

Measles and its Significance in Hinduism



We at Dipika humbly prostrate and seek the Divine blessings of the Mother/Deity of Skin Diseases, Mother Marieammen ("Maari" meaning "power" and "ammen" meaning "mother"), A.K.A. Mother Sheetala-Devi to compile this ground breaking article. Jai Maarie Mata, Jai Sheetala Mata. This topic has been hotly debated by both the religious and scientific communities. So we at DIPIKA are going to carefully analyse different backgrounds and thus give everyone a fair hearing. We hope that this article will enlighten the public rather than further confuse many. Jai Matashree.

An Overview of the Measles Disease

The Cause:- Measles is a respiratory disease caused by a virus and is a viral and an air-borne disease. The virus spreads through coughing and sneezing. Moreover, it spreads faster during the hot season. This is because when the temperature is high, viruses spread faster thus causing the widespread of the disease. Overcrowding also triggers the spread of the disease. The disease of measles and the virus that causes it share the same name. The disease is also called rubeola. The measles virus normally grows in the cells that line the back of the throat and lungs. There is no cure for measles.

The Symptoms:- Measles causes fever, runny nose, cough and a rash all over the body. Signs and Symptoms of measles generally begin about 7-14 days after a person has been infected, and include: blotchy rash, fever, cough, runny nose, red & watery eyes (conjunctivitis), feeling run down, Achy (malaise), tiny white spots with bluish-white centers found inside the mouth (Koplik's spots). *** View the picture below.



A typical case of measles begins with a mild to moderate fever, cough, runny nose, red eyes, and sore throat. Two to three days after symptoms begin, tiny white spots (Koplik's spots – pictured above) may appear inside the mouth. Three to five days after the start of symptoms, a red or reddish-brown rash appears. The rash usually begins on the affected person's face at the hairline and spreads downward to the neck, trunk, arms, legs, and feet. When the rash appears, a person's fever may spike to more than 104 degrees Fahrenheit. After a few days, the fever subsides and the rash fades.



Skin of a patient after 3 days of measles infection.

Complications:- About one out of 10 children with measles may also be affected with an ear infection, and up to one out of 20 gets affected with pneumonia, about one out of 1,000 get affected with encephalitis (is the irritation and swelling {inflammation} of the brain, most often due to infections), and for one or two out of a 1,000 it's fatal. Other rash-causing diseases that are often confused with measles include Roseola (roseola infantum) and Rubella (German measles) – picture below. Rubella is an acute viral disease that causes fever and rash for two to three days (mild disease in children and young adults).



Despite the seemingly slim chance of fatality, measles is responsible for approximately 200000 deaths per annum. Measles can also make a pregnant woman have a miscarriage or give birth prematurely. About 30% of measles cases develop one or more complications, including

- Pneumonia, which is the complication that is most often the cause of death in young children.
- Ear infections occur in about 1 in 10 measles cases and permanent loss of hearing can result.
- Diarrhoea is reported in about 8% of cases.

Transmission:- Measles is highly contagious and can be spread to others from four days before till four days after the rash appears. Measles is so contagious that if one person has it, 90% of the people close to that person who are not immune will also become infected with the measles' virus. The virus lives in the mucus in the nose and throat of the infected person. When that person sneezes or coughs, droplets spray into the air. The droplets can

get into other people's noses or throats when they breathe or put their fingers in their mouth or nose after touching an infected surface. The virus can live on infected surfaces for up to 2 hours and spreads so easily that people who are not immune will probably get it when they come close to someone who is infected. Measles is a disease of humans and is not spread by the animal species.

