

The Gregorian new year (1st January) & Hinduism

Presently in India New Year is being celebrated on 1st January as per the Western Gregorian calendar. Celebration on the eve of the Western New Year includes a lot of malpractices like indulging in eve teasing, boozing etc. So, instead of beginning the New Year on an auspicious note it begins rather unpleasantly. To ensure that the beginning of the New Year begins on an auspicious note rather celebrate it according to our Hindu scriptures, on Chaitra Shuddha Pratipada (MID MARCH YEARLY) {known as Gudi Padwa} as per the Hindu lunar calendar, as this date is glorious in all ways - as per the cycle of Nature and it also has historical and spiritual significance. All this contributes to endowing the one celebrating it as per the Hindu scriptures with several benefits. It is the duty of each individual to arrest the loss being caused to the society by emulating the Westerners. According to the Brahma Purana, this is the day on which Lord Brahma created the world after the deluge and time began to tick from this day forth.

But of course not to sound like a "spoils spot", those that desire to observe the 31st December/ 1st January in this way it is totally optional.

Those who desire to start off the Gregorian year 1st January with prayers then the below is a simple guide.

The following is observed during the Hindu New Year (Gudi Padwa) and can be used on the morning of the 1st January. Ablution with oil (abhyangasnan) - an auspicious bath: On this day one should wake up early in the morning and take an oil bath. With an ordinary bath the raja (mode of passion) and tama (mode of ignorance) components decrease by 1/1,00,000 % and the sattva (mode of goodness) component increases by the same amount for a duration of only three hours. However with an oil bath it lasts for four to five hours. An oil bath consists of an oil massage to facilitate the absorption of oil by the skin followed by a warm water bath. Oil should be applied to retain the elasticity of the skin. Warm water is auspicious and pleasing to the body. Bathing after an oil massage retains only that amount of oiliness that the skin and hair require. Hence an oil massage is necessary before a bath. Application of oil after a bath is inappropriate to say the least.

Provided below is a very simple D.I.Y. puja proper for the 1st January. The observer of puja must first bathe and wear fresh clean clothes, thereafter proceed to your prayer place. Have all the requirements for the Puja and the havan arranged beforehand on a tray.

For the Puja proper:

On your tray you should have the following:- 1 large tray (to place all your puja items on that tray), 1 large rectangular tray, 1 banana leaf the size of your rectangular tray, 1 small Ganesh murti/picture, a laminated picture of Lord Vishnu picture, small bowl of sweet rice (use the same bowl for the havan), a small lota/chumbu/cup add water with a small spoon, 5 incense sticks, one incense holder, 2 blocks of camphor, 1 box matches, a small clay lamp which should be placed on a saucer, 10 betel leaves, 10 round betel nuts, 200g white rice, small bowl of flower petals, 1 small hand towel, make one Kusha ring with kusha grass, 50g chandan powder (on a saucer and add water to make a paste). On a saucer keep a small clay lamp add, some ghee and a wick).

Place tray on the floor, and then place the banana leaf on top of the rectangular tray - (this is your bedi), place on the banana leaf the Lord Ganesh Murti. Place the clay lamp

which is on a saucer (and which has the ghee and wick) next to Lord Ganesh, and on the lamp's right hand side place Lord Vishnu's picture. Now sit facing East or North. Pour a little water into your hand from your small lota and sip it three times chanting "Om Vishnu" (Wash your hands after each Om Vishnu chant). Now wipe your hands. Anoint your third eye (the place between your eyebrows) with a chandan dot, place your kusha ring on your ring finger of your right hand.

Next take 1 betel leaf, on top of that betel leaf add some red flower petals and some rice and say in English "O Supreme Lord on this day the 1st of January (CURRENT YEAR) and place (like Durban) where you performing this prayer, I (state your name and surname) am performing my prayer and havan. Leave the betel leaf, flower petals and rice on the banana leaf by Lord Ganesh.

GANESH PUJA: Take 1 betel leaf, on top of that betel leaf place 1 betel nut, few grains of rice and few flower petals and pray to Shree Ganeshji chanting his mantra.

"Om ganapati devata aa-vaa-hayaa-mee sthaapa-yamee, Om ganapataye namah"

And then place the betel leaf (and its ingredients) on the banana leaf in front of Lord Ganesh's murti/picture. Do note the tip of the betel leaf should be facing you. Now offer Lord Ganesh 4 drops of water, chandan dot, sprinkle rice and then flower petals, offer one stick of incense (turn the incense around the murti/picture 7 times in a clockwise direction, and place in the incense holder, next offer the clay lamp on a saucer (which has a small piece of camphor in it, light it) and turn the lamp around the murti/picture 7 times in a clockwise direction, offer a spoon of sweet rice on the betel leaf and then place a betel leaf with a betel-nut next to Lord Ganesh's betel leaf and then finally offer the clay lamp (7 times around the murti) to end.

NAVAGRAHA PUJA: Then take another betel leaf, on top of that betel leaf place 1 betel nut, few grains of rice and few flower petals and pray to 9 Planets chanting their mantra...

