



BALAVIN KURAL

A Balambika Divya Sangam Publication



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"..Everywhere in this microcosm, is our beloved and benevolent deity Lord Ganesha..."

- Loving Ganesha

by Ms. Roopa V Rajan...

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Featuring this Month :

Know your mythology : Vidura

Written by Thulasinathan, this month's mythological feature is on Vidura - the paternal-uncle to the Pandavaas from Mahabharat.. See page 08

Science Snippets

Written by Latha, an interesting snippet on the bridge to Lanka named Rama Sethu. See page 11



Malur Sri Balambika

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



Dear BDS Members,

Namaskaram.

Wish that you all are staying safe and in the best of health.

We hope the daily Nithya Abhishekams and Shayana Puja photos and videos bring you the much needed comfort and positivity in these challenging times.

On August 7th, on the account of Adi Velli, a special abhishekam was performed at the Malur Balambika temple. The blissful smile on our Kutty Bala's face when She was adorned with the chocolate Mala, was absolutely unparalleled.

Every month, we try to bring you a varied set of topics in the newsletter, to suit your diverse appetites.

In this edition, we kick it off with "Bala Speaks", where She shares the importance of Introspection for spiritual growth.

All of us constantly face dilemmas when we have to make important decisions, and are not sure if it is ethically and morally correct. In the Q&A section, our BDS President gives us valuable advice on what guidelines we need to follow on encountering such situations.

The "Know your Mythology" section describes an excerpt from the Mahabharata epic, on the wisdom of Vidura and his devotion for Lord Krishna.

Most of us are aware of the bridge Lord Rama built to Lanka, to rescue Sita from Ravana. The Science snippets section provides archaeological and scientific backing on the existence and construction time of this bridge, called Rama Sethu or Adam's Bridge.

As you all know, the festivals of Avani Avittam and Raksha Bandhan were celebrated on August 3rd. Ever wondered if these festivals have anything in common and the reason why we observe them? The Editorial section dives deep into this and provides instances from our diverse history on how these festivals came to be celebrated.

The "Devotee Shares" section highlights the importance of praying to Lord Ganesha before we start any important initiative.

EDITOR'S DESK ... *Continued*

As part of the “Ground to Bench” program, BDS Outreach has been making positive impacts in Malur schools, by providing ergonomic study desks for the children, who were previously sitting on the floors. In this edition, we have shared testimonials from our wonderful sponsors who have made this mission possible.

If you would like to share your thoughts and experiences on Bala or contribute to our outreach activities, please email us at editorial.bds@gmail.com or message us in the BDS WhatsApp group.

Hope there is a little something for everyone in this newsletter and you enjoy reading it.

Please share your feedback and suggestions.

Sarvejana Sukhinobhavanthu.

You need to pursue a self-training program, to inspect your inner workings. For this, one should make a commitment to himself/herself that he/she will practice regularly and faithfully, no matter what, for the sake of his/her spiritual growth. Remember, this is not the same as following a commandment or a blind injunction. The reason you do not have the capacity to inspect within, is that you are swayed and controlled by your thoughts and you tend to identify yourself with these thought patterns. The wisdom to decide what is useful in the mind is not there, so you are affected by these thought patterns. Inspect within, to see what is good and what is not good for your practice. If you do not have that determination, do not inspect your thoughts, because your thoughts will start ruling you, and you will be overwhelmed, distracting you from your goal.



Kutti Bala in her chariot during Mandala Poojai Celebrations 2019

பாலாவின் வார்த்தைகள்

நம் உள்மன செயல்பாட்டை கண்காணிக்கும் பயிற்ச்சியை நாம் கண்டிப்பாக மேற்கொள்ளவேண்டும். ஒவ்வொருவரும் இந்த பழக்கத்தை எக்காரணத்திற்காகவும் விடாமல் தொடர்ச்சியாகவும், நம்பிக்கையுடனும் ஒரு கடமையாக செயல்படுத்தவேண்டும். இது ஒரு கண்மூடித்தனமான கட்டளையாகவோ தடையாகவோ கொள்ளக்கூடாது. நாம் நம் எண்ணங்களாலும், நம்மை அந்த எண்ணங்களுடன் அடையாளப்படுத்திக் கொள்வதாலுமே நம் உள்மனதை கண்காணிப்பது கடினம். நம் மனதிற்கு எது நல்லது என்று தீர்மானிக்கும் விவேகம் நம்மிடம் இல்லையாதலால் நாம் இந்த எண்ணங்களால் பாதிக்கப்படுகிறோம். ஆகவே நமக்கு எது நல்லது, எது தீயது என்பதை கண்காணித்துக்கொண்டே இருக்கும் திடம் நம்மிடம் இல்லையெனில் நாம் அந்த முயற்சியில் ஈடுபடக்கூடாது. ஏனெனில் நம் எண்ணங்கள் நம்மை ஆட்சிசெய்யவதுடன் மட்டும் இல்லாமல் நம் நோக்கத்திலிருந்து நம்மை விலகச்செய்துவிடும்.



