

# Balavin Kural

Balambika Divya Sangam

December 2012 Vol 2 Issue 8



**Temples of India:**  
**Achalpuram's heritage and**  
***sthala puranam***  
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**Yoga: 'Stress-busters'**  
**and *asanas* for relaxation**  
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# SNAPSHOT

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## 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).



## Dolai Utsavam:

Dolai Utsavam will be performed for Sanchara Bala, in the privacy of one's home, amidst a social gathering. Devotees who are interested, please contact Smt. Asha Manoharan asha.raji@gmail.com



## Annadanam:

Annadanam is performed at Modern English School, Malur. Those who are interested in contributing towards this cause, please contact Smt. Asha Manoharan asha.raji@gmail.com



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If you would like to participate, contribute or require more details, please contact us via email. Contributions can be made in cash/cheque/DD/online transfer etc. Please give us your feedback and do share your ideas and experiences with us so that we can continue to give you the best.

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## MALUR SRI BALAMBIKA TEMPLE CONSTRUCTION UPDATES

- Work at the construction site is likely to resume in a week, once the stones arrive.
- A compound wall enclosing only the temple site of area 100 feet x 120 feet would be constructed using hollow blocks.
- The height of the compound wall would be 10 feet.
- Quotations for the same are being solicited from the contractors.



Stonework in progress, as *Garbhagraham* is being constructed



**Happiness is a daily choice.  
It's a mindset which you can nurture and train.  
It doesn't mean it's there every second,  
but when you notice it's missing, often the tiniest shift can put you right back on top of the world.  
Spend a few minutes thinking of all the bits of life that you are grateful for.  
The big and the small,  
the things that you are proud of,  
the people who care about you,  
the experiences that bring a smile onto your face.  
Often it is the grateful people who are likely to be more happy.  
Smile is often that magic wand, which spreads happiness all around you, and inside you.**

## Divya Tattvam

A divine insight into the Bala Sahasranama Stotram - By Smt. Asha Manoharan

### Lalitha

Maya is known as Lalitha

Atma is known as Lalitha

Pure consciousness is also Lalitha



Shakti comes from the root *śhak*, "to be able", "to have power". It may be applied to any form of activity. The power to see is visual Shakti, the power to burn is Shakti of fire, and so forth. These are all forms of activity which are ultimately reducible to the Primordial Shakti (Adhya Shakti) when every other form of Power proceeds. She is called Yogini because of Her connection with all things as their origin. It is this Original Power which is known in worship as Devi or Mother of Many Names. Those who worship the Mother, worship nothing "illusory" or unconscious, but a Supreme Consciousness, whose body is all forms of consciousness-unconsciousness produced by Her as Shiva's power. Philosophically, the Mother or Daiva Shakti is the kinetic aspect of the Brahman. All three systems recognize that there is a static and kinetic aspect of things: Purusha, Brahman, Shiva on the one side, Prakriti, Maya, Shakti on the other. This is the time-honored attempt to reconcile the doctrine of a changeless Spirit, a changing Manifold, and the mysterious unity of the two. For Power (Shakti) and

the possessor of the Power (Shaktimaan) are one and the same. In the Tantras, Shiva constantly says to Devi, "There is no difference between Thee and Me."

We say that the fire burns, but burning *is* fire. Fire is not one thing and burning another. In the supreme transcendental changeless state, Shiva and Shakti are one, for Shiva is never without Shakti. The connection is called Aminabhavi Sambandha. So also, Consciousness is never without its Power. Power is active Brahman or Consciousness. But, when there is no activity, they exist as one supreme state or as one Tattva (Ekam tattvam iva); Shiva is the Cit, Shakti as Cid rupini. This is the state before the thrill of Nada, the origin of all those current forces which are in the universe.

Those who worship the Mother, worship nothing "illusory" or unconscious, but a Supreme Consciousness, whose body is all forms of consciousness-unconsciousness produced by Her as Shiva's power. Philosophically, the Mother or Daiva Shakti is the kinetic aspect of the Brahman. All three systems recognize that there is a static and kinetic aspect of things: Purusha, Brahman, Shiva on the one side, Prakriti, Maya, Shakti on the other.

According to Shamkara, the Supreme Experience contains no trace or seed of objectivity. In terms of speech, it is an abstract consciousness (Jnana). The view expressed is that, which appears "without" is the one which only so appears, because it is in some form or the other, that exists "within". The same view is also expressed by Shakta Visvasara Tantra, "what is here is there, what is not here is nowhere." If therefore we know duality, it must be because of the potentiality that exists in it and also from which it arises. The Shaivashakta school thus assumes a

The Shakta Tantras compare the state immediately prior to creation with that of a grain of gram (Canaka) wherein the two seeds (Shiva and Shakti) are held as one under a single sheath. There is, as it were, a Maithuna in this unity of dual aspect, the thrill of which is Nada, productive of the seed or Bindu from which the universe is born. When the sheath breaks and the seeds are pushed apart, the beginning of a dichotomy is established in the one consciousness, whereby, the "I", and the "This" (Idam or Universe) appear as separate.

real derivation of the universe and a causal nexus between Brahman and the world. According to Shamkara, this notion of creation is itself Maya, and there is no need to find a cause for it. So it is held that the supreme experience (Amarsha) is by the Self (Shiva) of Himself as Shakti, who as such is the Ideal or Perfect Universe; not in the sense of a perfected world form, but that ultimate formless feeling (Bhava) of Bliss (Ananda) or Love which is the root of the whole world. All is Love and by Love, all is attained.

