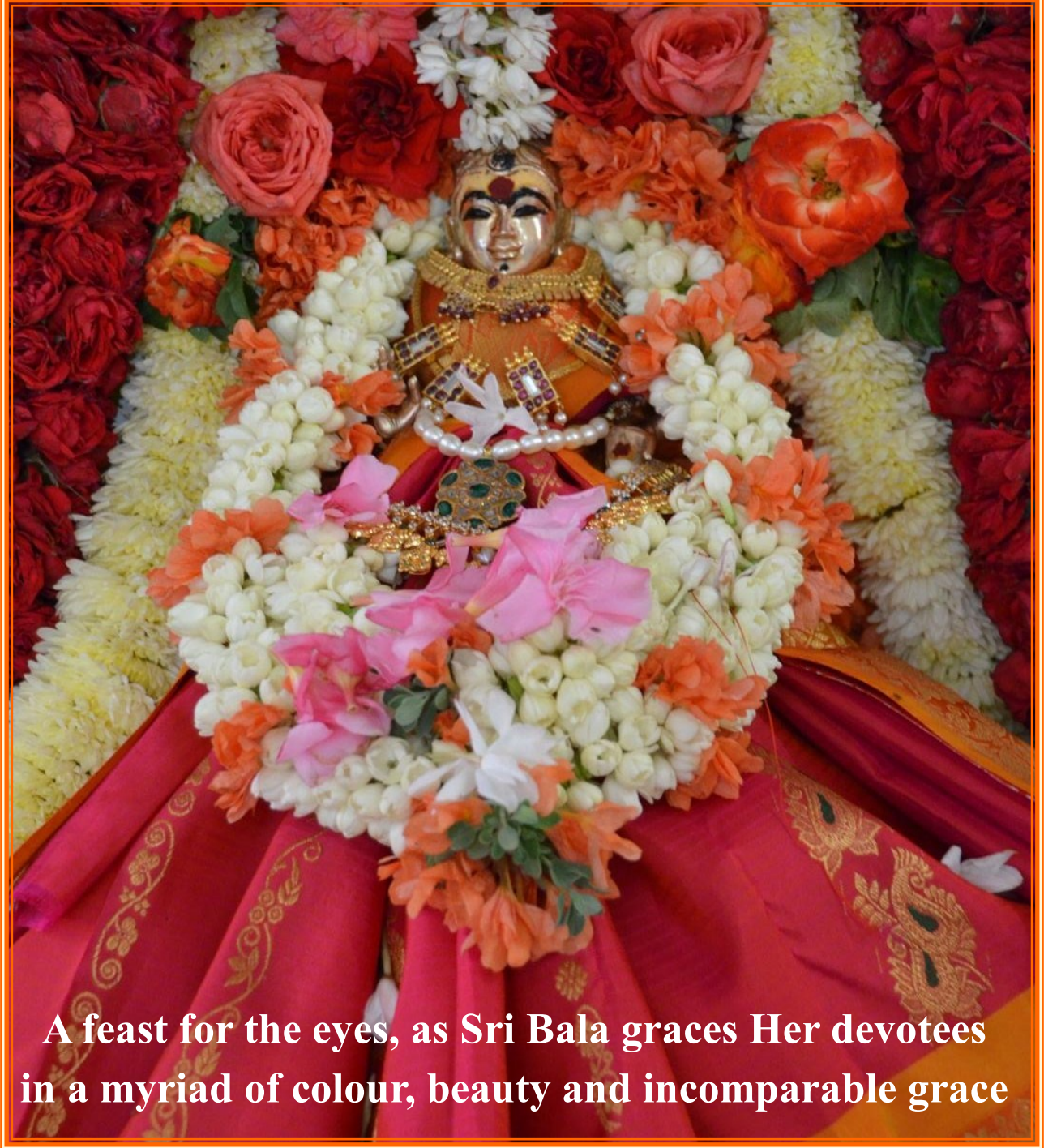


Balavin Kural

Balambika Divya Sangam

November 2012 Vol 2 Issue 7



A feast for the eyes, as Sri Bala graces Her devotees in a myriad of colour, beauty and incomparable grace

Navaratri Mahotsavam: 9 day celebration of Sri Bala's manifestation of veeryam, showryam and gnyaanam - page 12

Significance of ganga snaanam during Diwali: page 38



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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 in-
terested, please contact
Smt. Asha Manoharan
asha.raji@gmail.com



Annadanam:

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



CONTENTS

Bala Speaks	3
Divya Tattvam	4
Temples of India	8
Navaratri Mahotsavam 2012	11
Navaratri Celebration at Bala's House	12
Navaratri Celebration at Malur Balalayam	31
Kumara Sambhava Puppet Show Pictures	32
Bala Tripurasundari Homam Pictues	34
You, Me and our cup of Yoga	36
Did you know...?	38
Ambal's Keerthanai	40
Bala Prastha	41
We are very thankful to...	42

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“Good conduct is the best way to attain salvation.

Good conduct forms a foundation for personal development in this world.

It helps one to lead a very virtuous life in this world.

Just as this earth forms the base for all animate and inanimate things,

so is morality the foundation of all qualities.

**When you look around you see that everything rests upon this earth,
whether it is the building or a tree or an animal, so is good conduct or morality.**

Morality is the foundation of all qualities,

all virtues all attainments ranging from mundane to supramundane,

ranging from success and good fortune,

all the way upto skill, wisdom and enlightenment.”

Divya Tattvam

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



Shobhana

Beautiful character exists in Her

Here, they use the word *shobana* to illustrate Her strength of character. Let us look at this more closely. Every child in this world, finds his or her mother the most beautiful person on this Earth. Why? Does the child see the features and decides that his or her mother is beautiful? The answer is NO. It is the mother's traits that makes her so beautiful. So when we describe Devi, we look at Her qualities and say She is beautiful. What are the attributes in Her that makes us revere Her? Her personality, intelligence, grace, charisma, integrity, elegance...Let us look at some examples and then come to a conclusion.

