TAYĪ AND CHAVATĪ

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Tayī (Suvarṇa Gaurī Vrata or Hartālikā) and Chavatī(Gaṇesha Chaturthī) are amongst the most delightful utsava-s celebrated by the Chitrāpur Sāraswat-s. These utsava-s appeal to the senses and the very inner core. Encompassed within all the celebration is the thought that Goddess Gaurī has come to Her mother’s home (kul̄āra) - the ‘me’ time is given to Her. During this time, ongoing worries or concerns disappear, warm camaraderie and kinship pave the way for stronger relationships, and the meeting and mixing with people help us step back from the virtual, and into the real world. This is also the time when olfactory and gustatory cravings are tickled… and happily satiated! All finery in clothing and jewellery are worn by families to celebrate these occasions. As the third and fourth days of Shukla Paks͟ha in Bhādrapada approach, the flurry of activities and huddles in Āmchigele (Āmchī in short) households multiply, with hectic micro planning and execution. The excitement is almost unbearable!

Tayī (Vāyṇā Pūjā or Gaurī Tṛtīya) occurs a day prior to Gaṇesha Chaturthī (Chavatī), and Devī Pārvatī (or Suvarṇa Gaurī) – the mother of Lord Gaṇesha is worshipped on this day. On Tayī, the ladies, young maidens and girls are at the forefront, carrying out all tasks joyously, while the menfolk offer their support.

Traditionally, pūjā arrangements for Tayī and Chaturthī begin after Amāvasya - about 2 days prior to Gaurī pūjana. A complete decoration of the pūjā area, the temple area, and the home and preparation of (much awaited) naivedya food items is meticulously done. All family members joyfully involve themselves with whichever chore they are capable of carrying out as assigned to them by the lady of the house. Any helpers in the household find themselves running between the house and marketplace for pūjā and food items umpteen times a day, efficiently performing different tasks rapidly one after the other. One cannot help being sucked into the vortex of uplifting festivities.

Tayī – Vāyṇa and Gaurī pūjā (Vāyṇa: a Dorī or mixed coloured silken string)

With the lady of the household centre-stage, this is a holy and auspicious occasion celebrated with intense fervour that often overshadows most other festivals. At times assisted by priests, ladies of the household perform this pūjā to seek Devī’s grace and blessings for the family’s descendants, as well as for longevity of the significant other. It is a big celebration for a new bride who visits her parental home for her first Tayī as a married lady (sumaṅgalī or savāshiṇī).

After bathing, coconuts are de-husked and cleaned thoroughly, leaving only a tuft (called sheṇḑī) in the middle of the coconut’s 3 pores (we call it the ‘2 eyes and mouth’). Married ladies usually use a minimum of 5 coconuts and the unmarried maidens (called kanyā-s) and young girls use 2 (some families use 3). A sought-after task by youngsters is the fine cleaning of coconuts, and then immersing them in turmeric infused water to purify them. The shells of damp coconuts are then patterned creatively with coloured chalk and later, paint. Two coconuts are selected to represent Gaurī and Gaṇesha respectively. Special home-made collyrium (kājal) is applied to the eyes of the coconut and the mouth dabbed with coconut oil infused sindūr (an orange-red cosmetic powder) or Kuṅkum and inscribed with a circle going round the circumference at its greatest bulge. The coconut slated to be Gaurī is coloured completely with white chalk or paint (except for the eyes and mouth), and a vermillion (kuṅkum) tilak is applied on one side of the coconut - some apply a horizontal kuṅkum tilak while some apply plain round dots. All the readied coconuts are then kept in the prayer area (devākūḑa) or in a secluded corner of the house.

On the morning of Gaurī and Vāyṇa pūjā, women have a head-bath and ladies fast until Vāyṇa pūjā is over. A strict no-garlic no-onion diet is followed thereafter. A portrait of Gaurī is affixed behind the podium where the coconut symbolising Gaurī is to be placed for worship. To Gaurī’s left, space is left for placing Gaṇesha the next day (Chavatī). On a flattened plantain leaf (with the tip facing the worshipper), fistfuls of rice grain are placed to form a small mound. A kalasha filled with water is positioned on the rice mound, with a 5 rupee coin, 5 blades of grass that have spikelet arrangement (durvā-s), and a whole piece of betelnut (supārī) immersed inside. Five clean mango leaves or betelnut leaves are arranged on the mouth of the readied kalasha and the ‘coconut signifying Gaurī’ is positioned firmly atop. The coconut on the kalasha is then bedecked with jewellery (some families keep jewellery to be used only for Gaurī Pūjā), and a new silk sarī is wrapped around the kalasha, along with aromatic flowers. A maṅgalasūtra and green and black glass bangles are placed on either side, and often a Devī-mukha (a mask made of silver, copper or clay) is also placed around the coconut.

During the pūjā, a series of vidhi-s are performed: Āchamanam, kalasha pūjā, Shaṅkha pūjā, Shuddhiproks͟haṇa, pañchāmṛta pūjā and Gaurī prāṇapratis͟ht͟hā with abhis͟heka. A small bamboo winnow or a plate (PaĪeru) containing fresh areca nuts, betelnut leaves (vīdŏ-s), fruit (specially plantains), areca flowers (Bhiṅgāra), or flowers like champā, mogrā and sweet-scented flowers, turmeric powder (haldī), Kuṅkum, cucumber, ridged gourd, a piece of sugar cane (kabbu), okra (lady’s finger) and a lit lamp (divli), is placed. Alaṅkāra offered are a mirror, comb, haldī-kuṅkum, maṅgalasūtra and vāyṇādorī.

