



CHF will be reaching out to you and the wider community soliciting your contributions – whatever you are able to provide. We also request you to support Dharma, CHF’s newsletter, by submitting new content to [chf.dharma@gmail.com](mailto:chf.dharma@gmail.com) for sharing with the rest of the community.

— CHF

## Message from Trustees

Namaste devotees, volunteers and well-wishers of Cambridge Hindu Forum!

It was really a very happy occasion to have our first in-person pooja on March 12 th after a long gap due to the Covid induced lockdowns and disruption. Even though we were able to continue the poojas virtually through Zoom, it is no match for participating in-person. We are thankful to all the devotees who attended on the day and volunteers who made it possible. As we look forward to the rest of 2022, a monthly pooja calendar has been put together with a mix of regular poojas and special events such as Satyanarayana pooja and Ganesh Chaturthi. We request you all to plan your participation in advance and receive divine blessings.

We are now looking to accelerate our efforts to get the temple project underway and request your help and support. At present, identification of suitable land/property is in progress and we’re looking to build a corpus fund to help secure the property and start the planning process. In the coming days,

## Spirituality Meets Science

by CHF, Cambridge

Anyone who has participated or witnessed a Hindu pooja would have noticed the special pooja clothes, often new clothes, the elaborate arrangement of offerings to the deities, the long and complicated Sanskrit mantras recited effortlessly by a learned priest and the vast list of Pooja-samagri or pooja items used in the process.

Have you ever pondered or wondered about why we do some of these rituals or follow some traditions? We will aim to cover a few questions in this edition of this article.

### Why Are Silk Clothes Preferred While Doing Pooja?

*Electromagnetism in action!*

Silk clothes have the capacity to attract and store electromagnetic energy. Friction between the body and silk clothes produces

electric energy, which gives rise to electrostatic attraction. According to the shastras, this energy acts on the devotee’s mind. It is also said that vibrations which are generated while worshipping are stored when wearing silk clothes. Silk material prevents the loss of important magnetic vibrations, which work on the mind to sustain concentration. Hence, Indians prefer wearing silk clothes during poojas, be it Ganesh pooja for Maharashtrians, Durga Pooja for Bengalis, or Laxmi Pooja for Gujaratis. So go on, adorn your beautiful silk clothes next time you participate in a pooja.

### Why do we sit on the floor cross-legged during Pooja?

*Relaxes the mind and body.*

In Yoga, sitting cross-legged on the floor is called *sukhasana* or *padmasana*. This asana applies pressure to your lower body which helps you relax your mind and body. It releases muscle tension and keeps blood pressure at bay. While sitting straight in a cross-legged posture,

most of the weight is on the lower body. This strengthens the knees, ankles, hips and the back while also reducing lower back pain.



### Why do we sit cross-legged on the floor while eating?

*Limiting intake and better digestion.*

When you bend ahead to take a bite while eating and return back to natural posture, abdominal muscles secrete digestive juices. These juices help in proper digestion of the food and keep you away from many tummy troubles. The nerve responsible for transmitting signals from stomach to brain whether the stomach is full or not is called vagus nerve and while eating in a cross-legged position,

you eat slower and feel full soon which can really help reduce weight.

## Hindu New Year

by CHF, Cambridge

April is a month of varied celebrations throughout different parts of India and those following different cultures linked to Hinduism. For many cultures, the yearly calendar starts in April. Let's sneak a peek at a few.

### Baisakhi - Punjab

Marks the Solar new year and celebration of Spring harvest; usually falls on 13th or 14th April (This year: 14th April 2022). Hindus and Sikhs bathe in sacred rivers such as Ganga, Kauveri on this day and visit Gurdwaras. Processions, street long colourful decorations and celebrations add to the joy along with festive food shared with family and friends.

### Bihu - Assam

Also known as *Rongaali Bihu* or *Bohag Bihu*, this is a week-long festival of the beautiful state of Assam, marking the seeding period in farming. Celebrated in the month of *Bohaag* (mid-April). This year it starts on 14th April. Dance and songs accompanied by traditional assamese instruments are a major part of the celebration. Do look up the significance of each of the 7 days of Bihu to learn more about this festival.



### Cheti Chand - Sindhi

Marks the arrival of spring and falls on the second day of the hindu calendar, in late march or early april. This year it falls on 2nd April. It also marks the birth of the Lord of the ocean, Lord Jhulelal who fought for the rights of Hindus to their own religious observances. Traditionally, all items used in the pooja including the *diya* (lamp) are made of perishable materials and are offered into the ocean at the end of the day.



### Gudi Padwa - Maharashtra and Konkan

Marks the arrival of spring and reaping of Rabi crops and is believed to be the day Brahma created the universe and time. Falls on the beginning of the solar calendar. This year it falls on 2nd April. The flag of Brahma - a bright colourful silk scarf-like cloth tied at the top of a long bamboo, called *Gudi* is a notable part of the celebration. New clothes and colourful rangolis add to the colourful spring welcome. A special dish with a mix of all flavours is prepared and eaten as a reminder to the mixed experiences of life.

