



Bharatha Samskruthi Prakashana
 No.37/8, G4, Leesa Apartment, 4th Cross,
 Lalbagh Road, Bangalore 560 027
 Phone : 080-22278231, 26765381, Mobile : 9448078231
 URL : www.bharathasamskruthi.com,
 Email : bspllg@gmail.com



Title : *Gauri Festival* Under **Yogic & Vedic Heritage FESTIVALS OF BHĀRATA - A collection of Festivals of India, Original in Kannada by Sri Sri Rangapriya Sri Srih, Translated into English by Prof. K.S. Sridharan, Dr. Hungi Eswara, and Viswanatha Sharma, and Published by Bharatha Samskruthi Prakashana, Bangalore-560 027.**

E-Edition : January 2016 No. of pages: 34 Price: 25

We Dedicate this Sacred Treasure at the holy lotus feet of

Sriranga Mahaguru and SriMata

© with publisher

Published by:

Bharatha Samskruthi Prakashana

No.37/8, G4, Leesa Apartment, 4th Cross,

Lalbagh Road, Bangalore 560 027

Phone : 080-22278231, 26765381, Mobile : 9448078231

URL : www.bharathasamskruthi.com,

Email : bspllg@gmail.com

Cover Design : Chandranatha Acharya

Inside Pictures : Basavaraj R Algur

Copies available at :

Bharatha Darshana,

No.163, Manjunatha Road,

2nd Block, Thyagaraja Nagar,

Bangalore 560 028; Ph: 080-26765381

Printed By :

Laser Line Graphics,

Bangalore 560027

Transliteration followed in this book

अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ	ऋ	ॠ	ऌ	ॡ	ए	ऐ	ओ	औ	अं	अः
a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	ṛ	ṝ	ḷ	ḹ	e	ai	o	au	am	ah
क	ख	ख	ग	ङ											
ka	kha	ga	gha	ṅa											
च	छ	ज	झ	ञ											
ca	cha	ja	jha	ña											
ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण											
ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa											
त	थ	द	ध	न											
ta	tha	da	dha	na											
प	फ	ब	भ	म											
pa	pha	ba	bha	ma											
य	र	ल	व	श	ष	स	ह								
ya	ra	la	va	śa	sha	sa	ha								

Example:

क	का	कि	की	कु	कू	कृ	कृ	क्लृ	के	कै	को	कौ	कं	कः
ka	kā	ki	kī	ku	kū	kṛ	kṛ	klṛ	ke	kai	ko	kau	kam	kah



Gaurī Festival

Gaurī Festival is one of the most important *parvas* that comes in the month of *Bhādrapada*. Though it is generally known as ‘*Gaurī Habba*’, the *śāstraic* name happens to be ‘*SvarṇaGaurīvrata*’. This is because this festival is unique and has distinct features compared to other *vratas* pertaining to *Gaurī* such as ‘*Saubhāgyagaurī*’, ‘*Sampadgaurī*’, ‘*maṅgalagaurī*’, ‘*Lāvaṇyagaurī*’, ‘*Trilocanagaurī*’, ‘*Gajagaurī*’ etc. Though all these are *Gaurī* festivals, ‘*SvarṇaGaurīvrata*’ is the most famous of these, and the practice of calling only this as ‘*Gaurī festival*’ is in vogue. It is like the ordinary people calling the *saṅkramaṇa* of *makara māsa* only as ‘*saṅkranti*’ specially, even though *saṅkramaṇas* occur every month. Likewise, this festival which is special, is called as ‘*Gaurīvrata*’. All over India, people in large numbers celebrate this festival.

Lay persons distinguish festivals, as festivals of males and festivals of females. From this view point *upākarma* is a festival of men and ‘*Gaurī festival*’ ‘*Varamahālakshmi*’ etc. are festivals of women. It is because, it is women who actually worship in *Gaurī* and *Varamahālakshmi* festivals. In these festivals the enthusiasm and rapture of women are more. But this is a (cursory) grossdivision. Because, in these exclusive festivals of women, men also have to offer respects through *namaskāras* etc to *Gaurī* and *Lakshmi*. They should help women with inspired devotion in worshipping these goddesses. Both men and women have responsibility in celebrating festivals. Here, we would like to recall the nectar like words of *ŚrīGurudeva*, who had the complete comprehension of the worship of the deities. Men should not ignore worship of *Gaurī* excusing themselves, as is evident from the adage “*Gaṇḍasigeke Gaurīḍuhkha*” (why should men have *Gaurī Problems*?) Women too should not keep men (away from) *Gaurī* worship. Because, goddess *Gaurī* did not remain exclusively alone, but became the mother of all, only after marrying *Śiva*. She became the mother of both men and women. All the men and women in this world, are virtually the two parts of the first couple of the universe, who are in the form of *Ardhanārīshvara*, “स्त्रीपुंसौ आत्मभागौ ते भिन्नमूर्तेः

सिसृक्षया’’. Therefore, it is the responsibility of both men and women to worship both *Śiva* and *Pārvati*."