"Om Aim Hreem Kleem Navagraha devata namah aa-vaa-hayaa-mee sthaapa-yamee, Om Navagraha devata-ye namah",

And then place the betel leaf (and its ingredients) on the banana leaf next to Lord Ganesh. Do note the tip of the betel leaf should be facing you. Now offer the Navagraha's 4 drops of water, chandan dot, sprinkle rice and then flower petals, offer one stick of incense (turn the incense around the lamp 7 times in a clockwise direction, and place in the incense holder, next offer the clay lamp on a saucer (which has a small piece of camphor in it, light it) and turn the lamp around the Navagraha's Betel leaf 7 times in a clockwise direction, offer a spoon of sweet rice on the betel leaf and then place a betel leaf with a betel-nut next to the Navagraha's's betel leaf and then finally offer the clay lamp (7 times around the murti) to end.

Light the wick of the clay lamp which is on a saucer (and which has the ghee and wick). Once lit pray to Mother Lakshmi for Her blessings for your puja.

LAKSHMI PUJA: Then take another betel leaf, on top of that betel leaf place 1 betel nut, few grains of rice and few flower petals and pray to Mother Lakshmi chanting Her mantra...

"Om Shreeng mahaa lakshma-yai namah aa-vaa-hayaa-mee sthaapa-yamee, Om Shree Lakshmi devi-yai namah",

And then place the betel leaf (and its ingredients) on the banana leaf in front of Lord Vishnu's picture. Do note the tip of the betel leaf should be facing you. Now offer Mother Lakshmi 4 drops of water, chandan dot, sprinkle rice and then flower petals, offer one

stick of incense (turn the incense around the lamp 7 times in a clockwise direction, and place in the incense holder, next offer the clay lamp on a saucer (which has a small piece of camphor in it, light it) and turn the lamp around the lamp 7 times in a clockwise direction, offer a spoon of sweet rice on the betel leaf and then place a betel leaf with a betel-nut next to Mother Lakshmi's betel leaf and then finally offer the clay lamp (7 times around the murti) to end.

VISHNU PUJA: Then take another betel leaf, on top of that betel leaf place 1 betel nut, few grains of rice and few flower petals and pray to Lord Vishnu chanting His mantra.

“Om Vishnu bhagavaan aa-vaa-hayaa-mee sthaapa-yamee, Om Vish-nave namah”, And then place the betel leaf (and its ingredients) on the banana leaf in front of Lord Vishnu's picture. Do note the tip of the betel leaf should be facing you. Now offer Lord Vishnu 4 drops of water, chandan dot, sprinkle rice and then flower petals, offer one stick of incense (turn the incense around the murti/picture 7 times in a clockwise direction, and place in the incense holder, next offer the clay lamp on a saucer (which has a small piece of camphor in it, light it) and turn the lamp around the murti/picture 7 times in a clockwise direction, offer a spoon of sweet rice on the betel leaf and then place a betel leaf with a betel-nut next to Lord Vishnu's betel leaf and then finally offer the clay lamp (7 times around the murti) to end.

Should you desire to chant the greatest Superhero's Chalisa Shree Hanuman Chalisa then you may.

The havan proper now commences.

For the Havan proper:

On your tray you should have the following:- One packet havan wood; 100g Navadhan (9 grains), 100g wheat (Hindi-Gehu//Tamil-Godhumai), 100g ***{Guggal} (a brown-ish resin), 100g ***{Gur/Jaggery}, 100g of Lobhan (Samarani), 100g Til; 100g Barley (Jau) grains, a medium size bowl for the havan samaghree ingredients, 100g ghee in a small bowl with a Table spoon, 3 pieces of Sandalwood sticks.

The Havan kund should be place on a metal rectangular tray. Place 4 equal length Kusha (Kush grass/Darbha grass) on the outside of the four sides of the kund, add about 3 hands-full of clean sand in the havan kund (this is done so that the ghee wouldn't leak from the Kund), place the wood neatly in the kund. On top of the wood sprinkle some red sindhur powder.

Now in your samaghree bowl add the remaining white rice (that you have from the puja), the Navadhan, wheat, Til, 1 Tsp of sweet rice, Guggal, Gur, barley, Lobhan, 2 Tsp's of ghee... Mix the ingredients well. This is your Havan samaghree, I would advise to refrain from adding the ready made (store-bought) havan samaghree as these days that samaghree is just powder and mass produced.

Place a camphor tablet on a table spoon and (light and) kindle the camphor tablet and place in the havan kund while you chant “Om Bhoor Bhuvah Swaahaa”, repeat twice more times i.e. two more camphor tablets.

When the fire is nicely alight, put your two palms together and pray to Agni-deva inviting Agni-deva to enter into the kund and kindly accept the grains that you will be offering shortly, chanting. “Om Agni-devata aa-vaa-hayaa-mee sthaapa-yamee, Om Agni-deva namah”.

