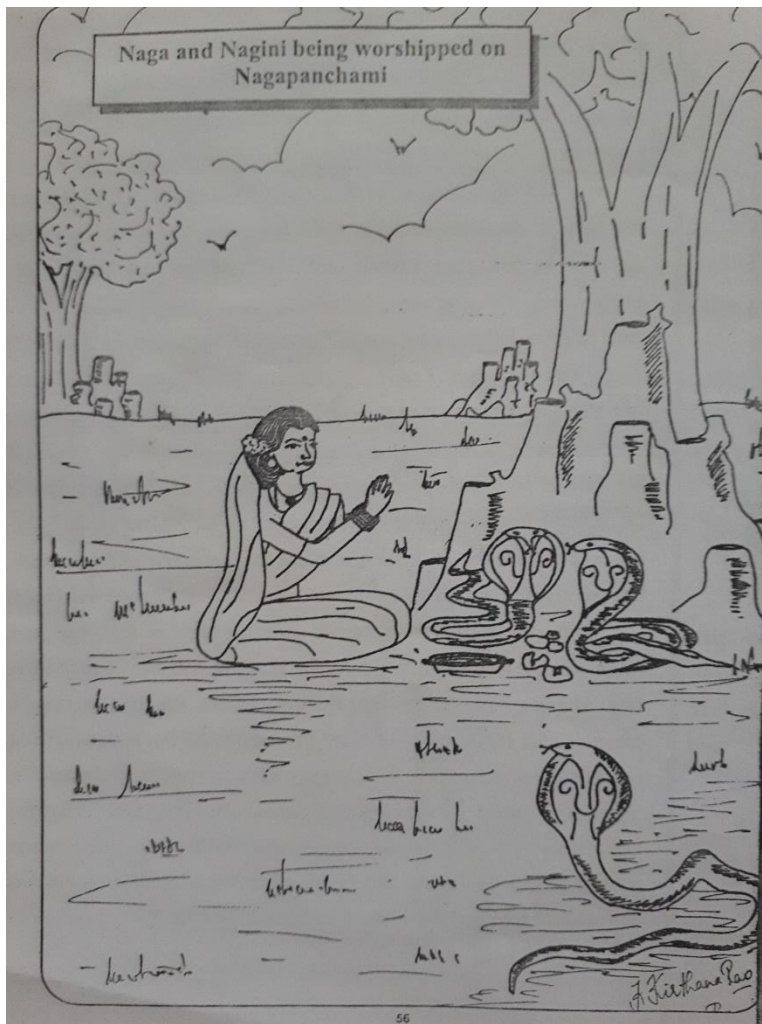


NAGA CHATURTHI AND NAGA PANCHAMI

Naga pooja is performed on Naga chaturthi day and also on Naga panchami day. They fall on Sravana suddha chaturthi and panchami. Performing this pooja is supposed to keep the sense organs healthy and to avoid bites by snakes.

Pooja Procedure : The family members get up early and take oil bath. There are different modes of worship followed. Some draw a figure of five headed Naga with rangoli mixed with haldi and kumkum on a wooden plank, some draw picture of Naga with haldi paste on a wall or use a picture and some make use of silver idol of Naga for the pooja. Nine names of Naga are chanted during worship, namely, Ananta, Vasuki, Sesha, Padmanabha, Kambala, Sankhapala,

Dhrutarashtra, Takshaka and Kaliya. Fragrant flowers, milk, pepper, rice flour, rice corn are offered for worship. On that day, acts like tilling the land, cutting the vegetables, frying and roasting are to be avoided. People visit Naga mandirs and offer milk over the ant hills.



Story of Naga Chaturthi and Naga Panchami

In a small village, there was a farmer, living with his family. He had a small piece of land, which he used to till and earn his livelihood. There was an ant hill at one spot in his land which used to be inhabited by a cobra family. The male cobra is referred to as NAGA and the female as NAGINI.

It was the month of Sravana and that day was Naga Panchami. The farmer went out with the plough to till the land. Accidently, the plough hit the anthill which came down crumbling. The little ones of Nagini got trapped inside and died. Bloodstains were seen around the anthill. Nagini, the female cobra returned and to her dismay could not find the anthill but could only see the blood stains.

She started hissing, kept moving hither and thither and concluded that the farmer must have been responsible for all these happenings. In rage, she rushed to the farmer's house, bit every member of his family in revenge and the entire family of the farmer was wiped out. Nagini, however, remembered that the farmer had one more daughter who was married off and was living in a nearby village. Nagini did not want to spare this daughter also. She rushed to the nearby village, located the house and slowly crept inside. What did she see there?

Since it was a Naga Panchami, arrangements were on in the house for worshipping Naga. An idol of Naga and Nagini were placed on a wooden plank, decorated with flowers. Sandal paste was kept nearby. Milk for neivedya was kept separately, parched or fried grain was also kept. Pooja commenced shortly, some milk was poured over the idols, prayers were offered with closed eyes. Neivedya was shown, camphor burnt.

Nagini was pleased with the poojas and slowly wended her way near the idols and when the lady of the house opened her eyes Nagini stood before her and spoke, "O lady, do not be afraid, tell me who you are, also who are your parents and where are they living?". The lady narrated her story, Nagini, in a repentful mood, thought within herself. "How nice to see this lady worshipping Naga, How foolish I was in hastily wiping out the farmer's family" and narrated the sequence of events which led to the death of members of that family.

The lady asked Nagini, "Please tell me how to bring back my parents to life, what vrata should I observe?"

Nagini then gave her some nectar (Amrut) and asked her to go to her parent's house and sprinkle it over each member of her family. On doing so, her parents came back to life.

Nagini continued, "O, young lady, On Naga Panchami day of sravana month, avoid ploughing the land, don't cut vegetables with a knife, don't fry on a hot plate, avoid eating fried items, observe atleast these instructions as a minimum, and worship Naga on Naga Panchami day, offer milk and parched grain at an anthill.

If you observe these scrupulously, you will be assured of a prosperous and happy life".

So saying, Nagini went back to her home.