Raja Bala as Mangala Gowri roopam
during Navratri 2019

இதன் பொருள் நிலவைப்போல் குளுமையானவள் என்பதாகும். ஏனெனில் நிலவு இருளை நீக்குகின்றது, அம்பாளோ அஞ்ஞானமென்ற இருளை நீக்குபவள். நிலவு அமுதம் பொழியும், பாலாவோ அமுதம் நமக்கு. குளிர் நிலவைக் கண்ட அல்லியை போல பாலாவின் முகம் கண்ட தொண்டர்கள் அன்னையை பார்த்து, “நினைவும் நீயே, செயலும் நீயே, மந்திர சித்தியும் நீயே, அதனை நான் பெற்றிட உன்னருள் வேண்டுகே” என்பார்கள். அம்பாளின் குளிர்ந்த இந்த தன்மையை உணர்ந்த அபிராமி பட்டர், அம்பாளை நோக்கி,

உறைகின்ற நின்திருக் கோயில் நின் கேள்வர் ஒரு பக்கமோ அறைகின்ற நான்மறையின் அடியோ முடியோ அமுதம் நிறைகின்ற வெண்திங்களோ கஞ்சமோ என்றன் நெஞ்சகமோ மறைகின்ற வாரிதியோ பூரணாச்சல மங்கலையே.

என்று பாடுகிறார். அதன் பொருள், நீ உறையும் இடம் உன் கணவரின் இடப்பக்கமா, நான்கு வேதங்களின் முதலிலா அன்றி முடிவிலா, அமுதம் பொழியும் நிலவிலா, அன்றி தாமரை மலரிலா, பார்க்கடலிலா, அடியேன் நெஞ்சமா, தாயே கூறு என்பதாகும்.

“பரிணத சரச்சந்திர வதனா”

என்று அம்பாளை சௌந்தர்யலஹரியில் போற்றுவதுண்டு. அதன் பொருள் நிலவைப்போல் அழகிய முகம் கொண்டவள் என்பதாகும். ஆனால் அதன் உட்பொருள் ஸ்ரீவித்யா தத்துவத்தை உணர்த்துவதாகும்.

“ராக ஸ்வரூப பாஷாட்யா க்ரோதா காராங்குசோஜ்வலா”

என்ற லலிதா சஹஸ்ரநாம வரியை உணர்த்துகிறது. நிலவின் குளிர்ச்சியைக் கொண்டிருந்தாலும் அம்பாள் பரபிரும்மனின் சித் சக்தி. இதில் புத்த பாவம் உள்ளது. அது மூன்று நிலைகளை கொண்டது. ஸ்தூல பாவம், ஸூக்ஷ்ம பாவம், வசான பாவம். இவை அனைத்தையும் பாலா தன் திருமந்திரத்தில் ஏற்றிருக்கிறாள் என்பதை நாம் உணர வேண்டும்.

இந்த உவமையே ஒரு அனுபவம் தான். ஏனெனில் இந்த அனுபவத்தில் ஞானமும் யோகநிலையும் மட்டுமில்லாமல் பிரேம நிலையும் வெளிப்படுகின்றது. அதனால்தான் நிலவு எப்போதும் பிரேமையை குறிக்கின்றது. பிரேமையோ அம்பாளின் சுயரூபத்தை குறிக்கின்றது.

Q & A WITH MRS. ASHA MANOHARAN



Raja Shyamala—The Minister, Ganapathy - The remover of Obstacle & Varahi - The Army chief guarding the temple.

ETHICS:

Today, we are going to talk about Ethics and Morals. We have heard a lot from our teachers, and parents about this topic, but there is always a conflict in our minds, when we have to apply this to our daily lives. This is mainly due to not having a good foundation or basis for these Ethics.

