

## Karthigai Deepam – 29<sup>th</sup> November 2020



Karthigai Deepam is a festival of lights, celebrated in the Tamil month of Karthigai. Karthigai is essentially a festival of lamps. It is celebrated on the full moon day of the Karthigai month which coincides with Krithikai star. This year Karthigai Deepam falls on **29<sup>th</sup> November**. The lighted lamp is considered an auspicious symbol. It wards off evil forces and usher in prosperity and joy. While the lighted lamp is important for all Hindu rituals and festivals, it is indispensable for Karthigai.

Karthigai Deepam is also considered as the extension of the Deepavali festival. In some houses, they double the number of lamps every day from the day of Deepavali and this way, they end up with a number of lamps on the day of Karthigai Deepam.

One of the earliest references to the festival is found in the Ahananuru, a book of poems, which dates back to the Sangam Age (200 B.C. to 300 A.D.). The Ahananuru clearly states that Karthigai is celebrated on the full moon day (Purnima) of the Tamil month of Karthigai. It was one of the most important festivals of the ancient Tamils. Avaiyyar, the renowned poetess of those times, refers to the festival in her songs.

It is celebrated in a special manner in Thiruvannamalai. Lord Shiva asks Lord Brahma and Lord Vishnu to find out the exact location of his head and his feet. Since Lord Shiva takes a gigantic form, They are not able to find out anywhere. Then Lord Shiva takes the form of a jyothi (light of fire) on the hill of Thiruvannamali. Therefore, this festival is also known as Annamalai Deepam. Here, a special torch is lighted on the zenith of the hill and it is believed that Lord Shiva's jothi will be visible on this day.

Lord Muruga took the form of six babies in a lake called "Saravana Poigai". On this day, all his six forms were united by Parvati (his mother) and this way, he had six faces. On this day, people clean the houses. In the evening, they draw kolams (rangolis) in the front of the house and also place some lamps on it. The lamps (Agal) are placed in the pooja place and lighted. Then the Deeparathana is done in which the lamps are moved to different places in the house. The lamps glow all over the streets on this day. The lamps are arranged near the doors and windows and also in the balconies. In this way, people of Tamil Nadu celebrate Kaarthigai Deepam for three days.

Once when Lord Shiva was in meditation, Mother Parvati left Him and went to the hill of Arunachala. There She performed penances. She was the guest of Gautama Rishi. It was during Her penance here that Mahishasura was Killed by Mother Durga hidden by Mother Parvati. Mother Parvati saw Lord Shiva as Arunachal lesvara. She was taken back by the Lord to His side, and made His Ardhangini once more, that is, She occupied half of the body of the Lord.



Shree Ardhanarishvara (Half Lord Shiva - Half Ma Parvati)

On Karthigai Deepam day in South-India, devotees make bonfires in front of temples in the evening. It is said that Lord Shiva burnt the chariots of several demons who were torturing sages and celestials. This bonfire symbolizes this katha...



Pithalai vilakku (Brass lamps) during the occasion  
Of Karthigai Deepam in front of the house.

People place rows of earthen lamps in front of their houses on the evening of Karthigai Deepam and worship the Lord. They also light a variety of fireworks. To annihilate the three impurities, namely, egoism, selfish action and delusion, this is real Karthigai Deepam. May the light of lights illumine you all! May Mother Parvati and Lord Shiva bless you with more light! May you merge in this supreme light and attain the eternal adobe of bliss and immortality!



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