Once, there lived a very poor brahmin. He was a religious and pious man, prayed to the goddess Bala Tripurasundari everyday. One day, he decided to visit the temple of the goddess during Navaratri. As the time came near, he tried his best to gather something valuable to offer Her. Since he could not find anything other than his scythe and sieve, with which he used to work on a small piece of land, he just put these two tools in a bundle with some clothes and food, and went along with the pilgrims to the temple.

After praying, when other people offered their cash and jewellery, the brahmin took out his scythe and sieve and placed them at the altar. Soon the puja was over, and everyone left, but the poor brahmin stayed behind and sat in front of the altar of Devi. The goddess asked him: "Why haven't you gone, good brahmin, even when all have left?" Then the brahmin said humbly "Good mother, now that I have given my scythe and sieve to you, I have nothing left, with which to earn a living." The goddess was touched by his plight and said: "Here, take this basket with you, and whenever you ask for food, it will be there before you. You will never go hungry, and you can ask for any amount of the choicest food."

The brahmin was very happy to receive this Divine gift. He made his way to his little hut in the village. He asked the basket to get him some good food to eat and the miracle basket did as it was asked, soon the eatables appeared in front of him! He ate and relished

The story speaks of Her compassion for the weak. She protects those who trust Her and punishes those who suppress the weak and the needy. It speaks of Her generosity and how She rewards Her people, teaches them to be good and kind to everyone.

it and was so delighted, that he soon decided to share his happiness with everyone including the king. He went around and invited everyone to have their afternoon meal with him the next day. Everyone was astonished, including the king and was curious to know as to how the poor man would provide for so many. However, they all agreed to attend.

The next day, they set out for the lunch. They were surprised when they saw the king along with his men making his way towards the brahmin's house. They all sat on the grass with a plate kept in front of them.

The brahmin brought out his basket and asked it to spread the choicest dishes fit for the king. No sooner had the words been uttered, such a sumptuous meal was laid out that everyone's eyes nearly popped out in surprise! They all ate to their heart's content and the king was very impressed. He asked the brahmin the secret of it all. The brahmin revealed the whole story. The king's men quickly seized the basket, saying that such a thing should belong to the king, and no one else. They marched off leaving the poor brahmin in a very sad state. He decided to go back to the temple and narrate to the goddess the tale of the cruel king. In the temple, the brahmin stood in front of the deity and She asked him the reason for coming again. Now, he told Her the entire story. On hearing this, She was very angry with the king and his men. She gave him another basket and told him to invite the whole village and the king again.

So, it again happened that there was a great feast, where everyone came eagerly, along with the king. They were curious to know if the brahmin could manage a grand meal again without his miracle basket. The king was also anxious to see, since the basket (which his men had forcibly taken) was not there, as to how the poor brahmin was going to serve everyone.

Everything was arranged at the brahmin's house with great pomp and show, just as it had been done before. All sat down with great enthusiasm as they could hardly wait for the meal to begin. The brahmin brought out the (second) basket and said: "Do justice to this gathering, for they have come with great expectations." The basket picked itself up, and started beating the entire gathering, including the king, who got really scared and asked the brahmin to stop it. But it would not stop and only when everyone had been thrashed soundly, did it stop and said: "This is for the selfish and unkind things you have done to this man. Give him back the basket you have seized from him forcibly." All of them agreed at once, and in any case the basket was giving nothing but bitter

seeds to eat. The king agreed to give it back and save himself and the rest, from the terrible beating.

The brahmin explained that Devi had told him to do all this, and he did not really mean to harm or insult anyone. The king then understood that a person who had enough should not be greedy and snatch away other people's belongings, that the Mother Goddess looks after everyone who worships Her and is faithful to Her. This story speaks of Her compassion for the weak. She protects those who trust Her and punishes those who suppress the weak and the needy. Next story speaks of Her generosity and how She rewards Her people, teaches them to be good and kind to everyone.

Once, there lived a mother with her three married sons. While the two elder sons earned well, the youngest was not able to, as he was not bright as the others. Since in those days arranged child marriages were common, as luck would have it, he got the most beautiful and talented wife! Her name was Gorajari. As they had little or no money, the couple had a difficult time in getting food and clothing. The couple were disturbed mentally because of their poverty. This situation hurt Gorajari very much, but women in those days could not go out for work, so she had to be content with eating the leftovers of her sisters-in-law. Her husband tried to go out and earn something, but people just threw him out before he could show them that he could do any work. Everyone but the old mother misbehaved with them. Since the old mother was under the watchful eyes of the two elder daughters-in-law, she could not help them in any way. Sometimes, when she found something very tasty served to her during a meal, she would hide it and when no one was looking, she would slyly take it for her youngest son and his wife. It was a very bad situation indeed. It worsened gradually and the young couple decided to live separately in a hut outside the main house.

Soon Navaratri arrived, and everyone started preparing for the festivities. Everyone performed the *puja* with great pomp and show, but Gorajari and her husband did the *puja* with whatever they could obtain by begging. This annoyed her so much that she decided to go and sit in the temple of the goddess. She went and laid down at the back of the temple, and did not eat or drink for the whole day.

These two stories bring out the compassion with which Devi deals with humans. What do these stories illustrate? Though being all powerful, She doesn't exhibit Her strength to the weak, She is compassionate towards them, She supports them, She understands them, hears them and by doing so, She helps us take that path as we lead our life. The message is loud and clear, every action of Hers not only brings out Her character, it shows us the way. That is why enlightened souls praise Her as *shobana*. Her strength of character lies not in punishing the wicked but to be compassionate towards the weak.

