

## **Vara Lakshmi Vrat – 24<sup>th</sup> August 2018.**



In the Skanda Purana the great Lord Shiva himself describes this very important prayer. This very auspicious vrat (fasting) is performed mainly by women to obtain progeny, auspiciousness, prosperity and wealth. Many women perform this prayer mainly for the health and long life of her husband. (Well I believe that the husband should also fast and pray to Lord Narayana for the long life of his wife. I think that's rather fair)

### **This year this auspicious vrat falls on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> August.**

The meaning of "Vara Lakshmi Vrat" is Vara is a boon or wish, Lakshmi is the Goddess of wealth and a Vrat is a fast undertaken to secure a boon or wish. So Vara Lakshmi Vrat is a fast undertaken in honour of the Goddess of wealth to secure a boon or wish.

Mother Lakshmi or as she is also known as Shree Devi, is the wife of Lord Narayana/Hari/Vishnu, and under various names appears in this relation in His various incarnations. For example when Lord Raam appeared She was known as Sita-devi, when Lord Parashurama appeared She was known as Dharaani, when Lord Krishna appeared She was known as Rukmini-devi and when Caitanya Mahaprabhu appeared She was known as Srimati Lakshmi-priya. In other descents of Lord Krishna She was always His associate.

In the Srimad Bhagavatam it's mentioned that Lakshmi Devi who is sought by the Devi's and Devas, brahmanas, Vaishnavas and everyone else always engages in rendering service to the lotus feet of Lord Krishna. Mother Lakshmi is well known for always massaging the lotus feet of Lord Narayana. She is an ideal wife because she takes care of Lord Narayana in every detail. She takes care not only of His lotus feet but of the household affairs of the Lord as well. She cooks nice food preparations for Him, fans Him while He eats, sets His bed and sitting places in the right order. In this way She is always engaged in the service of the Lord.

Riches come from Mother Lakshmi, the goddess of fortune, and the Goddess of fortune is the property of Lord Narayana, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The goddess of fortune cannot stay anywhere but by the side of Lord Narayana; therefore another name for her is Chanchala – restless. She cannot be peaceful unless she is in the company of her husband, Lord Narayana. For example, Lakshmi Devi as Sita Devi was carried away by the materialistic demon Ravana. Ravana kidnapped Sita-devi, the goddess of fortune belonging to Lord Rama. As a result, Ravana's entire family, opulence and kingdom were smashed and destroyed, and Sita-devi, the goddess of fortune, was recovered from his clutches and reunited with Lord Rama. So from this example we can see that if one wants to enjoy Mother Lakshmi the way Ravana did, the laws of nature will vanquish one, and whatever few possessions one has it will be taken away. Finally death will take everything away from him or her.

Mother Lakshmi is the Lord's very precious potency. She is the constant companion of Lord Narayana; They remain together constantly. One cannot keep Mother Lakshmi in one's home without Lord Narayana. To think that one can do so is very dangerous. To keep Mother Lakshmi, or the riches of the Lord, without the service of Lord Narayana is always dangerous, for then she becomes the illusory energy. With Lord Narayana however, she is the spiritual energy.

The Vishnu Purana mentions that Lakshmi Devi is the constant companion of Lord Narayana and therefore called anapayini. She is the mother of all creation.

**The Appearance of Mother Lakshmi:-** During the churning of the ocean of milk that happened millenniums ago the demons and devas churned the milk ocean for The Nectar of Immortality. As they churned the ocean many forms of beings were born and eventually Mother Lakshmi appeared. So She is therefore the daughter of the ocean. The devas, devas, great sages and the other beings offered Her their respectful worship. Ganga Devi and the other sacred rivers followed Her, and the heavenly elephants took up the pure waters and poured them upon Her. The Goddess of Fortune was allowed to select Her own husband in a Svayamvara (marriage) ceremony. She examined every one of the candidates but could find anyone suitable to accept as Her husband. At last She selected Lord Narayan as Her master. Approaching Lord Narayan She placed upon His shoulders a garland of newly grown unfading lotus flowers, which She received from Her father. Lord Narayan accepted Her and gave Her a place to stay everlastingly at His chest. Because of this combination of Lakshmi and Narayan, all who were present, including the Devi's and Deva's and the other beings were very pleased. According to the desire of Mother Lakshmi, Lord Narayan made His bosom Her residence so that by Her glance She could favour everyone, including the Devi's and Deva's and ordinary human beings. In other words, since the Goddess of Fortune stays on the bosom of Shree Narayan, She naturally sees any devotee who worships Lord Narayan. When the Goddess of Fortune understands that a devotee is in favour of devotional service to Her husband, She is naturally inclined to bless the devotee with all opulence's. Ignorant people try to receive the favour and mercy of Lakshmi Devi, but because they are not devotees of Shree Narayan, their opulence's are flickering.