They being together as the first couple of the world, known as *Lakshmī Nārāyaṇa* and *Pārvatīparameśvara* is indeed a joint account. *Lakshmī* and *Nārāyaṇa* can never separate from each other. So also is the case with *Pārvatīparameśvara*. The worship offered to the *paramapurusha* in *Umeśa* or *Rameśa* will naturally reach *parāprakṛti*. The service or (worship) offered to *parāprakṛti* should be offered to the *paramapurusha* also. They have equal role in the deed of creation. *Purusha* needs the help of *prakṛti* for his multiplication. What should *prakṛti* foster? She should foster "*Purusha* the *jnānasvarūpa*." And for this, her desire for *purusha* is indispensable indeed. As the saying goes, “जगज्जनन्यै जगदेकपित्रे” equal importance is there for the worship of both of them. As all the living beings, male and female, are parts of those two, both men and women have the right to worship both of them.

Śrīgurudeva used to cite an example from a story in the *purāṇas*, which tells how a person may have to suffer from shortcomings, if he happens to discriminate worship between *Paramapurusha* and *Parāprakṛti*. Once, a question arose as to who was greater of the two i.e. *Pārvati* and *Śiva*. When this question was raised everyone in the ‘*Śivagaṇa*’ kept

silent. But *Bhṛṅgi* stood up and declared—‘*Śiva* indeed is greater’. *Pārvatī* got indignant, and drained him of all the seven pure elements and other aspects of dispositions which she had granted him earlier. That is why the devotee of *Śiva Bhṛṅgi* is shown in pictures only as a skeleton". This is the story.

Thus, although *purusha* and *prakṛti* have equal importance, on some occasions, they are worshipped separately for the purpose of obtaining distinct *Purushārthas*. For example, we come across *pūjākālpas* where the ‘*Śakti* part of the Lord present in the form of *ŚrīGaurī*, *Sarasvati* etc. is worshipped specially, for the accomplishment of purity of disposition, which is required for the attainment of wealth, fortune, knowledge, arts, *jnāna* and detachment. Though one’s mind is focussed on *Śakti* alone in these (*pūjās*) for the purpose of accomplishments, it should not be forgotten that the ultimate aim of all the above *siddhis* is the *Purushasvārūpa* only, and, by the worship of *Devī* he is also pleased. And, *Gaurīpūjā* is one among such *Devīpūjākālpas*.

How did the custom of worship of *Devī* come into practice? Why did it come? With regard to these points we have noted above the vision of the *Sanātana Ārya Bhāratiya* sages who clearly visualized the *devas* and *devīs* and wholeheartedly

bestowed upon the world that supreme truth. Some western scholars who have with a narrow mind, done comparative study and research of religions that have evolved in different parts of the world, expound a strange opinion about the origins of the worship of *devī*. Though that opinion carries no profound critical assessment, we refer to it here as a *purvapaksha*, as it has captured the minds of many thinkers now a days.

"In days of yore, the *Ādimānavas* had to live only on animal meat, fruits and roots available in the forest. Men had to trek long distances during those days, for hunting and collecting other eatables. They were staying outside their homes during most part of the day. As women stayed (back) in homes most of the time, the children happened to be educated by women only. They started considering women alone as goddesses and started worshipping them. So the worship of *Devī* started this way".

"Dravidians lived in India well before the Aryans. They were the ones who worshipped '*māri*', *masaṇi* and other goddesses. Their families were matriarchal. Aryans who came to India later, defeated Dravidians and established their empire. They were worshipping *indra*, *agni* and only other male gods. When they later mixed with Dravidians, goddesses were also included in their worship. Even

to this day, the Aryans follow the patriarchal system" - This is the summary of the opinion of those western scholars.

Though this opinion appears fine when looked at superficially, it does not become a conclusion based on truth. Because 1) they have not viewed this subject from the threefold levels viz *Ādhyātmika*, *Ādhidaivika* and *Ādhibhautika*. They have neither done any *upāsana*. But they have put forth an opinion which has emerged from a mere intellectual gymnastics. 2) They have disregarded the (hymns) appearing in *Vedic* literature, viz., *Sarasvatīsūkta*, *Devīsūkta*, *Medhāsūkta*, *Indrāṇīrk* etc. which expound the glories of *devīs*. 3) In the culture of great sages, the matter of assigning either equality or a distinct importance for men and women, both at home and in the society, depends on their dispositions and distinct capacities, which are *daivadatta*. When one takes into consideration all these matters, (it will be learnt that both) have equal importance. They are the two parts of the divine body of the creator. They are forms of *Śiva* and *Śakti*. If the father is the heaven (*dyuloka*), the mother is the earth (*prthivī*). If the father is *sāma* (the third *veda*) mother is the (*Rk*) ("सामाहमस्मि ऋक्त्वम्" "द्यौः पिता पृथिवी माता") They have never cared to study the purport of the *Vedamantras* at all. They have not taken into account the fact that all the

vedic gods are *Śakti viśiṣṭas* only. (4) Above all, the mystery of *devī*, as is evident from, “गुहा त्रीणि निहिता नेङ्गयन्ति” can be known only to *jnānis* who enter the cave of wisdom, and not to those who indulge in intellectual exercises focussed on what just appears externally. Therefore it is no wonder that western scholars give such strange opinions on the subject. If such views are given importance in the land of *maharshi* traditions, it can only be termed lamentable

The next question is who is this *Gaurī* worshipped during *SvarṇaGaurī vrata*? Why should she be worshipped?

