BALAVIN KURAL

Balambika Divya Sangam















As the curtain closes on one of the most auspicious and spectacular events hosted by Balambika Divya Sangam so far – Malur temple kumbhabhishekam, we are left reminiscing over the spiritual, visual and physical experiences in the weeklong gaiety. Sri Raja Bala along with Her mother Sri Rajarajeshwari, Sri Rajyashyamala and Sri Varahi reign supreme, blessing the throng of devotees from all over the world. And now, a new stage of worship begins in Malur, as the deities consecrated by the divine austerities during the kumbhabhishekam, are further venerated through the mandala pooja.

It is said that a mandala – a period of 48 continuous days of prayer, good habits, a divine sankalpam, and any such positive spiritual steps forward, will result in long lasting benefits that will stick with the individual forever. It is a period that tests our ability to stay true and firm with our intent, and the determination and resolve to keep the will going. This timeframe is like a penance - it churns your inner self to believe in your sankalpam, and gives you the energy to keep the flame going. So also, after a kumbhabhishekam, it is customary to perform a mandala pooja for the deities, which entails the 'shodashopacharam' or the 16 steps of ritualistic worship befitting the god that energizes the deity even more. It is believed that the god is like a child in this process, where we, like a mother, take special care of a new born baby for the first 48 days after its birth, protecting the baby and caring for it with the rules and regulations laid out by the elders and matriarchs of the family. By religiously continuing the procedure for so many days, we establish a standard that we strive to live up to forever. It becomes a hab-

Blessed are we, to see the quartet of Gods in Malur Sri Balambika temple dressed in all their finery, in person, and through WhatsApp, as each day of the mandalam unfolds yet another alankaram. Raja Bala seems to be getting more and more beautiful as She gives us Her darshanam. Her lovely eyes accentuated by the decoration around them, Her glittering jewels – that brings to our mind Goddess Abhirami, Her vastram - that brings out Her girlish looks...Her dancer's pose...and sometimes, even a hint of a maiden's beauty, Her thiruvadi adorned with the tinkling anklets, Her crown, Her braids, and simply every little flower on Her, is a feast for our yearning eyes. Let us drown ourselves in Her thoughts and be a part of the mandala pooja festivities, that will live and grow with us forev-



President—BDS Mrs. Asha Manoharar

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Bala Speaks...



To attain liberation, one should be disciplined in life. Self-discipline comes from within. It is the capacity to overcome your perceived weaknesses and the ability to pursue what you want, even when those around you or your own inner insecurities attempt to derail you. You need self-discipline to control your five senses. You need it to manifest any project, fulfill a desire, fuel self-development, or master any skill. Self-discipline is required in every aspect of living. So the five pillars of self-discipline are: Acceptance, Willpower, Hard Work, Industry, and Persistence.

• The Mandala Pooja is being done for 48 days starting from 11th April and will conclude on 28th May. Everyday, the pooja starts with Sankalpam, followed by Bala Tripurasundari Homam, Kalabhishekam, alankaram and shodashopacharam for Sri Raja Balambika.

 Chitra Pournami was celebrated along with Mandala Pooja on 10th May. Homam, Kalabhishekam and special pooja were conducted in the morning, while Pournami Pooja was performed in the evening.



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Poosalar

3y Thulasinathan Kandasamy

RajaSimhan had just come to a partially awakened (lucid) state. He hadn't open his eyes yet. He turned to his left while still lying flat on his bed, raised his left arm above his head, in line with his body. He looked much longer (or taller?) with his one hand raised while lying down. He used the palm of his right hand to lift his body and gently got up to sit on the bed.

While still sitting with closed eyes, he raised both the hands above his head and held them together as if saying a big namaskaram (Vanakkam) for a few moments. He then lowered his hands to the front of his face, and looked at his palm. He had just woken up. It was still early in the morning and the birds were chirping around outside. There was a gentle breeze coming from the Vegavathi river. It was not the birds that woke him up, he touched his heart and felt that it was still beating very fast. His body felt very light and his mind was in a subtle weird state.

RajaSimhan tried to recollect what he just saw, he wasn't sure if it was a dream or a vision. It was a wonderful feeling. He recollected the time that he went to bed, it was with a feeling of completeness, filled with joy. The Kailasanathar Temple had come to completion. His heart was full. It was another significant cultural contribution of the Pallavas. The marvelous meticulous carvings cannot be matched by anyone anytime soon. Just like his ancestors, he was a lover of art and a fine grained warrior King.

