

Balavin Kural

Balambika Divya Sangam

From the Editor's desk...

Dear all,
How are you feeling after those dashing colourful pictures that we put up in the last issue. I do agree it was such a treat to the eyes and the brahmandam of the goddess was revealed in every alankaram. For me Navarathri is a special time to understand what life is all about. This world is full of complexities, - life, death, pleasure, happiness etc. These are all in view attached to despair and grief. The senses and the sensual world are the realm of birth and death. Take sight for instance: it's dependent on so many factors — whether it's day or night, whether or not the eyes are healthy, and so on. Yet we become very much attached to colours, shapes and forms that we perceive with the eyes, and we identify ourselves with them. Then there are the ears and sound: when we hear pleasant sounds we seek to hold onto them, and when we hear unpleasant sounds we try to turn away. With smells: we seek the pleasure of fragrances and pleasant odours, and try to get away from unpleasant ones. Also with flavours: we seek delicious tastes and try to avoid bad ones. And with touch: just how much of our lives is spent trying to escape from physical discomfort and pain, and seeking the delight of physical sen-

sation? Finally there is thought, the discriminative consciousness. It can give us a lot of pleasure or a lot of misery.

These are the senses, the sensual world offers. It is a compounded world of birth and death. Its very nature is dukkha, it is imperfect and unsatisfying. You'll never find perfect happiness, contentment or peace in the sensual world: it will always bring despair and death. The sensual world is unsatisfactory, and so we only suffer from it when we expect it to satisfy us.

The sensual world is unsatisfactory and that's the way it's supposed to be. When we attach to it, it takes us to despair — because attachment means that we want it to be satisfactory, we want it to satisfy us, to make us content, happy and secure. But just notice the nature of happiness. How long can you stay happy? What is happiness? You may think it's how you feel when you get what you want. Someone says something you like to hear, and you feel happy. Someone does something you approve of, and you feel happy. The sun shines and you feel happy. Someone makes nice food and serves it to you, and you're



happy. But how long can you stay happy? Do we always have to depend on the sun shining? In England, the weather is very changeable: the happiness about the sun shining in England is obviously very impermanent and unsatisfactory.

Happiness is unsatisfactory, it's dukkha. It's not something to depend on or make the goal of life. Happiness will always be disappointing because it lasts so briefly and then is succeeded by unhappiness. So I shifted my goal this NAVARATHRI from being happy to being more realistic about life, be patient, and to see what it has to offer... (believe me there is always some surprise waiting)

Upcoming Events:

Bala Sahasranamam Parayanam:
Mythili Sundararajan's residence, Bangalore, India
Contact: myyasundar@gmail.com
Chakravarthy's residence, Ohio, USA.
Contact: 95chikki@gmail.com
Anuradha Srinivasan's residence, Chicago, USA
Contact: asriniv65@gmail.com

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 and Milk scheme:
Annadanam and serving of milk to nursery children, 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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Editorial Team

Mrs. Asha Manoharan

Mrs. Latha Chakravarthy

Mr. Ramesh Chakravarthy

Mr. Raghu Ranganathan

Mr. Anthil Anbazhagan



Bala Speaks...

“One of the most powerful influences for good and bad is the mind.”

In today's world, what we urgently need is to replace hatred and revenge with kindness, tolerance and forgiveness. One of the most powerful influences for good and bad is the mind. Genuine peace between people and nation grows out of peace and goodwill in the heart of human beings. If one's heart is filled with hatred and revenge, then material progress and technological innovation alone cannot help the world at large. When one transforms oneself, only then can they transform the world and make it a better place to live in. Creating a good place to live in is in the hands of each one in this world. Heaven is right here when the world is filled with love and compassion. It turns into hell when hatred and revenge enters in. So it is in each one's hands to make this world a heaven or hell.

Why do we perform Aarathi? Part-2

In the earlier newsletter I had written about *aarathi* and its significance. Here is some more information on *aarathi*.

There are five different types of *aarathi* offered to the gods. The first type is the *mangala aarathi*. This is offered in the morning after waking up the Lord. This has to be offered definitely by 4:30 AM. The second type of *aarathi* is the *shringara aarathi*. This is offered after the deities are dressed up for the day. Normally, a mirror is placed before the deities, so that they themselves can observe their *shringar*. The third type of *aarathi* is the *raja bhoga aarathi*, which is offered before the noon *bhoga* or *bhojanam* offering. The fourth is the *sandhya aarathi*, which is offered during the twilight hour. Lastly, the *shayana aarathi*, is offered before the deities are put to rest for the day.