Goddess Tripurasundari soon became aware of somebody's presence behind Her, so She asked Her *kavalan* (server of the Deity in Her celestial abode) to find out. He came back and said that a poor woman with torn clothes, who looked thin and miserable, was lying there and she would not budge until Devi Herself spoke to her. Mother goddess asked him to bring the lady to Her. On being asked about the reason for her distress, Gorajari related all her woes to the Mother. Mother offered to give her some leftovers of the food from the *prasadam*s which she had got from the devotees. This annoyed Gorajari and with tearful eyes said that she got leftovers all through - both at home and now in Devi's temple. But Devi asked her to calm down and asked her to go and have the food with her husband and enjoy it to their heart's content.

Back home, both of them started to eat the food, none too happy. But lo and behold! As they ate, they

noticed that the food turned delicious and fresh as if it had just arrived from the kitchen. Their ordinary utensils turned gold and silver and their clothes changed to fabulous rich garments. Both looked at each other and then at themselves, and stood up in amazement. As their gaze went to their hut, it had become the most beautiful palace one could imagine. They were overcome and fell prostrate, and thanked Devi repeatedly for the beautiful *prasad* She had given them.

Unable to contain herself, Gorajari rushed over to her mother-in-law to tell her about her good fortune, but before she could do so, her sisters-in-law saw her in all her finery. They came out stunned and angry, accused her of stealing someone's wealth. But she protested saying that, "It is Devi who has showered all these good things upon us." They called her a liar telling that, "We pray with pomp and show, and spend so much for Devi, but She has not shown such generosity to us. Then how could you, who has nothing but dust to eat and dust to offer, be the recipient of such generosity?" Gorajari challenged them and asked everyone to go with her to the temple of the goddess. There she prostrated before Devi and asked Her to tell them the truth and urged Her to come and rescue her, for everyone was mistaking her to be a thief.

Mother spoke to all of them and said, "She speaks the truth. You all have ill-treated her but she is pure at heart and in action, therefore I have given her this treasure. Whereas you all have done my *puja* with grandeur, but without sincerity, and you have not been kind to the poor and to your kith and kin. You have been nasty and cruel. How could I bestow my blessings upon such people? Be good and kind to all, and see my kindness bestowed upon you."

As you see again, She comes to the rescue of the weak and the needy. Where there is kindness, She resides and here She says in Her words "Be good and kind to all and see my kindness bestowed upon you."

These two stories bring out the compassion with which Devi deals with humans. What do these stories illustrate? Though being all powerful, She doesn't exhibit Her strength to the weak, She is compassionate towards them, She supports them, She understands them, hears them and by doing so, She helps us take that path as we lead our life. The message is loud and clear, every action of Hers not only brings out Her character, it shows us the way. That is why enlightened souls praise Her as *shobana*. Her strength of character lies not in punishing the wicked but to be compassionate towards the weak. In Durga avatar, She has weapons in all Her hands, it is not to kill but to protect

- The conch shell in Durga's hand symbolizes the *Pranava* or the mystic word *Om*, which indicates Her holding on to God in the form of sound.
- The bow and arrows represent energy. By holding both the bow and arrows in one hand Mother Durga is indicating Her control over both aspects of energy - potential and kinetic.
- The thunderbolt signifies firmness. A devotee of Durga must be firm like a thunderbolt in one's convictions. Like the thunderbolt that can break anything against which it strikes, without being affected itself, the devotee needs to attack a challenge without losing his confidence.
- The lotus in Durga's hand is not fully bloomed, symbolising certainty of success but not finality. The lotus in Sanskrit is called *pankaja*, which

means born of mud. Thus, lotus stands for the continuous evolution of the spiritual quality of devotees amidst the worldly mud of lust and greed.

- The *Sudarshan Chakra* or beautiful discus, which spins around the index finger of the Goddess, while not touching it, signifies that the entire world is subservient to the will of Durga and is at Her command. She uses this unfailing weapon to destroy evil and produce an environment conducive to the growth of righteousness.
- The sword that Durga holds in one of Her hands symbolises knowledge, which has the sharpness of a sword. Knowledge which is free from all doubts, is symbolised by the shine of the sword.
- Durga's trident or *trishul* is a symbol of three qualities - *Sattva* (inactivity), *Rajas* (activity) and *Tamas* (non-activity), and She is the remover of all the three types of miseries - physical, mental and spiritual.

She symbolises compassion, courage, firmness, certainty of success and all knowing. So, the strength of one's character lies not in suppressing the weak but to be compassionate towards them. That is the message that this word in Bala Sahasranamam illustrates.



Temples of India - A journey through the heritage of time

- By Smt. Asha Manoharan

Pallavaneeswaram

Our next destination was Pallavaneeswaram. I had my worksheet with me and as we headed off from Vaideeswaran Kovil, I glanced at it to see whether we were on schedule, but it was almost 1pm. The temples in Tamil Nadu close by 1 o'clock and open back only at 4pm. We decided to find a place to stay. We travelled back to Chidambaram because all the temples were in and around it and more so, we wanted to see the night pooja of Natarajar at Chid

ambaram. Our car leapt towards Chidambaram and we watched the summer heat brush past the window. We reached Chidambaram at half past one and were directed to a star hotel. On reaching there, our eyes fell on Sharadharams Heritage hotel. We took directions from the receptionist at Sharadharams (which is the main hotel) and headed for their Heritage hotel located at T.Puthur, almost 15 kms away from Chidambaram. I fell in love with it the first time I set my eyes on it.