The Shakta Tantras compare the state immediately prior to creation with that of a grain of gram (Canaka) wherein the two seeds (Shiva and Shakti) are held as one under a single sheath. There is, as it were, a Maithuna in this unity of dual aspect, the thrill of which is Nada, productive of the seed or Bindu from which the universe is born. When the sheath breaks and the seeds are pushed apart, the beginning of a dichotomy is established in the one consciousness, whereby, the "I", and the "This" (Idam or Universe) appear as separate. The specific Shiva aspect is, when viewed through Maya, the Self, and the Shakti aspect the Not-Self, is for the limited consciousness only. In truth the two, Shiva and Shakti, are ever one and the same, and never dissociated. Thus, each of the Bindus of the Kamakala are Shiva-Shakti appearing as Purusha-Prakriti. At this point, Shakti assumes several forms, of which the two chief

are Cit-Shakti or Cit as Shakti, and Maya-Shakti or Maya as Shakti.

Maya here is not a mysterious unconsciousness, a non-Brahman, non-real, non-unreal something. It is a form of Shakti, and Shakti is Shiva, who is Consciousness and which is real. Therefore, Maya Shakti is in itself (Svarupa) Consciousness and Brahman. Being Brahman, is real. It is that aspect of conscious power which conceals Itself to Itself. "By veiling the own true form (Svarupa = Consciousness), its Shaktis always arise", (Svarupavarane casya shaktayah satatotthitah) as the Spandakarika says. This is a common principle in all doctrines relating to Shakti. Indeed, this theory of veiling, though expressed in another form, is common to Samkhya and Vedanta. The difference lies in this, that in Samkhya it is a second, independent Principle which veils(covers); in Mayavada Vedanta it is the non-Brahman Maya (called a Shakti of Ishvara) which veils; and in Shakta Advaitavada (for the Shaktas are non dualists) it is Consciousness without ceasing veils Itself.

Shakta doctrine says consciousness appears to be unconscious, or more truly, to have an element of unconsciousness in it, owing to the veiling play of Consciousness Itself as Shakti.

This veiling power explains how the undeniable element of unconsciousness which is seen in things exists. Is the principle existing if all are to be consciousness? The answer is given in the luminous definition of Shakti; *It is the function of Shakti to contradict*" (Nishedha Vyapara Rupa Shaktih), that is, to contradict consciousness and make it appear to Itself as unconscious. In truth, the whole world is the Self whether as "I" (Aham) or "This" (Idam). The Self thus becomes its own object. It becomes object or form so that it may enjoy dualistic experience. Yet it remains, what it was, in its unitary blissful experience.

This is the Eternal Play in which the Self hides and seeks itself. The formless cannot assume form, unless formlessness is contradicted. Eternity is contradicted into finality; the all-pervading into the limited; the all-knowing into the "little knower"; the almighty into the "little doer", and so forth. It is only by contradicting itself to itself that the Self becomes its own object in the form of the universe.

It follows from the above that, to the Shakta worshipper, there is no unconscious Maya in Shamkara's sense, and therefore there is no Cidabhasa, in the sense of the reflection of consciousness on unconsciousness, giving the latter the appearance of consciousness which it does not truly possess. For all is Consciousness as Shakti. "Aham Stri," as the Advaita Bhavopanisad exclaims. In short, Shamkara says there is one Reality or Consciousness and a not-real not-unreal Unconsciousness. What is really unconscious, appears to be conscious by the reflection of the light of Consciousness upon it. Shakta doctrine says consciousness appears to be unconscious, or more truly, to have an element of unconsciousness in it, owing to the veiling play of Consciousness Itself as Shakti.

"Reflection" is a form of pictorial thinking. What it means is that, two principles are associated together without the nature (Svarupa) of either being really affected, and yet producing that effect which is Jiva. Shakta doctrine says that all is consciousness, but this same consciousness assumes the appearance of changing degrees of unconsciousness, not through the operation of anything other than itself (Maya), but by the operation of one of its own powers (Mayashakti).

As with so many other matters, these apparent differences are to some extent a matter of words. It is true that the Vedantists speak of the conscious (Cetana) and unconscious (Acetana), but they, like the Shakta Advaitins, say that the thing in itself is Conscious-

ness. When this is vividly displayed by reason of the reflection (Pratibimbha) of consciousness in Tattva, (such as Buddhi), capable of displaying this reflection, then we can call that to be conscious. Where, though consciousness is all-pervading, Caitanya is not so displayed, there we speak of unconsciousness. Thus, gross matter (Bhuta) does not appear to reflect Cit, and so appears to us to be unconscious. Though all things are at base consciousness, some appear more, and some less conscious. Shamkara explains this by saying that Caitanya is associated with a non-conscious mystery or Maya which veils consciousness, and Caitanya gives, to what is unconscious the appearance of consciousness through reflection.