Aarathi preparation is of different types: some use oil or ghee, some use a red solution made from turmeric and *shunnambu*, while some prepare it with *kumkum* powder. Though the methods are different, it all signifies the same thing - it is an especially significant offering of worship. *Aarathi* leads to the high concentration of the total congregation. The necessary atmosphere for utmost concentration is produced. That is why it is used as an expression of devotion, and has been re-

spected by people and the devotees as a contributive form of worship.

Aarathi is an indigenous or Dravidian word for five lamps, incense sticks and lighted wicks. In reality, *aarathi* is not included in the 16 forms of daily ritual worship. *Aarathi* is not mentioned in the five *upachaars* or *prakaars*. It was introduced to the Aryans by the Dravidian culture, and perhaps it became popular in the *bhakti* tradition of worship or devotion to a personal god. As we move from south to north, the progression of *aarathi* changes. For example, in South India, *aarathi* is an important ritual, and the various *aarathis* are offered along with the ringing of bells and playing of musical instruments. However, singing is absent. In Goa, there is a rich tradition of setting different *aarathis* to a beautiful vocal music. In large temples there, the loud sound of musical instruments is a noteworthy characteristic, but vocal singing is absent. The similar custom is prevalent to a certain extent in Maharashtra. In the Northern provinces this form of *aarathi* is accepted but not as it is in Maharashtra and in the South. *Aarathi* there is never set to music.

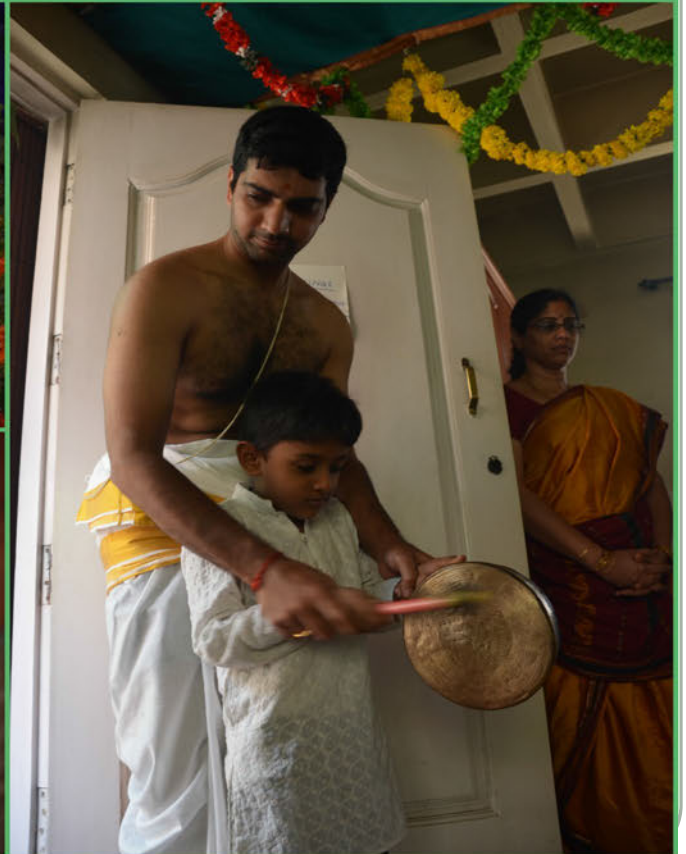
There are various ways to how they prepare for *aarathi*. The most common form is the *ghee* lamp with cotton wicks placed in a tray and waved before the idol. For them *ghee* is superior to an offering of oil. The popular belief is that a lamp waved wards off the evil eye, and keeps away