Picture 1. Heritage Hotel

It was like any other Heritage hotel (Picture 1) but what I loved about it was its location in the heart of the village; its old compound wall gave a feeling of "home". Inside the compound stood before us a medium sized house, which had a tile layered roof with a front porch. The porch had two tiers, the lower one had a small reception area with a big oak table designed and featured from the 19th century. The architecture was typical of the era, with a huge open courtyard in the centre and rooms all around it (pic. 2). The floor above also followed a similar layout. The doors were all made of teak wood. Though the rooms had a plain double door, the main house had a huge door which was intricately designed. Attention to detail was very much visible in every corner of the

house. The house blew me away. We took the keys to our room and went to the western wing of the house. The room as outside, was designed perfectly for travellers who wanted to make themselves at home. We showered, changed and rested.

At 4 o'clock, we set out for Pallavaneeswaram. We drove out of the village, and our car hit the main road and headed south for the temple. The total distance is approximately 40 Kms. It took us nearly 50 mins. We took the bypass road on to NH 227 towards Chennai - Nagapattinam highway, travelled 2.9 Kms, turned right onto Chennai - Nagapattinam highway, passed by Sathanaar Agency, travelled on for about 19 Kms and then turned left to stay on



Picture 2. Centre Court



Picture 3. Mythili S. and Me

Chennai - Nagapattinam highway, then took a slight left onto SH22, travelled about a Km, took the first right and then the first left. We reached Pallavaneswaram village. We were then guided onto the temple. Here the Moolavar is Shiva called Pallavaneswarar.

Ambal : Soundarara Nayaki

Vriksham : Mullai

Patikam : Sambandar

Uchavar : Somaskander

This is the 10th Shiva temple on the banks of river Cauvery praised in the *Thevarams*. The temples in this region have been mentioned in the ancient tamil

work, Silappadhikaaram. The temple faces the Bay of Bengal. All the planets in the *Navagraha Mandap* face the Lord, i.e. west. Lord Muruga graces with His consorts Valli and Deivanai in the *prakara*, in a standing form. The peacock vehicle is absent in this shrine. There are two Durgas deities, Durga in the *prakara* with demon Mahisha and another one without the demon. There are two Chandikeswaras. River Cauvery enters the sea just near this place, hence the place is named Kaveri Puhum Pattinam. The present name of the place is Poompuhar. This temple was built during the Pallava period, which is about 1000 - 2000 years ago.



Picture 4. Inner prakaram



Picture 5. Main entrance to the kovil (temple)

The *sthala purana* of this temple is that, there lived in this region a Shiva devotee called Sivanesar and his wife Gnanakamalambikai. They were blessed with a son named Tiruvenkadar. He was a marine trader. At 16, Tiruvenkadar married a woman called Sivakalai but had no children for many years. To grace them, Lord Shiva was born to Siva Sharma and Suseelai, a poor couple. The child was named Marudavanar. Lord Shiva appeared in their dream and advised them to give Marudavanar to Tiruvenkadar in adoption.

Marudavanar, now the adopted son of Tiruvenkadar, continued the marine trade of the family. Returning from his business travels one day, Marudavanar gave a box to the mother and left. Tiruvenkadar anxiously opened the box to see the wealth brought by his son but was shocked to see the box containing a dung cake made with husk. Throwing it in anger, he found a note written on the cake, "Even a broken needle would not accompany the soul during the last journey." Tiruvenkadar learnt the truth and renounced his family life at once. He prayed to Lord Shiva to bless him with salvation. Lord appeared before him and assured that his wish would be granted at an appropriate

time. Later, he came to be known as the great poet Pattinathar, as he was born in Kavirpoom Pattinam. He attained salvation in Tiruvottriyur.

Lord Anugnai Vinayaka is the main Vinayaka of this temple. The Shiva Linga in the sanctum sanctorum is big in size. Sage Kalava Maharshi had worshipped here. Sage Pattinathar is in a separate shrine facing north. The sculptures of Pattinathar's wife, mother and Lord Shiva who grew up as his son are on the *vimana* of this shrine. *Brahmotsavam* is not celebrated for Shiva in this temple but only for Pattinathar, known as *Adiyar Utsav*, meaning festival of the devotee. Also, there is no *Kodimaram* (flag post) in the temple.

Pattinathar festival is celebrated for 12 days in the month of Adi (July - August). The 10th day commemorates the event of Lord Shiva granting salvation to saint Pattinathar, which is celebrated in a very grand manner. Lord Shiva as Marudavanar, the couple Shiva Sharma and Suseelai who brought Him up, Pattinathar, his disciple Badragiriar, Naya-diar and Mother Guhambika with Lord Muruga on Her lap, are the procession deities in this temple.

Navaratri Mahotsavam 2012

- By Anthil Anbazhagan

The members of Balambika Divya Sangam celebrated the Navaratri this year with pomp and splendour. A nine step ladder rack was setup and beautiful decorated with traditional dolls/figurines that symbolized and brought out different aspects of life and beyond. Balambika decked in finery was a sight to behold; the devotees could not take their eyes off her beautiful countenance. The spring of eternal bliss seemed to radiate from her divine eyes. We prayed to her for eternal peace, prosperity and wisdom.

Everyday started with fresh rangoli/kollam of different pattern and content being drawn out in front of the gollu arrangement. Bala's idol was placed on this for a brief period in the morning facing the gollu dolls. Then, the vibrant floral arrangement for the day was put into place keeping aside the garlands which were to adorn Bala later in the day. The priest then would start the Bala Tripura Sundari homam with Sankalpam for all trustees and the sponsors for the day. On the first day all activities were started with the auspicious Ganapathy Homam. Once the homam was done, the priest would perform abhishekam. The abhishekam carried out for Bala everyday was with ingredients such as milk, curds, turmeric, honey, fruits, tender coconut and finally sandal paste. Then the alangaram or decoration for the day would be carried out. Bala dressed in those bril-

liant and unique outfits everyday filled the devotees hearts with sheer delight. Finally after wrapping her with a series of garlands, the Maha Mangalarthi was done at noon. Bala reveled in this pious atmosphere with the air filled with chants and devotional songs epitomizing her supremacy and benevolence.