First thing we need to be careful about, is not to impulsively take decisions based on emotions only. In most cases, we find that if we look back at our decisions when we are in a calm state, we feel we took the wrong one. This also applies to many parents who don't feel like scolding their young kids, as they feel the child should grow up naturally. However, many years later, when the same parents notice that their kids have taken the wrong path, they regret their decisions to not scold or correct them when their kids were young, because of being overwhelmed with love and emotion. Ultimately, the child is the one who will suffer, when he tries to build his life and career in society.

For the most part, all religions preach the same good values, but a person from one religion might consider something wrong, what another religion considers correct. For example, some religions allow animal cruelty, but it might be considered immoral in the eyes of a person from another religion.

Similarly, something considered unlawful in one country might be acceptable in another. For example, the consumption of alcohol is allowed in most countries, but it is considered a crime in others. Therefore, we cannot base our ethics or decisions purely on religious beliefs or laws of a country.

Then, what do we base our morals on? The Vedas say that a person from any background or caste can read and gain knowledge from them. So, we should turn to our Vedas for guidance on this ethical path. The Smritis, which codify and provide elaborate interpretations by various scholars to the Vedic line thought, are also a vast repository of knowledge. We should also follow the rules of Sadachara or right conduct, as prescribed in the smritis, which stress on the importance of speaking the truth, practising Ahimsa or non-violence, and be conscious of what we say and do, to avoid hurting the feelings of others.

Listening to the teachings of various saints and experienced people, understanding and applying it to our everyday lives, is another approach to help solve the dilemma we constantly face, on what is the ethical course of action. In this regard, we can gain authenticated knowledge and direction from three categories of people:

Vayo Vruttaha: People who are aged and experienced, and have seen various scenarios over the course of their lives.

Gnana Vruttaha: Intellectual, wise people. who base their ethics on not just experience.

Achara Vruttaha: Senior people who are disciplined. and strictly follow the Dharmic path.

I would like to leave you all with a kural from the great Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar, which stresses the importance of virtue:

Only that pleasure which flows from domestic virtue is pleasure; everything else is not pleasure, and it is without praise.

வாசகரின் கேள்வியும் திருமதி ஆஷா மனோகரன் பதிலும்

அறநெறிகள்::

நம் அன்றாட வாழ்வில் அறநெறிகளை எவ்வாறு கடைப்பிடிப்பது என்ற சந்தேகமும் குழப்பமும் எப்போதும் இருப்பதால் நம்மால் சரியான முடிவுகளை எடுக்க முடிவதில்லை. சரியான அடித்தளம் இல்லாததால் குழப்பமே நிலவுகிறது. இக்குழப்பம் எதனால் என்று பார்ப்போம்-அறநெறிகள் உணர்ச்சிகளை சார்ந்து இருக்கக்கூடாது. ஏனெனில் உணர்ச்சி வேகத்தில் எடுக்கும் முடிவுகள் துக்கத்தையும் தோல்வியையுமே தழுவும். எப்போதும் முடிவுகளை தீர ஆராய்ந்தே எடுக்கவேண்டும். உதாரணத்திற்கு குழந்தைகளை கண்டித்து வளர்ப்பது பின்னாளில் பலனளிக்கும். இரண்டாவது, அறநெறிகள் மதநம்பிக்கைகளை சார்ந்து இருக்கக்கூடாது. ஏனெனில் எல்லா மதங்களும் நல்லதையே போதித்தாலும் அவற்றை நடைமுறைப்படுத்தும் போது சில தவறுகளும் குழப்பங்களும் ஏற்பட்டுவிடுகின்றன. உதாரணத்திற்கு, சில மதங்கள் பிராணி வதையை கண்டிக்கின்றது. அதே சமயம் சில மதங்கள் அதனை ஒப்புக்கொள்கின்றது.

மூன்றாவது, நாட்டின் சட்டதிட்டங்களைச் சார்ந்து அறநெறிகள் இருக்கக்கூடாது.

ஏனெனில் ஒவ்வொரு நாடும் வேறு வேறு சட்டதிட்டங்களை பின்பற்றுகின்றன. உதாரணத்திற்கு மது அருந்துவது சில நாடுகளில் அனுமதிக்கப்பட்டாலும் சில நாடுகளில் அது ஒரு குற்றமாகும்.

