



Balavin Kural

BALAMBIKA DIVYA SANGAM

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TEMPLE CONSTRUCTION UPDATES

- The construction is proceeding as per schedule under the supervision of Mr. Muthiah Sthapathi.
- The contractor has been informed that the proposed Yagashala would be constructed in phases, with the first phase expected to be completed by June.
- The Yagashala design drawings were handed over to the contractor, and a cost estimate is expected in a week.
- A new consignment of stones was received, with more stones expected to arrive from Hosur.
- Completion of the fence is being planned to safeguard the temple site, construction materials, and prevent unauthorized use of the sump water.

Bala Sahasranamam Parayanam:

May 11th, at 3:00 PM at Mythili Sundararajan's residence, Bangalore, India

Contact: myyasundar@gmail.com

May 12th at 5:30 PM at Chakravarthy's residence, Ohio, USA.

Contact: 95chikki@gmail.com

May 12th at Anuradha Srinivasan's residence, Chicago, USA

Contact: asriniv65@gmail.com

Dolai Utsava Murthy Abhishekam:

Abhishekam will be performed for the Dolai Utsava Murthy on Tuesdays/Fridays. Devotees who are interested please contact Sashikala Venkatesh (9886895627).

Lalitha Homam:

2012 Lalitha Homam event will take place from July 6th - 8th. Sponsorship details are on page 16.

Uthavi Karangal...

It was exam time. The month of November was when Mala had her annual examination. After that, she had her Christmas holidays from the end of November to the middle of January, and everyone waited for those holidays. It was fun all around, with the Christmas trees coming up in school and there were fun activities throughout the month of December up to New Years. Mala was preparing very hard and she was very confident that she would get a very good rank which would please her parents, and she was determined to do it. They have always cared for her and gave her the best they could afford, and it was her turn to repay for all the good things they have done for her.

The days moved quickly and she had just one week left for her exams. One morning as she woke up, her father was next to her mom, bending down to find out if she was alright. Her mom was an early riser, but today she was in bed and her father was attending to her. When Mala came out of her room, he turned around and asked her to come to him. When she went near him, she saw that her mom was very pale and was in severe pain. Mala touched her and asked, "Mom are you ok, what happened to you?" Her father touched her shoulders and said, "Amma has chest pain, we have to take her to the doctor, will you help me?" Mala nodded and did as she was told. She quickly went to the bathroom, washed herself, wore her uniform, and was ready for school. Her mother got herself dressed and they both waited for the rickshaw to come. When her father returned with the rickshaw, Mala helped her mom to get inside it. Then she went in, picked up her school bag and got in. Her father locked the house and pedaled his cycle.

They reached the hospital where her mom was helped by the attenders, and was taken in. Mala sat outside and her father came to her, took her inside to the canteen, and got her some food to eat. He told her to get a bus from there, and asked her to come back to the hospital in the evening because he wanted to admit her mother. Mala nodded and left. She walked through the streets and went to the nearby bus stop. Her thoughts that day were only about her mother and her illness. She was very sad the whole day.

In the evening she quickly came to the hospital and her father was there. She looked at him and knew there was something terribly wrong. He told her that the doctor had asked her mom to stay in the hospital because of her heart condition. She needed to be monitored before any action could be taken. Mala knew exactly what it all meant. She was to be in the hospital along with her mother, care for her, and shuttle between her house and the hospital. They had no relatives who could help them during any crisis. Mala had never seen any relatives at all. She never knew if they existed. All she had was her grand mom and grand dad. Her father's brothers had kids but she hadn't seen them for a very long time. Her mother always kept quiet about her side of the family, and no one knew why. Even her father hadn't spoken about them. Who were they? Where were they? Mala never knew. So, only her father and she had to take care of her mom. Mala went inside the hospital room with her father. Her mom was lying there completely pale, and when she saw Mala she called her close by and whispered, "You have your exams Mala, go and study, Appa will take care of me." Mala looked at her and said, "It is ok mom. I will sit beside you and study. You don't worry." Mala touched her head and comforted her. Her mother and father were all she had in this world, and the thought of that filled her eyes with tears, and it just rolled down her cheeks without any inhibition. Her mom

wiped her tears and said, "Don't worry, I will be alright."

This was not the first time that her mom had fallen sick during her exams. It has been like that for the past few years. Mala quickly moved away from her mom. She said she wanted to go home, change, and then come back. She bid her mom goodbye, and she told her father that she would come back in half an hour and relieve him. Mala walked away from the hospital thinking of the days ahead. On her way back, she was thinking of her mom and dad and their sufferings. This thought filled her heart and she was sobbing as she walked towards her house.

