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Performing Gowri and Ganapathi Pooja by Sankethis

Any Hindu festival is conducted as per Agama Shastras. But local traditions influence the way they are conducted. Thus we may find many minor variations of conducting the pooja. Within sankethi families we observe such differences. The purpose of this write up is to bring out such minor differences in observing Gowri and Ganapathi pooja just as a matter of information. This is not an exhaustive document not does it claim that it encompasses every detail of the poojas.

The procedure and the rituals to be followed for the poojas are generally found in “Vratha Ratnaakara”. These days one can use the internet to get to the pooja procedure. One such website is www.mypurohith.com

Gowri pooja (Also called Swarna Gowri Vrata):

Where: Performing Gowri pooja in one’s own house is the tradition (sampradaaya) in some sankethi families while in others is to go to a family which has the tradition and perform the pooja there. In some sankethi villages all families go to the temple or Ramamandir and perform pooja in groups.

Who: The Gowri pooja is mainly performed by married women and unmarried girls also join in the pooja. Usually a priest (Vaadhyar) helps in performing the pooja and is remunerated by all those who conducted the pooja by giving Vayanadaana at the end.

When: Gowri vrata is observed on the third day of the bright half of the month of Bhadrupada. Usually even if the third day thithi is there for a small portion of the day in the morning the vrata is observed on that day.

Ingredients: The usual ingredients required for all pooja is used. (Arishina, Kumkuma, Gandha, geje vastra, flowers, agarabathi, oil lamps, coconut, fruits, camphor and Nivedya) Usually for nivedyam on the Gowri pooja day Paayasam is used and if time permits “Obbattu” which is the special dessert for the day is used. In addition, “Moradajothes” with five types of grains (Toor Dhal, Channa Dhal, Moong Dhal, rice and wheat)with coconut fruits, dakshina and Blouse piece is prepared before hand. Usually five sets are prepared with one set given as “Taayi Baagina”to the mother or an elder person after the pooja is done. The other four sets are given to any suitable person of choice.

In some families they use the root of turmeric (Arishinada Kone) as representing Godess Gowri and pooja is offered. In other families on the day of the pooja they go to the Tulasi Katte to offer a small pooja and get the mud to be wrapped in a cloth smeared with turmeric powder to represent Godess Gowri and offer pooja inside the house.

In some villages on the banks of Cauvery and other rivers where sankethis live, Goddess Gowri is invoked into a symbolic idol made of sand from the sacred river (Marala Gowri) and is carried in a procession into a common place of worship.

An important aspect of Gowri Pooja is preparation of special Gejje vastras which are elaborately prepared weeks before the pooja day to be offered to Goddess Gowri. This also acts as decoration (Alankaranam). For performing Mangalaarathi special designs (rangoli) is drawn on plates and used. Another important aspect of Gowri pooja is offering pooja to a thread with 16 knots. (Dora Granthi pooja)
An oil lamp is kept continually lit till the Visarjana day which is described below.

Finishing the Pooja: Where possible, an auspicious day is used to perform Visarjana by consulting the panchangam. Just before Visarjana, people who performed the pooja will conduct a ritual called “Shobhalakki” (exchange of grains and blessings with Goddess Gowri)

Why: Goddess Gowri is the symbolization of Soumangalya. Hence all married women and young girls of marriageable age offer prayers every year for Dheerga (long) soumangalya. The pooja also provides an occasion to recognize mother, sisters and in general women folk

Ganapathi pooja (Vara Siddhi Vinaayaka vrata)

Where: Every family will perform Ganapathi pooja in their own houses.

Who: All males in the family perform the pooja. Pooja is either conducted by the head of the family or is performed through a priest (Vadhyaar) who is remunerated at the end of the pooja through Vaayana daana. Along with Vaayanadaana 11 Modakas or kolakattes are included.

When: Ganapathi vrata is observed on the fourth day of the bright half of the month of Bhadrupada.

Ingredients: The usual ingredients required for all pooja is used. (Arishina, Kumkuma, Gandha, gejje vastra, flowers, agarabathi, oil lamps, coconut, fruits, camphor and Nivedya) Usually for nivedyam on the Ganapathi pooja day Modakam (Karigadubu) is used. If time permits “Kolakatte” (A sankethi specialty) which is the special dessert for the day is used.

An idol made of mud with appropriate coloring is usually brought from the store each year and after the Visarjana immersed in a body of water. If idol made of mud is not available a silver idol is used.

On the pooja day, it is common practice to visit 21 homes where Ganesha has been worshipped to receive Ganesha's Grace. When this is not possible or the person is shy, 21 namaskaras are prescribed in one's own house after the pooja is finished or in the

evening. (It is also probable that since a very heavy meal is taken on this day it is good to exercise a little bit.)

Finishing the Pooja: It is a tradition to invite relatives and friends for Ganapathi Mangalaarathi on evenings before visarjana. Usually prasaadam on such occasions is “Kadale Hittu” and or “Kadale kaalu Usali”.

Sankethi associations in India conduct Ganapathi mangalaarathi on a grand scale as a community get-together event with sports, music, Vedic chanting together with a grand dinner.

Why: The pooja is called Vara Siddhivinayaka Vrata. Every family yearns for all siddhis (success) throughout the year. All families seek to receive the blessings of Lord Vignesha in removing any obstacles in life, giving good education and enhancing prosperity throughout the year.

Sree Krishnarpanamastu