"Reflection" is a form of pictorial thinking. What it means is that, two principles are associated together without the nature (Svarupa) of either being really affected, and yet producing that effect which is Jiva. Shakta doctrine says that all is consciousness, but this same consciousness assumes the appearance of changing degrees of unconsciousness, not through the operation of anything other than itself (Maya), but by the operation of one of its own powers (Mayashakti). It is not unconscious Maya in Shamkara's sense which veils consciousness, but Consciousness as Shakti veils Itself, and, as so functioning, it is called Maya-Shakti.

It may be asked how can Consciousness become Unconsciousness and cease to be itself? The answer is that it does not. It never ceases to be Consciousness. It appears to itself, as Jiva, to be unconscious, and even then not wholly: for as recent scientific investigations have shown, even so-called "brute matter" exhibits the elements of that which, when evolved in man, is self-consciousness. If it is to be asked how consciousness can obscure itself partially or at all, the only answer is Acintya Shakti, which Mayavadins as all other Vedantists admit.

Prakriti is then, according to Samkhya, a real independent category different from Purusha. This both

Shakti is three-fold as Will (Iccha), Knowledge (Jñana), and Action (Kriya). All three are but differing aspects of the one Shakti.

Mayavada and Shaktivada deny. Maya is a not-real, not-unreal Mystery, is dependent on, and associated with Brahman; Maya-Shakti is a power of, and, in its Svarupa, not different from Shiva: is real, and is an aspect of Brahman itself. Whilst Brahman as Ishvara is associated with Maya, Shiva is never associated with anything but Himself. But the function of all three is the same, namely to make forms in the formless. It is That, by which the Ishvara or Collective Consciousness pictures the universe for the individual Jiva's experience.

Shakti is three-fold as Will (Iccha), Knowledge (Jñana), and Action (Kriya). All three are but differing aspects of the one Shakti. Consciousness and its power or action are at base the same thing. It is true that action is manifested in matter, that is apparent unconsciousness, but its root, as that of all else is consciousness. Jnana is self-proved and experienced (Svatahsiddha), whereas, Kriya, being inherent in

bodies, is perceived by others than by ourselves. The characteristic of action, is the manifestation of all objects. These objects, again, characterized by consciousness-unconsciousness are in the nature of Abhasa of Consciousness. (Here Abhasa is not used in its sense of Cidabhasa, but as an intensive form of the term Bhasa.) The power of activity and knowledge are only differing aspects of one and the same Consciousness. According to Shamkara, Brahman has no form of self-determination. Kriya is a function of unconscious Maya. When Ishvara is said to be a doer (Karta), this is attributed (Aupadhika) to Him by ignorance only.

It follows from the above that there are other material differences between Shakta doctrine and Mayavada, such as the nature of the Supreme Experience, the reality and mode of creation, the reality of the world, and so forth. The world, it is true, is not; as the Mahanirvana Tantra says, absolute reality in the sense of unchanging being, for it comes and goes. It is nevertheless real, for it is the experience of Shiva and Shiva's experience that is not unreal.





## Temples of India - A journey through the heritage of time

- By Smt. Asha Manoharan

After visiting Pallavaneswaram, we headed towards Achalpuram. It is a village which comes under the Kollidam Taluk, Nagapattinam District. Achalpuram is 10.7 kms from its taluk main town Kollidam, 61.9 kms from its district main city Nagapattinam and 200 kms from its state capital Chennai. The total distance from Pallavaneswaram to Achalpuram is approximately 31.7 kms, and it took us about 42 mins. We headed south towards the Chennai - Nagapattinam highway which was at a distance of about 3.3

kms, passed Punjab National Bank on the right just after about 1.1 kms, headed further south for about 10.7 kms, and on turning right, we were still on the Chennai - Nagapattinam highway. We went further for another 12.3 kms and then we were on the slight left on to SH 22 leading straight into Achalpuram. After taking the first right and then the first left we were right in front of the temple.



Achalpuram Temple Entrance

This place is about Thirugnana Sambandar and his devotion to Lord Shiva. As I walked through the entrance, I remembered the song of Thirugnana Sambandar. This particular song indicates the five major actions of the God, namely, creation, protection, destruction, hiding in illusion, blessing.

*“Thoodudaiya cheviyan vidai eeriyoor thuven madhi choodi  
Kaadudaiya sudalaip podi poosy ennullam kavara kalvan  
Eedudaiya malaran muninaat panindheetha arul seidha  
Peedudaiya piramaapuram meeviya pemman evan andree”*

*Translation:*

*The God with a ring in His ears appear on the Holy Bull (creation), He has the moon on his head (protection\*), He wears the ash of the burnt bodies in the cremation ground (destruction), He - that thief - has stolen my heart (Hiding), He blessed the Brahma, who is on the Lotus, when he prayed to the God in the past (blessing), He is that Peruman of the great Piramaapuram\*\*."*

*\*protection - In order to prevent the moon from getting destroyed, the God wore the moon on His head*

*\*\*Piramaapuram - Another name of Sirkazhi.*

As the song was singing in my head, I walked through the *mandap* touching every stone to feel the *atma* of this great saint who once sat here to sing the praises of the Lord. Sambandar was born to Sivapada Hridhaya in Sirkazhi town. When he was three years old, his father put him down on one of the steps of the temple tank of Sattainathar *kovil*, before he entered the tank for bathing. When Sambandar cried out of hunger, Goddess Parvati appeared with Lord Siva before him and fed him with her breast milk in a golden cup. While feeding the child, the Goddess also infused him with the Milk of Divine Wisdom. From that day, he became Thirugnana Sambandar.