The name ‘*Gaurī*’ is a synonym for *Pārvatīdevī*. She is the divine consort of *Mahādeva* who has in his authority, mainly the last one among creation, sustenance and dissolution. She is his beloved, and half of his form. At the time of destruction she becomes ‘*Kālī*’ adorning the black colour. While blessing people with knowledge, she becomes *Shyāmalambika*, assuming a dark complexion. She becomes the effulgent *Gaurī*, adorning the colour of the *Campaka* flower or pure white colour of snow, while bestowing prosperity and conjugal felicity. The very meaning of the word *Gaurī* is a woman who has the complexion of a *Campaka* or the one who is fair complexioned. (“गौरः वर्णः अस्ति अस्याः इति गौरी) “चाम्पेयगौरार्धशरीरकायै”

“योगाग्निदग्धदेहा सा पुनर्जाता हिमालये ।
शङ्खेन्दुकुन्दधवला ततो गौरीति सा स्मृता ॥”

And, *Lalitādevī*, *Umā*, *Ekaparnā*, *Shākambharī*, *Rājarājeśvarī*, *Tripurasundarī* etc happen to be her other forms pertaining to her diverse functions.

Among the *Śaktipīthas*, her main abode is *kānyakubja*.

गौरी प्रोक्ता कान्यकुब्जे रम्भा तु मलयाचले (देवीभागवत 7-30-58)

Which particular *purushārtha* is obtained by worshipping her?

Sarasvatī, *Lakshmī* and *Gaurī* are the divine consorts of the trinity (i.e. *Brahma*, *Vishṇu* and *Maheśvara*) respectively. All the three have the power to directly grant all the *purushārthas*, or by *paramparā* also (i.e. one after the other). Because, these (*devis*) are the various forms of the very *ParāŚakti* (supreme power).

गीर्देवतेति गरुडध्वजसुन्दरीति शाकम्भरीति शशिशेखरवल्लभेति ।
सृष्टिस्थितिप्रलयकेलिषु संस्थितायै तस्मै नमस्त्रिभुवनैकगुरोस्तस्यै॥

But each of these is worshipped for obtaining different benefits. And *Gaurī* is worshipped especially for the fortune of good marital happiness.

“विद्याकामस्तु गिरिशं दाम्पत्यार्थम् उमां सतीम्” (भागवत, तृतीय स्कन्ध 7)

This *Sarvamangalādevī* (all auspicious goddess) is worshipped for obtaining a suitable

husband, and for *Saumaṅgalyasiddhi*, permanent love of the husband.

The story of *Rukmiṇidevī* and *Gopikās* worshipping *Gaurī* to obtain *Śrīkr̥ṣṇa* as their husband and also to become his favourite, is well known.

हेमन्ते प्रथमे मासि नन्दव्रजकुमारिकाः ।

चेरुहविष्यं भुञ्जानाः कात्यायन्यर्चनव्रतम् ।

.... नन्दगोपसुतं देवि पतिं मे कुरु ते नमः ॥ (भागवत 10-22)

नमस्ये त्वाम्बिकेऽभीक्ष्णं स्वस्तानयुतां शिवाम् ।

भूयात् पतिर्मे भगवान् कृष्णस्तदनुमोदताम् ॥ (भागवत 10- 53)

Even today, the practice of worshipping *Gaurī* during wedding ceremonies for *tālībhāgya* is well known. Her various divine and auspicious names such as "*Śivā*, *Sarvamaṅgalā*, *Mṛḍānī*, *Śarvāṇī* and *Ambikā*" etc, are exemplar of her *Māṅgalya Śakti*.

Who is this *Gaurī*?

This question may sound childish to those who worship Gods, and to those who have at least a little knowledge of the *Purāṇas*, *Itihāsas*, and *Kāvyas*. This is because even ordinary people know that *Gaurī* is *Śivā*, the wife of *Śiva*. It is also well known that she is called by names such as *Pārvatī*, *Umā*, *Durgā*, *Bhavānī*, *Kāthyāyini*, *Aparṇā* *Ambikā* and many other divine names.

We see that she is referred to as *Nārāyaṇa*'s sister, just as she is called the wife of *Śiva*.

“नारायणानुजा देवी वैष्णवी विजयाम्बिका”

We see pictures and sculptures where *Vishṇu* is depicted as celebrating the wedding of his sister *Gaurī* with *Śiva* (known as) *Sundareśvara*.

There is also an opinion that *Gaurī* is the mother of all the worlds and is served by both *Sarasvatī* and *Lakshmī*.

“वन्दे मातरमम्बिकां भगवतीं वाणीरमासेविताम्”

Contrary to this, we can see that she is described as the daughter-in-law of *Brahma* the son of *Vishṇu*, and as a slave of *Mahālakshmī*, and also her devotee. And that she is the wife of *Śiva* and got her power by a small grace of *Mahālakshmī*.

ब्रह्मेशादिसुरव्रजस्सदयितस्त्वहासदासीगणः ।

श्रीरित्येव च नाम ते भगवति ब्रूमः कथं त्वां वयम् ॥

श्रीमन्मन्दकटाक्षलब्धविभव ब्रह्मेन्द्रगङ्गाधराम् ।

त्वां त्रैलोक्यकुटुम्बिनीम् भगवतीम् वन्दे मुकुन्दप्रियाम् ॥

We see the above statements in the *stotras* of *Pārvatī* and *Lakshmī*.

Thus, it sounds very strange to call the same *Gaurī* at different contexts as a mistress of some divine woman, as her slave and as the wife of her grandson.

The confusion does not stop here. *Gaurī* who had been clearly described as the divine consort of

Śiva, is also called the sister of *Rudra* by *Śrutivākyas* also.

सह स्वस्राम्बिकया, आखुस्ते पशुः

So, did *Rudra* marry his own sister?" There are some who ridicule— "Why not? Have not the *purāṇas* stated that *Brahma* married his own daughter? This is also like that. These Hindu gods have no ethics at all."