அறநெறிகள் எதை சார்ந்து இருக்கவேண்டும் என்பதை ஒரு ஸ்லோகம் மூலம் பார்ப்போம்

வேத: ஸ்மிருதி: சதாசார : ஸ்வயேச்ச பிரியமாத்மன :

ஏதக் சதுர்விதம் சாஷாத் தர்மஸ்ய லஷணம்.

வேதம், ஸ்மிருதி, சான்றோர்கள் நடத்தை, தனக்கு உகந்தது ஆகிய நான்கும் தர்மத்தின் நேரடி இலக்கணம்.

வேதத்தை ஜாதி மத வேற்றுமையின்றி யார் வேண்டுமானாலும் படிக்கலாம், ஜபிக்கலாம் என்று வேதமே திட்டமாக கூறுகிறது.

வேதத்தின் அங்கமாக, வியாக்கியானமாக இருப்பது ஸ்மிருதி.

சதாசாரம் என்பது சான்றோர்கள் சொன்ன நீதிகள்.

ஸ்வயேச்ச பிரியமாத்மன: என்பது நமக்கு துன்பமளிப்பதை மற்றவர்களுக்கு நாம் செய்யக்கூடாது. இதுவே மனித தர்மமாகும். இதை திருவள்ளுவர் பின்வருமாறு வலியுறுத்துகிறார்-

இன்னா செய்தாரை ஒறுத்தல் அவர் நாண

நன்னயஞ் செய்து விடல்.

சான்றோர்கள் உபதேசங்களைக் கேட்டு அதன்வழி நடப்பது, அவர்களின் நடத்தையை கவனித்து, உள்வாங்கி அதன்வழி நடப்பது ஆகியவை நம்மை தர்மத்தை கடைப்பிடிக்க உதவும்.

மூன்று வகையான சான்றோர்கள் உள்ளனர்.

வயோ வருத்தஹ . அனுபவமிக்க வயோதிகர்கள்

ஞான வருத்தஹ . ஞானத்தினாலும், அனுபவத்தினாலும் மூத்தவர்கள்

ஆசார வருத்தஹ . ஒழுக்கத்தினால் மூத்தவர்கள்.

தர்மத்தை புரிந்து நடக்க நமக்கு சுய அறிவு போதாது.

சான்றோர்களின் அறிவுரையை கேட்டு நடப்பது, அறநூல்களைப் படித்து, புரிந்து அதன்வழி நடப்பதே நன்மை பயக்கும்.

அறத்தான் வருவதே இன்பம் மற்றெல்லாம்

புறத்த புகழும் இல.

தூய்மையான நெஞ்சுடன் நடத்தும் அறவழி வாழ்க்கையில் வருகின்ற புகழால் ஏற்படுவதே இன்பமாகும். அதற்கு மாறான வழியில் வருவது புகழும் ஆகாது, இன்பமும் ஆகாது என்று கூறுகிறார் திருவள்ளுவர்

KNOW YOUR MYTHOLOGY:

VIDURA

"If it comes to that, how can the war be won?", Yudhisthira asked Krishna in a thoughtful and worrisome tone. To which Krishna replied, "As long as people are with weakness or vulnerable or cursed or both, it will not be difficult," and smiled.

Yudhisthira asked with a responding smile, "Will there be anyone who has no weakness or vulnerability or curse?" Krishna responded with a grin, "There usually will be an exception to everything, so, yes." Yudhisthira started thinking deeply, "That would mean the person is fully on the path of Dharma and supremely wise, also powerful..., (realizing) this description can only fit my paternal-uncle Vidura." Krishna smiled in agreement, "Vidura's bow Govardhan is given by Lord Vishnu and cannot be matched."

"Speaking of bows, isn't Arjuna's Gandiva more powerful than Vijaya (bow of Karna)?" asked Yudhisthira. "I don't think you want to know," responded Krishna, indirectly confirming Yudhisthira's concern that Vijaya is superior. Krishna added, "Vijaya dhanush was used by Lord Shiva Himself." On observing that Yudhisthira was more worried, Krishna gently patted him, giving confidence, continued, "Will see. Being the messenger of peace between Pandavas and Kauravas, I will be having a discussion with Duryodhan. Setting out for that."