In the evenings, Bala Sahasranamam Parayanam was conducted. This was followed by some devotional bhajans for Bala. Again, Maha Mangalarthi for the evening was done and prasadam distributed amongst the people gathered. Before binging down the curtains for the day, milk and water were kept in silverware besides Balambika's idol. This routine was repeated for each of the nine days. In a similar fashion, Navaratri was also celebrated at the Sri Malur Balambika Temple site at the *Balalayam* in Malur. The local families left no stone unturned in their efforts to rejoice and revel in Sri Bala's glory during this auspicious time of the year.

The members of Balambika Divya Sangam along with devotees from the nieghbourhood of Bala's house immersed themselves in this divine spiritual experience. This auspicious celebration recharged all of us with the energy and will to face the upcoming challenges in bringing up the temple at Malur.



DAY 1 - October 16th

With bated breath we waited to usher in the festivities of Navaratri and the morning of 16th heralded the festival season with a bright morning. A beautiful rangoli with a flower arrangement graced the front of the splendid gollu arrangement. A tray with cute dresses, tiny bangles, sparkling bindhis and tempting chocolates were kept besides Bala's idol. She looked resplendent in her 'Bala Tripura Sundari Alankaram' beaming with a smile on her lips. Venpongal was prepared as prasadam in the morning and Karamani Sundal for the evening.



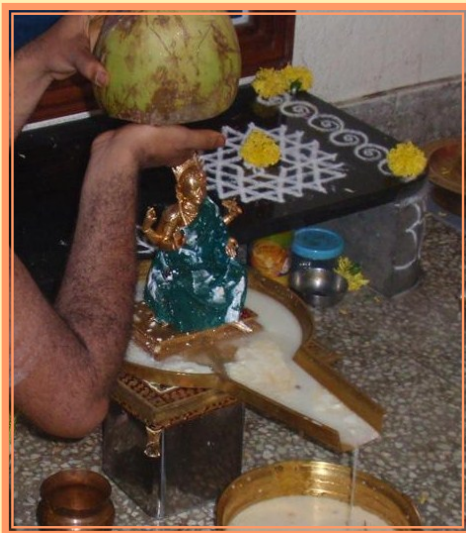
Traditional display of 'golu' with *kolam* made out of rice flour



Preparation for Ganapathy *pooja*



Sankalpam followed by pooja



Sri Bala Tripura Sundari abhishekam



Sri Bala Tripura Sundari *alankaram*

A colourful summary of Day 1 of Navaratri

DAY 2 - October 17th

Dressed in lush green silk pavadai, Bala was welcomed with an ‘arusi’ kollam. As in everyday, the sankalpam was followed by Ashtothara Archana and finally the Mahamangalarthi. The first 3 days witnessed different Bala Tripura Sundari Alankaram. Puliyoagerai was prepared as prasadam in the morning and Kondakadlai Sundal for the evening.



Kolam made out of wheat flour with square patterns, as Sri Bala enjoys the *alankaram*



A colourful summary of Day 2 of Navaratri

DAY 3 - October 18th

The third day had a very colorful rangoli with extensive flower arrangement in it. Not to be left behind, Bala was dressed in traditional long silk attire with fragrant garland of flowers adorning her slender neck. That beatific smile behind the layers of sandal paste on her was celestial. Sakara Pongal was prepared as prasadam in the morning and Mochaka Sundal for the evening.



Flower *kolam* decoration on the third day of Navaratri





A colourful summary of Day 3 of Navaratri

DAY 4 - October 19th

Come Friday and Bala was ready to move into the second phase of Navaratri – the 3 days that were to celebrate her form as Lakshmi. Attired in sparkling blue, she had a shiny garland of silver coins adorning her. This day also had ‘Sumangali Pooja’ scheduled and needless to say, a large number of women folk were present to grace and be graced on this auspicious occasion. Kadamba Sadham was prepared as prasadam in the morning and Pattani Sundal for the evening.



Sri Bala Tripura Sundari *abhishekam*



Sumangali pooja



Mahalakshmi alankaram followed by mahamangalarathi

A colourful summary of Day 4 of Navaratri

DAY 5- October 20th

On the fifth day, a unique 'hamsa' rangoli was made with peanuts. Bala was decked with colorful striped attire and was eager for the festivities to start. During this period Bala is adored as a giver of spiritual wealth. One may lose physical wealth someday, but his spiritual wealth is carried forward for eternity. Curd Rice was prepared as prasadam in the morning and Kadamba Sundal for the evening.

DAY 6 - October 21st

The rangoli spelt out “Sri Bala Tripura Sundari Namaha” with formation made out of tur dal. Bala’s dazzling outfit in violet and the colorful chain made out of various gems was a pretty sight indeed. The fruits and honey used in the abhishekam is finally distributed as to the devotees. Coconut Rice was prepared as prasadam in the morning and Verkadalai Sundal for the evening.



‘Bala Tripura Sundari’ - Devi’s name written with *dal*, celebrating day 6 of the Navaratri





A colourful summary of Day 6 of Navaratri

DAY 7 - October 22nd

Bala's attire today was that of Goddess Durga. She was draped in a bright red dress with her long flowing hair decorated with fine ornaments. She also sported a trident on her left hand. The rangoli was a brilliant mix of various color powder and flowers. Her presence in this form filled all of us with vitality and zest. Along with the usual homam, Durga Ashtotharam was also chanted. Lemon Rice was prepared as prasadam in the morning and Pattani-maanga Sundal for the evening.