"One need not have to deride like that. Brothers and sisters, sons and daughters and mother and son should not marry each other. It is very abhorring. One should not even think of it even in the mind. But ethics like these and discipline didn't exist in the early days of civilization (Because this kind of ethics is not seen in animals!) The above said stories of the strange marriages of *Brahma* and *Rudra* are the remains of the beginning era of civilization" - We see such pacifying and peacemaking commentaries exuding from researcher degree holders in history.

As though the above confusion is not enough, we see some opinions that not only describe *Gaurī*, *Lakshmī* and *Sarasvatī* as mother and daughter mutually, but that they have the same true form!

गीर्देवतेति गरुडध्वजसुन्दरीति
शाकम्भरीति शशिशेखरवल्लभेति

There is also a statement that *Gāyatrī*, *Sāvitṛī* and *Sarasvatī* are the wives of *Brahma*, *Rudra* and *Vishṇu* respectively.

प्रातर्मध्यदिने तथास्तसमये ब्राह्मी तथा शाम्भवी
वैष्णव्यात्मसमस्तसेवकजनान् कुर्यात्सदामङ्गलम्

There is also an opinion that among these three, only one is *jagajjanani* (mother of the universe). And the remaining two are her (glories).

To Continue the confusion further, *Devī Purāṇa* states "*Brahma*, *Vishṇu* and *Maheshvara* are the sons of *Ādimahāśakti*. "ब्रह्मा विष्णुश्च रुद्रश्च जगद्धात्रि सुतास्तव".

"Is it not possible that the same soul, in different births can become the father, the mother, the son, the daughter, the wife and the daughter-in-law to other souls? So also is the relationship of gods and goddesses."—This is the easy philosophical solution some try to provide, in reply to the above contradictory statements. If this can be acceptable, a question may again arise. "If gods and goddesses are souls that can be subjected to births and rebirths based on *karma* like we people, why should we worship them? We can as well worship ourselves!"

Above all this, some raise one more objection—"The god of your *Vedas*, *Purāṇas* and *Itihāsas* can never become *Nirañjana Paramātmā*

(at all). Because he too like we mortals, has emcumberances such as wife, children, daughter-in-law etc," When such questions and objections cause disturbance in the mind, the devotion and faith essential for the worship of *Gaurī* get slackened. Therefore it is necessary that we have to find satisfactory answers pertaining to these.

The above gods and goddesss viz. *Śivapārvatī*, *Vishṇulakshmi* and *Brahmasarasvatī* are all matters, which are beyond the human senses. So, it is not at all correct to arrive at a conclusion by discussing those matters using the worldly yardsticks based on senses. None of the questions and answers that arise in the world of senses can be honestly in harmony with that (suprasensory) field.

When viewed through the eyes of *Maharshis*, *Brahma*, *Vishṇu* and *Maheshvara* are the evolved forms of the *Parañjyothi Paramapurusha*, and, *Vāṇi*, *Ramā* and *Gaurī* are the evolved forms of his *Parāprakṛti*. *Paramātmā* is the (father) who provides the seed of creation. *Prakṛti* is the *Kshetra* which causes the expansion of his *saṅkalpa*. It is essential to do *Yogasādhana* to comprehend the *Prakāsa Svarūpa* and the evolutionary forms of that *Bhagavān* and *Bhagavatī*. At different stages of this *sādhana* we see the *Paramapurusha* and *Prakṛti* variously as wife-husband, father-mother,

brother-sister, and god and goddess etc. These views help us to focus the mind on them with a feeling of supreme love for them. Actually speaking, we have to term the *paramātmā* as the Lord and master endowed with knowledge, power, valour and radiance, and *Prakṛti* as the *Vistārakshetra* of his wish. The attributes such as Father, mother, brother etc are various forms related to *guṇa*, *kriyā* and *Upāsana*.

The same almighty who causes creation, sustenance and dissolution, obtains the symbols of *Brahma*, *Vishṇu* and *Rudra*.

सृष्टिस्थित्यन्तकरणीम् ब्रह्मविष्णुशिवात्मिकाम्
स संज्ञां याति भगवानेक एव जनार्दनः

Each of them has his own prominence in each field. Same is the case with *Sarasvatī*, *Lakshmi* and *Gaurī*, the wives of the trinity, who cooperate with them.

Mahāguru Śrīraṅga used to explain it this way.—"Suppose, the same actor plays three roles in a drama. In the different acts of the play, different roles become more prominent. Those who happen to witness the acts of the same play separately, think that only a particular god of a particular act as prominent. The same is the case with the consorts of divinity. The same *parāprakṛti* plays the roles of *Vāṇi*, *Ramā* and *Gaurī*. Each one of her roles has