Krishna was given a grand welcome by Duryodhan. Everything was in excess and pompous in all aspects. Except for a very few, everyone He met were either dependent on Duryodhan or were indebted to him either by strategic approach or naturally. Many wanted to host Krishna in their palace(s) and invite Him to stay with them. Duryodhan welcomed Krishna to his grand palace. Krishna gently refused, saying, "Since I am the messenger of peace, it won't be appropriate until the talks are successful." Vidura asked, "Krishna, are you not staying in your own place here?" It was clear to Krishna that Vidura is inviting Him to his home. In fact, it was clear to Duryodhan too, who was not very happy about it. "Uncle always supports the Pandavas and hates me," thought Duryodhan, and cringed upon recollecting that Vidura recommended to Dhristrashtra many times about getting rid of Duryodhan. Vidura was someone who always opposed him and would not tolerate the insults made towards Draupadi.

At Vidura's home. Krishna was served a humble meal. After the meal, Krishna asked Vidura "O wise one, what do you say about speech?" Vidura responded, "O pure one, it is said to be the most difficult to control speech. It is not easy to hold a long conversation, uttering words full of meaning and delightful to the listeners. Well-spoken speech is productive with many beneficial results; and ill-spoken speech, is the cause of evil. A forest pierced by arrows, or cut down by hatchets may again grow, but one's heart wounded and censured by ill-spoken words, never recovers. Weapons such as arrows, bullets and bearded darts, can be easily extracted from the body, but a wordy dagger plunged deep into the heart is incapable of being taken out. Wordy arrows are shot from the mouth. Once struck, the victims grieve day and night. A learned man must know not to unleash such arrows, for do they not touch the very vitals of others?"

During this conversation, Vidura joyously peeled bananas and gave it to Krishna. Only when Vidura's wife asked him to be watchful, he realised that, in the overwhelming joy of Krishna's presence, he was throwing the fruit away and was giving the banana skin to Krishna. Krishna was happily consuming it. Vidura apologized repeatedly and Krishna's response was, "I don't evaluate what is given to me, when given with love, it becomes my favorite." On observing that Vidura fell silent, Krishna asked him, "What would you say about silence?" Vidura responded, "Silence, it is said, is better than speech. If one must speak, then it is better to release the truth. If truth is to be said, it is better to say what is agreeable; and if what is agreeable is to be said, then it is better to say what is consistent with morality." ... *Continued*

The next day during the peace discussions, an infuriated Duryodhan, got very aggressive and kept on insulting Vidura. He referred to Vidura's mother as only a maid and that obviously, Vidura could not understand the feelings of the real Royals. Krishna gently mentioned "As a messenger, I would recommend to better be careful with the choice of words, one's heart wounded and censured by few words never recovers."

Krishna noticed that Duryodhan was emotional and was crossing the line, and Vidura's patience was depleting quickly. He knew that when there is a fight between emotion and logic, it will always be the emotion that wins. Krishna mentioned to Duryodhan, "Duryodhan, it is not wise to criticize or insult Vidura, as he might decide not to participate in the war, and stay neutral. It will not be advantageous for you." Duryodhan's angry response was, "I have many Kshatriyas who are loyal to me. I won't need someone whose belly is filled with the food from my kitchen and whose heart is beating for the Pandavas." Finally, that did the trick.

Vidura the wiseman, who was an incarnation of Yama Dharmaraja himself, picked the cue from Krishna and said, "Myself and my bow Govardhan, will not fight for Duryodhan." He also proceeded to break the bow, which stunned every elderly person seated in the court. The loud sound of intense thunder and lightning reverberated the court when the bow was broken. Vidura walked away from the court. Duryodhan, still felt undeterred. Krishna, after witnessing this turn of events, left the palace triumphantly, as always.

EDITORIAL : AVANI AVITTAM AND RAKSHA BANDHAN

On the full moon day of the Shravan month (August), Avani Avittam is celebrated all over South India. This is also the day when Raksha Bandhan is celebrated with pomp and splendor all over North India. Both these festivals, though followed on the same day, have very different meanings and backgrounds behind it.

