

Chitra Paruvam Kavady- 29th April 2018

We humbly seek the divine blessings of the most merciful Lord Muruga in complying this article on the significance of Chitra Paruvam Kavady.

The next Kavady festival, known as Chitra (Cittirai) Paruvam Kavady, takes place on April 29th. There are at least four Kavady festivals a year, all of which are dedicated to Lord Muruga. This Kavady is celebrated in the Tamil month of Chithirai {mid April – Mid May} hence it's called Chitra Paruvam Kavady.

The significance of Kavady...



Lord Muruga

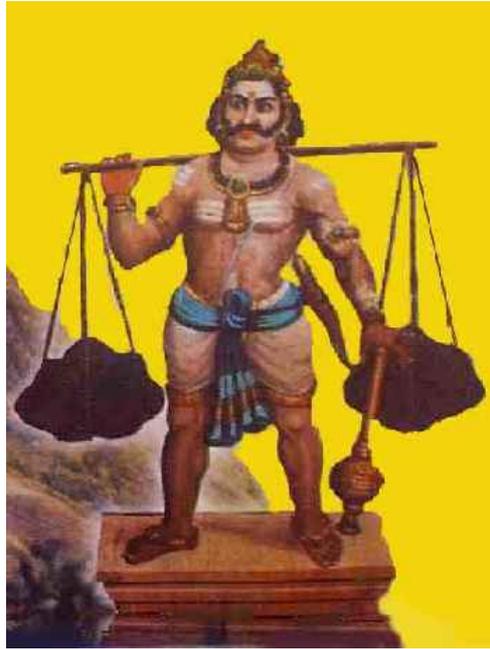
HA-RA-GA-RO-GA-RA Hail, Hail, Hail Oh Lord Muruga

The origin of the Kavady festival

Iduman, one of the disciples of Agasthiyai, was asked to bring two hills - representing the two forces inherent in all living beings (Lord Shiva and Mother Shakti (Mother Sati/Parvati/Durga). Iduman, carried these two hills with a – Kavady (A Kavady is the cylindrical wooden structure that devotees of Lord Muruga carry on their shoulder. The structure represents equilibrium. And can be likened to the western concept of a scale. Like any scale, weight must be balance, hence the Kavady has matching items (flowers, milk, etc) at either side to maintain such balance and prevent it from toppling.) Across his shoulder with one hill suspended on each end. Mid way through the journey he sat the hills down in order to rest.

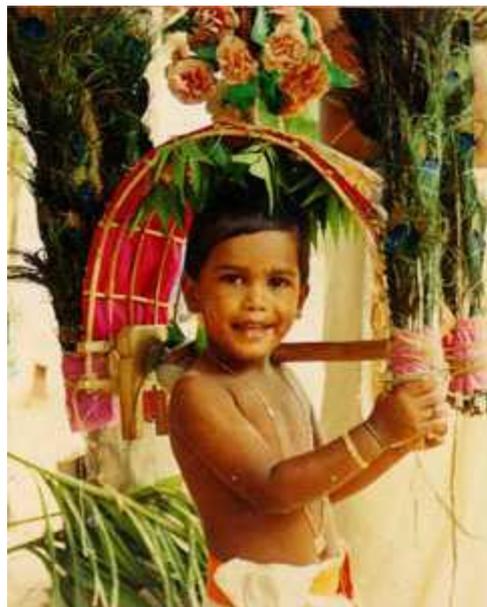
When he was ready to resume, he found that the hills were too heavy to pick up. As he prepared to forcibly pick them up he saw Lord Muruga in the way and he angrily asked him to move out of the way, Lord Muruga refused. Iduman was annoyed a battle broke out between Lord Muruga and Iduman whereby Iduman was destroyed. Lord Muruga through his eternal mercy revived and pardoned him, a change came over Iduman and he became Lord Muruga's greatest devotee. He carried the first Kavady out of absolute

devotion to the Lord. Lord Muruga also made Iduman his gatekeeper. That is why when a devotee goes to the famous Pazhanimalai temple one must first pray to Iduman and then proceed to the main temple.



What is a Kavady?

It is a Tamil word meaning flattened pole with loads at the ends. The Kavady carried in a religious procession also has a pole with a semi circular arch. The arch is decorated with flowers and palm leaves. The loads attached to the ends of the pole are brass vessels filled with milk or other offerings. Peacock feathers and a Vel (Lord Muruga's spear) are also attached.



A brass pot filled with milk can also be carried for Lord Muruga as an offering and it is called "Paal Kodum". One question, which is often asked by devotees, is can I fast for Kavady without carrying a Kavady. The answer to this question is definitely "YES".

One does not have to only carry a Kavady to show devotion to Lord Muruga. By observing the 10-day fast and attending the 10-day prayer at the temple is also seen as devotion towards Lord Muruga. Dear devotees please remember it is your love and devotion towards the Lord that is important.

Why carry Kavady?