He wasn't sure if he could dream of something that he had not seen, heard, or learnt about. In the dream, it was a massive light, much brighter than anything he had experienced. It was like looking directly at the Sun. The voice was very clear: "Kadavarkon, we need to be in Ninravur on that date to attend the consecration of Poosalar's Temple. Change your date for Kumbhabhishekam". Now, that was a shocker. He didn't hear about any Emperor or King or a rich merchant called Poosalar. He called his ministers and asked them to figure it out.

RajaSimhan wasn't sure if he should feel happy that the Lord Himself came to share his schedule with him, or feel sad that there is a temple that is superior to his, that the Lord Himself wanted to go first. He decided to focus on the first thought and travelled to (Thiru)Ninravur immediately. He couldn't find any temple that was nice, rich, bigger or more sophisticated than his. He was wondering if some Chola King had built a (another) massive temple and it was buried inside the sand somewhere in that area, waiting to be found.

He recollected, that the Lord said Poosalar, so he decided to look for Poosalar first. His people found Poosalar's residence. It was more apt to be called a hut.

RajaSimhan was introduced to an ordinary man. He was not just ordinary, he was extraordinarily ordinary. Before anything, RajaSimhan touched his feet and sought his blessings. Poosalar blessed him, but had no clue as to what was going on and what brought the King here.

"How can I help you?", asked Poosalar to the King. The King replied, "I will be immensely indebted to you, if you could kindly take us or tell us the way to your temple that Kailasnath Himself wanted to sanctify first". The ordinary man stood speechless for several long moments, and tears started flowing down his eyes. RajaSimhan was shocked, he asked for an apology if he had said something that hurt Poosalar.

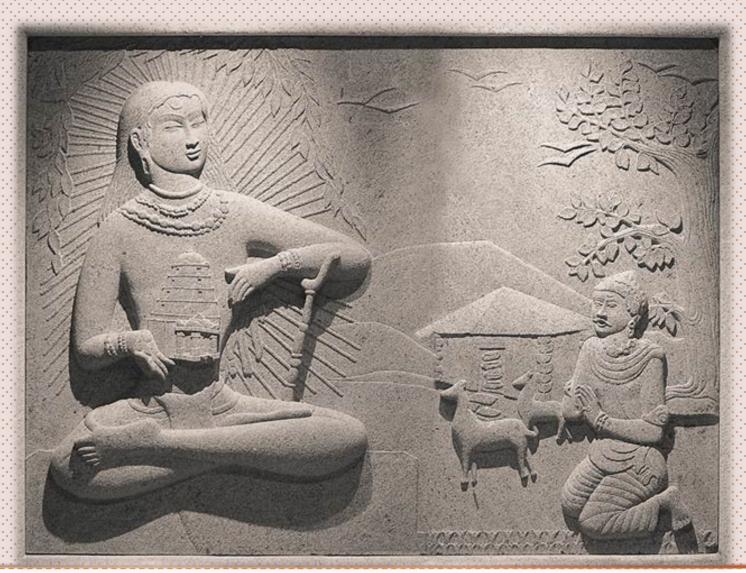
Poosalar said, "No, you didn't and possibly can never do anything wrong. Just so you know, I envy you, because you are more blessed that the Lord showed up to you first. As for the Temple...", he touched his heart and said, "it's here".

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RajaSimhan took a few moments to realize what was happening. Poosalar clarified further in a tearful voice, "I've been trying to build a temple for the Lord. Tried long enough, but I figured out that I won't have enough funds or resources. It was my destiny to build it as I saw. However, I couldn't figure out a way. Then I started building it in my heart (not in mind per se) as per the perfect Agama rules, with the best builders and sculptors. It's been a long lasting effort, and has finally come to completion. I will do the Kumbhabhishekam tomorrow." RajaSimhan was stunned. Now the words Dwajasthambam, and Moolasthanam started making more sense than before. He realised that the body is the temple and the spine is the Dwajasthambam. Not only Poosalar's, but everyone's. They both sat together for a long time in a meditative state.

RajaSimhan turned to his ministers and said, "I don't think we can match or build anything similar to what Poosalar has built in his heart. However, start construction on a temple for Hridayaleeswarar right here. Let's pray that the Lord visits his heart first and then our Temple here and Lord Kailasanathar's temple as well."