Avani Avittam is a Vedic ritual observed mainly by Hindu Brahmins, and also by some members of the Kshatriya (warrior class) and Vaishya (merchants class) community. Also called “Upakarma” or beginning, Avani Avittam signifies the commencement of Vedic studies. On this day, a “Prayaschittam” or atonement for sins, is performed for two reasons. One of the reasons is to ask forgiveness for learning Vedas in the prohibited period. Previously, the learning of the Vedas used to begin in the month of August with an Upakarma, and was temporarily stopped in the month of Magha or January, with an “Utsarjana” (*utsarga means cessation or stopping*) ritual, and resumed in the next Shravan. However, it was found that six months in a year was not sufficient enough to complete the study of Vedas. In order to overcome this predicament, the Vedic students started skipping the Utsarjana ritual and studied Vedas throughout the year. The second reason for Prayaschittam is a general request to pardon all the sins committed over a year. Various homams are held on the day of Avani Avittam, and the sacred thread, called poonal (in Malayalam and Tamil) or Yajñopavitam in Sanskrit, is changed.

Legend also has it that on this day, Lord Vishnu incarnated in the form of a horse or Hayagriva (horse head) and restored the Vedas that were stolen from Lord Brahma by the demons Madhu and Kaitabha.

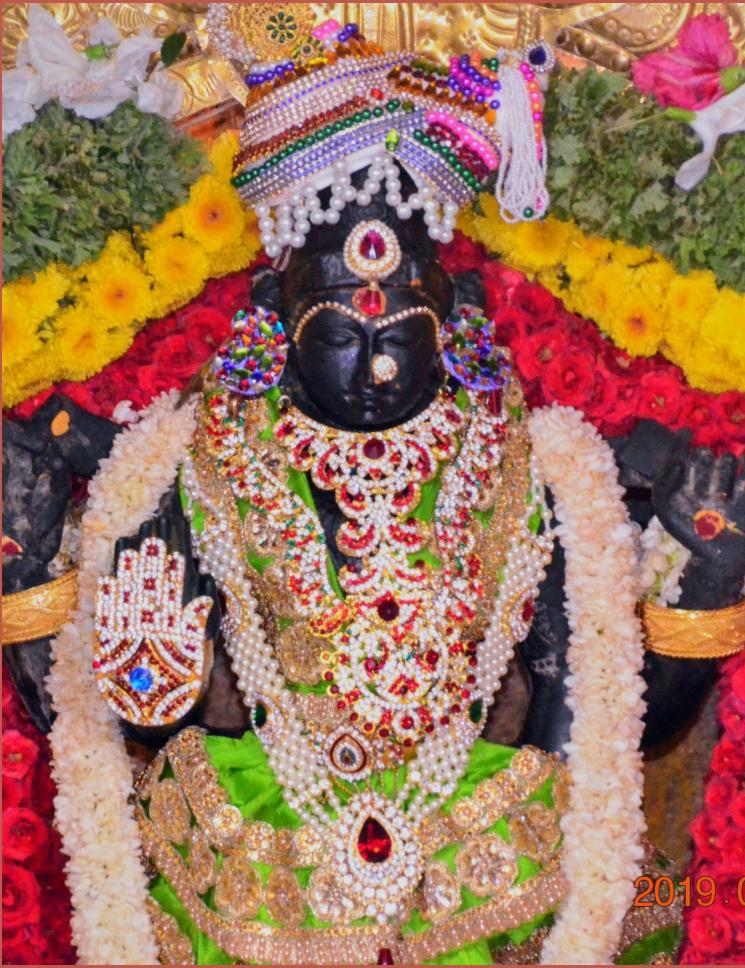
The sacred thread consists of three strands, joined by a knot known as Brahmagranthi or the knot of Brahma. The three strands have various interpretations. They symbolise the Hindu trinity - Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma, the three qualities of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas; the past, present and the future; the three states - wakefulness, dream and deep sleep, the three dimensions of heaven (swarga), earth (martyaloka) and nether regions or hell (patala). One of the most important meanings behind the three strands are the Ida, Pingala and Sushumna nadis, through which the “kundalini” or hidden energy manifests as prana and consciousness. Coming to Raksha Bandhan, which means “the bond of protection or care”, this festival is also celebrated on the Shravan Purnima day, predominantly in North India and Nepal. This festival symbolizes the eternal love in a brother-sister relationship, that is not restricted to only those by blood. On this day, all sisters tie an amulet or rakhi, around the wrists of their brothers, and pray for their prosperity, health and well-being. The brother in return offers gifts, and commits to protect his sister from any harm under every circumstance.