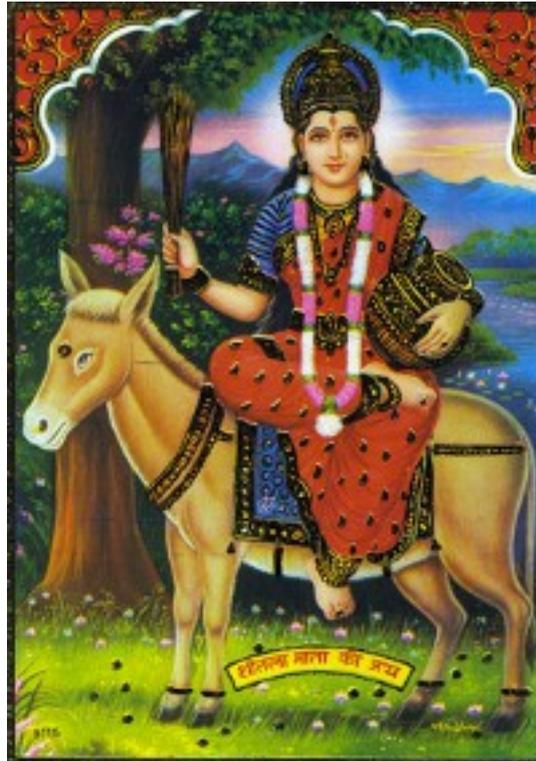
Treatment of the average attack of measles in the well-fed patient involves no more than good nursing at home, with attention to fluid and food intake, and keeping one's eyes and mouth clean. Historically, however, measles was regarded as an extremely serious disease, akin, as we have seen, to smallpox. Death rates of between ten and twenty per cent were reported from isolated communities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and in Glasgow at the turn of this century five children in every hundred died from the disease (Morley, 1969).

Measles from a Hindu perspective

The Indian History of Measles:- Many ancient Indian visionary doctors explained skin diseases like measles etc. Over 2500 years ago the two most famous visionary Rishi doctors were Sushruta Acharya and Charaka Acharya. Their great selfless works revolutionised the medical field. The Sushruta Samhita is a Sanskrit text, attributed to Acharya Sushruta and The Charaka Samhita is attributed to Acharya Charaka. So these two great Samhita's (works) discusses everything about measles' and other skin diseases and a whole lot more. So this makes us Hindus the pioneers in this field. Jai Hind.

The Sanskrit word "masuurikaa" translates to English as "measles, lentil, eruption of lentil shaped pustules, procuress (female procurer) and smallpox". So, below we shall examine further what relationship a Vedic Goddess may have with this disease and why. As with many early cultures and belief systems, significant phases in life are assumed to be controlled by some divine powers. Measles in Sanskrit also translates as the "Gift from the goddess" because of the huge developmental and growth spurts often followed infection. Measles can help to mature the immune system, and may help prevent auto-immune illnesses such as cancer, asthma and allergies later in life.

Sheetala (Sheetla) Mata is the Hindu Deity governing pox, sores, pustules and diseases. Mata is worshipped particularly in Northern India and surrounding areas. Sheetala Mataji loves cold and coolness and this is reflected in her name (Sheetal). One derivation of Sheetala Devi means the "Cold Goddess" hence Mata likes cold food offerings cooked the day before. Measles is said to be caused by Sheetala Mataji. When we converse about measles and Sheetala Mata, it's important to realise that this is understanding measles in strictly religious terms. Us Hindus refer to measles as Choti Mai or Choti Mata (The Smaller Mother) whilst smallpox is Bari Mai or Bari Mata (The Larger Mother).



Mother Sheetaladevi

According to Puranic Lilas (pastimes) Mother Sheetaladevi is one of seven sisters who live in the Neem Tree/Syringaberry Tree and who brings epidemic diseases. She is often in the company of Ghentukarna (The Deity of skin diseases), Jvara-asura (The fever demon), the Caushattee Rogas (The sixty-four epidemics), Olaai Candi/Olaai Bibi (The goddess of cholera) and Rakta-avatee (The goddess of blood infections). The measles rash represents “heat” and “impurities” that must exit the child’s/person’s body.

In the above picture depicting Mother Sheetaladevi, Mata is represented as a young maiden crowned with a winnowing-fan, riding her mount - a donkey/ass, holding a short broom of Neem leaves {her weapon} (either to spread or dust off germs) and a pot full of pulses (the viruses) or cold water (a healing tool). Also Mata is said to be carrying a bunch of Neem leaves which is an ancient Ayurvedic medicinal herb that's a very effective remedy to most skin diseases even today. Temples dedicated to Srimati Sheetaladevi can be found near Neem trees/Syringaberry trees. Hindus place Neem leaves/Syringaberry leaves over the entry way to the house and under the infected child’s bed.