special importance in a particular act of the play. When seen in the origin in the suprasensory realm, all of them are nothing but *paramapurusha* and *parāprakṛti* only. Descending just from the realm of that centre, the trinity in *dhyānamudra* and their consorts are seen. Again descending a little from that, in that suprasensory field only, the various forms of the trinity and their consorts, their glories, and their actions pertaining to the three *guṇas* are seen. Among the trinity, *Brahma* with his consort, *Mahaviṣṇu* with his consort and *Rudra* with his consort are the presiding deities for *Rajoguṇa*, *Sattvaguṇa* and *Tamoguṇa* respectively. Even though they are engaged in the activities related to the three *guṇas* they are *triguṇatītas*. Does it mean that *Brahma* and *Rudra* lack *Sattvaguṇa*? No. They have all the three in them, the - *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. Demons worship only the *rājasa* part, and those who have divine dispositions, worship the *sāttvika* (part). But, among the three or them, the one who works most in the realm of a particular *guṇa*, is (generally) called the presiding deity of that part. But, all the three *mūrtis* have the same true form and their consorts also have the same true form. And that is why we find the names of *Gaurī* and *Sarasvatī* in *Lakshmī Sahasranāma*, the names of *Sarasvatī* and *Lakshmī* in *Lalitā Sahasranāma* the names of *Śiva* in *Vishṇu Sahasranāma*, and

some names of *Vishṇu* in *Śiva Sahasranāma*. When viewed in the above said manner, the references like *Lakshmī*, *Sarasvatī* and *Gaurī* as mother, daughter, grand-daughter and daughter-in-law fit at different (spiritual) centres.

Among the two groups viz the trinity and their divine consorts, which group has more prominence? The answer is, both the groups are equally prominent. The first group belongs to the *purusha* and the second group to *prakṛti*. Whom should the *prakṛti* nurture? It should nurture the lustre of the *purusha*. So, the importance to *purusha*. But the *prakṛti* is very essential for the growth of the strength of *purusha*. Therefore, importance to *purusha* in the aspect of growing and importance to *prakṛti* in nurturing that growth. As the trinity has to work with the help of their consorts, we may say metaphorically that they are the sons and servants of the *parāŚakti*.

For example, when *Gaurī* combines with *Śiva* and is engaged in the activity of *laya*, we call her as the consort of *Śiva*. Both the *purusha* and *prakṛti* appear here as expansions of *paramapurusha* and *parāprakṛti*. But, if creation and other activities have not begun by their coming together, *prakṛti* may be called as the sister of *purusha* in that state. Only in this sense the *Vedas* have called *ambikā* as *rudra's* sister. In this sense only they are referred to

as brother and sister before coming together and start working. Later they are husband and wife. Poetical compositions call a wife by many names; a servant when she nurses her husband and a minister when she gives counsel to her husband.

“गृहिणी, सचिवः, सखी मित्रः, प्रियशिष्या ललिते कलाविधौ।”

In this sense *Gaurī* can be *Siva's* consort and sister as well.

But how can *Gaurī* be the sister of *Nārāyaṇa*? Some argue as follows:—“This is because *Gaurī* is the left half portion of the body of *Siva*. *Nārāyaṇa* also adorns the left half of the body of *Sadāśiva*. And so, the *śāstras* state that *Vishṇu* and *Gaurī* were brother and sister, and *Gaurī* is the younger sister of *Vishṇu*”. But this is not correct. There is no scriptural evidence to this. And, we do not get here the answer to the question as to why *Gaurī* can only be the younger sister of *Vishṇu* and not the elder sister.

We get the correct answer in the tenth *skandha* of *Śrīmadbhāgavata*. *Śaktidevī* became the younger sister of *Vishṇu* in the *Kṛshṇāvatāra*. *Śrīkṛshṇa* tells *yogamāya* there—“I will take a partial incarnation in the womb of *Devakī* as her son. Following that, you take birth as the daughter of *Yashoda* in her womb. Let people call you by the names *Durgā*, *Bhadrakālī*, *Vijayā*, *Vaishṇavī*,

Kṛshṇā, *Mādhavī*, *Īsānī*, *Ambikā* etc, and worship you with *dhūpa*, *upahāra* and *bali*”. And, we see that she takes birth accordingly. So, as she was born thus after *Kṛshṇa*, it is appropriate that she is called the younger sister of *Vishṇu*.” This is the scriptural description.

Thus, when viewed with discernment, it becomes very appropriate to call *Gaurī* variously with relation-names such as wife of *Śiva*, sister of *Śiva*, younger sister of *Nārāyaṇa*, owner or servant of *Lakshmī*, *Sarasvatī*, mother or daughter-in-law etc. Here there can be no room for aspects like wordly ethics, immorality, evolution of civilization etc.

***Bhagavān* is *Nirañjana* and *Jaganmāta* is *citprakṛti*. Even though they expand for the sake of *lokavyāpāra*, there can be no *vikāra* in their form. Here *Śrīraṅgamahāguru* had given the following analogy. “Even though a number of *rāgas* may spring from the same *Śṛuti* the *Śṛuti* does not undergo any change.” Therefore there can be no diminishing in the true forms of *Bhagavān* (and) *Bhagavati* by their involvement in the acts of creation etc.**

Thus *Gaurī* is referred to by various names such as *Śiva's* wife, sister of *Śiva* the supreme god, sister of *Sarasijanābha* (*Vishṇu*), younger sister of

Nārāyaṇa etc, and the festival pertaining to her, viz. *Svarṇagaurī vrata* is called commonly *Gaurīhabba*. When should it be celebrated? What should be the modalities? These shall be discussed now.

When should it be celebrated?

This festival should be celebrated on the 3rd day of the *śuklapaksha* of *bhādrapada māsa*. (*Ṭṛtīyā tithi* should be there at the time of sunrise on that day. It will be very endearing to *Gaurī* if the *caturthī tithi* fixed for the worship of *Gaṇeśa* happens to be touching *ṭṛtīyā*. Therefore, *Gaurī* festival should be celebrated on the day when the *yoga* of *caturthī* occurs with *ṭṛtīyā*. Suppose *ṭṛtīyā* spreads for most part of the previous day, or for that whole day (for a full sixty *Ghaṭikas*), and it lasts for just the duration of one *muhūrta* or even less the next day Then, when should the festival be celebrated? It should be observed only on the following day.