any evil or inauspicious effects. At the time of weddings or sacred thread ceremony, after smearing turmeric on the bride or the boy, *aarathi* is performed to protect them from evil. Similarly, on Diwali, New Year's, or when heroes return home, lamps are waved to keep them protected from the evil eye. It is also a belief that ghosts, evil spirits and animals are afraid of the brightness of fire. Light produced by fire is considered splendid, and this itself is a unique concept of all cultures and religions. Therefore, *aarathi* has a special place in *bhakti* worship. One should note with significance, that there is no singing in Sanskrit temples (traditional temples of gods and goddesses). It is distinctly present in Vittal Sampradaya in Maharashtra, and it is also predominantly present in Guru Sampradaya, as it is present in the temples of Sri Sai Baba. According to Guru tradition the relationship between Guru and disciple, and the bond between them and their merger is supposed to be at the very heart of *bhakti*, superior even to the worship of the God. To the common man, Vittal, or Gurudatta or Saibaba, are closer than the remote, abstract concept of Sanskrit Eashwara. That is probably the reason why people are drawn to the former, and this fact makes the basis of religion not just a creation through a miracle, but a well-founded fountain of love through faith and experience. >



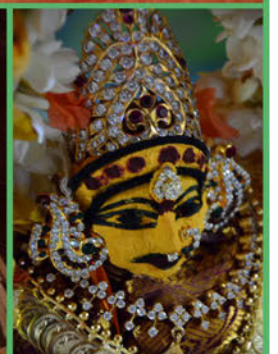
The potent expression of this '*prem*' is *aarathi*. It is a *sampradaya*, not a concept in Vedic tradition.













Bala Prastha



A professor began his class by holding up a glass with some water in it. He asked the students, "How much do you think this glass weighs?" The students answered, "50 grams", some said, "100 grams" and "200 grams" and so on. "I really don't know unless I weigh it," said the professor, "but my question is what would happen if I held it up like this for a few minutes?" "Nothing," the student said. "Okay, what would happen if I held it up like this for an hour?" the professor asked. "Your arm would begin to ache," said one of the students. "You're right. Now what would happen if I held it up for a day?" asked the professor. "Your arm would go numb. You might have severe muscle stress, and would have to go to the hospital for sure," answered another student, and all the students laughed. "Very good," said the professor, "If you hold it for a very long time you might even get yourself paralyzed, and you will not be able to do anything." "So why carry the glass, you could put down the glass," said a student. "Exactly!" said the professor, "You can hold it for a few minutes and then put it down."

Life's problems are also something like this. Hold it for a few minutes in your head, they seem to be okay. Think of them for a long time, they begin to ache. Hold it even longer, they begin to paralyze you. You will not be able to do anything. It is important to think of the challenges or prob-



Did you know?

When we visit a temple, we are often received with huge structures, sculptures and geometrical shapes. Have you wondered whether any of these things makes sense? After reading this article, you would be ready enough to see those images and shapes in a new light!

The Hindu temple involves a multiple set of ideas. Perhaps Hindu traditional architecture has more symbolic meanings than other cultures. If you look at most of these temples, it is oriented to face east, the auspicious direction where the sun rises to dispel darkness. The temple design includes the image of a cosmic person (*Vastu Purusha*) in a yogic posture, symmetrically filling the gridded space of the floor plan, his navel in the center, and it includes the archetype of the cosmic mountains between earth and heaven, of fertility, planets, City of the Gods, deities, etc. One encounters these simultaneous archetype themes and meanings conveyed in the semi-abstract forms in many temples. There are rules for the shape and proportion in the authoritative text of Hindu tradition (*Shastras* and *Agamas*), which give birth to a variety of complex temple designs. The Brihat Samhita text (4th Century CE) says the temple should reflect the cosmic order.