The Dorībandhana ritual is carried out amidst stotra chanting. Betel-nut flower or other flowers are knotted onto the multicoloured thread (16 or 9 or 7 or 5 knots) while taking circumambulations (pradaks͟hiṇā) from a fixed point. The Dorī is then worn round the neck or tied to the left wrist.

Thereafter, Vāyṇā Pūjā is performed. After doing Namaskāra, flowers and rice grain (aks͟hatā) are offered to Gaurī. In a paĪeru, a coconut, aks͟hatā, haldīkuṅkum, betelnut, betelnut leaves are offered. Complete Naivedya prepared for Gaurī Pūjā and Chavatī, is offered to Gaurī. Naivedya prepared for Chavatī is placed back in the store, to be offered to Lord Gaṇesha the next day (Mother Gaurī must know what her son Gaṇesha would be eating!) Prasāda of kuṅkum, veṇī (a flower braid) and flowers offered to Gaurī is removed and used subsequently by the ladies. All present partake tīrtha pañchāmṛta (a mixture of milk, water, honey, sugar and ghee). The Pūjā concludes with a sincere and devoted Prārthanā to Goddess Gaurī for happiness, wellness, prosperity (sukhasamṛddhi), healthy children, longevity of spouses (akhaṇḑasaubhāgya) and seeking pardon for any errors committed.

After vāyṇa, ladies partake rice as part of lunch and observe fasting (phalāhāra) in the evening. For Gaurī, Naivedya preparation involves making Pātolyŏ from wheat flour or varai, cucumber khīrī, cucumber salad (kocchol̄i), an AĪaṇi upkarī of 5 types of green leafy vegetables, cheppi (without salt or sugar) coconut khīrī and some folks prepare ambaṭ and phoḑyŏ-s (fritters) too. Both cucumber khīrī and aĪaṇi upkarī are prepared without salt. Goddess Gaurī is ‘saumya’, simple and gentle – her naivedya accordingly is very simple as well.

Chavatī

The next day (being the fourth day of Shukla paks͟ha in the month of Bhādrapada), Goddess Gaurī’s son Lord Gaṇesha’s arrival is celebrated with pomp and grandeur. It is said that He comes to take His mother back to Mount Kailāsa. The portly Gaṇesha, the God of wisdom, prosperity and good fortune, is a favourite of the masses. Being the remover of all obstacles and calamities, His blessings are invoked before embarking on anything auspicious. Devotees bring home mūrti-s of Lord Gaṇesha and worship in a special way for a day and half, or 3 or 5 or 7 or 10 days depending upon family tradition or Saṅkalpa.

Gaṇeshasthāpanā: The priest does the prāṇapratis͟ht͟hā, and the mūrti is smeared with rakta-chandana. Some āmchī homes use a turmeric water immersed and dried large coconut with sheṇḑī, as Gaṇesha. A white chalk mark circles around the bulge, two eyes smeared with kājal and mouth smeared with sindūra.

The coconut signifying Gaṇesha, is placed on a cleaned flattened plantain leaf with the tip pointing towards the worshipper, on a small mound of rice. A silk dhotar and aṅgavastram is placed around the coconut. In the absence of dhotar and aṅgavastram, a tiny garland is made out of cotton puncatuated by tweaks of red kuṅkum and placed oblong across the coconut like the zānve̐ (sacred thread). He is often decorated with jewellery kept specifically for Him. A garland of flowers and especially His favourite hibiscus is placed round the ‘neck’. The Durvā is significant in Gaṇesha Pūjā, and a garland of Durvā is also placed round Gaṇesha’s neck. If enough durvā is not available 21 durvā-s are tied together and offered. Gaṇesha pūjana usually takes an hour and half where the whole family prays together. During the Pūjā, 108 durvā-s and 108 belpatrī-s, are offered, and it ends with kuṅkumārchanā.

Gaṇesha loves food and an elaborate menu of 21 food items is laid out as naivedyam, and later enjoyed heartily by family and friends. Prasāda bhojana preparation has Amboḑe ghasshī with bitter gourd, Potato sukke̐, bhĕṇḑi upkarī, kākḑī kocchoĪī, Colocasia bhāji, Patroḑŏ (optionally with ghasshi), Khŏṭṭe with chutney, maḑgaṇe̐, variety of fritters, vermicelli khīrī etcetera. Savouries normally are cׅhākli-s, nevryŏ, jaggery laḍū-s, modaka-s, pañcׅhakdāya and urad dāl amboḑe. Twenty-one modaka-s are specially made as divlī-s (lamps) that are lit and used for ārati to the Lord Gaṇesha and ārati-s are sung enthusiastically with fervour and devotion.

On the last day of worship, Visarjana takes place first for the Mother Gaurī, by shifting the coconut a little bit. Lord Gaṇesha’s visarjana takes place by turning the coconut (or Mūrti) a bit in it’s place, with participants lustily cheering “Gaṇapatī bāppā morayā, pud̲h̲chyā vars͟hī lavakara yā” (like saying Punarmilāmaḥ !!). The idol is taken out in a colourful procession to the accompaniment of music, to be immersed in a water body. Just prior to this visarjana, kuṅkum is added to water to colour it red (lāṭṭyā / kuṅkumā uddāka) in a vāṭṭe̐ (a shallow, rimmed plate). This is then positioned at a distance from the podium/dais in such a way that family members can view the reflection of the coconuts and lit lamps in the water. This is the last ‘chance’ (as elders advise youngsters) to offer intense prayers and seek blessings from the Lord.

It's time thereafter, to offer vāyṇa to elder suvāshiṇī-s and gorging on the delicious prasāda. The coconuts symbolising Gaurī and Gaṇesha are used to prepare sweet savouries that people crave for.