The sight of Sirkazhi, where his Lord sat with the

bee sought plaited Lady, filled Sambandar's mind with joy. Singing His glory, he entered the town and saluted the Lord. Hearing that Thirugnana Sambandar had reached Sirkazhi, the sincere servants of Lord Murugar, Thirunallankkar arrived there. While the holy minded were together singing the Greatness of God, Sambandar's father and other relatives felt it was the age for him to get married. They requested him to get married for doing the vedic rituals. The slave of the Lord who reduced the king of lust to ashes, with all his mind in the meditation of Maheswara did not wish to get married. His father appealed to him that he should lead the charitful family life as prescribed in the scriptures, as he sang the vedic hymns. For upholding the tradition Sambandar pillaiyar agreed, for showing that the married life is also a proper nice way to worship the Lord. The relatives feeling very much blessed, thanked the Lord. The seeker of vedic knowledge, Sambandar's father chose the loving daughter of the devotee of the Lord, Nambandar Nambi for his great son. He went with an array of relatives to Thirunallur Perumanam, the place of Nambandar Nambi. He welcomed Shivapada Hridayar with decorated lamps, flowers and fruits and agreed to the proposal as a boon. They decided on an auspicious date for the marriage. The arrangements went on in full swing, with joy and happiness visible everywhere.



Thirugnana Sambandar wedding scene

The streets of Sirkazhi were decorated with filled pots, luminant lamps, fluttering flags and garlands of flowers and pearls. For the marriage of this great devotee, they grew grains at the beginning of the function. From that day on, the clouds of perfumed smoke from burning *agal* and other incense substances were creeping into the roads of Sirkazhi.

The crowds of devotees who came in to participate in that wonderful marriage were hosted with a refreshing smile. The devotees and relatives took the prospering wrist thread that the groom should wear, all around the town in a procession and wound it around the soft wrist of Sambandar in the morning of that great day. The prodigy who came to make the world prosper in *shaivam*, went with pure heart and body to the Yogi who sat with the most beautiful woman at Thiruththonipuarum to take his blessings.

After taking his blessings, Sambandar went with all the devotees in the pearl palanquin that the Lord had blessed him with, to Thirunallur Perumanam. Getting down from the vehicle, he went straight to fall at the feet of the Lord at Nallur Perumanam and sang His glory:

***“Mandhira maavadhu neeru vaanavar meeladhu neeru  
sundhara maavadhu neeru thudhikkap paduvadh  
dhu neeru  
thandira maavadhu neeru chamayaththil ullaa-  
dhu neeru  
senthubar vaayumai pangan thiruaala vaayan  
thiruneeru”***

*Translation:*

*Mantra is the ash; Higher than heavenly people is the ash; Beauty is the ash; Praised is the ash; Technique is the ash; In the religion is the ash; The Lord of thiruaalavaay who share the body with the red lipped Uma - His Holy Ash.*

The vedic pandits asked him to get dressed in the wedding robe. He was ordained with sandal paste, shining white garments, golden chains with the nine gems, and glittering crown. Above all, he decorated himself with the highly precious substances in the world, *rudhraksham* and Holy ash, chanting the Holy Five Letters. Saluting the Perennial, he took the garland of the groom and with the shout of acclamation from the devotees, he reached the wedding stage.

The father who gave birth to the blessed daughter to get married to the prodigy, came and washed the flawless devotee's legs with sandal water and happily sprinkled it on himself and all others present there. The pleasantly adorned bride was brought to the place and her tender hands were given to the brave *shaivite* beacon amidst the chanting of holy scriptures. The wedded couple were asked to come around the fire. The saint who was always in His thoughts, rose to circumambulate the Lord of Nallur Perumanam. He wanted to merge with the Lord along with his wife and not to lead the married discipline. With all the devotees and relatives following, he went with his newly married wife to the Lord and sang saluting Him, saying it was the time for Him to accept him.