### Navreh - Kashmir

Celebrated by the Kashmiri Hindu or

Pundit community on the first day of *Shukla Paksha* of *Chaitra* month - falls on 1st April this year. Goddess Sharika is worshipped on this day, with offerings of Turmeric rice in Ghee. It is also believed that on this day, 5000 years ago the Saptarishi era of the Kashmiri Hindus started. Can you find more information on the Saptarishi era? Families gather together in the morning at the *Brahma Muhurta* and eat a walnut each as a reminder of the bitter side of life.

### Dates for your calendar

14 May	:	Mayfield School
11 Jun	:	Mayfield School
9 Jul	:	Cambourne Hub
13 Aug	:	Fawcett School
10 Sep	:	Fawcett School
8 Oct	:	Mayfield School

### Pohela boishakh - Bengal and Tripura

Marks the first day of the Bengali calendar. This year it falls on 15th April. Celebrated in Bengal, Tripura and Jharkhand traditionally to mark the beginning of tax year and harvest calendar. Even today, businesses and traders celebrate *Haal Khata* on this day to mark the closure of the previous year and opening of a new ledger. Traditional celebrations in white and red attire and early morning cultural processions called *Prabhat Pheri* add to the pomp and glory of this festival.

### Puthandu - Tamilnadu

Also known as *Puthuvarudam* marks the first day of the Tamil calendar in the month of Chithirai. It follows the Spring equinox and falls on 14th April. The scientifically inclined - do read up more about spring equinox. Family pujas with offerings of fruits, flowers and auspicious items followed by an elaborate vegetarian feast adds to the family love and bonding. The Tamils also visit their local temples on this day where the head priest usually reads out or publishes the *Panchangam* for the year.

## Ugadi - Andhra, Telangana and Karnataka

Also known as Yugadi or Samvatsaradi is celebrated in the month of *Chittirai* on the day after *Amavasya*. It is also pivoted on the first New Moon after March Equinox. This year it falls on 1st April. Colourful *Muggulu* patterns, decorative *Torana*, oil massages and special baths add freshness to this beautiful celebration. The *pachadi* is a notable festive food that combines all flavours – sweet, sour, salty, bitter, astringent and piquant. *Holige*, *Obbatu* and mango pickles are other accompaniments to the festive treat.

Vishu Sadhya is the name of the elaborate traditional meal served on the day, relished with family and friends.

### Did you know?

The origin of the word *Bihu* is from the Sanskrit word *Vishu*, both referring to New years in two different cultures. Although following different calendars, *Cheti Chand*, *Ugadi* and *Gudi padwa* usually fall on the same day or adjacent days every year.

## Rama Suprabhatam

by CHF, Cambridge

Songs and lullabies may have been commonly used to get you to sleep, but has anyone had to sing to wake you up?

An interesting story from *Bala Kanda* of *Ramayana*: When Rama was young, Sage Vishwamitra used to take Prince Rama on journeys to fight evil and restore justice. On one such voyage, they decided to rest for the night at a hermitage at a place where the sacred rivers *Ganga* and *Sarayu* meet. A beautiful, peaceful place to rest. At dawn-break, prince Rama continued to sleep-through enjoying the peace and serenity of the place. That's when Sage Vishwamitra sang the *Rama suprabhatam* in an attempt to wake Rama. Did Rama wake up immediately?

One should listen to the entire *suprabhatam* to understand how long it would have taken Sage Vishwamitra to wake up Rama from his peaceful slumber! The song begins as below

Just the following verse is so beautiful, the entire song is a melody to the ears and soul. No wonder Rama wanted to continue his sleep while Sage Vishwamitra was singing it multiple times! This song is famously called the *Rama Suprabhatam*. It is played in temples when the doors are opened

in the morning and is also played in many households.

“ कौसल्या सुप्रजा राम  
पूर्वासंध्या प्रवर्तते ।  
उत्तिष्ठ नरशार्दूल कर्त्-  
व्यं दैवमाहिनकम् ”

“ *kausalya supraja  
rama! purvasandhya  
pravartate, uttistha!  
narasardula! kartavyam  
daivamahnikam* ”

meaning

“ *Excellent son of  
Kausalya, Sri Rama,  
as the night turns to  
dawn, arise to perform  
your responsibilities, begin  
by offering holy prayers  
(Sandhya vandanam) to  
the Gods* ”

Do try listening to this song and tell us what you think about it.

## Vedic Group Teachers

by CHF, Cambridge

Cambridge Hindu Forum in association with Purnavidya UK conducts Vedic heritage classes for children. Vedic classes are committed to cultural education with religious background and to bring spiritual awakening of Indian culture. We engage children of all ages from 4-18 years in a structured manner using books appropriate to their age.

Since we have now restarted our on-site poojas, we are taking registrations for this year's vedic classes. Parents who are interested to register please email [chfvedicgroup@gmail.com](mailto:chfvedicgroup@gmail.com) for enrolment and any other queries.



## Vishu - Kerala

Derived from the Sanskrit word, *Viswam*, meaning 'equal'. Marks the first day of the astronomical year and hence Lord Vishnu, the God of Time, is worshipped on this day. This year Vishu falls on 15th April. Vishu is a family celebration, where the entire family participates in decorating the house and preparing colourful offerings for *Vishukkani* (*kani* - that which is seen first). The family wakes up to view *Vishukkani* that was prepared the day before.