On the third day of her exam, Mala was very tired, and she dozed off in the bus. The bus had taken her to the last stop. When she woke up, she was elsewhere! She ran up to the bus driver and told him what had happened. He smiled at her and said that on returning he will stop at her stop. Mala was relieved, and went back and sat in her seat, this time making sure she doesn't fall asleep. The past few days had been hectic for her, but she only thought about her exams. She went home instead of the hospital, deciding to take a nap and then go to the hospital that evening. When she reached home it was 2 'o' clock. She went in quickly, washed her hands and went to the kitchen. Her father had made some lunch. She quickly ate it and decided to sleep for some time. Her next exam was only the day after tomorrow, so she thought she could afford to sleep that afternoon. She lay in bed thinking of the past few days which had completely changed her routine. She was fast asleep even before she realized!

She didn't know how long she had slept, and when she woke up it was quite dark. She got up, switched on the light and she saw that the time was 9 'o'clock. She cried, "OMG! I have to relieve Appa! What will he say." She rushed to the kitchen and to her surprise, every thing was cooked and covered with a plate. She opened them and found curry, sambar and rice. Everything was ready! She was perplexed! She had emptied everything that afternoon thinking that in the evening she could wash the dishes, and then cook just the rice alone. She consoled herself and thought, "Appa must have come," but she still wondered why he hadn't woken her up. She packed dinner for her mother and herself, and left the house still a bit confused.

She reached the hospital, and when she went in her father took no notice of her, but murmured, "How come you are so quick, you just left....and you are back?" He took the keys and he looked at Mala and asked, "Have you cooked for me as well? "

Mala nodded, but was confused as to why her father was asking her if she had cooked for him as well. Wasn't it he who had cooked ?.... Before she could open her mouth, the nurse came in, took her mom's temperature, and turning to Mala she said,

"Mala, where are the syringes I gave you this afternoon? I need one for the injection now...."

Mala was taken aback. "What syringe?", she thought. She didn't know what to say. She went to the nearby cupboard, and opened it, and there it was, a packet full of syringes! She gave it to the nurse and quickly sat on the chair close by. Now her head was reeling. She didn't know what was happening, she had to calm herself, and she waited for the nurse to leave, then she turned to her mom, who looked much better now.

She asked, "What is going on mom, was I here this afternoon?"

Her mom looked at her bewildered. "Don't you remember, you came back from school, sat here, joked with all the

nurses, and they all seemed to love you. You stayed till this evening, and then around 8 o'clock you left saying you will cook something for us and now, here you are. Why, what happened, have you forgotten that?"

Mala quickly said, "Oh yeah, yes I remember now, I had forgotten."

Her mom looked at her and said, "Mala you look so tired, go home and rest. I will take care of myself."

Mala looked at her in a forgettable mood and said, "It is ok. Amma, I am ok. I will just go out for some fresh air and I will be back."

Mala hurried out, and she knew exactly what had happened. She went to the gate and on the corner stone was Bala. She went straight to her, looked at her without uttering a single word.

Bala smiled "What, why are you looking at me like that?"

Mala was breathing very heavily. She looked Bala into her eyes and said, "Why did you do this? What was the necessity? I told you I will take care, didn't I?"

Bala looked at her from the corner of her eyes and smirked. "What will you take care? The running around, I cannot leave you like this, when I saw you at home, you were so tired, you were sleeping like a log. Is it wrong to help Mala, for someone whom you love and care about? I know you are a swabhimaani, you don't like anyone helping you, but I cannot see you like that, but help. Hey, are you angry with me?" Bala cupped Mala's face in both her hands and looked at her.

Mala could not take this any more, she hugged Bala and wept bitterly. All the sorrow she had for the past few days just burst out, and she couldn't control it any further. Bala consoled her, wiped her tears, made her sit on the stone on which she was sitting, knelt down before Mala and said, "It is ok."

Mala calmed herself quite a bit, sniffed and looked at Bala. Both the girls looked at each other, smiled, and then started laughing.

Mala said "Why should you do this? I have to do this, not you. Next time I don't want you to do all this. Why should you sit at the hospital and nurse my mother? What was the necessity? You have so many other things to do, why do these things."

Bala touched her cheeks and said, "I will do anything for you Mala, even if I don't like doing it. I cannot see you sad. I like the way you never ask for help. It pulls me closer to you. I like the self dignity you have."

Mala looked at her, "What can I do for you Bala, for all the affection you have for me....?"

Bala laughed loudly. "I will tell you what I want when the time comes... Hmmm, so do you want me to take care of your mom?" saying, she nudged Mala.

Mala looked at her and said, "Thank you very much for your help, you better go, I will take care."