Sri Bala seated on the day's *kolam* made out of flowers



Durga alankaram



Ardent devotees throng Sri Bala's house and seek Her blessings

DAY 8- October 23rd

During the final 3 days, Bala is revered in the form of Saraswati – the Goddess of wisdom and learning. True to this tradition, Bala was today dressed in pure white with a majestic Veena in her hands. A bright lotus in the form of rangoli was lined on the periphery with coins. On this occasion, Bala blessed all the tiny tots from the neighborhood with the yearn to learn and assimilate. Like they say: the known is finite, but the unknown - infinite. Kanya pooja was also performed on this day. Palpaayasam was prepared as prasadam in the morning and Kadalaparupu Sundal for the evening.



Sri Bala seated on a lotus *kolam* made out of coins



Celebrating Day 8 of Navaratri, with Sri Bala in Saraswati *alankaram*

(note the little *veena* in Her hands)



A colourful summary of Day 8 of Navaratri

DAY 9- October 24th

The final day of Navaratri dawned with the fervor hitting a crescendo. As always, elaborate homam, abhishekam and Mahamangalarti were performed. Rangoli today was in the form of a Trident, aptly filled with turmeric powder. At the fall of dusk, the grand finale to the event was the Mahishasura Mardini stotram being chanted with milk abhishekam for Nandi performed through a conch. In all, it was a spectacular nine days which enthralled all her devotees alike. Sakara Pongal was prepared as prasadam in the morning and Payathamparupu Sundal for the evening.

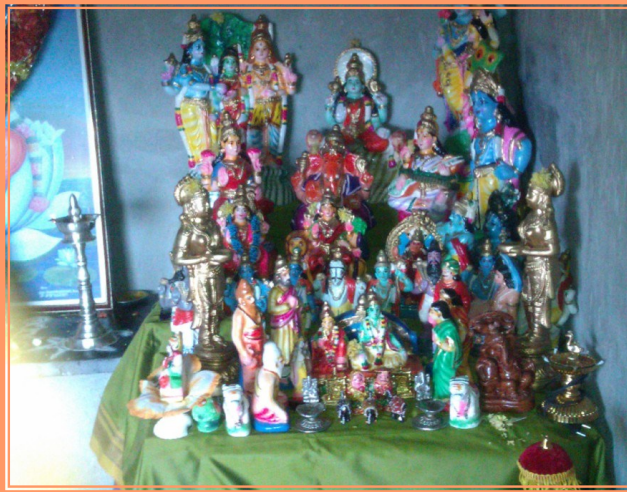


The final day of Navaratri commemorated with a *kolam* depicting Devi's weapon — the *soolam*, decorated with sandalwood powder



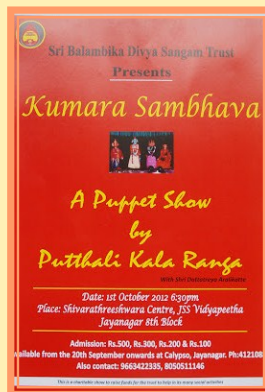
Vishesha alankaram, followed by chanting of Lalitha Sahasranamam and Mahishasura Mardhini Stotram, culminating the 9 day festivity at Sri Bala's house during Navaratri 2012

Navaratri Celebration in Balalayam at Malur Temple Site



Navaratri was celebrated at Sri Malur Balambika Temple Balalayam. The traditional *golu*, the nine days variety *kolam*, the sincere chanting of the Bala Sahasranamam by the local devotees, and the daily *poojas* performed by the local priest, were all a part of the festivity at Malur.

Puppet Show—Kumara Sambhava



On the 1st of October 2012, Balambika Divya Sangam had the very first Fund Raiser - A puppet show by Putthali Kalaranga, lead by Shri Dattatreya Aralikatti. The venue was the Shivarathreeswara Center, JSS Vidyapeetha, at Jayanagar 8th Block.



Left: Smt. Priya Rangan rendering an invocation song “Karunayin vadivame”

Center: Smt. Mythili Sundararajan’s address regarding the Trust, its activities and future plans, followed by a video that illustrated the talk with actual photographs, covering Annadanam, Dolai utsavam, Temple construction, Archanas and so on.

Right: Smt. Sharanya Vignesh, elaborating on the activities of the Yuva Sena wing of the Trust.



Colourful puppets bring to life stories from our legends, thanks to the team lead by Shri Dattatreya Aralikatti. The scenes depicted the tales from the story of Tarakasura, with his death at the hands of Shiva Puthra.



The audience welcomed events on stage with loud cheers, appreciating of the puppeteers' skills. The young and the elderly, both enjoyed the presentation of the true to life puppets.



At the conclusion of the wonderful show, Shri Sundararajan honoured the senior artist with a shawl and presented him with a sapling.

Sri Bala Tripurasundari Homam festivity at 2012 Lalitha Homam



Homam preparations, with Sangam President Smt. Asha Manoharan initiating the start of the homam



After the abhishekam and alankaram, Sri Bala is nestled beautifully among the flowers with such charm and grace - truly a feast for the eyes and the soul, that we are blessed to witness.



Sri Bala Tripurasundari *homam*



Balambika Divya Sangam trustees organizing an informational/fund raising event

You, Me and our cup of Yoga

Salambha Sarvangasana (Shoulder Stand) - By Mrs. Gargi Parthasarathy

Salambha means supported. *Sarva* is 'all' and *anga* means body. In this *asana* the entire body benefits, hence it is called Sarvangasana. There are many different forms of Sarvangasana. The one we will be looking at here is Salambha (supported) Sarvangasana. Sarvangasana is referred to as the queen or mother of all *asanas*. Just as a mother looks after the overall health and well being of a family, so too does this *asana* maintain harmony and balance in our body. It has a positive effect on the entire system as its names rightly justifies.

Steps:

1. Lie down flat on the ground with the legs stretched out and the hands by the side of your body.



2. Exhale, bend your knees and move your legs till the thighs touch the stomach. Make sure your hands are still on the ground beside you.



