioned in Sri Hari-bhakti-vilasa (13.10-13)

The following are ingredients that can be used in preparing Havishya, which is like an unspiced khichari prepared with the following items.

- * Aatap (sunned rice) or white rice
- * Ghee from cow

*** 'Saindhava' salt (salt from ocean - Sea Salt)**

- * Milk from cow
- * Milk with cream
- * Ripe banana
- * Wheat
- * Fruits (Skanda Puraana, Naagara Khanda says they must be with a small seed or with few seeds only)
- * Mango
- * Jackfruit
- * Roots
- * Pippali (Long pepper)
- * Haritaki (an herbaceous plant)
- * Ikshu-dravya or sugarcane derivatives (other than gur or mollasses)
- * No oil

The following ingredients are normally part of Havishya but have to be avoided in the month of Kaartika:

- * Moong (Mung) dhal
- * Til (Sesame) oil
- * Radish
- * Jeeraa
- * Tamarind

So, from the above list of possible ingredients of Havishya, it most commonly contains just rice and dhal boiled together, without spices and with a pinch of sea salt. One may also add some simple roots or fruits.

From the above given information one can deduce that salt is one of the items that is used in the meals that are prepared in the 10 days.

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