Bala smiled mischievously, "See? You are denying me a job!"

Mala made a face and said, "Yeah, that is my job. How dare you take it from me?"

And the two girls laughed loudly till they were both exhausted...

Kalum karaiyum...

Bala Speaks...



Patience is not repressing anger and gluing a plastic smile.

It is a mind structure that accepts truth.

It is a point from which you can see the cause and effect of things.

It is not being wimpish,

but an act that arises from self knowledge and courage.

Pausing, even for a moment, before reacting to a difficult situation,

is a powerful form of patience.

A pause may give you a better understanding of the situation,

and your intentions within it.

Sometimes, a pause allows for something wonderful and unexpected to

arise, something that would not have happened,

had you rushed in to comment, react, or control.

A mind state of patience is often effortless because it comes out of under-

standing of oneself. So remember patience always bears rewards.

Divya Tattvam

A divine insight into the Bala Sahasranama Stotram

By Smt. Asha Manoharan

Sundari:

She is beautiful in internal and external worship.

When we say worship, what does it mean according to the Hindu Dharma? The texts say that worship of God consists of 3 acts.

- a) the first and foremost is to study the Vedas, with the motivation to acquire knowledge of God.*
- b) the observance of Dharma (moral duty and action) as prescribed by God in the Vedas.*
- c) worship of God by fire or the homa-sacrifice, this involves the use of the Gayatri Mantra.*

She is beautiful when the act of worship is performed, reminds me of the worship of Shakthi in ancient times. The origin of Shakthi worship can be traced to such Vedic texts as Sri-Suktam, Durga-Suktam, Bhu-Suktam, Tripuropanishad, Bhavanopanihad etc. In Sandhya Upasana, we think of Gayatri Devi in the solar orb, and imagine that the sun shines by Her effulgence, and that She is also the Truth, which has kindled the light of reason in our minds. Archeologists have recovered thousands of female statuettes at the Mehrgarh village in India, which indicate that Shakti worship existed in India as far back as 5500 BCE. There are references to the female deities in the Rig Veda, including a popular Hymn to the Divine Mother (Devi-sukta, X.125). Tara-Tarini at Kumari hills on the bank of River Rushikulya near Purushottampur in Ganjam District is one of the most ancient Shakti pithas. Worship at this important centre of Shakta cult has been continuing since time immemorial. Two stones anthropomorphized by the addition of gold and silver ornaments, is shaped to be seen as human faces in this Shrine. This represents the Goddesses Tara and Tarini. In between them are placed two fully celebrated and beautiful brass heads as their Chalanti Pratima. It has been said that from a tribal cult Tara-Tarini have been transformed into Shakti cult through the process of aryanisation.

We have references of Shakthi worship in Maha-Bharata in many contexts - before entering Matsya- Kingdom, at the commencement of the battle of Kurukshetra, Arjuna prayed to Durga. In Bhagavatam, we observe Rukmini worshipping Ambika before her marriage. Devi Bhagavatam deals entirely with the glory of the divine Mother. Brahma-puranam contains Lalitha Sahasranama and Trisati. Chandi or Devi-Mahatmyam forms part of Markandeya-puranam. So history reveals that Shakthi worship has been in this culture and has become a part of our tradition. So what is Shakthi worship? The Mother herself tells us what is worship and the types of worship? Here she describes the internal and external form of worship.

Mother says: "I now describe to you the rites and ceremonies and the methods of My worship that are pleasing to Me. Hear it attentively and with faith. My worship is of two kinds: external and internal. The external worship is

again twofold: one is Vaidik, and the other is Tântrik. The Vaidik worship is also of two kinds according to the differences in My forms. Those who are initiated in the Vedic Mantrams worship according to the Vedic rites and ceremonies, and those who are initiated in the Tantrik-Mantram worship according to the Tantrik rites." Meditation with Karma, Jnana with Bhakti will lead oneself to Her. Only work alone, will fail to get close to Her. From Dharma arises Bhakti, and from Bhakti arises the Highest Jnana. In Tantra Shastras, there are some passages in conformity with the Vedas and there are other passages contradictory to the Vedas. Here Devi says: "The Sanyasins, Vânaprasthas, householders and Brâhmacharis should give up all their desires and take refuge in Me; free from egoism and vanity, kind to all creatures, their hearts wholly given to Me and engaged in speaking out My places with apt devotion." So whether it is Tantrik or Vaidik, it all leads to her.