3. Now exhale and raise your hips from the floor supporting them with your hands. Bend your arms at the elbows. Then exhale and raise your legs so that the trunk of your body is perpendicular to the ground. Point your toes upwards. This is the final pose. Stay here for at least 3 minutes with even breathing in the beginning. After you have practiced it for some days and are more comfortable with it increase the time to 5 minutes and then gradually to 15 minutes everyday.



To return:

Release the hands and slowly bend your legs and come back to the initial pose.

Points to keep in mind:

1. In Step 3, make sure your elbows are shoulder width apart and are placed wider.
2. In the final pose make sure the trunk of your body is perpendicular to the ground. It should not be at an angle.
3. Only the back of the head, shoulders and the arms up to the elbows touch the ground in the final pose.
4. The chin should be pressed against the breast-bone

in the final pose. You should feel a contraction of the throat (Jalandhara Bandha). Ideally one should not experience breathlessness at any stage of this *asana*, but if you do then slowly come back to the starting position, take a few deep breaths and start again with even breathing.

5. Breathe, breathe, breathe. At no point of time in this *asana* should one hold the breath or make an exaggerated effort to exhale or inhale. Breathing should be deep.

Words of caution before beginning this *asana*:

1. Pregnant women should consult their doctor before practicing this *asana*. Some schools of Yoga don't recommend this *asana* during the second and third trimester of pregnancy. But certain yoga teachers like Geetha Iyengar don't see any problems in this *asana* during any stage of pregnancy. I personally would like to say that when you practice any *asana*, listen to your body. You are the best judge of what your body is trying to tell you.

2. This *asana* should not be practiced by women when they are menstruating.

3. Since the entire weight of the body rests on the shoulders in this *asana*, it is advisable that anyone with a weak back and shoulder need to consult their doctor before even trying out this *asana*.

4. People suffering from spondylitis problems should not practice this *asana*.

5. Also, since it is an inverted position, the blood flows down to the heart, hence anyone with heart and blood pressure conditions need to consult their doctor before even beginning this *asana* practice.

Benefits of Sarvangasana:

1. Due to the inverted pose, the venous blood flows to the heart for purification due to the force of gravity. Oxygenated blood is supplied to the entire chest area helping people with problems of breathlessness and anemia, asthma and other ailments.

2. Due to the firm chin lock, the thyroid glands get an ample supply of blood, thereby keeping the hormonal system well balanced.

3. Oxygenated blood supply is established to the head region in this inverted position. This makes sure that the nerves are soothed. Headaches usually disappear when one practices this *asana* regularly. Also, an emotional well being and calmness is established. This *asana* is frequently used to treat patients with temper issues.

4. Another important benefit of Sarvangasana is that it relieves constipation. People suffering from colitis and stomach ulcers benefit highly from the practice of this *asana*.

This *asana* is frequently recommended for people with menstrual problems, low vitality, urinary disorders, anemia, hypersensitivity, insomnia, nervous breakdown, irritability amongst other disorders. As you can see, it serves as a panacea for a range of different problems, and even otherwise, if practiced regularly, it induces new vigour and vitality in one's life.

Did you know...?

By Smt. Asha Manoharan

Ganga Snanam Aacha?: (Have you had your Ganga Snan?)

This month is the Diwali month and everyone would have celebrated Diwali by the time this issue is out. I thought as to how everyone greeted me on this occasion. The young and the old wished me “Happy Diwali”, I was now smiling to myself. One may wonder, why I was smiling. It is our age old practice of wishing everyone “*Ganga snanam aacha*?” I remember when I was a kid, we used to get up at 4 in the morning, have a nice oil bath and run outside to burst crackers. As we stood on the street, we greeted everybody, old and the young with “*Ganga snanam aacha*.” Here after half a century, we wish each other in a foreign language. The globalisation strangled not only our economic growth but our culture too. Last year, out of the 50 odd people who called me, 47 of them wished me “Happy Diwali” including my parents, who also sadly got converted to this modern progression.

Why did we specifically ask *Ganga snanam aacha*, why not Cauvery *snanam aacha*, inspite of some of us residing on the banks of river Cauvery. It is strange, I thought.

One might even ask, why do we have to get up early in the morning at 4, to have an oil bath?

One and a half hours before sunrise is called the *Brahma Mukurtham*. In India, the sun normally rises at 5.30 in the morning. This according to Rishi Sushrut is also called the nectar time and it is the best time to offer prayers and to meditate. This is the time when the earth is filled with ultra violet radiations, the violet colour is a cool colour for the brain and it relates to knowledge and self awareness. Atharva veda mentions this time, as being good for being healthy and away from diseases.

River Ganga is worshipped as a mother as well as a Goddess, particularly by the people of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Bengal, through which the river flows. On the day of a festival, if a devotee is unable to visit and bathe in the river Ganga, *Ganga jal* (water) which is kept in most Hindu homes is then used for purification. A bath in the river is said to purify the bather, of all sins. The Ganga is revered all over India, even in places far from its course.

Initially, river Ganga flowed in the heavens. She was brought down to earth by the severe penances of the sage Bhagiratha and that is why she is also called Bhagirathi. According to the story of the descent of the Ganga, a number of demons were harassing the hermits by disturbing them in their ascetic duties. During the day, they would be chased into the ocean. But in the darkness of the night, they would emerge from the ocean and start harassing the hermits again. In desperation, the hermits appealed to Rishi Agastya. Agastya, known for his gastronomic powers, drank all the water of the ocean. Though this was done in good faith, it resulted in depriving the world of the water needed for sustenance, and the earth became parched and dry.