Kadavarkon (King of Kadava/Pallava also known as NaraSimhavarman II) also realized that the most phenomenal things happen never just by human effort. It happens when the Ultimate decides to show a glimpse or droplet of Himself, through what human effort was trying. All that humans can do is do their part. Of course, they can be proud that they showed up for the meeting. However, the meeting may not happen because the moderator (nature or the Truth or Herself or Himself or Itself) did not join.



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Sri Bala Sahasranamam

With Meaning & Commentary by Smt. Asha Manoharan

References to Goddess Balambika (Bala) can be found in the Brahmanda Puranam. Sri Bala Sahasranama Stotram describes and praises the various attributes of Sri Balambika in 113 verses. Since each *nama* represents a unique nature and quality of Sri Balambika, it can be interpreted and discussed to cater to the different needs of an individual. Along with a direct meaning of each *nama*, Smt. Asha Manoharan has provided us with intriguing commentary and examples that a common man can relate to and apply in everyday life. So the next time we chant Sri Bala Sahasranamam, we will not only know the literal meaning of the *stotram*, but will also find a unique way to connect and relate to Sri Balambika.

vishvothpatthir vishwamãyã vishvãrãdhyã vikasvarã

Vishvothpatthir - Master of the Universe

Ambal is the master of the universe. Look around you. The order with which the Universe operates is remarkable, the measurability and predictability of natural laws is impressive. Certain aspects of it are chaotic, but they do serve a purpose. For example, during a nuclear fusion at the core, the star stops, it collapses. Occasionally, the gas falling inward gets heated to a very high degree, then it expands outwards, causing it to explode into a supernova. This creates a nebula, which can assist in the formation of new stars. It's a brilliant system.

The Universe is full of order.

Here a few examples:

- a) There is order in the law of gravity and motion of the stars through our galaxy, in the orbits of the planets, and in the orbits of planetary satellites.
- b) There is order in the behaviour of electric current, light and other electromagnetic phenomena.
- c) There is order in the chemical behaviour of all substances.
- d) Nuclear and atomic processes follow precise laws which hold the atoms of all matter together, to make ordinary substances.
- e) Fluids like air and water show order in their predictable motions.
- f) Living things, in amazing variety, are all orderly, complex, and apparently purposeful. Each living cell is incredibly complex, and ordered, with numerous interdependent systems all necessary for life.
- g) And all the laws of nature, which make each of these various systems work, are exactly what they should be in order for there to be life on planet Earth.

All these laws of nature act harmoniously within the universe, like perfectly designed parts of a well oiled machine.

So, we see a universe filled with a staggering variety of complex, ordered and with evidently purposeful systems.

This is the great master mind of Parashakti, She has designed the systems, its laws, its functionality.

So the next point is, how does She do it.

A scripture gives us the answers to all of these.

Everything that has been created in this universe contains three basic qualities which we call as gunas of Prakriti (Shakti) and thus, they are the inherent characteristic of all matter and energy. They form everything that has been created. Everything that has been created contains different proportions of these three gunas. The three gunas namely are:

- a. Sattva is a state of the equilibrium between Maha Shiva and Maha Shakti, between consciousness and its power, between Purusha and Prakriti. It is purity, wisdom, harmony. It is the unveiling by which liberating knowledge is gained.
- b. Rajas is Maya Shakti, the dynamic aspect of Consciousness, which continuously creates forms and veils. It is desire, passion, strife.
- c. Tamas is Maya Shiva, Consciousness stripped of its power and veiled by the action of Maya Shakti. It is ignorance, dullness, inertia, slowness.

In short, Sattva is essence, Rajas is movement, Tamas is inertia.

These qualities mix together in different proportions and they create the different life forms such as man, animals, plants, min-

erals and matter.

They also give rise to what is called the (24) Tattvas (categories of existence):

Sattva gives rise to:

- Buddhi intelligence, discrimination, analysis
- Ahamkara the ego
- Manas the mind, or the mental functions, builds perceptions, images, concepts
- Citta the unconscious, memory bank

Rajas gives rise to:

- The five sense organs (Jnanendriyas)
- The five action organs (Karmendriyas)

Tamas gives rise to:

The five subtle elements (Tanmatras):

- Energy of vibration, or sound (Sabda)
- Energy of impact, or touch (Sparsa)
- Energy of light and form, or form (Rupa)
- Energy of viscous attraction, or taste (Rasha)
- Energy of cohesive attraction, or smell (Gandha)

The five gross elements (Bhutas): Ether, Air, Fire, Water, Earth.