Symbolically, Mother Sheetaladevi represents Nature’s power of generating virus causing disease and Nature’s healing powers. Also Mother Sheetaladevi emphasizes the need for cleanliness. According to Puranas, Mother Sheetaladevi (the cooling one), was created by Lord Brahma-ji. Mother Sheetaladevi was promised by Lord Brahma that she will be worshipped as a Goddess on earth but she should carry the seeds of lentils. The lentil is none other than ‘Urad dal’. Mother Sheetaladevi then asked for a companion and Mata was directed to Lord Shiva-ji, who blessed Mata and created Jvara-asura (the fever demon). Jvara-asura was created from the sweat of Lord Shiva. Mother Sheetaladevi and Jvara-asura remained in Devaloka (heavenly planets) along with other Devi’s and Deva’s. They used a donkey to transport the lentils to wherever they went. But the lentil seeds one day turned into smallpox germs and the disease started to spread in the heavens. Finally, the Devi’s and Deva’s grew frustrated with Mother Sheetaladevi, and requested Devi to settle on earth where she will be worshipped. Mother Sheetaladevi and Jvara-asura came down to earth and started

searching for a place to reside. They visited the court of King Birat, an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva-ji. King Birat agreed to worship Mother Sheetala and gave Mata a place to reside in his kingdom but Mother Sheetala will not get the respect accorded to Lord Shiva. An angry Mother Sheetala demanded supremacy over all other Devi's and Deva's and when King Birat did not budge, Mother Sheetala spread different various kinds of skin diseases on his land and finally, King Birat had to consent to Mother Sheetala wishes. Thereafter all the diseases and its after effects were miraculously cured. (And if you are thinking of criticizing Mother Sheetala – don't - as this will be a huge aberration as this is after all the Lord's Lila's which us humans will never understand).

In a time of great drought in India, a time when people were plagued with measles, chicken pox, small pox, mumps, and so forth, they sought help from the Divine Mother Parashakti. Mother Durga says in the Durga Paath that when one needs Her help all one has to do is ask Her. The Mother, ever willing to help Her children, manifested in the form of a woman garbed in a yellow sari, descended on the state of Samayapuram in the district of Thiruvekardu, South India. Here Mata fed the ill with porridge and nursed them with a mixture of Neem leaves/Syringaberry leaves, water and turmeric paste. Mata continued healing the sick and when Her work was complete She retired to Her abode. Mata was thereafter called Maarie-ammen. Mother Maari is worshipped in primarily in South India while Mata's counterpart, Mother Sheetala Devi is primarily worshipped in North India.

The Difference between Syringaberry leaves and Neem leaves.

Azadirachta Indica (Scientific name) - Neem (Hindi), is a tree in the mahogany family Meliaceae. It is one of two species in the genus Azadirachta, and is native to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh growing in tropical and semi-tropical regions. Its fruits and seeds are the source of Neem oil.



The amazing Neem tree is said to treat forty different diseases. All the parts of the tree is used for treating illness, the leaves, fruit, seeds and even the bark all contain medicinal properties. The use of Neem as a medicinal herb in India dates back over 5,000 years. Today its benefits has been verified by scientific research and clinical trials (I wonder what took them so long, hmmm). The Neem can be purchased in the form of oil, powder and pills. To give you an idea of the healing powers of the Neem tree, here are a few names that the citizens of India have given it, "Divine Tree", "Village Pharmacy", "Heal All" and "Nature's Drug store". With the almost endless list of uses for Neem, it could be called, "The Tree of Life"! Neem cleanses the blood, stimulates antibody production and strengthens the immune system which improves the body's resistance to many diseases. There are countless medicinal benefits of Neem.

Melia Azedarach L (Scientific name) - Syringaberry tree, is a species of deciduous tree in the mahogany family, Meliaceae. It is native to large parts of the world, like the Indian sub-continent (i.e. India and Sri Lanka) south-eastern Asia, China, Japan, Australia, Southern Africa, and so forth.



So we can deduce from the above that both leaves look virtually identical. It would take a well-trained eye to reveal any difference.

Based on the research compiled in this ground breaking article, we can deduce that the traditional Hindu remedies are not without merit. Tumeric is anti-bacterial and soothing to the skin. Syringa leaves/Neem leaves has a cooling effect on the body. Measles also presents other symptoms like diarrhoea and is probably why boiled food is the preferred option. Common sense must prevail though. If serious complications arise one should of course be attended to by a trained, professional medical practitioner. Although, even up to this day, modern science cannot anticipate who will experience measles without complications and who will have severe complications. Bear in mind that measles has been around for thousands of years and also would have existed at a time when there was no proper sanitation and running water. Leaving water in sunlight would have been an attempt to ensure that water was purified and posed less risk to the ill and the compromised immune system.

