

Vaikasi Visakam 28th May 2018
(The Appearance day of Lord Muruga)



Vaikasi Visakam Muhurtham

Visakam Nakshathram Begins = 18h08 on 27th May 2018

Visakam Nakshathram Ends = 19h34 on 28th May 2018

Vaikasi Visakam is celebrated as birthday/appearance/jayanti of Lord Muruga. It is celebrated during Visakam Nakshatra in the Tamil month of Vaikasi. In 2018, the date of Vaikasi Visakam festival is 28th May. Vaikasi is the second Solar month in Tamil Calendar and Visakam is the sixteenth star out of twenty-seven stars which prevails at least once in every month. Vaikasi month is known as Vrishabha month and Visakam Nakshatra is known as Vishakha Nakshatra in other Hindu Calendars. Vaikasi Visakam falls in month of May or June.

The birth anniversary of Lord Muruga, who is also known as the Vedic Deity of courage, wealth and wisdom, is mainly celebrated by those of South Indian decent all over the world and which I find quite disappointing as there isn't a Tamil or Hindi Deity rather Vedic deities (Tamil and Hindi are just two of the many thousands of dialects spoken in India). Lord Muruga is younger son of Lord Shiva and Mother Parvati and brother of Lord Ganesha. Lord Muruga is also known as Lord Senthil, Lord Kumaran, Lord Subramanyam and Lord Shanmugam. Lord Murugan has six faces and because of that He is also known as Lord Arumugam. Due to His six faces Lord Murugan can see in East, West, North, South, Heaven and Patala (netherworld) simultaneously.

On Vaikasi Visakam, the day when the Nakshatram Visakam coincides with the full moon or Purnima, devotees go on processions and take milk to Lord Muruga's temple to perform milk Abhishekam ('pal' abhishekam) to the deity of Lord Muruga. Some devotees also carry Kavady to Muruga Temples. Thousands of devotees visit Lord

Muruga temples on Vaikasi Visakam, especially at Tiruchendur and at Tirupparankundram South India.

SO WHAT IS DIPIKA'S ADVISE ON HOW TO OBSERVE THIS SPECIAL DAY:-

After having a bath, wear clean clothes, then prepare Payasam (sweet rice/kheer), and place some cut mango or banana in a bowl, and in a cup (lota/chumbu) add milk with gur, and betel leaf + betel nut. These items should be placed on a tray, as depicted in the pictures provided below.

Tray #1:- 3 Incense sticks in an incense holder, lamp with a tablet of camphor or ghee and a wick and one marigold, jasmine or a flower that is easily accessible.



Tray #2:- Payasam in a bowl, 1 clean spoon, cut mango or banana in a bowl, milk in a cup (lota/chumbu), 1 betel leaf + betel nut (the flat, brown one).



Now offer Tray #2 by placing the tray in front of a picture or murti of Lord Muruga. Pray to the Lord and ask that he enjoys the food prepared by yourself with love. Leave the tray for 5 minutes after offering it to the Lord - for the Lord to partake in his meal. After 5 minutes, return and pray to Lord Muruga asking for forgiveness if the food prepared by yourself wasn't to his satisfaction but it was prepared with utmost devotion. Always remember humility, as one should never think what they are cooking or preparing is the best but one is simply trying to please the Lord.

Light the incense and the lamp, place these items on the tray together with a flower and then offer your tray assembled like Tray #1 by turning the tray in a clockwise direction around the picture/murti 7 times. Should you desire to be more specific with the aarti as performed in temples, then you can offer the tray offer four circles (clockwise) to the lotus feet of Lord Muruga, two circles to the navel, and three circles to the Lord's face; then offer seven circles to the Lord's whole body.

Finally the six-syllable mantra is chanted during this auspicious day to Lord Muruga viz. 'OM SARA-VANA-BAVA NAMAH x 108 times in front of a deity or picture of Lord Muruga. Please chant this most auspicious mantra with a lot of faith. Once done with the chanting, one should pay their obeisances to the picture/murti of Lord Muruga and you can continue with your day constantly remembering our Lord and his pastimes during the day.

In the evening as most would find this convenient many visit their local Lord Muruga temple. What you should take along with to offer to Lord Muruga is a tray, 3 incense, 1 clay lamp with 1 camphor tablet, 1 box matches, 3 kinds of fruits, 1 unbroken cleaned coconut, 1 banana leaf, 3 whole flowers, and Mithai (sweets). When by the temple priest he would then advise what you should do from thereon.