Some living systems have 12 more Tattvas, these 12 are higher Tattvas, preceding the classical 24 Tattvas.

Shiva Tattva: Shiva here is consciousness with the potential of power.

Shakti Tattva: Shakti, the cosmic energy, the dynamic consciousness, is experienced as bliss. The first two Tattvas cannot be seen separately. Samkhya Tattva: From stillness, it turns into movement, what is also called 'the first idea'.

Ishvara Tattva or Bindu Tattva: Here, the seed of creation of the universe is produced.

Suddha Vidya Tattva: Creation starts, but on this level, there is only Mantra, that is vibration. But, with creation, the Tattvas become more impure as the Tamas Guna becomes more and more dominant. Under this Tattva, arise the eight Pudgalas (living beings), which are the Jivas in the form of knowledge. The jiva is the soul and possesses consciousness and intelligence.

Maya Tattva: Maya means 'to veil' or is the veil of consciousness. Although the veiling of consciousness started from the beginning of the Tattvas, it is here, in Maya Tattva, that it becomes complete. This creates limitations in experience. Maya Shakti is considered the root of Her five instruments, the Kanchukas.

The five Kanchukas (which become the next five Tattvas) are:

- Kaala: time limitation
- Niyati: consciousness dependency
- Raga: attraction to objects
- Vidya: limited knowledge or wisdom
- Kalaa: limited action

Kaala Tattva: this is the first limitation of consciousness. This 'time limitation' gives rise to what we commonly call time. This 'time limitation' is what our consciousness experiences as birth and death.

Niyati Tattva: the unlimited (of Brahman) becomes limited space. As consciousness has become limited to time, the thought process arises which always develops in time. Consciousness becomes dependant on the circumstances, and it loses its freedom and independency, thus becoming dependent on the order prevalent in creation.

Raga Tattva: complete satisfaction (of Brahman) becomes limited to desire. Raga is a function that creates desire. Desire to know and acquire knowledge and wisdom of (apparent) other objects other than the Self.

Vidya Tattva: the all-knowing (Brahman) becomes limited by the Vidya quality to obtaining limited knowledge of the apparent objects around him.

Purusha and Prakriti Tattva: Purusha, the Self, or Cosmic Consciousness becomes limited by its own limiting power, Prakriti, or Shakti, also called Para Shakti Maya in this aspect. By the creation of Purusha and Prakriti, Consciousness forgets about its true nature, it cloaks itself with Maya and and the five kanchukas, it limits its power and reduces itself to an individual soul.

There are fourteen worlds (lokas) which are spheres of existence:

The seven lower worlds:

- Patala
- Atala
- Rasatala
- Mahatala
- Talatala
- Vitala
- Sutala

Then, we have the seven higher worlds:

- Bhuh, the Earth where we are.
- Bhuvarloka, the atmospheric sphere, is from the earth to the sun. Here are the Siddhas.
- Svarloka, the Heavenly Sphere, is from the sun to the pole star. Here are the Devas and the Blessed ones.
- Maharloka, is mixed (mishra)
 - Janaloka
 - Tapoloka
 - Satyaloka

All these worlds are occupied by numerous living beings. They are all Purushas, or Jivatmas, that is divine essences, or individualized souls. A Purusha or Jivatman is not only a human being, animal or plant, but it comprises every single thing in the universe, as everything is alive, everything is consciousness. Thus, for example, an atom is also a Purusha or Jivatman. So are beings that are not visible to us.

All these beings are dominated and limited by time and karma.

Then come the 5 human bodies. The human body is our vehicle to express ourselves in this world. But, little do we know what the human body is. Yogis have studied the body for thousands of years and have developed a basic philosophy around it. The principal composition of the human body is of five 'vessels' or koshas:

- anna maya kosha: the food vessel bound to birth and death.
- prana maya kosha: the vital energy vessel energy needed to maintain the body-hunger and thirst is expressed by this vessel.
- mano maya kosha: the mental vessel it is the manas or the mind. I can receive impressions from the physical world by the five physical senses, but it also receives impressions from the subtle world with its subtle senses, for example clairvoyance.
- Vijnana kosha: the intellectual vessel Buddhi. This is the vessel of Buddhi, which is the selective, discriminatory ability of the mind. Manas (thinking) receives the impressions and gives them to Buddhi which analyzes, identifies and recognizes the registered object and then relates it to previous experiences.
- ananda maya kosha: the bliss vessel. It is the vessel of the karana sarira.