In his Laghu-Bhagavatamrita Srila Rupa Goswami has quoted from the Padma Purana where it is stated that Lakshmidivi after seeing the attractive features of Lord Krsna, was attracted to Him, and to get the favour of Lord Krsna She engaged herself in meditation. When asked by Lord Krsna why She was engaged in meditation with austerity, She

answered, "I want to be one of your associates like the gopis in Vrindavan." Hearing this, Lord Krsna replied that it was quite impossible. Lakshmi-devi then said that She wanted to remain just like a golden line on the chest of the Lord. Now for Mother Lakshmi to enter the rasa dance She was able to give up everything: Her palace, Her opulence, and Her royal clothes. She was reduced to performing austerities and eating khichiri, but still She could not give up Her mentality, "I am Lakshmi, the Goddess of Fortune". She could not enter the level of devotion of the gopi's. Finally Lord Krsna granted Her request, and since then Ma Lakshmi has always been situated on the chest of Lord Krsna as a golden line. Lakshmi Devi stays there on Shree Krsna's chest as a golden line when He is performing pastimes with the gopis. When Lord Krsna is not performing with any of the gopi's, then Lakshmi Devi comes off His chest and serves Him as Mother Lakshmi. That means when He is manifesting Himself as Lord Narayan. So in one sense Lakshmi Devi finally did enter the rasa dance, but only as a golden line.

The austerity and meditation of Lakshmi Devi is also mentioned in Srimad Bhagavatam (10.16.36): the Naga-Patnis, the wives of the serpent Kaliya, in the course of their prayers to Lord Krsna, said that he goddess of fortune, Lakshmi-devi, also wanted His association as a gopi and desired the dust of His lotus feet.

Lakshmi Devi had the desire to enter the rasa dance with Shree Krsna in Vrindavan Dham. However she can't quite adopt the same surrendered mood as the gopi's. Thus although Ma Lakshmi desires to enter the rasa dance with Shree Krsna, because her desire is mixed with the mood of being the Queen of Vaikuntha she is not able to enter into Vrindavan Dham.

Once, Mother Lakshmi heard that if she went to Vrindavan Dham and performed austerities then she might be able to enter the rasa dance. Previously Lord Shiva had performed austerities to be able to enter the rasa dance. After Lord Shiva had performed his austerities, Lalita Sakhi suggested that he take a bath in Manasarovara. Doing so, he obtained the body of a gopi and was then able to enter the rasa dance. Lord Shiva is thus known as Gopishvara. Lord Krsna gave Lord Gopishvara the service of protecting the rasa dance. For this reason Gaudiya Vaishnavas pray to Lord Shiva in his form of Gopishvara that he may grant them entrance into the madhurya-rasa of Vrindavan Dham.

But Lakshmi Devi could not enter Vrindavan Dham. She could only get as far as the other side of the Yamuna River. On the eastern side of the Yamuna there are five forests. The forest where Lakshmi-devi is staying is known as Bilvavan. Although Lord Krsna performs pastimes in the nearby forests of Bhandiravan and Lohavan, very few of His pastimes take place in Bilvavan, and certainly none of His confidential pastimes with the gopi's.

On the western side of the Yamuna in Vrindavan is the location of the rasa-sthali, the place where Shree Krsna's confidential pastimes go on with the gopi's. Lakshmi-devi could not cross the border of the Yamuna. She was separated not only by the Yamuna, but also by her mood. She had a certain pride of being Lakshmi-devi. She did not have the surrendered mood of the gopi's called gopi-bhava. Without gopi-bhava no one can enter Vrindavan to serve Lord Krsna in the dance or serve Srimati Radharani.

Mother Lakshmi was determined to perform austerities in Bilvavan until she could get her desire fulfilled. She is still there today. She has been performing austerities there for thousands and thousands of years. The deity of Ma Lakshmi in Bilvavan is unique. Generally deities of Mother Lakshmi are seen in a standing position next to Lord Narayan.

Being the Shakti potency of the Lord, she is always seen holding her right hand palm out, bestowing blessings. However, this particular deity of Ma Lakshmi is alone, without Shree Vishnu. She is not standing but seated in the yoga posture performing austerities to receive the blessings from the residents of Vrindavan. Although Lakshmi-devi is the Goddess of Fortune whom everyone approaches for fortune, wealth and position, she is begging for a position from the residents of Vrindavan. From this we can understand that the residents of Vrindavan are the most fortunate, most wealthy persons in the whole universe. They have the greatest wealth and that's the love for Shree Krsna or Krsna – prema.

Mother Lakshmi not only bestows wealth and all sorts of material prosperity but also imparts divine wisdom to all Her devotees. Mother Lakshmi is one of the most worshipped deities. Why??? Well She plays a very important part in our Sanathan (eternal) culture. BUT most people unfortunately commit a grave mistake in their homes –albeit it's not really their fault. People have not being taught these very simple things. You see many Hindus have a Lakshmi lamp at their house but without a Vishnu/Narayana/Hari picture or murti next to Her. Now I am sure you know that Lakshmi Mata is always situated at the lotus feet of Her husband. And Her duty is to massage His lotus feet.

