

In the forest of Naimisha, Saunaka and his fellow sages are performing gyana yagna learning puranas and other tales of wisdom from sage sootha. One such day, the rishis bowed to sootha and prayed, "O Maharishi, please teach us a vratha that bestows quick and auspicious results on the performer(seeker)".

Sootha replied "O Great sages, Once Devi Parvathi approached Lord Shiva, who is sitting on a throne adorned with precious gems in kailash and questioned "Swami! I have learned many shastras(branches of knowledge) and Agama Vidyas from you. Please teach me a vratha that can give great results at all times from all miseries with only little effort".

Lord Shiva then smiled and replied "Devi! The quest for a vratha for the Greater Good, which can benefit all beings seems appropriate I will share one such exceptional vratha" He continued to say,

Just as how The sun among the stars, The Moon among the planets, River Ganga among the rivers and The mind among the senses are considered great, among all the vrathas this somavara vratha is considered supreme, This vratha is named as "Shodasa(sixteen) somavara vratham". one cannot list the miracles of this vratha. One who performs this vrata with

utmost devotion will attain all that he/she desires. The Poor will see wealth, maidens will find a suitable groom, Married women will see prosperity, the sick will turn Healthy, Separated couples can get back with their partner. As such this vratha is magnificent.

Devi Parvarthi then Prayed, "Swami! Please explain the way to perform this vratha".

Lord Shiva replied, "Devi! This vratha is to be performed with pure devotion. The period between the months of Ashada poornima and Karthika poornima are known for performing this

vratha. During the sixteen Mondays of this period, The Performer has to fast(can have prasadam), get up early around sunrise and complete their nitya karmas. Then a Linga made from

The mud collected from an anthill is to be made. Linga made of gold or silver or such accepted metals can be used.

Bilva leaves, flowers, Dhoop and Oil/Ghee lamps are required for worship. For prasadam(offering) a dish made of broken wheat, ghee and jaggery mixed to form laddus is to

be made. After offering to the Lord, the prasadam has to divided into three parts and one part to the attendees of the puja, one part to the animals or birds around you, one part to the performer. Make sure to avoid having salt on this day. This ritual has to be performed on all the sixteen Mondays. On the day of seventeenth Monday all the Lingas that are worshiped can be taken to any waterbody to be dissolved. On this day, Depending on the capacity of the vratha performer Annadhana can be arranged to brahmins.

Having listened parvathi further said, "Swami! You have enlightened me with the knowledge of this vratha. Please tell me more about the instances and devotees who followed this vratha vidhi and attained siddhis". Shiva then began to explain the fruits of this vratha, "Parvathi! A Long time ago you performed this vratha and your wish to marry me came true. I still remember how "Girija Kalyanam" happened. The devas and saptarishis witnessed the severe penance you did to get married to me. They prayed saying, "Oh Lord! Hymavathi is doing severe penance to attain you. Why are you holding back? ". I came to you disguised as a bachelor and tested your devotion towards me by saying, "Shiva is not a suitable match for you. He is filthy and stubborn". you became extremely angered and showed your commitment by saying, "To speak-ill of lord shiva is a terrible sin, I cannot survive without shiva, cannot imagine others in his place". After hearing this, I revealed my true self before you. Your wish to get me as your husband came true as result of having performed this vratha. "Girija Kalyanam" thus happened in the presence of devasrishis and gandharvas with great grandeur. That is you performed this vratha and got me as your husband.``

The story of simanthini and chandrangada

"Long ago there lived a noble king by the name of Chitravarma in Bharathakanda. He had many sons. After worshipping Parvathi and Parameshwara to have a Girl child, he is blessed with one.

Astrologers gave a prediction saying, "The princess may become a widow at the age of fourteen". The King became depressed hearing this to console him the astrologers suggested a remedy.

Princess Simanthini has reached a marriageable age. She is married to Prince Chandrangada. The prince and princess continued to live happily at Chitravarma's Palace. One day Chandrangada decided to visit River Yamuna for recreation. Unfortunately, the Prince is lost in a whirlpool. The King and his subjects are in deep sorrow. Simanthini decided to take her life. Then Rishi Yagnavalka's wife Maitreyi visited her and consoled saying, "Dear! Don't be worried. I will teach you a vratha that will remove your widowhood". She explained about "Shodasa somavara vratha".

Simanthini followed the vratha vidhi as explained by Maitreyi with devotion. Chitrangada who is now in NagaLoka, is felicitated by the King of Nagas and returned safely to the capital. Seeing the prince return safely everyone is delighted. The vratha thus brought the separated couple back together.

Lord Shiva gave one more account.

The story of Markandeya, samba and the priest.

Once There lived a great sage called Mrukanda. Being childless, the sage did penance and prayed to Lord Shiva to have children. Shiva appeared and questioned

"Maharishi, whom do you prefer having as a son - one with noble qualities but with a lifespan of 16 years or someone with a lifespan of 100 years but with least levels of morale?". Rishi replied, "I want to have a good son who lives upto 16 years of age". The rishi got a child and named him "Markandeya". As the boy approached the age of 16. He did this shodasa somavara vratha and escaped the clutches of death.

During the time of Dwaparayuga, Lord Sri Krishna is falsely accused of stealing the gemstone called Samantakamani. To clear his name, he won over Jambavantha who is in possession of this Gem and married Jambavathi. She did this Shodasa somavara vratha and to have children and is blessed with a baby boy. The boy is named Sambha after lord shiva.

Once Lord Shiva and Goddess Paravathi are disguised as a merchant class couple and came down to earth. They entered a temple and started playing a game of dice. Shiva lost the game but the priest lied saying the merchant had won. Angered by this Parvathi cursed the priest to suffer from leprosy. The priest has fallen on the ground saying the names "Shiva, Shankara". Then a beautiful lady appeared and said, "Perform Shodasi somavara vratha to get cured from this disease". He followed her instructions and got cured of leprosy and got back his previous appearance. By the grace of Lord Shiva he accompanied him. The story of Shodasi somavara vratha in the form of a conversation between parvathi and shiva given in Markandeya purana thus ends.