The key to combat measles is to ensure and maintain healthy immune system. A healthy immune system can protect the infected person from further complications with other diseases to prevent the measles from getting any worse. Follow a healthy diet of fruit and vegetables. One should not skip meals as this healthy yet simple boiled foods is not only meant to cure measles but to boost the infected person's immune system. So make sure that vegetables and fruits are eaten at every meal. Abstain from any meat products as that may aggravate the disease. It is also advised to engage in light exercise such as walking or stretching. Observing proper hygiene is the best safeguard against measles. The affected person should avoid using scented soaps. One may use hypoallergenic soap but not the accustomed soap that one usually uses. One should use only water when taking a bath, as far as possible.

Being isolated for about five days due to the measles virus is not the best solution at times as being isolated is also emotionally stressful to the affected person. Also, people around the affected person will ask if he/she is OK, it seems as if they are afraid to go near him/her. Also the child/person can miss a lot such as classes in school, work, and time with his/her friends because of the required isolation. Also one has to wear clothes that cover the whole body to avoid transmitting the disease to other people. And then he/she is not allowed to go outside especially when it's hot because the rashes get rather itchy when exposed to heat. In order to avoid this, it's important to maintain the immune system and continue with proper

hygiene. Observe a strictly healthy diet. In case of development of symptoms, go to the nearest hospital for check up to prevent the disease from getting worse.

When it's confirmed that the affected person has measles, it's imperative that strict cleanliness is adhered to and observed. From that day onwards (until the virus entirely clears up) the wearing of shoes is not allowed especially in the infected person's room, and preferably in the house as well. One can keep the shoes at a designated place in the house. When leaving the house you take your shoes with and wear it outside the house. During this period a strict vegetarian diet is consumed by the infected person, consuming of braised food, any fried foods and using of masala are also avoided. The general rule adhered to by many Hindu families is that when a person has measles in the house, all those who reside in that house also consume the boiled food. But the boiled food is chiefly for the infected person. Sweeping the house, especially the infected person's room with a broom is prohibited – however you can use a broom made out of Syringaberry or Neem leaves to sweep. You can sweep the yard with a normal broom. In some households the mother does not even use her sindhur in her Maang (middle part of the head) – but this seems not to have a scriptural basis hence this is optional. It is advisable not to attend Satsangs and weddings, etc. The reasons for above prohibitions were given earlier in this article but to highlight the points once again we shall briefly explain. So traditional Hindu remedies for measles and the like are not without merit.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTION:- Why a strict vegetarian diet is followed, consuming of braising of food, any fried foods and using of masala are also avoided?

ANSWER:- The treatment of measles in a well-fed patient involves no more than good nursing at home, with careful attention to fluids and food intake, and keeping the eyes and mouth always clean. Measles also presents other symptoms like diarrhoea and the like and a heavy or spicy-food based diet will undoubtedly irritate the bowels of the affected person. Hence this is probably why boiled food is the preferred diet. Also to mention that Tumeric (Hurdi) is anti bacterial and soothing to the skin. The affected person drinks hurdi water or Neem water (Neem leaves crushed into a paste) to cool the body. Syringaberry leaves/Neem leaves are cooling to the body.

QUESTION:- Why isn't one allowed to attend Satsangs, weddings, and so forth?

ANSWER:- So that the affected person doesn't spread the disease/virus. Since measles is highly contagious and can be spread to others and if one person has it, 90% of the people close to that person who are not immune to the virus will also become infected with the measles' virus. When the affected person sneezes or coughs, droplets spray into the air and if the droplets get into other people's noses or throats when they breathe or put their fingers in their mouth or nose after touching an infected surface. So this begs the question - "can the others in the house go to Satsangs, etc"? Well it is advised that anyone that resides in the house where the measles is currently occurring NOT attend as they are in contact with the infected person and the virus can still spread through the house members.

QUESTION:- Why is shoes not allowed in the house and sweeping the house with a regular broom is prohibited?

ANSWER:- This is strictly due to cleanliness. Sweeping the house, especially the infected person's room with a broom is prohibited – however you can use a broom made out of Syringaberry or Neem leaves to sweep. You can sweep the yard with a normal broom. Also

one should remember that the virus particles are in the air of the house of the infected person and sweeping the house with a broom causes that virus particles to rise into the air and if it is windy it spreads around that area further infecting more people. Using a broom made out of Syringaberry/Neem leaf branches is the preferred option as it doesn't rise much virus particles into the air.