***“Kallor perumanan veeyndaa kazhumalam  
palloor perumanam paattu meyyaai thila  
Solloor perumanam soodalare thondar  
Nalloor perumanam meeya nambaanee”***

*Translation:*

*This marriage is not required. Otherwise, whatever I sang in Kazumalam (Sirkazhi) and other places, will not be considered true by the devotees. Oh God of Nallur Perumanam.*

A magnificent glow appeared and the “Giver of liberation” told everyone to come into the glow. Sambandar sang the beautiful hymn telling the entire world the greatness of the Holy Five Letters of the Lord singing the *NamachchivAya thiruppadhikam*, assuring the world that it is the holy mantra *NamachchivAya* that would rescue and bless all. Singing the famous song:

**“Kadhalaagi kasindhu kanneer malgi  
Oodhuvar thammai nannerikku uyppadhu  
Veedham naanginum meyporulaavadhu  
Naathan naamam NAMASHIVAAYAVEE”**

*Translation:*

*With deep love, budding tears pooling, whoever hails  
guiding them to the good discipline, the true sub-*

*stance of the four Vedas (knowledge) the sound (for oneself) like Lord's name is namahshivaaya.*

He asked all the devotees to get inside the glow. The pure hearted devotees including ThirunaIlanakkara, Muruga, ThirunaIlakanta Yazppanar, Shivapada Hridayar, Nambandar Nambi entered the bliss along with their families and relatives. Finally the glow of *shaivam* along with his wife prostrating and circum-ambulating the glow, entered in Him to be one. Immediately the glow disappeared from the temple. The people who did not enter it were shocked, wondered what had happened. The devas praised from the heavens offering salutations to Sambandar and to the heart-stealing wonderful devotional tamil.



Five level Rajagopuram

The majestic east facing temple has a five-level Rajagopuram. Nandi *mandap* and a 100-pillar *mandap* are situated adjacent to the tower. Sambandar is portrayed in a wedding attire in the *sannidhi* in the 100-pillar *mandap*. Next, is the east facing *sannidhi* of Sivaloga Thyagaraja and the *sannidhi* of Thiruvanneetru Umayammai. Sacred ash is distributed as *prasadam* in this *sannidhi*. During the marriage of Thirugnana Sambandar, Ummayammai

stood there and distributed *vibhuti* to all the devotees, hence she gets the name Thiruvanneetru Umayammai. It is believed that we can get rid of our diseases by applying this ash on our body. Also, it is believed that the ash gives redemption from our sins and ensures *thaali bhagyam* for women.

Sage Kaaga did penance here. Hesitant to walk on his feet in this holy place, he reached here by walk-

ing on his head. Brahma had also visited this *sthala* and became the Creator. Lord Vishnu visited this *sthala* and was blessed with the boon of killing the asuras. While Indra acquired prosperity through his visit here, Chandra got *abhaya*. Ganga Devi worshipped Lord Siva here. By worshipping and praying at this temple, one gets rid of his *karma*, and becomes detached. Those who worship Lord Siva are sure to get *mukti*.

The incident in which Thirugnana Sambandar merged with the Sivajyothi is enacted at the festival held here in the Tamil month of Vaikasi. Sages Vasishtha, Parasara, Bhrigu and Jamadagni have worshipped here at this *sthala*. This place has a lot of vibrations and it makes us feel that these saints are still there watching over us.



The saints who were present at Sambandar's wedding

## Diwali Celebration at Bala's House

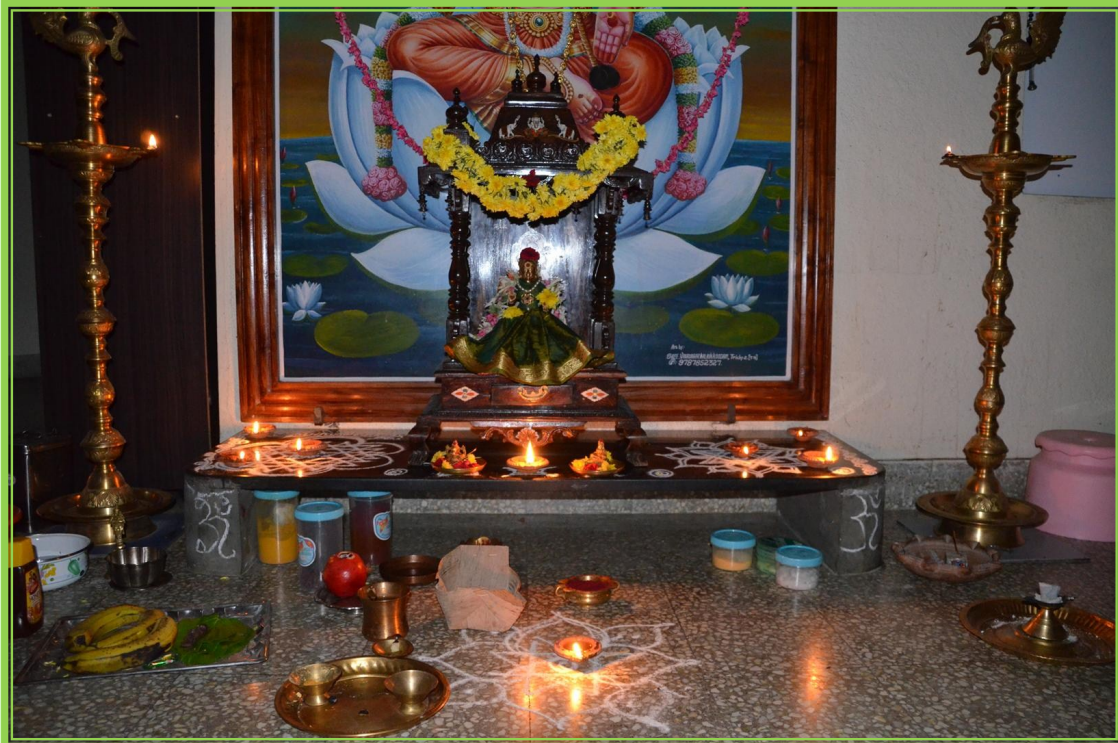


*Abhishekam and alankaram* - a treat for the eyes to see Little Bala amidst roses