मुहूर्तमात्रा ततो न्यूनापि परा ग्राह्या, पूर्वदिने
षष्टिघटीमितामपि त्यक्त्वा परदिने अल्पापि
चतुर्थीयुतैव ग्राह्या गणयोग प्राशस्तात्

ii) How should it be observed?

Goddess *Gaurīdevi* should be meditated upon in the heart and then worshipped externally. What should be the medium for external worship? A golden idol of *Gaurīdevi*, or a pot, or turmeric, or

sand or clay collected from a pure river or a lake—in all these or in any one or two or three of these, *Devī* is invoked and worshipped. What should one do if he or she cannot afford to get an idol made of gold? "Such people may get it done in silver, which is less expensive. Such a custom is also followed by some"—some say, But it is not correct. *Kalpas* do not merely insist that the idol should be made of gold for the reason that gold is expensive. Scriptures prescribe that the idol should be made of gold because of the extraordinary property of the substance. If one cannot afford to get (it made of) gold he should use another material of equal merit or one with a little less merit in its place. That material is '*haridrā*' (turmeric). It is not merely because that turmeric also possesses the color of gold. **Whatever the (change in the) state occurs in the body that helps to obtain the grace of the deity by seeing or touching gold, is accomplished on seeing or touching turmeric also. This has been demonstrated by Śrīraṅgamahāguru by Nāḍīśāstra.** Even if the idol is made of clay, it should be painted with golden color only. The goddess who is worshipped is *Gaurī* the yellow complexioned. She is described as “चाम्पेयगौरार्धशरीरकायै कर्पूरगौरार्धशरीरकाय” by *Śrīsaṅkarabhagavatpāda*, as one with an auspicious form glowing with the colour of the *Campaka* flower.

Those who desire to worship the goddess by invoking her in sand or clay should purify themselves by taking a bath etc on the morning of the festival, and go to a river or a lake and worship *Gaṅgā* there. Then taking the pure sand or clay from the river or the lake and placing it in a cloth applied with turmeric, they tie a knot, and offer *Shoḍaśopacāra pūja* to it, and bring it to the temple or home, accompanied by auspicious instrumental music. Then they place it in a *manṭapa* and offer worship after doing *prāṇa pratisṭhā* to it. *Devī* should be worshipped as per precepts, three times or twice a day, till she is given a send off. This part of the festival may be done by men, who are rendered pure by rituals and who are knowledgeable in modalities. Afterwards women do the worship. Those who cannot afford to install *Gaurī* for worship in their houses, go either to others' houses or a temple where *Gaurī* has been installed, and offer their worship there. The *kaṅkaṇa* which is a part of this observance should have sixteen knots in it.

Pūja begins with *ghaṇṭānāda*. Then follows *Ācamana*, *saṅkalpa*, *kalāśa pūja* and *mahāgaṇapati pūja*; and then the idol of *SvarṇaGaurī* is installed and *devī* is meditated upon.

हरान्वितामिन्दुमुखीं सर्वाभरणभूषिताम् ।

विमलाङ्गीं विशालाक्षीं चिन्तयामि सतीं शिवाम् ॥

(I meditate upon *Satīdevī* the consort of *Śiva*, who is together with *Śiva*, glowing with all the ornaments, endowed with pure limbs and shining with large eyes).

She should be invoked with flowers and *Akshatā*, and then should be offered the jewel throne. A new thread has to be kept for *pūja* and *dhāraṇa* (worshipping and wearing). Then, (services) such as *Pādya*, *Arghya*, *Ācamana*, *Madhuparka* *Pancāmṛtasnāna* *Śuddhodhakasnāna*, *vastras*, *Ābharana* (jewels), *yajnopavīta*, *gandha*, *akshata*, turmeric and *kuṅkuma* and other auspicious things and fragrant flowers should be offered. Then, *aṅgapūja*, *pushpapūja*, *patrapūja* and *nāmapūja* should be offered. After that, all the sixteen knots of the thread should be worshipped with the sixteen names viz., *SvarṇaGaurī*, *MahāGaurī*, *Kātyāyini*, *Kaumārī*, *Bhadhrā*, *Vishṇusodari*, *Maṅgala Devatā*, *Rākenduvadanā*, *Candraśekharapriyā*, *Vishveshvarapatnī*, *Dākshāyaṇī*, *Kṛshṇaveṇī*, *Bhavānī*, *lolekshanā*, *Menakātmajā*, and *SvarṇaGaurī*.

Devī should be worshipped with *ashṭottara divyanāmas* and *Dhūpa*, *dīpa*, *naivedya*, *tāmbūla*, *phala*, *dakṣiṇā*, *arghya*, *nīrājana*, *Pushpāñjali*

(offering flowers from cupped hands held together) and *pradakṣiṇa* and *namaskāra* should be offered. The special *naivedya* to be offered to *Devī* is *haridrānna* (yellow coloured cooked rice,) and *mudgānna* (sacred food prepared with green gram and yellow coloured rice)

Then *Devi* should be prayed for the fulfillment of desires and prosperity, and with her permission, the sixteen knotted threads mentioned above should be worn. She should be prayed to bestow with sons, wealth, prosperity and all the desires in the parameters of *Dharma*.