QUESTION:- Why is Neem/Syringaberry leaves hung on the front door of an infected person's house?

ANSWER:- This is simply to alert anyone that does makes an unexpected visit to that house, that the house has a member affected with measles/small pox/mumps and the like. And to avoid being infected one should take the appropriate precautions.

DO NOTE:- With the above answers, it must be noted that "Common sense must prevail". I always encourage practicality, time, place and circumstances in all situations.

The Puja that's generally performed in this period...

***** DO NOTE:-** This puja is not only for Measles, but also for small-pox, mumps and similar diseases.

From the first day (once the measles has been confirmed), Neem/syringaberry leaves are hung at the entrance of the front door of the house. Place a metal pot/lota/chumbu which has water filled to the top, add a little Turmeric powder and a few Neem/syringaberry leaves. This is placed just to the side of the doormat/doorstep (of the front door), so that outsiders may sprinkle the water on them before entering the house in order to purify themselves. Then make sure all shoes are placed in a room where the affected child is not in. From this day only boiled food (salt can be added) should be consumed especially by the affected person but generally everyone in the house also consumes this food. Place Neem/syringaberry leaves under the bed-sheet of the affected person, also the patient should also lie on Neem/syringaberry leaves until the virus has totally abated. It is said that Mother Marieammen/Mother Sheetala used the very same syringaberry (Mother Marieammen) / Neem (Mother Sheetala) leaves and turmeric powder to heal the sick. The syringaberry/Neem tree has great medical value and it's widely used in Ayurvedic medicine. These leaves also have antiseptic qualities. While the virus is still in the house I would humbly recommend playing a CD on a CD player of the MARIAMMEN THALATTU – The lullaby to Mother Maari (unfortunately the video of the MARIAMMEN THALATTU is only given in this article on www.dipika.org.za) and also Sheetala Mata's Chalisa. The Sheetala Mata's Chalisa is given only on DIPIKA as well, due to a lack of space in this article.

The affected person and the people of the house can also chant the following simple mantra 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 21 or 108 times to Mata daily as well. The reason for chanting this special mantra is to gain the favour of Mother Sheetala Devi thus please her.

Mantra of Sheetala Mata - THE GODDESS OF DISEASES

Jaya Jaya Mata Sheetala, Tumahee Dhare Jo Dhyaana,
Hoya Bimala Sheetala Hridaya, Vikase Buddhi Balaa Gyaana,
Ghata Ghata Vaasi Sheetala, Sheetala Prabha Tumhara,
Sheetala Chai Nyaa Main Jhulayi, Mayyaa Pala Na Dara

The question that will be asked is "Is watching TV permitted"? Well, watching TV, hearing to the radio, and working on the computer of course is allowed. Do note that some of the information given below is due to tradition and should be respected as such.

Traditionally when an affected person has measles it is said from the generations passed that one should not wear any “hot/brightly” coloured clothes like red or yellow rather more subtle and dull colours. But the colour of the clothes you wear has no relationship with regards to measles. So we can deduce that what colour clothes you wear has no logical basis and thus optional. However lightweight cotton clothing is certainly recommended as it's non irritating to the skin. Observing proper hygiene is the best treatment for one affected with measles. When the infected person bathes for the first two days the usage of scented soap is generally avoided. This is due to the fact that the soap may cause more irritation to an already itchy skin. As far as possible, one should only use water in taking a bath and avoid the use of scented soap. One may use hypo-allergenic soap but not the accustomed soaps that's generally used. For obvious reason it would be best if only the affected person uses that particular bar of soap. After 3, 5, 7 or 9 days, if the sores have dried up, a bath is given to the patient with turmeric water mixed with Syringaberry/Neem leaves. So for the first two days one should use just plain water to bath and then on the 3rd or 5th, 7th or 9th day when the sores/measles have dried, use water to which Turmeric (hurdi) and Syringaberry/Neem leaves have been added to bath with. One should remember that Measles is usually a childhood disease and therefore generally affects very young children. Accordingly it's the mother that usually assists the affected person. The affected person sits on a stool just outside one's home in the yard and then beforehand 9 Lota's/chumbu/water pot, of slightly warm Hurdi water mixed with Syringaberry/Neem leaves is added to a bucket. Then the Mother drops 8 Lota's of the hurdi water mixed with Syringaberry/Neem leaves on the affected person's head and then with the 9th Lota the mother turns the lota of Hurdi water mixed with Syringaberry/Neem leaves in a clockwise direction 3 times and then drops it over the affected person's head, but a little is left as this is given to the affected person to drink. **(Use a teaspoon for consumption of the hurdi water as it should not be drunk directly from the lota)**. On a tray containing a clay lamp which has a piece of camphor in it, the camphor is lit and turned 3 times in a clockwise direction around the affected person in the name of Mother Marieammen/Mother Sheetala. Then the mother touches the ground with her hand just by the child's feet and places a Tika (anointment) on the child's forehead. The turmeric powder mixed with water and Syringaberry/Neem leaves that are given to the person to drink serves as an antibiotic internally, as these leaves have incredible healing powers.