Vishvärädhyä – Universally worshipped

Ambal is universally worshipped for Her wonderful qualities.

Worship is "to give honour, homage, reverence, respect, adoration, praise, or glory to God." Ambal demands worship, because She and She alone is worthy of it. Worship is more than singing; it is a life posture of honouring God through obedience and acknowledgment of Her worth. Many of us think that God does not and should not expect anything, but the truth is, She does expect certain actions from us. So what does Ambal expect from us?

1. She wants us to love Her;

She created us in Her own image; we have all come from Her, so when we are on Earth, She watches over us, She has a mission for us to complete, until such time, She wants us to be in this world. During this stay, She does not want us to stop loving Her, She is just the mother who has sent Her child faraway to study or work.

She eagerly waits for their phone call, letter or email. Just as a mother is overcome with joy when she receives response from her children, likewise, Ambal gets overwhelmed seeing how much we love Her. She holds them close to Her heart, and preserves our words and actions and reads and rereads them until the next time we pray to Her. Isn't that wonderful?

Here are a few tips as to how you can show your love towards God.

- i. Pray to Her regularly
- ii. At least help one person each day
- iii. Practice forgiveness

2. Act justly towards each other.

We weren't created just to consume resources — to eat, breathe, and take up space. Ambal designed us to make a difference with our lives. We were created to add to life on Earth, not just take from it. But, life isn't always fair. Everyday, we have abundant opportunities to recognize injustice, on scales large and small, in our own lives and the lives of people we love. You could find out you make less than someone else in the same job. You could lose a promotion to someone else who is far less qualified. You could lose a court case when it feels obvious someone else was in the wrong. You could discover that a friend of yours is losing her savings, because her accountant mismanaged her money. You could learn that someone you trusted to care for your mother took advantage of her good nature. You may find out that your sister's losing her home because of predatory lending. And this doesn't even touch upon the massive injustices happening all over the world, far outside the scope of our everyday experience.

Life isn't always fair. Whether it's self-preservation, basic human decency, or a combination of both, we want to change that. In some cases, we can. We are not powerless, and we don't have to simply accept every injustice as an unavoidable part of life. We do, however, need to accept that our response to perceived wrongs affects our ability to right them.

Three things you can do if you find unfairness:

i. Stopping Obsessive Thinking -

Dwelling on unfairness doesn't do anything to change it; it actually affects our ability to do that, since obsessive thinking drains our energy, magnifies our emotions, and keeps us more focused on problems rather than solutions.

Just say, "This isn't productive. It is what it is, and I can either accept it or try to change it."

ii. Thinking Rationally Before Acting -

According to psychologist and author Marcia Reynolds, when we feel slighted or cheated, and react emotionally, we use our logical brain to rationalize that response. For example, we may tell ourselves, "I snapped, but he deserved it!" We can be far more effective if we use our logical brain first, before we do something we'll later regret.

In some cases, when we think rationally, we may realize an unfair situation is not a big deal in the grand scheme of things—when someone cuts us off and runs a red light, for example. It's annoying, but is it really worth fuming during a car ride that could otherwise be pleasant? Other times, we'll still feel strongly that we need to fight for justice, but this doesn't require us to act with aggression. It requires calm, careful planning and acting, if it's something we can, in fact, control. This leads to the last step.

iii. Knowing What We Can Control and Doing Something About It -

We can't change mistreatment that happened in the past. We can address mistreatment that's happening now. We can't change someone else's decision or behaviour if they aren't willing to change. We can change how we respond to them (and choose to help educate and positively influence them).

We can't change the tragedies that have occurred, in our own lives or in places across the globe. We can support causes that seek to prevent future tragedies. And, we can't guarantee specific outcomes for our actions, but we can increase our odds of making a difference by being clear-headed, patient, and consistent. Sometimes, there will be unfair things that we simply need to accept, and it might feel instinctive to fight that. We're only human, and we will sometimes give in to our emotional responses. What's important is that we try to move beyond them, so that we don't let the things we can't control take control of us.

3. To show compassion towards others.

God wants us to show compassion, which is the end product of Her love for us. What we receive from Her, is translated as compassion when we use it.