For the completion of the observance of the *vrata*, *pakvānna* and other gifts should be offered to great *Brāhmins* and *sumaṅgalis* (and *Brāhmin* couples also). Services such as *chatra*, *cāmara*, *nṛtya*, *vādyā*, *Āndolikā* should be offered to *Devī*, and her affection and grace should to be sought.

Though there may be some differences in the modalities of the *pūja*, offering of services that are dear to *Devī* will be in all of them. The offering of vedic and tantric *mantraśloka*s, and also the offering of *Tantras* will be there. The custom of listening to stories pertaining to the *vrata* after the worship is also in vogue.

This *vrata* may be observed by both men and women. Those who desire to perform *udyāpana* of

the *vrata*, should clean the eastern part of the house, erect a *manṭapa*, spread cereals and install a copper *kalaśa* with the figure of a lotus having sixteen petals etched on it. Then the divine couple is invoked in the golden idols of *Pārvatī* and *Parameśvara*, and are offered *abhisheka* with *pañcagavya* and *pañcāmṛtha*. Then the idols are placed on the *Kalaśa* and *Prāṇapratishṭa* is done, and *Shoḍaśopacāra pūjas* are performed. The performer of these worships should keep awake throughout that night.

On the following morning, after bath and *Ahnika*, the *parādevatās* should be worshipped again. *Homa* should be performed with gingelly, *yava* and *Ājya*, to the chanting of *saṅkarshaṇa mantra* and *Gaurīmantra*. Again, *Devi* should be worshipped and the gifting of cow and bronze vessels along with *Dakṣiṇa* to the *Ācārya* should be done. Sixteen *Brāhmins* and *Suvāsinis* should be fed, offered gifts and their blessings should be received. After that, *Prasāda* should be had along with relatives and friends.

Those who cannot afford to perform the *vrata*, should do *Devipūja* to the extent possible, and give *dāna* and *dakṣiṇa* etc in keeping with their ability, to the deserving ones and make the day holy by singing the praises etc of *Devī*.

Question 1- There is a custom of bringing clay from *gaṅgā* for making the idol of *Gaurī devī* or the sacred sand. If river *gaṅgā* is not close by, *gaṅgā* is invoked in a nearby pond or lake, and sand and clay are brought from there. What is the reason for this custom? If clay and sand are available nearby, why not make use of them? Why one has to go to *gaṅgā tīrtha*? This is the first question. The answer lies in the *tāttvika rūpa* of *gaṅgā* and *Gaurī*.

The *purāṇas* and *Itihasas* say that both *gaṅgā* and *Gaurī* are daughters of *Himavān*, the emperor of mountains.

तस्यां गङ्गा समभवत् ज्येष्ठा हिमवतः सुता ।

उमा नाम द्वितीयाभूत् कन्या तस्यैव राघव ॥

एते ते शैलराजस्य सुते लोकनमस्कृते ।

गङ्गा च सरितां श्रेष्ठा उमा देवी च राघव ॥ (रामायण, बालकाण्ड-सर्ग 35)

We have to take note of the general and special meanings and the purport of these statements. Why *Gaṅgā* is called the daughter of *Himavān*? One may easily say "Don't you know even this much"? River *gaṅgā* takes its birth in the Himālayan Mountains. Therefore *purāṇas* metaphorically say that *gaṅgā* is the daughter of *himavān*." But, the scriptures call the very same *gaṅgā* as the one born of the feet of *Nārāyaṇa*" (विष्णुपादोद्धवा गङ्गा), "holy water in the *kamandalu* of *Brahmadeva*" (आदावादिपितामहस्य नियमव्यापारपात्रे जलम्,) daughter of sage *Jahnu*, (जाह्नवी

सुरनिम्नगा), and "Daughter of *Bhagīratha*" (*bhāgīrathī*). One way is to interpret from the view point of each story. For example, some explanations may be had from the statements viz. "Lord *Brahmadeva* washed the feet of *Nārāyaṇa* who was in the form of *trivikrama*, with the holy water of his *kamandalu*; *Jahnumaharshi* drank up *gaṅgā* completely and then let her out through his right ear; *gaṅgā* incarnated on the earth and followed *Bhagīratha*, as a result of the severe penance done by him. And so, *gaṅgā* is called by the above names". But when we study the *pāramārthika bhāva* of *gaṅgā*, an explanation which is well woven and uniform can be obtained.

Philosophically speaking, *gaṅgā* is in indeed a flow of pure divine knowledge. It is in fact, a (continuous flow) of *brahma vidya*. The origin of that flow of knowledge is the very abode of god. It flows down from there for the welfare of the world. *Himavān* too, with a summit that grants supreme bliss, is vast, steady and a meditational abode of *yogis*, is indeed a representative of the supreme soul. It is praised by vedic hymns as "ब्रह्मण आणी स्थः" (you are the nails for the *Ālambana* of *Brahma*), as it comes from the right ear of a *Brhmajñāni* via the *vedavidyās*. And *Bhagīratha* is a *Mahāyogi* who obtained that great flow of knowledge by the power of penance, and utilized it for the world. All these

proclaim a single philosophy—That *gaṅgā* is a flow of divine knowledge (*jnāna pravāha*). We may recall here that the scriptures call the holy water of *gaṅgā* as ‘the water body form of *Śiva* who is *jnāna-sukhasvarūpi* “(शम्भोर्जलमयी मूर्तिः’). *Śrīsaṅkarabhagavatpāda* also proclaims the same philosophy that *jnāna-gaṅgā* is the mother of the three worlds and is all pervading” “त्रिभुवनजननी व्यापिनी ज्ञानगङ्गा. The commentaries on *kenopanishat* and *taittiriya upanishat* proclaim—“As *gaṅgā* is a continuous flow the divine knowledge, *Gaurī devī* is also a true form of *Brahma Vidya*”.

