

GUDI PADAVA

(VARSHA PRATIPADA)

Gudipadava is the first day of the Hindu lunar calendar “Gudi” means a banner or pole raised to announce victory and joy and “Padava” is another name for “Pratipada” which is the first day of the lunar month. This is celebrated as a festival and is the foremost among Hindu festivals. It falls on Chaitra suddha pratipada. It is an auspicious day for undertaking any new venture or to take a New Year resolution. Gudipadava is the New Year’s Day for Maharashtrians. The worship to the Gudi is supposed to drive away evil from the house and is expected to usher prosperity and good fortune. It is also the New Year’s Day for the Telugu speaking community called “Ugadi panduga” and for the Kannada speaking people it is called “Ugadi Habba”.

Pooja Procedure: On this day, Indradwaja pooja or Brahmawaja pooja is performed in the morning, followed by Nutana (New) Panchanga patana (reading the new almanac) by learned pundits.

It is customary for the members of the family to wake up early in the morning, take oil bath (Abhyanga snana). The women folk clean up the house front with water mixed with cowdung, draw rangoli, wear new clothes and set up a “gudi” (a flag post, referred to as Indradwaja) as follows. A new bamboo pole is cleaned and a new red silken cloth is tied at the top along with a fresh branch of neem with tender leaves and flowers. It is covered with a silver cup upside down and decorated with flowers. This constitutes the Gudi. This decorated pole is firmly planted in the middle or front portion of the house, which has been cleaned already with cowdung, and the pooja is performed for the flagstaff and the new almanac by the eldest member of the family. A paste made out of fresh and tender neem leaves, tamarind water and a little jiggery is distributed to all members of the family, which is believed to purify the blood and build up immunity in the body against diseases. After the pooja, a sumptuous lunch is arranged in which all the members of the family take part.

In the evening, the new almanac is worshipped and panchanga patana (reading of important aspects of the almanac) is done by learned pundits and all people gather and hear the good and the bad which are to happen in that year. The gathered exchange New Year greetings and disperse.

Story of Gudipadava

At least four different episodes relevant to this festival can be cited. They are:-

1. It is said that it is on Chaitra suddha pratipada, Lord Brahma created the Universe.
2. It is believed that Lord Sri Rama, after vanquishing Ravana and other demons first entered Ayodhya on this day and the occasion was celebrated as a victory day with flags, festoons etc.
3. Sage Narada had sixty sons. As per the Hindu custom, sixty years are named as Prabhava, Vibhava etc., It constitutes one cycle and it repeats itself. The commencement of each year is on Chaitra suddha pratipada and it is called Gudipadava.
4. It is also believed that this festival, then called as Indramaha, was started by Uparichara Vasu. When the king was prevailed upon by Indra to desist from being a hermit in a forest, and to rule over the country called, Cedi, Indra gave him a bamboo staff as an affectionate gift and in honour of Indra, the king planted it in the earth and since that time when the year ended, a bamboo staff was raised by the kings (also by other noble persons) and it was decked with baskets full of fragrant substances, ornaments and garlands were suspended from it.
5. It is also believed that Lord Vishnu gave Indra a flag – staff to frighten the demons.
6. It is a day of great festivity and rejoice as it commemorated the triumphant expedition of Maratha armies of the Great Chhatrapathi Shivaji Maharaj. It is a day when the brave Marathas returned home from their successful expedition of war.