What are steps towards being compassionate?

i. Listening -

Often, while listening to someone, we are formulating replies in our mind, waiting for a lull in the conversation, so that we can interject. Try instead to just listen. Suspend all judgment and give the person your undivided attention. There is powerful healing in sharing your darkest secrets and having another person truly hear it and still love you.

ii. Responding to the need -

Angry words may conceal fear; guilt may hide behind blame. When you try to understand and respond to the underlying emotion, people begin to trust and open up.

iii. Get your own support right -

I'm a firm believer that we can only give unconditional love when we can receive it too. Make sure to get out, do things with

people you love, and continue to experience life. Replenish your soul.

iv. Remember the whole person -

When someone is spiralling into a negative path, you could lose sight of all their positive qualities. Make it a point to remind yourself, at that moment, of a particular strength she/he has. Maybe it's his loyalty, or humor, or patience. See the whole person.

v. Put yourself in that situation mentally -

Suffering is universal. Almost all of us have felt joy and pain. The particular details may be unique, but the themes are universal. So, remind yourself of a time when you went through something related. Meditate on this and remind yourself of every single emotion and worry you had, and how much you longed for empathy and compassion from a fellow traveller. Do this often, so that it becomes second nature.

vi. You will fail sometimes, so forgive yourself -

Have compassion for yourself too. No one is perfect. Give yourself a break if you come up short sometimes. Remember you are just as human as anyone else. As long as your intentions and efforts are in the right direction, most of the times, it will work out in the end.

In this way, we present ourselves to Her as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to Her. When we worship with an obedient heart and an open and repentant spirit, Ambal is glorified, you are blessed. These are all the elements of true worship.

Vikasvarã - opens up

Ambal opens up a whole new world when we move closer to Her.

She has numerous of plans for us. She loves us, She understands our needs and wishes. So let us not lose heart, but wait patiently for Her call.

Let us look at three specific plans which She has in store for us.

1. She has plans to make us prosperous:

The word prosper means to be successful,

It means to grow,

It means to flourish,

It means to excel,

It means to develop into something good or positive,

It means to accomplish something good,

It means to improve on something that needed improvement,

It means to go to the next level in life,

It means to be victorious,

It means to live and do well.

Now, most people, when they think of being prosperous, it just only means living in a big house, having lots of money in the bank, and driving fancy cars. But, you can have all of that, and yet, still not be prosperous, because if you don't have a personal relationship with Ambal, then you are not prosperous. Prosperity is not depending upon your bank account, but on your relationship with God. Prosperity is not dependent upon what the politicians do for us, but it is dependent upon God who controls all things.

But, in order for God to give us the prosperity, you must do the following things:

- i. First of all, You must seek Her.
- ii. Secondly, you need to trust Her.
- iii. Thirdly, you need to obey Her.
- 2. Ambal has plans to love us despite our weaknesses:

She plans to love us. That is, God is going to love us, despite our failures.

She is going to love us, despite our shortcomings.

She is going to love us, despite the faults that we may have.

She is going to love us, despite the weaknesses that we may have.

She loves us unconditionally, and will forgive us when we do wrong. That does not give us the license, just to do any kind of sinful act and think we are going to get away with it, because if we don't repent and stop doing the wrong things, She will step in and discipline us, because She is not just a loving God, but She is a holy and just God.

3. Ambal has plans to always be able for us:

So, what is She always able to do?

- She is able to save us to the utmost.
- She is able to keep us from falling.
- She is able to supply our every need.
- She is able to heal our diseases.
- She is able to deliver us.
- She is able to turn our bad situation around and to make it work for our good.
- She is able to turn our midnights into day.
- She is able to sustain us when we are going through some stormy situations.
- She is able to make a way out of no way.
- She is able to lead and guide you.
- She is able to build you up where you may been torn down; She is able to strengthen you where you have been weak.
- She is able to forgive you and cast your sins away, as far as the west is from the east.

And, the reason why She is able is, because, "there is nothing, absolutely nothing, too hard for HER."

Bala Sahasranamam on Website, Facebook and YouTube







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Sponsors for Mandala Pooja

Our heartfelt gratitude and thanks to all the Sponsors, Patrons and Volunteers who made this event possible. May Sri Balambika shower everyone with peace and prosperity.

Sarve Jana Sukhino Bhavantu!!!

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