Now offer one stick of incense (turn the incense around the fire 7 times in a clockwise direction, and place in the fire, next offer the clay lamp on a saucer (which has a small piece of camphor in it, light it) and turn the lamp around the fire 7 times in a clockwise direction, offer a spoon of sweet rice on the betel leaf into the fire, offer some flower petals into the fire and then finally offer the clay lamp (7 times around the fire) to end.

Next sprinkle, water around the havan kund 3 times in a clockwise direction.

Take 3 pieces of Sandalwood sticks, dip the three sticks in the ghee, and then offer one stick into the fire while chanting "Om Bhoor swaahaa", the second stick with the mantra "Om bhuvah swaahaa" and the third and final stick with the mantra "Om svah swaahaa".

Place the havan samaghree bowl in front of you. Do remember that at every swaahaa offer samaghree and/or ghee. Now you can commence with the Havan proper...

Chant:

Om ganapataye swaahaa x 1

Om agnaye swaahaa x 1

Om somaya swaahaa x 1

Om praja-pata-ye swaahaa x 1

Om indraya swaahaa x 1

Om bhuh swaahaa x 1

Om bhoovah swaahaa x 1

Om svah swaahaa x 1

Om bhoor bhuvah svah swaahaa x 1

Om Hraam Hreem Hraum Saha Sooryaaya swaahaa x 3

Om Shraam Shreem Shraum Saha Chandraaya swaahaa x 3

Om Kraam Kreem Kraum Saha Bhaumaaya swaahaa x 3

Om Braam Breem Braum Saha Budhaaya swaahaa x 3

Om Graam Greem Graum Saha Guruve swaahaa x 3

Om Draam Dreem Draum Saha Shukraaya swaahaa x 3

Om Praam Preem Praum Saha Shanaish-charaaya swaahaa x 3

Om Bhraam Bhreem Bhraum Saha Raahave swaahaa x 3

Om Shraam Shreem Shraum Saha Ketve swaahaa x 3

Om aim hreem kleem chaamun-daayai vich-chai swaahaa x 3

Om trayam bakkam yajaa-mahe sugan-dhim pushti-varadhanam
urvaa-rooka-miva bandha-naam mrityor mooksheeya maamritaata swaahaa x 11

Om Hanumate swaahaa x 1

Om Shreem Mahaa-lakshmi-yai swaahaa X 1

Om Vishnave swaahaa X 1

Sprinkle water around the havan kund three times.

Offer samaghree 21 times with the Maha Mantra "Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare" to atone for any mistakes committed during the havan.

Lastly - the final offerings (**Purna-Ahuti**): Place the remaining betel leaves on a tray and on that betel leaves place the balance of the samaghree on top of the leaves, on top of this place the rest of the betel nuts, some ghee and chant the following mantra

"Om sarvam vai poornam swaahaa"

And place this in the middle of the fire. Offer the rest of the ghee into the fire.

Shanti Paath Mantras: Put your two palms together in the Namaste position and chant.

Om Dyauh Shanti
Ranta-riksha Gwam Shanti
Prithvi Shanti Rapah Shanti
Rosha-dhayah Shanti
Vanas Patayah Shanti
Vishva Devah Shanti
Brahma Shanti Sarva Gwam Shanti
Shanti Reva Shanti Sama Shanti Redhi
Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Now take the 4 kusha grass around the Kund and your kusha grass ring and mix with the final remains of the ghee in the ghee bowl and offer into the fire.

Once this is complete, kindly request Lord Ganesh, the Nine Planets, Mother Lakshmi and Lord Vishnu and the rest of the Devi's and Devas to forgive you for any shortcoming committed while you performed the puja and havan and then request them to kindly return to their divine abodes, and chant the Maha Mantra (above) once to end. Bow down to the bedi and havan kund.

A word of note: The puja items used in the puja above, put that into the havan kund and make sure everything is fully burnt and I would advise instead of disposing the remains into a local river, you should bury the burnt samaghree in the 4 corners of your yard. This is DIPIKA'S stance on taking care of Mother Earth.

PRIOR TO THE PUJA IN THE MORNING: In a 5L bucket add water, some rough salt, a pinch cow dung, a drop of cow urine (optional), few drops of sheep dip, a pinch of turmeric (hurdi) and a few drops of Ganga jal. Mix well and then sprinkle in your rooms in your house and then yard.

AT NIGHT: Purchase Lobhan, Googal (Guggal), Hing and Raaz Lobhan. Any decent puja shop will have all these items. Smash the lobhan and guggal into powder and mix with the hing powder. At night break the Raaz lobhan into half and place one half in a metal container. Light this Raaz Lobhan, once its half way burnt add about ¼ teaspoon of the mixture (of the Lobhan, Hing and Googal) on it. When its burnt properly and is smoking profusely, smoke all the rooms of your house, especially concentrating on the corners because spirits like to hide in these places. This should stop these things from causing any distress in the short term. I would recommend doing this about 2-3 times a week. Some nasty spirits like to cause problems so they are rather persistent.

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