According to the legend, King Sagara of the Ikshvaku dynasty ruling at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh had two queens, Keshani and Sumati, but neither had a child. Sagara performed severe austerities before his wives could have sons. Keshani gave birth to a son called Asmajas, while Sumati bore 60,000 sons. Sagara performed the Ashwamedha sacrifice to declare his sovereignty over the neighbouring kingdoms. According to the prevalent custom, the sacrificial horse was let loose and allowed to wander into the neighbouring kingdoms. If the horse was caught, a battle ensued and the outcome decided the winner. The 60,000 sons of Sagara were following the horse when they saw him enter a cavern where sage Kapila was meditating. Not seeing

the horse in the cavern, they presumed that Kapila had captured it. They did not kill Kapila as he was a sage but they started disturbing his meditations. Annoyed at being disturbed, Kapila burnt the 60,000 sons of Sagara with a curse.

Time passed and later Bhagiratha, the great grandson of Sagara, chanced to come across the bones of his dead ancestors. He wanted to perform the *shrad-dha* of his ancestors but there was no water available for the ceremony. Agastya having drunk all the water of the ocean, the country was passing through a severe drought. Bhagiratha prayed to Brahma, the Creator, to end the drought. Brahma asked him to pray to Vishnu, the Preserver, to allow the heavenly Ganga, issuing from His big toe, to come down to earth. When Bhagiratha prayed to Vishnu, he asked the third member of the Hindu trinity of Gods, to allow the torrential rain to fall on his head before it came to the earth, as the river was very forceful and if she were allowed to come down unchecked, her fall would split the earth. Shiva agreed to take the gigantic weight of the cascading Ganga on the matted hair piled high on his head. This ensnared and delayed the progress of the river, which in meandering through the labyrinth of his hair, lost its force and then gently descended to the Himalayas, from whence it flowed to the plains bestowing its waters on the parched earth. That is why the anthropomorphic image of Ganga is shown in the matted hair of Shiva, who is also called Gangadhara. Being born in the Himalayas, Ganga is considered the elder sister of Parvati, who is also a daughter of the Himalayas.

According to the Agni Purana and Padma Purana, the Ganga descended to the earth on Ganga Dussehra day and a bath in the holy river on this day is said to purify one of all sins. To die on the banks of the Ganga is considered most auspicious. If that is not possible, then the immersion of the ashes after cremation in the river Ganga is a must, as it then releases one from the cycles of birth and rebirth.

The seven ways of worshipping the Ganga are:

1. By calling out her name, 'Oh Ganga'.
2. Having darshan of her.
3. By touching her waters.
4. By worshipping.
5. By standing in the waters of the river.
6. By Bathing
7. By carrying clay dug out of the river.

Ganga in her anthropomorphic form is shown as a beautiful young woman standing on a crocodile and holding a water pot in her hands. Her image, with that of the Goddess Yamuna, another sacred river deity, is often depicted on the doors of temples and palaces. In Gujarat, there is a legend, according to which Ganga came down to the earth on Rishi Panchami, the fifth day of Bhadra (September) at Tarnetar.

So, Ganga is the remover of all sins when worshipped by the above said means. It is said that on *Naraka Chaturdasi* day, taking bath during *Brahma Mukurtham* is equivalent to taking bath in the Ganga, and pronouncing her name as many times as possible will free oneself of their sins. That is the reason why we are asked to take bath in the morning and we pronounce her name as much as possible by asking others "*Ganga snaanam aacha?*"



Ambal's Keerthanai

Annaye...

Composition: Smt. Asha Manoharan

Sung by: Smt. Ambika Arvindd

Ragam: Keeravani

Talam: Adi

Pallavi

Annaye unthan patham vidaen
endum neeye thunai....(annaiye)

Anupallavi

Yengum nirainthaval ulaginil
ponnoli mayni kondu uraibaval
thaan enkal....(annaaiye)

Charanam

Ilam thalir mayni unthan mugavareyoo?
manjal kumkumam unthan anikalankaloo?
abaya karangal unthan thirusorkalo ?
kanniye unthan peyar thaana enna?

Vetriyai thanthidum vedavalliyo?
Abaya karam neettum abiramasundariyo?
Kannikalukku yellam kanakavalliyo?
Paal manam maaratha balambikayo?



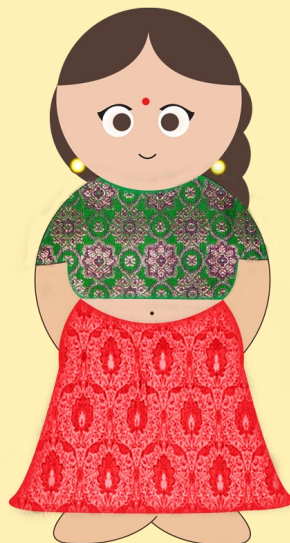
Bala Prastha

A LITTLE SOMETHING TO PONDER...

At the Seattle Para Olympics, nine contestants, all physically or mentally disabled, assembled at the starting line for the 100-m race. At the gun, they all started out, with a relish to run the race to the finish and win. All, except one little boy who stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled over a couple of times, and began to cry. The other eight heard the boy cry. They slowed down and looked back. Then they all turned around and went back.....every one of them. One girl with Down's syndrome bent down and kissed him and said, "This will make it better." Then all

nine linked arms and walked together to the finish line. Everyone in the stadium stood up, and the cheering went on for several minutes. People who were there still recall the incident with pride.

Why? Because deep down we know this one thing: What matters in this life is, more than winning for ourselves, is helping others also to win, even if it means slowing down and changing our course.



Our heartfelt thanks to our sponsors and patrons for supporting the services of Balambika Divya Sangam



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Sudha Madabushi
Vinay Srinivasan
Kanchana & Raghuram
Rohit Joshi
Venkat Murali
Sonali & Nirmal Jayabalan



Dolai Utsavam

Manjula Ananthakrishnan



Annadanam

Arjunram
Nilav Bose
Roopa Rajan
Sudharshan Atreya
Vasikaran Family
Krish Poornima



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Navaratri Celebration

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