*** REMEMBER that your devotion or bhakti is what is important and means the most to Lord Muruga.

While traveling to the temple don't allow yourself to focus on problems at home or at work. Do hear to religious music in your car audio system or your cell phone and listen to the music with lots of faith.

The Kavady procession is seen as an outward demonstration of mass devotion towards Lord Muruga. There are various reasons for carrying the Kavady but the two main reasons are either to express gratitude to Lord Muruga or to request Lord Muruga for help in overcoming a particular problem/issue in one's life.

Vaikasi Visakam also spelled as Vaikasi Vishaka. Lord Muruga is the general of the army of devas, is also known as Skanda, Kanda, Subrahmanya and Kartik.

According to Puranas, the Devas (gods) were driven out of heaven by demon Surapadman with the help of boons he received from Lord Brahma. Unable to defeat

Surapadman, Lord Indra, the king of devas, sought the help of Lord Brahma. But Lord Brahma could only narrate his helplessness as Surapadman had already obtained boons from him through severe penance. But Lord Brahma did suggest a way out and that was to seek the help of Lord Shiva. When Lord Indra narrated the cruel deeds of Surapadman, an enraged Lord Shiva opened his third eye and the fiery sparks that came out which transformed into six babies. Later Mother Parvati joined the six babies into one and thus Lord Muruga incarnated with the purpose of vanquishing the demons.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:- The descent of Muruga is referred to as the Shanmuga avataram. This descent was in answer to a prayer by the devas to rid the world of adharma caused by the three asura brothers, Soorapadman, Singamuhan and Tarakan. These brothers had obtained great powers through intense penance and were harassing the devas. The devas appealed to Lord Shiva for help. Tradition has it that Lord Shiva added a sixth face to the existing five faces and this incident is spoken of in the celebrated work of Saint Kumaraguruparar as:

Ainthu mukaththodatho mukamum thanthu Tirumukangal ārāki.

Saint Tirumular in his Magnum Opus, the Tirumantiram, over two thousand years ago referred to this Divine incident as:

Āme pirān mukamainthodu māruya Rāme pirānuk kathomukamārula.

From the forehead, Shiva emitted six sparks of fire which enveloped the world with lustre. These sparks were carried by Vayu and Agni to the Ganges which pushed them into Lake Saravana filled with lotuses and reeds. Philosophically the lotus represents the pure heart and the reeds represent the network of nerves in man's physical body. Symbolically, the Divine Effulgence in the lake with its lotuses and reeds, are within each one. As Light and Life this Reality abides in the body, breath, senses, mind, intelligence and ego. These six facets of the human complex represents the six faces of Shanmugan.

In the Lake the sparks became six Divine children and were nursed by six Kaartika maidens. These children were embraced by the Divine Mother and became One with six faces and twelve hands. And thus descended Shanmugan, the incarnation of pure consciousness and divine knowledge on the pournima (paruvam) in the month of Vaikasi.

Saint Kachchiappah Sivachariyar beautifully portrays the descent as, 'With form and formlessness, without a beginning and as one and many, stood the column of Light, the

Supreme Brahman, who with six merciful faces and twelve arms took the Divine Incarnation as Murukan for the redemption of the world,'

Aruvamum uruvumāki anāthiyāi palavāi onrāi

Brahmamāi ninra sothi pilambathor meniyākak

Karunaikoor mukangal ārum karangal pannirendu konde

Oru thiruMurukan vandhāngu udhiththanan ulakam uyya.

He then goes on to say, 'That ever pure, Omnipresent Shiva, who cannot be comprehended by speech or mind or even by the Vedas, assuming the form of six sweet babes, was gracefully seated on six lotus flowers in the Saravana Lake.'

Muruga is worshipped and adored also as Subramanyan, Shanmugan, Kārttikeyan, Guhan Saravanapavan, Arumugan etc. As Muruga, He is the ever young and beautiful; as Subramanyan, He is the Su Brahmanya the All-pervading spirit of the Universe – the essence from which all things are evolved, by which they are sustained and into which they dissolve. He is the Omnipresent One, the Commander-in-Chief seated on a peacock with the Vel and is depicted at times with the Divine Consorts, Devayani and Valli. As Shanmugan, He descended to destroy adharma. As Kārttikeyan, He was nursed by the Kārtika maidens. As Guhan, He resides in the cavern of one's heart. As Saravanabavan, He belonged to Lake Saravana. As Arumugan, He has six faces.