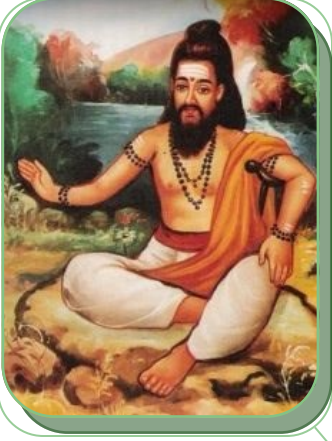
One of the most famous

tight rope walkers living today said, "To look up elevates the soul; to watch a falcon take flight from a building is to envy its freedom, to consider the world from a loftier perspective. We need altitude as much as oxygen. To be surrounded by things of great height, mountain peaks or skyscrapers, reminds us of our fragility and also inspires us to reach for the clouds, to take our measure and stretch it." The observations speak strong sensibilities of human experience and carefully broach the topic on the significance of great heights. For countless generations mountains existing as upthrust geographical areas of higher elevations have nurtured the religious imagination by enticing people with the possibilities of drawing closer to the sky, a realm beyond the human being's usual earth-bound reach. Around the world, wherever mountains exist as geographical features of the environment, there are ancient associations – ideas of reaching up to the heaven, contacting a higher spiritual realm. We think of Himalayas, Olympus, Fiji, the temple mountain in Jerusalem, as well as the holy mountains in the Andes, to name but a few. In the Hindu experience, the archetypal mountain of existence – the cosmic mountain named Meru is the center or the navel of the universe. Temple scholar and historian George Michell writes: "In the superstructure of the Hindu temple, per-

haps its most characteristic feature, the identification of the temple with the mountain is specific, and the superstructure itself is known as a 'mountain peak' or 'crest' (*shikhara*). The curved contours of some temple superstructures and their tiered arrangements owe much to a desire to suggest the visual effect of a mountain peak. The structure of mountains when closely observed shows sloping stones and bulging necks, which is what is taken up in the temple architecture. In North India, the superstructure is a solid tower with curved vertical ribs, bulging in the middle and ending in a very narrow necking covered by a distinct ribbed piece of round stone known as '*amalaka*'. *Temples in South India* have more pyramid shaped tower composed of gradually receding stories divided by horizontal bands ending in a dome or barrel-shaped ridge." South Indian Dravidian culture was already highly evolved before Sanskrit influences arrived from the North-- this accounts for the different styles. In the South tall gateway towers called *gopuras* form entrances to the temple compound, which is a temple's superstructure. While there are a number of variations on the mountain shape in Indian temples, nevertheless the purpose of the superstructure is always one and the same. It is to lead from a broad base to a single point where all lines converge. >



This single pointed wholeness composed of many self-similar peaks at various points in the structure displays a striking fractal quality. Hindus saw these fractal-like self-similarities in nature and intuited recurring geometry as the way to express deep philosophical views. A deep sense of oneness pervades the background of Hindu thought. 'The One' is praised in various ways in the Rig Veda, and 'The One' is the ultimate reality with many names and forms. The truth is one, though inspired sages speak of it variously. One Rig Veda verse states, "Likewise, the base has several points, but the top is with one point, and the human mind needs to be focused on that one point." And that is the reason why all temples irrespective of their shape and structure reflect this philosophy of oneness.



*Sri Kamalamuni
devoted his entire
life time to medicine
and philosophy*

Siddhar Tharesanam: Kamalamuni

Kamalamuni is one of the 18 yoga siddhas. He was born in the month of vaikasi and his birth star is second part of poosam. He belongs to a kuravar caste and lived for 68 generations and his approximate age was 4000 years and 300 days. He is believed to have lived in China for a long time. However, Siddhar Karuvoorar in his book "Vadha Kaviyam" (Song 584) says "Maamuni" belongs to "Kannar" caste. He does not explicitly say "Kamalamuni", but mentions "Maamuni".

Sri Kalangi Nadhar belongs to Kannar caste. Many people believe that Sri Kalangi Nathar is Siddhar Kamalamuni. In the 63rd song of "Kamalamuni Suthiram 76", a line says that "Kamalamuni alias Kalangi". Hence it can be true that Sri Kalangi Nathar is Siddhar Kamalamuni himself.

There is a controversy with respect to his *samadhi*. In "Bogar Janana Sasthra", it is mentioned that Kamalamuni attained *samadhi* at Madurai. But it is widely believed that Siddhar Kamalamuni attained *samadhi* at Thiruvavur. He is such a great man, let him be at rest in some place. His work towards medicine and philosophy is enormous and Bhogar himself calls him a great *muni*.

Sri kamalamuni devoted his entire life time to medicine and philosophy and he is said to be the disciple of Sri Bhogar muni. You can find lots of information about this *siddha* and his works in the following books: [Babaji and 18 Siddhas The Yoga of the Eighteen Siddhas: An Anthology](#) which is a good read for the mind and the soul.

Malur Navarathri



Annadhanam



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Balambika Divya Sangam

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Bangalore - 560034
INDIA

Email: balambikathirupanitrust@gmail.com

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