Bala Sahasranamam Parayanam

## Karthigai Celebration at Bala's House



*Agal villakku adorning Bala's mandapam*





Bala as *jyothi*, forever blesses Her devotees with everlasting grace

## You, Me and our cup of Yoga

### Asanas to relax- By Gargi Parthasarathy

Relaxation is such an important part of life. Most of the physical and mental problems arise because some part of the body or more commonly the mind is not relaxed and calm. While yoga in general aims at relaxing the mind, there are certain asanas which are specifically relaxing. They are used after a vigorous practice of asanas or as is. The most popular relaxing asana is 'shavasana'. But if you want a nice variation to your yoga practice or even in general if you've had a stressful day and want to just relax and calm yourselves, there are a couple more asanas which do just that.

#### 1. Makarasana (Crocodile Pose)

In this asana, the body assumes the form of a crocodile floating on water. Hence the name '*Makarasana*'. The main objective of this asana is to calm and relax the entire body and mind.

Technique:

1. Lie on the ground, face down with the chest touching the earth.
2. Cross your arms such that the palms rest on the

opposite shoulders.

3. Rest your chin on your hands where they have crossed.
4. Separate your feet as much as is comfortable.
5. Point your toes away.
6. Close your eyes and pay attention to your breathing which should be natural and rhythmic.

Benefits:

1. After a particularly vigorous Yoga practice, this pose helps the body to relax completely and quickly.
2. This asana is especially helpful for people suffering from high blood pressure.
3. It also helps get rid of flatulence.
4. It is a good asana for asthmatic problems.
5. People suffering from certain lower back problems like sciatica benefit greatly from this asana too.
6. Regular practise of this asana also helps in treating people with hyperactivity problems.

Words of Caution:

Pregnant women should not practise this asana.



Makarasana (Crocodile Pose)

## 2. Balasana (Child's Pose)

Have you ever seen a newborn baby or a child in general try to go to sleep? If they fall asleep by themselves they always automatically get into this pose before sleep. Maybe that is why they say - 'sleep like a baby'. This pose tries to imitate what babies naturally do to relax themselves and lull themselves into sleep.

Technique:

1. Kneel on the floor.
2. Touch your big toes together and sit on your heels.
3. Separate your knees about hip width apart.
4. Exhale and lay your torso down in between your thighs and rest your head on the ground.
5. You can keep your hands stretched out in front of

you or by your side.

6. Close your eyes and inhale and exhale naturally.

Benefits:

1. This is an effective 'stress buster'. A minute of this asana everyday will definitely calm the stressed out nerves and make you feel more relaxed.
2. It gently stretches the hips and thigh muscles.
3. Helps the spinal column relax.

Words of Caution:

1. Pregnant women should avoid this asana.
2. People suffering from blood pressure should consult their doctor before trying this asana out.
3. If you have weak knees, consult your doctor before trying out this asana.



Balasana (Child's Pose) - hands by the side



Balasana (Child's Pose) - hands stretched out

## Kubera Lakshmi and Villakku poojai festivity at 2012 Lalitha Homam



Kubera Lakshmi poojai—silver lotus flowers offered during the *homam*



Villakku poojai - array of lamps glowing with Bala's *jyothi*

## Did you know...?

By Smt. Asha Manoharan

This edition of “Did you know?” again comes late after your Karthigai celebration, sorry about that. I have pledged to myself that I will give this kind of information before the festival and not after that.

As you know, October - November is the month of festivals with Navaratri, Diwali and Karthigai. Karthigai is the extension of Diwali. Rows of *agal vilakku* in front of every house... this is the image that comes to our mind when we think of Karthigai Deepam — the festival of lights that is celebrated throughout Tamil Nadu during the month of Karthigai (November-December). Not many of us are aware that it is one of the oldest festivals celebrated in the state, perhaps even before people began celebrating Diwali and Navarathri.

Unlike many other Hindu festivals, Karthigai is basically a Tamil festival and is virtually unknown in most other parts of the country. The reference of Karthigai Deepam can be found in many ancient Tamil literatures like ‘*Ahananuru*’ (200 B.C. to 300 A.D.), ‘*Tolkappiyam*’ that dates back to 2,000 or 2,500 BC, ‘*Jeevaka Chintamani*’; an epic written by the Jain poet, Thiruthakka Thevar in the Sangam period, ‘*Karnarpadu*’, ‘*Kalluvazhi Narpadu*’ dating around 1,000 BC and ‘*Pazhamozhi*’. The ‘*Ahananuru*’ clearly states that Karthigai is celebrated on the full moon day (*pournami*) of the Tamil month of Karthigai. It was one of the most important festivals (*peruvizha*) of the ancient Tamils. Avaiyyar, the renowned poetess of those times, refers to this festival in her songs. Inscriptions in our temples also make a reference about this festival. A mid-sixteenth century inscription at the Arulala Perumal temple in Kancheepuram, refers to the festival as Thiru Karthigai Thirunal.