Generally Muruga is spoken of as Ceyon one who is ruddy in colour. However, the Sri Tattvanidhi describes Muruk Muruga as dark blue in colour holding the Vel; sometimes He is depicted with the two consorts, Devayanai and Valli. Besides Him stands the peacock gripping a snake with its claws. This entire picture is in itself a narrative description in which every aspect symbolises a deeper meaning. The blue indicates infinity. To the human perception all infinite expanses for example the sky or ocean, appear blue. Muruga is the Infinite Reality existing in the cavern of the heart - the Guhan. This reality expresses Itself through the mind and together with the five sense organs, forms His six faces – Shan(six)-mukham. The peacock is symbolic of vanity and pride. The serpent represents ego, the carnal personality of man which keeps wanting the mundane pleasures. The ego is created by avidya or ignorance and this must be kept in check and channeled to discover the Truth. The peacock holding the serpent within its claws conveys this Truth. And finally the Vel, is symbolic of the removal of the negative and evil tendencies which veil the true Divine Self. The Vel represents wisdom, Jnāna Sakti; His Consort Valli is the power of Will and is the

personification of Divine Love, Ichchā Sakti; and Devayanai is the power of action and is the personification of deathlessness, Kriya Sakti. The three saktis help in eradicating the demon ego, represented in this episode as Soorapadman, the asura.

Muruga appeared for a special purpose to eradicate the adharma caused by the asuras and the ensuing battle with the asuras is the katha of the Skanda Shashti fast. The manifestation of Shanmugan is the everlasting testament of victory, of Truth over falsehood, of Dharma over adharma. And those who fight against adharmic forces within or around themselves, are said to be the 'faithful warriors of Muruga' and reflect his splendour - the Muruga amsam

Thus it is seen that on this special day of Vaikāsi Visākam, the young and ever beautiful One came down for a specific purpose. But what is important is that this Divine Avatāram is continuously going on within man. Saint Arunagirinathar says that one should bear this in mind, draw strength and knowledge from this by meditating on the his sacred form for at least half a minute in order that he may be blessed with His grace.

Sarana kamalalayaththe arai nimisha neramettil Tavamurai Dhyānam vaikka

To the Buddhist, Vaikāsi Purnima, is Wesak, the day Gautam Buddha appeared, gained enlightenment and finally attained maha samādhi. His life from birth, through marriage, renunciation, enlightenment to maha samādhi is nothing less than fascinating. Even though he had left his mortal coil over two thousand five hundred years ago, the spirituality created by him has not diminished - it is timelessly ancient.

To the Hindus, Buddhism is the philosophy of the Upanishads. It is not that Buddhism as a distinct sect disappeared from the land of its birth, but was re-absorbed into the main current of Hindu thought because in essence it was part of it and the ethics of Buddhism became an essential part of Hindu religious teaching.

Vaikāsi Purnima is also Periyalvar's jayanti. He was one of the famous Alvar saints – they was Vaisnava devotees who sang of Shree Krishna as a child.

Year after year, the Vaikāsi full moon walks the sky reminding the Hindus of their ancient spiritual heritage. May we, on this sacred day re-dedicate ourselves to foster love and compassion and be blessed with the choicest grace of Muruga.

Finally some advise from DIPIKA...

There are countless prayers one can perform. Some remedies would give results, some won't, depending on one's karma.

My “go-to” miracle always is carrying KAVADY.

Many request help via email, etc., and I always advise people to pray to Lord Muruga (a.k.a Lord Skanda deva). Many North Indians (for example Hindi and Gujarati, etc. people) misunderstand that he is a Tamil deity, which cannot be further from the truth. Most North Indians (Hindi or Gujarati, etc. people) perform the Shree Satya-Narayana Katha and this katha is from the Reva Khanda of the Skanda Purana. If only the North Indian (Hindi or Gujarati, etc.) people knew this fact, they would surely be surprised. Also, Lord Muruga is the commander-in-chief of Lord Vishnu’s army. So I would humbly advise you to pray to a deity or picture of Lord Muruga. I would suggest you write all the things you desire from Lord Muruga on an A4 paper (but please don't be unrealistic or ask for trivial things). Fold this page a few times and then place it in between your palms and pray to Lord Muruga praying that what you wrote on the page is realised or comes true and you will carry a Kavady for 3 years. Now leave this page by Lord Muruga's Deity or picture and a R10. Use this money when you are buying things for the next Kavady of your choice. Daily pray to Lord Muruga to fulfil your desires on what you wrote on that page.

All Kavadies are special and powerful, but I personally recommend the Thai Poesam Kavady which occurs around the latter part of January or the beginning of February yearly. Another Kavady is called Vaikasi Visakam is also observed around April/May.

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Narottam das & Arjun Nandlal

Email info@dipika.org.za

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