A word of note:- Some families offer 7 lotas of Dhaar, or 7 camphors. Whilst we are not suggesting that this is incorrect, one should rather always performs things in 9's. We humbly suggest that you offer 9 lotas of Dhaar or 9 camphors etc. However if you feel that you are comfortable doing things in 7's then by all means - go ahead. This is a minor issue and shouldn't be made into something major – don't conjure up a storm in a tea cup.

Sugar Prayers:- Traditionally, depending if the measles has abated by the third day then one performs the Sugar Prayers (as a concluding /shaanti prayers to the Mother) if not 5 or 7 days later. But the measles must have subsided. Generally (if all the precautions are taken as stated above) by 7 days the measles should have abated considerably. Find a place outside your home - a clean place in your yard. Clean the place and sprinkle with hurdi water. Now you ready for the puja. Some ladies visit three houses requesting for some sugar for the sugar puja, however this is optional in this day and age. In a bucket add warm water and add hurdi and ground syringaberry/Neem leaves in it. Make sure you have 11 lotas of mixture in the bucket. In a small bowl have a little sugar (which you collected). Facing east on the ground place 2 tablets of camphor for Sair-Dee Baba with cloves. Then place two lotas of the Dhaar mixture behind the camphor's. Sair-Dee Baba are a wife-husband protectors of

your land (Kshetra-pal). They are worshipped first to request them to protect your land from any misfortunes. Then place 9 tablets of camphor and place cloves on each one and then on each one put a little sugar on each camphor including Sair-Dee's ones. Place one lota of the Dhaar mixture behind the 9 camphors.

Light the Sair-Dee Baba camphors first, pray and then turn the Lota of Dhaar 3 times in a clockwise direction around the camphor fire and then drop a little Dhaar (hurdi, syringaberry/Neem leaves) in front of the camphors. Do this for the next lota as well. Then offer one lota of Dhaar outside your main gate and then the other lota at the outside of your front door. Do note:- Both Lota of Dhaar are for Sair-Dee Baba so its doesn't matter which one you offer outside your main gate or outside of your front door.

Then return to the puja place again and light the 9 pieces of camphor, pray to Mother Marieammen or Mother Sheetala and then turn the Lota of Dhaar 9 times in a clockwise direction around the camphor fire and then drop a little Dhaar (hurdi, syringaberry/Neem leaves) in front the camphors and then go to your Thaan (a place where your Mothers prayers are done in your yard) and offer 9 lotas on your Thaan. Thereafter return to the prayer place and then the sugar becomes Prasad which you can then give your affected person a little to eat and the rest of the sugar goes in your sugar container.

Halwa Puree Puja:- This puja is more of a thanksgiving prayer to the Mother. Some ladies visit three houses to request for some flour to make the Puri for the puja however this is optional in this day in age. The Halwa Puri Puja is generally performed on the 21st day. The reason is that it's very likely that your other children may get infected with the virus as well. In a bucket add warm water, hurdi and ground syringaberry/Neem leaves. Make sure you have 11 lotas of mixture in the bucket. On a banana leaf place in the following order {2 Purees (one of top of the other), 1 betel leaf, 1/4 tsp Halwa, 1/4 tsp sweet rice, 3 types of fruits (cut in very small pieces), 3 types of sweetmeats (cut in very small pieces), 3 channa dhal, 1 whole elachie, 1 whole clove, 1 flat betel nut, 1 Tikli dot, 1 dot red sindhur and lastly 2 red bangles}. You must have in all 2 (for Sair-Dee Baba) + 9 (for the Mother) sets in all.