Karthigai is essentially a festival of lamps. The lighted lamp is considered an auspicious symbol. It is be-

lieved to ward off evil forces and usher in prosperity and joy. While the lighted lamp is important for all Hindu rituals and festivals, it is indispensable for Karthigai.

Lord Shiva appeared as a hill (Arunachala Hill) at Thiruvannamalai in Tamil Nadu. Indeed, the very names ‘Tiruvannamalai’ and ‘Arunachala’ translate as ‘holy fire hill.’ The Shivalinga in the temple here is the agni lingam. The tiny lamps lit during the Karthigai festival (Karthigai Deepam) are believed to be the miniature replicas of the fire linga.

There is an interesting story explaining the link between Karthigai and lamps. Legend has it that Lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma began to quarrel as to who was the more powerful of the two. While they were fighting, Lord Shiva appeared before them in the form of a huge pillar of fire. Lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma gave up quarrelling and decided to find the top and the bottom of the pillar. Accordingly, Brahma assumed the form of a swan and moved upwards. Vishnu transformed himself into a boar and started digging deep into the earth. But even after searching for several years, neither of the two were able to find the ends of the pillar. Finally, they realised that the pillar was none other than Lord Shiva. Soon afterwards, Lord Shiva appeared as a hill (Arunachala Hill) at Thiruvannamalai in Tamil Nadu. Indeed, the very names ‘Tiruvannamalai’ and ‘Arunachala’ translate as ‘holy fire hill.’ The Shivalinga in the temple here is the agni lingam. The tiny lamps lit during the Karthigai festival (Karthigai Deepam) are believed to be the miniature replicas of the fire linga.

A special light is lit at the top of the hill at Thiruvannamalai which is the abode of Lord Shiva, called as Agni Shetram or Agni Sthalam (one of the five aspects of the Panchaboothams). In Thiruvannamalai,

Maha Karthigai Deepam is celebrated for 10 days. It is popularly known as Karthikai Brahmotsavam. The celebrations begin with the flag hoisting on the Utradam day and the festivity continues for nine days. The popular Bharani Deepam is lit in Arunachaleswarar's Sannithi in the early morning hours of the tenth day. Devotees move to the Annamalai hills to worship the Bharani Deepam on the final day of the festival. It is believed that the flame of the lamp does not sputter on this day and divulges into the form of Lord Muruga, reaching up to the sky. The Bharani Deepam is actually a colossal circular metal vessel with a capacity to hold about 2,000 liters of ghee, a height of five and half feet and diameter of five feet. The wick of the lamp itself is made up of 30 m of 'Ghada' cloth burnt using 2 kilos of camphor. It is claimed that on the night of 'Karthigai Pournami', when the lamp is lit it can be seen across an area of 35 km around the shrine.

In down south of Tamilnadu and in Kerala, sisters pray for the welfare of their brothers and they light an elephant lamp (Gajalakshmi Vilakku) which marks a sign of prosperity and wealth.

In the evening, the Pancha Murthis are brought to the Katchi Mandapam. At dusk (Pradosham), with the Karthigai day harmonizing with full moon day, the deity, Ardhanareeswarar, is taken in a grand procession on the decorated vehicle to this place with the five deepams, which are put in a big receptacle near the flag staff. Surya Vahana Seva, Kamadhenu vahana seva and other vahanas are taken by Periya Nayagar. First day of this festival is called as "Appakarthigai" and the second day is called as "Vadai karthigai". All devotees offer porri, adhirasam, vella seedai, vetrilai pakku, fruits as naivedyam to God Shiva. The final day procession is called "Girivalam".

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The story behind lighting an elephant lamp (Gajalakshmi Vilakku) is that, there lived a king who had a daughter. She had an elephant and grew up with him and loved him very much. She even considered him as her own brother. After her marriage, she missed her brother elephant very much. So for every Thirukarthigai/Karthigai deepam occasion, she lit an elephant lamp (Gajalakshmi Vilakku), prepared elephant leg size milagu Adai, Pori, Adhirasam, Vella Seedai and kept them as naivedyam. So that tradition is followed by the people in that region.

A popular belief is that the day is also the birthday of Lord Muruga. Lord Muruga, also known as Skanda, Subrahmanya and Kartik, was born as six different babies to Lord Shiva after he awoke from the deep meditation after Goddess Sati's death. The six babies were looked after by the six Kritika stars and the six children were later joined as a single force by Goddess Parvati. As Muruga was born as six different babies and later joined into one, He is popularly known as Aarumugan and this festival is celebrated as karthigai deepam in honour of the karthigai girls who brought him up.

The lamps lit on the occasion are of varied sizes, shapes and colours. Traditionally, lamps are lit in temples and *agal vilakkus* would adorn the *thinnaiss* of houses. Bigger lamps made of mud, stone and metal are lit inside homes. The ancient Tamils are said to have even imported lamps from as far as Greece and Rome, through the ports of Arikamedu (near Pondicherry), Mallai or Mamallapuram and Mylai or Mylapore (part of present-day Chennai).