यक्षे भक्तिं बुद्ध्वा विद्या उमारूपिणी प्रादुरभूत् ।
सर्वेषां हि शोभमानानां शोभनतमा विद्या ॥ (शङ्करभाष्य)

परशक्तिरूपेण स्थिता प्रणवपर्यायेण उमाशब्देन उच्यते ॥ -भट्टभास्कर भाष्य

Thus, *Gaṅgā* and *Gaurī* are the very modes of *Brahma Vidya*. The essence of both is *jnāna* only. Therefore *śāstras* state that they are sisters. The abode of *Gaṅgā* is the abode of *Gaurī* also. In order to expound this philosophical knowledge, the tradition of worshipping *Gaurī* through the holy sand or clay of *Gaṅgā* is quite appropriate.

Question 2- We see a very deep relationship between the number sixteen and the modalities of the worship of *Gaurī*. The *aṅgapūja* of *Gaurī* is done in sixteen places. The number of flowers and leaves used in the worship is sixteen. The number of knots

on the *dora* is sixteen. The number of years required for the fulfillment of *Gaurī vrata* is sixteen.

षोडशान्वत्सरान्... पूजयेद्धक्तिपूर्वकम् ।

एवं कृत्वा नरः पार्थ परिपूर्णव्रती भवेत् ॥

The number of priests who officiate for the completion of this (*udyāpana*) is sixteen. *Vāyana Dāna* is for sixteen people and the number of couples to be worshipped is sixteen.

षोडशप्रमितं दद्यात् ब्राह्मणेभ्यश्च वायनम् ।

ऋत्विजः षोडशाप्येवं पक्वान्नैः प्रीणयेत्सदा ॥

Is the occurrence of this number sixteen in *Gaurīpūja* a more coincidence or is there any special reason? This is the second question.

We are of the opinion that the number sixteen here is for a special reason. The philosophy that Mother Nature who is endowed sixteen *kalās* and who is *paramātmamayī* is *Gaurī devī* herself, is indicated here. The first among these sixteen *kalās* is nothing but the *śuddha caithanyamaya Śivasvarūpa*. The *paraprakṛti* itself is *Gaurī devī* who expands that *Śiva svarūpa*. For people like us who are immersed in inert nature, it is extremely difficult to directly touch that pure spirit. So, the compassionate mother *Gaurī* joins that *caitanya Kāla* with fifteen *kalas*, gets magnified and expanded to us. When we worship her, the sixteen *kalās* of our inert nature get purified and assume

the form of *parāprakṛti*; and find refuge in the *paramātmā svarūpa* and attain fruition. She is neither just a *Caitanya Kalā* nor a *jadaparakṛti* consisting of fifteen *kālas*, but she is the *Mahādevī* who is endowed with fifteen *Kalās* which get refined by the *caitanya kalā* and thus complete with the sixteen *kalās*, acting as a bridge between us and the *paramatma*. This is the significance of the number sixteen proclaimed in *Gaurīpūja*.

Question 3: Why should the idol of *Gaurī* which is made with devotion and installed with *prāṇa pratishṭhā* be given a send off? This is another question. Why can't we continue worshipping it daily? Why should we bid good bye to the sacred idol?

In reply to the above, the following points have to be noted. It is difficult to perform the worship every day, maintaining ritualistic purity and as per precepts. For this reason, doing *udvāsana* after worshipping for a stipulated time has been a custom in deity worship. Even in the daily ritual of *sandhyāvandana*, we see that *Gāyatrī devī* is invoked, and after the *japa*, *upasthāna* is done. Bidding good bye is a sacred ritual. It is not done with the intention of abandoning her by sending away. It is an auspicious rite performed with the intention that after reaching her sacred abode, may She joyfully arrive again when we invoke her for

worship. This is an auspicious send—off for that goddess performed with the feeling “‘शोभनार्थं पुनरागमनाय च’”. *Udvāsana* is thus a temporary send off along with auspicious *manodharma* and materials, only to invite her again. That is why while sending *Gaurī*, five kinds of rice items viz jaggery rice, ghee rice, curd rice, tamarind rice, *pāyasa* and *paramanna* are offered. And goddess is given a send off with auspicious things viz - bangles, *Biccole*, turmeric, *kuṅkuma*, *Shobhana tandula* (rice filled in the pouch made from the front part of a sari), clothes, mirror and comb etc. to the tune of auspicious sounds of musical instruments. This is a *śobhana yātra*. The intention that *devī* who has returned to her *maṅgaladhama* may (arrive) again at the time of worship, is hidden here. Why should the idol of *devī* be sent off in water only ? This matter will be described in the chapter of the worship of *Gaṇeśa*. (The idol of *Gaṇeśa* is also immersed in water only, as per precepts). We should note that the send off also happens to be a part of the services and worship.

Thus, *Gaurīpūja* which begins with *Dhyāna* and *Āvāhana* ends auspiciously with *Udvāsana*. We pray to the all auspicious *Gaurīdevī* known as *Sarvamāṅgalā*, for the auspiciousness (benediction of one and all).