Now here is a detailed description of the external form of worship. One should be up from bed early in the morning, meditate on the thousand petalled lotus, bright, of the colour of camphor, in the top part of his brain on the head. He should remember his Sri Guru (Shiva), very gracious looking, well decorated with ornaments, with His Consort Shakti, and bow down to Him and within Him he should meditate the Kundalini Devi. Then he should rise up to go for the calls of nature, etc., and complete Sandhya Vandanam and other duties. The best of the Brahmins, then, should for Devi's satisfaction, perform the Agnihotra Homa and sitting in his Asana, do his Sankalp (determination) to do her Puja (Worship).

Next he is to make Bhuta Shuddhi (purification of elements of the body by respiratory attraction and replacement) and then the Matrika Nyasa. Then he should arrange the letters of the root Mantra of Maya and execute the Hrillekha Matrika Nyasa. In this he is to place the letter "Ha" in the Muladhara, the letter "Ra" in his heart and the vowel "î" in the middle of his brows and, Hrim on the top part of his head. Finishing all the other Nyasa according to that Mantra, he should think within his body Dharma, Jnana, Vairagyam, and Prosperity as the four legs of the seat and Adharma, Ajnana, Avairagyam and non-prosperity, these four as the body of the seat on the four quarters East, South, West and North. Then he should meditate on the Great Devi in the lotus of his heart by Pranayama, situated on the five seats of the Pretas. These are of the nature of earth, water, fire, air, and ether, the five elements and also of the nature of Jagrat (waking), Svapna (dreaming), Susupti (deep sleep state), Turiya (the fourth state), and Atita Rupa (the fifth state) excluding the 4 states, corresponding to the five states. But Devi, who is the nature of Brahma, is over and above the five elements and the five states; therefore Her Seat is always on the top of these five forces. Meditating on Her thus and worshipping her with his mind concentrated, he has next to do Japam (reciting her name slowly). He should then place the Arghya for the external worship.

Then the worshipper is to sprinkle with the Astra mantra 'Phat', all the articles of worship that are placed in front of him and purify them. He should close the ten quarters with the Chbotika Mudra and bow down to his Guru. Taking his permission, he should meditate on the outside seat, the beautiful divine form of his heart lotus and invoke the Deity outside, and place Her on the seat by Prana Pratishta and perform AvAhana, and present to Her Arghya (an offer of green grass, rice, etc., made in worshipping a god), Padya (water for washing legs and feet), Achaman, water for bath, a couple of clothes, all sorts of ornaments, or scents, flowers and the necessary articles with due devotion.

Next he should worship Bhuvaneswari Devi, with scent, good smelling flowers; and Naivedya and various other tasteful dishes. He should then recite the Sahasranama (thousand names) stotra and the Devi Sukta Mantra "Aham Rudrebhih" etc.," and "Sarve vai Devâ Devî mupatasthuh" etc., the Devi Atharva Shiro Mantra and the Upanishads' Mantra of Bhuvaneshvari, the famous mantras, repeatedly.

With hearts filled with love and with hairs standing on their ends all should satisfy Devi fervently with tears of love flowing from their eyes and with voice choked with feelings and with dancing music and singing and with his whole body filled with joy. Her glory is well established in the Veda Parayana and in all the Puranas. So for Her satisfaction, one should offer daily to Her one's everything with one's body and recite the readings from the Vedas.

Next, after completing the Homa offerings, he should feed the Brahmanas, the young virgins well clothed, the boys and the public and the poor, thinking all of them to be so many forms of the Devi. Then he should bow before the Devi that resides in his heart, and finally by Samhara Mudra take leave of the Deity invoked.

The Hrillekha Mantra (Hrîm) is the chief of all mantrams; so Her worship and all other actions ought to be performed with this Hrillekha Mantram. Devi says this in her own words "I am always reflected in this Mirror of Hrillekha form; so anything offered in this Hrillekha Mantra of Mine is offered as it were with all the Mantras."



Chinna Chella Bala



Dolai Utsavam



Bala Sahasranama Parayanam



You, Me and our cup of Yoga

Backache and Asanas

By Gargi Parthasarathy

A couple of days back, a group of our friends decided to get together along with the kids in tow, for a picnic in the park. Apart from the regular conversation, almost everyone was complaining or suggesting a remedy for backache. I was even more amused when my friend's 11 year old chipped in with her backache story! This more than anything prompted me to assume that backache seems to be a universal problem pervading through all the age groups.

The phrase "My back hurts" has become one of the most common and universal complaints. So just out of curiosity, what do you do when you are in the grip of a backache? The most common solutions seem to be applying a balm/spray, a back massage, and of course the easiest option is to lie down flat on the ground without any support (this by the way is also an asana which we will dive into later). All of the above mentioned techniques are indeed helpful in temporarily relieving backache. But since we have decided to follow the path of yoga to find solutions to our ailments, let us look at how we should ideally be addressing this problem.