Now ask yourself this question, would you like to be separated from your husband??? (And I am hoping that you both are very attached to each other). Well if you said yes then why are you separating Lakshmi Devi from Her husband to whom She's extremely attached to? Lakshmi Devi says in the Srimad Bhagavatam that if I'm worshipped without My husband then I am a chancala (i.e. She is never in one place), but the moment you worship Me with My husband then I remain there very happy. So please if you do have a Lakshmi lamp without a Narayana murti or picture then please obtain one and worship Them as the Divine Couple, then you would see amazing transformation in your life. Remember that without Her mercy and blessings you cannot receive the mercy of Lord Narayana.

Do you know why we always say Durga-Shiva, Lakshmi-Narayana, Sita-Rama, Saraswati-Brahma, and Rukmini-Krsna? Why is the Shakti or females name always first??? It's because without the mercy of the Shakti-the wife one cannot receive the mercy of the husband. It's that simple.

Lakshmi Devi projects the whole world by Her projecting power, and deludes everyone by Her veiling power. She is also known as Vidya Lakshmi where She enlightens the spiritual aspirant. Without the grace and the blessings of Lakshmi Devi not even saints, gurus and those in the renounced order can engage in the work of preaching the holy messages of the Supreme Lord. In fact they need Her more than Grihastas (householders). Why??? Because they have to perform intense and dynamic preaching for mankind. And as I have mentioned above without the blessings of the mother how the fathers can bestows blessings. All great gurus never perform any prayers without first praying for the blessings of the Divine Mother. Even the great liberated Sukadeva Goswami – the speaker of the Maha Purana (The Srimad Bhagavatam), prayed to Mother Sarasvati (devim Sarasvati vyasam) before he narrated the Srimad Bhagavatam.

Lakshmi-devi is also known by the following names:-

HariPriyaa : - The beloved Of Lord Hari  
Padma : - The lotus  
Padmaalaya : - She who dwells in the lotus

Jaladhijaa : - the one that was born of the ocean  
Chancala : - one who is very fickle  
Lakamaata : - the mother of the world.

### **The Puja:- (This is a simple D.I.Y method)**

After having a bath, you should wear fresh clothes. Then at your prayer place, sprinkle water to purify the place. Then sprinkle ata (flour) on a clean board/tile (or see what you can use – use your discretion). This is called a mandala/bedi (a place where the prayer is going to be performed.). Fill a clay/brass/copper pot with white or basmati rice, place five fresh washed mango leaves in the pot and place a coconut (you should have already have cleaned the coconut) in the pot. Thereafter place a red cloth on the coconut. Then place this pot at the center of the mandala. Fresh grains are used in the worship as they convey the idea of growth and prosperity.

On the mandala place a Lord Ganesh murti and if you have a picture of Radha- Krsna or Sita-Rama. Firstly either 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 the prayer.

Lakshmi Devi is now invoked and worshipped in the pot (khumbha/lota). Pray to Mother Lakshmi asking her to please enter in the pot (khumbha/lota) and accept your prayers.

Now chant the following: -

1) Om swagatam su swagatam - Om Lakshmee-yai namah  
(Swagatam means O Mother Lakshmi I welcome you.)

Now garland the coconut.

Then offer flower or flower petals.

2) Om idam pushpam – Om Lakshmee-yai namah. (Pushpam = flowers)

Then offer incense

3) Om tato dhoopam aghraa-payaami – Om Lakshmee-yai namah.  
(Dhoopam = incense)

Then offer lamp

4) Om prat-yaksha deepam darshayaami – Om Lakshmee-yai namah.  
(Deepam = lamp)

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

5) Om naivedyam samar-payaami – Om Lakshmee-yai namah  
Offer cut fruit)  
(Naivedyam = food)

You can also place a small lota of milk next to the coconut.

6) Offer prayers for forgiveness

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

Then offer your personal prayers to Mother Lakshmi. Ask Ma for whatever you want and Ma 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 Lakshmi Chalisa or any mantras of Lakshmi Devi.

After the worship of the pot, then the worship of the sacred thread (which is red in colour). You can place the red thread on or near the pot. It is then tied to the left hand of the lady but in some places in India it's tied on the right hand. In the Sarva Deva Pratishtaa Paddhati by Gopaladatta Shastri page 54 it's explained that the raksha sutra is tied on the left wrist for a female and on the right wrist of the males. You can then worship whomever you like Hanumanji, Durga-Shiva, and so forth. After the worship is over, various auspicious articles (like rice, sari, and so forth) are given in charity to some deserving lady.

Famous question is what to do with the coconut after the Puja. Good question. During the Lakshmi Puja Mother Lakshmi was invited into the coconut but now once the Puja is completed Mother Lakshmi returns back to Vaikuntha to be with Her Lord Vishnu and thus the coconut becomes Prashad, which should be broken and eaten as Lakshmi Prashad (Mercy food from Mother Lakshmi). Do not dispose of the coconut into the river...

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