There are many references from Indian mythology and history regarding the origin and celebration of this festival. The most famous among them is the incident from Mahabharata involving Lord Krishna and Draupadi. When Lord Krishna kills Shishupala with his Sudarshana Chakra, it makes a cut to his finger. Seeing his bleeding finger, Draupadi immediately tore a piece of her sari and bandaged his finger. Lord Krishna was so touched by Draupadi’s concern and affection, that he pledged to protect her whenever she was in trouble. When the Pandavas lose Draupadi to the cunning Kauravas in a game of dice, and one of the Kauravas Dushasana attempts to disrobe her, Lord Krishna comes to her rescue and protects her dignity.

The other well known instance from medieval history, is the story of Rani Karnavati of Chittor and the Mughal Emperor Humayun. Rani Karnavati was the widowed queen of the King of Chittor, which was facing an impending attack from the Sultan of Gujarat. Not being able to defend her kingdom, she sent a Rakhi to the Mughal Emperor, Humayun, seeking his protection and help. Humayun was overwhelmed with this gesture, and immediately set out along with his troops, to protect Chittor from the invasion.

No matter what the reason is behind celebrating this day, we should use this opportunity to pause and rejuvenate our soul, our relationships with family and the community.

SCIENCE SNIPPETS : RAMA SETHU – THE BRIDGE TO LANKA



Raja Bala Alankaram during Bala's Birthday celebrations in 2018

We have all grown up reading or listening to stories from the great epic Ramayana. Quite amusingly, when we come to the part where Lord Rama builds the bridge to Lanka to rescue Mother Sita from Ravana, we imagine the scene to be filled with an army of industrious monkeys and fervent squirrels, whose only goal was to cross the ocean and reach Lanka. In today's world we quickly dismiss any curious questions that inquisitive young ones might pipe out, regarding the truth as to whether this mythical bridge could actually have been built across an ocean. Feed the cynical minds a little more, and the next question is, "Ok. Then is it still there now?" The short, historical and scientific answer is 'yes', it is called Adam's Bridge - Rama Sethu, it runs from Dhanushkodi (India) to Mannar Island (Sri Lanka) and luckily, science has advanced so much that there is NASA satellite imagery that could help back this myth! Skeptics might argue, spiritualists might go ecstatic, while some might still waver. So, first and foremost, let's get the facts straight. Based on archaeological studies, the dating of the bridge formation coincides with the timeframe of the Ramayana, which took place during the Treta Yuga, more than one million seven hundred thousand years ago. The shape, structure and composition of this 30 KM long chain of limestone shoals, with layers of marine sand assembled over sandstone and boulders above hard rock, also suggests its man-made nature. Finally, global warming and rising ocean levels, not to mention continental drifts, could have resulted in the bridge being more superficial back then, to be submerged under water now. While we feel awe and wonder for this legendary landmark and civil engineering marvel, we also experience a sense of deep spirituality and unconditional trust that God's existence is unquestionable. Further strengthening the power of His existence, is the fact that we are celebrating the bhoomi puja of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, where the original idols of the Lord and His family will be consecrated. So next time, whether it is a non-believing teenager, a skeptical youngster or the atheist co-worker who taunts your beliefs, get yourself all-armed and reveal the bare facts.

DEVOTEE SHARES



Loving Ganesh by Ms. Roopa V Rajan....

Prayers.

Shuklaambaradharam Vishnu's Shashi Varanam Chaturbhujam Prasanna Vadanam Dhyaayeth Sarva Vighna Upashaanthaye.

We Hindus may be justifiably proud of our religion, which postulated thousands of years ago, a cosmology that is only now being rediscovered and appreciated by science through the process of reason and empirical proof.

Everywhere in this microcosm, is our beloved and benevolent deity Lord Ganesha. He is there in the forces of family, community, commerce and Dharma, which shape our cultures. He is also present in the consecrated temple or roadside shrine from which his grace radiates out. Ganesha is the Lord of beginnings, who guides us through the practical aspects of our lives.

Ganesha is easily contacted, since he is lenient with our shortcomings and understands our human nature.

Gana is "the hosts, multitude or troops of gods." Isha means "ruler or Lord", which is synonymous with Ganesha. Ganapati, another name for Lord Ganesha, is the leader of the Ganas, ruling over the celestial hosts with strategy and intelligence.