Kavady is actually a procession that signifies devotion and prayer to Lord Muruga. Symbolically it is said that the essence of life involves balance, moderation and harmony. Maintaining a sense of balance in our lives involves mental calmness. To attain mental calmness we must balance our desires. If we have more desires than actions ... we suffer imbalance and mental distress. Balance also signifies love and devotion to God to offset the weight of evil and vice. Lord Muruga represents perfect balance between desire and action. Since humans face problems in maintaining such balance on their own, they seek Lord Muruga's help to achieve it. Devotees blessed with his grace get peace of mind through mental balance. We carry **KAVADY** for one of 2 reasons: firstly to express gratitude to Lord Muruga for his mercy and to ask for his help in restoring balance (overcoming a problem or life obstacle). Devotees carry Kavady, a symbol of balance and pray to Lord Muruga for such mental calmness and balance in their lives.

Why Lord Muruga?



Now for those who don't know Lord Muruga is the younger brother of Lord Ganeshji and the son of Mother Parvati and Lord Shiva. Through out the history of South Indian culture Lord Muruga is worshipped as a deity of beauty, love, courage, humility and as a symbol of protection and preservation. He is a Saviour of infinite mercy, who can free a devotee from the shackles of suffering and mental imbalance. Carrying Kavady means that we make the sacrifice, undergo the suffering and shoulder the weight (pulling a chariot or carrying the wooden Kavady) to show our total devotion to Lord Muruga. No amount of pain or agony will stop us from seeking LORD MURUGA'S help. The Kavady is carried with the simple hope that Lord Muruga will help restore mental balance and fulfil the devotee's wish to overcome an illness or a difficult problem.

Why is a flag raised and a 10 day fast observed?- The flag, which is raised on the first day. Firstly marks the beginning of the 10-day fast and the observance of the Kavady festival. The flag also serves as a reminder that one should start fasting and go to the temple.

The meaning of the banner or flag:- The Sevel (Rooster) symbolizes the approach or the dawn of knowledge. It is the Sevel that proclaims the coming of the sun in the east. The sun is the heavenly body that dispels darkness. The Sevel on the banner announces the approach of knowledge, which will destroy all ignorance. The 10 day fast or sadhana is the clearance of ones mind, body and soul. By fasting and going to temple and praying for 10 days devotees become spiritually charged and uplifted to carry their Kavady.

The Vel



Lord Muruga's Vel is strong, straight and pointed representing our spinal cord running through the spinal column, to the top most part of our brain, which is the highest point of knowledge. The Vel is the spear of wisdom, penetrating the intellect, seeking ultimate reality. A deadly foe to the arrogant, to the lower natured it affords strength and protection to the awoken soul.

The Mayil (Peacock):- The Peacock represents his Vahana (vehicle) symbolizing his conquest over ego, vanity and pride. By Lord Muruga sitting on the Peacock it symbolises the control he has over our pride and ego.

Why yellow?- The ancient tribes in India started the Kavady festival by worshipping the rising sun. They believed that the sun could provide heat and light but symbolically it could also burn up sins and redeem devotees. They recognized the sun as Lord Muruga. The sun was seen as a yellow colour, which is associated with Kavady. That is why devotees wear yellow for Kavady.

Types and significance of various Kavadies:-

PAAL (Milk) – Good life and prosperity
THAYIER (Sour Milk) – Sickness
SANDANOH (Sandal wood powder) – Happiness and Wisdom
THEN (Honey) – Truthfulness and honesty
PANJAMRITHAM (5 sweet mixtures) – Good strength
ELLEMICHAAI (Lime) – For enemies
MANJAL PODI (Turmeric powder) – Worries and Debts
PANIER (Rose water) – Wealth and progress
ILLANIER (Tender Coconut) – Conceiving
NEY (Ghee) – Liberation (MOKSHAM)
VIBHOOTI (Holy Ash) – Blessings
KAARUMPIEN CHARU (Sugar cane juice) – Cure Diseases
MACHA (Fish) – Only carried by fisherman, to rid of evil spirits
PUSHPA (Flowers) - progress and success

The six-syllabled mantra chanted for Lord Muruga: -

OM SARA-VANA-BAVA NAMAHA/POTRI

(Please note in north India namah (I offer my obeisance's) is used and in South India Potri is used. Both have the same meaning.

WHY WE CHANT SA-RA-VA-NA-BA-VA

SA – CONFERS THE PROSPERITY OF SHAKTI
RA – GIVES THE WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE
VA – BESTOWS HAPPINESS OF ENJOYMENT
NA – PROTECT FROM ALL FORCES OF EVIL
BA – CONFERS MORALITY
VA – CONFERS THE LIFE OF BLESSEDNESS

The message is that Kavady offerings to Lord Muruga need not be confined to a special day set aside for that purpose. We should mentally carry the Kavady each and every day of our lives; that is, we should ask God's help to live a well balanced life at all times. Please remember that Kavady is not only for the Tamil-speaking people but also for all Hindu's. Let's not segregate rather congregate. ॐ

HA-RA-GA-RO-GA-RA – Hail, Hail, Hail Oh Lord

Thank you for taking time to read this article. We are trying to reach out not only to Hindus but to others of other faiths as well. By compiling and publishing these articles we hope that others will understand what a beautiful and diversified way of life Hinduism (Sanatan Dharma) really is. Please pass these articles to your friends and

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