One such imported lamp is the hanging variety, designed in the shape of a swan with a fish placed at the top. Terracotta lamp from Arikamedu was also very common. Another variety of lamp, common in Tamil Nadu from early times was the Lakshmi vilakku or Pavai vilakku. It was shaped like a woman bearing in her folded palms, the tahali or shallow bowl containing oil for lighting the lamp.

The ubiquitous five nozzle kuthu vilakku has been in use from the days of the Cholas or perhaps even earlier. The five petals or nozzles are also said to denote the five main elements of Nature — earth, water, fire, air and sky or space. The five nozzles are also said to denote the five main elements needed for a successful life — health, wealth, learning, courage and longevity.

At Arikamedu, archaeologists have unearthed a flat circular clay lamp with four nozzles or petals or openings for four wicks. Another clay lamp discovered at this site has 12 nozzles. The ubiquitous five nozzle kuthu vilakku has been in use from the days of the Cholas or perhaps even earlier. When the British East India Company began to rule parts of South India, it featured the petals or nozzles of the kuthu vilakku on some of the coins that were minted. The five petals or nozzles are also said to denote the five main elements of Nature — earth, water,

fire, air and sky or space. The five nozzles are also said to denote the five main elements needed for a successful life — health, wealth, learning, courage and longevity. Traditionally, after Karthigai, most of these lamps, except for those in daily use, were cleaned and stacked away, and taken out only the next year for the festival. In the old, tiled-roof houses, *agal vilakkus* were invariably stacked in the loft beneath the roof. In recent times, changes in lifestyle and tastes have brought about changes in the lamps used for the festival.

Till recently, the humble *agal vilakku* was brought to our doorstep by the lamp-maker himself who carried his fragile wares on his head. Now, they are packed in colourful boxes and sold in prestigious department stores and handicrafts emporiums as also in the annual lamp exhibitions organised by Poompuhar to coincide with Karthigai. Designer clay lamps are becoming popular among the younger generation. These come in exotic shapes and are often decorated with painted designs, colourful stones, beads and zari work. Many modern families no longer prefer the oil lamps that stain the floor and the walls. Instead, they use scented candles, including those shaped in the form of the *agal vilakku*. In flats that do not have balconies or open spaces, the single candle lit next to the front door is a testimony to a hoary tradition.





## Ambal's Keerthanai

*Thayee purivai...*

**Composition: Smt. Asha Manoharan**

**Sung by: Smt. Ambika Arvindd**

**Ragam: Mohana**

**Talam: Adi**

Thayee purivai.....thayee purivai...

esan umaiyavalay....

1. Naanum.... maanam .....uruga.....  
oodoodi neeyum.....varavey....(thayee)
2. kaanukul.....nee.....eerukaa  
N....kaanukul ..... nee....eerukaa  
wayrethu.....kaaitchi.....ennaku.....ethairku (thayee)
3. muvulakum.....unathu....thaaki...  
mupoorulum.....nee .....aaki..  
kuzthathai.....roopam.....koondu....neeyum  
N.....arukay.....vainththedavey.....(thayee)



## Sangam Annadanam Initiative at Modern English School, Malur



Annadanam hosted by Sangam, offers varieties of delicious rice items, including vegetable *pulav*, *bisi bele bhath*, and tomato *bhath* to 183 students.

“Balambika Divya Sangam would like to thank all the Annadanam sponsors for their support.  
May Bala shower Her blessings on you and your family”

-President  
Smt. Asha Manoharan

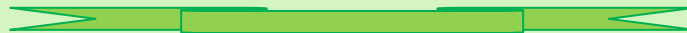
## Bala Prastha

### A HOLE IN THE FENCE

There once was a little boy who had a bad temper. His Father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, he must hammer a nail into the fence which was there in his back garden. The first day the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence. Over the next few weeks, as he learned to control his anger, the number of nails hammered daily gradually dwindled down. He discovered it was easier to hold his temper than to drive those nails into the fence. Finally the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all. He told his father about it and the father suggested that the boy now pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper. The day passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone. The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, "You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence." The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one. You can put a knife in a man and draw it out. It won't matter how many times you say I'm sorry, the wound is still there.

### A verbal wound is as bad as a physical one.

Friends and loved ones are a very rare jewel, indeed. They make you smile and encourage you to succeed. They lend an ear, they share a word of praise, and they always want to open their hearts to us. Water your relationships with kindness... and they will grow. So be careful little lips what you say...! And you won't chase friendships away.



### ACTIVITY OF THE MONTH

*Why don't you practice to say something nice to at least one person per day for the next one month. Record them in your calendar and send it to us by the first week of January.*

*We will name you as the "Star of the Month"*

*Please note that the calendar should be endorsed by someone - it could be a family member or even a friend.*

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Vani Muralidharan  
Karthik Chakravarthy  
Vivek Srinivasan  
Arvind Narayanan**

*Pooja items for Bala's House*

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Sowmya Ganesh  
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