We seek the blessings of Lord Ganesha, when we face challenges and confusion while trying to resolve our difficulties, and he helps us overcome these obstacles in a prudent and well planned manner. Lord Ganesha is not in a hurry, he is cautious, patient and waits for the right time for the events to take place.

As he is the Adhidevata of this material universe, we create images of him with turmeric, and worship it.

He is worshipped as Vinayaka at the beginning of any new effort. Ganapathi helps us connect with the various deities and seek their blessings.

Lord Ganesh with his Abhayahasta protects everything.

Lord Vignaraja removes obstacles and grants success.

Lord Ekadantha with a broken tusk indicates the fourth state of turiya consciousness.

Lord Lambhodhara refers to our breath, and he grants the balance of Vayu Dharana in our breath.

Lord Soorpakarnam (Karnam means ear in Sanskrit) meaning one with big ears. Ears are important to hear the Pranava Nada in yoga.

Sri Maha Ganapathy is a very significant and powerful aspect of Lord Ganesha.

The Pranava Om belongs to Ganapathy. Om is the symbol of unity. He teaches us this since he is the Lord of this material earth, with all its five gross elements.

He is called "Aadhi Moola" since he remains as Vata, Pitta and Kapha, the three *doshas or biological energies found in our body and mind*.

He is Atma Swaroopa, beyond the body and the mind, and witnesses all that happens within us.

Inspired from "Loving Ganesh" and "Secrets behind divine worship".

TESTIMONIALS FROM GROUND TO BENCH SPONSORS

Following testimonials were received from some of our esteemed Sponsors who came forward and sponsored study desk for the students. BDS once again thanks all our sponsors without whom the "Ground to bench" program would not have been a reality.

I think "Ground to Bench" program will make a big difference in students' lives. To see and interact with the teacher in the same eye level makes a big difference in their physical and mental well-being. It gives them the self-confidence to speak up in class when asked a question and also be able to write legibly. Sitting in benches encourages good posture which reduces neck and back pains amongst students. It also reduces the impact of hot or cold floors on the students. Overall I think it would bring about a significant and positive change in the students.

Shri Navin Manash

First and foremost, thanks to Balambika Divya Sangam (BDS) for giving us an opportunity to support them for the Ground to Bench programme. I am always appreciative of the efforts taken for social cause by the BDS. The schools in and around Malur are fortunate to get the support of the BDS. It would have been such a relief for the students to sit on the bench and study. BDS is doing a yeoman service in supporting the schools through their outreach programmes - be it providing breakfast or conducting classes for reading or providing benches - the list is endless. Kudos to Asha madam and the volunteers to make these happen.

I feel happy and proud to be a part of the BDS. Keep up the good work and let Goddess Bala bless all of us! Hope such activities happen in other areas as well.

Smt Visalakshi Ramachandran

I really appreciate the efforts taken by Balambika divya sangam giving a comfortable environment for little children. This help the kids to focus on studies and enjoy their schooling.

I'm really blessed to be a small part of this project. I heart fully thank Balambika Divya Sangam for giving me this wonderful opportunity

Kum. Tharunya and friends

TESTIMONIALS FROM GROUND TO BENCH SPONSORS: *Continued*

I am happy, BDS will continue to strive to do their best to improve the quality of life of the surrounding community with better educational and health standards in the future. Best wishes.

Shri Dinakaran

Very good initiative,
Looking forward to seeing the kids using it once the schools open....

Shri Vinay

Thank you for the opportunity

Shri Anthil

Thanks, it is an opportunity to help kids, so we are blessed to get this.

Shri Raghuram

Good Job by the sangam.
Looking forward for such Initiatives from BDS to help children.

Shri Senthil

Ground to Bench is a good initiative!!!
Helping the underprivileged is a moral responsibility of all of us.
Let us continue to contribute all possible ways....This is one way we can give back to society...
Waiting to see the smiling faces of the kids once they are back to school!!!

K.P.Suresh

Namaskaram,

When I decided to donate for a cause, I did not know to which organization to give and whom to contact. Then I spoke to Padma and got the details about BDS doing "Ground to Bench Program". I was very happy and when I saw the pics of benches, I became very excited and felt the contribution went to the right hands.

Looking forward to see the young ones sit on those benches.

Best wishes and all the best to BDS for future initiatives

Shri Krishnamachar and family

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