I've already mentioned earlier that yoga is not just about asanas, but rather a way of life. One of the factors of leading a yogic life is understanding and questioning the real cause/causes of any effect you may be experiencing. Let us take a leaf out of this book and understand the root cause. First let us study an ideal situation where you have no back pain. Our backbone/spine and the adjoining muscles have been inherently designed to withstand a variety of activity from lying down to sitting, running, walking etc. At some point of the day we slip into any of these activities. So if we are performing specified tasks why do we end up with a backache? The underlying cause is either improper usage or wear and tear.

Most of the backache problems stem from an improper usage. Yes, our backbone is designed to withstand a variety of activity and the key is in the word 'variety'. Too much of one particular type of activity is also improper usage. For example consider the gear system of a car. You cannot always run the car in the first gear or on the fourth gear. Its not that the car will not work if you chose to do it anyway. But the net outcome will be a failed gear system in no time. Similarly most of us perform one of the intended activity way too much like sitting or standing too long. Even children sometimes complain of backache when they have been sitting in school all day without any outdoor activity like playing, running etc.

Other reasons for backache could be :

- 1. Improper posture : Sitting or even standing without the right posture leads to a stress and strain of the back.*
- 2. An overweight body causes pressure on the back.*
- 3. Improper functioning of internal organs like indigestion, constipation , gastrointestinal problems also contribute to strain on the back.*

Another factor often overlooked is the role mental stress plays in backache. Stress causes nerves in the body to tense up. When the nerves which run through the muscles and bones tense up, it causes a strain leading to aches and pains all over. Backache is the most common symptom of stress.

Wear and tear issues of the back could range from a physical injury to the back to problems arising due to brittleness of the bones (Osteoporosis), Sciatica, slipped discs etc, are also examples of a wear and tear problem of the back. So if you hear yourself complaining of a backache, first stop and ask yourself if its faulty usage, or a wear and tear issue.

In this section, we will cover a few basic asanas which can alleviate back ache predominantly due to strain on the muscles

of the back and spine. Regular practice of these asanas as demonstrated in the video below, will not only give you relief from the current problem, but will also make sure your back stays fit enough to escape aches and pains in the future. (A word of caution: The listed asanas are recommended for every body type, but if you have a serious back condition like slipped disc or have undergone some kind of back related surgery, do consult your doctor before trying out these asanas.)

A few basic hints to make sure you do not subject your back to a faulty usage:

- 1. Maintain a good posture by keeping the back erect and tucking in the stomach. Do not slouch your shoulders. This is a good posture to hold both while standing and sitting.*
- 2. Make sure you ease your body into any activity and do not perform it suddenly. For example, if you choose to go running after sitting for hours, start with a walk for a few minutes before you run.*
- 3. Give your back and connecting muscles enough exercise, and just the right amount of exercise.*

Annadanam at Modern English School, Malur



***Pictures of ongoing activities at Malur Sri Balambika Temple site
-Carving of stonework for Garbhagraham-***



Drawing made on the cement wall by the Sthapati.



A few more stone blocks on the foundation.



Carving work in progress inside the shelter.

Ganapathy Homam

-An auspicious start to the Lalitha Homam-

The yearly Lalitha Homam is a 3-day event, comprising 3 major poojas each with its own unique benefits and significance. On the very first day of this homam, Lord Ganapathy, the remover of obstacles, or vighna vinayaka, is invoked by performing the Ganapathi Homam. Devotees offer special prasadam and vasthram to Lord Ganapathy, whose blessings ensure the well being of one and all. To participate in this propitious event, and to sponsor any of the following prasadams or vasthram, please contact Smt. Asha Manoharan (asha.raji@gmail.com).



<i>Prasadams offered to Lord Ganapathy</i>	<i>Vasthram offered to Lord Ganapathy</i>
<i>Modakam</i>	<i>Vellai thundu</i>
<i>Appam</i>	<i>Rose jacket piece</i>
<i>Ellu urundai</i>	<i>Red jacket piece</i>
<i>Murukku</i>	<i>Red piece of cloth for Poornahuti</i>
<i>Sugiyam</i>	
<i>Suttha annam</i>	
<i>Sakkarai pongal</i>	
<i>Thair sadam</i>	

We are very thankful to...

Archana Contribution

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Thothadri
Bhuvana Krishnaswamy
Lalitha Raghuraman
Purnima Prasad
Indumathi Sundar
Usha

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Donor of the Month

Padma Srinivasan

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Please give us your feedback and do share your ideas and divine experiences with us so that we can continue to give you the best and more.

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