Facing East on the ground in front of the Banana leaf with the Halwa puri place 2 tablets of camphor for Sair-Dee Baba with cloves. Then place two lotas of the Dhaar mixture behind the camphor's. (Do note:- The Halwa-puri for Dee Baba should consist of all the ingredients above except the Tikli dot, red sindhur and the bangles but for his wife Sair Devi do as I have stated above). Make sure that the one for Sair Devi is on the left of Dee Baba's Halwa Puri. Now in the same way place 9 tablets of camphor and place put cloves on each tablet. Place one lota of the Dhaar mixture behind the 9 camphors.

Light the Sair-Dee Baba camphors first, pray and then turn the Lota of Dhaar 3 times in a clockwise direction around the camphor fire and then drop a little Dhaar (hurdi, syringaberry/Neem leaves) in front of the camphors. Do this for the next lota as well. Then offer one lota of Dhaar outside your main gate and then the other lota at the outside of your front door.

Then return to the puja place again and light the 9 pieces of camphor, pray to Mother Marieammen or Mother Sheetala and then turn the Lota of Dhaar 9 times in a clockwise direction around the camphor fire and then drop a little Dhaar (hurdi, syringaberry/Neem leaves) in front the camphors and then go to your Thaan (a place where your Mothers prayers are done in your yard) and offer 9 lotas on your Thaan. Thereafter return to the prayer place and then you must distribute the Prasad which you can eat a little give a little to your child and the rest to the others in your family. This is Mata's Prashad (mercy).

So this begs the question - "Is Camphor, cloves and Halwa Puri is our Scriptures"?

Well of course it is - and from the Srimad Devi Bhagavatam Purana, 11th Canto, Narada Muni converses with Lord Narayan (Vishnu):- "The Supreme Lord Vishnu said offering a jar of Ganga Jal (water), cool and nicely scented with camphor to Devi and then offering Betel leafs with camphor, elachie (cardamom), cloves and various delicious scents. These are all to offered with great devotion to Devi Durga so that Devi may be pleased. Devi is pleased with anyone who remembers Her even once! What wonder then that She will be pleased with all these offerings! The Mother is naturally merciful to her child. When she is loved with devotion, then she becomes very merciful. There is nothing strange here! " and then the next question will be "what if I don't get a beera, is my Puja answered or not?" Please understand that this is not a bargaining prayer, whether you receive a beera or not is inconsequential. Ask Mata and leave it to Mata, as Mata knows best.

In the Srimad Devi Bhagavatam chapter 11 verses 38-40 states "The devotee should offer foods to Devi consisting of the 6 Rasas (salty, sweet, sour, bitter, pungent, and astringent tastes)" hence (in order) Puri, betel leaf, halwa, sweet rice, 3 kinds of fruits, 3 kinds of sweets, 3 channa dhal, 1 elachie, 1 clove, 1 flat betel nut, 1 tikli, sindhur and 2 bangles are offered to Devi. The mentioned ingredients has at least one of the 6 tastes and the flat betel nut has all 6 tastes.

A note to all parents:- For parents, make sure that your child/children are immunized. Take your child to the nearest clinic for vaccination. There are vaccination programs conducted in health centers in your localities. Children should be protected because they are the ones who are mostly infected by this disease. It's important to have your children immunized through the vaccination programs offered by the government to protect them from contracting the disease in cases of outbreaks. There is no cure for measles but it can definitely be prevented.

DISCLAIMER:- Do note that Dipika is not affiliated to any Hindu group or organization. We at Dipika choose to remain an independent repository of spiritual advice. We appreciate that there are variances between organisations and humbly request that if our views differ from yours that you respect our decision not to conform to the prescripts of your particular organisation. We remain committed to spiritual advice which is based on scripture.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this article. We pray that this article will assist you in some way and we also pray that it helps you to appreciate the beauty and remarkable foresight of our ancient Hindu culture. We wish to educate all readers and demystify the path of Hinduism (Sanatan Dharma). Please feel free to share these articles with friends and family who do not have direct access to our website or articles. If you use the articles in any form including blogs and/or as part of other articles kindly credit our website as a source. We hope that the articles serve as a reference to you and your family when you need clarification of certain topics. Jai Hind... Jai Shree Radha Krsna.

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Compiled for the upliftment of Sanathan Dharma
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